Texas A&M
San Antonio
EPP Mentor Training
“Life’s greatest gift is the opportunity to throw oneself into a job that puts meaning and hope into the lives of other people. Seizing this opportunity is the surest way to put meaning and hope into one’s own life.”

Martin Haberman
Thank you for agreeing to play the supportive role of mentor for our Jaguar teachers. Of all the beginning teachers’ contacts, few are as important as you. Our goal is to ensure that the clinical teaching experience be a positive experience for both of you.

This training module is designed to maximize your experience and enhance your skills as a mentor. It will focus on three research-based models that enhance effective mentoring.

Introduction
The first model describes the different phases that beginning teachers typically experience. Ellen Moir found that beginning teachers go through some very predictable phases. They start the experience very excited; however, that excitement turns into disillusionment. Eventually, they begin to rejuvenate. When the end is in sight, most beginning teachers start to think about the next year and how they can improve their instruction and become more effective with their students.
In the following chart, the blue line indicates the phases of a normal beginning teacher while the red line reflects the attitudes of beginning teachers when they receive the proper support.

Supported beginning teachers go through the same stages as unsupported beginning teachers; however, the lows are not as low, nor do they last as long.

Phases of Teaching
Week 1
Week 2
Week 3
Week 4
Week 5
Week 6
Week 7
Week 8
Week 9
Week 10
Week 11
Week 12

Survival
Anticipation
Disillusionment
Rejuvenation
Reflection
Anticipation
• Begins during student teaching
• Is marked by romanticization and a commitment to making a difference
• Carries through the first weeks of school
• Reality hits.

• Student teachers in this stage are primarily focused on self.

• Some key Survival phase questions
  • How am I doing?
  • Will I make it?
  • Do others approve of my performance?
• Extensive time commitment—seventy hours per week
• High stress
• Self-doubt
• Lower self-esteem
• Focus on time and task

• Some key Rejuvenation phase questions
  • Is there a better way?
  • How can I do all that is expected of me?
  • How can I improve this?
• Assessment of impact on students

• Focus on student learning

• Some key Reflection phase questions
  • Are students learning?
  • What are students learning?
  • How can I raise achievement levels?
  • Is this meaningful to students?
Frances Fuller (1969) asked teachers to describe their chief concerns about teaching. The study resulted in the identification of three developmental levels of teacher concern.

Developmental Stages of Concern
Stages of Concern

Stage 1: Impact

Stage 2: Task

Stage 3: Survival

Stages of Concern
When student teachers are in the Survival Stage, they need different kinds of support than they will at other stages. The following are the kinds of support mentors can provide student teachers during the Survival Stage. Mentors should:

1. Look for opportunities to provide specific praise;
2. Show interest in the student teachers’ ideas;
3. Facilitate reflection on things that are going well and on how setbacks can be avoided in the future;
4. Invite student teachers to professional activities;
5. Share coping skills; and
6. Encourage student teachers to live balanced lives with time for self, family, and friends.
In the Task Stage, student teachers are primarily concerned with the tasks of teaching. They may feel overwhelmed with all the intricacies of educating and the limited amount of time in which to complete all the tasks they have on their plates. Student teachers in this stage may feel as if they are working as hard as they can but still cannot get everything done.

When student teachers are in the Task Stage, mentors need to provide support that is appropriate for this stage of concern. The following are the kinds of support mentors can provide student teachers during the Task Stage. Mentors should:

1. Help student teachers prioritize all of their tasks;
2. Invite student teachers to look at and adapt lesson plans;
3. Share methods of accomplishing common teaching and management tasks;
4. Arrange for student teachers to speak to and observe other colleagues; and
5. Invite student teachers to reflect on their rationales for instructional decisions.
In the Impact Stage, the student teacher is having the most effect on students and their learning. This stage is where we would like them to be. It is the mentor’s job to listen and watch for ways to help the student teacher move to this stage. However, the mentor should always be cognizant of the phases a student teacher goes through and how those phases might align with the Stages of Concern. Mentors need to be aware of all the signs student teachers exhibit in order to provide the most appropriate support in the moment.
“The most important characteristic of a successful mentor is a commitment to provide personal time and attention to the beginner.”

Steven Gordon
Qualities of an Effective Mentor

The third and final model in this training discusses three important qualities for effective mentoring:

• 1. Mentor is accepting of the mentee,
• 2. Mentor provides instructional support,
• 3. Mentor communicates hope and optimism.
One of the best ways to connect with the mentee is to accept the student mentee as a developing person and professional. Beginning teachers have various needs in order to feel accepted and a part of the school setting:

• Orientation to the school and community,
• Help in building competence,
• Time to work with mentor,
• Opportunity to discuss concerns in a setting free of evaluation,
• Support and advocacy by principal, mentor and staff.

**Mentor is Accepting of the Mentee**
Suggestions for developing a relationship with your mentee are:

- Create a safe environment,
- Listen without judgment,
- Focus on learning,
- Agree on objectives, not approaches,
- Appreciate your differences.

**Mentor is Accepting of the Mentee**
Mentors need to meet the mentees where they are and be willing to coach mentees to improve their performance regardless of their skill level. Simon Veerman cited the most common reported instructional challenges for beginning teachers as:

8. Students’ personal problems,
7. Insufficient materials and supplies,
6. Evaluating student work,
5. Planning class work,
4. Parent relations,
3. Dealing with individual differences,
2. Motivating students,
1. Classroom discipline.

**Mentor provides instructional support**
In order for the mentee to successfully develop these professional competencies, the mentee needs effective and consistent instructional support. This includes, but is not limited to:
- Regular observation of and conferencing with the beginning teacher,
- Support in teaching and learning standards of the state curriculum frameworks,
- Refining various teaching strategies,
- Addressing issues such as student-centered (classroom) management and communicating effectively with parents,
- Recognizing and addressing multiple learning styles and individual student needs.

**Mentor provides instructional support**
While conferencing after a lesson observation, the mentor should strive to balance a discussion of the new teacher’s strengths and improvement areas by:

- Summarizing impressions,
- Recalling supporting information,
- Comparing plans with achieved results,
- Analyzing cause-effect relationships,
- Articulating new learning.

Mentor provides instructional support
Conversations after the observation also help beginning teachers think out loud with their mentor. Reflective questions are open-ended, nonjudgmental, and encourage problem-solving. Throughout the conference, the mentor teacher should serve as an active listener. Examples of active listening stems are:

- From what I hear you saying. . .
- As I listen to you, I’m hearing. . .
- I’m hearing many things. . .
- In other words. . .
- Given that . . .

**Mentor provides instructional support**
Mentors should capitalize on opportunities to communicate hope and optimism by affirming the potential of the mentee in private conversations as well as public settings (with students, team, faculty, administrators, parents).

Show support in the following ways:

– Stress the need for life outside the classroom;
– Be available to listen;
– Recognize the new teacher as a peer;
– Remind the new teacher that making mistakes is normal;
– Designate a time for sharing.

It is also important for the mentor to share personal experiences of both joys and struggles of teaching.
It is August. Janice is excited and anxious about the beginning of her first school year. She is confident of her content and pedagogical knowledge and has a passion for making a difference in students’ lives. She is getting to know her students and school environment, organizing materials, and becoming familiar with state standards and testing.

Scenario
In this phase, we see teachers like Janice romanticize teaching. They are very committed to making a difference in the lives of all their students and in their schools. Everything’s going to be perfect. This phase normally lasts through the first few weeks of school. At this point, the mentor and beginning teacher are building their relationship.
Everything seems to be going wrong. Janice’s supervisor did a walk-through and things did not go as she had planned. The lesson did not work, the students did not participate, and she lost the supplemental handout for the assessment.
In Phase Two, beginning teachers are really focused on survival and self - they are trying to set routines, determine what works, and implement their curriculum. They are often just trying to make it through the day. They need outside validation because they are not getting it internally. They look for approval from others - administrators, supervisors, teachers, families/caregivers, and students.

Mentors should look for specific opportunities to provide reinforcement, remind the beginning teacher to maintain their lives outside of school, and provide instructional support.
After several weeks of teaching, the realities of being a teacher are beginning to sink in. Janice is spending week nights and weekends trying to keep up. She struggles with managing lesson plans, record keeping, and assessments. She wonders if she really can do it.
In this phase, teachers can hit bottom. The time commitment is completely overwhelming. They find themselves in high-stress situations, but lack the self-esteem to help themselves. Beginning teachers begin to doubt their career choices. They wonder, “Should I go back to school and change my profession?” At this point, mentors can help beginning teachers set priorities and provide time-saving hints.
After a new action plan is created with assistance from the mentor, the job seems much more doable. As Janice becomes more reflective and successful with her new action plan, she was amazed at how much she had accomplished and learned. Routines are in place, and her expectations much more realistic.
In this stage, beginning teachers finally learn to balance their time and responsibilities so that they can focus on the tasks at hand and complete them within a more reasonable amount of time. They start to look for better ways to do things. This is when new teachers begin to make more meaningful connections between their instructional strategies and the state standards and tests.

Mentors can really start to see growth and progress and can help beginning teachers be more effective by engaging them in reflective conversations.
Janice recognizes the tremendous growth she’s experienced and feels pride in her accomplishments. As she thinks back, there are things she would never try again or would choose to do very differently. Next year will be exciting! She will not be the newest kid on the block, and she has a workable plan for managing time and tasks. Janice also has greater comfort with content knowledge and setting expectations for students.
Towards the end, beginning teachers focus on impact. This is where we want our beginning teachers to be. Mentors can help beginning teachers reflect on how they impacted student learning and how they can improve.
The following slides provide questions for reflection based on the content and the scenario provided in this module. Take a few minutes to read through each question and consider the best response.
Your mentee will be arriving in a few days. To create an accepting environment, you should:
A. Send him to the office to get copies of textbooks
B. Gather textbooks and other teaching materials and arrange to introduce him to other faculty
C. Tell him you are very busy this week and you will visit with him early next week

Best answer: B

Accepting the Mentee #1
You and your mentee are planning for an upcoming unit. She suggests an activity that involves dance and music. You are concerned that the activity will distract from the lesson’s objective. To address this concern, you should:

A. Ask the mentee to describe how this activity will help the students master the objective
B. Tell the mentee you have tried this type of activity before and the students in this school can’t handle this type of activity
C. Tell the mentee that this activity is a silly idea

Best answer: A

Accepting the Mentee #2
During your first week of working with your mentee, you discover that her language arts skills are excellent but her math skills are weak. As a result you should:
A. Visit with her during conference period to present your plan for improving her skills
B. Have a conversation with her in which you share the fact that when you started teaching you had to play “catch up” in language arts and assure her that the two of you will create a plan for improving her math skills
C. Give her several math books and tell her that she needs to get her skills up to snuff

Best answer: B

Instructional Support #3
Although your mentee worked very hard at preparing his first lesson to teach, he presented the material without checking for understanding. Thus, many of the students did not master the concept. As a result, you should:

A. Tell him that in your opinion the students didn’t grasp the concept being taught
B. Tell him how you would have taught the lesson
C. Provide specific, non-judgmental feedback and ask the intern to reflect on what he might have done differently

Best answer: C

Instructional Support #4
After several weeks in the classroom, your mentee is becoming frustrated and somewhat disillusioned with teaching. As a result, you should:

A. Share with her some of the struggles and frustrations you experienced and how you overcame these

B. Tell her that you are frustrated too and you can hardly wait to retire

C. Tell her that teaching is just a tough job and that she may not be cut out for it

Best answer: A

Hope and Optimism #5
Although your mentee has been doing a wonderful job in the classroom, he appears to lack self-confidence in other school settings outside the classroom. To help him in this situation, you should:

A. Talk with him privately and provide positive feedback for the things he does in the classroom
B. Tell him that he needs to take a more active role in team meetings
C. Share the fact that his input kept a parent conference on a positive note and diffused a potential problem

Best answer: C
Through personalized time and attention, mentors can impact where beginning teachers are in their phases of development and stages of concern and can tailor support to give them hope and optimism for their future in the field of education.
• Succeed at Coaching, Mentoring and Supervision, NC State University College of Education, Reiman & Oja, 2003
• Texas Beginning Educator Support System (TxBESS), 2005
• Developing the Professional Identity of First-Year Teachers Through a Working Alliance (Brott and Kajs)
• Developing the Mentor/Protégé Relationship (DeJovine & Harris)

References
Please print last page, sign and scan to Aurora.Hernandez@tamusa.edu no late than Week 3 to verify that you have read and understand the tenets outlined in this presentation as a TEA requirement for Mentor Training.

Acknowledgement
• You will be asked to upload all assessment documents (ie. 2 formal lesson observations, a midterm report, a final attributes report) in a program called Digication this semester.

• You will receive an email from Digication that will include login information, helpdesk information and an instruction sheet. Please keep a look out for this important email!

• In addition to the helpdesk, Heather Brezinski and/or Evelyn Villarreal are available to answer questions.
  
  - Heather.Brezinski@tamusa.edu  210-784-2568
  - EVillarr@tamusa.edu  210-784-4342

Digication
• I read, understand and acknowledge the information presented in this training.

Mentor:_______________________ Date:________
Campus:_______________________ School District:_____________