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Editors' Notes

Debra Miretzky
Western Illinois University

Sharon Stevens
Western Illinois University

Chase Catalano
Western Illinois University

Krista Bowers-Sharpe
Western Illinois University

Mahrya Carncross
University of Iowa

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Editors' Notes

Welcome to the special edition of the *Mid-Western Educational Researcher* on the topic of *Mentors and Mentorship in Education*. Mentors in the field of education play a role in the development and persistence of teacher candidates, teachers, doctoral students, administrators, and higher education faculty through their guidance, modeling, and support. There is a growing need to examine mentoring in all forms and in all educational platforms.

This special issue was guest edited by Jennifer K. Shah of North Central College, Naperville, IL.

From the Editor

In 2016 the Learning Policy Institute published a report on a projected teacher shortage (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Carver Thomas, 2016). Three years later, a report by the Economic Policy Institute finds that this report was not wrong (Garcia & Weiss, 2019), and cites training, early career support, and professional development as possible solutions to the growing problem of teacher attrition. The benefits of teacher coaching on the instruction skills and effectiveness of teachers (Kraft, Blazar, & Hogan, 2018), as well as the educative mentoring of teacher candidates by cooperating teachers and undergraduate faculty, is well documented in the literature (Duckworth & Maxwell, 2015; McKinsey, 2016; Wexler, 2019) but is often described as taking place between individuals where one has more experience, authority, or power. This issue defines a mentor as anyone at any stage and with any level of authority who offers an individual career or psychosocial support towards the attainment of a goal in a dyadic and/or communal format. This focus disrupts the view of mentors in their traditional form and at times shifts power from the mentor to the mentee. The benefits are significant; in their literature review of 79 studies on the topic of doctoral attrition and persistence, Rigler, Bowlin, Sweat, Watts, and Throne (2017) identified common constructs including cultivating a positive, non-hierarchical relationship between doctoral candidate and chair along with candidate socialization and support as solutions to doctoral attrition in education. Levin and Bradley (2019) also report that principals who have experience with mentors stay longer at their schools.

The call for proposals for this special edition concentrated on the evolving role of mentorship in education today with a focus on innovative practice that was collaborative in nature and benefitted teacher candidates as well as administrators, doctoral students, higher education faculty, and/or anyone in between. A robust number of proposals were evaluated on key components, such as whether the research offered new ideas, produced applicable practical knowledge, and generated conversation. The resulting papers are qualitative, with the research being case study or autoethnographic in nature sharing the lived experiences of authors and/or

participants. In this issue, readers learn about new ways of utilizing space, tools, social capital, relationships, and pedagogy in an effort to enhance the experience of educators at various levels in their journey.

In her essay on faculty mentoring undergraduate students, McKinsey (2016) describes three stages of mentoring: *mentoring in*, *mentoring through*, and *mentoring onward*. Mentoring in refers to orientation and initiation while mentoring through implies persistence. Mentoring onward works towards next steps. This framework adequately captures the organization of this special edition.

Mentoring In

In Emily Hayden and Travis Gratteau-Zinnel's work "**Not a Moment to Lose**," we meet a mentor named Beth and the 15 white novice teacher candidates in her charge who are completing a clinical experience at a reading clinic where they work with a growing number of students who are English Language Learners. In this case study, strategic mentoring paved the way for equity and social justice conversations to take place naturally as teacher candidates had room to explore their concerns and establish a reflective practice outside classroom walls. Through their experience at the clinic, teacher candidates are building their pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1986) in order to teach in a highly diverse urban context.

While Hayden and Gratteau-Zinnel explore the possibilities of different spaces, Amy N. Farley and Scott Gibbons continue the conversation around a common tool utilized in a more purposeful way. In their commentary, "**The Use of Video Reflection for Teacher Education and Professional Learning**," the authors discuss the value of utilizing video reflection for reflective purposes with teacher candidates in order to promote professional growth and add to the growing conversation around the value of videotaping for pre-service teachers (Endacott, 2016). The authors urge university supervisors to integrate video reflection for more educative mentoring of teacher candidates. Video reflection also allows teacher candidates to pursue coaching in areas where they need it, allowing them to play an active role in their own professional growth-an evaluated skill when they become practicing teachers.

In addition to teacher candidates, doctoral students can also take an active role in their development as scholars. Through their autoethnographic work, Elizabeth (Betsy) Ferrell, David Ensminger, and Elizabeth Coleman ask faculty and doctoral students to consider an option other than the traditional dissertation in "**Changing the Doctoral Student-Dissertation Chair Relationship through the Article Dissertation Format**." They argue that the article dissertation format gives doctoral students more authority, flexibility, and legitimacy in the field and shifts the power dynamic between student and chair, answering the call by Rigler et al. (2017) and contributing a qualitative perspective to the conversation started by Thomas, West,

and Rich (2016). Writing three articles for publication in academic journals gives doctoral candidates experience they will need as future teacher-scholars instead of subjugating them to a dissertation format that they will never replicate.

Mentoring Through

Dissertation chairs are not the only resource available for doctoral students looking for psychosocial and career mentoring during their program. Three articles in this special edition discuss the benefits of peer mentors during graduate work. In **“Self-regulated Learning of Mentees and Mentors in an Education Doctorate Peer Mentoring Program,”** Kendra Lowery, Rachel Louise Geesa, and Kat McConnell elaborate on the partnerships created between first year doctoral students and completers or near completers of the same program in their case study. Through the lens of self-regulated learning, the authors discuss the beneficial advantages of this type of relationship.

Jari L. Minnett, Devean R. Owens, and ArCasia D. James take a different direction through a naturally occurring mutual peer mentor relationship and add an additional layer to the recent work of Patterson-Stephens & Hernandez (2018). The authors use collective Black feminist autoethnography to describe their unique experiences in **“Help a Sista Out: Black Women Doctoral Students’ Use of Peer Mentorship as an Act of Resistance”** resulting in a useful framework for others navigating academia similarly to use in their own contexts.

While the interactions described above took place outside of a traditional classroom, Kathleen M. Cowin and Sarah H. Newcomer explore the possibilities of relational peer mentoring in the classroom in their case study. In **“Sharing Stories and Learning to Lead: A Relational Mentoring Process through Self-Portraiture”** they describe how pedagogy normally utilized in art was strategically applied to build a mentoring community in a principal preparation classroom. The individual and communal experience of self-portraiture builds the “necessary skills and competencies for school leadership” needed in principal preparation programs (Bradley & Levin, 2019, p. 7).

Peer mentors were beneficial in either context whether they were at the same stage in the program or had completed it. Sharing and reflecting on one’s own experiences as well as the experiences of others built collegiality and relational skills in each of these three studies that can contribute to persistence through the programs.

Mentoring Beyond

As we know all too well in education, research does not always translate into practice (Fixsen, Blasé, Naoom, & Wallace, 2009). Our hope is that you, the reader, will take the next steps.

Whether you are a dissertation chair looking for a different experience for your doctoral students, a teacher educator considering a clinical experience for teacher candidates outside of traditional classroom walls, or a doctoral student looking to enhance your own experience, our hope is that you walk away with knowledge that enhances your programs.

A special thanks to the contributing authors, peer reviewers, and the *MWER* Editorial team for making this issue come alive. The opportunity to be a guest editor has been an extremely valuable experience. This special issue contributes to the evolving discussion around mentoring in education and we hope it spurs action and dialogue in your academic circles. Let us continue the conversation to work towards curbing attrition in all areas of the field of education by examining how we define and see mentors and mentoring in education.

Jennifer K. Shah, Guest Editor
North Central College

Opportunities with *MWER*

As always, we continue to look for strong scholarship, both quantitative and qualitative, and extend an invitation to you to submit your work for publication, to serve as a reviewer for the journal, or to do both. We do our best to continue to offer a timely review and publication process. Please see our [information for authors](#) and [information for reviewers](#). Let us know if you have any questions.

MWER Editors

Debra Miretzky, Co-Managing Editor
Sharon Stevens, Co-Managing Editor
Chase Catalano, Editor
Krista Bowers-Sharpe, Editor
Western Illinois University, Macomb, IL
Mahrya Carncross, Editor
University of Iowa



MWER1316@gmail.com

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