

SEPTEMBER

BEGINNING THE SCHOOL YEAR SUCCESSFULLY

Creating a Community of Learners in the Classroom

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. How do you help your novice teacher create a community of learners? The **Relationship ACTIVITIES** will provide ways to approach this task.
2. How will you help your novice teacher in implementing routines? The **Routines ACTIVITIES** offer you ideas to discuss.
3. How will you reinforce classroom and behavior management and introduce looking at student work? Use the **Student ACTIVITIES** as a way to begin the focus on student products. There will be a page on this topic each month.
4. Why is it important to encourage your mentee to reach out to parents? Use the **Communication ACTIVITY** as a way to focus on ways to connect with parents and families.

Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium—InTASC Standards

This month will focus on introducing InTASC Standards 1 and 2. For the complete list of standards, go to page 6 in Part I of this book.

- **Standard 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.

- **Standard 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.

Chapter Overview

A wise person once said, “Wisdom is not knowing what to do ultimately, it is knowing what to do next.” As a mentor, you must be willing to have conversations that relate to building student learning communities in the classroom. Relationships with students are crucial to a novice teacher’s success in the classroom. Students are disruptive if they are bored or if they feel the teacher doesn’t know them. By helping your mentee relate to students, you can help maximize student learning in your novice teacher’s classroom.

Mentoring is not about “telling” but more about “creating” opportunities where your mentee can discover what to do next. As a mentor, you will have lots of advice about survival and creating a community of learners. Your challenge will be holding back a bit and allowing the novice teacher to experience the process while you guide, question, and assist. Hold back. Become a listener. This may not be as easy as it sounds, especially in September when there is so much to do.

If you are working with more than one novice, consider bringing them together in a group and have them share what they are doing to create community in their classrooms. Facilitate the discussion and minimize your talking. Share the student’s quote from the beginning of this chapter with the group and see how they react. Students still want to be liked by their teacher. Invite the novice teachers to share what they think this student means.

Your Mindful Mentoring Affirmation this month is, “I am an advocate for my novice teacher.” Take the time to learn what your novice teacher needs right now. You will be the closest person to this beginner, and your guidance is essential to his growth.

Follow the PLAN, CONNECT, ACT, REFLECT, and SET GOALS sections in this chapter to guide your mentoring conversations and reflections.

Watch and listen to a mentor share her insights in the September Chapter Introduction (Video 2.5), available on the companion website or by scanning the QR code on a mobile device.

Use the Mentor Planning Guide and Journal to plan your meetings and record your reflections for this month.

VIDEO 2.5



September Chapter
Introduction

Use Questions to Guide Mentoring Conversations

Sometimes beginning teachers don't know what to ask their mentors because they don't know what they don't know! If your novice teacher doesn't have any questions, share this list and invite the mentee to choose some questions. What is your PLAN for responding to your mentee's questions? How will you listen to your mentee's needs?

Anticipate Beginning Teachers' Possible Questions

1. How do I create a community of learners? What does that mean?
2. Can you review how children learn at this age level?
3. How many of my students need support in English language learning, and what should I do to help them integrate socially and academically?
4. I need some help setting up routines in my classroom that will avoid misbehavior. Can you share some successful ways for setting up a classroom in September?
5. What are self-motivating strategies for students?
6. What do I do if a student misbehaves?

Note the other questions your novice teacher asked you so you will have them for the future.

Questions for Your Novice Teacher

Try to ask more questions to learn about your novice teacher, rather than telling.

1. What is your understanding of child/adolescent development?
2. At which level did you complete your student teaching?
3. How confident are you in starting the year?
4. What can I do to assist you right now that will reduce your anxiety?

Meetings and Observations

Plan brief weekly meetings with your mentee. The ACTs in this chapter serve as mentoring conversation starters and can also be used to assess or review what your mentee may already know about a given topic. Use the Appendices to guide you in scheduling short meetings as well as longer conversations.

Plan to meet at times that allow you to have quality time together in a place without interruptions. Knowing when you will meet each week reduces anxiety for both of you. Novice teachers look forward to regularly scheduled meetings even if they are short. Use a calendar to plan your meetings and classroom visits to ensure they will happen! Include watching videos and reading pages in the *Mentoring in Action* book as part of your *PLAN* for mentoring. A digital version of this calendar (September Calendar.pdf) is available on the companion website.

You don't have to observe the teacher "teaching" right now, but it is important to at least visit her classroom. A before school or after school visit is an opportunity for you to observe how the room is organized as well as to have her show and tell you what she has done so far. Plan a classroom visit now to ensure you fit it into your schedule.

September Calendar

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY

Use this calendar to PLAN the month as well as to document meetings and mentor planning.

SEPTEMBER

CONNECT to Additional Resources

CONNECT to School and District Resources

What resources exist in your school and community that could assist novice teachers in beginning the school year successfully?

CONNECT With Colleagues and Parents

1. Who are the teachers you want your mentee to know?
2. Who or what agency in the community could provide resources or support for no or low cost?
3. How will you share the nontraditional family models that may exist within your school and district? (e.g., Grandparents, single mothers or fathers, legal guardians, same gender parents, etc.)

CONNECT to Student Voices

When you walk into a classroom, you should see positive evidence of students. Whether their names are on the walls, photos are posted, or student work is on the wall of fame. Seeing students “in the room” when they are not physically in the room demonstrates the visible mark that students have in the classroom. Discuss this important topic, using the form titled “How Do Students *Show Up* in the Classroom?” available on the companion website.

CONNECT to Education Hot Topics

Organize your space! As you assist your mentee in organizing her first classroom, discuss the ways the space can be most effectively. Search for online tips such as “Easy ways to make your space work for you and your students.” Explore articles online to find out how wall color, lighting, and eliminating clutter influence the classroom environment.

CONNECT With the Companion Website

Video links, forms for this chapter, a featured book, and other resources are located at <http://resources.corwin.com/mentoringinaction>.



The First ACT!

Differentiating Mentoring Conversations

Teaching is complex work, and novice teachers can easily become overwhelmed. It is appropriate to customize your mentoring conversations to respond to the varied needs and skills of the mentee.

Directions: Interview your mentee at the beginning of the month to document her areas of strength and needs. Skim the ACTs for this month and decide together which topics are most relevant. Use your state or district teaching standards to focus the mentee’s responses to each prompt so you are also teaching her the “common language” of the standards.

Mentee _____ Date _____

Monthly Needs Assessment

<p>1. What is going well in your classroom? (i.e., What is working?) As a teacher, what do you feel you are doing well right now? <i>Refer to the teaching standards to guide your response.</i></p>	<p>3. What would you like to improve or enhance in your practice this month? <i>Refer to the teaching standards to guide your response.</i></p>
<p>2. How do you know your practice is working? (i.e., What is your evidence of success? or Why do you feel confident or competent in an aspect of your teaching?)</p>	<p>4. Review the ACT mentoring conversations for this month with your mentee. Ask which of the ACTs will support you in enhancing your teaching practice? (i.e., What would you like us to focus on this month?)</p>



A digital version of this template (Monthly Needs Assessment Sample With Standards.pdf) is available on the companion website. Keep a copy of this assessment for your files and make a copy for the mentee.

Overview of the ACTs for September Conversations

Directions: Skim the ACTivities listed here and complete the pages that will forward your novice teacher's learning. Your mentee also has complementary ACTs in *The First Years Matter*. Digital copies of any of the reproducible ACTs are available on the companion website.

Key Question Topic	ACTivities	PAGE
Relationship	ACT 1 Creating a Community of Learners in the Classroom	56
Relationship	ACT 2 Getting to Know the Students	57
Relationship	ACT 3 Creating a Classroom Profile	58
Relationship	ACT 4 Learning How Students Learn	59
Routines	ACT 5 Establishing and Implementing Routines	60
Routines	ACT 6 Rules, Rewards, and Consequences	61
Routines	ACT 7 Learning School Procedures	62
Students	ACT 8 Classroom and Behavior Management Issues	63
Students	ACT 9 Looking at Student Work Together	64
Communicate	ACT 10 Communicating With Parents	65

Creating a Community of Learners in the Classroom

Key Question: What should you review about building a learning community?

Directions: Review the list of ideas on this page and choose the topics that are most relevant to your novice teacher.

1. How does an effective teacher include students of other cultures in the community?
2. What does “respect” look like in the classroom, and how does a novice teacher create a respectful classroom?
3. Invite your mentee to share what she knows about team building and student communities.
4. How can student sharing create a safe and respectful classroom? Discuss this idea. Start the day or class with 5 minutes of student sharing time. Rationale: Students come to school with lots of issues related to their personal lives. Getting to know each other, learning how to listen, and respecting the lives of others can enhance a classroom community.
5. How can student partners help to build a spirit of teamwork? Discuss this idea. Allow students to work together, sit together, and support each other in learning. Rationale: Students want to talk to each other. By trying to keep them quiet all day, we attempt an impossible task. Letting students talk to a partner allows them to release energy and stay on task. By organizing sharing partners, novice teachers can structure student talking time and use it to create a sharing classroom. For example, when a student is absent, his or her partner can collect all the work and share.
6. How can learning teams and small groups make school more engaging for students who want to interact? Teams can work on projects, create team slogans, and challenge each other in academic contests. Why is it important to rotate teams periodically? Rationale: Teamwork is more fun for some students and teaches students how to work together to achieve learning goals.
7. How can student compliments encourage kindness? Students who give each other compliments at the end of the day as part of the teacher’s routine feel good when they leave school and want to come back the next day. Rationale for this activity: Everyone likes to hear that his classmates notice what he is doing to build a community in the classroom. Discuss how the teacher has to model the compliment process by giving compliments to students. Positive words create caring communities.

What ideas does your mentee have for creating positive learning environments?



Getting to Know the Students

Key Question: How can your mentee learn about her students?

Directions: Listening to students, understanding their needs, and responding to their suggestions are important ways to build relationships. Many first-year teachers make the mistake of being a friend to students and then have difficulty being a teacher later in the year. Use the ideas on this page to discuss practical ways to assist your mentee. Your novice teacher will have the Student Interest Survey in their book, *The First Years Matter*. At a meeting, be prepared to discuss his answers to the questions. A digital version can be found on the companion website.

Student Interest Survey

Directions to the Novice Teacher: Ask students to complete a short-answer survey.

Sample questions:

- What do you like most about school?
 - What do you think your strengths are in the classroom?
 - How do you learn best?
 - What is your favorite subject? Why?
 - What language do you speak at home?
 - Have you ever traveled to another country?
 - What could I help you learn this year?
 - What do you wish you could do in school?
 - What is your favorite sport or hobby?
 - Do you play a musical instrument?
 - Adapt questions to meet the needs and ages of students. Novice teachers may have to read the questions to younger children and write their answers on the board, or students can circle a smiley or frown faces to express their opinion.
1. *Option:* Select a question and have students write the answers on an index card. Make sure students write their names on the cards!
 2. *Take photographs of each student.* Students love it, and it will help you learn their names and faces. This may be more appropriate for younger students. A whole-class photograph is fun for all age groups.
 3. *Interview a few students.* Ask them to talk about their experiences in school and share how they best learn. You can assist your novice teacher in documenting the responses using audio features on phones or tablets. Be sure to get permission from students and parents.
 4. *What are your ideas for getting to know your students?*



Learning How Students Learn

Key Question: How does a novice teacher find out his students' learning preferences?

Directions: Being able to recognize the variety of learning styles will assist your mentee in designing effective lessons and engaging students in the learning process. Your novice teacher will have the Class Overview of Learning Preferences in their book, *The First Years Matter*. At a meeting, be prepared to discuss his answers to the questions. A digital version can be found on the companion website.

Discuss with the mentee how to be mindful of her preferred teaching style so she can meet the preferred learning needs of her students.

Class Overview of Learning Preferences

Directions for the Novice Teacher: Create a survey or interview your students to find out their learning preferences. Integrate these options into your lesson plans to engage more students.

I learn best by . . .	List the names of the students in your class who prefer each learning method.
Listening to the teacher, an audio book, etc.	
Seeing a visual diagram, map, or agenda, etc.	
Using manipulatives, blocks, building models, etc.	
Writing essays, paper pencil, or computer typing	
Writing poetry, songs, or raps	
Singing songs and performing	
Debating, interviewing, and presenting information	
Producing videos	
Reading text in books or on the computer	
Drawing, painting making diagrams, or charts	
Using the web to research and find answers	
Acting, dramatization, role playing	
Ask your students to respond to these two prompts.	Names of students
1. I prefer to work in groups with other students.	
2. I prefer to learn alone.	



Establishing and Implementing Routines

Key Question: Why is it important to discuss routines with your mentee?

Directions: Routines are important for maintaining consistency and moving through a teaching day in a predictable manner so students know what to expect. Establishing routines can save valuable time and energy that can be put into academic areas. Discuss these sample routines listed here and review the questions at the end of the page. Assist your mentee in creating appropriate routines for his classroom.

1. *Routines at the beginning of the day or beginning of a class*
 - Attendance and how to handle students who are absent so they get make-up work
 - Lunch count
 - Collecting homework and recording it
2. *Procedures for students' moving*
 - Walking to classes or in the classroom
 - Leaving during class time to go to the restroom or locker
 - Fire drills and emergency exits
3. *Routines and procedures for academic work*
 - Rewarding good behavior and/or consequences for misbehavior
 - How to listen to others during a discussion
 - What to do when students forget books, pencils, or materials
 - What students do who finish early
4. *Closing of the school day or a class*
 - Collecting work at the end of the day or class
 - Cleaning up materials and supplies
 - Exiting the class or building

Review these questions with your mentee.

1. What is the purpose of routines, and why are they important to classroom management?
2. How will you know when students understand a routine?
3. How does an effective teacher reinforce a routine that is already established?
4. How does an effective teacher introduce a new routine to the class?
5. How do routines save time that can be used for teaching and learning?



Rules, Rewards, and Consequences

Key Question: How do the rules, rewards, and consequences a teacher creates and implements contribute to establishing a positive community of learners?

Directions: Discuss the ways rules are created in this school and the types of rules you have in your classroom. Novice teachers who have difficulty managing a classroom often tend to create harsh rules like “no talking!” or “no getting out of your seat,” and these “no rules” are problematic for many students who have difficulty if their preferred style of learning is more social. How will you support a novice teacher in creating appropriate rules? Your novice teacher will have the form below in their book, *The First Years Matter*. At a meeting, be prepared to discuss his answers to the questions. A digital version can be found on the companion website.

Creating Rules, Rewards, and Consequences That Promote a Positive Learning Environment

Directions for the novice teacher: Reflect and respond to these questions. E-mail your responses to your mentor and discuss them at your next meeting. Bring a copy of your rules, a sample of rewards, and what consequences you are using.

1. What rules, rewards, or consequences systems are working for you so far?
2. How do you let students know what the consequences are *prior* to their breaking a rule?
3. What are some problems, issues, or concerns you have about this topic?
4. How is “respect” demonstrated in your classroom? How do you model respect?
5. What does being a “culturally sensitive teacher” mean to you? How do you demonstrate that?



Learning School Procedures

Key Question: What does your mentee need to know about the following procedures?

Directions: Getting oriented to the systems and procedures in a school and district can be frustrating and confusing for a novice teacher. One way you can help is to be proactive and discuss the procedures early on and share any specific issues that would be helpful. We all have had experiences of touching a book in the library and finding out there is a “procedure” that this librarian uses. Save your mentee from the distress of learning the hard way. Discuss the procedures below and add your own.

1. **How does a teacher . . .**

- Sign out books from the resource center or library?
- Use any computers or other equipment—where to get it and how to sign it out?
- Reserve books for class lessons?
- Order paper and school supplies?
- Deal with medical emergencies?
- Access student records and special education files?
- Call for a substitute and leave work for the day?

2. **What does a teacher do . . .**

- Before school; and how does she enter the building?
- During homeroom or lunch room?
- At recess, bus duty, or study hall?

3. **How does a teacher use . . .**

- Faculty-only rooms?
- The library or computer room?
- An aide or paraprofessional in the classroom?



Classroom and Behavior Management Issues

Key Question: How do routines minimize disruptions and promote a positive learning environment?

Directions: We all have heard that a prepared and organized teacher has fewer discipline issues in the classroom. To ensure your mentee is prepared means you have to be proactive in reviewing routines and organizational structures that need to be in place. You can't assume he understands how to organize his time, classroom space, and materials even though you may have touched on it. By discussing these topics up front, you minimize the stress that can be created from a disorganized classroom. Review the following topics and select the topics that are most appropriate for you and your mentee right now.

1. *Classroom Routines and Organization*

- Review what your novice teacher is doing in their classrooms to organize their space, time, and materials. Visit the classroom and have her show and tell what she is doing.
- Share effective systems that work for you for correcting papers, organizing materials, and grading student work. Focus on routines that save time and that may have taken years for you to figure out. Let the mentee know that she doesn't need to reinvent the wheel. But be careful not to dictate ideas and expect them all to be followed. Allow the novice to select the systems that fit for her and have that be okay with you.
- Organize a "sharing" meeting and invite other novice teachers to meet with your mentee to share successful ideas for organizing systems that save time in the classroom.
- Share efficient ways to begin and end lessons so that housekeeping activities required (such as collecting lunch money or homework) take minimal time away from classroom instruction.

2. *Behavior Issues With Individual Students or the Whole Class*

- Ask novice teachers if they are having any problems right now. If you are working with a small group of novice teachers, take one of the problems and work together to give the group some suggestions regarding possible solutions. Use the Problems to Possibilities template in the Appendices to guide your inquiry.
- Schedule time for your mentee to interview teachers at the school who have creative ways to avoid behavior problems.
- Discuss appropriate consequences for situations that arise in the classroom. Share the difference between students not completing homework and students who are seriously disrespectful to others and why the consequences have to be different.



Looking at Student Work Together

Key Question: How can looking at student work samples help a novice improve her practice?

Directions: Reflect on your skill as a teacher and mentor in looking at student work and assessing progress. If you feel confident with your skill, invite your mentee to bring a stack of student assignments to a meeting with you. Have her select three students from the class randomly (without looking at names). If you are using a school-based rubric for assessing student work, use that to review the assignment and grade the student. If you are not confident at this time, learn how to do this together! A mentor does not have to be perfect at everything!

1. Decide on the criteria for assessment and then rate the three random papers separately using the school rubric or this one. You will be using the same three papers for this activity.

1	2	3	4	5
Does Not Meet Any Criteria	Meets a Few Criteria	Meets Some Criteria	Meets Most Criteria	Meets All Criteria

2. Compare and share how you rated the students with your mentee. Discuss any differences in ratings and explain why you rated a student that way.
3. What is difficult about rating student work?
4. Why is this important to review student work with each other each month?



Communicating With Parents

Key Question: Why is it important to communicate with parents regularly?

Directions: Discuss ways you and your mentee could communicate with parents this month. Review the examples here and add your own.

1. *Examples of communication may include the following:*

- *A letter mailed to the home:* Share samples of letters that have been sent to parents from you or other teachers in the school. If the school sends a formal letter welcoming students, give the new teachers a copy. Some teachers also write a letter directly to the students too.
- *A letter sent via the students:* It may be easier to write a letter and give it to the students to hand deliver to the parents sometime during the first week of school. Novice teachers may want to have a return receipt to ensure the parents or guardians received the communication.
- *An e-mail to parents:* Some school systems have parent communication through e-mail. If this is an option at your school, discuss the appropriate ways to do this. The downside for e-mail is that the parents then have access to the novice teachers 24 hours a day, and this may be overwhelming.
- *Letters or e-mails could include a brief biography of the novice teacher, some examples of what the curriculum will include, and ways the parents can keep in touch. Policies for homework and expectations for materials students should bring to class may also be included.*

2. *Organizing a Classroom Social*

If the school does not sponsor an official Open House, you may help your novice teacher organize a social to meet and greet the parents. It could be “coffee and conversation” early in the morning before students arrive or an early evening after parents leave work. The goal is to have parents meet the novice teacher and see the classroom. You could attend to ensure all goes smoothly.

3. *Why It Is Important to Connect With Parents Early?*

- Builds a relationship with the teacher before there are any student behavior issues.
- Demonstrates that the teacher is reaching out to share what is going on in the classroom.
- Allows the teacher to share expectations for learning and homework and gain support.
- Based on the response from parents, teachers get an indication of who is willing and able to connect (e.g., those parents who may not speak English or parents who work night shifts and can't attend meetings). This gives the novice teacher time to create alternative ways to communicate throughout the school year. It also lets the novice teacher know that parents who cannot attend scheduled conferences still care about their children's progress.

September Mentor Reflections

Directions: Complete any of these prompts that stand out for you and add your own prompts to the blank stems. Write your responses here or use your Mentor Planning Guide and Journal on the companion website. Share your reflections with your mentor coordinator or with other mentors at a mentor support meeting.

Something I learned from
my mentee . . .

A goal we need to work on is . . .

Something I would like to work on
together . . .

Questions I have . . .

Using Mindfulness to Explore Mentoring Dilemmas

Directions: Read the mentoring dilemma and think about how you would respond in this situation. Consider discussing this dilemma at a mentor support meeting or with another mentor. Share your perspectives about how you would proceed and why you think this would be the best way to forward your novice teacher's practice.

Dilemma 2: Including All Students in the Community of Learners

Your mentee is beginning the school year on a good note, and you have visited her classroom to see how she is organizing the space. You notice that she has several students separated from the class in their own corner. When you ask about this, she says that other teachers in her grade level have told her that these students cause trouble and it is best to keep them separate. When you look at the roster and at the student photos in the room, you notice that these three students are the only students of color in the classroom. *What do you say in your next mentoring conversation?*

Respond to these prompts in your Planning Guide and Journal available on the companion website.

1. State the mentor dilemma as clearly as possible in one sentence if you can.
2. What decision do you need to make in regard to this situation?
3. Write about the emotions that come up for you that relate to this situation. If you have two choices, write how the emotions might be different.
4. Stop and reread what you have written. Underline any key words or phrases that stand out for you.
5. Soften your eyes or close them and take three deep breaths. Ask yourself, what am I missing that I have not noticed? Write that down in your journal.
6. What will you say to your mentee? Write your reflection in your journal.
7. If you are truly stuck, bring your dilemma to your lead mentor, a mentor support group meeting, or another experienced mentor. Ask him or her to listen to what you have written and to ask you questions to clarify your dilemma. *Your lead mentor's role is not to tell you what to do! No advice!* Just questions to help you clarify what you want to do.
8. After you have spoken to your mentee, write his reaction and how you feel about this dilemma now. All dilemmas are not resolved! This is a process of clarifying and understanding how you feel and how you could respond.

Directions: Complete all three goal-setting processes and write your responses on this page or in your Mentor Planning Guide and Journal available on the companion website.

1. Goal for Improving Your Mentee's Teaching Practices

- Review the PLAN–CONNECT–ACT–REFLECT pages you completed in this chapter with your mentee. Look ahead to October ACTs to see what you may focus on to continue development.
- Acknowledge what your mentee is learning. Be specific about what you have seen that is working.
- Agree on ONE goal to focus on and reinforce for next month.
- Goal:

2. Goal to Support the Social and Emotional Well-Being of Your Mentee

- Discuss any challenges your mentee may be facing right now. Challenges often bring stress.
- Don't ignore any signs of stress in your mentee. Pay attention and teach her ways to manage her stress.
- Continue to learn about mindfulness by reading *Five Simple Lessons for Social and Emotional Learning for Adults*, available on the companion website.
- Goal:

3. Goal for Enhancing Your Mentoring Skills

- Reflect on your own mentoring experience this month. How did you use your strengths and interests to mentor? What will you do differently next month? Write a reflection in your Mentor Planning Guide and Journal.
- Goal:



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“

A good teacher walks around the classroom helping everyone do things they don't understand.”

—SEVENTH-GRADE STUDENT



NEW TEACHER PHASE: OVERWHELMED

“There is so much to do in one day!”



MINDFUL MENTORING AFFIRMATION

I inspire novice teachers to be their best selves.