

Title of Session: Teaching Teachers
Moderator: Mary Thompson
Title of File: 20060406teachingteachers
Date: April 6, 2006

Room: Teaching Teachers Group

BJB2: Welcome to Teaching Teachers. Sorry I missed your earlier conversation. Can everyone please tell us where you are located and what you teach or hope to teach?

KatieRA: I teach 2nd grade out of Louisville KY

AmyDS: I'm in Texas. I teach 3rd Science, Reading and Math

LaraHe: I'm a grad student at University of Illinois studying curriculum and teacher ed

DianneA: I am located in Australia, I am teacher pre-service and continuing ed teacher for K-6

EricaB: My name is Erica and I live and teach in Katy, TX. I am student teaching at this time

ErikKr: I'm in Charleston, SC. I'm the technology director and computer teacher.

AmberP: I'm in PA- currently a substitute

KatieRA: I am also in grad school and that's how I found out about this site.

MaryFT: Mary Thompson...preservice teaching instructor at University of Houston

AmyDS: I'm in grad school as well

WilliamSi: I am Bill in Florida

MaryFT: Welcome everyone! We have a big group tonight...I'm thrilled!

AmberP: *first time here haha

KatieRA: me too

ErikKr: Me too

AmberP: good not the only one!

MaryFT: I usually like to start off these discussions by finding out what experiences you have had with mentoring...either having a mentor or being one...

WilliamSi: I teach multimedia production to all levels

LaraHe: This is a major area of my studies. I work with the Illinois New Teacher Collaborative and am researching e-mentoring

MaryFT: I know my student teachers have experienced a mentoring situation this semester

AmyDS: This is the first semester I have had a student teacher and this is my 4th year to teach.

DianneA: Mary, can I ask how you describe mentoring?

KatieRA: this is only my 4th year teaching, I haven't been a mentor yet, but the mentor I had during my 1st year was really good

KatieRA: I would like to try to be a mentor after I finish my grad work

ErikKr: I'm trying to help all of the teachers at my school to integrate technology more. I guess I'm trying to mentor the mentors.

KatieRA: that is something I struggle with too,

LaraHe: I didn't have an official mentor, but have individuals I worked closely with who I'd call my mentors when I started teaching.

MaryFT nods

MaryFT: mentoring can be a formal arrangement or an informal occasion

EricaB: that is my situation, although I am a student teacher I am more technologically advanced and I am teaching my teachers new and valuable information

AmyDS: In our district first year teachers have a mentor at their campus to work with them and provide guidance.

KatieRA: that is good Erica

MaryFT: wonderful Erica! I believe that mentoring is a give/get relationship

AmberP: I have found a lot of teachers in the buildings I sub in..and they provide me with valuable insights as a beginning teacher

EricaB: I showed my K teacher how to Google and she loves me to death now...lol

LaraHe: Wow!

AmberP: haha Erica

AmberP: nice

MaryFT: I have posted an article on under featured links about coming Full Circle...from mentee to mentor

AmberP: you have two placements Erica in diff grades?

MaryFT: Dianne...I'm still working on a definition...I have pieces...

EricaB: I was in Kinder first for 8 weeks and now I am in 4th I have about 2 more weeks then I am done

AmberP: well good luck

EricaB: Thanks

AmberP: k and 4th big change

AmyDS: We have a college in our town and the students teachers are required to complete six weeks in one grade and six weeks in another.

EricaB: YES unbelievable but I still like the little ones

AmberP: Yeah most are required to have to placements

EricaB: less attitude

ErikKr: I agree with that

AmberP: I student taught in the fall

LaraHe: I love the attitude. 6th grade for 14 years.

AmberP: on my last day in 5th grade.. the principal puts you in another grade as a sub for the day

AmberP: not allowed to talk to teacher..just kids

DianneA nods to Mary: I think each of us mentors at some stage, especially informally

AmberP: and he put me in kindg!

AmberP: so going from 5th where they are independent to kindg

AmyDS: sometimes it's good to be out of your comfort zone

AmberP: yeah great experience tho!!

EricaB: yeah we are subbing for our teachers on the 21st so they can go to a appreciation dinner

MaryFT: so Erica's experience with mentoring has been a good one...she has been both mentor and mentee

AmberP: sorry off topic

AmberP: I did it

LaraHe: In China, all teachers are required to "teach in the round" which means they teach each grade in order

AmberP: I taught my first co-op alot about computers

LaraHe: This gives them experience with where student have been and where they're going

EricaB: wow... that's interesting

AmyDS: I think at some point in our careers we are all both mentor and mentee

AmberP: as she had to assess me on an online program that she had no idea what to do

MaryFT nods

AmberP: wow that's neat though

MaryFT: Lara - you are studying e-mentoring...what are some aspect of that?

LaraHe: Comes in different forms.

MaryFT: Amy...my experience has been that many of my student teachers feel like they must assume the mentee role only...

LaraHe: Idea behind it is providing mentors for those in schools/districts which don't have programs

MaryFT: ...even if they have skills that they would like to share

LaraHe: Rural schools with 1 math teacher can't provide a math mentor

AmberP: some schools don't have a mentor program?

EricaB: That's the great thing about my personality I can't just sit there and not share what I have spent 4 years learning

AmberP: oh small schools

LaraHe: Urban schools with lots of turnover have a hard time finding qualified mentors

MaryFT: many schools don't have a mentoring program...lack of funding, distance

AmberP: got it

AmberP: I'd need a mentor my first real year

AmberP: haha

LaraHe: Texas has a database of e-mentors where mentors and novices fill out personal info forms and try to find a match

MaryFT: and mentoring is not just about knowing something...it's about knowing how to share it

DianneA: I am like Mary in thinking that student teachers are placed in certain [roles] when they actually have the capacity to work in another role

EricaB: well that's what teaching is all about sharing and teaching new ideas

AmyDS: I think knowing how to share it is a big deal. You can have a wealth of knowledge to share but it's how you present your ideas on whether it will be accepted or not.

DianneA: and further that if being a mentor while being a mentee, and vice versa you can actually learn about what it means to learn from both roles, learn in both roles

MaryFT: exactly!

AmberP: agree

MaryFT: is it okay to call that the give/get relationship? (I don't like the implications of give/take)

AmberP: yea definitely sums it up

DianneA: because we so often do it informally it becomes one of our invisible activities and attributes

ErikKr: That makes sense

AmyDS: sure

EricaB: yep definitely

MaryFT: there are many ways to approach a mentoring situation...

DianneA: and because it is informal and invisible sometimes we leave out doing the 'hard bits'

MaryFT: ...what are some qualities that mentors should have/develop?

DianneA listens to Mary

EricaB: I have also been mentoring another student teacher that hasnt had the experience I have had

AmyDS: openness

AmberP: yes openness...listening skills

MaryFT nods

AmyDS: good communication skills, patience, the ability to know when to talk and when to be quiet

ErikKr: They should be sure not to be condescending or know-it-all

AmberP: openness sums it up tho!

EricaB: patience

LaraHe: listening, adult learning knowledge, communication

MaryFT: openness and listening skills...good communication

AmberP: if you're not open to new ideas you have nothing

MaryFT: being non-judgmental?

LaraHe: diplomacy / means of critiquing without criticizing

AmberP: yeah definitely non judgmental

EricaB: constructive criticism

MaryFT: being trustworthy...being there when you say you will...

DianneA: aahh some one is talking about the 'hard bits'

AmyDS: that is exactly what I was about to type

LaraHe: that's the word I was looking for :)--thanks Erica

AmberP: haha I was going to say that too

EricaB: no problem

MaryFT: so how do you develop these skills?

MaryFT: how do you learn to be a mentor?

EricaB: experience

AmyDS: for some people these skills occur naturally, others have to work at them

EricaB: very true

AmberP: yeah depends on your personality

ErikKr: I think that as you spend time teaching kids you gain more confidence in mentoring adults

MaryFT: are all good teachers good mentors?

AmberP: some people will take a while to get to that point

AmberP: No..not all

EricaB: definitely not

LaraHe: Training can help, but I think some is personality

AmyDS: some people are excellent teachers but are horrible mentors

EricaB: some great teachers can not hold a decent conversation with an adult

AmberP: I had two co-ops who would be awful mentors

LaraHe: Nods

DianneA: That is an interesting question Mary, ... I would probably say 'yes' first off, and then wonder some more

MaryFT: it is something I have thought about often Dianne

AmberP: I think it's a lot of personality

DianneA: one thing a mentor has to know is how to operate with a peer, and how to be intentional about handing over, or encouraging greater independence

MaryFT: observation has made me think that it takes an extra "special ingredient" to tip the scales

EricaB: I think if you have the passion for teaching you will want everyone else to feel the same

AmberP: agree

AmyDS: just because someone is a great teacher doesn't mean that they have great skills that are needed to be a good mentor. some adults spend so much time talking to children that they can't talk to adults.

AmberP: but some have a strong passion but just keep to themselves

AmyDS: having the passion isn't always enough, it's how you convey your passion

AmberP: agree Amy

AmberP: cuz one teacher I worked with very strong passion...but couldn't convey it

AmyDS: you can have a passion about fighting cancer, but if you don't relay your feelings and ideas to others it's useless. same for teaching

DianneA: part of being a good mentor will be being able to share your practice thinking: what are the decisions you are making and why, when you are dealing with a particular child and learning problem

MaryFT: yes! very similar to the strategy called Think Aloud that we use with kids

ErikKr: I think the reasons for making the decisions you do is one of the most important things a mentor can pass on

DianneA: part of being a good mentor will involve being able to ask the questions that helps another talk about their own decision making and thinking

MaryFT: back to communication Dianne - but now you are talking about a specific strategy that can be learned!

AmyDS: I learned in a graduate counseling course that I took that asking questions is not always the best way to get others to talk about themselves

AmberP: what is..

DianneA: all communication is learned too Mary, and there are strategies to learn how to communicate better

DianneA: what other ways were suggested Amy?

AmyDS: sometimes just nodding, active listening, maybe just repeating important points and stressing them in you voice.

EricaB: eye contact

DianneA: that is about talking about themselves and their feelings, in mentoring we are also trying to share practice craft skills and craft thinking

AmberP: non verbal cues..body language

LaraHe: I suppose one could learn to ask the questions, but is it possible a mentor might do this, but not ask these questions about his/her own practices? Could this person be a good mentor?

AmyDS: we also learned that just saying things like, "and this makes you feel..." or "so you tried that and it didn't work, I'm wondering how it would have been different if you tried..."

MaryFT: good question Lara

DianneA: getting out emotions is important in some areas of interaction and helping caring work

EricaB: I have heard that before

AmyDS: I'm not saying not to ask questions, questions are ok, but sometimes it feels like a quiz instead of open communication

AmberP: true

EricaB: just not drill and kill

DianneA: I am aware also, that there are 'good' kinds of questions for getting information, and 'bad' or 'poor' questions

AmyDS: I think part of being a good teacher is to self evaluate your practices and reasons for doing things

MaryFT: so does a mentor need to be aware of their own learning/metacognition in order to elicit that in others?

AmberP: yes

EricaB: yes

AmyDS: absolutely

DianneA: and that all sorts of questioning needs to be used, and different questions at different stages to get out the craft knowledge

LaraHe: When a district is assigning mentors, how will they know if the mentor self-reflects?

BrendaE: That is an excellent point. We get better at our craft when we take the time to examine what we do and the results.

AmberP: good question Lara

DianneA: I am also aware that the kind of questions that I ask can 'feel' to be 'interrogatory', when they are only information seeking

AmyDS: unless the district requires teacher to turn in some sort of self evaluation my guess is that there is no definite way of checking to see if teachers and mentors are doing it

AmberP: we were taught to self reflect constantly

MaryFT: which is the difference between assigned/structured programs and a natural development of the mentoring relationship

AmberP: as a teacher you almost automatically reflect on lessons and think about how you can improve

DianneA: can you please elaborate Mary?

KrystalLC: I agree Amber

MaryFT: sorry...thinking "out loud"

EricaB: assigned I think could be having a student teacher and naturally would be working with a team inside your grade level or even school wide

DianneA: please think out loud some more then!

BrendaE: I wish that were true Amber, but sometimes there are teachers who have "done it that way for years" who fail to see the need to self-evaluate or self-reflect.

AmberP: oh yes..

MaryFT: but wouldn't it be interesting to measure success of "assigned" mentors against mentoring relationships that develop out of need or naturally

AmberP: I'm sure there are

ErikKr: That would be an interesting study

EricaB: yeah that would

AmyDS: In our district we are required to be evaluated by the PDAS. part of the evaluation is self reflecting on our practices

DianneA: I am sure that relationships that develop out of need are more successful than those that are structurally formalised!

AmberP: my eyes have been opened wide at how some teachers "teach"

EricaB: yes I think our district does that as well

LaraHe: Teaching is traditionally isolating (close the door and teach). I'd be curious to see how often mentoring relationships actually grow naturally

AmyDS: sometimes "assigned" mentoring relationship are not as good as the ones that form naturally

MaryFT: yes Lara!

MaryFT: great corollary question

LaraHe: I had a natural mentor, but we were forced to do so.

EricaB: I think you have to be open to new ideas and not an "I know everything" attitude

AmyDS: absolutely

BrendaE: My district's mentoring plan calls for the attempt to match personalities.

LaraHe: It was the first year the 6th grade moved to middle school concept and we had to make our team work

MaryFT: I am afraid I let my bias show though...having been a member of both an assigned mentoring relationship and one that grew up naturally...I have a definite preference for the "natural" method

EricaB: it is more comfortable right?

LaraHe: We all wanted it to be a success and so we formed a strong professional community. I'm not sure that would have happened otherwise.

AmyDS: matching personalities for mentoring... sort of like online dating lol

DianneA: I was talking of 'sure' from my experience of computer mediated discussions

MaryFT smiles

BrendaE: matching personalities works well, when it happens.

DianneA: they work best when someone offers a real problem for discussion

MaryFT: how are the personalities matched?

MaryFT: yes Dianne...or at least one with lots of common interest...like we have tonight

SusanR: o O (I notice teachers mentoring informally as they go about their teaching day ..)

BrendaE: We try to meet informally at first, and spend some time together, getting to know one another.

ErikKr: I think the informal meetings are a huge plus

DianneA: How would you describe that Susan?

EricaB: I think it is a great idea

SusanR: just sharing strategies that work...or ideas on implementing a skill, Dianne

DianneA nods

SusanR: goes on constantly throughout the school day

SusanR: lunch hour chatting

MaryFT: that's good Susan...so an extension to our question would be "what situations foster the natural mentoring process?"

MaryFT: maybe not situations...

ErikKr: Lunch hour chatting unfortunately seems to be more of a gripe session than a positive thing

DianneA: what of the 'whole mentoring role' gets missed in that informal approach Susan?

AmyDS: everyday situations offer a chance to "mentor"

EricaB: that's what I have noticed

LaraHe: School environment that encourages collaboration

MaryFT nods to Amy

AmberP: agrees with Lara

MaryFT: I don't know if that's the case in every school

BrendaE: Unfortunately, I have found that lunch time gripping is extremely nonproductive and not good for the mentoring situation.

EricaB: when I try to talk about something that happened in my lesson I sometimes get brushed off for gossip

AmberP: we were told as student teachers to stay away from faculty lounge

AmberP: nothing but gossip

AmyDS: you guys should read the book How Full is Your Bucket ... it talks about "filling" and "dipping" from others buckets by using positive and negative interactions

EricaB: they want us hip to hip

AmyDS: us too

BrendaE: Erica, I agree with you. The lunch time atmosphere is probably not the most conducive to mentoring

DianneA: Is a group context conducive to mentoring?

AmberP: we were allowed to break away at lunch and disclude ourselves from faculty lounge

MaryFT: so if you were a new teacher looking for the perfect school...what would indicate that the school environment was conducive to constructive mentoring?

AmyDS: groups can be conducive to mentoring if it's kept positive and related to to teaching and other school issues not gossip

SusanR: the school I have been in has been going thro' some restructuring .. so there seems to be less griping and more informal collaboration and positive sharing ..thus could it be mentoring

AmyDS: schools where teachers and kids are happy is a pretty good indicator if the school is a good environment to be in

DianneA: Susan, was the restructuring supported by some other inputs to help deliver on the collaborative atmosphere?

EricaB: there is a new school opening real close to the one i am at and we were talking about what kind of teachers to hire to make it effective

EricaB: experience or 1st year?

ErikKr: You need a mix

AmberP: where teachers are happy as well as kids

AmyDS: I so wish each of you could visit our school... I personally think we have one of the best school environments in our district, but I am biased

SusanR: they have acquired some literacy coaches and PD training during school days

DianneA nods to Susan, thanks

SusanR: there is a support team for the school

MaryFT: Dianne...you are answering my question as you describe your school

AmyDS: we also have a support team and each person in our school is on some sort of committee related to our school's environment and well being

MaryFT: judging whether or not teachers and kids are happy can be difficult especially if you are feeling pressure to choose a place and get hired

LaraHe: very true

MaryFT: but maybe it could be made easier by looking at existing structures such as pd programs, cues from the admin, anything else?

LaraHe: During interview, asking about PD structured in learning teams, lesson study, professional development teams could indicate collaborative environment

AmyDS: at our school, every person that is interviewed for a job is first interviewed by the principal and asst. then they are interviewed by the other teacher in the grade or area they are applying for. we make it a point to make them feel welcome and comfortable

MaryFT: Great tips Lara

MaryFT: sounds wonderful Amy

AmyDS: also remember that interviewing doesn't have to be one sided. ask questions! in fact most principals would prefer you did, it shows you are interested in the daily workings of the school

MaryFT: interviews by the teaching team communicate that teachers' opinions are valued and respected

EricaB: which is great

MaryFT: I definitely agree Amy

AmyDS: I can remember when i interviewed for the school I'm at. I was so relieved to be interviewed by someone other than the principal

MaryFT: okay...unfortunately I need to start exiting stage right...

LaraHe: I heard at a recent presentation that new teacher induction actually begins with the interview and how it's structured.

LaraHe: Bye Mary.

AmyDS: to me it showed that the teachers had a genuine interest in the person they were possibly going to teach with. that made me feel like if i got the job these teachers would be there for me when I needed them

MaryFT: ...I have another discussion scheduled in the Teachers in Training room

ErikKr: Thanks, Mary

MaryFT waves bye

LaraHe: Thanks!

EricaB: thanks Mary

MaryFT: I hope to chat with you all again next month

EricaB: thanks all I have learned a lot

AmyDS: thanks

MaryFT: this has been lovely!

AmberP: thanks Mary