

The Changing Face of Mentorship for Preservice and Beginning Teachers

by

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Bachelor of Education, The University of Alberta, 1996

A Capstone Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER IN EDUCATION

In the Area of Mentorship

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

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ABSTRACT

In education, it has long been understood that there are many benefits to mentoring. Unfortunately, a common training program across Alberta does not exist for mentors to professionally acquire skills to excel at their role as mentor. The literature describes a multitude of benefits to mentorship and how both a mentor and a preservice teacher would benefit from the time and practice invested in mentoring. In this capstone project, I have introduced a professional development (PD) session for the inexperienced teacher mentor that will inform and allow growth and skill development to help prepare a mentor for the challenges of mentorship with new preservice teachers in Alberta. I describe a series of steps to follow prior to accepting a student teacher to affirm personal readiness to steps to follow once working with a student teacher. These steps follow Alberta Education's philosophy of supporting the vision of an educated Alberta 2030: Engaged Thinkers and Ethical Citizens with an Entrepreneurial Spirit include communication, relationship building (Alberta Education, 2010). This PD session will dramatically increase the level of success of partnerships between mentor and mentee and increase the professionalism and retention of teachers in education to better prepare them for the classroom.

Keywords: Benefits, skills, professional development, success, partnership.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Mentorship has always been a concept or act that I have been drawn to. In many aspects of my life, I have always ended up mentoring my peers, or people in one way or another. It only seemed logical that I continue with this in my profession. It seems to be working as many administrators have asked me to mentor groups of struggling, marginalized students, to new teachers to now preservice teachers who do their practicum in my school. This was an opportunity of leadership that I was looking for.

Mentorship has not always been my focus. In fact, it has only truly come to light in the past 15 years. Prior to this, I was trying to find my own career path and keep up with the everyday rigors of teaching. In hindsight, if I would have personally experienced a good mentor, at the beginning of my career, I may have blossomed earlier. Learning from trial and error does not always have to occur and this is the driving force for me to embrace being a mentor and truly learn how to effectively mentor. This is no longer a new concept and has merit to be delved into for the benefit of others and not only as my own life-long education advances.

My formal post-secondary education was very exciting. I left home at 18 to a new province to study whatever interested me in a new language. This, I did without support and viewed it as an adventure. Independence is a good characteristic but not everyone is an independent soul. My own abilities to forge new paths and go without support are not what I have experienced in new staff members and student teachers I have mentored over the past years. I believe that the majority of people need support and can only benefit from it – as I would have if it were readily available at that time. This interest in creating

a program or resource for new teachers and student teachers would meet the needs of the independent and less independent person.

Throughout the process of this capstone project my ideas have migrated to be more on the development of a PD session for schools, school boards or post-secondary schools with education programs. Motivation for this subject comes from my love of teaching. No profession deserves to be left stagnant and has room for amelioration. Education has always been touted as a profession that requires life-long learning. My own life-long learning includes reflection and by writing this paper I have deeply reflected on my own teaching and best practices. Weismer and Woods (2010) state, “A primary advantage of hosting a student teacher is the resulting increased reflection on practice. Through reflection a teacher examines her or his pedagogy and the motives driving her or his planning, activities, and assessment” (p. 63). It doesn’t matter how long one has been teaching. To find new motivation is inspiring and keeps teachers in the profession.

Chapter Two

Literature Review - Introduction

A teacher education program is the formal beginning point in an educator's career. Parallel to formal schooling are the personal life experiences one brings to class. These experiences and knowledge can be fruitful and shape an individual. Both formal and informal experiences go together, and as I have personally experienced, my teaching career has been fulfilling and is growing the longer I teach. As a result of positive mentorship I have personally experienced, new leadership roles are opening up and are developing as a result of this.

Within teacher education programs, preservice teachers are introduced to various pedagogical theories; however, when in the classroom for the first time, they need to go beyond their coursework and experience positive mentorship in the school itself to hopefully experience success. "The cutting edge is no longer in higher education; it is in the P-12 arena" (Johnson and Templeton, 2011, p. 114). Alberta Education defined what teaching children represents: "The professional teacher is a learning leader, a collaborative partner, a researcher, a reflective practitioner, and a change agent with expertise in recognizing and responding to the academic, cognitive, affective and emotional learning needs of students" (Inspiring Action on Education, 2010, p. 22). And to be an effective teacher, education is lifelong learning. Furthermore, Eisner (1995) points out that the power of the human to reason allows students to reach their full potential to teach in particular ways. He also continues to state that teachers cannot satisfy all of the wants and needs of a child when he or she is in a group of 30 or more other children. Through appropriate mentorship, one can learn how to meet this

challenge, as larger classrooms are the reality of education today. Meeting this challenge will help with attendance problems and “dwindling academic performance” (Mintah, 2014) that typically occur with large class sizes.

A search of literature on mentorship with preservice teachers has brought to light the pros and cons of this practice. In this literature review, I will focus on:

1. How mentorship is defined.
2. 21st Century Learning in Alberta promotes positive mentorship
3. What concerns have been raised about mentorship?
4. Should mentor teachers be taught to mentor?
5. The evolution of mentorship for preservice and beginning teachers.
6. Examples of effective programs and current practice.

The literature on mentorship has dramatically grown since the 1980's. Mutchler (2000) believes that the goal was and still is to increase success in the quality of teaching and the retention of teachers.

How is Mentorship Defined?

Collaboration between teachers and student teachers as a mechanism to support student teachers while on field experience has become known as mentoring (Burn, 2006). Mentorship is teaching and modeling best practices. It is listening and reflecting with a student teacher so they can make a connection to their formal education. In addition, the mentor helps transfer knowledge to the classroom, easing a student teacher in to a whole new arena. A mentor can help a student teacher “negotiate their own personal identities within a reflective and goal directed framework” (McDonald, 2009). Menter, Mahony and Hextall, (2004) explain, that mentorship is “heavily shaped not only by global but also local socio-cultural and political practices” (p. 4). Thus, creating “opportunities

where preservice teachers not only observe the modeling of best practices but actively and consistently participate in demonstrating and studying best practices” (Johnson & Templeton, 2011, p115). Little (1990) explained the three main benefits of mentorship: Firstly, new teacher induction - to help transition beginning teachers into the classroom and acculturate them to the specific school and district setting in which they will work. Secondly, mentorship can help with career enhancement - to provide an avenue for leadership, public recognition, and reward for skilled veteran teachers who serve their schools and districts as mentors, professional developers, and/or contributors to curriculum and instructional improvement. Thirdly, helping student teachers by guiding them to find and enroll in professional development, which helps to build personal capacity and capacity for school and district program innovation (Little, 1990). With the personal experiences from their mentor teacher, preservice teachers can seek guidance to what professional development exists. Today, people ask for reviews of what was good and effective PD exists prior to attending it. They will read reviews on line or phone to talk to people who have experienced the session. Furthermore, Beck and Kosnick (2002) sum up what mentorship includes: “emotional support, shared authority, collaborative planning, flexibility, feedback, modeling of effective practice and organizing challenging but manageable workloads” (p. 2).

The significance of all the above descriptions of mentorship is collaboration; mentorship is more successful with positive collaboration from all parties. 21 Century learning focuses on collaboration requires an ‘associate teacher who is communicative and supportive and has clear beliefs and philosophies in regard to teaching and supervision” (McDonald, 2009, p. 1). Beck and Kosnick (2002) see a “clear link between

a positive practicum experience and excellence in supervision” (p. 1).

The Great Schools Partnership (2014) defines, the term “21st century skills”. It “refers to a broad set of knowledge, skills, work habits, and character traits that are believed—by educators, school reformers, college professors, employers, and others—to be critically important to success in today’s world, particularly in collegiate programs and contemporary careers and workplaces” (p. 1).

21st Century Learning in Alberta promotes positive mentorship

Alberta Education has made an emphasis on positive relationships, which falls into 21st Century learning and is seen on the cross-curricular competencies chart.



Figure 1. Cross-Curricular Competencies Alberta Education (2010).

Although there are ten very different competencies to the chart, each one is a characteristic that both the student and the preservice teacher must have to achieve success. Bringing to light these competencies is what is at the forefront on Alberta's Education's doorstep. Mentoring new teachers and student teachers on the philosophy of 21st Century competencies will only help in their application. These skills need to be taught at the foundation level of all education faculties.

Friesen and Jardine published a report (2012) in Calgary that reflects the needs of our students today. These needs reflect Alberta Education's competencies that educators are trying to integrate into their classes. Here are some of their comments, which tell me that we, as teachers, need to meet the ever-changing needs of 21st Century students:

- *We want to do work that makes a difference to me and to my world.*
- *We don't want to remember, recall and regurgitate*
- *We don't want to learn for the sake of tests*
- *We don't want learning made easy; rather, they want it to mean something.*
- *We want to learn with the media of our times.*
- *We want to do work that is relevant, meaningful and authentic.*
- *We want to be engaged intellectually*
- *We want stronger relationships with their teachers, with each other and with their communities locally, provincially, nationally and globally*
- *We want teachers to know how we learn, to take into account what we understand and what we misunderstand and use this knowledge as a starting place to guide our continued learning.*
- *We want to be able to work with others in the classroom, online and in our community. We want to be able to pick up our information anywhere, anytime*
We want in-depth learning.
We need feedback in time to help us learn and in time do something about it.

Figure 2. High school students' comments on 21st Century learning (p. 10).

What concerns have been raised about mentorship?

The practice of mentoring beginning teachers emerged and became a focus in the 1980s. Many challenges have been recognized in these past 25 years. Firstly, creating relationships is integral. Graham (2006) stated that relationships based on trust and reciprocity are needed in order to achieve cognitive engagement and meet the intellectual challenges of teaching. Relationships take time to build and mentors are not always willing to relinquish their classes or authority to student teachers. The issue created with this is that an authentic hands-on experience in teaching cannot be had without some autonomy. Secondly, without formal teaching experience, student teachers or novice teachers “tend to have their own theories about teaching (Timperley, 2010). These theories based on their own experiences may help or hinder their practicum experience. On the other hand, Eisner’s Rational Humanist ideology explains the power of the human as a rational being to make sense of curriculum content and the curriculum content itself and how we teach it (Eisner, 1995). Eisner believes that the individual (the student teacher), with their personal experiences will help “make sense” of what they teach. This is a difficult concept as curriculum is constantly changing, and the children we teach it to are also constantly changing (p. 47).

The student teachers’ personal theories are not proven as a result of lack of experience and therefore good mentorship is needed to appropriately direct new teachers. To see and experience good practice is important. A positive or negative practicum will have a strong impact on the retention of future teachers and will create their view of the profession (Korthagen et al., 2006). Many student teachers have quit the profession after or during their practicum in a school. They realize that this profession was not what they

believed it would be. Many people may have idealized teaching in their minds, but when in front of a class, the job is a lot more difficult than what was first believed to be. As society changes, students and education change, too. A student teacher may have believed that their classes would be the same as it was when they were in school.

Stress can lead to burnout, a sustained state that, as Maslach, Shaufeli and Leiter (2001) observe three dimensions:

1. Emotional exhaustion, which is the feeling of being overextended and depleted of one's emotional and physical resources;
2. Depersonalization, which results in negative, calloused responses to others;
3. Reduced efficacy or accomplishment, which is the sense that one is unable to achieve outcomes and lacks control over the resources needed to do so.

Student teachers would benefit from a guide, which would help them deal with what some describe as the “difficulty translating concepts learned in methods courses into their classrooms” (Clift and Brady, 2005, p. 331). Mentors need to bridge this disconnect and through practical experience show how to use the curriculum course materials in a real-life setting. Bridging the disconnect can be had by developing a good working relationship.

Kram (1983) stated that the mentor–student teacher relationship has four stages: “Initiation—getting to know each other. Cultivation—what things do mentors and protégés do together to promote and enhance teaching and learning? Separation—how does the role of the mentor diminish and the role of the protégé increase? Redefinition—how does the mentor–protégé relationships evolve to a peer coaching, critical friend

relationship? Is this a valid progression”(p. 7)? Mentors need to be aware of the phases of mentoring and strive to move to the redefinition of the mentor–student teacher relationship.

The Alberta Teachers’ Association (2010) believes that “Teachers, although expert at pedagogy, find that they become novice mentors—they, too, move through a learning cycle in terms of the mentor process (p. 7).

Should Mentor teachers be taught to mentor?

Mentoring mentors? An experienced teacher doesn’t translate into effective mentorship. How Mentor teachers are selected and supported varies between school districts. Within the Edmonton Catholic School district, any teacher with a permanent continuous contract can mentor. It is up to the school administration or coordinator to assume some responsibility to who is matched up with a student teacher and can deny requests. The pros to this are any teacher with a continuous contract can mentor and this can be a positive experience for an individual who wants to develop leadership experience. The feeling that they are having a positive impact is needed in all careers. This gives variety to a teacher that they might not have had access to and can open up dialogue with other mentor teachers. Also important is the fact that they will start to reflect upon their own teaching practices. Another benefit would be the new technology student teachers have experience with that can be brought into the classroom. Both the teacher and the student teacher can learn and benefit from the mentorship experience. There are cons to this method of acquiring student teachers, too. Firstly, it is common to see mentor teachers not ready, or willing, to dedicate the time needed to appropriately mentor. Also, they may not have the background or teaching experience to appropriately

model best practices. Some schools, like Louis St. Laurent Catholic high school, have stated that a teacher needs to have taught the course a minimum of two times to be able to mentor a student teacher in their subject. I believe that this short time span of two terms is not adequate to truly know and become a master teacher in the domain. Many schools do not take mentorship seriously and the best matches are not always made (Mutchler, 2000, p. 14).

Some school boards require mentor teachers to go through mentorship programs prior to accepting a student teacher. In 2000, The National Center for Research on Teacher Learning in the United States, listed five findings for mentoring programs:

- Mentoring must be connected to a vision of good teaching, if it is to contribute to educational reform
- Mentoring must be informed by an understanding of how one learns to teach.
- Mentoring must be viewed as a professional practice, not merely a new social role for experienced teachers.
- Mentors need time to mentor and opportunities to learn to mentor.
- Mentoring is affected by the professional culture of the school and broader policies and values.

The opportunities to learn to mentor are very important. Knowles & Cole (1996) pointed out the important fact that cooperating (mentor) teachers typically receive little or no preparation for their role and little or no recognition or support for their involvement; consequently, they rely heavily on their prior experiences as student teachers themselves to guide their advisory practices.

At the University of Missouri, in the teacher fellowship program, mentor teachers,

or veteran teachers, are taught to mentor. This program specifically focuses in on helping new teachers in their first year of teaching. The mentor takes leave of their regular class and dedicates two years to new teacher supports to ensure success. As a direct result of working with new teachers, retention rates increase. (UM Teaching Fellowship Program, 2012).

Most types of mentorship training come in the form of professional development. In Nova Scotia, teachers who want to learn mentorship skills take a two-day professional development session. Furthermore, the government of Nova Scotia stated “teacher mentor initiative is part of the province's \$3 million investment this year to provide more resources and support for students and teachers” (Nicoll, 2005). Edmonton Public School Board has partnered up with the University of Alberta to create a graduate level course for mentor teachers. This is subsidized by the school board and will help teachers to further their mentorship abilities.

There is a lack of professional mentor teacher training. Monies have and are been given to mentor new teachers in school districts, but currently there is a need and room for training mentors themselves, so they are able to acquire valuable mentoring skills prior to mentoring. As the National Center for Research on Teacher Learning (2010) indicated, “Mentors need time to mentor and opportunities to learn to mentor” It seems logical to go beyond just giving opportunities and time to learn but have formal training in mentorship.

The following chart from the ATA’s handbook to mentoring student teachers describes what is entailed in mentoring. Through training, a mentor can be informed on what is needed.

A need for mentorship has increased as the demographics of our student population has changed dramatically. Today, there is a push for “21st century learning. This is significant because it is a way to keep current with the changes in society and education that is more “student-centered” (Inspiring Action on Education, 2010). Not only are student teachers changing, the students themselves are very different. What worked five years ago may not be the best approach to today’s student. This diagram lists all of the characteristics of the 21Documents, like “Inspiring Action on Education”,

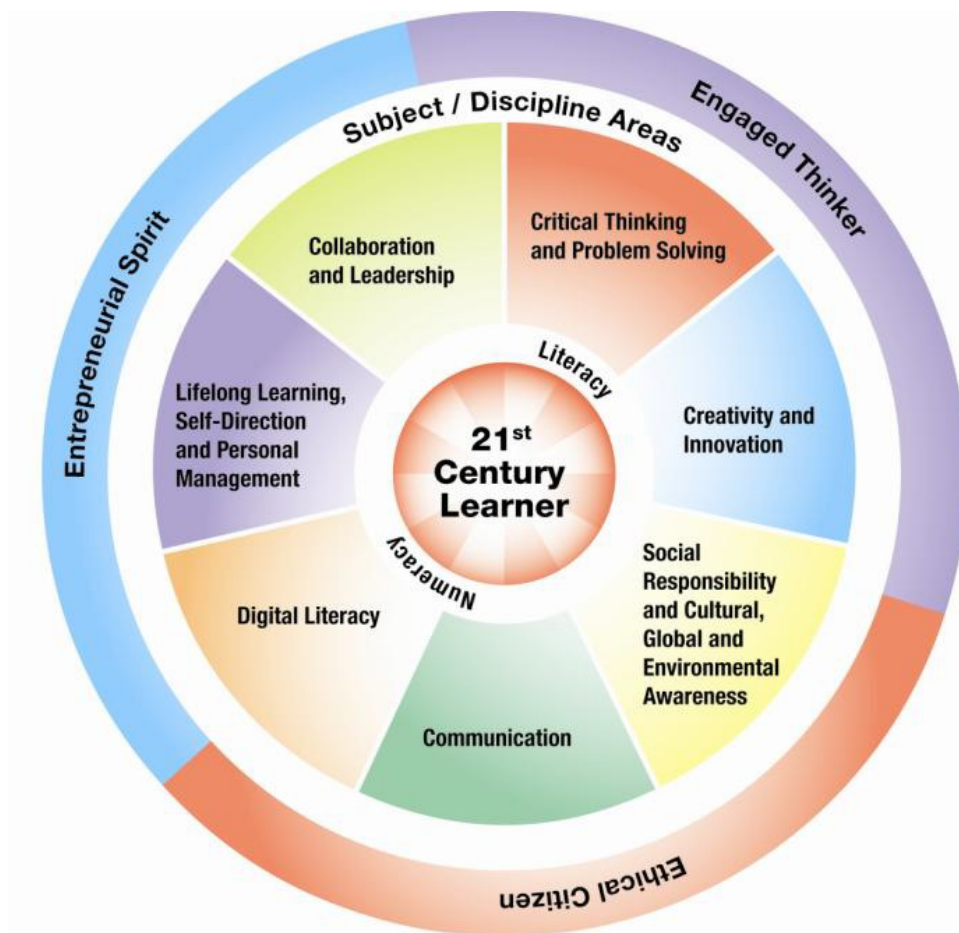


Figure 3. 21st Century Learner, Alberta Education 2010.

produced by the Government of Alberta (2010) acknowledges these continued societal and economic change but this document is not taught or shown to education students in their curriculum classes.

How can we keep ahead of the curve and progress? Albertan teachers are required to keep up with the changes in education (Inspiring Action on Education) and be more “21st Century focused.” This paradigm shift should be a focus in university foundation classes and thus both the formation of teachers new and experienced is up to date. Two IFX practicum students, (January, 2014) explained that they felt unprepared to actively integrate the 21st Century Learner characteristics during their practicum. The university they study at did not teach them in any foundation classes the shift Alberta Education is taking. Louis St. Laurent catholic high school, where they were placed, is currently integrating the three “E’s” – Engaged Thinker, Entrepreneurial Spirit, and Ethical Citizen” in all of their lessons. We, as active teachers, are asked to read documentation and change our approaches to meet the ever-changing students. The same should be expected of education students. Mentoring gives student teachers a connection between what they have learnt in University and how to implement it in real life scenarios.

The evolution of mentorship for preservice and beginning teachers

From its origins in Homer’s epic to today, mentorship has had its ebbs and flows. Davies (2013) explains that “Mentoring programs have multiplied throughout BC and Canada within the last 15 years as an attempt to create more structured processes and supports for new teacher induction” (p. 9). Also, Davies continues to explain the beliefs of mentorship’s gains and research in this domain is “reflected in the growing body of current international research, which confirms how mentoring can improve teaching

effectiveness, teacher retention, and student achievement” (p. 12). In 1999, the Alberta Teachers’ Association implemented a program to help locals and jurisdictions set up mentorship programs for beginning teachers. Kathy McIsaac, The Edmonton Catholic school board representative from the Alberta Teachers Association explains that all teachers presently pay ATA dues and a partial amount from these dues, specifically \$30,000 a year, is used to help mentor new teachers. The ATA matches this amount and as a result, \$60,000 in Alberta is available for teachers to use. One example of how these funds are used is by inter-school visitation grants. A teacher in their first three years will be granted a half-day replacement so the new teacher may go to another school or class to see an experienced teacher’s methods and best practices. This is very effective, as modeling will give fresh ideas to the inexperienced teacher and also to create connections and professional relationships with teachers who teach similar subjects. This open-minded exchange has been accepted into multiple districts in different provinces, too.

“Mentoring programs have multiplied throughout BC within the last 15 years as an attempt to create more structured processes and supports for new teacher induction” (Davies, 2013, p. 1). Furthermore, they have had a recent (Spring, 2012) infusion of funds “to support a joint BCTF/UBC pilot project aimed at developing mentoring programs in BC school districts that currently do not have structured mentoring programs in place” (p. 1). As each province is physically large, it is hard to reach all teachers to offer them support. New programs such as this initiative will help support rural areas.

In Ontario, the government mandated at the beginning of the 2006–07 school year that all publicly funded schools participate in The New Teacher Induction Program (Education Act, section 268 & 270, 2006-7). As education is governed provincially,

every Canadian province deals with this phenomenon in its own way and at its own pace. In addition to Ontario, Manitoba Education gives a list of 129 resources for beginning teachers in classroom management, discipline, and lesson planning. This is less hands-on and the onus is up to the inexperienced teacher to seek help. Alberta Education has explained that new teachers need to be cognizant that the professional teacher is a learning leader, a collaborative partner, a researcher, a reflective practitioner, and a change agent with expertise in recognizing and responding to the academic, cognitive, affective and emotional learning needs of students (Inspiring Action Discussion Paper, 2010, p. 22).

Examples of effective programs and current practice

“In order for the mentoring program to be successful, training is necessary for the mentor. Workshops can help the mentor become aware of issues that they will need to address with novice teachers. A detailed job description is also needed so the mentor is aware of the objectives of the program” (Rowley, 1999). Currently, Texas has a good model for mentorship of preservice and beginning teachers. Mutchler (2000), states “ By and large, teacher mentoring programs implemented by school districts tend to focus on the “survival and discovery” stage, providing support to teachers in their first year in the classroom” (p. 11). She continues to say that the goal of this program is to assist new teachers in adjusting to the requirements and demands of teaching while, at the same time, showing them how to navigate and become socialized to the school itself.

In Texas, their mentoring program is a local state-initiated teacher- mentoring program that has been refined over time. Logically, this State has the goal to build capacity for school and district program innovation and wants to guide local education

reform. This is significant because new teachers who have personally experienced the change when they were more recently in school themselves may accept reform more readily. Additionally, Texas Education believes that through mentoring activities, both the novice teacher and mentor gain understanding and concrete skills that will benefit their students and can be shared with colleagues (2000, p.9). Moir, Gless, and Baron (1999), believe that like-programs show high rates of satisfaction, retention, and success with students among beginning teachers who participate in new teacher mentor programs.

Mentor Culture in Secondary Schools

Mentorship is revered in some schools and is feared in others. Saxena (2014) stated that “A sound and effective school culture is one where mentorship and support prevail” (p. 1). Furthermore, she continues to explain the benefits of have a strong mentor culture in the school: “Reforming the school culture with elements of mentorship and support helps it form stronger ties with its communities, build better citizens through responsibility and service” (p. 1). On the other hand, when the culture of the school does not promote positive mentorship, the school needs to look at why. Gazza (2004) sees that “Deficiencies must be targeted for improvement through program revision. Through this dynamic process, program and cultural refinement will result” (p. 48). In the article Promoting Collaborative Learning Cultures (2010), teachers who have been introduced to a good school culture create a “common feature of effective education practice” (p. 1). This is directly related to Alberta Education’s 3 E’s which is an initiative to “take responsibility for all students in their diverse learning needs” (p. 27). Collaboratively, teachers extend beyond the classroom itself and permeate kids by inspiring them to be engaged, entrepreneurial and ethical in all of their endeavors.

Positive school culture is seen as very valuable and beneficial to the school. 21st Century Learning also discusses how cooperation, collaboration and creativity can solve issues of deficiencies. With the three E's of Alberta Education, such a culture shift seems logical and attainable. Entrepreneurial spirited teachers, Ethical teachers, and Engaged teacher can create enduring mentorship programs. Literature today still refers back to Homer and mentorship - time has only given us more motivation to go in this direction.

Mentorship programs outside of Education

Looking at positive mentorship programs in professions other than education, one can see a correlation of positive practices. Research has shown that Nursing practices have improved as a result of these programs. Ronsten, Andersson, and Gustaffson (2005) state that mentorship is related to nurses' success in nursing practice, which is directly linked to professionalism, nursing quality improvement and self-confidence. The authors continue to conclude that "Mentorship enabled novice nurses to nurse in a more reflective and holistic way, and their positively reinforced self-relation may be understood as a crucial ingredient for maintaining quality standards in nursing in the future" (p. 312). This conclusion is well respected in in the nursing profession. Gazza (2004) wrote, "Implementing a successful mentoring program requires time and effort from faculty and administrators. It is not enough to say that a mentoring program is in place" (p. 41). This positive perspective of mentorship reflects a culture that sees benefits in this policy.

Mentorship has a rich and successful history within nursing. It has become engrained in the culture of the profession. Why, then is there such a large disconnect in education?

Conclusion

In conclusion, mentorship is widely defined as helping the inexperienced teacher become a better instructor to assure good quality education and long-term retention. Mentorship has been seen as a positive investment. I have reviewed articles detailing the concerns about mentorship in addition to the education or formation mentor teachers should acquire prior to mentoring. In addition, I have looked at sources that viewed the evolution of mentorship and programs that are currently succeeding with their mentoring practices. With the majority of sources, the overarching response to mentorship has been highly positive and that it is a practice that needs to be more developed and fine-tuned even though it has been a main focus for the past two decades. The culture of mentorship reflects the philosophy of 21st Century teaching. It is being adopted and accepted as good practice.

Unfortunately there is very little that exists as a “concrete” guide. For future improvement in mentorship at the high school level, a guide to mentorship would benefit all schools, teachers and student teachers. This guide would be for teachers who are contemplating being a mentor and also as a “requirement” for those who want to mentor. It would assure quality mentorship. King’s University College in Edmonton, Alberta has a guide that discusses the characteristics of good mentorship, but it does not discuss how to mentor. It is a start, but not adequate for the inexperienced mentor. Training manuals just are not readily available. The University of Alberta, like Kings, has a list of desirable characteristics and defined “role” of the mentor. Additionally, they will send out a facilitator to help coach a struggling mentor on what to do to make their mentoring more effective, but this is on a one-to-one basis. I believe that it should be out there for all to

benefit from. If a teacher new or experienced audits their skills as a mentor, they will question their abilities and what they have to offer. This personal reflection, in my own mentoring, has helped me unpack my teaching and best practices. As a result, my teaching and mentoring have improved.

I would like to create a user-friendly guide with a presentation for mentor teachers. This would allow me to give a professional development session to those who want to learn how to positively mentor. Kings University College has showed great interest in having this type of presentation to help develop effective future mentor teachers.

Chapter Three

Professional Development Session

“The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character - that is the goal of true education”. (King, Jr. 1947, Para 5)

Mentorship is an absolute need in helping beginning and student teachers start their careers. It has been proven through literature that this is a topic that many educators find important and there are many academic articles trying to address the issues with mentorship. In chapter two I have explained in detail how Mutchler, (2000) and Moir, Gless and Baron (1999) believe that the role of mentor needs to be promoted and supported. In this chapter I will explain the program that I have created to better serve the mentor teacher and preservice teacher as well. This is a reciprocal venture.

Character is integral to mentorship. All educators have shown intelligence by succeeding through a university degree but character cannot be taught. It can be shaped and developed. Through mentorship, the good qualities of character can be achieved. Mentorship is not a new concept, but one that has taken flight and is being embraced in multiple fields. In education specifically, it is supporting new teachers through modeling best practices. As our population increases, so does the need for dynamic teachers who will want to stay in the profession. As a result, new teachers can gain valuable experience from experienced teachers through mentorship. Unfortunately there are few “mentor” preparation programs. There are teacher education programs but an effective mentor can influence the new teachers positively – maybe more than the formal schooling, and thus a

training platform or program on how to positively mentor is needed.

I have chosen to prepare a PD session, as they can be very effective. Teachers shop for PD sessions to meet their personal needs. These sessions are the foundation for all educators to improve upon their actions; keeping progressive and not stagnant. The sessions are tools to further increase knowledge and awareness of the continual changes in education. Little (1990) also agrees that PD session for both the mentor and the student teacher are important. Enrolling in professional development helps to build personal capacity and capacity for school and district program innovation. A commonality of attending PD in all literature shows that the teacher attending is looking to improve upon their own practices.

My session would be for the experienced teacher who would love to give back to the profession. They are the educators who believe in improving educational practice. They are open and willing to offer support by modeling what they know is successful. The training for these experienced teachers will only improve their skills. Knowing how to teach does not necessarily translate into knowing how to mentor and this is where the methods taught in a PD session can come in to be very useful. Different social and cultural practices come into play at this point. The PD session will enlighten and teach the mentor what obstacles exist for this commitment. Here is the introduction to the PD session in which would be posted on the ATA News, Local school weekly newsletter to staff and on their monthly bulletins.

Are you an experienced teacher looking to give back?

Mentoring may be for YOU!

- Share your knowledge!
- Get reenergized!
- Meet new colleagues
- GET INVOLVED!

Where: Louis St. Laurent 11240 – 43 Avenue

When: September 18th

Time: Thursday, 2-3 pm

Register by September 12th with Anne Fierheller at Mentor@ecsd.net

Agenda:

1pm: Discuss “why” mentor

- PowToon
- Go through characteristics of a good mentor
- why mentor?
- What can help? Alberta Ed’s 21st Century communication
- Where does your student teacher come from? UofA, Concordia or Kings?
- Trouble shooting

Register by September 12th with Anne Fierheller at Mentor@ecsd.net

Figure 4. Notification of PD session for fellow staff members.

A professional development model to mentorship has a place in all school districts. As there are no concrete requirements for mentoring, the existence of a program will increase the quality of new teachers entering the teaching market today. This PD model will be delivered with accompanying documents to support the mentor. I believe that having resources with a PD session is effective as new mentors can take away concrete support materials that they can use when needed.

Part 1 – Who is this session for?

People decide to mentor for many reasons. They may believe that they have a lot to offer to a new teacher but what are the characteristics that make a good mentor? These characteristics can be organized into four general categories: attitude and character; professional competence and experience; communication skills; and interpersonal skills. The following list is from the NEA Foundation for the Improvement of Education (n.d.):

Characteristics of a Good Mentor

Attitude and Character

- Willing to be a role model for other teachers
- Exhibits strong commitment to the teaching profession
- Believes mentoring improves instructional practice
- Willing to receive training to improve mentoring skills
- Is reflective and able to learn from mistakes
- Is eager to share information and ideas with colleagues
- Is resilient, flexible, persistent, and open-minded
- Exhibits good humor and resourcefulness
- Enjoys new challenges and solving problems

Communication Skills

- Is able to articulate effective instructional strategies
- Listens attentively
- Asks questions that prompt reflection and understanding
- Offers critiques in positive and productive ways
- Conveys enthusiasm, passion for teaching
- Is discreet and maintains confidentiality

Professional Competence and Experience

- Is regarded by colleagues as an outstanding teacher
- Has excellent knowledge of pedagogy and subject matter
- Has confidence in his/her own instructional skills
- Demonstrates excellent classroom management skills
- Feels comfortable being observed by other teachers
- Is a meticulous observer of classroom practice
- Collaborates well with other teachers and administrators
- Is willing to learn teaching strategies from protégés

Interpersonal Skills

- Is able to maintain a trusting professional relationship
- Knows how to express care for a protégé's emotional and professional needs
- Is attentive to sensitive political issues
- Works well with individuals from different cultures
- Is approachable; easily establishes rapport with others
- Is patient

Figure 5. Characteristics of a Good Mentor, NEA.

Figure #4 offers the four characteristics of good mentorship. I will explain the four categories to the attendees to create a sense of direction for those wanting to mentor. They will reflect upon their relationships that they have with their peers and students. It is a quick read list of what is needed and desired. A teacher cannot read this list of characteristics without looking and reflecting about their own abilities. These skills or abilities will help them “excel in preparing their most precious commodity, their children, to become leaders in tomorrow’s world” (Johnson & Templeton, 2011). If some of the characteristics are not met, then it can be a goal to acquire them or work towards these positive traits.

Starting my PD session

Step One: PowToon

PowToon, a commercial-like video, is a good way to start my PD session. This will entice the audience and inform them of the basic characteristics of mentorship. In



Figure 6. PowToon Video on Mentorship.

addition, this adds a touch of digital technology. A variety of resources used for the PD session will help me reach different audiences. For the creation of the video, I subscribed to PowToon and watched mentorship-related PowToon videos – all of which have a different spin to mine.

My focus is on the personal characteristics of a mentor including: Attitude and Character, Communication Skills, Professional Competence and Experience, and Interpersonal Skills. The above characteristics are the basis of the video. The duration is 3 minutes long and is followed up by myself asking the mentors in the session to auto-evaluate their own mentorship skills.

Step Two: (PRE) Auto-evaluation

Handout #1: The auto-evaluation. The 29 characteristics as seen fully in the appendices #1, will be laid out with boxes that are marked “always”, “sometimes”, “rarely”, or “never”.

ATTITUDE AND CHARACTER	Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Willing to be a role model for other teachers				
Exhibits strong commitment to the teaching profession				
Believes mentoring improves instructional practice				

Figure 7. Auto evaluation chart.

The rationale for this is to see if the teacher wanting to mentor or that was asked to mentor has the good qualities or “drive” to mentor. This questionnaire makes one reflect upon their personal practice as a teacher. I have seen many teachers who have thought that they would make great mentors but when mentoring they realized that they were not ready for the responsibility or the issues mentoring had brought about. They did not know how to manage another “teacher”. Discipline with teenagers is one thing, but feeling comfortable disciplining a fellow adult is very intimidating the first time! The

four areas that the attendee will look at in this auto evaluation are the same as in the above figure #7.

The auto-evaluation prior to accepting a mentee may dissuade or mentally prepare a mentor to be in the right frame of mind. It is a good decision for mentors to make educated decisions on whether to accept a mentee or not.

After completing this evaluation, we will review our findings and this will allow dialogue to see whether their decision to mentor has changed or has been strengthened. We will look at the findings in a round table discussion. From past experience, teachers enjoy talking about personal experiences and sharing them.

Step Three: What can help? Communication for a 21st Century Focus

The session needs to be based on Alberta's philosophy in today's education: 21st Century Learning. I would make it clear to the attendees how Alberta Education focuses in on Communication. Within communication is knowing what good questions to pose and thus allowing a positive relationship to develop.

Preparing mentor teachers of which questions to ask is important and may not come naturally. A mentor may have a very different background, different life experiences, and expectations of their student teacher, which may make a "friendship" not always possible, but establishing a mutual trust and connection is important to foster a positive relationship. The PD session will go through the initial meeting with a student teacher with the goal of a mentor to establish a clear vision about how they will be giving critical feedback and guidance. "College students do not have much experience receiving feedback, therefore may not have the personal or professional skills to appropriately receive it and respond to it. As a result, it is important that you take the opportunity to

provide feedback and guide him or her through this type of conversation.” (Amhurst University, 2015).

Critical Feedback

- Ask your mentee how he or she best receives feedback in your first meeting. When you are ready to provide feedback, check for a willingness to listen by asking for permission to deliver feedback. Make sure the other person is in the frame of mind to receive it.
- Check for understanding. Make sure that you accurately understand the situation before jumping to a conclusion. Utilize your active listening skills.
- Check for positive intent. Make sure that your intentions are to help with the other person’s growth and development and not related to any personal bias or feelings that you may have about the person.
- Focus on behaviors and results. Frame your message around concrete behaviors and results of those behaviors.

Figure 8: Critical Feedback, University of Minnesota Mentoring Program (2013).

The PD session will explain how after a working relationship has been formed, the critical feedback needs to continue for the whole practicum period. I will inform the teachers that a mentor’s role is to continually challenge the student teacher to improve through reflection and critical thinking. To facilitate communication, here are some sample questions that the University of Minnesota’s mentoring program posed:

Critical Questions

- What would you like to accomplish (before we meet next time)?
- What has happened since we last met? Where are you now?
- What did you learn (from an experience, about yourself, about others, about a situation)?
- What steps do you plan to take to accomplish those goals? How are you going to get there?
- What barriers or challenges can you anticipate?
- What is the situation/problem/issue?
- What do you think is the cause?
- What have you done so far to address it?
- What has worked so far? What has not worked?
- What could you do (differently) to get your desired result?
- What went well? What needs work?

Figure 9. Critical Questions, University of Minnesota Mentoring Program (2013).

The rationale for this type of questioning is to be able to effectively communicate throughout the 5, 9, or 10 week practicum which will empower both the mentor and mentee. This brings us to the question of who decides if a teacher should mentor.

Step Four: Is there a difference between teacher training institutes?

Part of the PD session is informing mentors about the difference in ways post-secondary establishments have of acquiring mentor teachers, and information surrounding the different institutions including the amount of student teachers per year and the amount of time spent in a practicum.

1. The University of Alberta has a list of duties for mentor teachers but this list does not include the characteristics a mentor teacher needs to have. 1200 student teachers were placed in the 2014-2015 school year. Four observation days, a 5 week introductory practicum followed by a 9 week final practicum in the last year of studies is what this university offers.

2. Kings University College has a booklet that details the qualities and expectations of a mentor teacher. 75 student teachers are signed up within two practicums over a two year period. The first being 6 weeks and the second 12 weeks. Both of these practicums are considerably longer than other teacher training programs in Edmonton.
3. Concordia University College specializes only in Elementary education, and has had great success with post placement employment with its student teachers. There are 70 students in the 2014-15 school year. This tight-knit group starts their first year with 10 ½ days of observation. To enter this program there is an interview process and it is very competitive. They vet their mentor teachers by having personal conversations prior to placements. The student is interviewed in person to see what type of placement they would like and where. This personal touch usually makes a very good placement.

Step Five: So you think you can mentor?!

A mentor needs to be an expert in their subject, the Program of Studies and their students. Student teachers will have had little experience with the Alberta program of studies and many will not have had experience around children or know how to discipline adolescents. Being an expert in the course, knowing what is required to teach in the short,

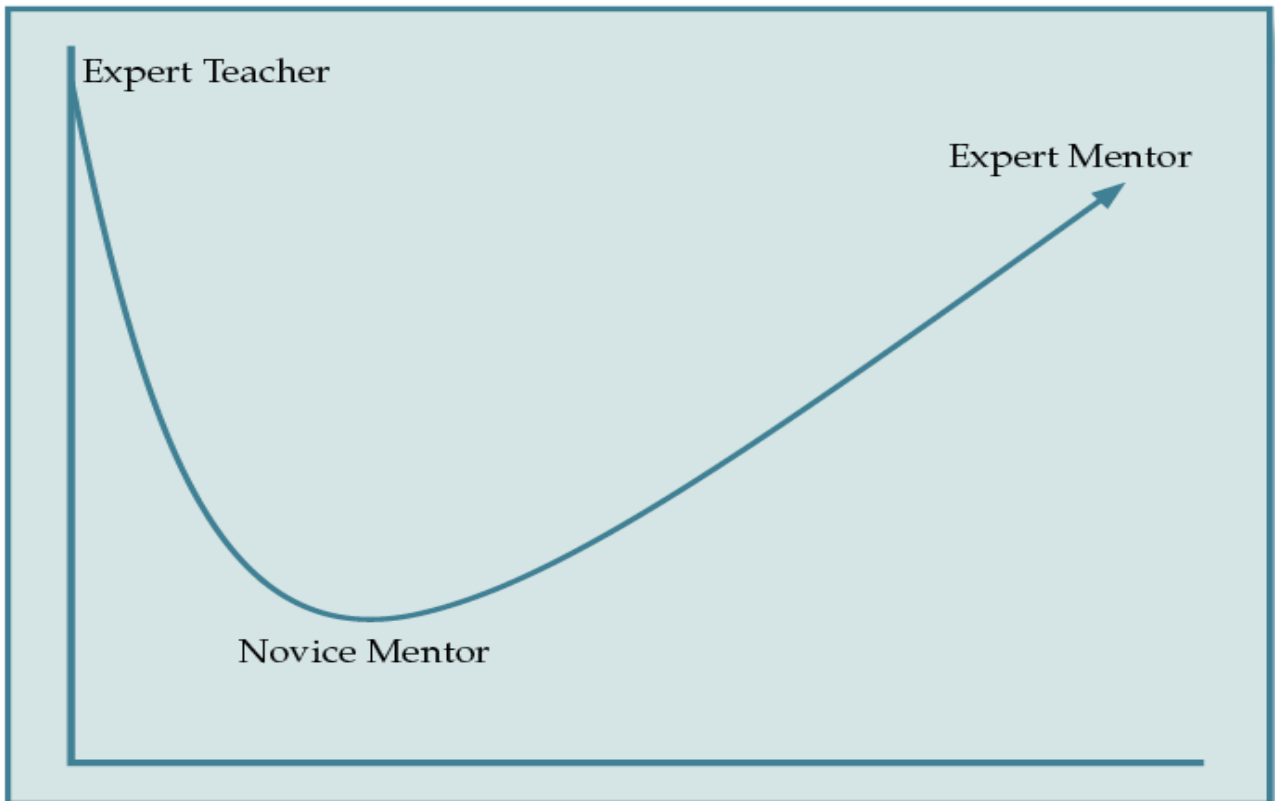


Figure #10. Movement chart: Expert teacher to novice mentor to expert mentor.

four-month semester is much needed knowledge that takes an experienced teacher at least two semesters of teaching the same course to get down pat. They will have to pass on the importance of timing to their student teachers so that all materials needed to be covered during the practicum's time period is accomplished. Managing time is a factor that repeats itself in education. Mentoring itself takes time and it is an investment in a future teacher's career. Figure #10 shows the path that an expert teacher follows when mentoring. They move from being expert teachers to novice mentors to expert mentors. Time will allow an expert teacher develop the skills to mentor.

Part 2: Trouble shooting common problems

Course pacing: Program of Studies (POS): When to teach what only comes with experience and is stressful for even the most experienced teacher. In this category I will explain that each semester changes drastically. New initiatives and celebrations are mandated which take up valuable class / course time. Knowing how to be flexible and what to remove or add leads to success.

The session will go through how to troubleshoot the issues that they will run into. The time span of 5-9 weeks (UofA, 2015) is the typical duration of a practicum in Alberta. Mentors will need specific skills to develop in order to facilitate the professional growth of the student teacher within this timeframe. Even though the educational institutions have “guidelines” each preservice teacher will have different abilities and needs. In the past I have given 100% of my classes to very adept student teachers and others had struggled to reach the minimum requirement of 80% for the advanced practicum.

With knowing this, a PD session in the middle or a “Call Back” for teachers to discuss and reflect upon their experiences would be useful.

Simple to complex: Issues are issues!

- Arriving on time/leaving early,
- Dressing appropriately,
- Legible handwriting on board.
- Discipline
- Having a “voice” and
- Not being prepared for lesson
- Not showing up for class

These issues are part of the daily duties a teacher has to accomplish. Some are simple but others are very difficult to overcome. The session will use roll playing to help mentor teachers learn how to deal with these common situations.

Professional Competence and Experience

The question of how long one should be teaching prior to taking on a student teacher has often been debated. The inconsistencies of these requirements between schools and school boards need to be addressed. The business of placing the ever-increasing number of student teachers is not going to revert back to yesteryear. The PD session will discuss Alberta Education's 21st Century philosophy and the need to follow the three E's: Ethical, Entrepreneurial and Engaged. At the moment, Concordia University College is instructing their 70 student teachers to complete all of their work and have an outlook on education that revolves around the Three E's – as Alberta Education has mandated.

Ethically, a mentor should not accept a student teacher if they do not feel ready or know that they have not mastered the materials to their courses. In addition, they would be looking out for the good of the student teacher and not themselves – to relieve themselves of their teaching duties for a period of time. It is a selfless giving of time and needs to be done for the right reasons.

Entrepreneurially, a mentor can see that an eager and hungry student teacher offers many benefits to a classroom. The mentor can learn new ideas and practices from their student teachers. Being open to a different approach does have its advantages and benefits.

Being engaged with the mentoring of a new teacher can be very gratifying. It is a way to transmit your best practices to others. A teacher with a good grasp of the materials and classroom management has a lot to offer. By modeling we are following good communication practices as well as being collaborative and being a leader.

All aspects in Alberta Education's characteristics of a 21st Century learner need to be the basis for any mentor teacher. In particular, a mentor needs to be critical and also be a problem solver. Through their trial and error, new teachers will find their own niche in the teaching world. Communication during the trial and error process is the one skill that has repeatedly come up in my research. Our role as a teacher, be it a student or experienced teacher is to, "pull together to accomplish change" (P3 Inspiring Action, Alberta Education, 2010).

Evaluating the Mentor Process

To see if the mentorship is being successful, there are tools one can use. The ATA has a form a mentor can fill out and get a good feel of how they are succeeding in their mentorship journey. I believe this form is a useful tool as it incites reflection in a mentor teacher.

I believe that this would be an excellent tool at the school level after the practicum has ended. After 5 or 9 weeks, any student teacher will have left an impact on the mentor. Furthermore, it is easy to fill out. It can be part of a post-mentoring group. At my school, there are 10-15 student teachers a year. Many teachers reflect in public about their experiences, but we have never had a "formal" way to reflect upon them! Reflection will allow the cooperating teacher to write up what went well and what they would do next time. If one waits until the next school

year or term, then they may have forgotten what they would have liked to change.

Churchill once said, “To improve is to change; to be perfect is to change often” (n.d.).

Evaluation of the Mentorship Program—Mentors

Please respond to the following statements using a sliding scale of 1 to 4 with 1 being poor and 4 being very effective.

- | | | |
|-----|---|-------------|
| 1. | I felt well-prepared to be a mentor following the mentor ship orientation | 1 2 3 4 N/A |
| 2. | A mentor training session helped prepare me to be a mentor | 1 2 3 4 N/A |
| 3. | I was able to provide guidance to my protégé in the area of Curriculum | |
| | ▪ Student Assessment | 1 2 3 4 N/A |
| | ▪ Instructional Strategies | 1 2 3 4 N/A |
| | ▪ Classroom Management | 1 2 3 4 N/A |
| | ▪ School/District Expectations of Teachers | 1 2 3 4 N/A |
| | ▪ Budget | 1 2 3 4 N/A |
| | ▪ Legal Issues and Contractual Rights/Responsibilities | 1 2 3 4 N/A |
| | ▪ Finding or Developing Resources | 1 2 3 4 N/A |
| | ▪ Becoming Oriented to the School | 1 2 3 4 N/A |
| | ▪ Becoming Oriented to the District | 1 2 3 4 N/A |
| | ▪ Communicating with Parents | 1 2 3 4 N/A |
| | ▪ Assisting with Special Needs Students | 1 2 3 4 N/A |
| | ▪ Completing Forms, Paperwork, etc. | 1 2 3 4 N/A |
| 4. | I provided helpful feedback during observations of my protégé | 1 2 3 4 N/A |
| 5. | I was able to learn things from this experience that enhanced my own teaching | 1 2 3 4 N/A |
| 6. | I experienced professional growth as a teacher by participating in this program | 1 2 3 4 N/A |
| 7. | Some of the topics or activities that were <i>most</i> helpful to me and/or my protégé include: | |
| 9. | Some of the topics or activities that were least helpful to me and/or my protégé include: | |
| 10. | Suggestions I have for improving the mentoring program include: | |

Figure 9, Evaluation of a mentorship program (ATA Mentorship Handout)

This evaluation process from the Alberta teachers' Association mentorship program is important because it lets us see how well this program is working and thus I can see the impact and influence it has on the PD participants. Knowing what to change for the future helps stop the attrition rate of educators and hopefully reinforces the continuation of active mentors and mentorship programs.

Conclusion

The creation of a PD session with the focus on better preparing mentor teachers has been done before, but at the moment the buy in from teachers and the requirements to attend a session non-existent. Maybe it is not the right person being asked to give the session! The PD session is designed to better prepare a new mentor teacher. The benefits of training teachers include assuring the retention of the best, most creative teachers. Mentoring engages and keeps experienced teachers who find a new challenge and opportunity for growth by serving and giving back to education. Mentorship can also aid in the establishment of "professional norms of openness to learning from others, new ideas and instructional practices, continual improvement, collaboration, collegiality and experimentation" (ATA Mentoring Beginning teachers, 2010).

The results of having "tools" as a go-to for some teachers, I believe can only help them achieve their goal in being a good mentor. They reflect and internalize with the option of externalizing their experiences.

Furthermore, the process of creating a PD session will also be personally beneficial. For movement in my career, having developed and presented sessions is looked at as being progressive light. I have worked on two interview committees for the Edmonton Catholic school board and both committees asked their prospective candidates

if they have taken the lead and presented sessions or created session. Leaving one's comfort zone to present publically is exciting and gratifying for myself. It pushes me out of my comfort zone. This, I believe, is good.

Chapter 4

Introduction

Professional readings have never held an important place in my many years of teaching. This does not mean that I didn't want to read but I have never truly had the opportunity or drive or reason to read. No one had asked me to delve into professional readings nor did I see anything that gave me the drive to do so. This did not bother me over that duration of time, but now, after having read a plethora of different educational articles and books, I am happy to have done so! Learning is life long and professional reading is only one type of learning. I believe that I shall read more in the future when I am curious or need information about a topic. It is easy to research issues – far easier than I would have thought.

The Experience

Starting off fresh in Dr. Rhonda Nixon's class during the first summer of my master's cohort, I was baptized by fire. What truly comes to mind were the articles I read from Elliot Eisner. Eisner made me look at my ideology and values in education. I know that I see things in certain ways, but I never knew that there were names or a label to put on "how" I see education. Eisner (1995) stated, "Ideologies in general are belief systems that provide the value premises from which decisions about practical educational matters are made" (p. 47). It is me that makes these decisions. I had never internalized what influenced me and how I teach. This was pretty interesting as the reasons for what I do were now being clarified. After writing my first essay in many, many years, I did not find it that daunting, as the work in this master's course made me reflect. I always give my students a choice of topics so that

that they can choose something that has a personal connection. Looking at Eisner made me reflect and connect to what I have done over the past 18 years.

Continuing with Eisner and many other authors I have read, different educational philosophies were brought to light. I became more aware of the American education system. American writers authored many articles that I read and in their work, they shared their approaches, which were very interesting. As a result, I read more than was necessary. For my capstone project I quoted Sue Mutchler from Texas, USA and was intrigued by how Texas was trying to change the mentoring programs to “consider the qualifications of individuals they choose to recruit” (p. 14). It seems that they and other states are struggling with the same issues we are having. A huge difference would be the money the government puts into wages and bonuses that were based primarily on test scores of students. These scores translated into “pay for performance” bonuses, a concept difficult to swallow.

Like Eisner, Loughran (2013) also made me look at reconsidering my teaching and learning. Loughran, from Australia, discussed the nature of pedagogy and stated “teaching is problematic” (p. 119). Yes, teaching is problematic: what we teach, how we teach and to whom we teach. I have mulled over these points many times and in the end I just go with the flow and teach what Albert Education mandates and teach it with the kids in my class in mind (student centered) – a focus that I learnt in my last year of education from the University of Alberta (Faculté St. Jean). This focus, I believe, fits well with the 21st Century learner profile. Lastly, I teach the students that the school puts into my classes. I do not choose my students so the classes have a very diverse population. All that I do I do well, and with a love

of being there for the students. I rock the boat at times but I know that going with the flow needs to be changed and I need to be more innovative.

My journey in professional readings had some freedom of choice. With each professor, I could choose articles that interested me, and that had a focus on my capstones topic. I chose articles that swayed towards mentorship and teacher education programs. Not everyone in the cohort would have appreciated the same articles. Marilyn Cochran-Smith's articles kept on coming up when I was researching teacher education. She stated that "there is not a clear empirical mandate for many of the reforms that are being advocated and or /implemented in state and national initiatives" (Cochran-Smith, 2005, p. 304). This, to me, was important as I see a disconnect between what we are mandated to teach from Alberta Education and what the teacher training institutions are preparing their preservice teachers with and for.

In addition to Cochran-Smith was Templeton's (2011) article which discussed the need for changes in higher education in the 21st century, a model for 21st century teacher preparation, needed policy and accreditation changes and a vision for the future" (p. 114). This reading made me approach the new cohort of student teachers differently. In January of 2015, we received six new student teachers and as a group we discussed 21st century learning and what our district and Alberta Education as a whole are requiring from all educators. They had not informed about the 21st century approach. This was quite bothersome, as I believe that the student teachers need to be very knowledgeable in this philosophy as they will be the new teachers of tomorrow. With this I decided to take it further and go

seek what other teacher preparation establishments were doing with the 21st Century learner. I went to visit Concordia University College. Before my master's program, I would never have thought to do. With drive, I went to visit a relatively small and unknown teacher-training institute. I called them and they were very welcoming and invited me to talk about their approach. Without these readings and new knowledge, I would not have had the drive or need to procure information. My perspective on how the three teacher training institutes in Edmonton have changed and I can see many new sides to what each institute has to offer. As a result of this new information, I believe that I would have chosen a different route for my own post-secondary education.

The information about the emotional side of mentoring has had an impact on myself. As the student teacher coordinator at school, I deal with mentor teacher issues as well as student teacher issues. While reading Beck and Kosnik (2002), I enjoyed the positive comments about the role of the associate teacher. The authors made it clear that we, as mentors, have a great responsibility when accepting a student teacher. Amongst the responsibilities, are the "emotional support, shared authority, collaborative planning, flexibility, feedback, modeling of effective practice and organizing challenging but manageable workloads" (p. 2). These resonated with myself as I try to mediate between mentor and mentee to assure that the experience is beneficial for both! The professional readings I have reviewed have refreshed the list of responsibilities that are easily forgotten.

My role as an educational profession is still on the same course as before but it feels more concrete. My drive and passion to continue as student teacher

coordinator has been renewed and I can only hope to be a Field Experiences Associate in the near future. With the MEd under my belt I feel that I have much more to offer and it will make me more desirable to hire.

Changes as a result of the MEd program

Of late, I have experienced change and I believe that it is directly related to me taking my masters. As I gain years in experience and am no longer a newbie, and now I have been asked by the administration my opinion of who is placed in which class and to also help with the interviewing process to pick appropriate teachers to teach specific classes. The “go with the flow” attitude I have always had is still there, but now I have some say in what I do and what others do. I have quoted a couple of authors in staff meetings and my fellow UVic students there with me felt knowledgeable. This was good, as I could professionally back up what was being said.

My beliefs have changed a bit, but in particular they have become more concrete and I have an answer to WHY I have done some things and why I have not chosen to do others. I believe that I can back up my reasoning with an author with similar philosophies and I know how to research and see respectable and valid varied opinions.

My job as a student teacher mentor and coordinator has always held a strong place in my heart as I believe that preservice teachers are the future of education and we need to better get them ready for the ever-changing world of today's education. With a MEd under my belt I know that it will open doors. This is the main reason for taking this program; the boost in wages was not the driving force. I would

like to continue my quest to work at the University as a Field Experience Associate. I have gone to an interview for this position but they stated that I needed a master in education. Like I previously mentioned, this MEd will hopefully open doors and I will make it open doors with my will and perseverance. This leads to how I anticipate my graduate experience will be influential for my professional career.

How my graduate experience will be influential for my career

In addition to the experience the FEA position offers, this will bolster my resume. I believe that I have many good qualities and newfound knowledge to offer to be a good candidate for this position. I believe that I have more to offer now and hopefully this goal will come to fruition. In addition to the FEA position, I would like to deviate from teaching for a short term and work for Alberta Education on a secondment.

Since I have been starting to look for different possible employment opportunities, I have noticed that many job listings ask for a “Master in Education” as a prerequisite. Now that I will have this, I will not hesitate to apply for a variety of jobs but none that will take me away from teaching for too long. I love the class and do not want to give up teaching. Additionally, knowing that I have a MEd will give me a confidence in my abilities and myself. This confidence will come out when seeking new opportunities.

I believe that my school and district will also benefit from my knowledge and experience. At the moment my district is moving forward with “Transform.” This direction follows the 21st century approach, which was discussed thoroughly in my courses. A master in Curriculum and Instruction can only help the direction my

school board is going. I have contacted my ATA representative, Kathy McIsaac, and have asked for any opportunity to speak to the beginning teachers with our district. I would be very interested in working with the ATA or any post-secondary establishment and new teachers. As I had discussed in chapter two, the ATA invests \$30 000 a year in new teacher mentorship. I know that I would like a role in this. I was invited to discuss this further with Kathy.

Furthermore, I would like to apply for a consultant position. This holds a great interest for me as I would be developing new curriculum or supporting the advancement of a present curriculum. I know I will be able to back up my ideas with academic articles and materials I have learnt in our courses. This is not a principal or a vice principal position, but one that works directly with teachers with improvement of curriculum. I do not believe that I would want to be a principal as I have seen great teachers change once they have become a principal. I think that I would lose some of my identity and would have to change. I also would not enjoy the politics! Therefore, Alberta Education or a consultant position intrigues me.

Furthermore, if I wanted to branch out from high school education, I know that there are private companies that are looking for individuals to work on their curriculum and in house training. I will research more on this in the future. I know that I am open to any opportunity that may arise.

Key Recommendations for Educators

1. Understand how communication affects relationships. The relationships that are built between mentor and student teacher are integral to the student teachers success.

2. Know, understand and accept the role of mentor teacher. It is not an easy job to mentor but you can get a lot out of it.
3. Be able to teach and promote the 21st century approach, as it is student centered and needs to meet the needs of our diverse students moving up through the grades. The traditional job of teacher has changed.

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Appendix

Mentoring - Self-Assessment Questionnaire

Mentoring is defined as a *relationship with a deliberate purpose of fostering growth*. A teacher mentor could be a friend or colleague, a more experienced person, or someone with specialist skills.

This questionnaire is a self-evaluation tool to help you get started in a mentoring relationship to stimulate personal and professional growth.

ATTITUDE AND CHARACTER	Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Willing to be a role model for other teachers				
Exhibits strong commitment to the teaching profession				
Believes mentoring improves instructional practice				
Willing to receive training to improve mentoring skills				
Is reflective and able to learn from mistakes				
Exhibits good humor and resourcefulness				
Enjoys new challenges and solving problems				

COMMUNICATION SKILLS	Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Is able to articulate effective instructional strategies				
Listens attentively				
Asks questions that prompt reflection and understanding				
Offers critiques in positive and productive ways				
Conveys enthusiasm, passion for teaching				
Is discreet and maintains confidentiality				

INTERPERSONAL SKILLS	Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Is able to maintain a trusting professional relationship				
Knows how to express care for a protégé's emotional and professional needs				
Is attentive to sensitive political issues				
Works well with individuals from different cultures				

PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE AND EXPERIENCE	Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Is regarded by colleagues as an outstanding teacher				
Has excellent knowledge of pedagogy and subject matter				
Has confidence in his/her own instructional skills				
Demonstrates excellent classroom management skills				
Feels comfortable being observed by other teachers				
Is a meticulous observer of classroom practice				

