Stakeholders in the induction process

Mentor/Coach

Mentoring/coaching is **not** induction.

> *Many educators believe that all a new teacher needs is a mentor. They try to portray mentoring as an effective stand-alone method for supporting and retaining new teachers.*
> (Wong, 2003)

The appointment of a mentor/coach is not an excuse for other school staff to distance themselves from the task of supporting beginning teachers.

While mentoring/coaching is a significant component of successful school-based induction process, in reality school-based induction is a multi-faceted, collaborative, organised, sustained multi-year program that involves a team of stakeholders at the school level.

The mentor/coach role

In the context of school-based induction processes the role of the mentor/coach goes beyond the role of 'buddy', that is, lending an empathetic ear and offering a kind and supportive word.

It is well-recognised that it is the quality of teachers and the teaching that has the most significant impact on student outcomes. Given this it is critically important that processes to support beginning teachers to reflect on and develop their teaching practice are initiated early in a teacher's career.

Watkins acknowledges that while emotional support is important in building trust,…

> *to accelerate beginning teacher growth, mentors must do much more. Instructional mentors focus their support on teaching and learning. Mentors must have a clear picture of effective teaching, be able to talk about best pedagogical practice and content, balance beginning teachers' immediate concerns and long term growth, and collaboratively build inquiry and reflection as a part of best practice.*
> (Watkins 2011)

Mentoring/coaching promotes teacher independence in working, planning, analysing and creating great lessons. Support must be readily available until the strategies become a part of teachers' daily work lives and embedded in instruction (Darling-Hammond & Sykes,1999; Fullan, 1991; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992).

An essential element of mentoring/coaching is to assist teachers as they practice new strategies in their classrooms. To be effective change needs to be embedded in what teachers value and have direct impact on their student's learning and classroom instruction to be effective. One mentor/coach explains:

> *Teachers want to see the proof in the pudding, so you must get to them through their children.*
> (Steckel, 2009)

Steckel's research supports the fact that demonstrations and modelling during training sessions are not enough to support teachers to embed new learning and practices in their classrooms. Modelling and demonstrations needs to occur in the teacher's classroom with the teacher's students as a follow-up to professional learning sessions to have maximum benefits.

Heavy and light mentoring/coaching

Mentoring/coaching *light* occurs when coaches are focussed more on building and maintaining relationships than on improving teaching and learning. Mentors/coaches may provide demonstration lessons, share curriculum materials, or facilitate learning without holding an expectation that teachers apply the learning in their classrooms.

Mentoring/coaching *heavy*, on the other hand, includes curriculum analysis, data analysis, instructional changes, and conversations about beliefs and how they influence practice. Coaching *heavy* holds all adults responsible for student success and engages them as members of collaborative learning teams to learn, plan, reflect, analyse, and revise their daily teaching practices based on student learning results.

Killion (2008) suggests that beyond a few introductory weeks of mentoring/coaching *light*, mentors/coaches must shift to mentoring/coaching *heavy* and stay there.

Qualities of a mentor/coach

To be effective mentors/coaches generally need to have a range of qualities and attributes including:

- demonstrate outstanding teaching practice
- be good role models, respected by colleagues, both personally and professionally
- have knowledge and understanding of current research and developments in teaching practice
- be open, willing and interested in working with others to improve practice and contribute to their professional growth
- be respectful and sensitive to the needs of others, especially beginning teachers.

Areas for mentoring/coaching support

Jim Knight (2006) identifies what he calls *The Big Four* of coaching. These are:

- content—planning and programming, syllabus understanding, etc to promote student learning
- instructional practices—teaching strategies and techniques to promote student learning
- assessment for/as/of learning—ongoing assessment and data analysis to inform teaching and promote student learning
- classroom management—management strategies and techniques to promote student learning.

Models of mentoring/coaching

There are three models of mentoring/coaching that can be implemented:

- individual
- group
- individual and group.

Poglinco & Bach (2004) examined an educational coaching program made up of both one-on-one coaching support in individual classrooms and group-focused activities such as staff meetings and study groups where curricular materials were introduced and reviewed. Their research found that 'Of all of the techniques coaches employ, modelling instruction in individual classrooms is most likely to result in modifications in instructional practices' (p. 399). This finding was in contrast to group activities alone, where they found that 'many struggle to understand how to use the new materials to change their instructional practices in the classroom'.

Based on the above research, and the further comprehensive research about effective teacher professional learning, a combination of group and individual mentoring/coaching models is recommended.

Group mentoring/coaching activities allows for common areas of need to be explored as a learning community while individual mentoring/coaching accommodates individual needs to achieve the common purpose.

Coaching activities

Poglinco & Bach (2004) and Denton & Hasbrouck (2009) have identified a range of coaching activities including:

- observing and providing feedback
- observing and understanding teacher strengths
- modelling effective techniques and strategies
- co-planning
- co-teaching
- advising and supporting
- working with teachers to effectively use data
- engaging in problem-solving discussions
- conducting workshops to introduce new strategies
- developing and monitoring improvement plans and goals
- providing useful feedback.

The following is a guide as to how a combination of individual and group coaching activities might be implemented to support school level induction for beginning teachers.

1. Group coaching—whole staff, faculty or stage professional learning workshops and/or meetings where new information/practices regarding content, instructional practices, assessment for learning and classroom management are explained and demonstrated including:

   - research, presentation and explanation of the theory behind the new information/practices
   - demonstration, modelling, supported practice of the new information/practices
   - reflection on and discussion of implementation new information/practices.

2. Individual coaching—supported implementation of new information/practices including:

   - classroom demonstrating/modelling
   - co-planning
   - co-teaching
   - observation
   - feedback and reflection.

The *NSW Quality teaching model* of pedagogy provides a framework against which mentors/coaches can plan mentoring/coaching strategies.

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