



# The Leadership Letter

## Mentoring New Professionals: ECAO

The **Early Childhood Association of Oklahoma's** (ECAO) Board of Directors is concerned about retaining new members and how best to support persons new to the field, so after much discussion and consideration, we decided to apply for an NAEYC Innovation Grant. Much to our delight, our grant was accepted and funded!

The ultimate goal of **PROJECT ADVANCE** is to build a "thriving network of confident, skilled and driven early childhood leaders who will be engaged in our state's affiliate, public policy, advocacy, and other leadership efforts" by increasing ECAO membership, training new professionals in the field and providing an across-the state network and fellowship of early childhood education and care providers.

Within the guidelines set forth in the grant, our board created a support network of twenty four members to provide leadership and offer outreach to new professionals in the field of early childhood. We developed a mentorship manual as a resource for mentors that will also provide infrastructure and sustainability for future mentoring efforts. Training was provided for the mentors.

ECAO is in the process of expanding its website to develop a page devoted to mentors/mentees and men-

tor resources. The website will connect new professionals with mentors in their area and will be available soon.

We have chosen *The Strength of an Eagle* as the theme for our training manual because the eagle is often considered a symbol of spirit, vision, and strength. Each mentor is responsible to **1)** volunteer time in person, by e-mail, web-cam, phone or other social media for a two year period for at least four new professionals in the field, **2)** offer a professional development workshop during ECAO's Annual Conference or other similar venue, **3)** promote the ECAO organization in our region, **4)** attend at least one Board meeting, and **5)** recruit at least four new or lapsed members annually.

We hope that other states will join us in our quest to mentor new early childhood professionals. If you have any questions, please email Jan Wetsel, PROJECT ADVANCE Lead, at: [jwetsel@uco.edu](mailto:jwetsel@uco.edu) or Jeny Searcy, PROJECT ADVANCE Lead, at: [jeny.searcy@integrisok.com](mailto:jeny.searcy@integrisok.com)

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### Leadership Commission Members

*Terrie Buckner, GA*

*Katie Shaughnessy-Williams, KY*

*Susan Carrigan, OK*

*Cindy Ramagos, LA*

# 20 Ways to Be a Great Mentor

by Jeny Searcy,  
PROJECT ADVANCE Lead

1. Demonstrate to your mentee that you are consistent, dependable, and trustworthy.
2. Know the mission of your state organization, the mentoring provider organization, and follow the guidelines of that organization.
3. Know what is expected of you as a mentor and follow those expectations.
4. Do not be critical of other organizations, work places, teaching styles or ideas.
5. Value your mentee and what she/he can bring to the relationship.
6. Have fun with your mentee as you learn together----mentoring should not be all work and no play.
7. Do less talking and more listening so your mentee can share his or her thoughts.
8. Be a positive role model in both word and deed.
9. Maintain a cheerful and positive attitude.
10. Keep conversations between you and your mentee confidential.
11. Be an advisor, not a preacher.
12. Be a sympathetic listener, not a psychologist.
13. Be a friend, not a surrogate boss.
14. Begin the mentoring relationship by discussing mutual goals and expectations.
15. Practice good communication skills.
16. Be sensitive to the mentee's needs.
17. Set expectations and ground rules from the beginning.
18. Coordinate your calendars. Schedule regular communication and visits.
19. Know that a thank you may come in the form of a hug or a smile, along with the words.
20. Find joy in the experience.

## The Many Meanings of "Mentoring"

by Susan Carrigan

There appear to be several definitions of mentoring in the literature, a concept open to interpretation by whomever chooses to instigate or engage in it. There are a variety of descriptions to explain the purpose of mentoring for teachers, staff, and professionals, including orientation, a support mechanism, supervision, staff retention, and professional development. Kanuka (2005) offers another view, believing that "mentoring can help to develop more collegial and compassionate programs, departments and institutions."

The following examples suggest several models or approaches that could describe mentoring and its purpose for different educational contexts. These models have been

implemented in an organization; however, according to the literature, the 'ideal' model is still in development.

### Peer Orientation

Teachers new to the program are assigned a colleague to orient the new teacher to the organizational culture. This may include familiarity with the program, the department they are going to be working in, a selection of key institutional policies and procedures that will affect the new teacher early on in their employment.

### Experienced Teacher-New Teacher

New teachers are assigned a liaison from within the department or faculty: an experienced teacher is

automatically assigned as mentor for the new teacher. There is an embedded process and faculty expectation that all experienced teachers will assume a mentor role as the need arises.

The experienced teacher's role could focus on general orientation, but perhaps is more effectively utilized by assisting with the actual teaching practice. This could include **1)** observation of teaching and giving feedback, **2)** creating opportunities for the new teacher to observe other experienced teachers, **3)** working through the administrative tasks directly associated with the teaching job, and **4)** giving instructional support and curricula guidelines.

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### **Campus Mentors**

These mentors are experienced teachers spread across the institution who can be accessed by any teacher; the mentee does not have to be from the same department or faculty as the campus mentor. The campus mentors can be available for anything relating to teaching practice and ongoing professional development.

The mentee may be a new teacher or an experienced teacher. There is very little in the literature that describes mentoring as a mechanism for the experienced teacher. It is an inherent and explicit expectation from the institute that teachers engage in ongoing professional development: the experienced teacher may very well need some advice, assistance and guidance in this area. Also, we cannot assume that an experienced teacher has learned all there is to know about teaching and learning or about their own teaching.

### **Group Mentoring**

Now sometimes referred to as "*Communities of Practice*" (Wenger, 1998), group mentoring can encourage collaboration and co-learning across the institu-

tion in a structured or less structured environment. Balatti (2001) believes that the group mentoring model has more potential for fostering workplace learning than the more traditional one-to-one mentoring relationship.

The mentor-mentees may be inter-departmental or may come from across the campus if the purpose of the mentoring is of a more generic nature. If the group sustains itself and becomes more cohesive, the group's purpose could shift to focus more on specific issues or problems the mentees would like to address.

### **Centralized Mentor Resource**

This resource is often based within staff development or human resources. The role is specifically to provide mentoring for teaching staff, more commonly for new teachers. Because of other institutional induction processes, the centralized mentor may focus on supporting teaching and learning practices rather than general orientation aspects.

The examples above reflect the thinking of Gibson (2004) who talks of a 'continuum of mentoring', signifying that varying types of mentoring relationships can exist in the one institution. These models do

not sit in isolation as 'another tool for supporting staff'. By implementing a model, mentoring immediately becomes embedded in the culture of the institution. Whichever mentoring approach is chosen, its purpose must be clarified and agreed to before its place in the institution can be valid and accepted.

### **References**

- Balatti, J.M. (2001). *Mentoring dyad to learning community: A narrative case study of the evolution of a workplace peer learning support system*. Educational Research Thesis, James Cook University.
- Feiman-Nemser, S. (1996). *Teacher mentoring: a critical review*. ERIC Digest. Retrieved June 15, 2011, from <http://www.ericdigests.org/1997-1/mentoring.html>
- Gibson, S.K. (2004). *Being mentored: The experience of women faculty*. *Journal of Career Development*, 30(3), 173-188.
- Kanuka, H. (2005). *Does mentoring new faculty make a difference?* Retrieved August 5, 2005, from <http://commons.ucalgary.ca>
- Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

*A mentor is someone who allows  
you to see hope inside yourself.*

—Oprah Winfrey



**SOUTHERN EARLY  
CHILDHOOD ASSOCIATION**

PO Box 55930  
Little Rock, AR 72215-5930  
1-800-305-SECA (7322)  
Fax: 501-227-5297

Email: [info@southernearlychildhood.org](mailto:info@southernearlychildhood.org)

*Promoting Quality Care and Education for  
Young Children and Their Families*

[www.southernearlychildhood.org](http://www.southernearlychildhood.org)

*The Southern Early Childhood Association (SECA) is a regional organization committed to promoting quality care and education for young children and their families. SECA is committed to providing leadership and support to individuals and groups by:*

- *Enhancing the quality of young children's lives through early childhood care and education.*
- *Supporting families in their roles of caring for their children.*

*Fostering the professional growth and status of individuals working with young children and their families*

## Suggested Reading List

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### Adults:

Baker, A. C., & Manfredi/Petitt, L. A. (2004). *Relationships, the heart of quality care: Creating community among adults in early care settings*. Washington D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Bellem, D., Whitebook, M., & Hnatuik, P. (1997). *The early childhood mentoring curriculum: A handbook for mentors*. Washington D.C.: Center for Child Care Workforce.

Covey, S. (2005). *The speed of trust*. New York: Free Press.

Dowling, L. C., and Mielenz, C. C. (2002). *Mentor manager, mentor parent*. Burneyville, OK:

ComCon Books.

Patterson, K., Grenny, J., McMillian, R. & Switzler, A. (2002). *Crucial conversations: Tools for talking when stakes are high*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Rusah, D., & Sheldon, M. L. (2011). *The early Childhood coaching handbook*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes Publishing.

Scairra, D.J., & Dorsey, A. C. (2002). *Leaders and supervisors in child care programs*. Albany New York: Delmar, Thompson Learning.

### Children's Books:

Lee, S., & Lee, T. L. (2001) *Giant steps to change the world*. New York: Simon and Schuster Books.

Pinkwater, D. M. (1977) *The big orange spot*. New York: Scholastic.

Reynolds, P. H. (2003) *The dot*. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press.

Rosenthal, A. K. (2009). *Spoon*. New York: Hyperion Books.