

Updated for 2021...Oh, What a Year!

The Just ASK October Mentoring Calendar

Using the Calendar

- "V/FF" represents the phrase "virtual or face-to-face" throughout the calendar.
- (W) represents resource is available on the Just ASK website.
- Read through the extensive list of possible mentor actions and identify actions that are appropriate for you or the mentoring team's work.

Personal

- Continue to hold brief and informal meetings (V/FF) of new teachers and mentors where a sense of community can be established, logistical issues can be addressed, and "off-the-record" questions can be answered in an informal but professional way.
- Acknowledge the fact that these are trying times while sending the messages "We are all in this together!" and "We can do this!"
- Continue to stop by new teacher's classroom daily or at the least every other day to say hello. Don't skip this during these challenging times.(V/FF)
- Check on balance of work and life. Reality sets in during October and the long hours of preparation and grading begin to take their toll.

Professional

- Introduce or review **The 21st Century Planning Process** that explains how to use the four **SBE Ovals**. See the **October 2021 Mentoring Memo (W)** for an eleven-minute video clip and a wide array of web and print based resources to support your discussions and action plans.
- Use data from earlier discussions and needs assessments to revisit challenges and concerns and the collaborative goals and commitments you made to each other on a monthly basis.
- Offer to help new teachers prepare for the first observation cycle by doing some form of peer observation together and discussing the teaching and learning using the district's teacher performance criteria. See pages 308-311 in **The 21st Century Mentor's Handbook** for possible peer observation formats.(V/FF)
- Keep new teachers apprised of professional development opportunities.
- Remind the new teachers to refrain from discussing private issues with students, parents, or colleagues in the lounge and other public places.
- Be a role model by always speaking professionally about the school district, administrative staff, support staff, and other teachers. Refrain from gossip!

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● Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

- Now that the new teachers know their students and more about their learning needs, discuss the need to focus on the essential (target) standards and to be mindful of possible alignment issues with programs and the learning standards and district curriculum.
- Continue to use the learning standards, district curriculum, and pacing guide to assist the novice teacher in chunking the year. Use **Tools for Instructional Planning** on pages 323-357 in *The 21st Century Mentor's Handbook*.
- Use district lesson plan formats or the lesson and unit design templates in **Chapter X, Tools for New Teachers** in *The 21st Century Mentor's Handbook* as discussion points for the planning process. (These tools are all available online.)
- Continue to emphasize the **21st Century Planning Process** by sharing lessons and units that use it to orchestrate instruction based on state learning standards and district curriculum.
- Have new teachers consider how their formative assessment repertoire is working. If they are engaged in distance learning, investigate the tips found in the **Distance Learning Collection** at <https://justaskpublications.com/dlc>. You can also use page 255 in *The 21st Century Mentor's Handbook* and **Chapter VI: "Making Assessment a Learning Experience"** on pages 137-168 in *Why Didn't I Learn This in College?* as resources for this discussion.
- Emphasize appropriate use of formative assessment data (to inform instructional decisions) and the power of growth-producing feedback. See **Making Assessment a Learning Experience** issues in the *Just for the ASKing!* Library. (W)
- Reiterate your "open files" policy.

Organizational Systems

- Remind new teachers about the classroom organization tips found in **Chapter IX: "Organizing the Classroom for Learning"** of *Why Didn't I Learn This in College?*
- Review record keeping systems. Examine the efficiency and effectiveness of current review and grading of student work..
- Discuss time management both at school and during prep time in the after-school hours. Ask how paper/digital document-flow management systems are working.
- As appropriate, share the strategies for organizing instructional materials found on pages 210-212 in *Why Didn't I Learn This in College?*
- Provide guidance, and if available, exemplars of substitute folders or kits for use in all settings. See pages 217-218 in *Why Didn't I Learn This in College?* guidelines. (The substitute situation may be challenging for novice and mentor alike.)

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Students

- If in a virtual setting, remind new teachers that synchronous sessions should focus on building a sense of community and on student interactions and discussions with other students and teacher rather than on lectures/mini-lectures and/or worksheet completion.
- Encourage new teachers to share stories about evidence of student learning that has been rewarding.
- Have the new teachers describe how students are becoming more comfortable with each other and with the learning process.
- Discuss concerns about students who are struggling and identify interventions that might work. Use pages 36-42, 118-129, and 187 in *Why Didn't I Learn This in College?* as resources.
- Go over learning profiles of students identified as students with special needs and assist the new teachers in scaffolding instruction for those students.
- Be sure that the new teachers are comfortable contacting building and district specialists for assistance. As appropriate, have the new teachers sit in on a meeting you hold with instructional specialists or accompany new teachers to their first meetings with building or district specialists.
- Discuss the impact of Halloween, homecoming (or lack thereof), and other special events on student learning.

Colleagues

- Remind colleagues of their role in seeking out and helping new teachers get established as positive and productive staff members. If you haven't already done so, set up a system for other teachers to indicate areas of support they would be willing to provide to new staff members. See the **My Support Team** form in the Just ASK online **Mentoring Resource Collection** at <http://justaskpublications.com/mrc>.
- Debrief department, grade level, and collaborative team meetings and memos. Answer questions about unknown terms or unclear processes. Be prepared to explain the rationale for or history behind comments and decisions.
- Invite the new teachers to join grade level or standards area groups to analyze student achievement data and to discuss how to use the information to inform instructional decisions.
- Arrange a meeting of classroom teachers and the special educators who support the learning of special needs students in the classroom. Design an agenda that helps the two get to know each other on a personal level and for each to better know how to make connections between the two programs for the learners.
- Have a conversation with the principal or other administrators to let them know the support you are providing.

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School and School System

- Verify that the new teachers' technology tools are in good working order and that the new teacher, students, or parents are not feeling overwhelmed by multiple demands, frequent changes, or interruptions in service.
- Explain systems used to announce late openings or school closings.
- Explain how teacher and student schedules operate when there are snow days or other emergency late openings or school closings..
- Discuss rationale and procedures around interims and intervention plans.
- Go over end of the grading period procedures and emphasize the importance of completing forms correctly and submitting them in a timely fashion. Explain systems that have worked for others.
- Discuss the school holiday policies with an emphasis on how Halloween is handled.
- Given that there will continue to be frequent changes throughout the 2021-2022 school year, be vigilant about noting and supportive of new teacher frustration with conflicting messaging; caution against believing and/or passing on every tidbit circulated on social media, posted on the Internet, written on protesters posters or other means throughout the school community. Remind them that both district personnel and the school board are heavily impacted by the swirling words they encounter each day. Anyone can start a newsletter, a petition, or gather together with posters and shouting voices. Let's keep our eyes on the goals of student learning and well being!

Parents and Community

- Ask about parent contacts and how they are going; encourage the new teacher to make frequent contact with families and caretakers and to include "good news" contacts as a regular part of their practice. (V/FF)
- Share newsletters, memos, video recordings, and letters you send home.
- Explain the norms and procedures for parent conferences. (V/FF)
- Provide appropriate assistance with parent conferences. Use pages 265-266 and 269-270 in *Why Didn't I Learn This in College?* as resource materials. See also **Parents as Partners 2.0** in the Just ASK **Distance Learning Collection (W)**.
- Discuss the pros and cons of having student-led conferences.
- If parent conferences are to be face-to-face, do a room tour and help teacher see the classroom through the eyes of parents. Ensure that learning standards and student work dominate.
- If a new teacher is expecting a particularly challenging conference, role play the conference and, if necessary, sit in on the conference.
- Suggest that general education teachers collaborate with special educators in