

DESCRIPTION OF MENTORING

Across the province, new teachers rate mentoring as the most valuable support they receive during their first year of teaching. Mentoring is an effective means of career development for new teachers because it provides the opportunity for a novice teacher to develop a professional learning relationship with a veteran colleague. It is an educational intervention that addresses new teachers' learning needs while helping them develop a principled teaching practice.

Mentoring is a consultative process and involves collaboration and sharing between two or more individuals. This supportive relationship is based on trust and confidentiality. Mentoring should provide support, challenge and growth in a non-evaluative manner.

The program matches new teachers with experienced mentor teachers from their own school or another school within the board. The mentoring continuum stretches from informal teacher-buddy relationships (mentor offers moral and emotional support) to trained advisors who provide skillful coaching and feedback related to teaching practice. Different levels and models of mentoring will be used for different situations.

Usually mentoring relationships are one-on-one but mentoring can also occur in a group setting with one mentor working with several new teachers. A novice teacher can also be linked to several veteran teachers. Regardless of the set-up, mentoring is an effective tool that contributes to the professional growth of teachers and helps them reach their full potential.

The mentor teacher contributes to the development of a new teacher by:

- functioning as an exemplary role model
- providing support and inspiration to the new teacher
- assisting the new teacher in achieving their goals as an educator
- assisting the new teacher in becoming a more independent, reflective professional who engages in problem solving

While the novice teacher benefits from the experience and expertise of the mentor so too does the mentor gain from the shared learning that takes place and the professional recognition that comes from being a mentor.

Partners can address all areas of teacher development or focus on specific areas. The desired outcomes are improved skills and knowledge for new teachers. Mentoring activities can include:

- * classroom observation & debrief
- * collaborative assessment
- * participation in communities of practice
- * shared professional development for both partners
- * reflection
- * co-planning
- * professional dialogue
- * co-teaching

Time will be provided to the new teachers and mentors to meet during the school day to work on specific aspects of teacher development.