

### Reflection on Support Process for New Teacher

Mentoring my colleague, Alex has been an interesting experience this year. I began the year as her unofficial mentor because another person was trying to mentor her in a more formal sense. Due to a lack of time, that particular person handed the reigns over to me. This worked out quite well and really made the most sense since Alex and I attended team meetings together and planned together on a weekly basis.

At the beginning of the year, she and I had two math groups that were quite different—she had the deliberate learners and I had the high achieving learners. This can be tricky to pair together in collaborative learning situations because unfortunately, students are aware of their particular assignment as far as grouping is concerned. High achieving students in my class are quite competitive and move quickly. Alex's deliberate learners at the time, had a good amount of math anxiety which often times, contributed to how quickly they understood concepts.

Using Hiebert's Five Dimensions and Core Features that promote understanding in mathematics classrooms helped me focus and remain more objective when observing Alex in her classroom. During the first formal observation, it was extremely difficult for me to shift from teacher to mentor. I found myself wanting to stop or interject during Alex's teaching. I also felt that I learned more about my own teaching than she learned from hearing my feedback. The more times I observed, the easier it got to focus on specific areas of her teaching. The Observation Protocols from the National School Reform site were extremely helpful! It was great to use a protocol in order to frame our interactions of pre-observation meetings, observations, and post observation meetings.

For some reason, the pre-observation meetings were the most awkward. It was difficult for Alex to choose an area of focus prior to observations. And afterwards, she always wanted to know how she could improve. I know this is completely normal, but I was expecting her to choose a particular area of focus pre- and post-observation for some reason. I now think this expectation is unrealistic for a new teacher. I believe it takes time to become self-aware enough to know what areas one needs to improve upon. The use of protocols allowed me to rely on structure to talk about the work. The protocols also allowed me structure to discuss areas in which Alex needed to spend more time thinking about during the planning phases of her work.

Finally, I realized that I could not mentor Alex and also write a report as if I were her principal. I do not understand or agree with establishing a trusting relationship as mentor/mentee and also having the power to evaluate someone. I do not think the mentee would feel as open to grow and question with someone who also has the power to fire them. For me, as an administrator, I would not wish to be someone's mentor if I was their principal. In addition, as a new principal, I would want every teacher to have the chance to mentor another teacher. Promoting this kind of teacher leadership can be a form of professional development and also promote a positive school climate at the same time.

## Addendum

Mentee: Alex Smith

Mentor: Heidi Hutchison

Date: April 9, 2015

Re: Reflection

Working with Heidi Hutchison has been a rewarding experience. She is supportive and patient with me as I acclimate to a new school and new community. My two previous schools were quite different from Friends. One was very regimented in what was taught and how it was taught, and in the other I had little guidance and planned my own units. I welcome being part of the Friends community and teaching with a team.

Heidi and I teach in adjoining rooms, separated by a folding wall. This is the ideal situation for us as often bring our groups together for lessons and activities. Sometimes Heidi takes the lead in teaching and I back her up, sometimes it is the other way around, and often the children take the lead. This gives us a unique situation in which to assist each other and also to observe each other's teaching. We use the series Math in Focus which based on Singapore Math. Math in focus is a rather new series and is new to both Heidi and me.

Having been out of the classroom for six years, I am "rusty" and somewhat out-of-date on using different types of technology in the classroom. Heidi is well-versed and adept at using technology, so she is helping me become comfortable with things to which I am not familiar. One thing she was able to introduce me to is Jo Boaler's online Stanford Math course, *How to Learn Math for Students*. I've been able to realize that I possess a Growth mindset and encourage my students to adopt one as well.

Throughout this year, Heidi has been a mentor, a coach, and mostly, a friend to me. I look forward to continuing both a professional and personal relationship with Heidi Hutchison.