



Mentoring From Near and Afar

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Just like good teaching is good teaching whatever the delivery format, good mentoring is good mentoring no matter the format. **Just ASK** consultants and authors have been collaborating with and coaching each other almost exclusively from afar for over twenty years. The technology has changed over the years (What happened to faxes, floppy disks, VHS, dial-up Internet, discs from AOL?), but the research base and personal practical experiences have consistently guided us in designing and assessing our professional interactions over time. Additionally, we have learned that the instructional approaches we recommend teachers should use with their students are quite similar to the approaches we ourselves use in “mentoring” or “coaching” each other as well as other colleagues and clients.

While keeping our eyes on the goal of promoting high levels of student learning and well-being supported by well informed and collaborative educators, we at **Just ASK**, like you, have over time used professional or learning standards and student work (participant and client products, questions, and requests to determine how to approach each group of students (be those “students” superintendents, principals, teacher leaders, mentors, or novice teachers) as strong influencers on why, what, and how we teach (model, explain, discuss, etc.). That overarching reality remains the same.

Whatever the age of our students, we all know how to do schooling face-to-face and many of us have lived at least part-time in a virtual world; a key to our future success in navigating mentoring from afar is the acceptance of a few realities some of which are listed below:

- **Learning and the application of that learning must always be our goal.**
As mentors, we have not only student learning and wellbeing as goals, we have also committed to having new teacher learning (and application of that learning) as well as their well-being as our goals. As Dale Carnegie said, “Knowledge isn’t power until it is applied.”
- **We are all in this together.**
All the adults need to commit to the success of all the other adults; this means reciprocity between mentor and protégé. One of the biggest challenges for many of us right now is that our protégés face situations in which we ourselves have most



likely not yet established foundational knowledge and skillfulness; as far as distance learning practices we, too, are novices. Accept it, acknowledge it, and embrace it in order to move forward together with purpose!

- **The world really is our classroom.**

This is a new normal and we need to help new teachers use the world as a major teaching tool from the git-go. The great outdoors, the home setting whatever it is (There is enough math there to last a life time.), the neighborhood, the music, the news, the weather, supermarket, the people we see and meet all provide learning opportunities that often go beyond anything textbooks can provide.

Marcia Baldanza, Just ASK senior consultant and author, writes weekly briefs titled **EmpowerED 3.2.1** about how innovations and information from multiple disciplines, (i.e., business and industry, medicine, the arts, athletics, telecommunications, science, economics, etc.) are applicable to our work as educators. We are far more aligned in how we work and what we are trying to accomplish than we realize so we can learn much from them. We and those we teach and mentor must get out of our old bubble and enlarge the circle. (Reality Check: Even before the pandemic, three of my four sons and daughters-in-law were working primarily from locations other than official company sites, as do most of the members of the Just ASK Team.)

- **We need to meet protégés where they are and help them do the same with their students.**

For starters, we desperately need to find high quality new teachers, entice them to join us in our endeavors, and keep them. They are most likely walking into a world they have not experienced so they may well be simply seeking to survive. A nifty quote from differentiation guru Carol Ann Tomlinson is, “Until Maslow’s needs are met, Bloom takes a pass.” The short version of that is “Maslow before Bloom.”

- **Community and connections are more important than connectivity.**

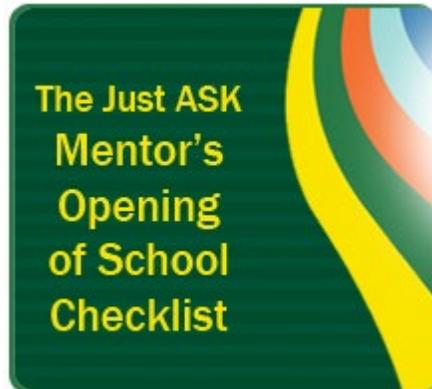
As Glasser taught us, four basic needs we seek in life are belonging, power, freedom, and fun. Building a sense of community may be one of our biggest challenges so it must be front and center as schooling reopens this fall. A new job in a new school and/or location is nerve wracking in the best of circumstances. As a teacher and military wife who moved often, I was on multiple occasions (and in multiple states) the “new kid on the block” and found I sometimes had to work really hard to make connections. Now it would even more challenging.

- **The standards-based planning process (Think SBE Ovals) guides our practice working with students and with our protégés.**

- **Oval One:** What do those I mentor need to know and be able to do in order to address student learning needs?
- **Oval Two:** How will those I mentor demonstrate this knowledge and these skills?
- **Oval Three:** What mentoring/learning experiences will facilitate the success of those I mentor?
- **Oval Four:** Based on data, how might I continuously refine mentoring/learning experiences to better match the needs of those I am mentoring/coaching?



For suggestions to consider in selecting your areas of focus and to maximize your efforts, consult **The 2020 Just ASK Mentor's Opening of School Checklist**. It is updated to reflect the realities that some of us will be mentoring virtually and some mentoring face-to-face, and that many of us do not know which it will be. Monthly suggestions for follow-up mentoring work are published in each *Mentoring Memo*.



The 2020 Just ASK Mentor's Opening of School Checklist
www.justaskpublications.com/mentorsopeningofschool



The Just ASK *Mentoring Memo* features **Tools of the Month** and mentoring calendars for the current time of year; these calendars, excerpted and updated from *The 21st Century Mentor's Handbook*, offer suggestions for mentoring actions to support novice teachers and teachers new to the district in eight areas of concern: Personal; Professional; Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment; Organizational Systems; Students, Colleagues; School and School System; Parents and Community. When you check out these calendars, you will quickly see how useful it can be in your work with new teachers whether you are an administrator, mentor, instructional coach, or colleague.

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