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Mentors' Views about Developing Effective English Teaching Practices

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Abstract: Effective mentoring in English is considered paramount to a preservice teacher's development. What are mentors' views about developing effective English teaching practices in their mentees? This study used quantitative data (survey) and qualitative data (questionnaire) on 24 mentors' perceptions of mentoring second-year preservice teachers for teaching English and, in particular, the teaching of writing. Quantitative data measured mentors' perceptions of their attributes and practices across five factors for mentoring (i.e., Personal Attributes, System Requirements, Pedagogical Knowledge, Modelling, and Feedback) with 67% or more of these mentors (n=24) agreeing or strongly agreeing they provided all of the advocated attributes and practices to their mentees. The System Requirements factor had the lowest percentage range (67-71%) while Feedback had the highest range. Qualitative data indicated that developing a good rapport in a mentor-mentee relationship keeps lines of communication open in order to assist the mentee's learning. Mentors advocated methods for enhancing mentoring practices, however, mentees may not agree with their mentors' perspectives; hence further research comparing the two perspectives may lead towards understanding effective approaches for mentoring.

The response to the demands for more effective teaching of reading, writing, and mathematics has increased in Australia (Adkins, Grant, Summerville, Barnett, & Buys, 2003). The advocacy for enhancing literacy and numeracy has motivated schools and states to script standards and associated testing towards these ends (Reid, 2005). Preservice teacher education appears to be a starting point for feeding reform measures into education systems, and tertiary education has a fundamental role for which it needs to draw upon practical and professional experiences in the field of teaching to connect current theories. Hence, the quality of input from current teachers in their roles as mentors is paramount to the development of preservice teachers' practical skills for advancing their pedagogical practices.

A return to teaching the basics and an attempt to relieve the percentage of students who exit school without acquiring functional literacy (Lievesley & Motivans, 2000), does not mean returning to traditional ways of inspections and reports on teachers. Research into professional development has wrought more strategies for upskilling teachers for which mentoring has been very effective in accomplishing change in teachers and their work (e.g., Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000; Kochan & Pascarelli, 2003). In the mid 1990s, the American Association of Teacher Education analysed data from a survey of teacher educators, school teachers and university and school administrators that identified mentoring as the most critical strategy for professional developing teachers (Anderson, 1992). International educators in the USA and the UK at the time (Bey & Homes, 1990, 1992; McIntyre, Hagger, & Wilkin, 1993) reported that mentoring should be the most common response to the school-based learning needs of beginning teachers. Policy makers as early as 1990 – The Schools Council Report: Australia's Teachers - acknowledge that

mentoring assists with careers and friendships but can also advance the pedagogical knowledge of recipients.

Researchers have investigated mentoring in global perspectives (Kochan & Pascarella, 2003; Cullingford, 2006); in school contexts (Carr, Herman, & Harris, 2005; Fletcher, 2000), with teachers, preservice and first-year teachers (Cox, 2004; Hurst & Reading, 2002; Podson & Denmark, 2000), and within specific disciplines (e.g., Hudson, 2004a, 2007) to show that mentoring can scaffold learning across any field. Mentoring is acknowledged as a tool for professional transformation and gives credence to the relationship basis of the mentee (preservice teacher) and mentor (cooperating classroom teacher). A mentor may be defined as “one who is more knowledgeable on teaching practices and through explicit mentoring processes develops pedagogical self-efficacy in the mentee towards autonomous teaching practices” (Hudson, 2004b, pp. 216-217). Mentors whether they are appointed mentors, buddy mentors or peer mentors need to build and maintain relationships with the purpose of creating a psychological climate of trust (Jipson & Paley, 2000; Zhao & Reed in Kochan & Pascarella, 2003). This in turn can lead to an intuitive acceptance of modelled attitudes and practices (Fletcher, 2002; Podson & Denmark, 2000). Questions, responses and interactive feedback must be carefully framed for sharing honest reflections on practices and to keep respect within this relationship (Cox, 2004). Without developing a mentor-mentee rapport, there is no connection to each other and transformation rarely occurs. The emphasis on the relationship within mentoring is the main distinction from its close but suspect neighbour, supervision, which often implies no modelling of practice, a more distant relationship, and a key purpose of performance assessment. Supervision by contrast is stigmatised by its imbued imbalance of power.

If the relationship is shared democratically between the mentor and mentee with opportunities for collaboration, challenges, and two-way dialogues then mentees can be empowered and more open to develop practices or theoretical frameworks rather than alienated from the task of reframing their own teacher identity or being fearful of making a transition to a safer place of operation. This is especially noted in preservice and beginning teachers (Podson & Denmark, 2000) in the teaching of writing or other subjects. Wang and Odell (2003) claim that “preservice teachers’ initial beliefs, mentors’ teaching and mentoring practices, and school contexts influenced preservice teachers’ conceptual development”(p. 147). A mentee’s development in learning to teach writing may also require mentors, mentees, and classroom students to be co-learners for which mentoring can be transformed to the application of teaching performance. Interpersonal skills that include conferencing and conversing are integral to mentoring processes (Fletcher, 2000; Millwater & Short, 1999; Routman, 2000) with an appropriate channel of communication as a key instructional conduit (Hurst & Reading, 2002).

Successful mentoring programs should have a balanced amount of structure to suit individual needs within the partnership. If there is too little structure then initial enthusiasm wanes, participants ask, *What are we supposed to do?*; meetings are little more than a nice chat; disillusionment can occur; and loosely-structured mentor-mentee partnerships do not achieve goals. On the other hand, if there is too much structure then preservice teachers often comment that mentoring feels contrived and stifled with excessive reporting and rules inhibiting the relationship and wasting valuable time (Fletcher, 2000). Most importantly, mentoring must be flexible to address the mentee’s immediate needs but this requires mentors to have an understanding of specific mentoring practices favoured by current literature.

Preservice teachers can improve their performance skills through critical reflection for improving practices (Mullen, 2000; Tillman, 2000). Comparing and contrasting new and old lessons and observations of lessons are often fruitful activities if guided by an astute mentor (Podson & Denmark, 2000). Yet, a lack of communication can create

problems for developing mentees' understanding and knowledge of a subject (e.g., writing). The confrontative function (Cohen, 1995) of the mentor must be used to address problems directly. This honest and critical support is a bonus and generally welcomed by the mentee and/or the mentor within a trusting relationship (Carr et al., 2005; Cox, 2004). Indeed, collaboration and open communication can overcome most problems (Carr et al., 2005).

A five-factor mentoring model has previously been identified, namely, Personal Attributes, System Requirements, Pedagogical Knowledge, Modelling, and Feedback (Hudson, 2003, 2007), and items associated with each factor have also been justified empirically (see Hudson, Skamp, & Brooks, 2005). The five factors and the development of the Mentoring for Effective Primary Science Teaching (MEPST) instrument are well articulated by these authors for which this study provides a direct link. Changes from the MEPST instrument to the survey used in this current study (Appendix 1) included rewording the survey, that is, changing it from the mentees' perceptions to the mentors' perceptions. Hence, the MEPST introduction "During my final field experience (i.e., internship/practicum) in primary science teaching my mentor..." was changed to "During this last field experience (internship/practicum) for mentoring the teaching of writing, I felt I...". The following items were also changed to reflect these perspectives, for example, changing "...was supportive of me for teaching writing" (MEPST survey) to "...was supportive of the mentee for teaching writing" (Appendix 1, Item 1). In addition, the word "science" was changed to "writing" throughout the survey. Hence, the consistency of the instrument was maintained to ensure reliability and trustworthiness. In relation to the five-point Likert scale survey displayed in Appendix 1, the following outlines the factors and associated attributes and/or practices linked to the survey items.

Factor	Survey item
Personal Attributes	1, 17, 22, 23, 26, 31
System Requirements	4, 11, 25
Pedagogical Knowledge	3, 6, 8, 10, 14, 18, 21, 24, 27, 30, 32
Modelling	2, 5, 7, 9, 12, 15, 19, 29
Feedback	13, 16, 20, 28, 33, 34

To illustrate further, providing feedback allows preservice teachers to reflect and improve teaching practices, and this includes practices in specific subject areas such as writing. Six attributes and practices, which may be associated with the factor *Feedback* for developing mentees' primary mathematics teaching, require a mentor to: articulate expectations (Item 28); review lesson plans (Item 33); observe practice (Item 34); provide oral feedback (Item 16); provide written feedback (Item 20); and, assist the mentee to evaluate teaching practices (Item 13).

The purpose of this study was to investigate how effective mentoring could be used to support the professional development of teachers in their roles as mentors. In particular, the generic mentoring literature was used to frame opportunities for mentoring preservice teachers in the teaching of writing. The aim of this study was to determine mentors' perceptions of their practices for mentoring their preservice teachers' development as teachers of writing. What are mentors' views about developing effective English teaching practices in their mentees?

Context for study

The 24 mentors (male=5, female=19) in this study are cooperating teachers who had mentored second-year preservice teachers (mentees) from one Australian university. These mentors were provided with generic guidelines for mentoring by the university.

These guidelines did not focus specifically on mentoring in the area of teaching writing; therefore they had carte blanche for mentoring on how to teach writing. The mentors' ages in this study varied (38% between 22 - 29 years; 38% between 30 - 39 years, and 25% between 40-49 years), as did their mentoring experiences (42% had mentored between 4 to 9 mentees, 50% had mentored more than 10 mentees, while for 8% this was their first mentee). All mentors except one completed at least one English methodology unit at tertiary level with 87% completing two or more units. Finally, 88% agreed or strongly agreed that English writing was one of their strongest teaching subjects, and 92% demonstrated at least one English writing lesson to their mentees, including 42% who had demonstrated 4 or more lessons.

Data collection methods and analysis

The paper-based survey (Appendix 1) was completed by mentors ($n=24$) immediately after they had mentored preservice teachers in their four-week practicum. Principals or executive teachers from a random selection of 10 primary schools were contacted previously with ethics approval and research information to seek mentors involvement in this study. All these metropolitan and urban schools were within university vicinity and respondent anonymity was assured. Two of these 10 schools did not participate in this study. This study used both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods to triangulate data (Hittleman & Simon, 2006). Quantitative data were used to provide an indication of mentoring in line with mentoring practices advocated in the literature. However, this relatively small sample size required further substantiation through a qualitative investigation. The qualitative data collection involved these mentors' written responses to statements and questions related to their mentoring of preservice teachers for learning how to teach writing. These statements and questions included: Explain your rapport with the mentee while mentoring writing. What mentoring strategies do you think helped the mentee to feel successful with teaching writing? Were there any mentoring aspects you think made the mentee feel unsuccessful with teaching writing? What do you think may enhance your mentor skills in writing? Data were transcribed and coded for commonalities (see Hittleman & Simon, 2006).

The five-factor mentoring model (i.e., Personal Attributes, System Requirements, Pedagogical Knowledge, Modelling, and Feedback) formed the basis for the survey instrument used in this study. SPSS (Windows Version) was used to extract means and standard deviations for the 34 items, which were grouped according to the five factors they were proposed to measure, along with the percentage of mentors who agreed or strongly agreed with each of the items.

Results and discussion

The results and discussion focused on quantitative data analysed from mentors' responses to the five-factor survey followed by qualitative data to provide further detail about their mentoring.

Mentors' perceptions of their mentoring across five factors

Two thirds or more of the mentors agreed or strongly agreed with all the 34 survey items for each of the validated constructs with mean scale scores providing an indication of construct validity across the five factors. Personal Attributes, System Requirements,

Pedagogical Knowledge, Modelling, and Feedback (Tables 1-5) had mean scale scores of 4.07, 3.72, 4.03, 4.16, and 4.28, respectively. Mentors generally agreed or strongly agreed they were comfortable in talking about the teaching of primary writing and assisting them to reflect on their practices. Even though most agreed they could instill positive attitudes for teaching writing fewer agreed they could instill confidence in their mentees for teaching writing (Table 1). Furthermore, there were fewer again who agreed or strongly agreed they had mentored system requirements for teaching primary writing (Table 2).

Mentoring Practices	%*	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Comfortable in talking	96	4.42	0.58
Assisted in reflecting	92	4.00	0.42
Instilled positive attitudes	92	4.08	0.50
Listened attentively	88	3.95	0.62
Supportive	88	4.13	0.74
Instilled confidence	79	3.83	0.49

* %=Rank-order percentage of mentors who either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” they provided that specific mentoring practice.

Table 1: “Personal Attributes” for mentoring the teaching of primary writing (n=24)

Mentoring Practices	%*	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Outlined curriculum	71	3.71	0.86
Discussed aims	67	3.79	0.78
Discussed policies	67	3.67	1.05

* %=Rank-order percentage of mentors who either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” they provided that specific mentoring practice.

Table 2: “System Requirements” for mentoring the teaching of primary writing (n=24)

Mentors indicated they were relatively in tune with current mentoring practices. Pedagogical knowledge for learning how to teach writing appeared in the range of 67-96% (Table 3) while items associated with modelling the teaching of writing was agreed upon by 71-96% of the mentors (Table 4).

Mentoring Practices	%	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Assisted with teaching strategies	96	4.13	0.45
Discussed content knowledge	96	4.20	0.66
Assisted with classroom management	92	4.25	0.61
Guided preparation	92	4.08	0.65
Discussed implementation	88	4.04	0.69
Assisted in planning	83	3.96	0.69
Discussed assessment	83	4.08	0.65
Assisted with timetabling	79	4.04	0.81
Discussed questioning techniques	79	3.96	0.75
Provided viewpoints	67	3.88	0.74
Discussed problem solving	67	3.75	0.85

* %=Rank-order percentage of mentors who either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” they provided that specific mentoring practice.

Table 3: “Pedagogical Knowledge” for mentoring the teaching of primary writing (n=24)

Mentoring Practices	%	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Modelled classroom management	96	4.54	0.59
Displayed enthusiasm	96	4.33	0.56
Modelled teaching	92	4.42	0.65
Modelled a well-designed lesson	92	4.17	0.70
Modelled rapport with students	88	4.21	0.66
Modelled effective teaching	79	3.96	0.62
Used syllabus language	75	3.83	1.13
Demonstrated hands-on activities	71	3.83	1.05

* %=Rank-order percentage of mentors who either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” they provided that specific mentoring practice.

Table 4: “Modelling” the teaching of primary writing (n=24)

The factor System Requirements had the lowest percentage range (67-71%; Table 2) while Feedback had the highest range (83-100%, Table 5). Specific items that were recorded on the lowest percentage range include: providing viewpoints about current teaching practices, and discussing aims, policies and problem solving for teaching writing (67%). It was interesting to note that 90% or more of mentors claimed they had provided mentoring practices on 16 items (Tables 1-5). However, this perspective may not be related to the mentees’ perception of their mentoring in this subject area. Indeed, other research (Hudson, 2007) investigating mentees’ perceptions for science teaching indicated less than 25% of mentees agreed or strongly agreed their mentors provided the three practices associated with System Requirements. Nevertheless, English (including writing) is given greater importance over science as indicated by state and national testing. Further research to compare the two perspectives (mentors and mentees) may provide disparities between these two perspectives for teaching writing, which can lead towards a way for targeting mentoring processes more effectively.

Mentoring Practices	%	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Observed teaching for feedback	100	4.46	0.51
Provided oral feedback	96	4.46	0.59
Provided evaluation on teaching	96	4.46	0.59
Reviewed lesson plans	92	4.29	0.75
Articulated expectations	92	4.08	0.50
Provided written feedback	83	3.92	0.88

* %=Rank-order percentage of mentors who either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” they provided that specific mentoring practice.

Table 5: Providing “Feedback” on mentoring the teaching of primary writing (n=24)

The qualitative data focused on mentors’ perspectives about: (1) the importance of developing a good rapport in a mentoring relationship; (2) mentoring strategies that may make the mentee feel successful; (3) practices that may make the mentee feel unsuccessful; and, (4) suggestions for enhancing mentoring practices.

The importance of developing a good rapport

Establishing a good rapport in a mentor-mentee relationship can aid in facilitating teaching practices, and it is important that the “lines of communication are always open” (Mentor 20). In this study, it was claimed that part of developing a rapport relied on the mentee’s “confidence for discussing ideas and experiences” (Mentor 3). Yet, six mentors believed they did not have a good rapport with their mentees while mentoring writing,

mainly “because of the mentee’s attitude” (Mentor 18). This was also indicated in frustration with their mentees, for example, “My mentee did not appear to take on my advice” (Mentor 17). Most mentors ($n=13$) expressed a high level of rapport with their mentees in terms of the mentee’s enthusiasm or willingness for developing teaching practices, particularly if they were “receptive to suggestions and willing to try new ideas” (Mentor 24). Three mentors recognised the value of learning from each other as a result of a good mentor-mentee relationship, for example, “Lots of information to share – teacher also learned new information” (Mentor 21). Mentor 8 suggested she had to contribute significantly towards developing a rapport with her mentee: “My latest mentee was very structured in her approach and needed lots of coaxing to try different approaches”.

Mentoring strategies that may make the mentee feel successful

Mentors wrote about their mentoring strategies they believed helped their mentees to feel successful with teaching writing. Modelling effective teaching practices was the most prevalent strategy articulated by mentors in this study, including “a lot of observation lessons for developing [the mentee’s] understanding of how to teach writing” (Mentor 13). Other strategies reported by mentors involved more specific modelling strategies, to illustrate, “Modelling, being specific, I think it depends on the focus for teaching episodes. Graphic organisers, brainstorming ideas, modelling, stimulus pictures” (Mentor 15). Other specific mentoring practices included: “using criteria and set expectation sheets so [the mentee] knew what was expected” (Mentor 8), “Modelling good practice such as questioning, joint construction, guided writing and independent writing” (Mentor 14), and the “use of planning such as mind maps” (Mentor 5).

Mentors provided further suggestions for developing the mentees’ teaching of writing that included observation, modelling, scaffolding and developing specific teaching skills. To illustrate: “Observing lessons/looking at planning documents for that term so student could see the relevance and the need to teach these lessons” (Mentor 20); “Modelling strategies and then critically discussing them with mentee. Focusing on expected outcomes [and] making students aware of expectations” (Mentor 21); and mentors “modelling different strategies and genres while explaining reasons for differing approaches” (Mentor 23). The focus was also clearly on understanding the teaching of different text types and assessment procedures, “Getting the mentee to break down the genre for teaching and making an assessment tool before teaching the lesson. (Mentor 22). Mentor 19 advocated a mixed approach for developing the mentee’s writing, “Modelling, shared development of lessons, scaffold planning, independent planning”.

In relation to the questions related to mentoring in the teaching of writing, Mentor 11 suggested that any modelling would be beneficial to the mentee including “demonstrating a ‘bad’ lesson and comparing it to a well-planned successful lesson”. However, providing “positive feedback, clearly presented feedback sheets for lessons, encouragement of risk-taking” (Mentor 4) were considered ways to make the mentee feel more successful. Mentor 18 claimed that mentoring can be very difficult when a mentee has a negative attitude. Indeed, as preservice teachers are only at the learning stages for teaching writing, confidence may be lacking which would require “a great deal of support and encouragement” (Mentor 10). Although it is most important for mentees to “have a go” at teaching writing (Mentor 7), and “lots of practical examples and strategies such as visual literacy” (Mentor 3) can assist in facilitating success for the mentee.

Practices that may make the mentee feel unsuccessful

Each mentor was asked if there were any mentoring aspects they thought may have made the mentee feel unsuccessful with teaching writing. Mentoring generally occurs when there is time to talk to the mentee, which is usually outside classroom teaching times. It is important for mentees to understand that cooperating teachers in their roles as mentors may not have sufficient time for full involvement in the mentoring process, as there are unpredictable circumstances within active school settings that can distract a mentor, and the first and foremost priority is a student's health and safety. One mentor claimed that insufficient time for involvement in the mentoring process may lead to a mentee feeling unsuccessful as it could portray inadvertently non-commitment from the mentor.

Mentor 8 claimed that her mentee may have felt less successful for teaching writing as she lacked knowledge of "level 3 and level 4 outcomes". This mentor explained that a lack of knowledge produced an "inability to articulate to students what she expected". Mentor 6 also stated that a mentee would feel more successful with an understanding of the "Student levels associated with syllabus requirements and the low socio-economic clientele". Three mentors pointed towards their mentees' inadequate preparation, that is, "unprepared by the university training and background" (Mentor 10). While Mentor 11 wrote, "Not discussing aims of teaching writing and not discussing syllabus documents with the mentee" may produce unsuccessful feelings.

Teaching is an all-consuming occupation, particularly as teachers generally deal with more than one "client" at any one time, unlike the luxuries afforded in other professions. Hence, unsuccessful feelings may come from the voluminous task of catering for all students within a lesson. To illustrate, "I think the mentee became aware of how difficult it can be to attend to all students when writing and give suitable feedback" (Mentor 12). Although it is very difficult to determine what may cause a mentee to feel unsuccessful from a mentor's perspective, other suggestions included, "a weakness in the management of completed work and reluctant students" (Mentor 21). The competency with basic skills may also lead to a lack of confidence, for example, "Background knowledge of grammar, punctuation/spelling etc. always plays a part when confidence is discussed" (Mentor 20). In addition, a lack of basic skills may impede the mentee's success for teaching writing, for example, Mentor 24 stated the mentee needed skills in "Handwriting on the blackboard". Another also claimed that there tended to be a "focus on teaching skills rather than content due to weaknesses of intern's teaching practices" (Mentor 19). Mentors need to be mindful of the mentee's developmental level, as these mentees were in their second year of a four year degree. However, mentees need to ensure their writing skills are developed for the practicum.

Suggestions for enhancing mentoring practices

Mentors responded with various suggestions on how they could enhance their own mentor skills and practices for a mentee's learning to teach writing. These suggestions included: knowledge of a literature-based unit (Mentor 2) with understanding of the links between syllabus literate futures and approaches to teaching (Mentors 6, 12, 20); professional development from universities for the mentors (Mentors 4, 10, 14); conferencing strategies (Mentor 15); analyzing years 3, 5, and 7 writing skills tests and marking guides (Mentor 24); and, sharing strategies, approaches, content with colleagues (Mentors 7, 16, 21). Finally, some mentors wanted more time with their mentees and longer practicum durations (e.g., Mentors 13, 22, 23).

Issues and concerns for practice

Although the majority of mentors indicated their mentees' preparation for teaching was sound, some mentors had issues about the preservice teachers' university preparation for learning how to teach writing. The most prominent concern was the mentee's content knowledge preparation, for example, "My mentee did not know how to effectively write lesson plans – the mentee's own writing skills were average and at times had difficulty teaching subject matter they were not demonstrating themselves" (Mentor 1), and "Mentees do not have the necessary knowledge of individual student needs and capabilities. They also have to define expectations of students which mentees find difficult to ascertain and implement as a general rule" (Mentor 8). Yet, there were also concerns about ensuring mentees have basic understanding about school requirements in the subject area. To illustrate, "Our school has specific genre to be taught in each year level so any feedback applies to teaching note taking skills, information reports and visual presentation skills" (Mentor 4). Nevertheless, many of the concerns "...can come down to time and experience and/or confidence with aspects of teaching writing" (Mentor 12).

Some mentees may have very limited pedagogical skills requiring significant mentor involvement: "I spent an inordinate amount of time assisting the mentee to understand the basic principles of teaching writing" (Mentor 16). Periodically, a mentee may be over-confident without ability, for instance, "I had a student [mentee] who was overly confident without the ability to analyse her own performance objectively. I feel that students and mentors require an extremely explicit list of standards and responsibilities" (Mentor 18). This call for more explicit standards was not uncommon among these mentors not only for the mentoring processes but also the responsibilities assigned to mentees for their preparation of learning how to teach writing: "I feel that students [mentees] should know how to break down a genre so they know what scaffolding to provide. They should also know how to do formal evaluation on writing such as assessment rubrics" (Mentor 22).

Timetabling writing lessons for mentees presented difficulties, particularly when writing lessons appear to "run over time" frequently. For instance:

A major difficulty is full completion of work both from a time aspect and from an understanding aspect. Students are always writing to a structure. There needs to be scope for writing as expression – just to tell the story or express feelings. This practice combined with knowledge of text types (and time to complete the task!) would enhance students' own confidence and output. (Mentor 21)

Summary and conclusion

This study indicated through qualitative and quantitative data mentors' perceptions of their mentoring for teaching writing. The outcomes of this study showed the importance of: (1) developing collaborative and professional mentoring partnerships; (2) modelling the teaching of writing; and, (3) providing constructive feedback on the mentee's progress on teaching writing. Mentors confirmed the importance of developing a rapport in the mentor-mentee relationship in order to provide opportunities for the mentee to communicate. Yet, developing a congenial and professional relationship can require scaffolding and support from mentors, as they are the ones in a position of power with knowledge of the school culture, education system, and "ownership" of the classroom. Mentors will need to be perceptive on this balance of power and use strategies to encourage mentees to talk openly about teaching practices where necessary. Mentoring also requires flexibility in order to address a mentee's specific needs.

Modelling teaching practices was articulated strongly by mentors as a way to demonstrate how to teach writing. Such modelling commences with planning using syllabus documents, organising resources, demonstrating knowledge on teaching strategies

and text types, and connecting outcomes to assessments with thoughtfully designed rubrics. Mentees' observations of such practices must be purposeful with mentees identifying and deconstructing processes that lead to effective teaching. In addition, mentees may be able to develop their conceptions of effective practices whether mentors' modelling is effective or not (i.e., learning what to do and what not to do).

Mentees may feel more successful when provided with constructive feedback that aims to build the mentee's confidence and performance. Mentors generally indicated a need for explicit standards in mentees' knowledge of writing structures before they enter a practicum. Consequently, successful practices for mentees need to include basic knowledge of grammar, text types, sentence structures, other writing components (e.g., metaphors, similes), and handwriting skills. Conversely, mentees may feel unsuccessful when mentors do not spend time discussing the teaching of writing. As mentees are new to the profession, they need to be aware of the limited time available to mentors, especially with the varied demands of planning, preparation, teaching (which is usually the majority of a school day), assessment, attending to duties, and communicating with parents, staff, and students. Nevertheless, mentors themselves acknowledged through the survey that they needed to improve on providing viewpoints about current teaching practices, and discussing aims, policies and problem solving techniques for teaching writing. Developing these mentoring practices may be facilitated through university handbooks for mentors and professional development programs. In addition, mentees need to have realistic expectations about their mentors' time, and focus on their own development of writing knowledge and skills before entering a professional school experience. These findings showed that both mentors and mentees need to be aware of each others' needs and constraints, as mentoring is a two-way interaction that requires a clear understanding of the mentoring context. This study showed that one element for developing a rapport requires a mentee to act upon the mentor's advice; therefore mentees may require education about how to respond to their mentoring for eliciting optimal teaching development.

The items on this empirically-based survey provided a way to measure mentoring practices. Although the surveys were anonymous, self-reporting on mentoring practices may be a limitation to this study. Mentors may overstate their mentoring practices in comparison to their mentees' perceptions (e.g., see Le, 2008). Word changes to the instrument validated elsewhere and the relatively small sample size necessitate future research with a larger participant sample in different contexts (e.g., English, science, mathematics) and with different participants (i.e., mentees, mentors). In addition, mentees may not agree with their mentors' perspectives and so comparing the two perspectives may lead towards targeting more effective approaches for mentoring. Determining both mentors and mentees' responses in relation to advocated mentoring practices can also advance an understanding of the mentor-mentee relationship. Ultimately, effective mentoring in this field may assist in enhancing teaching practices and student-learning outcomes.

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Mentoring for Teaching Writing

The following statements focus on mentoring for teaching writing during your mentee's (student teacher's) last field experience (practicum). Please indicate the degree to which you disagree or agree with each statement below by **circling only one response** to the right of each statement.

Key

SD = Strongly Disagree

D = Disagree

U = Uncertain

A = Agree

SA = Strongly Agree

During this last field experience (internship/practicum) for mentoring the teaching of writing, I felt I:

- | | | | | | |
|--|----|---|---|---|----|
| 1. was supportive of the mentee for teaching writing. | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 2. used writing language from the current English syllabus. | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 3. guided the mentee with writing lesson preparation. | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 4. discussed school policies with the mentee for teaching writing. | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 5. modelled the teaching of writing. | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 6. assisted the mentee with classroom management strategies for teaching writing. | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 7. demonstrated how to develop a good rapport with students while teaching writing. | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 8. assisted the mentee with implementing writing teaching strategies. | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 9. displayed enthusiasm when modelling the teaching of writing. | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 10. assisted the mentee to timetable the mentee's writing lessons. | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 11. outlined writing curriculum/syllabus documents to the mentee. | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 12. modelled effective classroom management when teaching writing. | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 13. discussed evaluation of the mentee's teaching of writing. | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 14. developed the mentee's strategies for teaching writing. | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 15. was effective in modelling the teaching of writing. | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 16. provided oral feedback on the mentee's teaching of writing. | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 17. was comfortable talking with the mentee about teaching writing. | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 18. discussed with the mentee questioning skills for effective writing teaching. | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 19. used hands-on materials for teaching writing. | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 20. provided written feedback on the mentee's teaching of writing. | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 21. discussed with the mentee the knowledge the mentee needed for teaching writing. | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 22. instilled positive attitudes in the mentee for teaching writing. | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 23. assisted the mentee to reflect on improving writing teaching practices. | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 24. gave the mentee clear guidance for planning to teach writing. | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 25. discussed with the mentee the aims of teaching writing. | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 26. made the mentee feel more confident as a writing teacher. | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 27. provided problem solving strategies for the mentee's teaching of writing. | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 28. reviewed the mentee's writing lesson plans before teaching writing. | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 29. had demonstrated well-designed writing activities for the students. | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 30. gave the mentee new viewpoints on teaching writing. | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 31. listened to the mentee attentively on teaching writing matters. | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 32. showed the mentee how to assess the students' learning of writing. | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 33. clearly articulated what the mentee needed to do to improve the teaching of writing. | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 34. observed the mentee teach writing before providing feedback? | SD | D | U | A | SA |