Welcome to *Mentoring in the 21st Century®*! We are excited that you are joining us in the incredibly challenging and important work of ensuring that there is a fully-qualified and fully satisfied teacher in every classroom. This month’s newsletter provides an overview of the challenges and concerns new teachers face and some brief suggestions to guide mentoring practice in those areas.

### Challenges and Concerns of New Teachers

The eight areas of potential challenges and concerns of new teachers are
- Personal
- Professional
- Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
- Relationships with Students and Focus on Student Learning
- Organizational Systems for the Teacher, the Classroom, and Students
- School/District Policies and Procedures
- Collegial Interactions
- Parents and Community

**Personal**

As we know from Maslow’s Hierarchy it is all but impossible to concentrate on the needs of others when we are struggling with our own personal needs. Both novice teachers and experienced teachers new to a district, school, or assignment have to find their place in the social structure of the school and the community. Their need to find appropriate housing, establish personal relationships, and locate a gym or other recreational facilities can occupy much of their time and emotional energy. In the interest of having fully satisfied teachers who feel supported as human beings, mentors need to be appropriately helpful with both information and introductions. This sets the new educators up to concentrate on the work they were hired to do.

**Professional**

The second challenge is one that novice teachers may not even know is an area of concern. If the new educators are twenty-somethings who have just completed an undergraduate program, they may never have had the need to think about medical benefits, investment programs, or saving receipts for taxes. Chances are good that they do not know which documents, hard copy or electronic, they should keep in well-organized folders. Such papers might include job offer letters, contracts, transcripts, permanent certification requirements, professional development expectations, certificates for recertification points, etc. While human resources departments usually provide an overview of these professional responsibilities, most new teachers’ heads are in the classroom they soon will be working in; in fact, they are most likely thinking about the bulletin boards. Those who are listening quickly get a “deer in the headlights” look in their eyes! Mentors can assist by identifying the essential...
information that the new educators need to organize early in the school year and help their protégées set up appropriate files. Another professional issue that mentors should address early on is the teacher performance evaluation system. We can help the new educators not only understand how the system works but what the criteria looks and sounds like in the classroom and throughout the professional community.

Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
While we want to ensure that new teachers feel supported as individuals that is not the whole picture of mentor responsibilities. Our main area of focus has to be on student learning and mentoring work around curriculum, instruction, and assessment has to be at the forefront of mentoring efforts. In most districts, gone are the days when new teachers did not know what to teach and wallowed in choices that resulted in “hobby teaching.” That scenario has been replaced by lengthy documents which identify the standards of learning to be addressed, pacing guides, common assessments, and rubrics as well as information on standardized testing. Most of our mentoring time and energy should be focused on helping our protégées plan and implement instruction and assessment that addresses the curriculum and promotes student learning. This work ensures that there is a fully qualified teacher in every classroom.

Relationships with Students and Focus on Student Learning
Building respectful relationships with students is a challenge for all teachers and especially for teachers new to the profession. The most important piece of advice we can give new teachers is that the best management program is a strong instructional program. Given that our goal is not well-managed students but rather well-educated students we need to coach new teachers in the creation of a learning-centered environment where all students feel a part of the learning community. Many novice teachers spend inordinate amounts of time creating and monitoring deficit-model behavior programs in which students find their names on the board or their marker moved from green to yellow when they do not meet teacher behavioral expectations. We need to help our protégées understand that, rather than focusing on control and compliance, their time and energy is best spent designing active, engaging, and interesting lessons.

Organizational Systems for the Teacher, the Classroom, and the Students
An important mentor responsibility is helping new teachers identify what procedures are needed, which ones are working, which ones are not working and why not, and then help them design alternative systems. In the recent past, novice teachers were focused on organizing their own learning; now they have to organize space, materials, and time for five to fifty others. This is a daunting task. It is easy for them to get discouraged and even blame the students for the chaos that may occur. One shortcoming of the student teaching process is that student teachers are usually assigned to teachers and classrooms where all the systems are operating smoothly with no apparent effort; supervising teachers may not even think to explain what work had been done to set up these systems. Mentors may want to take protégées who are struggling with organization on a “learning walk” through smoothly functioning classrooms and have a coaching session about what the new teacher could try.

School and School District Policies and Procedures
Policies regarding grading and reporting, fire drills, parking permits, leave policies, etc. can be mind-boggling to even the most experienced veteran. The professional new to the district can drown in the details and not be able to discern which are essential and which are nice to know, but not show-stoppers. Mentors can provide “just in time” guidance and support as particular events and due dates approach.

Collegial Interactions
New educators can either be overwhelmed by too many offers of help or by a feeling of isolation and neglect. Mentors play an important role in helping teachers new to the district identify and access all the support staff available at the building and district level. Additionally, we need to be sure that new staff members know who the “untitled” but incredibly knowledgeable experts are on various aspects of teaching and learning and who among their colleagues is more than willing to lend a helping hand. Another responsibility of mentors is to keep
the principal and all the other members of the staff informed as to what is happening in the mentoring program and how they can and should play an important role in the induction of new staff members.

Parents and Community
This can be an extremely challenging area of concern for some novice teachers. One of the most challenging events of the year is Back-to-School Night when novice teachers have to explain what the children will be learning throughout the year when they, in fact, are not sure what they are doing the next day. Mentors can play an important role in helping these new teachers prepare for that event and parent conferences by role-playing and even sitting in on difficult conferences. Additional problems can surface when some parents appear to be either over involved in their child’s educational program or seemingly uninterested or unable to be supportive of the learning of their children. Mentors can help their protégés be positive, proactive, and if problems surface, problem solve with them. It is most important that mentors help new teachers see parents not as the enemy but as partners in their children’s education.

To assist you in addressing the eight areas of challenge and concern mentioned above, see the attachment at the end of this newsletter titled Needs Assessment for New Teachers (PDF) which is reprinted from The 21st Century Mentor’s Handbook. It is organized by the eight categories described in this column and can be used multiple times throughout the induction process. New educators indicate on the needs assessment which areas are of high concern and which are of low concern at the present time. This data can help you maximize your mentoring time and energy.
New Teacher Needs Assessment

Please rate each item below to indicate your level of concern about or interest in that topic at this time.

Possible Ratings
- 1 for a low level of concern or interest at this time
- 2 for a moderate level of concern or interest at this time
- 3 for a high level of concern or interest at this time

Personal
- ___ Making living arrangements
- ___ Locating gyms and recreational facilities
- ___ Getting to know people

Professional/Human Resources
- ___ Payroll, benefits, and investment information
- ___ Certification and tenure requirements
- ___ Teacher performance evaluation system
- ___ Professional development opportunities
- ___ Professional organizations

Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
- ___ District and state learning standards
- ___ Planning for instruction using the SBE planning process
- ___ Building a repertoire of instructional strategies
- ___ Differentiation of instruction
- ___ Assessing student learning (formative and summative)
- ___ Using student work and achievement data to inform instruction
- ___ Going from rubrics to grades

Organizational Systems for the Classroom
- ___ Setting up the classroom
- ___ Classroom organizational systems
- ___ Organizing my time and work

Getting to Know and Working with Students
- ___ Getting to know the students
- ___ Creating a learning community
- ___ Working with students to establish norms and rules
- ___ Diagnosing student needs
- ___ Teaching diverse learners
- ___ Motivating students
- ___ Assisting students with special needs
New Teacher Needs Assessment

Collegial Interactions and Collaboration
____  Establishing a professional relationship with the administrative staff
____  Working as a member of a grade level, interdisciplinary, or departmental team
____  Working with my mentor
____  Co-teaching and collaboration between general and special education teachers
____  Working with a paraprofessional

School and School System Policies and Procedures
____  Understanding my legal rights and responsibilities as a teacher
____  School and district policy handbooks
____  Completing administrative paperwork
____  Administration of standardized achievement tests
____  Obtaining instructional resources and material
____  Ordering materials and supplies
____  Use of district and school library, media, and technology resources

Parents and Community
____  Establishing positive home contact
____  Working with parents as partners
____  Working with parents of special needs students
____  Back-to-School Night
____  Parent conferences
____  Grading and reporting student learning