



## Core Mentoring Practices

Research has shown that the practices in which effective mentors engage are varied and complex, and they are adaptable to the novice's learning needs. The following ideas are drawn from Sharon Feiman-Nemser's article (Feiman-Nemser, S. [2001]. Helping novices learn to teach: Lessons from an exemplary support teacher. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 52, 17-30). They serve as a set of core mentoring practices from which to draw. As in any teaching and learning relationship, these practices are based on the assumption that both mentor (Mentor Teacher) and novice (teacher candidate) are active participants, and the use of these practices will be adapted to the local situation and the teacher candidate's learning needs.

Experienced mentors know that it takes time and effort to develop mentoring practices, and that talking with fellow mentors about those practices is an important source for their own professional growth. As with all teaching situations, mentors need to be open to asking questions, stating uncertainties, and learning in and from their practice.

Core Mentoring Practices	The Mentor Teacher's Responsibility	The Teacher Candidate's Responsibility
Finding openings for conversation	The Mentor Teacher finds topics to talk about that are important to the novice and that are fruitful to talk about because they bring up basic issues that teachers need to think about carefully and thoroughly.	The novice notices these invitations to conversation; assumes that the mentor might be trying to raise questions, issues and options that the teacher candidate has not thought about; and makes note of key issues raised.
Framing problems	The Mentor Teacher helps the novice to decide what to treat as relevant in a situation. This helps the novice to make situations manageable by setting some boundaries on what is paid attention; it also helps the novice to see that teachers have choices in the way they define "problems", and therefore have choices about how to find potential "solutions".	The teacher candidate keeps in mind that the MT's framing of the situation can be both different from theirs and useful to him/her. The teacher candidate pay attention to the MT's reasoning behind the framing of the problem, and discusses alternative frames with the MT.
Probing novices' thinking	The Mentor Teacher finds out how the novice is thinking about a situation by asking him/her to elaborate on an initial statement or explanation, and may also extend the novice's thinking by asking the intern to think about an area that was not initially considered.	The novice responds by trying to be frank and clear about her or his thinking; by reporting incomplete, tentative, and potentially invalid rationales without worrying about being "right" or "wrong"; and by listening for the hints that sometimes come in questions.
Noticing signs of growth	The Mentor Teacher acknowledges and compliments the novice on specific aspects of her/his teaching, explicitly talking about what the novice did and can do.	The novice listens carefully for the content of the compliment. The mentor may be talking about a different aspect of the performance than the novice thought was important.





Focusing on the kids	The Mentor Teacher helps the novice to focus attention on students' thinking and sense making in addition to more formal assessments, and to use information about students' thinking as a source of feedback on teaching, a way to keep track of children's learning, and a source of ideas for curriculum development.	The novice accepts that s/he must learn to put an interest in students' learning before a concern for her or his own performance in the classroom, or his or her own interests, and tries to reason from the former to the latter. The novice uses information about children to inform ongoing instruction.
Reinforcing an understanding of theory	The Mentor Teacher connects specific examples of children's sense-making to research and theory, so as to help novices develop broad perspectives for looking at and thinking about their work.	The teacher candidate recognized the mentor's cue to connect a given case with relevant research and theory, and starts to think actively about potential connections with research and theory that the teacher candidate has studied.
Giving living examples of one person's way of teaching	The Mentor Teacher models a set of teaching practices, thinking aloud so the novice can both observe the mentor's actions and understand how the mentor thinks about those actions in situations. This set of practices is viewed and discussed as one of many possibilities for developing a practice that is consistent with the program standards.	The novice listens carefully to the mentor think-aloud, in order to see and hear the part or aspect of practice that the mentor is trying to show. The novice also may need to discipline of listening and observing as distinct from judging. The novice takes responsibility for deciding when and how to try to emulate the MT's particular set of teaching practices.
Modeling wondering about teaching	The Mentor Teacher models a set of teaching practices, thinking aloud so the novice can both observe the mentor's actions and understand how the mentor thinks about those actions in situations. This set of practices is viewed and discussed as one of many possibilities for developing a practice that is consistent with the program standards.	The teacher candidate recognizes that the mentor is trying to reveal the invisible mental work behind the visible work of teaching in a classroom, and seizes the opportunity to discover how someone else thinks about events in the classroom. The novice exerts curiosity.
Goal setting	The Mentor Teacher takes an active role in helping the novice to articulate goals for growth and to assess progress in working toward those goals; the mentor offers and suggests potential areas of growth to the novice.	The teacher candidate agrees that it is important to hold goals for one's own growth, tries to set them, and involves the mentor in helping to assess growth toward the goal.
Problem solving	The Mentor Teacher joins the novice in framing problems of teaching practice, identifying a range of potential solutions, and discussing whether problems are resolved.	The teacher candidate recognizes that situations in the classroom can be framed differently, and explores others' framing and suggested solutions in relation to his or her own.
Co-planning and co-teaching	The Mentor Teacher joins the novice in unit and lesson planning, and in carrying out those plans in the classroom, aims to help the novice to understand the knowledge and thinking that informs the planning, to guide the novice in using effective strategies throughout the planning and teaching process.	The teacher candidate is alert to recognize both what can be said about teaching and what can be shown by action in the classroom. The intern takes initiative to be an active participant in the co-planning and co-teaching processes, according to his/her readiness and the agreements made with the MT.

