BEVERLY HILLS GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL

TEACHER MENTORS

Supporting Teacher Professional Growth

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> **Mentoring …**
> is a sustained, dynamic relationship that allows effective practitioners to share their professional expertise and experiences. This reflection with colleagues benefits both parties. The aim of mentoring is to accelerate the learning process for colleagues while not depriving them of their independence or responsibility. It is especially relevant in periods of career transition.
> *Professional Learning and Leadership Directorate DEC*

A.   Personal Experiences in Mentoring
Think of a time when you have been mentored by someone else.

1. Briefly describe the mentoring relationship.

2. What sort of qualities or attributes did the mentor possess that made this relationship effective?

3. How did you and/or your teaching practices change as a result of this mentoring relationship?

4. Have there been times when mentoring has been ineffective for you? Why?

5. Discuss your responses with your colleagues. What did your experiences have in common?

B.   What do mentors do?

> "The challenge for supervisors (mentors) is to understand what quality practice looks like and to communicate to all staff so that the gap between exemplary and average practice is narrowed across the organisation."
>
> Gilbert, T. F. (1996) *Human Competence: Engineering Worthy Performance.*

Mentors are effective and experienced colleagues who support the professional learning of a person being mentored (a mentee). The mentor is often seen as the expert while the mentee is the novice in the relationship. The mentor provides support, advice and professional feedback.

Indicate which of the following have occurred as part of a mentoring relationship in which you have been involved.	
▪ Received effective feedback on classroom practice	
▪ Been provided with quality teaching resources	
▪ Provided support to identify learning goals	
▪ Been observed in the classroom	
▪ Observed a demonstration lesson	
▪ Provided with work specific information and guidance as appropriate	
▪ Given information on how the school/organisation functions	
▪ Asked powerful questions	
▪ Explored a range of teaching strategies	
▪ Co-planned a teaching unit/assessment task	
▪ Assisted with personal reflection and growth	
▪ Provided access to a range of networks and professional learning opportunities	
▪ Engaged in team teaching to support your classroom practice	
▪ Supported career development	
▪ Built an environment of trust, openness and respect	
▪ Helped build self-confidence	
▪ Been inspired and motivated to be the best you can be	

Reflection …

After considering some of the things that mentors do, what do you think are the benefits of mentoring to both the mentee and the mentor?

C.   Skills of the Teacher Mentor

Mentoring is not for everyone and should never be imposed. It is a voluntary relationship that is built on trust and respect. The mentor needs to be an experienced practitioner who is willing and keen to share their skills and knowledge and be able to relate theory to practice. They need to be a good listener who understands the principles of mentoring. The mentee must be keen to develop new skills and refine existing ones. They need to be able to accept constructive feedback and be open and honest. They might be entering a new phase in their career or in their learning.

There are many important skills for mentors.
- Work through agreed processes to develop trust and confidence
- Accurately read complex situations and emotions
- Listen attentively
- Give constructive feedback
- Communicate effective verbal and non-verbal language
- Use powerful questioning to build understanding and to help people form their own ideas
- Help mentees see a situation in a new way or from another person's perspective
- Focus on learning by evaluating, clarifying and reflecting
- Are skilled in communicating in person, by phone, online or in a variety of other forms.

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1.   Protocols

When engaging in professional conversations it is important to implement general protocols that create an environment of respect and openness. Some examples include:
- All ideas are valid and deserve respect
- Listen deeply and build on what others say
- Keep your contributions focused and concise
- Don't step on other people's talk
- Keep your conversations confidential

When mentoring in a group:
- Promote participation, inclusion and collaboration
- Encourage everyone to listen
- Encourage everyone to contribute and actively stop splinter groups from forming
- Read the body language
- Resist the temptation to get side tracked and talk with just one person
- Behave in a way that is open, honest and respectful
- Use group strategies to create a structured conversation such as ' final word'

Reflection …
Consider other examples that would facilitate effective professional dialogue.

2. Effective feedback

Effective feedback is a powerful tool for professional growth. John Hattie's research on teacher effectiveness (2009) identifies constructive feedback as having the greatest impact on improving a teacher's effectiveness.

Feedback is effective when …
- ❖ It is descriptive and provides facts not opinions or judgments
- ❖ Is objective and promotes learning and is based on accepted standards
- ❖ Acknowledges the positives and makes people feel that their work is valued and helps people build on their strengths
- ❖ Is direct, specific and explicit
- ❖ Is timely and regular
- ❖ Is factual and focuses on behaviours not the person
- ❖ Is constructive and thoughtful and suggests alternative strategies or actions to achieve goals
- ❖ Considers the impact on the person receiving the feedback and is supportive

Reflect on your own feedback practices and tick the most appropriate box.

Feedback Practices			
	Never	Sometimes	Usually
I choose an appropriate time and place for feedback			
I provide regular and specific feedback			
I look for staff behaviours and achievements to praise and confirm			
I communicate respect when I give feedback			
I ensure two way communication when giving feedback			
I use listening and strategic questioning when giving feedback			
I acknowledge and discuss feelings when appropriate during feedback			
I use key documents such as the syllabus, the Professional Teaching Standards to establish goals and expectations for feedback			
I focus feedback on the task or goals, never on the person			
I negotiate specific goals and expectations on which to base feedback			
I use evidence and examples to support my feedback			
I am open to feedback on my own work			
I model the expected behaviours and standards on which I provide feedback			
I provide the mentee with opportunities for self-evaluation and reflection when giving feedback			

Reflection …
When giving feedback I need to improve upon

3. Effective listening

Effective listening contributes to quality professional learning conversations when we really listen to understand, acknowledge the person and indicate we value them enough to give them our time and attention.

Effective listening involves:
- ❖ Eliminating distractions
- ❖ Listening without interruption
- ❖ Listening for what is not said as well as what is said by focusing on body language and non-verbal clues
- ❖ Using silence and pauses to give people time to think
- ❖ Checking understanding by rephrasing what has been said
- ❖ Questioning to stimulate discussion and glean information and check understanding
- ❖ Taking notes to help you remember key points.

4. Effective verbal responses

Effective verbal responses can build the capacity of colleagues and support their professional growth.
Types of verbal responses may include:
- ❖ Paraphrasing and understanding
- ❖ Questioning and probing
- ❖ Reassuring and supporting
- ❖ Analyzing and interpreting
- ❖ Advising and evaluating

Strategic questioning
Working in pairs, your task is to ask three questions of your colleague to ascertain information about an area of their work that they would like to improve. These questions may be focus based (seeking facts); observation questions; feeling questions; change questions.
1.
2.
3.

The Professional Teaching Standards

Participating in a mentoring relationship addresses the following Professional Teaching Standards:		
Professional Competence 6.2.4 Work productively and openly with colleagues in reviewing teaching strategies and refining professional knowledge and practice. 6.2.5 Accept and offer constructive feedback to support a professional learning community. 6.2.6 Participate constructively in formal and informal professional discussions with colleagues.	**Professional Accomplishment** 6.3.3 Assist colleagues to plan their professional development to enhance knowledge of subject/content and classroom skills. 6.3.4 Model collegial practices for evaluating and sharing best practice in teaching strategies and professional knowledge and practice. 6.3.8 Assist and advise colleagues in the formation of effective school policy and practice.	**Professional Leadership** 6.4.2 Evaluate and address the professional learning needs of colleagues with reference to the professional standards framework. 6.4.3 Identify, promote and evaluate personal professional development opportunities for colleagues to ensure engagement in purposeful and ongoing professional learning. 6.4.5 Initiate or lead strategies for developing a climate for accepting and providing constructive feedback and recognition of achievement.

5. Effective Classroom Observations

One of the most effective ways to learn is through observation of others. A mentor should provide the opportunity for their colleagues to observe quality teaching practices and to be observed. Classroom observations encourage teachers to become self-reflective practitioners who reflect on their learning to improve pedagogy.

Classroom observation is effective professional learning that:
- ❖ Allows teachers to either construct or deconstruct classroom practice with a view to strengthening teaching practice and pedagogy
- ❖ Highlights, encourages and acknowledges expert practice
- ❖ Involves ongoing conversation about connection between student learning and pedagogy
- ❖ Utilises a deliberate cycle of plan, observe, reflect and apply in response to the analysis of teaching practice
- ❖ Is explicitly connected to individual teachers' work, addressing matters of importance
- ❖ Is embedded in the work of teachers and school leaders
- ❖ Builds professional knowledge, values and ethics
- ❖ Supports a commitment to ongoing professional learning for improved practice
- ❖ Builds trust, respect and openness and is founded on collegiality and collaboration

Planning for classroom observation
- Identifying a specific professional learning need
- Identifying the most appropriate model of observation

Model 1		Model 2
Constructing classroom practice		**Deconstructing classroom practice**
The less experienced teacher observing the expert teacher		The expert teacher observing the less experienced teacher
Pre observation planning Contextualise lesson	**PLAN**	**Pre observation planning** Contextualise lesson
Classroom observation Notes anecdotal and descriptive	**OBSERVE**	**Classroom observation** Notes recorded after observation
Post observation reflection Describe Compare and contrast	**REFLECT**	**Post observation reflection** Effective feedback Strategic questioning
Classroom implementation	**APPLY**	**Classroom implementation**