

Get the Most Out of Being Mentored

Mentors open the door, but you must enter by yourself

If you have recently been hired — or expect soon to be hired — as a first year teacher, congratulations! You have entered — or are about to enter — one of the world's noblest, most gratifying professions. How does it feel? Exhilarating and inspiring? Confusing and scary? Perhaps a little of each or somewhere in between?

Hopefully, you will be assigned a mentor, an experienced teacher, to guide you through these first couple of years.

Whether you have a mentor who offers little or no help or support; or a mentor who throws so much information and help your way that you are constantly overwhelmed; or even if you have the good fortune to have as a mentor an experienced teacher who understands how to work effectively with a protégé; you will still get more out of being mentored if you are proactive in the mentoring process.

Being a proactive protégé includes remembering that you must cherish the mentor's time and make the most of it. Mutual trust is dependent upon maintaining confidences. A protégé must learn from his or her mistakes if he or she is to grow. Being receptive to feedback, both positive and negative, is essential to maximize the mentoring experience. Promises made must be kept if the relationship is to last.

While not all of the advice given needs to be followed, the protégé should genuinely consider the guidance that is given and, if the advice is rejected, explain to the mentor why it was not followed. Clarifying expectations will ensure that the type of help wanted is provided and that the mentoring goals are achieved. Protégés must never use their mentors to intervene in issues between the protégé and his or her supervisor or principal. When bringing problems to their mentors, protégés should also have possible solutions in mind to foster the development of their own problem-solving skills. Finally, those being mentored need to dedicate themselves to continuous learning.

PORTNER

For the Protégé: Points to Ponder

HOW TO BEGIN

Take the Initiative

Develop the Relationship

Earn and Keep your Mentor's Trust and Cooperation

TAKE RESPONSIBILITY

Feedback and How to Receive It

When to Give Feedback

Dysfunctional Mentoring Relationships

Responsibility to Yourself

Responsibility to Others

Get to Know Your Principal

Clarify Ground Rules Early

OBSERVE

Be an Objective Observer

What to Observe

Expand your View

Don't Imitate; Create

ASK

Who to Ask

Where to Ask

How to Ask

What to Ask For

Why Ask?

PORTNER

CHART YOUR COURSE

Find Out What You Don't Know

Set Priorities

Identify Resources

The Power of Planning

NETWORK

Support From Collegial Groups

Guidelines for Support and Discussion Groups

Working with College and University Professors and Cohorts

TAKE INFORMED RISKS

Look Before You Leap

Should you or Shouldn't You?

Help the Risk Succeed

Risk with Conviction

REFLECT

Keep a Professional Learning Journal

Guided Reflection

Focused Reflection