Approximately 20 years ago, educators, researchers, and policymakers were referring to “the induction years” as the “missing piece” of the teacher development continuum. Prior to that time, the commonly held view was that teachers were prepared, predominantly at the university, and then were directly employed as teachers and asked to assume roles that were much like those of all other teachers employed by the school district. Novice teachers were presumed to enter the classroom with a “suitcase” of knowledge and skills needed to teach and then spend their careers “unpacking” and perhaps “rearranging” the contents of this suitcase. The reality of the situation did not sustain this view. Novice teachers struggled much more than veteran teachers did with virtually all aspects of teaching (classroom management, knowledge of the curriculum, instructional practices, dealing with parents), and large numbers of beginning teachers resigned during their first couple of years in the classroom. Furthermore, school administrators were often spending large amounts of time dealing with novice teachers’ problems or problem situations created by novice teachers.

These realities have led to the realization that teacher development occurs in stages. Over the years, the concept of stages of teacher development has been examined by a variety of educational researchers including Fuller (1969) and Hall, George, and Rutherford (1977), who spoke of teachers’ developing through self, task, and impact concerns about teaching, and Burden (1980), who discussed the survival, transitional, and mature stages of teacher development.

Conceptualizing Quality Mentoring

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The understanding of stages of teacher development led to a realization that the induction years are a distinctly different phase of teacher development that requires further investigation. This understanding led to a further realization that novice teachers need a unique type of support during the first one to three years of teaching that is different from what is provided to preservice teacher candidates or veteran teachers. Furthermore, these insights have prompted conversations about which groups, including higher education, school districts, professional organizations, intermediate service agencies, and state departments of education, have the responsibility to provide assistance and support to novice teachers.

A Snapshot of the Big Picture

Today we have a much more sophisticated understanding of both teacher development in general and the induction years in particular and have come to accept that novice teacher support must be a shared responsibility among all stakeholders. Teacher development can be depicted as a continuum of at least four distinct phases as is shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Teacher Development Continuum</th>
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<td>Preservice</td>
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This conceptualization of a teacher development continuum is consistent with the recent work of Berliner (1990) and Feiman-Nemser and Remillard (1997), who describe five levels of mastery between a novice and an expert teacher, as follows:

Stage 1: The Novice Stage, characterized by survival and discovery

Stage 2: The Advanced Beginner Stage, characterized by experimentation and consolidation
Stage 3: The Competent Stage, characterized by mastery and stabilization

Stage 4: The Proficient Stage, characterized by analysis and deliberation

Stage 5: The Expert Stage, characterized by fluidity and flexibility

While the number and names for the various stages of teacher development have varied over the years depending upon the researcher describing them, the common underlying theory is that novice teachers will initially have lower-level concerns (those related to self and the mechanics of classroom management) that must be resolved in order for higher-level concerns (those related to student well-being and achievement) to emerge and that, with support, teachers generally progress through these developmental stages in a relatively predictable sequence. Among the interventions to facilitate the progression through these stages, the following appear to be especially crucial (Huling, 1997). Novice teachers need

- quality preparation programs that incorporate a variety of field experiences;
- reasonable assignments in school contexts that support and facilitate teacher growth;
- systematic induction support that includes a variety of components, especially the ongoing support of a well-prepared mentor who uses effective mentoring approaches;
- clearly communicated expectations about what constitutes quality teaching; and
- teacher assessment procedures and measures that are consistent with the developmental nature of learning to teach.

A Standards-Based Approach

Just as the profession’s understanding of the teacher development phenomena and of the necessity of creating conditions to facilitate this development has evolved, so has its recognition of the need for professional standards to guide practice in each phase of the teacher development continuum. In addition to the curriculum standards
that have been produced by the learned societies, three different entities have taken the lead in developing professional standards for the distinctly different phases of the teacher development continuum. As shown in Figure 2, these organizations are the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC), and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS).

**Figure 2**

<table>
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<th>Teacher Development Continuum</th>
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<td>Preservice</td>
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**Professional Standards Continuum**

**Where Does Mentoring Fit into the Picture?**

While numerous factors impact teacher development, it is our contention that the core of teacher development is a combination of teaching experience and those day-to-day interactions with veteran colleagues that prompt reflection and refinement of practice (i.e., mentoring). The role of the mentor is highly significant and requires specialized preparation for the mentor and significant ongoing personal and time commitments on the part of the mentor. Figure 3 depicts the relationship of teaching experience, mentoring, and other factors that influence teacher development.
What Constitutes Quality Mentoring?

The question of what constitutes quality mentoring has been the focus of literally hundreds of studies and both scholarly and practitioner-oriented products, including brochures, articles, monographs, books, and videos. Almost all of these products have included various guidelines, suggestions, and recommendations about what mentoring is and should look like in practice. To date, however, there has been no comprehensive set of standards and descriptors that can lead the way in the development and assessment of mentoring programs and practices. This task has been tackled by the Association of Teacher Educators (ATE)/Kappa Delta Pi (KDP) National Commission on Novice Teacher Support.

The ATE/KDP National Commission on Novice Teacher Support

In 1996 ATE, in collaboration with KDP, appointed the National Commission on Novice Teacher Support: Policy Progress and Results, to continue and extend the important focus on mentoring and teacher induction that both ATE and KDP have had for the past two decades. The Commission includes individuals with rich backgrounds as authors, researchers, program developers, program
directors, and educators in the areas of mentoring and teacher induction. Although the final work of the Commission remains under development, an overview of the Commission’s purpose, objectives, and strategies is offered here. A more comprehensive report of the Commission’s work can be anticipated in upcoming documents to be published by ATE and KDP.

The Commission’s Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of the Commission is to provide leadership and direction for those working in the area of mentoring, particularly in regard to understanding what constitutes quality mentoring. The intent is to guide individuals who are working with teacher candidates in initial teacher preparation programs in universities as well as those who are supporting and working with novice teachers in school districts. The specific objectives of the Commission are to make recommendations for

- research, policy, and practice as they relate to mentoring;
- improving the initial preparation of teachers;
- enhancing the culture of schools into which novice teachers enter; and
- preparing experienced teachers for mentoring.

Recommendations for Research, Policy, and Practice

As implied in the initial section of this chapter, the history of mentoring in teacher education and in the induction years is relatively short. Prior to the early 1980s, very little attention was given to providing structured induction or mentoring support

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1 ATE/KDP Commission members include Sandra J. Odell, Co-Chair, University of Nevada, Las Vegas; Leslie Huling, Co-Chair, Southwest Texas State University; Carol Bartell, California Lutheran University; Barbara D. Day, University of North Carolina; Gary DeBolt, State University of New York, Geneseo; Janet Dynak, Westminster College; Sharon Feiman-Nemser, Michigan State University; Fay Head, University of North Carolina at Wilmington; Anne Kruse, Iowa Board of Educational Examiners; Anne Nagel, San Diego State University; Alan Reiman, North Carolina State University; Virginia Resta, Southwest Texas State University; Sharon Schwille, Michigan State University; Barry Sweeny, Kane County Regional Office of Education; Michael Wolfe, Kappa Delta Pi.
systems for novice teachers entering the profession. However, for almost the past two decades there has been a plethora of induction and mentoring programs developed at the state level as well as in individual school districts and universities. Like many educational movements, these programs have often developed as a result of state mandates, with little concomitant funding, or as a result of a bandwagon approach to becoming involved, without clear conceptions of what constitutes a quality mentoring program. As a result, great variations of quality have existed across programs.

One Commission strategy has been to develop a “Mentoring Framework” (see Figure 4) intended to help specify indicators of quality mentoring. It is thought that an understanding of what constitutes quality mentoring should, in turn, help inform policy development in the area of mentoring and guide those who are engaged in the professional practice of mentoring.

Judith Warren Little (1990) effectively argued that there is a dearth of mentoring studies that are comprehensive and well informed by theory and that are designed to examine in depth the content, context, and the consequences of mentoring. She states, moreover, that the major gains in mentoring research have been conceptual rather than empirical and outlines several questions related to mentoring requiring further research. One Commission strategy is to synthesize the current knowledge bases related to novice teacher development in order to identify what we have learned from the research on mentoring and, in addition, to specify some of the most salient research questions on mentoring still needing investigation.

**Recommendations for Improving Teacher Preparation**

The idea of mentoring in the 1980s primarily revolved around mentor teachers who worked as support personnel in induction programs for first-year teachers. Their purpose was to ease the “reality shock” novice teachers face as they translate from being university students of teaching to full-time instructional leaders in the classroom. As research and induction programs have matured over the years, it has become increasingly apparent that mentoring can be viewed most productively as a professional practice that occurs in the context of teaching whenever an experienced teacher guides novice teachers in their teaching practice. The professional
practice of mentoring, then, occurs in initial teacher preparation programs as well as in novice teacher support or induction programs.

In traditional initial teacher preparation programs, students are typically placed with cooperating teachers for practicum and student-teaching experiences. It is well documented that these cooperating teachers often have significant influence over the growth and development of the teacher candidates (Guyton & McIntyre, 1990; McIntyre, Byrd, & Foxx, 1996). However, the jobs of university student-teaching supervisors have often been delegated to tangential, part-time individuals unconnected more generally to teacher education programs. Moreover, there has been relatively little attention given to working in robust ways with these cooperating teachers and university supervisors to help them develop their own teaching and mentoring practices. It is intended that the Commission’s “Mentoring Framework” will help influence and guide the restructuring and improvement of teacher preparation programs by providing indicators of quality mentoring practice for cooperating teachers and university personnel working with teacher candidates.

**Recommendations for Enhancing the Culture of Schools into Which Novices Enter**

Identifying indicators of quality mentoring practice cannot occur in isolation from defining the kind of teaching toward which mentoring practices are aimed. The Commission endorses mentoring toward reform-minded teaching, that is, teaching that is “highly intellectual, problem oriented, and largely clinical,” where “teachers can justify their teaching decisions with principled arguments and data derived from analysis of their effects on learners” (Howey, 1997). Accordingly, the Commission’s work is intended to identify ways in which quality mentoring practices can enhance existing school cultures. Mentoring environments or learning communities where students, prospective teachers, novice teachers, experienced teachers, administrators, other educational school personnel, and university faculty alike study and improve their teaching and mentoring practices are encouraged in the “Mentoring Framework.”
Recommendations for Preparing Experienced Teachers for Mentoring

The most significant and cost-effective component of mentoring programs is the assignment of a mentor teacher to guide novices in learning to teach (Huling-Austin, 1990). Authors have also identified some of the particular mentor characteristics that appear to support productive mentor/novice relationships (e.g., Odell, 1990; Zimpher and Rieger, 1988) and have specified practices of mentors (e.g., Huling-Austin and Murphy, 1987; Feiman-Nemser, 1992; Hawkey, 1997) and what should be included in preparing mentors (e.g., Odell, 1990). The “Mentoring Framework” developed by the Commission identifies and codifies the quality indicators for addressing the preparation and development of mentor teachers.

The Mentoring Framework: A Work In Progress

The “Mentoring Framework” (see Figure 4) is currently under development and is being based on the extant literature and the collective research, experiences, study, and insight of the Commission members. This framework identifies quality mentoring practices and commonly observed variations of these practices across six dimensions of mentoring programs. The dimensions include Program Purpose and Rationale; Mentor Teacher Preparation and Development; Mentor Roles and Practices; Program Administration, Implementation, and Evaluation; Mentor Selection and Mentor/Novice Matching; and School and District Culture.
Each of the six dimensions of mentoring programs is being further broken down into components for purposes of program analysis. By way of example, for the dimension of Mentor Teacher Preparation and Development, the components identified include Initial Preparation, Ongoing Professional Development, Content of Professional Development, Professional Development Activities, Facilitator Characteristics, and Mentor Incentives for Professional Development. Then for each component, indicators of quality practice are being specified and are followed by commonly observed variations in practice. By way of further example, then, one indicator of quality practice for the component of Initial Preparation under the dimension of Mentor Teacher Preparation and Development is that mentor teachers receive three or more days of intensive preparation at least two to three weeks prior to beginning mentoring.

Given the six dimensions, the many components of the six dimensions, as well as the indicators of quality practice for each of the components, the comprehensive and complex nature of the “Mentoring Framework” becomes evident. In addition, example vignettes are being developed that can be used in analyzing mentoring programs and practices. They are intended to provide
fodder for conversations between mentors and novices and among mentors, novices, and university personnel as they study mentoring and teaching practices together.

In using the “Mentoring Framework,” it is recommended that each program component be analyzed by reading the set of indicators of quality practice. Individuals are then encouraged to consider the commonly observed variations of practice related to the component and to identify the variation that most closely describes the program or mentoring practices being analyzed. Determinations for changes or advances in programs and mentoring practices can then be made.

It is envisioned that the framework will be used as an aid in designing and delivering mentoring programs. Program developers and facilitators will be able to integrate recommended practices in the planning and early phases of program development. The “Mentoring Framework” will hopefully also be used as a vehicle for self-assessment and cross-checking of perceptions about the particular program being analyzed. Program participants and facilitators will use the “Mentoring Framework” to determine program areas that are most fully developed and those areas that are in need of additional development. Responses of various individuals involved in mentoring programs could then be compared to identify areas where discrepancies in perceptions exist so that further conversations about these areas could occur for purposes of program improvement. In addition, the framework will be used as a tool for developing assessment instruments. The quality practices identified in the “Mentoring Framework” could serve as the content of program assessment instruments. Instruments could also be developed to assess to what degree specific practices exist in a mentoring program, and assessment results could be utilized for program planning and improvement purposes.
In Conclusion

For at least the past two decades, the profession’s understanding of and work around the induction years has been evolving. The work of the ATE/KDP National Commission on Novice Teacher Support, including the “Mentoring Framework,” supports the profession’s efforts to develop professional standards to guide practice in each phase of the teacher development continuum.

When completed, the “Mentoring Framework” will be a highly complex analysis of various components of mentoring and will include both specific indicators of quality practice and a range of commonly observed variations of these practices. The framework will provide a useful tool for program developers and evaluators in their work to conceptualize, implement, and evaluate mentor programs. At the same time, the framework in its totality will be of limited utility when simply handed to a state legislator working on induction legislation or busy veteran teachers juggling the professional demands of teaching and mentoring. It will be necessary for the information contained within the framework to be “translated” into various media that will be of direct benefit to specific role groups. For example, the framework could be “mined” for the specific indicators that will be useful to mentor trainers or for other indicators that could be helpful to school board members making program funding decisions. Other spinoff products from the framework could be a self-assessment for mentor teachers to analyze their own mentoring practices or a descriptive chart to help novice teachers understand the role of the mentor and what types of support and assistance could be expected from a mentor.

The framework is one of many significant efforts to conceptualize quality mentoring and the specific conditions that are necessary to support quality mentoring. The impact of these efforts, however, will depend, not so much upon the development of the concepts, but rather on their implementation. Much work remains to be done in translating these concepts into media that are useful to various role groups and stakeholders, broadly disseminating the resulting products, and working side by side with those responsible for the program development and implementation and the day-to-day practice of mentoring.
References


