

# Supervision Tips for Mentor Teachers

- **Become close colleagues with your Teacher Candidate**

- Introduce your Teacher Candidate as your “Co-Teacher” on the first day of school.
- Involve them in those two classes (per the Phase-in Plan) from the first day

- **Classroom Management and Discipline:**

- Please share your syllabus/expectancy sheet with them. Talk through your classroom rules and procedures, as well as how you handle misbehavior and support good behavior.
- During the fall semester, be clear about whether you want the Teacher Candidate to address misbehavior when they see it. They’re in a precarious position since they aren’t the lead teacher.
- At the end of the fall semester, they will create their own syllabus/expectancy sheet for the spring semester and will discuss that with you in advance of student teaching.

- **Unit Planning:**

- Create a calendar of the units/topics you will teach during the year. Discuss the course curriculum. Show them how you design a unit and share your unit plans with them.

- **Lesson Planning:**

- Written lesson plans are critical to their success when they start teaching. The most important learning comes from watching and practicing with you on a daily basis. You are their model.
- Dedicate time to plan together. Share the plans you’ve created. Talk them through your lesson planning steps. Create lesson plans together.
- Eventually ask them to create some lesson plans on their own. Discuss what they have created before they teach it. This is good practice for the spring semester when they are required to create **daily written** lessons plans, which you review in advance each week.

- **As you observe your student teacher, take notes:**

- A written record of the lesson helps to focus the post-conference and refresh memories.
- Make the notes as **objective** as possible (i.e.: number of students who are on task, number and names of students responding to questions, approximate length of activities, wait time, etc.)
- Write down some exact quotes whenever possible. This will help the Teacher Candidate examine his/her clarity when giving instructions, presenting material, disciplining students.
- In advance of discussing the lesson, determine what you think are the one or two most important areas of refinement. This will reduce the temptation to talk with them about too many things. (During your conference, the goal will be to encourage the Teacher Candidate to identify their own strengths and refinements whenever possible – See below).

- **During your conferences, give less advice and ask more questions.**

- Rather than teaching them, you are helping them learn. People don't learn from listening to others; they learn best when they have time to reflect and identify what they've discovered.
- Consider using these questions to encourage their involvement and reflection during a conference:
  - Kick-starter question: "What's on your mind?"
  - Focus question: "What is the real challenge here for you?"
  - Closing question: "What was most useful here for you?"

- **Focus on only one or two areas of refinement at a time.**

- Teacher Candidates can be hard on themselves and often have a long list of things that went wrong, which can be demoralizing. Remind them that teaching is challenging and it takes time to master the skills. It is difficult for anyone to concentrate on too many refinements simultaneously, so help them prioritize one or two areas only.
- You can gently steer them toward an area if you think there is a major area of concern they have missed, but otherwise it is best to allow the Teacher Candidate to lead the discussion. It develops their self-reflection skills and gives them ownership of the process.

- **Include feedback about what went well during the lesson.**

- Positive reinforcement is crucial for anyone's growth and confidence!

- **Establish specific times to meet several times throughout the week.**

- Conferencing should not be hit or miss. Create a meeting schedule and stick to it. Conferencing time is crucial for their development and will allow you to establish your relationship with the Teacher Candidate. Meet in a place that is private. Leave yourself enough uninterrupted time for the conference to run its natural course.

- **End each conference with specific action steps that are clear to both of you.**

- If you discussed an area of refinement, such as the need to keep students more actively engaged during a lesson, identify some specific actions the Teacher Candidate will practice in the next few weeks (i.e.: beginning the lesson with a starter question, pausing to let students share ideas with a partner, etc.). At the end of the conference, the Teacher Candidate should be able to tell you the specific steps they will be practicing.
- During the ensuing week, look for those action steps and keep your feedback focused on them.

- **Make the most of the Midterm and Final Evaluation instrument during the semester.**

- Refer to it during your regular conferences – help it focus their professional development steps.
- Prepare your Midterm and Final Evaluation in advance of the formal conferences with the Supervisor. Review the rubric for the 4-3-2-1 ratings. Consider that most teachers have emerging or proficient skills at this stage. The comments are as important as the rating, and allow for goal setting.

- **Here are helpful articles/podcasts regarding co-teaching and mentoring:**

- Co-Teaching - A How-To Guide:  
<https://www.escl.net/cms/lib/TX21000366/Centricity/Domain/59/CoTeachingAccessible.pdf>
- Seven Keys to Effective Feedback: <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/sept12/vol70/num01/Seven-Keys-to-Effective-Feedback.aspx>
- Podcast: Michael Bungay Stanier on The Coaching Habit  
(<https://accidentalcreative.com/podcasts/ac/podcast-michael-bungay-stanier-on-the-coaching-habit/>)