

Best Practice: How to mentor a new teacher in his or her job

Mentoring involves a professional relationship between a highly competent and experienced teacher or school leader, who acts as mentor and one or more new teachers, the mentees. The mentee learns from the mentor and applies this learning to achieve a high-quality standard of performance. If there is more than one new teacher at the school, there are advantages of mentoring them as a group.

Mentoring by an experienced teacher or school leader should involve:

- Providing a role model of best practice
- Providing advice on how to deal with challenges and shortcomings
- Helping new teachers to develop confidence in themselves as teachers and build their knowledge, skills and attitudes
- Helping the mentee develop best-practice teaching practices and work to the professional standards for teachers
- Assisting the new teachers in developing personal targets and developing a career plan
- Providing helpful contacts and networks
- Helping the mentee become adept in self-management, building relationships with colleagues, stress management, and related areas
- Helping the mentee become an effective self-directed learner
- Help promote equal opportunities by mentoring disadvantaged groups.

Adapted from Beevers and Rea (2010/2013), p.212-213

As a result of the mentoring process, mentee teachers(s) are expected to:

- Develop their professional knowledge, skills and attitudes as teachers
- Develop self-confidence and aspiration
- Develop the ability to reflect, analyse and find solutions
- Increase their motivation for teaching
- Develop career plans and pursue a career in teaching
- Understand their colleagues and superiors better
- Understand the wider context of their work
- Form good relationships and build professional networks in the teaching world
- Increase job satisfaction

- Develop positive and constructive attitudes
- Develop strategies to reduce stress.

Adapted from Beevers and Rea (2010/2013), p.217

Mentoring skills include the ability to plan a learning and development process and setting realistic and relevant targets, communicate clearly, explain complex matters in a simple way, actively listen to the mentee and focus on their needs, effective questioning, give constructive feed-back, team building (with teachers and leaders at the school), facilitate problem solving, and address personal problems and shortcomings with empathy. These skills are synonymous with some of the skills expected of an accomplished teacher.

The mentor is a facilitator. Ideas, reflection, brainstorming, improvement, changes, plans etc. should come from the mentee teacher(s) who are expected to take a very active role in the mentoring process.

In most cases, the mentoring process involves 4 stages:

Introductory stage

- An initial meeting between the mentor and the mentee.
- Agreeing on the purpose of mentoring and formulating realistic targets.
- Deciding realistically on how much time to allocate, how frequently to meet, etc.
- Developing the mentoring programme and incorporating it in the calendar.
- Agreeing how to work together.

Active mentoring stage

- The active mentoring stage covers the areas mentioned above under results of the mentoring process and any other issues which may have been identified as important.
- The duration of active mentoring may be half a year or more.
- The mentee teacher(s) will meet regularly, usually a couple of hours every week during the agreed mentoring period.

Concluding Phase

- Deciding on any follow up action and areas for improvement and learning
- Formulation of key result areas relating to the teacher's work.

Follow up Phase

- A meeting to evaluate the results and benefits of the mentoring
- Discussion of issues covered during mentoring and how things have developed
- Preparation of a plan for effective following up of mentoring. This is important to ensure that the results of mentoring are not forgotten.

It is important that time is allocated for the mentee teacher(s) to ask questions and for the mentor to give constructive feed-back. Staying objective, complying with guidelines and ethics, honouring confidentiality, regularly evaluating the process and keeping records are essential, both for the mentor and for the mentee. The mentee will be expected to take on responsibilities and an active role in the mentoring process.

Adapted from Beevers and Rea (2010/2013), p.225-226

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