

## Article Summary from Mentoring Modules: Mentoring Stances

Helman, L. (2006). Investigating Mentoring Conversation Using Different Mentoring Stances. In B. Achinstein & S. Athanases (Eds.), *Mentors in the making* (pp. 69- 82). New York: Teachers College Press.

Based on case studies conducted by one beginning teacher induction program, mentors assumed several different stances when conducting coaching conversations.

**Those stances include (1) probing to extend the beginning teacher's thinking, (2) explicitly teaching or suggesting a specific practice, or (3) focusing the teacher on how the lesson was accountable to larger school and state standards.**

A mentor may use a variety of techniques to promote **deeper thinking** or elicit possible solutions from the new teaching during a coaching conversation. Some of these techniques may include:

- **Using clarifying questions** (What do you mean by "a good story"?)
- **Paraphrasing** (So, you're saying that certain students get done faster than others?)
- **Probing** (Tell me more about how you've done that before.)
- **Making connections** (How does this seating arrangement affect students' behavior issues?)
- **Projecting** (What might it look like to modify the work for your students with special needs?)
- **Brainstorming** (What are some ways you have seen or heard of that being done?)
- **Pausing** (Leave space in the conversation for the beginning teacher to think and speak.)

If the beginning teacher lacks important information about a key area being discussed, **direct teaching** is a strategy where the mentor relays big ideas or discreet skills that the new teacher does not yet possess. **In direct teaching**, the mentor may:

- **Define a concept** (Reciprocal teaching is a process in which...)
- **Make a suggestion** (Taking a stretch break may work well at that point in the lesson.)
- **Tell** (What I know about working with second language learners is...)
- **Illustrate from your own experience** (When I organized a class field trip, I structured groups by...)
  - **Show how** (Here's how I might write up a language experience group chart)
  - **Elaborate on** (You mentioned \_\_\_\_, one additional idea relating to that is \_\_)
  - **Explain why** (Doing a quick check for understanding with your students is one way to get assessment of whether your class is ready to move on, or if the topic needs further explanation)

**During a planning conversation**, the mentor promotes accountability by ensuring the novice's goals are based on systematic teaching and learning standards. In this stance, the mentor may engage in **extending thinking** or in **direct instruction** about a standard, but the stance involves looking *together* at how the novice's work can be shaped by and aligned with standards. A mentor may promote accountability by:

- **Questioning** (What teaching standard would you like me to observe when I come in tomorrow?)
- **Telling** (The 4<sup>th</sup> grade writing standard includes \_\_\_ )
- **Researching** (I'll get a copy of the Math Framework so we can look up the geometry expectations for 6<sup>th</sup> grade.)
- **Problem--solving with the new teacher** (Where can we find your school's expectations for implementing the fall writing performance assessment?)

**Structured conversations** between a mentor and a novice provide a powerful opportunity for supporting reflective thinking, teaching specific content and instructional practices, and incorporating an understanding of expectations for teaching and learning.

**Mentors should be extremely thoughtful when choosing an appropriate stance as it directly impacts the amount of thinking and reflection a novice does in the coaching conversation.**