



THE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING ASSOCIATION

Louisiana Department of Education Mentor Teacher Training

Module 1:
Introduction to Mentoring

All Cohorts
June, 2019

Facilitated by Learning Forward



Mentor Teacher Training

Mentor Training Course Goals

Mentors will:

- Build strong relationships with mentees.
- Diagnose and prioritize mentee's strengths and areas for growth.
- Design and implement a coaching support plan to develop mentee knowledge and skills.
- Assess and deepen mentor content knowledge and content-specific pedagogy.

Module 1 Agenda:

- Welcome/Norms/Overview
- What is mentoring?
- The Mentor Cycle
- Connection to Assessments and Teacher Competencies
- Lunch
- Partnership Agreements
- Growth Mindset
- Closure/Reflection

Mutual Commitments:

Make the learning meaningful

Engage mentally and physically

Notice opportunities to support the learning of others

Take responsibility of own learning

Own the outcomes

Respect the learning environment including use of technology

Module 1 Outcomes:

- Know how the mentor roles, responsibilities, and expectations support mentors to set goals for their own learning based on a personalized assessment.
- Recognize the mentoring cycle as a support tool for developing mentees.
- Describe the Teacher Preparation Competencies as criteria for assessing themselves and their mentees.
- Identify elements of a Partnership Agreement that supports relationship building with mentees.
- Understand and practice growth mindset as a method for continuing to build a mentee-mentor relationship that is focused on learning.

Introduction - The First Mentorship

Homer's *Odyssey* describes the dialogue that transpired between Odysseus and his trusted friend, Mentor. As Odysseus was preparing for what he knew would be a long, arduous journey, he asked Mentor to care for his young son, Telemachus, in his absence. Odysseus wanted Mentor to provide not only for his son's physical well-being, but also for his emotional and spiritual well-being as well. He wanted Mentor to teach his son "to be wise beyond his years, to know the secrets of the heart and soul, to lead with courage and compassion, to develop strength and spiritual and mental balance, and to be loved and respected by his colleagues." With these words the first mentorship began.

The comprehensiveness of Mentor's responsibilities and the length and depth of his regard for his colleague increased the significance and vitality of the relationship between Mentor and Telemachus. This first mentorship set the precedent for worthy mentorships.

Mentoring is the process by which a trusted and experienced person takes a personal and direct interest in the development and education of a less experienced individual.

In teaching, a new teacher assumes essentially the same responsibilities as an experienced one. This puts the novice teacher at a disadvantage. They lack the wisdom, experience, resources, and skills veteran teachers have gained from years of experience. To complicate the situation, schools tend to be institutions in which teachers practice their profession in isolation of one another and have limited opportunities to share their experiences and learn with and from one another.

As a result, novice teachers report to learning by trial and error. They develop coping strategies early on to survive without any guarantee that the strategies they are developing are productive or effective. This process of learning by trial and error often leaves some talented novice teachers feeling ineffective, disconnected and they eventually leave the profession.

To facilitate the continuous learning of novice teachers who are committed to ongoing improvement through lifelong learning to ensure that each student succeed, mentoring for novice professionals is essential especially in the early formative years of their experience. Mentors facilitate the development of new teachers by providing guidance and support geared toward the success of the new teacher and that of his or her students. Mentoring focuses on developing competent, healthy, successful professionals who use available resources to meet the learning needs of their students, be productive members of the education community, make constructive contributions to the school and community, engage in continuous learning and improvement, and to meet the demands of the profession.

In addition to supporting novice teachers, mentoring develops experienced teachers by increasing their sense of efficacy, expertise, and metacognition about their practice. Experienced teachers who serve as mentors have opportunities to share and deepen their pedagogical knowledge, extend their content knowledge, share their insights and wisdom, and learn from less experienced professionals. Mentors become a source of inspiration, knowledge, and skills for the new teacher. Together the mentor and novice teacher experience collaborative professional learning through their ongoing reflection, dialogue, engagement in the feedback process, and willingness to inquire about one another's practice.

My reasons for being a mentor:

Attributes of Mentors

Beliefs	Teaching expertise	Coaching skills
<p>An effective mentor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Is willing to learn. ◆ Has a passion for ongoing professional learning. ◆ Believes in others' capacity to grow and develop. ◆ Has the attitude that everyone is important. ◆ Does not presume to have "The Answer." ◆ Understands his or her own assumptions and makes those transparent. ◆ Is committed to continuous improvement. ◆ Has moral purpose. ◆ Can let go of feeling responsible for another person's behaviors. 	<p>An effective mentor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Is skilled in instructional planning. ◆ Demonstrates success in his or her work as a classroom teacher. ◆ Reflects on his or her own practice. ◆ Articulates his or her own practice. ◆ Uses multiple methods of assessing students. ◆ Has strong classroom organization and management. ◆ Is fluent in multiple methods of delivering instruction. 	<p>An effective mentor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Understands and applies knowledge about adult development. ◆ Diagnoses teachers' needs. ◆ Aligns support to teachers' identified needs. ◆ Communicates effectively. ◆ Listens skillfully. ◆ Uses effective questioning skills. ◆ Understands and employs a specific reflection process.
Relationship skills	Content expertise	Leadership skills
<p>An effective mentor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Has good interpersonal relationships. ◆ Wants to be part of a team. ◆ Fosters trust. ◆ Works effectively with teachers and principals. ◆ Is respected by peers. ◆ Has patience for the learning process. 	<p>An effective mentor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Possesses and applies appropriate, in-depth content knowledge. ◆ Uses research and theory to support instructional decisions. ◆ Establishes a collegial learning environment to support teachers in reflecting on their practice. ◆ Stays current in own learning about curricula and best practices. 	<p>An effective mentor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Stays abreast of best practices in professional learning. ◆ Engages others in developing plans for improvement. ◆ Maintains a productive culture. ◆ Communicates the school's vision. ◆ Aligns work with school goals. ◆ Uses data to make decisions. ◆ Understands and applies knowledge about change.

Adapted from Killion, J. & Harrison, C. (2006). *Taking the lead: New roles for coaches and teacher leaders*. Oxford, OH: NSDC.

Continuum of Mentoring Stances

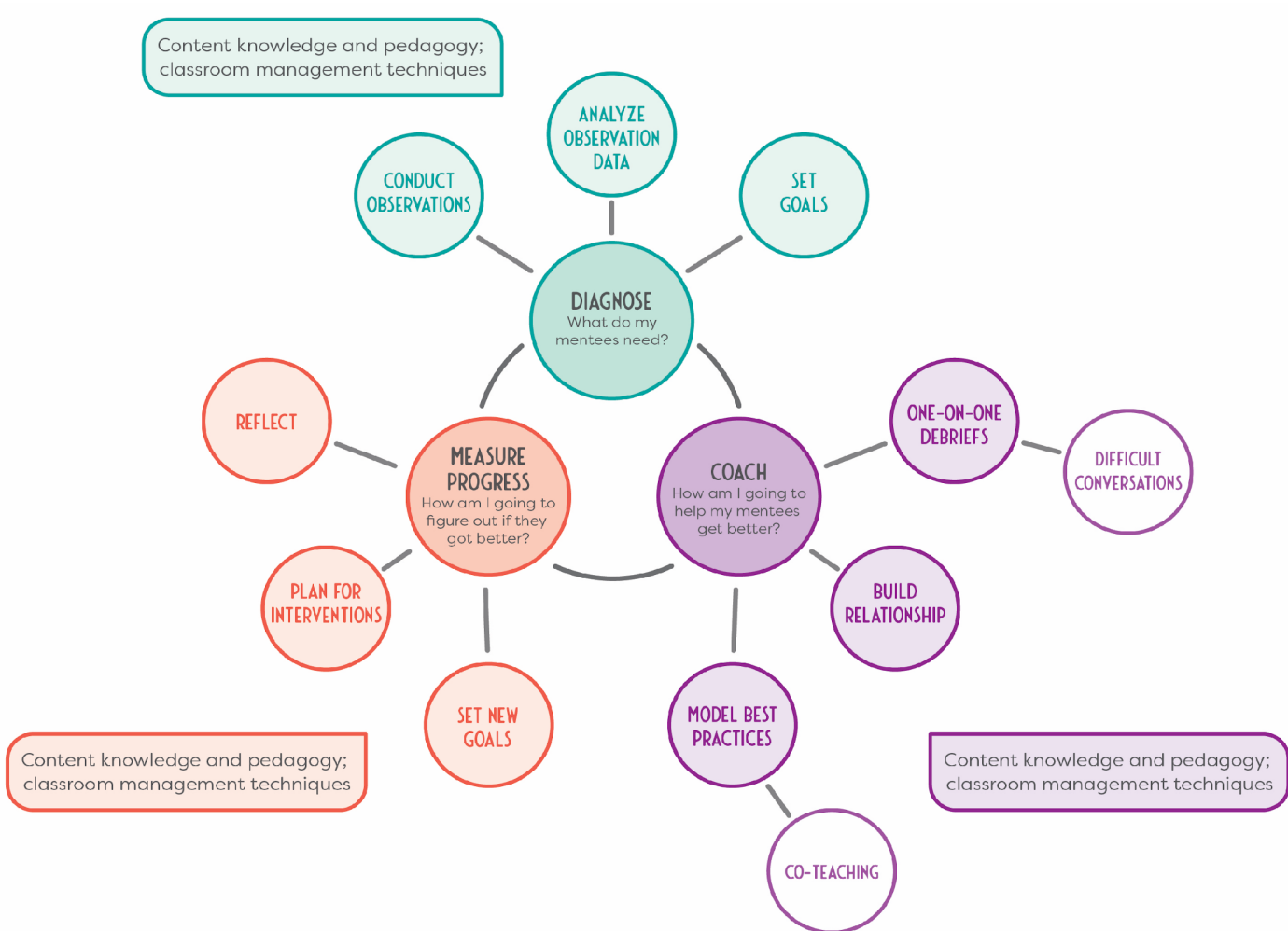
Consult	Collaborate	Reflect
Consult	Collaborate	Reflect
Purpose: Provide information, technical assistance, problem solving, and advice, i.e. informing and assisting the mentee in implementing a specific set of instructional strategies, curriculum, procedures or assessments.	Purpose: Share ideas and problem solve collaboratively; working together to identify areas for instructional focus and problem solving based on student data and teacher competencies.	Purpose: Improve instructional decision-making and increase reflection on practice; encouraging self-directed thinking about instruction that is based on reflection and student outcomes.
Focus: Shares logistical information on “how we do things around here;” ensures the mentee implements the content and pedagogy accurately leading to student success.	Focus: Reciprocal support for growth and improvement of practice	Focus: Non-judgmental support for planning, instruction, assessment, reflection, problem solving (cognitive aspects of teaching).
Actions: Provides resources and assistance in accessing resources, demonstration lessons, planning conversations, and observations with reflection conversations.	Actions: Researching, co-planning, co-teaching, exchanging resources, conducting action research, examining student data, etc.	Actions: Learning-focused conversations which include inquiry, reflection, construction and deconstruction of knowledge about professional practice and student learning.
Language: Directive “It’s a good idea to...; Always...; Keep in mind	Language: Collaborative “We might...” “Let’s...” “How might our actions affect ...?”	Language: Metacognitive What might be some ways to...? What research supports your decisions to...? What process do you use to...?
Result: Increased student achievement through the implementation of curriculum and instructional practices; Increased teacher content and content-specific pedagogical knowledge and skill.	Result: Resolved instructional problems based on teacher and mentor shared expertise; learning together to develop professional practice; increased student achievement.	Result: Tools/strategies for metacognition and independent problem solving on planning, instruction, and student achievement.
Whose direction: Mentor	Whose direction: Mentor and mentee jointly	Whose direction: Mentee

Adapted from Lipton, L. & Wellman, B. *Mentoring Matters, a Practical Guide to Learning-focused Relationships*

Key Takeaway:

Mentors develop expertise in mentoring attributes and approach the work through different stances to personalize support that meets mentee needs.

The Mentoring Cycle



Module 1	Overview	Module 2	Conduct Observations Analyze Observation Data
Module 3	Set Goals One-on-One Debriefs	Module 4	Plan for Interventions Modeling
Module 5	Plan for Interventions Co-teaching	Module 6	Set New Goals
Module 7	Reflect Difficult Conversations	Module 8	Practice Whole Cycle
Module 9	Practice Whole Cycle		

Mentor Self-Assessment

+ Extensive experience ? Some experience * Limited experience o No experience

Attribute or Cycle Component	My Rating	Additional notes/thoughts
Beliefs		
Teaching expertise		
Coaching skills		
Relationship skills		
Content expertise		
Leadership skills		
Conduct observations		
Analyze observation data		
Set goals		
One-on-one debriefs (difficult conversations)		
Build Relationships		
Model best practices (co-teaching)		
Set new goals		
Plan for interventions		
Reflection		

Key Takeaway:

Mentors apply the mentoring cycle (diagnose, coach, measure progress) to develop mentee competence.

Key Takeaway:

Louisiana's Teacher Preparation Competencies define what a teacher candidate must know and be able to do to be eligible for certification.

Build Relationship: 3 Key Components

- Establish trust
- Maintain trust
- Build confidence

Partnership Agreements - Support establishing trust between mentors and mentees

A partnership agreement is...

They are important because...

Partnership Agreements: Areas for Mentors & Mentees to Discuss

The first area is **time**, which includes time when you will connect with each other; time when you will be available for each other; and the time that you will not be available to each other - especially when planning sessions, classroom visits and debriefs will happen.

The next area is **location and logistics**. Location is where a mentor first may keep personal belongings or any resources that the mentor might want to bring into the classroom. It may also relate to establishing where a mentor may sit when visiting the mentee classroom.

Next is the **focus** of the mentoring work. First and foremost, it is meant to be supportive, not evaluative. And it will most likely focus in on the areas addressed through mentor training because these are the areas where data shows our new teachers struggle the most.

The **instructional goal** of the lesson you'll be observing, modeling, or co-teaching is very important to know. Because one of your main jobs as a mentor is to support your mentees in teaching the curriculum well, you always need to know what lesson from the curriculum they are teaching and what the goal of the lesson is. You should review the lesson in the curriculum before mentoring around the lesson.

Responsibilities includes the professional responsibilities that mentees and mentors assume. Moving from the role of a student to one of a professional is a considerable transition for some new teachers/mentees. Mentors need to make the mentee's responsibilities clear and specific to avoid disappointment. The mentor also assumes responsibilities when he or she becomes a mentor. She agrees to communicate clearly with the mentee and agrees to provide regular constructive, growth-oriented feedback to the mentee, in addition to agreeing to model, support, co-teach and develop the mentee's capacity and competence in alignment with the Teacher Preparation Competencies.

Expectations are what the mentee and mentor expect of each other, yet often go unstated. A mentee expects fair assessments, opportunities to perform and grow, challenges that are just right for his ability, and ongoing feedback. A mentor expects a mentee to be committed to having a growth mindset about learning and growing as a teaching professional, and to be open to try out new things, take risks, and learn from the mentor.

Data refers to what data the mentor and mentee will gather about students and their work in the classroom. Data and student work is important to gather so that all conversations between mentor and mentee are based in facts.

Resources is the arrangement for using each other's materials or resources and the school's resources. For example, what resources are needed to teach the specific lesson? Does the mentee need support in securing appropriate resources?

Confidentiality is a big area. It refers to what types of information the mentee and mentor hold in confidence. This might relate to what information the mentor and mentee agree to share publicly, with the principal, for example, and what they share with other staff members about their interactions. A mentor might be upset if a mentee shares a private conversation with a colleague of the mentor. The mentee might say something in confidence to the mentor only to find that it is later shared with the principal, which also would lead to a breakdown in trust.

Follow-up is another area where there are often disappointment resulting from a lack of partnership agreements. A mentor and mentee should first schedule a debrief about the mentee's teaching, and then the mentor must ensure the mentee understands their must-do's after the debrief. For example, in the conversation, the mentee and mentor might discuss revisions for the next lesson. The mentor expects that the mentee will integrate the behaviors they discussed into the next lesson, yet the mentee fails to do so. She thought the ideas were only suggestions and did not understand that she was to make the changes because they did not clarify and follow-up about what was to happen and make sure the mentee was ready to integrate the suggestions.

Which areas of agreements do you think will be important to you and your mentee(s)?

How will you use agreements to build trust in your mentor-mentee relationship?

Partnership Agreement Practice Scenario

Read the following scenario. Identify the partnership agreements evident and recommend others that would be useful for this mentor and mentee to form.

Scenario, Part 1

Deciding to serve as a mentor was a difficult decision for Felicia Cordova. She cares deeply about her students' success and takes her responsibility for their learning seriously. She worried that having a mentee in her classroom might impact the quality of learning her students experienced. Ms. Cordova did not want to have a mentee limit her students' success.

On the other hand, she saw the benefits of working with a mentee, contributing to the growth of a new teacher, and having another adult with whom to exchange ideas. Ultimately, she decided that not only would this partnership contribute to her own professional growth, but she also decided that she had much to offer a mentee. She accepted the mentor responsibility and wanted to form a good relationship with her mentee, Alex Morris. Ms. Cordova wanted to start off on the right foot with Mr. Morris. She was eager to have stimulating, intellectual conversations with him, to help him grow professionally, and to raise his consciousness about the decisions he was making in the classroom and their effect on students. In her first meeting with Mr. Morris, Ms. Cordova was concerned about Mr. Morris's appearance. She communicated how important professional deportment and dress were to her during the time they worked together. She told Mr. Morris that she expected him to make the transition from a student to professional within the first week of school.

After spending the first week of the school year observing Ms. Cordova teach and debriefing after each observation, Mr. Morris was ready to begin co-teaching. Mr. Morris made it clear that he felt unsure about teaching the math curriculum and asked for Ms. Cordova's support. He particularly asked for her help in using the curriculum resources and in assessing student learning. Ms. Cordova let Mr. Morris know that she wanted him to take a substantial role in teaching the math lesson and expected him to prepare and to ask any questions he might have about the lesson in advance. She suggested that one of their agreements be that either one of them feel free to add comments while the other was teaching.

One day, later in the school year, while teaching a lesson on adding two fractions with unlike denominators, Mr. Morris tells students that they should always multiply the denominators together. Mr. Cordova, recognizing that his statement is not completely accurate, raises her hand in the back of the classroom and asks Mr. Morris if his approach worked in every situation to get the least common denominator. For example, if we were adding $\frac{1}{2}$ and $\frac{1}{6}$, wouldn't a common denominator be 6? Mr. Morris responds, "Ms. Cordova, you are right. It is important to find the smallest denominator that both fractions share in common." During the debrief of the lesson with Ms. Cordova, Mr. Morris analyzed his lesson, clarified his understanding of the math, described how he would clarify with students the error so that there were no lingering misconceptions.

Partnership agreements evident:

Other recommended agreements:

Scenario, Part 2

Mentor: *I am really looking forward to working with you this year and helping to grow your practice over this next school year. It's been a busy first week of school and I'm really excited that we've found time that works for both of us to sit down so that we can talk about our partnership. My hope is that I can help you meet your professional goals. Thinking about this school year, what are your expectations for participating in this mentoring program?*

Mentee: *I'm really hoping that I can grow in the area of classroom management. I feel like this is an area that is super important and if it is not really strong then everything else in my classroom will fall apart.*

Mentor: *You're right, classroom management is really important and something I'd be happy to support you with as this school year begins. Is that something you'd like my support in?*

Mentee: *Yeah. I'm really anxious about this, actually - my first period class was tough this morning and there were a few moments when I wasn't sure what to do.*

Mentor: *It's normal to feel anxious about it. I still have back-to-school nightmares where I can't control my class! And every class is different - I feel like I'm still learning every year what's going to work best. I'm really happy to work on that with you this year. So the way we'll work together is that throughout the school year I'll be doing some classroom observations of you teaching and will get to provide you with some feedback. Based on what we're working on over the course of the year the times we meet might shift, but thinking about wanting to start with classroom management, for the beginning of the year is there a particular time of day you prefer me to observe?*

Mentee: *I teach 3 blocks of ELA, and really any of them are fine with me. First period is probably the best because it seems like a tougher group of kiddos and I could use the additional support with them I think.*

Mentor: *Okay great. So first period I have a class, but my co-teacher knows that I'm going to be mentoring you this year and that means I will be in your classroom to support you some of the time. So I can be out of the room for about 45 minutes to support you a couple of times a week as we get the year going. How about I plan on coming for the first 45 minutes of the period on Mondays for the next three weeks?*

Mentee: *Yes, that works for me. I like the idea of you being with me on Mondays to start the week strong.*

Mentor: *So let's plan on me coming to do my first classroom observation this coming Monday. What resources have you been using to support you with your classroom management? I'm trying to think about what resources we might need to support us with this work.*

Mentee: *Well, I have the packet of resources we got during the back-to-school week, and I've tried a few strategies, but I'm not totally sure what would be the most important to do next.*

Mentor: *Okay, that's a good start. Make sure you bring that with you when we're planning - oh, yeah, planning. Are you free in the morning planning period before school to meet to plan the observation together? That means we'll use that whole 30 minutes so you'll need to have all your planning done before then.*

Mentee: *Yeah, I guess that would be okay...*

Mentor: *If you don't feel comfortable using that time, we could meet after school on Fridays.*

Mentee: *I think I'd like that better, if you don't mind. I feel like right before school starts I'm too nervous to sit and plan right now.*

Mentor: *That's no problem at all - and thanks for being honest about that with me. So we'll plan after school together for the next three Fridays and then I'll come into your classroom the next three Mondays. And then after those three weeks, we'll revisit and see how it's going. We'll figure out the specifics during our Friday planning meetings. So, we're going to want to make sure we can get in touch easily. What's the best way for you to communicate? Text? Email?*

Mentee: *Let's do email! Because the kids can't have devices I'm trying to leave my phone put away during class.*

Mentor: *Sounds like you're trying to show some empathy and respect for the kids with that choice. I have my tablet accessible all day, so email works for me. Tonight I'm going to email you my schedule so you know when I'm free and when I'm not and you can send me yours as well. Okay, so I know the school year just started, but is there anything you want me to know specifically about your classroom? The set-up? Any particular students you want me to know about?*

Mentee: *I don't really know yet. I do have a few students who have inclusion support so you will see some other teachers in the room during that first block.*

Mentor: *Okay, that sounds good. I'll make a note for us to talk more about particular students once you know your classes better. So we'll meet this Friday afterschool to plan the first observation. Our focus sounds like it will be on classroom management. Does meeting in your classroom still work for you?*

Mentee: *Yeah, no problem.*

Mentor: *Do you have any other questions as we begin our work together?*

Mentee: *After you observe me teaching, when will we meet to go over what you observed?*

Mentor: *Ah, I'm glad you said that - I almost forgot. It is best to meet within 24-72 hours after an observation. We will engage in what's called a one-on-one debrief. Is there a time that best works for your schedule on when we could meet to have this conversation?*

Mentee: *Tuesdays after school I don't have anything.*

Mentor: *Okay, I can make Tuesdays after school work. During those times, we'll talk about how classroom management is going. Since we're focusing on that and not academics to start, we'll use observations from you and from me to help us determine if our work together is being successful. Okay, our time is nearly up and I want to respect your time so let's wrap up! The last thing I want to let you know is that our work together will be confidential. I'm really looking forward to working together this year, and you don't have to worry about me sharing anything we discuss or work on together with anyone else.*

Mentee: *Thanks for saying that. I'm looking forward to working with you too.*

Sample Questions to Guide a Partnership Agreement Conversation

- What do you want to accomplish in our work together?
- What services and support can I provide that will help you accomplish this goal?
- When will we work together?
- What resources will we need that will be helpful in our work?
- Who will bring those resources?
- How long do we expect this will take?
- What data do we want to use to know if we are successful?
- What do you want me to know about your preferences for my work with you?
- What is the best way for us to communicate?

Reflect on Relationship Building:

Key Takeaway:

Partnership Agreements support establishing trust between mentors and mentees.

Maintaining Trust

- Revisit partnership agreements
- Provide ongoing support in reaching SMART goals
- Celebrate the work
- Embrace and teach about growth mindset

TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

Developing a Growth Mindset in Teachers and Staff

By *Keith Heggart*

February 4, 2015



An idea that is beginning to gain a lot of favour in educational circles at the moment is the notion of fixed versus growth mindsets, and how they might relate to students and learning. Based on the work of Stanford University psychologist, Carol Dweck, the idea of mindset is related to our understanding of where ability comes from. It has recently been seized upon by educators as a tool to explore our knowledge of student achievement, and ways that such achievement might be improved.

However, in my work, I have found that the notion of developing a growth mindset is as equally applicable to staff and teacher performance as it is to students. This article begins with a brief discussion about the difference between the two mindsets, what that means for education, and

concludes with some ideas for how school leaders might seek to develop a growth mindset amongst their staff.

The New Psychology of Success (2000), Dweck developed a continuum upon which people can be placed, based upon their understandings about where ability comes from. For some people (at one end of said continuum), success (and failure) is based on innate ability (or the lack of it). Dweck describes this as a fixed theory of intelligence, and argues that this gives rise to a 'fixed mindset'. At the other end of the continuum are those people who believe success is based on a growth mindset. These individuals argue that success is based on learning, persistence and hard work.

According to Dweck:

In a fixed mindset students believe their basic abilities, their intelligence, their talents, are just fixed traits. They have a certain amount and that's that, and then their goal becomes to look smart all the time and never look dumb. In a growth mindset students understand that their talents and abilities can be developed through effort, good teaching and persistence. They don't necessarily think everyone's the same or anyone can be Einstein, but they believe everyone can get smarter if they work at it (Morehead 2012).

The crucial point for individuals is that these mindsets have a large impact upon our understanding of success and failure. Fixed mindset people dread failure, feeling that it reflects badly upon themselves as individuals, while growth mindset people instead embrace failure as an opportunity to learn and improve their abilities.

Needless to say, this idea of mindsets has significant implications for education. One of the most important aspects relates to feedback. According to Dweck, when we give praise to students (which we, as teachers often do, in order to build self-esteem and encourage students) for how clever they are, we might actually be encouraging them to develop a fixed mindset - which might limit their learning potential. On the other hand, if we praise students for the hard work and the process that they've engaged in, then that helps to develop a growth potential.

We have to really send the right messages, that taking on a challenging task is what I admire. Sticking to something and trying many strategies, that's what I admire. That struggling means you're committed

to something and are willing to work hard. Parents around the dinner table and teachers in the classroom should ask, 'Who had a fabulous struggle today?' (Morehead 2012)

This praise can have significant effects upon students: citing longitudinal studies with Year 7 maths students, Dweck has shown how students with a growth mindset are far more likely to take on more challenging work and succeed at it than students with a fixed mindset - even if all other factors remain the same.

Dweck (and others) put this down to the development of self that takes place as different mindsets develop. With a fixed mindset, there are feelings of powerlessness and learned helplessness. This can lead to the development of a self-defeating identity, accompanied by toxic personal statements like 'I can't do this' or 'I'm not clever enough.'

On the other hand, a growth mindset amongst students is likely to encourage them to develop feelings of empowerment - students begin to see how they might take action to positively influence their community and their own learning.

Mindsets predict motivation and achievement amongst students according to some research, too:

Students with a growth mindset were more motivated to learn and exert effort, and outperformed those with a fixed mindset in math—a gap that continued to increase over the two-year period. Those with the two mindsets had entered 7th grade with similar past achievement, but because of their mindsets their math grades pulled apart during this challenging time. (Blackwell, Trzesniewski and Dweck, 2007).

Crucially, Dweck's research is applicable to all people, not just students. Therefore, school leaders could ask themselves what effect might developing a growth mindset amongst staff have upon learning in a school? Fortunately, a number of educators and teachers have already begun to explore what this might look like for teachers.

Modelling

According to Jackie Gerstein, teachers, like the students they teach, can learn to develop a growth mindset, but this requires careful planning by school management. The most obvious way of applying a growth mindset to teacher professional development is through modelling. Gerstein has run a number

of professional development courses that seek to instruct teachers in how to model a growth mindset amongst students and one of her key principles is encouraging teachers to see themselves as learners, and, just like students are all capable of learning and improving, so too are teachers (Gerstein 2014)

Create space for new ideas

A second principle requires that schools provide opportunities for teachers to try new things and make mistakes. This can seem daunting for teachers, but it is essential for developing a growth mindset - after all, one of the key principles of such a mindset is the willingness to try new approaches. As part of creating this space, it is important to begin with the learning in mind; that is, what will teachers and the school learn as part of the process, rather than whether the new idea is going to be a success or a failure.

Build time for self-reflection

While creating space for new ideas is important, it is only part of the process of developing a growth mindset. Linked to it, and equally vital, is providing a chance for teachers to reflect upon their new ideas and consider what they learned from the process. Ideally, this reflection should focus less on whether the idea was a success or a failure, but rather on what the teacher learnt from the process.

Formative Feedback

Teacher performance management processes can often be quite awkward and distressing experiences; however, by viewing the process as part of a growth mindset - that is, making it formative, rather than summative, and inviting participation of the teacher in the process, the feedback can be more meaningful and applicable to the teacher's daily practice.

Developing a Growth Mindset amongst students is not an immediate process; rather, it will take a concerted effort on behalf of teachers and the rest of the schooling community. Equally, encouraging teachers to see themselves in the same way will equally take a lengthy period of time; however, there are significant benefits to be had from leveraging these ideas.

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5/8/2019

Failure Is a Part of Teaching. Here's How to Grow From It - Education Week Teacher

EDUCATION WEEK
TEACHER

FIRST PERSON

Failure Is a Part of Teaching. Here's How to Grow From It

By Lory Peroff

April 23, 2019

It had been a tough day.

 [Back to Story](#)

After the bell rang, I collapsed into my chair in the classroom and reflected on all the moments I felt I had failed. The list was long.

I failed to communicate effectively with a student, resulting in his mother telling me he thought I didn't like him. I failed to input my progress report grades properly and had to rewrite them all. I failed at checking in with a student on his weekly goals because I was preoccupied with students who were fighting during recess. I failed to eat lunch during my lunch break because I was helping students with a poster for a creativity contest. Hungry and irritable, my afternoon lesson crashed and burned. Like I said, the list was long.

When I went home I attempted to take refuge in writing, to decompress and process the events of the week. I was even having trouble with that. Nothing had really gone my way this week. I had no good strategies to share, no successes to celebrate, just a long list of failures. I felt miserable.

This wasn't supposed to happen. I have been teaching for almost two decades. I had just become a National Board-certified teacher. And I was mentoring two student-teachers who were supposed to be learning from my example. I felt that I was not only letting my students down, but also my mentees.

My experience that day got me thinking about how teachers don't always approach failure the way that we encourage our students to.

We teach our students to learn from failure. We have pencil bags with brightly colored letters claiming that "mistakes are proof you are trying," and inspirational posters with flowing rivers and smooth rocks reassuring us that "failure is a stepping stone to success." But the trouble is, it doesn't feel that way. One of my 4th grade students said it best: "Failure is both good and bad. It is good because you can learn from it. It is bad because it feels bad to fail."

As teachers, we can feel pressure to present only the picture-perfect moments in our practice. When I scroll through articles written by teachers, most of them showcase successful strategies for student engagement and classroom management, and dynamo ways to amplify student voice. With each seemingly amazingly effective teacher sharing his or her prowess, I feel more and more depleted. All these teachers seem like they are crushing it in the classroom. Why, after 17 years, do I still feel like I'm blundering through the day?

I realized I had stumbled upon the ultimate teachable moment. Instead of feeling embarrassed and trying to hide my failures from my mentees (like I so dearly yearned to do), I addressed them head on.

I wanted to dispel the myth of the "perfect" teacher. I wanted the new teachers to know that there will be good and bad days, even for the best of us. So I shared with my mentees some of the strategies I use to get through tough days on the job and learn from my mistakes.

● Reflect

When you experience failure, the first step is to take some time to think deeply about what happened. You may want to reflect by writing about it, sharing it with a colleague, or just turning it over in your mind on your commute home.

<https://www.edweek.org/tm/articles/2019/04/23/failure-is-a-part-of-teaching-heres.html?cmp=eml-enl-eu-news2-rm&M=58815864&U=2789600&UID=5ffda66e16...> 1/2

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Failure Is a Part of Teaching. Here's How to Grow From It - Education Week Teacher

That night, as I went for my evening run, I mulled the days' mishaps over in my mind. I felt sluggish. I realized in addition to feeling like a terrible teacher and mentor, I was still quite hungry from skipping lunch. I thought more about how I need to take care of myself in order to better care for my students.

● **Make a Plan**

You might be feeling a bit better and ready to put those bad feelings associated with failure behind you and move on to a better day. Not yet—it's time to make a plan. Write a simple list of three ways you could avoid making the same mistake again.

Upon returning home after my run, I jotted down some simple ideas to help decrease the chances of missing lunch again in the future. I had the plan: Pack a lunch the night before, bring some cash to purchase lunch, replenish my snack supply in the classroom.

● **Find Support**

Share your list with someone you can rely on to hold you accountable for your plan. A trusted colleague, family member, or even an eager student can help you stick with it. You can't just walk away from your solutions now, because someone is going to be checking in on you.

A colleague and I have committed to a "walk and talk" session once a week after school. I look forward to our weekly sessions as a way to share about our week, check in about what's working and what's not, and support each other's growth.

● **Try It Out, But Be Gentle With Yourself**

When I arrived to school the following day, I invited my student teachers to take a vacation from the classroom and join me in the staff room for lunch. That day, with a full stomach, the afternoon block went off without a hitch.

But I know there will still be some days when things just don't go as planned. Teachers can be their worst critics. Don't let the heavy feeling of failure drown out the quiet triumphs we have daily. Challenge yourself to think of two bright spots everyday. Think of the shy student who raised her hand for the first time. Remember the beautiful haiku your student proudly shared. Make it a routine to write down these two bright spots a day, and allow these beautiful moments be a part of your daily reflection too.

● **Be Real**

By sharing our struggles and this attitude toward failure with our colleagues and students, we show what true leadership is. By talking honestly about what I learned and how I grew, I was able to provide my student-teachers with some strategies on how to deal with the hardships they will inevitably encounter.

Let's face it: Every day that teachers interact with students, there are bound to be lots of errors, missteps, and flat out failures. And it feels bad. But this profession is also incredibly important, and can be so rewarding. In order to stay in the classroom for the long haul, teachers should be equipped early on with some strategies to deal with failure and the negative feelings that come along with it.

Lory Walker Peroff is a 4th grade teacher at Waikiki Elementary School in Honolulu, Hawaii, and a Hope Street Group National Teacher Fellow alumna who believes writing is not only enjoyable but essential. She lives in Honolulu with her husband, two energetic and curious daughters, six chickens, two ducks, and one peahen.

Planning for Growth Mindset: Gallery Walk	
Ideas for introducing Growth Mindset to mentees	Ideas for practicing Growth Mindset with mentees

Reflection: How do you plan on introducing and practicing the concept of growth mindset with your mentee(s)?

Build Relationships: Key Takeaway:

Using a growth mindset will strengthen the mentor/mentee relationship.

