

Mentoring a Teacher Candidate



Competency Statement:

Establish, develop and maintain an authentic, trusting, collegial relationship with teacher candidate that is professional and mature.

Objectives

Supervising Practitioners will:

- guide teacher candidate to the demographics and learning profiles of students in his/her placement classroom.
- assist and familiarize teacher candidate with use of pre and post testing his/her learners.
- demonstrate and model daily formative assessments for teacher candidate for him/her to build a menu of ideas.
- assist the teacher candidate with instructional delivery techniques.
- demonstrate ways that teacher candidate can get concrete evidence from ALL learners to verify that the majority of students learned the objective(s) taught by the teacher candidate.

Key Concepts

- Simultaneous Engagement Strategies
- Informal and Practical Formative Assessments
- Student End Products
- Student Product Sorting
- Criteria for Student Success and Scoring Rubric

Demographics and Learning Profiles

When a teacher candidate enters a school and placement classroom, they rarely even know what questions to ask you. They do not know what they do not know yet!!

The teacher candidate may know and be ready to get acquainted with all of the children's names, yet may not think about the cultural, ethnic, learning ability, and other factors that impact how s/he will interact, plan, teach and take responsibility for the learners' needs.

Thus, within the student teaching course, the teacher candidate is asked to demonstrate initiative in gathering all kinds of demographic data and information on the community, the school, the grade level, and the actual classroom. Your role, as supervising practitioner, is to **guide** them to obtain a complete/holistic representation of the classroom; the candidate is expected to do the research. You may also begin to share information in a professional way so that the teacher candidate is acquainted with free/reduced lunch, family resource centers or programs, living and family arrangements of your students, recent events in a student's life, or other information that **you** find invaluable to successfully planning and preparing for the learners.

Another role you can play is to expose your teacher candidate to school or district data collected on your current caseload of students. Invite them to attend PLC (professional learning community) meetings with you when you are interpreting or analyzing student data, RTI (Response to Intervention) meetings, etc. Participating or observing in these different situations will expose the teacher candidate to the various ways that students' ability levels and achievement and behavioral data are being used.

Reflection Activity: Student Data

- Take 3-5 minutes to consider all the ways that you and your collegial team collect, review, interpret and analyze student data. This includes daily formative assessments and common formative assessments, as well as, formal tests, unit and chapter tests, quizzes, district, state or national level tests. Think of performance based tests too such as in PE, Music, Science, etc.
- Remember to include data collection for student behavior, attendance, and/or other areas of a student's profile in addition to academic ability or achievement.
- Make a list for reference to use with a Teacher Candidate.

Pre and Post Assessment

Teacher candidates have been exposed, in their undergraduate programs, to the concept of pre and post-assessments. Depending upon their program area, it will behoove you to discover what extent your teacher candidate is ready to *apply* this instructional skill, as a result of their preparation program.

During the course of the student teaching experience, the candidate is required to intentionally plan and administer a pre-test, plan lessons according to the results of the pre-test, deliver the lessons adjusting instruction based upon how students perform each day, and finally post assess the learners for evidence of growth and candidate's impact on student learning.

In addition to the student teaching course assignment, the number of times and ways that you request the teacher candidate to pre and post-assess the students, will still the value and importance of this effective teaching practice. This will the candidate transfer the practice to their future classroom and role as teacher/assessor.

Teacher candidates may gain insight from you, as well, upon the importance of the pre and the post-test being identical so that evidence of actual, individual student growth will be apparent to the candidate. When witnessing your use of these tools and conversing with you on the results and evidence of student growth, the candidate will be more likely to take this responsibility and effectively apply to their practice .

Ideas for pretesting:

1. At the onset of the unit or chapter in contrast to the end of the unit or chapter
2. At the onset of the week in contrast to the end of the week's instruction (such as vocabulary)
3. At the onset of a lesson in contrast to the end of the lesson

Consider demonstrating a variety of informal and practical ways to make pre-assessments tools.

Modeling Daily Formative Assessments

Some novice teachers, inexperienced teachers or teacher candidates may tend to teach “at students” rather than “with students”. Meaning, that they go through the motions of delivering information or having students perform activities in a lesson, without connecting to the students or the evidence of what their responses or performance is yielding. This is a natural developmental phase for some beginning teachers or teacher candidates. They go through the motions of teaching without connecting the content to the learners or for the learners.

Developmentally, an effective veteran teacher’s brain uses many connections and makes decisions simultaneously while on-their-feet teaching. This stage of brain development takes time to physically emerge in teacher candidates. In contrast, a beginning teacher’s brain has conceptual learning stored in categories or separate arenas. While instructing they may only be able to focus and concentrate upon the lesson plan and the activities. The novice may not be able to see or analyze the student behaviors happening right in front of them. The novice may not be able to make adjustments to the lessons while teaching. They may also not be able to connect their decisions, actions or behaviors to the cause-effect of the student responses or indicators of learning. Student performance may be going on as the teacher candidate is circulating the room, yet the accuracy or inaccuracy of the performance by students is unnoticed while circulating the room. The teacher candidate may still be in the developmental phase of storing and accessing pedagogy in the brain as separate and distinct categories.

Circulation of the room is very different from monitoring and assessing the room as students are performing. In the early phases of student teaching, the candidate may not realize this essential and critical role while students are working or collaborating on tasks/activities. The candidate may walk around the room or stay in one area of the classroom, or interact with just a few students during the seat-work or independent practice time frame without assessing or analyzing what students are actually doing.

Thus, gathering evidence of student learning is a critical and essential skill for the teacher candidate to gain from you while student teaching. Basically, veterans use the following occasions to collect evidence from ALL of the learners, in order to analyze the degree of understanding or ability of ALL learners to accurately perform the objective being taught at the time:

1. Prior to the lesson (Pre-test)
2. During the lesson based upon the questions being asked and quick learning activities being requested from the learners
3. During guided practice prior to any independent practice
4. During independent practice
5. During the lesson closure
6. After the lesson with homework assignment(s)

When your teacher candidate is lesson planning, it is important to understand what the teacher candidate has planned for assessments. It is also important to know when they will be used to gather evidence from ALL learners. Typically, a teacher candidate will be aware of an end product or homework to assign, but not aware of the multiple points and multiple ways in which students can be assessed during a lesson period. This is especially true “during” the instructional delivery.

In addition to your teacher candidate’s lesson plan – you can also begin to monitor the ways and times that evidence is being collected for ALL the learners during their instructional delivery.

Assessment/Evaluation

One of the most essential roles and responsibilities you have is to supervise and coach the teacher candidate with instructional delivery. Each lesson that you observe will be of value to the teacher candidate. When observing, it is critical that you collect evidence of BOTH positive aspects and areas to upgrade. The collection of evidence will be not only important to you for documentation but also a helpful springboard for your communication and coaching with the teacher candidate.

This responsibility is similar, yet different, to when your administrator evaluates your instruction and performance. Your role is to coach. Giving concrete examples or evidence of what you witnessed or heard can help to guide the teacher candidate to upgrade technical skills or strategies. You are also the cheerleader for the teacher candidate. Let them know specifically what was strong in the lesson and WHY: how the actions or decisions were of benefit to students and their learning or behavior decisions. Emphasize for him/her what to continue doing, based upon how effective it is for students!

Watch another video clip and put yourself into the role of the Math coach. What ideas do you gain from this clip that you can apply to your role as a supervising practitioner and coach of a teacher candidate?

Video 1

[How To Observe Teachers In The Classroom](#)

Video 2

[Using Coaching And Teamwork To Improve Teaching \(Deeper Learning\)](#)

Reflection Activity: Sharing Data Collection

- During a pre-observation conference, your teacher candidate asks you to help him with pacing his lessons. What kinds of data collection techniques might you consider using to address this goal?
- During a different lesson, you note that your teacher candidate is allowing a lot of blurt outs. What kind of data collection might you consider using so that you can accurately reflect the number of kids that were blurting out or the number of times a student was allowed to call out rather than raising his/her hand? (Let's assume that raising hands is the expectation given to the learners at this time.)
- After observing a lesson, you are beginning to confer with your teacher candidate. You open the conversation with "How do you think the lesson went?" Your candidate responds with, "I think it went great. There was good involvement, and I think the kids got it." What would your next question be and why?

Collecting Concrete Evidence

Teacher-Sort with Student Product(s)

When a teacher candidate finishes a lesson, s/he may or may not truly understand the value of the end products collected or how these student products can guide them in lesson planning and preparation for the next lesson period. The candidate may know that the products need to be scored or reviewed or evaluated, but not how to analyze the student information gained from the products.

Demonstrate and model for them how you physically sort the papers (not even to grade them or before grading them) in order to review the different levels of understanding or accurate performance the learners just provided. Most veteran teachers sort the student products into three or more categories.

- Low/Struggling learners
- Average/Typical learners
- High/Capable learners

Converse and articulate what you are interpreting from the student evidence. Share with the teacher candidate the options you have, now that you have gathered, reviewed, and analyzed student evidence from ALL learners:

1. Will I teach tomorrow whole group because of the information gained?
2. Will I teach the next day with whole group for a portion of the lesson and small group for a portion of the lesson?
3. Will I plan the next lesson to only use small group or instruction by centers based upon this information?
4. Will I set up or assign members to small groups or partnerships based upon the evidence from today?
5. Will I collaborate and interact with other colleagues or professional peers as a result of the evidence gained such as gifted/resource teacher, special educators/ departmentalized team mates, etc.
6. What explicit content do I need to reteach to all the learners, to some of the learners, to a few of the learners?
7. ETC.

Collecting Concrete Evidence Cont.

As your teacher candidate phases into more planning, teaching, and assessment responsibilities, begin to wean the candidate away from you in regards to this responsibility. Question the candidate so that you are getting your own evidence of your teacher candidate's ability to review the student products, analyze the evidence gained, and justify decisions made for planning the next lesson, with intentionality, based upon the evidence gained. Do not allow the teacher candidate to score or evaluate the papers without consideration of how the results will be used for the next or future lesson(s).

After any lesson taught by the teacher candidate, question to extract evidence that the majority of students **LEARNED** the objective(s) or moved forward in their understanding/ability to perform what was taught. Reasonable and legitimate questions to ask your teacher candidate after every lesson taught!

1. What is it you wanted students to know or be able to do by the end of the lesson?
2. How did you know whether students have learned or not?
3. What did you do for students who already knew it at the beginning of the lesson?
4. What will you do now, if students have not learned it?
5. What evidence do you have that students learned it or made forward progress with the learning objective being taught? WHO and WHAT?

Intentional Coaching

Being intentional when you are coaching your teacher candidate is important. It is through your deliberate actions that you will be promoting self-reflection on the part of your teacher candidate. Through the course of coaching conversations, the goal is to develop the self-awareness within your teacher candidate of what was happening and increase his/her ability to examine cause-effect. Whether it is behavior or instructional delivery, a teacher candidate needs to develop their internal self-talk, accuracy of collecting their own data on a focused skill, and examine evidence that is present in order to adjust any of their teaching decisions. Questioning will be one of the most prominent of your coaching skills.

Each teacher candidate will process these coaching conversations differently. Sometimes, all it takes is a question and the teacher candidate is off and running with their own thoughts, their own questions for you, their own observations and insights as they were teaching. This type of teacher candidate is rare. S/he has the ability to take note of what was going on while they were teaching.

Most often, teacher candidates are developing their ability to reflect and accurately label what was going on and what the underlying related cause was. The coaching conversation may need to be extremely direct and concrete for a teacher candidate who has little to no ability to self-reflect or notice what was going on. The data collected during the observation becomes the center focus of the conversation in this case. If there are 30 learners in the class, and you have evidence that 15 of them were out of their seats and wandering the room multiple times during the half-hour instruction; your evidence will bring your coaching conversation to a stronger level of new awareness for the teacher candidate. The stronger your evidence, the more productive the conference will be for the teacher candidate.

Effective Conferencing

Observing and Conducting Effective Conferences with Teacher Candidates

Before an observation of a lesson:

- Discuss together the goals of the lesson to be observed. Keep the goals simple at first. For example, you might want to focus on a clear statement of objective, the clarity of directions to the students, and overall management of the class.
- Discuss together the success indicators of the lesson. Ask: “How will you know if the students are on task?” or “How will you know if they are successful?”
- Discuss the teacher materials and student materials needed for the lesson.
- Discuss approaches, strategies, and decisions that may need to be made during the lesson.
- Explain the methods of data collection you will use for the observation. Some observation methods involve anecdotal writing, timing, tallying, or coding. Explain these methods to your teacher candidate before you use them so that your post-conference will be more meaningful

Effective Coaching

During an observation of a lesson:

- Focus on the observation goals agreed upon before the lesson.
- Write down questions and suggestions for later discussion.
- Record positive aspects as well as areas for improvement.
- Focus on behaviors that the teacher candidate can change. Frustration is only increased when a person is reminded of shortcomings over which s/he has no control.
- Collect data on both teacher behavior and student behavior that may prove useful as evidence to your teacher candidate: Some ideas follow:

Consider using tally marks for something like a verbal tic, or for the number of students out of seat, or the number of students who blurt out rather than raise hands. Consider using selective scripting where you just write down the questions the teacher candidate asks. Perhaps, you are looking at time management so you write down the segment points of the lesson. Perhaps you are examining the active engagement of ALL learners at the same time so you record instances of what they did and when, etc.

Another valuable tool for you to consider using when collecting data during an observation is video clips. If a teacher candidate is agreeable to the use of video taping during a lesson/s, this is the best way to allow the "footage" to let them "see for themselves" and allows you to be authentic with your feedback

Effective Coaching

After an observation of a lesson:

- Pick an appropriate time and place for your discussion. Talk to your teacher candidate as soon as possible after the observation of the lesson. Remember that timing is important. If it has been a rough day for both of you, it might be best to save the conference for the next day.
- Sit in side-by-side chairs, not across from one another. You want to emphasize the feelings of collegiality. Do not put a desk or physical barrier between you.
- Talk with your teacher candidate in private. Never share criticism or offer opinions in front of students or in the presence of other faculty.
- Begin by asking the teacher candidate how he/she felt about the lesson. Encourage him/her to discuss some of the success indicators of the lesson. Ask: “How could you tell that the students were engaged?” and “How could you tell that they were successful during guided practice?” If your teacher candidate “draws a blank” when you ask these questions, begin by pointing out a few positive aspects that you observed. This may help to “prime the pump” and get your teacher candidate to reflect and talk.
- Share the data you collected during the observation. Together, summarize strengths as well as areas for upgrade from the lesson.
- Check for clarity of communication.
- Give your teacher candidate an opportunity to ask questions. Remember that feedback is most useful when the receiver formulates questions which the observer can answer.
- End on a positive note. If the lesson was a disaster, remind the teacher candidate that tomorrow is a new day and a new opportunity. Concentrate on what has been learned from this lesson and how it can be effectively used next time.

You may find some of these questions from Cognitive Coaching, by Arthur L. Costa and Robert J. Garmston, helpful in planning your post-observation conferences.

[The Language of Coaching: Questioning](#)

Encouraging and Developing Reflection in Teacher Candidates

You will notice that in the last section of questions, provided in the excerpt from Costa and Garmston, the questions are designed for YOU to intellectually stimulate your teacher candidate's ability to self-assess, self-analyze, or reflect upon what was said and done in the lesson in a way that guides his/her own growth and development from a beginning teacher to a more experienced and conscientious one. Often it will take great time for a novice teacher to be aware of their own self-talk, the decisions they are making while on their feet, or even after a lesson, to be able to re-create and picture exactly what happened in the lesson just conducted. The novice brain is still trying to make connections and simultaneously be able to handle input, distractions, think of the content or curriculum, take note of behaviors going on right under their nose, AND the self-talk that puts deliberate decisions into action. It is said that a veteran and skillful teacher will be simultaneously making 2-3,000 decisions in a day's time. A novice brain needs time and experiences for these connections to develop! We must be patient, yet intentional, about assisting the development of these capabilities.

There are many tools which you can use, from everyday life, to promote self-reflection in your teacher candidate. Think back, earlier in the module, with examples of how to collect evidence while the teacher candidate is teaching. Sharing the data, no matter how simple, (such as tallies) will bring an awareness to the teacher candidate that is powerful to see in "writing" as evidence collected. For example, let's envision your candidate has a verbal tic. After every discipline request, the candidate is in the habit of ending with the word "ok?" so that the command or request comes across to the listener as a question rather than an assertive request. Simply asking the teacher candidate "to what degree they are aware of this verbal tic" is a beginning. Yet, it will be the collection of evidence (such as tallies, an audio-recording, etc.) that will promote the strongest desire for the teacher candidate to purge this verbal tic!!! Your role, is critical, as data collector! Examples: "I want you to sit down, ok?" "Raise your hand, ok?"

Perhaps you are working with the teacher candidate because the candidate tends to stay in one area of the instructional space while teaching rather than continuously moving around the room. You can raise the awareness for the teacher candidate by using a map of the classroom. Every 5 minute interval, you can put the time down on the exact location of where the teacher candidate is. Another data collection strategy is to use a video-clip. Using your cell phone or that of your student teacher, collect a visual picture of the movement or lack of movement within a 15-20 minute period. Use questions to help the candidate begin to identify the quality or quantity of their movement patterns, and to assess effectiveness.

Another simple tool, is to use a class roster. This can be used to bring self-awareness to a teacher candidate for many different skills. Example: As a student is called upon publicly to respond to a question or contribute aloud, put a tally next to the student's name. Questions to the teacher candidate can revolve around awareness of how many students were called upon publicly to actively contribute or participate. Then, reveal the evidence collected and inquire to hear the level of self-awareness, effectiveness, etc. the novice is able to provide. You can both examine gender, patterns or trends based upon classroom seating, dominant vs. quiet students, etc.

Use of the student teaching evaluation instrument can be a useful tool for the teacher candidate to reflect upon the lesson by envisioning, reflecting and labeling what they remember saying or doing. To what degree is s/he able to resurface what the learners said and did? Engaging him/her in frequent self-assessments of an area or set of skills will help YOU to know to what degree your novice is able to not only reflect, but also accurately label what was going on and to what degree of effectiveness was achieved for the learners or for classroom management, etc.

Finally, use of videotaping (everyone has a cell phone camera) is a very valuable way of promoting and encouraging self-assessment and reflection in your teacher candidate. Watching a video clip together and pausing it where you want to focus the attention for the teacher candidate is one way to use video. Asking the teacher candidate to view the video and self-analyze his/her own strengths and weaknesses is another way to use the video. This may be oral or requested to be done in writing and turned into you the following day of a lesson that was taught by the teacher candidate. Emphasize that the teacher candidate examine behaviors or responses of the learners. See if they can relate the cause-effect upon their learners based upon his/her decisions, actions, or words.

View this video clip and see what ideas you might gain to apply to your mentoring.

[How to Improve Your Teaching with Video](#)

Reflective practitioner(s) are what is needed and valued in our classrooms today. More often than not, the teacher will be alone in the classroom the majority of the time. Depending upon the leadership style of the administrator, sti could be weeks or longer without explicit feedback from someone else. Any teacher will be stronger and more effective in the classroom when they are fully aware, deliberate and intentional about decisions and actions used with the learners.