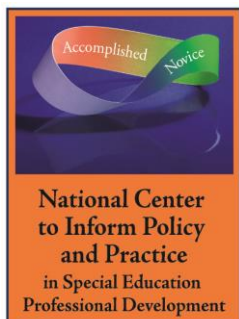


Mentor Handbook: Supporting Beginning Special Educators



National Center to Inform Policy and Practice
in Special Education Professional Development
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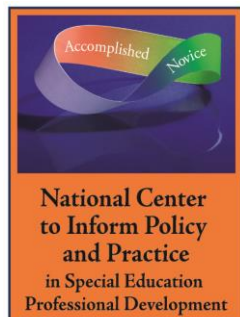


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Note:

The majority of information in this manual was modeled from the practices in three districts that have extensive, long-term induction and mentoring programs for special education teachers. For more in-depth information about the model districts, go to [Program Descriptions](#).

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The primary goal of this handbook is to provide relevant and practical information for mentors as they guide the development of beginning special education teachers. Novice special educators usually enter the field enthusiastic and eager to begin teaching students with disabilities. However, even the best prepared of these new entrants face steep learning curves as they work to apply in complex school settings what they have learned from their pre-service programs.

At the same time that new special educators assume their teacher roles, they are still learning to teach; therefore, they need expert and responsive guidance in using effective instructional practices. In addition, they need assistance navigating other challenges during the initial years such as working with administrators, colleagues, and parents and learning about their school communities and local policies and procedures.

Increasingly, state and district professionals are providing new special education teachers with mentors, and there is a growing knowledge base about what effective mentors do. This manual provides a detailed guide for mentors and district and school leaders as they design, implement, and assess mentor programs. This manual provides information about

- goals that typically guide mentoring programs;
- what is known about new special educators (e.g., various types of preparation, new teachers' experiences);
- what effective mentors do to provide emotional support, create a climate of support that addresses varied needs, conduct both high-quality individual and group mentor sessions, and align mentoring with professional development (PD).

The manual also provides numerous vignettes, examples, and planning forms to aid in the mentoring process.

Chapter 2: District and Mentoring Goals

Prior to building relationships with new special education teachers and providing support through the beginning years, leaders must develop mentoring goals. Creating mentoring goals includes determining what mentors aim to achieve; what mentees want to accomplish; and what school, district, and state leaders need the mentoring process to accomplish. Developing district goals and objectives for mentoring is critical and provides a basis for evaluating the success of these mentoring programs. Although goals and objectives may differ from district to district, professionals typically strive to increase work commitment, improve student outcomes, and improve the quality of novice special educators.

District Goals

Improve instructional effectiveness. Beginning special educators need help learning the curriculum, acquiring and adapting necessary materials, addressing challenging student behavior, and using data to inform instruction. In order to measure new special education teachers' instructional quality, district professionals must establish clear expectations of student performance academic standards and assessment as well as curriculum frameworks that explicitly link to standards. Goals that are tied to improving novice special educators' instructional quality are as follows:

- Content area goals should parallel district or state content standards for differentiated instruction; they should focus on making and using rubrics to measure performance.
- Special education pedagogy goals should focus on effective instructional practices and ensuring that beginning special educators have the knowledge, skills, and practice to improve student outcomes.
- Behavior management goals should center on a standard or rubric for measuring teacher effectiveness in specific areas (e.g., using effective classroom management practices, using functional behavioral analysis).

Increase collaboration. Throughout their careers, special education teachers must communicate and collaborate with other professionals, parents, and adults. Therefore, learning to interact with other adults in a positive and productive manner is important for novice special educators.

Collaboration with colleagues. Beginning special educators must collaborate with general education colleagues, special education colleagues, and support staff in order to provide students with the most comprehensive support and learning experiences. New special education teachers need support in building relationships with administrators, paraprofessionals, and colleagues to ensure that they can work together to attain desired student results.

Collaboration with parents. Education professionals place significant value on increasing parental involvement in the schools, which may lead to increased student achievement and higher graduation rates. Therefore, it is critical that beginning special education teachers learn how to effectively interact with parents and increase parental involvement in their children's academic progress.

Improve data management. Accountability and objective standards for measuring progress are necessary for identifying deficits and gains in the performance of both novice special educators and students. It is critical that new special education teachers become experts in data collection and analysis and proficiently track their students' performance. Also, novice special educators must learn to make effective modifications and adaptations to their instructional practices based on data.

Student progress and achievement. Beginning special education teachers must learn the most effective practices for collecting data and monitoring students' academic and behavioral achievement. This information will help inform

- instructional decisions,
- behavior management strategies,
- portfolio development,
- classroom concerns and environment, and
- personal reflection.

Special education policies and procedures. In order to increase awareness and skills in applying special education policies and procedures, mentors must

- ensure that mentees are meeting the legal requirements and policies in special education,
- consult state and district requirements and inform mentees of these requirements, and
- set up appropriate data tracking systems.

Once mentors have considered district goals for mentoring, they should further specialize their mentoring goals based on mentees' needs and their personal objectives.

Mentoring Goals

Build successful relationships with mentees.

- Use effective communication skills.
- Establish consistent and authentic emotional support by being
 - approachable and available,
 - supportive and patient,
 - respectful,

- complimentary of others, and
- willing to share ideas.
- Encourage mentees toward continued professional growth by
 - providing specific praise,
 - acknowledging understanding of mentees' challenges,
 - reinforcing and reminding mentees of the positive changes they have made, and
 - using action plans to stay focused.
- Evaluate the mentoring relationship to determine whether mentees feel comfortable seeking out and confiding in mentors.

Socialize mentees to the school and district.

- Guide mentees through their transition to a new environment.
 - Provide an overview of school and district rules and policies.
 - Assist with classroom setup; if mentees are in co-teaching placements, generate ideas about setups that support the learning of students with disabilities (e.g., placement of students in the front of the room, grouping of desks).
 - Provide procedural support, including assistance with school and district paperwork and special education procedures (e.g., setting up, writing, and running individualized education programs [IEPs]).
 - Connect with colleagues and broker school culture.
- Advocate for mentees.
 - Promote collaboration among multiple disciplines.
 - Teach effective communication strategies (e.g., reflective listening).
 - Role play and model complicated scenarios.

Increase instructional effectiveness of mentees.

- Determine areas in which mentees need additional preparation and support through action plans to develop instructional goals and progress.
 - Clearly communicate expectations with mentees.
 - Discuss lesson plans during pre-observation meetings.
 - Discuss lessons during post-observation meetings.
 - Plan for improvement in classroom practice.
- Provide mentees with resources to improve instructional effectiveness.
 - Help mentees develop schedules that help protect their instructional time.
 - Locate and share materials and sample lessons.
 - Plan, direct mentees to, and participate in PD activities.
 - Co-teach with mentees.
 - Allow mentees to observe in classrooms.
 - Plan lessons with mentees.
- Monitor and evaluate mentees' progress.

- Use reflective questioning.
- Observe mentees in classrooms.
- Conduct post-observation meetings to reflect and offer feedback.
- Reflect on and discuss classroom practice.
- Reference rubrics or action plans to determine goal attainment.

Chapter 3: Understanding Beginning Special Education Teachers

To better understand how to support beginning special education teachers, leaders must recognize the diversity of new special educators entering the teaching profession; they also must examine the typical challenges novice special education teachers face. The following section includes an overview of the preparation, classroom contexts, and experiences of beginning special education teachers.

Preparation

There are two main paths for entering the field of education: (1) a traditional route and (2) an alternate route. It is important to note that each route offers a high variability in programs.

Traditional route. The traditional route allows prospective teachers to enter university settings in order to earn degrees in education. Typically, teacher education programs are 4 or 5 years in length; they include course work and practicum experiences, and students exit with degrees.

Alternate route. The alternate route offers abbreviated tracks into the classroom. This route, which comprises programs that vary in length and intensity, is designed for individuals who have bachelor's degrees in fields other than education and who seek certification in a teaching area.

Implications for induction. New special education teachers enter the classroom from a variety of preparation routes. Consequently, it is likely that districts will have novice special educators who fall on a continuum of needs. For example, a beginning special educator with a degree in English who completed an alternate route through a summer institute and will take education course work throughout her first 2 years will likely need intense assistance in instructional and behavior strategies. In contrast, a beginning special educator with a master's degree in special education and a strong foundational command of instructional content and teaching strategies may need help refining his or her practices. Understanding the preparation with which novice special education teachers enter the classroom helps district professionals assess and address teachers' needs.

Classroom Context

Most special education teachers have a broad certification in pre-K-12 special education, which allows them to work in a variety of classroom contexts. Moreover, special educators teach within multiple service delivery models with students of varying disabilities and often in high-needs locations.

Grade levels pre-K-12. Beginning special educators may accept positions in settings ranging from preschool through high school.

Delivery models. New special education teachers may receive positions in a variety of instructional contexts. They may co-teach in general education classrooms, work in resource rooms and full-time special education settings, or serve as consultants.

Student population. Beginning special educators often teach students across disability areas (e.g., autism, learning disabilities, behavior and emotional disorders, intellectual disabilities).

High-needs locations. Schools in rural and urban areas have different challenges. A beginning special education teacher in a rural location may be the only new special educator in a school and may be required to meet the needs of students across grade levels, content areas, and disability designations. A beginning special educator in an urban setting may not be the lone special education teacher, but he or she may be part of a junior teaching staff with little or no veteran teachers in the building. New special education teachers in any high-needs school must tackle issues related to the context (e.g., fewer resources, academically and behaviorally challenging students) at the same time they deal with the struggles of being first-year teachers.

Implications for induction. It is critical for district leaders to understand the prior preparation and experiences of new special education teachers in order to assess these teachers' needs. For example, novice special educators may not have prior practicum experiences in their current teaching contexts. For instance,

- a beginning special educator with practicum experience in an elementary school may teach in a middle school,
- a new special educator with little knowledge about working with students with autism may teach in a co-teaching setting where these are the primary students served, or
- a novice special education teacher may teach in a rural middle school where he or she is responsible for multiple content areas and students of varying disabilities.

Understanding the classroom context assists mentors in providing the appropriate support for new special education teachers.

Experiences

The following information about the experiences of beginning special education teachers comes from two sources—Billingsley et al. (2009) and Jones, Youngs, and Frank (2011).

The experiences of new special education teachers narrow down to three main concerns: (1) inclusion, collaboration, and interactions with adults; (2) pedagogical concerns; and

(3) managing roles. Induction experiences and the mentoring preferences of novice special education teachers are also significant.

The experiences of beginning special education teachers vary and depend on multiple factors. Teacher self-efficacy and perceived support, for example, contribute to the overall experiences of new special educators.

Inclusion, collaboration, and interactions with adults.

Inclusion and collaboration with general educators. Novice special education teachers may face challenges in collaborating with general educators due to

- general educators' resistance to teaching or accommodating students with disabilities;
- inadequate time to collaborate with general educators because of large, overwhelming caseloads;
- general and special educators' inadequate knowledge of collaboration and how to include students with disabilities; and
- lack of physical proximity to general educators.

Interactions with colleagues. Interactions with colleagues make a difference to novice special education teachers because

- informal support from colleagues and mentors can increase commitment among novice special educators and may have as much, if not more, effect than formal mentoring;
- poor relationships with colleagues can increase the chance of burnout among beginning special educators;
- new special educators' perceptions of collegial support are as important as the actual support they receive;
- general educators invested in the success of students with disabilities are more likely than those who are not invested to provide new special educators with needed resources; and
- beginning special educators who feel a sense of belonging in their schools are more likely than those who do not feel connected to access resources from colleagues.

Interactions with administrators. New special education teachers value positive and supportive relationships with administrators; therefore, principals should create a culture of collaboration among general education teachers and beginning special educators. Beginning special education teachers with supportive administrators have

- higher levels of commitment,
- more opportunities for PD,
- fewer problems and less stress,

- higher job satisfaction and less burnout, and
- more perseverance and resources to support working through challenges with inclusion.

Interactions with paraprofessionals. Often, paraprofessionals have been at a school longer than new special educators, and they know both the students and the school. Novice special educators sometimes find it challenging to work with paraprofessionals. Beginning special education teachers may

- be reluctant to manage, train, and evaluate adults who are often older than they are;
- feel inadequately prepared to supervise, manage, and coordinate paraprofessionals; and
- require additional help and training in working with paraprofessionals.

Interactions with parents. New special education teachers need assistance with parent communication and planning and conducting parent conferences. Challenges identified by novice special education teachers include

- low parent involvement,
- anxiety about initial interactions and subsequent follow-ups, and
- uneasiness in conducting different types of meetings.

Pedagogical concerns. Beginning special education teachers' responsibilities vary depending on their students, service models, and content areas. Like beginning general education teachers, new special educators need help. New special educators, however, require attention to curriculum, teaching, and assessment; materials; and behavior management. Beginning special education teachers also come from different preparation programs; therefore, differences in initial preparation may influence how comfortable they are with the curriculum and the content of their lessons.

Curriculum, teaching, and assessment. New special education teachers must be able to meet the needs of their students across a range of areas, including

- academics,
- social skills,
- assessment,
- learning strategies,
- transition,
- instructional and assistive technologies, and
- alternative instructional delivery methods.

Materials. It is important to provide sufficient materials and resources for novice special educators because they may not know how to pull from alternative resources or how to use what is available whereas seasoned teachers are better able to draw upon a multitude of sources.

Behavior management. Beginning special educators grapple with

- managing challenging student behaviors;
- students' refusal to work; and
- power struggles and disruptive student behavior (e.g., throwing chairs, verbal aggression, making sexual gestures).

Some new special educators request more administrative support, and others handle behavior issues in house by finding alternative tasks and avoiding power struggles with disruptive students.

Managing roles. Novice special education teachers may become frustrated when heavy caseloads, scheduling problems, role confusion, and non-teaching demands reduce their instructional time with students.

Caseloads. Large, complex caseloads may prevent beginning special education teachers from providing effective instruction and behavior management. New special educators may struggle with trying to accommodate the multiple levels and needs of their students.

Scheduling problems. Time management is a critical concern for novice special educators who often need help with managing their time while teaching, planning lessons, writing IEPs, and scheduling meetings.

Role confusion. Beginning special education teachers may deal with role uncertainty and conflicting expectations from administrators, colleagues, and parents. Some schools have clearly defined procedures and responsibilities while others do not. Role confusion may create a sense of anxiety and disconnectedness among new special educators and may contribute to job dissatisfaction. Some teachers also have problems organizing and managing their varied responsibilities (e.g., instructional demands, IEPs, working with many different people).

Non-teaching demands. New special education teachers need help writing meaningful IEP goals and objectives, notifying parents, scheduling meetings, and managing other logistics.

Induction experiences. Emerging research suggests that the support that stems from induction and mentoring programs may increase the retention, effectiveness, job manageability, and overall success of beginning special education teachers. New special education teachers report that induction assists in the application of teacher preparation in the classroom, in

pedagogical content knowledge, and in classroom management. Overall, induction for novice special educators may have a positive effect on teacher and student achievement.

Mentoring preferences of beginning special education teachers. Research from surveys yields mixed results about the preferences beginning special education teachers have for their mentors; however, there are several characteristics and qualities identified as most valuable.

Qualities of mentors. Emotional support is among the highly ranked qualities of special education mentors. Mentors perceived as emotionally supportive effectively communicate and are sensitive to the needs of new teachers; they are also

- approachable,
- caring,
- open,
- respectful,
- patient, and
- sensitive to the changing needs of new teachers.

New special educators are more likely to seek help and find the induction process more effective when they are paired with mentors who

- teach students with similar characteristics (e.g., age, disability);
- teach the same grade level and subjects; and
- understand special education procedures, paperwork, and instruction.

Frequency of mentoring. Formal and informal support from mentors is valuable. Mentors received highly effective ratings when they had either formal or informal contact with beginning special education teachers at least once per week. Formal support includes scheduling meetings, facilitating collaboration and communication, and providing emotional support. Informal support includes unannounced visits, handwritten notes, phone calls, and emails.

Content of mentoring. The content of mentors' interactions with new special education teachers should include

- emotional availability and understanding (e.g., supporting through listening, sharing experiences, providing encouragement) of the challenging aspects of teaching;
- support with school and district procedures and assistance with paperwork;
- support with curriculum, materials, behavior management, and other strategies;
- help with addressing professional areas such as cultural competence and diversity, supporting families, and integrating IEP goals into the general curriculum; and
- encouragement of reflection through open-ended questions about data and implementation efforts to allow novice special education teachers to reflect on their practices.

Chapter 4:

Providing Emotional Support

One form of support that beginning special educators frequently identify and rate as highly important is emotional support. Emotional support involves providing encouragement during challenging situations, during the sharing of experiences, and while just listening at the end of a tough day. Mentees view mentors who provide emotional support as caring, approachable, open, respectful, and patient. Mentees most need emotional support when they experience problems and stress. In general, providing emotional support helps establish trust, which is important for mentor-mentee relationships.

New special educators may feel emotionally exhausted and completely overwhelmed by difficult colleagues, multiple obligations and time commitments, angry parents, challenging lesson content, and overwhelming student behaviors. When this happens, they need the support from their more experienced colleagues.

Mentors should help their mentees identify methods for managing multiple responsibilities by giving them communication strategies for preventing problematic situations with general education colleagues and parents and helping them identify solutions for when students present complex behavioral challenges. By sitting down with mentees and planning how to address challenges, mentors can provide mentees with the confidence and strategies they need to handle some of their toughest moments.

Mentees may also need support for issues that occur outside of school. For example, financial difficulties or other familial concerns may affect mentees' emotional well-being. Mentors should directly address some issues through emotional support techniques; trained professionals may need to handle other issues, and it is the job of mentors to recognize when mentees may need specialized forms of support.

Positive Affirmations

In any new position, it is normal to worry about meeting performance expectations and standards. In many instances, in order to increase their confidence and professional competence, new employees just need to hear that they are doing the right thing. This is also the case for novice special educators. Positive affirmations can be as simple as telling mentees they correctly implemented strategies, met certain goals, or appropriately handled tough situations. Simple affirmations go a long way in not only increasing mentees' confidence, but also in reinforcing their effective skills and making them more likely to utilize them in the future. Ultimately, affirmations will make mentees better special educators who are willing to try innovations with confidence.

Examples of positive affirmations.

- For a mentee who has researched strategies for helping students peer edit in an efficient manner: “Wow, that was a great idea!”
- Following an observation in a math class: “I like how you modeled the computation steps before you had the class try to solve the problem.”
- After learning about a conversation with a co-teacher on differentiating roles in the inclusive classroom: “You handled that situation well. You were in a difficult position.”
- During a meeting to review observations and growth over time: “Look at how much you have improved. This is awesome!”
- In any situation that gives the mentee an opportunity to show confidence in his or her knowledge and skills: “You are a rock star!”

Active Listening

When mentees experience difficult or challenging situations, they may need to talk or vent. In such cases, mentors should assume the role of active listener. Thus, it is important for mentors to learn to use and apply effective and active listening skills. Active listening helps mentees feel heard, and it encourages them to express their points of view. Additionally, active listening encourages mentors to abandon their own thoughts and refrain from offering possible solutions; this gives mentees time to think and listen to themselves as part of the problem-solving process.

Examples of active listening.

- Avoid multitasking (e.g., checking the time, planner, or phone). This shows the mentee he or she has the mentor’s undivided attention.
- Maintain eye contact. This allows the mentor to observe body language and notice non-verbal cues and incongruent comments.
- Nod and use acknowledgement statements (e.g., “uh-huh,” “OK,” “right”). These statements acknowledge the mentee’s comments and avoid judgment in order to maintain the momentum of information sharing.
- Reflect and summarize what the mentee has offered. This allows the mentor to share what he or she has heard or may have misunderstood, and it allows the mentee to clarify or correct. A mentor may begin the reflection and summary in the following ways:
 - Respond to the content of what the mentee said.
 - “OK, so in summary”
 - “It sounds like the biggest issue is comprehension.”
 - “Let me just recap to make sure I understood what you said”
 - Acknowledge the major emotions the mentee conveyed.
 - “It sounds like you are very overwhelmed with everything you have to do.”

- “You are feeling very disappointed that your colleague did not include you in any way on the lesson.”

Actionable Solutions

When individuals feel emotionally upset, it is possible for them to become more aggravated when they continue talking about certain issues. They may simply rehash situations several times without focusing on plausible solutions to problems. If mentees become overwhelmed, it is possible they will voice catastrophic thoughts and believe that situations will only get worse. It is the responsibility of mentors to limit these types of scenarios and redirect mentees toward more productive lines of thinking or problem solving to make situations seem more manageable.

Example of a focusing mentoring conversation.

Mentee: It has just been a rough day.

Mentor: You seem overwhelmed. Can you tell me a little bit about what happened?

Mentee: Timmy’s mom called me at lunch and screamed at me for 15 minutes because he got an F on his math test. She told me I was a worthless teacher and that it was going to be my fault if he gets held back this year [starts crying].

Mentor: So, you are feeling very upset that she said you are worthless.

Mentee: Yeah! And I am. I mean, he is failing, and there is nothing I can do about it.

Mentor: You sound very defeated.

Mentee: I just do not know what to do about it, and I do not think anything is going to work.

Mentor: Hmm . . . well, how about you tell me about some of the strategies you have used to help Timmy. What has not worked? [More productive]

Mentee: Well, I guess I have not tried anything special. Maybe he needs extra help.

Mentor: OK, so let’s think of some ideas! What are some things you learned in your computation workshop? [More productive]

In this example, the mentor allows the mentee to express her feelings about the situation and how it has affected her sense of self-efficacy. Although it is not possible to see the physical posture of the mentor, there is clear evidence of the mentee's response to the content and the mentee's verbal and non-verbal acknowledgement of emotions. Finally, the mentor redirects the mentee to discuss ideas to help the students, which should improve the mentee's self-confidence, the students' achievement, and future interactions with the parent.

Chapter 5: **Creating a Climate of Support**

Beginning special education teachers must learn to navigate relationships with administrators, colleagues, and parents and must figure out the different dimensions of their work. For example, new special education teachers must become part of the school community, learn about behavior policies, and learn to write IEPs. In order to help novice special educators secure great starts, mentors must support them as they encounter numerous dilemmas and challenges in the first years of teaching.

Support in Working With Others

Connecting with colleagues. One of the challenges novice special education teachers face is becoming an integral part of the school. A positive school climate tends to lead to beginning special education teachers' satisfaction with their jobs and their intentions to remain in the field of teaching. Moreover, new special education teachers report even higher satisfaction when they experience an integrated school culture in which they collaborate with veteran special education teachers. Mentors can help facilitate collaboration in the following ways:

- Provide information to staff members about the induction and mentoring program and the ways in which staff members can support mentees. For example, mentors may send emails at the beginning of the year to key staff members who will work with the mentees. Mentors should introduce themselves, highlight the roles they will play in supporting mentees, and share the ways in which they will welcome and assist mentees.
- Ask administrators to identify key staff members who have expertise in different areas and are willing to be the go-to people for mentees.
- Ask administrators if they are willing to offer time to mentees to plan with colleagues, observe other classrooms, and meet with other mentees for peer support.
- Facilitate mentees' involvement with grad-level planning teams and professional learning communities, as appropriate.
- Encourage mentees to voice their needs to collaborating teachers and administrators.
- Provide mentees with guidelines for working with paraprofessionals.

Connecting with parents and guardians. New special education teachers often struggle to effectively communicate with parents and guardians about students' progress, struggles, challenges, and successes. Communication struggles affect both written and face-to-face communication and often result in infrequently communicating, using educational jargon that may be foreign to parents and guardians, sharing challenges without highlighting successes, and failing to keep parents updated about upcoming meetings and other important dates.

Beginning special educators may need support with effective written communication strategies, organizing when they should communicate with parents and guardians, and facilitating effective meetings with parents and guardians. Mentors can support communication with parents and guardians in the following ways:

- Encourage mentees to share issues in order to collaboratively solve problems and avoid major communication pitfalls.
- Provide mentees with sample parent letters that model effective written communication for
 - invitations to IEP meetings,
 - invitations to parent-teacher conferences,
 - sharing students' academic and social successes, and
 - sharing students' progress updates.
- Offer to help write or proofread written communication if mentees are uneasy about communicating crucial information.
- Prior to IEP meetings, mentors can
 - offer to meet and discuss students' progress toward IEP goals and make suggestions about how to effectively share this information with parents and guardians,
 - offer to attend students' IEP meetings in order to debrief after the meetings and provide strategies for future meetings, and
 - determine if school administrators or school psychologists who will attend IEP meetings can support mentees in sharing critical information with parents and guardians.
- Encourage mentees to communicate with parents and guardians in language that does not include educational jargon and acronyms.

Helping With School-Level Policies and Procedures

The range and volume of school and district policies, procedures, and responsibilities may seem challenging, and novice special educators may require support in navigating challenges related to their roles and responsibilities. Mentors can help acclimate mentees to new districts in the following ways:

- Encourage mentees to participate in orientation sessions designed to help them understand school policies and procedures. If school districts do not have orientations or if district-provided orientations do not provide the necessary details for navigating school and district procedures, mentors can provide orientations through PD; they can also encourage teacher leaders or strong advocates from the mentees' schools to discuss these processes with mentees.
- Help mentees understand their roles and responsibilities within their schools and districts.

- Offer mentees support in negotiating their roles and coordinating complex responsibilities for inclusion and collaboration.
- Encourage and teach mentees to use effective time management strategies and recognize when to turn down additional responsibilities.
- Assist mentees with finding constructive avenues through which to seek help and receive assistance.
- Observe mentees and offer non-threatening feedback about their teaching and integration into the school culture.

Helping With Individualized Education Programs and Paperwork

New special education teachers encounter excessive and competing responsibilities. Completing required paperwork (e.g., referrals, placements, evaluation documents) is challenging. The volume of work associated with IEPs and the logistics of completing associated paperwork may also present challenges. Mentors can help mentees better manage their roles and responsibilities in the following ways:

- Help mentees develop time management skills.
- Work with mentees to develop schedules and organize responsibilities.
- Discuss with school administrators the possibility of providing mentees with sheltered status, which includes reduced caseloads, fewer administrative duties, and support for the improvement of pedagogy.
- Offer assistance with required tasks and paperwork.
- Provide paperwork PD if not available through the school or district.
- Answer questions and provide feedback about the IEP processes. If mentors are not knowledgeable and experienced with school expectations for IEP paperwork, they should help mentees find school-based IEP partners who can support mentees in this area.

Connecting to Resources

Beginning special education teachers without materials and background knowledge in content areas often experience additional challenges. These teachers may be left on their own to develop instructional materials based on what is readily available to them, which can result in stress and can cut into time needed for other responsibilities. It can also be time consuming for new special education teachers to secure materials on their own (e.g., searching for materials on the Internet, asking university faculty for suggestions, requesting materials from publishers). Mentors can provide support to novice special educators in the following ways:

- Help mentees obtain necessary instructional resources and materials (e.g., curriculum materials, PD, suitable classroom space).
- Point mentees toward internal and external funding sources for materials and supplies.

- Provide a list of available support services and providers at the school and district levels.
- Work with administrators to create opportunities for mentees to develop curriculum knowledge by observing veteran teachers, attending PD sessions, and sharing resources with colleagues.
- Assist mentees in evaluating whether reading and other materials are structured and adequate for teaching students with disabilities.
- Encourage mentees to attend PD regarding using materials and curricula. If not available through the district, mentors should either provide this PD or find teachers who are familiar with the materials and curricula to provide this PD.
- Discuss with administrators the possibility of reducing the number of content areas mentees are assigned to teach.

Chapter 6:

Mentoring Approaches

There are several mentoring approaches that facilitate high-quality mentoring relationships. Mentors often juggle approaches depending on the goals of the mentoring session and the needs of mentees. Table 1 serves as a quick reference for each type of mentoring.

It may be beneficial for mentors and mentees to keep journals to reflect on what happens during mentoring sessions or lessons. Journals help mentors and mentees remember important concepts discussed during mentoring and positive strategies used while teaching. Journals also help mentees examine teaching patterns, student engagement, and behavior.

Table 1

Types of Mentoring

Type of Mentoring	Description	Goals	Examples	Advantages	Disadvantages	When to Use
Reflective Mentoring	Also termed <i>cognitive coaching</i> , reflective mentoring helps mentees reflect on their teaching strategies and develop and improve instruction.	To critically think about teaching practices and lesson plans and develop a deeper understanding of the learning process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “What are some of the problem-solving techniques you could use?” • “What elements of the lesson helped your students succeed or not succeed?” 	Helps mentees develop critical thinking skills and efficacy and allows them to take ownership of mentoring sessions.	May not work well with mentees who are still in survival mode or who cannot identify their areas of weakness.	Works well with mentees who have acquired basic pedagogical skills, who can identify successful and unsuccessful teaching strategies, and who strive to improve.
Direct Mentoring	Mentors act as problem solvers and models for mentees.	To provide modeling and strategies for mentees.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “One way I have dealt with this problem in the past is” • “A good suggestion for this issue is” • “Strategies that have proved successful for increasing fluency are” 	Provides mentees with problem-solving techniques; mentees do not need to develop their own solutions.	Does not allow mentees to identify their problem-solving strategies.	Works well with mentees who are not yet confident in their skills, are stuck on dilemmas, or do not have the knowledge base to identify and implement solutions.

Type of Mentoring	Description	Goals	Examples	Advantages	Disadvantages	When to Use
Collaborative Mentoring	Also termed <i>instructional coaching</i> , in collaborative mentoring, mentors and mentees form partnerships.	To use open dialogue between mentors and mentees to facilitate partnerships in improving instruction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Let’s brainstorm some ways in which we can work out this problem together.” • “That is a great idea. What about adding this?” 	Encourages problem-solving dialogues among colleagues and allows mentors and mentees to contribute.	May not be appropriate for all mentees. Some mentees may be more reflective, and more needy mentees may require direct mentoring.	Serves as a bridge between direct mentoring and reflective mentoring.

Reflective Mentoring

Mentors use reflective mentoring, also termed *cognitive coaching* (Costa & Garmston, 1994), to help mentees reflect on their teaching strategies in an effort to improve instruction. In this mentoring approach, mentors use a series of questions to encourage thoughtful reflection. Mentors motivate mentees to evaluate how their instruction affects student learning.

Beginning Special Education Teacher Describing Mentor:

“We met a couple days ago, and it was such a great discussion. She makes me feel comfortable, and she asks good questions to help me think about my teaching.”

Goal of reflective mentoring. The goal of reflective mentoring is to provide mentees with an increased ability to effectively use their resources. A key element of reflective mentoring is thinking about thinking. Mentees primarily focus on their performance and competencies, and reflective mentoring helps them target student learning and make instruction more effective. The long-term goal of reflective mentoring is to provide mentees with the ability to improve their practices without the assistance of mentors. Ideally, reflective mentoring gives mentees the ability to solve problems and refine their practices by independently using reflective techniques.

Implementation of reflective mentoring.

What is necessary? Reflective mentors must know their mentees’ instructional strengths and weaknesses. Reflective mentoring is easiest to implement after observing mentees’ instruction because it gives mentors starting points from which to base reflective questions. Mentors need sets of questions to prompt mentees to reflect on their instruction and offer thoughtful responses. When mentees have trouble responding to reflective questions, mentors should use strategies to elicit additional information. These strategies become useful when mentees experience difficulties assessing the quality of their lessons. Strategies also help move mentees from a more concrete reflective style into one that is more formal and abstract.

When do mentors use reflective mentoring? Reflective mentoring is not appropriate with all mentees; it is mostly suited to those who have strong basic teaching skills and are thoughtful and deliberate with their lessons. Reflective mentoring encourages mentees to transition into more refined lesson planning and teaching and continually evaluate and improve their practices. It is not recommended for those still in survival mode or those having difficulty with in-depth reflections; these mentees benefit more from direct mentoring.

Reflective mentoring is also used to help mentees develop autonomy within their classrooms and schools. Mentors do not supply mentees with directives; they use questioning to help them reach appropriate conclusions on their own.

How do mentors conduct high-quality reflective mentoring sessions? Reflective mentoring is a challenging process that encourages thoughtful dialogue between mentors and mentees. For high-quality reflective mentoring sessions, mentees need prepared or already-administered lessons to discuss with mentors. It is also helpful if mentors have seen the lesson plans and observed the lessons. Dialogue between mentors and mentees gives mentors ideas for questioning and allows for the observation of the strengths and weaknesses of the planning and implementation of lessons. Reflective mentoring may occur before lessons provided that mentees have developed and shared detailed lesson plans. Reflective mentoring sessions that take place after lessons allow mentors to determine how close the planned lessons are to implementation.

Reflective mentoring helps mentees organize their thoughts and plans for lessons and allows them to evaluate their current skills through a series of mentor questions. These questions are designed to encourage mentees to reflect upon their current practices and evaluate positive and negative aspects of lesson components. They also encourage higher order thinking and more conscious teaching decisions.

Examples of reflective mentoring questions.

- “If you could re-teach the lesson, what would you do the same? What would you do differently?”
- “What are some of the ways in which you would measure whether your students met your lesson goals?”
- “If someone else were to teach this lesson, what suggestions would you have for that person?”
- “What elements of the lesson do you think helped your students succeed or not succeed?”
- “Can you tell me about some of the modeling and scaffolding strategies you used during the lesson?”
- “What do your data tell you about the lesson?”
- “What will you look for in your students’ reactions to determine if they understood your directions?”
- “How did what you observed compare with what you had planned?”
- “How did that strategy help your students learn?” How do you know they learned?”

Examples of reflective mentoring conversations.

(See highlighted text for instances of reflective mentoring.)

Reflective mentoring conversation, example 1. Prior to an observation, the mentor and mentee discuss the lesson:

Mentor: So, your main focus in today's lesson is to help students stay on task, get involved, and learn. Let's think about what may happen if the strategies you are using to teach the lesson are not working for one of your students. **What could you do if your plan is not working?**

Mentee: Well, one thing I have found that is working is cheering on our peers. If it seems like someone is disinterested, then saying, "Help your buddies. They need your help. Are they doing a good job?" I like this technique because it creates positive social interactions. I also know it works. So, if my strategies for today do not work, I will rely on what I know has worked in the past.

Mentor: So, peer motivation and peer support, which create a positive environment overall for all of the students?

Mentee: Right.

In this example, the mentor uses reflective mentoring by asking the mentee to reflect on her intended lesson plan and think about the instructional choices she has planned and what she may do if any problems arise. The mentor **does not** use her own experience to tell the mentee about possible problems associated with the lesson. Although the mentor may see the mentee struggle in the lesson, she does not point this out; she encourages the mentee to analyze her lesson and plan in case things do not go according to the lesson plan.

Reflective mentoring conversation, example 2.

Mentor: As you think about your last month with these students, **what do your data say about your time spent in transition and any changes that may be necessary?**

Mentee: Well, my data say that it was effective in terms of the amount of time spent on task making the transition. I have it specific enough that the students know when they come in, they go get their journals, they go get this, and they go get that. And the data show that as we are transitioning from one type of activity to another, the amount of time spent off task has significantly decreased.

Mentor: So, it supports their learning, and the structure helps them stay on task, which increases the learning and instructional time. **Do the data show anything else?**

Mentee: Well, their test scores have increasingly gotten better.

Mentor: From the beginning of the month? OK, good. So, the data show that they are improving.

Mentee: They are improving. Yes, I am pleased.

In this example, the mentor asks the mentee to use her data to support what she is saying about transition and student learning. This helps the mentee determine which strategies are working for her. The mentor does not show the mentee how the data helped. The mentor also does not identify the areas that have affected learning; she only asks probing questions.

Reflective mentoring conversation, example 3.

Mentor: All right, if you think about the lesson you just completed, what are your main concerns?

Mentee: Well, my main concern is John. It did not seem that he was understanding most of the vocabulary I went over today. I think he was engaged, but even with the examples the other students gave, I do not think he knew most of the words.

Mentor: OK, good. Why do you think he had problems?

Mentee: John seems to find one thing about an example to which he can relate and latches on to that. The problem is that he does not always latch on to the right thing.

Mentor: I do not completely understand that. Can you give me an example from the lesson?

Mentee: Sure. Remember when we were discussing the word *catapult*? Sam was giving the example of using a rubber band to catapult his pencil across the room, and it hit someone. Remember when John was talking about breaking his pencil, and part of it flung to his neighbor? He focused on the pencil part and that it was thrown, but I am pretty sure he did not understand the word *catapult* and its meaning.

Mentor: So, what do you think you could do next time to help John? Any ideas?

Mentee: Well, first, I was thinking maybe I should spend a bit more time on vocabulary and have a check-in. I am not quite sure how I am going to do that yet—maybe something with examples and non-examples that students identify while working in pairs. This would tell me if they understand how the word is used. What do you think?

Mentor: Well, that idea certainly would give John more practice. I like your idea of examples and non-examples. This would help to refocus him. Good thinking.

In this example, the mentor probes for the specifics with which the mentee is struggling in instruction. When the mentee identifies a problem, the mentor probes for examples and possible solutions. The mentor does not suggest any specific methods for leading with the problem. In the end, the mentor does affirm that the plan seems like a good idea, but the plan was created by the mentee.

Reflective mentoring video. <http://ncipp.education.ufl.edu/practices.php>

Direct Mentoring

Direct mentoring occurs when mentors assume a problem-solving role. In this mentoring model, mentors give mentees specific feedback. Direct mentoring helps mentees feel grounded and supported when they are struggling with issues in their classrooms. During direct mentoring, mentors provide mentees with advice or problem-solving techniques based on their own experiences or personal knowledge.

Beginning Special Education Teacher Describing Mentor:

“She was really knowledgeable about a lot of things. I really enjoyed the experience because I never had anyone except a principal or assistant principal come in and do an evaluation. I mean, she told me the ins and outs, she told me what classes they offered here, she would email me right away if I had a logistical question. She was really able to help me learn the way everybody in the school does things. She was always checking in, and I thought it was a really good experience with her.”

Goal of direct mentoring. The goal of direct mentoring is to provide mentees with explicit answers to their questions and advice for the difficulties they experience. Direct mentors may communicate to their mentees problem-solving techniques, anecdotes from prior experiences, and answers to logistical questions. Direct mentoring is based on the premise that mentees will use the advice provided by mentors to resolve current and future issues. The long-term goal of direct mentoring is to help mentees become more self-reliant and independent while conducting their lessons. Ideally, direct mentoring should be a precursor to more reflective and collaborative mentoring practices.

Implementation of direct mentoring.

What is necessary? Mentors utilizing a direct mentoring approach should have strong pedagogical skills they can use to scaffold for mentees, and they should take advantage of PD opportunities to improve their pedagogical and mentoring skills. Mentees who need direct mentoring may not have all the requisite skills to provide students with high-quality lessons, so mentors must have the ability to provide them with information and insight to improve their practices.

Mentors who give direct teaching advice to mentees should also have relevant experience and knowledge in the areas in which the mentees work. This experience and knowledge may include information about special education, strategies specific to a disability area or age group, and content areas. For direct mentoring to be successful, mentors must be skilled special educators. Providing mentees with concrete examples strengthens the direct mentoring experience and helps mentees generalize the information to their overall practices. Anecdotes and stories involving both positive and negative experiences may help strengthen mentees' understanding and skills in certain areas.

When do mentors use direct mentoring? Direct mentoring may prove extremely useful for mentees who have not yet acquired the necessary metacognitive skills to engage in reflective mentoring. It is also a good technique for mentees who are not yet comfortable reflecting on their students' learning. In addition, direct mentoring is beneficial when mentees have logistical or procedural concerns about their schools. Direct mentoring approaches may assist those who need information regarding their schools' handling of IEPs and other special education issues. Finally, direct mentoring may be useful to mentees who work in challenging classrooms and schools or have a wide variety of academic levels in their classrooms. Mentees who feel inundated may benefit more from explicit, direct information than from reflective questioning. Reflective and collaborative mentoring may be too labor-intensive or abstract; giving these mentees immediate access to useful information may be more valuable.

How do mentees conduct high-quality direct mentoring sessions? Direct mentoring heavily relies on mentees' explicit questions or concerns and is likely to align with the mentees' primary concerns. Direct mentoring sessions are likely to occur following an issue or problem. If mentees tell mentors about problems before mentoring sessions, mentors can find strategies that help even if they have no experience with the problem themselves.

Examples of direct mentoring statements.

- “Well, one of the things I do when I have this issue in my classroom is”
- “An effective way to solve this problem is”

- “I had a similar experience with one of my students. It drove me up the wall. I handled it by”
- “This is a good place to go to for resources for this problem”
- “I tried that strategy in my classroom, and this is why it did/did not work”

Examples of direct mentoring conversations.

(See highlighted text for instances of direct mentoring.)

Direct mentoring conversation, example 1.

Mentee: Right now, I have one student who is having difficulty reading out loud. Whenever I call on her to read, she spends the majority of the time stumbling over words and reading very slowly.

Mentor: So, it sounds like she has some difficulties with fluency when she reads out loud. How are you going to address her fluency problem?

Mentee: I have no idea!

Mentor: So, what I would recommend you do with her is give her some additional practice with fluency. Do you have an idea of some good remedial fluency work?

Mentee: Not really.

Mentor: Well, why don't you start her off with some repeated readings to get her used to reading with good speed and prosody. It may also be useful for you to assign her a reading partner who has strong reading skills. That way, when they do partner reading, the partner can model good fluency skills for her.

Mentee: I could do those things with her during our centers time.

Mentor: OK, good. Next time we meet, let me know how it is going, and if you still need more help, I will provide you with some additional fluency programs.

In this example, the mentor provides direct feedback and strategies for the mentee. She expresses her opinion about what would work best for the student and offers to supply additional resources to the mentee.

Direct mentoring conversation, example 2.

Mentee: Today, while I was teaching the lesson, I had a lot of trouble determining if the lesson was at the right level for my students. When I created the lesson, I thought it would be at the

appropriate level, but some students got it right away and were bored, and other students struggled but did not want to raise their hands and ask questions.

Mentor: So, it sounds like you had some difficulty determining who was understanding the lesson and who was not.

Mentee: Yes, exactly. I had a lot of kids zoning out, and I was not sure if it was because it was too easy, too hard, or not interesting.

Mentor: Well, one of the things I do in my classroom is give each child three different squares of construction paper in red, green, and yellow. I explain to the students that the red one is for when they feel completely lost, the yellow is for when they understand but still have a question, and the green is for when they understand the lesson well. During the lesson, my students should always have one of these colored cards out. That way, I can look around and easily determine who is having some trouble, and who is doing OK. It also eliminates some of the embarrassment students may feel by raising their hands to say they do not understand.

Mentee: That is a good strategy. Do you know where I could go and laminate those pieces of paper?

Mentor: Sure, I can show you where the laminating machine is.

Direct mentoring video. <http://ncipp.education.ufl.edu/practices.php>

Collaborative Mentoring

Collaborative mentoring, also termed *instructional coaching*, utilizes the partnership approach between mentors and mentees in which both are seen as equal in the relationship. Mentors should encourage constructive dialogue during mentoring sessions. This two-way dialogue should encourage reflective thinking, and mentors should not impose judgment or opinions on mentees.

Beginning Special Education Teacher Describing Mentor:

“I think it was a very good experience because sometimes you think you are doing everything wonderful. But actually, when someone comes in and takes a step back . . . but it was never any criticism, you know . . . and that is why I am saying it was not her word was the law. It was like she was very flexible; it was always a lot of back-and-forth conversation about what was going on. She just shared a whole lot.”

Goal of collaborative mentoring. The goal of collaborative mentoring is to utilize the partnership between mentors and mentees to facilitate dialogue about teaching practices. This mentoring model encourages open communication between colleagues and fosters professional relationships. It combines elements of reflective and direct mentoring to develop mentees' skills and teaching practices.

The long-term goal of collaborative mentoring is to allow mentees to become comfortable engaging in professional dialogues using a problem-solving model. It also helps mentees become familiar with reflective and direct mentoring styles.

Implementation of collaborative mentoring.

What is necessary? Because a strong relationship is paramount to this type of mentoring, mentors and mentees must feel comfortable working together in a collaborative context. Thus, mentees should be aware that collaborative mentoring is not top-down supervision; it is an ongoing dialogue between two colleagues to encourage positive teaching practices.

During collaborative mentoring, mentors should have a deep understanding and knowledge of both research-based intervention and effective coaching strategies (Knight, 2007). Thus, mentors should regularly engage in PD opportunities to increase overall knowledge and coaching competency.

When do mentors use collaborative mentoring? Because collaborative mentoring combines elements of reflective and direct mentoring, it is beneficial for many mentees. However, mentees who have moved past survival mode and have become more reflective about their practices may benefit the most from this type of mentoring. Collaborative mentoring is also beneficial for mentees who have used the direct mentoring model and are ready to engage in a more reflective or collaborative process. Mentors may use this framework to transition mentees into more reflective and thoughtful practices.

Collaborative mentoring works best with mentees who invest in the mentoring process. Because it requires mentors and mentees to collaborate on ideas and problem-solving techniques, mentees must be comfortable engaging with mentors in open dialogue. Mentees who expect the mentoring relationship to be a supervisory process may have difficulty adjusting to this format. To help mentees feel more comfortable, mentors should explain the collaborative process before initiating it to ensure that mentees understand expectations.

How do mentors conduct high-quality collaborative mentoring sessions? In mentoring, true partnerships imply that mentees have choices at every step in the collaborative process. As Knight (2007) notes, collaborative mentors are most effective when they act as critical friends

who respect and encourage mentees and push them to continually improve their practices. Collaboration allows mentors and mentees to jointly arrive at the same solution through give and take of ideas and possibilities.

Collaborative mentoring often involves modeling, observation, and open dialogue. Mentors and mentees work together through co-inquiry to investigate causes and possible solutions to problems. Mentors may allow mentees to lead mentoring conversations at some points during sessions (Harrison, Lawson, & Wortley, 2005).

Modeling is an essential element of high-quality collaborative mentoring sessions. Mentors observe mentees' lessons and have follow-up conversations with mentees. It is beneficial for mentors to create and use observation forms during lessons. The observation form should include teaching behaviors mentees consider important (Knight, 2007). The form may be collaboratively produced to increase the mentees' buy-ins and ensure their understanding. While modeling, mentors should focus on behaviors on the observation form rather than on entire lessons.

Following mentoring sessions, mentees should implement their lessons while mentors watch for the critical teaching behaviors identified on the observation form. Mentors must watch for and record positive teaching behaviors that become subjects of discussions after lessons. Mentors should emphasize positive behaviors to ensure that mentees become aware of what is effective in their practices and what needs additional work (Knight, 2007).

Immediately following lessons, mentors should meet with mentees to discuss the data they collected. This meeting is not a chance for mentors to give the mentees their expert opinions or inform them about how to improve their lessons; it is a chance for mentors and mentees to reflect on lessons and engage in dialogues about them (Knight, 2007).

Examples of collaborative mentoring questions and statements.

- “This is what I may try in this situation. What do you think of this strategy? What is something you may try?”
- “Let’s brainstorm some of the ways in which we can handle this issue.”
- “I wonder how we could come up with a solution together that may solve this problem.”
- “Can you tell me about some of the strategies you used while you were teaching this lesson? I will jump in if I can note something additional.”
- “Have you dealt with this problem in the past? What worked for you?”

Examples of collaborative mentoring conversations.

(See highlighted text for instances of collaborative mentoring.)

Collaborative mentoring conversation, example 1.

Mentee: So, I have been having some trouble with one of my student's comprehension skills during reading groups. She is a good reader, and she reads pretty fluently, but she has difficulty remembering the main ideas of what she has read.

Mentor: OK, well let's put our heads together and think about some of the reasons this may be. Does her comprehension seem to be any different while she is reading out loud or while she is silently reading?

Mentee: Well, yes, it seems she has better comprehension of a story she reads out loud than while she silently reads.

Mentor: OK, that is interesting. Let's think about why that may be. Do you think she is as diligent about reading each word while she silently reads?

Mentee: I am not sure. I think you may be right that she may be skipping words or reading too fast, but I think more than that, she enjoys reading out loud, which makes her pay more attention to it.

Mentor: That makes sense, so let's come up with some ways to encourage that type of careful reading while she is reading both out loud and silently.

In this example, the mentor is careful not to give too many ideas to the mentee without encouraging some reflection. The mentor also encourages the mentee to reflect on the mentor's hypotheses about the problem before implementing ideas.

Collaborative mentoring conversation, example 2.

Mentor: I think this first reading lesson went well. So, tell me what you think went well or what you think needs improvement with the last lesson. I would like to get your take on things, and then we will brainstorm what we could do to strengthen the lesson.

Mentee: Well, I liked the way the students were engaged in the lesson and kept getting so excited to answer questions. I will use that format again. My only concern was that they sometimes got too excited and seemed to lose focus on what they were doing.

Mentor: OK, good. That was pretty much the same observation I had. **Now, what do you think we could do to improve this situation?** I think one of the things you could do next time is give everyone a brief overview of the rules before starting.

Mentee: Right, well, we could review basic classroom rules like raising your hand and sitting in your seat. I think we could review some of the more specific rules of the lesson, too.

Mentor: Good, I agree with that.

Collaborative mentoring video. <http://ncipp.education.ufl.edu/practices.php>

Chapter 7: **Providing Instructional Support**

Beginning special educators typically enter the field with preparation in effective strategies and methods for teaching and assessing students with disabilities, but they may not have comprehensive knowledge of all subject areas. Consequently, new special education teachers may be unprepared to provide direct instruction in specific content areas or co-teach with colleagues. Additionally, they may encounter students who have a variety of needs. Because novice special educators may struggle to address these needs during instruction, mentors must provide instructional support.

Determining Focus of Support

There are a variety of methods for determining the exact type of instructional support mentees need. Needs assessments, observations, student progress monitoring, and simple conversations with mentees can highlight areas in which mentees need instructional support. To establish a comprehensive picture of what mentees need, mentors must consider the following methods.

Needs assessments. Mentors can determine what mentees need by administering a short survey (see Table 2) and then meeting to ask follow-up questions. This brief survey can be used to focus the attention of both mentors and mentees.

Table 2

Sample Survey

Instructional Needs		
I need assistance with	planning.	Yes or No
	ideas for engaging students.	Yes or No
	identifying strategies that are appropriate for my students.	Yes or No
	figuring out effective practices for teaching the content.	Yes or No
	finding instructional materials appropriate for individual students.	Yes or No
	organizing instructional activities and materials.	Yes or No
Assessment Needs		
I need assistance with	finding appropriate assessments for my students.	Yes or No
	organizing data collection.	Yes or No
	interpreting data for parents.	Yes or No
	using data to develop IEP or lesson goals.	Yes or No
	involving students in goal setting.	Yes or No
Collaboration Needs		
I need assistance with	planning with my general education colleagues.	Yes or No
	negotiating accommodations for my students in the general education classroom.	Yes or No
	communicating with parents.	Yes or No
	supervising my paraprofessional.	Yes or No
	working with my building principal.	Yes or No
Paperwork Needs		
I need assistance with	developing IEPs.	Yes or No
	completing special education paperwork.	Yes or No
	using the data management system.	Yes or No
	managing the time I spend on paperwork.	Yes or No

After administering the brief survey, mentors should set up appointments with mentees to talk and ask questions. Sample questions are as follows:

- “What strategies have you tried for engaging students?”
- “What are the evidence-based strategies you have tried? How have they worked?”
- “What challenges are you experiencing while communicating with parents?”
- “What content are you finding hard to teach? Explain what is challenging to you.”
- “Do you have any students who are not succeeding? What data have you collected on these students?”

Observations. Classroom observations or observations of meetings with general education teachers and parents may also help mentors identify mentees' needs. Such observations may be particularly helpful when mentees do not recognize the type of help they need.

To conduct successful classroom observations, it is helpful for mentors to use teacher evaluation tools to assist in the identification of certain practices mentors want mentees to implement; these tools also help determine how successfully mentees achieve practices. Mentors should ask mentees if there are certain aspects of instruction they would like to have observed during classroom visits.

While observing mentees with students, mentors must make note of whether mentees' lessons have clear goals, appropriately explained or modeled new ideas or strategies, and sufficient guided practice appropriate for their levels. Mentors may also observe mentees collaborating with general education teachers or parents. In these instances, mentors should evaluate how clearly mentees are communicating. Do mentees use jargon-free language? Are their explanations clear? Do they actively listen?

In addition to direct observations, mentors should review mentees' portfolios. District induction and mentoring programs may require mentees to compile general information on the first year of teaching in a portfolio that details their progress on various professional skills and requirements. For instance, mentees may include lesson plans, student work samples, and videos of activities conducted in classes. These key pieces can help mentors determine the areas in which mentees need instructional assistance.

Mentors may also consult formal evaluations to understand mentees' needs. Mentees often must meet benchmarks or standards throughout their first year of teaching, and administrators may share formal observations with mentors to provide assistance in deficit areas. While interviewing administrators, mentors should inquire about areas in which mentees need help.

Progress monitoring. Beginning special educators collect progress-monitoring data to determine student achievement and individual need areas. These data can be used to examine instruction and determine if there are any areas in which all students are having difficulty. When mentees bring student data to mentoring sessions, mentors should base conversations on these results.

While meeting with mentees, mentors should focus on a series of questions that reveal information about mentees' needs. Sample questions are as follows:

- “Based on the bar graphs, which aspects of reading instruction do you think your students are struggling with the most?”

- “Let’s talk about what you have tried that has been successful while teaching science. How could we apply these strategies to this problem?”
- “How will you know if your students have mastered some of these vowel team patterns?”

Simple conversations. Having frequent informal conversations with mentees and their building principals keeps mentors abreast of mentees’ needs. Mentors should simply ask questions of mentees and principals. Sample questions are as follows:

- “How have things been going in your classroom?”
- “How is planning with your general education colleagues working?”
- “Which students are doing well? Which students are presenting some challenges?”

Types of Instructional Support

Once mentors identify the instructional support mentees need, they must determine the most appropriate way to provide this support. It is important to note that mentees will need different types of support. If they are struggling a great deal, they may need explicit support. In this case, direct mentoring may be best. If mentees seem to have a fair amount of skill, then a reflective mentoring approach may be more important. Mentors can provide instructional support through observations and feedback, co-planning, focused mentoring conversations, modeling, and developing and implementing action plans.

Observation and feedback. Observing mentees’ classroom practices during real-life instruction is one common type of instructional support. During observations, mentors should take notes on instructional strategies, record their mentees’ exact words during lessons, or even videotape lessons for later reflection. Mentors and mentees should then review observation data during mentoring sessions, where mentors help mentees identify problem areas and create plans for changing instruction. Mentors should repeat the observation and feedback process and should observe and collect data on how well mentees implement the discussed changes.

Before providing feedback, mentors must first get mentees’ perspectives. When mentors provide their feedback, they must use data from the observations to support their concerns. Also, they must use tentative language and ask questions. Research has shown that tentative language and questioning help solve problems in collaborative relationships. For example, mentors may observe a point in a lesson in which students are mostly off task. The mentor may say, “I noticed that students were getting off task about 25 minutes into the lesson. What does that tell you?” In another scenario, a mentor may say, “After introducing that strategy, you explained it two times to the students, but the students still seemed confused. Johnny could not remember any of the steps. In the future, it may help to model more for Johnny.”

Co-planning. When mentees struggle to create successful lessons in content areas, mentors should assist them by co-planning. Additionally, mentors should help struggling mentees collaborate with their general education colleagues by co-planning with the pair. While collaborating, mentors must be sure to help mentees describe the instructional goals and state why they are important. Mentors must encourage mentees think about the broader goals they have in instructional areas and describe what they believe targeted students must do to meet the goals. Mentors should encourage mentees to use student data and the broader curricular goals to develop instructional goals for individual lessons.

Example of a co-planning conversation about curricular and instructional goals.

Mentor: Have you checked the state content standards to determine some of the broad curricular goals that your third-grade students with disabilities must focus on in mathematics?

Mentee: Yes, but I am having a hard time selecting goals.

Mentor: Have you talked with your third-grade general education teachers about the goals they are trying to achieve and how your students are making progress toward those goals?

Mentee: Yes, and they have told me that my students have troubles with long multiplication and measurement.

Mentor: Have you looked at any of the work samples from the third-grade class?

Mentee: Yes, and it seems that the students are having a hard time remembering to use zero as a place holder while multiplying with a two-digit multiplicand (the multiplicand is 32 in $95 \times 32 =$).

Mentor: Maybe it would help to look at their competence with place value. How could you do this? What sorts of activities could you use to have students demonstrate their knowledge of place value?

Mentee: Well, I could give them base ten blocks, and they could show me to regroup ones into tens.

Mentor: Yes, that would be the most basic level of understanding. What could you do to determine if they have the understanding necessary for regrouping during multiplication?

Mentee: Well, I could ask them to show me how the ones should be regrouped to a ten if they need to carry a ten to the second digit while solving the problem.

Mentor: Yes, that would be an excellent idea. Now, let's take this one step further. Suppose they do what you ask but still fail to put zero in while multiplying by a two-digit multiplicand. What could you do?

Mentee: Well, I guess I could ask them to show me, using the base ten blocks, the number in the tens place. Then, I could ask them to show me how they will represent that they are moving over to the tens place. If they do not understand how to do that, then I will assume that they understand a good bit about place value but not how it works in multiplication problems with two-digit multiplicands.

Mentor: Excellent! You are now on the path to collecting some very good student data. Now, let's talk about how you could construct some activities to test out these different hypotheses about your students' understandings.

After the mentor has helped the mentee select areas for further assessment, the mentor should help the mentee set up assessment activities.

Mentors should also co-plan with mentees and general education teachers if they are having trouble focusing. Mentors should use strategies such as the Planning Pyramid by Schumm, Vaughn, and Harris (1997) to help mentees consider the broader goals they have for all students and determine which goals they will need for students with disabilities. The Planning Pyramid is a tool for planning an inclusive curriculum. While using the Planning Pyramid, general and special education teachers must consider their goals for all students. In other words, they must state what they expect *all* students should do to demonstrate understanding in content areas. Next, they must consider what *most* students should do and what *some* students should do. Mentees who consider these three tiers will better focus on what they want their struggling students to learn and do.

Focused mentoring conversations. Focused conversations are critical to the success of mentoring and the success of mentees during their first years in the field. Mentors should use focused conversations after an area of need is identified. For example, a mentor and mentee (and possibly the general education colleague) may discuss how to change classroom practice to affect student results. The mentor would begin by brainstorming instructional ideas, particularly those with research behind them.

Example of a focused mentoring conversation about curricular and instructional goals.

Mentor: Now that you have determined that the students have problems understanding how place value works in multiplication problems involving two-digit multiplicands, what will you do to help the students?

Mentee: Well, in college, I learned about how it is important to take students from the concrete to the abstract. Because my students know how to use the blocks for place value, I am now going to show them how to use the blocks to solve the problems.

Mentor: So, once you show them how to solve the problems using the blocks, how will you teach them to represent the problems with numerals?

Mentee: I will show them how they must use a zero in the ones place to represent that they are multiplying with the second digit of the two-digit multiplicand.

Mentor: That is a terrific idea. How will you know when they have acquired the knowledge they need?

Mentee: Well, I will know when the students can easily solve these problems without using the blocks and move to three-digit multiplicands and solve those correctly.

Mentoring conversations also serve to align PD to classroom practices. If the mentee in the above conversation had been unable to generate appropriate strategies for addressing the students' needs, the mentor could have pointed the mentee to PD workshops or websites for assistance. For instance, the mentor could have directed the mentee to the National Library of Virtual Manipulatives (<http://nlvm.usu.edu/en/nav/vlibrary.html>) or provided the mentee with a method's text that would have shown how to use base ten blocks to teach math. The chapter *Providing Emotional Support* (Chapter 4) provides more information about focusing mentoring conversations.

Modeling. Mentees may need instructional support on a more direct level. One way mentors can provide this support is by modeling instructional practices for mentees. For example, the mentor and mentee could discuss instructional strategies prior to a lesson; they may even choose to co-plan a lesson. Then, the mentor could model the lesson in the mentee's class in order to give a concrete example. After the modeling, the mentee could try the strategy while the mentor watches.

While modeling the lesson, the mentor would make sure to review the concepts, skills, or strategies the students need to do the work. For instance, while preparing students to work with two-digit multiplicands, the mentor could review with the students the basic knowledge they need to work with base ten blocks. Mentors could show students the problem $56 \times 31 =$ and ask them to demonstrate how to represent the 3 using base ten blocks. Then, the mentor could ask them to show how to represent the 3 (in the tens place) times 6 using base ten blocks. Mentors should review a couple of times before modeling.

In the model portion of the lesson, the mentor should encourage the mentee to use very clear language and model several times, bringing students in each time so that the concept and skill being taught are clear.

Example of modeling.

Mentor: Now, I am going to show you how to use base ten blocks to solve the problem $31 \times 21 =$. First, you must work with the numbers in the ones place. In this case, the multiplier in the ones place is _____. Then, the number in the ones place for the multiplicand is _____. [Call on a student to provide the answers: 1 and 6.] OK, so now I will take 1 and multiply it by 1 using my base ten blocks. So, I have one group of 1. [Show the students 1 and group it into one group.] Before moving on, I will write the number 1 in the ones place below the problem because I have one set of 1.

Now, I will take 1 times the number 3. What place is the 3 in? Yes, tens. So, I really have the number 30 in one group. [Show the students 30 or three base ten blocks in one group.] Now, I will write the number 30 underneath the 1, and I will make sure I line up the numbers in the ones place. OK, here comes the trickier part; now, I must work with the number 2. What place is the number 2 in again? Yes, tens. So, how many groups of ten will I have when I multiply 1 by 20? Yes, I will have 20 groups with 1 in each, so let's write 20 groups with 1 in each. How many ones do I have altogether? Yes, 20. Now, I will write 20 below 30, making sure that I line up what? Yes, tens and ones. Now, I move to the 3. What does the number 3 represent? Yes, 30. What number does the 2 represent? Yes, 20. Now, I multiply three tens by 20, so I have three tens in 20 groups. What number is this? Yes, it is 600. Now I will add $1+30+20+600$. What number do I get? Yes, 651.

Mentors should plan to model three times or more with the students. Mentors should increasingly bring the students into the model so that it is more like guided practice.

Developing an Action Plan

Action plans help guide instructional support throughout the year. Once mentors and mentees establish goals and objectives, they should create timelines for instructional changes and other supports such as PD. Action plans may include many other types of support. For example, a mentee could incorporate the strategies of prediction and summarization for increasing comprehension. In order to do this, the mentor would need to show the mentee an approach for teaching summarization and co-plan a lesson in which the mentor models for the mentee how to use the summarization strategy. After co-planning the lesson, the mentor would observe it being taught. Depending on how the lesson goes, the mentor would model for the mentee how to teach summarization in the classroom. The chapter *Conducting High-Quality Individual Mentor Sessions* (Chapter 9) provides more information on action plans.

Chapter 8: Mentor Parameters

Frequency of Contact

The frequency of support influences beginning special education teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness and helpfulness of mentoring. Mentees who have contact with their mentors at least once per week for the first year versus those who have less contact with their mentors tend to rate mentoring as more effective. However, these teachers also perceive this amount of assistance to be inadequate for addressing all of their professional and emotional needs. Thus, it is important for mentors and mentees at the beginning of mentoring relationships to agree upon guidelines regarding frequency of contact. Induction and mentoring program directors should discuss the importance of the frequency of contact and ensure that program specifications are met.

Determining Need

For the most part, new special education teachers have the same responsibilities as their more experienced counterparts, but they often have less knowledge and skill. Administrators should prepare mentors and plan relevant induction programs with an understanding of mentees' different needs, which may differ by district, school, and teacher. Initial needs assessments assist in determining the supports each mentee may require. Progress monitoring data gathered throughout the mentoring process ensures support for any newly identified needs or deficit areas.

High needs. Novice special educators with high needs require intensive mentoring support. They may have weak foundational pedagogical skills, may feel unsuccessful and ineffective, and may work in challenging contexts. Typically, mentors invest a significant amount time supporting high-needs mentees. On the continuum of support, mentors are likely to take a more directive role. Thus, mentoring may include

- reliance on mentors for ideas about dealing with challenges;
- use of modeling and demonstrations;
- increased classroom observations;
- increased planning time;
- increased need for resources;
- increased availability for contact (e.g., face-to-face interactions, phone calls, emails); and
- emotional support.

Low needs. Low-needs mentees require minimal support from their mentors. Low-needs mentees are reflective, self-directed learners with strong pedagogical skills and high efficacy. They may also work in highly supportive contexts. Mentors of low-needs mentees usually take more of a reflective mentoring role. Mentoring support may include

- emotional support,

- assistance examining student data to change teacher practice, and
- reflection on professional growth.

Mode of Contact

Open communication plays an influential role in establishing effective relationships between mentors and mentees. Mentees rate mentors who have contact with mentees at least once per week as the most effective. Mentors can strengthen communication with mentees in many ways.

During instruction. Occasionally, mentors must be present during instruction to provide modeling, demonstrate strategies, and observe problems mentees are having in class. Observation enables mentors to provide immediate feedback to mentees.

In-person discussion. Mentors can conduct formal and informal face-to-face meetings with mentees. Formal meetings are often structured, and they are scheduled to occur when both mentors and mentees are available. By contrast, informal meetings are more likely to occur impromptu and in free-form fashion. Often, they happen in real time in response to the mentees' urgent needs.

Phone. Mentors often have success in exchanging phone numbers with their mentees, especially when they work in different schools. Phone calls are made during the down time of teaching, before and after school, and at night. Phone conversations between mentors and mentees provide effective mentoring without face-to-face exchanges.

Technology. While considering which technologies to use as part of mentoring relationships, mentors must consider whether they will use the technologies for direct communication, information sharing, or a combination of both. For direct communication, mentors may use synchronous communication through video conferencing software (e.g., Skype, FaceTime) and chat software (e.g., Skype, chatrooms, course management sites such as Moodle, Blackboard, and Sakai). For information sharing, mentors may rely on asynchronous communication such as email, wikis, or discussion boards. For example, wikis such as Wikispaces (<http://www.wikispaces.com>) offer free password-protected options for K-12 purposes. Mentors and mentees should share information in a confidential manner that allows for frank communication about individual students, lesson plans, and other sensitive information.

Chapter 9: Conducting High-Quality Individual Mentor Sessions

Building Relationships

Beginning special education teachers who enter new schools and new classrooms with new students and new procedures need mentors to help familiarize them with the culture.

Beginning Special Education Teacher:

“I mean, being thrown in as a new teacher, let alone a new school district, period . . . I did not even know what our behavior guide and my caseload looked like, and I had these kids coming into my classroom. I had no idea what their needs were. I did not have my folders with their IEPs in them. My kids had behavioral plans I did not even know about.”

Most people can remember a time when someone made them feel a little less intimidated and more comfortable with a situation. Perhaps someone offered a campus tour, suggested a helpful strategy, or simply asked, “How are you doing?” Mentors have the potential to be this person for mentees. It is critical that mentors work to establish healthy working relationships with mentees so that mentees feel they can rely on mentors for support during times when it is most needed.

Beginning Special Education Teacher:

“My mentor provides a lot of great strategies to use in the classroom, and if I email her, she is always good about emailing back. I am like, ‘This is what is going on, can you help me out?’ And she is very flexible, which I think is awesome. For someone whose schedule is demanding . . . she came and waited for me for 40 minutes, and I did not think my meeting was going to take that long, and she was like, ‘It is not a big deal. We will reschedule.’ But it is nice to have that support and know that she understands.”

One critical component of any relationship is communication. All healthy relationships, whether friendship, romantic, or professional, should involve a steady stream of communication between parties. Mentoring relationships must have this healthy communication.

Effective communication skills. Mentors who use effective communication skills typically establish with mentees healthy, comfortable lines of communication. In order to foster effective communication, mentors should incorporate three skills into their everyday conversations with mentees: (1) communicate high expectations for students, (2) avoid judgments, and (3) set clear expectations for mentoring.

Use language to help beginning special educators communicate high expectations for students. Mentees have a lot on their minds. Mentors should ask questions to keep them focused on their students' progress. Sample questions are as follows:

- “Looking at your student data, what are realistic expectations for your class this year? Can you increase these goals?”
- “In what ways do you think you can make this student/class more successful?”
- “I know that during the first semester, the class was 90% successful. I think they can surpass that. What do you think?”
- “Wow, your students have made a lot of improvement! What is the next step to keep them moving forward?”

Use language devoid of judgments. Mentors should ask questions that develop mentees' problem-solving skills and draw on their experiences or resources. Sample questions are as follows:

- “As you consider this situation, what are some skills you learned in your pre-service courses to help you solve problems?”
- “As you consider your struggle to help John increase his fluency, what are some resources that may help you?”
- “Think back to how you handled Suzie's problems with decoding earlier in the year. Which strategies were effective with her, and how can they be applied to Timmy's issues?”
- “That does sound complicated. What person in your building is knowledgeable in that area?”
- “Tell me a little bit about the strategies you have tried so far. We can see what has been effective and build on that.”

The following questions contain judgment and are not appropriate:

- “That will never work. I tried it in my classroom, and it was a disaster.”
- “That is not a very good idea. I do not know why you would do that.”
- “It seems to me that you never correctly enforce your behavioral management strategies.”
- “I do not think you handled that well.”

Establish clear expectations for the mentoring relationship. Mentors should clearly communicate to mentees the roles and responsibilities of the mentoring relationship. Mentors should share goals for the mentoring experience and establish a structure for scheduling meetings and observations.

Effective listening skills. In conversations, there are always two players: (1) the communicator and (2) the listener. In establishing healthy relationships, mentors must use effective listening skills while mentees are talking to them.

Use body language to demonstrate listening. Mentors should communicate active listening by sitting forward, maintaining eye contact, and nodding throughout conversations.

Ask open-ended questions to facilitate conversation. Open-ended or divergent questions stimulate thought and facilitate conversation. Sample questions are as follows:

- “How do your students show growth in that area?”
- “What are some resources that can help you with this situation?”
- “What are some ways in which you can adjust your instruction to change the student’s performance?”
- “How does this situation compare to what happened last week?”
- “Can you think about how last week’s reading training relates to this problem?”
- “What do you think were the strengths and weaknesses of the lesson today?”

Paraphrase what the mentee says. Paraphrasing allows mentors acknowledge, clarify, and extend what mentees say. Sample paraphrases are as follows:

- “So, you are wondering about the best way to communicate with parents?”
- “I hear you saying that”
- “OK, so the biggest issue is that Did I get that right?”
- “In summary”
- “OK, let me recap what you said so that I can ensure that we are on the same page”

Acknowledge feelings. Mentors should put feelings on the table as a first step in dealing with the ups and downs of classroom life in order to deal with the sources of frustration. Sample feelings statements are as follows:

- “You are feeling frustrated with the behaviors in your classroom that interrupt instruction.”
- “It sounds like you are very angry that she reacted that way.”
- “You sound very confused about how to handle the situation.”
- “Wow, you must be feeling very overwhelmed.”
- “I can see that you are very upset about this situation. That must have been very hard to deal with.”

Be quiet. Mentors must know when to keep quiet. They should wait for their mentees to pause before speaking, should be respectful, and should not fill silences while mentees try to gather their thoughts and formulate plans.

In order to avoid pitfalls while engaged in active listening, mentors should avoid the following:

- Using personal references (e.g., “me, too,” “I would never . . .”).
- Asking questions because of personal curiosity.
- Multitasking (e.g., checking phone or planner during a mentoring session).
- Using too many monotonous, one-word responses (e.g., “uh-huh,” “OK”), which may convey disinterest.

Begin building relationships. Mentors should consider implementing the following steps during the first two to three mentoring visits:

- Meet with mentees and provide contact information.
- Connect with mentees on a personal level.
 - “What university did you attend?”
 - “Are you from the area, or did you just move here? From where?”
- Conduct observations.
 - Gather information about mentees’ learning environments.
 - Collect baseline instructional data to determine a place to start the conversations.
 - Discuss expectations of the induction program.
 - Describe the mentor/mentee relationship.
 - Explain the meeting requirements.

Example from Special School District of St. Louis County (SSD), Missouri

Prior to first visit, introduce yourself and state your intention to visit.

First visit

- Stop by to meet and greet.
- Connect with the mentee on a personal level.
 - Inquire about the mentee’s personal interests and hobbies.
 - “What do you like to do for fun?”
 - “What did you do over summer break?”
 - Share something about yourself related to your personal interests.
 - Talk about your hobbies.
 - Talk about your family.
 - Provide contact information.

Second visit

- Conduct an observation to gain insight into the mentee’s teaching assignment.

Third visit

- Discuss the induction program and expectations; be sure to include PD requirements.
- Describe the expectations for you and your mentee.

- Communicate the meeting requirements and schedule.
- Connect the conversation to the PD content the mentee received at new teacher orientation; discuss implementation barriers, if any.

Developing a Focus and Goals for Meetings

Every time mentors meet with mentees, they should communicate a plan for what they hope to accomplish. Once mentors and mentees are regularly meeting, they should begin by reviewing what they discussed during previous conversations. For example, mentors may ask, “Based on our last mentoring conversation” After the review, it is important to establish the focus of the current mentoring conversation. For example, mentors may state, “Today, we are going to talk about . . .

- the observation I conducted yesterday.”
- the student data you collected.”
- the PD you attended and how you are applying it in your classroom practice.”

Establishing a focus helps inform mentees of what to expect from conversations and reminds mentors to ensure that conversations do not drift from the goals. The following five strategies help determine how to focus mentoring conversations: (1) needs assessment, (2) direction, (3) classroom observation, (4) administrator referral, and (5) action plans.

Needs assessment. Data drive conversations. Data provide something concrete to which mentees should refer, especially while addressing deficit areas. Information from needs assessments helps illuminate mentees’ strengths and weaknesses, which can be a focal point for future conversations. The three steps for conducting a needs assessment are as follows:

1. Create a needs assessment based on the district’s evaluation tool or use a pre-made needs assessment (http://ncipp.education.ufl.edu/files_25/AddNeedsAssmtInfo.pdf).
2. Ask mentees to complete the assessment and rank highest-to-lowest needs.
3. Focus subsequent conversations on mentees’ highest needs.

Example of a needs assessment conversation.

Mentor: I took your responses from the needs assessment form you completed last week and graphed the results in this bar chart. From this chart, we can see that you indicated the area in which you would most like support is co-teaching. Let’s talk a little more about that. Tell me about the problems you are having in your classroom so that we can narrow down exactly what type of strategies will be the most useful for you.

Mentee: Well, I am having a hard time establishing my role in the classroom while the general education teacher is in there. She tends to take over, and I never have any involvement in the lesson.

Mentor: That sounds frustrating. Let's walk through last week's co-teaching lesson and try to determine how to handle the next lesson.

Direction. New special educators may struggle with issues that are not identified in needs assessments or observations. They may have issues that come up on a day-to-day basis, and it is helpful to focus mentoring conversations on what mentees identify as concerns. Starting conversations may be as simple as asking, "What is going on that concerns you?" or "Is there a specific practice you would like to improve?"

Example of a direction conversation.

Mentor: Let's talk about what is going on in your classroom. If you could pick one area that has been the biggest struggle in the past week, what would it be?

Mentee: I have had a hard time getting my students to summarize. They answer questions that I direct, but they are not summarizing.

Mentor: OK, so let's talk about this some more. Can you tell me about your lesson to teach summarizing? What are you doing to teach them how to summarize?

Classroom observation. Observing novice special education teachers is valuable for learning about their strengths and weaknesses and forming a basis for mentoring conversations. Beginning special educators often fail to recognize areas in which they are struggling, and outside observers can help by identifying and discussing their observations. The chapter *Providing Instructional Support* (Chapter 7) provides more information about assessing new special education teacher growth. The four steps for conducting a classroom observation are as follows:

1. Conduct a pre-observation conference with the mentee. Sample questions are as follows:
 - "What do you want students to know and do at the end of the lesson?"
 - "How will you assess the outcome today?"
 - "Who do you think will do well? Why? Who will have a hard time with the lesson? Why?"
 - "What would you like feedback about?"
2. Take notes as you observe, using instruments or noting strengths and weaknesses related to the focus of the observation (e.g., [WV evaluation tool](#)).
3. Conduct a post-observation conference with the mentee. Sample questions are as follows:
 - "What went well? How do you know?"
 - "What changes would you make? Why?"

Also, provide feedback requested by the mentee and discuss the observed strengths and weaknesses.

4. Use the post-conference information to continue discussions on improvement.

Example of a classroom observation conversation.

Mentor: During our last mentoring conversation, you told me that you wanted me to watch how you reinforced your students' responses during the lesson. I collected data on the number of times you made positive and negative comments after students' responses and graphed it on this chart. So, you can see that you replied with almost 40% percent negative responses and 60% positive. How does this compare to the goal we previously discussed?

Mentee: Well, I wanted at least 75% of my comments to be specific positive feedback.

Mentor: OK, so how can we change your negative comments to positive comments? For example, when the students were working on the reading comprehension questions, Timmy incorrectly responded, and you told him, "No, that is incorrect" and moved on to the next student. How could you have made that response more positive?

Administrator referral. Administrators can also identify concerns about beginning special education teachers. Mentors must carefully present information to mentees so that they have opportunities to change and improve. Depending on the administrators' roles in the school, mentors may want to acknowledge the source of the concern or find another way to bring it up. Mentors should complete the following steps after learning about an administrator's concerns:

- Schedule a meeting with mentee to discuss concerns.
- Raise the concern in conversation.
 - Acknowledge that it came from the principal.
 - Ask probing questions about the concern.
- Create a plan for remediating the concern.
- Follow up with the mentee's progress data.
- Follow up with the administrator about mentee progress.

Example of an administrator referral conversation—direct approach.

Mentor: I was talking with your principal the other day, and she mentioned that one of your student's parents contacted her regarding Jimmy's grades. The parent voiced concerns that Jimmy was failing and she had not received any warning or indication of this at all. The principal wanted me to talk to you about your plan for both Jimmy's success and communication with parents.

Example of an administrator referral conversation—indirect approach.

Mentor: I thought we could talk a bit today about failing students and communicating with parents. What plan do you have in place for when students are struggling?

Action plan. An action plan is a comprehensive way to monitor change and progress across a variety of goals and objectives within multiple areas (e.g., student, classroom, professional). Action plans recognize the importance of using multiple sources and modes to inform all stakeholders (e.g., mentors, mentees, administrators) of new special educators' progress and improvement. Action plans should be used throughout the year to help focus conversations with mentees. The three action plan steps are as follows:

1. Complete an action plan with the mentee based on one of the mentee's areas of need. The plan should include specific goals, objectives, resources, a timeline, and evaluation strategies. A variety of tools, including needs assessment, self-assessments, observational data, and administrator's referral, can ascertain a mentee's areas of need. Examples of action plans can be found at <http://ncipp.education.ufl.edu/practices.php>.
2. Follow the timeline and reflect on progress during mentoring conversations, review data with the mentee, and ask questions. Sample questions are as follows:
 - “What are some reasons for your students' progress or lack of progress?”
 - “I see you have been working on improving your students' comprehension scores. You moved from 60% to 80%. What have you been doing?”
3. Use the action plan to guide the next steps.
 - If no change or a slight change is noted in the students' progress, what could be done differently or in addition to what is already happening?
 - If change is noted in students' progress, what must be continued and what must be added to extend learning?

Example of an action plan conversation.

Mentor: Let's take a look at the second goal on your action plan. It reads, “Use varied writing strategies to help students expand their use of vocabulary in their sentences.” I know you brought some lesson plans and student data today, so let's see what you have.

Mentee: OK, here are the strategies I have implemented so far . . .

Leading Structured Conversations

Although mentees will have varying levels of needs, there will likely be many needs that will require support. It may be tempting for mentors to try to address all issues at once, but they should try to avoid addressing too many needs at one time. Structuring conversations assists mentors in effectively and efficiently using their time. Structured conversations allow mentors to strategically communicate with mentees about areas for improvement. These conversations

- focus the attention of the mentor and mentee on the big picture;
- provide scaffold for supporting and challenging thinking; and
- address cognitive outcomes such as predicting, envisioning, and synthesis.

Structured Conversation Skills

There are several strategies mentors may use to engage in structured conversations with mentees. These include pausing at integral times, paraphrasing information, probing for more information, and paying close attention to the discussion.

Pausing at integral times. This wait time allows mentors and mentees time to reflect and consider what was expressed. Answers to common questions about pausing during structured conversations are as follows:

- How long should mentors pause during the conversation?
 - Mentors should pause for about 3 to 5 seconds.
- When should mentors pause conversations?
 - After they ask questions.
 - After mentees respond to questions.
 - Before they respond to information presented by mentees.

Paraphrasing information. Mentors should show mentees that they hear and understand their concerns and successes. Paraphrasing allows mentors to communicate to mentees that they understand what mentees are saying. Additionally, paraphrasing helps minimize miscommunication because mentees can correct mentors if mentors misinterpret what mentees communicate. The three principles of paraphrasing are as follows:

- The paraphrase should be shorter than the original statement.
- Paraphrasing should occur prior to asking a question.
- Paraphrasing should include the pronoun you instead of I.

Probing for more information. Sometimes, when mentees describe events in their classrooms, their information is vague. For example, a mentor may ask about a student with challenging behavior, and the mentee may say, “Sally is out of control,” which does not provide detail about the actual student behavior. Probing for more information allows mentors to delve deeper into what is occurring. Probing is an effective tool for helping mentors move mentees toward providing specifics in language and thought. Sample questions mentors can use to focus thinking are as follows:

- A mentee may say, “None of the administrators value my work.” The mentor may probe with, “Which administrator specifically does not value your work?”
- A mentee may say, “He just does not do well in math.” The mentor may probe with, “What mathematical skills cause him to struggle?”

- A mentee may say, “She is always acting out in class. I just cannot control her.” The mentor may probe with, “Can you describe what acting out looks like? What is the problem behavior?”

Three Phases of Structured Conversations

1. **Activate and engage.** In this step, mentors activate the mentees’ knowledge. For example, a mentor may discuss how the mentee is doing in meeting goals or addressing challenges. Mentors also set the scene for learning-focused conversations. For example, a mentor may review the goals and ground rules for a conversation and may remind the mentee about the purpose of the structured conversation.
2. **Explore and discover.** This step allows mentors and mentees to examine events, make inferences, and analyze experiences. For example, if a mentee is working on a goal related to having smoother transitions, the mentor could discuss transitions in the classroom that he or she observed and make inferences about whether these transitions were effective and whether there could be improvements. Finally, the mentor may analyze data to help the mentee further hone his or her skills in transitioning students from one activity to another.
3. **Organize and integrate.** During this step, mentors move mentees toward generalizing new information to future situations. For example, the mentor could discuss ways of integrating information in the next day’s teaching. Mentors should look at the mentee’s lesson plans to help find opportunities to generalize the discussed information. Otherwise, it will likely not be applied in the way mentors would hope.

Types of Structured Conversations

There are two types of structured conversations: (1) planning and problem-solving conversations and (2) reflecting conversations. Each type of conversation serves a different purpose; however, mentors may consider integrating information from these two types of conversations into their practice.

Planning and problem-solving conversations.

Activate and engage

- Attain contextual information (e.g., classroom events, background information related to the lesson). Sample questions are as follows:
 - “As you think about the [lesson, event], what are some thoughts and actions that are influencing your choices?”
 - “Let’s think about what happened before Timmy had his tantrum. Tell me what was going on in the classroom.”
 - “What are some strategies you have tried in the past? What has been effective in specific situations?”

- Attain information about the observed lesson/event. Sample questions are as follows:
 - “What are some questions you have regarding this [lesson, event]?”
 - “What were the A, B, Cs (i.e., antecedents, behaviors, and consequences) surrounding this [lesson, event]?”
 - “When this [lesson, event] occurred, what was most effective and helpful?”
- Present issues and concerns. Sample questions are as follows:
 - “What are some of your concerns and challenges regarding this [lesson, event]?”
 - “When this [lesson, event] occurred, what was most difficult for you?”
 - “When this [lesson, event] occurred, what was most difficult for the students?”
 - Explore the mentee’s perspectives and perceptions. Sample questions are as follows:
 - “In thinking about this [lesson, event], what could be some other perspectives to consider that will lead to a fuller view?”
 - “What do you think is the parent’s biggest concern in bringing this up to you?”
 - “Thinking about this from the child’s point of view, with what do you think she is struggling the most?”

Explore and discover

- Focus on goals and outcomes. Sample questions are as follows:
 - “What is the goal and outcome of this [lesson, event]?”
 - “How will you know whether the [lesson, event] was effective?”
 - “How will you adapt the [lesson, event] if students are not reaching benchmarks and goals for this [lesson, event]?”
- Explore indicators and evidence of success. Sample questions are as follows:
 - “What are some indicators that you anticipate seeing or hearing to indicate the goal is being met?”
 - “What type of data collection techniques are you using to monitor progress? Visual?”
 - “Other than concrete data, what are some other indicators of the child’s progress?”
- Consider approaches, strategies, and resources. Sample questions are as follows:
 - “What are some actions and strategies you could use to ensure success with this [lesson, event]?”
 - “What are some pre-service trainings you have received that could be useful with this [lesson, event]?”
 - “Who in your building or school is knowledgeable in this area and could be helpful in assisting you with this [lesson, event]?”
- Reflect on potential choice points and concerns. Sample questions are as follows:
 - “What could be some potential factors that may influence your actions and outcome?”

- “What are some supports you could put in place to address these potential factors?”
- “Which of these factors could you modify or adapt in some way?”

Organize and integrate

- Make connections. Sample questions are as follows:
 - “In thinking about your experience with this [lesson, event], what are some ways in which the [lesson, event] may fit into the larger picture for this year?”
 - “In thinking about a similar situation, what was effective in dealing with this [lesson, event, student]?”
 - “What did you learn during the _____ PD you received in the beginning of this year that you could apply to this [lesson, event]?”
- Move toward generalization. Sample questions are as follows:
 - “In three words or fewer, describe this [lesson, event]?”
 - “If you had to pinpoint the most problematic point from everything you just described, what would it be?”
 - “How will this apply to multiple settings?”
- Encourage application of new strategies and learning. Sample questions are as follows:
 - “Of what do you want to be most aware of as you begin this [lesson, event]?”
 - “In thinking of your successes with other behavioral strategies, what can you try to apply to this [lesson, event, student]?”
 - “How can you utilize the skills you learned from your training at the _____ workshop to tackle this problem?”
- Encourage personal learning. Sample questions are as follows:
 - “What learning goals do you want to keep in mind during this experience?”
 - “What data are you collecting to measure your professional growth?”
 - “How has this [lesson, event] made you grow as a teacher?”

Reflecting conversations.

Activate and engage

- Attain contextual information (e.g., classroom events, background information related to the lesson). Sample questions are as follows:
 - “As you think about this [lesson, event], how do you think it went?”
 - “What were the most difficult and easiest parts of this [lesson, event] for you?”
 - “What part of this [lesson, event] would you change and adapt? Why?”
- Attain information about the observed lesson/event. Sample questions are as follows:
 - “What are some of the factors that influenced what happened?”
 - “Let’s walk through this [lesson, event]. What were the significant A, B, Cs (i.e., antecedents, behaviors, and consequences)?”
 - “What was the major goal of this [lesson, event]? Was it accomplished?”

- Present issues and concerns. Sample questions are as follows:
 - “What stands out as you reflect on the [lesson, event]?”
 - “In thinking back about this [lesson, event], what do you think was a problem area or concern?”
 - “If you could re-teach this lesson again, what would you change to address this problem area?”
- Explore the mentee’s perspectives and perceptions. Sample questions are as follows:
 - “What are some things you are noticing related to your learning goal?”
 - “What do you think was the most challenging part of this [lesson, event] for your students?”
 - “In your opinion, what could you have done differently with this [lesson, event]?”

Explore and discover

- Weigh priorities. Sample questions are as follows:
 - “Given your reflections on your learning goal, on what could we focus that will be most beneficial to you?”
 - “If you could pick one thing with which you are struggling the most, what would it be?”
 - “Based on your goals, what area needs the most work?”
- Search for patterns. Sample questions are as follows:
 - “What are some patterns and trends you are noticing related to this [lesson, event]?”
 - “In looking at the data, what do you see?”
 - “Based on my report and observation, what types of patterns do you see relative to your _____ [co-teaching, behavioral strategies, etc.]?”
- Compare and contrast. Sample questions are as follows:
 - “What are some similarities and differences between what happened and what you anticipated would happen?”
 - “In thinking about this concern versus your concern with _____, how do you think they relate?”
 - “How do you think this problem is different from the problem you described earlier this year?”
- Analyze cause-and-effect relationships. Sample questions are as follows:
 - “As you think about what went well, what could be some reasons for why those things went well?”
 - “As you think about challenges that arose, what could be some reasons for why the challenges occurred?”
 - “In looking at the environment, what else could have influenced this outcome?”

Organize and integrate

- Make connections. Sample questions are as follows:
 - “How does this [lesson, event] connect to your yearly plan?”
 - “How does this [lesson, event] relate to your overall goals relative to your _____ [class, student, self]?”
 - “How are these similar? How are these different?”
- Move toward generalizations. Sample questions are as follows:
 - “What words of wisdom could you give a colleague who is about to do something similar?”
 - “Would you apply this successful strategy to another class, student, etc.?”
 - “How would you adapt this strategy to make it more effective?”
- Encourage the application of new strategies and learning. Sample questions are as follows:
 - “What is some new learning from the [lesson, event] you will replicate in your future practice?”
 - “Do you think this strategy would apply for another class, environment, student, etc.?”
 - “What are some important points to consider while applying this strategy to a different class, environment, student, etc.?”
- Encourage personal learning. Sample questions are as follows:
 - “What did you notice about your teaching and your students?”
 - “What may be a different learning goal you could set for yourself after this conversation?”
 - “How will you determine whether you have met your professional goal?”

Assessing Growth

One important goal of mentoring is the development of effective classroom practice. This is why mentors work with mentees to identify areas in which they need to improve and areas in which they have established a fair degree of competence. In order to identify areas of strength and need, mentors must have access to valid observation systems that are sufficiently sensitive to the differences among novice special education teachers and their general education colleagues. Additionally, mentors must have a strong understanding of how to assess student learning in different types of lessons so that they can help their mentees determine the impact of their instruction.

Ideas and strategies that mentors may use to strengthen the role of assessment include examining classroom artifacts, structured classroom observations, and evaluating student growth on important outcomes. Observation and feedback by expert teachers play a critical role in improving beginning special education teachers’ practices. When done right, such coaching improves both new special educators’ skills and their students’ outcomes. To be effective,

however, mentors must understand the observation process. What follows is an in-depth look at structured classroom observations.

Pre-observation. Prior to conducting a classroom observation, the mentor must understand what the mentee's goals are for the lesson, how the mentee will attempt to achieve those goals, and how the mentee will know when the goals have been accomplished. This information will help the mentor determine if the mentee can focus instruction and effectively evaluate it. Prior to observing the mentee, the mentor must set up a pre-observation conference. This conference should accomplish the following:

- Clarify goals and objectives to help the mentee focus instruction on the skills and abilities students must acquire.
- Gather student data to focus instruction. The mentor should ask the mentee to bring to the meeting student data that is relevant to the lessons the mentee is planning. Student data may include off-task behavior during a class; progress monitoring data on certain skills (e.g., number of math facts correctly computed in 1 minute); diagnostic data; work samples; and notes about classroom observations. These data should be used to help the mentee focus his or her lesson.
- Link student data to instruction. During the conference, the mentor should ask the mentee what he or she has noticed about students' needs and how the needs are evident in the data. Once the mentee identifies students' needs, the mentor should ask about the lesson and how it meets students' needs.

Pre-observation conversation, example 1.

Mentor: Let's look at the student data you have brought to develop your lesson. What do you see as students' areas of difficulty? (If the mentee struggles, the mentor should ask probing questions that help the mentee describe what exactly students may need.)

Mentor: Which area of difficulty do you plan to address in this lesson? What will you do to address this difficulty? What do you want students to be able to do by the end of the lesson?"

At this point, the goal is for the mentee to think about how to address identified student needs through the content of the lesson. The mentee should do the following:

- Describe the content he or she will include in the lesson and what instructional procedures and activities he or she will use to help students learn that content.
- Provide specific information about how he or she will review relevant information for the lesson and how he or she will use modeling and explanation to help students learn content or strategies.
- Describe how each lesson activity helps students acquire the content.

Pre-observation conversation, example 2.

Mentor: OK, so we have established that your students must understand how place value works in addition. Let's talk about how you will review this content with the students. What have you already done with place value that is relevant to this lesson? (The mentee may indicate that he or she has shown students how they should use Cuisinart rods to regroup ones rods into tens rods.)

Mentor: So, you have already shown students how they can replace ten ones' rods with a ten rod. How will you provide a brief review of this for the students? (The mentee should describe the specific language he or she will use before moving on to how students will model using the Cuisinart rods with regrouping in addition.)

Mentor: Now that we have established how you will review the concept of ones and tens, let's talk about how you will model regrouping with addition, including the specific language you will use.

At this point, it is important to determine routines, procedures, and management of materials. After planning the content of the lesson, the mentor should talk with the mentee about how to manage the lesson and what sorts of challenges may occur during the lesson. For instance, for the place-value lesson, the mentor could ask the following questions:

- "How will the students be organized to work with the base ten blocks?"
- "What sorts of problems do you anticipate students will have with the rods?
Previously, you talked about how students sometimes play with the rods rather than use them as a learning device. What have you done to prevent this problem? How will you remind students of the rules for working with the Cuisinart rods?"
- "How will students get the rods? (If the mentee cannot answer, the mentor should ask a question to provide some ideas.) Will you have them ready in small boxes to immediately distribute to students? Will you assign two responsible students to quickly pass them out?"
- Determine how lesson success will be documented. At this point, the mentor must help the mentee think about what exactly he or she wants students to accomplish and how this may occur during the lesson. To assist the mentee in thinking about the goals of instruction, the mentor could ask the following questions:
 - "What will students be able to do if they are competent in _____?"
 - "How will students demonstrate that they know _____?"
 - "What do you expect students to do with the knowledge they acquired from the lesson?"
 - "How will you know if students are motivated?"

The point of questioning is to help the mentee consider the evidence that he or she will use during the lesson to determine whether students are ready to move on or whether the mentee must re-teach. For example, a mentee who is interested in

determining what her students understand about how place value works in addition with regrouping problems could take the following steps:

- Analyze the errors students made while solving addition problems with regrouping.
- Develop a hypothesis or hypotheses about what is causing the errors. Are they miscalculation errors? Are they errors of regrouping that represent a lack of understanding about place value?
- Interview students while they are solving addition problems with regrouping using base ten blocks.

Mentors may wish to create a list of the methods the mentee can use to assess students during lessons. Having this list available while meeting with the mentee may improve the mentee's ability to carefully think about what he or she is trying to achieve.

- Determine the data to be collected during the lesson to facilitate mentee reflection in the post-observation meeting.
 - Once the mentor and mentee have decided on the lesson goals, the mentor must consider the type of data to be collected. In making this determination, the mentor and mentee should consider what type of data will help them reflect on the degree to which the mentee accomplished his or her lesson goals. For instance, if the mentee is attempting to show students how to summarize a passage from an expository text, the mentor could take notes about how the mentee explains and models the summarization strategy for the students. The mentor should also take notes about how the mentee brings students into the guided practice section of the lesson. Of course, in this instance, the mentor must make sure in the pre-observation conference that the mentee is clear about how to model and practice the summarization strategy.
 - In addition to collecting information about how the mentee explains, models, and practices the summarization strategy, the mentor may ask the mentee what other data could be useful for helping to reflect on the lesson. For instance, the mentor may ask if the mentee has concerns about how students are engaged with the lesson. In this case, the mentor may suggest examining the ways in which students are participating and responding to questions about the summarization strategy.
 - Other types of data the mentor may collect include
 - types of questions the mentee asks, how relevant they are to lesson objectives, and how clear they are;
 - pattern of calling on students to respond to questions. Is the mentee creating equal opportunities for all students?;
 - strategies the mentee uses to engage all students;

- ways in which the mentee redirects or re-engages students when they are off task;
 - type of error correction the mentee provides; and
 - how the mentee sets expectations for the lesson.
- Types of student data the mentor may use to evaluate the lesson and promote mentee reflection include
 - completed work samples from the lesson,
 - responses to questions,
 - number of times students struggled with an activity or responded to questions,
 - time on task, and
 - following directions.
- Decide which data collection method is appropriate. Some methods for collecting data are as follows:
 - Verbal flow. The mentor records when the mentee and students talk, making clear when it is a teacher-initiated interaction versus a student-initiated interaction. The mentor may look at types of questions that best engage the students or help them summarize and understand the concept.
 - Class traffic. The mentor tracks the mentee's movement around the classroom and notes with whom the mentee interacts as well as the content of the interactions. For example, the mentor may look to see if the interaction is focused on instruction. Is the mentee re-explaining or asking the student how he or she approached the task? Is the student asking a question for clarification? How does the mentee respond to the student question?
 - Selective verbatim. The mentor writes down everything in the lesson as it pertains to one category. For example, the mentor may transcribe how the mentee models the strategy or skill; later, the mentor should point out strengths of the model or how the model could be improved. The mentor may also capture how the mentee provides error correction so that the mentor and mentee can discuss the approach.
 - Scripting. The mentor writes down everything that is said by the mentee and the students during the lesson in order to capture the quality of the classroom discussion and determine how students respond to certain types of questions.
 - Video recording. A video of classroom practice may be used to assess all or part of a lesson. For instance, if the mentee wants to work on modeling, the mentor could videotape that portion of the lesson plus some of the guided practice. This allows the mentor to evaluate the quality of the model and the degree to which it prepared students for guided practice. Video clips may be especially helpful for reviewing portions of instruction with the mentee and capturing his or her rationale for making certain instructional moves. Insights into the mentee's thinking may help the mentor support the mentee in accomplishing goals. Finally,

a series of videos may help the mentee see how he or she has grown over the course of a year.

During the observation. Once the mentor has decided on a time for the observation, he or she should arrive a few minutes prior to the lesson in order to get situated in the classroom and ensure that any equipment for collecting observation data is ready. The mentor must be unobtrusive while observing the lesson; however, if students are doing independent or partner tasks, the mentor may want to circulate among students and take notes about the students' performance. The mentor may also want to collect student work samples for later analysis. Finally, the mentor must recognize the following two areas, which may require intervention during the observation:

- **Discipline.** If a mentee engages in a negative interaction with a student or students and is becoming too frustrated to effectively or safely handle the issue in the classroom, the mentor may need to intervene. Intervening may require safely removing the student from the situation. If a student is disruptive but not aggressive, the mentor could call the student over to work with him or her, or the mentor could walk over to the student and offer individual assistance. If the mentee is frustrated by multiple behaviors, the mentor may ask if it would be OK to ask the students questions or try an activity with them. It is a good idea for the mentor to tell the mentee ahead of time that he or she may step in to help out.
- **Content knowledge errors.** Sometimes, a mentee may make a mistake in teaching a concept. For example, the mentee may teach a consonant digraph as a blend or may provide the incorrect definition for a word. When this happens, the mentor should gain the mentee's attention in an unobtrusive way by using non-verbal cues, privately speaking with the mentee, or writing down the issue on a note. The mentor must be clear about what the mentee did wrong and how the mentee may correct it. When possible, the mentor should allow the mentee to correct issues on his or her own. The mentor should ensure that students always view the mentee as a source of authority in the classroom.

Post-observation. Scheduling time to talk soon after the observation allows the mentor and mentee to reflect on the data collected and consider the lesson's strengths and areas for improvement. While talking with the mentee, the mentor should ask open-ended questions to help the mentee reflect. The mentor should always ask general questions first, followed by more specific questions if the mentee struggles to focus on certain aspects of the lesson. Sample open-ended questions are as follows:

- "How do you think the lesson went? What causes you to say that?"
- "What did you notice about the students during the lesson?"
- "What did you notice about your thinking and decision making during the lesson?"

- “What did you do to model the strategy? How effective do you think your model was? What did you see the students do as a result of your model?”
- “How did what occurred in the lesson compare to what you had intended? What do the data tell you about . . . ?” (e.g., students’ comprehension of the text, how well the students understood the concept of equivalent fractions).
- “What would you do differently next time? Why?”
- “What may be some next steps for strengthening students’ understanding of the concept you taught or their ability to use the strategy you taught?”
- “What will you do as a follow-up to this lesson?”

Providing Feedback

For feedback to be effective, mentors must provide it as soon as possible. Otherwise, important details of the lesson will fade from the minds of the mentor and mentee. Additionally, feedback should be immediate, specific, accurate, and honest. It should be provided during the time when the mentor questions the mentee about his or her lesson. Specific, constructive feedback is important because it helps the mentee understand exactly what was effective about the lesson and determine how to fix the less-effective parts of the lesson.

Examples of specific, constructive feedback.

Mentor: I know you felt that students were not engaged, but there were points in the lesson when they were engaged. For instance, when you had all of the students writing their responses, students were very focused and engaged. Also, when you asked more open-ended questions about the book, students started paying attention. How do you think that you could better engage students during your read-aloud times? (If the mentee cannot generate any ideas, the mentor should provide one or two.)

Mentor: Let’s review the point in the lesson when you were modeling. I wrote down what you said to the students and how they responded. Your language was very clear in the model. For example, you clearly explained how the students should figure out the main idea. However, what do you notice about the student responses after you modeled the strategy? Yes, you are correct. The students needed a lot of help, and they started to look frustrated. What does that tell you? Yes, you probably needed to model more. I know you were concerned that the students would be bored, so you could consider bringing them into the model. Perhaps you could have them tell you the next step of the strategy.

Mentor: When you asked students questions that required them to make inferences about the story, most students responded. I did notice, however, that Sam struggled to answer these questions, but he could respond to questions that required him to recall information. What does this tell you about Sam’s comprehension abilities? How can you help Sam to learn to make inferences?

In these examples, the mentor focuses on the positive aspects of the lesson and the trouble spots. The mentor solely focuses on what happened during the lesson and does not provide any evaluative statements of the instruction. For instance, in the last example, the mentor does not tell the mentee that he or she was excluding Sam from developing abilities to reason through the text. In conclusion, feedback should

- begin with the positive,
- be specific rather than general, and
- focus with neutral language on the mentee's behavior.

If the mentor does not have time to provide feedback right after the lesson, he or she should write the mentee a note. The note should focus on at least two positives and some aspects of the lesson to be discussed at a later time. For instance, the mentor's note may include the following: "You did a great job of getting the students immediately engaged in the lesson. You also wasted little time in the lesson. When we meet later, I would like to talk about how involved all the students were during the lesson, particularly Maribel."

Taking the Next Steps

Once the mentor identifies areas of strength and improvement, the mentor and mentee should agree upon some next steps. It is important to focus on one to three areas of instruction that need to change. If the mentee is struggling, it is best to select one area and suggest a strategy or two that the mentee is likely to understand and incorporate. If the mentee is rather sophisticated, he or she may be able to incorporate three new strategies or ideas into the next lesson.

Handling mentoring challenges. Mentors are likely to face two common challenges: (1) struggles with instruction and classroom management and (2) challenging contexts. Fortunately, there are strategies for dealing with these scenarios.

Struggles with instruction and classroom management. There are many reasons why novice special educators struggle in their initial assignments. They may be poorly prepared, may not be suited for the work they are asked to do, may be disappointed in their places of employment, or may be isolated from colleagues within their buildings. In any case, a necessary first step in reaching out to struggling beginning special education teachers is convincing them that mentors can help. New special educators should feel encouraged to buy into the mentoring program.

While working with struggling mentees, mentors must establish reasonable expectations and must communicate them to their mentees. They must also identify areas of competence and need. Mentors may assess needs in several ways. They may ask their mentees to complete a formal needs assessment, or they may generate the same information themselves through structured

conversations. Needs assessments are most helpful when they relate to a model of effective practice with which mentees are familiar (e.g., teacher evaluations). Mentors may also observe mentees and use pre-observation and post-observation conferences to draw detail from the process.

Once mentors and mentees identify and agree on strengths and areas of need, they may collaborate in developing action plans to improve performance. For each area of need, mentors should identify a set of strategies for mentees to practice. Once mentors choose strategies and goals for improvement are set, then they are ready for implementation. During implementation, the mentors' feedback may be tightly focused on the mentees' needs. Mentors may also note and comment on the progress they observe. When time for observation is limited, mentors may ask their mentees to maintain logs to keep track of what is working and identify problems that persist during implementation.

Identifying areas of need has other benefits. First, it allows mentors to model solutions themselves or identify other effective teachers mentees may observe. Second, it allows mentors to role play with their mentees. Rehearsing a strategy does not guarantee its success, but it does give mentees a chance to practice and refine a skill before trying it out under fire.

Some mentees who lack skill in self-reflection may benefit less from observation and feedback than from watching themselves in videotaped lessons. Videotaped lessons are an effective means for fostering reflection. As mentor and mentee watch the video together, the mentor should conduct a structured conversation. In a structured conversation, the mentor should use open-ended questions and paraphrase, pause, and probe.

The following conversation illustrates a structured conversation.

Mentor: Before we videotaped your lesson, you mentioned using white boards as a way to engage all students. In your lesson, you did not use the boards. Why not?

Mentee: I don't know. I guess I just forgot.

Mentor: What can we do to help you remember to use the white boards next time?

Mentee: Maybe what I need to do is pass out the white boards and markers ahead of time. That way, I will not disrupt my lesson, and I will have a visual reminder to use them.

Even in a well-conducted structured conversation, a mentee may repeatedly profess, "I don't know." When a mentee cannot generate an idea, the mentor should trust that the mentee truly does not know how to proceed, and the mentor should offer suggestions based on personal

experiences. The mentor should also brainstorm with the mentee. The mentee must then select a strategy to implement, and the mentor must make clear the intent to follow up at the next meeting.

This following conversation illustrates how a skilled mentor may approach a struggling mentee who simply does not know.

Mentee: I am having a lot of trouble with students swearing. They do it right in class as if I am not there.

Mentor: What have you done to solve the problem?

Mentee: I tell them to stop using that kind of language, but I feel like a nag, and it has not worked.

Mentor: What else could you do?

Mentee: I don't know. I have thought a lot about it, but I have not come up with any good ideas.

Mentor: Would you like some ideas?

Mentee: Absolutely!

Mentor: You could try a motivation system with the class or the worst offenders, or you could create a word bank with appropriate words for the kids to say when they get frustrated.

Mentee: I like the word bank idea.

Mentor: When can you start? Do you need any resources?

Mentee: I will start on Monday. I have used word banks before in other ways, so I know how to create one. So, thanks, but I've got what I need.

Mentor: Great! I will check in with you at our next meeting to see how it is going.

Challenging contexts. Helping novice special education teachers who work in high-poverty, low-achieving schools is a second important challenge for mentors. In difficult contexts, matching mentors and mentees on similarity of job description and responsibilities becomes doubly important. Mentors must be prepared to regularly meet with mentees and should expect certain problems to arise. For example, particularly in urban schools, learning to address the

needs of culturally and linguistically diverse learners is likely to be an important issue for mentees. Mentees may also struggle with effectively managing their classrooms, learning to deal with building routines, and coping with special education paperwork.

Mentees may benefit from opportunities to meet with and learn from other colleagues. Mentors are likely to know experienced teachers who are strong professional role models and can arrange for their mentees to observe them. Ideal role models should work in close physical proximity to mentees; however, proximity may be hard to achieve in small, rural schools. Mentors may also provide additional support. They may link mentees to other teachers who may help in subtle but important ways. For example, friendly neighbors may offer support, particularly when mentors and mentees are based at different schools. Friendly neighbors can make mentees feel welcome every day by stopping by to say hello. Friendly neighbors provide an insider's understanding of school culture and traditions and can educate mentees about how to get things done within their schools.

The issue of proximity sometimes presents a problem for small, rural schools. Sometimes an appropriate mentor or professional role model is not available at a mentee's school or any nearby school. Some mentees may be the only special education teacher in their buildings, and if there is a special education colleague on the premises, it is unlikely that the colleague works with the same types of students. However, when appropriate mentors or professional role models are not available locally, technology can bridge the gap. E-mentoring, email, and web-based technologies (e.g., communities of practice, social networking) may help connect all mentees in a district.

In short, for every mentee in a challenging context, a mentor should mobilize as many supports as possible. The most important support is the presence of experienced special education teachers in the mentee's same building. Colleagues may provide role modeling of effective practice, offer advice, and be there for the mentee when the mentor is not available. Colleagues can also provide a welcoming presence and offer important advice about navigating the school's culture and traditions. Although professional role models who teach the same types of students or the same subjects are most effective, any teacher—even a school administrator—can help to foster socialization.

Coping With Mentees' Problems and Growing as a Mentor

Like good teachers, good mentors constantly reflect on their practices. They may grapple with different questions at different times and in response to different circumstances, but their questions, taken together, are likely to form a coherent whole. This whole can be demonstrated as an Outcome Map (see Table 3). The first column features the questions mentors are likely to ask themselves as they go about helping mentees. The first question allows mentors to develop a clear and specific understanding of a problem. The second question asks mentors to describe in a

general sense what a positive outcome may look like. The third question requires mentors to identify the desired behaviors they would like to see and hear. The fourth question leads mentors to identify the knowledge, skills, and dispositions mentees need in order to develop these behaviors; essentially, mentors must determine what mentees need in order to achieve desired outcomes. The fifth question instructs mentors to identify strategies for promoting growth, and the sixth question tasks mentors with locating resources they need to implement strategies. The second column of the table offers sample responses to the six questions.

Table 3

Mentor's Outcome Map

Questions	Examples
1. What is the presenting problem?	The mentee does not prepare lesson plans.
2. What is the tentative outcome?	The mentee will prepare lesson plans.
3. What behaviors would I like to see and hear?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The mentee will write lesson plans. • The mentee will use lesson plans during instruction. • The mentee will describe how the objectives of daily lessons connect to objectives for the year.
4. What knowledge, skills, and dispositions do the mastery of these behaviors require?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The mentee will need the district's lesson plan template. • I, the mentor, will explain to the mentee each element of the lesson plan template. • I, the mentor, will use the template to model for the mentee how a lesson plan is written. • I, the mentor, will help the mentee develop a system for organizing written lesson plans.
5. What strategies can I use to promote my mentee's growth?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The mentee will attend PD on the district's lesson plan template. • I, the mentor, will model lesson plan implementation for the mentee. • I, the mentor, will collaborate with the mentee on writing lesson plans.
6. What resources do I need to successfully implement these strategies?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule of PD opportunities. • Release time for collaborative lesson plan writing and observations of lesson plan implementation. • Schedule of mentoring meetings to review the adequacy of lesson plans.

Chapter 10: Structuring Group Mentoring Sessions

Group mentoring is often an appropriate alternative to individual mentoring; it is used to reduce stress for beginning special educators by providing them with the advantages of individual mentoring for a cohort of new special education teachers. Novice special educators involved in group mentoring work together to achieve learning goals that improve their instruction, planning, and reflective practices. Table 4 serves as a quick reference for each type of group mentoring.

Table 4

Types of Group Mentoring

Type	Description	Explanation	Advantages
Facilitated Group Mentoring	A number of mentees to benefit from the experience and expertise of one mentor.	The mentor serves as the facilitator of the group, asking thought-provoking questions such as, “What was the most challenging situation for you this week?” and “What did you learn?”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentees hear about others’ experiences. • Mentees listen to mentor’s advice. • Saves time for mentor.
Peer Group Mentoring	Peers with similar learning interests and needs mentor each other.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peers can be matched by similar age, disability taught, or identified needs areas (e.g., instructional strategies, communication strategies). • The group is self-directed and self-managed with no mentor present. • Assumes that peers can provide one another with knowledge, support, feedback, and role modeling. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows peers to connect and bond with each other. • Gives peers the chance to act as mentors for others.
Team Mentoring	A team’s individual members develop mutual learning goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The team may work with one or more mentors to help them facilitate their learning. • Learning goals are achieved through group collaboration. 	Mentees collaboratively work with their colleagues and have an experienced mentor who is available to assist them.

Facilitated Group Mentoring

Facilitated group mentoring allows new special education teachers to regularly meet with a mentor or group of mentors on a regular basis.

Goal of facilitated group mentoring. The goal of facilitated group mentoring is to allow for a group of mentees to simultaneously benefit from the expertise of a mentor or group of mentors who act as group facilitators.

How can mentors create effective facilitated group mentoring structures? Mentors can structure facilitated group mentoring through the following three types of meetings: (1) mentee-driven agenda meetings, (2) mentor-driven agenda meetings, and (3) blended approaches. One approach is for mentees to set the agenda with topics of concern to them. For example, mentees may struggle with a dilemma that they can discuss together within the group. In this case, the mentors guide the discussion, help the mentees with the dilemma, and help the mentees apply the information discussed to their instructional contexts. The other approach allows for mentors to pre-determine topics on the agenda. With this approach, mentors create a calendar of topics they expect mentees will deem important. Sample topics are as follows:

- Sample topics for the start of the year.
 - Setting up the classroom.
 - Organizing data collection.
 - Managing behavior.
 - Working with paraprofessionals and other support staff.
- Sample topics for mid-year.
 - State assessments and alternate assessments.
 - Co-teaching.
 - Effectively communicating with parents and caregivers.

Often, facilitated group mentoring meetings occur as a blended approach with a combination of input about the agenda from both the mentees and mentors.

How can mentors conduct effective facilitated group mentoring meetings?

- Mentors decide whether to implement mentor-driven, mentee-driven, or blended facilitated group meetings.
- Mentors discuss with mentees their areas of concern. Even if mentors are planning a mentor-driven agenda, it is helpful for them to receive input from mentees about the mentees' needs, teaching assignments, and school cultures.
- Mentors must be mindful of the types of challenges mentees face during different times of the year. For example, mentees working with students with significant disabilities will most likely need support with alternative assessments during state assessment times.

- Mentors should reach out to other expert special educators in the district. These experts are often exceptional resources for the mentees. They may also join one or several facilitated group mentoring meetings or may invite mentees to observe in their classrooms.

Example of facilitated group mentoring. Mr. Howards is a new special educator at Bethel Elementary School. He was hired to work with the math and science departments as an inclusion teacher. His district provides facilitated group mentoring for the beginning special education teachers in the district. During his first meeting, Mr. Howards meets the other mentees and is happy to learn that there are others who, like him, are working in co-taught settings. Mr. Howards has two group mentors, and the group mentoring meetings allow him to interact with both mentors because the weekly meetings are split into two sections. In the first section, he meets with a mentor who debriefs all mentees. In this setting, Mr. Howards shares his anxiety about being viewed while co-teaching as an instructional aide rather than as a teacher. The mentor guides the group through brainstorming strategies that may help. Another mentee shares a different concern regarding a difficulty transitioning her students from one activity to another. The mentor then guides the group through problem-solving issues related to structuring effective transitioning procedures. During the second session of the facilitated group mentoring meeting, Mr. Howards meets with a second mentor who hands out a schedule of topics to be discussed throughout the year. Mr. Howards scrolls down the list and is relieved to see that co-teaching is one of the topics. The mentor explains that her section of the meeting involves PD activities related to each of the topics on the list. There are three blank dates within the schedule. The group members start discussing potential topics for these three to-be-determined dates.

Peer Group Mentoring

In peer group mentoring, mentees have opportunities to collaboratively work with other mentees. This type of group mentoring allows mentees to benefit from the experiences of their peers. Additionally, other mentees, who all experience similar new-teacher struggles and concerns, provide strong emotional support.

Goals of peer group mentoring. The goals of peer group mentoring are to build mentees' professional expertise through shared learning and create a climate of support among mentees.

How can mentors support effective peer group mentoring? Although peer group mentoring should be self-directed, having some degree of structure is advisable. Suggestions that may help the group in establishing the agenda and meeting the needs of mentees are as follows:

- Encourage mentees to regularly commit to meeting and setting scheduled times. As mentees begin teaching, there is a tendency to place peer meetings on the back burner

due to more pressing immediate needs. Without a commitment to attend peer group mentoring meetings, the momentum of these groups diminishes.

- Arrange for release time to allow mentees to observe in peer classrooms. Observing in each others' instructional settings allows for richer dialogue and deeper understanding amongst the group.
- Invite occasional guests such as veteran special educators, mentors, administrators, parents, and support staff to group meetings. Conversations with these guests about issues the mentees identify as important will enhance the mentees' collective professional knowledge base and alert them to resources in their school district and community.

Example of peer group mentoring. Rockdale School District leaders have hired 12 new special educators to work across the district. During new teacher orientation, these novice special educators met as a group and were encouraged to form a peer group mentoring support structure. Now, 3 months into the school year, the mentees have a trusting relationship with each other. They meet biweekly to debrief, talk about issues that arise, and provide each other with emotional support and critical feedback. They have also invited to their next meeting a few parents who are model advocates for their children to talk about strategies for effective home-school communication. At the last meeting, because the group members were beginning to feel stressed by deadlines, they elected a volunteer among the group to send reminders of important dates. The development of shared learning experiences and survival strategies has benefitted the members and forged a lasting support system.

Team Mentoring

Team mentoring allows for intact groups to receive mentoring support together.

Goal of team mentoring. The goal of team mentoring is to allow the mentees in the team to receive both individual and collective mentoring support with topics identified by the mentees as important.

How can mentors support mentees involved in team mentoring? Mentors may not be directly involved in the mentees' team mentoring group because this may be outside the purview of the mentoring relationship. However, mentees may need support in order to benefit from this mentoring format. Suggestions for mentors who wish to support mentees in team mentoring groups are as follows:

- Regularly meet with the mentees to learn about the goals the team has agreed upon and offer help in accessing resources toward meeting these goals.
- Work on individual goals with the mentees to help them meet the group goals. For example, if the team is working toward increasing the level of technology integration, this may become an area the mentor also chooses to work toward.

Example of team mentoring. Ms. Martin is a beginning special education teacher at Roosevelt Middle School. She is on the sixth-grade team and primarily works with the English and social studies general education teachers. This sixth-grade team meets weekly as part of a team mentoring group. As Ms. Martin begins the school year, the other teachers on her sixth-grade team invite her to join this group. They begin the school year by brainstorming mutually agreed-upon goals for the year. These goals are as follows:

- Increase the level of technology integration into instruction.
- Continue to expand the amount of interdisciplinary work among teachers.
- Provide more consistent use of instructional strategy instruction across subject areas.

Ms. Martin and the sixth-grade team meet weekly to discuss how to move forward toward these excellent and important goals; however, Ms. Martin is worried that she does not have the necessary skills to adequately meet them. She shares with her mentor that she needs resources and help, especially in the area of technology integration.

Current Group Mentoring Uses

Group mentoring has proved successful in business, and many of the strategies used in business can be applied to induction and mentoring programs. Some of these strategies are as follows:

- Participants identify and discuss the group's purpose, meeting format, and leadership.
- Participants clearly articulate the goals and purposes for the group mentoring concept.
- Participants generate a list of discussion topics.
- Participants organize and lead sessions of their choice.
- Participants create multiple group mentoring opportunities to address varied learning styles.
- Participants include structures and practices to support group mentoring.
- Guest speakers serve as resources for specific topics.
- Participants frequently monitor progress to determine whether they are meeting goals.

The benefits of group mentoring are as follows:

- Extends mentoring efforts and reaches more people in a time-efficient manner.
- Provides an alternative to one-on-one mentoring, which often has a shortage of qualified mentors.
- Promotes diversity in thinking, practice, and understanding.
- Prevents mentor fatigue and burnout.
- Allows peers to provide emotional support, encouragement, feedback, and a sense of acceptance of one another in a formal, structured process.
- Develops a sense of collegiality within a support group.
- Creates an opportunity for reflection, which leads to thinking more broadly about issues and cultivating new understandings.

Chapter 11: Integrating Mentoring With Professional Development

It is important for mentors to support the connection between PD content and new special education teachers' instructional practices. There are several different models that enable mentors to align PD with mentoring. All models have one common thread—follow-up support from mentors.

Professional Development Models

Mentor provides professional development. In this model of mentoring and PD, the mentor provides the mentee with the necessary PD. Suggestions for effectively planning and conducting mentee PD are as follows:

- Observe the mentee. It is important that the mentor see the mentee in action in order to better understand his or her instructional needs.
- Meet with the mentee to discuss observation data as well as the students on the mentee's caseload to identify the mentee's needs and goals.
- Collaboratively prioritize with the mentee the PD needs and goals based on the needs of the mentee and the mentee's students. A situation may arise in which the mentee prioritizes goals that are different than what the mentor proposes. When this happens, the mentor can work on the mentee's goals and the goals he or she has suggested. This way, the mentor shows respect for the mentee's professional capacity.
- Develop PD opportunities based on the collaboratively identified needs.
- Make use of resources available within the school district, the community, and online. For example, the mentor may take advantage of free online modules that specifically address special education content.
- Consistently implement PD.
- Evaluate PD and the mentee's integration of the information learned through the PD into his or her instructional practice.
- Support through follow-up conversations and observations the mentee's implementation of strategies and skills learned through the PD.

Mentor participates with mentee in professional development. In this model of integrating mentoring and PD, the mentor joins the mentee in the PD as a participant and guide to help the mentee understand and integrate the information learned into his or her daily practice. Suggestions for effectively participating in PD with mentees are as follows:

- Discuss PD opportunities with the mentee and strategically evaluate which activities best address the mentee's needs and goals. Many times, school districts offer a range of PD opportunities. Other times, when the range is limited in scope, the mentor may want to supplement the PD.
- Encourage the mentee to select one PD activity based on the mentee's professional needs and goals.
- Jointly attend with the mentee the selected PD sessions.
- Meet with the mentee to discuss how the information learned in the PD sessions applies to the mentee's instructional practices.
- Support through follow-up conversations and observations the mentee's implementation of strategies and skills learned in the PD.

Mentor provides follow-up support only. In this model of integrating mentoring and PD, the mentor does not play a role in the PD activities. Rather, the mentor provides support after the PD. Suggestions for effectively supporting mentees in implementing information learned through PD are as follows:

- Help the mentee strategically select PD opportunities based on the mentee's instructional needs and goals. If the school district has limited PD activities that do not directly meet the mentee's needs, the mentor may need to point the mentee toward outside PD opportunities.
- Encourage the mentee to attend the selected PD. Because the mentor will not attend the PD activity, he or she should ask the mentee to take detailed notes to share with the mentor during follow-up.
- Discuss with the mentee how the PD experience applies to the mentee's instructional practices.
- Support the mentee through follow-up conversations and observations to help implement the strategies and skills learned in the PD.

Mentees use online professional development resources. As previously mentioned, there are online resources mentors can use for the PD of mentees. Examples of online resources that may help mentors with PD planning and supplementation of what is offered in their school districts are as follows:

- The IRIS Center for Training Enhancements
<http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu>
- Autism Internet Modules (AIM)
<http://www.autisminternetmodules.org/>

- LD OnLine
<http://www.ldonline.org/>
- Special Connections
<http://www.specialconnections.ku.edu/>
- The Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports
<http://www.pbis.org/>
- The National Center on Response to Intervention
<http://www.rti4success.org/>
- The National Center on Universal Design for Learning
<http://udlcenter.org>

For additional online resources, see Table 5.

Table 5

Online Resources Aligned With New Special Education Teachers' Learning Needs

New Teachers' Learning Needs	Examples of Website Resources
1. Content Knowledge and Standards	
IRIS Modules and Case Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CSR: A Reading Comprehensive Strategy • PALS: A Reading Strategy for High School • Improving Writing Performance: A Strategy for Writing Expository Essays • Applying Learning Strategies to Beginning Algebra (Part 1) • Cultural and Linguistic Differences: What Teachers Should Know • Teaching and Learning in New Mexico: Considerations for Diverse Student Populations
LD OnLine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Clarifying Routine: Elaborating Vocabulary Instruction • Vocabulary Assessment and Instruction
Special Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies for Accessing the Science Curriculum for Special Needs Students • Strategies for Accessing the Social Studies Curriculum for Special Needs Students
2. Effective Instruction	
cast.org	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universal Design for Learning resources
4Teachers.org	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistive technology website resources
IRIS Modules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differentiated Instruction: Maximizing the Learning of All Students • RTI (Part 1): An Overview • RTI (Part 2): Assessment • RTI (Part 3): Reading Instruction • RTI (Part 4): Putting It All Together • RTI (Part 5): A Closer Look at Tier 3
National Center on Response to Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RtI in Middle Schools webinar
Special Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct Instruction • Universal Design for Learning • Instructional Accommodations
3. Assessments	
Intervention Central	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CBM Warehouse

New Teachers' Learning Needs	Examples of Website Resources
IRIS Modules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom Assessment (Part 1): An Introduction to Monitoring Academic Achievement in the Classroom • Classroom Assessment (Part 2): Evaluating Reading Progress
National Center on Response to Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction: CBM for Progressing Monitoring • Using CBM for Progress Monitoring in Reading • Using CBM for Progress Monitoring in Math • Using CBM for Progress Monitoring in Written Expression and Spelling • Using CBM to Determine Response to Instruction
Special Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum Based Assessment/Measurement • Data-Based Decision Making • Quality Test Construction • Grading • Assessment Accommodations
4Teachers.org	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RubiStar for quality rubrics • QuizStar for online quizzes • Assessment website resources (e.g., managing assessments, alternate assessments, authentic assessments, portfolios)
4. Behavior Management	
IRIS Modules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addressing Disruptive and Noncompliant Behaviors (Part 1): Understanding the Acting-Out Cycle • Addressing Disruptive and Noncompliant Behaviors (Part 2): Behavioral Interventions • Classroom Management (Part 1): Learning the Components of a Comprehensive Behavior Management Plan
Special Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher Tools Related to Functional Behavior Assessment • Positive Behavior Support (PBS) Planning • Positive Behavior Support Interventions • Classroom and Group Support

New Teachers' Learning Needs	Examples of Website Resources
5. Collaboration With Others	
Beach Center on Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family-related resources
IRIS Modules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborating With Families
Special Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperative Teaching • Working Successfully With Paraeducators
6. Managing the Job and Dealing With Stress	
Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reality 101: CEC's Blog for New Teachers
IRIS Modules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Pre-Referral Process: Procedures for Supporting Students With Academic and Behavioral Concerns • Teacher Induction: Providing Comprehensive Training for New Special Educators
Special Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating a Schedule

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Providing Professional Development

Identification of needs. In order to provide or recommend PD opportunities that directly meet the needs of beginning special education teachers, it is critical to effectively identify their needs and the needs of their students. The chapter *Providing Instructional Support* (Chapter 7) provides more information about needs assessment.

Mentors can identify the mentee's needs in the following ways:

- Observe the mentee.
- Discuss how the mentee's needs connect to the students' needs.
- Align the mentee's needs with PD content.

As mentees go through the process of learning their new job responsibilities, determining their students' needs, and identifying available resources, mentors should encourage mentees to gauge their own needs. Strategies to help them honestly assess their needs are as follows:

- Remind the mentee that he or she will not be judged for divulging areas of struggle. A mentee may fear that exposing areas of need or weakness will indicate poor job performance.
- Encourage the mentee to regularly reflect on his or her practice through a journal, private blog, or another form of communication. The mentee can choose whether to directly share these reflections or discuss them during mentoring times.
- Suggest that the mentee use data as part of his or her self-assessment. These data include items such as student outcome data or even the amount of time the mentee spends in various professional tasks. These data can inform the PD, resources, and supports the mentee may require.

Alignment with action plan. Once the mentor and mentee have collaboratively identified the mentee's instructional needs, the next step is to create an action plan for the mentee. The chapter *Providing Instructional Support* (Chapter 7) provides more information about action plans.

Once this action plan is in place, it is important to make PD decisions based on the goals and needs identified in the action plan. Suggestions for aligning the PD activities with the mentee's action plan are as follows:

- Complete the action plan with the mentee based on implementation of PD content.
- Encourage the mentee to collect data and reflect upon how the PD experiences are helping to meet the goals set within the action plan.
- Connect follow-up conversations and observations with the action plan.

Follow-up conversation. All of the models include follow-up conversations between mentors and mentees. It is critical to debrief and consider how the information learned in the PD applies to the unique experiences and situations within the mentees' instructional contexts.

Example of a professional development follow-up conversation.

Mentor: What new learning did you gain from the PD session?

Mentee: We spent most of the time learning about classroom management structures for all learners.

Mentor: So, you spent a chunk of time learning about Tier 1 supports for all students. What supports did the presenters highlight during the session?

Mentee: The presenters discussed the importance of establishing and teaching rules and routines to all students and maintaining a 4:1 ratio of positive-to-corrective feedback with the students.

Mentor: So, specific structures include clarifying expectations for students with the use of rules and routines to create a more positive environment for your students. As you think about implementing your new learning, what are some of your goals?

Mentee: I would like to begin with establishing rules and routines for my students.

Mentor: OK, so starting with identifying your expectations of your students, what are some expectations you have for the students?

Mentee: I expect the students to listen while I talk and sit in their seats. I also want them to bring paper and pencil to class.

Mentor: OK, that is a good place to start. What would be some good rules to address these expectations?

Mentee: I want to say, "no talking, stay seated, and bring paper and pencil."

Mentor: So, those are fairly straightforward. Let's look at the PD material, and let's make sure these rules will work. What are the characteristics of a good rule?

Mentee: Looking at my materials, rules need to be measurable, observable, and positive, and I must have no more than five.

Mentor: Compare the rules you suggested to the criteria, and then you can determine if they match.

Mentee: There are fewer than five. They are measurable and observable, but I do not know about positive because I do not understand that criteria.

Mentor: Making a rule positive means that you are providing the student with an appropriate behavior to model instead of the inappropriate behavior they are choosing. So, when you say no talking, what appropriate behavior, instead of talking, do you want the student to model?

Mentee: I want the students to stop talking so much and listen to each other and me.

Mentor: So, what is your expectation for the students?

Mentee: Listen to the teacher.

Mentor: Your original comment also mentioned listening to each other. How will you share the expectation that you also want them to listen to each other?

Mentee: I could change it to, “Listen to the person speaking.”

Mentor: OK, let’s go back to the criteria and test all of the rules.

Mentee: I still have fewer than five, I can measure and observe all of them, they all suggest an appropriate behavior, and they are all positive.

Mentor: What may be your next steps from here?

Mentee: I will post the rules and go over them with the students.

Mentor: How will you go over them with the students? What will that look like?

Mentee: In the PD session, an important topic was teaching the rules, so I will write out a lesson plan and teach them by the end of this week.

Mentor: So, you will post them, write a lesson plan, and teach them by Friday. Is this correct?

Mentee: Yes.

Mentor: In our conversation next week, we will touch base about the rules and continue talking about the other content pieces from the PD session, like routines and 4:1 positive-to-corrective feedback for students.

Chapter 12: Resources for Mentors and Teachers

Ethical Principles

Council for Exceptional Children: Special Education Professional Ethical Principles and Practice Standards, https://www.cec.sped.org/Standards/Ethical-Principles-and-Practice-Standards?sc_lang=en

Induction Module

IRIS Teacher Induction Module: Providing Comprehensive Training for New Special Educators, <http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/resources.html>

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