

The Mentoring Relationship

The quality of a mentoring relationship greatly determines the positive or negative feelings a beginning teacher develops toward his/her induction experiences. The best mentoring occurs when a symbiotic relationship incorporating trust, communication, and support can be built. Mentoring requires a high degree of interaction in the earliest stages of the relationship but grows toward self-sufficiency for the beginning teacher as s/he learns the habits and skills of effective classroom teaching. It is giving wings to a new teacher rather than chaining him/her to a relationship where the mentor is always in the forefront and the beginner is in his/her shadow. Gray (1985) presented the mentor/protégé relationship in 5 stages.



Level 1: M	At this level, the mentor (M) is in charge. The mentor initiates contact and begins creating the relationship. The mentor offers ways to support the protégé and establishes a structure and a timetable for work with him/her. The mentor displays enthusiasm and leads by example.
Level 2: Mp	At this stage, the protégé (p) becomes active in the relationship learning “the ropes” from the mentor. The mentor introduces the protégé to the school and staff and helps with procedural matters. At this stage the mentor observes, suggests improvements, checks for comprehension, and prepares the protégé to learn from others. The protégé takes an active role in learning and responding to the mentor.
Level 3: MP	At this stage equity and collegiality begin. The mentor (M) and protégé (P) dialogue, share, and plan together. Each offers suggestions. Here the mentor sets the tone and the protégé participates as a contributor. The protégé begins to learn and apply the reflective process to critique and improve his performance.
Level 4: mP	Here the protégé moves toward independence as the mentor (m) begins to delegate to the protégé (P). The mentor begins to separate from the protégé as the beginner “tries his wings” by experimenting with new ideas and methods. The protégé learns to turn to others as resources for help and support rather than for guidance. The mentor becomes a listener and supporter.
Level 5: P	The protégé establishes his independence. He/she moves from protégé to professional (P). He/she is able to be somewhat sufficient in self-evaluation. The professional promotes changes, self-educates and resolves problems independently. He/she is professional in dealing with the rigors of the daily school environment.

It is to the final stage, Professional, that the mentor should strive to move the protégé. The objective for the mentor is not to do the work for the beginner; rather, it is to give the beginner the support, tools, and guidance s/he needs to become sufficient in the school community. While the levels are well defined, there is not a specific timeline for achieving them. After a few weeks, an exceptional protégé may easily be at Level 4 while one who is less adept, may remain at Level 2 for several months. It is the mentor's responsibility to recognize the level of performance of his/her protégé, to know how to support the protégé at that level, and to help him/her advance to the next level.