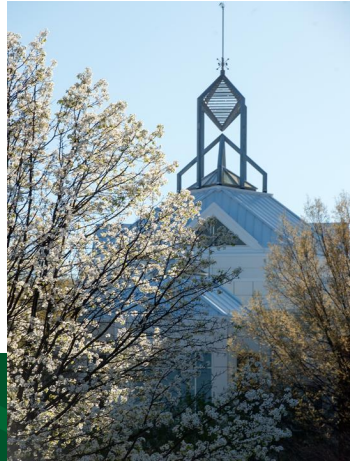# Peer Mentoring & Developing Communities of Practice: Professional Development in Action

American Councils
TCLP Workshop
15 February 2024
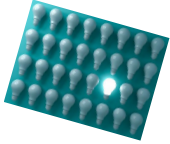
Rebecca K. Fox, Ph.D.
Professor Emerita

George Mason University

Welcome Back to your Home Countries!

TIME TO. . . . .

Activate your leadership!
and
Share your new knowledge
with your colleagues!

HOW?

Our Changing World Calls for New Educational Practices
Time to Lead the Instructional Updates you Want to See!

Three Ways to Activate your Leadership

Mentoring

Peer-to-Peer mentoring = two-way relationship

Communities of Practice

Engage with colleagues in your schools

Deep Reflection

Actively use Deep Reflection in all you do

What does the term "mentoring" mean to you?

THINK: Have you had the opportunity to experience mentoring? What was that like for you?

Take a moment to share with our group a thought about what *mentoring* means to you personally and professionally.

Raise your hand or write your response in the chat
SHARE RESPONSES

What is Mentoring? Definitions

Mentoring is . . . . the act or process of <u>helping and giving advice</u> to a younger or less experienced person, especially in a job or at school (Cambridge Dictionary)

Mentoring is a *reciprocal* and *collaborative* at-will relationship that most often occurs between senior and junior employees for the purpose of the mentee's growth, learning, and career (Association for Talent Development)

THINK: Who are the mentors? Who are the mentees?

Mentoring Models

- All participants have a goal
- Could be part of an existing or new community of practice

One-on-One Mentoring
- Most traditional of all the types of mentoring.
- Only the mentor and mentee are involved
- Usually a more-experienced individual paired with a less-experienced or much younger mentee.

Group Mentoring
- One or several mentors work with a group of mentees.

Peer-to-Peer Mentoring
- Peers offer support for each other
- Peers in this model are usually from the same department, subject area, or have shared or similar experiences, professional or personal.
- Can be a small group or a paired mentoring relationship.

7
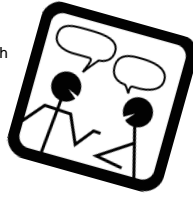
Peer Mentoring - what some research says

A **powerful tool** for personal and professional growth, fostering an environment where individuals can **learn from each other**, build relationships, and collaborate effectively.

Much more than a one-way avenue of ideas

Involves **RELATIONSHIPS** created by participant peers

Each member has a role = reciprocal relationships

    Everyone is considered equal to one another

    Everyone has voice, and opportunity for input

    Everyone is valued as an individual

Safe space for dialogue, questioning, seeking answers -- all members must feel safe to ask questions

Active listening leads discussions

Solutions to dilemmas are open for discussion

8

How Do I Start?
Forming Peer Mentoring Groups

Small groups of 4, 5, or 6 teachers – a great start!

Voluntary membership

Teachers with similar or different interests, subjects, or grade levels

Both early career and more experienced educators join the same group

Can be from the same school, district, region -- or from across a broader distance

Meeting times can be virtual, face-to-face, or combination

9

Communities of Practice

COPs are an excellent way to activate peer mentoring groups

Form a CoP in your school – decisions and idea sharing for set up

    Face to Face Meetings?

    Online group using social platforms (google, telegram, etc.)

Setting goals

Maintaining & growing group relations

Regular times to touch base

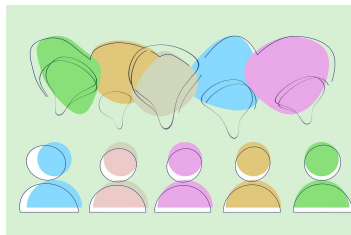Hmmmm. What type of CoP model will best work with the teachers in my school?

As you organize – jointly decide on

WHAT you are going to work on together

How often you will meet and where

HOW you will address questions or dilemmas from the group?, etc.

Most importantly,

What are some of the new practices you would like to share from your program abroad?

THINKING and SHARING TIME

What ARE some of the new educational practices you would like to share with colleagues?

Why are these important?

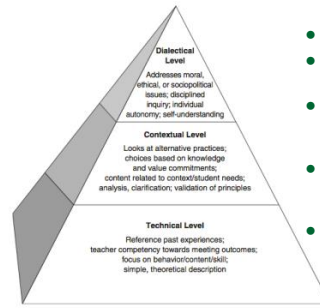**Time for sharing or write A response in the chat.**

12

Let's consider the use of *REFLECTION* to support:
Mentoring relationships, Communities of Practice,
Your own growth and development

Develop Deep and Active Reflective Practice to enrich all your work -
Incorporate the Model from Taggart and Wilson (2005)

A Framework for Developing Deep Reflection

- **3 Modes of Reflection**
- **Taggart & Wilson's framework as a guide to "see" our learning as peer mentors,**
- **To embed new classroom practices, make changes based on what we see as the result of our teaching,**
- **All modes of reflection are Reflection, but challenge yourselves to reach for the Dialectical,**
- **Framework helps us ask questions, connect our reflections purposefully, and encourage deeper thinking with a call to action.**

Taggart, G. (2005). *Promoting reflective thinking in teachers: 50 action strategies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Technical Mode of Reflection

- **Provides** descriptions or observations

- **Describes behaviors, content, and skills from experiences or observations**

- **Lists or describes what is to be shared**

Contextual Mode of Reflection

- Reflects on teaching practices; considers how they affect learning

- Reflects on classroom decisions - why did this work, or not work?

- Relates theory to practice – connects actions to research and theory

- Looks for approaches to teaching or change based on knowledge

    - i.e., communicative classroom activities to promote student learning

- Analyzes, clarifies decisions based on theory & research

Dialectical Mode of Reflection

.
- Systematically questions
- Seeks the "why?" something works or doesn't give us the results we would like to see
- Suggests alternative ideas or theories to seek and result in new outcomes
- Reflects on decisions made and the resulting that happen during the new practices
- Looks for change or new ways to promote desired results

What do I need to do to support
ACTIONS for CHANGE in peer mentoring and in CoPs?

Research Supports
Reflective Practice *in Action*

Stephen Brookfield (2014): Four ways to support the development of deep reflection

(1) Autobiographical – understanding our own backgrounds, beliefs, cultural contexts
(2) Through our students' eyes - what are their views and voices
(3) From our colleagues' perspectives
(4) Research literature

These lenses give support to processes of self-reflection, peer mentoring, communities of practice, and orverall engagement.
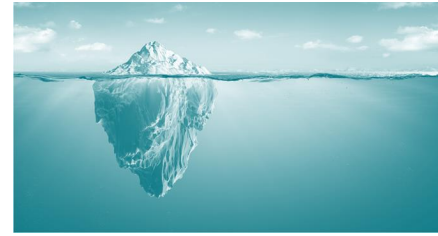
You can use them as you work in your CoPs!

THINKING and SHARING TIME

Do you think Reflection should be an important element of
peer mentoring?
Communities of Practice?
Why?

Enhance your Depth Perception through Reflection:

As Educators working with Peer Mentors or in COPs, you can Examine What's Below the Surface

Connect with your peers to *deeply* examine questions together

---

Activate
Reflective Peer Mentoring IN ACTION

Engage with your colleagues to achieve a deeper understanding of how to work together using Peer Mentoring and Deep Reflection

---

Thank you for participating today!
Time for questions and ongoing discussion.

Rebecca Kanak Fox, Ph.D.

rfox@gmu.edu

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

Questions?
Thoughts for ongoing discussion?

Thank you for engaging in dialogue today!

Rebecca K. Fox, Ph.D. rfox@gmu.edu