

Strategies For Mentoring Student Teachers

By The Editorial Team at Resilient Educator

Being a student mentor teacher can be daunting, especially with your first few student teachers. New teachers still in school or just out are getting their feet wet in a classroom setting. They could be prone to mistakes or errors in judgment and benefit greatly from the guidance of an experienced teacher. As their mentor, you can give them helpful feedback and guide them toward the best and most effective teaching methods. If you're going to be a student mentor teacher, here are some tips for being the very best mentor possible:

Mentoring Tips and Strategies

- Present demo lesson plans featuring a variety of teaching strategies. Discuss them afterward.
- Allow the student teacher to develop and prepare original teaching plans.
- Provide oral and written feedback regularly.
- Plan an effective learning assessment with your student teacher.
- Provide feedback on their classroom presence, i.e. how they navigate the classroom, their style of expression, having a professional appearance and demeanor, etc.
- Provide guidance in the use and care for the school's supplies and materials.
- Guide the student teacher in helping students with special needs.
- Implement collaborative teaching where you take turns instructing with the student teacher.

Addressing Concerns

If the student teacher's performance falls short in some way, discuss it with her or him as soon as possible, Be specific, and document all of your discussions. Work together to understand the issue and develop strategies for overcoming it. If you feel it is appropriate and the situation warrants, notify your supervisor or principal and schedule

a three-way conference. However, most concerns should be able to be addressed between you and the student teacher.

Interpersonal Relationships

Obviously, good interpersonal or “people” skills are crucial to a teacher’s professional success. In addition to being a role model in the classroom, the teacher will have to learn the appropriate levels of professionalism expected of a teacher whether in the classroom, at a staff meeting or in any other public setting. Assist the student teacher in learning the appropriate norms for discussing both their students and their colleagues when outside of the classroom. Emphasize having respect for others, honoring cultural diversity and maintaining a professional demeanor. As a student mentor teacher, strive to help integrate the new teacher into the school’s environment as a colleague and an equal.

The Stages of Student Teaching

The student teaching education progress generally moves through five stages. Mentoring and supervision through the first, second and fifth phases require about two weeks, with stages three and four occupying your remaining time. The exact structure and length of each phase will vary, however all of the stages are important to the success of the student teacher:

1. Observation

In this phase, the student teacher will observe the mentor teacher in action as they model ideal teaching skills and practices. The student teacher will learn by example and be able to reflect their understanding of the skills they are observing before they move on to stage two. However, they should be looking ahead and preparing for the next stage.

2. Teamwork

The mentor teacher and the student teacher will plan and co-teach lessons on a cooperative basis. This kind of team teaching experience provides opportunities for the student teacher to both observe and experience the teaching process, as well as ask questions along the way.

3. Independent Teaching Plus

Observation

In this phase, the student teacher has more independence in teaching. The mentor teacher will review lesson plans and observe the student teacher's methods and instruction style. The mentor teacher will hold regular meetings with the student teacher following the teaching sessions, providing both feedback and support.

4. Independent Teaching

The student teacher is now ready to teach on an independent basis while continually gaining more confidence and autonomy. Students start to depend more and more on the student teacher and not just the mentor during this phase. The student teacher learns to exercise independent judgment while learning from experience in this phase. Regular conferences with the mentor teacher continue.

5. Critical Observation and Conclusion

In the final phase, the mentor teacher re-assumed more responsibility in the classroom as the student teacher once again goes into more of an observer role. However, now their vantage point includes much more knowledge and experience. The student teacher may also observe in other classrooms and do a personal evaluation of their own skills.

Being a student mentor teacher is a big responsibility, but the rewards can be great. Following these guidelines can help you to assist your student teachers to be the very best they can be.