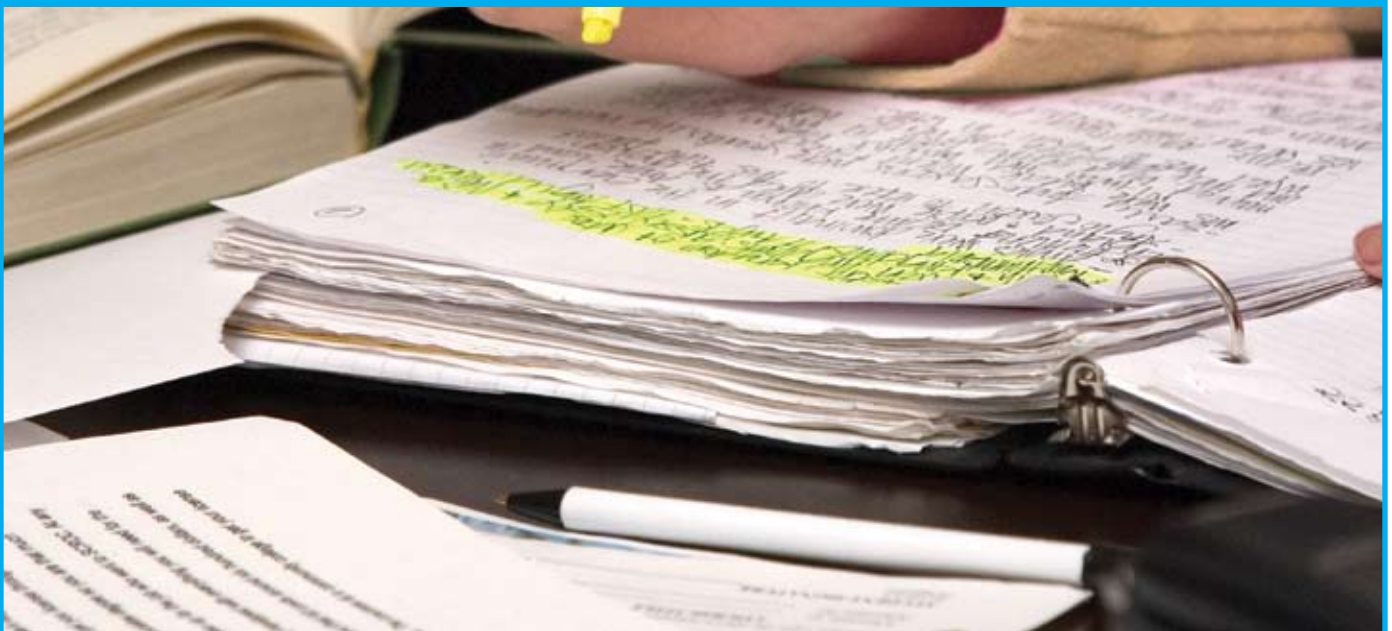











Mentoring Beginning Teachers



Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association

Teacher's Affirmation of Professional Responsibility

*In embarking on my chosen vocation as a teacher,
I, hereby confirm that:*

-  *The chief purpose of education is the intellectual, moral, physical and social development of my students;*
-  *My first professional responsibility is to enhance the quality of education provided to the students in my care;*
-  *A privileged relationship exists between teacher and student, and I shall always seek to uphold this trust;*
-  *I have a responsibility to do all in my power to establish professional, cooperative relationships with parents and the community, to serve the best interests of their children and society;*
-  *As a member of a professional body, the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association, I will always seek to uphold the profession and will act in a manner which maintains the honour and dignity of the profession;*
-  *I will never take any action which is prejudicial to the Association, or to the profession generally, and I will conduct myself in a manner which is respectful of other members of the profession and which respects the collegial nature of the profession; and*
-  *I have a professional responsibility to undertake service to my Association.*

May I always act so as to preserve the finest traditions of my chosen vocation, and may I bring the best of my professional abilities to the students in my care.





THE BRIDGE BUILDER

An old man, going a lone highway,
Came, at the evening, cold and gray,
To a chasm, vast, and deep, and wide,
Through which was flowing a sullen tide.
The old man crossed in the twilight dim;
The sullen stream had no fears for him;
But he turned, when safe on the other side,
And built a bridge to span the tide.
“Old man,” said a fellow pilgrim, near,
“You are wasting strength with building here;
Your journey will end with the ending day;
You never again must pass this way;
You have crossed the chasm, deep and wide –
Why build you a bridge at the eventide?”
The builder lifted his old gray head:
“Good friend, in the path I have come,” he said,
“There followeth after me today,
A youth, whose feet must pass this way.
This chasm, that has been naught to me,
To that fair-haired youth may a pitfall be.
He, too, must cross in the twilight dim;
Good friend, I am building the bridge for him.”

William Allen Dromgolle

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INTRODUCTION

You may have been asked to assume the role of mentor to a teacher beginning his or her career. If so, this is both a privilege and a challenge. It is also a recognition of your talents as a professional educator and an exciting learning opportunity for you and for the beginning teacher with whom you will be paired.

During your years as a student, you no doubt formed your own concept of what “teacher” meant from observing the many teachers you encountered. At some point you made the decision to become one. Then came pre-service training, followed by that most significant first year on the job. For some of you reading this booklet, that year of teaching was in the recent past; for others, it may seem a lifetime ago! Chances are, though, each one of you remembers that year as clearly as if it had been yesterday. Why? Many teachers describe it as “A trial by fire!” adding comments such as “I was in over my head,” “I almost gave up from the shock of it,” or more positively, “I was like a duck to water.” The reality of the job forced many of you to learn more quickly than you have ever needed to, before or since. Indeed, it is doubtful that many teachers would ever want to repeat the intensity of that first year.

THE TEACHER INDUCTION PROGRAM

A teacher induction program aims to ease this transition from student to professional educator. It is a planned approach to provide beginning teachers with sustained support for at least the first year of their careers. The program provides a link between beginning teachers’ education at university and their becoming fully-fledged teachers, confidently taking their places as participants in professional learning communities. Formal induction programs can help introduce new approaches and techniques, as research has shown that without intervention, teachers tend to teach as they have been taught. As many of you know, success in the first year of teaching can be crucial to a beginning teacher’s decision to continue in the profession. As research has shown, beginning teachers who have participated in planned induction programs increase their chances of having success in their first years and tend to remain in the profession longer.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, the Beginning Teacher Induction Program was introduced to school districts in 1998. Under the guidance of a provincial steering committee, annual institutes involving teams from the school districts operating at that time resulted in extensive feedback and the beginnings of a province-wide implementation effort. Over the years, the NLTA published booklets in support of this. The publication, *Handbook for Beginning Teachers in Newfoundland and Labrador*, for instance, has circulated widely and has received many positive comments from teachers. Other components of induction have included orientation sessions for beginning teachers provided by the NLTA, school districts and individual schools. The NLTA continues to work with its educational partners to provide planned, formalized support to beginning teachers and to those other school-based professionals who go out of their way to help, the mentors. This handbook is part of that support.

I was mentored in my first year of teaching, and I firmly believe that I am the teacher I am today because of that. Now I have chosen to be a mentor. It's not a burden. I'll always be grateful to my mentor, and I am more than willing to walk that extra mile for someone else.

The Mentor's Role in the Teacher Induction Program

As a mentor, it is useful to keep in mind the broad picture that makes up teacher induction in this province. Mentorship is one part of this picture. You are not solely responsible for your beginning teacher's first-year experiences. Both you and the beginning teacher will work within a framework established by the NLTA, your school district and your school. A significant part of the process is your training for mentorship.

Before offering support to new teachers, it is also useful to reflect upon the profession, to determine the qualities we seek to develop in new teachers and to strengthen within ourselves. The program is based on involvement, reflection and awareness – involvement of as many supportive colleagues as possible; reflection on teaching practices; and ongoing awareness of underlying issues of professional esteem and school structure.

Assumptions

An effective induction program is based on a set of assumptions about what is necessary to support successful professional growth. It is through the concerted effort of professionals working together that successful induction occurs. We assume that

- All teachers need support
- Beginning teachers need more support than their experienced colleagues
- Support can take many forms
- One important element of support is personal contact
- Some of the beginning teachers' needs are of common concern and can be handled in a general way
- Other needs are individual and situation specific, requiring individual response
- Experienced colleagues and professionals should be accessible to those starting in the profession
- Beginning teachers also need to learn from themselves, analyzing their own practices, building on strengths and improving on weaknesses
- Building on their experiences, beginning teachers can become a resource for each other, sharing similar experiences
- Contact which is ongoing and frequent is more effective than sporadic or one-time contact

Goals

For an induction program to be successful, it must meet the needs of beginning teachers. These needs can be organized under three types of support: informational, personal and professional. This support can be offered at the provincial, district and school levels. Mentors at the school level are in the unique position of being able to gauge the level of support needed on a daily basis and to provide it as needed in a dependable, continuous way. The NLTA publication, *Handbook for Beginning Teachers in Newfoundland and Labrador*, is a valuable guide for your beginning teacher and a worthwhile resource for you. It describes in detail the kinds of tasks beginning teachers are faced with, many of which we take for granted as our experience grows, but which can seem daunting at first. As well, it is crucial that beginning teachers are provided with appropriate, up-to-date curriculum guides and associated resources.

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Informational Support

Beginning teachers require orientation to the role of educator. Providing informational support offers to:

- Help new teachers feel part of a team of professionals
- Integrate the beginning teacher into the broader professional environment
- Provide information about the school and the school district
- Provide positive perceptions of the school, the school district and the profession
- Help new teachers adapt to the school and community
- Transmit the culture of the school, the school district and the profession

Personal Support

Beginning teachers need to feel accepted and supported on a personal level. This is especially important for those who have made a significant move in order to take up a new position. Personal support strives to:

- Provide assistance on a continuing basis
- Be aware of and responsive to problems known to be common to beginning teachers
- Build personal and professional self-esteem
- Help beginning teachers balance the many demands placed on them

Professional Support

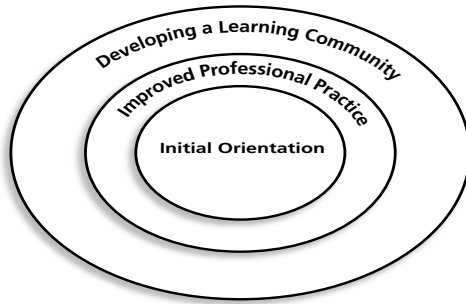
Induction programs can offer collaboration, coaching and modeling in order to:

- Assist in the development of knowledge skills
- Provide professional learning experiences
- Help beginning teachers develop their individual teaching styles
- Encourage a professional attitude which values learning, change and development
- Develop reflective practices
- Encourage self-assessment

Having established what the Teacher Induction Program is meant to be, it is also important to establish what it is not. *It is not an addendum to nor a replacement for the evaluation process that most beginning teachers undergo in their first year of teaching.* That evaluation, while it begins with a formative component, often leads to a summative assessment, usually for the purpose of granting tenure. The summative level of assessment falls under the jurisdiction of the school administration. While teacher induction may have very definite links to the evaluation process in that it is built upon the principles of reflection on practice for the purpose of improvement, it is not intended to formally become part of the evaluation process. The Teacher Induction Program is meant to create a non-judgmental environment where new teachers are not afraid to ask for help when they need it.

Foremost in our minds should be the fact that the beginning teachers of today are the educational leaders of tomorrow. As mentors, we have the responsibility, and the opportunity, to help guide them toward that end, for the ultimate benefit of all the students they will encounter.

Professional Community of Learners



Beginning teachers need help in moving from being in the Initial Orientation stage through working to Improved Professional Practice to finally taking part in a Professional Learning Community.

MENTORSHIP

The heart of a successful induction program is the mentorship that occurs at the school level. Mentorship is based on the belief that we can all learn from one another and that we have a professional responsibility toward our colleagues. It can be described as “a professional practice that occurs in the context of teaching whenever an experienced teacher supports, challenges and guides novice teachers in the teaching practice” (Odell & Hulling, 2000, p. xii). As a mentor, you have the opportunity to profoundly affect the professional life of a person beginning his or her career as an educator in our province. Being a mentor means assuming a role in a planned, purposeful relationship that has as its goal the movement of mentors and beginning teachers towards full partnerships in a professional learning community.

It was a rewarding experience to be a mentor because it helped me to realize

I had something to pass on to a new teacher. I realized how much I had to offer.

Informal Mentoring

Informal mentoring occurs all the time in our schools. No doubt you have been mentored informally, perhaps when you observed how well another teacher managed to gain the attention of her class by clapping rhythmically and having the children echo this back. Great idea! Perhaps you have had a recess-time discussion with another teacher about using technology in a way that piqued your interest, so much so that you subsequently tried out the technique with your class. Or perhaps you have watched in dismay as a disgruntled staff member managed to infect a beginning teacher with his or her cynical attitude that made teaching gradually become a daily grind. Informal mentoring occurs sporadically, is unplanned, is without long-term goals and can be uplifting or degenerating.

Informal mentoring will always take place in the induction of beginning teachers. Just as it takes a village to raise a child, so it may take an entire staff to support a beginning teacher. Nevertheless, mentoring that takes the form of occasional advice from a variety

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of sources is not likely to provide the ongoing quality of support needed by beginning teachers and will not help them develop the degree of professional competence that is the goal of a formalized program. There are several reasons for this.

- Beginning teachers are often reluctant to ask for the help they need
- More experienced teachers are unlikely to offer help unless it is requested
- Beginning teachers benefit from observing excellent teachers in action, and this is unlikely to occur without formalized parameters
- A hit-or-miss approach does not ensure beginning teachers can have access to the kind of support they need when they need it
- Informal mentoring operates “under the radar” and so does not receive crucial support from the school district or school administration that it needs to succeed
- The reflective practices which promote improved teaching are not likely to be part of unsupported mentorship efforts

Well-intentioned informal mentoring does result in providing teaching materials, classroom teaching strategies, units and long-range plans for the benefit of the beginning teachers in what could be referred to as an apprenticeship model. Unfortunately, the competence level of mentors does not increase under this model. No reflective practice is in place, and no collaborative action research is carried out by mentors or beginning teachers. While some help is offered to beginning teachers, the path to developing a professional community of learners is not clear.

I barely made it to Christmas my first year teaching. I thought that if I asked for help it would be an admission of incompetence, so I just closed my classroom door and let chaos reign. Finally, the principal intervened and sat me down for a talk. That helped, but it was humiliating. There was no mention of mentoring back then.

Formal Mentoring

Through the teacher induction program designed by the NLTA and hopefully operated in your district and school, there is support provided which fosters your developing professional relationship. In such a program, you and your beginning teacher can form a relationship in which each of you increases your professional competence. The mentoring relationship nurtures professional growth for both of you as you move into collaborative planning and reflective practices.

A good mentorship program has firm underpinnings. Not all the following factors may be in place for you, but having some of these will help support a successful mentoring relationship.

- Within the school and the district, a high value is placed on the induction of beginning teachers and on the contribution of more experienced teachers
- The matching of mentor to beginning teacher is carefully considered
- The roles and responsibilities of mentors and beginning teachers are clearly expressed
- Scheduled time together is given a priority
- Training is given to the mentors, thus increasing their confidence and expertise as

teachers of adults

- Beginning teachers are encouraged to develop a wider range of teaching practices and incorporate more challenging activities to engage students

It is well known that beginning teachers are more influenced by their first-year experiences than by their pre-service education. As well, these experiences are predictive of success and retention in the profession. It is critical, therefore, that beginning teachers are given the kind of planned support that will meet their informational, personal and professional needs at the time they most need it. Formal, structured, school-based mentoring that is strongly supported by the profession can ensure this happens.

Competence Levels after Informal and Formal Mentoring

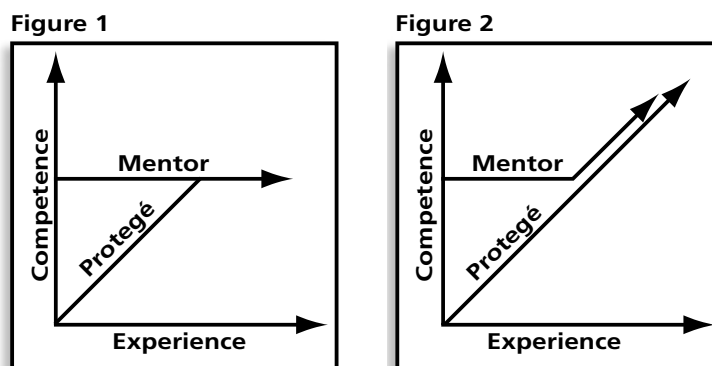


Figure 1 represents teacher growth in an informal “buddy” mentoring relationship.

Figure 2 shows how professional competence develops in both the beginning teacher and the mentor when the mentoring offered is supported within a formalized program.

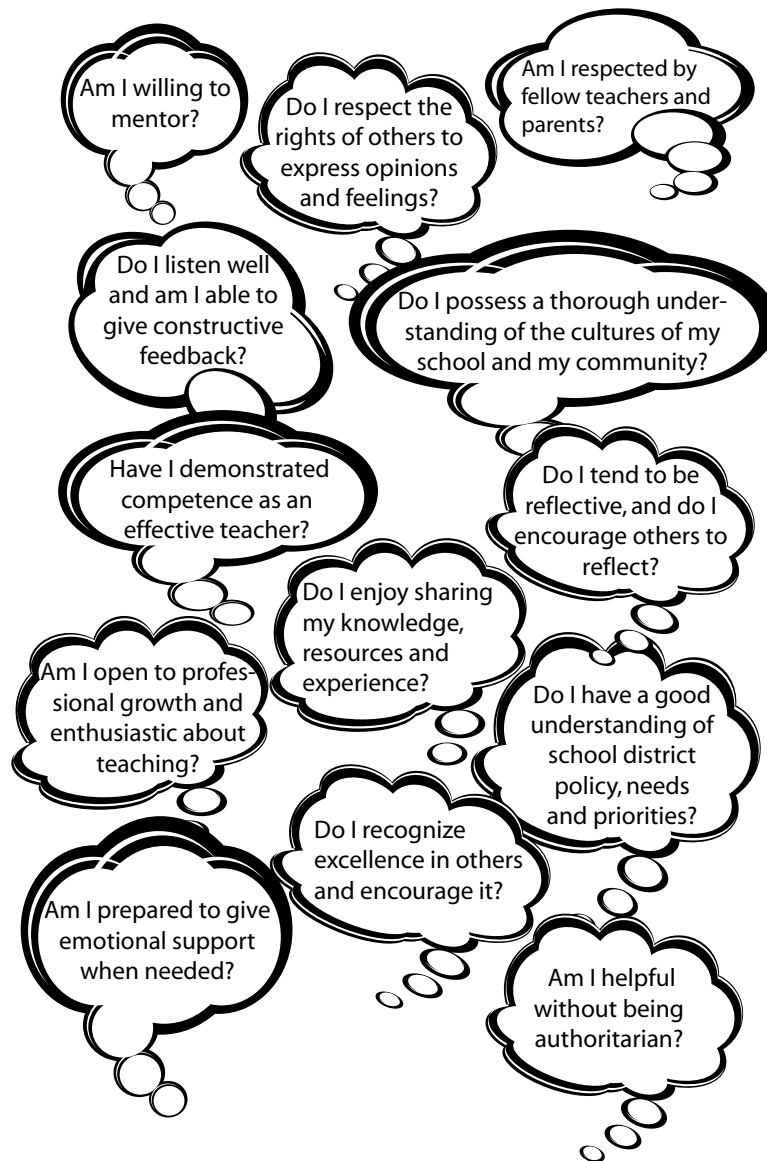
Will I Make an Effective Mentor?

If you are reading this, it is likely that you have been chosen to become a mentor. Usually it is the principal of the school who makes this decision. Being chosen is a reflection of your competence as a teacher and is an opportunity for you to grow even more professionally.

In choosing you, the principal was most likely influenced by a variety of factors. Most often, principals are attempting to meet the needs of the beginning teacher. It could be that the beginning teacher is very shy, and that the mentor chosen is known to be particularly sensitive and understanding. Perhaps the beginning teacher is overly confident, well into the anticipation phase of his or her year (see Phases of Teaching in the section “The Topsy-Turvy World of the Beginning Teacher” on page 16. The principal may pair this teacher with a mentor who is task oriented and a no-nonsense kind of person, one who will be able to give him or her the grounding needed. Then again, the mentor may have been chosen because s/he is the only one who volunteered!

Whatever the reason for your having been chosen, you may be asking yourself if you

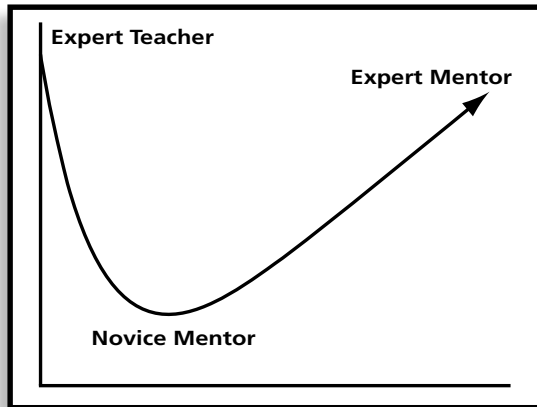
are up to the job. While personality and professional “styles” vary, there are certain characteristics which make some people more suited to the role. Here are some questions would-be mentors might like to ask themselves (of course, you may not see yourself reflected in every single point).



Despite what some may think, not all teachers with excellent teaching skills make helpful mentors. It may be they are intuitive teachers who find it difficult to articulate their experiences or coach someone in reflective practice. Just as great hockey players do not always make great coaches, excellent teachers of children might not make excellent coaches of adults. There is room for growth, however, even in those most suited to be mentors. In your year as mentor, you will doubtlessly find that your own professional skills will develop, and you will become an increasingly competent mentor.

It is important to be honest with yourself throughout the experience. Realizing your own strengths and weaknesses will help you as you offer guidance to your beginning teacher.

From Novice to Expert Mentor



Teachers, although expert at pedagogy, find that they begin as novice mentors. They, too, move through a learning cycle in terms of the mentoring process. As a mentor, you will need specific skills development in order to facilitate the professional growth of the beginning teacher. In a planned program, these skills are provided by a series of professional development seminars throughout the school year.

The Benefits of Mentoring

We all know that teaching is a busy job. Adding to it the responsibility of mentoring a beginning teacher is bound to make it more so. Given that mentoring brings with it a significant time commitment, it may be reassuring for you to know that, despite this, many teachers often agree to assume the role of mentor more than once. They have found that offering coaching and guidance to beginning teachers brings many rewards. Some of these may include

- The satisfaction of having contributed positively to the teaching profession
- A renewal of your commitment and enthusiasm
- Greater insights into your own teaching and that of others
- A refocusing on instructional practices and development of reflective skills
- The establishment of new relationships, both professional and personal
- Improved personal and professional well being
- Stronger leadership capabilities
- Increased ability to collaborate effectively
- Heightened job satisfaction
- Recognition of your status as an excellent teacher
- Access to the new ideas and technologies brought by the beginning teacher

Mentoring has been a two-way street for me. The junior teacher had energy and innovative ideas that I found refreshing. In turn, I was able to offer guidance based on my experience. It worked out well for both of us.

Offering Support to Your Beginning Teacher

As a mentor, you are offering to guide and coach a beginning teacher. *Yours is not a position of authority or evaluation – you and your beginning teacher are equals.* The advantage of your experience is often balanced by the newest research information and technical skills your beginning teacher brings to the partnership, as well as his or her uplifting energy and enthusiasm.

Mentoring Beginning Teachers

As you work through the school year with your beginning teacher, your relationship will evolve. As with any relationship, there are predictable patterns in its development, even though they are not hard and fast. Its evolution will depend on many factors that cannot be controlled. Try not to think of mentoring as a stilted, static or scripted set of steps. It is a fluid professional relationship that responds to the needs of the beginning teacher and the personal and professional style of the mentor. These will be as variable as the types of teaching situations to be found throughout our province and the personalities of the teachers and students involved in them.

The relationship you will develop with your beginning teacher will likely revolve around the three kinds of support that have been previously mentioned: informational, personal and professional. These are integral to any successful induction program.

Informational Support: The Practicalities

Beginning teachers will require practical information to help them navigate the written and unwritten policies and codes at the district and school levels. Support of this nature will help new teachers feel that they are part of a team of professionals. This important support can range from making sure they know where to find district policy guides to helping them fit into the “inner sanctum” of the staff room.

Especially during the first weeks of the school year, your beginning teacher will require a great deal of orientation to the job. This is the informational type of support needed to feel part of the professional community, to feel comfortable in the new building, to access needed supplies and to follow procedures correctly. Before the year starts, beginning teachers will want access to the following kinds of information.

- Logistical information, such as the layout of the school, parking arrangements, staffroom protocols, arrival and dismissal times
- Personnel information, including the names and location of the administrators, custodian, department heads, guidance counselor, secretary, student assistance and team or grade level leaders
- Student information, such as lists of homeroom students, indications of students with special needs and medical conditions and lists of students on diverse programs
- Other job-related information, such as procedures for opening day, class lists, forms needed for enrolment or parent information, student supply lists, curriculum guides, school handbooks and district policy manuals.

Throughout the year, your beginning teacher will have further need for this level of support. The NLTA publication *Handbook for Beginning Teachers in Newfoundland and Labrador* will give you many more ideas for the types of information your beginning teacher will require.

As a beginning teacher, I really appreciated the help my mentor gave me. He showed me all the things they don't teach you in university, the realistic, everyday, run-of-the-mill classroom stuff. He walked me through a mock parent-teacher interview so I'd know what to expect and showed me how to take attendance, that kind of thing.

Personal Support: The Human Factor

Our province is filled with warm and welcoming people. It's a Newfoundland and Labrador social tradition on first meeting to establish connections, tracing shared links to communities and families. Some of you may take this further – exploring mutual interests, likes and dislikes and even life stories. Others will be more reticent, preferring to focus on the informational and professional aspects of your relationship with your beginning teacher and keeping your personal life private. There is no right approach, and certainly, you should not feel you have to compromise your privacy in order to bond with your beginning teacher. It should be noted, however, that a shared personal understanding is the basis of respect and communication. Even though the mentoring relationship is first and foremost a professional one, some degree of personal connection can help overcome tensions and promote trust.

The extent to which your relationship will become personal will likely depend on your beginning teacher's need for mentoring at that level, and your comfort zones for disclosure and openness. Some beginning teachers will be away from home for the first time, and if their first jobs are in communities very different from those they are used to, they are bound to need social support. Given the welcoming nature of most of our teachers, you will not have to take on the full responsibility of ensuring this occurs. It may be up to you, however, to help ensure your beginning teacher takes time to develop personal connections within school and within the community and to formulate a balance between his or her professional and recreational activities.

Professional Support: Aiming High

The beginning teacher you are paired with will want to be the best teacher possible for his or her students. Helping beginning teachers develop their professional competence is the most important and rewarding goal of mentoring. Effective teachers develop their skills over time. The role of mentors is to offer support and guidance to novice practitioners over the course of at least one year so that their skills and their confidence grow in a positive way. Such support will ensure that beginning teachers are able to educate children in a manner consistent with their professional values, using techniques which preserve the dignity of children, and offering children instruction and activities which enhance their intellectual, emotional and spiritual development.

A planned mentor program will help you develop your skills so that you can guide your beginning teacher effectively from an initial orientation to taking an active part in the larger professional community. Reflective practices, shared planning and open discussion are all valuable approaches to communicating with your beginning teacher.

- Observe and provide feedback to the beginning teacher
- Offer tactful communication in the spirit of trust
- When needed, offer sound advice regarding teaching practices, professional conduct and the culture of your school and community
- Support the beginning teacher in the development of his/her own strategies for teaching
- Assist in identifying personal strengths and planning for further professional growth

Getting Started

As you begin your mentoring, you and your beginning teacher will negotiate the initial expectations of the relationship. You must decide how you can manage to get together and how often you will meet. Perhaps your administration has paired one or two of your preparation periods, or perhaps you can organize your supervision time together.

You will likely have to initiate most of the contact at first. Discussing the following actions will help structure your meetings and ensure they do occur. Research has shown that beginning teachers are often reluctant to ask for help.

- Finding a convenient time and place to meet – you are likely to meet more often in the first months than later on in the year
- Deciding on the length of meeting times (keep them short!)
- Allowing the beginning teacher to determine the kind of assistance needed and ensuring that his or her concerns are the focus of your meetings
- Being open to including others who can help

During this start-up time, it might become obvious to either you or the beginning teacher that a working relationship between the two of you is not likely to succeed. If you feel this strongly, be aware that you will need to maintain some relationship – you are on the same staff – but that this needs to be redefined from mentoring the beginning teacher to being colleagues. Take your concerns to your principal and have another mentor assigned to the beginning teacher. Read on for information about the fears mentors have and for common pitfalls in mentoring.

Fears Expressed About Mentoring

Relationships are seldom problem free. Some would-be mentors are cautious about committing themselves to the role because they are fearful something will go wrong. Here are some fears expressed by mentors, followed by suggestions that will hopefully address any concerns you may have.

Committing to a Relationship That Will Not Work

Mentors are sometimes fearful of entering a year-long commitment in case the relationship sours thus causing their regular professional interaction to become awkward. Easing into the mentoring relationship by first becoming acquainted through sharing interests, values and professional expectations will increase the likelihood that a solid foundation will develop. Hopefully, this initial bond will enable you to smooth over any irritants or disagreements. If, however, it is obvious from the start that your relationship is mismatched, now is the time to make changes. Engage the help of the principal to see that the beginning teacher is reassigned to another mentor, bearing in mind that you will continue to be a colleague of the beginning teacher.

Mentor's Professional Image Threatened

As an experienced teacher, you may be fearful that if the beginning teacher you are working with does not have a successful year, this will reflect on your competence and reputation. It is more likely, however, that acknowledging a wrong career choice would be seen as a positive step for the young teacher, and the mentor would be seen as having done his/her best to support the teacher throughout the year and in making that difficult decision. Experienced mentors encourage beginning teachers to consult

many others in the educational community so that the support they receive is broad and varied. As a mentor, you are there to offer guidance; it is up to the beginning teacher to make use of it.

Am I Really Necessary?

Before undertaking any training as a mentor, you may be fearful that you are not able to fulfill the responsibilities of guiding a beginning teacher. Becoming a mentor through a formal program means there is support provided to you. Through this professional support, you will learn how to communicate with and effectively guide your partner, strengthening your own repertoire of skills at the same time. Being asked to be a mentor means others have strong faith in your ability to undertake the task.

Rivalry

You may fear that the beginning teacher will, in time, after learning all your trade secrets, surpass you. Mentorship, rather, is of reciprocal benefit. Beginning teachers often have the newest research in education to bring to the mentoring process. This will act to further your own professional development. The purpose of a mentorship program is to advance the expertise of both you and your beginning teacher. In such a positive environment, rivalry plays no part.

Possible Pitfalls

Once you have taken on the role of mentor, it is wise to anticipate the pitfalls that may get in the way of the mentor/beginning teacher relationship. Being prepared for these will lessen the chance that friction will develop between you. Consider these possible situations, traps that are surprisingly easy to fall into.

Allow for Elbow Room

Mentors are there to help, but sometimes beginning teachers must be given room to make their own decisions and find their own way. Sometimes they need to make mistakes. These are not a reflection on you, but rather an affirmation that the beginning teacher is free to make choices. You are there to offer help, not to control. Sometimes a beginning teacher will ask others for their assistance; this is not a rejection of you. Look upon it as another way the beginning teacher has of finding his or her path.

Be a Guide on the Side

Beginning teachers look to their mentors for guidance and to learn. You can offer suggestions, but it is up to the beginning teacher to accept or reject them. When they do well, their successes are their successes; let them take credit for what they do. Enjoy these successes from the sidelines and join in the applause.

Don't Keep Score

Good mentors can ease the way for their beginning teachers. Your introductions and praise may result in some sort of advancement or positive outcome for your beginning teacher. Your favours, however, do not have to be returned. There is no scorecard to be kept – it is likely after all that you are in a better position to give.



The WISC Scores for the ADD Students Go in the ISSP File ASAP!

Using the educational jargon and acronyms that abound can make your beginning teacher feel alienated and incompetent. Help decode the language and help make your beginning teacher feel part of the group.

I Told You Once, I Told You Twice...

Beginning teachers are learning at an accelerated pace and are undergoing all kinds of emotional turmoil. You may have to explain things more than once. Be patient.

You're Not the Boss of Me

This is not a relationship in which evaluation plays any part. Honour your relationship and do not make any evaluative comments about your beginning teachers to anyone, especially the administration. Your job is to assist, not to assess.

It's a Roller Coaster Ride!

The first year of teaching can be highly charged emotionally, with lots of ups and downs. There may be emotional trauma outside the school life of the beginning teacher to which the mentor is not privy. Events and incidents that may seem minor to you may be very upsetting to your beginning teacher. Take his or her concerns seriously. As your beginning teacher grows in confidence, s/he will gain a more balanced perspective on day-to-day challenges.

I was lucky to have the mentor I did. I was away from home for the first time and was really lonely at first. She noticed that and made an effort to hook me up with other people in the community so that I felt part of something outside school. That helped a lot as at times I felt I was drowning in school work.

THE TOPSY-TURVY WORLD OF THE BEGINNING TEACHER

As you probably remember, the first year of teaching can be somewhat chaotic, emotionally draining and physically exhausting. Beginning teachers are confronted with the real world of the classroom and respond emotionally to the challenges they face. The first year is seldom exactly what they thought it would be.

As a mentor, I felt I was there to ground my beginning teacher. They feel they can take on the world, and you don't want to see them burned out in three months. I was always there with support.

Phases of Teaching

Moir (1990) has identified phases she believes beginning teachers go through during their first year of service. Experienced teachers who take on or are handed new assignments may show similar reactions as they struggle to adapt to changing circumstances. The phases listed which describe that first year reoccur over the years, although with less intensity as experience grows. What is important is that teachers not get stuck in any one of these phases, and that the phases are treated as part of the normal pattern of the school experience.

Anticipation: This feeling of excitement takes place before beginning teachers start the school year and lasts a few weeks into it. This has also been referred to as the “fantasy phase” in reference to the unrealistic expectations beginning teachers have about what their new role entails.

Survival: This often occurs within the first month of teaching as beginning teachers experience situations and problems for which they feel inadequately prepared. They find themselves particularly overwhelmed by the constant work of developing curriculum and find they have little time to reflect. It is not uncommon for beginning teachers to be working 70 hours a week preparing their classes. This is a dangerous time for those with little or no support as they can get mired in work, afraid to ask for help and unsure of where to turn. Mentored beginning teachers, although still likely to enter this phase, are much more likely to continue to move along the continuum of emotions. It is at this phase and at the next that the mentor is needed most.

Disillusionment: At this stage, beginning teachers question their own competence and their choice of profession. The disparity between the expectation of teaching and its reality hits home, and beginning teachers realize that a whole new arsenal of strategies will be necessary in order to succeed. They must prepare for that first student evaluation of the school year and deal with parent-teacher conferences. They are often exhausted. All beginning teachers will need support to move beyond this phase, for it is important that the beginning teacher not become entrenched in a negative mindset, casting blame on others for their difficulties.

Rejuvenation: Here, new teachers begin to accept the realities of teaching and adjust their teaching practices. They begin to feel a sense of accomplishment. This will expand more and more as the teacher’s confidence builds over the course of his or her new career. It is the mentor who can spur on this sense of competence by noting and celebrating successes and by encouraging beginning teachers in their journeys towards professional excellence.

Reflection: Here, beginning teachers reflect on the accomplishments of the past year and confirm their commitment to teaching. This stage occurs repeatedly throughout their careers, leading to stronger and more confident professionalism.

Renewed Anticipation: Teachers return to their initial enthusiastic anticipation as their teaching career continues. This time, however, the anticipation is grounded in reality. Most teachers find that anticipation of the upcoming year returns every year as September rolls around.

When mentoring first-year teachers, it is important to keep in mind their emotional state as they move through these various stages. One of the greatest needs of first-year teachers is emotional support in personal and professional matters. Mentors, however, should not feel they must be the only ones supporting beginning teachers. It could be that the emotional support could best be provided by another beginning teacher on staff, or by another experienced teacher the beginning teacher has befriended. Mentors shouldn’t feel let down if their beginning teacher takes personal concerns to others. Induction is a shared task; the mentor has volunteered to take on the bulk of the responsibility but can be helped by other willing volunteers who have the best interest of the beginning teacher at heart.



Decoding the School Culture

It's hard for any of us to interpret our culture. We live in it and we use its unwritten rules to guide our conduct. Its invisible presence makes us feel comfortable and secure. If you have ever had a chance to step into an unfamiliar culture, you will realize that your inability to know exactly how to behave can make you feel uneasy. Every school has its own culture, and sometimes it's not until teachers move to a new school that the concept of school culture becomes real to them.

Your school has a host of unwritten rules which direct how its “livyers” communicate, avoid offending others, negotiate the sharing of equipment, tolerate various types of humour and so on. Every staff room has its taboos (wash your coffee mug, don't even think of leaving it in the sink; the chair at the head of the staff room table is the exclusive domain of the storyteller on staff, better not sit there...) which are often unwritten. Teachers in small schools with a staff of three or four will likely have very different relationships to each other than those teachers in large high schools in which there are lounges for each academic department. Some schools prefer to maintain casual relations among staff members while others operate in a more formal manner.

Schools are sometimes compared to families. Families have personalities: formal/informal; humorous/serious; tolerant/critical; charismatic/negative. They operate within the constraints of a prescribed cast of characters. We all know the saying that you can't choose your family. You often don't choose your colleagues either! Beginning teachers know nothing about the particular culture of their new schools. As mentors, you have the opportunity to help them negotiate their way to acceptance and comfortable relationships within the school and within the framework of the NLTA Code of Ethics (see Appendix).

Time Management

Time can be a real adversary to the beginning teacher. As the reality of teaching comes crashing in, especially at the start of the year, beginning teachers will need tips on how to control their work load in order to create a balance in their lives. The following tips, together with ones you have developed in managing your own time, can help organize their lives and help them feel in control.

- Suggest that your beginning teacher arrive at school each day prepared for all scheduled classes, meetings and events. This will make it easier to handle the unforeseen tasks that invariably arise and must be dealt with.
- As activities mount, your beginning teacher should prioritize them according to their importance and urgency. It might help to keep lists of “tasks to do” in an accessible place, such as a plan book, and check the list often to keep focused on what is important.
- Stress to your beginning teacher the value of the “no” word, and support her use of it when she must decline additional responsibilities.
- Suggest that your beginning teacher aims for, and sticks with, a specific time to stop work each day.
- Urge your beginning teacher to do as much planning in school time as possible. It's helpful to find a quiet area where it's easy to focus; it's also helpful to protect this spot by closing the door or putting a sign outside that says “Planning in Progress.”

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- Beginning teachers usually enjoy involving themselves in “extra curricular” activities with students but should take care to limit themselves; they do not have to take on everything.
 - Even if your beginning teacher is not directly responsible for leading extra curricular activities, suggest that he occasionally watch his students as they participate in them. Attending student events such as basketball games or dramatic performances will give a new and valuable perspective on his students, and the students will certainly appreciate the attention.
 - Help your beginning teacher to delegate jobs such as creating bulletin boards, tidying the classroom or photocopying. Suggest ways to lessen the workload and to include parents or responsible students in a positive way.
 - Let your beginning teacher know that it’s a good idea to get correcting done as soon after it is collected as possible and return it promptly to students. Tasks deferred tend to get harder to start.
 - Beginning teachers should schedule down time for themselves every day, whether it is taking a walk at lunch time or relaxing in the staff room. If you notice that your beginning teacher is not showing up in the staff room, take time to investigate why.

The first year of teaching is really a year of learning on the job. University education can only go so far in preparing prospective teachers for what they will eventually encounter. The learning curve is steep, as we all remember. As a mentor, you play a crucial role in helping to determine the outcome of that first teaching experience.

I think my beginning teacher felt an enormous sense of relief to have a mentor.

There was someone there for her. She would ask me for advice and use me as a sounding board. She felt more secure having me on her side.

MENTORING SKILLS

As a mentor, you will be guiding an adult learner. A different set of skills from those used in the regular classroom is necessary. The techniques you will use as a mentor are ones you can apply to your own professional growth, helping you to reflect and observe, enhancing your own teaching practices as well as those of the beginning teacher. In your work with your beginning teacher, your thinking and reflecting become explicit. As you read on, you may find that you are already using these techniques, recommended by researchers, to guide your beginning teacher.

Becoming a Reflective Practitioner

David Schön, among others, has developed the concept of the reflective practitioner. He believes that professionals deepen their understanding and their ability to respond appropriately to new situations through the process of reflecting on their professional behaviour. Schön has described two kinds of reflective practices in which teachers learn to learn from their own experiences.



Schön has identified the concept of “reflection-*in*-action,” which is what you and all teachers do daily: think on your feet. When a new and unanticipated event occurs in your classroom, you must think quickly. In order to make a good judgment call and respond appropriately, you quickly review your experiences and try to find a response that fits this new situation. Repeated reflection-*in*-action builds new understandings as you consider new and unique situations and connect them to prior understandings and experiences.

Schön’s “reflection-*on*-action” occurs later, after the spontaneous event has occurred. You discuss or write up your responses to this event, exploring why you acted as you did. This practice deepens your understanding of events through introspection and allows you to build up a repertoire of ideas, examples and actions from which you can draw in the future. A large repertoire gives you more choices when faced with new situations. In your classroom, you go back to reflection-*in*-action on a daily basis, quickly reviewing your experiences and drawing on those you believe would best fit.

Understanding Schön’s concept of building an ever-increasingly complex repertoire of responses helps beginning teachers deal with new situations in a more controlled way. Learning is less haphazard if it is followed with analysis that is guided and has as its end a deeper understanding of professional practice. Learning to reflect is not easy. You may have to model this technique for your beginning teacher. One way to do this is through an interactive journal.

Reflective Journals

Keeping a journal of events and reactions to them is a useful tool for beginning teachers. This activity is used to aid in the reflection process and adds the dimension of acknowledging and validating the concerns of beginning teachers. It encourages them to reflect on their practices and is part of the reflection-*on*-action concept advocated by Schön. The interactive journal takes this process one step further, with both you and your beginning teacher contributing to the journal. Encouraging the use of this journal has the added benefits of sanctioning time for reflection and forcing beginning teachers to consider their practices. It also allows you time to reflect on the responses you wish to give to your beginning teacher. The interactive journal is a considered dialogue, allowing you insight into the thinking of your beginning teacher and offering your beginning teacher new approaches to puzzling situations. It has the added benefit of encouraging you to develop fresh insight into your own professional practice, allowing you the opportunity to develop, change and grow. The journal can take several forms, perhaps as a traditional book journal, or it can take place through e-mail entries.

It is important to remember that, as you respond to entries in the journal, you are a guide only. Your role is to suggest, act as a mirror, offer support. Your journal responses should not be didactic since this defeats the purpose of helping the beginning teacher develop a unique teaching style that reflects her/his own values and beliefs. Here are some guidelines you can use as you respond to the journal entries of your beginning teacher.

To express empathy

- That must have been frustrating...
- It’s difficult to know what to do in that situation. Here are some ... to consider
- I would have been hurt if that had happened to me.

To personalize your response

- When this type of situation has happened to me, I tried to...
- I felt just the same way when...

Make connections for the beginning teacher

- When you first mentioned... I thought...
- Your first entry mentioned...and now I see that your thinking has changed...
- Many of your recent entries have noted...
- What do you think the relationship is between... and...?

Paraphrase important ideas and feelings

- You seem to be saying...
- I notice that you...

Ask questions that encourage the beginning teacher to probe deeper

- What might happen if you try...?
- How do you think the students might react if you...?
- What do you see as...?

When asked for your suggestions, offer them tactfully

- These are a few things I've tried in the same kind of situation...
- Some ideas might be to...
- Sometimes it helps to... How do you think that might work for you?

Do not feel that you have to find the perfect solution for your beginning teacher. Let him/her decide what to do, offering several possibilities. Trust that if an idea is good, the beginning teacher will recognize its worth.





Sample Interactive Journal Entry Between a Beginning Middle School English Teacher and Her Mentor

Beginning Teacher:

November 23rd: Today I finally felt that I had the attention of all my students for most of the class. We read and discussed a poem about a boy who loses his hand and then his life as a result of a chain saw accident. It was probably the subject matter that interested them the most, but we did have some good discussion. And that leads to my main problem. Everyone wanted to have their say, and I found it difficult to keep order in the discussion without putting a damper on the students' enthusiasm. If I tried making them take turns, they tended to forget what it was they wanted to say, and the discussion was less spontaneous. I was uncomfortable with how chaotic the discussion became and probably ended it before we had come to any resolution about what we all felt. It's so easy for enthusiasm to become disruption! I'd appreciate any insights you have about how I might have handled the discussion better.

Mentor:

Congratulations on having an exciting and provocative class! I am sure your students must have enjoyed the poem, and you did engage them in discussion that kept them interested. I've had the same problem with runaway discussions. Some groups of students are able to handle discussion better than others, but having a large group discussion is always a challenge at this age level. I've tried several things, and really, it depends on the group what is successful, so it's a bit of trial and error. Have you considered having the students discuss issues in small groups? This age group often responds positively to smaller situations. Jean Druthers is a real expert in handling groups within her class. If you like, I will ask her if you could observe one of her classes in the next week or so, or if you prefer, we could meet with her together to pick her brain. I'd be interested in learning more about grouping as well. Let me know what you think. And don't despair! Having an excited group of Grade 9 students in English is a great start!!

Topics for Reflective Journals

Writing reflectively does not come naturally to the majority of people. There is a natural tendency to relate events rather than to question “why” and “how.” Providing your beginning teacher with possible topics and questions might spark deeper thinking in their self-reflecting writings. Here are some thought-provoking questions to tempt them.

- What successes did I have this week? Why did these activities work well?
- What could have gone better? Now that I can look back, how could I have changed the way I handled certain situations?
- What took up most of my time this week? Is there a way I could have wasted less time or used my time more efficiently?
- What happened in my classes that made me proud of my students? Why was I so proud, and how did I show my students how I felt? How did they react?
- What student behaviours challenged me this week? How did I react? Now that I can look back, how could I have improved my reaction?
- Am I improving in any way over the previous week? Is there anything I did this week that was a result of having learned something the week before? Am I building a repertoire of responses or instructional strategies?
- If I could give a couple of pieces of advice to another beginning teacher, what would I say? Why would I choose those pieces of advice?
- Can I see improvement in how my students are learning? Am I getting better at understanding what they need in order to learn well? Can I list some of their learning needs?
- What students are posing the greatest challenges to me? What are the challenges? How do they make me feel? What can I do to make my responses more professional and measured? Is there anyone on staff who could give me advice?
- Am I keeping in touch with students’ homes? Do the parents of my students know what is going on in my classroom and how their children are achieving? Is there anything I can do to improve my communication with parents?

Promoting journal writing to beginning teachers can have lasting and meaningful consequences. It gives them an opportunity to map their growth over this crucial first year, and re-reading their entries can assure them that positive change is indeed occurring.

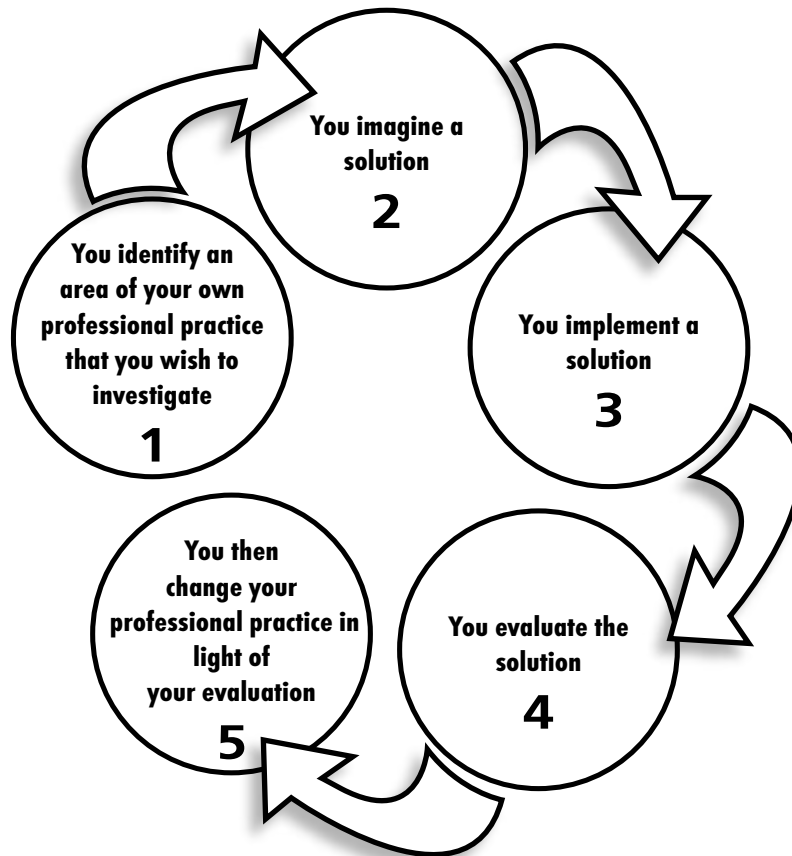
Action Research

Action research is a practical way of looking at your own work in order to check that it is as you would wish it to be. It is a self-reflective practice that helps you systematically investigate your own behaviour and the reasons for it. Using action research helps you become more authentic in your professional practice. Using it, you work towards matching your values with your professional practice so that you are living and working in a way that you feel is right for you. It helps to formalize your learning and gives a clear and justified account of your work as a continuing regular feature of your practice.



As a mentor, you may wish to encourage your beginning teacher to engage in action research as a way of solving some of the issues that arise in the classroom. It is a collaborative approach; you will no doubt find your own professional practice changed by your involvement in it.

There is no one way to carry out action research. Generally, though, it can be seen as a cycle or spiral of cycles involving these steps.



Movement through these steps might be haphazard, and you might find you make changes as you move along. One way of working through the steps is to formulate a series of questions that encourages systematic planning of action research. This allows you to validate your claim that you have indeed improved a situation which you have set out to improve.

Here are questions you might ask yourself as you work through your action plan and some explanation about what these questions involve. These will help you as you guide your beginning teacher to develop his/her own action plan.

- *What issue am I interested in researching?* You must ensure that the issue you are going to focus on is one that you can actually affect and that you have the time and energy to handle. For instance, deciding that you would like to investigate your professional practice to see if you could accommodate all the needs of the diverse students in your class in all areas of the curriculum is an enormous undertaking. Focusing on accommodating diverse needs in a particular unit in math might be more practical.

Formulate a research question, such as “How can I more actively engage the five special needs students in my class when I am teaching decimals?”

- *Why do I want to research this issue?* This question relates to your value system. Perhaps your sense of fairness leads you to have a strongly-held belief that all students should participate in learning the same subject matter in your classes at the same time, regardless of ability.
- *What kind of evidence can I gather to show why I am interested in this issue?* Your aim here is to gather evidence, through whatever means suits you (journal, videotape, questionnaire, notes...), that will enable you to share with others your view that the situation in your class is not as you wish it to be. Perhaps you will periodically note how many students are actually working on what you have assigned and how many are off task. Your aim is to gather as much data as you feel is necessary to justify your view. At the same time, you can develop criteria that will help you decide that the changes you make have worked.
- *What can I do? What will I do?* You now imagine ways in which you can improve the situation you have observed. You can consult others for ideas, but the plan you develop must be one you believe will work in your situation. Consider your options carefully so that you do not overload yourself with too high expectations. Consider the time, energy and resources you will need to fulfill your goal. Try out your ideas. You may find that more than one idea works, or perhaps none works as well as you had hoped. In this case, you can scrap the plan completely, or perhaps decide to readjust some aspects until you gain success.
- *What kind of evidence can I gather to show that I am having an influence?* Using the criteria you developed earlier, and perhaps adjusting them to suit the situation, gather more evidence in the form of journals, videos, notes or another format suited to the situation so that you can make a judgment on whether or not you have positively affected the target situation. Others can help you decide whether or not there has been improvement.
- *How can I explain that influence?* Action research does not occur in a vacuum. Others will likely be influenced by your changing practice. Your action plan has been collaboratively developed, and your willingness to question your own practices and to systematically develop a way to improve your teaching practice will no doubt influence others working with you. You will want to show that your changing practices did actually have the desired positive effect.
- *How can I ensure that any judgments that I might make are reasonably fair and accurate?* Action research is not an exact science; you will not be able to “prove” the accuracy of your results. You should be able to show reasonable evidence that your changing practice did bring about the desired results, thus justifying your claims.
- *How will I change my practice in light of my evaluation?* Action research occurs in real classrooms and is undertaken by real teachers. By its very nature it does not come to an abrupt end. Over the course of conducting action research, new questions arise and other issues emerge. Action research becomes an approach you take to achieve consistency between your deeply-held values and your professional practice.

Action research is an effective tool to use in promoting a professional community of learners; it is collaborative. There is no right answer apart from what the teacher involved feels is right for his/her own situation. There is no leader; all participants are equal learners and contributors in the process of questioning, trying out, evaluating and deciding. Different solutions can be gleaned from shared action research, all contributing to the professional growth of the teachers involved. It is positive self evaluation that encourages this same type of evaluation in others. To engage in action research with your beginning teacher brings you both closer to developing a professional community of learners.

For more information on action research, see the listed websites in the Resources section of this booklet.

*Mentoring encouraged me to look at my own practices
after so many years of teaching. I found it to be very positive.*

Classroom Visits

You and your beginning teacher are engaged in mutual learning. Experiences you share provide both of you with the opportunity for dialogue about the teaching process and are designed to enhance your teaching performance, and thus your students' learning. Shared experiences can include team teaching and team planning, but one of the most effective shared experiences is observing each other in the classroom.

Reciprocal classroom visits provide powerful opportunities for learning and professional growth. For your beginning teacher to see how an experienced person handles everyday issues is surely an example of learning in the most meaningful context possible. You can imagine how difficult it would be to coach a budding hockey player by just talking over strategy and technique. How much better it would be to actually get on the ice together and demonstrate shots and saves, or participate together in a real game. Reciprocal visits provide potent opportunities for discussions that are meaningful and fruitful for both of you. Access to another's class can provide just-in-time learning for the new teacher and can also give experienced teachers the opportunity to rethink practices and to give voice to beliefs about the teaching process. Both of you can use classroom visits to develop insight into what you do in the classroom and to reflect on why you do these things. Reciprocal visits can assist new teachers in developing their Professional Growth Plan and can play a role in tailoring yours as well.

Inviting the beginning teacher to observe your class first may make reciprocal classroom visits less threatening. An invitation from your beginning teacher to visit his or her classroom may or may not be forthcoming, but by offering to go first, you are opening up the possibility of a reciprocal visit. And remember, there are other experienced teachers who may be willing to be observed and who can offer different approaches to issues such as classroom management or dealing with diverse learners and diverse learning styles.

Inviting the Beginning Teacher In

Over the course of your discussions with your beginning teacher, his/her concerns will become obvious. Some of these will no doubt relate to instructional practices. Observing another professional deal with these issues is a wonderful way to gain insight into possible solutions and to spark creative ideas. While you are certain to increase your own professional learning along the way, it is the beginning teacher who has the most to gain from observing an experienced teacher in action and from having an experienced teacher observe him/her and engage in focused reflection afterwards.

In offering to model instructional practices, you are not presuming to have all the answers. It is true you are offering your beginning teacher a wonderful gift of sharing and trust. Yet most of us are not used to having another adult in our classrooms. Even though what we do each day is public, we are not used to professional scrutiny. Inviting another professional into our classes is generous and can be one of the most instructive experiences your beginning teacher will have.

- Try to ensure that both of you will be comfortable with the visit. It will help you and your beginning teacher get the most from the experience. It's important that the visit to your classroom be formalized through an explicit structure.
- State a specific time for the visit and ensure that any obstacles that may arise are overcome. Your principal can play a role in freeing up the beginning teacher or removing any administrative barriers that arise.
- Discuss with your beginning teacher what specific aspect of teaching s/he would like to focus on in the observation. This will help focus the discussion later and will help the beginning teacher get the most out of the experience. It will also give you ideas for what aspects of teaching you may wish to model. It is likely that your beginning teacher will be quite aware of his or her own needs at this stage and will want techniques that suit these needs. Let him or her provide the focus.
- Give the beginning teacher some background to the class s/he will observe. What new concept(s) will you be teaching? Have you prepared the students for this new concept, and if so, how? Are there special considerations in this class, such as diverse learners or particular behavioural issues? Will you be trying a new grouping technique? What do you expect the students to learn? How will you assess that learning has taken place? Remember that in this process you are verbalizing and modeling the necessary thinking that takes place in planning for instruction.
- Let the beginning teacher know how you want him/her to enter your classroom with the least disruption. Arrange for comfortable seating beforehand.
- Ensure that you meet to discuss the classroom experience as soon after the visit as possible. Be prepared to answer questions and discuss the techniques you used during your lesson. You may be able to offer a book or journal article on some area that interests your beginning teacher. Remember that this is a shared reflective exploration. Your beginning teacher will not expect you to have answers to all questions, and, indeed, the class may not have gone as you may have wished. Your beginning teacher will appreciate your candid reflections about how the class unfolded.



A mentor will not likely be accepted as a friend and confidant if an authoritarian tone is taken or if the mentor presumes to be a perfect teacher. This is a wonderful opportunity to present yourself as a co-learner, one who does not always have the answers, but who is willing to try different techniques for the benefit of your students. Once an atmosphere of mutual trust is established, it may become possible to be more direct with comments when the situation is reversed and you are invited into the beginning teacher's classroom.

Visiting the Beginning Teacher's Classroom

Once your beginning teacher has visited your classroom, the possibility of a reciprocal visit is much more likely. You can broach the possibility, but it's up to the beginning teacher to invite you in. Perhaps it would be more comfortable to have a short visit the first time instead of a full class period. Let your beginning teacher establish those comfort zones and respect her feelings of trepidation. To get the most out of the visit for both of you try following these suggestions.

- Decide in advance what the beginning teacher would like you to focus on in your observation. Most beginning teachers will have come to realize what it is they need to know. Let the beginning teacher determine what aspects of his/her teaching needs to be the focus of your visit.
- Decide what form the observation will take. Perhaps the beginning teacher would prefer you to just observe without taking notes. Or perhaps noted comments would be welcome as a focal point for later discussion. Video taping or audio taping the class is another option. Any data collected should be given to the beginning teacher immediately after the session. Written notes may need to be polished first but should be delivered to the beginning teacher as soon as possible.
- Definite plans should be made for when the observation session will take place and how long it will last. The beginning teacher should decide how you will enter the classroom and where you will sit.
- On the day of the observation, the beginning teacher should quickly review with you what the plan is for the class. This will refamiliarize both of you with the focus of the observation.
- After the observation, you should meet with the beginning teacher as soon as possible to discuss the observed class. Remember you are not there to make judgments, but to assist the beginning teacher in developing reflective skills and hone the ability to teach. Allow the beginning teacher to direct the discussion. Be low key and positive. Do not offer any critique unless it is specifically requested. Ask questions that will prompt introspection.
- Remember that a violation of trust can destroy respect and any future relationship of collegiality. Tread lightly and offer as much constructive feedback as you are asked for. Observe confidentiality.

The prospect of having another adult in your classroom can be uncomfortable, regardless of your degree of experience. Inviting another teacher into your class is a generous gesture, sure to have a powerful impact on the development of your beginning teacher.

Beginning teachers rarely appreciate mentors who have the right answers to every question and the best solutions for every problem. Good mentor teachers are transparent about their own search for better answers and more effective solutions to their own problems.

James B. Rowley, "The Good Mentor," *Educational Leadership*, May 1999

ADMINISTRATION'S ROLE IN THE TEACHER INDUCTION PROGRAM

The NLTA has developed a support document for administrators outlining their role in the teacher induction program. As would be expected, administrative support for mentorship within the school is essential. It is incumbent on the principal to become knowledgeable about the program and to provide input into designing its implementation within his or her school. To demonstrate support, the principal should take the responsibility to

- Inform the staff about the program and its benefits
- Inform beginning teachers and mentors about the program
- Recognize the role of the mentor as the day-to-day and first-line support for new teachers
- Understand the importance of trust and confidentiality in the mentor/beginning teacher relationship
- Identify mentors and establish beginning teacher/mentor partnerships

A critical role of the administrator is to identify mentors and establish partnerships. The perfect match between mentor and beginning teacher is not always possible. Some schools have large staff turnovers on an annual basis, and experienced mentors may opt to take a rest every few years. Some schools have such small staff numbers that whoever is willing is paired with the newest teacher. Experience has shown, though, that unlikely matches are sometimes more successful than anyone could have predicted. There is an intangible chemistry that can overcome relationships that may have seemed dubious at first glance. The characteristics which predict a successful relationship most often is the willingness to mentor and a strong belief that success can be met.

If you, or your administrator, require more information about the role of administration in the induction of beginning teachers, please contact the NLTA for a copy of the booklet *The Administrator's Role in Supporting Beginning Teachers*.

A crucial characteristic of mentors is the ability to communicate their belief that a person is capable of transcending present challenges and of accomplishing great things in the future.

Lasley, 1996

*Mentoring
Beginning
Teachers*



RESOURCES

General

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development – www.ascd.org

This site is searchable on a limited basis for non-members. This is the organization that publishes *Educational Leadership*, a well-respected journal.

Educational Leadership. A professional magazine on leading and learning: A must-read journal. Subscriptions can be arranged through the website of the National Staff Development Council: www.nsd.org. There are four issues per year.

The Effective Teacher. This is a DVD series of presentations given by Harry K. Wong. It's a five-hour inservice workshop packaged into eight small parts. It would be an excellent addition to a district's professional development library. For ordering information: www.harrywong.com

The Administrator's Role in Supporting Beginning Teachers (2006) St. John's: NLTA

Handbook for Beginning Teachers in Newfoundland and Labrador (2005) St. John's: NLTA

Journal of Staff Development. This is another must-read journal with timely articles on issues common across the profession. It bills itself as "a journal for educators by educators." Subscriptions can be arranged through the following website: www.ascd.org. There are eight issues per year.

Secretan, Lance H.K. (1988) *The Masterclass: Modern Fables about Working and Living*, Stoddart. This book is a solid read on professional issues. It is out of print; copies can be hard to find but are worth the search. Try searching for copies on the web.

The Virtual Teacher Centre – www.virtualteachercentre.ca/pd/welcome.aspx

The Virtual Teacher Centre has a mandate to develop, facilitate and deliver professional and program support to teachers throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. It works hand in hand with educators at both the district and school levels, as well as in partnership with Memorial University and the Department of Education, in the development and delivery of content.

Mentoring

The NLTA website (www.nlta.nl.ca) contains links to all other teacher organizations across Canada. Some of these have dedicated sites for mentors.

47 Mentoring Information Categories – www.teachermentors.com

This gives a comprehensive listing of links to sites on mentoring and teacher induction.

The New Teacher Center – www.newteachercenter.org

The New Teacher Center (NTC) at the University of California at Santa Cruz is dedicated to teacher induction, development and new teacher training and the support of programs and practices that promote excellence and diversity in America's teaching force.

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory – www.nwrel.org

This U.S. site offers a searchable database of information supporting educational research.

Odell S.J. & Hulling, L. (2000) *Introduction: Leading the teaching profession toward quality mentoring*. In S.J. Odell and L. Hulling (eds.) *Quality mentoring for novice teachers*, Indianapolis: Kappa Delta Pi.

Peer Resources – www.mentors.ca

This site offers information to persons who wish to establish or strengthen peer helping, peer support, peer mediation, peer referral, peer education, peer coaching and mentor programs in schools, universities, communities and corporations.

St. Mary Catholic School – www.stmary.ecsd.net

This Edmonton school is subtitled “Professional Learning School.” Follow the mentor link for more links to mentor-related issues. “Additional links” leads to an excellent annotated list of mentor topics. The “additional sites” link leads to an international list of mentor-related sites.

Beginning Teachers

Educational Resources for Teachers – www.educ.queensu.ca/resources/beginners.html

This page, compiled by the Faculty of Education at Queen's University, lists links pertinent to beginning teachers, under headings such as Canadian Faculty of Education Sites, Topics of Interest to Beginning Teachers, Classroom Resources and Lesson Plans.

Inspiring Teachers – www.inspiringteachers.com

This is a somewhat commercial site that has a beginning teacher's toolbox, a teacher's toolbox and links to mentor articles. The site is searchable and has a member log in.

Survive and Thrive – www.survivethrive.on.ca

This is a site intended for beginning teachers in Ontario, offering virtual conferences and pertinent links. Free membership.

www.teaching.com

This site describes itself as a “free, noncommercial web service for educators and students.” You must register to use its services, which include “mighty mentors,” allowing teachers to mentor each other via e-mail. Another e-mail service is “Teacher talk.”



Action Research

Graduate School of Education, George Mason University –
www.gse.gmu.edu/research/tr/index.shtml

A research site with links to teacher research and action research.

www.jeanmcniff.com

A site dedicated to action research topics.

Queen's University Faculty of Education – www.educ.queensu.ca

A searchable site with a wide range of educational topics available, an especially good source for action research.

Self Reflection

ALPS (Active Learning Practices for Schools) – <http://learnweb.harvard.edu/alps/>

This site has been created by Harvard Graduate School of Education and Project Zero, an educational research group at the Graduate School of Education at Harvard University. It has a variety of areas you can explore; one of particular interest is the Area of Reflection, which is a tool designed for teachers to reflect on areas of their teaching and thinking.

APPENDIX

Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association Code of Ethics

The Code of Professional Practice shall apply to all members and the term “teacher” as used in this code includes all members of the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association. This statement, arrived at by consensus of the Association, does not attempt to define all items of acceptable practice, but rather to serve as a guide. Both individual and collective actions taken by members of any professional group may enhance or detract from the status of that profession; NLTA members are expected to be aware of this and to observe general principles of professional practice. (Note: The Code of Professional Practice shall not apply in the case of a teacher who, in good faith, provides statements or evidence to a Court of Law, an Arbitration Board, the NLTA Professional Relations Commission, the NLTA Disciplinary Committee, or any body or official duly authorized by the NLTA.)

Teacher-Pupils

- (i) A teacher's first professional responsibility is to the enhancement of the quality of education provided to the pupils in his/her charge.
- (ii) A teacher regards as confidential, and does not divulge, other than to appropriate persons, any information of a personal or domestic nature concerning either pupils or their homes.
- (iii) A teacher keeps teaching as objective as possible in discussing with the class controversial matters whether political, religious or racial.
- (iv) A teacher does not knowingly misuse professional position for personal profit in the offering of goods or services to pupils or their parents.
- (v) A teacher does not accept pay for tutoring his/her own pupils in the subject in which that teacher gives classroom instruction.
- (vi) A teacher accepts that the intellectual, moral, physical and social welfare of his/her pupils is the chief aim and end of education.
- (vii) A teacher recognizes that a privileged relationship exists between the teacher and his/her pupils and shall never exploit this relationship.
- (viii) A teacher who has reason to suspect that a child has suffered, or is suffering, from abuse that may have been caused or permitted by any person shall forthright report the suspected abuse to the appropriate authorities. [This section applies notwithstanding section (ii) under Teacher-Colleagues.]

Teacher-Employer

- (i) A teacher does not disregard a contract, written or verbal, with a school board.
- (ii) A teacher does not apply for a specific teacher's position that is not yet vacant.
- (iii) A teacher does not accept a position with an employer whose relations with the professional organization have been declared in dispute.



Teacher-Colleagues

- (i) A teacher reports through proper channels all matters harmful to the welfare of the school. S/he does not bypass immediate authority to reach higher authority without first exhausting the proper channels of communication.
- (ii) A teacher does not criticize the professional competence or professional reputation of a colleague, except to proper officials and then only in confidence and after the colleague has been informed of the criticism.
- (iii) A teacher notifies any other teacher whose pupils s/he proposes to tutor on a regular basis.
- (iv) Teachers do not take any individual or collective action which is prejudicial to the Association, to other members of the Association, or to the profession generally.
- (v) A teacher does not knowingly undermine the confidence of pupils in other teachers.
- (vi) A teacher submits to the Association disputes arising from professional relationships with colleagues which cannot be resolved by personal discussion.
- (vii) A teacher, before making any report on the professional competence of a colleague, provides that colleague with a copy of the report and forwards with it any written comment that the colleague chooses to make.
- (viii) A teacher who is in an administrative or supervisory position makes an honest and determined effort to help and counsel another teacher before subscribing to the dismissal of that teacher.
- (ix) A teacher does not actively oppose the presentation to higher authority of matters duly agreed upon by fellow teachers, except by formal minority report.

Teacher-Professional Growth

- (i) A teacher acts in a manner which maintains the honour and dignity of the profession.
- (ii) A teacher assists in the professional growth of colleagues through the sharing of ideas and information.
- (iii) A teacher makes a constant and consistent effort to improve professionally.

Teacher-Professional Organization

- (i) A teacher, or group of teachers, does not make unauthorized representation to outside bodies on behalf of the Association or its local branches.
- (ii) A teacher does not refuse to follow Association directions under a legitimate job action.
- (iii) A teacher adheres to collective agreements negotiated by his/her professional organization.
- (iv) A teacher recognizes, as a professional responsibility, service to the Association at the local and provincial levels.
- (v) A teacher who has requested representation by the Association honours commitments made on his/her behalf.

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- (vi) A teacher recognizes the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association as the official voice of teachers on all matters of a professional nature.

Teacher-Parents

- (i) A teacher seeks to establish friendly and cooperative relationships with the home and to provide parents with information that will serve the best interests of their children.



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This guide was written in honour of and in support of all those teachers who have, either formally or informally, mentored colleagues and helped them to thrive rather than simply survive in this profession.

The general concepts of the guide were developed based on observations, consultation and discussion with mentor teachers during various mentor training sessions over a number of years. A committee then mapped out the specifics we wanted to include. Thanks to Mr. Leo Mackey and Ms. Patricia Collins Yetman for their invaluable input. If this guide is distinctly “practical” in its approach, it is attributable to Leo and Patti’s constant reminders to us of the need to “keep it real.” I would also like to recognize Anne Crawford Major’s vital contribution in translating ideas and concepts into words. Together we worked through several drafts to bring to you what we now hope will be a tool to assist you, the mentor, as you provide a much-needed support to a fortunate beginning teacher.

Beverley Park
NLTA Professional Development Division

Quotes used throughout the book which are not otherwise attributed, are the comments of mentor teachers or beginning teachers from Newfoundland and Labrador. They were collected from various conversations, evaluations or feedback sheets.

For additional copies of this publication, please contact:

Beverley Park (ext. 244) or Susan Cardoulis (ext. 246)
Professional Development Division
Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers’ Association
3 Kenmount Road, St. John’s, NL A1B 1W1
Telephone: 726-3223; 1-800-563-3599 (toll free)
Fax: 726-4302; 1-877-711-6582 (toll free)

Mentoring Beginning Teachers



