



Mentoring in the 21st Century

Issue X

by Paula Rutherford

Welcome back! The *Mentoring in the 21st Century*[®] newsletter was not published during the summer months. I apologize for that but am delighted to tell you that I finished the *Facilitator's Handbook* for the *Mentoring in the 21st Century*[®] Resource Kit. During the summer months and September we have been working with hundreds of mentors in California, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Maryland, New York, Tennessee, and Virginia. Our work with mentors and leaders of mentor programs continues to provide us with new learning and understandings about the issues related to the mentoring process. The focus of this month is on designing programs and mentoring interactions with an end in mind.

In the Beginning

One of the key concerns we hear in our work with mentors is that mentoring programs range from Rolls Royce models to Bicycles Built for Two models. While all mentoring programs have the same goals, the reality is that they operate with different resources in terms of time, human power, materials, and money. Given that, we must be perfectly clear about reasonable outcomes for the program and must maximize the resources we have available.

Whatever details we add to program outcomes the bottom line is that we all want to ensure that there is a **fully qualified and fully satisfied teacher** in each classroom. We must have those goals because the research is clear that students of novice teachers do not demonstrate the same level of learning on standardized measures of achievement as do the students of experienced teachers. It is in the best interest of each and every staff member to support new teachers as they develop professional competency and ensure that they feel like valued members of the school community. Additionally, a recent report from the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future reveals the phenomenal financial cost of recruiting and inducting new teachers. Access the report at http://www.nctaf.org/resources/demonstration_projects/turnover/TeacherTurnoverCostStudy.htm

With these goals in mind, what makes the most difference in how we support new teachers at the opening of school? The following lists provide some doable ways to mentor new teachers during the first weeks of school. The lists, presented from low cost in terms of time, energy, and money to increasingly expensive, were created with an eye on the mentor who is also teaching full-time but would serve any mentor well.

Low Cost: No Excuses for Not Doing All of These!

- Stop by her classroom daily to say hello.
- Send an email to say you are glad he is part of the school community.
- Put a note in his mailbox with words of encouragement or guidance.
- Leave a note on her desk.
- Accompany the new teacher to meetings and sit with him. Quietly note and explain at an appropriate time any lingo, jargon, or other information for which the new teacher might not have background knowledge.

- Introduce the new teacher to colleagues and support staff.
- Be a role model by always speaking professionally about administrative staff, support staff, teachers, and the community. Refrain from gossip! If you cannot say something nice, do not say it!
- Listen.
- Make extra copies of forms/lessons you use and place a copy on his desk or in his mailbox.
- Send email copies of forms/lessons you create.
- Take a walk around the block together at lunch or after school.
- Establish an open door policy that says the new teacher can observe you at any time.
- Encourage the new teacher to stay focused on well-educated students rather than on well-managed students. Explicitly communicate that the best management program is a strong instructional program. Let them know that names on the board and other forms of public humiliation have been rejected as appropriate teacher behaviors. (See page 89 in Lee and Marlene Cantor's 1992 edition of **Assertive Discipline: Positive Behavior Management for Today's Classroom**.)
- Encourage colleagues to do any and all of the above.
- Explain to colleagues the role they play in welcoming new teachers and helping them be successful and contributing members of the school community.
- Ask for five minutes of each faculty meeting to present a **Mentoring Moment** during which you or another mentor communicate what is going on in the mentoring program and/or further introduce staff members to the new teachers as individuals and/or point out the issues they are facing at this time.
- Have the new teacher complete a needs assessment to identify his primary areas of concern at this point. See pages 242-243 in *The 21st Century Mentor's Handbook*.

A Bit More Expensive: Choose at Least Five to Use during the First Weeks. (Use the data presented in the needs assessment to decide which strategies to choose.)

- Identify staff members with particular areas of expertise who would be willing to help the new teacher. See attached **Mentoring Team** (at the end of this newsletter) form you can use to communicate the names of colleagues and their areas of expertise.
- Provide new teachers with a map of the school with teacher and staff member names written in their main work area or classroom.
- Summarize the procedural expectations for this time of the year and send the list via email. Try to keep the list short and focused on the essentials. It will help you and your protégée.
- Share strategies for organizing the paper flow to and from the district, the school, the parents, and the students. If you are not particularly proud of your own organizational systems, ask an organized colleague to help out with this one.
- Explain how the pre-referral (Response to Intervention) and special education referral processes work.
- Go over policies, possibilities, and potential pitfalls of working with paraprofessionals.
- Discuss parent communication systems. Help the new teacher understand that positive and early home contact can make a great deal of difference if a problem arises later.
- Attend a school extra curricular event together, enjoy the event, and discuss why it is important to learn about the lives of students outside the classroom.

A Bit Costly but Very Important: Choose at Least Two to Use during the First Weeks(Use the data presented in the needs assessment to decide which strategies to choose.)

- Review the learning standards and the pacing guide or curriculum map with the new teacher. Even if these documents were covered during new teacher orientation, now that the novice is in the classroom, they have a much better context for what they need to know. They often do not remember that the information is at their

- fingertips either in hard copy or on the district website.
- Provide ready-to-use field-tested lessons or units based on the district's learning standards. Explain the standards-based planning process (SBE Ovals) used and select significant components to emphasize. You can use lessons you personally developed or direct the new teacher to the district website where exemplars of content/grade level specific lessons are posted.
 - Go over the teacher performance evaluation system and help the new teacher prepare for the first observation cycle by doing some form of peer observation together and discussing the teaching and learning observed using the district's teacher performance criteria. Help the new teacher view the observation and feedback process as a professional development opportunity.

It is not only new teachers who need support systems during the first weeks of school. New mentors need information and support systems as well. If you are responsible for the district/school mentoring program or are new to the mentoring process, be sure to access the archives of the *Mentoring in the 21st Century*[®] newsletter at <http://www.justaskpublications.com>. Past editions provide mentors guidance around the categories of challenges and concerns of new teachers, peer observation possibilities, the challenges of working in an inclusive classroom, and more. Mentors can also find valuable information about best practice in a standards-based environment by accessing the archives of the *Just for the ASKing!* newsletter at <http://www.justaskpublications.com>. Mentors can use the newsletters to sharpen their own understanding of current issues or as discussion starters with new teachers. Areas of focus include differentiation of instruction, framing the learning, rethinking assessment practices, providing growth-producing feedback, and setting students up for success.

Another area of great interest to the mentors with whom we have worked over the past few months is providing growth-producing feedback to new teachers. Consult **Chapter VIII: Data-Driven Discussions** in *The 21st Century Mentor's Handbook* for extensive guidance on providing feedback that makes a difference.

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The Mentoring Team

SBE Lesson and Unit Planning	Assessment	Instructional Repertoire
Active/Engaged Learning	Special Needs Students	Second Language Learners
Essential Understandings and Concept-Based Instruction	Looking at Student Work	Rigor and Relevance
Instructional Technology	Data Analysis	Differentiation
Communicating with Parents	Organizational Systems	Co-Teaching
Resistant Learners	Professional Responsibilities	Other