Introduction

Have you ever had a mentor? Someone—perhaps a college professor, family member, coworker, or friend—who inspired you, helped keep you going, and showed you the ropes? In the field of education, mentors are usually veteran teachers who support colleagues new to the profession, encourage them, and help them become better teachers.

Raymond is a veteran teacher. He was selected to become a mentor for a new colleague in his school. Raymond was excited about his new role. He was also nervous because he wanted to do a good job. Raymond decided to spend a few minutes thinking about others who had helped him when he began his teaching career. He made a list of their behaviors that helped him to become a better teacher and person.

I asked Raymond to share his list with me. I was curious what the people he considered to have been his mentors did that supported, encouraged, and helped him become the fine educator he is. Raymond's list is on the next page. But wait . . . before you turn the page, take a few minutes to think about those who mentored you. What are your recollections?

What are some things a person you consider to have been your mentor did that supported, encouraged, and helped you to grow professionally? Perhaps one thing that person did was celebrate your achievements in some way. Construct your own list. Write six of your mentor's positive behaviors in the space below.

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Here is what Raymond remembers about his mentors:

They made themselves available.

They listened to what he had to say.

They were encouraging and optimistic.

They seemed to know what he needed and when he needed it.

They invited him to watch them teach, then discussed with him what they did and why they did it.

They were willing to share their expertise.

They helped him set realistic goals and timelines.

They made practical suggestions.

They directed him to other people or resources when they did not have answers.

They provided him with constructive and timely feedback on his planning and teaching.

They encouraged him to take risks and to make his own decisions.

They made him think about what he was doing in such a way that it helped him consider whether there were better ways.

They helped him feel that he was not on his own. They believed in his ability to succeed.

In addition to Raymond's list, here are some attributes of good mentoring that a colleague from the private sector shared with me:

A mentor looks for signs of specialness that he can somehow work with and develop.

A mentor manages to "think out loud" in the mentee's presence.

A mentor gives honest advice when needed. A mentor does not let his [mentee] get beat up or spit out.

A mentor lets her mentee "shine." She knows the credit will reflect back on her as much as it does on the mentee.

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And from an elementary school principal, these observations:

> *The mechanics of teaching can be taught, but the love for children cannot. Mentors who are able to communicate their caring for children are better mentors. . . . Because teaching is a new experience every time you walk into a classroom, good teachers build a repertoire of strategies and tools that they can use when they need them. Good mentors share their tools with their mentees and help them build their own repertoire.*

Your list, Raymond's, and the others include a wide variety of mentoring behaviors. Successful mentors not only have an extensive repertoire of such behaviors but also use them appropriately when they interact with their mentees, when they attempt to figure out what their mentees need, when they guide their mentees' professional growth, and when they encourage their mentees to make informed decisions on their own. The protégés of successful mentors feel empowered and eventually become willing and able to identify and address their own professional problems and needs. And lo and behold, many successful mentors have discovered that when they employed behaviors that enabled their protégés to grow, their own competencies also strengthened!

Support for Mentoring

Between 1998 and 2004 there was close to a 25 percent increase (from 21 to 33 percent) in the number of states that mandate beginning teacher support as part of their teacher induction programs (Hall, 2005), and the number continues to grow. Although the number of states *financing* support for new teachers has not grown much over the years, there are signs that this is changing. Alabama, for example, has allocated $3.9 million in state funds to allow every first-year teacher to have a mentor during the 2007–08 school year (Act 2007-361 of the state's 2008 education appropriation bill). The Alabama mentors will be experienced teachers who will each be paid a $1,000 stipend to be a mentor to a young educator.

Both the National Education Association (NEA) and American Federation of Teachers (AFT), the nation's largest teacher unions, jointly support the establishment of programs under which all beginning teachers would be assigned a mentor. In response to state mandates and teacher union encouragement, increasing numbers of

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school districts have arranged for experienced teachers to help their new colleagues persist and develop beyond their difficult first year.

Idealistic considerations, state mandates, state funding, and NEA/AFT encouragement aside, much of the recent support for mentoring new teachers can be attributed primarily to two practical realities: the high rate of attrition among new teachers and the high cost of replacing them. *The New York Times* (Dillon, 2007) reports that, according to the Department of Education, "about 269,000 of the nation's 3.2 million public school teachers, or 8.4 percent, quit the field in the 2003–04 school year. Thirty percent of them retired, and 56 percent said they left to pursue another career or because they were dissatisfied" (p. 2). The large number of teachers across the country who give up on the profession every year costs the public schools an estimated $7.3 billion annually (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2007). A case in point: The Clark County Nevada School System needed nearly 1,200 teachers to fill vacancies for the 2007–08 school year. And in San Francisco, the district spends an estimated $12 million to recruit, hire, and train new teachers each year to replace those who've left.

The staggering financial burden high turnover places on a district can be devastating. It diverts resources that otherwise could be devoted to books, tutors, and other instructional resources (Portner, 2005a). There are other costs, too. Constantly replacing teachers destabilizes the instructional process and places disruptive and demoralizing burdens on the system that it can ill afford. The bottom line is that it takes effective teachers to leave no child behind. And "for the students who are perpetually left behind—the ones with IEPs and the ones from under-resourced communities—they need effective teachers to stay the most" (Shyu, 2007, p. 11).

The large number of new teachers entering the profession each year will need the kind of support that *effective* mentors are prepared to provide. What is an "effective mentor" and how does a mentor become effective?

Effective Mentors Are Made, Not Born

In February 1997, the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics published its report, *Teacher Professionalization and Teacher Commitment: A Multilevel Analysis.* Among the findings of the study described in this report was that "having a mentor program to assist beginning teachers is less important for improving

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teacher performance and commitment than the quality of that assistance" (National Center for Education Statistics, 1997, p. viii).

So how can a school district see to it that its mentoring program is of high quality? Part of the answer is to give veteran classroom teachers the opportunity to be mentors. Experienced teachers generally take on the challenge and responsibility of mentoring with high hopes and good intentions. Classroom expertise, hope, and good intentions, however, will not by themselves guarantee effective and accomplished performance as a mentor. A dedicated, experienced teacher becomes and grows as an effective and accomplished mentor by design and training, not by chance.

Many educational leaders recognize the fallacy of assuming that veteran teachers, by virtue of years of successful experience in the classroom, automatically make good mentors for adults. Consequently, an increasing number of educational organizations at local, regional, and state levels are providing professional development opportunities for mentors. These efforts typically include distributing relevant reading materials to mentors, organizing mentoring conferences and seminars, and providing comprehensive mentoring workshops. Both the reading materials and the seminars generally aim to impart a body of knowledge germane to working with adult colleagues. This knowledge base includes such concepts as Stage Theory and Adult Development. Comprehensive workshops usually address the special knowledge of mentoring and also provide opportunities for participants to learn and develop coaching, conferencing, and classroom observation skills. Ongoing mentor training and mentor support teams arranged for by a designated mentor coordinator are especially critical to the continuous development and effectiveness of mentors and mentoring.

There is an additional aspect to mentoring that perhaps does not receive enough emphasis. This subtle and sometimes overlooked facet of mentoring has to do with understanding the purpose and function of the mentor's role in relation to that of supervisor, curriculum coordinator, and department head.

Mentoring Is Not Evaluating

Consider this scenario. In your district, subject coordinators are expected to serve as mentors as well as supervisors to new teachers in their departments. You are a new teacher. Aña, your mentor-supervisor, calls you into her office and gives you a list of books to use for your

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classes. You are disappointed with the list because, in your opinion, it does not offer the students a wide enough range of views. You and Aña have developed a good professional relationship in the short time you have been working together, and for the most part, you have found her advice and suggestions to be helpful. You would like to discuss your viewpoint about the book list, but a little twinge in the pit of your stomach reminds you that Aña soon will be filing an evaluation report on you with the principal, and you don't want to "rock the boat." You tuck the list into your pocket and walk away, trying to decide whether to accept the list and follow it closely or to substitute books of your own choosing on the sly.

A critical difference between the role of supervisor (e.g., department head, curriculum coordinator, or principal) and the role of mentor is that a mentor cannot be an evaluator. Trust and confidentiality are vital components of mentoring. No one—especially someone in a new environment trying to prove himself or herself—wants to expose insecurities and inexperience to a coworker and thus leave oneself vulnerable to possible ridicule and censure. Yet it may be necessary for a mentee to risk these behaviors in order to help the mentor understand the crux of a situation. This degree of openness may be difficult to achieve if it is the mentor's responsibility to evaluate the mentee or to recommend certification.

Here are some other distinctions between the role of mentor and evaluator.

- Mentoring is collegial; evaluating is hierarchical.
- Mentoring observations are ongoing; evaluating visits are set by policy.
- Mentoring develops self-reliance; evaluating judges performance.
- Mentoring keeps data confidential; evaluating files it and makes it available.
- Mentoring uses data to reflect; evaluating uses it to judge.
- In mentoring, value judgments are made by the teacher; in evaluation, they are made by the supervisor.

There are, of course, some commonalities between the roles of mentor and supervisor. For example, the mentor shares with his or her supervising colleagues the goal of improving the quality of the novice's teaching, often attempting to achieve that goal by helping the beginner to develop lesson plans, to select curriculum materials,

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and to construct assessment tools. But an effective mentor understands that although it is the ultimate goal, improving classroom performance is not enough; mentoring should also stimulate the mentee's own critical and creative thinking about how to teach and how children learn. It is the evaluation aspect of supervision that is contrary to this basic aspect of mentoring.

Some districts have instituted a program called Peer Assistance Review (PAR) that seeks to link mentoring to evaluation by adding one significant element to mentoring; mentors conduct formal evaluations and make recommendations regarding the continued employment of participating teachers. From my personal point of view, a PAR program is not mentoring, nor should it be considered mentoring—it is supervision and evaluation. In all fairness, proponents of PAR use the term *peer assistance* rather than *mentoring*, although the assisting teachers are encouraged to use mentoring behaviors.

Toledo instituted a PAR program in 1981. Several other cities, including Boston, Cincinnati, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, New York, and Rochester, have joined Toledo in instituting PAR, but as of this writing, no state has mandated it. Most of these districts provide the PAR program not only to new teachers, but also to veteran teachers who are experiencing difficulties in the classroom.

Mentoring's Role in Induction

Mentoring, which commonly functions as a one-on-one relationship with a series of interactions between a new teacher and a veteran, is actually part of a larger system called *induction.* Induction includes "training for the mentor, a variety of support programs for new teachers (and their mentors) that complement and extend the mentor relationship, administrative support for the mentor program, and a district or school comprehensive plan that formulates and quantifies the expectations for the induction program" (Saphier, Freedman, & Aschheim, 2007, p. 17). A comprehensive induction program is vital to the successful retention and development of new teachers. By its very nature, induction requires the involvement of a variety of people in a variety of roles.

This book, *Mentoring New Teachers,* is not about induction, per se. Rather, it concentrates exclusively and extensively on the specific functions and responsibilities of the most complex and intricate role in the induction process: mentoring.

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There are several excellent publications for those wishing to delve into the intricacies of induction, including the following:

New Teacher Induction: How to Train, Support, and Retain New Teachers (Breaux & Wong, 2003)

Supporting Beginning Teachers: How Administrators, Teachers, and Policymakers Can Help New Teachers Succeed (Brewster & Railsback, 2001)

Training Mentors Is Not Enough: Everything Else Schools and Districts Need To Do (Portner, 2001)

Beyond Mentoring: Comprehensive Induction Programs: How to Attract, Support, and Retain New Teachers (2nd ed., Saphier, Freedman, & Aschheim, 2007)

Leading the Teacher Induction and Mentoring Program (2nd ed., Sweeny, 2007)

Descriptions of these and other publications having to do with teacher induction can be found in Resource E: Annotated Bibliography.

The Mentor's Primary Role

It is simplistic to think of a mentor as a guru, a master teacher, at whose feet one sits and to whom one poses occasional questions, hoping to absorb the mysteries of the art. The role of mentor as "expert-who-has-the-answers" has its place and value, but a new teacher needs to develop the capacity and confidence to make his or her own informed decisions, enrich his or her own knowledge, and sharpen his or her own abilities regarding teaching and learning. Purposefully bringing a mentee to this level of professionalism is the mentor's primary role.

A mentor functions best in this role by relating, assessing, coaching, and guiding. These four functions draw upon the eclectic body of knowledge that informs the mentoring process and are carried out through a variety of skills and behaviors.

What Mentors Do: The Four Mentoring Functions

Relating

Mentors build and maintain relationships with their mentees based on mutual trust, respect, and professionalism. Relating behaviors create an environment that allows mentors to develop a genuine

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understanding of their mentees' ideas and needs and encourages mentees to honestly share and reflect upon their experiences.

Assessing

Mentors gather and diagnose data about their mentees' ways of teaching and learning; they determine their mentees' competency and confidence to handle a given situation; they identify unique aspects of the school and community; and they take note of the school district's formal and informal culture, procedures, and practices. Assessing behaviors ensure that the mentees' professional needs and learning styles are identified so that mentoring decisions can be based on a thoughtful consideration of a variety of data.

Coaching

Mentors help their mentees fine-tune their professional skills, enhance their grasp of subject matter, locate and acquire resources, and expand their repertoire of teaching modalities. Coaching behaviors allow mentors to serve as role models to their mentees; to share relevant experiences, examples, and strategies; and especially to open new avenues by which mentees can, through reflection and practice, take responsibility for improving their own teaching. Mentors wean their mentees away from dependence by coaching them through the process of reflecting on decisions and actions for themselves and encouraging them to construct their own informed teaching and learning approaches. Teaching involves constant decision making. The mentor places the responsibility for decision making with the mentee. Decisions about teaching are driven by reflection. The coaching skill of the mentor is to ask the right questions the right way, and at the right time—questions that encourage the mentee to reflect on his or her decisions.

Guiding

Guiding behaviors acknowledge and act on the mentee's degrees of ability and willingness to perform. Guiding behaviors stimulate the mentees' creative and critical thinking, empower them to envision future situations, encourage them to take informed risks, and help them build the capacity to develop perceptive decisions and take appropriate actions.

These mentoring functions do not occur in isolation. They consistently overlap and complement each other during the mentoring process.

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Teacher Mentor Standards

In the spring and summer of 2002, Jean Casey and Ann Claunch, coordinators of the resident teacher program at the University of New Mexico, and I held a series of discussions around the impact of mentoring on teaching and learning. The inquiry was grounded by the conviction that effective mentoring improves the decision making abilities and behaviors of the mentee, which in turn results in enhanced performance and achievement by the mentee's students. Our discussions and research centered on identifying the attributes of a mentor that contribute to effective mentoring. We agreed that these attributes include not only the observable behaviors of a mentor, but also behaviors that are generally unobservable, such as a mentor's decision-making process.

Our inquiry culminated in the formulation of a set of Teacher Mentor Standards based on the core propositions developed by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (1989). It was our belief that these standards would establish a foundation for mentoring new teachers that (1) extends mentoring beyond emotional support, encouragement, and help with routines; (2) provides guidance for best practice in teacher-mentoring programs; and (3) challenges mentors to continue to develop their own mentoring abilities.

In order to confirm that the Standards were built on a *real-world* foundation, we set aside a period for peer review. The process began with a thorough analysis and editing by Barry Sweeny, director emeritus of the International Mentoring Association. The Standards were then reviewed and validated by a number of other researchers, consultants, and practitioners including professors of education in Florida and Utah, assistant district superintendents of schools in Illinois and Connecticut, a cochair of a statewide teacher induction committee, coordinators of student teacher field experiences in Oklahoma and Wisconsin, a staff development coordinator in a South Dakota school district, a nationally acclaimed mentor trainer and consultant, and a school mentoring team leader in Massachusetts. The resultant Teacher Mentor Standards can be found in Resource A.

Standards, functions, and behaviors notwithstanding, ultimately a successful mentor must possess an additional attribute—one that is fundamental to mentoring's primary purpose. When all is said and done, a mentor, upon reflecting on his or her mentoring experience, must see himself or herself as having been not only a master teacher who may have had some answers, but also one who acted on the belief that learning takes place best between and among colleagues exploring together. This book is written in that spirit.