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### Taking the Mentoring of New Teacher Educators Seriously: Lessons From a Clinically-Intensive Teacher Preparation Program

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CHAPTER 2

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**TAKING THE MENTORING OF  
NEW TEACHER EDUCATORS  
SERIOUSLY**

**Lessons From a Clinically-Intensive  
Teacher Preparation Program**

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The challenges facing teacher educators entering their first faculty position in a clinically intensive teacher preparation program reflect similar difficulties that novice teachers encounter upon entry to their own classroom.

Just as new teachers must learn the ropes while performing the work of teaching (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Wildman, Niles, Magliaro, & McLaughlin, 1989), so, too, must novice teacher educators learn to create clinically based learning opportunities for teacher candidates (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 2018; Grossman, Hammerness, & McDonald, 2009) while learning to navigate the university system, establish their practice as field-based practitioners, earn strong student/course evaluations (Ramsden, 2003) and address the realities of “publish or perish” (Russell & Korthagen, 1995).

Numerous research studies indicate that novice classroom teachers benefit from being paired with a carefully selected and trained mentor who can help them make the transition to independent teaching (Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, & Tomlinson, 2009; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Stanulis, Brondyk, Little, & Wibbens, 2014). Although some within university settings have argued that university teacher educators must create structures and professional cultures that support new faculty’s learning (Carroll, Featherstone, Featherstone, Feiman-Nemser, & Roosevelt, 2007), mentorship of faculty in higher education traditionally focuses on socialization, including learning the ins and outs of the institution (Cawyer, Simonds, & Davis, 2002) and integration into the campus community (Savage, Karp, & Logue, 2004). Missing from the literature are fine-grained descriptions and analyses of what serious mentoring efforts of new teacher educators look and sound like as well as their impact in helping field-based practitioners to develop critical aspects of their craft.

In this chapter, I first conceptualize educative mentoring. I then describe Trinity University’s clinically intensive teacher preparation program that serves as the context for the mentoring vignettes that follow. The vignettes highlight core aspects of a field-based teacher educator’s practice, including: designing clinically based courses; establishing relationships in clinical settings; giving candidates feedback on their planning, teaching, and progress; addressing significant concerns in candidates’ practice and/or clinical placement; and supporting mentor development.

### CONCEPTION OF EDUCATIVE MENTORING

A narrow view of mentoring focuses on assisting a novice’s entry into teaching by answering immediate questions and offering psychological support. In contrast to a conception of mentoring as short-term socialization and technical assistance (Wang & Odell, 2002) lies the construct of “educative mentoring” (Feiman-Nemser, 1998). For an experience to be educative, it must result in growth (Dewey, 1938/1963). Educative mentoring is a form of individualized professional development designed to improve both the

novice’s performance as well as her students’ learning. An “educative mentor” is a co-learner who also generates growth-producing experiences for the novice (Feiman-Nemser, 1998).

The concept of educative mentoring rests upon “social learning theories postulating that learning is situated, collaborative, and scaffolded” (Gardiner, 2017, p. 54). Vygotsky’s notion of “assisted performance” is critical in clarifying the theoretical underpinnings of mentoring. Vygotsky (1978) first wrote about assisted performance in relation to working in a child’s zone of proximal development where a learner is able to accomplish with a more knowledgeable help from others what she cannot accomplish alone. In other words, a learner engages in an activity to which she is committed. The teacher observes what the novice can do on her own then provides appropriate scaffolding so that the novice achieves the task. In the context of mentoring, the mentor must structure opportunities for the novice to take on the intellectual work of teaching under the mentor’s support.

The scaffolding that a mentor provides the novice can occur both inside and outside of the novice’s teaching (Schwille, 2008). Mentoring “inside the action” involves a mentor offering real-time coaching, co-teaching, or intervention as the novice engages in the work of teaching. Of course, other central tasks of teaching occur before or after instruction. “Outside the action” mentoring refers to support provided to a novice in preparation for or reflection on teaching.

### CONTEXT

Educative mentoring and assisted performance play central roles in Trinity University’s clinically intensive teacher preparation program. Trinity’s Department of Education transitioned from a traditional 4-year education major to an intensive, 5-year, field-based model of teacher preparation, leading to a Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) degree in 1990. Elementary teacher candidates complete any major offered at Trinity while taking 20 hours of undergraduate education courses that combine theoretical learning with clinically based experiences in our public partner schools. Table 2.1 provides the titles and brief descriptions of this coursework. Their undergraduate coursework equips candidates with foundational knowledge and skills to build on during their graduate program.

Upon entry to the MAT program, candidates complete a 5-week intensive summer program within an elementary or secondary cohort before beginning an 8-month, unpaid internship with a mentor teacher at one of our Professional Development Schools. We have sustained this MAT model for more than 25 years, creating long-term partnerships with a small number of urban schools that serve as the primary sites for teacher candidates’ clinical

**TABLE 2.1 Trinity University Elementary Undergraduate Course Sequence**

Course Number	Course Title	Description
EDUC 1331	Learners With Exceptionalities in School and Society	An introduction to the causes, characteristics, strategies, trends, and issues in teaching students with exceptionalities. Includes a field placement working with students with exceptionalities in a range of educational and community settings.
EDUC 3320	Child & Adolescent Development	The cognitive, emotional, and social factors influencing children and adolescents in contemporary society are explored. Emphases placed on practical application of current human development and learning theories related to the family, school, and peer groups.
EDUC 2201	Practicum: Early Childhood Teaching Exploration	An introduction to the developmental needs of young children in conjunction with a field placement in an early childhood classroom.
EDUC 3301	Field Seminar in Elementary Literacy	A study of literacy learning and instruction in the elementary school that integrates theory (seminars) and practice (field experiences).
EDUC 3341	Teaching Science in Elementary School	An introduction to principles of curriculum design and instruction for teaching science. Includes a field placement.
EDUC 3351	Mathematics in Elementary School	An examination of key content, strategies, and skills as well as methods of teaching and learning mathematics at the elementary level. Includes field placement.

experiences. Interns follow the public school calendar, completing all campus and district-level professional development alongside their mentor teacher and assist their mentor in setting up the classroom before students arrive. In the fall semester, elementary candidates are in their mentor's classroom 4 days a week, focusing on the planning, teaching, and assessment of reading and mathematics. They observe their mentors teach, co-plan and co-teach alongside their mentor, then complete 2 weeks of guided lead teaching where they plan, teach, and assess students' learning in math and reading with their mentor's support. In the spring semester, interns are in their clinical placement 5 days a week, entering into a period of "lead teaching" where they take primary responsibility for children's learning in all content areas for 5 consecutive weeks. In addition to their internship experience, candidates take graduate courses designed to help them prepare for and make sense of their clinical experiences. In addition, they complete key assessments such as the Praxis Performance Assessment for Teachers and projects including an action research investigation.

## MENTORING VIGNETTES

I have assisted with the performance of my colleagues who, like me, are responsible for creating clinically intensive, learning-rich experiences for teacher candidates at the undergraduate and graduate levels. The following teacher education mentoring vignettes focus on core aspects of a field-based teacher educator's practice, including: (a) designing clinically based courses, (b) establishing relationships with key players in clinical settings, (c) providing feedback to candidates on their teaching, (d) addressing significant concerns in candidates' practice and/or clinical placement, and (e) supporting mentor development. Each is discussed in turn.

### Designing Clinically Based Courses

New faculty members must learn how to design clinically based learning opportunities for their students. My colleague, Melissa, teaches an undergraduate clinically intensive course called Math in Elementary School. Melissa initially designed the field component of the course—an after-school math tutoring program—to reflect a structure I had created for candidates in a field-based literacy seminar in which they facilitate an after-school poetry club for elementary students. After using this structure for a semester, however, Melissa did not feel that the experience was as educative for the teacher candidates as she had hoped.

As we continued to discuss her reflections on the experience, I realized a key difference in the way we structured teacher candidates' clinical experiences. Melissa had asked each teacher candidate to tutor 1–3 students every week. Doing so left her feeling stretched thin in terms of giving timely feedback on their individual lesson plans and being available to observe and assist during the hour-long tutoring sessions. In contrast, I paired literacy field-seminar students up to co-teach a mini-lesson to all of the poetry club students while the rest of the candidates observed, then all Trinity candidates provided one-on-one support to students through writing conferences held during independent writing time. I encouraged Melissa to consider adopting this model. It would enable her to facilitate the first tutoring session herself, something that I do in the poetry club. Doing so allows the teacher educator to make the intellectual work of teaching visible to pre-service teachers by talking aloud about initial planning decisions, directing teacher candidates' observation of her teaching, then reflecting with the teacher candidates afterwards about challenges, surprises, and an assessment of whether learning goals were met.

Melissa followed suit when teaching the math methods course again. She structured the tutoring sessions to begin with a whole group

mini-lesson—initially taught by her then later co-facilitated by pairs of teacher candidates—before then breaking up into smaller groups co-facilitated by all of her students. This structure enabled Melissa to give extensive feedback to each student pair *before* teaching the whole group mini-lesson. Moreover, she was available to “step in and out” of the mini-lesson to provide real-time support (Fieman-Nemser, 2012) as they taught. At semester’s end, Melissa noted that scaffolding candidates’ learning to teach in these ways significantly strengthened their ability to support elementary students’ learning.

In a further example of mentoring, I supported Melissa in teaching a course I normally offer. While I was on leave last fall, Melissa stepped in to teach the literacy field-based seminar. I first offered her my syllabus and detailed teaching notes. After reading through them, we met so that Melissa could ask questions. I offered to serve as a guest teacher later in the course when teacher candidates use a protocol to analyze children’s poems since Melissa was not familiar with this protocol. I then connected her to the after-school coordinator at our partner campus and explained some logistics of launching a poetry club—the clinical setting for teacher candidates.

Melissa and I checked in with each other periodically throughout the semester. Each time we spoke, Melissa shared how much she was enjoying the course. When I asked why, she said that she had gained a major insight. In the early days of the course, students first interviewed each other about their writing experiences and attitudes. They then wrote their writing autobiography and shared excerpts in class. They further got to know about each other by sharing poems they wrote about the meaning and impact of their own names. Rituals were established early on, including reviewing the agenda at the beginning of class, reading excerpts from their written reflections on the previous class, and sharing their writing in “compliment read arounds,” all of which created a sense of predictability and community. On the fifth class, Melissa read in my teaching notes to invite her students to switch hats for a minute from writers to future teachers. She posed the question, “What have I done as the teacher so far to help us launch our classroom community and investigation of writing?” Doing so encourages the teacher candidates to unpack the deliberate choices that Melissa made in the early sessions to help them feel safe and begin taking risks in their writing and sharing. She told her students that just as they have benefited from the teaching moves she made, they, too, must do the same for their own students in classrooms.

Melissa realized that as a teacher educator, she needs to make explicit all that is implicit in her own teaching so that novices can learn in and from her practice. She explained to me that she never thought about creating a classroom learning community in an undergraduate course first, then using that work as a way to think about learning community in schools and candidates’ role in developing it. In that same vein, Melissa felt a bit

embarrassed as she shared that the notion of setting up the course to allow candidates to immerse themselves in writing beforehand then becoming teachers of writing had never occurred to her. She saw firsthand the benefits of doing so by using my teaching notes to guide her instruction. In her end-of-course evaluations, students stated how much they appreciated writing together beforehand, then structuring that experience to students in a school setting. She had not received such feedback before in previous courses she had taught.

Melissa’s reflection on the literacy field-based seminar created opportunities to rethink the Math for Elementary Teachers course she teaches. She now plans to explicitly name aspects of her practice in the university-based portion of the course both to make transparent the intellectual work of teaching and to encourage them to use these teaching moves when tutoring students in the field. Moreover, when comparing her clinical role in her math course with the role she had just played in the literacy field-based seminar, she noted that she created a lot of time for teacher candidates to reflect on their instruction as well as students’ learning, then she scaffolded them to use that understanding to inform future poetry club sessions. In past field experiences she supervised, Melissa focused more exclusively on planning and teaching, missing opportunities to engage candidates in student assessment and the provision of feedback to children. She now sees how she can structure clinical experiences in what she describes as a more authentic, seamless way so that candidates better understand the planning/teaching/assessment cycle.

Melissa also gained an appreciation for the importance of maintaining her practice in school settings, not just university settings. As the literacy seminar is structured, the teacher educator facilitates the first poetry club session rather than teacher candidates. As mentioned above, doing so gives candidates a vision of the possible and a framework to structure future sessions they will co-facilitate. It also sets up the expectation that the candidates, like Melissa herself did, reflect on their practice in front of classmates. When Melissa first read in my teaching notes that she would have to model teach the first poetry club lesson, she felt panicked. What if she failed? She recounted that this moment served as a valuable lesson for her to make sure that she is willing to do what she asks her own candidates to do. Remaining connected to her own classroom practices will keep her knowledge and expertise relevant in her teacher education practice.

### **Establishing Relationships With Key Players in Clinical Settings**

Gaining access to clinical sites can feel like a daunting task when initially designing field-based experiences for teacher candidates. Part of my

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### **Establishing Relationships With Key Players in Clinical Settings**

Gaining access to clinical sites can feel like a daunting task when initially designing field-based experiences for teacher candidates. Part of my

mentoring lies in connecting new faculty to key players in our clinical settings, including administrators and teachers. For instance, when Sara first taught an undergraduate early childhood practicum that I had taught in years past, I scaffolded her entry into the school that served as the site for her students' clinical experience. After giving her a tour of the building, I formally introduced her to school administrators in a pre-arranged meeting. During that session, we shared with the principal a written description of the practicum and how many early childhood teachers we hoped would serve as mentors to Trinity students. Keeping campus administrators informed and maintaining open lines of communication is central to creating strong clinical settings for novices.

I then set up and facilitated a meeting with identified teachers in order to walk them through course logistics, explain their role as mentors, and describe the two major projects that teacher candidates completed at the time (e.g., a semester-long study of a single child and an oral dictation/dramatization project). Sara sat in on this meeting which gave me the opportunity to introduce her to the teachers, many of whom I had worked with for several years. Sara later explained that this modeling was quite helpful to her. Getting to see an experienced teacher educator negotiate these opening moves with mentors who serve as school-based teacher educators gave her structures and language to draw on when she taught the course the following year and needed to partner with a different school. She felt well-equipped to establish relationships with administrators and teachers at the early childhood center. While I visited the new school with her and met with the principal for the first time to offer continued support, Sara facilitated mentor meetings on her own.

When I initially designed the early childhood practicum, I requested that mentors create space for teacher candidates to conduct the oral dictation/dramatization project in their classrooms. As curricular standards became more rigorous, however, a number of mentors began to push back on the project, noting that they expect their students to be writing on their own in pre-K and kindergarten by the time teacher candidates work with them in the spring semester. As Sara began to teach the course on her own, she was much more responsive to mentors' concerns than I had been. She gave up that particular project in order to create a much more open-ended expectation that candidates teach at least one literacy-based lesson that (a) meets a learning objective selected by the mentor, and (b) the candidate has time to fully plan and receive feedback before teaching. In that way, Sara reinforced for me the importance of insuring that field-based expectations for candidates support rather than thwart the mentor's teaching and children's learning.

In addition to helping my university colleagues establish initial lines of communication with mentors and administrators, I supported them in

sustaining those relationships. For example, I had met twice a month with the principal at one of our professional development schools in the first year of our partnership. I encouraged my colleagues, Rocio and Sara, to join these meetings in Year 2 as soon as they began supervising teacher candidates at the school. Meeting regularly with school administrators is vitally important to ensuring a healthy university-school relationship. When I left the school a year later in order to establish a new partnership with another school, my peers were well-positioned to remain, coordinating the internship program at the initial school without me. And 3 years later when Trinity created yet another school partnership, Sara stepped into that role with full confidence of her own. She noted that these mentored experiences helped her quickly gain an appreciation for the importance of building respectful relationships. In her words, as teacher educators, we really are guests in a school that has graciously opened its classrooms and practices to us and our students. We must ensure that we are respectful of teachers' and administrators' time and maintain gratitude that our school partners are assuming additional responsibilities in order to support our teacher candidates.

### **Providing Feedback to Teacher Candidates**

Novice teachers need feedback in order to learn from their teaching and make improvements. This happens in a variety of contexts: providing feedback on candidates' written plans, including individual lessons and curricular units; observing and debriefing individual lessons; supporting candidates' action research projects; and providing summative feedback on candidates' progress over time.

#### *Feedback on Written Plans*

Teacher educators need to give constructive, actionable feedback on teacher candidates' written plans. At Trinity, novices learn an approach to curricular design called Understanding by Design or UbD (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). Sometimes known as "backward design," this approach to planning curricular units reverses the order in which teachers typically plan. Educators first identify desired learning results then determine acceptable evidence of those learning results before then designing learning activities. We support interns in developing two UbD units during the MAT program, one in the summer session as an introduction to UbD principles and one in early January to implement during lead teaching.

I have taught UbD principles and given formative feedback to candidates as they plan units in small teams and formally after submitting completed units for more than a decade. Our candidates sometimes struggle to



clarify clear learning targets and assessments before planning a sequence of daily lessons. When Sara and I began co-teaching graduate courses in which candidates are given time in class to plan their UbD units, she was relatively new to UbD design principles. Knowing how to make sense of novices' early planning efforts in real time, to think on one's feet and to celebrate strengths while constructively addressing concerns is complex intellectual work. I initially offered to model how I give feedback. Sara quickly began to contribute her own questions and suggestions after a brief period of observation. Once she felt comfortable facilitating feedback sessions on her own, we thought it made sense to "divide and conquer," so we split ourselves up to work separately with teams under the assumption that we could provide more feedback. After doing so, however, both Sara and I realized that we prefer to remain together in order to jointly offer insights and suggestions to planning teams. While both of us are now adept at providing feedback on our own, we routinely continue to visit planning teams together. Doing so allows us to build off of each other's thinking and pedagogical moves in the moment, to debrief later what we're learning about the candidates as planners and to determine how to use our insights to inform next instructional steps. Moreover, it provides continued opportunities for us to learn with and from each other.

### *Observing and Debriefing Individual Lessons*

While mentor teachers may debrief candidates' lessons after teaching, unless they have a clear focus or structure for such conversations, mentors can give unfocused or unreliable feedback that does not lead to significant learning (Hudson, 2014; Valencia, Martin, Place, & Grossman, 2009). This reality makes university teacher educators' feedback on candidates' teaching even more essential.

Before Sara began to assume responsibility for supervising graduate interns, I first suggested that she read *The School Mentor Handbook* (Hagger, Burn, & McIntyre, 1995), particularly the chapters on observation and assessment/supervision. We then met to discuss the text. During that conversation, I shared my own approach to observing novices' teaching by attending to the commonplaces (Schwab, 1978) which include the teacher and her teaching, the students and their learning, the curriculum, and the context. I also explained different approaches to taking notes while observing, including scripting (my preferred method), and dividing one's paper into two columns, using one side for descriptions and the other for questions/interpretations.

After developing some background knowledge, I then invited Sara to join me as I observed and debriefed a graduate intern's lesson. Both Sara and I took notes as we observed her. Before meeting with the intern, Sara and I first shared the notes we had taken with one another and discussed

the intern's lesson in terms of the commonplaces. When I then asked her what role that she would feel most comfortable playing, Sara stated that she preferred to listen during the debriefing conference. After I debriefed the intern's lesson while Sara observed, she later shared how surprised she felt by the tone and tenor of the debriefing. Sara had expected the conference to be "super formal" but was struck by how conversational and coaching-oriented it was. I had asked many questions, using the intern's responses to determine what to focus on and what to highlight from my own observations. Sara felt prepared to then observe and debrief interns' teaching on her own.

### *Supporting Candidates' Action Research Projects*

Beyond offering feedback to interns on their planning and teaching of individual lessons, university field-based teacher educators also need to provide support and guidance as candidates conduct action research projects. As novices move through this inquiry project, they

- draw on their classroom-based experiences to identify a question, puzzle, concern, dilemma, or problem of practice that they want to focus on;
- consult a range of human and textual resources to help them think about and explore their question;
- design and carry out a plan-of-action to address their question, adapting, or adjusting their plan as they proceed;
- keep track of the process by collecting information, data reflections, and examples that serve as evidence for them to assess their progress and support their learning;
- make sense of the data they collect, looking for insights into their question, taking stock of their progress, and making revisions to their question or data collection plan as needed; and
- summarize and report their findings at their Professional Development School campus so that their school-based colleagues can also benefit from their inquiry.

Interns benefit from feedback at every stage of this research project. At the outset, I help them craft a researchable question and offer feedback on their initial plan-of-action. In addition to supporting data collection by observing and providing feedback, I also meet individually with candidates during hour-long data analysis sessions. During these meetings, candidates share raw data and/or their initial findings. I review data with them, ask questions, offer my own analysis, and provide suggested next steps. Once interns draft their presentations, their peers and I use the Tuning Protocol ([schoolreforminitiative.org](http://schoolreforminitiative.org)) to identify strengths, ask probing questions,



and offer suggestions for improvement. Finally, I formally assess their action research presentations when they give them at their school campus.

Although I take primary responsibility for offering these forms of feedback, I have mentored Sara around this action research project in several ways. First, Sara has observed me provide feedback during the half-day session when candidates explore initial ideas for their project and eventually narrow their focus to a researchable question. In addition, she recently began to observe me conduct individual data analysis sessions. Doing so allows her to see how I guide candidates through the process. Additionally, because Sara is strong at data analysis herself, she is able to make contributions during these conversations. Finally, both Sara and I now individually assess each intern's final presentation then jointly discuss our independent evaluations before determining final ratings and crafting narrative feedback.

#### *Providing Summative Feedback*

Beyond offering feedback on interns' action research projects, planning and instruction, university field-based teacher educators also need to provide summative feedback on candidates' progress over time. Trinity creates three occasions for interns to receive formal summative feedback from university teacher educators and their mentor teachers through 3-way assessment conferences held mid-semester in the fall, the end of the fall semester and the end of the spring semester. The conferences bring together university teacher educator, candidate, and mentor teacher in order for each to share his/her assessment of the candidate's progress toward meeting Trinity's Standards for Professional Practice.

Before Sara assumed responsibility for facilitating conferences on her own, she first sat in on nine end-of-fall semester conferences that I conducted. Beforehand, I showed her the detailed general written guidelines I use to structure the conference. I also shared with her the specific notes that I had created in preparation for each intern's conference. I explained that I constructed these notes by first reviewing the intern's written midpoint portfolio entries which each intern constructs to demonstrate progress toward the program's standards then reviewing my own observational/debriefing notes. I also explained the purposes of the fall end-of-semester conference: to celebrate progress/strengths in the novice's practice; to identify areas for continued growth and strategies to do so; and to look ahead to the upcoming semester when interns will assume increased responsibility for planning, teaching, and assessing students' learning. Observing the way that I structure the conference—including clarifying roles and expectations—then facilitate the conversation—including how to negotiate differences in ratings—gave Sara insights into this complex territory and left her feeling confident to facilitate spring conferences on her own.

#### **Addressing Significant Concerns in Teacher Candidates' Practice**

Although Trinity's Department of Education uses a rigorous admissions process, nearly every year at least one intern encounters significant difficulty during the year-long internship. Sometimes the causes of those concerns are internal, including significant mental health issues. Sometimes the causes are contextual, including a poor fit between the intern and clinical placement for any number of reasons. Sometimes the causes are pedagogical, including significant difficulty in developing specific core skills in assessment, instruction, and/or management.

The syllabi for Clinical Practice (Fall) and Advanced Clinical Practice (Spring) state that if at any point the university teacher educator, mentor teacher, or school administrator determines there is a significant problem with the intern's performance based on the professional teaching standards or any university or school-based guidelines, the intern will be placed on a professional growth plan that includes specific actions and/or behaviors as well as a reasonable timeframe for demonstrating adequate growth on the plan. If the Trinity faculty, mentor teacher, and administrator determine that the intern has failed to meet the terms of the growth plan within the predetermined time frame, the internship will be terminated and the intern will receive a failing grade for Clinical Practice or Advanced Clinical Practice.

Knowing how to identify interns' consistent versus short-term difficulties, to consider possible underlying causes, and to address the concerns constructively—including crafting professional growth plans that clearly state area(s) of concern and identify an actionable plan for addressing those concerns within a specified time period—are all skills that teacher educators must develop. Making informed decisions about whether, how, and when to address those concerns are rarely straightforward.

As a case in point, my colleague, Rocio, supervised an intern who showed signs of struggle early on in her year-long internship. The intern, Beth, was placed in a first grade Spanish immersion classroom with a mentor who was new to Trinity's MAT program. The Spanish immersion program at this school begins in first grade. English-dominant students are taught in Spanish the entire school day. Rocio felt confident that as a Spanish major, Beth possessed the Spanish language skills needed to teach in this context. Deeply committed to becoming a bilingual educator, Beth was really happy with her placement.

Beth thoroughly enjoyed her placement but experienced significant and consistent difficulty engaging children in learning and managing their behavior. Rocio and Beth's mentor offered numerous strategies to Beth for gaining students' attention. They encouraged Beth to use more nonverbal cues and

to incorporate more songs with movement opportunities. The more Beth taught, however, the worse her students' behavior seemed to become. The mentor grew increasingly concerned that students were not learning.

Early in the spring semester, Rocio asked me to observe Beth teach in hopes that I might be able to offer additional suggestions to Beth, Rocio, and/or her mentor in how to strengthen Beth's instruction. What struck me most from that observation was how emboldened the students had become in ignoring Beth's directions and instruction. Beth seemed to struggle to find the language to communicate effectively. I strongly encouraged Rocio to place Beth on a professional growth plan and change Beth's placement to a general education classroom, arguing that learning to teach is difficult under the best of circumstances. Doing so in a second language seemed to have created insurmountable challenges for Beth.

To support Rocio in drafting the growth plan, I first walked her through several examples I'd previously written. I explained the importance of referencing the language from the syllabus about the growth plan process. I encouraged Rocio to organize the concerns she had about Beth's performance around Trinity's Standards for Professional Practice. I expressed the importance of providing 1–2 very clear examples for each concern using descriptive language. Rocio drafted a plan laying out the concerns then I provided extensive written feedback to her. Once we had clarified what Beth needed to improve in her practice, I thought aloud about how Rocio and I might structure a new placement in a different school so that Beth would have opportunities to develop key aspects of her teaching. For example, because Beth had struggled to establish her authority and manage students' behavior, I listed the following tasks for Beth to accomplish in the first week of her new placement:

- Describe currently established classroom procedures.
- Describe in detail the established behavior management system, including consequences for children's misbehavior.
- Describe several strategies your mentor uses to gain students' attention.
- Begin to establish yourself as an authority figure in the classroom, someone who is friendly but firm with students.

I explained to Rocio that if Beth could name these aspects of her new mentor's practice, she could then begin to use some of those strategies that she had observed when beginning to plan and teach her own lessons in subsequent weeks. I identified a new placement with a new mentor who was an alum of Trinity's MAT program, met with the mentor, then drafted a week-by-week structure for Beth's new placement.

Because Rocio had not yet conducted a professional growth conference, I offered to take the lead in facilitating Beth's conference with Rocio. My intent was to provide some modeling, but I privately worried that Rocio might feel that I was asserting myself too much. Fortunately, Rocio explained to me that looking back on the experience, she felt that my offer had been supportive, and she appreciated watching me facilitate the conference. I also took the lead in explaining the reasoning for changing Beth's placement with both the mentor and building principal, making sure that the decision was not a reflection on them but on the need for Beth to teach in English while establishing her moral authority. Rocio explained that she benefited from hearing the language I used to navigate those conversations. Happily, Beth experienced significant growth and success in her second placement and has become an accomplished teacher in a bilingual program.

Two years later, Rocio again found herself supervising an intern who encountered significant difficulty. The intern, Lisa, had been placed in a first grade general education classroom with a mentor who graduated from Trinity's MAT program and had successfully supported previous Trinity teacher candidates. Both Rocio and the mentor felt that Lisa's written lesson plans lacked sufficient detail. Sometimes Lisa failed to address an aspect of the reading or math block in her plans entirely. Other times Lisa hadn't sufficiently thought through key details in her plans. Both issues resulted in pacing difficulties as well as a lack of student engagement while teaching.

Rocio and the mentor mentioned these concerns at Lisa's fall mid-semester conference in October. Lisa demonstrated slow progress in the quality of her written planning following their feedback. Rocio continued to observe Lisa regularly but relied on her mentor to help Rocio know what was happening since the mentor was in the classroom everyday with Lisa. Unbeknownst to Rocio, the mentor grew increasingly concerned with the quality of Lisa's teaching but held off on sharing those concerns with Rocio because the mentor thought that Lisa's challenges would diminish with more teaching practice.

Rocio vividly remembers the mentor breaking her silence after Lisa really struggled to move students from their classroom to the library. The mentor sought Rocio out, described the incident then said, "I don't know how to address it. I'm such a conflict avoider." Rocio laughed and replied, "So am I! Both of us are conflict avoiders, but the more we let this go on, the more not only are we not helping Lisa but also her students are suffering." Rocio offered to talk directly with Lisa, something the mentor felt that she herself had not yet done. In addition to this one-on-one conversation, Rocio and the mentor reiterated their concern about some aspects of Lisa's planning and teaching at her end-of-semester assessment conference in December. Lisa voiced her need for more planning support. In response, Rocio set up weekly meetings with Lisa and her mentor so that the three of

them could look ahead to the following week, identify resources that Lisa could share, and brainstorm activities given specific lesson goals.

Rocio and the mentor had privately discussed the possibility of placing Lisa on a professional growth plan, but since they had seen some improvement, they backed off, remaining hopeful that Lisa would demonstrate increasing competence. In January, however, Lisa continued to struggle. As she assumed increased responsibility for planning and teaching, the quality of her lesson plans grew inconsistent. She had difficulty submitting her lesson plans on time. More and more challenges surfaced in her instruction, including pacing and management. She found herself missing key materials in the middle of a lesson. She had difficulty keeping the classroom clean and organized as she entered into Lead Teaching.

The situation came to a head in February when Lisa arrived at school Monday morning without having developed or submitted written lesson plans for that day or week ahead of time. The mentor happened to see me in the hallway before the start of school and shared her concern that Lisa had no written plans. I reminded the mentor of the MAT program policy—interns cannot teach without written plans—and suggested that Lisa begin working on her plans while the mentor herself taught. I didn't want to step in and directly interact with Lisa without Rocio being there, fearing that doing so might undermine Rocio's authority.

When Rocio arrived soon after, the two of us consulted outside of the classroom. Together we brainstormed how to structure a conversation that Rocio would facilitate with Lisa. I encouraged Rocio first to ask Lisa why she did not have written plans for the week. Once she elicited that information, she could then explain to Lisa that she was being placed on a professional growth plan given the serious, unresolved concerns that Rocio and the mentor had. I also suggested that Rocio tell Lisa to step out of the classroom for the day to work on her missing lesson plans in the school library. Doing so would create time for Rocio to craft Lisa's growth plan. Rocio could then meet with Lisa (and hopefully the mentor) after school to share the plan.

I remained with Rocio as we spoke to Lisa privately. After confirming that Lisa hadn't submitted written plans, we asked why. Lisa broke into tears, explaining that she had suffered from a debilitating migraine all weekend that kept her from being able to work or sleep. Realizing just how exhausted she was, we sent Lisa home to rest, explaining that we would meet with her the next morning. Rocio used the growth plan that we had developed for Beth as a reference to craft Lisa's plan, and she felt confident to facilitate the professional growth conference on her own.

When developing this vignette, Rocio mentioned to me that she is sometimes "afraid to lay down the law" through a professional growth plan. When I asked her what she meant by that, she explained that when she creates a growth plan, it "unbalances the relationship—I become the know-it-all. But

I'm not the one in the classroom there every day, eight hours a day, like the mentor. It creates an imbalance of power." I offered an alternative way of viewing growth plans. First, doing so supports the mentor rather than diminishes her power. Typically, a mentor and clinical faculty have already tried many strategies to support a novice before a growth plan is warranted. In contrast to taking over, the university teacher educator is presenting a united front with the mentor. Moreover, taking responsibility for the physical drafting of the plan is not a power move but rather taking on a task that the mentor most likely does not have time to do herself.

In addition, I referenced Peter Elbow (1983) who argues that teachers face two seemingly contradictory obligations in their role as educators. On the one hand, we must support students in every way possible, doing whatever we can to ensure that they are successful. On the other hand, we must also be the gatekeeper, making hard decisions about whether our students sufficiently meet our goals for their learning. Elbow posits that while both commitments to support and evaluate are essential, we cannot enact them simultaneously. Rather, we must be clear with students from the outset about our expectations then do everything we can to make sure that they meet them. If, however, students are not successful, we must be willing to hold them accountable. I explained to Rocio that I strongly maintain this stance in my role as a field-based teacher educator. I also noted, however, that Elbow explains that many teachers avoid the tension between these obligations by focusing on one obligation at the expense of the other.

As Rocio and I talked further, Rocio mentioned that she sometimes continues to hope that simply giving a novice more opportunities to practice—be it planning, teaching, or assessing—will provide more opportunities to experience success. This is an assumption she wants to continue to question. She also noted that when drafting a growth plan, it is much easier for her to identify the areas of concern. Linking that set of underdeveloped knowledge and skills to subsequent learning opportunities is not so clear cut. As Rocio looked back at Lisa's plan, she felt that she needed to make her expectations for growth clearer and to develop a much more detailed plan for *how* Lisa could make that growth over time.

Our conversation clarified for me just how complicated this aspect of a clinically based teacher educator's practice truly is. At the same time that the teacher educator is negotiating her relationship with the teacher candidate, she is also managing her relationship with the mentor and supporting the mentor–novice relationship, too. Ensuring that the professional growth plan creates educative learning opportunities for all involved is the goal, but knowing how to do so requires great insight and skill. The teacher educator must be able to assess the situation from multiple stakeholder's points of view. She must be willing to step into this evaluative role. She must collaborate closely with the mentor to ensure that both are on the same page.

She must draft a coherent growth plan that clearly lays out concerns *and* lays a path forward for how to strengthen those aspects of the novice's practice. She must simultaneously support and stretch the intern, helping the novice remain open to learning rather than shutting her down.

### Supporting Mentor Development

Another critically important component of a university field-based teacher educator's practice lies in supporting experienced classroom teachers to develop their mentoring practice (Carroll, 2007; Norman, 2011). Teacher candidates identify mentors as the single biggest influence on their learning (Clarke, Triggs, & Nielsen, 2014). The success of field-based internships rest on the mentors' ability to view their intern as a learner of teaching and themselves as teachers of teaching (Feiman-Nemser, 1998). This means that mentors not only understand the content to be taught—the learning to teach “curriculum”—but also are able to design learning opportunities based on knowledge of their intern and what she needs to learn (Gareis & Grant, 2014).

My own doctoral studies extensively focused on mentor development. As soon as I began supervising graduate interns at Trinity, I established mentor teacher study groups where mentors and I regularly meet to check in on how mentors and their interns are doing; focus on a single aspect of mentoring practice such as co-planning, observing/debriefing, co-teaching, or assessing interns' progress; and review expectations for interns' clinical responsibilities in the month ahead.

During mentor study group sessions, I regularly bring mentoring artifacts of practice for our collective examination. Sometimes the artifacts grow out of my own work with an intern (e.g., a videotape of a debriefing conference or co-planning session). Other times I will bring a video excerpt of a novice's teaching, inviting mentors to use different tools to observe then make decisions about what to discuss in a subsequent debriefing session as well as how and why. Still other times I ask mentors to bring an artifact of their own mentoring practice to the session or to identify mentoring challenges for joint problem-solving through the use of protocols.

As soon as my colleagues began supervising interns, I encouraged them to attend mentor study group sessions with me. I took responsibility for facilitating these sessions for nearly two years then later met with them to co-plan and co-facilitate subsequent sessions. Over time, they have assumed the role of facilitating mentor study groups on their own.

Sara noticed both in her observation and co-facilitation of mentor study group sessions that mentors may initially feel uncomfortable discussing interns without them being present. Doing so can feel like gossiping. As one

mentor once said, “I wouldn't appreciate my colleagues sitting around talking about me. I've developed a sense of trust with my intern and I just don't feel comfortable at this point sharing something unless that person were here.” Mentors need help understanding that their intern is their *student* of teaching. The teacher educator can help mentors to understand that just as they wouldn't hesitate to seek a colleague's support if they were struggling to support a *child* in their classroom, they should view mentor study group sessions as an opportunity to gain insights into how they can better support their novice's teaching and learning.

This is sometimes easier said than done. Openly discussing challenges that an intern is experiencing can lead a mentor to feel like she is tattling. The mentor might also feel inadequate in front of his/her teaching peers. Mentors need support in coming to see such conversations as an opportunity to clarify an intern's areas for learning and growth. More clearly understanding where interns' growing edges lie better positions all of us—mentors and university clinical supervisors—to better support their learning to teach. Creating a trusting learning community where all members of the study group view each other as co-learners of mentoring is an important skill that field-based teacher educators must develop and hone over time (Norman, 2011).

From these mentored experiences, Sara gained a deeper appreciation for the importance of supporting new and veteran mentors. Serving as a mentor in Trinity's program requires a host of knowledge and skills, including:

- programmatic knowledge (e.g., structure of the internship; roles/responsibilities of mentor, intern, and university clinical faculty);
- foundational knowledge/skill (e.g., knowledge of the developmental learning to teach continuum, knowledge of, and skill in the core tasks of teaching); and
- practical knowledge/skill (e.g., use the mentor's practice as a site for intern's learning; scaffold opportunities for intern to take on core tasks of teaching in ways that lead to further growth; provide feedback on intern's planning, teaching, and progress over time).

Mentors can really benefit from university teacher educators' support in developing their practice as teachers of teaching.

### DISCUSSION

As the vignettes above illustrate, the serious and sustained support of novice teacher educators through assisted performance can take several forms.

Some of my mentoring efforts take the form of *demonstration* (as when Sara observed me conduct assessment conferences or Sara and Rocio initially sat in on mentor study group sessions). Some mentoring efforts occur through *guided practice* where together we perform a core aspect of the teacher educator's role (as Sara and I do when jointly providing feedback on candidates' UbD plans, or as Rocio and I co-conducted a difficult conversation with an intern in preparation for placing her on a professional growth plan). Still other mentoring efforts transpires after the novice teacher educator engages in *independent practice*; we come together to jointly problem solve (such as Melissa and I did when determining how to adjust the structure of the clinically based tutoring component of her math methods course).

The vignettes also illustrate that just as teacher candidates vary in the amount and forms of support needed to grow their teaching practice, so too does the quantity and kinds of assistance that teacher educators need to grow their field-based practice. Unlike Rocio who came to Trinity having served as a university supervisor while completing her doctoral program, Sara's graduate studies did not include teacher candidate field supervision. Reading the needs of my colleagues and checking my understanding by offering choices about whether/how to assist helped ensure that my mentoring efforts felt supportive. Offering my assistance by asking, "Would it feel helpful if I...?" helped me determine whether to step in, coach, co-conduct, or fade.

I have taught in Trinity's elementary MAT program for 17 years. I have regularly mentored department colleagues, both as newcomers to field-based teacher education and later as they have established an impressive practice themselves. In this way, I have come to understand that my role as mentor does not end once my colleagues have taught in the teacher preparation program for a certain number of months or years. Rather, mentoring is an iterative process where the more we collaborate, jointly problem solve, and assist each other, the more we find new ways to continue supporting each other's ongoing growth (Hanson & Moir, 2008; Nilsson & van Driel, 2010).

The benefits of taking the mentoring of teacher educators seriously are many. First, the teacher educator is immediately assisted in her practice. She is able to do with support what she could not successfully do on her own. By strengthening her practice, teacher candidates also directly benefit. Better supporting teacher candidates in turn benefits the children they teach. And of course, the mentor herself benefits greatly as well. As Clandinin (1995) notes, developing her practice as a teacher educator requires her to continually learn how to teach, regardless of how many years she has served in the role. This is true for me as well. Supporting my colleagues' field-based practices brings me new insights into the role and practice, positions them to support *me* when I encounter a thorny issue related to novices'

clinical experiences, and creates incredibly rich and engaging opportunities to develop shared beliefs about teaching and learning. Constructing these shared beliefs better assures curricular and pedagogical coherence across Trinity's teacher preparation program.

## IMPLICATIONS

Just as support for classroom-based mentor teachers must rest on a clear vision of teaching and the teacher's role, so, too, must support for university teacher educators rest on a clear understanding of the role and practice of clinically based teacher education. I offer one such conception which includes designing clinically based courses; establishing relationships in clinical settings; giving candidates feedback on their planning, teaching, and progress; addressing significant concerns in candidates' practice and/or clinical placement; and supporting mentor development.

As noted earlier, many colleges and universities assign a faculty member outside of the department or school to help new faculty learn what it means to "do" the university. If we took more seriously a systematic means of supporting and guiding new faculty within schools and departments of education, we really would create stronger cadres of emerging field-based teacher educators who can create powerful clinical experiences for teacher candidates.

I recognize that Trinity is a unique, small-scale program and that larger institutions will have many more new faculty to mentor. I also recognize that teacher educators in large teacher preparation programs likely are required to supervise many more students than we do within our program. That said, whether meeting with a candidate for 15 times across a year or three times during a traditional student teaching placement, the educative quality of those interactions can be strengthened through serious, sustained efforts to mentor the teacher educators responsible for providing them.

Of course, this support and guidance needs to begin *before* they enter the professoriate. Doctoral studies in teacher education should give candidates significant opportunities to use best clinical practices as well. I was fortunate to complete my graduate work at Michigan State University under the guidance of Sharon Feiman-Nemser. Her deep interest in designing strong clinical experiences for teacher candidates also extended into providing support to doctoral candidates who served as university field supervisors. Sharon and I designed and co-taught a doctoral seminar on learning the work of field-based teacher education. Graduate students examined their own efforts to support teacher candidates' clinical experiences while simultaneously reading and discussing core texts in clinical supervision. Every doctoral candidate—including those who supervise student teachers

during their graduate studies and those who will do so later on once in faculty positions themselves—deserves coordinated, mentored support in learning the practice of field-based teacher education. Doing so would provide essential initial preparation to support candidates' transition into clinical faculty roles.

### Discussion Questions

1. Of the five core aspects of a field-based teacher educator's practice, which ones do you consider your strengths and which ones need further development?
  - Design clinically based courses.
  - Establish relationships with key players in clinical settings.
  - Provide feedback to candidates on their teaching.
  - Address significant concerns in candidates' practice and/or clinical placement.
  - Support mentor development.
2. Drawing on the vignettes, what mentored experiences might you pursue in order to deepen aspects of your clinical practice? Would you benefit from demonstration, guided practice, and/or independent practice?
3. In the "Designing Field-Based Courses" vignette, Melissa realized that she needs to make explicit all that is implicit in her own teaching so that novices can learn in and from her practice. Consider a recent teaching experience you had with teacher candidates. In what ways did you use your practice to support candidates' learning? In the future, how can you make even more explicit what is implicit in your teaching?
4. When observing a teacher candidate, how do you approach that observation? What do you look for? attend to? hope to see? How do you structure the debriefing conversation and why?
5. In the "Addressing Significant Concerns" vignette, the field supervisor and mentor both acknowledged that they were conflict avoiders. This trait created a real challenge in helping the intern work through her planning and teaching difficulties. What dispositional and interpersonal strengths do you already possess that will aide you in addressing significant concerns in candidates' teaching? What is a dispositional and/or interpersonal vulnerability that you will need to work on over time in order to help candidates work through challenges they encounter?

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