MENTORING PRACTICES: AN OVERVIEW

Effective mentor teachers combine specific practices to help their teacher candidate (TC) learn throughout their clinical experience. These include: 1) Making your thinking explicit, 2) Modeling the work of teaching, 3) Pre-briefing and debriefing, 4) Co-planning with feedback, 5) Co-teaching, and 6) Analyzing student work together.

These six practices form the "core" of the work you'll do. While there are other valuable types of opportunities that support candidates' professional learning, the practices described here allow TCs to see and hear what goes into good instruction. In the words of a mentor:

> *Sometimes we take for granted all the things that we do in a lesson—that we just assume that [student teachers] understand and know. But they don't know how we formed the groups, or how we chose… that activity. I'm sure they don't because without an explanation, how would you know?* (Stanulis et al., 2018, p.6)

And even more importantly, these practices allow TCs to gradually take up responsibility for planning, teaching, and assessment, in partnership with you.

Below, we provide a brief description of each mentoring practice and links to find out more.

1) ***Making your thinking explicit***
Allow the TC to hear your reasoning about instructional decisions you are making (e.g., why you're modifying a lesson plan, how you're creating student groups) and why you are responding to professional situations in particular ways (such as contact from parents, students raising unexpected questions, etc.). Name the decision you have to make, what the alternatives are, and why you are choosing a particular path of action.

2) ***Modeling the work of teaching***
This refers to demonstrating some part of teaching. The TC can observe parts of classroom instruction, but may also benefit from watching you interact with other teachers, communicate with parents, and talk with students outside of instructional time. Often, effective modeling requires a pre-briefing in which you describe what you'd like the TC to watch and debriefing where you each discuss what you noticed and thought.

3) ***Pre-briefing and debriefing***
Before you or the TC enact some part of teaching, talk together about "What specifically am I (the mentor or TC) looking for when the action starts?" Perhaps it is something the teacher will be trying

out, like a discussion strategy, or the focus of attention may be on what the students are doing. The debriefing then unpacks what both the teacher and the students were doing, as well as what decisions had to be made along the way.

4) ***Co-planning with feedback***
When you co-plan lessons or units early in the year, the TC plays a peripheral role, perhaps modifying an activity or suggesting a question to ask students. As they gain more experience, they can take the lead in designing increasingly larger chunks of instruction. Your role is to probe their thinking: "What are your learning objectives? Why *this* activity? Who will need special support?"

5) ***Co-teaching***
Co-teaching can take many forms, and is more than the TC watching you and then mimicking what you said and did. Early in the clinical experience, the TC can try out parts of teaching inside lessons that you run. They can circulate during small group work and press students' thinking; they can frame activities, run warm-ups or lead a summary discussion at the end of a class. As they gain experience, you can have them take the lead, with you still offering assistance.

6) ***Analyzing student work together***
It's powerful for teachers to examine evidence of student thinking together because that's what instruction is supposed to influence. You can have TCs collect artifacts like students' scientific models, written responses to test questions, or exit slip comments about a lesson. Show the TC what you might look for, talk together about patterns or groupings, and discuss how your instruction might shift as a result of what you see.

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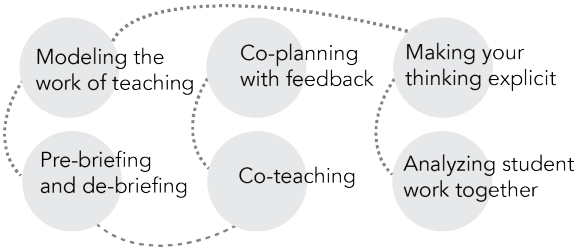
Importantly, these mentoring practices work best when combined. For example, modeling a part of teaching is most effective when you debrief immediately afterwards. If you are analyzing student work together, it is helpful, at first, to be explicit about your thinking regarding the patterns you see. Additionally, co-planning often involves discussions about what roles each of you might play when you co-teach.



We urge you to read more about each of these practices. They have been shown to help mentors become more aware of the effective routines and relationships they've developed, and assist TCs in realizing their full potential as beginning professionals.

Reference: Stanulis, R. N., et al. (2018). Mentoring as more than "cheerleading": Looking at educative mentoring practices through mentors' eyes. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 1-14.