

Seeds of Success

The Newsletter of the

ALABAMA TEACHER INDUCTION PROGRAM

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THE TECHNOLOGY OF MENTORING

By Nancy Brown

Time is of the Essence

Mentoring, when done well, is a time intensive activity that often competes with instructional time. However, today the technology exists to establish an environment for electronic collaboration between mentor and protégé that maintains the dialogue beyond face-to-face sessions and ultimately extends the ability of both new and experienced educators to communicate with other professionals and find resources beyond their own school walls.

Mentoring literature indicates that the efficacy of mentoring is linked to the amount of time that a mentor and protégé work together. In one study by the National Center on Educational Statistics, only 36% of proteges who work with mentors "a few times a year" report substantial improvements to their instructional skills. That figure jumps to an impressive 88% for those who work with mentors at least once a week.

The mentors and beginning teachers participating in the Electronic Collaboration component of the Alabama Teacher Induction Program are addressing this all-important matter of time in a number of creative ways.

Keeping in Touch

The equipment being used in the electronic collaboration was chosen for its ease of use and portability. The original vision for the project was to use real-time web-streaming video so that mentors could watch their pro-

teges teaching via the Internet. While this solution would overcome the distance barrier so often found in mentoring programs, it still wouldn't totally solve the time problem, in that teachers might not be free to watch the lesson at the time it is taking place. The project also faced the wide variation of Internet access configurations from school to school, so it was impossible to develop a uniform package of hardware and software to meet everyone's needs.

We dealt with this challenge by suggesting that teachers video themselves teaching, and afterwards edit the video clips using the "movie-making" software we provided them. Teachers then burn the video clips to CD's and mentor and protégé exchange CD's. Proteges watch their mentors model lessons and mentors watch proteges in the classroom for purposes of giving feedback. Mentor and protégé view each other's videos at their convenience and reflect on what they have observed via e-mail, telephone or face-to-face. Some participants use the

titling feature of the video editing software to insert questions or comments about lessons at crucial points in the clips. As one teacher said, "It is a good first-hand, grab-ya'-right- there time to ask the instructional questions I would probably forget to ask later."

Ripple Effects

Predictably, there have been challenges in using the equipment for this electronic collaboration, yet, those teachers who have persevered are seeing benefits from participation in the program. One teacher participating in the program was inspired to write a grant to fund a similar collaboration using the same technology (see story on page 3). Some of the teachers are teaching their students to use the equipment in class projects. It is hoped that the "ripple effects" of this project will raise the quality of teaching and learning in Alabama. One teacher put it quite succinctly when she said, "The future looks great for Alabama schools in this type of improvement is in the future."



New teacher, Bobby Lowe of Dannelly Elementary, is a participant in the electronic collaboration. Lowe and his mentor, Candy Lancaster, use their collaboration equipment and technologies to share lessons and teaching techniques.

Editor's Note: The Alabama Teacher Induction Program is piloting a model for electronic collaboration with selected mentors and novice teachers. These teachers, nominated by their school systems, were trained in the use of video cameras, laptop computers and video editing software. They are using this equipment in a variety of ways to enhance their mentoring relationships. Nancy Brown, technology consultant for the project, wrote the preceding article. Nancy is a former teacher who has taught subjects ranging from first grade to high school Spanish. She has worked as an Apple Education Curriculum Solution specialist and has her own training and consulting firm, MicroConsultants.

Cognitive Coaching

Coaching Updates

The second in a series of four two-day Cognitive Coaching training sessions took place in Birmingham on January 17 and 18. Teachers and administrators from nine districts participated in this session. Jane Ellison, co-director of the Center for Cognitive Coaching, led the training.

Cognitive Coaching is a proven model that has been linked to increased student achievement, enhanced teacher efficacy, and higher satisfaction with the teaching profession. At the heart of Cognitive Coaching is the belief that we each have

inner resources that enable us to grow and change.

The four part training series teaches participants how to coach others to become more aware of their thought processes regarding teaching in order to understand why they do what they do. In the first two-day session that took place in July 2002, participants learned the basics of Cognitive Coaching and how to coach someone *before* that person participates in an activity, resolves a problem, or attempts a task.

In the January session, teachers and administrators learned how to coach an individual *after* participating in an activity, resolving a problem, or attempting a task. In both planning beforehand and



Cognitive Coaching participant, Dell Goodwin of Dothan City Schools, can use her new communication skills in working with teachers and administrators in her district

reflecting afterward, it is the individual and not the coach who evaluates what is effective or ineffective about her work. Participants left the session with new knowledge and skills to help them bring out the best in fellow teachers and even family members.



Cognitive Coaching participants from Montgomery Schools pictured with trainer Jane Ellison are: Top row (l-r): Susanne Mahone, trainer, Jane Ellison, and Diane Hudson; Bottom (l-r): Candy Lancaster, Connie Mizell, and Lizette Farsinejad.



Trainer Jane Ellison addresses teachers and administrators from across the state who came to Birmingham to participate in Cognitive Coaching training.

Electronic Collaborations: Bringing People Together in New Ways

By Candy Lancaster

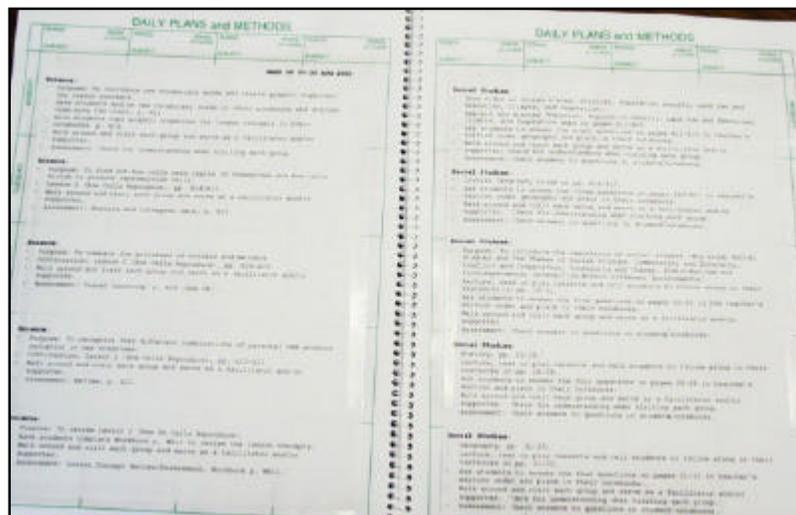
As a teacher of gifted junior high students I am always excited about any opportunity that relates technology to education. Electronic Collaboration has given me the opportunity to do just that in several significant ways this year.

First, I have had the wonderful opportunity to collaborate with Bobby Lowe, a Dannelly

Elementary 6th grade science and social studies protégé teacher. We have been able to bounce ideas off of each other about topics that range from classroom management to instructional strategies to professionalism in the classroom.

I have gained new insights into ways of reaching my own students through observing Bobby relate to his. In addition, we have had such a great time learning to use the equipment in our classrooms.

This collaboration has been such a successful experience for me that I shared the idea with Betsy



Bobby Lowe, new teacher and electronic collaboration participant, used the digital camera supplied by the project to capture a sample of his lesson plan book. This photo can be used in a professional portfolio or shared with other new teachers.

Russell, a new gifted teacher at another junior high school. We wrote a \$10,000 grant and presented it to two state legislators in order to purchase the needed equipment to begin a similar collaboration. We just received the money (yes, \$10,000!) and hope to begin a similar project this spring. This collaboration has caused me to feel very hopeful about the future of our students because of the opportunities Electronic Collaboration has afforded me.

Observing Bobby's teaching strategies and the special way that he cares and relates to his students and

collaborating with Betsy in order to write the grant has been a wonderfully rewarding experience for me. They have shared many times with me that having this opportunity has truly impacted their teaching careers in a very positive way.

I hope to continue this project by giving other new teachers the opportunity to observe Bobby (those movie clips can be used over and over again) and to share the grant idea that Betsy and I collaborated on. I believe that this project has given us the opportunity to become "highly qualified teachers".

INTERNET RESOURCES

Teachers use technology in a variety of ways to enhance their teaching and professional development. There are numerous web sites for teachers on the internet which feature articles, tips, discussion groups and education news. Below are a sample of some of our favorite sites:

www.edweek.com – **Education Week on the Web**

www.ed.gov/pubs/survivalguide – Survival Guide for New Teachers

www.nea.org/helpfrom/growing/works4me/library.html – **NEA Works4Me Tips Library**

www.Proteacher.com – **ProTeacher** - “The Web’s Little Secret for Elementary School Teachers.”

www.Teachervision.com – **Learning Network**

www.Theteacherscorner.net – **The Teacher’s Corner**

www.nwrel.org/request/march99/index.html – **Parent Partners: Using Parents to Enhance Education.** This article is on the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory web site.

www.student-wea.org/misc/prntinv.htm – **Building Parent Involvement** --These recommendations come from the Wisconsin chapter of the NEA.

www.nea.org/helpfrom/connecting/tools/ptconf.html - **How to Make Parent-Teacher Conferences Work for Your Child.** This article is on the NEA web site..

Especially for New Teachers

www.student-wea.org/misc/jitters.htm – **“13 Ways to Beat the First Day Jitters”**

www.student-wea.org/misc/strtyear.htm – **“33 Tips to Start Your First Year Off Right”**

www.student-wea.org/misc/firstday.htm – **“First-day Checklist”**

www.student-wea.org/misc/prntinv.htm – **“Building Parental Involvement”**

www.student-wea.org/misc/confstr.htm – **“Parent-Teacher Conference Strategies”**

www.ed.gov/pubs/survivalguide – **Survival Guide for New Teachers** -- This is on the web site of the U.S. Department of Education.

www.teachnet.org/dcs/newteach/conferences – **Parent-Teacher Conferences.** -- This article is on the Teacher’s Network web site and offers tips to new teachers on parent-teacher conferences.

Reframing the Teacher Shortage

A recent report from the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future says that the debate on what to do about the teacher shortage needs a closer look. The focus needs to change from scrambling at the beginning of every school year to recruit teachers to fill spaces, to finding ways to give the ones that are there the support and career opportunities they deserve. Among the supports recommended by the commission are mentored induction experiences for new teachers. The full report, “No Dream Denied: A Pledge to America’s Children,” was released January 29, 2003, and can be found on-line at

www.nctaf.org/dream/summary_report.pdf

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Knowledge, or anything else for that matter, really doesn't exist until it is shared. Intelligent, kind-hearted people who freely share their knowledge and humanity in the workplace will find the greatest success."

*The Measure of a Mentor, by Joel Schettler,
Training July 2002 (From National Staff Development Council newsletter)*