Analyzing Mentoring Practices through Teachers' Journals

By Kathleen M. Herndon & Janice R. Fauske

Journal writing is widely accepted as encouraging personal thought and development. Learning logs, free writes, quick writes, reaction papers, dialogue journals and collaborative writing projects have gained acceptance as useful strategies for learning and facilitating personal reflection, self awareness, and self analysis. Journal writing, in particular, helps make sense of experience (Janesick, 1983).

Journals have been used extensively in teacher education. Hall and Bowman (1989) have discovered common themes in the journals of student teachers that were matched in other journal keeping projects. Korthagen's (1985) work with preservice teachers is based on the assumption that while it is not possible to prepare student teachers for every situation they might encounter, it is possible to train them to reflect on their experience of various situations as a means of directing their own growth. Teachers who learn to be reflective, as defined by Tom (1985), develop habits of inquiry that include activities such as self monitoring and experimentation (Cruickshank, 1987). They become inquiry-oriented, one of Zeichner's (1983) four teacher education paradigms. Journal writing nurtures the development of reflective teaching and inquiry-oriented practice.

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Teacher educators often require preservice teachers to keep reflective journals during their student teaching experience; however, cooperating teachers are not often asked to participate in journal keeping. The reasons are varied but familiar: cooperating

teachers are volunteers, teachers resist extra work perceived as unnecessary, teacher educators cannot select cooperating teachers who are willing journal keepers, cooperating teachers are paid so little how can anything extra be asked of them. Yet, information recorded in journals by cooperating teachers could surely inform the process of preparing teachers.

Program Description

Beginning in 1990, cooperating teachers involved in the school-based program for preparation of secondary English teachers with which we are associated have been required to keep a journal. All courses and experiences are conducted at the school site rather than on the university campus. Approximately 85 teachers have participated in journal writing during three years of the program. Each cooperating teacher has supervised at least two student teachers consecutively during the 20-week experience. Cooperating teachers are enrolled in a three-credit graduate course entitled Effective Mentoring of Preservice Teachers. The course is taught as a part of the college supervisor's regular load and no tuition is charged. Only a recording fee is charged and that fee has been paid through the operating budget of the department. The course, then, is set up at no cost to the cooperating teachers but rather offered as an incentive for professional growth. To date, all cooperating teachers have completed the course requirements. Requirements for this course included mentoring preservice teachers, attending a weekly seminar, writing a personal mentoring plan, and keeping a journal.

In teacher education, the term mentor often refers to a teacher who volunteers to assist a beginning teacher as a part of a district-mandated program. Mentors usually receive some training from the district; the extent of training varies from district to district. Cooperating teachers, called mentor teachers, in this program are expected to take a more active role than is normally assumed by traditional cooperating teachers. Mentor teachers attend weekly seminars where they discuss their own mentoring style, study various mentoring elements and strategies, respond to case studies on mentoring (Shulman & Colbert, 1987), and share real episodes from their mentoring experiences. In addition, mentor teachers model strategies in their classrooms for student teachers and also participate directly in student teacher preparation by demonstrating strategies to the student teacher seminar. They also attend a retreat at the start of the student teaching program.

Journal Assignment

The journal is assigned as a means of recording and studying teachers' mentoring strategies as well as their thoughts and attitudes about the program. Journals were collected approximately every third week for review and response by the university supervisors. Journals, then, provided a method of feedback to the college supervisors, allowing them to respond quickly to the needs expressed in both

mentor teachers' and student teachers' journals. Journal guidelines are not rigid; teachers are asked to make journal entries at least once per week over the 20-week program. At the half-way point, mentor teachers write a longer entry, a "snapshot" in time, assessing the start of the program and a final summary which includes overall program evaluations and conclusions.

Because university supervisors know that mentor teachers in the program often use journals, free writes, and other strategies in their own classrooms, they hoped at the inception of the program that the teachers would understand the power of writing and be able to transfer that knowledge to their own learning. However, teacher reactions to the journals have been mixed. In the opening seminar of the mentoring course, teachers reacted to journal writing. Teachers reactions indicate that transfer and application of journal writing is not automatic but must be orchestrated even among "believers." Teacher concerns center on the amount of time required and that university faculty would read the journal entries as they might read a formal paper. Their fears about "grading" of the entries emerged. In synthesis, four distinct attitudes toward journal writing were identified as recurring patterns.

Active Support

A small core of teachers vocally supported the journal requirement and vigorously reminded others that they make similar assignments in their own classes. Therefore, it was an equally appropriate expectation in this course. They maintained that it was easy to write for a few minutes each day or week. Interestingly, one of the teachers who fell into this category was also one of the few who did not complete the journal.

Tacit Agreement

The majority of teachers understood the need for a record of the induction process and remarked that keeping a journal was a reasonable requirement. In addition, they stated that they used journals themselves in teaching or for personal records and that journals are a powerful tool for learning and self analysis.

Vocal Disagreement

A few teachers claimed they were already too busy and stated that student teachers require enough work without the additional requirement of a journal. They further argued that the incentive of graduate credit would do nothing to enhance salary or career status and offered little incentive in that regard for keeping a journal.

Passive Acceptance and Procrastination

Less than five teachers remained silent during the initial discussion and then procrastinated until the end of the program. They then admittedly created a journal which was submitted in the form of a summary.

Analysis of Journal Themes

At the end of the program, teachers' journals were submitted for the final reading to the university supervisors working with the mentoring seminars. Completed journals were read, responded to in writing, duplicated, and the originals returned. They were not graded with letter grades but rather were given credit for completion. Permission was obtained for using the journals for research purposes. Journals were read by at least two different faculty to identify emergent themes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Five themes emerged from the analysis:

- Personal Reflections
- Mentoring Concerns and Strategies
- Organization and Structure
- Teaching Routines and School Demands
- Suggestions and Criticisms

Personal Reflections

Teachers recorded their personal thoughts, feelings, successes, frustrations, opinions, and reactions both to the program requirements and their student teacher.

Frustrations. When mentor teachers recorded personal thoughts in their journals they gave voice primarily to their frustrations. Positive comments about the program and the student teachers occurred when they wrote about the actual work of mentoring or when they were evaluating the program overall. A few entries even recorded disappointment in the behaviors and attitudes of fellow mentor teachers who were perceived to be overly critical of the program and their student teachers.

Early in the first year of the program, a minor communications break-down occurred between all three program groups: mentor teachers, student teachers, and university faculty. Some student teachers, feeling the stress of their assignments, vented their emotions to their peers but neglected to discuss issues with their teachers. This concerned several mentors who wondered if they had neglected to provide sufficient support and encouragement. One mentor wondered if perhaps the pre-program retreat had actually encouraged too much familiarity between students and mentors, therefore making it more difficult to maintain a traditional mentor-student relationship in the classroom. (Interestingly enough, the stiffness of the traditional relationship was exactly what the program was designed to avoid.) This same individual was candid enough in her "snap shot" to suggest that she would have enjoyed a bit more awe from her student teacher. She wanted her student teacher to think she was wonderful because of what she had learned through her years of hard work and professional experience. Since they were somewhat close in age, she felt the student teacher saw their relationship as one of equality rather than expert and novice. Another mentor remarked,

> I found I was one of these people who sit back and say, "I dare you to teach me anything about my profession".... Sometimes the ego gets in the way, and I was guilty...

Teacher Learning. Other comments focused on the learning that took place throughout the course of the program. Mentor teachers learned a great deal about themselves, their teaching, their abilities as mentors and as members of a large group brought together for the first time to reach a specific goal. One mentor remarked,

> This experience as a cooperating teacher made me realize how hard teaching is. I work as hard or harder at it now than I did when I first began.

Project Schedule. The program calendar was lengthy, beginning in mid-August with a two-and-a-half-day retreat and extending until mid-March with the end of the university winter term. A recurring theme in the journals, both on the personal level but also in program evaluation, was the length and demands of the calendar. Mentor and student stress and burn-out was the topic of numerous journals. More than one entry expressed concern for the student teachers as well as the mentor: "She became bogged down with final grades (term and semester) and school newspaper stories to grade," and "This is how teachers feel all the time, but somehow I think it's easier to cope when you're the 'real' teacher and you don't feel the pressure of scrutiny in the same way."

Mentors maintained their professional commitments to their classes and students and sometimes chose to cut back on making lengthy journal entries, "I didn't have the time to complete the after X-mas entries." One mentor expressed great concern that her student teacher was being "pulled in too many directions." Other mentors agreed that their student teachers seemed to have too much to do: teach in the morning, attend classes in the afternoon, prepare for both in the evening. But as one mentor wrote,

> I know she becomes very agitated with me when I keep reminding her that the pressures don't stop. Regular teachers still have to take care of their own children and attend classes after school.

Personal planning and grading time was reduced for most mentors. "Teachers," one mentor wrote,"do a great amount of 'teaching' during their prep period." She continued by saying,

> Even the best student teacher needs feedback and direction. These sessions often take the entire planning period.

Despite the frustrations experienced by the teachers and the relief they felt at the conclusion of the program, most agreed they would miss working so closely with their student teachers. One mentor commented,

> With the completion of student teaching, I am filled with a sense of relief. I will miss T____ and having someone to talk to about the students. But I must admit that I will be a relief to go back to the classroom and not have to share my space, time, lessons, life, with someone.

Strohm (1992) found that journals often provide a harmless outlet for venting teachers' frustrations. Journal entries in this project corroborated that finding.

Mentoring Concerns and Strategies

Teachers reported what they did with their student teacher, when, how, and for how long. They traced their conferences and planning sessions. Some actually kept a record of how many minutes were spent in mentoring sessions, what was said, and what decisions were made. Comments were also made about the student teacher's professional growth and the compatibility of the mentor-student relationship.

Just as journal keeping encourages student teachers to observe, reflect, test,and evaluate (Hall & Bowman, 1989; Korthagen, 1985) it supports similar processes in mentor teachers. The teachers in this program were experienced in the classroom but not all were experienced in supervision. In fact, one participant had never been assigned a student teacher before.

Overall, the greatest number of journal entries fell within the mentoring concerns category. However, among individual mentors there were wide differences in the number of mentor category entries.

Compatibility and Ownership. One of the first concerns expressed in the journals was the issue of compatibility with the student teacher. Mentor teachers wanted to be sure that their student teacher would be willing to work with them. Some teachers were more comfortable with one of their students teachers than the other and recorded those feelings in their journal. One particularly candid mentor reflected on her reactions when students began to turn to the student teacher more than to her,

> It's very hard to sit back and watch "your kids" take to someone else. Teachers being the territorial animals that they are find their 'turf' being taken over by someone the kids are responding to in a positive manner. I found this out myself!

Once the introductions were made and mentors welcomed student teachers into their classrooms by finding work places and introducing them, advising and conferencing became the primary mentoring concern. Still the beginning tensions of learning to work with someone else, on a daily basis, for a long period of time, were reflected in the journals,

> I hope he will be receptive to suggestions and help. I hope I will be accepting of having someone practice on my students. I realize my own shortcomings as a teacher but I don't want my students to feel like guinea pigs.

Feelings of possessiveness eventually lessened and the mentor/student teams entered into collaborative relationships which included team planning and team teaching.

Gradually the teaching script moved from mentor as lead to mentor as co-star and eventually to mentor as observer and advisor. In some cases two mentor-student teams planned together:

> K____, S____, T____, and I went over the writing unit they will begin Monday. They are excited. K____ and I have some doubts about some of the things they want to try but we are willing to let them try.

Another entry commented on the team relationship,

> We are moving into a true team teaching posture. We are going to prepare the students before Christmas for the work they will do after Christmas.

Planning. Although the importance of planning has been stressed in both general and content area methods courses, mentors repeatedly wrote of their commitment to planning and their disappointment when students teachers did not cooperate, "I find it inexcusable for him not to be prepared...." Another mentor wrote, "I think he will understand better the need for preparation and planning if he has a chance to do so right from the start." At the conclusion of the program one mentor reflected,

> Planning seemed to be difficult for both of my student teachers. I tried to guide, but I found Mrs. H____ floundering for ideas, and Mr. P____ with ideas in his head but not on paper.

Giving Advice. In a classroom situation, giving advice was a major mentoring activity. Teachers discussed voice projection, writing on the chalkboard, modeling responses to assignments, and writing out instructions in addition to delivering them orally as well as sophisticated issues of teaching philosophy and discipline. Mentors also recorded their role of supporter and cheerleader. When one student was upset and in tears after what she felt was a ruined lesson the mentor remarked,

> Between tears she told me she had ruined the kids. "Hell no," I said, "Don't you think all teachers make mistakes. We aren't perfect and neither are you," I said.

Seeing Student Teacher Growth. Perhaps the most exciting theme recorded in mentor teacher journals was the developing skill of the student teachers. Personal frustrations and philosophical disagreements became less important as student teachers' abilities and skills developed and improved. One of the most important things mentors noted was that students must develop their own teaching style. Early in the program some students had attempted to teach from their mentor's plans and in the same style. When that strategy was unsuccessful most teams backed off and

approached the situation differently. Two mentors noted that individual teaching style develops as students spend more time in the classroom.

Other comments showed mentors' awareness that skill develops from practice and experience. "True, these people will fail occasionally but all I have to do is remember my first attempts and humility is mine!" When difficulties arose in one class period or with one group of students, mentors were able to help students evaluate the situation, adjust, and move on. "She still doesn't feel totally as ease with this class, but I think she realizes things will not fall into chaos or fall apart." As the activity of teaching becomes more comfortable mentors note growth in areas beyond the performance level, "I can see her beginning to internalize her lesson plan which is a natural step."

Seeing Their Own Growth. Mentor teacher journal entries not only provided a record of observations of student teachers, they also traced the progress made by teachers in becoming mentors. Making a good first impression was a major concern to most mentors,

> I wanted so much for my student teacher to have a good experience that I was thinking about every small detail in the classroom: How do I stand? Is my voice loud enough? Are my fingernails polished the "right" color? God! I'm going crazy!

Another mentor recorded different concerns, "One of the problems I find I have is remembering to explain in detail what procedures I take to set up an activity or learning experience." Because the mentor has followed certain patterns for so long it was difficult for her to remember all the steps. She continued by saying,

> In future experiences, I would give the basics and then let the situation evolve until there is need. I would not assume any information too trivial to give.

A few mentors joined the program with the idea that there was one right way to mentor a student teacher. Because they were concerned about doing a good job and providing a solid experience for their students, they often looked to the university faculty to present a no-fail model for mentoring. Mentoring classes designed specifically to work with the in-service teachers provided support and answers for their concerns. One mentor noted in late September, "The class conducted by our professors was good in that we were able to compare and contrast our mentoring styles or situations up to this point." Another mentor reflected in her final journal entry, "In retrospect I realized I 'made' my other student teachers into clones which was really a disservice to them." Some teachers focused their attention more on the classroom progress of their student than on personal frustration,

> Problems? Frankly I don't see any worth fussing over. T____ is gaining confidence daily and I am basking in her success.

At the end of the program, two insightful entries addressed the progress mentors had made in their own work.

> I still feel that I was not prepared for the mentoring experience, but maybe getting in and doing it is the only way, just like student teaching. I think that I would be able to set better guidelines for me and the student teacher if I had the experience again, just as the student teacher will do a better job when they get in their classrooms.

Several teachers made note of reminders they would use if their had a student teacher in the future: instructions, guidelines, and ways of showing support and encouragement. And more than one noted the emotional quality of the mentor-student relationship.

> It was important to me that she succeed because I was her "mommy" teacher and just like any mommy I wanted to see my child grow and mature into a responsible caring teacher. She didn't let me down.

Organization and Structure

Teachers commented on the design of the program, the program calendar, and the scheduling of team meetings and deadlines. Other remarks included comments about the way in which student teachers were assigned and how their assignments were changed at the midway point.

Retreat. The element that made this program unique was a retreat which allowed all participants to work together in a neutral setting without the distractions of telephone, daily schedules, meetings, and household chores. Initial reactions to the retreat were, not surprisingly, mixed. Student teachers were quite enthusiastic. Mentor teachers were somewhat less eager to participate in an overnight retreat with people they hardly knew. In fact, some drove back and forth rather than spend the night at the retreat site.

Despite the initial skepticism about the retreat, it probably had the most dramatic effect on the program. Not only did it provide an opportunity for student teachers and university faculty to address such topics as educational philosophy, organizational styles, and professionalism, but when the mentor teachers arrived for the second and third days they were able to spend time getting to know their student teacher, making general plans, and sharing personal insights about their profession. It also provided a forum for discussion of the readings that had previously been distributed to all participants. Interestingly enough, the teachers were also able to meet with colleagues who taught in the same district, but in different schools. One mentor expressed the thoughts of many of her colleagues' journals when she wrote,

> Retreat—the word was something I didn't want to think about. I didn't want to go on retreat. I don't want to spend two days with strangers. Can't I just bond with my student teacher while in school?

Later in her journal she recorded a change of attitude shared by many mentors,

> Retreat—finally I was wrong. After meeting the student teachers and the professors I started to capture the excitement and enthusiasm they all felt.

By far the most positive accomplishment of the retreat was providing time for mentors and students to meet, talk and make preliminary plans.

> It gave me an opportunity to become acquainted before the first day of class. This was a marked improvement over experiences in the past where I met my student teacher the first day of the quarter.

Mentoring Assignments. Mentor-student pairs were assigned by the university faculty team. In nearly all cases the first pairings were successful. One of the mentors remarked that she would have liked to select her own student teacher, but decided it wasn't really that important in the long run. At the half-way point, most student teachers were re-assigned to new mentors at a different grade level. One mentor doubted the wisdom of changing the assignment,

> I found myself somewhat disappointed that J____ will be moving on to high school. At first I thought it wouldn't matter, but now I can see that her staying would be good for both of us—me for the rest and for her the continuity of the teaching experience.

A differing view was presented by a mentor who worked with the same student throughout the program,

> I retained him as a student teacher because I didn't want my students to have to adjust to a new teacher. However, M____ needed to move and I see that now.

Other entries relating to organization and structure recorded setting teaching schedules, beginnings and endings of course units, and specific duties assigned to student teachers. The bulk of the commentary on organization and structure was evaluative in nature and dealt with suggestions and criticisms of the program. This finding is consistent with Nistler and Shepperdson's (1990) research revealing that participants showed more concern with tasks and self than with overall program impact in innovative programs, until some level of comfort with the innovation is achieved.

Teaching Routines and School Demands

Teachers recorded their thoughts about the actual life of the school, classroom management, discipline, extra duties, specific curriculum issues, and use of materials. A considerable number of comments were made about the daily management of a classroom. Mentors were careful to establish operating rules for the class. One mentor assigned her student teacher to observe and make notes on the students' socialization patterns and to use that information in making seat assignments.

Presence and Authority. A major concern of all mentors was establishing

their presence and authority in the classroom and they were very concerned about the student teachers' ability to do the same. Junior high teachers wrote about this more frequently than high school teachers probably because they feel a need to train the younger students in appropriate group processes. There were times when mentors felt the student teacher was too relaxed with the class. For the most part the difference of opinion was seen as a combination of inexperience and differing levels of tolerance. One mentor wrote a series of entries on the topic of classroom control,

> When she first started student teaching she seemed hesitant to expect and enforce certain behaviors.... She seems to be able to tolerate more classroom confusion than I would.... She has also discovered what is appropriate behavior is to her.... Her classroom control in 4th period is improving because she is structuring her lessons tighter and improving her timing ... I think she is learning she can be firm yet kind.

Another mentor wrote in frustration about her student teacher's unwillingness to support her management rules. In this case she was not only concerned that the students would see the student teacher as weak and indecisive, but that they would assume the procedures had no purpose or rationale.

> I am also concerned about his allowing students to turn in late work [early November].... [He] is still hesitant to make the kids totally accountable [late November].... I think kids need to learn to follow rules [December].... I told him that the message the real world was getting was that kids don't...follow orders [early January].... I am somewhat frustrated because I feel that he is not supporting my rules...kids will take advantage of him in a real classroom situation.... Isn't a student teacher supposed to follow the classroom policies of the teacher? [late January].

In another entry this mentor wondered if she had become hardened to students' excuses as a result of her years in the classroom. The primary concern however was that students would fail to see student teachers as the authority.

Grades. Other disagreements surfaced over the issue of grades. It was not uncommon for the junior high teachers to be more strict in their assignment and report card grading than their student teachers. In fact, one mentor wondered if student teachers had been taught by university faculty to overlook errors in order to protect the students' self-esteem and encourage freedom of expression. More than one teacher wrote about her concern for accuracy in finished products and her skepticism about holistic grading and subjective, open-ended essay questions. These same mentors were committed to the importance of applying consequences without hesitation. Only one teacher reported student reaction to grades,

> R____ asked me if she should be critical of their poor writing skills, I encouraged her to be positive. She was. The students' reactions to their papers when R____returned them was interesting to observe. Most had smiles on their faces, even J____ my poorest writer looked pleased. I think she succeeded.

Parent Conferences. Another of the demands of teaching is parent conferences. The mentors were especially concerned that the students would have experience in these situations and develop an understanding of the importance of good relationships with parents. All the mentors required their students to be present for "back to school" nights and conferences.

> She was cordially welcomed by the parents I felt. She presented herself professionally.... I was impressed and the parents were too.

Early in the year the responsibility for evaluation fell to the mentor teachers but as the weeks passed and the student teachers took charge their role changed at conference time,

> I appreciated R____ interjecting her thoughts whenever she wanted. Parents seemed pleased and listened to her comments...we spoke frequently of our plans to begin cooperative learning soon. Most parents agreed that the experience would be a good one for their child.

One mentor noted that parents

> still [asked] me questions and not her. This annoyed her.

One mentor wrote at some length about preparing her student teacher for conferences: indicate what the child has done or not done, tell parents how they can help, list upcoming assignments, and make a few positive comments in five to six minutes. At the end of the student teaching program a perceptive mentor noted that her student teacher found parents the most surprising and disappointing aspect of teaching, "even though parents want their children to succeed they don't spend much time helping them, or finding the time to help them."

Suggestions and Criticism

Throughout the journals, teachers made evaluative comments about the program, and their suggestions were later formalized in final journal entries. Teachers evaluated the program overall in terms of the design, calendar, and their personal commitment. Several teachers commented on their professional growth and development as a result of the program.

Program Demands. The most frequently voiced criticism concerned the length of the program. Most mentors felt that it was too long a student teaching experience, although one teacher commented that the length of the program gave the student teachers an accurate sense of a teacher's schedule. The few teachers who worked with the same student throughout the program concluded that a change of assignment would have been good for everyone concerned. "I had one class that had a student teacher the entire semester." Comments about the students showed mentor teachers' concern, "Students tire of being in the process of a student teacher situation even when the student teacher is good."

There was considerable concern that student teachers were expected to do too much,

> I sensed the student teachers were overloaded by preparing for teaching curriculum, attending afternoon classes, trying to please the needs of supervising teachers and college professors. At the same time evaluating their students in their classrooms.

The difficulty of the dual role played by the student teachers was noted by all the participants, and especially by the mentors who saw the student teachers on a daily basis.

Clear Expectations. There was some feeling that the university faculty was unclear in explaining the demands of the program for the mentor teachers. One individual was particularly critical because she believed additional assignments were given to the mentors in an arbitrary manner.

> Cooperating teachers must have a detailed outline at the onset of requirements and expectations. There should be no surprises or hidden agendas.

Others echoed this feeling by wanting course syllabi for the student teachers' required afternoon classes and a no-nonsense orientation at the start of the program which clarified expectations for all parties and provided some guidelines for helping student teachers through the first steps of classroom work.

Teachers never seem to have enough time in their day to do everything they are expected to do. One frustrated mentor remarked that it is crucial in the future for teachers to know exactly how much time their involvement will require,

> ...interested teachers must understand that their planning period will be different. There never is time to correct papers which I found very difficult. Teachers need to be prepared for this and have that understanding before they agree to do it.

Another teacher suggested that cooperating teachers need to be advised "to get out of the way as soon as possible and let the student teacher teach." However, university faculty were reluctant to prescribe a specific timeline for fully turning over classes to apprentice teachers because the timing of that decision must be determined by the mentor.

Mutual Sharing. In this program all student teachers met together for classes in the afternoon at the school site. Each mentor teacher presented a successful lesson plan to the student teacher seminar at the school site. These presentations broadened the students' exposure to all of the mentors and to a variety of strategies. One mentor suggested that the student teachers do the same. She also indicated that meeting more frequently with other mentor-student teams would have been helpful in learning how they were handling situations and working with curriculum. There were times when mentors mentioned they would have liked to know specifically

what was taught in those sessions. Although mentors were invited to attend class, none did. From time to time it was hinted in journal entries that the class assignments could have coordinated more closely with what student teachers were doing in their own teaching.

> Could the assignments in seminar be the lesson plans they are using.... The assignments could help them complete their work at school rather than add to it.

Actually, the course work has been directly coordinated with what student teachers were doing with their own students. This comment and others like it point out the fact that mentors did not have a clear idea of the instruction taking place every afternoon.

Professionalism. Issues of professionalism surfaced from time to time. One mentor was particularly astute in reminding her student teacher about confidentiality and avoidance of gossip. She suggested a stronger emphasis of professionalism in the classes,

> It is very important that student teachers realized that not only should they build trusting relationships with their students, but they need to spend time building trusting relationships with their faculty.

For the most part, even those mentors who were somewhat skeptical noted some professional growth as a result of having taken part. About one third of the mentor journals indicated that they learned new strategies from their student teachers and from the mentoring classes. One mentor wrote about how this program caused her to "evaluate [her] own teaching." So many things had become automatic that [she had] not been conscious of the process. This same teacher wrote that when her student teacher was having success, she felt better about herself. But, when the student teacher was having difficulty she felt responsible and also experienced some doubts about her ability. It was noted however that

> to grow you must struggle and many of us shy away from struggles seeking more comfortable situations.... We need that freshness of ideas to keep us from becoming too comfortable, too stagnant in our teaching.

The final verdict of nearly all of the teachers was positive; they were pleased to have been selected to participate in this program, they felt enriched both personally and professionally, and they felt they had made a solid contribution to their profession by preparing well-qualified teachers,

> ...this was a good experience. I'd have a student teacher again.

Conclusions

Mentor teacher journals provide a long-term, continuous commentary on the teacher preparation program as well at the relationship between student teacher and

mentor and the mentoring process. Indeed, the journals provide even more information than expected when the assignment was first made. Despite the reluctance of some mentors to write in the journal, they remain a rich source of information about the work teachers do when they accept the responsibility of a student teacher.

Some interesting conclusions can be made after analyzing the journal themes. Berliner's (1991) conclusions about an expert's ability to articulate are certainly supported by the journals. Some journals are quite long, over 60 pages, while others consist of only a few pages. Some record entire conversations and elaborations on professionalism, frustrations, and personal growth; others are lists of dates, times and terse jottings on how time was spent. Still, it is possible to draw some conclusions about the effects of journal writing on mentoring from teacher journals.

1. Personal commitment to the journal influences a teacher's ability to track thoughts, ideas, and mentoring activity. Teachers who viewed the journal as "busy work" did not use it as a means of recording personal progress. Those who believed the journal was a reasonable request wrote often, weekly at least, and with considerable elaboration. This observation brought us back to the reactions teachers had to the journal assignment at the beginning of the program. Most of the teachers agreed with the values of journal keeping and accepted the assignment as a means of tracking the progress of the program. Those teachers who felt themselves stretched to the limit wrote minimally; their entries looked like shopping lists with times and topics. These journal entries showed the least evidence of reflection on mentoring practice. Two teachers who procrastinated until the end of the program did, in fact, engage in some reflective writing in their final summary entries. But because we had only one long, reflective entry, we were unable to trace the progress or process of their mentoring. They elaborated on their feelings at the end of the program which were much different than those they expressed verbally at the beginning of the program, but we were unable to see when and how their attitudes and observations began to change.

2. Journals revealed that successful mentors showed more willingness to think about what they were doing instead of simply reacting or behaving automatically. Berliner reminds us that experts may not be aware of what they do that makes them successful, or that they may not be skilled at articulating what they do. Teachers who take the time to think, reflect, and write about their expertise were more successful in passing that information on to their student teacher. One mentor expressed concern about teaching processes and expressed difficulty remembering to explain in detail procedures used to set up an activity or learning experience. Because the mentor had followed certain patterns for so long it was difficult for her to analyze and articulate the process. She also noted that mentors should not assume any information too trivial to give. This kind of reflection, when a teacher reexamines and adapts practice, is what Schon calls reflection on action (1983).

Some teachers spoke about their professional growth at the conclusion of the program, but they did not record that growth in their journal entries. One mentor who wrote terse entries throughout the program made this comment in her final entry, this program caused her to

> evaluate my own teaching. So many things have become automatic that I have not been conscious of the process. The reflecting validated many of my practices and caused me to re-evaluate others.

Those individuals who wrote minimally tended to be less open with their student teachers as well.

3. Some mentors are more capable and willing to write what they are thinking and seeing. The previous conclusion addresses the issue of thinking in contrast to reacting or behaving automatically. We also noticed that some mentors were more skilled at recording what was going on in their minds and what they were seeing in their student teachers. These mentors began to trace both their progress as mentor and their student teacher's progress in becoming a teachers. They began to notice and describe patterns developing in their mentoring, their teaching, and in the student teachers' teaching. They were able to make adjustments in their mentoring approach based on these observations.

4. Journal entries of thoughtful mentors predominately address mentoring issues rather than personal complaints or problems. Overall, in looking at the journals as a body of literature, mentoring comments were more common than any other type. However, in studying individual mentor journals, some centered exclusively on mentoring issues while others were mainly concerned with personal reactions and frustrations.

Interestingly enough, but perhaps not too surprising, the grocery list journals made little attempt to disclose personal reactions or frustrations. Even though all program participants (mentors, student teachers, university faculty) experienced frustration from time to time, the more thoughtful and reflective mentors did not engage in complaining. They expressed their frustration clearly, generally briefly, and then went on to a topic directly connected to mentoring.

5. Some mentors were willing to reflect on the whole experience and were able to generalize about the program with suggestions for improvement or restructuring. Regardless of attitude, all mentor teachers who kept a journal took the time to make final evaluative entries which resulted in the improvement of the program. Mentors were asked to review their entire journal and to respond to their own entries or university faculty responses. These critical summaries were helpful to us. Some mentors were able to view the program holistically. These individuals looked back to the start of the program and saw its peaks and valleys over time. In

many of these journals we saw collaboration and team teaching postures among mentors and students. These individuals recognized the recursive nature of learning to be both teacher and mentor. They realized that we were all novices in a sense: student teachers were novices at teaching, mentor teachers were novices at mentoring, and professors were novices at administering the program. The criticism from these individuals tended toward the global and theoretical.

Other mentors tended to focus on structural criticism concerning times, dates, and calendar adjustments. These suggestions helped us refine our program and we operate more smoothly as a result.

Berliner's expert-novice research has made educators aware that successful practitioners are not always able to analyze, explain, or verbalize what it is that they do. Journal writing offers a means of assessing the ability of expert teachers to reflect on practice and facilitate the learning of practice with novice teachers. It may provide a valuable means of identifying and developing effective mentors who can meaningfully improve the preparation and induction of future teachers.

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