

# Preface

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**T**he number of new teachers our nation will need in the next decade is astounding! In the next ten years, an anticipated two million new teachers will enter the teaching workforce (U.S. Department of Education, 1999). Although these teachers vary in their backgrounds as well as their pathways to teaching, they will all share the same need. Someone will need to provide them with support and guidance as they learn to teach. The question becomes who, and how?

Mentors have the power to shape the next generation of teachers. Their roles assume many varieties and flavors—some mentors work in partnership with a university, hosting semester-long student teachers or professional development school full-year interns in their classrooms. Some mentors are classroom teachers assigned the extra duty of serving as a mentor for one or more beginning teachers at their school. Some mentors are retired educators hired part-time by a district to mentor a number of novices in different schools. Some mentors are teachers who share their classrooms with a paid apprentice for one school year, at which time the apprentice “graduates” from apprenticeship and takes on his or her own classroom the following year. Particularly in schools with high teacher turnover and large numbers of alternatively prepared, uncertified teachers, some mentors are former classroom teachers released from their work in the classroom to full-time mentor a cohort of new teachers in one school building. Whatever type of mentor you are, one thing is

certain—the work of mentoring is the most critical factor influencing who the next generation of teachers will become!

Having the awesome responsibility of shaping the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of the teachers who will be teaching your children, your grandchildren, and perhaps even your great-grandchildren can be both a joy and a challenge. Mentors find joy in their work as they feel that it is through mentoring novices that they can give back to the profession to which they committed their lives. Through mentoring, they often become professionally renewed, and new life is breathed into their own careers through the optimism, enthusiasm, eagerness, growth, or passion of the novices with whom they work. Mentors often feel professionally challenged in their work because mentoring involves simultaneously paying attention to a whole host of factors associated with learning to teach and reflection on one's own teaching, as well as a good deal of problem solving.

We wrote this book to recognize the power that mentors possess in shaping the work of novices who are learning to teach. Within the book, mentors who work with novice teachers share the metaphors that guide their work to help you deepen your understanding of effective mentoring; dissect the many discrete components that constitute effective mentoring; explore a variety of contexts and mentoring models; and, finally, reflect, learn, and grow in your own practice as mentor teachers.

This book emerges from our understanding of the professional development, mentoring, professional knowledge, and supervision literature as well as our own research on mentoring and learning to teach (see, for example, Dana & Silva, 2002; Silva & Dana, 2001; Silva & Tom, 2001; Yendol-Hoppey, in press; Yendol-Hoppey & Dana, 2006; Yendol-Silva & Dana, 2004), our own experiences serving in the role of mentor teacher, and our collective experience working with hundreds of educators serving in the role of mentor in various capacities since the mid-1980s. What we have learned from these mentor teachers and captured in the pages of this book is testament to all teachers who have chosen to support the needs of novices. Mentors are educators who truly recognize the power effective mentoring holds for transforming classrooms and schools to places where all children, and all teachers, can learn! Your work should be both shared and celebrated!

## ABOUT THIS BOOK

Enlisting the help of story and metaphor, in this book we explore mentoring from many different angles. We begin in Chapter 1 by recognizing the need for skill-based mentor development as well as the importance of deep reflection on one's own mentoring practice. Both approaches are necessary for developing a rich mentoring practice that acknowledges the multifaceted nature of veteran teacher work with novice teachers. The voices of the mentors whose stories are captured in this book assert that their mentoring is indeed a reflective activity that is just as complicated as teaching. They argue that mentoring requires planned, intentional reflection on their years of experience as a thoughtful teacher. In Chapter 2, we tease apart the multiple components that mentoring entails by looking microscopically at what constitutes an effective mentor and three discrete entities of an effective mentor's work with the novice—creating the mentoring context, guiding a mentee's professional knowledge development, and cultivating the dispositions of a successful educator. This chapter sets the stage for mentors to contemplate how they can draw on existing strengths in their mentoring to prompt even more novice teacher professional knowledge and dispositional growth.

Next, in Chapters 3 through 9, the reader is introduced to seven different mentors and their work with mentees. Each mentor demonstrates different components of effective mentoring, and each mentor is presented using a different metaphor to frame, understand, and explore their mentoring practice. In Chapter 3 you meet Darby, a middle school teacher whose work with a student teacher, Juan, is captured by the metaphor of story-weaver. The story-weaver metaphor provides a vision of how one teacher took the time to get to know her intern and use the novice teacher's background as a starting point for developing his teaching skills. In Chapter 4, a fourth-grade classroom teacher, Kevin, is assigned to mentor four new teachers in his building. Like a jigsaw puzzle enthusiast, he figures out what the missing pieces are in each mentee's teaching practice and develops a sequence for helping novices find the missing pieces to their learning-to-teach puzzle. Chapter 5 introduces Robin, whose work with a yearlong intern resembles the careful work of a tailor, adjusting the novice's

roles and responsibilities in the classroom based on her level of readiness and scaffolding the novice's thinking by tailoring specific probing questions to prompt planning. Tracy, the mentor portrayed in Chapter 6, works with her paid apprentice using the metaphor of coach, progressing through reflective coaching cycles with her mentee throughout the school year. Chapter 7 depicts mentor teacher, Claudia, as a "mirror" whose professional development school work with interns is characterized by the actions she takes to foster novice reflection. Chapters 8 and 9 portray urban high school mentors, Paige and Wesley, respectively. Paige's mentoring work as a retired educator hired part-time to mentor novices resembles the work of an interior designer, while Wesley's mentoring work as a classroom teacher released from his duties to mentor a cohort of new, alternatively certified teaching candidates at his high school resembles the work of a real estate agent.

Each mentor's metaphor and story is based on (and in many cases is written and contributed to this text by) a real mentor teacher who has lived the mentoring experience. According to Kenyon and Randall (1997), "To be a person is to have a story. More than that, it is to be a story" (p. 1). In our case, to be a mentor is to have a story. More than that, in Chapters 3 through 9 of this text, it is to *be* a story. The stories and metaphors of these mentors serve to help you develop your own identity as an effective mentor teacher, your own effective mentor story. Whatever your mentoring context, you will find yourself and your own unique mentoring makeup within each one of these metaphors. Exercises at the end of Chapters 1 and 2, as well as discussion questions at the end of Chapters 3 through 9, help you reflect on your mentoring practice, and learn and grow as a mentor teacher.

Finally, in Chapter 10, we name and summarize some of the tools that can be used to effectively mentor novice teachers. In addition, we provide specific ways for you to find support as you develop your mentoring practice. Finally, we suggest ways to continue reflecting on your practice as you continue to learn and grow as a mentor teacher.

## WHO IS THIS BOOK FOR?

This book is for mentors who have already created a strong toolbox of "the nuts and bolts" of mentoring to help them deepen their

mentoring practice. This book includes lessons learned from mentors across contexts—from the traditional mentor teacher who is working with a university preservice teacher entering the profession to the mentor teacher assigned a cohort of first-year alternatively certified teachers to support through their first years of teaching in a single school or district. This book is for mentors who might want to individually or collectively engage in a book study targeting deepening their practice. This book is for staff developers who train mentors in their districts, providing a multitude of ideas and discussion material for workshops on mentoring. This book is for university professors who conduct research on or teach classes on mentoring, providing the stimulus for serious discussion about the current state of mentoring by putting mentoring theory into practice, and mentoring practice into theory. This book is for university supervisors, field placement directors, and professional development school coordinators who wish to deepen their work with mentor teachers, creating richer and more powerful field experiences for their preservice students. Finally, this book is for principals who have hired novice teachers and want to ensure their success by assigning them a strong, effective mentor.

## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book serves as a stimulus for readers to engage in planned, thoughtful reflection on the ways years of experience as an effective classroom teacher can be translated efficiently and effectively to the next generation of teachers. If you are a mentor teacher, we suggest you go through this text chapter by chapter, engaging in the exercises at the end of Chapters 1, 2, and 10 and carefully considering the discussion questions at the end of Chapters 3 to 9. You may either engage in discussion of these questions with colleagues, or reflect individually on each mentor teacher portrayed in this book. In this way, we believe you will deepen your understanding of mentoring, heighten the visibility and the utility of the intrinsic mentoring tools you have already used or can adapt from your own experiences as a teacher, develop new tools for mentoring, and discover the unique mentor identity that resides within you.

If you are a staff developer, you can pair this text with a mentoring skill development text as you train mentor teachers within your

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district. By adding this text to your mentor development efforts, mentors begin to see how a mentoring practice becomes actualized. Each chapter can be read prior to a day of training, and the exercises can be completed and shared as part of your workshop and instruction on mentoring. You might also engage in a cooperative learning jigsaw activity during a part of your mentor training, where, after reading and discussing Chapters 1 and 2, individual mentors are assigned different metaphors (Chapters 3 to 9) to read and subsequently present to the entire group for discussion. Alternatively, you might review the content of Chapters 1, 2, and 10 at your beginning of the school year mentor training, and discuss Chapters 3 to 9 as a "warm-up" activity at subsequent mentor teacher meetings you hold for the district throughout the school year.

If you are a university professor who conducts research or teaches classes on mentoring, your students could discuss and debate the strengths and limitations of each approach to mentoring portrayed in this text. Doctoral students might benefit from an exercise in qualitative research where they look at Chapters 3 through 7 as data, and conduct a cross-case analysis, naming themes and patterns present across all of the mentor's work found in this book.

If you are a university supervisor, field placement director, or professional development school coordinator, you might read and discuss this text with your peers, gaining insights into new approaches to clinical education training provided for classroom teachers who host preservice teachers from your university. You might start a mentor study group in the schools you work in, meeting monthly with the mentor teachers at the building to discuss and engage in the exercises presented in this text, and deepen and expand your mentor teachers' interactions with preservice teacher education students from your institution.

Finally, if you are a principal, using this book, you could create and lead a study group of mentor teachers in your building as you collaboratively work to support the novices in your building. In so doing, you provide support for your veteran teachers who have taken on the additional responsibility of mentoring, as they engage in both the hard work of teaching and the hard work of mentoring another to teach!

However you use this book, we hope it will provide much "food for thought" in relationship to the complex process of mentoring, as well as the complex process of learning to teach. . . . Bon appetit!