
Preface

Whenever people get really good at something, chances are that other people will see value in their expertise and try to model or emulate what they do. Think of apprentices with journeyman tradespeople, artists with mentors, physician interns with residents in teaching hospitals, postdoctoral fellows with senior scientific researchers; all are relationships designed to facilitate some exchange of information between the veteran professional and those promising newcomers just entering the field. Some of those relationships are informal. Others are arranged and precise, following a specific protocol for how the relationship is expected to work. Education is one of those fields that values and facilitates mentoring relationships. The expert-novice mentoring relationship has been around throughout human history.

In education, there are many examples of mentoring relationships. So why has so much attention been given to models of expert-novice relationships in education lately? First, the attrition rate among new teachers is high. And second, the job of teaching seems to be getting harder for a variety of reasons, and we in the institution of education have not done a very good job helping people make the transition from novice teacher to veteran teacher.

As mentors supervising new teachers, we want to be proactive rather than reactive. We want a vocabulary to describe and talk about what we both are experiencing. We don't want to miss common pitfalls or fail to "read" teaching/mentoring opportunities or challenging situations ahead of time. We don't want to miss large categories of induction topics we could or should cover. We want to achieve an "emotional literacy" to express empathy for those struggling with new educational scenarios. We want to be able to create and craft a highly effective educational environment to maximize the professional growth potential within the journey from novice to seasoned educator. Experience alone can be a slow teacher. With mentoring, we can do a better job than just providing new teachers with a place in which to work and gain experience.

So where do we as teacher mentors go to find out what works, what doesn't, and what works in one specific school setting (like yours) but not another? Unlike many other professions, the primary literature of

educational research, experimentation, and investigation is usually a world away from the day-to-day grind of the classroom teacher. Rarely does that type of information filter into a teacher's professional life or development.

Yet that kind of information does exist. There is research on how teachers learn to teach, how new teachers are inducted into the profession, and how they are supervised, assessed, and evaluated. A simple keyword search of the literature can bring up a wealth of primary research sources and other information about new teacher induction, socialization, and induction relationships. Yes, there are others out there concerned about the quality of the induction experience for those new to mentoring and supervising beginning teachers. There is information supported by real data out there that can help define what works and what doesn't during this key period in a teacher's professional development. This information can make us all better at what we do.

Experience is a great teacher, but there are faster, more humane, and more efficient means of teaching and learning, which, when coupled with experience, become empowering, effective, rewarding, and beneficial. The purpose of this book is to give a voice to the research and the researchers who ask the important questions about new teachers, teacher support, and teacher induction and then find some of the answers. Filtered through our own experiences in schools, we hope to make the valuable products of research and inquiry available to all those involved in that crucial and important induction period. We have followed the trail of many investigations to address and cover as many of the important elements and principles of new teacher supervision and induction as possible. New teachers don't have to wait for experience to teach them; they can learn from the experiences of others, use what works, and avoid what doesn't. Then they can combine it all with what they already know and apply it in the classroom and school building.

This book is not meant to be read sequentially as one would read a novel. Rather, our objective is to focus on useful and practical educational research that translates into a range of choices and solutions to individual teaching and learning problems typically faced by new teachers and their mentors. Within our 10 chapters we present a large range of instructional strategies and suggestions based on educational, psychological, and sociological studies. The strategies are based on research done with preservice, student, or new teachers and with those supervising them. Strategies within the chapters are structured in a user-friendly format:

- **Strategy:** A simple, concise, or crisp statement of a mentoring or professional development strategy.
- **What the Research Says:** A brief discussion of the research that led to the strategy. This section should simply give the teacher mentor some confidence in, and a deeper understanding of, the principle(s) being discussed as a professional development strategy.

- **Application:** A description of how this strategy can be used in professional development and instructional settings.
- **Precautions and Possible Pitfalls:** Caveats intended to make possible reasonably flawless implementation of the strategy. We try to help teacher mentors avoid common difficulties before they occur.
- **Sources:** These are provided so that the reader may refer to the original research to discover in more detail the main points of the strategies, research, classroom, and professional development applications.

It is our hope that if those new to teacher mentoring and supervision accept some of these strategies, maybe they can avoid the “baptism by fire” or “sink or swim” mentality that many of us experienced when we first started working with new teachers. Veteran mentors can also benefit from knowledge gained from the most recent research. Given the critical need for new teachers now and in the future, as a profession we cannot afford to have potentially good teachers leave the classroom because they don’t feel supported, they feel too overwhelmed, or they suffer from early burnout or disillusionment.

If you are a new mentor reading this book for the first time, there may be strategies that presumably don’t apply. As in many new endeavors, a beginning mentor “may not know what you don’t know.” We ask that you come back and revisit this book from time to time throughout the year. What may not be applicable the first time you read the book may be of help at a later date. Veteran mentors can refresh their teaching and supervisory toolboxes by scanning the range of strategies presented in the book and selecting those applicable to their own mentoring environments.

Teaching, and education in general, have never been more exciting or more challenging than they are today. Expectations for teachers, students, and schools continue to rise. The more resources mentors have at their fingertips to assist new teachers along their educational journey, the better the outcome for all of us. We hope all mentors will find this book useful and practical in defining and enhancing their mentoring skills.