

# The Just ASK Spring 2021 Mentoring Calendar

## Personal

- Make two spring break survival kits with magazines and “beach books,” sun screen, and chocolate candy... one for the novice teacher and one for yourself.
- Listen carefully to what your protegee(s) say and what they don't say about what they are thinking and feeling. If they sound negative or “down and out,” avoid telling them they are wrong or are over-reacting; instead, ask, “Given that you feel/think that and given our current reality, what might you do about it?” Help them problem solve.
- Encourage them to reach out to family and friends at least once a day and ideally more. If they have children, suggest that they involve their children in making such connections as well.
- Suggest that they get outside at least once a day and move around inside or out (lots of folks are participating in online yoga classes), and remind them to note and enjoy the emerging bulbs and the new leaves on the trees. (Be a role model and share how you are making a good faith effort to do the same.)
- In the interest of maintaining balance in their lives, recommend that they establish virtual office hours for connecting with students and parents.

## Professional

- Review second quarter professional goals and set new goals for the third quarter. See page 263 in *The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Mentor's Handbook* for a goal setting and review strategy.
- Use new teacher self-assessments or student work to guide your meetings. See pages 242-261 for new teacher self-assessments and page 262 for a goal setting format in *The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Mentor's Handbook*.
- If your district uses portfolios, analyze portfolio artifacts and assist in identifying how they are aligned with the teacher performance evaluation criteria. Discuss what else might be included.
- As appropriate, discuss the reduction in force (RIF) process and how it might impact the novice teacher or others on the staff..
- Collaboratively review your notes and reflections for the year. Together with the new teacher, identify which best practices in teaching and learning are the most challenging. Set up observations using online resources like **The Teaching Channel**, **Edutopia**, and **YouTube**, during which both of you note the practices you have identified. You can also use the 21-page **New Teacher Needs Assessment and Goal Setting Tools** mini-resource book that includes the **How Am I Doing?** surveys found at the end of each chapter of *Why Didn't I Learn This in College?* It is available in the Just ASK online **Mentoring Resource Collection**. (See link below)

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## Students

- Remind new teachers that if they demonstrate nervousness or speak disparagingly about standardized tests, their students will pick up on those emotions and comments.
- Encourage them to communicate to students how well the students are prepared for both the content and process of the testing.
- Have them explain once again to students the purpose of these tests and how they are different from their usual classroom assessments.
- Be perfectly clear about the fact that the lives of individual students beyond the school house doors vary greatly. Measuring student learning is difficult. Concentrate on their emotional well-being, natural curiosities, knowledge of and access to interesting books and videos, and healthy and positive social interactions can help them personalize learning.
- Work with the new teacher(s) to create a list of ten “touching bases” comments, poems, “remember when stories,” song lyrics, humorous comments, etc. they could use to interact individually with each of their students on at least a weekly basis. No Internet? No problem! Virtually everyone has a phone and the sound of their teacher’s voice will no doubt lift spirits. Secondary teachers, some with over 100 students, might consider organizing a phone tree.
- Collaboratively explore how an end-of-year recognition of the strengths, talents, contributions, and interests of each student could be orchestrated. Consider how both individual recognitions as well as a sense of belonging to a group/team might be communicated.

## Colleagues

- Ask the principal, as appropriate, to give you a heads-up about any upcoming teaching assignment decisions for the new teachers so that you can be prepared to support the new teacher in dealing with any changes.
- Discuss how collaboration between general educators and special educators is working and help solve any problems that have surfaced.
- Remind your colleagues that their comments about the standardized testing process can promote novice teachers sense of self-efficacy or make them nervous about their capacity to manage this process.
- Whenever possible, set up virtual collaborative team meetings to plan as well as to share what is working and what is not going so well. Meeting planners need to be mindful that some of their colleagues may not have the broadband needed to participate online. Phones could facilitate auditory participation.
- Provide new teachers with the **My Support Team** form available online in the

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Just ASK **Mentoring Resource Collection**. It is a Word document so they can adapt it to meet their needs. Have them record the names of colleagues along with contact information, print resources, websites, and/or blogs that could best guide and support them. This is especially important now because there is limited opportunity to connect face-to-face.

- Remind new teachers that not everything on the Internet was created equal. Anyone can write a blog or put up a website. Many of the so-called “free” resources are not much more than advertisements for a program or product. Likewise, advise them that some lesson plans and strategies posted by digital colleagues are not vetted and may, in fact, not be best practice at all.
- If possible, work collaboratively with other mentors to create and distribute a vetted list of trusted sites and blogs. The Just ASK team is working to create such a list. (Consider such sources as **Edutopia**, **Khan Academy**, **The Teaching Channel**, **Colorin Colorado**, and sites of regional labs and national organizations like **ILA**, **NEA**, **NCTM**, **NCTE**, **TEOSL**, **NSTA**, **NCSS**, **ACTFL**, etc.)

## School, School System, State, and Federal Guidelines

- Just before standardized testing events, review the policies and procedures for administering the assessments. Even experienced teachers can feel overwhelmed by the number of memos and the acronyms used in those memos.
- Stay on top of evolving directives (via websites, emails, press releases, and tweets) from the school, district, state, and federal government about end-of-year schedule adjustments and procedures. Encourage new teachers to remain calm in the face of uncertainty and anticipated rapid changes.
- Issues mentors need to monitor include standardized testing adjustments, grading, graduation, promotions, registration, payroll, and contracts for the upcoming school year. All teachers, new and veteran, need to be as well informed as possible and be able to direct parents to verified sources for information.

## Parents and Community

- Review the procedures and processes for parent conferences. Discuss what worked in past conferences and what needs to be done differently this time. Use pages 265-266 and page 270 in *Why Didn't I Learn This in College?*
- Advise the new teachers to keep parents informed of the learning that is occurring in the classroom. Use pages 215, 262-264 in *Why Didn't I Learn This in College?*
- Remind them to keep parents informed of changes in student work or behavior.

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- Recommend that they make as many or more positive parent contacts as they do negative contacts.
- Remind new teachers that parents are not trained or licensed as teachers. While some may be quite supportive with compliance issues, that does not necessarily lead to learning.
- Remind them also that many parents may be trying to work (do their paying jobs) from home and need access to what may be the one computer in the house. If there are more students and workers than there are computers, the issue is quite complicated. If there is no Internet access, a serious equity issue is a factor.
- Explain that many parents believe that teachers are knowledgeable about decisions and directives about which they know little. Advise the new teachers to be specific when directing families to other sources when they are asked questions for which they do not have answers. (To do so, they will need a list of sources from their mentors.)
- Discuss strategies for dealing with parents who are upset. Use pages 269-270 in *Why Didn't I Learn This In College?* as a resource.

## Especially for Special Educators

- Provide guidance on how to plan for transition of students between buildings and programs for the upcoming school year.
- Debrief with them their roles in the administration of standardized tests and help them think through what they would do differently next year.
- Assist them with establishing secondary transition goals and post-secondary goals as well as identifying needed adult services.
- While acknowledging that many difficulties exist in supporting students with special needs while schools are closed, encourage new special educators to identify what they can do that will make the most difference in the lives and learning of their students while aligning as closely as possible with regulations.
- Help new educators implement and explain to parents how federal and state requirements are/will be implemented in our current reality.
- Explain summer learning options for students and help the new special educators prepare recommendations to students and/or parents about student participation in those programs.
- As possible, review records to help them identify any missing paperwork.
- Provide guidance for setting up communications between this year's special education teachers and next year's special education teachers.