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371. 102 Elsbt 1997 1 HE Single Best Thing Mentoring Beginning Teachers A Manual for Program Designers and Participants " ATE DOCUMENTS COLLECTION ^tb 2 7 2001 MONTANA STATE 1515 E. 6th LIBRARY. AVE. HELFNA, MONTANA 59620 Dr. Alan Zetler, and Principal Author Dr. Lee Spnhler, Associate Author for the Montana Certification Standards and Practices Advisory Council State Board of Public Education IISi'fS'Bm 3 0864 0015 6752 1 the single best thing ^^ can do for a beginning teacher, ^'Mentoring is we Jim McCrossin High School Principal Whitehall, Montana July 1997 Digitized by the Internet Archive in 2011 with funding from IVlontana State Library [http://www. archive. org/details/singlebestthingm1997zetl](http://www.archive.org/details/singlebestthingm1997zetl) FOREWARD The Single Best Thing was developed as a self-help manual for districts and schools wishing to investigate or implement a beginning teacher mentoring support program. The manual describes one model of mentoring that was researched in thirty-five Montana schools from the period 1992-95 under the title " Beginning Teacher Support Program." Standards and Practices Advisory Council (CSPAC) of the State Board of Public Education has ownership of the research data and the manual. Publication and distribution of The Single Best Thing is a function of CSPAC. (See address below.) The Montana Certification The manual authors Dr. Alan Zetler and Dr. Lee Spuhler conducted the original mentorship research and developed the manual under contract to CSPAC. Both authors are Emeriti Professors and Deans at Western Montana College of The University of Montana located in Dillon, Montana. : The authors wish and present members of the Board of Public Education, Certification Standards and Practices Advisory Council, and Montana's professional

education associations for their assistance and support in completing to give credit to past this project. Under continuing obligation to Assistance and consultation about mentoring CSPAC for the period 1997-99, the manual authors are available for consultation. During the two-year period, the authors are available to make a total of four presentations without stipend to school districts and/or professional organizations. CSPAC will consider the stipend-free requests and the authors may contract for additional presentations. In addition, the authors will be available for telephone consultation for the two-year period, again at no cost to the callers. The contacts for : the manual copies and consultation services are as follows:

Montana Certification Standards and Practices Advisory Council 2500 Broadway Helena, MT 59620 Phone: (406)444-6576 Dr. * Alan G. Zetler P. O. Box 1002 Dillon, MT 59725 Accreditation Phone: (406)683-4751 * Lee Spuhler 3725 Laknar Lane Dillon, MT 59725 Phone: (406)683-4622 Dr. *

Contact also through: and Rural Education Office Western Montana College of The University 710 8. Atlantic, Dillon. MT 59725-3598 Phone: (406)683-7121 Email: of Montana s_munday@wmc. edu i Desktop Published by Sally Munday Western Montana College of The University of Montana This document was printed with state dollars from the Certification Any Standards and Practices Advisory Council's research fund. reproduction or citation must credit the Certification Standards and Practices Advisory Council and the Board of Public Education. Resale of this publication is strictly prohibited. The Single Best Thing Table of Contents Foreward Chapter One: Introduction From Where Did the Manual Originate? The Basic Definitions What Is the Purpose of the Manual? What the Manual Doesn't Do Manual Organized? The

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Questioning Appendix E - Check List for Starting School Year Appendix F - Participants in Montana Beginning Teacher Support Program Appendix G - Steering Committee for The Single Best Thing 69 71 73 77 83 85 87 89 IV Chapter 1 - Introduction ^ ^afitex One INTRODUCTION Chapter One is devoted to the concept of mentoring beginning teachers and how The Single Best Thing can help schools organize and implement a program. Mentoring is a formal helping relationship by which an experienced educator assists a beginning teacher achieve professional success. A fundamental tenet of teacher mentoring is the belief that the single best way of developing and retaining entry level teachers is to utilize the assistance of an established master teacher during the first year of the beginner's induction. The research showed the overwhelmingly positive effect that mentoring can have in is What mentoring? easing the transition from college to teaching, in starting the development of a competent professional, and in helping novices cope with the onslaught of new pressures. From Where Did In the Manual Originate? Standards and Practices Advisory Council Education embarked on a three year research project called the " Beginning Teacher Support Program." The type of support given to beginning teachers was to pair each of them one-on-one in a formalized relationship with a veteran teacher in the school district. The research examined two facets of mentoring. The first looked at the effect of mentoring on a new teacher's development as measured by performance and attitude during the initial year of teaching. The second examined context conditions that exist in a school/community and assessed the impact of those factors on the beginner. Certification 1992 the Montana (CSPAC) of the State Board of Public The research study

included newly contracted graduates from all eight Montana teacher preparation schools. A balance was achieved with variables such as elementary/secondary, American Indian/white, school size from AA (athletic One classification) through multigrade rural, and subject area assignments. hundred five teachers and administrators from thirty-five schools geographically representing all regions of Montana participated in the three-year effort. Following up on the study, to CSPAC contracted the two researchers during 1996-97 develop a manual based on findings. Information in the manual can be found in the original study reports which are available from CSPAC. If replicated, specific findings and procedures have additional support from the professional literature (see Appendices A and B). Chapter 1 - Introduction The Basic The professional literature applies Definitions definitions numerous This manual uses several common mentoring throughout which are defined as follows: terms and labels to mentoring. and their synonyms Mentor ; An experienced teacher who formally agrees to lend assistance to a beginning teacher and enters into a helping relationship. Mentors are also referred to as veterans, counselors, coaches, master teachers or peer teachers, even though the strict definitions of each do differ according to some writers. first year in the profession under contract to a being assisted by a mentor. Mentees typically are fresh from pre-service preparation and have no experience. Some districts may choose to classify teachers new to the district or school as mentee possibilities. Other terms used are beginning teacher, new teacher, novice or protege. Mentee ; A teacher serving his/her is district and who Administrator ; The building principal or district level official who is responsible for instructional is

supervising the mentor and mentee, other staff, facility, and program staff in a particular school. A key function of the administrator evaluation. Larger school administrator above the building level to coordinate systems may also utilize another a district mentoring program. Induction The ; total district effort aimed at new teachers which is designed to bring them up to full professional status. This effort is often a combination of short and long range in-service goals plus an individual development Mentoring is but one possible aspect of plan for the new teacher. induction. School culture The unique environment created by the sum of a school's history Drawn from the field of cultural anthropology, the term implies a school with its own special set of formal and informal ; and experiences. operating running. rules, people and conditions that keep the enterprise The terms " the system" or " the establishment" are loosely used as synonyms. Context or structural conditions Those characteristics of a school culture that impact a mentees sense of well being and therefore demand attention ; during mentoring.

Chapter I - Introduction What a specific Is the Purpose of the Manual? is to assist the beginner on site during the first year environment via the single best method available. in Mentoring is one process within broader induction procedures, the collective intent of which is to facilitate the pace and quality of the new teacher's development into a competent practicing professional. The purpose of mentoring school The Single Best Thing was created to help schools establish and implement a mentoring program as a separate assistance program or to supplement existing teacher induction efforts. The manual was written for the purposes of (a) informing key school personnel about the potential of beginning teacher support via mentoring, and (b)

providing guidance for administrators, mentors, and mentees should such a program be initiated. Written in general terms for program designers and in specific terms for participants, the manual can be adapted to differences in school size, administrative arrangements, community cultures, and to a host of other factors that make schools differ one from another. When compared manuals (Appendix more comprehensive, particularly in program design. detail has to do with the manual's anticipated use. to other existing B), The Single Best Thing is The reason for the greater a self-help publication for school districts and mentoring participants. While other mentohng program aids (workshops, consultants, financial grants) may be an option for some districts, the manual was written for schools that want to try mentoring on their own with only the manual as guidance. Some of the suggested procedures are already common practice with district experimental programs. The authors have chosen to err on the side of a detailed scenario, the parts of which surfaced at one time or another during their administration of the three-year mentorship research. It is The Single Best Thin2 is narrow in its intent, concentrating on the relationship between a beginning teacher and his/her experienced mentor and what that oneon-one pairing can accomplish. The relationship is fostered and formalized by the district and school administrator. The authors feel that 75% of the potential benefit from mentohng arises from the interaction between mentor and mentee. Just the fact that the two of them are together accomplishes most of the good. The other 25% is dependent on cooperative school arrangements in which participants from local or regional mentorship programs are brought together to share experiences. References that allude to such meetings and

what they are able to accomplish will be found in the manual. Chapter 1 - Introduction What the Manual Doesn't Do The narrow focus of supporting the beginning teacher as explained in this manual does not imply other agendas sometimes associated with mentoring. Currently no Montana state mandate through certification, accreditation, or statute requires mentoring of new teachers. Efforts are voluntary at the district level up to this point time and the manual recognizes that fact. Neither is there any educational reform movement underway of which mentoring is an integral part, as was the case in the California experiment (Wagner, 1990). Nor does this manual attempt to introduce mentohng at the expense of existing school induction efforts, for example In those those practiced in Great Falls, Miles City, and Columbia Falls. communities, mentoring as practiced in the CSPAC project was more comprehensive and personal in its scope, not replacing, but rather supplementing, in ongoing school programs. The Sinele Best Thing is not a comprehensive training manual for mentors. assumes the spontaneous interaction between two people will create most of the benefit. does not, therefore, attempt to detail one or several models of adult It It psychology, or instructional supervision usually offered as formal mentorship training. There is an orientation to what may be expected within new teachers and the role of mentors as defined by the research, but this is not construed to be in the same league as formal mentor training which typically takes learning, 3-4 days. programs are encouraged by their accrediting agencies to follow up their first-year graduates, not only to survey beginning teachers but to ideally work with districts on continued professional development for the beginner. This responsibility is sometimes narrowly interpreted as

providing But assistance for the institution's graduates should they encounter trouble. teacher education programs are hard pressed to offer this service in a way that is meaningful to the beginning teacher. The reason is partly budgetary, but also Mentoring as because they are not based on site as is the novice graduate. proposed in this manual is a school district organized and implemented operation, not an extension of college programs. The potential for college followup is there, but is not a reality at present. Collegiate teacher preparation How How can it Is the Manual Organized? be made to work? The manual is divided into five working chapters The first two chapters contain general mentorship information for decision makers and potential participants. Chapter 1 orients readers to the mentoring concept as experienced in the Montana three-year study and to the philosophy behind The Single Best Thing Chapter 2 is a suggested scenario that plus an appendix. . Chapter I - Introduction and implementation for one year. The general findings of the research first appear within this chapter. But generalizations are just that, so specifics and exceptions to the norm are critical because mentoring must be tailored to each school's situation. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 are written specifically for building administrators, mentors, and beginning teachers, respectively. Each of these three participants will find the pertinent general patterns and statements of Chapter 2 expanded into detail as may affect them Individually. Any of the three persons could gain perspective by reading material intended for the other two; no follows program organization it secrets are intended. format feature of the manual is the separation of text in the chapters following to the inside of pages with comments and blank space on This design permits

the text to be the outside. embellished with actual comments and experiences drawn from the 105 Montana educators who participated in CSPAC's Beginning Teacher Support Program or that were taken from professional mentoring literature. Blank space allows room for Another Writing ^^^ Comment ^ ^ ^ school personnel to write notes to themselves or for others that identify unique characteristics important to mentohng as it is applied to " our school." An advisory group of eight participants from the research study helped the authors design this manual. Another nine participants from three districts read the drafts and offered comment. All names appear in Appendix G. Everyone stressed the need for flexibility in the application of mentoring because of the uniqueness of schools. The authors found that when generalizations were attempted across schools, something always turned up to show why the norm did not apply to some situations. Therefore, at the end of some topics within the manual text will be found a paragraph titled »" BUT NOT ALWAYS to ." These exceptions to the general statements to are intended unique be a constant reminder of their manual will users that the characteristics school necessitate local modifications of described practices. The Guiding Premises Mentoring as studied the best for all not claim to be the only type of the Beginning Teacher Support Program research does new teacher assistance. Nor does it pretend to be situations. However, as judged by the participants, mentoring as in defined within the study appears to be the single best experimental assistance a district could have readily available for its new teachers, hence, the title of the Chapter 1 - Introduction model of mentoring was designed and implemented, several guiding premises were followed that led to positive impacts 90% of the time

For a school to adopt - and adapt - the suggestions in this manual and to have the best chance for success, these three minimal guidelines must be followed. Otherwise, the ground rules of mentoring will have been changed and the lessons from the research experience may not be valid. manual. As this particular . O Mentors do not evaluate their mentees. That is the job of the school administrator. The secret to a good mentor-mentee relationship is mutual trust and weaknesses from administrators. beginners ever feel their revelations confided to a mentor are becoming part of the district summative evaluations, the show is over, folks! confidentiality. New teachers will try to hide If @ Mentoring as described in The Single Best Thing is a one-on-one first contract calls for a full load of a veteran teacher. The mentor likewise has a fulltime load and has instant credibility with the beginner because of that fact. Fulltime teaching is hard enough by itself, let alone with the added burden of seeking and giving assistance on an instantaneous and long term basis. One beginner with one veteran teacher for one school year seems to be the best practical arrangement, given the daily responsibilities of most professionals. proposition. responsibility the The beginning same as that teacher's of w Mentors are not trained advantage. for the responsibility. Oriented, yes; trained, no. This statement is contrary to what the literature on mentoring suggests. If a school disthct has the resources to provide mentor training, that certainly would be an premise would not argue were mentor training available. But the pragmatic circumstances are (a) the state does not currently have the resources or mandate to provide training for school districts, (b) few districts, if any, are in a position to train mentors themselves because, at this time, mentoring beginning teachers may be only

an occasional enterprise (we hope it would grow) and, (c) the Montana study showed that nine times out of ten, using untrained mentors selected by the school administration resulted in very positive outcomes. What this third premise says is that schools usually already have on staff a teacher or teachers with sufficient talent to act as mentors. this third Even What About the Future? Mentoring and Induction Programs mentoring by school districts could become a step in district professional development. It also could be part of the district induction program and a factor in staff retention. The Beginning Teacher Support Program study found some intriguing data on retention of first year teachers. Using a control group of non-mentored beginning teachers, the research found that 91% of mentored teachers stayed in the profession after three years, while 73% of non- Acceptance of Chapter 1 - Introduction under teaching contract. Almost all of the dropout occurred during the first year. Admittedly, the sample numbers are small and a longer term study is needed to validate the tendency. But if retention is an issue, mentoring is an idea worthy of district consideration. still mentored teachers were Presently, over half of the states have tried some form of mentoring as a step within teacher induction or as a separate concept (Donovan, 1992). Provisional certification including mentoring is a device that could be used by states to insure support for all beginning teachers. If that happens, and if the mentoring programs use premises and designs similar to those of the original Montana Beginning Teacher Support Program, then this manual has additional potential for wider application. The names and listed in district affiliations of the Montana mentoring study individuals are Appendix F by the year of their participation. 8 Chapter 2 - Essential

Components ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS Chapter Two is devoted to the general considerations necessary when developing and implementing a mentorship program. The eleven components described are the core of the manual and are the building blocks of a mentoring program. The number of components is arbitrary, so some may be eliminated, combined, or need not even be considered by some districts. Others may be added. A philosophy there are lies behind the content of this chapter. As long as mentoring is going well and no problems, some of the program components suggested might not need to be considered. However, if questions do arise, districts would be prepared to respond if policies and procedures were already in place. Districts will have to weigh the amount of organization work against the possibility of problems when deciding what components of this chapter they should pursue. Component No. Issues If 1 That Become Priorities for New Teachers Read This!! | You Don't Read Anything is Else, If mentoring reduced to its drives the organization of a mentoring program, fundamental one cause that it would be as follows: The environment year of teaching creates an emotional mind game in beginners, played not with others, but within themselves. Whether or not a new teacher successfully copes with the job may be judged by others, but that critical determination takes place in the beginner's own mind. The decision is based on a self -assessment of how well he/she is contending with those issues most important to the individual, not someone else's definition of of the first what is significant. What are the priorities that mentors help address? The purpose of this component topic is to make participants aware of what specific help beginners are likely to seek and mentoring programs will be asked to deliver. Fortunately, the research

showed a pattern of prioritized issues across beginning teachers, but each with a local context twist. Chapter 2 - Essential Components The Importance of School Context Conditions on the Beginning Teacher Our different elementary staff and As a school evolves within a community, unique culture of its secondary are two own. In takes on a order to operate, it fashions it groups. Teachers cross-over formal and informal rules of conduct to building regulations, manage its affairs. who had assignments had problems Formal rules are state school mandates, curriculum, district policies, satisfying both sides of that equation. Siqyerintendent schedule, and other procedures that are deliberated and formally adopted into practice. Informal rules are behavior expectations that arise as people of the past and present interact in the community and school workplace. The mores and folkways of larger societies are formed in this manner. These rules are not written, but there is social scorn if they are violated. As a group of people function within the two sets of rules, they individually and collectively add a unique chemistry that will not be found anywhere else. The middle school faculty of a certain school, the third graders, the helpful custodian -- these are examples of people adding their own uniqueness to a school. This cultural mix of rules, practices and people becomes the school context. Working conditions and expectations that are unique to this school charactenze the context. The terms " context conditions" or " structural conditions" refer to the various parts of the unique school environment. Some teachers bring a The better personal/background package to the job than do others. Administrator beginning teacher introduces a new to the existing context: a package composed of his/her individual background, spirit, personality, life style, and

career aspirations. The personal recently hired structural condition package and the existing structure must accommodate each other over time. For the beginner, a rational, welltimed transition would be beneficial. But unfortunately, as the mentoring research revealed, the first-year accommodation is an emotional whirlwind for the newcomer, consuming great amounts of thought and energy -- energy diverted from children and learning. Instead, new teachers' first priorities address their own self concerns as they try to fit into the system. This does not mean that beginners ignore the everyday responsibilities of teaching or are not doing a good job in the classroom. means their first purpose in trying to make teaching work better is to ease the burdens on themselves, not to make It learning better for children. Pupil gains occur, but that purpose is may simultaneously overshadowed for awhile. 10 Chapter 2 - Essential Components The mind conditions of the new teacher may veteran school construct context or that staff members administrators do not recognize as even existing. Mentors need to allow beginners opportunity to talk about anything around the school and not be judgmental about what other is a significant issue. Some issues would exist in no school or be of no concern to anyone but the individual mentee. What are the prioritized context conditions that beginners first need to know about, defined not by someone else or by the system, but by themselves? What do new teachers most worry about? What I- Personal incentives are changes in a mentor's school duties or routines that the mentor feels are important and to satisfying. An extra amount of released time prior performances/events, no lunchroom duty, reduced playground shifts, no ticket duty at home games, and a higher rank

in budget priorities are possibilities. >- What do you as a mentor play in implementing the incentive system? You may have limited input at early role stages of the process at the district level. If the reward system is already in place, the year-end evaluation may be the avenue by which you can validate rewards or But if the incentive system is still suggest changes undecided or has been left flexible, you may be able to work with a district or building administrator. Within the limitations of financial, professional, or personal options available, you may be able to negotiate one or several options appropriate for your priorities. At the end of the year, both you and the school/district will want to assess the adequacy and impact of rewards. . two other incentive possibilities. One in the reward system. With administrative agreement and your concurrence, new teachers may participate in travel, workshops, special materials/ equipment purchases, released time to observe Mentors can is facilitate the inclusion of your mentee A possibility: Bring into tlie the mentee reward system. other classes, or other opportunity not normally available to Authors them. This is a case of your having earned the reward but wishing to share it or, as mentor, helping create other assistance for the mentee you cannot directly provide. A second district possibility or school to in encourage your help organize meetings of mentors and you can facilitate is to your district or region. Getting together with your counterparts is a very satisfying reward in itself. This manual alludes to the " other 25% of mentoring benefit" that can be realized by this method. Experienced mentors and mentees from the Montana Beginning Teacher Support Program were adamant in emphasizing the value of such meetings. However, don't be alarmed to find that you may be the only mentor in the

area. It is hoped that your effort will help the idea catch on in other schools. mentees The other 25% 49 Chapter 4 - The Mentor - A Conversation About Roles The Mentor's Interactive Role Mentoring is a person-to-person program. Whether you want to call it communication, interaction, or use the terms interchangeably, the mentor-mentee relationship that arises from it is the essence of the whole process. No amount of district organization, incentives, and good intentions will substitute for a relationship built on trust, respect, communication and confidentiality. The chances are high that you and your mentee will have a successful relationship; you have been chosen to enhance that probability. All aspects of a relationship need not read like a textbook ideal. But if the primary goals are reached -- the new teacher's professional growth and sense of well-being - then your work will have been accomplished. It All Starts With Communication is The for opportunity and willingness to talk interaction. the starting point try Working with your administrator, structured to arrange some uninterrupted time during the week when you can be alone with your mentee. Released time (an hour or so) during the week is good if your class can be covered. Same-hour preparation periods can work if you have a quiet place to meet and stay clear of the teacher's lounge. Before or after school is another possibility, but make sure the administration, mentee, and you honor the arrangement by keeping the time free of pupils and duties. school day or Structured time will topics or explore a few enable you to discuss a multitude of in depth. But much of what the not Frequent informal talk really helps. mentee wants to know does demand that amount of Authors time and is needed on an immediate informal basis. Therefore, a minute or two between classes, over

lunch, on the way into school, or sandwiched between other conversation are ways in which informal talk occurs. Close physical proximity in room locations really helps. If the two of you cross paths in the discharge of your daily duties, it will assist informal communication. to use your influence and you are a veteran and know the system!) As mentor, you may be able leverage (after all, 50 Chapter 4 - The Mentor - A Conversation About Roles to bring about some of the structured and informal talk possibilities. But keep in mind that opportunity translate into reality unless the it. does not necessarily commitment is there to use One very beneficial use of your " power" is to suggest that you and your mentee observe each others' classes or perhaps team teach. You are not trying to evaluate one another, but rather to watch ideas and techniques materialize in the classroom atmosphere. There will be much discuss afterward, instructional planning. to particularly the " whys" of Another option in facilitating interaction opportunity is to time together away from school. Do not turn social events at which both mentee and you are present into school talk sessions. Everyone needs a break from school and purely social time is valuable in itself. spend longer periods of But school related travel or activities without the pressure of students being present are excellent opportunities for talk. Invite your mentee (and nobody else!) to ride with you to a convention. Extend an offer that he/she room with you. If the two of you teach the same specialty, traveling to a workshop together might be possible. Invite the mentee to Traveling together to meetings was significant. Mentor an out-of-town game. This is all quality time which allows conversation to progress beyond mere words ride with you to into the realm of interaction. As a

respected member of the school faculty, you may choose to use your influence and status to create better conditions for the mentee.

Administrator used mentor as an intermediary between other staff the Some of your colleagues or if staff members may try to take advantage of the new kid on the block. You may become protective your mentee starts to teachers are reluctant to say no because of social pressure, job security, or the perception they will not be accepted (Priority issue No. 3, Chapter 2). get all members and Mentor new teacher. the dregs. New One beginners feel occurs with the realization that they don't have to do it all. Using your leverage directly to help mentees is a delicate decision on your part. Providing information to help them fathom what is happening or to assess the situation they may be getting into is not so overt but equally helpful. New teachers do not know how to say " no". Your suggestions that help them from getting in over their heads will be appreciated. of the greatest reliefs 51 Chapter 4 - The Mentor - A Conversation About Roles Qualities of Good Mentors as Seen by Beginning Teachers The above suggestions ensure first, will help set the stage but will not will occur if a good relationship. is something to talk about (that is seldom a problem in teacher mentoring) and second, both people perceive in each other an attitude of genuine interest and caring. When mentees were asked how this attitude was exhibited in good mentors, they came up with the following consensus list of " qualities desired in mentors":

Communication there My mentor allowed me to fail or succeed as a teacher.

Approachable Candid but non-critical Knowledgeable Open minded Innovative Similar teaching area Reality based Believes in mentoring Accepting Reliable Treat new teacher as equal Confidential Mentee

Compatible style This only representative and there were good mentors that did not meet all the qualities. For example, in small schools " similar teaching area" was often not possible. Nothing is magical about the desired qualities; they are list is common teachers. to most personable, professional, experienced What about negative qualities to avoid Mentees again came up with a consensus list: Too experienced Selfish to the point of being stone in mentors? hardened Narrow minded Lack of motivation Tries to give too much information - overwhelming Smothering mother hen This list seems to say that mentors should avoid trying to mold the beginner in his/her own image. Instead, the novice's development needs to proceed along its own unique path but within acceptable boundaries. of the synonyms mentees use when describing mentors are also clues to qualities that promote interaction. A coach brings out the best talents in people. A counselor helps an individual work within a system whose rules are designed for larger groups of people. Guides show people Some 52 Chapter 4 - The Mentor - A Conversation About Roles do not walk the path for them. Interpreters translate information and events into understandable terms. Confidants listen to one's inner concerns and keep those the but way thoughts confidential. takes two to The Mentee as a Factor in Interaction Even with the best of conditions and with good tango! there are no guarantees that intentions, good communication will result. Fortunately, most mentormentee relationships do work well, but some pairings may start slowly and need special attention. ; It A rare but difficult problem occurs when the mentee really Mentor talking. is a beacon - could use the help but does not personally feel it is needed. Or the beginner may be putting up a front to mask some sense of inadequacy. Genuine shyness

could prevent a Some cultural mentee from initiating discussion. backgrounds may dictate an aloofness from strangers. Whatever the reason or Personalities may clash. structure facilitated our Mentee I was not ready at level to mentor patience. Time is on the mentor's side; no rule says communication has to start out with a bang. Mentoring participants can take comfort in knowing that in the experience of the Montana study, more relationship problems occurred at the beginning of the year than at the end. Mentors and mentees who were at first distant usually began to grow together. motivation, lack of receptivity demands much develop professional the my mentor wanted me to perhaps a second year? Mentee One beginning teacher observed her " I own actions early in I even know what don't know." This quote emphasizes the point that mentees often have no idea of what questions to start asking. They have no experience base from which to determine the information they need. After things start to happen to them in the classroom, then they know! Their early questions may be irrelevant but still deserve an answer. The experience of the mentor can break the ice. Without being overbearing, as a mentor you can initiate some conversation and questions. Start slowly and build up by using the time-honored the year and said, don't Many have questions would otherwise gone unanswered. Mentee technique of letting people talk about themselves. This is not a devious method in mentoring because teachers who practice reflective thinking about their own teaching have started on the road to professional growth. Our relationship enabled us to see the human side of each other. Mentee 53 Chapter 4 - The Mentor - A Conversation About Roles final One Great help preparing for administrative evaluation. Mentee aspect of

communication bears some attention. Teachers love feedback about their professional progress. No, they are starved for feedback! A school's schedule of observation with feedback by administrators and formative/summative evaluations is usually too infrequent and too late to satisfy that need. As a mentor, you are not replacing the formal mechanism, but you certainly are in the best position to supplement it. New teachers, in the isolation of their classrooms, do not have the opportunity to pick up frequent signals from significant adults. A mentor's responses and comments within the formal and informal communication episodes provide the avenue for candid feedback. Mentees are interested not only in classroom performance (which the mentor may or may not be able to actually observe), but like feedback about their ideas, plans, observations, and reactions to people and events. Most feedback is an accumulation of beginning subtle messages. *' BUT mentee NOT ALWAYS!' frankness is There may be instances if when bold is appropriate, especially controversial the that planning some action could end a career in your school. Other Techniques Your attitude to Help Interaction and your mentee's attitude about the between you will determine the productivity of your communication. both feel comfortable and respectful about the relationship, the process will likely grow on its own even with periods of ups and downs. When asked to what mentoring comment about created good relationship If relationships, novices made Statements like the following: Mentor volunteered information when appropriate A good friendship developed I I have a colleague felt it I can talk to was my right to ask as a formal mentee Comforting to know I could go to my mentor anytime Mutual reliance on each other for ideas Poor match initially, but

finally established ourselves as colleagues Through communication, we learned each other after a rough start This person is of great value in my forever grateful to understand will life. I remain 54 Chapter 4 - The Mentor - A Conversation About Roles They (mentors) answer questions but do not what to do She was approachable and I tell you her had complete trust in Reflective Questioning: An Opening it to Good Communication in In Mentees will normally engage well with mentors communication is objective and non-evaluative. response to questions or volunteered, mentees need if if to feel whatever they reveal is accepted for its informational It can be disheartening if the listener makes a judgment about the unworthiness of what the mentee said. A pattern of negative judgments may lead the new teacher to conclude that his/her actions and ideas are being matched against those of proven veterans, probably unattainable to a newcomer. If judgments are always good, there may be suspicion that the mentor is not being candid. Early in the relationship, mentees may read into judgmental attitudes the message that they had best not volunteer too much information. As mentor and mentee learn to understand and trust each other, this caution may carry less value. weight. Helping new teachers reflect on their own actions and decisions is one method of opening up the lines of communication in a non-threatening and non-evaluative atmosphere. This can be accomplished by asking mentees questions that generate reflective tlinking and lead them to their own conclusions. The beauty in reflective thinking is that it takes mentors out of the judgment process and places it in the hands of mentees themselves. Mentors not familiar with this method can find suggestions for reflective questioning applicable to first-year teachers in Appendix D of this i

learned how to grow. Mentee manual. The Content What topics may to talk I, of Mentor-Mentee Interaction as mentor, expect the beginning teacher about? What do they want to know? What information are they apt to reveal to me? 55 Chapter 4 - The Mentor - A Conversation About Roles To answer those questions about any one beginner is risky business, but patterns in new teacher thinking that provide guidance do exist. Component No. 1 in Chapter Two described the twelve top priority issues that are most universally on the minds of mentored beginning teachers. An analysis of the thoughts and conversations that created that list plus the lesser priority issues not shown in this manual revealed two very significant observations of importance to mentors. (For a complete list of priorities, see the Class BTSP Final Report, Appendix B.) was a group of "ringers". Some pupils on treatment. Principal even though the prioritized issues can be generally applied across mentees, the information each mentee wants to know is specific to the school context. An example is priority No. 2, Chapter 2 (discipline). Your mentee at this time is probably not interested in learning more about First, motivational Instead, theory applied to adolescent youngsters. the mentee wants your thoughts about what if he tries to keep the 4th period class quiet by using procedure "X." The eventual answer to the discipline dilemma is an individualized solution for this new teacher and probably would not work anywhere else because the context would be different. Our conversations personal "that too". parents' or the principal's reactions might be covered problems listening, to The second observation has prioritized issues. These fall can be used by mentors are likely to to into do with the pattern of the a predictable mode that suggestions, to anticipate

the help that in this mentees happened me, want. The pattern Mentee concerns that new teachers feel called the "Concerns Model" (Fuller, 1975). One comment that appears with regularity in various sections of this manual is that the first year of teaching is a time of stress, high emotion, and self-centered interest. The rankings of the twelve prioritized new teacher issues bear out that statement. Other research studies conducted on teacher attitudes reinforce self-interest as the first step in a pattern of concerns typical of teachers facing significant change. The first teaching contract certainly classifies as a major change in a new teacher's life. case reveals the early and is part of what is The Concerns Model Briefly Explained New teachers, as well as candidates in pre-service training and in-service veterans, have been studied for nearly two 56 Chapter 4 - The Mentor - A Conversation About Roles decades to determine what happened to their thinking when those confronted with meaningful change. Fuller (1975), Hall (1982), who Olsen (1990), and Rogan (1995) were among this undergoing teachers researched start of phenomenon. Among the changes studied were the professional courses in college, student teaching, major innovations in an established school structure, and the first teaching position. Change aroused concerns in the minds of teachers, and these concerns progressed through sequential stages in the process of coping. Three stages were identified: The first stage Self is self -concerns (sounds familiar). Legitimize the concerns Teachers first look at how the change is going to affect them personally. Individuals question their own ability to cope with the stress and reorientation brought about new by circumstances. They ask "What is this new situation going to do to my life?" Much of their response is emotional

rather than rational. After resolving self concerns, teachers to task of new teachers. Mentor concerns to Task organization, move on These concerns involve the routines, and methodology . necessary within the operate a classroom smoothly new set of structural conditions. New schemes of instruction and classroom management emerge. Once concerns are addressed to teachers advance to impact concerns These are the ultimate and more desirable concerns that indicate teachers who have progressed to the stage of looking at the change with understanding and professionalism. Not worked anymore how the change will affect them personally or how it will alter their classroom systems, teachers make decisions task satisfaction, . Impact based on the anticipated pupil learning impact. *BUT NOT ALWAYS! progress through the stages with An is individual beginner's front, apt be an uneven aspects progress rapid on some and slower back to in others. Beginning teachers if may that recycle is an earlier concern arises. The a Montana mentorship study found situation completely new this 57 Chapter 4 - The Mentor - A Conversation About Roles regression visions occurring in of what teaching was going inflexible. fixed and whose were The concerns stages have no teachers to some new be like timetable, only a sequence. i. e., One purpose of in First year mentoring could therefore be phrased terms of the quality Concerns Model, of a beginner's concerns. to facilitate the pace and the movement through stages of Connecting the prioritized issues of beginning teachers to the stages of concerns gives mentors a fair idea of the help new teachers are likely to seek. Novices will be asking you to help them understand the unique school and community cultures they find themselves in and what the internal dynamics mean to

them. But don't be surprised if it does not work out according to the predictions. People are different and no two schools are alike.

58 Chapter 5 - The Beginning Teacher Mentee (A. E. F. T. T. E. % " pive THE BEGINNING TEACHER MENTEE This chapter is written for new teachers who are starting their first year with help from a mentoring program. The chapter topics emphasize (a) the benefits of mentoring in context learning and (b) the implications of a formalized mentor- mentee relationship.

A Message for Mentees

collegiate not long ago that you graduated from a teacher education program, after which you received the initial state teaching certificate. The college program prepared you as an " entry level" candidate for the teaching profession, and the certificate is the state's assurance to the public that you are a competent teacher. The new contract you signed is a legal document signifying that the school district has faith in your ability to deliver instructional services in return for a salary and benefits. You have made the transition from student to practitioner.

Another aspect of the transition is the " in-service" status. From now on, your educational growth will be a combination of your teaching experience, together with opportunities provided by or Any additional formal education required by the district. you pursue will be taken during the same years you are in-service (teaching). The fact that you receive mentor assistance is a commitment to your first year in-service professional growth. Mentoring is not a sign the district feels you may be a weak beginning teacher. You possess the package of competencies and attitudes to succeed in teaching; otherwise, the district would not have hired you. Mentoring will accelerate the pace and quality of your early professional growth, enhancing your sense of well being if you

have been chosen to a symbol of the district's My mentor - an advisor, a confidant. Mentee the process. When asked to comment on their programs, graduates say that field college preparation experiences, particularly 59 Chapter 5 - The Beginning Teacher Mentee Student teaching, was of the most value. But even student teaching cannot compare with the intensity and amount of new learning that takes place during the first year of teaching. The reason teachers learn so much during that I entries read some of my past journal and I sure sound like a whiner. period appears to be a matter of responsibility. As a student teacher, you could go home at night and not worry because the cooperating teacher had final responsibility for the pupils you were instructing. is Mentee New teachers realize there no escaping or deferment of duties and responsibilities. it The buck stops here! " I suddenly realized now was my rear end that was on the line" is a typical reaction when beginners realize how serious a responsibility teaching really is. This creates the motivation to learn much and learn fast both by choice and by necessity. Nothing is wrong with learning by experience, but in the pressure cooker of the first year, some of that learning can be unfocused and indiscriminate. Your early thoughts are apt to be about your own survival, instead of how well the students are learning. In fact, first year teachers do expend a great amount of thought and energy on issues not directly related to instruction (Component No. 1, Chapter 2). They feeling During December I was not good about my own competence. Mentee I 'm all ready to go next year. Mentee tend to take things personally, not yet realizing that much of what pupils and parents do is not their fault or under their control. In spite of these concerns, as a general rule, new teachers still go a good job in the

classroom. Given enough time, learning on the job does get more efficient, and coping with classroom and non-teaching issues gets easier. But what happens to pupil learning and to your stress level in the meantime? These are some of the concerns that mentoring seeks to address and make easier for you. The process seeks to provide information personally suited to you through a veteran teacher so you can direct energy to the benefit of pupils and yourself and minimize the energy spent worrying about other things. You and your students will all be happier if your transition to teaching is smoother and faster because of mentoring.

The Benefits of Context that Knowledge The knowledge learn on the job is The which they are teaching. particular school creates the need for the teacher to acquire specialized knowledge in order to personally deal with conditions in that school. Another new teacher in the same school would need different knowledge to cope with the specific to the school in new teachers 60 Chapter 5 - The Beginning Teacher Mentee same conditions because the teacher is a different user. Another school would create another set of conditions that would require different knowledge. This knowledge that is learned within the context of a school and applied to teaching in that school is called context knowledge. It is what individual teachers need to know in order to directly address classroom learning and the multitude of other The issues that impact them in the new teaching job. knowledge educational is usually put to to writer refers an immediate use. One it practical as " personal knowledge" (Hollingsworth 1994). The learning advantage of the real classroom is new teacher has actual pupils in an actual school that the situation under his/her direct responsibility as the motivation for learning. The knowledge has tangible

direct application; effectiveness or ineffectiveness the can be seen immediately. Because this direct application and feedback were not possible with most college classes, first-year teachers are often critical of teacher education. Much of what is learned on the job covers the range of content that is commonly referred to as " curriculum and instruction." other words, what is to be taught and how to teach Very few schools teach exactly the same content, even if the district has curriculum guides. Each teacher covers content a little differently. The beginner finds out that teaching methods do not apply universally, but must be adapted to each different group of pupils. As the new teacher gains experience, new ideas that work are added to the pool of usable knowledge. As this knowledge collection grows, the teacher can draw on it at any time for any appropriate teaching purpose with some assurance that the idea(s) will work. / can talk to parents with confidence.

Mentee The process allowed me try to and discover academic and ideas. classroom control Mentee work. The ideas were designed, after all, with me in mind. This process creates an advantage in that the knowledge and the process of learning it are the teacher's personal repertoire and as such, have potential for transfer -- to other pupils, other classes, and other schools. Even though born within the context of one school, the knowledge is the teacher's professional property. School districts take advantage of it when they hire an experienced teacher who can quickly adapt to a new school. What specific content does a new teacher need to get through the beginning of school, especially the first days and weeks? Each school differs, but Appendix E gives some guidance to new teachers on preparing for the opening of school.

Some of the classroom 61 Chapter 5 - The Beginning Teacher Mentee

management items are conversation. typical of those addressed by mentor-mentee

The college program probably cannot teach you skills" A new teacher also needs to know what pupils, reactions may be the " people expected needed for the job. Mentee members, administrators, custodian, school secretary, and other significant persons in and around the school. This could be learned over time, sometimes smoothly and sometimes harshly.

The mentor who supplies the beginner with timely information about the feelings, attitudes, sensitivities and emotions of key persons or groups of persons is providing from parents, faculty an immense help. The motivations for new teachers to learn this personal information are several: 0 people learn to work with and around the feelings of others as part of normal human discourse. New teachers are no different. They need to anticipate how others will react; context information about people is the necessary information. Being able to anticipate other teachers' reactions, particularly those in the same grades, may be a large factor in deciding what and how some lessons are taught. First, / learned how to deal with A second motivation involves the manner in which the trouble makers. Mentee be received or how it may impact individuals or groups of persons. A knowledge of student backgrounds and attitudes and that of their parents is an important part of a teacher's learning. becomes part of the information needed to assess a instructional decisions will It child's learning style. Mentor should be neutral about the forces that exist in €> Third, the community. Mentor new teachers may have no idea of the issues about which a community may be sensitive. Some subject content may be taught innocently enough, but may arouse emotional reactions and lead to controversy. The community reaction to the

beginner may be less tolerant than it will be for a respected veteran teacher. To be forewarned is to be forearmed. the new teacher him/herself. The emotions that first year teaching creates will be masked over in many cases. But the beginner needs to recognize that his/her personal reactions may color the way that events and others are. Finally, an often overlooked context factor is O My mentor gave me reassurance that I was doing the right thing relative to my style. Mentee perceived. Is this an advantage to mentoring? It is when the beginner is encouraged to reflect on him/herself as a factor in the school learning environment. 62 Chapter 5 - The Beginning Teacher Mentee As new teachers continue to gain experience, they begin to trust themselves and stop second guessing their decisions. What others think becomes less of a factor, and learning decisions are based on professional rather than personal considerations. The teachers are becoming "professionals." / don't take things personally anymore. Mentee Other Mentoring Benefits and Context knowledge can be directly enhanced accelerated by mentor assistance. There are additional may be more obvious and benefits, some of which measurable. Examples of these benefits are as follows: a new teacher's year It signals he/she can be offered the second contract. do the job of teaching which comes as a great relief. The district also wants to retain its best teachers; keeping promising first year teachers is much easier than hiring new ones. But retention also has much wider implications. The teaching profession suffers from a high dropout rate. Most of this comes from teachers choosing to leave on their own. The primary reason is not money or students, but rather an inability to fulfill personal aspirations while working within Retention: of the high points in One High

Points of Contract renewal! the Year for Mentees: Kids accomplishments! ' January evaluation wait! after a long New curriculum plans! Low Points of the Year for Mentees: into the routine! the school context. They feel the need to satisfy the Family sucked " system" conflicts with what they had personally hoped to obtain from a teaching career. It is arguable whether this inconsistently results from unrealistic expectations or from an inability to cope with actual school conditions. As a mentored beginning teacher, you have the advantage of being better able to function within school structural conditions because of timely information. Regardless of what the real dropout reasons may be, within one to three years from now, there is a 91% chance you will still be teaching if your experience follows that of the Montana mentoring research. That is much better than the 73% for non-mentored beginners. Within five to six years, half of all new teachers will no longer be teaching. The authors are confident that mentoring will help keep you in the profession. Monotony of the in February! routine hit me Department problems - extra curricular work - reluctant school board - all came together during February! Feedback: First year teachers have a tendency to judge themselves more poorly than is actually the case. The reason is a lack of feedback from important adults in the school. The administrator conducts formal evaluations and classroom observations, but typically these come too late The mentor and I roomed together. Talked until the wee small hours. Mentee 63 Chapter 5 - The Beginning Teacher Mentee and too infrequently to satisfy the beginner's need for feedback. To fill the vacuum, novices pick up signals about their performance from whatever sources are available -students, teacher's lounge, hallways, downtown, and

their own imagination. A spouse at home during the evening may not want to listen to school talk. Frequent and candid conversations with a mentor go a long way toward fulfilling this need.

evaluations: Preparation for Administrative teacher evaluations are the devices used by school districts to document performance, plan for growth, and make rehiring decisions. Mentors can help beginners prepare for earlier (formative) evaluations and final (summative) evaluations. The anxiety in the beginner's mind can be reduced by knowing what to expect during the administrative visit and afterwards. However, mentors clear of the actual evaluation, do have to keep themselves I am very concerned that all I won't get through objectives. my teachers, Mentee the administration in developing an individual professional development plan (IPDP). The teacher's self-assessment is a large factor in the plan. New teachers may wonder what goals are appropriate. Mentors can help.

to Professional Development Plans: especially new ones, Many districts require work with The other 25%: The manual authors claim potential that 75% of the year teacher, you can start to realize the remaining benefit if you can get together with other beginning teachers and tell tales. Whether or not the other new teachers are mentored is not that important. You will discover and be relieved to learn that others like yourself have many problems and concerns The sense of relief that comes from in common with you. knowing you are not alone with the problems you face is in The itself a significant boost to your professional esteem. process is very therapeutic. As a mentored teacher, you have someone (mentor) who can help pull strings with your building administrator, and in turn with other officials in the district or in the region. Ask if they can help set up a social or professional meeting

of first year teachers, or if not, perhaps supply the names of such teachers. Your mentor probably knows the representative of the state teachers' association or union who might be able to help with names. benefit interaction of mentoring comes about through As a first mentor and mentee. 64 Chapter 5 - The Beginning Teacher Mentee A couple teachers like yourself could organize a meeting of new teachers. you show initiative, you might be surprised If at the help others might lend. The Formalized Mentor-Mentee Relationship The between mentor and first-year teacher as envisioned by this manual is formalized both in its The implications of this design and implementation. arrangement are important to understand formal because they create a path of responsibility from the is evaluated. time mentoring is proposed until the time Responsibility leads persons to create structures and The end procedures to carry out their obligations. purpose of all of this, of course, is to create the supportive atmosphere within which the interaction between mentor and mentee takes place. Chapter Two discusses the essential components of a mentoring program and where the responsibility falls for each step. relationship it Formalized responsibility : way. I was not making him go out of his Mentee Formalized left to - not chance. In the following section of this chapter, the individual most active participants building administrator,