If you are reading this, you are preparing to mentor a novice teacher. Let me begin by saying, “Thank you.”

You have made a commitment to support a beginner in the journey to become an effective teacher. This role takes time away from your own classroom and your personal life. I know your dedication to be a mentor is a choice you made after careful thought.

Your willingness to help others learn the art and craft of teaching demonstrates your choice to serve.

By being of service to others, you influence a cycle of support for novice teachers. You create a system where everyone is helping everyone else. Your participation as a mentor in your school acknowledges your heart is open to help others. It also demonstrates the hope and love you have for the teaching profession. You become a role model for your novice teacher as well as all teachers in your school who see you stepping up to share and help another teacher. A mentor is a leader who becomes an important part of a “ripple effect.”

Lao Tzu says it this way . . .

_Do you want to be a positive influence in the world?_

_First get your own life in order._

_Ground yourself in the single principle so your behavior is wholesome and effective._

_If you do that you will earn respect and be a powerful influence._

_Remember that your influence begins with you and ripples outward._

_So be sure your influence is both potent and wholesome._

_How do I know this works? All growth spreads outward from a fertile and potent nucleus._

_You are a nucleus._

Excerpt from “The Ripple Effect,” _The Tao of Leadership_ by John Heider

To me, to “get your own life in order” means that you need to learn how to mentor. Dedicate yourself to being the best mentor you can be. Take your role seriously and recognize the
important influence and role model you are for the teachers you are serving. Take courses related
to mentor skills, attend workshops on mentoring, and register for conferences where mentors
share ideas. This will ensure that your influence is wholesome and positive for teachers and the
education profession.

This generation of novice teachers brings vitality, idealism, and some excellent social networking
skills with them. Your role is to empower these novices to share, integrate into the school
community, and emerge as leaders who will take your place in the future. We all agree that
systematically supporting novice teachers into the profession works. Research has been done
to prove it, and common sense tells us that mentoring is the right thing to do. We all have our
own stories of “being mentored” that first year. The “sink or swim” method of mentoring doesn’t
provide any support to novice teachers. So what is the problem? Why aren’t we systematically
supporting our novices?

As I meet mentors from all over the United States, I have discovered that many districts are
facing similar issues. No funds for the training of mentors, no ongoing support for mentors who
have been prepared, and some districts don’t have funding for one-on-one mentoring. If mentors
are available, they are often volunteers and more time is spent “matching” the mentor and mentee
than actually engaging in discussions about teaching and learning. Sometimes after mentors
are assigned, they don’t know what they should do or talk about with a novice each week. These
challenges of funding, training, and support influence the quality of the mentoring program and
may be impacting the retention rate for novice teachers.

This Book Is a Practical Resource for Mentors

We want to retain the teachers we are bringing into the profession. To do that, mentors need
to focus on what is important to keep them teaching! Some teachers enter through traditional
pathways in teacher preparation programs and others by alternative fast track routes. Mentors
may have to differentiate their mentoring based on the needs of the novice teachers with whom
they will be working. This guide will help a mentor review topics for novice teachers who come
well prepared by colleges of education. It will also provide content for other teachers who have
entered teaching through alternative routes who need more in-depth mentoring.

This book serves as a curriculum guide for you while you are “in the act of” mentoring. If all the
mentors in your district used this curriculum, there would be a common language you could
refer to together. Formalizing the mentoring program and what mentors are doing demonstrates
the value of mentoring. It says mentoring is important, and we will provide resources and
support to our mentors!

I have a passion for this work. I have been a teacher and a teacher educator for more than
40 years. During my visits to schools, my talks with mentors led me to create this 2nd edition.
My intention is to offer you an updated resource that supports you in being a powerful influence
on a novice teacher.

Use the practical ideas to inspire you as you share your wisdom. Use the positive energy and
vitality from your mentee to sustain you and remind you of the joys of teaching. Remember, you
are mentoring the next generation of teachers into this noble profession.

Sincerely,
Carol Pelletier Radford EdD
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