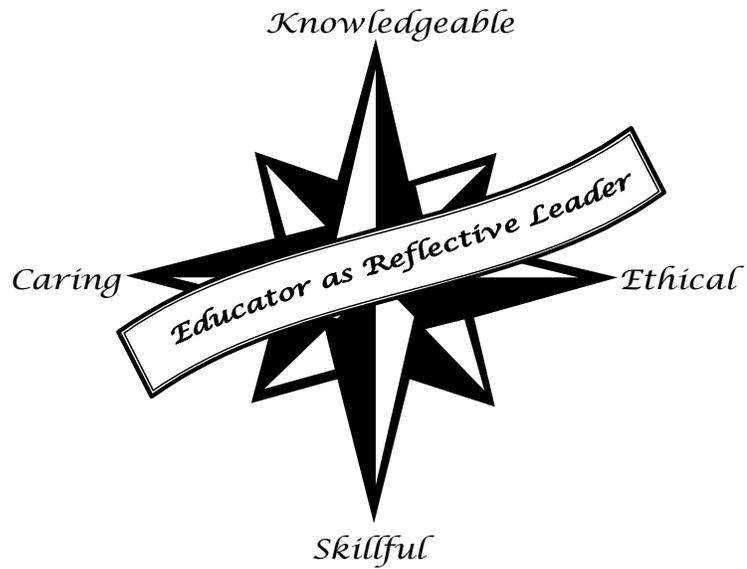




## EDUCATION UNIT



## MENTOR HANDBOOK

*This handbook is based on the work initiated by Dr. Shari Stokes.*

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## *Promising Practices for Mentoring*

### Overview

Teacher candidates in our teacher preparation programs are of all ages and have had a variety of experiences working with children. In order to assist them in meeting their needs, as a mentor it is helpful to understand what they bring to the Practicum/Student Teaching. Below is information that will outline some of the possibilities.

### The Nature of the Teacher Candidate in Practicum Experience

Just as the children and young adults in schools are unique, so, too, is each teacher candidate with whom you work. Past experience helps teacher candidates to gain confidence and understanding, but some may need tremendous support and guidance even though they have had previous experience with children or in schools.

The following are some generalizations about the various stages of teacher candidate development. We offer this as a guide for thinking about their particular needs.

### Teacher Candidate's Stages of Professional Development

***Beginning Stage: Developing Awareness/Gathering Information:*** Some teacher candidates in the teacher preparation program have had very little experience in teaching; in fact, they may have very little experience in working with children in any capacity, other than the previous pre-practicum experiences provided to them in their course of study. These candidates will need, and will be seeking, basic information about teaching and children. They may have difficulty applying what they have learned or are learning in their university classes. They will benefit from observing you and others modeling teaching as well as receiving direct feedback and suggestions on their own teaching.

***Intermediate Stage: Building Confidence and Competence:***

Teacher candidates who have had more experience working with children and young adults (perhaps, they are raising or have raised children of their own or have worked at camps, residential or recreational programs for years) will likely demonstrate more confidence and may be ready to attempt teaching with minimal support. While they are ready to try, they need support in analyzing their instruction after the lesson has taken place. These individuals will benefit from questions such as: "How did you think the lesson went along?" "What might you have done differently?"

***Advanced Stage: Enhancing Skills Already Acquired:***

Some teacher candidates may have extensive experience in schools already. Some have been instructional assistants or aides and are returning to university to become licensed teachers. If they feel competent and confident, they will benefit from analysis of their teaching. As a mentor, you can help these candidates identify areas that need enhancement and help them identify ways to improve their teaching. Teacher candidates at this level benefit from similar lines of questioning as those who are functioning at the intermediate stage.

Regardless of their stage of professional development, two guiding principles may help you in working with the teacher candidate assigned to you:

- All teacher candidates need to hear when they are doing well and what, specifically, is effective about their teaching.
- When aspects of their teaching need to be addressed, candidates need encouragement to reflect on their teaching, rather than being told what they are doing wrong. Opportunities to reflect will not only foster their skill refinement, but also build self-reliance.

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## *A Guide to Effective Mentoring*

The Education Unit at Fitchburg State University views all field experiences as an opportunity for growth and development. The Education faculty will work with you to ensure that the candidate has the appropriate support in this process. While it is not possible to summarize all the strategies that you will use in the process of mentoring the Fitchburg State University Education teacher candidate, it is hoped that these few pages will give you both a framework for your work and a basis for discussion with your teacher candidate.

### The Nature of the Mentoring Process

Mentoring is an *intentional* process. You do not become a mentor because someone gives you that name. Being a mentor is a matter of consciously taking on the responsibility of a protégé, (in this case, a teacher candidate), and effectively doing the job. Mentoring is a *supportive* process. The relationship between mentor and protégé must be one that is safe. Mentoring is also a *nurturing* process. It is not a matter of telling, directing; instead, it is a process that *fosters* the maturity of the teacher candidate.

If [the mentor] is indeed wise he does not bid you enter the house of his wisdom, but rather leads you to the threshold of your own mind.

Kahlil Gibran

While mentors do not tell or direct, they do share their wisdom--mentoring is an *insightful* process that increases the teacher candidate's perceptiveness about the teaching learning process.

### A Context for Mentoring

#### ***Mentor/Supervising Practitioner: Role and Responsibilities***

Supervising practitioners/mentors are asked to serve as positive role models and guides as teacher candidates meet individual goals. The following strategies will aid in this process:

1. Establish regular meetings each week to provide for opportunities during which the teacher candidate can reflect on practice, receive feedback and discuss progress and/or any concerns toward meeting the standards for licensure.
2. Provide access to the various resources and instructional materials within the classroom and school.
3. Provide information about individual children's learning style, interests, needs, and other special considerations through formal and informal records and discussions.
4. Assign activities and responsibilities that will enable the teacher candidate to ultimately assume full responsibility in the role of the general or of the special educator, e.g., staff meetings, grade level meetings, IEP meetings.
5. Inform the university supervisor if any problems arise with the teacher candidate or the mentoring process.
6. Discuss suggestions made to the teacher candidate by the university supervisor.
7. Provide insight into the teacher candidate's progress both to the candidate and to the university supervisor.

### ***University Supervisor: Role and Responsibilities***

The university supervisor serves as the liaison between the university and school personnel. The responsibilities of the university supervisor are to support, encourage and give feedback to teacher candidates as they develop their teaching skills and to facilitate the supervision process between the mentor and teacher candidate. Specific responsibilities of the university supervisor include:

1. For teacher candidates enrolled in Practicum/Student Teaching, convening the initial three-way meeting as well as the mid-point and final evaluation meetings to review the evaluation process and to discuss the teacher candidate's progress towards the licensure competencies.
2. Observing the teacher candidate and giving feedback on all visits to the candidate's site.
3. Supporting the candidate and the supervising practitioner/mentor by maintaining contact and being available to answer any questions or concerns.
4. Assisting the teacher candidate with problems the candidate has identified or with problems that have been identified by the mentor teacher.

The process of mentoring in teaching requires that the mentor be a skilled practitioner whose understanding of teacher candidate's' needs is broadly based.

### **Understanding and Applying Adult Learning Principles to the Mentoring Process**

In addition to understanding the particular needs of a teacher candidate, a mentor must also understand the principles of adult learning. Individual candidate's needs are best understood within the context of adult learning principles. There are many considerations for Adult Learning. [These considerations are adapted from the following sources: Lawler, P. (1991). *The keys to adult learning*. Philadelphia: Research for Better Schools; Vella, J. (1994). *Learning to listen, learning to teach*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.]

**Establish a Sound Relationship:** Adult Learning requires a sound relationship with a mentor. To effectively learn adults need to work within a sound relationship built on time, affirmation, mutual respect, engagement in significant work, responsiveness on the part of the mentor, and open dialogue about the teaching process.

**Ensure Safety:** The first principle is **safety**. To effectively learn, adults need to feel safe--in their learning relationships, in their environment, and in the learning process. As a mentor some ways that you might foster safety include:

- Be open.
- Create a comfortable working atmosphere--both personal and within the classroom.
- Have the teacher candidate use a journal for reflection, outlet.
- Establish control and then review rules and consequences with teacher candidate, children or young adults in the class.
- Model consistency and follow through.
- Establish a good dialogue--listen and be clear.
- Address issues immediately.
- Give encouraging comments often
- Provide essential information, e.g., school policies, medical information about particular children, fire drills.
- Have patience.

- Supply materials & work space.
- Have a sense of humor.
- Accept teacher candidate's ideas and individuality.
- Provide time to get to know you and what you expect.
- Prepare children or young adults for the newcomer.
- Model for the children or young adults your trust of the teacher candidate.
- Provide 1:1 time that is meaningful.
- Minimize unnecessary risks

**Establish Expectations:** The third principle--establish expectations--is a mentoring strategy that is essential in creating a safe relationship. Take the time to ask yourself: What are my expectations as a mentor in this relationship? Those expectations may change over time or may vary to some degree from one teacher candidate to another. Below is one set of expectations. You may find you agree with some or all of these, or you may find you would delete some or add others.

*Example of a Mentor's Expectations [Regional Laboratory for Educational Improvement of the Northeast and Islands, 1994. Adapted from Saphier and Gower, 1987.]*

*These are my expectations for our mentoring relationship. As your mentor:*

I will be available to you.

I will help, support, and encourage you in managing and mastering the following areas of schoolwork:

- quality and quantity of work;
- work habits and procedures;
- business and housekeeping routines;
- interpersonal behavior.

We will work together to solve problems regarding issues that are important to you and issues that are important to me for the development of your career in teaching.

We will treat each other with collegial respect, keeping our commitments to each other, for example, appointments, assignments, and agreed-upon expectations.

I will observe you teaching and provide you with objective data that will help inform your teaching practice.

Although I do not have "the answers," I will help you frame the questions that will lead you to your own answers and questions.

I will share with you and demonstrate what I have learned about teaching. I will treat everything that transpires in our mentoring relationship with confidentiality, within the reasonable bounds upon which we have agreed.

We will learn from and with each other.

**Assess Needs:** The fourth consideration is the assessment of, and thereby, an understanding of the Teacher Candidate's Needs. Regardless of previous experiences, teacher candidates are individuals. Each is unique in his level of development, needs and the pace at which she or he learns. As a mentor you will need to assess each teacher candidate's needs as she or he begins this important aspect of a teaching career, so that appropriate planning and support can be provided. This assessment can take place through ongoing dialogue with the teacher candidate. (Teacher candidates are encouraged to be candid about their needs.) Some other ideas for needs assessment include:

- Observations
- Conferencing
- Effective listening
- Written self-evaluation by teacher candidate.
- On-going, updated teacher candidate self-evaluation.
- Learning style inventory.
- Autobiography of teacher candidate as a learner--history, philosophy.
- Use of "Evaluation" portion of the lesson plan form or a separate evaluation sheet after lessons as ongoing needs assessment.
- Listening to a group of teacher candidates talking about their teaching experiences.

**Use dialogue rather than monologue when you converse:** Monologue, as compared to dialogue, is the traditional didactic pedagogy that occurs when a mentor tells what she knows, so that the learner will also know it. There is no reference to what the learner already knows, wants to know, or feels he needs to know. Dialogue, on the other hand means 'the word between us'. Teacher candidates have life experiences, which they bring to their teaching; enough experiences to be in dialogue with another adult, namely, their mentor. Moreover, teacher candidates will learn new knowledge, skills, and attitudes most effectively if they are able to relate what they are learning to these life experiences. Therefore, problem posing with opportunities for reflection are crucial aspects of effective learning experiences. Dialogue does *not* mean that the two adults--mentor and student-teacher--always agree. They do, however, listen to each other, respect, and affirm *each other* even when they cannot affirm the ideas of the other adult.

**Draw Motivation From Needs and Interests:** The teacher candidate has a particular interest in becoming a competent teacher. Therefore, motivation is usually high. (If it is not, there may be some real impediment, and this perception should be shared with the university supervisor as soon as possible.)

**Maintain an Orientation to that is Life Centered:** Teacher candidates have practical needs that are connected to the licensure process. The adult learner's need for immediacy of what is being learned is built into the nature of the field experience; therefore, supporting the teacher candidate in focusing on the goal of being an effective teacher is usually a straightforward process.

**Tap Experience as a rich Resource:** University students bring many life experiences to their fieldwork. As all adults do, teacher candidates filter things through their own experiences. As we said above, they benefit from talking about how they can relate their past experiences and their education to what they are learning in the school setting. Moreover, this dialogue fosters the connection of field experiences and course work, one of the important goals of the field-based experience.

**Actively Engage the Candidate in the Learning:** Action with opportunity for reflection is essential. Teacher candidates do not want to be passive observers. They need to be doing, feeling, perceiving if they are to learn. Once they have had a chance to experience their work as teachers, they need time and facilitation to reflect on what occurred.

**Address Self-direction as a Deep Need:** Teacher candidates appreciate the opportunity to make some decisions about their part in the classroom activities.

**Recognize that Learning Styles (and therefore, Teaching Styles) are Individual in Nature:** Acknowledgement of differing styles will provide support to the teacher candidate. Provide opportunities to discuss the teacher candidate's **learning style** and how his or her resulting **teaching style** can align with the learning styles of the children or young adults in the class. Discussions on these relationships are powerful builders of insight.

**Give Careful Consideration to the Nature and Timing of Your Feedback:** Competence can be readily threatened by perceived attacks: Because adults can hold high standards for themselves and can also be particularly self-critical, feedback that might seem minimal to a mentor or supervisor may be perceived by the teacher candidate as a major shortcoming in his or her teaching. Therefore, mentor communication skills, including body language, are very important in providing clear, specific information to the teacher candidate. Moreover, a primary need among adults is affirmation. Whether or not there are areas to refine, ***teacher candidates need to know what they are doing right.***

Of these principles for effective adult learning, when you enter a relationship as a mentor the four to address right away are:

- Establishing a sound relationship;
- Ensuring safety;
- Establishing expectations;
- Carrying out a needs assessment of the teacher candidate.

### **Progression of Teacher Candidate Teaching Responsibilities**

When teacher candidates first begin a field-based experience they need time to observe, to become acclimated, to learn about the students and the school culture, the schedule of the day, and the materials used in the class. While the amount of time needed for acculturation will vary from candidate to candidate the following schedule is an approximate structure to consider when supporting the candidate to take on greater and greater responsibility.

An eight-week student teaching placement might have a schedule that looks approximately like the following:

Week 1:	Observe and assist as needed; teach one or more lessons
Week 2:	Teach one specific subject area throughout the week
Week 3:	Add a subject area/class
Weeks 4:	Add a subject area/class
Weeks 5:	Add a subject area/class
Weeks 6 - 7:	Assume full responsibility for the role
Beyond:	Begin to return the teaching back to the mentor

A similar progression of responsibility would be appropriate in a 16 week, semester long experience.

### Mentoring Processes

As a mentor teacher you have a profound influence on the teacher candidate's professional development. You will assist the teacher candidate to master teaching competencies through modeling, direct assistance, structured observation and feedback, communicate effectively, and consultation with the university supervisor. Let us discuss each of these ways that you mentor a teacher candidate.

**Modeling:** As a mentor you provide a solid **role model** for professional and personal growth. You offer the teacher candidate a sense of what they are becoming. This role modeling includes more than skill as a demonstration teacher. It requires a developmental sense of teaching in which the maturity level of the teacher candidate is recognized and careful consideration is given to provide growth-producing activities within the context of adult learning principles. Being a mentor also requires you to demonstrate teaching strategies; provide realistic ways of solving problems; prescribe how to get things done within the culture and political climate of the school; exude energy, self-confidence, security, competence, and professionalism.

**Assisting Directly:** In addition to being a role model you will also **provide direct assistance**. Teacher candidates can be expected to experience some problems inherent in classroom management, instructional strategy development, curriculum building, and communication with the many adults with whom the teacher candidate is building relationships. As the mentoring teacher your experience and skill will be called upon for even the most experienced teacher candidate. While the teacher candidate will be enrolled in course work and will be meeting with a university supervisor to discuss all these issues, your knowledge and expertise is valuable for the teacher candidate. Your close observation and intervention will be profoundly important in the development of the professional teacher. *Some of the commonly experienced problems of the teacher candidates are:*

Time management	Classroom discipline	Motivation of students
Assessing student work	Communication with parents	Establishing boundaries
Organization of class work	Obtaining materials and supplies	
Taking a chance on new ideas	Fitting in with experienced staff	
Respecting confidentiality		

If the teacher candidate appears to be having difficulty organizing a lesson, one way that you can provide direct assistance is through suggesting the use of the following questions (Evertson & Weade, 1989) as a guide for the lesson planning process:

1. What is the "motivator" for the lesson?
2. What is the anticipatory set that is going to be created?
3. What will the advance organizer be?
4. What prior knowledge of the children is being activated and how will this be done to set the stage for the lesson?
5. What events will take place?
6. What are the academic expectations for the children's or young adults' participation in each event?
7. What resources (for example, prior learning experiences both inside and outside the classroom) will the children or young adults bring that can be used to help accomplish the task?
8. What sequence of events will help the children or young adults acquire, practice, and apply concepts?
9. What "knowledge" will the children or young adults be expected to demonstrate? What will "count" as appropriate knowledge?

10. What will be the social expectations for the children or young adults participation in each event?
11. How will groups (whole class, small group, pairs) be organized? How will expectations for participating vary within each group and across groups?
12. How will turn taking (volunteering by hand raising, oral responses, calling out) be organized?
13. How will the children or young adults be expected to demonstrate appropriate knowledge and procedures?
14. What procedures can be implemented that will help the children or young adults in doing the academic task?
15. What prior experiences with doing the lessons are shared by teacher and the children or young adults? Which of the children or young adults do not share these experiences? How will their lack of experience be addressed?
16. Will there be a tangible product? What form will it take?
17. How will the products be collected and checked off?
18. How are academic and social expectations related? Do social expectations facilitate and support expectations for academic participation?

Remember, if the teacher candidate is experiencing difficulty, it is not unusual. It is your responsibility and that of the university supervisor to help the teacher candidate address these problem areas through coaching, modeling and direct feedback through the use of effective communication.

### **Providing Feedback**

Mentoring a teacher candidate requires the use of **structured observation and feedback**. Usually the most effective means of structuring an observation is a three-step process. In the first step you and the candidate prepare for your observation of the teacher candidate's teaching. During that conference some useful questions (Haley, 1992) to ask include:

- What is the objective of the lesson or the experiment within the lesson?
- What has led up to/will follow this lesson?
- What is the sequence of events within the lesson/experiment?
- What behaviors do you hope to hear/see?
- What do you hope that the students will be able to do following the lesson?
- What teaching strategies/behaviors will you use or experiment with?
- How are the teaching strategies, desired behaviors and outcomes related?
- Do you have any particular concerns regarding any of the above?
- Do you have any additional information you would like to share with me?
- What kind of data would you like me to collect during the observation?
- In what form should I collect the data?

*When you have completed the observation*, use the data you collected to provide a basis for the teacher candidate to reflect on his or her teaching. To promote such reflection you might use any of the post observation questions (Saphier, 1992) below. The general pattern is: Give *objective* data from your observation, then, ask for the teacher candidate's feelings, interpretation, or rationale.

1. Questions that clarify tone or feelings associated with a particular situation:  
"I noticed that you started talking much more quickly when you described what you wanted the children or young adults to be concentrating on in their groups. What were you feeling at that point?"
2. Questions that clarify the reasons and intended consequences of observed actions, events, or statements.  
"I noticed you stopped John in the middle of his answer and went to Peggy. What were you thinking when you did that?"
3. Questions that ask about the reasons for patterns or incidents of the same nature.  
"I noticed each time you went back to the circle, you always knelt down in the same spot. Was there a particular reason for that?"
4. Questions that connect an observation with a past conversation or event.  
"Was Susie one of the kids you were talking about that you thought might not participate? She talked four times. What do you think might have been going on for her?"

*If you were discussing a lesson that you have not observed*, the following questions would facilitate your dialogue with the teacher candidate:

- How did you feel/think about the lesson or the experience? What contributed to those feelings?
- What do you recall of children's behaviors?
- What do you recall of your own behaviors and strategies during the lesson?
- How did your strategies and behaviors compare with what was planned?
- To what extent do you feel the objective of the lesson or experiment was achieved?
- What might account for the outcomes achieved?
- What have you learned from this lesson/experience?
- If you were to do it again, what would be the 'keepers' and what might you do differently?
- What do you think a follow-up lesson would look like?

*As the conference comes to a close*, invite the teacher candidate to reflect with you on the observation and conference process and on how you two are working together. The following two questions will facilitate the process:

- What are you finding useful?
- What might you change next time or ask me, as the mentor, to do differently?

**Giving Feedback Constructively:** When you are involved in the process of providing the teacher candidate with constructive feedback, these guidelines will help ensure that your feedback is constructive. [Adapted, in part, from materials for which permission was given to copy: Kit Marshall & Associates. (1986). *Effective teaching facilitator's handbook*. Cameron Park, CA: Professional Educator's Press.] :

- 1) **Take time to provide feedback.** Establish times to meet on a regular basis.
- 2) **Only give feedback on a behavior or aspect of an individual's teaching that is changeable.**
- 3) **Find a specific focus for your feedback. Provide the amount of information the receiver can use, rather than the amount you would like to give.** Do not overload. Limit the discussion to 1-3 items. Do not save up feedback until you have several behaviors you want to discuss. When we overload a person with information, we reduce the chance that he will be able to use the feedback effectively. We are satisfying a need in ourselves when we give more than can be used.
- 4) **Talk about the present.** Do not bring up past times when the behavior occurred.
- 5) **Focus feedback on behavior rather than the person.** It is important to refer to what a person *does*. When providing feedback statements, focus on adverbs (which relate to actions) rather than adjectives (which relate to qualities) when referring to a person. Thus, we might say a person "moved about the room frequently", rather than that the person is a "good monitor of the classroom."
- 6) **Focus feedback on observations rather than inferences.** Observations refer to what we see or hear in the behavior of the person or the students while inferences refer to our interpretations of the behavior (e.g., "the students were interested" or "you seemed relaxed"). We may occasionally share inferences or conclusions, but it is important to *always identify them as inferences or conclusions, that is*, distinguish between observations and inferences, and make the distinction *verbally* clear. Present the data on which the inferences are based before stating the inference. Whenever you state inferences, do so tentatively--as hypotheses. If you include inferences, **own your inferences.** Use "I messages" throughout your communication. , e.g., "I sense...", "I see...", "It seems to me...", "I have the impression...", "I feel..." ("You messages" on the other hand, frequently sound accusatory and, therefore, evoke defensiveness.)
- 7) **Focus feedback on description rather than judgment.** Description represents a process for reporting what occurred, while judgment refers to an evaluation in terms of good or bad, right or wrong, effective or not effective. It is important to realize that judgments arise out of our personal frame of reference or values, whereas description represents neutral reporting. Neutral data is most useful. When you identify an issue, try not to be judgmental. Avoid evaluating the behavior by using such words as 'misguided', 'unproductive'. Be specific. Let the facts speak for themselves. Stay with what is observed.
- 8) **Focus feedback on cause and effect.** When we can draw the relationship between teacher behavior and student behavior (e.g., "When you walked around the room, the students in the back returned to their work"), our colleague can decide if what occurred was what was intended.
- 9) **Focus feedback on descriptions of behavior in terms of "more or less" rather than in terms of "either-or".** All behavior falls somewhere within a continuum. Stressing quantity which is objective and measurable is much more useful, rather than talking in terms of quality which implies judgment. We can avoid thinking in categories such as "good" or "bad" when we provide feedback that uses terms such as "more" or "less".
- 10) **Focus feedback on a specific situation, preferably on the "here and now".** Feedback is most meaningful if it is given as soon as appropriate after the observation has been completed.
- 11) **Focus feedback on the sharing of ideas and information rather than giving advice.** When we share ideas and information, we free the receiver to decide how to use the ideas and information. When we advise, we are not only taking away our peer's freedom to determine an appropriate course of action but reducing his or her responsibility for his or her own behavior.

**12) Focus feedback on exploration of alternatives rather than answers or solutions.** When we focus on a wide variety of means for attaining a particular goal, we avoid premature decisions, answers and solutions. The value of peer support increases as we develop our skills in searching for and weighing many possible alternatives. We prevent limiting our options when we avoid quick answers.

**13) Focus feedback on the value it has for the receiver, not on the value it has for the giver.** Feedback is an offer, not an imposition. When we offer to provide feedback and support, we are not seeking our own release but are willing to accept that the help may not be acted upon.

**14) When discussing a problem or issue, do not look for a solution; look for possibilities.** Explore alternatives. Share ideas. Ask open-ended questions. Remember to use responsive listening when the teacher candidate speaks.

**15) Be positive and supportive.** “You will find a way when you are ready.” “Things take time.” “You know what you need. Feel free to ask.”

**16) Acknowledge difficulties** and the possibility of failure in some instances. “Sometimes what we try runs into difficulty.” “Sometimes we’re not able to make the change we want right away.”

**17) Set new goals jointly.**

**18) Follow-up to assess progress and support effort.**

- **Developing Closure:** When you develop closure you support the teacher candidate’s move to the next level of communication: for example, from stating a problem to beginning to brainstorm solutions. There are different kinds of closure needed in your communication:
  - **Moving to close off one segment of the dialogue:** An example of communicating this would be: “Is there anything else that you want to add before we....?”
  - **Shifting from one aspect of the dialogue to another:** An example would be: “Do you want to explore some ideas about...?” or, “Shall we come back to this topic when we both have given some thought to a plan or do you want to do that now?”

## Communicating Effectively

Whether you are being a role model, providing direct assistance or carrying out structured observations with feedback, effective communication skills are essential to your successful work with a teacher candidate. Your skill in communicating can support the teacher candidate in becoming a reflective practitioner who is looking to improve teaching based on knowledge and research, someone who is open to change and to trying new practices, a professional who is aware that change takes time. Invaluable communication skills are: Listening responsively, advocating responsibly, fostering reflection, giving feedback constructively, and developing closure. Let us look at each of these skills.

- **Listening Responsively:** Communicating a desire to understand someone. This includes:
  - Acknowledging:** Expressing understanding and empathy by reflecting the content or the content and the feeling of the message.
  - Non-verbal forms:**
    - Purposeful eye contact.
    - Attentive body language.
    - Nodding.
  - Verbal forms:**
    - Brief utterances such as “hmm”.
    - Restatement of message in listener’s own words. Can be:
      - Paraphrase of content and/or feelings; e.g., “You’ve been thinking...” “You seem worried about...”
      - Brief paraphrase of message after a short while; e.g., “You’re considering switching books.”

You may wonder how you can listen responsively if, in fact, you do not understand what the teacher candidate is saying. When that occurs, you can use clarifying.

-**Clarifying:** When you clarify, you express a desire to understand, yet possible confusion about the content or feelings of the teacher preparation teacher candidate’s message.

**Non-verbal form:**

Attentive body language, yet quizzical look.

**Verbal forms:**

A request for clarification: “Could you say that another way for me?”

An invitation to check your understanding; e.g., “Let me see if I am understanding you correctly. You seem to be saying.... Am I correct?”

A statement of confusion; e.g., “I don’t think I understand. Are you saying ....or....?”

Probing with questions to get the candidate’s intended meaning: “Do you mean all of them?” It is important to be careful that the question is objective and not meant to question the thinking behind the statement and that when you ask it, your tone of voice sounds neutral.

-**Summarizing/Organizing** the message after listening for a longer time period:

**Summarization of content to illuminate themes:**

-“In other words...”

-“So, there seem to be two issues here....and....”

**Organization of content:** “On the one hand you have said....; on the other hand, you seem to have also said....”

Another way to listen responsively while also fostering reflection is to extend what the candidate has been saying.

**-Extending/Shifting Conceptual Focus/Synthesizing:**

--**Shifting focus up to more abstract level or down to a more concrete level of logic.**  
To shift up insert a value, belief, assumption, etc. "An important goal for you would be to...." To shift down insert an example, strategy, choice, action, etc. "So you are saying that one choice for you might be...."

--**Taking message to deeper level of thinking;** e.g., "You are saying that you don't want to teach math this way, yet every strategy you describe seems to fit this model. I sense some conflict for you."

--**Giving information or providing resources in response to the message content;** e.g., "You're wondering how actively engage students in grasping set theory. I can give you the names of two teachers who have designed such learning experiences, if that would be helpful."

- **Advocating Responsibly:** When you want to express your perspective about an aspect of teaching such as when you are providing direct assistance, your ability to communicate effectively with the teacher candidate will be enhanced if you state your ideas in a way that promotes understanding. There are two aspects of effectively expressing your ideas:

- **Expressing your thinking clearly:**

- ◇ When you make a statement describe the reasoning behind your ideas; e.g., "Here are the reasons for my saying this."
- ◇ State the data on which your thinking is based; e.g., "I am basing this on the following data...."
- ◇ Explain the context within which the ideas would occur; e.g., "I think these children would benefit...."
- ◇ Give examples to illuminate your idea(s); e.g., "Here's how we could carry this out...."

- **Testing your ideas:**

- ◇ Invite the teacher candidate to explore your ideas; e.g., "What do you think about this idea?"
- ◇ Explore your ideas for weak spots; e.g., "Do you see any problems? Anything missing?"

Listening responsively to the university student's ideas and stating you ideas responsibly are two essential communication skills for mentoring. A third is developing closure.

- **Fostering Reflection:** As we have said, good mentors support teacher candidates in thinking through the teaching process, rather than telling the teacher candidates what to do. Asking questions that are fairly open ended can foster candidate reflection. Some questions (Caney, 1991) that promote reflection are:

- When is the concern most pronounced?
- Why do you think that happened?
- What evidence do you have about that?
- What have you tried before?
- Why do think that worked/didn't work?
- What do you want to happen?
- What if it happened this way?
- How might you do that?
- How else might you approach that?

### Resolving Conflicts

Occasionally conflicts may arise. These may occur between the candidate and the supervising practitioner or the supervising practitioner and the university supervisor or the candidate and the university supervisor. While conflicts are natural and normal in any relationship, people often shy away from resolving them. Below are some suggestions for a means through which a mentor could help resolve an issue. [Adapted from: Covey, S. (1989). *The 7 habits of highly effective people*. NY: Simon and Shuster; Johnson, D. & Johnson, F. (1991). *Joining together. Group theory and group skills* (4th ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall; Johnson, D, and Johnson, R. (1995). *Reducing school violence through conflict resolution*. Alexandria VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.]

**1) Speak up.** Tell the other person that you feel/think there is a problem you would like to resolve. State your perspective and invite the other person to do the same.

**2) Jointly define the conflict:**

<b>When you are the one defining the conflict, advocate. Seek to be understood</b>	<b>When you are the one listening, listen responsively. Seek to understand</b>
-Chose something that <i>can</i> be changed	-Do not interrupt.
-Stick to one item.	-If you do not understand the other person's perspective or the information offered, ask clarifying questions.
-Be as specific and precise as possible.	-When the other person has stated his perspective, summarize his point; then check with him to be sure you are accurate.
-Define the conflict <i>as a problem to be solved</i> , not a confrontation to be won.	-Indicate respect for the other person's views, whether or not you agree with her.
-Talk about behavior, not people; do not label, insult; judge or accuse.	-If appropriate, provide additional information to help clarify a misunderstanding.
-Distinguish observation from inference; minimize inferences.	If the other person uses labels, ask for the behavior(s) that the person saw or heard; if the other person uses inferences, ask for the specifics that lead to the inferences.
-Take ownership for your perspective--use "I" messages, not "you" messages.	If the other person uses -"you" messages, use paraphrasing to turn the statements into that person's "I" messages; e.g., "You find it hard when I...."

**3) Encourage each person involved to communicate what each of you wants and each of you feels/thinks as well as the reasons for your positions *throughout* the resolution process.** This helps to maintain the healthy exchange of ideas, particularly since ideas often change throughout the process.

**4) Communicate *cooperative* intentions--as often as seems needed throughout the exchange.** Joining *with* another person to jointly resolve a conflict establishes a shared goal whereas trying to win or trying to prove you are/were right establishes a competition in which one has to lose. If anyone has to lose, both the relationship and the job to be done lose.

**5) Take the opponent's perspective periodically throughout the discussion.**

**6) Brainstorm options that are beneficial to all parties.**

**7) Reach a wise agreement that is good for *all* people involved.** Include:

How each will act differently;

How cooperation will be restored if someone 'slips' back to the previous behavior;

Provision for a future checkpoint to see how each person feels the agreement is working.

If the conflict cannot be satisfactorily resolved between a candidate and a mentor/supervising practitioner, then the university supervisor should be called right away and asked to help resolve the issue.

If the three people are not able to address the conflict, then the department chair (or in the case of secondary programs, the program chair) should be called and asked to assist. If there is an unresolved conflict between the mentor and the university supervisor, then the dept chair or program chair should be asked for assistance. If none of these steps leads to resolution, the Dean of Education should be asked to assist.

### **Practices Beyond Communication**

There are additional mentor practices that will help support the teacher candidate:

- Believe the candidate is capable and demonstrate that belief.
- Value the candidate as an individual.
- Share ideas rather than giving advice.
- Be honest and objective.
- Honor confidentiality.
- Be authentic about who you are and what you value.

#### ***When you have limited time***

- Set parameters and expectations.
- Focus on a few items for your discussion.
- Provide closure.

#### **Consultation with the University Supervisor**

Do not over extend yourself. You will serve yourself and the teacher candidate better if you do not become overly responsible for the teacher candidate. Remember, the university supervisor is your support as well. If concerns arise that need attention, make use of the supervisor by asking questions during or between visits.

#### **A Final Word**

The mentoring process and the licensure process are serious professional responsibilities. The Fitchburg State University faculty members in the teacher preparation programs respect your part in this work. If at any time you need assistance or have questions, please call us at 978-665-3239.

***Thank you!***



## The Conceptual Framework of our Teacher Preparation Programs

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