

# INTRODUCTION

## WELCOME TO MENTORING IN ACTION!

If you are reading this, you are preparing to mentor a novice teacher. Let me begin by saying, “Thank you.”

You have made a commitment to support a beginner in the journey to become an effective teacher. This role takes time away from your own classroom and your personal life. I know your dedication to be a mentor is a choice you made after careful thought.

Your willingness to help others learn the art and craft of teaching demonstrates your choice to serve.

serv-ice 'sɜrvəs/ *noun* 1. the action of helping or doing work for someone. “Millions are involved in voluntary service” *synonyms*: favor, kindness, good turn, helping hand.

By being of service to others, you influence a cycle of support for novice teachers. You create a system where everyone is helping everyone else. Your participation as a mentor in your school acknowledges your heart is open to help others. It also demonstrates the hope and love you have for the teaching profession. You become a role model for your novice teacher as well as all teachers in your school who see you stepping up to share and help another teacher. A mentor is a leader who becomes an important part of a “ripple effect.”

Lao Tzu says it this way . . .

*Do you want to be a positive influence in the world?*

*First get your own life in order.*

*Ground yourself in the single principle so your behavior is wholesome and effective.*

*If you do that you will earn respect and be a powerful influence.*

*Remember that your influence begins with you and ripples outward.*

*So be sure your influence is both potent and wholesome.*

*How do I know this works? All growth spreads outward from a fertile and potent nucleus.*

*You are a nucleus.*

Excerpt from “The Ripple Effect,” *The Tao of Leadership* by John Heider

To me, to “get your own life in order” means that you need to learn *how* to mentor. Dedicate yourself to being the best mentor you can be. Take your role seriously and recognize the

important influence and role model you are for the teachers you are serving. Take courses related to mentor skills, attend workshops on mentoring, and register for conferences where mentors share ideas. This will ensure that your influence is wholesome and positive for teachers and the education profession.

This generation of novice teachers brings vitality, idealism, and some excellent social networking skills with them. Your role is to empower these novices to share, integrate into the school community, and emerge as leaders who will take your place in the future. We all agree that systematically supporting novice teachers into the profession works. Research has been done to prove it, and common sense tells us that mentoring is the right thing to do. We all have our own stories of “being mentored” that first year. The “sink or swim” method of mentoring doesn’t provide any support to novice teachers. So what is the problem? Why aren’t we systematically supporting our novices?

As I meet mentors from all over the United States, I have discovered that many districts are facing similar issues. No funds for the training of mentors, no ongoing support for mentors who have been prepared, and some districts don’t have funding for one-on-one mentoring. If mentors are available, they are often volunteers and more time is spent “matching” the mentor and mentee than actually engaging in discussions about teaching and learning. Sometimes after mentors are assigned, they don’t know what they should do or talk about with a novice each week. These challenges of funding, training, and support influence the quality of the mentoring program and may be impacting the retention rate for novice teachers.

## **This Book Is a Practical Resource for Mentors**

We want to retain the teachers we are bringing into the profession. To do that, mentors need to focus on what is important to keep them teaching! Some teachers enter through traditional pathways in teacher preparation programs and others by alternative fast track routes. Mentors may have to differentiate their mentoring based on the needs of the novice teachers with whom they will be working. This guide will help a mentor review topics for novice teachers who come well prepared by colleges of education. It will also provide content for other teachers who have entered teaching through alternative routes who need more in-depth mentoring.

This book serves as a curriculum guide for you while you are “in the act of” mentoring. If all the mentors in your district used this curriculum, there would be a common language you could refer to together. Formalizing the mentoring program and what mentors are doing demonstrates the value of mentoring. It says mentoring is important, and we will provide resources and support to our mentors!

I have a passion for this work. I have been a teacher and a teacher educator for more than 40 years. During my visits to schools, my talks with mentors led me to create this 2nd edition. My intention is to offer you an updated resource that supports you in being a powerful influence on a novice teacher.

Use the practical ideas to inspire you as you share your wisdom. Use the positive energy and vitality from your mentee to sustain you and remind you of the joys of teaching. Remember, you are mentoring the next generation of teachers into this noble profession.

*Sincerely,  
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