Synthesis of Research on Mentoring Beginning Teachers

Mentor teachers and their protégés will be more successful if they are trained for their roles in accord with a five-level Helping Relationship model.

WILLIAM A. GRAY AND MARILYNNE M. GRAY

As a way to improve the induction of beginning teachers and to provide leadership opportunities for career teachers, school districts in California and elsewhere are arranging for the experienced teachers to serve as mentors to the beginners (whom we will call protégés). These arrangements promise to make teaching more satisfying, both for the mentor teachers and for their protégés.

Mentoring has a long history of success, beginning with Odysseus' decision to entrust the education and development of his son to a wise and learned man named Mentor some 3,500 years ago, and continuing to its present application in training nurses (Fagan and Fagan, 1983), psychologists (Pierce, 1983), sociologists (Phillips, 1979), scientists (Rawles, 1980), teachers (Gray and Gray, 1985; Gray and Rogers, 1982), educational administrators (Hepner and Faaborg, 1979; Moore and Sangaria, 1979), and business executives (Alleman, Dalton, and others, 1977; Hennig and Jardim, 1977; Klauss, 1979; Kram, 1980, 1983, 1985; Levison and others, 1982; Clawson, 1979; Collins and Scott, 1978; 1985; Levinson and others, 1978; Missirian, 1980; Phillips, 1977; Phillips-Jones, 1983; Roche, 1979; Sheehy, 1976, 1981).

Like other innovations, however, formal mentoring programs require planning and support. Laura Wagner (1985), administrator of the California program, asks, "How can useful evaluations be conducted when program goals are intangible and hard to operationalize, when 'the program' is different in every site at which it operates, when evaluation has not been mandated from the program's inception, when required documentation is absolutely minimal, and when timelines are extremely tight?" Without provisions for credible candidate and program evaluation, Wagner warns, "... the Mentor Teacher Program may well become just another bright flash in the fast-changing pan that brings educational reform proposals into the light."

A useful source of information for those designing and evaluating mentor programs is the extensive body of research on mentoring produced in recent years. Most studies of mentoring have been done in the business field, and have typically investigated informal or "happenstance" mentoring some five or more years after less-experienced employees (protégés) realized that they had been mentored in their career advancement or personal development by more-experienced, higher-ranking employees who took a personal interest in them.

Mentor Characteristics

Findings reveal that certain mentor and protégé characteristics are important. Clawson (1979) found that good mentors are people-oriented, tolerate ambiguity, prefer abstract concepts, value their company and work, and respect and like their subordinates. Alleman (1982) found that successful mentors are confident, secure, flexi-

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ble, altruistic, warm and caring, sensitive to protégés' needs, and that they trust their protégés.

What Successful Mentors Do

Even more important are *behaviors*—what mentors do with and for protégés, and how enthusiastically protégés receive and respond to mentor help. Alleman (1982) concluded that "since no single 'mentor-type' was found, selection is not the primary issue. Rather, mentoring involves mentor-like behavior, and behavior, once identified, can be taught."

What mentor behaviors are important? Phillips (1977) studied the differences in impact on protégés of "primary" and "secondary" mentors: the former have greater impact because they stick their necks out for their protégés, share power and expertise, give a personal blessing, and take a personal interest in the protégé's career and personal well-being; the latter have less impact because they show much less personal caring for the protégé, functioning in a business-like manner. Kram (1980) found that successful mentors fulfill five *career functions* (expose protégés to new opportunities, coach and sponsor them, protect and challenge them) as well as four *psychosocial functions* (role-model, counsel, accept-confirm, and befriend them) as the mentor-protégé relationship is being cultivated.

Behaviors of Mentor Teachers

What mentor behaviors help new teachers? Two studies of informal or "happenstance" mentoring provide some answers. Fagan and Walter (1982) found that of 107 teachers who reported being mentored by one or more veteran teachers during their first year of teaching,

> . . . 74 percent of teacher protégés credited their mentor with helping them to gain self-confidence; 40 percent said their mentor helped them learn the technical aspects of their job; 67 percent reported that their mentor listened to their ideas and encouraged their creativity; 51 percent indicated that their advisor helped them better understand the school's administration; and 17 percent said their mentor taught them how to work with people. Protégés with one definite mentor were more satisfied with their work than those who had either no mentor or several mentors.

Mentor Roles

Gehrke and Kay (1984) interviewed 41 teachers who claimed to have been mentored during their first year of teaching. To find out what constituted mentoring from the point of view of these novices, their comments about their mentors were categorized into eight possible mentor roles as identified by Schein (1978). The most frequently filled mentor roles were those of teacher (reported 25 times), confidant (17), and role model (13). Schein's other possible roles were developer of talents (11), sponsor (11), door-opener (4), protector (2), and successful leader (0). Employing Clawson's (1979) definition, Gehrke and Kay labeled as "mentor" only those persons who had fulfilled at least three of Schein's eight mentor roles, had shared with protégés a mutual commitment to common goals, and had a comprehensive influence on the protégés' professional and career development. They concluded that only 13 of these 41 inductees experienced a real mentor-protégé relationship during induction—a relationship that gradually developed to become more personally caring and professional (addressing professional growth questions on instruction, curriculum, and classroom management). These mentors were characterized as being genuinely interested in their protégés, helpful, caring, willing to take time, dedicated, friendly, outgoing, patient, influential, and as being professional role models. Interestingly, only four former teachers and three co-workers were named as mentors, while 21 former college professors/supervisors and eight school principals were so named.

Selecting and Matching Mentors and Protégés

What factors should be considered when selecting and matching mentors and protégés to work together in a formalized mentoring program? While this has not been rigorously researched, a pilot study of four first-year teachers paired with four support teachers revealed that two pairings were unsuccessful because one pair was located in different parts of the school, which reduced interaction, and the other pair did not teach the same subjects or share similar ideologies about teaching, classroom management, and discipline (Huling-Austin and others, 1985). These researchers concluded that:

> . . . every effort [should] be made to select a support teacher who is not only considered to be a successful teacher, but also teaches the same subject and grade level as the first year teacher, whose classroom is in the same general area of the building, and who has compatible ideologies about teaching, classroom management and discipline. . . . An effort should also be made to determine if the beginning teacher recognizes the benefits to be gained from working with a support teacher. If he/she does not, these benefits should be explained and the beginning teacher should be encouraged to consider the advantages of this type of relationship.

Voluntary or Required?

These comments suggest that beginning teachers should be able to choose whether to have a mentor or not. Most researchers advise that participation in such programs be voluntary (Klauss, 1979; Kram, 1985; Phillips-Jones, 1983) because

> . . . achieving a mentor relationship with an older person is like falling in love—you can't force it to happen. . . . You can, however, make yourself receptive to such a relationship by displaying a teachable attitude and an eagerness to learn (Williams, 1977).

Nevertheless, formally arranged mentor-protégé pairings can work. In a study of 393 beginning teachers in Georgia, significantly more novices demonstrated classroom mastery of 16 competencies related to effective teaching when an assigned "buddy teacher" (mentor) worked with them during their first year of teaching (Tanner and Ebers, 1985). In the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater Teacher Induction Program (1985), follow-up studies of 50 inductees, each of whom received mentoring from a local staff member assigned to help them, showed that the program had increased the professional skill, judgment, and competency of the participants and had screened some less able candidates from the profession.

Needs of Beginning Teachers

What kind of help do beginning teachers need? After reviewing 83 studies, Veenman (1984) contended that the problems of beginning teachers are person-specific and situation-specific. A study of 602 first-year teachers in New York City (Sacks and Brady, 1985), mentor help for moral support, guidance, and feedback (cited by 24 percent); discipline and management (20 percent); curriculum and lesson planning (18 percent); school routines and scheduling (15 percent); motivational techniques (6 percent); and individualized instruction (2 percent).

Because beginning teachers want to achieve professional autonomy and status equality with their colleagues (Lortie, 1975), 92 percent do not seek help from colleagues except indirectly by swapping stories about personal experiences (Glidewell and others, 1983). This hides novices' weaknesses but does not enable them to obtain help with those factors—inexperience, unavailability of expertise, and ambiguity about goal attainment—that produce 93 percent of teacher stress related to performing professional tasks. More than "experience swapping" is needed: a sense of community must be established, consisting of interdependency, shared concerns, a sense of common fate, and a sense that others "stand by" when one is under stress or uncertainty about what to do.

These support features are found in clearly conceived and properly implemented mentoring programs. Research suggests that such programs should contain the components

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Highlights of Research on Mentoring

Research in business and education has found that:

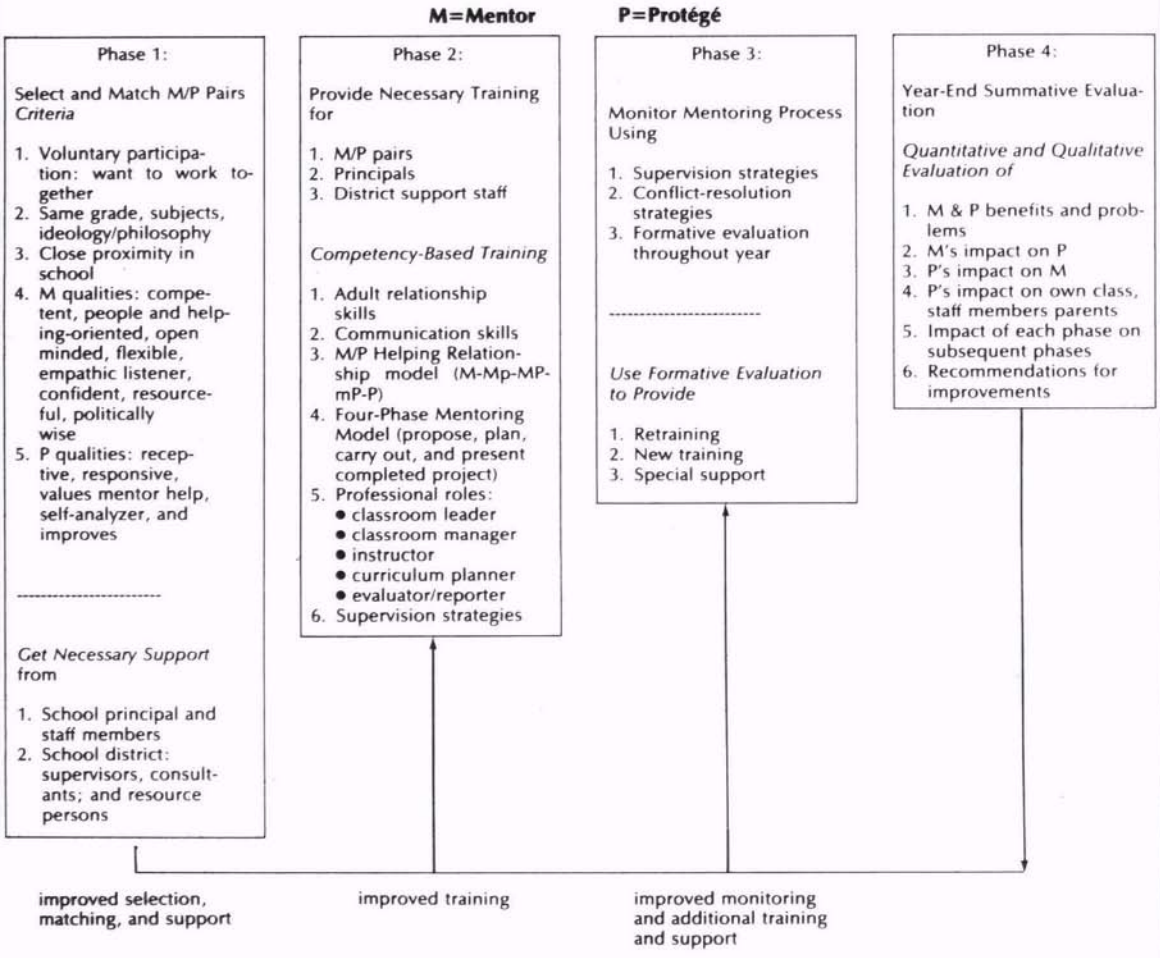
- Effective mentors are people-oriented and secure. They like and trust their protégés.
- Successful mentors take a personal interest in their protégés' careers, share power and expertise, encourage their protégés' ideas, and help them gain self-confidence.
- Beginning teachers report needing help with discipline and classroom management, curriculum and lesson planning, and school routines. Most of all they feel a need for moral support, guidance, and feedback.
- The key to successful mentoring is the mentor-protégé relationship, which can be represented by a five-step model ranging from level one, at which the mentor plays the primary role, to level five, at which the protégé becomes a self-directed professional.

shown in Figure 1. Mentors must be carefully selected and matched with protégés, and mentor-protégé pairs must be trained to work together harmoniously. Support personnel must be trained to provide supervision, formative evaluation, and additional training during the mentoring process. Summative evaluation must be effective to determine mentor impact, protégé gains, and, thus, the effectiveness of initial training and continual monitoring (Bird, 1983).

The Mentor-Protégé Relationship

Nearly all researchers agree that the key to successful mentoring is the

Figure 1. Components of a Four-Phase Formalized Mentoring Program to Induct Beginning Teachers



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mentor-protégé relationship, yet we are among the few who have studied the relationship while it was developing (Gray, 1984a, b). Most researchers have asked protégés to recall the stages of the mentoring process in business settings, five or more years after the relationship had ended. When doing this, Phillips (1977) found six stages: *initiation, the sparkle* (presenting one's best self to produce mutual admiration); *development* (mentor gives and protégé receives until the mentor delegates more decision-making responsibility to protégé; discussion focuses on organizational politics and how to attain career plans); *disillusionment* (when it is realized that little more can be gained by continuing the relationship); *parting* (to become independent, with or without bitterness, depending on how it takes place); and *transformation* (becoming a peer, friend, and equal who can now help the mentor). Kram (1983) found four stages that describe a similar progression: *initiation* (fantasies become realistic expectations); *cultivation* (mentor provides the five career and four psychosocial functions mentioned previously); *separation* (protégé becomes competent and independent); and *redefinition* (either a mutually supportive friendship develops or mentor and protégé feel used and bitter).

We have the dynamic nature of the Mentor/Protégé Helping Relationship in a five-level model (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Gray's Mentor/Protégé Helping Relationship Model and Major Mentor Functions/Roles (Model indicates varied types/levels of help mentor provides to enable protégés to gain competencies, confidence, realistic values, experience, and so on needed to function autonomously as a complete professional.)

MENTOR FUNCTION/ ROLES	M	Mp	MP	mP	P
			feedback loop		
SITUATIONAL LEADERSHIP	• M tells P what to do	• M sells P on what to do	• M invites P's joint participation	• M delegates to P & supports	• P is self-directed
ROLE-MODEL	• P observes how M acts professionally with others	• M teaches P "the ropes" (gate-keeping)	• Dialogue about school's culture & ethos	• M supports P's ideals for change (gate-opening)	• P "fits in" & also promotes change
INSTRUCTOR/PROMOTER OF THINKING SKILLS	• Direct instruction of basic knowledge	• M queries P to check for comprehension	• Socratic dialogues; M facilitates application, analysis	• M arranges guided discovery-learning, facilitates synthesis & evaulation	• P self-educates
DEMONSTRATOR/ TEACHER	• M exemplifies, leads by example	• M shows P how uses demonstrations	• M & P jointly demonstrate something	• M supports P's demonstrations	• P demonstrates independently
MOTIVATOR/PROMOTER OF REALISTIC VALUES	• M displays enthusiasm P is receptive	• M positively reinforces & enculturates P; P positively responds	• M & P value each other's contributions; contract together	• M encourages P's experimentation/ideals; P conceptualizes new values	• P is characterized by new values, is intrinsically motivated
SUPERVISOR	• M gives directives, advice, assertions	• M suggests improvements P responds	• M & P brainstorm, agree on problem solutions	• M gives feedback, encourages & supports P's proposed improvements	• P self-evaluates & improves
COUNSELLOR	• M provides anecdotes, examples, cases	• M confronts P, suggests improvements; P responds	• M & P discuss/ contract for changes	• M listens to P's concerns, supports P's solutions	• P resolves concerns autonomously
PROMOTER OF INDIRECT MENTORING	• M arranges for P to learn from others (gate-opening)	• M prepares P to learn from others	• M & P discuss what P learns from others	• M helps P incorporate what was learned from others	• P internalizes new learning

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"A sense of community must be established, consisting of interdependency, shared concerns, . . . and a sense that others 'stand by' when one is under stress."

When we train mentors to use this model, they are better able to provide important types of help (leadership, role-modeling, instruction, demonstration, motivation, supervision, counseling, and indirect mentoring) in the varied and appropriate ways a protégé needs to reach Level 5, where he or she becomes competent enough to autonomously handle the problems that beginning teachers most frequently encounter (Veenman, 1984).

At Level 1 (M), mentors do such things as: read about typical problems and concerns experienced by novices; receive training on how to work with protégés and other support personnel; prepare and teach demonstration lessons so protégés can observe specific techniques or materials being used; provide indirect mentoring by arranging for protégés to learn from other competent teachers; protect protégés from forseeable problems and unjust criticism; promote staff acceptance of protégés; locate resources protégés need for teaching, and so on. Mentors employ the style of situational leadership (Hersey and Blanchard, 1977) in which they "tell" relatively naive protégés what to do and how to do it. While interacting with protégés at Level 2 (Mp), mentors draw on their greater experience, realism, and expertise to do such things as: role-model how to "get things done" within the politics of the school so protégés fit into the school's culture (Sarason, 1971); demonstrate specific teaching techniques and materials; "sell" protégés (Hersey and Blanchard, 1977) on realistic ways of performing tasks such as establishing classroom management; provide external reinforcement; and show protégés how to prepare course unit plans and previews/overviews.

At Levels 1 and 2, mentors exercise more "power" than protégés because they have a greater supply of valued resources. This can present problems because new teachers value the professional norms of equality and autonomy (Glidewell and others, 1983). If mentors "get stuck" at Level 1 or 2 and protégés believe that little more can be gained from mentors at these levels, protégés will likely stop valuing this power-dependent relationship (Auster, 1984) and reject their mentors to achieve a nondependent status. Before this happens, a perceptive mentor will recognize and take pride in the protégé's need to change the nature of the relationship to a more egalitarian one by working with the protégé at Levels 3 and 4.

At Level 3 (MP), mentors acknowledge protégés' existing and developing competencies, and thus provide "participatory" leadership (Hersey and Blanchard, 1977) to enable protégés to make an equal contribution during their interactions. This is facilitated by joint problem solving, brainstorming, consensus reaching, open discussion, and contracting.

Before giving a protégé the blessing to go it alone, the mentor should exercise a new type of leadership by "delegating" greater responsibilities (Hersey and Blanchard, 1977) and giving protégés "guided practice" (Hunter, 1981) to ensure that they can succeed. This happens at Level 4 (mP) as the mentor listens to and encourages the protégé's proposals to try out his or her own ideas, teaching style, classroom management scheme, and so on. The mentor thus fosters discovery, learning, creativity, and self-evaluation while supporting the protégé's attempts to organize new values into his or her value system.

Upon reaching Level 5 (P), protégés are competent and confident enough to function without mentor help. They need no help in solving problems in those areas where they have acquired sufficient experience and competence. They have internalized and become characterized by values and other things learned during the mentoring process, thus learning to "fit in" while being able to promote change in a way that tempers their vitality and idealism with the realities of daily teaching responsibilities. When protégés need additional mentor help with something new, perceptive mentors return to the appropriate level of the model—as indicated by its feedback loop.

If formalized mentoring is conceptualized and implemented in accord with the Helping Relationship model, it can meet the specific needs of beginning teachers and provide increased professional satisfaction to mentors. If not, it is likely to become just another educational bandwagon that only complicates teachers' lives and adds to their frustration and sense of futility.□

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William A. Gray and **Marilynne M. Gray** are Codirectors of the Mentorship Training Programs, 4042 West 27th Avenue, Vancouver, British Columbia, V6S 1R7.

If interested in attending the First International Conference on Mentoring, held in Vancouver from July 21 to 25, 1986, during Expo 86, please contact the authors in care of the Faculty of Education, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada V6T 1Z5.

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