Washington State Standards for
MENTORING

"Supporting new teachers is complex and demanding work, and it involves skills other than those that most classroom teachers possess. It is critical, therefore, that we think not only what a new teacher needs to be successful but also what a mentor teacher needs to know and be able to do in order to support a new teacher."

Moir and Gless, New Teacher Center

Beginning Educator Support Team (BEST)

Created by OSPI, 2017

Table of Contents

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) manages Washington State's Beginning Educator Support Team (BEST) induction program. As part of this, BEST works with districts to provide sustained and purposeful support for early-career educators. BEST provides information, professional development for mentors and leadership, resources, and grants (as appropriated by legislative funding) for comprehensive induction for novice teachers. The program goals are to reduce educator turnover, improve educator quality for student learning, and ensure equity of learning opportunity for all students.

For more information about OSPI's Beginning Educator Support Team (BEST) Program, see the BEST webpage.

Mentoring

"men-tor: an experienced and trusted advisor"
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                                    Merriam-Webster

"Mentors are crucial whenever people are faced with new phases of their career or life that require the development of new knowledge, skills or attitudes….Mentors help people determine who they want to become, how they must change in order to become these people, and how they can take advantage of their college or work experiences to bring about these changes."

Drew Appleby, quoted in "The Life-Changing Power of Mentors"

Overview of Standards for Mentoring

Research notes that mentoring is a critical component in leading new educators into the profession and supporting their continual growth and improvement in practice. In order to do this, mentors must use a sophisticated set of learned skills and dispositions. The *Washington State Standards for Mentoring* were written by a team of Washington educators to articulate these skills and dispositions and to provide a tool for self-assessment and reflection. The standards are designed to help both new and veteran mentors in various job settings to assess their current level of understanding and abilities, and to create actionable steps to improve. Ongoing reflection and practice will deepen and refine mentoring skills, leading to gains in mentees' skill and their students' learning.

It's important to note that mentoring is one element of robust support for new educators. The Standards for Mentoring should be used as part of a comprehensive system of induction as described in *Effective Support for New Teachers in Washington State: Standards for Beginning Teacher Induction.* ([Available on the BEST website](#))

> "What we do for new teachers, we do for their students.
> What we fail to do for new teachers, we fail to do for their students."
>
> Marcy Yoshida

BEST Standards for Mentoring

An accomplished mentor:

STANDARD 1: *Cultivates **learning-focused relationships** through learning-focused conversations (pausing, paraphrasing, and questioning) to build mentees' reflective practice and improve instructional outcomes.*

STANDARD 2: *Conducts observations and provides non-evaluative feedback to engage new educators in **reflection** that leads to improved instructional practice and increased equity for learners.*

STANDARD 3: *Responds to the unique needs of **adult learners** by offering support for new educators in ways that appropriately differentiate for each mentee's learning needs, and by guiding the mentees toward appropriate professional learning opportunities.*

STANDARD 4: *Fosters **equitable practices** that positively impact educator and student learning, promotes inclusive practices, and honors and respects multiple perspectives.*

STANDARD 5: *Builds mentees' knowledge and skills in **curriculum, instruction, and assessment** to include a repertoire of classroom strategies, content knowledge and skills to maximize student learning.*

STANDARD 6: *Navigates multiple layers of organizational systems and facilitates new educator **connections to learning systems and learning communities**.*
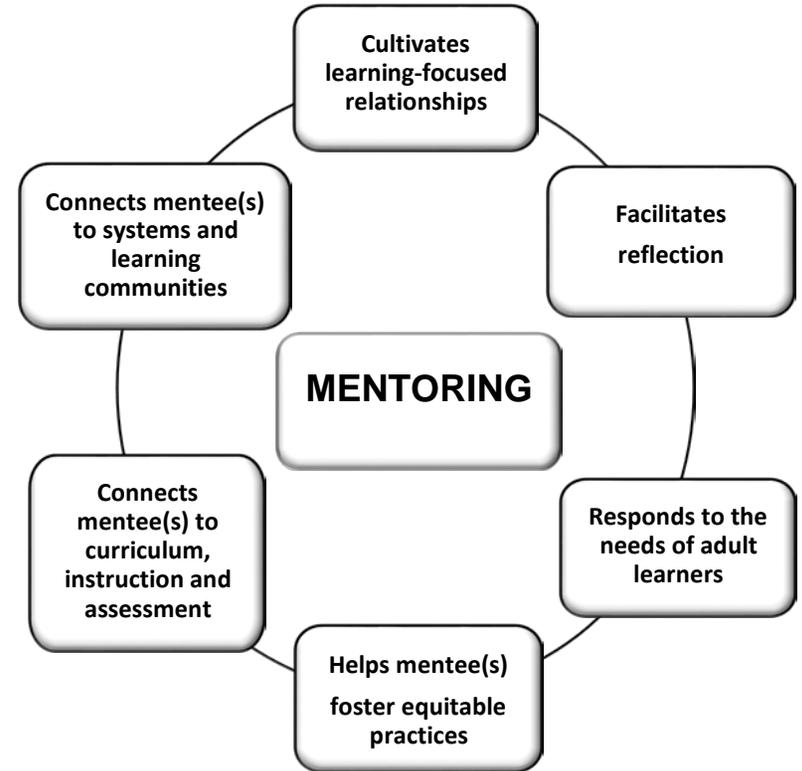
> "The first year matters because a first-year teacher is a professional in action, doing the urgent daily work of teaching. He or she is entrusted with students who will be in first-grade language arts or tenth-grade chemistry only once. It may be their teacher's first year of delivering instruction, but it's the students' only year to learn the content."
>
> Paul Bambrick-Santoyo

Using this document

This document is intended to be used as a tool to reflect on and grow mentoring skills. It can also be used as a guide for designing and providing on-going professional learning for mentors.

There are six BEST Standards for Mentoring:

- *Standard 1: Learning-Focused Relationships*
- *Standard 2: Reflective Practices*
- *Standard 3: Adult Learning*
- *Standard 4: Equitable Practices*
- *Standard 5: Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment*
- *Standard 6: Connection to Systems and Learning Communities*

Each of the six standards delineates mentor actions to reach standard. To the right of each descriptor there is a scale ranging from "unaware" to "flexibly and fluently." As you work to improve a particular mentoring skill, select a standard that you want to work on and indicate on the scale where your skill level falls at this time.

Under each set of descriptors is a section for reflection on the descriptor you chose ("Reflecting on my Responses"). Reflect on and record your strengths and areas for growth. There is also space for you to record evidence to support the reflection. Including examples of specific evidence of the descriptor will help you to notice strengths and gaps in practice and begin to identify growth edges.

After reflecting, begin to create action steps in the box labeled "What are my next steps and how will they impact my work as a mentor?" You will find suggestions for "Possible Action Steps" to help guide your work. You will benefit by re-visiting your reflections often and re-assessing your skill level, either individually or as part of a professional learning community or team. Reflection on mentoring provides many benefits, including an enhanced self-awareness of mentor skills and actions.

Combining that reflection on the standards with intentional practice will lead you over time to significant growth in your mentor skills. As you gain experience through interactions with new educators, you will notice in yourself greater ability to promote their professional growth and their students' learning.

Reflect on the descriptors below and self-assess using the scale to the right.	Evidence of Descriptors	UNAWARE	DEVELOPING CAPACITY	CONSCIOUSLY COMPETENT	FLEXIBLY & FLUENTLY COMPETENT
a. I invest in building trusting, respectful and confidential relationships through open, honest and authentic communication with my mentees.					
b. My language reflects positive presuppositions about my mentees and others.					
c. I cultivate a safe and welcoming environment in which my mentees can take intellectual risks and grow their practice.					
d. I offer support, create cognitive challenge and facilitate the professional vision of my mentees.					
e. I engage in learning-focused conversations by pausing paraphrasing questioning.					
f. I move along a continuum of stances – coach, collaborate, consult and calibrate—as needed to promote thinking and learning by my mentee.					
g. I approach difficult conversations in a proactive, supportive and genuine manner.					
h. I initiate timely communication with my mentees.					

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REFLECTING ON MY RESPONSES	
What are some current areas of mentoring strength?	
What are some areas for mentoring growth?	

WHAT ARE MY NEXT STEPS AND HOW WILL THEY IMPACT MY WORK AS A MENTOR?

POSSIBLE ACTION STEPS

Review materials and resources from OSPI BEST professional learning opportunities.

Intentionally prepare for learning-focused conversations including development of invitational inquiry questions.

Observe other mentors and ask others to observe your mentoring work; debrief your experiences.

Practice learning-focused conversations with mentor colleagues.

Intentionally practice using structured templates from *Mentoring Matters* to narrow the focus of conversations.

"She knew that she needed a teacher, a guide who could make it safe for her to find her voice."

Eric Liu, in *Guiding Lights*

Standard 2: REFLECTIVE PRACTICES					MENTOR SELF-ASSESSMENT

Reflect on the descriptors below and self-assess using the scale to the right.	Evidence of Descriptors	UNAWARE	DEVELOPING CAPACITY	CONSCIOUSLY COMPETENT	FLEXIBLY & FLUENTLY COMPETENT
a. I foster a growth mindset to engage my mentees in continuous improvement.					
b. I facilitate learning-focused conversations that promote reflective practices.					
c. I observe and gather data to provide specific, timely, actionable and non- evaluative feedback to build reflective capacity in my mentees.					
d. I use a repertoire of observational tools to promote connection-making between instructional practice and student data.					
e. I guide my mentees in setting specific, measurable goals that are timely and appropriate.					
f. I engage my mentees in ongoing reflective inquiry to improve, inform and refine instructional practice.					

REFLECTING ON MY RESPONSES	
What are some current areas of mentoring strength?	
What are some areas for mentoring growth?	

WHAT ARE MY NEXT STEPS AND HOW WILL THEY IMPACT MY WORK AS A MENTOR?

POSSIBLE ACTION STEPS
Collect data and feedback about the impact of mentoring on mentees' reflective practices.
Collaborate with mentor colleagues around observation tools and data-collection methods.
Plan and schedule a recurring time for reflection around mentoring practices.

"Now came the truly tricky part: teaching the boy to meet his mistakes, to welcome them and get to know them."

Eric Liu, in *Guiding Lights*

Standard 3: ADULT LEARNING					MENTOR SELF-ASSESSMENT
Reflect on the descriptors below and self-assess using the scale to the right.	**Evidence of Descriptors**	**UNAWARE**	**DEVELOPING CAPACITY**	**CONSCIOUSLY COMPETENT**	**FLEXIBLY & FLUENTLY COMPETENT**
a. I differentiate the support I provide my mentees based on their unique needs, diverse backgrounds, professional experiences, current context and the predictable phases of the first year of teaching (Ellen Moir).					
b. I respond to the unique needs and assets of my mentees by connecting them to appropriate and timely professional learning.					
c. I encourage learner-agency with my mentees by engaging them in ongoing, evidence-based reflection.					
d. I provide job-embedded support to explore problems of practice and help my mentees apply new learning.					

REFLECTING ON MY RESPONSES	
What are some current areas of mentoring strength?	
What are some areas for mentoring growth?	

WHAT ARE MY NEXT STEPS AND HOW WILL THEY IMPACT MY WORK AS A MENTOR?

POSSIBLE ACTION STEPS
Participate in ongoing professional learning communities such as Mentor Academy and Mentor Round Tables, to support your use of mentoring tools and learning-focused conversations.
Attend professional learning opportunities with your mentees to support their understanding and implementation of information.
Utilize the Teacher Leadership Skills Framework Self-Assessment: Working with Adult Learners. http://cstp-wa.org/teacher-leadership/teacher-leadership-skills-framework/

> "….Adults have different ways of knowing — or ways of taking things in, making sense of them, and putting them together [and]… we need to employ a variety of …practices …to adequately meet adult learners — who have different ways of understanding their experiences — where they are … and offer developmentally appropriate challenges or stretching … to support their learning and growth."
>
> Eleanor Drago-Severson in "Use a Variety of Practices to Connect with All"

Reflect on the descriptors below and self-assess using the scale to the right.	Evidence of Descriptors	UNAWARE	DEVELOPING CAPACITY	CONSCIOUSLY COMPETENT	FLEXIBLY & FLUENTLY COMPETENT
a. I work to improve my cultural knowledge, awareness, sensitivity and competence.					
b. I seek to recognize and accept my biases and then work to overcome them.					
c. I question inequitable, biased and discriminatory practices.					
d. I understand and can articulate the complexities and strengths of working with diverse populations and partnering with our community.					
e. I understand, use, and help my mentees to create culturally responsive environments and practices that address acceptance and knowledge of differences while leveraging cultural strengths.					

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f. I openly discuss issues of equity with my mentees by identifying, surfacing, and questioning assumptions and biases that result in discriminatory and inequitable practices.					

REFLECTING ON MY RESPONSES

What are some current areas of mentoring strength?	
What are some current areas of mentoring strength?	

WHAT ARE MY NEXT STEPS AND HOW WILL THEY IMPACT MY WORK AS A MENTOR?

POSSIBLE ACTION STEPS

Take the Implicit Association Test to explore your personal bias and reflect on your results.
Attend professional learning opportunities focused on equity issues.
Gently challenge your mentees to keep an equity reflection journal. Try to be proactive rather than reactive: role-play possible challenging scenarios addressing issues of equity with your mentees.

Standard 5: CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION AND ASSESSMENT				MENTOR SELF-ASSESSMENT	
Reflect on the descriptors below and self-assess using the scale to the right.	**Evidence of Descriptors**	**UNAWARE**	**DEVELOPING CAPACITY**	**CONSCIOUSLY COMPETENT**	**FLEXIBLY & FLUENTLY COMPETENT**
I engage my mentees in making connections among standards, curriculum, instruction and assessment.					
I connect my mentees with resources to deepen content knowledge.					
I help my mentees understand and implement research-based best practices.					
I utilize the district's instructional framework and professional standards to articulate best practices and promote instructional improvement.					
I support my mentees in designing and utilizing formative and summative assessments to monitor student learning.					
I engage my mentees in analysis of student-, classroom- and building-level data to inform instruction.					
I engage my mentees in designing lessons that focus on lesson design, differentiation and equitable practices.					

I support my mentees in differentiating instruction to address individual student learning needs.					
I help my mentees integrate appropriate instructional technology to enhance student learning.					

REFLECTING ON MY RESPONSES	
What are some current areas of mentoring strength?	
What are some areas for mentoring growth?	

WHAT ARE MY NEXT STEPS AND HOW WILL THEY IMPACT MY WORK AS A MENTOR?

POSSIBLE ACTION STEPS
Participate in professional learning opportunities alongside your mentees.
Review the content standards and pedagogical best practices for areas in which you mentor, and create a personal learning plan where needed.

Standard 6: CONNECTION TO SYSTEMS AND LEARNING COMMUNITIES				MENTOR SELF-ASSESSMENT	
Reflect on the descriptors below and self-assess using the scale to the right.	**Evidence of Descriptors**	**UNAWARE**	**DEVELOPING CAPACITY**	**CONSCIOUSLY COMPETENT**	**FLEXIBLY & FLUENTLY COMPETENT**
I foster connections for mentees to access resources and professional relationships within the school, district and larger community.					
I encourage mentees to participate in professional learning community opportunities congruent with mentee context.					
I nurture professional inquiry by mentees within learning communities in order to grow practice.					
I advocate for consideration of mentee strengths and needs within the system to result in a collective sense of responsibility (administration, colleagues, etc.).					
I foster mentee reflection around professional standards and the district's instructional framework.					
I support my mentees in establishing student growth goals, aligning instruction, and gathering multiple data sources as evidence of student growth.					

REFLECTING ON MY RESPONSES	
What are some current areas of mentoring strength?	
What are some areas for mentoring growth?	

WHAT ARE MY NEXT STEPS AND HOW WILL THEY IMPACT MY WORK AS A MENTOR?

POSSIBLE ACTION STEPS
Present and share mentoring work with others in the district (school board, district and building administrators, superintendent, and cabinet).
Co-create a list of resources and personnel to connect mentees to others who have expertise in their content area or grade level.
Coordinate support to ensure that efforts are not duplicated and mentees are not overwhelmed by competing programs and agenda.
Utilize the Teacher Leadership Skills Framework Self-Assessment: Systems Thinking.

Mentoring and Confidentiality

Confidentiality

Effective mentoring relationships create a safe environment where novice educators can openly share their struggles, authentically articulate their thinking, and bravely take risks to improve their teaching practice. Trust is essential to creating these mentoring relationships. The development of trust comes through a commitment to confidentiality and is an essential component of mentoring. When the new educator is confident in the mentor's intention and discretion, there is a higher level of honesty and investment in the relationship.

Communicating with Administrators and Colleagues

Mentors need to maintain confidentiality in conversations with administrators and colleagues. Sharing information with others can compromise the trusting relationship that a mentor must have with a new educator. It is even inadvisable to share good things a mentor sees. A new teacher who walks into the staff room and hears the end of a story about his or her effective lesson will wonder if the same stories are being told of those lessons that did not go well.

It is critical that mentors refrain from becoming the go-between for the new educator and other staff members, including the principal. New teachers need to develop their own relationships with colleagues. Likewise, new educators and administrators need to develop a professional relationship in order to maximize the growth of the novice. If the principal communicates concerns to a mentor (in a one-sided conversation), it is effective practice for the mentor to encourage the principal to communicate those concerns to the new teacher as well.

Separating Mentoring from Evaluation

Assisting new educators to understand the evaluation process, use districts' instructional frameworks, and gather evidence of student learning is the shared responsibility of mentors, coaches, colleagues and principals. These are essential for teacher growth (See *Standards for Induct on: Formative Assessment for Teacher Growth*). While mentors *do* use instructional frameworks, observe and give feedback, they *do not* provide information to administrators that might be used in evaluation. The confidential trusting relationship between mentors and educators is necessary for real improvement in performance and must be carefully protected.

While mentors should *not* share information and comments that could influence the administrator's evaluation of the new educator, it is important for mentors and administrators to work in partnership to support the needs of novices. Mentors can address three areas without breaking confidentiality: teachers, time, and topics. For example, "I am meeting with Ms. Smith two times per week and we are focusing on effective transitions." This form of communication keeps the administrator aware of the content and frequency of the work without adding mentor judgment or evaluation of the work. It is also important that the mentor and new educator ask for input from the administrator about areas for growth and a focus for the mentoring work.

When a Mentor Must Break Confidentiality

If a new educator breaks the OSPI "Code of Professional Conduct for Education Practitioners" a mentor *must* share information with an administrator or assist the new educator in doing so. This is the only circumstance when confidentiality should be broken. When in doubt, a mentor should consult with an outside administrator who is not part of the mentor's or new educator's evaluation process regarding possible Code of Conduct violations.

Being Proactive

Mentors, district induction teams and other colleagues can be the "first line of defense" for helping new educators avoid violating the code by taking proactive steps. These might include:

- Ensuring that new educators who handle money understand the school and district policies governing the handling of funds
- Discussing with new educators appropriate use of school district resources, especially technology and the internet
- Talking with new educators about administering state and large-scale tests
- Cautioning new educators about contact with individual students after school, or during school in places where they are not visible to others

Tips for Talking

1) Stick to 3 Ts: Teachers, time, topics

2) Hand it back:

Principal	*How is_____doing?*
Mentor	*We've been working on_____(neutral statement of topic). Is there a specific topic or practice you'd like us to pursue?*
Colleague	*Someone really needs to help the new teacher next door._____'s kids are really out of control.*
Mentor	*I hope you'll considering checking in as a friendly colleague. I'm sure_____would appreciate your support. Learning to teach is such complex work.*

3) State a shared value and set a boundary:

Principal	*I'm wondering what you think of____'s work?*
Mentor	
Option 1	*I know we are both committed to seeing high quality instruction in all classes. I'm sure that you understand that in order to build a trusting relationship with__, I need to maintain confidentiality. If you'd like, I can listen to what you would like us to work on.*
Option 2	*I am working with all new teachers on classroom routines weekly. I know your focus is that all classrooms have effective learning environments. I can't share specifics. I would love to hear topics or areas you would like us to work on.*

Mentoring Educational Staff Associates (ESAs)

ESAs include nurses, psychologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech and language pathologists, audiologists, vision therapists, counselors, and sometimes librarians who work in school settings.

ESAs often work in contexts that are very different from classroom teachers, and their day-to-day work is typically different from that of classroom teachers. Some new ESAs may have limited or no previous professional experience in school settings. They often are sole practitioners in their schools or systems and work across multiple buildings, which may lead to limited opportunities to collaborate with colleagues. In addition, the evaluation process for ESAs is different from classroom teachers. ESAs may be evaluated by someone who has no background in their specific discipline or someone based at district office or another building.

As always, mentoring is one component of a comprehensive induction program to support new staff members. It is the role of the district stakeholders' team to plan this overall induction program for ESAs. (See *Effective Support for New Teachers in Washington State: Standards for Beginning Teacher Induction*)

Mentoring around the unique demands of each ESA job is key. While mentors for ESAs use many of the same skills as mentors for new teachers, they need to be prepared to help new ESAs navigate the logistics and practicalities of their new role. This includes district policies and procedures, especially related to legal matters, and strategies when working as an itinerant. Mentors also support ESAs in connecting and collaborating with others, exploring professional practice, and engaging in reflection to improve.

In some cases, mentors may face the challenge of having different roles or being unfamiliar with their mentees' school or context. Skillful mentors use learning-focused conversations to surface and clarify what new educators understand, to guide problem solving, and to determine when to consult with outside resources for additional support.

Communication can be a challenge for ESAs and their mentors, due to after-school meetings, different work sites, and limited or no access to substitutes. These teams need support from district and building administrators. This could be in the form of schedules tailored to support mentor team time or release time for site visits and meetings. As with any mentoring relationship, mentors have the responsibility to regularly connect with their mentees. They will need to think creatively to make opportunities to connect and should consider using technology to foster regular communication.

While mentoring is related to both teaching and counseling, it entails a unique and sophisticated set of learned skills and dispositions. All mentors benefit from initial and on-going training to increase their capacity to grow the professional practice of another.

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