

Foreword

I still remember my excitement and pride 30 years ago as I turned the key and walked through the door to my first classroom. The bare room smelled of varnish and chalkdust. As I began the task of turning this empty space into a learning community, I felt very alone. Throughout the entire first year, aside from an occasional observation from my principal, I navigated the complexities of teaching by myself. I made lots of mistakes. Sometimes I learned from these mistakes, and sometimes I had no idea what to do. I survived the first year, but I can only imagine how much better a teacher I would have been that year if I'd had a mentor.

Times have changed. We no longer use the trial-by-fire method to induct new teachers. In the same way that physicians learn to practice medicine through a residency program, student teachers and beginning teachers need the guidance of skilled mentors to become effective educators.

Maximum Mentoring provides a timely and important contribution to building effective teacher education and induction programs. Nearly two million new teachers will enter U.S. classrooms over the next decade. Since teacher quality is the single most important component of student success, nothing is more crucial for our schools than supporting our new teachers as they enter the profession. This book demonstrates how experienced, talented teachers—trained as mentors—can enhance preservice and induction programs.

Good teachers know how to teach; good mentors know how to help a novice learn to teach. It is critical that we look at what a cooperating teacher or mentor teacher needs to know to support a student teacher or new teacher. Mentors can help provide a supportive environment where beginning teachers can take risks and explore their new role as an educator. Talented mentors help student teachers and beginning teachers reflect on their teaching and set appropriate goals for professional learning. They also help novices assess their strengths and areas for growth as well as provide emotional support when the obstacles seem overwhelming.

Effective mentors have the ability to keep one eye on the new teacher's immediate needs and another eye on broader, professional concerns. Mentors know when to pose questions and when to provide concrete advice. They have good observational skills and know how to give useful feedback. Effective mentors have strong interpersonal communication skills as well as patience, generosity of spirit, and an inquiring disposition.

In the 20 years that I worked as a Supervisor of Teacher Education at the University of California, Santa Cruz, I have seen the key role that cooperating teachers play in helping student teachers succeed. Each year I strove to find the best placements for our students. I'd ask myself, is this cooperating teacher someone I'd enjoy

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learning from? I was always looking for excellent teachers with the disposition and qualities of an outstanding mentor.

In 1988, I developed the Santa Cruz New Teacher Project (SCNTP), a program to support newly credentialed teachers. I knew that providing new teachers with mentoring from outstanding veteran teachers would be the foundation of the program. After fifteen years work supporting nearly 8,000 beginning teachers, the SCNTP maintains this focus. We release experienced teachers fulltime to work with beginning teachers—in their classrooms—during the school day. And we have learned a lot about what it takes to help experienced teachers learn their new role as mentors.

Mentoring is sometimes misperceived as an intuitive and informal role. To be an effective mentor takes time and training. It requires a whole new set of skills. *Maximum Mentoring* offers an array of training strategies for mentors, and helps to codify what it means to be an effective mentor. Gwen Rudney and Andrea Guillaume clearly understand the complexities of the roles of cooperating teacher, mentor, and supervisor. They share a wide array of examples that employ adult learning theories, encourage relationship building with novices, use standards as a foundation for formative and summative assessment, and detail strategies for working with struggling novices. I'm particularly impressed with their deep understanding of the needs of novices and their applied ideas on how well-trained, knowledgeable cooperating teachers form the cornerstone of an effective teacher preparation and induction program.

An investment in teacher quality starts at the earliest stages of teachers' careers and continues throughout their professional lives. Using the talent of our nation's exemplary teachers to support novices benefits the entire profession. It offers veteran teachers a chance to share their wealth of knowledge while adding another professional dimension to teaching.

Maximum Mentoring makes great sense. It is a wonderful resource for mentors who want to contribute to the next generation of teachers.

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