

Maine's Definition of Effective Mentoring

"To coach is to convey a valued colleague from where he or she is to where he or she wants to be. " Art Costa and Robert Garmston

Mentoring is the process by which a more experienced educator facilitates the growth of a beginning educator by acting as a coach, encouraging and modeling reflection, encouraging and modeling intentionality, focusing the beginning teacher on what is important, helping the beginning educator achieve his or her goals, assisting the him or her with career and professional development, connecting the beginning educator to others who can enhance his or her growth or development, and serving as a sounding board.

A mentor's support and sponsorship needs to include meeting regularly with the beginning educator. This meeting is at least thirty to forty-five minutes in length and should be regularly scheduled. At the beginning of the school year these meetings tend to focus on support issues and familiarizing the beginning educator with the school and the district. It is important for the mentor to familiarize the mentee with the culture of the school. The mentor serves as an advocate for the beginning educator, and assists him or her in finding resources. Mentors also provide emotional support and problem solve with the beginning educator.

As the mentor and mentee relationship evolves into more collegiality, the meetings focus on such issues as effective planning and instruction, differentiation, curriculum, assessment and student achievement. The mentor or mentee documents the weekly meetings. At all times effective mentors use effective listening and questioning techniques, such as paraphrasing, positive presuppositions and combining data and questioning rather than judging.

Mentors also observe the beginning educator and his or her classroom at least four times during the school year. The coaching cycle model is used for all four visits. This includes a planning conference, the observation, and the reflecting conference. Each element of the conference should be conducted in a timely manner to increase the likelihood of reflection and professionalism on the part of the beginning educator. The first observation should be informal. The other three observations are more formal, using the suggested data collection techniques of "class traffic", "verbal flow", "interaction analysis", "selective verbatim", "global scan", "at task", or other non-evaluative, objective observation technique. The mentor only collects data on the agreed upon topics.

Throughout the coaching cycle and weekly meetings, mentors always maintain confidentiality and problem solve using positive conflict resolution. Their observations should be used for certification purposes only, and never for employment or evaluation reasons.

Due to the intensive and personal nature of this model of mentoring it is strongly recommended that mentors are assigned to only one beginning educator at a time.