

MENTORS in the MAKING



**Developing New Leaders
for New Teachers**

Betty Achinstein and
Steven Z. Athanases Editors

Foreword by Ellen Moir

the series on school reform

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MENTORS in the MAKING

*Developing New Leaders
for New Teachers*

Edited by
BETTY ACHINSTEIN
AND **STEVEN Z. ATHANASES**

Foreword by Ellen Moir



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This book is dedicated to two of our greatest mentors:
Asher Achinstein (1900–1998), Betty’s grandfather,
and Alexander T. Athanases (1923–2004), Steven’s dad.

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Foreword

Mentors in the Making makes a vital contribution to our profession. It explores the complex knowledge base of mentors working with novices, highlighting both promises and challenges in enacting a transformative vision of induction. It brings together voices of induction leaders, mentors, researchers, and professional developers all deeply concerned with launching a new generation of teachers. The image of such a launch captures much of the excitement and exuberance of new teachers along with the rather momentous endeavor involved in supporting them. Embarking on such a journey involves much preparation. This book provides critical insights to help navigate the often rough seas. But beyond helping navigate current waterways, this volume provides maps for envisioning and charting new directions. For the next generation of teachers, induction must envision a future that does not re-create the status quo where, all too often, new teachers and mentors encounter systems devoid of passion, caring, equity, and opportunities for human development. *Mentors in the Making* provides critical questions and a message of hope as we launch new teachers and mentors on their momentous and sometimes arduous expedition.

I am acutely aware of the passion, commitment, and expertise of outstanding educators who step forward to mentor new teachers. I have committed the last 20 years of my career to supporting quality induction because I believe it is the leverage point for change in our profession. At the same time, I wonder if our profession and organizations have learned how to utilize fully the potent resource of mentors or to provide systems necessary to help these talented veterans develop skills and professional leadership to capitalize on their potential.

We place the success of our next generation of teachers in the hands of these talented veteran teachers. It is an awesome responsibility and an enormous opportunity, but what exactly does this new role of beginning teacher mentor entail? How can we most effectively build on veteran teachers' knowledge and experience as they become teachers of teachers? How can we ensure that we support these veteran teachers in providing the highest-quality guidance and assistance possible? What sorts of systems welcome and acknowledge this role for what it is?

We are beginning to recognize that great teachers are not born but developed over time, and that there is a body of professional knowledge and standards of professional practice that underlie this development. It is also important for us to recognize that these same great teachers need time, careful professional development, and ongoing support to develop the new set of skills and understandings that will make them outstanding teachers of teachers.

Development of quality mentors has two important dimensions. First, it involves learning new, sometimes complex skills and understandings that are rarely intuitive. This means we need to begin asking questions like: What is the pedagogy of mentoring? What sort of curriculum best supports mentor development? And how best can we impart that curriculum? Second, these outstanding veterans need systems that accord them the status, time, and recognition to function in this demanding role while providing the ongoing support and development they need. We might ask: How do we capitalize upon this new role for teachers to influence our system? What structures need to be in place? What policies? And how do mentors (and the new teachers they induct) fit into our organization's greater vision for the teaching profession? Moreover, how can they transform educational systems to be more educational and equitable?

The implications of these new roles for veteran teachers are many, and the opportunity to influence our profession at both ends of the developmental continuum (novice and veteran) is exciting. *Mentors in the Making* brings to light the central concern of mentor development, the curriculum and pedagogy of mentoring, and the organizational contexts that foster powerful induction. In focusing on the mentors' roles and contexts, this book also advocates for a new kind of profession, one where mentors and teachers are critically reflective of their practices, focused on the needs of diverse learners, and oriented toward school reform. In this volume you will find new understandings about the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed by mentors and induction leaders who will transform a new generation of educators.

—Ellen Moir

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We could not have brought this book to fruition without the mentors who shaped our own early careers. We honor Doris Gelman, Betty's first teacher mentor, and Larry Cuban, who mentored Betty's research career. We also honor James Wicklund, Steven's high school department chair, and Beverly Whitaker Long, who ushered Steven into scholarship. Without their commitments to our early career development, we would not have developed images of the possible nor the capacity to bring them to print.

Finally, we recognize those who continue to sustain us throughout our lives, including our families and friends for their encouragement. Betty especially honors Chad and Adin Raphael for their love and compassion.

INTRODUCTION

New Visions for Mentoring New Teachers

*Betty Achinstein and
Steven Z. Athanases*

Betty's first year of teaching in a Chicago public school:

- 150 8th graders
- 40 different languages spoken
- 1 brand-new school, in a city undergoing school reform
- 4 competing gang territories from which students are bused to school
- 25 colleagues with competing views on teaching diverse youth
- 5 incomplete sets of social studies textbooks
- 10 burned-out (and never replaced) classroom lights in a gray
Chicago winter
- 1 hope for a progressive school and the struggles to make it happen.

Steven's first year of teaching in Arlington Heights, Illinois:

- 150 high school students
- 120 freshmen nobody else seems to want to teach
- 4 sections of English composition (1 remedial level)
- 1 section of reading lab to team-teach with the "battle-axe" whom
students and other teachers fear
- 10,000 pages of student writing to read in 9 months
- 30 9th graders who need to learn how to write a sentence

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1 principal angry that a dictionary soared out the 2nd-floor window
10 all-day Saturday speech tournaments (1 bus caught in a blizzard
on the ride home)

These brief tallies of our early career challenges in public school teaching were not, of course, unique. Nor were our first-year questions: How can I meet the needs of all of my students? What and how should I teach? How will I negotiate conflicts at school? Like many in the profession, we managed to find veteran teachers to provide help. This support, however, was seldom systematized, and it lacked a structure, a vision, and a knowledge base about what we needed as new teachers, and when and why and how. A quality mentoring and induction support system could have guided us in moving from being students of teaching to quality teachers of students.

More recently, interest in new teacher support and induction programs is growing as they are reported to yield increased teacher retention, improved practice, and improved student achievement. Programs that pair a novice with a mentor to provide professional development and guidance are proliferating internationally. However, much of what passes as mentoring is haphazard, falling short of ambitious educative aims. The dominant conception of novices in “survival mode,” focused on self-image and classroom control, limits mentors’ roles to emotional support or technical advice-giver. Yet new teachers need more and different kinds of support in meeting ambitious educational reform goals for teachers of the 21st century. The nature of learning that is possible and needed during induction—and therefore the kinds of knowledge, skills, and dispositions mentors need—requires rethinking. We know little about what mentors need to know and be able to do to help novices develop into quality professionals who have taken up reform-minded teaching. Educators can no longer afford only a haphazard approach to the induction of its newcomers, nor one with limited assumptions about new teachers as learners. We lose too many teachers, often some of the best and the brightest, too early in their careers. Students in classes of new teachers too often get shortchanged. Clearly we need greater articulation of ambitious conceptions and models of induction and mentoring to address these needs.

In response to growing interest and questions about mentoring and teacher induction, we collaborated with practitioners and researchers to write this book, which has three main goals:

1. To articulate a complex knowledge base of mentoring needed to foster quality teaching in the 21st century, one that focuses new teachers on reform-minded conceptions of teaching and learning, students, and the profession.

2. To explore how mentors' knowledge, skills, and dispositions can be developed effectively, examining a curriculum for mentor professional development.
3. To describe challenges and promising practices of mentoring in action.

Our title highlights key assumptions about the book. We refer to *mentors in the making* to emphasize that mentors are not born, but developed through conscious, deliberate, ongoing learning. We focus on *developing new leaders* to emphasize how mentors need new understandings, knowledge, and visions; thus the book features a new *kind* of leader. This part of the title foregrounds the importance of fostering new kinds of knowledge, complex understandings, skills, and dispositions that mentors must have at two levels, about students and about new teachers. The book spotlights challenges, using problems from the field as a way to inquire about the work of and conceptions about mentoring. It also examines practices, closely scrutinizing mentoring conversations, interactions, and field-tested tools to open up the “black box” of mentoring. Leadership for *new teachers* is the focus of this volume because guiding the novice during a key period of socialization—one that can inform a possible 40-year career—is a strategic leverage point to influence the profession.

This book offers educators, researchers, and policymakers descriptions and analyses of mentoring and induction from educators engaged in systematic inquiry, struggling for contexts that foster ambitious new teacher development, equitable learning opportunities for students, and systemic change. In this volume we use original empirical research, practitioner action inquiry, and field-tested practices. The volume highlights opportunities and challenges of mentoring within diverse educational contexts. These include urban and suburban schools, large and small districts, multidistrict consortia, school- and museum-based sites, and collaborations with universities and county offices of education.

A CALL FOR NEW TEACHER SUPPORT

In the first 10 years of the 21st century over two million new teachers are needed in the United States. Yet despite this staggering figure, attracting and hiring teachers is only the start. Addressing the revolving door of new teacher attrition is a more critical matter (Ingersoll, 2001a). Of those who enter the profession, approximately 30% leave within 3 years, and up to 50% leave within 5 years (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Ingersoll, 2002; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003b). Teachers in schools serving high-poverty communities have an even greater risk of leaving at the end of their first year (Smith & Ingersoll,

2004). Moreover, those identified as more academically able may be the most likely to leave (Murnane, Singer, Willet, Kemple, & Olsen, 1991; Schlechty & Vance, 1983). This early departure from the profession is due to factors such as job dissatisfaction and unsupportive schooling conditions (Ingersoll, 2001b; Johnson, 2004). Most teachers still experience the “sink-or-swim” career introduction, isolated in their classrooms, unsupported by colleagues, with little power over decisionmaking and few opportunities for learning. Some characterize the teaching profession as unique in “eating its young.”

Beyond retention, developing the quality of new professionals is paramount. Recent research demonstrates the significant influence of teacher quality on student achievement (Hanushek, 1992; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005; Sanders & Rivers, 1996). The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 requires that all teachers be “highly qualified,” and concurrent accountability measures raise the bar of teacher expectations. Goals articulated by recent standards-based reforms call for complex teacher understandings and capacities. These include: a deep knowledge base (about learners and learning, curriculum and teaching, and social contexts of education); a repertoire of pedagogical skills; and use of knowledge and skills tailored to particular students, classes, schools, subject matter demands, and objectives (Darling-Hammond, Wise, & Klein, 1999). The bar for professional standards and knowledge has been raised. Standards like those of the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) outline knowledge, skills, and dispositions expected of new teachers that support ambitious and reform-minded teaching.

For new teachers with no teacher education or credential, challenges can intensify. In 2000–01, in California alone, more than 42,000 teachers, 14% of the workforce, did not hold preliminary or professional clear credentials (completed licensure) (Shields et al., 2001). Nearly half of new teachers in the state begin teaching before completing a preliminary teaching credential (California Department of Education, 2003). Moreover, unprepared teachers are unequally distributed to low-income, high-minority, and underperforming schools, among the most challenging settings for novices. In states like California, students in lowest-performing schools are about five times more likely to be taught by an underprepared teacher than students in high-performing schools (Shields et al., 2001).

The beginning teaching phase offers an opportunity to make or break the new professional and, ultimately, the profession. Conditions that shape the first years determine teacher effectiveness, attitudes and behaviors, and decisions to stay in the field (Bush, 1983). Fortunately, some educators in recent years began to see this phase as unique for fostering the professional norms that schools and students deserve, and that teachers need to believe in a viable future in the profession. Tasks of supporting and retaining the remarkable number of new teachers needed have generated widespread in-

terest in induction and mentoring support. Such interest deepened as early evidence suggested that high-quality induction and mentoring programs yielded various benefits. These included improved teacher retention, job satisfaction, teaching quality, and ultimately student achievement (Fletcher, Strong, & Villar, 2004; Huling-Austin, 1990; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003a; National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996; Odell & Ferraro, 1992; Pearson & Honig, 1992; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Strong & St. John, 2001; Wilson, Darling-Hammond, & Berry, 2001).¹

Furthermore, calls for greater professionalism and accountability, whereby educators define professional standards and monitor their own, have generated a proliferation of induction programs. Interest in teacher induction has, in fact, grown worldwide. In the United States, while in the 1990–01 school year less than half of beginning teachers nationwide reported participating in an induction program, by the 1999–2000 school year, almost 80% of novices reported having a mentor or participating in an induction program (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). As of 2003, 30 states had formal induction programs for 1 to 3 years; 16 required and financed formal induction for all new teachers (Quality counts, 2003). Some of these programs involve one-to-one mentor support aligned with professional standards, professional development seminars targeted for novices, networks of new teachers, and opportunities for observation and formative feedback on practice. Eight states required mentors and teachers to be matched by school, subject, and/or grade level; seven states required release time for mentors; and nine states required some form of compensation for mentors (Quality counts).

China, France, New Zealand, Switzerland, and Japan have well-funded induction support for 2 or more years addressing ambitious learning goals for new teachers (Britton, Paine, Pimm, & Raizen, 2003). In Israel, the Ministry of Education and Culture funds induction and mentor development (Orland, 2001). In Australia, educators and policymakers show increasing commitment to mentoring new teachers (Ballantyne, Hansford, & Packer, 1995). Clearly, many policymakers, reformers, and educators worldwide have turned their attention to teacher induction, given the need for new teachers, the support necessary to retain them, and an urgency to meet ambitious teaching goals articulated by reforms.

CONCEPTIONS OF INDUCTION AND MENTORING

Induction refers to three concepts: a unique phase as an individual transitions from being a student of teaching to becoming a teacher of students; a period of socialization into the norms of the profession; and formal programs and comprehensive systems of sustained support and professional development

for teachers in their first few years in the profession (Feiman-Nemser, Schwille, Carver, & Yusko, 1999). *Mentoring* is a central strategy of many induction programs, which pairs the novice with an expert veteran teacher focused on supporting the novice's professional development. The term mentor comes from a character in Homer's *Odyssey* who educated and supported Telemachus while his father was away. The mentor was a wise guide invested in the personal development of the protégé. More recently, mentoring has been likened to an apprenticeship focused on occupational socialization linked to career development (Little, 1990). In new teacher education, the mentor may attend to the professional development of beginning teachers through ongoing observation, conversations and assessment of practice, goal-setting aligned with standards of quality teaching and subject matter knowledge, advocacy, and technical and emotional support. Mentors may model lessons, jointly plan curriculum, coach on subject matter content or pedagogy, collaboratively inquire, discuss individual learners and examine student work, read research, talk about navigating school issues, identify inequities in the classroom, and guide novices using a variety of approaches.

Limitations of Induction and Mentoring Conceptions and Practices

In practice, however, many induction and mentoring programs do not rest on robust ideas about teacher knowledge, students, or change (Feiman-Nemser et al., 1999). The most common form of new teacher support is still workshops typically focused on school policies and classroom management (Shields et al., 2001). Goals include easing newcomers' transition into existing school and district cultures and promoting teachers' retention. Induction programs and mentoring practice too often center on little more than teacher accountability through reductive tasks and checkoff lists as monitoring devices. Even programs with a mentoring component vary dramatically from comprehensive systems that support release time for mentors and novices to meet, aided by compensation and ongoing professional development, to more informal setups that pair a new teacher with a "buddy" at the school site with no release time, no common planning time, no compensation, and no professional development. Mentoring is often limited to socioemotional support, guidance in local policies, or technical suggestions for management, rather than reform-minded, standards-based teaching and critical reflection on practice to meet the needs of all learners (Wang & Odell, 2002).

One reason for these problematic practices is a limited conception of new teachers as learners and the goals of induction. The dominant conception throughout the latter part of the 20th century is one of new teacher in the throes of the "survival period," learning to take basic content knowl-

edge and transmit it to well-managed students. This model persists today in the literature and policy rhetoric, is part of the popular conception, and remains largely unquestioned. In this model, novices are reported to experience a form of “practice shock” (Veenman, 1984) as they enter the classroom. The notion of a new teacher “survival phase” (Fuller & Bown, 1975) identifies teachers in a defensive position concerned with student control, administrative review, and making it day to day. Developmental theories identify the phase as one preoccupied with self and a sense of competence. Such theorists find that concerns about self must be addressed before teachers can focus on the needs of students (Huberman, 1993; Kagan, 1992). Along with survival models, other depictions of novices reflect a resurgence of the idea that novices need merely basic subject knowledge, basic pedagogy such as classroom control techniques, and scripted curriculum. (For discussion of how this depiction may contribute to new teacher tracking into lower-order learning contexts, see Achinstein, Ogawa, & Speiglmann, 2004.)

Models of mentoring built on the dominant paradigm of novices in survival mode restrict mentors’ roles. Just as Bruner (1996) described how 20th-century models of the student as learner guided teachers’ decisions (e.g., when we thought of the learner as an empty vessel, the pedagogy was transmission mode), beliefs about the new teacher as learner similarly frame the nature of mentoring. The model that has dominated mentoring is derived from reductive conceptions of novices. If one believes that the new teacher is a survivor in a challenging context, trying to impart basic knowledge to well-managed kids, then mentoring entails helping novices adjust to new environments, learn routines, keep management plans in place, and learn some tips and techniques of teaching. Researchers have documented that all too often, mentoring is focused on situational adjustment, technical advice, emotional support, and local guidance (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Little, 1990; Wang & Odell, 2002). A humanistic perspective focused on helping novices deal with reality shock through emotional adjustment and self-image support has pervaded the field. A situated apprentice perspective providing technical support in the local context also has been a dominant perspective of mentoring programs (Wang & Odell, 2002). These conceptions identify the purposes of induction as enculturating new teachers into the current system to help novices fit into their new environments, rather than critiquing or challenging existing schooling practices.

Some scholars have challenged these limited models of new teacher learners. Grossman (1990) found that novices are capable of wrestling with complex content-knowledge development in their students; and Gore and Zeichner (1991) criticized how the limited models failed to consider ways new teachers can and should wrestle with ethical and political issues regarding limitations of schooling, rather than learning to replicate the status quo. We review these and other critiques and offer a new one ourselves in Chapter 1