Why Mentoring?

An Interactive Presentation for Beginning Teachers in Adult Education
Communities of Practice: Why Mentoring?

Presentation Goals

1. To invite reflection on the meaning of “mentorship”
2. To contemplate the purposes that mentorship can play in your professional growth as a teacher
3. To identify two to three aspects about teaching and being a teacher that you would want to talk about with other teachers
Meaning of Mentorship

A mentor is an experienced and exemplary teacher who nurtures professional growth in a beginning teacher by sharing their knowledge and insights and supporting the beginning teacher in their professional learning and growth.
Meaning of Mentorship—
Two More Stories

A story from ancient Africa

- Designation of an older child to listen carefully and ask questions of a younger child
- “Habari gani menta” or “What’s happening?”

A story from ancient caves in Southern France

- Drawings of men advising children at the borders of the physical world
- Mentorship as “being given a tour” of what lies just beyond

(Youth Empowerment Seminars. (n.d.))
Reflection: Depictions of Mentorship

1. Mentors as experienced, wiser advisors
2. Mentors as those who ask “what’s happening?” in your life as a teacher
3. Mentors as those who embolden you to “tour” your own practice, to go to the “edge” and look beyond

Reflect and share:
- Which depiction do you like most, and why?
- Can you think about people in your life—in teaching and other areas of life—who have played these different roles?
On Being Mentored as a New Teacher

Meet Steve

- Director, Active Learning in Adult Numeracy
- Adult numeracy teacher and teacher trainer
- Former curriculum developer
On Being Mentored as a New Teacher

As you listen to Steve:
What are the different roles that Steve’s mentors played in his early years as a teacher? How did his mentors help him improve his teaching in different ways?
“You shouldn’t expect one person to be able to always be all things to a new instructor.”

- One mentor provided emotional support
- A second mentor provided support around math teaching
Mentors share wisdom. They encourage. They ask questions and push their mentees to stretch themselves. At this point in your teaching career, which of these areas do you feel you would like the most from a mentor, and why?
On Being Mentored as a New Teacher

Meet Estefany Giehm

- Coordinates a service learning program
- Teaches English as a Second Language (ESL)
- Taught ESL at community college and intensive English programs
On Being Mentored as a New Teacher

As you listen to Estefany: Through her relationship with her mentor Gail, what aspects of her teaching did Estefany feel she was able to strengthen?
Lessons Learned From Estefany

Learning by participating and observing a mentor

“Gail…taught me how to make my students feel valued in the classroom and that was just something that I learned from her example.”

“Most of what I learned from my mentors was just from serving them, from seeing what they did, and seeing how that affected their class for their students.”
Recall a time when you were able to observe another teacher and learned something new by being in his or her classroom.

- What was the situation?
- What did you learn?
- Were you able to use what you learned in your own teaching?
Reflection

As you contemplate future opportunities to work with a mentor, are there specific aspects of teaching you’d love to observe firsthand in a classroom and learn more about?

List one or two aspects, and share your list with a colleague.
On Being a New Teacher

About Amy

- Participant in a study about professional growth of beginning English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers, specifically changes in teacher identity (Kanno & Stuart, 2011)
- Teaching assistant in a university-based ESL class
- Six months of teaching experience prior to enrolling in a Master of Arts Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) program
- Often struggled with grammar explanations, which would make her feel inadequate as a teacher
Amy drew attention to a student’s sentence on the board:

The graph shows that how many Starbucks stores spread in the world.

Amy pointed out the incorrect use of the relative pronoun *that*. But the students asked about the verb: *Should the verb be “spread” or “have spread?”* Is “spread” *transitive or intransitive*? One student checked a dictionary and confirmed that “spread” can indeed be transitive or intransitive, to which Amy dubiously said “OK.”

Amy rewrote the sentence on the board, but her revision was even more incorrect!

The graph shows that how many Starbucks have been spread in the world.
Reflection on Amy’s Experience

Amy’s thoughts:

“I started to second-guess myself when they offered the passive voice of the present perfect even though I just felt that this wasn’t correct. . . I felt myself saying I’m not sure a lot, and just felt them losing respect for me as their teacher every moment.”

(Kanno & Stuart, 2011, p. 242)

REFLECTION

In what ways can you relate to Amy’s experience, particularly her feeling that she was losing the students’ respect for her?

What happened?

What did you do in the moment?
Further Reflections on Amy’s Experience

What happened to Amy:

- Amy observed an experienced, well-regarded teacher who also was unable to answer questions on the spot.
- “Even experienced teachers do not have all the answers.”
- Amy changed her strategy: if a student asks a tough grammar question, she admits “I don’t know.” She goes home and comes back the next day with an informed answer.
- Amy felt she “earned some respect back” and eventually she started to “feel like I’m more their teacher.”

(Kanno & Stuart, 2011, p. 243)

REFLECTION:

Consider your own growth as a new teacher. To what extent have changes in feeling like “a real teacher” been part of your growth process? What role can mentors play in helping new teachers feel like “real teachers?”
Lessons Learned From Amy

- Teacher growth involves changes in teacher practice and teacher identity.

- **In sum:** “[The] central project in which novice L2 teachers are involved in their teacher learning is not so much the acquisition of the knowledge of language teaching as it is the development of a teacher identity…Changes in novice L2 teachers’ classroom practice cannot be explained solely in terms of the changes in their knowledge; again, one needs to refer to their evolving teacher identities to fully understand why certain changes occur in their practice.”

  (Kanno & Stuart, 2011, pp. 249-250)
Implications for Mentorship: Expanded Goals

- Mentorship can support positive changes in your classroom practice.
- Mentorship also can support your exploration and active crafting of your professional identity as a teacher.
Practical Insights for Mentees

- Know that the transition from being a student teacher to feeling like a “real teacher” is not automatic.
- Reflect on moments when you feel and don’t feel like a “real teacher.” Share these reflections with colleagues.
- Ask more experienced teachers how their teacher identity has changed over time.
Recap

- Different ways of thinking about mentorship
- Multiple roles that mentors can play in our growth as teachers
- Connections between your growth as a teacher and changes in your teacher identity
Action Steps: Reflections on Teaching Practice and Experience

- Check out these questions on p. 41 of the LINCS Mentoring Guide for Teacher Induction.
- Spend some time reflecting and taking notes on your answers.
- Talk to a colleague about your responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guiding Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What education and/or experience do you have that can be applied to instructing the adult students in your class? Is this teaching context different from what you have done before? Please compare.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What are your strengths as a teacher, especially in reference to your current class?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. In what areas would you like support from your mentor, especially in reference to your current class?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Think about your own teaching strategies. Which methods or activities do you use most? Why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. How do you know if what you are teaching meets the students’ needs?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Think about the teaching strategies presented in the online courses, Principles of Learning for Instructional Design and Motivating Adult Learners to Persist. Which stand out as strategies you would like support to implement?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. What ideas did this reflection give you about the professional learning goals you might work on with your mentor?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Special Thanks

- **Steve Hinds**, Director, Active Learning in Adult Learning & Numeracy & Mathematics (www.alanproject.org), Chicago, IL

- **Estefany Giehm**, Coordinator and ESL Instructor, Services to Older Refugees, English Language Center, Boise, ID
About the LINCS Website

Teacher Effectiveness in Adult Education

Research indicates that teacher effectiveness determines student achievement and performance. To develop successful students, one focus of adult education programs should be on developing and supporting effective teachers, especially those new to adult education or the profession. This page includes a variety of resources and tools to enhance teacher effectiveness in adult education.

Adult Education Teacher Competencies

The Competencies identify the knowledge and skills expected of any adult education teacher. A Self-Assessment, Introductory online course, and interactive framework are also available.

Evidence Based Instruction

Learn about evidence-based instruction principles and strategies highlighted in the National Research Council’s Improving Adult Literacy Instruction: Supporting Learning and Motivation.

Information Brief: Evidence-Based Instruction and Teacher Induction

• Online Courses on Evidence-Based Instruction
  • Principles of Learning for Instructional Design
  • Motivating Adult Learners to Persist

Teacher Induction

Teacher induction is an evidence-based strategy to accelerate the effectiveness of beginning teachers and those new to adult education or a new content area.
Additional Mentoring Resources


**Sources for stock photography:**
* http://morguefile.com/
* http://www.publicdomainpictures.net
* https://unsplash.com/

(All photos published on Unsplash are licensed under [Creative Commons Zero](https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0/).)