Tips for Successful Mentor/Beginning Teacher Relationships

- Work for effective communication
- Seek specific topics which are of joint interest which can serve as a focus for working together
- Build relationships through shared work and values
- Foster learning from each other
- Establish mutual trust and understanding by being reliable in meeting commitments and being clear in expectations of each other
- Collect data for the beginning teacher’s analysis
- Use positive, nonjudgmental descriptions

Materials taken from Region VI ESC workshop on Texas Beginning Educator Support System (TxBESS) Mentor Institute conducted by Dorothy Yawn.
Teachers move through predictable **Stages of Development** and there are mentoring behaviors that are most appropriate at each of the developmental stages.

**Stage 1: The Survival Stage - Appropriate Mentoring Behaviors**

- Look for opportunities to provide specific praise
- Express interest in the beginning teacher’s ideas
- Share experiences from your own first year of teaching
- Have the beginning teacher reflect on things that are going well, on successes as well as on setbacks
- Include the beginning teacher in social and professional activities
- Share your coping skills and encourage the beginning teacher to lead a balanced life that includes time for self, family, and friends (time management)

**Stage 2: The Task Stage – Appropriate Mentoring Behaviors**

- Suggest that the beginning teacher prioritize the many tasks that he or she feel compelled to complete
- Open your lesson plan files and invite the beginning teacher to adopt or adapt them
- Talk about your methods of more efficiently accomplishing common teaching and management tasks
- Have the beginning teacher speak with or observe other colleagues who demonstrate exemplary practice in areas in which the beginning teacher has expressed interest
- Have the beginning teacher reflect on his or her motives for pursuing a particular task
- Do tasks together (planning) so the beginning teacher can see how you do these tasks
- Encourage the beginning teacher to get students to help them with some of the classroom tasks
- Refer to “Time Crunchers” and offer suggestions

**Stage 3: The Impact Stage – Appropriate Mentoring Behaviors**

- Commend the beginning teacher for being student centered
- Engage the beginning teacher in collegial dialogue that focuses on meeting the needs of individual learners
- Expose the beginning teacher to more complex teaching and learning strategies
- Have the beginning teacher collaborate with or observe outstanding teachers who can model best practices the beginning teacher has not yet mastered
- Focus conversations on the beginning teacher efforts to make progress with challenging students
- This is a good stage for workshops

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**Time Crunchers**  
(Tasks reported by Beginning Teachers as areas of concern)

- Catching up on paper work
- Grading papers
- Lesson planning
- Modifying lessons
- Classroom cleanup
- Displaying student work in classroom
- Preparing for parent conferences
- Faculty and other meetings
- Record keeping
- Finding instructional resources
- Student routines and procedures
- Tutoring

Materials taken from Region VI ESC workshop on Texas Beginning Educator Support System (TxBESS) Mentor Institute conducted by Dorothy Yawn.
Observing and Conferencing with Interns

Skills to look for during observations

Personal/Professional
• Punctuality
• Cooperation
• Enthusiasm
• Positive attitude
• Tact
• Absences
• Attention to details
• Interpersonal communication
• Confidence

Instructional
• Questioning
• Planning varied activities
• Appropriate level
• Content
• Student centered
• Clarity of instruction
• Sequencing
• Objectives
• Motivation
• Self analysis
• Follow-up

Management
• Starting class
• Transitions
• Physical environment
• Movement
• Stating expectations
• Wait time
• Non-verbal
• Student needs
• Sex bias
• With-it-ness
• Overlapping
• Rapport

Interpersonal skills
• Praise
• Feedback
Guidelines for Conferencing

- Focus on descriptions of behavior rather than personality
- Discuss facts rather than assumptions
- Use descriptions rather than explanations
- Be specific rather than general
- Share information rather than giving advice
- Guide the intern to seek alternatives rather than giving the “one right way”
- Focus on things that can be changed
- Ask “why” before giving judgments
SPECIFIC MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES
Middle/ Secondary

MOVEMENT OF STUDENTS IN THE CLASSROOM
To move students from one group to another:
1. Give all of the needed directions before you begin an activity to reduce problems before students move into groups.
2. Set time limits for movements (e.g. In the next 30 seconds, I would like for you to move into your groups).
3. Signal those students for movement who are attentive and using appropriate behaviors (e.g. I can see that Table One is ready to pick-up their materials).

REINFORCING POSITIVE BEHAVIOR
To encourage appropriate behaviors:
1. Use verbal praise such as, “I see that one table is set-up to begin.” Be sincere and do not use praise to manipulate students.
2. Write notes to students expressing positive messages.
3. Call parents and give verbal praise of the student.
4. Reward students with coupons for privileges for computer time, free time, homework exemption, or seat change.
5. Reward the class for a good day with appropriate verbal praise and an award such as, “Everyone worked so hard today that I will give you ten minutes to read whatever you want at the end of the period.”
6. Reward the class occasionally with a “no homework night”.
7. Give individuals, groups, or whole class a reward when they show hard work and/or cooperative work efforts.

REDIRECTING WHOLE CLASS BEHAVIOR
When the entire class is off-task:
1. Ask for the students’ attention while simultaneously giving a signal to cue students to focus on your directions (e.g. Raise your hand until students raise their hand, turn off lights, use a bell or chime signal, or tap on the desk).
2. Change your inflection to a soft voice or whisper to gain attention.
3. Recognize the groups or individuals who are on-task and praise them by name (e.g. Thanks, Julie, for being prepared for the next activity).
4. Look at your watch and keep track of the time that the class has wasted. Students must then pay you back after the bell rings.

REDIRECTING INDIVIDUAL OFF-TASK BEHAVIOR VERBALS
When an individual student is off-task:
1. Ask the disruptive student a question, using her/his name in front of the question to summon attention (e.g. Charles, why do you think this was one of the main causes of the war?)
2. Use the individual’s name in a comment without interrupting the flow of the lesson. Using a student’s name is especially effective if you first use it in a positive manner (e.g. Do you remember when Charles stated yesterday that one of the causes centered on the imbalance of power?)
3. Use specific, positive comments that refocus a negative behavior, “Michael, I want you to have plenty of time to do quality work.” Or, you could say, “I know that you will do better if everyone is quietly working.”

4. Give a positive direction, followed by a “thanks.” Avoid the use of “please.” It is better to be definite, (e.g. Remember our rules for listening). Then move on, expecting the student(s) to comply.

5. Praise the other students by stating, “Thanks for all of you who are being such active listeners.”

6. Use a strategic pause in the middle of your statement to the class. Say the student’s name in a firm tone, followed by a pause for attention, and then continue with the lesson.

7. Ask the student, “How can I help you improve your behavior in class?”

8. Never embarrass a student in front of the class. If you need to discuss behavior with the student, arrange for this privately.

**Redirecting Individual Off-task Behavior Using Nonverbals**

To refocus students without disturbing the rest of the class:

1. Give the “teacher look” that communicates distress at the student’s behavior. (Practice at home in the mirror before you try it in class since students have seen “the look” before.)

2. Move into the student’s space and stand there next to her/him continuing what you were doing. You may also whisper desired expectations to the student. It may be necessary to state, “See me after class.”

3. Choose appropriate gestures and facial expressions to express your concerns. Shake your head and give a stern look to the individual student off-task. Signal by pointing your finger for the student to move from the area in which he is distracted or causing the distractions.

4. As you continue the lesson, use your tone of voice, eye contact, and proximity to the student to alter behavior.

5. Move continuously around the room to monitor students. Move and stand beside a student who is not paying attention until the student is back on task. Touch the student on the shoulder (if allowed) as you pass by; you may want to follow up with eye contact. Tap student’s work or point to the place she/he should be.

6. Take any distracting objects away from the student. Student may pick-up the object at a later time.

7. Stand quietly in front of the room and wait for ALL students’ attention.

8. Point to the procedure for an activity or the class rule students need to follow on a class chart in front of the room.

9. Place notes on the board or overhead (e.g. what you expect, directions, steps to follow).

10. Point to your watch to remind students that time is running out.

11. Use a timer for classroom activities. When the timer rings, students know to put their pencils down and look at the teacher. You, however, need to explain to your students this procedure early in the semester. Watch for students who become anxious when timed.

12. Have students use signals to identify when they are ready to move on or listen, (e.g. pencils down, papers turned over, books closed).

13. If at all possible, remove a disruptive student from the room to discipline. To discipline a student in front of her/his peers may invite an incident from the student in order to “save face” in front of others.

Compiled by Diane Graham in consultation with College Station and Bryan ISD teachers.
Suggestions for Sharing Expertise

Once the mentoring relationship is established the mentor can provide much professional knowledge and skill. Here are some suggestions for sharing expertise in the various aspects of teaching.

Suggestions for Sharing Expertise on Planning
- Find out how you can be the most helpful in the area of planning.
- Team up during the orientation week before school begins and schedule regular times to meet for discussion and planning sessions.
- Discuss goals for the year or semester and objectives for units or lessons.
- Describe various classroom climates and environments you have observed or created and how these variations worked out.
- Review the State or district curriculum guidelines together and discuss how they can be woven into the curriculum.
- Share catalogs for ordering instructional materials and equipment.
- Show how you organize your planning for the year, the semester, the week and the day.
- Share your ideas about planning for contingencies.
- Talk about how and where to anticipate students’ errors and misconceptions.
- Describe the labor saving steps you use in planning that pay off later in reduced workload.
- Talk about the patterns of students’ physical, social, and academic development in your classes; and demonstrate your understanding and valuing of differences among cultural, ethnic and linguistic groups of students in your school.
- Describe alternative strategies that are successful for teaching in classrooms where students have diverse or conflicting needs.
- Collaborate on a special unit of instruction or a project.
- Work together to design a new lab or learning centers.
- Share syllabi, units of study or lessons that have worked well for you.
- Offer to share your computer software or show where other software can be found.

Suggestions for Sharing Expertise on Instructions
- Structure times at noon or the end of the day to share reactions to the day’s teaching.
- Provide opportunities for the mentee to talk about any teaching concerns and to ask questions.
- Listen with interest when he or she talks about teaching a particular lesson or units, and if asked, offer your own reaction or analysis and support.
- Be willing to share information about your own teaching successes and failures, if appropriate.
- Volunteer to receive an evening or early morning phone call in an emergency.
- Talk about timing, pacing and sequencing in teaching concepts that are difficult for students to master.
- Offer to demonstrate lessons or labs—live or on videotape.
- Discuss several kinds of lessons and the teaching methods that work best with various groups of students; explain the rationale for using various approaches.
- Brainstorm a wide range of solutions that might be fitting for common problems.
- Describe strategies you use to increase student attention, motivation or participation.
• Talk about “brick walls” and “roadblocks” that particular groups or all students encounter, and share your strategies for helping students move forward.
• Offer to prepare to videotape lessons or classes and offer to give feedback if he or she has any questions.

Suggestions for Sharing Expertise on Management
• Take time to listen to concerns about management.
• Ask what kinds of feedback on classroom management would be most useful.
• Discuss standards for classroom management and share strategies for meeting those standards.
• Talk about the importance of organizational routines and describe the routines that contribute most to classroom management.
• Describe ways to let students know you understand their needs and concerns, and demonstrate ways to link that knowledge with long-range and short-term planning.
• Share examples of ways to enhance students’ self-concepts.
• Talk about the most difficult management problems you have encountered and various ways to address them.
• Describe techniques you tried that didn’t work and analyze why they didn’t work, demonstrating an experimental orientation.
• Talk about standards of schoolwide conduct.
• Demonstrate a wide range of classroom management techniques—either live or on videotapes.
• Offer to analyze (as a colleague and peer) the videotape of a new teacher’s performance in the area of classroom management, and be willing to share your own videotapes.
• Share exemplary professional books or workshop materials on classroom management techniques.

Suggestions for Sharing Expertise on Evaluation
• Listen to the mentee’s concerns about evaluation and share ideas about the overall purposes of evaluation in the classroom and the school.
• Talk about the variety of ways (formal and informal, verbal and nonverbal) that one can evaluate student learning and attitudes in specific subjects or at specific grade levels.
• Share your own system for grading and record keeping, and describe other models that you know about.
• Collaborate on the development of tests that might be used in identical or similar classes.
• Offer to share a collection of tests or other evaluation measures you have developed.
• Offer to give feedback on the mentee’s evaluation instruments and their results.
• Review the standardized test program used by the school or district, and talk about its role in relation to curriculum planning and evaluation of student learning in the classroom.
• Describe various strategies to handle the expected paperwork associated with students’ assignments.
• Explore various approaches for sharing evaluation results with students, site administrators and parents.
• Discuss and compare various techniques for evaluation of one’s own teaching effectiveness.
- Help the new teacher to prepare for the review and evaluation of his or her first year of teaching.