Mentoring That Pushes Instruction

Research Findings from Mentoring Conversations
Welcome!

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We are part of the external evaluation team for the Alaska Statewide Mentor Project’s (ASMP) Urban Growth Opportunity (UGO)
Agenda

- Setting the context for the research
- Exploring the study findings
- Connecting to the literature
- Reflecting on the implications for mentor practice
Goals

- Learn how successful mentor/new teacher dyads typically operate
- Consider actions that dyad members could take to improve instruction
- Reflect on the research findings
- Think of ways to apply the findings to your practice
Norms for this session

- Ask questions when you have them (by raising your hand or getting our attention).
- Keep questions and comments respectful of your peers.
- Actively participate in your table group.
Setting the Context
What is ASMP?

ASMP has been a collaboration between the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development and the University of Alaska
What is ASMP?

- ASMP is an “Alaskanized” version of the NTC model
- ASMP began in rural and high-needs schools in 2003–2004
- ASMP added the Urban Growth Opportunity (UGO) in 2011
ASMP UGO mentors

- Have 8+ years of teaching experience in Alaska
- Are fully released
- Have no more than 15 early career teachers per mentor
- Attend 2 years of training
- Are not matched to teachers by content area or grade-level expertise
Supports for UGO mentors

- Attend monthly online Friday Forums
- Partner with a local peer coach
- Communicate monthly with a coach
Supports for UGO mentors

- Participate in ongoing coaching using mentor formative assessment tools
- Have 3 “shadow” observations from their Coach (2 in their first year of mentoring and 1 in subsequent years)
UGO mentor work with mentees

- Communicate with their teachers at least weekly
- Meet face-to-face with each teacher monthly
- Use Formative Assessment System tools, ASMP-developed tools, and other tools to collect and analyze classroom data and support teachers
UGO mentor work with mentees

- Support reflective practice through individual learning plans, midyear reviews, and professional growth reflections

- Do not evaluate mentees

- Do not report to principals
Table talk:
Compare and contrast your mentoring program with ASMP UGO
Investing in Innovation (i3)
What is the effect of having a mentor on:

1. Remaining in the teaching profession in Alaska?
2. Instructional practices?
3. Achievement of their students in reading, writing, and mathematics?
Simplified UGO logic model
Simplified UGO logic model

**Implementation**
- What the program has control over (e.g., mentor training)

**Intervention**
- What actually takes place as mentors work (e.g., mentors respond to teachers’ needs)

**Impact**
- What changes as a result (e.g., better classroom instruction)
Today’s focus: Intervention

**Implementation**
What the program has control over (e.g., mentor training)

**Intervention**
What actually takes place as mentors work (e.g., mentors respond to teachers’ needs)

**Impact**
What changes as a result (e.g., better classroom instruction)
<table>
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<th>Intervention</th>
<th>Impact</th>
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<tr>
<td>What actually takes place as mentors work</td>
<td>What changes as a result</td>
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<td>• Mentoring conversations</td>
<td>• Classroom instructional practice</td>
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Intervention methodology

**Intervention**

*What actually takes place as mentors work*

- Mentoring conversations

**Impact**

Improved classroom instructional practice

Diminished classroom instructional practice
How did we measure change in instructional practice?

- Classroom observations
  - 9 video recordings of teachers teaching during their first and second years (3 recordings each fall of year 1 and spring of years 1 and 2)
  - Scored by certified scorers with the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS®)
  - Averaged scores for each recording period by teacher
What is CLASS®?

- Is content neutral, with different versions that allow for developmental fit
- Examines the quality of instruction in 3 domains:
  - Emotional support
  - Classroom organization
  - Instructional support
- Uses a 7-point scale
Intervention study methodology

5 Gliders
- Improved on all 3 CLASS® domains
- Had the greatest improvement in their total CLASS® scores
- Average gains ranged from 3.55 to 1.84

5 Sliders
- Regressed on all 3 CLASS® domains
- Had the greatest decreases in total CLASS® scores
- Average decreases ranged from 3.85 to 1.98
Exploring the Study Findings
How are Gliders and Sliders different?

We compared survey data and mentor/mentee conversation data to determine:

• Teachers’ trust of their mentors
• Mentoring activities
• Relationship dynamics
• Priority topics
Mentors recorded conversations with each mentee

- Mentors recorded 4 conversations during the second year (2 conversations per semester)
- Mentors could choose which conversations to record, in consultation with the teachers
- Conversations were to be focused on data that had been collected
Dyad Characteristics
Glider and Slider teachers both trusted their mentors

- Teachers all completed a trust scale on the annual survey
- Both Glider and Slider teachers generally trusted their mentors
- Slider teachers were more trusting of their mentors than Glider teachers

Sample item: My mentor keeps their word.
Teachers in both groups were similar

- Comparable amounts of resistance
- Common challenges related to placement (fit in the school, grade level, content area)
- Similar attitudes, positive or negative, in both groups
Mentors were also comparable

Gliders
- 20 conversations
- 4 different mentors
- Range of new to veteran mentors

Sliders
- 20 conversations
- 3 different mentors
- Range of new to veteran mentors
Dyad Conversation Results: Engagement
Glider dyads were qualitatively different from Slider dyads in the way they engaged with each other.

- Had longer conversations
- Talked more about instruction and students
- Responded to each other more often
- Engaged as peers more often
Gliders had longer conversations

- Glider conversations were about 5 minutes longer
- In a 10-month academic year, this translates to 50 additional minutes
- 50 minutes is equivalent to almost 2 additional conversations per year
Glider dyads talked more about instruction and students

- The topic was instruction or practice
  - 606 more instances
  - .85 more instances per minute (>3 SDs)
- The topic was student outcomes, work, or behavior
  - 521 more instances
  - .76 more instances per minute (~3 SDs)
Glider dyads responded to each other more often

- New teachers were more engaged in conversation with their mentors
  - 619 more instances of back-and-forth dialogue
  - .85 more instances per minute (>3 SDs more)
Glider dyads responded to each other more often

- Mentors affirmed or empathized with teachers more often
  - 452 more instances
  - .64 more instances per minute (~2.5 SDs more)

Teacher: Doing that assessment took an hour, but I started doing it in small groups. That’s the only way I could keep up.

Mentor: It was the first time. I think you do need to try it again to see when they learn the format.
Glider dyads engaged as peers more often

- Both members contributed information and ideas
- Air time was more consistent
  - Glider mentors spoke 32–59 percent of the words compared to 18–68 percent for Slider mentors
- Both members felt comfortable discussing areas in which they disagreed, while also affirming and acknowledging each other’s opinions
What does that mean for mentors?

- Make time for mentor/new teacher conversations
- Focus on instruction and students
- Ensure balanced air time in the conversation
- Allow for differing opinions
Dyad Conversation Results: Actions
Glider dyads were qualitatively different from Slider dyads in the actions they took

- Solving problems of practice
- Targeting successes and strengths
- Redirecting conversations to the positive
- Picking up on challenges and addressing them
- Directly facilitating conversations when needed
Glider dyads problem solved together while focused on teachers’ positives

- Mentors and teachers problem solved together
  - 252 more instances
  - .38 more instances per minute (~1.5 SDs)

- Targeted successes, strengths, and positive things going on
  - 265 more instances
  - .37 more instances per minute (~1.4 SDs)
I agree, it’s a challenge. Remember you have all these things going for you, too. Have you considered trying ... ?
Glider mentors redirected to the positive, especially in regard to students

Teacher: She’s a young one in class. I mean, she’s one of the youngest.

Mentor: I know, but she has potential. Here, I wrote down all the things she told me about the vocabulary words ...
Slider mentors sometimes missed or minimized teachers’ challenges

Teacher: [Student] is never here. He’ll be here for three days and then gone for an entire week ... He writes papers at a college level. Super smart. [But] he is not here on a consistent basis.

Mentor: Well, there’s always going to be those attendance issues. What I noted in your class was that students choose their own seats ...
Slider dyads sometimes had only lightly facilitated conversations

- Mentors did not facilitate the conversation consistently.
- Teachers dominated air time and often focused on extracurricular activities or special school events.
What does that mean for mentors?

- Problem solve with new teachers
- Target successes and strengths of new teachers AND their students
- Listen for teachers’ challenges and address them
- Redirect/facilitate conversations as needed
Dyad Conversation Activity
Activity: Example dialogues

Now it’s your turn to read some dyad conversations and discuss them.

- Find the *Glider Dyad Example Dialogue* handout
- Read and underline examples of things the mentor does that could support improved classroom practice
Activity: Example dialogues

Now, discuss with your table group:

- Which things did you underline and why?
- To what extent would you say the dyad is talking about:
  - Instruction or classroom practice
  - Student outcomes, work, or behavior
  - Successes, strengths, or positive things
  - Ways to solve a problem
Activity: Example dialogues

Now silently read the *Slider Dyad Sample Dialogue*

Underline areas in which you think the mentor missed the opportunity to support improved classroom practice
Activity: Example dialogs

Now, discuss with your table group:

- Which things did you underline and why?
- To what extent would you say the dyad is talking about:
  - Instruction or classroom practice
  - Student outcomes, work, or behavior
  - Successes, strengths, or positive things
  - Ways to solve a problem
Activity: Example dialogues

What would you do differently?

- Choose a dialogue
- Reread it
- Find places you would do something differently to push the teacher’s practice
- Discuss your ideas with your table group
Dyad Conversation Results: Summary
Conversation result summary

Glider dyads did some key things more often:

- Engaged in more back and forth, with mentors often affirming or empathizing
- Talked about instruction and student outcomes, work, and behaviors
- Solved problems of practice together while noting successes, strengths, and positive things to build from
Conversation result summary

Sliders did some things Gliders did not:

- Mentor minimized or redirected away from a challenge
- Mentor did not facilitate the conversation
Connecting to the Research
What we know about mentoring

Features of successful mentoring relationships:

1. Reciprocity
2. Mutual respect
3. Clear expectations
4. Personal connections
5. Shared values

(Strauss et al., 2013)
What we know about adult engagement in learning

• Adults need to be involved in the planning and evaluation of their instruction
• Experience—including mistakes—provides the basis for learning activities
• Adults are most interested in learning about subjects that have immediate relevance to their job or personal life
• Adult learning is problem-centered rather than content-oriented

(Knowles, 2002)
What we know about effective educator mentoring

- Find openings
- Pinpoint problems
- Probe new teachers’ thinking
- Notice signs of growth
- Focus on students
What we know about changing adult behaviors

Adult learners have preferences for:

• Active learning strategies that support cognitive growth
• Transformational learning
• Immediate application of knowledge
• Opportunities for self-direction

(Ross-Gordon, 2011)
Reflecting on the Implications for Mentor Practice
Activity: Reflection tool

- Find the reflection tool in your packet
- Take 10 minutes to fill it out
- Use an index card to write a reminder to yourself about what you want to integrate into your practice
- Share your reflections with the whole group (optional)
Feedback

- Please complete the NTC feedback form
- We welcome your thoughts and suggestions
Thank you!

Contact us if you have questions or ideas

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References


