# The Mentor's Guidebook

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## Unleashing Your Potential to Inspire and Retain New Teachers

Vince Bustamante
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Foreword by Franita Ware

CORWIN

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# About the Authors

**Vince Bustamante, EdD**, is a Calgary-based author, instructional coach, curriculum content developer, and educational consultant. Vince specializes in working with teachers, leadership teams, schools, and school districts in implementing high-impact strategies and systems. With a strong background in implementation, assessment, and deep learning, he is passionate about understanding and evaluating teachers' impact. Having worked with schools and school districts across North America and internationally, he brings a wide variety of experience and perspectives when looking at school improvement, pedagogical and leadership development, and implementation of high-impact strategies across school environments. Vince's doctoral research focused on the sustainable implementation of professional learning across school districts, and the impact of long-term school partnerships.

Vince has coauthored two best-selling books with Corwin: *Great Teaching by Design* and *The Assessment Playbook for Distance and Blended Learning*. His other title, *Leader Ready: Four Pathways to Prepare Aspiring School Leaders*, is also available from Corwin. You can find more information about him at www.vincebustamante.com.

**Timothy P. Cusack, EdD**, has over 32 years of experience as a classroom teacher, assistant principal, principal, and superintendent. Having taught in rural boards in northern and southern Alberta, Tim also has 10 years of experience as a school leader (K–12) and eight years of experience as a system leader of a large urban board in Edmonton. Tim currently serves as the Dean of Education of Concordia University of Edmonton (CUE) where he leads a teacher preparation program (after degree in education) and a master of education in educational leadership program. His doctoral research focuses on new teacher preparation, teacher mentorship, and leadership development. His dissertation (University of Portland, 2020), which centered on preparing aspiring

school leaders, evolved into his first book with Corwin: *Leader Ready: Four Pathways to Prepare Aspiring School Leaders* (2023).

Tim has worked with school jurisdictions across Canada and the United States in sharing his passion for leadership development and teacher mentorship. His service to public education has been recognized through the Council of School Leadership Distinguished Leadership Award (2014) and the Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee Medal (2023).

Tim also serves as a Naval Warfare Officer in the Royal Canadian Navy and brings a wealth of leadership experience having served now for over 35 years. In addition to his role of dean, Tim is currently the commanding officer of HMCS *Nonsuch*, Edmonton's naval reserve division. His experience in K–12 education, postsecondary leadership, and military leadership adds richness and depth to his work as an educational consultant and author.

More information about Tim may be found at www.timothycusack.com.

**Wayne Davies, EdD**, is the director of student teaching at the University of Winnipeg where he also teaches. Prior to this role, he spent 32 years as a teacher and school leader. He has taught and led in many settings including on the Lax Kw'alaams reserve in British Columbia, Canada, as well as in rural and urban school divisions in Manitoba. As a principal in Selkirk, Wayne was part of the nationally acclaimed BOSS Guitar Works project, which he eventually wrote about in his novel *The Guitar Principal*. In 2014, Wayne was recognized as one of Canada's top 40 school leaders and is a Distinguished Alumnus at the University of Manitoba for his community work. A citizen of the Red River Métis, Wayne holds an EdD in educational leadership from the University of Western Ontario where his work focused on high school graduation rates and the role of culture, student voice, and two-eyed seeing in increasing Indigenous student success.

# Foreword

Vince Bustamante, Tim Cusack, and Wayne Davies have written a book that details strategies to support novice educators and encourage their successful transition into teaching. The school leader who recognizes the need for an effective and organized mentoring process yet must delegate the responsibility to an educator closer to the classroom will find this book especially beneficial. Concurrently, *The Mentor's Guidebook* serves the mentor who has achieved success as a teacher and wants to continue to grow and become exceptional in a supportive role. This kind of mentor is a committed lifelong learner who seeks enhanced professional development for personal improvement in addition to facilitating the growth of any teacher they mentor. Additionally, the mentor has genuine compassion for new teachers and understands that supporting them fosters their students' growth and their school's stability. Thus, the guidance offered in this book attends to the need of mentors' personal high expectations for their own continued success.

The authors create a clear path for mentors and school leaders who realize the importance of providing productive support during the induction phase of new teachers. They have written a manual for all educators who want to do significantly more than introduce a new teacher to the "location of the break room" and check in at the end of the year by asking, "How was your first year of teaching?" Moreover, the authors impart the skill of mentoring through their clear explanation and systemic organization of the process, all the while underscoring the commitment necessary to navigate the fluidity of effective and authentic relationships. This work has the potential to increase the number of teachers who remain in the field beyond the novice phase of teaching. We have seen the troubling statistic that only 1 out of 10 teachers recommend teaching and 52% of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) teachers leave within the first two years, which undermines the stability and effectiveness of the profession and, most importantly, the needs of students. The authors identify the beneficiaries of their content to include all new teachers, including second-career professionals who enter the field and are sorely needed by our students. Our students can gain multiple new perspectives and skills from the experiences of educators who possess a variety of lived experiences and identities. All new teachers need mentors to help with the small tasks of teaching and the larger responsibility of creating inclusive and growth-producing instruction and classroom cultures. To be sure, for new teachers to effectively address the complexity our students require, teachers need to be mentored and authentically supported, to receive

constructive feedback, and to celebrate wins that encourage their innate desire to continue to grow.

The authors reveal the reciprocity of mentorship as an opportunity to reflect on their own teaching practices and learn from the interaction with their mentee, thereby contributing to creating a transformational experience. Acknowledging the opportunity for mutual growth and ongoing self-awareness makes the reader aware that mentorship is not simply giving support to another teacher, but gaining a reciprocal learning opportunity for their own continued professional development and the demonstration of lifelong learning. Mentorship becomes its own reward for the courageous teacher committed to personal growth through reflective practices provided in the book. The authors provide unique perspectives and solutions to reciprocal learning and expand the capacity of schools to recruit effective mentors with the support from this book.

One opportunity for reciprocal learning and reflection is self-awareness, which is necessary for the mentor and mentee to develop a willingness to challenge personal assumptions and unconscious and self-serving biases. The foundation of the mentor's self-awareness and the synergy of reciprocal learning contributes to the mentor engaging the new and potentially exceptional teacher in experiencing the importance of self-awareness of the *attitudes*, *biases*, *conceptual understanding*, and *dispositions* of mentoring and teaching. The reflection of the mentor on their ABCDs creates the opportunity to invite the mentee to consider how their self-serving biases can impede their relationships with students, colleagues, and potentially the mentor. This practice of ongoing reflection on biases, which improves the classroom and school climate, can be a discussion between the mentor and mentee as they share their personal reflections and provide feedback to each other. Thus, with this book as a guide, the mentor and mentee gain opportunities to teach and share how they are learning through mentoring. Insights also encourage mentorship momentum through sustained progress in learning and growth encouraged by engagement, feedback, and goal-oriented actions.

The authors also communicate the importance of mastery of student learning. Teachers have multiple opportunities to consider the significance of their role in student learning through their teacher preparation program. The mentor's role is critical in helping the new teacher connect their actions to student success and may require an application of a synthesis of the strategies offered throughout this book. This particular focus is an opportunity to critique the perceptions of the mentor and mentee's biases about the student's capacity to learn and the teacher's capacity to identify and facilitate effective strategies to teach all students. Accordingly, another opportunity arises for the mentor and the teacher to examine perceptions and biases that influence the teacher's beliefs about the shared capacity of the teacher and student interaction.

Reading this book opened a dialogue I had with a new teacher, one who enthusiastically expressed her joy in her first year of teaching at the half-year mark. As we talked, her personal joy was tempered by her reflection that she knew she was having a unique experience. She was hired at the same school where she completed her student teaching; therefore, she was welcomed into a familiar place in which she had demonstrated success. However, she knew many of the new teachers in her cohort from college were not having similar positive experiences. When I asked her if she had a mentor, I was surprised to learn she did not. I could not help but wonder how a mentor as a part of her first year of teaching could support her enthusiasm for the remainder of the year and beyond.

I asked what she would want from an experience with a mentor, and not surprisingly, she mentioned experiences that the authors identify in this book. She mentioned the importance of building a relationship between herself and the mentor, "getting to know each other, sharing our pasts, experiences, specialties, and passions," and meeting at different locations such as coffee shops to support the authenticity of the relationship. She identified the need for a schedule for check-ins and to understand the purpose or focus of check-ins. The teacher stated the need for support in addressing her challenges, strengths, and aspirations; listening to her; advising her; and sharing resources that would push her to be a better educator. Additionally, she expressed the desire to have a mentor challenge her growth. As I casually analyzed her statements on what a mentor would do to support her, I noticed that Bustamante, Cusack, and Davies have written the strategies for mentor teachers through the framework of the Mentorship Mindset Model.

This is a teacher we need to see grow and remain in the profession with joy. Her enthusiasm and identity are needed by students and colleagues. I hope her excitement will continue for many years and be contagious to others.

An often-overlooked function for mentors that the authors highlight is intentionality in examining the policies and procedures of the school and strategies for working with all professionals in the school. Mentors can help "pull back the curtain" of what may be the stated policies of schools and the actual culture of the school. Concurrently, understanding the culture and the hierarchy of the school community supports the longevity and success of new teachers.

In a conversation with another first-year teacher who also didn't have a mentor, I learned that she had decided to leave the profession at the midyear mark because she neither understood the hierarchy of the school nor felt

welcomed by the other teachers in the building. The authors identify this important aspect of creating success for new teachers. Without question, the new teacher I mentioned and many others I've encountered would be less inclined to leave if they had mentors to facilitate successful and encouraging experiences. The mentor can help new teachers develop relationships with existing teachers and educators and better navigate unspoken but existing cultures regarding the implementation of policies and the importance of developing effective communication with all educators in the school, some of whom serve in nonteaching roles.

In conclusion, as educators we all share the responsibility of supporting new teachers and encouraging experienced teachers who serve as mentors to grow and communicate the joy of teaching. *The Mentor's Guidebook: Unleashing Your Potential to Inspire and Retain New Teachers* contributes to the effective introduction of new teachers to the complexity of teaching and reclaims the narrative regarding the meaningful profession of teaching.

**Dr. Franita Ware**,
CEO of F Ware PhD Consulting LLC and Qualitative Data Analysis
Consultant with Innovative Learning Center LLC

# Acknowledgments

**From Vince Bustamante:**

When I approached Tim and Wayne with the idea of simultaneously writing two books at the same time, they both excitedly agreed! Without them neither project would have been a success. In the case of this mentorship book project, I owe everything to them. They provided me with mentorship and guidance as we collaboratively worked to create a book that I am very proud of. Tim and Wayne, it was truly a pleasure sharing this space with both of you, and I look forward to our future collaboration.

When implemented effectively, mentorship can be an invaluable resource for both new and seasoned teachers. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to you, the reader, for choosing this text and for your dedication to enhancing our profession through the refinement of your craft. Whether you serve as a formal mentor or provide informal support to a colleague, your service is deeply appreciated.

I want to express my sincerest thanks to Dr. Franita Ware for including her voice in the foreword. Thank you, Franita, for the rich conversation, for the incredible perspective, and for your support of teachers everywhere. You truly are a gift to the profession.

Thank you to the Corwin family for your unwavering support for this project, and of me as an author. A special thank-you to Jessica Allan and the entire editorial team. I am appreciative of the collaborative approach to making this work truly the best it could possibly be. It is truly a privilege to have our work represented by Corwin, and I am excited for future opportunities.

Finally, and most importantly, my deepest gratitude goes to my wife, Leah. Your unwavering support, patience, and wisdom have been my anchor throughout this entire journey. As I navigated the challenges of yet another book project, your encouragement and guidance were the steady force that kept me moving forward. You are the backbone of our home, and without you, none of this would be possible. There is no doubt in my mind that this book would not have come to fruition without you by my side. For all that you do, and for the love and strength you bring to every day, I will forever be grateful. I am so excited for our future together with Luca and our new addition on the way.

**From Timothy P. Cusack:**

One of the best parts of writing this book with Vince and Wayne has been the opportunity to learn from them. It is remarkable to note that many of the mentoring techniques and processes we share in this book were inherent to how we collaborated in the writing process. Learning "from and with" others is central to our professional growth. The richness of dialogue, debate, and discussion is a treasured gift that I have received from this author team. Thank you!

Speaking of mentorship, I am thankful for the talented team at Corwin who have guided and shaped me as an author and consultant for almost five years now. I am thankful for the opportunity to share my professional knowledge and experience and relate it to the wider education community. I am also thankful to learn from the many thought leaders and champions of great teaching and learning within the Corwin family. Thank you!

I wish to thank my wife, Dr. Susan Coates, for her ongoing support and input into the important work of mentoring new teachers. She, like the many school and system leaders I have been blessed to serve alongside, reminds me of the moral imperative to do everything possible to best prepare our new teachers for the challenges and rewards ahead of them. Thank you!

Finally, I want to thank you, the reader of this book, for the important role you play in supporting and developing our early career teachers. Your work in serving as a mentor is truly central to creating the school culture and conditions that will encourage new teachers to thrive and remain within the profession. It is our sincerest hope that this book will help you to grow as a mentor and reinforce your passion and commitment to provide the best teaching and learning possible for our students. Thank you!

**From Wayne Davies:**

This book is the culmination of many months of thinking, writing, reflecting, and collaborating. My participation would not have been possible without the incredible support of numerous individuals and communities. To begin, I must express my deepest gratitude to my coauthors (who were also my mentors throughout this project), Vince and Tim. Your dedication, expertise, and unwavering commitment to the project have been instrumental in bringing this work to fruition, and I am indebted to you for your constant support, cooperation, and shared vision of assisting mentors in their important role of guiding new teachers. I look forward to working alongside you both on many more projects to come.

To my family, words cannot fully capture the depth of my appreciation for your love, support, and assistance throughout this journey. Tess, Kendall, and Clyde, you are my foundation. Your patience and belief in me have made it possible for me to pursue this work with confidence and dedication. Your unwavering encouragement has been a source of strength, and for that, I am forever grateful. To my greatest mentors, Lloyd and Peggy Davies, thank you. Through my actions as a teacher, leader, and mentor I have tried to reflect all that you instilled in me.

I am also deeply grateful to all the students, staff, and caregivers I have shared the road with over the years. Your stories and experiences have inspired and motivated me, and I have learned "much from many" as a former colleague used to say. I will forever cherish the opportunity to have worked in vastly varied environments and systems beginning with my time on the Lax Kw'alaams reserve with the Tsimshian First Nation and then eventually coming home to the prairies where I shared the journey with many incredible people including my greatest professional mentor, Dr. Christine Penner.

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In closing, it is my sincere hope that this book serves as a small contribution to the ongoing work of supporting and empowering those who are shaping the next generation of educators and, by extension, learners. Thank you to you, the reader, for becoming part of my journey and allowing myself, Tim, and Vince to become part of yours.

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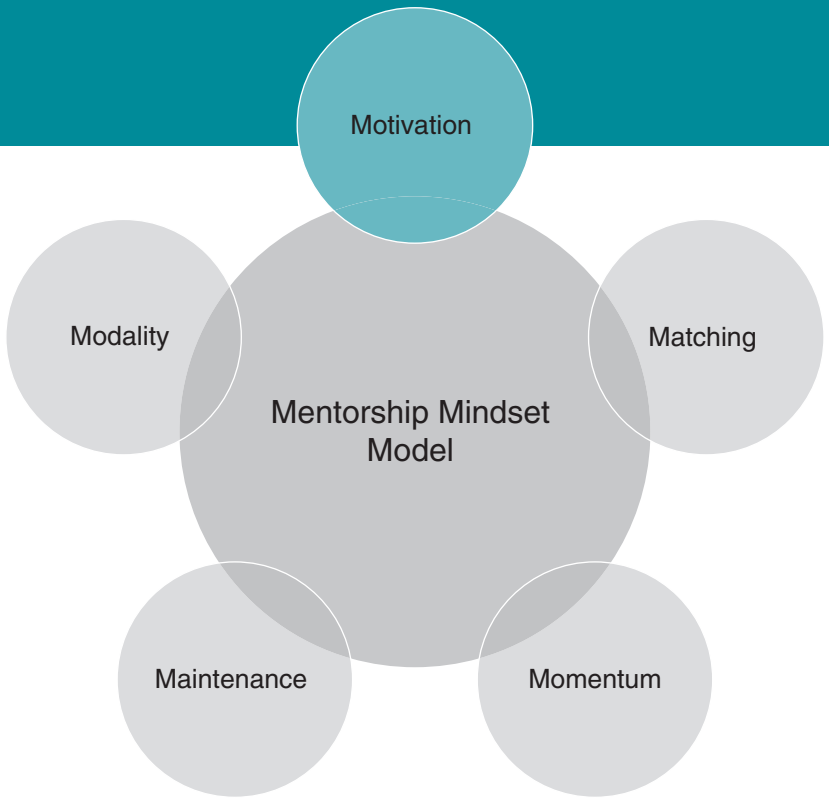
CHAPTER ONE

# Who Are You as a Mentor?




**To be a mentor you need to understand what's going on in a young person's life and you just want to have an internal dialogue that says, "How can I help? Because I really care."**

**— Deepak Chopra (see Mentoring Complete, 2014)**

## *MENTOR*: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Before we can launch into this book about how to become a better mentor, we first need to understand the word itself. The term *mentor* has become so commonplace in education and other disciplines and is so nuanced in meaning that it becomes fuzzy or blurry as to what it really means. We know that the etymology of *mentor* is Greek, meaning "wise and trusted." From Homer's *Odyssey* (8th century BCE/2003), we recall that Mentor was a friend of Odysseus and served as a tutor (a more knowledgeable other) to Telemachus. Thus, in a classical sense, when we hear the word *mentor*, we think of synonyms such as *teacher*, *guide*, *advisor*, *master*, *coach*, *champion*, *guru*, and the like.

When we think of the many attributes and qualities associated with being a mentor, the sheer scope of the word *mentor* diffuses even more. Is a mentor a guide? A critical friend? A role model? Essentially, the word means many things to many different people. In many ways the term *mentor* is more of a label that encompasses the many acts of support we provide others. What is common, however, is that, in some way, a mentor helps another person to learn. This is what we want to establish as our focal point. Moreover, we argue that the mentor seeks to raise the knowledge, skills, and ability of the person being mentored. We will address this in terms of building and guiding the self-efficacy of others later on, but for now, we want you to surface your own thoughts, views, and understanding of what being a mentor means.

## THE "WHO" BEFORE WE DO

Think back to a time in your life when you were learning something for the first time. Was it easy to do? Did you struggle? Likely, there was a more knowledgeable person present supporting you with the task or concept. A parent, teacher, or close friend perhaps? Would you consider that person to have been a mentor to you? We hear the word *mentor* a lot in education, but it is a word that is often taken for granted. What do we mean by this? Just because someone with more experience, wisdom, or lived practice shows us how to learn something new, it does not necessarily mean that they are serving in the capacity of a mentor. Being a mentor, as Deepak

Chopra clarifies (see Mentoring Complete, 2014), requires entering a relationship with someone who not only needs to learn or be developed but *wants* to learn and develop. We will unpack this in greater detail soon, but first, let's think about the individuals we might consider as being our mentor(s).

If you were to make a list of all the people in your professional context who served as a mentor to you, how many names would there be? Were they seasoned teachers, school leaders, or system leaders? Beyond that, what characteristics, attributes, and approaches to the teaching, learning, and assessment inherent to their mentoring stood out for you? Most likely, you will suggest there was a strong relationship between you and your mentor. Your mentor knew how and when to push and challenge you and when to ease off. Your mentor was a cheerleader, motivator, and champion of your success. The positive mentorship attributes on your list are most likely to be the ones you would choose to emulate if you were serving as a mentor to someone.

Conversely, there are people in our professional encounters that we learn from but would not consider to be mentors. Have you ever experienced a situation and thought to yourself, "I'm pretty sure I wouldn't do it that way." Clearly, we can learn *what not to do* just as readily as we can learn *what to do*. If most of our mentorship experiences have been skewed to the *what not to do* side, our willingness to learn and take on new challenges becomes stymied. Negative role models (we call them tormentors) can leave a lingering, damaging effect—especially on our early career teachers. Given the pressures we discussed in the introduction about the need to attract and retain teachers, we cannot afford to have tormentors. Thus, in this book we will provide a practical approach to help you, an experienced classroom teacher, become the powerful, positive, caring "super-mentor" you have always wanted to be! How? We're glad you asked.

We know through social cognitive learning theory (SCLT) that we model our own actions and responses to stimuli after those individuals we look up to as an example. Bandura (1989) proposed that learning occurs through observation, imitation, and modeling. Our learning is influenced by factors such as attention, motivation, attitudes, and emotions. These predispositions to learning are important for a mentor to know. If we are going to meet our learner—in this case the pre- or early service teacher we are taking under our wing—where they are

at, we need to have a rich sense of our own *attitudes*, *biases*, *conceptual understanding*, and *dispositions* toward mentorship. We call these the ABCDs of mentoring. Let's take a few moments to unpack these.

## *A* IS FOR ATTITUDES

Your attitude refers to your mental and emotional stance or outlook on mentorship. It includes your feelings, beliefs, and values regarding the importance of mentorship, your expectations for the process, and how you perceive your role. In other words, attitude is more about your immediate reaction to being a mentor, and it's shaped by your personal experiences, outlook, and assumptions. For example:

- **Positive Attitude:** A mentor with a positive attitude might see mentorship as an opportunity to give back, build relationships, and help shape the future of education. They are likely to approach challenges with patience and a growth mindset, seeing setbacks as learning experiences.
- **Neutral or Negative Attitude:** A mentor with a less favorable attitude might view the role as burdensome or as an additional task, rather than a rewarding opportunity. They may be less motivated to engage deeply or consistently with the mentee.

In general, a mentor's attitude will influence the level of enthusiasm, empathy, and encouragement they provide to their mentee, as well as how they navigate challenges or setbacks in the mentorship process.

Attitude refers to a settled way of thinking or feeling about something (mindset), often reflected in a person's behavior. It encompasses an individual's outlook, beliefs, and feelings toward specific aspects of life or situations. Attitudes can influence how someone responds to challenges, interacts with others, and approaches tasks. They are often shaped by experiences, values, and perceptions, and can significantly affect one's effectiveness in various roles, including professional and personal contexts.

We know that mentors play a crucial role in guiding a new teacher through their early experiences in the classroom.

Here are five key attitudes that are particularly valuable for a mentor to embody:

- **Empathy:** Understanding the challenges and uncertainties that come with being a new teacher is essential. By showing empathy, a mentor can offer support that is both compassionate and practical, helping the new teacher navigate their initial hurdles and feel valued.
- **Patience:** Transitioning into teaching can be overwhelming. A mentor with patience will allow the new teacher to grow at their own pace, offering guidance and feedback without rushing or applying undue pressure.
- **Openness:** Being open to new ideas and methods can foster a positive learning environment. A mentor who embraces innovative approaches and listens to the new teacher's perspectives encourages creativity and professional growth.
- **Encouragement:** Providing positive reinforcement and acknowledging the new teacher's successes builds confidence and morale. Encouragement helps the new teacher to overcome setbacks and stay motivated.
- **Reflective Practice:** A mentor who engages in reflective practice models a growth mindset. By openly discussing what works well and what could be improved, the mentor helps the new teacher develop their own reflective habits, enhancing their teaching practice over time.

## *B* IS FOR BIASES

Biases are preconceived notions or preferences that affect how we perceive and judge people, situations, or information. They often lead to unfair or skewed evaluations and can be based on stereotypes, personal experiences, or societal influences. Biases can impact decision making and behavior, sometimes without our conscious awareness.

While mentoring is a valuable and supportive practice in education, it's important to be aware of potential biases that may impact the mentoring process. Biases can unintentionally affect the mentor–mentee relationship and the guidance provided. Some common biases associated with mentoring teachers include the following:

- **Affinity Bias:** The tendency to favor people who share similar interests, backgrounds, or experiences to oneself

- **Confirmation Bias:** The tendency to seek, interpret, and remember information in a way that confirms one's pre-existing beliefs or assumptions
- **Generational Bias:** The tendency to favor or discriminate against people based on their age or the generation to which they belong
- **Status Quo Bias:** The preference for the current state of affairs and the tendency to resist changes from that baseline
- **Stereotype Bias:** The tendency to hold oversimplified and generalized beliefs about a particular group of people, often leading to prejudiced attitudes and discriminatory behavior

To address these biases, it's crucial for mentors and mentees to engage in open and honest communication. Mentors should actively seek diverse perspectives, be aware of their own biases, and strive to create an inclusive and equitable mentoring environment. Additionally, mentoring programs can implement training and guidelines to raise awareness about biases and promote fair and unbiased mentoring practices.

### PAUSE AND REFLECT 1.1

Of the *attitudes* listed earlier, which ones are resonating with you most? Which ones do you think might require more time and attention on your part?

How might the manner in which you were mentored *bias* how you would mentor an early career teacher?

## *C* IS FOR CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING

Conceptual understanding refers to the awareness and recognition of abstract ideas and principles that underpin our knowledge and practice. It involves grasping the broader concepts and frameworks that shape a particular field or situation (in this case mentoring new teachers), beyond just the concrete

details or surface-level information. In essence, it's the ability to see and comprehend the larger patterns, theories, and relationships that guide and influence specific phenomena or practices.

Mentoring teachers involves several key concepts that contribute to the effectiveness of the mentoring process. These concepts are fundamental to creating a supportive and growth-oriented relationship between mentors and mentees. Here are some key concepts associated with mentoring teachers:

- **Collaborative Learning:** An educational approach where individuals work together in groups to achieve a common goal, sharing knowledge and skills to enhance learning outcomes
- **Differentiated Support:** Providing tailored assistance and resources to individuals based on their specific needs, abilities, and learning styles to help them achieve their goals
- **Feedback and Assessment:** Evaluating performance or understanding and providing constructive comments to guide improvement and measure progress
- **Trust Building:** A process of establishing and nurturing mutual confidence and reliability between individuals or groups through consistent actions and communication
- **Reflective Practice:** The process of thoughtfully analyzing one's actions and experiences to continuously improve personal and professional effectiveness

These key concepts collectively contribute to the establishment of a positive mentoring environment that promotes continuous learning, collaboration, and the overall professional development of teachers.

## *D* IS FOR DISPOSITIONS

Unlike your attitude, your disposition refers to your more grounded, enduring characteristics and natural tendencies as a mentor. It's your overall behavioral orientation and the kind of mentor you are inclined to be, shaped by your personality, temperament, and values. A person's disposition tends to reflect *how they act* in relation to mentorship over time, rather than just how they feel about it in the moment.

For instance:

- **Supportive Disposition:** A mentor with a naturally supportive disposition might consistently offer guidance, encouragement, and constructive feedback in a way that builds trust and confidence. Their demeanor is calm and reassuring, and they demonstrate patience and understanding.
- **Critical or Directive Disposition:** A mentor with a more directive disposition might prefer to take a more authoritative or solution-focused approach, providing specific instructions and expectations. They may prioritize efficiency and standards over nurturing relationships or building a sense of autonomy in the mentee.

While a mentor's attitude can shift based on context or specific situations, their disposition is more likely to remain consistent, as it reflects deeper-seated aspects of personality and approach to teaching and mentoring.

Dispositions are crucial because they shape how individuals engage with their roles, respond to challenges, and contribute to the learning environment. Positive dispositions in educators, for example, can significantly enhance their effectiveness and create a more supportive and productive classroom atmosphere.

The dispositions of a mentor play a critical role in the success of mentoring relationships, especially when working with early career or new teachers (including teachers from other countries). Here are key mentor dispositions associated with mentoring new teachers:

- **Active Listening:** Fully concentrating, understanding, responding, and remembering what is being said, demonstrating genuine interest and empathy in the conversation
- **Providing Constructive Feedback:** Offering feedback that is specific, actionable, and aimed at fostering growth and improvement, while maintaining a supportive and respectful approach
- **Championing Cultural Competence:** Actively promoting and practicing understanding, respect, and effective interaction with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds
- **Promoting Lifelong Learners:** Continuously seeking and acquiring knowledge, skills, and experiences

throughout one's life to adapt to change and achieve personal and professional growth

- **Providing a Positive Outlook (broker of hope):** Consistently offering encouragement, optimism, and constructive perspectives to uplift and motivate others in various situations

By embodying these mentor dispositions, mentors can create a supportive and constructive mentoring environment that facilitates the growth and development of new teachers as they embark on their educational journey.

## PAUSE AND REFLECT 1.2

Which of the *conceptual understanding* and *dispositions* of mentoring provided do you do well already? Which one or two might you wish to explore further?

## YOUR CRITICAL ROLE AS A MENTOR

Think back to your days as a beginning teacher. How was your experience transitioning into this wonderful career? What were your first few days and weeks like as you took your initial steps into teaching? Did you go home at night with more questions than answers? Did you feel like you were constantly interrupting your colleagues, asking how to use the photocopier or where the first staff meeting would be? When that first report card writing period came around, were you dead sure you knew how to write great comments, submit them on time, and then get all your parent meetings booked? Or did you lie awake the night before, just hoping to survive it, wishing there was someone to talk to?

Maybe someone saw you looking a bit confused at the staff meeting, dropped by your classroom afterward, and offered you a few helpful pointers. Or perhaps the school leader assigned you a "mentor" who showed you around the building, got you a school coffee mug, and then checked in on you again in June to see if you had survived the year or not. It is also quite

possible you had a very fulsome and robust experience and still keep in touch with the person who made a difference for you (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Thus, as you approach this relationship, you will need to surface and reflect on your own experiences and feelings about mentoring so that you can either go beyond what you experienced or use your past as a guide to also do a great job!

Whether or not you had a great experience, one thing is clear: You have been selected to be a mentor, and your mentee is excited to work with you! New teachers entering schools today are definite in their desire to be mentored. These new teachers view mentoring as a valuable part of their development and work. To add to this, the capacity of a school to offer formalized mentoring greatly helps schools attract and retain new teachers, especially Millennials and Gen Z. Research points to improved retention of emerging teachers. Considering we are in an era that is witnessing larger attrition than years past, with over half (55%) of those in the field considering leaving the profession, efforts to retain are more important than ever (Walker, 2022a, 2022b).

But why are you important as a mentor? You are important because you can help an emerging professional navigate the first months or years of what many of us know to be the greatest career in the world. You are important because you can use your expertise, your lived experiences, and your professional knowledge to help new teachers successfully navigate their way through their early years. Mentor selection is an important part of a successful mentorship program (Callahan, 2016). You can help build their confidence while seeing them through the most challenging time of their career. You can build their ability to self-reflect. You can position them for success, showing them ways to see opportunity in the chaos that can exist all around us in schools. You can be the one to show them the joy in their chosen profession.

How about those second-career teachers—why are you important to them? Maybe you can help them recognize that all those years as an entrepreneur have given them the skills necessary for successful teaching. Maybe you can help ease them through the awkwardness they might be feeling as a 40-year-old rookie. Starting over is never easy, but you can definitely make it "less hard."

The internationally trained teacher who just arrived in your community could surely use a hand navigating some of the informal customs and protocols your school follows. Maybe they could also use a tip on where the best restaurants are or just be introduced around to start gaining a sense of "home" again. At the same time, you might see an opportunity for reverse mentoring. Maybe they can strengthen your teaching with some advice on that science lab you just can't seem to make work while you talk to them about differentiation and assessment or whatever else they might be interested in. Do not be afraid to ask them questions too.

Yes, all of these are the reasons that you are important as a mentor: your patience, your enthusiasm, your humanity—the ability to make people feel good about things, about being new or starting over. You have been chosen for a reason; you have been chosen because you can make a difference in the career of a teacher, which ultimately means good things in the lives of our students.

## MENTORSHIP MOMENT

### LEARNING TO LOOK: THE FIELD TRIP DILEMMA

As I sat with Pat in the staff room, I could tell something was bothering him. The normally affable young man I had been working with since my principal had asked me to mentor him in late August was lost in thought. After a few minutes, when I was about halfway through my turkey sandwich, he finally began to talk. Apparently, a few of the students in his fifth-period science class had not handed in their permission form for the upcoming class field trip.

Pat was really excited for the students as they would be seeing the largest telescope in the region, which they had been studying in their astronomy unit. As I finished off my cookies, Pat was still grumbling that the students just did not understand how amazing this trip was going to be! Heck, he had even built in a stop at a local restaurant so they could get off the bus for a bit and break up the trip.

I had been helping Pat get organized for this trip. This included explaining how to book a bus, putting together a safety plan, and of course creating a permission slip with an itinerary that complied with district policy. Pat had made sure to prep the students and set up what he was convinced was going to be a great first field trip in his year of firsts. And what a year it had been! Even if we were only five weeks in, Pat had taken the school by storm with his energy and enthusiasm. Of course, there had been some bumps, and Pat had painted himself into a few corners. Totally normal for an emerging teacher.

As his mentor, when these bumps arose, I liked to ask him questions and let them sit for a bit. Thus, as I got up to head to my class, I asked, "What might the real problem be?" Pat quickly reacted, defending his field trip and asserting it was going to be "epic"! I smiled and suggested he look a bit further, just like the scientists do with the telescope he and the students were going to visit.

The next afternoon Pat popped into my classroom. He had figured out the problem. After our conversation he had taken a closer look at the situation and began to think deeply about the students and their reluctance to hand in their permission slips. He knew they were really interested in astronomy and had heard them talk about the trip when it was first announced. However, in reflection, he noticed their enthusiasm had dropped off a bit when he mentioned the restaurant stop.

I smiled as I knew the connections Pat was making but made sure not to get ahead of him or stifle his need to talk through the revelations he had made. He went on to say that he had talked with the Student Services teacher, and she had confirmed with him that some of the students were in situations where extra money for restaurants was definitely not in the family budget. She explained to him that instead of being embarrassed at the restaurant, unable to order, they would forgo the whole trip and use the permission slip now to avoid potential embarrassment later. I could hear the sadness in his voice as I knew he was making some big realizations about his students and the situations some of them face.

Once he finished talking, I gently asked what his plan was. Would it be full steam ahead or maybe a bit of a course correction? Pat held up the new permission slip. He had adjusted the itinerary, and instead of a restaurant the class would be stopping for a brown bag picnic, some fresh air,

and a movement break at a roadside park he knew of. I smiled as he headed out to meet his class, knowing Pat was a little farther down the road toward his target of being the best teacher he could be and the teacher his students need—one who is willing to really look deeply at situations, find solutions, and help make schools a better place for all students.

### The ABCDs of This Mentorship Moment

| As you read through this Mentorship Moment, what were some biases that Pat may have exhibited in the situation?<br>What were some of the attitudes and dispositions held by the mentor that helped Pat solve his problem? | |
|---|---|
| **PAT:** | **MENTOR:** |

## THIS INTERACTION BETWEEN MENTORING AND COACHING

Imagine you are at a staff meeting and a new teacher approaches you and asks you to explain the differences between mentoring and coaching. What would you say? How do you define these terms?

This is a topic that comes up a lot. In our many conversations about the "art and science" of being an effective mentor with an early career or new teacher, we felt it would be prudent to chat about the differences between mentoring and coaching. Both are important to developing the skills and capabilities in others, but these words are often used interchangeably when, in practice, they are different. Let's take a look at Table 1.1 and examine what we consider to be nuanced differences.

## TABLE 1.1 MENTORING VS. COACHING

| Domain | Mentoring | Coaching |
|---|---|---|
| **Focus** | ***Developmental:*** Mentoring has a broader, long-term focus on overall personal and professional growth. It encompasses career development, personal development, and life balance. | ***Goal-Oriented:*** Coaching is typically focused on specific goals, skills, or performance improvements. It is often used to address short-term objectives or particular challenges. |
| **Scope** | ***Holistic:*** Mentors provide guidance and support across various aspects of the mentee's life and career, sharing their wisdom and experiences. | ***Performance-Based:*** Coaches help individuals enhance their performance in specific areas, such as leadership skills, time management, or public speaking. |
| **Relationship Dynamics** | ***Informal and Flexible:*** Mentoring relationships are generally more informal and flexible, adapting to the needs of the mentee over time.<br><br>***Personal Connection:*** Mentors often develop a deeper personal connection with their mentees, offering support and advice that can extend beyond professional concerns. | ***Formal and Structured:*** The relationship between a coach and coachee is often formal and structured, with regular sessions, specific agendas, and measurable outcomes.<br><br>***Professional Boundaries:*** Coaches maintain a professional distance and do not typically get involved in the coachee's personal life beyond the scope of the coaching objectives. |
| **Duration** | ***Long-Term:*** Mentoring relationships often last for a longer period, potentially spanning several years, as they focus on long-term development and career progression. | ***Short-Term:*** Coaching engagements are usually shorter in duration, ranging from a few sessions to a few months, depending on the goals set. |
| **Methods** | ***Advice and Sharing:*** Mentors provide advice, share their own experiences and insights, and offer guidance based on their personal and professional journeys.<br><br>***Role Modeling:*** Mentors serve as role models, exemplifying the attitudes and behaviors that can lead to success. | ***Questioning and Feedback:*** Coaches use questioning techniques, active listening, and constructive feedback to help the coachee find their own solutions and strategies.<br><br>***Action Plans:*** Coaching often involves creating action plans, setting milestones, and tracking progress. |

| Domain | Mentoring | Coaching |
|---|---|---|
| **Expertise** | ***Subject Matter Expertise:*** Mentors typically have significant experience and expertise in the mentee's field or industry, providing specific knowledge and insights. | ***Process Expertise:*** Coaches may not need to be experts in the coachee's field but must be skilled in the coaching process and techniques. |

Clearly, mentorship and coaching are deeply interconnected, yet they serve distinct, complementary roles in the development of new teachers. Coaching typically focuses on improving specific skills or practices through observation, feedback, and goal setting, helping teachers refine their teaching techniques in a structured, often short-term, way. While coaching is invaluable for honing classroom strategies and fostering professional growth, mentorship offers a broader, more holistic support system. Mentorship is about building relationships that nurture the personal and professional development of new teachers, guiding them through the challenges of their first years and providing a safe space for reflection and growth. Unlike coaching, which is often more performance oriented, mentorship is rooted in long-term support, emotional encouragement, and shared experience. It is through mentorship that new teachers can develop the confidence, resilience, and deeper understanding needed to thrive in the profession. Together, coaching and mentorship create a powerful framework for teacher development, but mentorship is the cornerstone for sustained success and fulfillment in the teaching profession.

While both coaching and mentoring aim to support individual growth and development, the big takeaway we ask you to bring forward with you in engaging with this book is that coaching is more performance and goal oriented with a short-term focus, whereas mentoring is developmental, long term, and relationship based. To help reinforce your understanding of this, we invite you to do the following exercise.

## Exercise: Coaching or Mentoring?

All too often we interchange the words *mentoring* and *coaching*, believing them to be essentially the same thing. They are not. This exercise will assist you in understanding the distinctions between coaching and mentoring by applying the concepts to specific scenarios. See the end of the exercise for the answer key.

### Instructions

Read through the following list of tasks and determine whether each task is related to coaching or mentoring. Write *C* for coaching or *M* for mentoring next to each task.

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. Providing guidance on navigating career advancement opportunities | |
| 2. Setting specific, measurable, and time-bound goals for improving classroom management skills | |
| 3. Sharing personal experiences about overcoming professional challenges | |
| 4. Facilitating a series of structured sessions to enhance student assessment abilities | |
| 5. Offering advice on work–life balance based on years of personal experience | |
| 6. Developing an action plan to achieve a new skill within six months | |
| 7. Listening and providing feedback on a mentee's long-term career aspirations | |

| | |
|---|---|
| 8. Helping an individual identify and overcome limiting beliefs to boost confidence | |
| 9. Introducing the mentee to valuable education stakeholders, partners, and networking opportunities | |
| 10. Using questioning techniques to help a new teacher discover their own solutions to a problem | |
| 11. Regularly meeting with a mentee to discuss their personal and professional growth over the years | |
| 12. Creating a structured plan to improve time management skills within a new teacher | |
| 13. Offering ongoing support and advice during significant career transitions | |
| 14. Facilitating self-assessment exercises to improve specific teaching-related competencies | |
| 15. Providing long-term support and advice based on a wealth of field experience | |

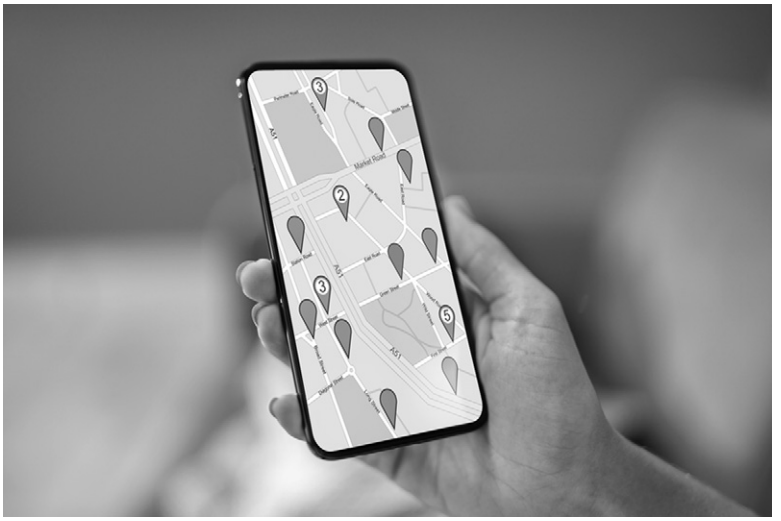
### Answer Key: Coaching or Mentoring?

1. Mentoring, 2. Coaching, 3. Mentoring, 4. Coaching, 5. Mentoring, 6. Coaching, 7. Mentoring, 8. Coaching, 9. Mentoring, 10. Coaching, 11. Mentoring, 12. Coaching, 13. Mentoring, 14. Coaching, 15. Mentoring

## THE MENTOR AS A NAVIGATION (GPS) SYSTEM

When we introduced this chapter, we briefly mentioned the notion that the term *mentor* is often difficult to really define. In fact, for some of us, the word itself may draw up feelings of anxiety, discomfort, or even fear. The truth of the matter is, however, that the term is not nearly as important as the actions taken by you as a mentor. In a brief conversation between myself (Vince) and a dear colleague and friend, John Hattie (personal communication, January 26, 2024), we discussed the misinterpretations of mentorship and even his discomfort with the term itself. Ironically, when we were chatting, I was plugging in a destination on my maps program as we were driving in the middle of Alaska in the winter. At that moment I started to reflect on the commonalities between a mentor and a GPS.

Figure 1.1: GPS



*Source*: istock.com/AndreyPopov

Hear us out. The actions of a GPS are not so different from what we do to support our mentees. A GPS knows the final destination of your journey, calculates the amount of time it will take to get to your destination, provides you with multiple routes, and perhaps most importantly adjusts all of these depending on the conditions or circumstances. You as a mentor have the potential to be a brilliant GPS for your mentee. You have been through those first few years of teaching, and have had experiences that your mentee may not have experienced. So, using your lived experiences and your expertise, you can help readjust the journeys of your new teachers,

recommend alternative routes when necessary, determine whether they require collaboration (mentorship carpooling), and ultimately ensure your mentees are navigating through their first few years of teaching knowing you will be there looking out for them.

Not unlike a bad commute, sometimes the progress we make is slower than desired, but regardless, our GPS navigation and our mentorship is steadfast and always ensuring the journey is moving forward. It is with this mindset we are hoping you consider your importance as the navigation system for your mentee. So, now that you are equipped with the ABCDs of mentoring, we will set coordinates for our next waypoint (Chapter 2): helping you determine your mentorship modality (or default style of mentorship) through unpacking some *traditional*, *interdependent*, *metacognitive*, and *environmental* (T.I.M.E. methodologies) styles of mentorship.

## REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Through your understanding of the ABCDs, contemplate each of the following questions and consider your attitudes, biases, conceptual understanding, and dispositions as they relate to the prompts provided. Further, what are some new ideas gleaned in this chapter that you may want to try in addressing the provocations that follow? If you are mentoring someone for the first time, we invite you to approach these questions hypothetically: How would you do this? What might you say to your mentee?

1. In what ways do you help new teachers navigate the balance between following established educational practices and fostering their unique teaching style and creativity?
2. How do you foster a *growth mindset* in your mentees to encourage continuous learning and improvement in their teaching practices?
3. How do you address the diverse learning needs of new teachers and help them develop strategies to reach and engage all students in their classrooms?
4. How do you assist new teachers in developing strong connections and collaborations with colleagues, parents, and the broader school community to enhance the overall learning environment?
5. In what ways do you encourage new teachers to reflect on their teaching experiences, and how do you help them turn reflections into actionable insights for professional growth?

## QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR MENTEE (AND WHY)

Starting a new school year (or practice teaching session) with thoughtful and open-ended questions can help a mentor understand their protégé's needs, goals, and concerns. Here are five sample questions a mentor could ask their mentee:

1. **What challenges do you anticipate facing this year, and how can I support you in overcoming them?**
   Addressing potential challenges early on allows the mentor to offer guidance and resources. It also fosters a supportive environment, as the mentee feels comfortable discussing potential obstacles.
2. **What specific areas of professional development are you interested in exploring further?**
   Identifying areas of interest for professional growth helps the mentor tailor their guidance and support. It could involve recommending relevant workshops, courses, or resources that align with the protégé's interests and career goals. This also helps point to professional practice standards, which serve as a common language for growth and development.
3. **How do you plan to establish a positive classroom culture and build relationships with students?**
   Building a positive classroom environment is crucial for effective teaching. This question prompts the protégé to consider their approach to classroom management and relationship building, allowing the mentor to offer insights and advice.

# UNPACKING OUR ABCDs OF MENTORSHIP MODALITY

In this chapter, we discussed the importance of understanding our *attitudes*, *biases*, *conceptual understanding*, and *dispositions* (ABCDs) toward mentorship. We offer two provocations for your reflection and consideration:

1. Having read this chapter on the ABCDs of mentorship, use the space provided to identify three ideas that have resonated most with you.

| |
|---|
| **Idea 1.** |
| **Idea 2.** |
| **Idea 3.** |

2. With a colleague, share a mentorship motivation idea from this chapter that you will commit to trying with your mentee.