On Becoming a Mentor

An Interactive Presentation for Adult Educators
Presentation Goals

1. To reflect on the qualities of effective mentors in our own teaching careers
2. To reflect on our own strengths and potential contributions as a mentor for other teachers
Definition of Mentorship

A mentor is an experienced and exemplary teacher who nurtures professional growth in a beginning teacher by sharing knowledge and insights and supporting beginning teachers in their professional learning and growth.

Meaning of Mentorship—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

Source: Yes! (n.d.)
Views on Mentors

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

For Reflection
- Which depiction do you like the most, and why?
- How do these depictions remind you of mentors you have had in your own professional life?
On Being Mentored as a New Teacher

Meet Steve

- Director, Active Learning in Adult Numeracy
- Adult numeracy teacher and teacher trainer
- Former curriculum developer
Reflect on Steve’s Story

- Who provided him with encouragement?
- Who asked him questions about “what’s happening?” in his teaching?
- Who pushed him to think beyond what he already does in his practice?
Mentors share wisdom. They encourage. They ask questions and push their mentees to stretch themselves. Which of these areas do you feel you would enjoy the most as a mentor, and why?
From Reflection to Action

- Reflection on these different views of mentorship prepares us to be effective mentors.
- We recognize the many forms of mentorship we have received in our own professional development.
- We can articulate our own preferences, strengths, and limitations as mentors.
- We can anticipate the diverse needs of the teachers we will mentor in the future.
Assessing Your Strengths and Limitations as a Mentor: Tool #1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Are Active Learners</th>
<th>Support Beginning Teachers’ Growth and Professional Development</th>
<th>Communicate Effectively</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Know they will learn from the beginning teachers and the mentoring experience and express this to the beginning teachers.</td>
<td>Can articulate the art of teaching.</td>
<td>Listen with full attention and are able to read verbal and nonverbal cues; can “hear” what is said as well as what is not said.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate that they are reflecting on their own practice while working with beginning teachers.</td>
<td>Help teachers establish goals for themselves and the partnership.</td>
<td>Are able to articulate clearly what they know and have experienced.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are open to feedback and willing to adapt as needed.</td>
<td>Do not feel the need to prove competence by having all the answers or prompting the beginning teachers’ discoveries.</td>
<td>Recognize and honor different communication styles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish goals with the beginning teachers for their partnership.</td>
<td>Know when to share knowledge and when to help beginning teachers discover.</td>
<td>Ask open-ended questions to elicit thinking; ask follow-up questions to clarify.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Continue to build their own content knowledge and familiarity with emerging research and practices in the field.</td>
<td>Use learner-centered approaches with beginning teachers.</td>
<td>Understanding and to demonstrate genuine interest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage beginning teachers to assess their own situation and make their own conclusions and decisions.</td>
<td>Set high expectations for beginning teachers and recognize and build on teachers’ strengths.</td>
<td>Probe for specificity, clarity, elaboration, and precision so that teachers learn to reflect on their practice and learn to better articulate their thinking and reasoning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check assumptions and find out whether interpretations and perceptions are valid and accurate.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Assessing Your Strengths and Limitations as a Mentor: Tool #2

Planning and Documenting Induction

Mentor Self-Assessment

**Purpose:** This tool describes the qualities and attributes of skilled mentors and provides a way for mentors to monitor their progress in developing these traits.

**Completed by:** Mentor

**Instructions:** Use the following self-assessment to get a picture of your strengths and limitations as a mentor. Complete it once at the beginning of the induction process and again at the end. Each time, review your self-evaluation with your instructional leader to discuss ways to develop your mentoring skills.

Read each statement and circle how consistently you demonstrate each attribute in the following four tables.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Create an Open, Supportive Climate for Communication</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am a good listener and build effective relationships with those around me.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I express and try to understand other people's points of view.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don't assume that similarities are weaknesses or that in character flaws.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I reflect on and manage my feelings.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I expect to make mistakes.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don't need others seeing me make a mistake.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I learn from constructive feedback.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effectively Communicate Experience and Elicit Thinking</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I share useful and appropriate information about my strengths and abilities.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I articulate my teaching strategies and how I make instructional decisions.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I reflect on the assumptions I might be making and check their validity.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I provide evidence for my beliefs and conclusions.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I ask others about the evidence for their reasoning and their reasoning on their thinking.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Reflection**

1. Summarize the strengths you have identified in the self-assessment.
2. Summarize areas that you have identified as needing attention.
3. If this is the second time you are filling out the self-assessment (at the beginning of the induction process), note the strategies and resources you used to build your strengths.
4. If this is the second time you are filling out the self-assessment (at the end of the induction process), describe the strategies and resources you used and what you will continue to work on.

*The Mentor Self-Assessment is adapted from [source].*
Assessing your strengths and limitations as a mentor

- Choose one of these two tools.
- After you complete the exercise, summarize your strengths and the areas that you would like to work on.
- Note steps you would like to take to build on your strengths and work on areas that need attention.
- Share your ideas with a colleague.
Four Key Mentoring Strategies

1. Supporting reflective practice
2. Giving effective feedback
3. Using a gradual release approach
4. Using student work to inform practice
Some Characteristics of Effective Feedback

- Evidence-based, specific, concrete, and descriptive
- Focused on the behavior, not the person
- Takes into account the needs of the receiver
- Timely and well-timed
- Involves sharing information, not giving unsolicited advice
- Involves balanced communication
- Linked to an action plan
On Getting Feedback From Mentors

Meet Ana Wu

- Currently an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher at City College of San Francisco
- Born and raised in Brazil
- Taught in Japan for 5 years
- 2009 Chair-Elect of the Non-Native Speakers of English (NNEST) in Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) Interest Section
On Getting Feedback From Mentors

As you listen to Ana:
How does Ana describe her experiences getting feedback from mentors?
What kind of feedback does Ana find most useful?
Least useful?
Lessons Learned From Ana

- It is important to take into account the needs of the receiver of feedback.
- Saying what we would do in our own classrooms is not necessarily effective feedback.
- Narrow focus on giving feedback tends to close off opportunities to solve problems.
**Getting Feedback: Tool for Reflection**

**Purpose:** To reflect on one’s needs and preferences for getting feedback

**Steps:**
- Read through the table, and pick five statements that best describe your needs and preferences for getting (not giving) feedback.
- Rank those statements from 1 to 5 (1 is most important).
- Share your rankings with a colleague.

*(Lacey, 1999)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Given with care</td>
<td>To be useful, feedback requires the giver to feel concern and care for the person receiving the feedback—to want to help and not hurt the other person.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invited by the recipient</td>
<td>Feedback is most effective when the receiver has invited the comments. This provides a platform for openness and some guidelines; it also gives the receiver an opportunity to identify and explore particular areas of concern.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom of choice to change</td>
<td>Feedback is most readily accepted when the receiver is supported to change but does not feel compelled to change.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directly expressed</td>
<td>Good feedback is specific and deals clearly with particular incidents and behavior. It is direct, open, and concrete.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fully expressed</td>
<td>Effective feedback requires more than a bald statement of facts. Feelings also need to be expressed so receivers can judge the full impact of their behavior.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-evaluative</td>
<td>Specific behavior is commented on rather than personal value judgments about the behavior</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well-timed</td>
<td>The most useful feedback is when the receiver is receptive to it and is sufficiently close to the particular event being discussed for it to be fresh in his or her mind.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readily actionable</td>
<td>Effective feedback centers on behavior that can be changed. Feedback concerning matters beyond the receiver’s control is useless.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checked and clarified</td>
<td>If possible, feedback should be clarified to explore differences in perception.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Recall a time when you were given advice about your teaching that led to a positive change in your practice.

What was the advice?

How did it help you see your practice from a new angle or consider information you had overlooked?
Steve’s Advice: “No Statements, Only Questions”

As you listen:

What advice did Steve give to the new math teacher?

Why did Steve feel that this advice was important to share?

In what ways do you think Steve’s advice helped teachers see their teaching practice from a new angle?
Lessons Learned From Steve

- Concrete, specific advice that helps new teachers look at their teaching in a new way is valuable.
- Advice is linked to “data”—real observations of what teachers and learners are doing.

- *Which students did you talk to today? How many students? What questions did you ask? How did the students respond?*
Lessons Learned From Steve

- Advice prompts new questions about teaching and learning, which promotes a culture of inquiry.
  - What kinds of questions will you ask again in future classes?
  - What should I be thinking about when I listen to learners’ answers about how they are solving a math problem?
  - What emotions got in the way when I was asking questions and listening to learners’ answers?
  - What did I feel the learners understood but did not have clear evidence to back up?
On the Promise of Mentoring:
“It would be wonderful if…”

Meet Tom Kennedy

- Currently a faculty member in the noncredit ESL program at City College of San Francisco
- Interested in beginning-level literacy development, critical pedagogy, and teaching for social justice
As you listen:

To what extent can you relate to Tom’s concerns about the capacity for mentorship in our field?

What are some possible solutions to improve the capacity for mentorship in our field?
Lessons Learned From Tom

- We cannot expect experienced teachers to thrive as mentors if they themselves do not feel nurtured and supported as professionals in their own right.
Final Thoughts

“Who teachers are to one another matters. In a sometimes lonely profession, isolation within the individual egg cell crates of a school does not promote professional or personal growth. Parallel play may socialise youngsters in sandboxes, but it limits learning for adults.”

State of Victoria, Department of Education & Early Childhood Development (2010, p.1)
Special Thanks

Steve Hinds, Director, Active Learning in Adult Learning & Numeracy & Mathematics ([www.alanproject.org](http://www.alanproject.org)), Chicago, Illinois

Tom Kennedy, ESL Faculty, City College of San Francisco, San Francisco, California

Ana Wu, ESL Faculty, City College of San Francisco, San Francisco, California
About the LINCS Website

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.

Teacher Effectiveness in Adult Education

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**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:**

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