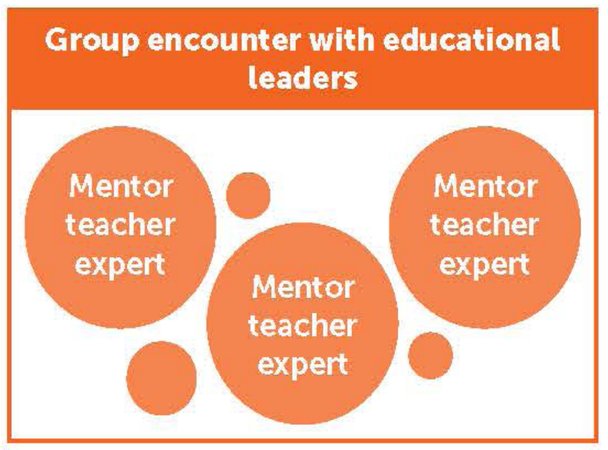
TO BECOME A MENTOR: EMPOWERING THE NEXT GENERATION OF EDUCATORS

Mentorship plays a pivotal role in developing the careers of newly qualified teachers. To clarify what mentoring is:

A person-to-person experience that is ...

- a confidential, non-judgmental process which ...
- ensures support and guidance on all aspects of an effective teaching practice ...
- based on national, provincial, district and school needs but focused on the needs of the novice teacher.



Seasoned teachers who move into a mentoring function not only support their mentees but also contribute to the overall improvement of teaching practices and ultimately benefit learning outcomes.

This relationship should not be top-down guidance and authority from mentors to novices, but a more holistic approach fostering a reciprocal, emotionally supportive partnership that values mutual growth, shared learning, and long-term professional development. Mentoring functions are carried out within the context of an ongoing, caring relationship between the mentor and the novice teacher and should follow a proper induction pathway:

1. PLANNING

Clarify roles and responsibilities; selecting and pairing mentors and mentees

2. PREPARING

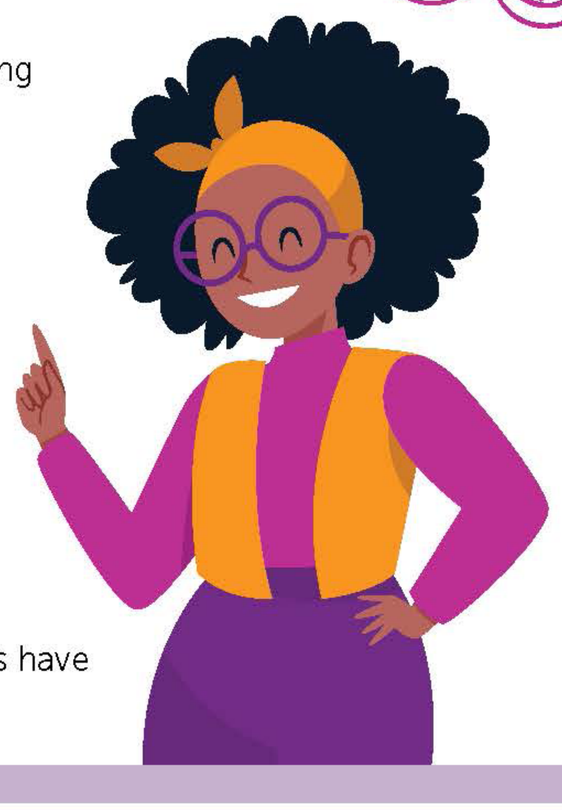
Orientation of novice teacher, observe classroom practice, provide feedback

3. APPLYING

Provide support and remove barriers

4. REFLECTING

Synthesise, summarise, and articulate what's been learned and how new ideas have been put into practice.



PRACTICAL MENTORING ADVICE FOR TEACHERS

1. Build trust and open communication

- ✔ Establish a comfortable, welcoming environment where mentees can freely discuss challenges.
- ✔ Ensure confidentiality to gain trust and promote open communication.

2. Set clear expectations and goals

- ✔ Define objectives collaboratively to guide the mentoring relationship.
- ✔ Establish a plan with short- and long-term goals that are aligned with school priorities.

3. Engage in regular and meaningful interactions

- ✔ Regularly schedule check-ins to review progress and address concerns.
- ✔ Be available for informal support when required.

4. Model effective teaching practices

- ✔ Invite mentees to observe your classes and debrief afterwards.
- ✔ Co-teach at times to provide live modelling and coaching.

5. Foster reflective practice

- ✔ Facilitate self-reflection by using guided open questions and discussions.
- ✔ Assist mentees to review successes and challenges for ongoing development.

6. Offer constructive and balanced feedback

- ✔ Provide concrete, actionable advice taking into account strengths and weaknesses.
- ✔ Use a balance of praise and critique to boost confidence.

7. Facilitating professional development and networking

- ✔ Identify workshops, webinars or courses matching developmental requirements.
- ✔ Introduce them to professional networks and learning communities inside school to build collegiality.

8. Acknowledge and celebrate successes

- ✔ Acknowledge milestones and progress to build morale.
- ✔ Celebrate teaching successes, no matter how small.

By planning the induction journey and adopting these practices, mentors are able to increase teacher retention by contributing positively to their mentees' professional journey. Good mentoring enhances teaching practice, creates collegiality, and promotes a supportive school culture where everyone thrives; novice teachers then enjoy a sense of belonging and well-being and become professional teachers.

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