

Praise for *The First Years Matter: Becoming an Effective Teacher*

“Carol Pelletier Radford is the consummate professional educator. From the outset of my association with her, she has been a conscientious and dedicated administrator, a mentor, and a generous and supportive colleague. Readily able to foster constructive connections between course material and her own exemplary classroom experience, she has consistently provided innovative direction and support to classroom teachers by way of the books she has authored. Generations of educators have and will continue to use them.”

Dr. Radford’s commitment to teaching in urban populations has distinguished her contribution to the education profession. I continue to be impressed by her command of relevant research and effective instructional techniques. Her skill is facilitating communication. She effectively addresses the interface between practice and education with the primary objective of identifying the relevant issues in support of human well-being. Dr. Radford is truly a reflective practitioner, and I always appreciate opportunities to learn from her as she continues to clarify the relevant issues in educational practice by way of her latest publications.”

—Cameron Marzelli, Adjunct Faculty at the Graduate School of Arts and Social Sciences,
Lesley University; Founder, stillwoman.com: Using the Expressive Arts on the Resilience Path

“What amazes me about the Mentoring in Action and The First Years Matter books is that every aspect of the teaching field is addressed.”

—Kerri Schoonover, History Teacher
Atlantis Charter High School

“I love the idea of having mentors and mentees work alongside each other with Mentoring in Action and The First Years Matter, sharing their thoughts about challenges and successes each month and opening up a reflective dialogue.”

—Karen Mayotte, Grade 2 Classroom Teacher / Co-coordinator Mentor Program
Nashoba Regional School District

“The two texts, Mentoring in Action and The First Years Matter, are companion texts that give both participants a guide for discussions, suggestions for activities, and a place to track reflections. They also allow for targeted differentiation.”

—Maureen Perkins, Reading Specialist
William A. Berkowitz School

“Integrating teacher evaluation standards fits naturally into the reflection prompts and activities in The First Years Matter and Mentoring in Action texts.”

—Caitlin Corrieri, Mentor Coordinator
Belmont Public Schools

“I will most definitely use the Mentoring in Action text paired with The First Years Matter text as a month-by-month curriculum to focus mentoring conversations.”

—Kristen Daly, First Grade Teacher
Kenneth Coombs School

“With the Mentoring in Action and The First Years Matter books, training of mentors is consistent and comprehensive. The First Years Matter is structured enough to provide a clear path toward helping a new hire to achieve independence.”

—John Radosta, Mentoring Coordinator
Milton High School

“Mentoring in Action and The First Years Matter are so important to guide discussions between mentor and mentee and are also helpful when differentiating for a new teacher’s needs.”

—Elyse Hager, Kindergarten Teacher
Nathaniel Morton Elementary School

“Our district will use the Mentoring in Action and The First Years Matter texts to directly align with teacher evaluation standards and create a common language among our mentors and novice teachers.”

—Bethany Botelho, Mentor Teacher Facilitator
Old Colony Regional HS

“The Mentoring in Action and The First Years Matter books are critical resources that each mentor will need to provide support for becoming a qualified mentor.”

—Angela Downing, 1st Grade Teacher
Franklin Elementary School

“The Mentoring in Action and The First Years Matter books have given me so much knowledge and understanding of the mentoring process that I feel more than confident in my ability to direct a mentoring program.”

—Adam Crawford Crombie, Co-Director of Mentoring
Winthrop Middle School

The First Years Matter: Becoming an Effective Teacher

A Mentoring Guide for
Novice Teachers

Second Edition

Carol Pelletier Radford

Foreword by Peter DeWitt

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Senior Associate Editor: Desirée A. Bartlett
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Note from the Publisher: The author has provided video and web content throughout the book which is available to you through QR Codes. To read a QR Code, you must have a smartphone or tablet with a camera. We recommend that you download a QR Code reader app that is made specifically for your phone or tablet brand.

FOREWORD

Do you remember when you first became a teacher? I will never forget my first full year with “*my own*” class. As a novice teacher in a city school district, I couldn’t wait to see my students make their way into the classroom. I had these pre-conceived notions that I could close the door and just be with the students. I felt that by the time they were done learning from me that they would be reading *Moby Dick*. Perhaps even more than reading a great novel, they would be able to dig deeper like in the movie *Dead Poet’s Society*, one by one students would stand up on their tables reciting one of the great works that they would have read with me over a period of months. Sure, I was teaching first grade, but they would certainly show amazing growth in their learning. After all, I was a novice teacher with a great deal of freshly learned instructional knowledge under my belt.

The excitement to know that all of my hard work in college was paying off and I was now a real life teacher was sometimes overwhelming. And that was before the year ever began. All the planning that we do as novice teachers, although important, may have to be thrown away as soon as the students enter the classroom because they bring experiences we can’t always plan for. Like those of you who taught for the first time, I soon realized I was working without a net. I was no longer a student teacher or a teaching assistant. I was responsible for the 30 first graders that couldn’t sit still for two minutes in front of me. That was where the fun and the fear all began.

There were nights I laid awake worried about what they went home to, and had countless students, like all of you, who hugged me at the end of the day and didn’t want to go home. After my first year was completed, I remember standing in the classroom all alone wondering what happened. I was supposed to be the one teaching them, but I learned as much from them as they did from me.

Over the years I learned that teaching was not an individual sport, but one that took collaboration. Whether it was working as a grade level team, or with the special education teacher because I taught inclusionary education, I soon realized that teaching was a lifelong learning experience, which made me love it even more. And the learning didn’t stop there. I learned from the parents who came to the parent-teacher conferences with baggage from when they were students, and I learned from the parents who were a bit older and wiser than me, who wanted nothing more than the best experience for their children.

I always remember my first years with great fondness, and those years had an enormous impact on my first years as a school leader. The first year teachers that we are fortunate enough to hire are the ones that we have to devote extra energy to get to know. Many of us sit on interview committees, find the best candidates, hire them, and then walk away. We say we will check in with them. We say we will give them some of our resources and an undivided attention where we sit down with them to go through those resources that will be most helpful. And then life happens, and each of those days that we promised to make an effort get filled with our own distraction and focuses.

And that is why I love *The First Years Matter: Becoming An Effective Teacher*. Our first year of teaching is really complicated, but it seems to be even more complicated these days in comparison to when I was a novice teacher, and Radford understands that. With accountability, mandates, district initiatives, and testing, teaching is not for the faint-hearted, and Carol Radford understands that as well.

Carol Radford brilliantly lays out all of those things we need to know and how to get through them. In leadership circles we talk a lot about “*We don’t know what we don’t know*” and our “*Blind spots*.” What is great about this book is that Carol clues us all into what we should know, and how to get through it, so that we are less likely to have as many blind spots. She lays out a perfectly executed action plan which includes creating a community of learners, the mentoring process, and understanding our impact as teachers. These are all issues that we need to

know about, not just in our first years, but every year we teach and lead. Radford closes out each section with her Plan, Connect and Act, which helps novice teachers, and their leaders, prepare for each day.

Our first years as teachers were exciting, difficult and scary. I would never take my struggles as a novice teacher away, but I certainly wish I had this book to help me better prepare for them.

Peter M. DeWitt, EdD
Corwin Author/Consultant
Finding Common Ground Blog (Education Week).

PREFACE

This second edition of *The First Years Matter* brings a new title that includes an important message. By adding an *s* to years, we are noting that the first *years* matter to novice teachers. Teaching is an ongoing learning process; you can't learn how to teach in one year! As a beginner, it is important to realize that the first *few years* are developmental. Throughout the book, we will be referring to teachers in their second year and beyond as "2+ year teachers." Novice teachers in their second, third, and even fourth years of teaching have shared that using the book for another year is useful because they now know what to expect and this book reminds them of effective teaching practices. So don't try to do all the activities this year. Save the book and use it next year too!

Your mentor is using the *Mentoring in Action* book that is aligned to this one so that you have a common language for your mentoring meetings. By having your own book, you will be empowered to look ahead at topics for all the months, skip around and read what is most meaningful to you, and bring your own questions to meetings. Watch Video 0.1, *Using the First Year Matters: Being Mentored in Action*, to hear novice teachers talk about having their own book. Go to the Companion Website or scan the QR code on a mobile device.

The second edition of *The First Years Matter* introduces new tools and topics to expand your strategies for becoming an effective teacher. The new cover image of the tree branches reaching out illustrates your growth over time. A Novice Teacher Affirmation on every month's chapter title page places an emphasis on mindfulness and intentional teaching. This edition also encourages you to align your mentoring conversations with your own state or district teacher evaluation standards. Listening to students is integrated throughout this book to emphasize the importance of their voices in your development as an effective teacher. So whether you are stepping into the classroom for the first time or continuing your mentoring experience as a 2+ year teacher, I hope you will find this resource practical and inspiring.

The second edition includes these features:

- Twelve month curriculum with the addition of July for reflecting and planning
- Cues for 2+ year teachers to *go further* into a strategy or reflection
- Parts I and II revised and updated to include novice teacher leadership ideas
- Chapter overviews with updated InTASC standards and video introductions
- PLAN pages now updated to include strategies for collaborating with your mentor using observation
- Updated CONNECT pages that include Hot Topics and ways to include Student Voices
- ACT pages that list key questions and a First ACT page aligned to standards
- The REFLECT section with new Mindful Teaching Dilemmas
- SET GOALS pages with a focus on your social and emotional development
- A QR Code within book chapters to access videos on mobile devices
- The Companion Website, which includes the videos and digital forms indicated in the chapters
- A Novice Teacher Journal to record your thoughts and ideas throughout the year also available on the Companion Website

VIDEO 0.1



Using the
First Year
Matters: Being
Mentored in
Action

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A profound and emotional shift came to me on the day I interviewed a high school student named Jennifer Rossado. She was a student in Jim Strader's classroom who had improved her math grade from an F to an A. Jim Strader was a graduate of a teacher preparation program that I led at the university, and he was also mentoring a novice teacher. I wanted to know about this success story, so I could pass his secret on to other beginning teachers.

Jennifer agreed to be recorded with only me in the room with the videographer. She was visibly nervous and not forthcoming in the beginning of the interview. She shared she was doing this only because Mr. Strader was the best teacher she had ever had and he made a difference in her life.

I thank Jennifer for her honesty and courage to speak up that day and be recorded knowing this would be shared with others. She spoke from her heart with her knees shaking and her voice cracking. She told me that Mr. Strader didn't judge her or give up on her. Jim Strader taught Jennifer how to do math, so she could feel successful in school and have a future.

Matt Conley and I sat in the basement of an old high school listening to this vulnerable student share what it meant to have a teacher who could help her achieve in school. Thank you, Matt, for editing a two-hour session to a three-minute clip that captured Jennifer's message. Video 0.2, *Teachers Make a Difference*, is the very first video I ever produced. Jennifer's courage to speak up inspired me to continue to use video as a way to communicate to teachers in my courses.

Shonna McGrail Ryan and Adam Pelletier continued producing and editing the videos that you will see referenced in this book. Shonna's ability to design courses that integrated video allowed me to transition to teaching online. Adam's tireless editing and ability to capture the true message in a video demonstrates his creative talent. Thank you both for being on this journey with me. You make this book come alive with the voices of students, teachers, mentors, and coaches.

To learn the secret of Jim Strader's success with Jennifer, watch Matt Conley's video, *Teachers Make a Difference* on the companion website or by using the quick response (QR) code. All other videos produced by Shonna and Adam are available on MentoringinAction.com.

VIDEO 0.2



**Teachers Make
a Difference**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Carol Pelletier Radford is an education consultant recently transitioning from the position of Project SUCCESS Program Director, a Massachusetts statewide hybrid mentor “train the trainer” leadership program. She received her EdD from Harvard University where she focused her studies on teacher leadership, preparing cooperating teachers, and professional development. She has served in higher education for 20 years working as an administrator, a licensing officer, and alternative certification program director.

In more than 20 years as a public school teacher, she has received numerous teacher leadership awards, among them the prestigious Christa McAuliffe Fellowship sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education.

She is the author of *Mentoring in Action: Guiding, Sharing, and Reflecting With Novice Teachers*; *The First Years Matter: Becoming an Effective Teacher*; *Strategies for Successful Student Teaching 3rd edition*; *The First Year Matters: Being Mentored in Action*; *Mentoring in Action: A Month-By-Month Curriculum*; *Touch the Future TEACH!*; and *Techniques and Strategies for Coaching Student Teachers 2nd edition*.

Carol is actively engaged in using video to teach and communicate with mentors and novice teachers. Her online graduate courses include *Becoming a Qualified Mentor*, *Maintaining Your Balance—Novice Teacher Development After Year 1*, and *Mindful Leadership in Action—Supporting Principals to Lead Induction Programs*. She is a passionate advocate for teacher leadership and the inclusion of student voices in classroom practice. Her current focus is integrating mindfulness practices into her courses and presentations. You can find her resources and books on MentoringinAction.com.

*This book is dedicated to Jim Strader, a generous human being
and skillful math teacher, who passed too soon.*

INTRODUCTION

WELCOME TO *THE FIRST YEARS MATTER!*

If you are reading this, you are a first-year teacher beginning your career or a 2+ year teacher in a follow-up mentoring program to further develop your teaching skills. Let me begin by saying, thank you for choosing to be a teacher. You have made a commitment to students and their success in school.

As a teacher, you are responsible for your students' instruction as well as their social and emotional development. Whether you are teaching a content area or a special subject you must engage students. You are not just teaching a subject or a skill; you are interacting with human beings to help them learn and be successful in life—a big job! By putting students at the heart of your teaching you are intentionally creating a community of learners where everyone is respected. In this book, you will be encouraged to use mindfulness as a way to stay focused on your goal of being an effective teacher.

Mindfulness *noun* **mind·ful·ness** \ 'mīn(d)-fəl-nəs \

1. the quality or state of being mindful
2. the practice of maintaining a nonjudgmental state of heightened or complete awareness of one's thoughts, emotions, or experiences on a moment-to-moment basis; *also*: such a state of awareness

By being mindful and paying attention to what you are doing, you can purposefully apply what you are learning with your mentor, so you can help your students succeed. An important key to mindfulness is nonjudgment. Don't blame yourself for not knowing what to do. You are “learning” how to teach and choosing what works best for you in your classroom. To make those choices, you need to pay attention to your emotions and thoughts, so you can put your best ideas forward.

The goal of this book is to offer you a monthly structure, many strategies to try in your classroom, and end-of-month reflections to deepen your practice. You will be learning so many things at once, and it may get overwhelming at times. This book, along with the Novice Teacher Journal on the companion website, provides you with a place to mindfully reflect on what you are doing so you can help your students succeed in school.

Are You Prepared to Teach?

Some teachers enter teaching through traditional pathways in formal teacher preparation programs and others enroll in an alternative fast-track route. Think about the route you took and if it prepared you for the challenges of the classroom. Ask your mentor to differentiate your mentoring based on your needs. If you didn't complete a formal student teaching program, you can read this entire book and see what the year is all about. Then, as you review month-by-month, you won't be surprised by the expectations teaching brings.

I have a passion for this work. I have been a teacher and a teacher educator for more than forty years. During my visits to schools, my talks with novice teachers led me to create this second edition. My intention is to offer you an updated resource that supports you in being the most effective teacher you can be.

Enjoy your year!

Carol Pelletier Radford, EdD
MentoringinAction.com



PART I

BEGINNING YOUR JOURNEY INTO TEACHING



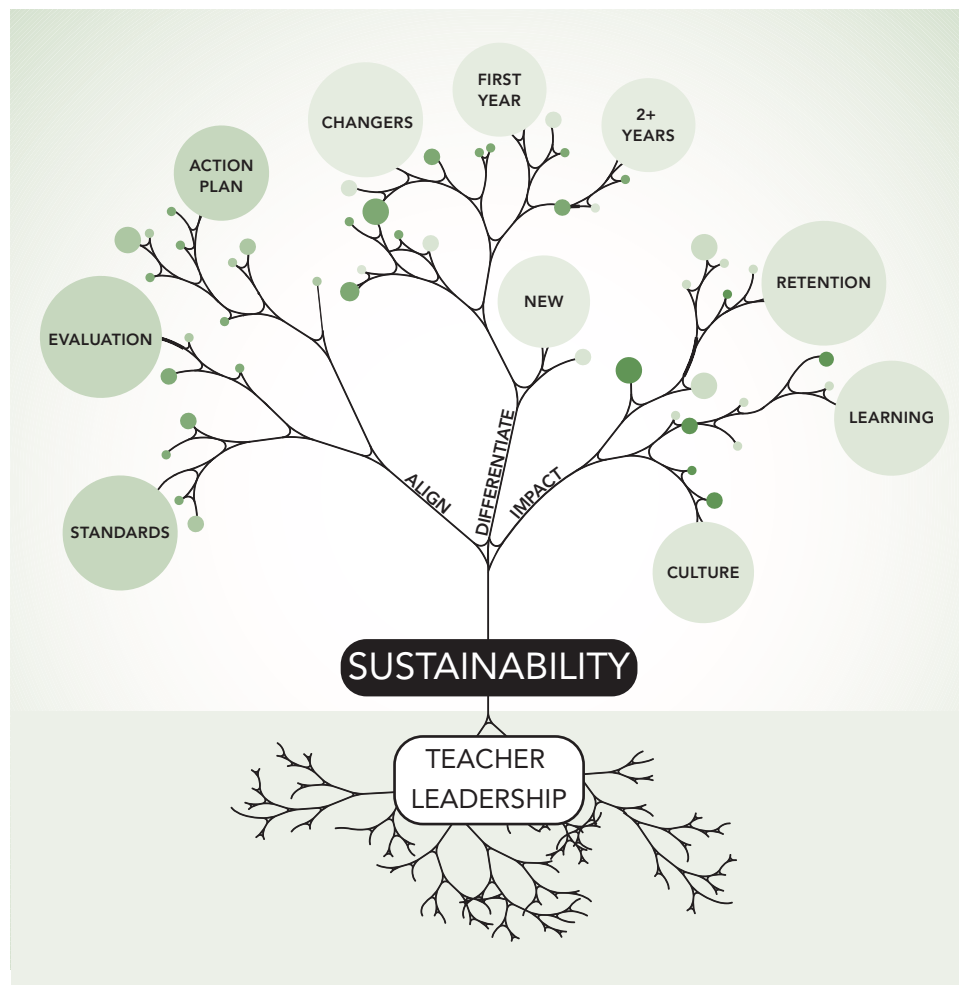
The Purpose of Induction and Mentoring

Mentoring is required in most states and districts to support the induction of novice teachers into the teaching profession. These programs vary, and funding is often inconsistent, so you need to find out if you are part of a formal induction program. You also need to know if your induction program has specific requirements related to your state teaching license. Ask your mentor or district administrator what you must do to meet those requirements.

If you are reading this book, you have been assigned a mentor who will guide you through your first year of teaching; or perhaps you have completed your induction year with a mentor, and you want to learn more about being an effective teacher. Your state may encourage mentoring beyond year one, and this book and the Novice Teacher Journal can provide you with a framework for meeting that requirement. Being a 2+ year teacher gives you the advantage of knowing what that first year is all about. Now you can really focus on teaching skills. In either case, it is important to understand the purposes of induction and mentoring.

The tree in Figure 1 is a visual image illustrating three purposes for mentoring. The three branches highlight topics that are important to retaining novice teachers like you in a teaching position. The roots of the mentoring and induction program are the teacher leaders in the district who serve as mentors for novice teachers like you.

Figure 1 Mentoring Program Sustainability Tree



These teachers, in most cases, volunteer their time and expertise to guide you in learning how to teach and how to systematically reflect on your teaching practices.

Sustainable Mentoring

Align Mentoring Conversations to Standards

The first branch of the sustainability tree is to align your conversations and reflections to standards, teacher evaluation, and a district action plan. The Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) published Model Core Teaching Standards to serve as a national model. Refer to Figure 2 to review these ten standards and use them as a reference to measure your teaching skills and disposition for teaching. Each chapter will review the standards that relate to the topic featured that month.

You will be assessed and observed by your principal or department chair some time this year to determine your effectiveness in the classroom and whether you will be rehired. Review the school evaluation rubric and standards in your district to understand the criteria on which you will be measured. Some novice teachers have shared with me, “I don’t have time

Figure 2 InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards

Standard	Description
1	Learner Development The teacher understands how learners grow and develop, recognizing that patterns of learning and development vary individually within and across the cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, and physical areas, and designs and implements developmentally appropriate and challenging learning experiences.
2	Learning Differences The teacher uses understanding of individual differences and diverse cultures and communities to ensure inclusive learning environments that enable each learner to meet high standards.
3	Learning Environments The teacher works with others to create environments that support individual and collaborative learning, and that encourage positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self motivation.
4	Content Knowledge The teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline(s) he or she teaches and creates learning experiences that make these aspects of the discipline accessible and meaningful for learners to ensure mastery of the content.
5	Application of Content The teacher understands how to connect concepts and use differing perspectives to engage learners in critical thinking, creativity, and collaborative problem solving related to authentic local and global issues.
6	Assessment The teacher understands and uses multiple methods of assessment to engage learners in their own growth, to monitor learner progress, and to guide the teacher's and learner's decision making.
7	Planning for Instruction The teacher plans instruction that supports every student in meeting rigorous learning goals by drawing upon knowledge of content areas, curriculum, cross-disciplinary skills, and pedagogy, as well as knowledge of learners and the community context.
8	Instructional Strategies The teacher understands and uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage learners to develop deep understanding of content areas and their connections, and to build skills to apply knowledge in meaningful ways.
9	Professional Learning and Ethical Practice The teacher engages in ongoing professional learning and uses evidence to continually evaluate his/her practice, particularly the effects of his/her choices and actions on others (learners, families, other professionals, and the community), and adapts practice to meet the needs of each learner.
10	Leadership and Collaboration The teacher seeks appropriate leadership roles and opportunities to take responsibility for student learning, to collaborate with learners, families, colleagues, other school professionals, and community members to ensure learner growth, and to advance the profession.

Developed by CCSSO's Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) April 2011

for mentoring because I have to focus on my teacher evaluation!” Mentoring is not an “add on” conversation. It should *be* the conversation that helps you to succeed on your teacher evaluation and license requirements.

See Figure 3 for a sample of how you can align this book to your state evaluation standards. By talking about these standards in The First ACT section each month, you will learn what they mean, and they will become second nature to you. Understanding and applying the evaluation standards in your district is important to your rehiring. Take the time to color-code this book so that you know which standards you are talking about or reading about.

Figure 3 Evaluation Alignment Tool

Directions: Each state or district has criteria for teacher evaluation. Align this book with your district evaluation process by comparing your evaluation criteria and standards with the ACTs listed each month.

Step 1. Find the rubric or district evaluation criteria headings that will be used to assess your development as a teacher. For example: Here are four standards used in one state that are used in district teacher evaluations.

1. Curriculum Planning and Assessment—This standard includes indicators such as subject matter knowledge; standards-based lessons and units, using a variety of assessments, modifications and adjustments to lessons as needed; analysis and conclusions; as well as sharing assessment results with parents and students.
2. Teaching All Students—This standard includes student engagement, quality of effort and work, diverse needs of students being met, collaborative and safe learning environment, respect for differences, as well as clear, high expectations for all students.
3. Family and Community Engagement—This standard includes a process for communicating with families, as well as culturally proficient communication options for parents and guardians.
4. Professional Culture—This standard includes reflective practice, professional learning and growth, professional collaboration with colleagues, and reliability and responsibility as a teacher.

As you read the indicators, you get a sense of what that standard means. As you read the ACTs in the Table of Contents, you can actually match each ACT topic to a standard.

Step 2: Select a color for each standard your district uses. In this sample, we use four colors, one for each standard. Pink for Curriculum, blue for Teaching all Students, green for Family and Community Engagement, and yellow for Professional Culture. You need to be familiar with the indicators listed under each standard. For example, “reflection” is listed under Professional Culture in this state so anything with “reflection” would be color-coded yellow. These colors are often included as a package for highlighters. You can also use colored dots to place on the pages instead of the highlighter.

Step 3: Review the topics listed for each chapter and scan the ACTs for each month to make a decision about which standard relates most closely to this topic. Highlight the ACT on the page in the book so you can see which standard it relates to when you are having a mentoring conversation. A sample using these four standards, titled *Aligning Standards to Mentoring in Action*, is available on the companion website. This will give you an idea of how easy this is to do! It proves to be a very important alignment as you learn how to become an effective teacher.

Your district leaders and your mentor are responsible for aligning the program goals with a district induction plan. All the novice teachers entering your school or district should be working with a common language for teaching. Your mentor may be on the District Action Plan committee, and in the future you may consider contributing to the ideas to ensure the plan meets the needs of novice teachers.



Differentiate Mentoring to Meet Your Needs

Career changers, new to district hires, 2+ year teachers, and first time in the classroom teachers have different needs. You can customize your mentoring conversations by sharing your needs with your mentor or by simply using the pages in this book as you need them. Skim the entire book and tag the pages that are most useful. Even though the book is organized by month, you don't have to do this book in order. Mindfully select the monthly ACTivities (ACTs) list that will move your teaching skills forward. If your district offers a 2+ mentoring program, you can revisit the ACT pages that you completed last year and acknowledge your continued growth over time. Date your pages, refer back to them, and use them as evidence for teacher evaluation.

Measure the Impact of Induction

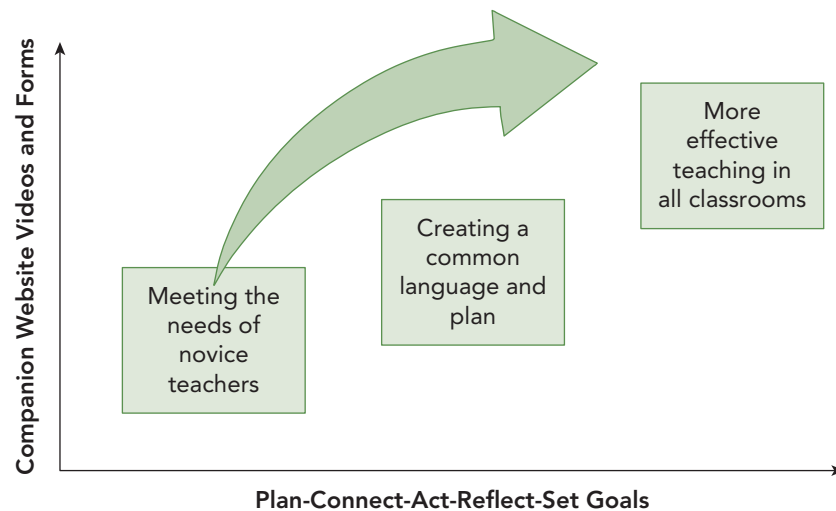
The third branch of the tree highlights three areas that illustrate the possible impact of mentoring. School culture can be impacted when a community of teacher learners is created to share and support each other. Your mentor is part of this community, and you are invited to fully participate in this community with her. Students, families, and community leaders are part of your community of learners, and how you interact with them impacts the culture of the school. The success of a school culture is often measured in the retention rate of the novice teachers. How many novice teachers stay at your school? If teachers are choosing not to come back the next year or are leaving before the end of the school year, there is usually a problem. Do you know what the school culture for novice teachers is at your school? Ultimately, the greatest impact for mentoring is that the students in your classroom are successful. You are the reason there is a mentoring program! The goal is to retain you and have you be the most effective teacher you can be, so your students can thrive in your classroom and in school. Sustaining all three branches of this tree is a goal for successful induction and mentoring programs.

What Is Mentoring in Action?

Your mentor's book is titled *Mentoring in Action* because as a mentor he is "in action" when he is mentoring you. Most mentors are teaching full-time or on a reduced teaching load if there are resources in your district to provide release time for mentors. This also means that you are "being mentored in action" because you are learning to teach while you are in the act of teaching. This works because you can apply what you are learning immediately and change your practice. Your book, along with your mentor's book, provides a road map for your conversations so that you can stay focused on teaching practices that relate to the standards.

As shown in Figure 4, the goal is to create a common language with these two resources, so together you can help students succeed in the classroom. By using the companion website with the videos and forms, you can expand your thinking and integrate more resources into your teaching. The Plan–Connect–Act–Reflect–Set Goals format in both books provides a format for each chapter that is easy to follow. This format will complement your busy teaching day and allow you both to focus.

Figure 4 Mentoring in Action



Building a Relationship With Your Mentor

Research shows that the most important relationship for novice teachers is the mentor. If you are fortunate enough to have an experienced teacher assigned to you, take advantage of all she has to offer. Experience brings wisdom, and you can benefit from this. The sink or swim method of inducting a novice teacher is not helpful. Yes, you do need to learn things on your own and try and fail to test your methods, but you don't need to do that all the time. Mentors are assigned to support and guide.

Your mentor is taking on this role as an extra duty because she wants to support beginning teachers to be successful. She has opened her heart to you and is serving the district and you in this role. Get to know your mentor by completing the Relationship Profile in Figure 5 with her. As you compare and share your answers to the questions, you will learn about each other. Respect each other's perspectives. You don't have to be the same teacher as your mentor. You are a different teacher, and your job is to be the best version of you, not a clone of your mentor. See Figure 5. Relationship Profile.

One of the most important ways to build a relationship is to listen. Your mentor will provide you with feedback, offer you suggestions, and discuss important issues with you. Being open to fully listening will enable you to get the most out of this experience. This doesn't mean you have to do everything your mentor suggests. It means you respectfully listen, ask questions, and integrate what works for you in your classroom. This is a learning opportunity for you.

Find out who will be evaluating you this year. Agree that whatever you share with your mentor will not be repeated to another colleague or the person who is evaluating you. Your mentor must be a confidential colleague for you to feel safe.

Dedicate yourself to reflecting on your practice and being guided by your mentor. If you do not have an assigned mentor, or if you are a 2+ year teacher, read this book and self-mentor so you can be the best teacher you can be. Watch the videos, write in your journal, and try the ACTs in your classroom. Take your role seriously and recognize the important influence you are for your students.

Figure 5 Relationship Profile

The Relationship Profile: A Process for the Mentor and Novice Teacher

Directions: Use this template as a guide to learn about each other. Feel free to add your own columns to the table. What would you like to know about your mentor? A digital copy of this form is on the companion website.

Topics	Philosophy of Teaching	Career Stage and Age	Teaching and Learning Styles	Personality and Life Goals
Questions	<i>Why did we choose teaching?</i>	<i>How do our ages and teaching experience compare?</i>	<i>How do we teach and how do we like to learn? How do we like feedback?</i>	<i>How do we interact with others?</i>
Novice Teacher				
Mentor				
Similarities and Differences— What Shows Up?				
Acknowledging diverse perspectives and respecting these differences publicly promotes a trusting relationship. This is one way to build a relationship with your mentor.				



Figure 6 Are You Listening?

Directions: Ask yourself, “Am I really listening, or am I thinking about what I want to say next?” You need to be an active listener who can hear what your mentor is saying without judging it. Being open to suggestions and changes that you may need to make is not always easy. These statements reflect some barriers to actively listening. Read each statement and rate yourself. Are you listening?

What do you do?	Always Sometimes Never!
Do you assume what the speaker is going to say before she finishes her statement?	
Do you finish other people’s sentences?	
Are you easily distracted (by phone, e-mail, someone walking by) when in a conversation?	
Do you argue or try to strongly persuade someone to do it your way?	
Would you say you like to control the conversation?	
Do you accept feedback easily?	
Are you open to suggestions?	
Do you ask people questions?	
Do you multitask in meetings or during conversations?	
Do you put your phone on silent when you are in a meeting?	
Are you writing your shopping list in your head (or for real on paper) while listening?	



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Your mentor will empower you to share your best practices to help you emerge as a novice teacher leader who will stay in the district. Don't worry about having the *perfect mentor* this year. Learn from the mentor that is assigned to you and ask questions. Don't get too focused on your personalities and social connections. Your role is to be engaged in the process, so you can discover ways to better teach your students. Listen and learn.

Social and Emotional Learning. Teaching is emotionally draining at times, and because we are all humans with lives outside of school, you will have personal issues arise during the school year. You always should let your mentor know if there is a stressful situation going on in your life. You don't have to share the details, just that there is some personal challenge you are facing. Your mentor may feel compelled to provide advice and share her own personal stories. It is best not to engage in a focus on your personal life. Keep your mentoring conversations on student learning. It may be very difficult for you, but the best advice you can get is to leave your personal issues at the door.

Developing your own social and emotional learning *is* something you can talk about with your mentor. This means that you will learn how to minimize your anxiety and promote your own well-being and health. Take some time to watch Video 1.1, *Managing Your Stress to Promote Well-Being* and Video 1.2, *Managing Your Stress: Take a Break*, available on the companion website. You may consider watching these videos with your mentor and having a mentoring conversation about this topic. Your goal is to teach your students and stay healthy and focused on the development of their social and emotional needs. You may find these videos give you some ideas to use with your students too.

The Board of Mentors process can also assist you in reflecting on who can help you with any social and emotional issues. Moving to a new town, having a parent pass away, and just getting your first full-time job are all emotional issues that could influence the way you teach students. Your mentor cannot meet all of these needs for you. His role is to guide you to proficiency on the teaching standards. Yes, you may "connect" with your mentor, but it isn't fair to have him take on all of these social and emotional needs that you may face. That is why this process will enlighten you to discover who in your life can help you. The more people sitting on your board of mentors, the more help you have to navigate your year of teaching. Use the Board of Mentors process shown in Figure 7 to find out who is sitting at your table. A digital version is available on the companion website.

Use a mindfulness stance when you are assessing your social and emotional development. Be purposeful when you complete the Are You Listening? assessment and the Board of Mentors processes. Bring the intention of nonjudgment to yourself and others to maintain a healthy disposition toward your teaching practice. This year is about practice not being perfect. Being in the moment, aware of your emotions and feelings, will give you strength to do what is right for you. Use these tools to give you a knowledge base for developing your own social and emotional skills. Instead of discussing your *stories about your challenges* use your time to discuss the strategies available for promoting healthy reactions to any life situation.

Group Mentoring and Novice Teacher Leadership. Group mentoring is a valuable way to connect with other novice teachers in your school or district who are in their first year or 2+ years. The Group Mentoring Agenda in Figure 8 is one way to organize these meetings. Mentors often lead these meetings, but you may consider coleading if you are a 2+ year teacher who is ready for a leadership role. Sharing best practices is a great way to let everyone at the meeting talk and share. The mentor doesn't always have to even attend every meeting. She can just help you get started. An interactive portable document format (PDF) titled "Group Mentoring" is available on the companion website. This resource includes videos and examples of agendas for two types of mentoring groups. The Problems to Possibilities video is led by a mentor, and the Sharing Best Practices video is led by a novice teacher.

VIDEO 1.1



Managing Your
Stress to Promote
Well-Being

VIDEO 1.2



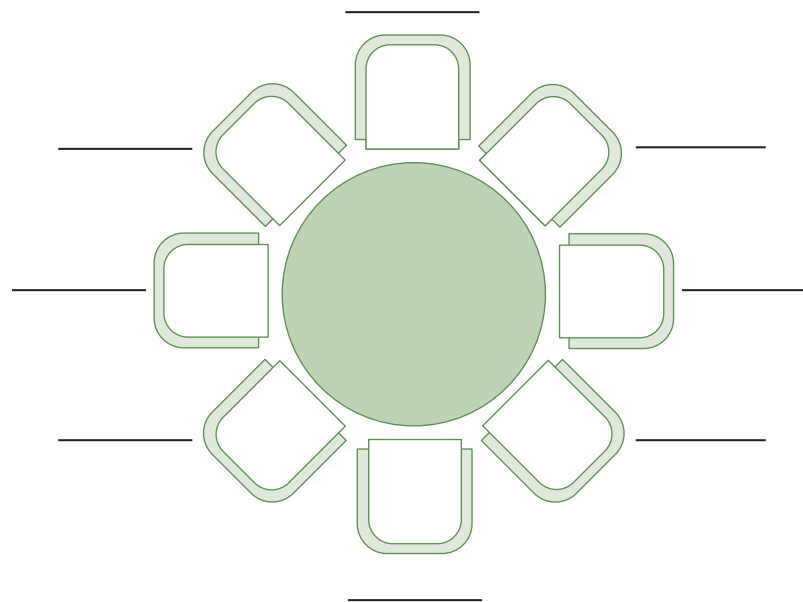
Managing Your
Stress: Take a Break

Figure 7 Board of Mentors Process

Directions: Use this tool in discovering who is in your support system. Your mentor is only one person and cannot meet all the social and emotional needs you may have this year. A digital version of this form is available on the companion website.

Print your name in one of the chairs at the table. Notice that YOU are the leader of your Board of Directors. There is a blank line near every chair, and the line is where you will print the "role" the person who is sitting in that chair plays in your life. Your role is to reflect on your practice and make appropriate changes as well as to acknowledge your successes. For example, your line would say reflective practitioner because your role is to reflect on your teaching practices. Your mentor's name is on a chair next to you, and that role would be mentor. Another person's role may be "best friend" or "financial advice." Everyone sitting at your table has a role, and their name is listed in the chair.

In a conversation with your mentor, or in your own personal reflection, discover the names of the people in your life who support you in different ways. For example, if you are moving to a new apartment, your best friend might be your mentor. We all have mentors who help us with finances, social networking, spiritual support, and educational decisions. Your role in this process is to list the people in your life and what role they serve. This will allow you to see that your mentor is not your entire support system, just one of many on your Board of Mentors. You are the head of the Board and make the final decisions as to who will provide you with the support you need to be successful.



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Figure 8 The Group Mentoring Agenda

Directions: As a novice teacher, you may find you want and need to talk with other beginners. Watch the video *Sharing Best Practices: Emerging Teacher Leaders*, available on the companion website, to see a novice leading a group of novice teachers in sharing ideas that relate to teaching standards.

Tips for a successful group mentoring session! Find a comfortable space and put a sign on the door that says Group Mentoring Meeting in session—Do not disturb! Invite the novices to bring snacks and drinks to share. Host the first meeting in your classroom to model a meeting. Rotate meetings to other teachers' classrooms each month. Share your classroom and why you set it up the way you have it. Ask the novices to bring their *The First Years Matter* books to the meeting. Some novice teachers like to meet before school and call the meeting the breakfast club, or after school for coffee. A meeting with three or four people is a great way to start.

Sample Agenda—30 Minutes

Welcome and introductions: Novice teacher leader shares her classroom. You take a few minutes to show something in the room that you are proud of that is working well. Review *The First Years Matter* book and see if they have any questions from the PLAN section that need to be addressed this month.

Take some time to be quiet: Select a prompt from the REFLECT page this month and ask everyone to write a response. Report on the responses and discuss the issues that come up.

Share a best practice with the group: Ask everyone to share a best practice they are using in their classroom.

Mindful teaching dilemmas: (optional) Each month there is a dilemma presented in the REFLECT section of the chapter. You may consider taking some time if you have a longer meeting scheduled to explore this dilemma together using the Mindful Journaling process.

Problems to possibilities: Novice teachers may bring up challenges and problems they are facing in this meeting. Explain that this is a sharing meeting and you will bring the issue to your mentor who will advise you about how this can be resolved. It is important as the leader to stop gossip in its tracks and not use this time as a complaint session. It is easy to piggyback on problem issues; and then soon the meeting turns to a grip session about what is not working. Take the high road and keep on track with sharing ideas.

Wrapping up the discussion: If everyone doesn't share this time, then begin the meeting with that teacher next time. Take a moment to connect whatever you talked about to the teaching standards.

Closing and acknowledgment: Thank everyone for coming and end the meeting on time.



Watch the novice teacher lead the *Sharing Best Practices* meeting video and see if this is something you might like to do in the future. Sharing ideas and solving common teaching problems is effective and practical. Novice teachers don't even have to be at the same grade level or in the same content area to learn from each other. It is also fun to socialize a bit and share survival stories. Your mentor is a wonderful support system, but it is empowering to expand your board of mentors to include a novice teacher support group!

Purposeful Mentoring Conversations

Novice teachers often ask, "What are we supposed to talk about when we meet?" This book can be used for conversation starters with your mentor. If your mentor is using the *Mentoring in Action* book, he may guide the conversations to topics that are most relevant to your school or district goals. But you can also read the chapters ahead of time and come prepared to a mentoring meeting to discuss a topic that is of particular interest to you. The ACTs in each chapter provide you with many options for conversations. Use the book as a resource from which you can pick and choose the topics and pages that would be the meaningful conversations based on your needs. The questions in the PLAN section of each chapter also offer you options for conversations based on your questions.

Purposeful mentoring conversations are those that are planned and that forward teaching skills and strategies for the classroom. By reflecting on what is important and what is the next step to improve your practice, you can minimize the overwhelming details of day-to-day teaching. The First ACT in each chapter is a place for you to align your goals to the standards. This is where you will make that important connection to how you will be assessed in your district. This book will provide you with the tools and the structure. It is your role to make your mentoring conversations meaningful and customized to address your particular need or focus.

Documenting and Sharing Your Teaching. School districts assess and evaluate the success of a teacher in a variety of ways. All districts will have standards and expectations for proficiency, and these must be discussed in your mentoring conversations. Sometimes we assume novice teachers understand evaluation and standards. Clarify any questions you have now about what is expected for your district or state license.

Align the book to your state or district standards as soon as possible so that you and your mentor can discuss how the ACT topics relate to the required standards. Simply by color-coding the book to your standards, you will create a visual connection that can easily be individualized to your state or district. Use the Evaluation Alignment Tool shown in Figure 3 to guide your process.

Observation and feedback are important components of learning how to teach because they provide your mentor with evidence of success in your classroom. Some mentors don't have release time to observe their mentee in action, and often your lesson preparation times do not match. If this is the case for you, I encourage you to use video technology to have your mentor observe and provide feedback to you.

Explore the options in your district for scheduling a high school student to come to your room to record a lesson you want your mentor to see you teach. You can even get your students involved to "create" the video and introduce themselves to your mentor! Use a mobile device if video equipment is not available. You don't need a long video. A 10–20 minute clip that includes highlights of the beginning of a lesson and some activity in the middle and the closing of the lesson will give your mentor an idea of how you are presenting yourself in the classroom.

Figure 9 Developing a Portfolio

Directions: Review any requirements regarding the organization of a portfolio with your mentor. Portfolios can be shared with parents at open house night or with district administrators who are evaluating you. A portfolio brings your teaching to life and offers the reader visual representations of you in action.

Follow these steps and discuss these ideas with your mentor. A digital version of this form is available on the companion website.

1. Review the purpose of a professional portfolio with your mentor. Why is it an important tool for a novice teacher?
2. Write a three-paragraph philosophy statement. Use this as a format.
 - a. List three words to describe yourself as a teacher and why these are important.
 - b. Write three beliefs you have about teaching and learning.
 - c. List three ways you demonstrate your words and beliefs in the classroom.
3. Collect artifact samples in a box or online folder to be reviewed later.
 - a. Student work, lesson plans, photographs, evaluation comments, professional development, and courses of students working in the classroom. Remember to get permissions for any photos you put into your portfolio.
4. Discuss the best way to present your portfolio. Digital or should it be hard copy?
5. If this is for the state, when is it due? Stagger any requirements to ensure you are not doing it all at once at the end of the year.
6. Ask your mentor (or support group) to help you put the portfolio together following these tips.
 - a. Select the most meaningful samples from the artifact box or online folder. The examples you select should either relate to a standard or illustrate an area that is documenting proficiency. You should not keep samples that do not relate to required evidence needed unless you can make a connection to a teaching skill.
 - b. Reflect on why this evidence is important and write a short caption or description for each artifact. The reflection is the explanation as to why this photo or sample of student work relates to teacher development. Connect the dots for the reader, so he can see how what you are displaying relates to standards.
 - c. Ask your mentor for advice about an appropriate layout with the evidence, the sample artifacts and reflections. Organize a table of contents, place the philosophy statement up front, and place the reflections near the evidence.
7. Review the completed portfolio and acknowledge yourself for all you have done this year! Congratulations!



Some states or districts require a professional portfolio as evidence of completed evaluation standards, and others require documentation that you have met with a mentor for a number of hours during the year. All districts usually require a performance assessment that includes an observation of your teaching in the classroom. You need to ask your mentor what you need to show as evidence of completion. This book and the Novice Teacher Journal can serve as evidence of reflection and mentoring conversations. Consider dating the pages and using the digital calendar to document your meetings and observations.

If a portfolio is a requirement for your district or state, refer to Portfolio Development ideas in Figure 9 to guide the process. If a portfolio is not required, you may consider creating one to remember your year of teaching. If this is your first year, it is unlike any other year of teaching, and having a memory book with student photos and highlights of special activities is a worthwhile process.

Take the time to gather evidence as you move through the year so that you are not collecting it all at once in June when you are very busy. By using the Novice Teacher Journal, the companion website forms and calendar, and the book with tagged pages and notes, you will have evidence to share with any administrator that you indeed were mentored! If a more formal presentation is required, the portfolio option is one way to organize your evidence. The June chapter also includes suggestions for sharing your portfolio with others. Sharing your teaching practice with your mentor, your district administrators, other novice teachers, and yourself is an important way to acknowledge your growth and development as a teacher. This is your journey into teaching.