



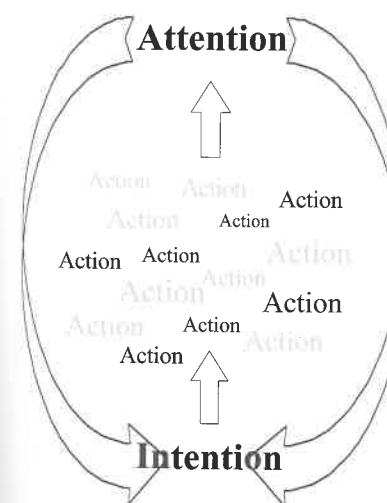
Section 2

Learning-Focused Interactions: A Continuum

MENTORS continually attend to relationship and learning as closely entwined goals of the mentoring process. Skillful mentors intentionally provide challenge, as well as emotional and cognitive support, for protégés. They do so by helping their new colleagues develop identity as teachers, through an expanding technical knowledge base and enhanced instructional repertoire.

Skilled mentors support novices in learning from experience, helping them to calibrate future action with emerging insights. Fostering trust and attending to the relationship are critical to creating the emotional safety necessary for learning. Being clear about intention and behaving congruently signals a safe climate for thinking, risk-taking, and problem-solving. Our intention always is to create this climate while at the same time providing focus. Thus, the learning focus might involve planning, reflecting, exploring information, or engaging in problem-solving.

Intention-Driven Action



An environment, and a relationship, that is conducive to learning must provide emotional support for the complex cognitive tasks of examining and improving teaching practice. The choices we make and the actions we take are increasingly effective when they are consciously connected to clear intentions. Mindfulness of the intention to produce and support thoughtfulness about practice is an important function of a learning-focused relationship. Skillful mentors are conscious of this intention in their interactions with protégés.

When this intention is clear and present, mentors focus their full attention on cues from the protégé. They direct attention externally to signals from the protégé and internally to survey their own mental and emotional processes. The skillful mentor attends carefully to the external cues, both verbal and nonverbal, that signal a protégé's inner processes, both feeling and thinking. Intonation, gesture, facial expressions, posture and muscle tension, as well as specific things a colleague might say, provide a feedback loop for determining a mentoring stance, choosing an access point, and entering into the conversation and the protégé's world through skillful communication. The challenge for mentors is that this communication is interactive—driven by the responses of the protégé—and not a predetermined script.

For learning-focused mentors, this calibrating process operates both in the moment and over time. For example, during a reflecting conversation, a mentor notices her protégé appears to be anxious, so she chooses a supportive move, rather than a challenging question. In addition, paying attention over time creates a developmental perspective, rather than an episodic one. For example, as a mentor listens to her protégé describe a lesson plan, she is comparing previous descriptions and listening for

indications of growth. Assuming there is increased precision and sophistication in the protégé's thinking, the mentor may choose to ask more challenging questions. However, if the planning conversation is vague and unclear, the mentor may choose to probe for specificity regarding student goals, learning outcomes and indicators of success.

Learning-focused mentors also monitor their own internal processes to calibrate, modify and align their actions with their intention to maintain relationship and produce learning. For example, a judgmental response might occur to a mentor listening to a protégé's description of a lesson plan. By attending to the reaction, the mentor has a decision point. In some instances, it might be useful not to share the judgment. In others, it might be helpful. The pattern we suggest to mentors is one of 'Whether, When and How': the first decision is *whether* to share the judgment at all. If the choice is yes, then the subsequent choices of *when* and *how* offer an array of possibilities that align with a learning-focused intention.

TABLE 2.1 DIMENSIONS OF ATTENTION

INTERNAL (ATTENDING TO SELF)	EXTERNAL (ATTENDING TO OTHER(S))	IN-THE-MOMENT (IMMEDIATE SITUATION)	OVER TIME (DEVELOPMENTAL LENS)
- body awareness of breathing patterns muscle tension posture, gesture - emotional state awareness of tension fatigue confusion - internal dialogue awareness of intention judgment stance choice points - toolkit use of pausing/silence intonation response patterns of pause, paraphrase, inquire or probe	- non-verbal cues awareness of breathing patterns muscle tension posture, gesture - emotional state awareness of tension fatigue confusion distress - linguistic elements awareness of intonation inflection word choice metaphor - content/context listening for problem frame perception of issues and perspectives	Attending to: CHANGES IN GOAL ORIENTATION from isolated skills to clustered, nested outcomes WAYS OF DESCRIBING CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS from - literal details - individual ideas - specific events to - inferential reasoning categories - generalizations and pattern recognition SOURCES OF DECISION MAKING from external guides to internal guidelines TYPES OF QUESTIONS from self-oriented concerns to curiosity about practice and principles ELEMENTS OF RELATIONSHIP from friendly associates to trusted colleagues	

To maximize effectiveness, these choice points require that a mentor develop a wide repertoire of specific actions, as well as options for relating with protégés. We describe these options as stances and position them along a continuum—moving from most to least directive.

A Continuum of Learning-Focused Interaction

Skilled mentors operate across a continuum of interaction to support learning for their colleagues. Within learning-focused conversations, they flex between consulting, collaborating and coaching stances to develop their protégés' capacities to reflect upon practice, generate ideas and increase professional self-awareness. The ultimate aims of these interactions are to support self-directed learning by protégés and enhance their capacities for engaging in productive collegial relationships.

Versatility across this continuum supports response patterns that are developmentally and contextually appropriate for meeting the learning needs of novices. At times it may be most appropriate to consult; that is, to offer counsel and advice about processes, protocols, choices and actions. The mentor as consultant draws upon her own repertoire, experiences and expertise to advocate and offer perspectives and options. Alternatively, it may be most productive to collaborate; that is, to participate as equals in planning, reflecting and problem-solving. In this stance, the mentor and protégé share the work of idea generation and analysis. At other times, coaching, or the nonjudgmental mediation of thinking and decision-making, is the most productive option for supporting learning and growth.

In each stance, trust and rapport, as well as commonly defined goals and clarity of outcomes, are critical to success. Skillful application of communication patterns across the continuum of learning-focused interaction encourages the protégé to learn from and with a mentor, and to generate his or her own learning.

One way to think about these outcomes is to imagine the colleague you would like to have teaching next door to you. With this in mind, create a list of the knowledge, skills and dispositions of this ideal neighbor. Then, note the various approaches you might take to help your neighbor develop these resources. You will most likely find yourself crafting lists of ways to physically and emotionally support your protégé, ways to intellectually challenge your protégé, and ways to model and support a growing vision as a professional teacher.

Three Stances: Consulting, Collaborating, Coaching

Two major attributes define the stance a mentor is taking in any learning-focused conversation. One factor is the way in which information emerges during the exchange. The other factor is the source of any gap analysis regarding such elements as planned goals and actual outcomes or teacher actions and student behaviors. Within a consulting stance, the mentor produces or supplies the information and identifies and offers expert analysis of any gaps. Within a collaborative stance, the mentor and protégé share idea development and gap analysis. Finally, within a coaching stance, the protégé produces the information and analyzes the

CONSULT • from the Latin 'consultare', meaning to give or take counsel. This moves beyond simple advice giving. To offer counsel as a mentor is to provide the 'why', 'what' and 'how' of your thinking.

COLLABORATE • from the Latin 'collaborare', meaning to work together. As a mentor, this means creating a space for true, shared idea generation and reflection with attention to one's own impulse control, so the protégé has room and an invitation to fully participate as an equal.

COACH • from the French 'coche', the German 'kutsche', and the Hungarian, 'kocsi', after Kocs, a town in Hungary where fine carriages were built. A mentor as a coach is a vehicle for transporting a valued colleague from one place to another. It is the protégé's journey. The mentor/coach is a guide and support system.

gaps as the mentor paraphrases and inquires to enlarge perspectives and clarify details.



To Consult

The intention of the consulting stance is to share vital information about policies and procedures, learning and learners, curriculum and content and standards and effective practices. The consulting mentor provides information in two important categories: information about how the district and school operates, and information about professional practice.

The first category includes the procedural expectations of the district and school, including legal and policy guidelines for matters like discipline and special education. In the consulting stance, the mentor might share information about policies for getting approval for and conducting fieldtrips, and how to manage bureaucratic tasks such as completing personnel forms and ordering materials.

The second category includes information about the craft of teaching including such things as; establishing classroom routines, developing a repertoire of instructional strategies and implementing curriculum guidelines. This information offers protégés opportunities for making informed choices and decisions as they implement these ideas and suggestions in their classrooms.

In addition to sharing technical information, the skilled mentor-as-consultant also shares principles of practice in the 'Why' of the actions and options. This intentional display of habits-of-mind models professional practice at its highest level and offers a vision of growth for the protégé. As protégés internalize principles of learning and teaching, these resources help them to develop approaches and solutions on their own.

Some Strategies to Use When Consulting

A useful template to guide mentoring practice is a pattern of sharing the 'What', 'Why' and 'How' of an idea or suggestion. For example, the mentor might say, "Here's what I pay attention to in situations like this; here's why that is important; and here are some ways to do it." The mentor then elaborates on the variables to be considered and the reasons for the final choice of action. When a mentor connects a specific

Some Strategies to Use When Consulting

- Think Aloud about your own 'What & Whys'
- Offer a Menu
- Produce an Idea Bank
- Conduct a Model (labeling the critical attributes)
- Review Tapes of Teaching
- Reference & Highlight Current Research

THINK ALOUD

strategy to the broader principles of best practice, the protégé learns to apply the principle as well as the individual idea. When a mentor shares the thinking process that leads to a solution, the protégé benefits from a deeper understanding of the process of problem-solving. Just as important, thinking aloud debunks the myth that experienced teachers have all the answers and no longer struggle with the complexity of decision-making.

OFFER A MENU

If our intention in mentoring is to increase a colleague's capacity to make decisions, we must offer opportunity for decision-making. However, there are times when a novice has little experience to draw upon. At these times, it is useful to offer a menu of ideas; we suggest at least three. In this way, the protégé is still making a choice, but has the support of the mentor's experience. To increase the learning challenge, once a choice has been made, ask the protégé to elaborate upon the decision. The capacity to articulate the criteria for decision-making is a hallmark of expert problem-solvers.

PRODUCE AN IDEA BANK

Similar to offering a menu, an Idea Bank also provides the support of the mentor's experience. However, while the menu is a spontaneous generation of suggestions, the Idea Bank is created proactively. In many cases, we can anticipate the needs of our protégés. For example, Idea Banks relating to establishing classroom routines will always be welcome early in the school year, or later on if management issues indicate the need for them. To keep it learning-focused, however, it is important to offer the Idea Bank when the protégé sees the need for it. Otherwise, it remains in the category of good advice that may or may not be appreciated or applied.

CONDUCT A MODEL

Demonstration is a powerful way to communicate effective practice. A model lesson conducted in the mentor or the protégé's classroom produces a clear example that is specific and tailored to the protégé's needs. The experience is more powerful when the mentor focuses the protégé's attention prior to the model. For example, ask a protégé to pay attention to the behavior management strategies, or the teacher's response choices, or whatever observable moves are relevant. Or, create a more formal observation strategy, such as a checklist or script tape for review and reflection after the lesson is completed.

REVIEW TAPES OF TEACHING

Videotape is a medium for slowing down, rewinding and repeating very complex series of actions. Viewing a tape of masterful teaching offers an opportunity to closely examine effective practices. The tape might be one of many manufactured for learning purposes, or created at the school site for sharing specific instructional practices that are aligned with school goals. While viewing a tape from a consultative stance, mentors label the critical attributes that make the practices effective, or even stop the tape to focus the protégé's attention or ask for a prediction or cause-effect relationship before going on.

Referring to professional books and journals, or citing information from recent professional development offerings models the life-long learning journey of all learning-focused practitioners. This practice also plants seeds for a protégé's professional studies and grounds any suggestions that might be offered in concrete research.

To Collaborate

In a collaborating stance, the mentor and protégé co-develop the information pool. This is often the case once a problem has been framed or clarified and solution approaches appear. A collaborative interaction involves shared analysis, problem-solving, decision-making and reflection. The reciprocal nature of collaboration supports mutual learning, mutual growth and mutual respect. Each party participates, alternately listening, paraphrasing and inquiring towards shared understandings and productive outcomes. Ideas develop through brainstorming, elaboration, and exploration of external resources. Prioritization, evaluation and, ultimately, implementation might be the function of each colleague, or the one most involved with or responsible for the event or plan.

This stance usually arises spontaneously as an outgrowth of the mentor taking either a consulting or coaching stance to help frame a problem or planning task; or once a central issue emerges, during a reflecting conversation. Careful pausing and paraphrasing by the mentor opens up the emotional and thinking space in which this stance flourishes. The use of inclusive pronouns, such as 'us', 'our' and 'we' or 'we're' also sends a subtle invitation to the protégé to join this stance. After paraphrasing, "so we have a list of seven items to think about . . .," the mentor can then shift to coaching or consulting based on her sense of which stance might be most appropriate.

Adopting a collaborative stance signals respect and the expectation of a collegial relationship. It is important to resist our own impulsivity to jump in and do the bulk of the analysis and thinking. Pausing to allow protégés time to think and prompting and encouraging idea production communicates our belief in their personal and professional capacities.

Some Strategies to Use When Collaborating

The most fundamental collaborative action is the mutual generation of information. Remaining nonjudgmental by applying the process of brainstorming keeps the exchange squarely in a collaborative stance. Among other things, we generate possible reasons or causes for a particular circumstance or event, a variety of ideas, potential solutions to a presenting problem or interventions that might be productive for an individual or group of students.

REFERENCE CURRENT RESEARCH

Some Strategies to Use When Collaborating

- Brainstorm
 - Reasons
 - Ideas
 - Solutions
 - Interventions
- Co-Plan
- Co-Teach
- Become Study Buddies
- Conduct Action Research
- Explore Case Studies

BRAINSTORM

ENGAGE IN CO-PLANNING AND CO-TEACHING

Working together to create a lesson or a unit of study, and extending that activity by teaching together are natural expressions of a collaborative relationship. As learning-focused mentors, however, we must be sure to include protégés fully in the process, creating a true collaboration.

BECOME STUDY BUDDIES

A mentor and protégé might become Study Buddies, choosing to learn together about a new instructional methodology or reading current articles on classroom related research. This common focus provides a launching point for creating new ideas and trying new strategies. The learning aspect is deepened when we identify and share feedback about our mutual experimentation and set new goals for learning and sharing.

DESIGN AND CONDUCT ACTION RESEARCH

Extending a Study Buddy relationship into a more formal action research project deepens the learning potential and encourages a spirit of conscious curiosity about our practice. In addition, instilling a norm of experimentation early in a novice's career is a powerful way to facilitate a professional vision as a life-long learner.

EXPLORE CASE STUDIES

Case studies provide a context for dialogue about practice. The open-ended nature of most cases offers a practice arena to consider the complexities of teaching. Exploring a case study from a collaborative stance can be an intriguing learning experience for both partners.

To Coach

A coach supports a colleague's thinking, problem-solving and goal clarification. The outcomes of the coaching stance are to increase the protégé's expertise in planning, reflecting on practice, and instructional decision-making. We draw from the work of Arthur Costa and Robert Garmston (2002) whose model, Cognitive Coaching, defines this stance. Cognitive Coaching addresses the underlying thinking that drives the observable behaviors of teaching. With a focus on cognitive and related emotional operations, skillful coaches guide colleagues in accessing internal resources and developing capacities for self-directed learning.

In a coaching stance, the mentor supports the protégé's idea production by inquiring, paraphrasing, pausing and probing for details. These inquiries are not focused solely on the 'What's and How's' of planned actions or past events. They also focus on the 'Whys' of choices, possibilities and connections. The intention is to continually enlarge the frame to take in a bigger and bigger picture as the protégé's professional confidence increases. The ultimate aim of this stance is to develop the internal resources of self-coaching for the protégé. Over time, the patterns of a mentor's inquiry within templates for planning, problem-solving and reflecting transfer to the protégé's inner voice so he or she can be guided by this professional self-talk.

Some Strategies to Use When Coaching

- Maintain a Nonjudgmental Stance
- Inquire . . . about
 - Successes
 - Concerns
 - Whatever your colleague brings up
- Reflect on Goals

Some Strategies to Use When Coaching

Coaching is, by definition, a nonjudgmental interaction. The only judgments are those made by the protégé as he or she plans, reflects, problem-solves and makes appropriate choices.

Ask about successes, concerns or whatever your colleague wants or needs to discuss, using open-ended questions designed to produce cognitive complexity. Questions with a wide response range encourage thinking and invite choice. (See more on inquiry in Section Four, Learning-Focused Verbal Tools.)

Engage in conversations focusing on the protégé's learning interests and goals. Interactions that are goal-directed will be relevant and rigorous, balancing support and challenge by marking successes and articulating new arenas for learning. (See more on reflective conversations in Section Three, Maximizing Time and Attention.)

Keep in mind that many strategies, including several of those described above, can be adjusted to align with each stance on the continuum. For example, student work samples can be explored from each of the three stances, depending upon the mentor's assessment of need. From a consultative stance, the mentor can point out what she notices or recognizes in a set of student's work, given her expert perspective. The conversation can move to a more collaborative stance by brainstorming strategies that would be most likely to produce particular qualities in student work. Or, she can shift to a coaching stance by asking the protégé to find similar examples in other student's work, or determine some cause-effect relationships regarding student performance.

Flexibility in Stance

Expert mentors listen for and note the ways in which protégés are framing problems and concerns. In general, they enter the conversation in a soft coaching stance, somewhere between collaborating and coaching. Until you know the other person's perception of the problem, you usually do not know which approach to take or what problem-solving resources the protégé is bringing to the table. Often, clarifying the question, in and of itself, is a major breakthrough and leads to insights for the protégé.

In a problem-solving situation, problem framing is as important as solution generation. If you continually jump to advice giving, it can build dependency and can, over time, establish a one-up, one-down relationship. Problem finding and problem clarification are hallmarks of expert thinking. Growth oriented mentors must remember to keep an eye on the bigger picture while responding to the issues and emotions of the present moment.

MAINTAIN A
NONJUDGMENTAL STANCE

INQUIRE

REFLECT ON GOALS

In a reflecting conversation, the perceptions and perspectives of the protégé are initially much more important than anything you think might have happened. This is true whether you were present for the event or not. If you have observed a lesson, this is especially so. Your comments, feedback or suggestions for improvement all need a context in which to be heard. The context always initially belongs to the protégé. It is, after all, the protégé's world and worldview you are entering.

Once an issue has been named and framed, the mentor must then choose the most appropriate stance for approaching the situation. This choice depends upon the knowledge, skills and emotional resources that the protégé brings to the situation. The choice also depends on the knowledge, skills and emotional resources of the mentor. Novice mentors often leap to advice giving because they lack repertoire for operating within the coaching and collaborating stances. They also often lack repertoire within the consulting stance, skipping over the problem framing and the naming of principles of practice, moving directly to "Here's how I do it."

If the protégé appears stumped and lacks repertoire for contributing ideas, the mentor then switches stances. As a consultant, the mentor might propose some ways to think about a problem or concern, offer options for action and then flex to a coaching stance to help the protégé consider and reflect upon the options and appropriate steps to take when clear choices emerge. By attending carefully to the protégé's thinking and own idea generation, a mentor can calibrate his or her actions and decide whether to remain in a coaching stance or flex to collaborating or back to consulting.

At other points, the mentor might be in a coaching or collaborating stance and it becomes obvious that the protégé is unable to generate ideas or options. The aware mentor then flexes to a consulting stance to produce information and perspectives. With this refined third point established, he or she can then slide back to collaborating or coaching; whichever is now most appropriate. This pattern of flexing across the continuum continues as needed throughout the conversation.

TABLE 2.3 A CONTINUUM OF INTERACTION

I N T E R A C T I O N S	CONSULTING	COLLABORATING	COACHING
	To share information, advice and technical resources about policies and procedures; learning, learners, curriculum and content; and effective practices. To establish standards for professional practice.	To co-develop information, ideas, and approaches to problems. To model a collegial relationship as a standard for professional practice.	To support the protégé's idea production, instructional decision-making, and ability to reflect on practice. To increase the ability of the protégé to self-coach and become a self-directed learner.
A C T I O N S	• Providing resource materials and references to research. • Demonstrating processes and procedures informally and through model lessons. • Offering a menu of options to consider. • Providing introductions to building and district resource people as needed. • Offering expert commentary on student work samples. • Sharing principles of practice by elaborating the 'What', 'Why' and 'How' of proposed ways of thinking about issues and proposed solutions. • Framing presenting problems within wider contexts and providing expert ways to approach issues and concerns. • Illuminating principles of practice that guide choices.	• Brainstorming ideas and options. • Co-planning and co-teaching lessons. • Sharing and exchanging resource materials. • Planning experiments to try simultaneously in each of your classrooms, and comparing notes on results. • Jointly analyzing student work samples. • Joining the protégé to offer support and 'translate' when building and district resource people are there to provide technical assistance. • Jointly noting problem frames and generating alternative ways to think about issues and concerns. • Alternating paraphrasing and summarizing oneself with encouraging the protégé to paraphrase and summarize developing ideas and understandings. • Alternating offering ideas with encouraging the protégé to contribute ideas.	• Maintaining a nonjudgmental stance with full attention to the emotional and mental processes of the protégé. • Inquiring, paraphrasing and probing for specificity to surface the protégé's perspectives, perceptions, issues and concerns. • Inquiring, paraphrasing and probing for specificity to support the protégé's planning, problem-solving and reflecting on practice. • Inquiring, paraphrasing and probing for specificity to support the protégé's analysis of student work samples. • Inquiring, paraphrasing and probing for specificity to increase the protégé's self-knowledge and awareness as a teacher and as a professional educator.

TABLE 2.3 (CONTINUED)

C U E S	CONSULTING	COLLABORATING	COACHING
	• Using a credible voice. • Sitting up straighter or leaning back a bit from the table. • Using the pronoun 'I' as in, "Here's how I think about issues like that" • Using bookmarking phrases for emphasis such as: "it's important to . . .," "keep in mind that . . .," "pay attention to . . ."	• Using a confident, approachable voice. • Sitting side-by-side, focused on the common problem. • Using the pronouns 'we' and 'us'. • Using phrases like, "Let's think about . . .," "Let's generate . . .," "How might we . . .?"	• Using an approachable voice. • Attending fully and maintaining eye contact. • Using the pronoun 'you' as in, "So you're concerned about . . ." • When responding, using a pattern of pausing, paraphrasing and inquiring to open thinking; or probing for specificity to focus thinking. • Framing invitational questions to support thinking such as: "What might be some ways to . . .?", "What are some options that you are considering?" and "What are some of the connections you are making between . . .?"
C A U T I O N S	If overused, the consulting stance can build dependency on the mentor for problem-solving. Advice without explanation of the underlying choice points and guiding principles usually does not develop a protégé abilities to transfer learning to new settings or to generate novel solutions on their own.	Mentors need to carefully monitor their own actions when they enter the collaborative stance. Their own enthusiasm and excitement for the topic or issues may override the intention to co-create ideas and possibilities. False collaboration then becomes disguised consultation.	The coaching stance assumes that the other party has resources for idea generation. If this is not the case, pursuing this stance can lead to frustration on the part of protégés. You cannot coach out of someone what is not in them.

Mediational Mentoring: Establishing the Third Point

As a growth agent, a primary intention of learning-focused mentors is mediating another's thinking. Skillful mentors mediate a protégé's thinking first by establishing a focus for the conversation and then by applying their verbal and non-verbal toolkit to stimulate thinking. Mentors mediate thinking by asking open-ended questions, providing data, facilitating the acquisition of information, and strengthening cause-effect relationships, all the while moving their protégés towards increased confidence and self-reliance. We borrow the term mediating from the work of Reuven Feuerstein (1991), an Israeli psychologist who developed the concept of cognitive mediation. For mentors, cognitive mediation is a three-point interaction between the mentor (as mediator), the protégé and a focus, or third point. The third point can be external and observable or internal and referential. For example, external focus points might include a work product, such as a lesson plan, samples of student work, or observational data. It can involve a demonstration or the observation of an event, such as a model lesson, a videotape, or a specific student's behavior. The third point can also be referential, that is the focus is a reference to something that is not physically present, such as a description of a problem, an emotional state, or a perception of a student's behavior.

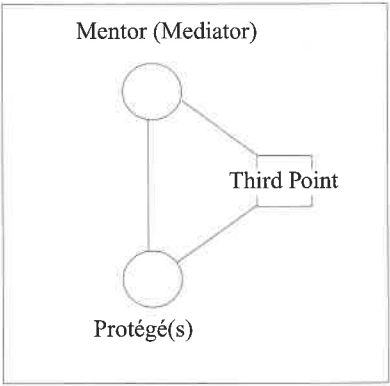


TABLE 2.2 PROVIDING A THIRD POINT: SOME EXAMPLES

INTERNAL	EXTERNAL
• A recollection or description • A personal observation • A statement of concern • A perception of a problem • A statement of value or belief • A judgment	• Samples of student work • Rubric defining excellence • A lesson plan • A curriculum guide • Standards descriptions (content, student work or effective teaching) • Test results • Individualized Education Plan(s) • Annual Reviews • Parent letters, communications

Mediation can occur prior to, during, and/or following any experience. Skillful mentors intentionally guide the protégé's experience, through questions, highlights and references. Mentors also use emphasis to clarify their purpose and importance, to sort significant principles or patterns from less significant details, and to create opportunities for their proteges to build and construct understanding.

Mentors facilitate thinking, or mediate, from any stance. Imagine, for instance, a mentor and protégé are meeting to discuss expository writing.

They are reviewing the protégé's fourth grade students' writing samples. The mentor enters the conversation in a coaching stance, focusing on one student's work.

Mentor: *"What are some things you're noticing about this student's work as it compares to the writing standards?"*

Protégé: *"Well, I think the writing has improved, but I'm not really sure whether it meets the standards or not."*

At this point, the mentor might take a consulting stance, sharing what she notices about the work and making specific references to the writing standards. She might then use a similar pattern with another student sample. In this way, the novice has several concrete examples that clarify and calibrate the standards as well a model of a more sophisticated lens for examining student writing. As they continue the conversation, the mentor might then shift to a more collaborative stance, suggesting that they brainstorm ideas for lessons that will help the all of the protégé's students increase their writing skills.

Mediating Non-Verbally

Physically referencing the third point in a space off to the side between the parties provides a psychologically safe place for information, concerns and problems. This subtle use of space and gesture depersonalizes ideas. It is now not the mentor's information or problem, the colleague's information or problem nor even 'our' information or problem. It is simply information or a problem about which and with which to think. Information placed as a third point frees the colleague to accept, modify or reject the idea as an idea. Without this subtle, but critical distancing, the protégé might feel trapped in a web of relationship and have difficulty freely accepting or rejecting the idea, for fear of hurt feelings. Thus, placement of the conversational focus creates a triangle, either literally or referentially, keeping the conversational container psychologically safe.

Nonverbal tools, such as posture, gesture and voice tone are all subtle indicators of the stance we are taking. In a consulting stance, the posture tends to be a bit more upright, leaning back slightly from the conversation. The mentor's voice tends to be less rhythmic and more credible with a narrower range of modulation than the coaching voice. This is the posture and voice of experience and wisdom. This is also the voice and stance that uses the pronoun 'I' as in "Here's how I've learned to think about issues like that."

In a collaborating stance, the posture is metaphorically and often physically side-by-side. The voice tone is collegial, approachably confident, with a blend of 'we' and 'you' pronoun types.

In a coaching stance, there is greater eye contact, closer proximity, leaning in and more rhythmic speech patterns. The voice is approachable and invitational. This is the posture and voice of inquiry, creating a psychologically safe space for thinking and reflecting. The dominant pronoun is 'you', as in "So you're noticing some patterns in your classroom that seem to be working."

Skillful mentors attend to the signals of their protégés to determine their choice of learning-focused stance. By attending to the protégé's verbal and nonverbal behaviors as they generate ideas and respond to inquiries, the aware mentor can calibrate the effectiveness of a given stance and know whether and when to move along the continuum. Our colleague, Barbara Lawson, suggests the following categories for organizing these important behavioral cues.

Learning-Focused Mentors Attend To:

THE LANGUAGE OF THE TEACHER'S GOALS FOR LESSONS AND UNITS. Do goals adhere strictly to the teachers' guide? Do they contain longer-term outcomes such as problem-solving skills, or the ability to write with an audience in mind? Does a given lesson connect to other lessons and larger contexts?

THE DETAILS AND LEVEL OF SOPHISTICATION OF STRATEGIES. How extensive and with what degree of nuance does the protégé understand the strategies to be employed? Is a given strategy option the only piece of repertoire that the protégé knows for a given situation, or is it one of a number of options to be considered?

THE DEPTH OF CONTENT KNOWLEDGE. How well does the protégé understand the knowledge, skills and concepts being explored by the lesson or unit being considered? To what degree does the protégé understand the connections between ideas in the curriculum? To what degree does the protégé understand and remember what preceded and what follows a specific lesson?

THE ABILITY TO RECOGNIZE AND GENERATE CHOICE POINTS. To what degree is the protégé able to apply 'if-then' types of thinking during planning processes? How flexible is the teacher during lessons? Is the protégé willing and able to abandon or modify lesson plans that are not working productively? When reflecting, is the protégé able to reconsider choices and envision other possibilities and outcomes?

THE SOPHISTICATION AND DEPTH OF EVIDENCE AND DATA CITED. When planning and reflecting, how extensive are the student learning data upon which the protégé draws? Are data and student work used as a resource for planning and for reflecting on results? In what ways are the data being used?

THE LENGTH OF SENTENCES. What is the degree of elaboration of observations, strategy descriptions and reports of actions taken? How able is the protégé to describe thinking processes, choice points and outcomes?

THE VERBAL EMPHASIS. What words and phrases seem most important to the protégé? Are any words or phrases repeated?

THE NONVERBAL EMPHASIS. What gestures are used to emphasize key points in association with tonal emphasis and verbal repetition? Are any gestures repeated?

Versatility Matters

Expert mentoring requires a repertoire of knowledge and skills for engaging protégés in productive formal and informal conversations. These professional resources provide the foundation for operating along a continuum as we interact with colleagues. Having access to one's repertoire opens up possibilities for successful mentoring experiences and offers options for consideration when a given approach is not working. Knowing what we know and don't know helps us to identify gaps in our repertoire so we can consciously expand our own capacities as growth agents.

Versatility matters. In any given conversation, any one of the three stances may be appropriate. By reading the verbal and nonverbal cues of the colleague with whom we are engaged and responding accordingly, we can then flex along the continuum to support learning and growth. This flexibility in stance is the key to successful mentoring relationships. If our goal is to increase our protégé's capacities for self-direction, we need to continually offer opportunities to think, reflect and problem-solve within the flow of the real work of learning to teach. Our ability to continually anticipate, monitor and flex our stance across the continuum of interaction is a vital component in developing and maintaining learning-focused relationships.