

Mentoring Session: Mentor Teacher and New Teacher (8th grade, Jewish Day School)

1 MT: This is great. This is where I want to focus. [looking together at some written assessment, maybe
2 collaborative log?] I want to focus on these two places. So the teaching skills you want to focus on for
3 the rest of the year. It looked like to me that it had a lot to do with curriculum planning and some to do
4 with systems. So there's a systems piece and a planning piece.

5 NT: Yes.

6 MT: and that makes sense since you're counting days.

7 NT: I think one of the things that I did not articulate here because I didn't know how to is, I haven't had
8 to carry over yet a curriculum.

9 MT: What do you mean carry over?

10 NT: Last year I wrote a bunch of curriculum but didn't use it this year. What do I need to be thinking
11 about to tweak it and restart a new year with same curriculum? Because I haven't had the experience of
12 going into a second year in the same place.

13 MT: OK, I have a thought about that. I want to get this down. [writing] What tweaking can I do for next
14 year the second time through? That's a great thing to be thinking about at this time of the year. You can
15 see the end and far off in the distance is the beginning. I remember when I taught my second year. I
16 looked at everything I had done. I don't want to do that again. There's something amazing about the
17 second year. It's fresh. You've done it once. You can go back. I remember when I taught my second
18 year...I ended up using some stuff and not others. There's something to be said about getting through it
19 once and do it differently. When do you think that tweaking will happen?

20 NT: I've done some tweaking.

21 MT: In a formal way? a written way?

22 NT: I don't have a journal or anything. But I write comments about how things go and I go back and
23 change things. For the first time I can sit back and look at an entire year of curriculum. Before we leave
24 the end of the year, I would like to have certain goals set for what I'm doing over the summer. I don't
25 want my curriculum to be dead for me over the summer. Do I want to shift the order? Do I want to
26 reassess the projects I have them do?

27 MT: Absolutely

28 NT: I don't know what it looks like to look at curriculum as a whole because I don't want my curriculum
29 to be dead to me over the summer. Do I want to reassess the projects I have them do? I don't know
30 what it feels like to look at curriculum as a whole.

31 MT: Well it seems like you are excited to do that. Reflecting isn't easy for some people. I got through it
32 and now I have summer. Let me just have summer. I'll look at it and do it again. But it can be worth so
33 much. What I've done and this is one way. I start with a reflection of the year. I do a year-long map. You
34 can do Sept, Oct, Nov, Dec, the whole year out. And you look at it and you might do, content, skills,
35 assessment – those three things. Basically you write down what you did, not what you hope to do.
36 They give us a couple of days That chunk of time, the 8th grade's graduated, but you are coming in to do
37 If you block that out on your schedule, the same time when you were normally teaching language arts.
38 Start with mapping out what happened. Then you can start to think about the order, the order of the

Mentoring Session: Mentor Teacher and New Teacher (8th grade, Jewish Day School)

39 books, the order of the units. Then you can actually go back and put things in binders. It's really a fun
40 process. Maybe I should get someone to cover so I can help you with that. I will be around for that. But
41 planning for the rest of the year, that's what you wanted to do. My role helping, possibly planning out,
42 you and Marshall will decide what will be cut. But in terms of teaching *Much Ado*, I put it out there and I
43 continue to put it out there. I'd love to help you with that unit.

44 NT: I want the year to go out with a bang, that the end of the year is not just throw-away, that they
45 really have an interest in Shakespeare. Wow I did a lot of substantial things in 8th grade. I'm excited
46 about going into 9th grade. I really feel ready.

47 MT: This unit is the perfect content to do that. Their excitement about Shakespeare is infectious so
48 you'll be able to build on that from now until the end of the year. It's never too late. With these logs, the
49 biggest thing for me is that it's down on paper. I like the way it's set up. It's documented, whether we
50 stick to it all the time. From this I took that what's working right now, according to you, is classroom
51 management, time management, differentiated instruction – those seem to be the things that are going
52 well. I want to ask a little more about this and it's so intriguing to me. I'm working on it, too. The focus
53 seems to be curriculum planning, maybe setting smaller goals, realistic goals from now and the end of
54 the year and then organizational systems for tracking student work. So there's a lot.

55 NT: When I talk about tracking student work, I want an organizational system not centered around
56 preparing for conferences but for preparing for the day to day. Work's coming in. Sometimes it takes me
57 a week to get it back. How do I organize it? What kind of grade tracking system is the best? How do I
58 stay on top of the kids? Because I notice what's happening is, I forget to follow up with them.
59 Sometimes it takes a week to get back to them. How do I stay on top of the kids? The kid is absent two
60 days. I check in and let him know the assignments. Then I forget to follow up. How do I set up a system
61 for myself to stay on top of things? As much as I love my system, it's not working.

62 MT: I want to start by going to these standards – the standard that I thought addressed it the best is
63 “Assessing learning, monitoring student learning, participation and process.” So decide where you feel
64 you are right now, and we can see how it can be tweaked a little bit. [looks at teaching standards rubric]

65 NT: I think I'm somewhere in between these two – “approaching” and “meeting.”

66 MT: Approaching and meeting?

67 NT: Yea.

68 MT: Why?

69 NT: “Intermittent” feels a little too random and unplanned. I do have a system and it is something I'm
70 thinking about but there are holes, there are gaps. But it's not quite here yet.

71 MT: “There are holes.” Ok so what is your system?

72 NT: Do you want me to get it?

73 MT: Yea,

74 NT: [brings back notebook] So this is what I've been doing since the beginning of the year

75 MT: For homework?

Mentoring Session: Mentor Teacher and New Teacher (8th grade, Jewish Day School)

76 NT: For homework. For pretty much everything. I just keep track of it this way. The grades go here. This
77 means I didn't give them an assignment. Since I didn't check it. The other problem is, they'll show it to
78 me in homeroom. Then I don't have a chance to go to my board and mark it off. So I forget.

79 MT: So showing it to you in homeroom means showing you have it?

80 NT: Yes. Nine times out of ten I say, 'Wait for class.' So I don't think this is working.

81 MT: What about this isn't working? It seems you've combined the recording of the grade with whether
82 they have done it.

83 NT: I think it would be easier for me if I could see it this way all the time, laid out like this.

84 MT: Rights....why?

85 NT: Because I just see this first page and I forget to look back. I think I want to pick up your "missing
86 homework system." I think it's too late in the year to introduce a new system.

87 MT: Not necessarily.

88 NT: Really.

89 MT: It depends on the system.

90 NT: And then I put the grades into grade keeper. But it isn't until I get them into grade keeper that I see
91 that I have missing assignments that go back weeks.

92 MT: It seems that one issue that isn't working is that you're not aware in the moment when you need to
93 be aware of who's missing what. So I have a couple of suggestions and you can take them or leave
94 them.

95 NT: Do you want me to write them down? [gets paper and pen]

96 MT: Yes I would. You've come empty handed. I'm shocked (laughing) So it's like when you go to a
97 restaurant and they don't write anything down. You are amazing. Then there is that tiny questioning...
98 One of the ways, I want to begin by saying, at eight weeks left in the year it can become a lens for
99 looking at everything. Is it worth it? Is it possible?

100 NT: I feel that.

101 MT: And that's a natural feeling to feel and yet I am of the belief that depending on the system, it's not
102 too late. I believe it's not a good idea to implement a system that you don't follow through on. This is
103 what a lot of first year teachers do, which you didn't do, is introduce ten systems because they're all
104 wonderful. I heard about this from this person and that from that person. You don't do them all and kids
105 get inconsistent messages about if this system is being implemented and what they're supposed to do.
106 Put the kids aside for a moment. For you, you will end the year. You'll have practice for eight weeks with
107 a system that you will use next year. That's worth it on its own. One of the things you should do is be
108 more consistent, 100% consistent on not accepting homework on the fly. 'I'm so glad you have your
109 homework. Bring it to class.' Unless you have all of your stuff ready, it will feel on the fly. Kids can
110 handle that. There are so many reasons kids want to show you work in the morning. They want to know
111 that, you know, maybe you'll forgive them and there's that whole piece to it. 'Oh it's so great that you
112 have it but show me later cause I don't have my stuff with my right now and I want to be sure to get it

Mentoring Session: Mentor Teacher and New Teacher (8th grade, Jewish Day School)

113 down.' That's one piece. The second piece is that this [clipboard] is really nice for recoding in big chunks
114 whether you have missing wholes or not. OK. The missing homework sheet has got to go along with it. It
115 isn't a spread sheet. Your eyes will go to the top page. If you see checks there, Oh look it seems
116 everyone's all set. Maybe they're not all set. What if they aren't all set? Seems you have a system for
117 whether they are absent or not...

118 NT: No this means it's two days late so I don't accept it.

119 MT: So a policy is if they don't have it after two days, it's a zero and that's it?

120 NT: Yes. You can turn it in up to two days late.

121 MT: OK, so they got it in on the second day. And what happens with this person?

122 NT: Sarah? Oh she did turn it in.

123 MT: Systems like this are hard and they prey on our human erring with marking on things. This is tough.
124 You can have a homework record that doesn't have grades on it. All it has is whether they have it in or
125 not. OK? Accompany that with a missed homework sheet, it's like that one-touch policy with homework
126 papers. It comes in, I deal with it and it's gone. You have your missed homework sheets, blank ones
127 underneath, as you go around and check homework. You circle it, you give the kid a sheet, you wait at
128 their desk until they are done. It takes two seconds. You can xerox ones with your signature. The kid fills it
129 out. When I say wait, I mean, sometimes I've made a mistake, I give it to one, then go along giving to
130 everyone else in the row. If I forget to pick it up from them and the system is shot. But as long as you
131 have a homework sheet, you stick them right on top. So the next day you look at them, Oh my gosh you
132 say there's this sheet. Lou, do you have your work? If he does, you cross it off and dump it into an
133 archive folder. That can be good. I would implement the "missed homework" sheet now and see how it
134 goes to do that. So, what about absentee work. When you have kids who aren't there in class, what do
135 you do when you have kids who aren't there? What do you do when you have handed out assignment
136 sheets?

137 NT: When they come back to school, they go right back there. Whatever homework they missed I put
138 them right in there. The missed work folders.

139 MT: How is that working?

140 NT: Pretty well. Because of the nature of the work we've been doing, there's been less worksheets so I
141 haven't had to put anything in there for awhile. Plus parents and brothers and sisters have been coming
142 by to pick up the work. I haven't used it a lot. The kids go there when they come back.

143 MT: So that's working well. The issue with kids being absent is what?

144 NT: Just following up with them. OK you got your work. I always put a due date on the work.
145 Remembering to mark that date in my records. Ok you were out today and you have two days to make
146 up this work. Keeping on top of them.

147 MT: So what could you do?

148 NT: I could have an absentee sheet when they come they could fill out. When it's due. I don't know,
149 what do you do?