

HOWDY!

Texas A&M University
School of Education & Human Development
Mentor Teaching Training

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to play the supportive role of mentor for our Aggie teachers. Of all the beginning teacher's contacts, few are as important as you. Our goal is to ensure that the clinical teaching experience be a positive experience for both of you.

This training module is designed to maximize your experience and enhance your skills as a mentor. It will focus on three research-based models that enhance effective mentoring.



PHASES OF TEACHING

The first model describes the different phases that beginning teachers typically experience. Ellen Moir found that beginning teachers go through some very predictable phases. They start the experience very excited; however, that excitement turns into disillusionment. Eventually, they begin to rejuvenate. When the end is in sight, most beginning teachers start to think about the next year and how they can improve their instruction and become more effective with their students.

In the following chart, the blue line indicates the phases of a normal beginning teacher while the red line reflects the attitudes of beginning teachers when they receive the proper support. Supported beginning teachers go through the same stages as unsupported beginning teachers; however, the lows are not as low, nor do they last as long.

PHASES OF TEACHING

1. Anticipation

- Marked by a commitment to making a difference;
- Carries through the first weeks of school.

2. Survival

- Reality hits;
- Self-focused: How am I going to do this? Will I make it? Will others approve of my performance?

3. Disillusionment

- Extensive time commitment;
- High stress
- Self-doubt & low self-esteem.

4. Rejuvenation

- Focus is on time and task;
- Is there a better way? How can I do all that is expected of me? How can I improve this?

5. Reflection

- Focused on student learning;
- Assesses impact on students: Are students learning? How can I raise achievement levels? Is this meaningful to students?

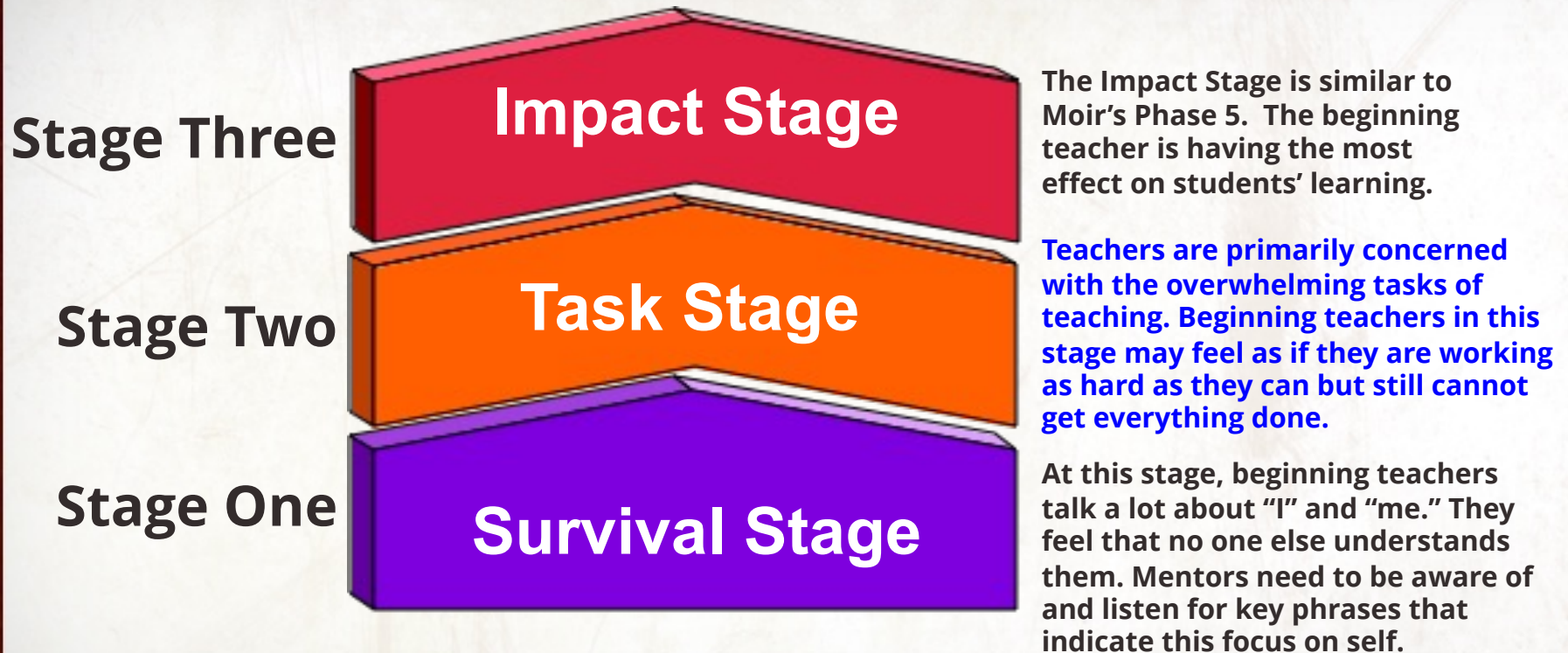
DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES OF CONCERN

In Frances Fuller's Developmental Stages of Concern, teachers were asked to describe their chief concerns about teaching. The study resulted in the identification of three developmental levels of teacher concern. These stages closely correspond to Moir's Phases of Teaching.

- Stage 1: Survival
- Stage 2: Task
- Stage 3: Impact

The following diagram describes each stage.

DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES OF CONCERN



TxBESS Phases and Stages Module
Texas State Board for Educator Certification



Mentor Support Suggestions for Developmental Stages of Concern

Survival Stage:

1. Look for opportunities to provide specific praise;
2. Show interest in the beginning teachers' ideas;
3. Facilitate reflection on things that are going well and on how setbacks can be avoided;
4. Invite beginning teachers to professional and social activities;
5. Share coping skills; and
6. Encourage beginning teachers to live balanced lives with time for self, family, and friends.

Task Stage:

1. Help beginning teachers prioritize all of their tasks;
2. Invite beginning teachers to look at and adapt lesson plans;
3. Share methods of accomplishing common teaching and management tasks;
4. Arrange for beginning teachers to speak to and observe other colleagues; and
5. Invite beginning teachers to reflect on their rationales for instructional decisions.

Impact Stage:

1. Listen and watch for ways to help students move to this stage;
2. Be aware of all the signs beginning teachers exhibit to provide the most appropriate support.
3. Praise and encourage students to continue in this highly effective stage.

Qualities of An Effective Mentor

The third and final model in this training discusses three important qualities for effective mentoring:

1. Mentor is accepting of the mentee,
2. Mentor provides instructional support,
3. Mentor communicates hope and optimism.



Mentor is Accepting of the Mentee

One of the best ways to connect with the mentee is to accept the student mentee as a developing person and professional. Beginning teachers have various needs in order to feel accepted and a part of the school setting:

- Orientation to the school and community,
- Help in building competence,
- Time to work with mentor,
- Opportunity to discuss concerns in a setting free of evaluation,
- Support and advocacy by principal, mentor and staff.

Suggestions for developing a relationship with your mentee are:

- Create a safe environment,
- Listen without judgment,
- Focus on learning,
- Agree on objectives, not approaches,
- Appreciate your differences.

Mentor Provides Instructional Support

Mentors need to meet the mentees where they are and be willing to coach mentees to improve their performance regardless of their skill level.

Simon Veerman cited the most common reported instructional challenges for beginning teachers as:

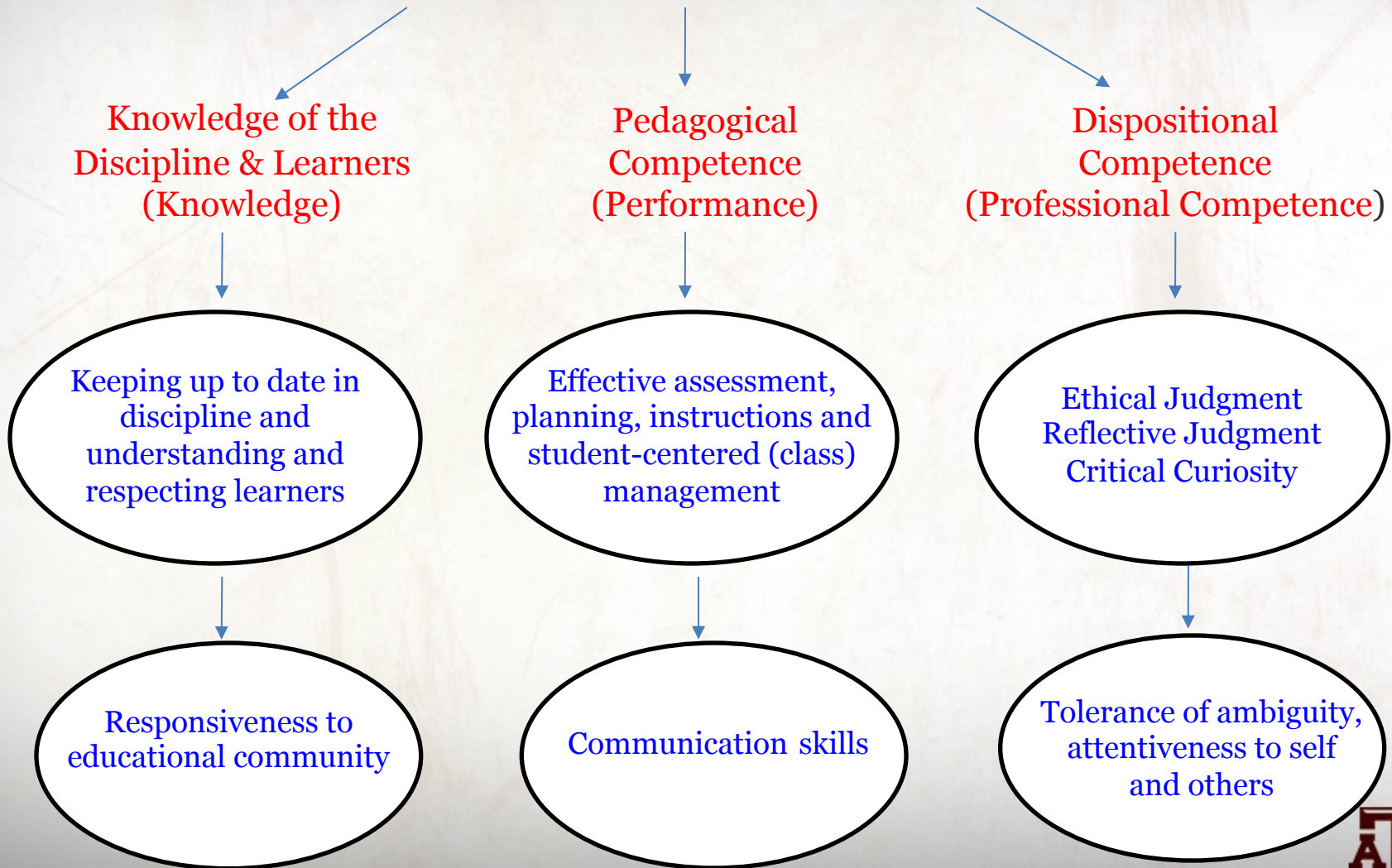
8. Students' personal problems,
7. Insufficient materials and supplies,
6. Evaluating student work,
5. Planning class work,
4. Parent relations,
3. Dealing with individual differences,
2. Motivating students,
1. Classroom discipline.

The beginning teacher must successfully develop professional competencies in the areas of knowledge, performance and professionalism. Following is a chart that describes the major domains of professional competencies.



TEACHER PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE¹

Major Domains of Professional Competence



Mentor Provides Instructional Support

In order for the mentee to successfully develop these professional competencies, the mentee needs effective and consistent instructional support. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Regular observation of and conferencing with the beginning teacher,
- Support in teaching and learning standards of the state curriculum frameworks,
- Refining various teaching strategies,
- Addressing issues such as student-centered (classroom) management and communicating effectively with parents,
- Recognizing and addressing multiple learning styles and individual student needs.



Mentor Provides Instructional Support

While conferencing after a lesson observation, the mentor should strive to balance a discussion of the new teacher's strengths and improvement areas by:

- Summarizing impressions,
- Recalling supporting information,
- Comparing plans with achieved results,
- Analyzing cause-effect relationships,
- Articulating new learning.

Conversations after the observation also help beginning teachers think out loud with their mentor. Reflective questions are open-ended, non-judgmental, and encourage problem-solving. Throughout the conference, the mentor teacher should serve as an active listener. Examples of active listening stems are:

- From what I hear you saying. . .
- As I listen to you, I'm hearing. . .
- I'm hearing many things. . .
- In other words. . .
- Given that . . .



Mentor Communicates Hope and Optimism

Mentors should capitalize on opportunities to communicate hope and optimism by affirming the potential of the mentee in private conversations as well as public settings (with students, team, faculty, administrators, parents).

Show support in the following ways:

- Stress the need for life outside the classroom;
- Be available to listen;
- Recognize the new teacher as a peer;
- Remind the new teacher that making mistakes is normal;
- Designate a time for sharing.

It is also important for the mentor to share personal experiences of both joys and struggles of teaching.

“The most important characteristic of a successful mentor is a commitment to provide personal time and attention to the beginner.”



Use this scenario to build understanding:

- It is August, and Janice is excited and anxious about the beginning of her first school year. She is confident of her content and pedagogical knowledge and has a passion for making a difference in students' lives. She is getting to know her students and school environment, organizing materials and becoming familiar with state standards and testing.
- In the Anticipation Phase, we see teachers like Janice romanticize teaching. They are very committed to making a difference in the lives of all their students and in their schools. Everything's going to be perfect. This phase normally lasts through the first few weeks of school. At this point, the mentor and beginning teacher are building their relationship.

Continue the scenario:

- Everything seems to be going wrong. Janice's supervisor did a walk-through and things did not go as she had planned. The lesson did not work, the students did not participate, and she lost the supplemental handout for the assessment.
- In Phase Two, beginning teachers are really focused on survival and self—they are trying to set routines, determine what works, and implement their curriculum. They are often just trying to make it through the day. They need outside validation because they are not getting it internally. They look for approval from folks outside of themselves—administrators, supervisors, other teachers, families/caregivers, and students. Mentors should look for specific opportunities to provide reinforcement, remind the beginning teacher to maintain their lives outside of school, and provide instructional support.

Continue the scenario:

- After several weeks of teaching, the realities of being a teacher are beginning to sink in. Janice is spending week nights and weekends trying to keep up. She struggles with managing lesson plans, record keeping, and assessments. She wonders if she really can do it.
- The Disillusionment Phase is when beginning teachers really hit bottom. The time commitment is completely overwhelming. They find themselves in high-stress situations, but lack the self-esteem to help themselves. Beginning teachers begin to doubt their career choices. They wonder, “Should I go back to school and change my profession?” At this point, mentors can help beginning teachers set priorities and provide time-saving hints.

Continue the scenario:

- After a new action plan is created with assistance from the mentor, the job seems much more doable. As Janice becomes more reflective and successful with her new action plan, she was amazed at how much she had accomplished and learned. Routines are in place, and her expectations much more realistic.
- In this stage, beginning teachers finally learn to balance their time and responsibilities so that they can focus on the tasks at hand and complete them within a more reasonable amount of time. They start to look for better ways to do things. This is when new teachers begin to make more meaningful connections between their instructional strategies and the state standards and tests. Mentors can really start to see growth and progress and can help beginning teachers be more effective by engaging them in reflective conversations.

Complete the scenario:

- Janice recognizes the tremendous growth she's experienced and feels pride in her accomplishments. As she thinks back, there are things she would never try again or would choose to do very differently. Next year will be exciting! She will not be the newest kid on the block, and she has a workable plan for managing time and tasks. Janice also has greater comfort with content knowledge and setting expectations for students.
- Towards the end, beginning teachers focus on impact. This is where we want our beginning teachers to be. Mentors can help beginning teachers reflect on how they impacted students and how they can improve.

Questions for Reflection:

The following slides provide questions for reflection based on the content and the scenario provided in this module. Take a few minutes to read through each question and consider the best response.



“Accepting of the Mentee”

Question 1:

Your mentee will be arriving in a few days. To create an accepting environment, you should:

- A. Send him to the office to get copies of textbooks
- B. Gather textbooks and other teaching materials and arrange to introduce him to other faculty
- C. Tell him you are very busy this week and you will visit with him early next week

Best answer: B



“Accepting of the Mentee”

Question 2:

You and your mentee are planning for an upcoming unit. She suggests an activity that involves dance and music. You are concerned that the activity will distract from the lesson’s objective. To address this concern, you should:

- A. Ask the mentee to describe how this activity will help the students master the objective
- B. Tell the mentee you have tried this type of activity before and the students in this school can’t handle this type of activity
- C. Tell the mentee that this activity is a silly idea

Best answer: A



Provides “Instructional Support”

Question 3:

During your first week of working with your mentee, you discover that her language arts skills are excellent, but her math skills are weak. As a result you should:

- A. Visit with her during conference period to present your plan for improving her skills
- B. Have a conversation with her in which you share the fact that when you started teaching you had to play “catch up” in language arts and assure her that the two of you will create a plan for improving her math skills
- C. Give her several math books and tell her that she needs to get her skills up to snuff

Best answer: B



Provides “Instructional Support”

Question 4:

Although your mentee worked very hard at preparing his first lesson to teach, he presented the material without checking for understanding. Thus, many of the students did not master the concept. As a result, you should:

- A. Tell him that in your opinion the students didn't grasp the concept being taught
- B. Tell him how you would have taught the lesson
- C. Provide specific, non-judgmental feedback and ask the intern to reflect on what he might have done differently

Best answer: C



Communicates “Hope and Optimism”

Question 5:

After several weeks in the classroom, your mentee is becoming frustrated and somewhat disillusioned with teaching. As a result, you should:

- A. Share with her some of the struggles and frustrations you experienced and how you overcame these
- B. Tell her that you are frustrated too and you can hardly wait to retire,
- C. Tell her that teaching is just a tough job and that she may not be cut out for it

Best answer: A



Communicates “Hope and Optimism”

Question 6:

Although your mentee has been doing a wonderful job in the classroom, he appears to lack self-confidence in other school settings outside the classroom. To help him in this situation, you should:

- A. Talk with him privately and provide positive feedback for the things he does in the classroom
- B. Tell him that he needs to take a more active role in team meetings
- C. Share the fact that his input kept a parent conference on a positive note and diffused a potential problem

Best answer: C



Closing Thoughts:

Through personalized time and attention, mentors can impact where beginning teachers are in their phases of development and stages of concern and can tailor support to give them hope and optimism for their future in the field of education.

Thanks & Gig 'Em!



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