



Mentoring for All



support every child | accompagner chaque enfant
reach every student | appuyer chaque élève



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LEARNERS AT THE CENTRE – MENTORING FOR ALL

Thinking About All Learners

At the core of *Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario* is a commitment to authentic, collaborative, continuous learning for all our learners.



Authentic learning is owned by the learner. It is job-embedded, based on “real world” learning needs, and provides meaningful opportunities for all educators and board staff to learn with (and from) students, colleagues, administrators, parents/guardians and central staff.

Powerful learning designs like mentorship de-privatize instruction, foster collaboration, and support “small I” leadership via the intentional sharing of knowledge and practice between colleagues.

By providing meaningful learning for all we are modelling and supporting the development of the types of iterative and authentic learning ecosystems we would like each educator to create and live with students in their own classrooms. In a nutshell, fostering growth and development for all learners is a critical pre-condition for achieving excellence.



[Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario](#)

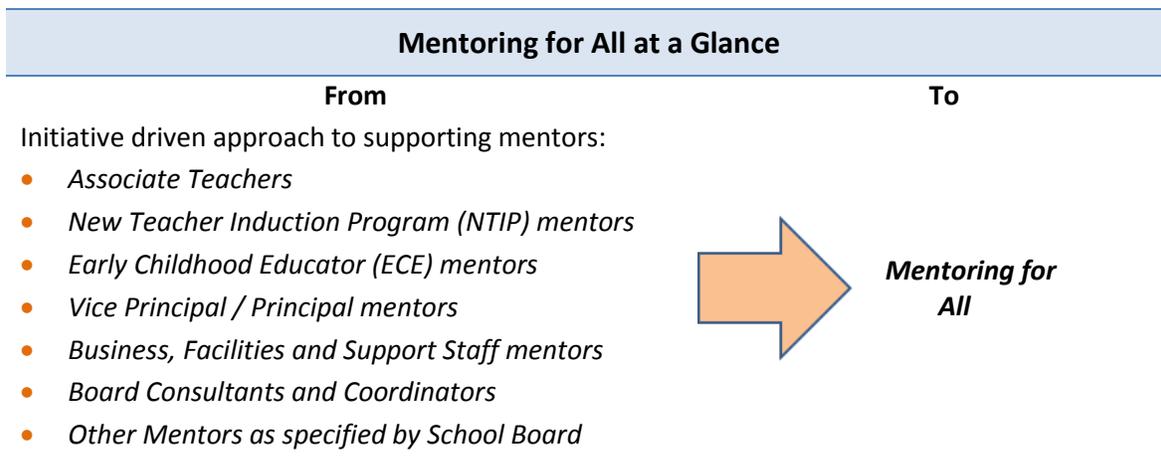
Foundational Elements of Mentorship

In our shared work supporting the New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP) across the province we are increasingly engaged with school boards providing a continuum of mentorship based on the authentic learning needs of the mentors they support.

Effective mentorship skills are highly transferable and include:

- Building relational trust
- Facilitating learning focused conversations
- Providing meaningful and growth oriented feedback
- Utilizing powerful mentoring designs

The diagram below illustrates this move away from an “initiative driven” and/or “role specific” approach to supporting mentors to what we characterize as *mentoring for all*.



Reciprocal learning is a foundational component of all mentoring relationships. One of the most powerful outcomes of mentorship is it serves as a means for job embedded deprivatization of practice and fosters reflection, learning and growth of mentors themselves.

In summary, mentorship is an act of learning.



Mentoring for All – Illustrative Example

MULTIPLE MODELS OF MENTORSHIP

Building a Mentoring Web

For 12 years, I lived on a houseboat (aka a floating home). I had many amazing experiences with nature including the fact that spiders were everywhere.

Each morning before kayaking I spent several minutes attending to cobwebs with a broom. The webs with only one or two strands were very easy to destroy, whereas the webs with many strands were much stronger, more resilient and secure.

When we think about building a mentoring web that's the idea – the more strands in the web, the stronger it is.

Beyond one to one “dating game” mentor matching, mentoring webs are constructed by the learner. Each is unique, based on authentic learning needs.



In their longitudinal research of the New Teacher Induction Program, Christine Frank & Associates found that high growth new teachers accessed five to seven different mentorship supports. So again, the idea of a constructing learning via a menu of personalized growth opportunities with the support of multiple mentors emerges as a powerful learning design.



Building a Mentoring Web – Strategy Harvest from Board Teams

Multiple Models of Mentorship

*Who are the people at your school or work site (or beyond)
who bring you strength, energy, passion and hope?
They will be your true mentors.*

Broker Mentor

ROLE

- Mentor provides orientation to school or work site logistics and culture
- Mentor brokers involvement of colleagues as needs arise



CONSIDERATIONS

- Consultant type relationship, fewer opportunities for collaboration and coaching
 - May be initial support until other mentoring relationships are established or ongoing throughout the year
-

One to One Mentor Matching

ROLE

- Mentor is site-based and is matched on an individual basis to a new colleague
- Mentor adopts consultant, collaboration and coaching stances based on the needs of the person they are working with



CONSIDERATIONS

- Mentoring relationships that flourish are reciprocal – both parties learn and grow
 - Greater “ownership” occurs when the mentor has volunteered and the person being mentored has been involved in the choice of mentor
-

Group Mentoring

ROLE

- Mentor works with 2 or more individuals or one individual may have 2 or more mentors
- Communities of practice provide opportunities for collaboration between both new and experienced colleagues



CONSIDERATIONS

- This model provides flexibility if school or work site has large number of new staff (or mentors)
 - This model is often embedded in a school or site wide “mentoring culture” where all staff are engaged in ongoing collaboration
-

Informal Mentoring

ROLE

- Individuals connect with a variety of colleagues as needs arise
- Mentor/mentee roles are fluid – often referred to as Peer Mentoring as in many cases the informal mentors are relatively new themselves



CONSIDERATIONS

- Spontaneous, informal nature of relationship lends itself to collaboration
- Relying on “accident, geography and friendship” may not work for all as new staff could feel isolated if not part of any mentoring relationships

Online Mentoring

ROLE

- Using online conferencing new staff can participate in discussion and sharing with both experienced and other beginning colleagues



CONSIDERATIONS

- Enables access to a variety of resources and perspectives outside the school or work site
- Not everyone may feel comfortable sharing issues and concerns in a “public” online forum



Building a Mentoring Web – Glideshow

***Having a formally assigned mentor is not linked to growth – being mentored is.
(NTIP longitudinal research findings – 2015)***

MENTORING IS...

- M**utual
 - Mentoring relationships that flourish are reciprocal – all parties learn and grow
- E**volving
 - Mentors exhibit flexibility of stance and role based on the needs of the person they are supporting
- N**on-evaluative
 - Mentoring supports are not connected to evaluation or judgement of a colleague's performance
- T**rusting
 - Relational trust is built through effective listening and fostered in an environment characterized by emotional safety and mutual respect
- O**pen
 - Through powerful learning designs (e.g., observation and debriefing) practice is deprivatized and the intentional sharing of knowledge and practice occurs
- R**eal
 - Mentoring activities are personalized, based on each person's authentic learning goals and connected to their "real world"
- S**upported
 - Conditions to foster effective mentoring relationships are supported at both the school and board level (e.g., joint release days, foundational learning for mentors)
- H**onours strengths
 - A deliberate seeking out of the strengths and attributes that each person brings to the mentoring relationship sets the context for meaningful sharing to occur
- I**nvitational
 - All parties have voluntarily chosen to engage in mentorship
- P**ersonalized
 - Each person may choose to engage in multiple models of mentorship as they build a web of mentoring supports



Emerging Themes of Mentorship – Glideshow

THE POWER OF LISTENING

Building Relational Trust

While there are many different approaches to mentorship, what they all share in common is an emphasis on the importance of listening.

As the Chinese character for listening illustrates, listening is a complex skill. At its core, listening shows we care. It is a powerful tool for establishing and building the trust and rapport essential for any mentoring relationship.



Elements of Listening



Attending Fully

A real barrier to listening can be actually being present in the moment when someone is speaking. Many of us are guilty of “fake attentive listening” where we smile and nod at the speaker but in reality we’re thinking of the dozens of things still to do that day.

Attending fully involves physically unplugging from our personal electronic devices and also letting go of our “mental e-mail” in order to fully focus on the person who is speaking to us.



Pausing and Paraphrasing

Often we “listen to speak” when engaged in conversation. In other words, we begin to quickly construct answers or advice in our heads rather than truly listening. Both pausing and paraphrasing can be effective tools for acknowledging what the speaker is saying and allowing the person to clarify their thoughts.

An elegant paraphrase doesn’t parrot back everything the speaker has said, rather it’s a single sentence that expresses the gist of what you’ve heard and understood as a listener. We can choose to paraphrase the content of what we’ve heard or the feelings behind them or both. An example is below:

- Sounds like you’re **very worried** (*feeling*) about **planning for the open house**. (*content*)

Non-Verbal Encouragement



Albert Mehrabian's pioneering research in the 1960's examined three key elements of any face-to-face communication:

- Our words / Our tone of voice / Our body language

While his 7 / 38 / 55 rule (7% words / 38% tone / 55% body language) is subject to much interpretation and academic debate, the emphasis of how important non-verbal communication can be is worth considering. If our body language is congruent with the attributes of an effective listener we are sending a message of genuine interest in what the speaker has to say.

Reflecting Feelings



A learning focused conversation is an intricate dance. As a skilled listener you may be adjusting your tone, facial expression or even body position based on the cues you are observing from the person speaking. This is not mimicking or mirroring the person, rather it's a sense of being in synch.

At its core, reflecting feelings is caring with your heart about what the person with whom you're conversing is saying. What's truly rewarding in working with both adults and students is that when people feel that sense of caring, how much more rich the sharing of thoughts, feelings, and ideas becomes.



[Power of Listening](#) (1 min 21 sec)

This video is part of the 2014-15 *Associate Teacher Partnership Project* led by Lakehead University in collaboration with 7 local school districts.



[Power of Listening Slidecast](#)

GOAL SETTING CONVERSATIONS

Setting the Stage for Success

Mentoring is a powerful, personalized learning design. Yet the dynamics of mentoring relationships are complex. When there is a misalignment of expectations significant challenges can arise.

Engaging in collaborative goal setting conversations at the outset of any mentoring relationship helps to set the stage for success. Two potentially powerful outcomes of these learning focused conversations are:

- Building relational trust
- Clarifying roles and expectations



Goal Setting Conversations – Practical Ideas

Elements of Listening

Attending Fully



Non Verbal Encouragement



Pausing & Paraphrasing



Reflecting Feelings



Building Relational Trust

Being “present” by applying the elements of effective listening is at the core of building trust and rapport in any relationship.

Clarifying Roles and Expectations

Position yourself as a co-learner by sharing your own learning goals for the mentoring relationship. Mentoring relationships that flourish are reciprocal – both parties learn and grow.

Possible Goal Setting Conversation Questions for Mentoring Teams

- What strengths and attributes do you bring to your role?
- What goals do you have for your professional learning this year?
- How do you see our collaboration best working?
- What are the best ways for us to communicate? (preferred tools, times, methods)
- Who else can provide support and mentorship?
- What are the next steps in our collaboration?



[Goal Setting Conversations](#) (1 min 11 sec)

BUILDING INFLUENCE



WHAT WE CAN INFLUENCE.... our 50% of the equation

Below are some key ideas about how as mentors we can be mindful in our approach to “the complex dynamics of human interaction” that shape all of our relationships.

Self-Knowledge

Knowing how we respond internally and externally is the 50% of the equation we can influence in any human interaction. Just like with students, we can make conscious choices to inflate or deflate challenges we encounter in interacting with our colleagues.

Power of Listening

Simply being “present” and attending fully is an integral part of establishing the relational trust that is an essential component of any mentoring relationship.

Attributes Based Approach

By purposefully seeking out the strengths and attributes our colleagues possess we empower not only the people we are working with, but continue to engage in our own learning and growth. We have so much to learn from and with each other!

Wellness

In a nutshell, by taking care of ourselves we have more to give to others. Sounds simplistic, but sometimes there are deep truths in simple ideas. Basic things like daily physical activity, reflection, nutrition, and laughter are powerful gifts we can give ourselves, those we mentor, and ultimately the students we serve.

ROLES & STANCES OF AN EFFECTIVE MENTOR

Consulting / Collaborating / Coaching (The 3Cs) at a Glance

In their book *Mentoring Matters: A Practical Guide to Learning-Focused Relationships* Laura Lipton and Bruce Wellman describe a practical framework for mentors to consider. The chart below provides an at a glance guide to the 3Cs adapted with permission from their work. While these 3Cs are helpful as a frame, effective mentors demonstrate **flexibility of stance and role** based on the needs of the people they support. Mentoring relationships that flourish are reciprocal – all parties learn and grow!

Consultant

Offering Support and Providing Resources



CHARACTERISTICS

- Mentor shares key information about logistics, school or work site culture, policies and practices
- Beyond simple advice, a consultant provides the “why,” “what,” and “how” of their thinking

CUES

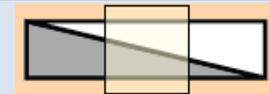
- Credible voice / Use of pronoun “I” / Phrases like “it’s important to” ... “keep in mind that”

CAUTIONS

- We tend to default to this stance / Overuse can build dependency on the mentor

Collaborator

Creating Challenge and Encouraging Growth



CHARACTERISTICS

- Mentor and colleague co-develop strategies and approaches
- 50/50 pattern of interaction and idea production

CUES

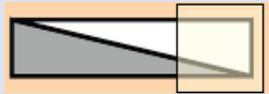
- Confident, approachable voice / Use of pronoun “we” / Phrases like “let’s think about” ... “how might we”

CAUTIONS

- Mentors need to ensure collaboration is authentic and they don’t take over

Coach

Facilitating Professional Vision



CHARACTERISTICS

- Mentor supports internal idea production through inquiry and paraphrase
- Ultimate aim is to develop colleague’s internal resources for self-coaching and independence

CUES

- Approachable voice, attending fully / Use of pronoun “you”
- Questions like “what might be some ways to?” ... “given all that you know, what options are you considering?”

CAUTIONS

- Stance can cause frustration if colleague lacks internal resources for idea generation

The 3Cs in Action – Practical Mentoring Strategies

Christine Frank & Associates (CFA) has been conducting NTIP longitudinal research over the past three years. The chart below summarizes the actions mentors took that new teachers found most helpful.

How Do Mentors and Colleagues Help?	
<p>Consultant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing formal and informal support Sharing resources 	
<p>Collaborator</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fostering collaboration with beginning teachers, mentors, colleagues (building a mentoring web) 	
<p>Coach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classroom observation(s) and debriefing Ongoing feedback 	

In her book *Being an Effective Mentor* Kathleen Feeney Jonson shares her research about what specific strategies or actions mentors themselves felt were most helpful to beginning teachers. The chart below aligns Jonson’s findings with our Ontario context and provides “real world” examples of how mentors can provide meaningful support.

Mentoring Strategy	Ontario Mentoring Context
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct Assistance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School or Work Site Orientation / Consultant Stance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstration Teaching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Observation / Debrief / Action Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Observation & Conferencing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scaling Questions / Coaching Stance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informal Contact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building Relational Trust / Listening
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaboratively Assessing Student Work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moderated Marking / Collaborative Stance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Role Modeling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interaction with Colleagues / Students



[Illustrative Example of the 3Cs in Action \(2 min 5 sec\)](#)



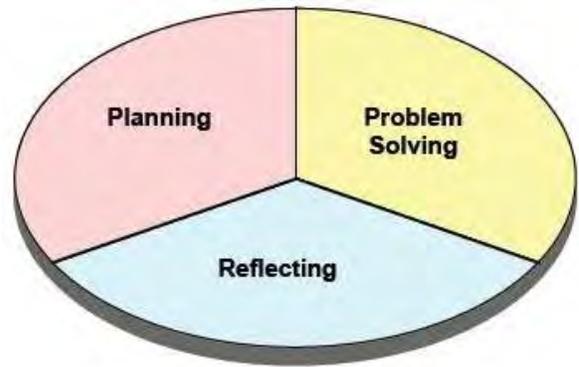
[Month by Month Practical Ideas for NTIP Mentors](#)

A CONVERSATION MAP FOR MEDIATING THINKING

Learning Focused Conversations

Many mentors may find themselves engaged in the three types of conversations described below:

- Anticipating a new project, assignment or unit of study (Planning)
- Looking back upon a meeting, event or any completed task (Reflecting)
- Addressing a specific challenge or concern that is top of mind (Problem Solving)



Illustrative Example of a Conversation Map

Learning focused conversations represent authentic opportunities for mentors to [continue to listen](#) and by doing so foster the relational trust that is so important for successful mentoring relationships.

The conversation map below is intended to be a starting point for thinking. An attribute of skilled mentors is they demonstrate [flexibility of stance and role](#) based on the needs of the person they are working with.

Step by Step

(1) Elegant Paraphrase

“So even though the rest of your class is coming along well you’re feeling frustrated because there’s one student you just don’t feel is connecting with anybody.”

As the beginning teacher begins the planning, reflecting or problem solving conversation, the mentor models the elements of listening illustrated above, thereby encouraging the person to continue speaking. When the person is “finished” explaining their issue in one sentence the mentor summarizes the “gist” of what they have heard.

An elegant paraphrase can reflect heart (how the person is feeling) or content (the big issue or challenge). In the illustrative example to the left, the mentor has summarized both feeling and content. Usually the speaker responds with an emphatic yeah and/or elaborates on the concern or issue in greater detail.

(2) Explore Options

“Given all that you know about building inclusion in your classroom, what are some of the options you are considering as you try to bring your new student on board with the rest of the class?”

Instead of offering advice or autobiography, the mentor assists the beginning teacher in accessing their thinking about the choices they have. Key to this step is a “positive pre-supposition” that the speaker has already given the issue thought and has internal strategies and resources they can bring to bear.

Note that the question in the illustrative example is forward looking. At this point the speaker will often provide a synopsis of a number of things they are considering. The role of the mentor is to continue to listen without offering any counsel. Once a number of options have been surfaced, consider proceeding to step # 3.

(3) Plan Next Steps

“Wow, you’ve obviously given this a lot of thought. As you go back to your classroom, what will be the first step you take in your effort to help this student find an entry point into your classroom community?”

The mentor’s goal here is to have the beginning teacher consider all the options they have shared and articulate a specific next step or strategy that they will apply to the issue, problem or challenge.

Once the beginning teacher has articulated the practical idea(s) they are going to walk away with from this conversation and attempt to implement in their context, consider proceeding to step # 4.

(4) Self-Evaluation

“So you’re going to start by having the student work more in groups with others - how will you know if this strategy is working?”

When next steps have been established, the mentor assists the speaker in developing some “measures” that will let them know about whether the approach they’ve chosen is working.

The mentor encourages the beginning teacher to respond with specific indicators that they would like see. At this point the mentor may choose to affirm what she or he has heard and bring the conversation to a close.



[Learning Focused Conversations](#)



[Learning Focused Conversations Slidecast](#)

Illustrative Example of a Learning Focused Conversation

The videos below are part of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) Mentor Training series and used here with permission from ETFO.



Learning Focused Conversation Example

- Coaching conversation with a beginning teacher (3 min 37 sec)
-



Learning Focused Conversation Reflection

- A beginning teacher reflects on the value of coaching conversations (28 sec)
-



Learning Focused Conversation Map

- Overview of the conversation map and the thinking behind it (1 min 41 sec)
-

Mentor Reflections – Learning from Mentoring

One of the most powerful potential outcomes of this “intentional sharing of knowledge and practice” is the learning of mentors themselves. Here are three emerging learning themes that NTIP Mentors have expressed as a result of their learning from and with beginning teachers:



Increases Reflection on Current Practice

Mentoring has opened me up to the possibility of growth and to the potential new ideas.... this has helped me become more reflective about my own practice.

Fosters Inspirational Connections with Colleagues

Mentoring has improved my relationships with other teachers (not just new teachers). I've become more aware of the value of colleagues, and more encouraged to share.

Impacts on Teaching Practice and Learning of Students

Learning about the importance of listening and coaching didn't just help me support beginning teachers, it helped me become a better mentor for my students!

KEY IDEAS FOR MENTORS

Facilitating Learning Focused Conversations – Ideas to Consider

Over the last several months the Teaching Policy and Standards Branch (TPSB) has had the privilege of working with (and learning from) several board teams in the design and delivery of foundational professional learning opportunities for mentors.

During these sessions mentors honed their coaching skills via engagement in authentic learning focused conversations with colleagues.

Below are some core elements for mentors to consider as they facilitate learning focused conversations.



Setting Aside

Often we “listen to speak” when engaged in conversation. In other words, we begin to quickly construct answers or advice in our heads rather than truly listening. Setting aside our personal need to connect (via autobiography) or offer immediate judgement (via advice) enables authentic listening to occur.

Attending Fully

A real barrier to listening can be actually being present in the moment when someone is speaking. Attending fully involves physically unplugging from our personal electronic devices and also letting go of our “mental e-mail” in order to fully focus on the person who is speaking to us.

Pausing and Paraphrasing

Both pausing and paraphrasing can be effective tools for acknowledging what the speaker is saying and allowing the person to clarify their thoughts. An elegant paraphrase is a single sentence that expresses the gist of what you’ve heard and understood as a listener. It can focus on feeling or content or both.

Using Questions to Mediate Thinking

Open ended mediational questions connect the person to their strengths, inner resources, and available supports. They can assist in exploring options and in the development of practical next steps for the speaker.

Flexibility of Stance and Role

Not every conversation is a coaching conversation. While these ideas to consider above may be helpful as a framework for thinking, effective mentors demonstrate flexibility of stance and role based on the needs of the person they are working with.

SCALING QUESTIONS AS A TOOL FOR DEBRIEFING

Scaling Questions Conversation Map at a Glance

- On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the worst morning you've had and 10 being the best, how was this morning for you?
- Oh a <e.g., 6> – What made it a 6?
- How might you bump it up a notch to a 7? (specific ideas)
- Continue with Coaching stance or shift to Consultant or Collaborator based on needs

Opportunities for individuals to reflect on practice and debrief with mentors can be powerful learning for both parties. One approach to debriefing conversations is “scaling questions” adapted from the solution-focused conversation work of Nancy McConkey.

What is powerful about this tool is not only that variety of mentoring contexts within which it can be applied but also the underlying assumptions described below.

Attributes Based Approach

A purposeful seeking out of strengths is at the heart of this idea. Often, the person you are mentoring has given their challenges considerable thought prior to speaking with you.

Islands of Competence

By asking about the positive things you ensure the conversation begins with a success. Even a “1” is better than a “0!”

Ownership resides with the Mentee

Your impression is set aside as ultimately the person you are mentoring will be the one implementing the ideas in their own context (classroom, school, work site).

Flexibility of Stance & Role

As a skilled mentor you may choose to continue in the coaching stance or shift to consultant or collaborator, based on the needs of the person you are debriefing with.

Don't like Numbers?

For some, applying a quantitative number to an experience may not feel comfortable. If that's the case, the initial scaling question can be simply adapted as in the example below:

- *Thinking about both the worst morning you've ever had and the best one; how was this morning for you?*
- *Oh...the morning was “fine” – Fine sounds better than so so...what made it fine?*
- *How might you bump it up to “very fine” (specific ideas)*
- *Continue with Coaching stance or shift to Consultant or Collaborator based on needs*

At first, scaling questions may feel a bit like following a script but over time this tool can simply be embedded into a mentor's repertoire of learning focused conversation strategies.

Utilizing Scaling Questions – More Resources

The videos below are part of the 2014-15 *Associate Teacher Partnership Project* led by Lakehead University in collaboration with 7 local school districts to support the mentoring of Associate Teachers.



[Complexity of Teaching and Learning – Set Asides](#) (1 min 56 sec)



[Scaling Questions as a Tool for Debriefing](#) (2 min 43 sec)

The video below is part of an OISE/TDSB project to support the mentoring of Associate Teachers entitled *Authentic Voices from the Field: Associate Teachers Talk about Effective Feedback*. The full project can be accessed at: http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/supo/Schools/Authentic_Conversations/index.html



[Using Scaling Questions – Reflections from Associate Teachers and Teacher Candidates](#) (2 min 49 sec)



[Practical Tools for Mentors Slidecast](#)

CREATING A THIRD POINT

Providing Meaningful Feedback

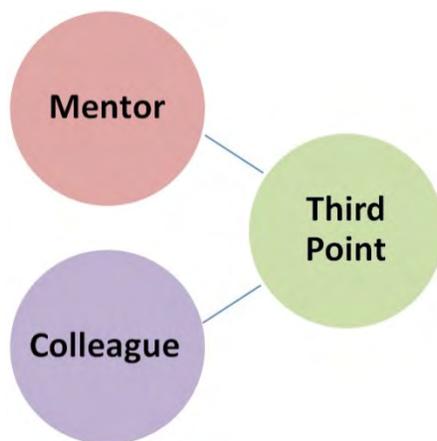
As mentors we are often called upon to provide feedback. So how do we do this in a respectful and meaningful manner? Creating a “third point” can greatly assist as it helps shift the focus away from personal to external.

Thinking about our scaling questions example may be helpful:

- **How did you do this morning?** – personal
- **From 1 to 10, how was the lesson?** – external, third point



Practical Ideas



Collaboration vs. “Face-offs”

If you and your colleague are sitting down for any planning, reflecting or problem solving conversation, position the chairs at 45 degree angle rather than directly facing each other. This is also a great set up for parent – teacher interviews where you can sit in this collaborative stance with student work on the table in front of you both as the third point. Similarly, using hand gestures you can metaphorically place the problem or challenge in the physical space in front of you both during a learning focused conversation.

Observation vs. Impression

Often when we provide feedback without meaning to we imply judgement. Here is an example:

- *The students were **out of control*** – perception, implies personal judgement
- *During the lesson **four students left their seat*** – observation of behaviour, third point

Avoiding “You Should”

As mentors we are often called upon for input and advice and certainly based on individual needs this is an important component of the consultant stance. That said, if there are two words we strive to avoid using in mentoring conversations they are “you should” – for example:

- ***You should** make sure everyone is listening and paying attention before you begin the lesson* – feels like a command
- ***Something that worked for me** was using a signal to focus students before giving instructions* – feels like an idea

APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY AS A TOOL FOR REFLECTION AND GROWTH

Appreciative Inquiry at a Glance

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is an “attributes-based” approach that can be used to facilitate reflective conversations either during formal professional learning sessions or as part of the ongoing dialogue between mentors and colleagues.

At the core of AI is the belief that all participants come to mentoring relationships possessing many strengths and that by building on these assets, the answers to the issues and challenges they face can be collaboratively constructed.

This thinking is why AI always begins with an examination of what is working well in current practice (themes of success). Many of these themes can then be applied as actual strategies to collaboratively address specific challenges and issues.



Appreciative Inquiry Conversation Map

Below you'll find some practical ideas for using AI. The Appreciative Inquiry Commons is a great place to explore the concept of AI in greater depth: <http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu>

Step by Step

Before the Conversation: Power of Listening



At its core, listening shows we care. It is a powerful tool for establishing and building the relational trust essential for any mentoring relationship.

Reviewing the elements of listening sets the context for Appreciative Inquiry conversations and promotes an open, non-evaluative atmosphere conducive to meaningful sharing of thoughts and ideas.

Beginning the Conversation: Themes of Success

- **What's already working well?**

As you think about your commitment to making a difference for students, tell a story about the best experience you have had so far in your work this year?

- *Without being humble, what skills, values, and attitudes do you bring to your work that contributes to your ability to support and mentor others?*

Often in our practice we can focus on what is not working – creating time for paired conversations about what is working well can help bring to the fore the strengths and attributes of both new colleagues and mentors as well as highlighting the successes they've experienced in the year.

Following this segment of the conversation, participants may note common threads or themes that ran through their stories of success.

Some of these “themes of success” may actually provide useful strategies for the challenges and issues participants encounter.

Continuing the Conversation: Issues and Challenges

- **What's not working so well?**

What issues you are encountering? (i.e. What are the stones in your shoe?)

- *Looking ahead what are the “wishes” you have for your role?*

Acknowledging the “real world” challenges both new and experienced colleagues encounter in their work brings authenticity to the AI process.

As the listener in the conversation, it is important for mentors to remember their role is non-evaluative and supportive.

Concluding the Conversation: Practical Ideas and Next Steps

- **Collaborative Strategy Harvest of Ideas**

What specific ideas / strategies / resources are you considering to address the issue or concerns expressed?

- *So What / Now What – share an individual action plan of possible next steps (next day / next week / next month)*

Often when someone expresses a challenge they have already given the issue a great deal of prior thought.

For mentors, awareness of **flexibility of stance and role** is critical at this point of the process.

Based on what they are hearing, mentors may decide to:

- Consult (offer support and resources)
- Collaborate (create challenge and encourage growth)
- Coach (facilitate professional vision)



AUTHENTIC LEARNING

Mentoring as a Powerful Design

In her book *Powerful Designs for Professional Learning* Lois Brown Easton describes powerful professional learning as possessing the following characteristics or attributes:

- Arises from and returns benefits to the real world of teaching and learning
- Focuses on what is happening with learners (both student and adult) in the classroom, school, and district
- Involves collaboration or has collaborative aspects
- Establishes a culture of quality
- Slows the pace of schooling, providing time for the inquiry and reflection that promote learning and application



Mentorship enables all learners to build a strong web of support that aligns with Easton’s powerful designs and is personal to their unique learning needs and goals. As the chart below summarizes, authentic learning via mentorship is collaboratively constructed as opposed to something that is “done” to someone.

Traditional Professional Learning	Authentic Learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Outside-In Reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inside-Out Transformation
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Top Down Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collegial Involvement in Planning
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• System-Centred	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learner-Centred
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Goals for learning determined by others	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learners determine their own learning goals
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Knowledge Consumption by individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Knowledge Construction by collaborative teams

Illustrative Examples from the Classroom

On the next page you will see some illustrative examples of what a menu of learning designs could look like. Although the context is NTIP teachers and their mentors, the idea of voice, choice and personalized construction of learning that directly connects to “real world” learning needs is transferrable to any context.

Possible Learning Menu

Learning Goal

Improve my ability to provide meaningful feedback to students about their learning.

Guiding Ideas

Through NTIP, flexible use of a number of joint release days is provided to support learning and collaboration between beginning teachers and mentors.

While all of the learning designs on the menu have a collaborative component, individual teachers select the “offerings” and “portions” that best meet their authentic learning needs.

Classroom Observation & Debriefing

- Beginning teachers observe the classroom of their mentors and/or mentors observe beginning teachers in action in their own classroom
- Observation is followed by collaborative debriefing and action planning

Demonstration Classroom Learning

- New teacher observes mentor(s) teach OR new teacher and mentor observe another classroom together, followed by a debriefing conversation

Co-planning / Co-teaching

- Beginning teachers and mentors collaboratively plan and teach a lesson (or a series of lessons) together followed by debriefing, reflection and a continued cycle of collaboration

Collaboratively Assessing Student Work

- Beginning teachers and mentors assess student work together in order to help develop consistent understanding of the standards of achievement and inform their instructional practices

Networked learning within or beyond the school site

- Beginning teachers and mentors form ongoing communities of practice with colleagues (both new and experienced) who have a similar grade or subject assignment and/or similar learning goals
- Networked learning environment may be face to face or online or a blended model of both

Choice from a variety of professional learning sessions

- Beginning teachers and mentors participate together in a professional learning session related to their learning goals, followed by debriefing and action planning

Teacher Learning and Leadership Program (TLLP)



Perhaps the ultimate example of authentic learning is the [Teacher Learning and Leadership Program](#). Each year the Ministry provides TLLP funding for proposals from teacher led teams seeking to examine, learn and share the evidence-based instructional practices they are engaging in with their students. This year over 100 TLLP teams are deepening their professional learning and sharing with colleagues in their schools, across their districts and even beyond Ontario.

OBSERVATION AND DEBRIEFING PROTOCOLS

Learning From and With Each Other

Observation and debriefing, whether it be informal observation of a mentor’s classroom by a beginning teacher or a more formal demonstration classroom process, represents a powerful tool for personalized and authentic professional learning.

By learning from and with each other, colleagues begin to build meaningful communities of collaboration focused on the “real world” of teaching and learning in practice.



Core Elements of the Learning Experience

The following core elements are integral to ensuring the classroom observation learning experience is meaningful for all participants.

Orientation

- An opportunity for visiting teachers to share specific learning goals for the observation with the teacher being observed and/or visit guide

Observation

- Focused observation of teaching and learning in the actual classroom over a sustained period of time (e.g. a full morning)

Debriefing

- An opportunity for visiting teachers and mentors to reflect on the classroom experience, ask questions, and share ideas with each other and the demonstration teacher, and/or the visit guide (if applicable)

Action Planning

- A structured so what / now what action planning process for applying the learning to each participants’ specific teaching contexts

Follow Up

- Direct assistance for visiting teachers from mentors and/or the visit guide to support the implementation of new ideas and strategies back in their own classrooms



[Making Observation Meaningful Slidecast](#)

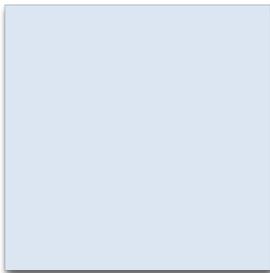
The Importance of Collaborative Debriefing and Action Planning

Classroom observation without collaborative debriefing can have the “orange wallpaper” effect. Participants may like the day, enjoy being in someone else’s classroom, but leave with their next step being to use the same lovely orange wallpaper the demonstration teacher has on their bulletin board.



Immediately following up the classroom observation with a collaborative debriefing and action planning process involving the Classroom Teacher, Mentors, Visit Guide and other visiting teachers allows the focus of the participating teachers to shift away from what they saw to how they can apply their learning to their own teaching context. Focusing on the “so what / now what” provides visiting teachers opportunities to construct the practical next steps they will implement with their own students while simultaneously expanding their web of networking supports.

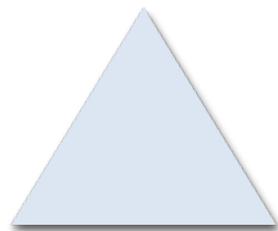
Shape Reflection Tool



- Something that “squared” with me (i.e. validated prior understanding)



- A question that is still “circling” around in my mind at this point



- Something I learned that could form the “base” of future action

LEARNING ABOUT MENTORSHIP AND GROWTH

NTIP Longitudinal Research – Key Findings

Through longitudinal research over the past 3 years, Christine Frank & Associates (CFA) has found that new teachers have made meaningful and sustained improvements in all four of the core goal areas of NTIP (confidence, efficacy, instructional practice and commitment to continuous learning).

So what are the key factors that make a difference for new teachers? The clickable chart below summarizes the research findings and includes direct links to relevant resources. All of the links below, along with the *CFA Year 3 Highlights Report* can be accessed at: <http://mentoringmoments.ning.com>.

QUALITY OF MENTORSHIP

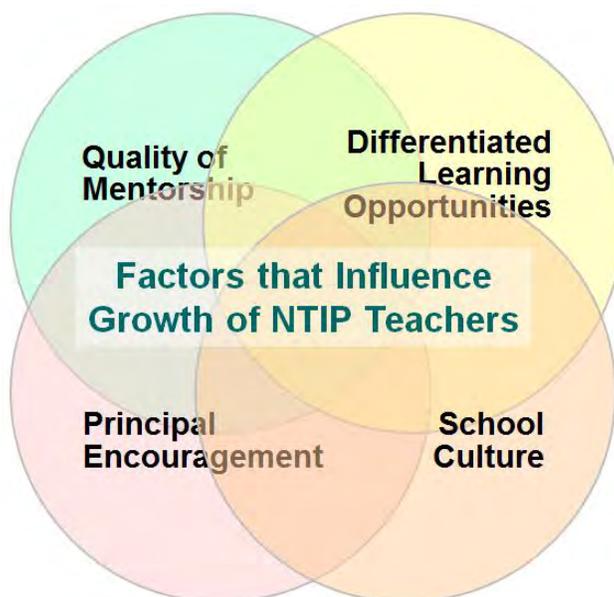
Having a formally assigned mentor is not linked to growth – being mentored is

- [Powerful Designs for Mentorship](#)
- [Classroom Observation & Debriefing](#)
- [Learning Focused Conversations](#)

DIFFERENTIATED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

High growth new teachers accessed 5 to 7 different NTIP supports

- [Constructing a Menu of Authentic Learning via Joint Release Days](#)
- [Illustrative Examples from Boards](#)



PRINCIPAL ENCOURAGEMENT

Ongoing feedback and encouragement from the Principal was strongest predictor of growth in NTIP

- [Power of Listening](#)
- [Providing Meaningful and Growth Oriented Feedback](#)

SCHOOL CULTURE

A collaborative school culture was an important factor in building a sense of confidence and efficacy

- [Building a Mentoring Web via Multiple Models of Mentorship](#)
- [Mentoring for All](#)

NTIP Board Visits – Key Findings

The Teaching Policy and Standards Branch (TPSB) in collaboration with Regional Education Officers have been privileged to conduct 60 NTIP Board visits from 2012 – 2015 as part of the 5 year visit cycle.

At each visit focus group participants were asked what aspects of NTIP were most meaningful to their professional growth and how NTIP could be even more effectively implemented. Using “dotmocracy” participants identified the ideas that they felt had the greatest resonance with their lived experiences.

**HOW CAN NTIP BE EVEN MORE EFFECTIVELY IMPLEMENTED?
(Dotmocracy – Brainstorm / Prioritize / Action Plan)**

In a sense the dotmocracy results are like a mirror held up to each NTIP team. This mirror reflects both the strengths of the current program and the voices of new and experienced educators as they seek to personalize and construct an authentic and meaningful NTIP that enhances the learning and growth of all.

BUILD A MENTORING WEB

- Create a mentoring web with multiple models of mentorship both within and beyond the school

MENTOR OUR MENTORS

- Support mentors as they are critical to the success of NTIP



MORE JOINT RELEASE DAYS TO SUPPORT COLLABORATION

- Increase number of joint release days and allow them to be used with multiple mentors

PROVIDE CHOICE FROM AN AUTHENTIC LEARNING MENU

- Provide greater choice and voice in learning as it acknowledges the vast array of prior experiences many NTIP teachers bring and allows for differentiation of supports based on authentic learning needs

Learning About Mentorship and Growth – More Resources



NTIP Board Visits – Key Findings Glideshow



NTIP Longitudinal Research – Key Findings Glideshow

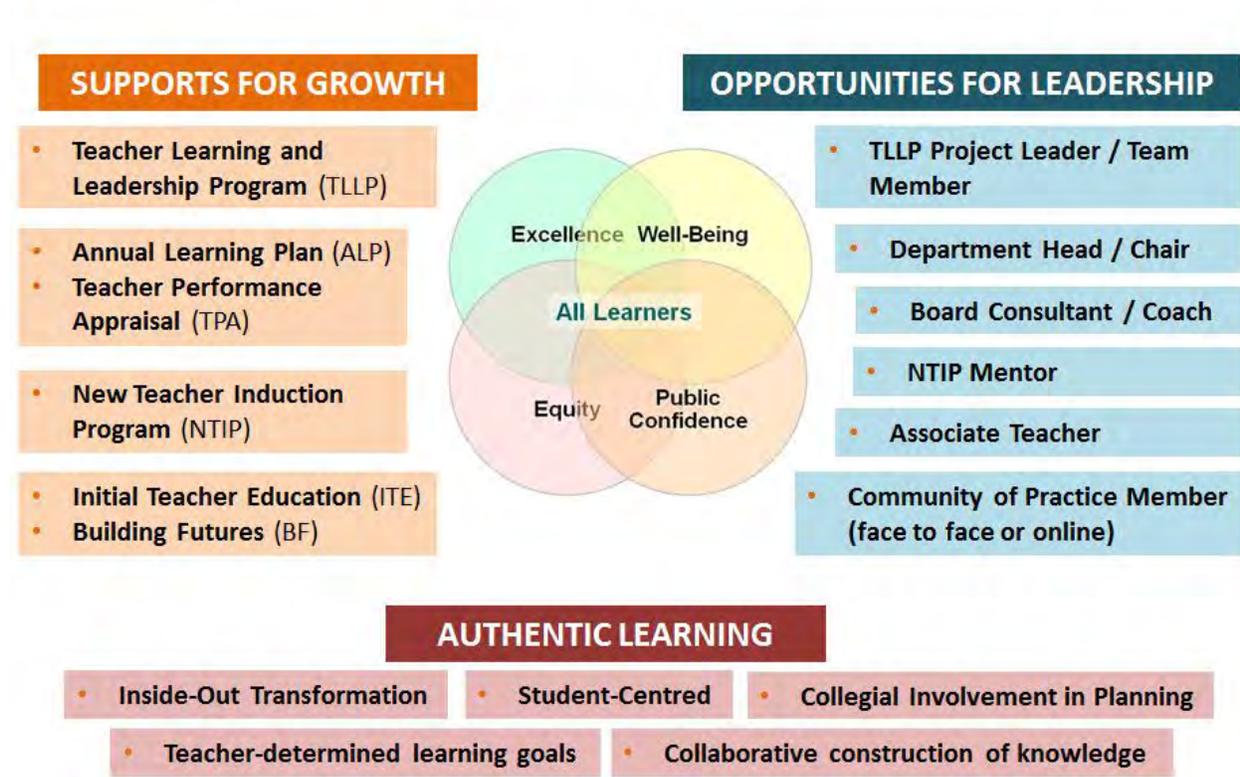


NTIP Learning Voicecasts

Continuing the Learning

Mentoring for All is the fourth in a series of ebooks to be published by the Teaching Policy and Standards Branch (TPSB). Each ebook is aligned to the Continuum of Teacher Development pictured below and is available for download at: <http://mentoringmoments.ning.com/group/ebooks>

Fostering Teacher Growth & Development



Mentoring Moments

Mentoring Moments is an online community of practice for educators across Ontario supporting teacher professional development (NTIP / TLLP / ALP & TPA). Join us to continue the learning at: <http://mentoringmoments.ning.com>

TeachOntario

In collaboration with OTF and our TPSB team here at the Ministry, TVO has created TeachOntario; an online platform to support sharing, collaboration and knowledge exchange amongst Ontario educators. We encourage you to share this resource in your district: <https://www.teachontario.ca>

**Teach
Ontario**