
Foreword

Veteran teachers and administrators who read *The Active Mentor* will reflect on their first years of teaching and wish they could have had Ron Nash as their mentor. Ron's love of teaching, understanding of human nature, and ability to know what beginning teachers need to be successful make him the quintessential mentor and an authentic author. Novice teachers may not be able to experience Ron's personal mentoring expertise in their own classrooms, but they can experience his written wisdom and practical advice by reading this book. A few overlooked details could cause first-year teachers anxiety and confusion the first week of school. Ron Nash weaves storytelling and realistic dialogue to set the stage for what mentors should model for new teachers to help them gain the confidence they need to start the school year. He describes the importance of creating the positive classroom climate that fosters cooperation, respect, and active engagement that are critical for success in teaching.

I was amazed at the number of vivid memories I recalled about my first year of teaching after Ron described his own early teaching experiences. It certainly takes more than knowledge of the subject matter to succeed in education. Often, our success depends on the "kindness of strangers" embodied by both informal and formal mentors who shape our "style" of teaching and allow us to survive that critical first year of teaching. The first year often determines whether or not we succeed in our chosen profession or if we become the "one out of three teachers" who end up leaving the profession within the first few years. Recently, I met with two teacher friends who became my informal mentors when I began my teaching career at Stranahan High School in Broward County, Florida, in 1970. We arrived at school at 10 a.m. each day and planned until noon. Since we were overcrowded and on split sessions, we new teachers were the "second shift" who taught for five straight hours from noon to five. The school was not air-conditioned, so we would turn off the noisy

oscillating fans when we lectured and then turn them on again when the students did the work. Anyone who has visited South Florida in September has experienced the excessive heat and humidity. Imagine being jammed in a classroom with 35 sweaty ninth graders studying participles, gerunds, and infinitives. Our school did not have a formal mentor program, but Diane DeFelice and Karen Owen taught similar classes and the two-hour planning time we shared each morning was invaluable to me. They gave me copies of worksheets, lesson plans, and tests; and most important, they shared organization and behavior management techniques. Wearing my long hair in a neat bun made me look older than my 22 years, but I always felt green and those students could sense it. If it were not for Diane and Karen's informal mentoring, I truly believe I would have quit teaching during my first year.

The Active Mentor should be required reading for all administrators, mentors, coaches, teachers, and professional developers. Ron's advice and strategies are both practical and profound. Even if schools cannot afford a formal teacher induction program and have no funds to pay and train mentors, this book could be used in a study group or as professional reading to begin the conversations before school starts. Ron's emphasis on proactive preparation for the first week of school and on interactive instruction throughout the year is artfully delivered through vignettes. The realistic interactions and dialogue between the novice teacher, the mentors, and the administrators in the stories help identify how schools should establish a mentoring program that incorporates so many of the practical and useful tactics described in the book. In today's economic environment, the importance of a quality education delivered by highly effective teachers has never been more important. It is imperative that we attract, train, and retain effective teachers. Ron Nash offers an inexpensive and practical program for mentors and novice teachers that will ensure success for teachers and ultimately for the students they teach. *The Active Mentor* could serve as a textbook for preservice, graduate, and inservice training as well as a handbook for beginning teachers, veteran teachers, mentors, administrators, and professional developers whose common goal is to improve teaching and learning. If teachers are not fortunate enough to have Ron Nash as their personal mentor, they can at least have this book to guide and support them, as they become successful educators in the 21st century.

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