To motivate teachers, mentors need to create the right conditions for growth. This means meeting them where they are, using video and dialogue and adapting your support and facilitation accordingly.
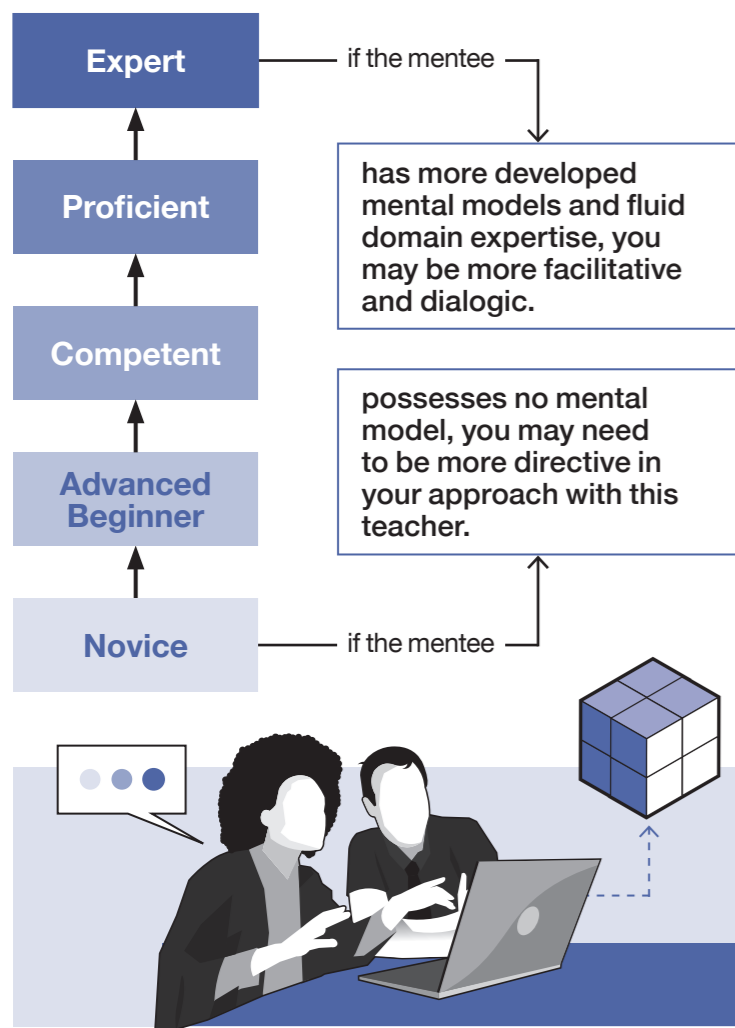
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High Leverage Mentoring Strategies

5 powerful ways to support novice teachers with developing their instruction

High Leverage Mentoring Strategies

T **here** is little research about what mentoring models are most effective and what mentors can do to support novice teachers to make the biggest impact on their developing instruction. Through my work with thousands of early career teachers and mentors across the world, I have identified five high leverage strategies which mentors and coaches could use to help teachers get better. There are lots of crossovers here with Sims et al.'s 2021 EEF research on PD mechanisms too as mentoring and coaching, for me, are the absolute foundations of effective professional development. How you employ these high leverage strategies will depend on domain expertise of the mentee. That's why it is important to know the reality of where your mentee is now. Video is perfect for this as it provides an anchor for granular and specific discussions on instruction.

Expert — if the mentee

has more developed mental models and fluid domain expertise, you may be more facilitative and dialogic.

Proficient

Competent

Advanced Beginner

possesses no mental model, you may need to be more directive in your approach with this teacher.

Novice — if the mentee

1 Shared Language

Discuss the 'Learn how to' statements in generic and subject specific ways.

Creating a shared language of teaching and learning strategies is so important. Paul Bambrick-Santoyo (2012) highlights the importance of teachers being able to 'see it- name it- do it' and this strategy focuses on the 'name it' part of that strategy. Great mentoring on instruction also focuses on the subject and phase specificity of teaching. Does your mentee understand what the 'learn how to' statement means and why it is important? What does the 'Learn how to' statement look like in your subject or phase? Dialogue and coaching conversations are important here.

Adaptive Mentoring

If you are working with a novice, you may use more analogies and metaphors from your own teaching. With a more experienced teacher, you may ask them to reflect more on their own experiences of the strategy in their subject/phase.

2 Granular Feedback

Give granular feedback using Bambrick-Santoyo's 6-step model focusing on the 'what' and 'how'.

Feedback which is too vague makes it difficult for teachers to understand what they need to improve and how. The more granular the target, linked to concrete, observable actions in the classroom the easier they can visualise the what, why and how. Breaking strategies down into action steps might help. Action steps don't need to be absolutes or definitive guides to what great teaching looks like, they provide a sat-nav for teachers to help reach their destination. Target setting is part of a larger feedback process; using a framework can be a useful scaffold. Bambrick-Santoyo (2012) '6 Step Feedback model' is useful.

Adaptive Mentoring

If you're working with a novice teacher, you may be more directive in setting the target and giving advice for action steps. If the teacher is more expert, it'll take a partnership approach of co or self-construction.

3 Observe Experts

Observe and deconstruct the practice of an expert teacher to identify the action steps and make thinking visible.

Teaching is complex, so sending new teachers in to observe lessons with little guidance may not help them to develop mental models of what great teaching looks like. Instead, providing some guidance on what to look for, or asking them to observe a particular strategy may be more helpful. After the observation, mentors should discuss what the mentee saw, encouraging them to deconstruct the active ingredients of the strategy, including non-examples. This makes thinking much more visible for a new teacher and helps them apply the thinking to their own teaching, bridging the knowing-doing gap.

Adaptive Mentoring

If you're working with a novice, you may give them some prompts or a tight focus before they observe a lesson and they may stay in the classroom for this 'waterfall moment.' If more expert, you may ask them what they noticed.

4 Explicitly Model

Explicitly model strategies and provide opportunities for out of context rehearsal and in context practise.

As an expert, mentors should explicitly model the strategies a new teacher wants to improve, accompanying this with instructional explanations. After a discussion of the model, once the mentee is clear on the steps, they should have the opportunity to engage in some rehearsal if appropriate. Using Deans for Impact's (2016) five principles for deliberate practice will act as a useful guide for how to do this well. After rehearsal and feedback, the mentee will have developed some automaticity in this skill and will then be ready to face the cognitively demanding environment of the classroom for some in-context practice.

Adaptive Mentoring

Novices need more out of context rehearsal whereas more expert teachers will need the complexity of the classroom to become more fluid in adaptive environments.

5 Use Research

Use research to ensure that teaching is evidence-informed for both experts and novices.

Great teachers are research-informed. In education, research is always a best bet rather than an absolute. The ECF and CCF give guidance on what teachers need to know. These frameworks set out a minimum expectation - there are other forms of research to engage with. Teachers must be critical consumers of research. 'The four As' help here:

- **Ask:** What do I need to improve?
- **Appraise:** Will it work in my context?
- **Apply:** How can I implement it?
- **Audit:** What was the impact?

Adaptive Mentoring

When working with novices, mentors may signpost research to mentees and bridge the gap by demonstrating what it looks like in the classroom. More expert teachers may bring research to discuss how they might use it to inform their teaching.