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Introduction

First Things First

Thank you for picking up this book, and thank you for turning to Chapter 1. Those simple actions indicate your commitment to helping teachers new to our profession and provide an invitation for us to work together as you assume the vital role of mentor for the next generation of teachers. With the growing recognition that teachers at all points in their career path can benefit from the support of a knowledgeable and trusted professional, the roles of a mentor are now many. As a cooperating teacher (or master teacher), you provide leadership by guiding the apprenticeship, the classroom-based portion of student teachers' professional education. As a support provider (or mentor teacher), you provide collaborative opportunities for new teachers to explore and reflect on their practice in a safe setting, and you enhance the professional community of education through your efforts to build collegiality.

> "The one who teaches is the giver of eyes."
>
> —Tamil proverb
> (quoted in Creative Quotations, 2002)

Cooperating teacher, yours is a memorable role. We know from working with hundreds of student teachers that yours is the face that many of them will see in their mind's eye years from now. Yours is the voice that will speak to them from over their shoulder when they tackle a classroom dilemma five or ten years hence. Yours is a powerful role. The work you do as a cooperating teacher fosters success for our future teachers, and your influence has the potential to flavor the learning of our future teachers' many, many students for years to come. When you are effective in your role, you help student teachers gain richer insights into the complexities of the classroom, assist them in connecting what they learn through various sources and understanding its implications for actual students, foster effective practices, and shape future professionals' view of what it means to be a teacher. For these reasons, we are delighted to embark on your adventure with you, and we look forward to

being a part of your thoughts as you do the important work of guiding a student teacher.

Support provider, the work you do for new inservice teachers is critical to the profession. We know that many new teachers perceive a sense of isolation, a lack of frequent feedback on their teaching, and an absence of sustained support. Without caring support from a fellow professional, many teachers leave teaching after just a few years in the classroom. The trusting relationship you build, the effective feedback you furnish, and the informal support you provide can make the difference between teachers' leaving or staying, between mere classroom survival and rich professional satisfaction. Your work is important, and we appreciate the opportunity to join you in your efforts.

> "Who finds a faithful friend, finds a treasure."
>
> —Jewish proverb
> (quoted in Creative Quotations, 2002)

ROLES FOR THOSE WHO MENTOR

Though local definitions vary, we use the noun *mentor* broadly to refer to one who supports, either formally or informally, a teacher's professional development. Three points at which formal mentoring often takes place include preservice field experiences, where the mentor is deemed a cooperating teacher; early inservice years, where the mentor is often referred to as a support provider; and later years, when the mentee experiences temporary or sustained troubles in the classroom or requests assistance that is focused on a specific need. The act of mentoring, of helping and providing counsel, takes on different flavors depending on the mentee's distance along the career path.

Cooperating Teacher

Cooperating teachers serve as early mentors by guiding the field-based portion of preservice teachers' training as they work toward initial licensure. Cooperating teachers are expected to be effective role models, to give control of their classrooms (in varying degrees) to the student teachers, and to provide feedback to the student teachers. The cooperating teacher role is distinctive in that cooperating teachers are expected to display superior classroom expertise and use well-honed communication skills for working with adults.

The cooperating teacher–student teacher relationship is the most unbalanced of the mentoring relationships. The fact that cooperating teachers provide formal evaluations—throughout the student teaching experience and at its culmination—brings about a very real power differential. Cooperating teachers have the power, through their evaluative role, to keep preservice teachers out of the profession of education.

Another type of mentor works with a preservice teacher who holds a paid classroom position but is currently enrolled in a credential program. Such mentees are usually called *interns,* though the terminology for their mentors varies. Some

programs deem them *intern buddies,* and their role tends to be more of a supportive one than an evaluative one.

Support Provider

Many states fund programs that match new teachers with experienced colleagues during the new teachers' early years in the classroom, deemed the induction years. Additionally, many experienced teachers take on the role of support provider informally. Though the support provider's role varies by local program, the flavor of the support provider–mentee's relationship is very different from that of cooperating teacher–student teacher. First, the support provider is rarely in a position to provide summative, high-stakes evaluations of the mentee. Even when support providers act as assessors, the results of their assessments are usually formative and confidential. This relationship tends to be, then, more of an equal one, where the mentee perceives the support provider to have more experience but to be facing conditions similar to those the mentee is facing as a paid classroom teacher.

Peer Coach or Mentor

Some states fund programs that place experienced teachers in the role of mentor teacher or peer coach. In some states, mentors are hired to address curriculum and teacher development in certain clearly specified topics such as technology or writing instruction. In some places, experienced teachers assist others who either request aid in certain aspects of classroom practice (e.g., management) or who are required by their districts to improve their classroom practice or face possible termination. The stakes of the potential outcome of relationships between peer coaches or mentors and their mentees clearly color their interactions and the nature of their relationship.

Which role—or roles—do you play? Although the general goal of assistance and support crosses each type of mentoring relationship, "help" can mean different things in these different contexts. Keeping an explicit awareness of the purpose of your relationship and a recognition of the potential power you wield in your role as mentor can help you build a relationship and employ strategies that suit the formal expectations of your work.

YOUR RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES AS A MENTOR

Ours seems to be a profession where, during any given day, we juggle myriad responsibilities. In addition to your role as mentor, you no doubt hold a number of other responsibilities. Namely, many mentors continue to be responsible for the learning of a set of students. You probably also work on a number of committees or perform other professional duties.

Table 1.1 Balancing the Rights and Responsibilities of the Mentor's Role

Rights	*Responsibilities*
1. You have the right to expect ethical and professional behavior from your mentee.	1. You have the responsibility to model ethical and professional behavior for your new teacher partner.
2. As a cooperating teacher, you have the right to maintain final say for the educational decisions of your students.	2. You have the responsibility to provide freedom for your student teacher to experiment and develop a personal style and strategies.
3. You have the right to receive support from other members of the student teacher's team (e.g., university supervisor, course instructors) or the new teacher's team (e.g., other induction program leaders, the site administrator).	3. You have the responsibility to act as part of the team, providing information and working alongside team members such as the university supervisor, team leadership members, and the site administrator.
4. As a cooperating teacher, you have the right to use your professional expertise in the ways you believe best meet your students' needs and the needs of your student teacher.	4. You have the responsibility to remain open and consider other viewpoints and methods for meeting students' needs and the needs of your student teacher. You have the responsibility of acting flexibly to provide appropriate support to your mentee.
5. You have the right to expect sound, though developing, instructional practices from your student teacher.	5. You have the responsibility to direct your student teacher's growth in ways deemed appropriate by the profession. You have the responsibility to help your mentee deepen his or her practice in ways that support students' learning and enhance your mentee's professional satisfaction.
6. You have the right to contribute to the student teacher's evaluation.	6. You have the responsibility to give feedback that is frequent, honest, and caring.

The role of mentor adds another layer to your many professional responsibilities. It also brings a set of rights. Table 1.1 presents some of the rights and responsibilities to be balanced.

WHAT THIS BOOK DOES

We begin with the recognition that the work you do is critical to teachers' professional development. We begin with the understanding that there is a knowledge base and a set of perspectives and skills associated with the work of mentorship. And we begin with the conviction that, no matter how experienced one is, one can and should grow in one's capacity to serve as an effective mentor. The purpose of this text is to provide support for *you* as you support future teachers' development.

As a support, this text strives to meet three goals. First, it attempts to provide some key information related to many facets of teacher development and the practice of mentoring. Second, it provides opportunities for you and your mentee to build a common ground and to maintain a successful working relationship. To accomplish these aims, each chapter offers some key ideas and practical advice and includes exercises that may be useful as you and your mentee build and sustain an effective professional relationship.

Our hope is that this text will provide guidance and direction as you manage the many roles and responsibilities of your important work as mentor. You are embarking on an important journey in the life of a new teacher. We look forward to traveling with you. Good wishes.

> "The beginning is always today."
>
> —Mary Shelley Wollstonecraft
> (quoted in Creative Quotations, 2002)

A Note on Language Use

In addition to the word "mentee," we use a number of terms to represent new teachers. Mentees are also called "new teacher partners" as a general term applying to all mentees, "preservice teachers" or "student teachers" as terms applying to interns and credential candidates, and "newly credentialed teachers" as those in their first years of teaching.

EXERCISES

Exercise 1.1 Recording Your Roles and Responsibilities

Explore the work that lies ahead through this checksheet.

Roles and Responsibilities	✓ *When Answered*	*Notes*
1. What are my formal responsibilities?		
2. What is my role as an evaluator (e.g., formative and summative)?		
3. What are the potential benefits and pitfalls of the partnership for me professionally and personally?		
4. What else do I need to know right now?		
(Other)		

Exercise 1.2 Setting a Purpose to Read

We know that strong readers and active learners have a purpose in mind as they approach a learning situation. Try taking some notes on what you want to learn in reading this book. Then skim ahead and jot down possible chapters or page numbers that may hold information that is relevant for your purposes. If you do not find what you need, let us know, or ask people in your local context.

What do I hope to learn from this book?	*In which chapter or on which page might it be found? Where might I find more information?*

Exercise 1.3 Let's Go Surfing Now

Though it has its drawbacks, the Internet is a powerful tool for gaining and sharing information about mentoring. Sites change so frequently that we do not list individual Web addresses. Instead, we recommend a variety of meta search engines and search terms to set you on your way. Happy surfing!

Helpful Meta Search Engines	*Promising Search Terms*
www.google.com Comprehensive. Try "advanced search" for more specificity. www.ixquick.com Powerful. http://vivisimo.com Sorts results in a tree structure so you can travel quickly to the appropriate category. www.zworks.com Uses Boolean logic, so you can be very specific in your search terms.	Use the following phrases: mentor teacher teacher induction new teachers cooperating teachers teacher education

Also try:

- Going to your state's Department of Education Web site and looking for mentoring projects.
- Going to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) Clearinghouse for Teaching and Teacher Education (www.ericsp.org).