



Center for the  
**SUPPORT** of  
*Beginning*  
**TEACHERS**

*Supporting New Teachers*

**TIPS FOR MENTORS**



## *A Message from the Dean*

Welcome to a new and timely publication for mentors published by Western's Center for the Support of Beginning Teachers. *Supporting Beginning Teachers: Tips for Mentors* is a collection of mentoring tips posted by Western North Carolina e-mentors participating in the Center's online support program.

*Tips for Mentors* invites us to explore the challenges facing beginning teachers as they transition from university preparation programs to the classroom. Through suggestions, strategies, and stories, mentors share their dedication, commitment, and overwhelming desire to make a difference in the lives of beginning teachers. This is a resource that can be revisited often by both experienced and beginning teachers as issues and events surrounding planning, classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibilities unfold.

Western's College of Education and Allied Professions, Center for the Support of Beginning Teachers and school partners are committed to providing a variety of opportunities for mentors to network, collaborate, and discover strategies to more effectively support new teachers. The children of western North Carolina will be the beneficiaries.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "A. Michael Dougherty". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

A Michael Dougherty

# SUPPORTING NEW TEACHERS: **TIPS FOR MENTORS**

Submitted by e-mentors participating in Western Carolina University's Center for the Support of Beginning Teachers 2006-2007 online support program:

*Alleghany County*

*Cherokee County*

*Clay County*

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## Introduction

Along with being awarded the title of “mentor” teacher comes a host of responsibilities and duties. Each day, mentors not only directly and indirectly affect novice teachers, but they also affect their students, colleagues, and other stakeholders invested in the profession. Beginning teachers seek the knowledge of mentor teachers concerning content, curriculum, classroom management, etc. But at times these same beginning teachers need a counselor and motivator to reinforce their performance in the classroom, an ear to listen to descriptions of lessons that went well and others not so well, and a wise colleague to offer assurance that they are not alone in their struggles.

*Supporting New Teachers: Tips for Mentors* is a collection of mentoring tips submitted by e-mentors participating in Western’s Center for the Support of Beginning Teachers’ online support program during the 2006-2007 school year. Building on the work of Catherine Le Maistre and Lauren Small at McGill University, e-mentors used Charlotte Danielson’s *Framework for Teaching* (2007) as an “organizing structure” and posted information, ideas, and strategies in one of four domains: Planning and Preparation, Classroom Environment, Instruction, and Professional Responsibilities. A fifth category was created for items that did not naturally fit in any of these domains.

Although the tips in this guide were provided by mentor teachers from various grades and subject areas, one common goal bridges the gap: to produce quality educators who not only understand and value their professional responsibilities but who will make the transition from novices to master teachers and, in turn, one day become the mentors for new teachers in their schools.

Whether this is your first year as a mentor or your twentieth, as you read these tips, you will quickly be reminded of the many trials facing new teachers that you yourself have experienced. Most importantly, the strategies, advice, and words of encouragement provided by these mentors will help guide you in your journey as a mentor.

*Janice Holt*

### Works Cited:

- Le Maistre, C. and Small, L. *Learning from each other: Beginning teachers’ advice to their peers*. Unpublished paper.
- Danielson, C. (2007). *Enhancing professional practice: A framework for teaching*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.



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## Planning and Preparation

As a beginning teacher, just the thought of a group of unfamiliar faces walking into the classroom on the first day of the school year can be overwhelming. Your mind is filled with a multitude of thoughts and questions: How will I ensure that my lessons are engaging? How will I make sure that my lessons align with the standard course of study? And the question that creates the most distress: How will I get my students from point A to point B to prepare them for the next level? All of these questions have one simple answer—organization. From long-term planning to day-to-day planning, organization must occur in order for a teacher to stay prepared and focused on what is best for his/her students and to eliminate stress in his/her own life. The following are tips and strategies for planning and preparation to share with the beginning teacher you mentor.

### ***Organizing: Day-to-Day***

#### *Trudi Gunter—3/5 E-mentor*

Planning is vital to being a good teacher. I can feel it deep down in my bones when I am not comfortable with my curriculum and I have not taken the time to plan every detail. Mentors need to encourage new teachers to take the time to write out lesson plans. I include an extra column for extensions and review. This keeps my day running smoothly. I never have idle time, and my students are on task the majority of time.

#### *Gianna Carson—MG E-mentor*

I suppose what I think is one of the most important aspects of planning is to have a pacing guide that you stick to but are willing to stray from if necessary. (For instance, if the students do not understand a concept and something must be repeated.) Also, I think it is important to have daily lesson plans that are linked to the SCOS and show classroom objectives; this will help keep things on track. It seems easiest for me to keep all this information, along with activities, in a notebook for each of my major strands. Be sure to share pacing guides and your planning strategies with the beginning teacher you mentor.

#### *Dianne Chadwick—HS E-mentor*

For those of us on the block in high school, strong planning and careful pacing are critical, so a mentor needs to offer plenty of support to a beginning teacher in this area. Planning and pacing should be at the top of the agenda in the first meetings that a mentor and beginning teacher have. Most schools have copies of pacing guides so the beginning teacher does not have to re-invent the wheel. Therefore, the mentor's role is to guide the new teacher through the planning/pacing process, sharing his/her own plans and helping the new teacher find the necessary resources, materials, and texts he/she will need.

*Kathy Stamey—HS E-mentor*

I always try to over-plan in case things go quickly. As a new teacher, I thought there would come a time when planning would become obsolete. Boy, was I ever wrong. I continue to write down everything I plan to do for each class that I teach—important to share with beginning teachers.

*Jenny Lytton—HS E-mentor*

My biggest piece of advice is to help beginning teachers organize all of the resources that they make and find from other places. Taking the time to manage these resources may seem like a chore at the time, but it will make their life easier and easier each year.

*Tiffany Smith—HS E-mentor*

It's important to let my mentee know that anytime I try a new activity, I have a back-up activity ready just in case. I still have to remind myself to gather a few extra resources and plans for the unexpected. I've had plenty of activities that I thought were going to turn out spectacular but produced completely different results. You can't just say, "We'll try again tomorrow." You have to take advantage of class time. Over-planning is a great skill to learn.

*Patricia Hembree—WCU SCI*

The number one tip that I would like to contribute is to schedule the mentoring time. I would urge new mentors to hold that time/day as an immovable object! NEVER change it! Too often, I let my too-full schedule here at the university interfere with my mentoring time. Next time....

*Erin Tapley—WCU ART*

Long can be the journey from the "written down" lesson plan to the mouth that enunciates the lesson to the students. Even if it's written down and just inches away, I have seen many new teachers forget to do things that were rather crucial to the meaning of the lesson (and I've done that too).

Encourage beginning teachers to boil the lesson plan down to three things they must cover in class. Write these objectives on the board or at least on a sticky note that they can even stick to themselves so that their students will keep reminding them that they look funny, and thus, they'll be reminded to make their key points.

## **Organizing: Year-to-Year**

*Gianna Carson—MG E-mentor*

Show your mentee the method you use to organize your yearly plans. I keep notebooks and/or folders with everything I do so the next year I can improve my plans. I also write on my lesson plans if something went well or did not go well so I can fix it the next semester or year.

*Knox Hardin—HS E-mentor*

I show beginning teachers how I work with my binders. When I began planning with the “binder” technique, I would reflect about what worked well or needed to be modified. I did this with a “red” pen so that it would “stick out” the next time I used it.

*Dennis Hembree—WCU Math*

I encourage new teachers to be organized electronically. Computer-generated documents are so handy to modify or to print for individual use, and it’s frustrating not to be able to find something you really need. Get your school to purchase some sort of software for creating mathematical text, such as MathType. If you use Word, then you may already use Equation Editor. MathType is the parent software for Equation Editor and much more powerful and customizable.

## **Planning: Next Week**

*Sherry Maney—PK/2 E-mentor*

I plan several days in advance (usually by Wednesday of the week before). I usually use Thursday to gather materials and make lists for my assistant as to what things I need for her to help prepare. As I am gathering work or materials, I write each child’s “magic number” on any individual work to be done. This helps me when a child forgets to write his/her name, when someone is absent, and when I am putting completed work into take-home folders. I simply put the work in number order and check for any missing work; this makes it is easier to fill folders (which are also placed in number order). Another planning strategy that works well is the use of pacing guides. Our kindergarten team has a common pacing guide for each subject area that we write at the beginning of each school year. I review this guide regularly to help with planning for SCOS goals. With input from informal and formal assessments (K-2 assessments), the pacing guides keep me on track.

*Trudi Gunter—3/5 E-mentor*

Beginning teachers find that ideas on keeping students organized are very useful. I have a weekly contract that I use to help my students see what they are supposed to be doing everyday. At the end of the week, they have to take it home to let their parents see what work was not completed. It is a good method for keeping the parents informed and for keeping the students on track. If you ever get a chance to use a contract, I highly recommend it. It takes a little while to get the students used to the routine, but it really pays off after they get it down. It also cuts down on the number of questions we have from our students. All they have to do is look at their contract to see what they need to work on next.

## **Long-Term Planning**

Long-term planning for the year is extremely difficult for beginning teachers. Effective mentors share their long-term plans with their mentees and explain the rationale they used for organizing curriculum.

### *Chris Ulery—Music E-mentor*

I plan in reverse. I start with what my students need to learn for the semester and then break this into various units. Most all objectives need to be continuously reinforced and will be touched on throughout the year. Finding materials/pieces that can be used to teach these objectives and locating other resources to reinforce them is the hardest part for me. I always uncover things that need to be taught through the year and have to change my plans, but having a good plan to begin with is a good start.

### *Kathy Proctor—MG E-mentor*

Long range planning is extremely important. Yearly plans must come before unit plans, which come before daily plans. Without the long-range plan, you will find yourself floundering at the end of the year in a panic about all the material not covered. If you make reasonable long-range plans, your pacing will be much easier, and you will cover what you need to before the end of the year. You need to take the time of the year and difficulty into consideration when making long-range plans. It is also important to integrate studies so students will see connections and have more exposure to essential skills and knowledge. The biggest secret to successful planning is taking the time to plan ahead and making sure you are covering all that you need to cover.

Make notes on your plans and keep them as a reference for the following year. I like to make notes about both time and content. Often I think students will enjoy a story but find that they don't like it, so I put that in my plans. I also keep Web sites and other information with my plans so that I can access them later. If I find great resources after finishing a unit, I go back and record those as well.

## **Miscellaneous**

### *Kate Birthright—Spanish E-mentor*

I feel that as a beginning teacher it was very important that I kept thorough notes. Lesson plans needed to be very detailed. As painstaking as it seems, I believe it really pays off both in the immediate future and when getting ready to teach the same lesson again in a new year.

Perhaps the most important part of my note taking/record keeping was how the lesson went, what worked and what didn't, how would I change it, etc. Even if you can only jot down comments such as "needs more work" or "change wrap-up," it helps because as

much as I thought I would remember things, I wouldn't! While we get better and better at thinking on our feet, we and our students are much happier if we can prepare ahead of time for these things!

I kept a three-ring binder for each chapter that I taught and kept all of the lesson plans and materials organized in that notebook. Always having a few extra copies of materials was very handy. While I liked having all my plans typed, I wouldn't go back and redo them. I would just jot down notes on the plans to show changes needed.

*Kelly Pace—HS E-mentor*

Although this is not a strategy, it might be useful for some beginning teachers. We know that all successful teachers plan, and plan, and plan! However, it's important for new teachers to know that they should not be afraid of changing their plans. As they become more experienced and comfortable with their curriculum, they become more open to trying different approaches and projects. While explaining an assignment, a student might ask a question that sparks an idea. At times, this might lead to a different twist or desired outcome for the assignment. Mentees need to embrace this change, even though it was not in the original plan.

## Classroom Environment

Each year, students walk through the door of a new classroom to spend anywhere from 90 to 180 days. Whether age five or 15, students tend to be most successful when they are at ease with their surroundings. With this in mind, beginning teachers should work to build a classroom community in which all students feel comfortable and safe. The following information provides both insight and tips from mentor teachers that address the importance of classroom environment and its correlation with student achievement.

### ***Community and Behavior***

*Sherry Maney—PK/2 E-mentor*

I believe that when children feel cared about and can make a connection in the school environment and community of our classroom, they will be more successful. Mentors should help new teachers see the importance of talking to each and every child on a personal level each day. Children need to know that I do care about them. I may be the only person that day who gives them that hug and really listens to them. I also keep snacks and breakfast types of foods in my room, in case someone is still hungry after breakfast. If we don't meet our students' emotional and physical needs, then we can't successfully meet their academic needs!

*Karen Taylor—PK/2 E-mentor*

New teachers should understand that the classroom environment can be the make-it or break-it of the entire year. I spend the first few weeks really concentrating on building strong relationships and continue that through the year so that the relationships get stronger. It is important to know all about the family in your classroom. I also think it is important that the class decides on its expectations. The expectations are then maintained out throughout the year, and everyone understands how important he/she is for the class to run smoothly. Nothing is better than a class full of smiles and laughter with brains full of learning!

*Richard Harvey—3/5 E-mentor*

New teachers need to know that scheduling routine physical activity is important. This allows my students a chance to blow off steam, reset their minds for the next subject, and also allows me to reset myself. In just 10 to 15 minutes, my students are more awake, with brains stimulated, and more ready to learn than if we did not take some physical-exercise time.

At the beginning of the year, I stipulate that before the students could have free play, they had to run one to three laps. I would select how many laps for the day. Although at first they moaned about this, now they look forward to it. This active and free recess time benefits them and me. I would not run my classroom any other way.

Mentors should emphasize to new teachers that there are multitudes of ways to build a solid, caring community. One way I've found to show that students are important to me is by supporting them outside of the classroom. Each year, I devote two Saturdays and an afternoon to attending my students' extracurricular activities. Although this time is my own off-duty time, it really isn't that much time to give to my community, and the payoffs are big. Showing up at a game and cheering for them speaks volumes to them and their parents. It seems to me that this is not an expected role, so it surprises and delights them when I do show up. I enjoy talking informally to the parents; I like how they get to meet my wife and child. All in all, we both get to know the other side of our community and the people in it.

*Trudi Gunter—3/5 E-mentor*

Students respond so much better to us if we let them know that we care about them. Even when I have to give students consequences for inappropriate behavior or inadequate academics, I explain to them why I am disappointed. I feel my students deserve to know why I am upset with them. I also find that if I take the time to talk to my students in a mature way, then they feel that I want to talk with them more than I want to be angry at them. I do have the benefit of having a partner teacher in the classroom and it helps. It is nice to be able to take a moment to breathe before I talk with a student about something that has upset me. My best recommendation for new teachers is to remember to breathe, and it never hurts to laugh. Humor is one of the best medicines that I know about. Keep your classroom light and funny, and your students will enjoy being there—and you will enjoy having them there.

*Gianna Carson—MG E-mentor*

I like for my classroom to be open enough for students to feel comfortable asking questions but controlled enough that there is not mass chaos.

*Jo-ann Whiteside—EC E-mentor*

It is important for me to have a classroom environment that models respect. I try to model respect to my students and expect the same of them in return.

My students are struggling learners. I set up a system of positive reinforcement to motivate my students.

*Knox Hardin—HS E-mentor*

I have a few comments that mentors should stress when working with new teachers. A well-planned, over planned lesson that actively engages students in the learning process will do more for minimizing classroom behavior problems than anything. In order to effectively teach lessons that actively involve the learner, ground rules must be established from day one and reinforced throughout the semester/year.

Final words of wisdom on classroom management for mentors to share with new teachers: Be fair, firm, and consistent. During my first year of teaching, I cannot tell you how many times I heard the principal say: "It is much easier to loosen the reins than it is to tighten the reins." I learned this the hard way my first year. Start out tough and continue to be fair, firm and consistent; then when you have a good feel for the student behavior in your class, YOU, not your students, can decide if the reins can or need to be loosened.

*Tiffany Smith—HS E-mentor*

I prefer to discuss incidents with students privately instead of giving up my instructional time or giving them the satisfaction of additional attention or distracting the class even further. Try to be consistent, fair, and honest and students seem to respect what you are trying to accomplish. Classroom management is a skill that takes time to figure out; you have to find your own style (I'm still working on mine.).

*Kate Birthright—Spanish E-mentor*

Consistency seems to be one of the most important aspects of creating an effective classroom environment.

For example, the rules need to be carried out consistently with all students at all times. While we have a little wiggle room since we are the teachers, we have to be really careful about letting something slide because it involves a “good kid” or sometimes we are just caught off guard. I have seen the faces of those kids who pick up on this, and I didn't feel so good about my actions. It's important to take steps as soon as possible when we may not have carried out our discipline plan/rules as posted/agreed upon with the students in the beginning of the year.

As new teachers, we often find out things don't work and they may have to be changed mid-semester. Don't be afraid of this; just be open about the process, communicate with students, and be consistent with the new strategy!

*Greg McLamb—WCU SS*

I believe that a classroom is effective only if students feel they can invest in it and get a noticeable return. I encourage a community outlook by giving some of the ownership of the class and the room over to the students. Each day my students are required to submit a question about that day's material, and I am required to answer. Questions that are about me, the class, the university, or anything else are also encouraged, with the right reserved to not answer any intrusive questions. I also make them decide when the major assignments will be due, instead of lumping everything in the same week as they say most professors do. When someone violates a rule, I allow the class to decide what punishment should be used if they can successfully argue that my punishment is unfair because of extenuating circumstances, precedent, etc. Once they feel they have a say in how the class is run, they contribute more to it and seem to receive more from it. I establish certain boundaries that are inflexible according to university rules, but pretty much everything else is up for examination and alteration based on the makeup of the class and their willingness to question, address, and accept changes in the classroom.

## ***An Efficient Environment***

*Chris Reynolds—PE E-mentor*

I believe in the routine model of classroom management. I have a definite process on how to enter the gym and what cues are used to stop and where to huddle. This helps with many aspects for P.E. The students are not running wild and you can begin the lesson with more practice time for the students. I believe this would be just as effective in the traditional classroom as well.

## ***Physical Environment***

*Debbi Madill—PK/2 E-mentor*

I have found over the years that the physical layout of my classroom impacts my kindergarteners' learning (and behavior) in so many ways. Over the past few years, I've discovered what works for me and my students and have kept the room arranged pretty much the same way. A lot of it is just common sense and seeing how things work out. When I teach small groups at my table, I am facing out so I can monitor the rest of the class while they do center activities; my assistant's table is on the opposite side of the room—she faces out also and can monitor the class too. I have well-defined centers so the children know the boundaries (lots of low shelving), and they know how many children can be in a center at a time. I rotate materials so that there's not a ton of stuff out at a time—the children can pick up easier when there's a place for everything. During the first weeks of school, I have seen too many teachers put out too many materials thinking the room is inviting, but it's usually overwhelming for children (I've heard those stories about teachers who put all their puzzles on open shelving and the first day of school every puzzle piece gets mixed together). I have areas where children can be active (blocks, housekeeping, etc.) and passive (reading, easels, computer, etc.). I “divide and conquer,” meaning that I use all of the space so that the children are spread out and busy. When I have group time on the carpet, there is room for all, and every child can see what's going on. My classroom furniture is positioned so that no child is out of view. A well-thought-out environment can prevent a lot of problems!

*Sherry Maney—PK/2 E-mentor*

I set my room up pretty much the same each year, although there have been years that I have had to make some minor changes to adapt for individual children. As a mentor, I tell new teachers that there may be times that changes are needed and that it is okay to change. What is important is that you do what is right for the students that you are currently teaching. These needs will probably change each year. For example, I have recently made some changes in seating for some of my students. They were working successfully at the beginning of the year, but there have been changes in their focus and behavior in recent weeks. We moved some of the furniture around to allow them to have more personal space or be less distracted. This minor change in the environment has made a big difference.

*Kathy Proctor—MG E-mentor*

An effective classroom environment is one where students feel safe and comfortable. I encourage my mentee to make sure that his/her room is clean, decorated, and filled with stimulating materials. I also encourage beginning teachers to have student work on display so students will feel a sense of pride in their work.

As far as climate goes, I believe nothing works better than treating students fairly and having rules and procedures that apply to all. Students feel safe when there are boundaries and an adult who cares enough to make sure those rules are enforced. Having high expectations is also very important; students will work hard for you when they know that you believe in them and will help them succeed.

*Dianne Chadwick—HS E-mentor*

Harry Wong says that what a teacher does on the “first days of school will determine ... success or failure for the rest of the school year.” Creating a safe, nurturing classroom environment is so important. Not only does the physical appearance matter, so does ambiance. After only ten minutes of being in a classroom, high school students make swift judgments about the teacher and the course. Mentors need to encourage new teachers to create an inviting classroom. Determining seating arrangement, traffic patterns, and use of space are areas in which a mentor can assist a beginning teacher in setting up his/her room. Most new teachers do not have many resources to make a room feel comfortable, but most school systems give beginning teachers a small amount of money to set up their classrooms and buy supplies. The mentor can advise the new teacher to purchase colorful fabric to cover bulletin boards, inexpensive calendars to use on bulletin boards until student work can be posted, plants to have in the room, and/or to make posters on the computer with clip art. Most veteran teachers have more posters than they use, so mentors can share.

But more important than an attractive physical setting, the beginning teacher needs to establish a safe, nurturing, productive emotional setting. Mentors should stress the importance of the first days of a semester in establishing the rules and procedures for the class, having positive expectations, and getting to know the students. A productive classroom environment is also one in which the teacher is professionally dressed, has a smile on his/her face, appears confident, reflects a positive attitude, and is consistent. Finally, I think the most important role for the mentor is to set the tone for the beginning teacher. The mentor must be and do what s/he suggests for the new teacher.

*Kate Birthright—Spanish E-mentor*

New teachers need to understand that creating an environment that reflects how you want your students to feel and act is important and is often overlooked! Small things, like changing bulletin boards, decorating your door, using colors and patterns that reflect different feelings, etc., are ways to help achieve this. The physical arrangement of the room is also vital—it must be an effective layout for student learning.

Encourage new teachers to peek in at other teachers’ classrooms, ask questions, observe, and work on developing their own classroom environments.

## Instruction

One of the most distinct characteristics of a master teacher is his/her ability to vary classroom instruction. New research continues to support the fact that learning styles differ from one child to the next. Once again, organization and planning come into the picture when preparing daily instructional plans that will allow the learning styles of each student to be addressed. In this section, mentors discuss the importance of providing individualized instruction for students, which will equate with academic success, by incorporating a variety of instructional methods.

### *Debbi Madill—PK/2 E-mentor*

I'm fascinated by some of the "Brain Research" that's out there and wish I had time to learn more. I try to incorporate some of it in my instruction. I find that children retain so much more when they have opportunities to learn rote things (days of the week, letter names and sounds, names of the seasons, body parts, etc.) through music and role play, and Dr. Jean's CD's are great for this. Remember to share these resources with beginning teachers.

### *Sherry Maney—PK/2 E-mentor*

Like Debbi, I also have an interest in brain research and how children learn. A couple of years ago, my school offered a staff development called Brain Gym. I learned so much about the importance of water and activities that have children cross mid-line to make synapses happen between the right and left brain. If anyone ever gets a chance to attend one of these workshops, I highly recommend it!

### *Kathy Proctor—MG E-mentor*

It is so important that you teach a concept using a variety of methods. This helps all students to get the material in more than one way so it is more likely to stay with them longer and be more meaningful to them. I am careful to show my mentee that this doesn't have to be complicated; just make sure that you have activities that will let students write, discuss, read, and present in a variety of ways. By giving students choices, you also help them take their own learning styles into account. Cooperative group activities are easily incorporated into most lessons and help students who are struggling on their own. There are times that students need to have a quiet environment and work independently, and there are times when they need to be active, discuss ideas, and work together to accomplish a goal. In an effective classroom, students are given opportunities to express themselves in many ways, and there is always room for improvement. A non-threatening but challenging environment is essential in carrying out effective instruction. The most important component is a teacher who cares about students and plans lessons that will encourage students to stretch themselves beyond what they thought possible.

*Richard Harvey—3/5 E-mentor*

One area that I share with new teachers is how I have learned to incorporate authentic details or activities into social studies lessons. Whether it is a game from the time period, the creation of protest signs, or cooking authentic food, incorporating such activities makes the time period, the people’s reasonings and actions—some element of their lives—more relatable to students.

I guess this perspective has come about from a long and powerful day walking through the Holocaust Memorial in Washington D.C. The power of the memorial was related through a myriad of media—personal writings, survivor interviews, pictures, videos, artwork, models, artifacts, or a simple ID booklet. This small booklet was handed to me as I entered the memorial. Not knowing the importance of this booklet beforehand, I carried a picture and a short life history of a man named Artie Mankewiez. Upon leaving the memorial hours later, I was grateful to have this small booklet, which helped me realize what he had gone through.

I can never really know all the elements of a past time period or situation that I did not live through, but I do think it is still important to help convey an event as meaningfully as possible to students. Helping “place” students, by taking the time to concretely set one element of the time period, is important.

*Jo-ann Whiteside—EC E-mentor*

I encourage beginning teachers to use research-based programs and research-based types of instruction when possible.

*Knox Hardin—HS E-mentor*

As a high school math teacher, my classroom finally came alive and my students became actively engaged in learning mathematics when I relinquished the role of disseminator of information. Sadly to say, it took many years for me to fully understand this. This realization was reaffirmed when I attended one of the best staff development opportunities in my 32 years of education. As a mentor to new teachers, I would like to share with you some of the strategies that Marcia Tate presented at this workshop. I only wish someone had shared them with me during my initial years of teaching. Listed below are 20 strategies that take advantage of how the brain learns best:

- |  |                               |
|--|-------------------------------|
| 1. Writing                                     | 11. Graphics                  |
| 2. Storytelling                                | 12. Drawing                   |
| 3. Mnemonic devices                            | 13. Humor                     |
| 4. Visuals                                     | 14. Discussion                |
| 5. Movement                                    | 15. Games                     |
| 6. Role play                                   | 16. Project-based instruction |
| 7. Visualization                               | 17. Field trips               |
| 8. Metaphor, analogy, simile                   | 18. Word study                |
| 9. Reciprocal teaching or cooperative learning | 19. Technology                |
| 10. Music                                      | 20. Manipulatives             |

Not all 20 strategies are effective in all content areas, but at least 15 of the 20 would be. Also, it would be impossible to use all 20 strategies on a daily basis. If new teachers would focus on using four or five of these strategies throughout the year, I feel student achievement would greatly increase.

The strategies that I utilized the most in my math classroom were visuals, movement, music, humor, games, technology and manipulatives. Discussion and cooperative learning were the two basic strategies that I used during the first 15 to 20 years. I did not abandon these strategies, only minimized their use.

*Kathy Stamey—HS E-mentor*

New vocational teachers are concerned about end-of-course tests. To improve VOCATS scores and to aid with retention of material, I make most of my tests comprehensive. I also allow students to rewrite test questions and answers after each test to bring up their scores and help with retention. I have students write the question and correct answer twice and then write a positive statement about the question. It's a really good way to bring up test scores for students who do not do well on tests. I give them one point for each question for which they do the three-step re-write.

*Chris Ulery—Music E-mentor*

The most effective part of instruction for me is having the students understand the importance of what they are learning. If they understand the value of what they are doing, then they are more engaged and will work toward the goals you have set. It's critical to help new teachers set clear goals and the steps to achieve those goals so their students will understand the importance of what they are trying to accomplish.

## Professional Responsibilities

A popular misconception about the role of an educator deals with his/her professional responsibilities. Unlike many other professions, the hours of a teacher are not cut-and-dry; there is no nine to five. Beginning teachers are often unaware of this and surprised to learn of the required (paperwork, meetings, etc.) and non-required (attending extracurricular events to show support, etc.) responsibilities they are expected to handle. The following tips from mentors bring to light many of these responsibilities and methods of organizing and handling them in a professional manner while maintaining sanity.

### ***Administrative (paperwork, meetings, etc.)***

*Trudi Gunter—3/5 E-mentor*

It is important for all new teachers to be aware of the paperwork that is expected of them. Teachers are responsible for developing Personal Education Plans (PEPs), keeping track of absences, attending parent meetings, and making phone calls. Keeping copies of student work, especially work samples from students who may need to be tested or retained, is essential. Be sure the beginning teacher you mentor is aware of the paperwork that has to go into a student's permanent record.

### ***Parents***

*Richard Harvey—3/5 E-mentor*

An important topic that caught me by surprise my first year of teaching was custody issues. For students from a divorced, split, estranged, or abusive home, there may be court-ordered limitations on visitation, phone contact with a child, or pick-up. Often these court orders are attached to the inside front cover of the student's main school file. At the beginning of the year, I write a quick note about any issues I'm required to follow. For example, a student may have a parent who is allowed to visit him/her at school only during the lunch hour on Friday. Lunch must be in a supervised location. Sometimes orders can be that specific. New teachers need to know the appropriate individuals in the school to go to with questions about court orders to ensure safety for the student.

### ***Miscellaneous***

*Sherry Maney—PK/2 E-mentor*

I encourage new teachers to take advantage of as many staff development and workshop opportunities as possible. It is always nice to get fresh ideas. It is a good idea to keep up with new research and current practices.

*Kathy Proctor—MG E-mentor*

As professionals, the most important thing we must remember is that we have to be advocates for our students. It is our responsibility to ensure that students are not mistreated and that their needs are met. This means that we have to be prepared to get medical help, counseling, or financial assistance when necessary. It also means that we have to make sure that they do not feel threatened or bullied in any way by anyone. There are many agencies available to help us help our students, and there are rules and laws that ensure students will not be mistreated. All new teachers should be made aware of these resources.

*Kate Birthright—Spanish E-mentor*

As a new teacher, doing things to support your students and your school can be incredibly rewarding but also overwhelming. My advice to mentors would be to caution your mentee to take on additional responsibilities at a slow pace! For me, going to dinners, seeing plays or musicals, and going to sports events were all that I took on in my second year, and it was great because I could work it into my schedule without being overwhelmed. Taking the time to see your students outside of the classroom brings you closer to your students, which is awesome!

*Kathy Stamey—HS E-mentor*

New teachers need to understand how important it is for vocational teachers to interact and become acquainted with their local community professionals. My classroom is filled with donated equipment from our local hospital, nursing homes, pharmacies, and physicians' offices. These individuals are also a great help with presentations, fundraisers, competitions, etc.

*Chris Ulery—Music E-mentor*

Help beginning teachers understand professional responsibilities. Doing "extra" duties as expected (open house, bus duty, lunch duty, IEP conferences, PTA meetings, etc.) is important and is difficult sometimes to juggle. While these are not things that directly impact what goes on in your classroom, they are very important to being involved in your school.

## Other Tips

### ***Taking Care of Yourself***

*Karen Taylor—PK/2 E-mentor*

The first two years of teaching have seriously been a roller coaster! It has had the highest of moments and the lowest of moments. The saying that you have to take the good with the bad is very true in the teaching field. However, this statement does not give full justice to the teaching profession. The highest of the moments have been the greatest moments, which were rewarding and life changing. In order to revive and get to the highest points in teaching, you have to take time for yourself. This year I started running and doing yoga, and what a difference that has made for me. Just taking an hour everyday to do some form of exercise has really changed my mentality and given me a whole other love for teaching. On those low-point days, I get outside and run a few miles and brush the gruff off from the day and start over.

*Kate Birthright—Spanish E-mentor*

Take time to listen to yourself. Don't ignore your personal social/emotional needs. Feed your soul with what makes you grow. Take care of yourself! I was so tempted to veg out after a rough day, but I have to remind myself that MOST of the time reading a book, doing a devotional, going for a walk/run, or doing other things that feed my soul will leave me much more refreshed and relaxed than an hour in front of the TV. Mentors need to remind new teachers to think about how they spend "down" time (however little it may be!).

### ***Humor***

*Dennis Hembree—WCU Math*

For me, laughing with students is what makes teaching fun. Just interacting with so many fascinating minds is like being in at a carnival (or zoo). It was just great fun for me to realize that, for pretty much any topic I could think of, there was some kid around who was willing to think about it with me. The downside is, after spending 25 years in classrooms, I don't relate to adults very well. So keep some life outside and separate from your school life.

### ***Colleagues***

*Debbi Madill—PK/2 E-mentor*

I would encourage new teachers to develop a good rapport with their fellow grade-level teachers. Even if teaching methods and philosophies differ a bit, that is okay. We all bring our own special talents and interests to this profession, but we can learn so much from each other. Why re-invent the wheel? With a team approach you can often brainstorm

ideas, plan wonderful events for all the children (putting on plays, going on field trips, etc.), and have a wonderful support system in place—and new teachers can especially benefit from that.

*Sherry Maney—PK/2 E-mentor*

Some of my most helpful colleagues are the custodians; I couldn't do my job without them! They are wonderful at our school! In the past, I have had an appreciation day for the support staff. My students made special snacks and created cards/gifts to give to the special helpers in our school. We invited the custodians, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, secretaries, etc. The students served the snacks, handed out the cards/gifts, and sang songs for the entertainment. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the event. It is important to remember that the support staff in the school needs to feel appreciated as well.

*Chris Ulery—Music E-mentor*

The first few years are often the toughest. Having a mentor or two to offer support and to serve as a sounding board is important. Remind new teachers that these may not be their officially assigned mentors, but a teacher in their department or someone they are comfortable talking to can be very helpful. Talking with peers and sharing the everyday trials and tribulations of the job has a great therapeutic effect. Beginning teachers need to realize that it's very easy to isolate yourself when your subject area is specialized and you are the only one in your school that does what you do. They should keep in touch with those they graduated with and create some time away. It's so easy to burn yourself out in those first couple of years. When you are away from work, be away.

## **Reflection**

*Gianna Carson—MG E-mentor*

I think that self-reflection should be considered a professional responsibility. I would tell all new teachers to spend time reflecting on how they taught each day.

*Dennis Hembree—WCU Math*

My experience mentoring beginning teachers is that the most important thing I can do is to get them to ask different questions. The most natural questions I get are "Was my lesson good or bad?" or "How did I do?" etc. I think mentors must shift these sorts of questions to "What could I do differently the next time I teach this topic or find myself in this situation?"

I generally try to accomplish this shift by asking questions about the students I observe in the class and exploring what they may or may not understand about the lesson or topic. I think that as mentors we must emphasize that the focus of teaching is on the learner rather than on the subject or on the teacher.

This is my first year at WCU, and so far, I have been very impressed with our beginning teachers and their awakening understanding that the students they teach may be very different from the students they remember from their own school classes or from the way they saw themselves as students. Most of these beginning teachers are well on their way to having the reflective stance that it takes to be an accomplished teacher.

# Project Contributors

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## Mission of the Center

The mission of the Center for the Support of Beginning Teachers is to address the need for an adequate supply of highly qualified teachers by supporting the professional development of beginning teachers and their transition to the classroom. Induction activities include face-to-face meetings, complemented and enhanced by an electronic network developed for beginning teachers; ongoing professional development for mentors; and opportunities for principals to focus on their role in new teacher development. The Center provides a comprehensive approach that includes support, practice, feedback, and evaluation collaboratively delivered by the school systems and the university.

For more information on the work of the Center, please visit our Web site: <http://www.ceap.wcu.edu/csbt>.

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