

Reflective Dialog Journals: A Tool for Developing Professional Competence in Novice Teachers

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ABSTRACT: This study focuses on the use of a mentoring protocol, the reflective dialogue journal, to develop professional competencies for pre-service teachers within a school-university partnership. To examine the effectiveness of the reflective dialogue journal protocol and the processes employed by mentor teachers to assist pre-service teachers with developing professional competencies, this study utilized a qualitative research method and analyzed the reflective dialogue journals written by 21 pairs of mentor teachers and pre-service teachers over a period of 12 weeks. Results show that keeping reflective dialogue journals benefits both the mentor teachers and the pre-service teachers, allows mentor teachers to identify areas of concern by pre-service teachers, and provides a wide range of mentoring strategies for mentor teachers. Findings indicate this easy-to-use, evidence-based tool can be readily incorporated into mentoring programs to enhance reflective practice and provide structured mentoring opportunities.

NAPDS Essential(s) Addressed: #4/A shared commitment to innovative and reflective practice by all participants; #5/Engagement in and public sharing of the results of deliberate investigations of practice by respective participants.

Introduction

Research on student achievement reveals the single most important determinant of what students learn is what their teachers know (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, n.d.). The United States Department of Education also emphasizes that, “One of the most important factors in raising student achievement is a highly qualified teacher” (para. 1). Thus, developing, recruiting and retaining effective teachers is imperative for the American education system. Furthermore, in the era of Common Core State Standards and increased emphasis on student achievement, highly qualified teachers have never been more important.

Many education professionals look to support and mentoring as a means to bring new teachers more effectively into the profession (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Geoffriaon, Staples, & Shewmaker, 2001; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Odell & Ferraro, 1992; Wilkins & Clift, 2006). Additionally, mentoring support is regarded as a critical part of the internship experience. During this period, two adults (the mentor and mentee) are collaborating and working side-by-side in the same classroom on a daily basis for an extended period of time. As such, opportunities for mentoring during the internship experience are abundant.

Clearly, partnerships between schools and institutions of higher learning, specifically Colleges of Education, have a

significant responsibility in ensuring the availability of highly qualified teachers. Indeed, the rigorous programming they provide for pre-service teachers is critical in preparing teacher candidates to meet the high standards of teaching quality required in today’s schools. In addition, school and university partnerships have a responsibility to understand the importance of the mentoring relationship, as well as the dynamics involved in this cooperative alliance, and its subsequent impact on children’s learning outcomes. In order to better understand the nature of the mentoring relationship and the supports required by novice teachers, and to see how school and university partnerships could contribute to the preparation of quality teachers, it is critical to capture real time data that reflects the many facets of the mentoring relationship.

To deepen our understanding of the mentoring relationship and the unique needs of pre-service teachers, this research aims to provide evidence for the effectiveness of a mentoring tool, the reflective dialog journal, in the context of a school-university partnership in a state implementing residency/induction programs for new teachers. The purpose of this paper is to 1) report research findings about the processes employed by mentor teachers in assisting pre-service teachers in the development of professional competencies; and 2) describe findings from, and benefits of the use of reflective dialogue journal prompts as a tool for collaborating and mentoring between pre-service teachers and mentor teachers, and

implications for university teacher preparation programs and school districts in terms of teacher preparation, development, and retention.

Literature Review/Theoretical Framework

The Need for Mentoring Programs

Gareis and Nussbaum-Beach (2008) write, “Historically, the culture in schools has characterized the first year of teaching as a ‘sink or swim’ proposition” (p. 230). Mornore and Loughry (2006) write, “Without support and supervision, novice teachers often feel overwhelmed, disoriented, and frustrated when they find themselves totally on their own in their classrooms” (p. 25). As high-quality induction and mentoring programs provide professional development for new teachers and support the need for highly qualified teachers for every child, teacher induction programs with mentoring as a major aspect, are increasingly popular. The number of states that passed teacher induction legislation rose from eight in 1984 to over 30 in the 1990s (Smith, 2007). In 2012, at least ten additional states had some form of induction program for new teachers (Goldrick, Osta, Barlin, & Burn, 2012). In the 2013-2014 academic year, the New Teacher Center Induction program alone reached 25,985 beginning teachers (New Teacher Center, para 2).

The Nature of Mentoring Programs

The majority of mentoring programs pair a veteran teacher with a novice teacher, which usually succeeds in providing emotional and technical support to the new teacher (Evans-Andris, Kyle, & Carini, 2006). Abiddin and Hassan (2012) argue that effective and successful mentors assume multiple roles that include adviser, guide, teacher, coach, role model and counselor. However, the most successful mentoring programs are highly structured and typically include: (1) strong principal support; (2) high-quality mentors experienced in the same grade level and content area as their mentees; (3) training and support for mentors; (4) programs that begin before school starts; (5) emotional and technical support, as well as professional and instructional support; (6) involvement of multiple persons providing support and guidance, including veteran teachers, department heads, administrators, and a faculty member from a teacher training institution; and (7) the encouragement of reflective practice (Evans-Andris, Kyle, & Carini, 2006; Harrison, Dymoke, & Pell, 2004; Leimann, Murdock, & Waller, 2008; Wiebke & Bardin, 2009).

Some benefits of mentoring programs reported by mentees include: sharing ideas, getting feedback for their performance, improving self-esteem and confidence, having positive role models, and opportunities to reflect (Hansford, Ehrich, & Tennent, 2004). Mentors frequently report positive outcomes which include: reflection /reappraisal of their beliefs and practices, professional development, and the development of

collaboration, collegiality, and networking through mentoring programs (Hansford, Ehrich, & Tennent, 2004). Studies also show that support and assistance for beginning teachers has positive impacts on teacher commitment and retention, teacher classroom instructional practices, and student achievement (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

Reflective Dialog Journals

Promoting reflective inquiry in one’s own teaching practice is frequently cited as an important aspect of quality mentoring programs (Evans-Andris, Kyle, & Carini, 2006; Mornore & Loughry, 2006; Shea & Greenwood, 2007; Youngs, 2007). Reflective practice provides an opportunity to analyze instructional strategies, such that strong points can be reproduced, and areas of weakness can be improved (Evans-Andris, Kyle, & Carini, 2006). Dialogue journals involve mentor teachers and pre-service teachers in writing and exchanging their writings in mutual response, and are often cited as a powerful tool for promoting reflection in teacher education (Lee, 2004), as well as providing many potential benefits. Porter, Goldstein, Leatherman, and Conrad (1990) outline some of the benefits and suggest that dialogue journals help students in specific areas where they have difficulty, promote autonomous learning, enhance confidence, help students make connections between course content and teaching, create interaction beyond the classroom, and make the class more process-oriented.

Tsang and Wong (1996) report that through reflective teaching practices, pre-service teachers have narrowed the gap between theory and practice and “come to their own judgments as to what works and what does not work in their classroom” (p. 24). Weasmer and Woods (1997) indicate, “Because interactive journaling focuses on reflection rather than correctness of expression, it provides a comfortable arena for communication and informal assessment” (p. 113).

It has also been argued that dialogue journals are an important tool for teacher education because they incorporate three fundamental paradigms in education: (1) process - writing activates pre-service teachers’ thinking and allows them to make connections between issues, explore ideas, generate new ideas, and discover meaning; (2) the learner - bringing his/her own beliefs, values, and experiences to the learning process and actively constructing knowledge and personalizing learning; and (3) reflection - journal writing makes reflection possible. Using dialog journals, pre-service teachers reflect and write about their views on different issues, talk about their problems and concerns, share their ideas, and discover new meaning (Cole, Raffier, Rogan, & Schleicher, 1998; Lee, 2004).

Theoretical Perspectives

Reiman (1999) takes the discussion of reflective dialog journals to a new level by examining the role of language, teacher, and interactions using a Vygotskian framework, and provides a

taxonomy of direct and indirect responses for developing reflective thinking in students. Vygotsky (1986) stresses the importance of language in mediating thought. "The relation between thought and word is a living process; thought is born through words. A word devoid of thought is a dead thing..." (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 255). Vygotsky (1956) also points out that written speech is a self-reviewing structure of thought. Thus, utilizing dialog journals during the internship promotes reflection about new experiences and deeper understanding for novices. Journal writing promotes critical reflection and development of thinking through written language which leads to conceptual understanding (Reiman, 1999).

Another principle central to Vygotsky's theory is the importance of social interaction for learning. In the case of reflective dialog journaling, social interaction occurs during collaboration between mentors and mentees, in which mentors guide, direct, and encourage mentees' activity and reflection (Reiman, 1999) while mentees develop professional competencies for teaching.

Adapting Flanders' (1970) model, Reiman (1999) proposes guidelines for analyzing the interaction patterns utilized by master teachers when participating in dialog journals with pre-service teachers reflecting on the teaching processes. The following seven interaction patterns have been identified in teachers' responses in reflective dialog journals: 1) accepting feelings - mentors share own feelings with and accept mentee's feelings; 2) praising or encouraging - mentors offer support and encouragement; 3) acknowledging and clarifying ideas - mentors accept and clarify ideas, and encourage critical examination of the situation; 4) prompting inquiry - mentors ask mentees questions that encourage critical thinking and analysis; 5) providing information - mentors relate information to relevant theories and contrast with competing theories; 6) giving directions - mentors offer directions but encourage self-direction; and 7) responding to problems - mentors accept mentee's feelings and arrange a conference. While the first four patterns are indirect strategies to develop reflective thinking skills, the last three are direct strategies to guide reflections (Reiman, 1999).

Although widely recognized as beneficial for both mentors and mentees, mentoring programs vary greatly in quality and content. As a result, it is important to understand the mentoring process and provide quality-mentoring programs for novices. Professional development on mentoring practices can enhance mentors' knowledge and skills, thereby enhancing the mentoring relationship and its impact on pre-service teachers. This study specifically explored the use of reflective dialogue journals as a tool in mentoring pre-service teachers. Findings and subsequent recommendations from this research contribute to the ongoing discussion, development, and implementation of teacher residency programs and to the understanding of specific processes utilized by expert teachers to assist pre-service teachers in developing professional competence.

Method

Background

The present study, reporting the use of reflective dialogue journals to develop professional competencies for pre-service teachers, was part of a broader study that addresses an overall question, "What processes and effective strategies do mentor teachers use to assist pre-service teachers in developing professional competence?" The broader study was funded by a school-university partnership composed of over 130 rural and Appalachian school districts, institutions of higher education and other educational agencies in the 35-county region of a mid-western state. The broad study, utilizing qualitative methods and tools co-created by a team of in-service teachers and teacher educators from the Partnership, was designed to determine the processes and strategies employed by mentor teachers in assisting pre-service teachers in the development of professional competencies. Pairs of mentoring teachers and their professional interns were the focus of study during the pre-service teachers' 12-week professional internships. Several instruments were used to collect data for the broader study addressing the above goals. Sources of data included: (1) individual semi-structured interviews with each pre-service teacher and mentor teacher, (2) lesson plans, notes, and post-conference transcripts and notes from pre-service teachers and mentor teachers, (3) lesson observations and ratings (two sets of observation notes and ratings for each intern, as both a researcher and the mentor teacher rated one lesson for each pre-service teacher), and (4) reflective dialog journals. The present study reports findings from data collected with the fourth protocol, reflective dialog journals created for the broader study. Reflective dialog journals kept by mentor teachers and pre-service teachers from this school-university partnership and transcripts of the follow-up individual interviews conducted with mentor teachers were analyzed. This study explores whether reflective dialogue journals assist mentees to develop professional competence, and contribute to the general question the broader study asks, "What processes and effective strategies do mentor teachers use to assist pre-service teachers develop professional competence?"

The broader study took place over a three-year period. During the first year, data collection tools were collaboratively developed by the four university members of the research team and four teachers from partnering schools. The newly developed instruments, including the dialog journal prompts and interview protocol, were implemented during the second half of the year with four different mentor-mentee pairs. An additional 17 pairs were recruited for participation over the next two years for a total of 21 mentor-mentee pairs.

Participants

The researchers were faculty members from the member university and schools within this school-university partnership,

while both mentor teachers and the pre-service teachers were recruited from the partnership university and schools.

Volunteer participants were recruited from the pool of pre-service teachers enrolled in a member university of this school-university partnership during spring 2008-2009, fall, winter, and spring 2009-2010, and fall and winter quarters of the 2010-11 academic years. Participants, both mentor teachers (from member schools within the Partnership) and their pre-service teachers, received information packets describing the specifics of the research project, participation requirements, and consent forms.

One integral piece of the university-school partnership's relationship for providing mutual support is the Exchange of Services Agreement. As part of the agreement, participating mentor teachers have the option of receiving two-credit hours' tuition for graduate courses offered by the university, or to have their school receive a small stipend which is put into the school's general fund for professional development accessible by all faculty/staff. Approximately two-thirds of the participating mentor teachers elected to receive the two-credit hours as compensation for their participation in the study, while the remainder chose to participate without compensation, referencing a personal interest in the topic or a desire to 'give back' to the education profession. A total of twenty-one (21) pairs of pre-service and mentor teachers ranging from early childhood to secondary education participated.

Instrument and Procedures

The reflective dialog journals kept by the 21 pairs of pre-service teachers and mentor teachers are the main source of data for this paper. Each pre-service teacher and mentor teacher pair was asked to keep an interactive, on-going, reflective dialog journal throughout the 12 weeks. The dialog journal, responding to specific prompts outlined below, was passed back and forth between the dyad each week. The journals were not graded, nor shared beyond the research team. The pre-service teachers were typically assigned to a classroom full-time for 12 weeks to complete their internship. They began the experience observing, and slowly take over full teaching responsibilities in the classroom. Near the end of the experience, the teaching responsibilities were slowly returned to the mentor teacher to ensure a smooth transition into and out of the classroom.

Dialog journal prompts developed by the research team with in-service teachers were provided to the 21 pairs for the first five weeks, serving to focus the pre-service teachers' observations and reflections, with suggested prompts for the remaining weeks. During spring quarter of 2010, a sixth required prompt was added, prompting pre-service teachers to analyze a critical incident that occurred during their internship and reflect on how they dealt with the incident. This additional prompt was a result of preliminary data analysis, which suggested and called for details and evidence of critical thinking and problem solving, a competency essential for all education professionals.

After the first six weeks, mentor teachers were given the option of using the suggested prompts for the remaining weeks or to create their own that would address current issues occurring in their own classrooms. Mentor teachers were instructed to have their pre-service teachers read, observe, reflect, and respond to each week's prompt. The journal was returned to the mentor teacher who would respond to the pre-service teacher's reflection. The journal could be passed back and forth more often during a week, allowing for an on-going 'dialog' between the pair regarding each week's topic.

As described earlier, dialog journal prompts utilized in this research were co-created by a team (members of the Partnership) of teacher educators and in-service teachers with extensive experience mentoring pre-service teachers. Topics for the required weekly prompts include managing the classroom, creating a map of expectations, building connections with students, showing passion for teaching, thinking on one's feet, and examining a critical incident occurring during the internship (See Appendix for details of the prompts).

Data Analysis

All written data from dialog journals and interviews with mentor teachers were transcribed into Microsoft Word and converted to rich text files. Dialog journal data, together with the interview transcripts were then uploaded into Atlas.ti, coded and analyzed for themes by a member of the research team. Atlas.ti, a software designed to aid in the management and analysis of qualitative data, allows researchers to create code families (groupings of concepts), read through the files and assign codes to the passages for categorization. The team member developed the code families using a constant comparative method in light of the existing literature on mentoring programs for new teachers, then sorted and combined similar codes and analyzed the data to determine common themes.

A total of 31 codes were identified and clustered into four code families including classroom management, teaching practices, professionalism, and mentoring strategies (See Appendix B). Dyads' interactions and reflections focused on classroom management issues novice teachers observed, participated in, or reflected upon the best strategies for establishing effective environments or dealing with problematic situations. Dyads also identified and reflected upon effective teaching practices in terms of lesson planning, engaging all learners using active and real-world, hands-on strategies connected to the content standards, and the variety of ways parents can be included in the learning process. Specific discussions of professionalism addressed explicit expectations made clear by mentoring teachers, as well as the importance of staying current. Novice teachers also reflected on how their mentor teachers displayed their passion for the profession and how they developed confidence during their time in the classroom. Finally, mentoring strategies were classified by type (modeling, offering advice or suggestions) as well as nature (supportive, positive reinforcement).

By specifically focusing on the types of mentoring strategies used, mentor teachers' responses were analyzed to determine which interaction patterns were utilized to facilitate pre-service teachers' professional development and support reflective practices. Themes derived from the code families were compared with Reiman's (1999) seven interaction patterns outlined above.

Results

Staton (1988) defined dialog journals as a "private written conversation" between a pre-service teacher and a mentor teacher "for an extended period of time" (p. 197). Although the dialogue journals in this study were not 'private' it did not appear as though the knowledge the journals would be shared with the research team impacted the honesty and openness of the dialogue between the pre-service and mentor teachers.

Three major themes emerged from the analysis of the dialogue journals and transcripts: (1) the role dialogue journals played in the mentoring relationship, (2) the areas of on-going concern from pre-service teachers, and (3) how mentor teachers responded to pre-service teachers' reflections and concerns (interaction patterns) (Reiman, 1999).

Roles of Dialogue Journals

Benefits to pre-service teachers. Dialogue journals afford pre-service teachers a tangible way to note their observations in the classroom, reflections, and impressions, allowing mentor teachers to present explanations, insights, and elaboration regarding what the pre-service teacher is observing. Dialogue journals help pre-service teachers focus their observations during the first few weeks of their internships. Over time, through guided reflection, pre-service teachers began to recognize how their mentor teachers modeled flexibility, built relationships with students, and differentiated instruction for learners of all ability levels. Additionally, they were able to reflect on their own growth and development, identifying areas of strength and areas of need.

Pre-service teachers observed and reflected upon mentor teachers' classroom management strategies, which included explicit instructions/clear directions, visual discipline system, as well as parent and student involvement. As one pre-service teacher reflected on her mentor teacher's actions, "She responds to repeated misbehaviors by having the child take their buckeye down." Which in turn elicited the following teacher response, "The next step [of the classroom discipline plan] is parent involvement where I have the student call home explaining the behavior." The pre-service teacher's initial observation provided an opportunity for the teacher to expand on the observation and explain next steps in the process. The dialog journal allowed the mentor to provide an elaboration, which may not have been possible when the incident was being observed.

Pre-service teachers also reflected on the various methods their mentor teachers used to build connections with students such as "getting to know you" activities, individual communi-

cations and relating to student interests. One pre-service teacher shared:

Getting to know you' activities...really helped [the teacher] build knowledge about [the students'] backgrounds, likes/dislikes, needs, and motivators. [The teacher] models the 'Me bag.' This is a bag that each child takes home and fills with their favorite things. They then bring it back to school and share. [The teacher] learns so much about them through this and finds [herself] referring back to [the students'] photos and items they bring in all year long.

The written observation provides a record of the potential strategies a pre-service teacher may wish to utilize in the future, as well as an opportunity to reflect on the use of the strategies.

Pre-service teachers also observed their mentor teachers modeling strategies used to determine their students' understanding of concepts. One pre-service teacher describes her mentor teacher's flexibility and strategies for finding alternative ways to reach students. The pre-service teacher indicated, "When my Cooperating Teacher gets a 'deer in the headlights' look [from the students] she finds another way to explain the material or she might have another student explain it in their own words." which again provides the intern with a record of potential strategies and their use within a specific context.

Dialog journals give pre-service teachers an opportunity to observe the variety of ways their mentor teachers communicate learning goals to students to ensure they understand the goals for the day. One novice reflected, "I think it's very important to not only state the learning goals with students orally, but also to share them in writing. Therefore, I write the learning goals for the day on the board, verbally communicate those goals, and have the goals written on every assignment students complete."

Dialog journals help focus pre-service teachers' observations of their mentor teachers and provide them with a tool to record their observations and reflections. Due to the interactive nature of dialog journals, mentor teachers can respond to interns' reflections and provide clarification, elaboration, or initiate difficult conversations regarding professional behaviors and expectations.

Benefits to mentor teachers. Reflective dialogue journals provide an opportunity for mentor teachers to address pre-service teachers' misconceptions in a non-confrontational way. Mentor teachers use this tool to explain, direct, and provide suggestions to their pre-service teachers to assist in their development of teaching processes. For example, one mentor provided the following advice in response to a novice teacher's reflection:

I think that it's necessary for standards to drive your plans and activities, but that you need to be flexible with how you document which standards you are

hitting and when. You need to be able to prove that you are hitting all those standards.

The mentor teacher's comment provided explicit direction regarding expectations for standards-based instruction.

In the follow-up individual interviews, mentor teachers indicated the dialogue journals were beneficial in guiding their discussions and allowed them to address subjects that might not have been raised in their daily dialogues. Mentor teachers appreciated the structure provided by the prompts, as they provided a framework of specific areas for initial discussion that helped create opportunities for deeper and more extensive dialogue over time.

A direct benefit of the reflective dialogue journals for the mentor teachers is that journals provided them with a view of their own practice through the eyes and perspective of another. In response to a pre-service teacher's reflection, one mentor teacher wrote,

It's really interesting to see someone else's perspective of what I do. This reflection taught me that even when I feel like the day isn't going well, at least I can still make positive connections with my students! Thank you [intern]!

In response to a pre-service teacher's reflection on how the teacher modeled flexibility, the mentor teacher responded, "Wow! Do I do all that?" providing a validation of the mentor teacher's efforts to meet her students' needs and address unexpected occurrences in the typical school day. Another pre-service teacher described the use of classroom rules as one way her mentor teacher ensures safety, to which the mentor teacher responded, "I never thought of it this way! Super!" Pre-service teachers' reflections in their dialog journal entries served as a mirror for teachers to view their behaviors through the fresh eyes of novices.

Identification of On-Going Concerns

Specific themes emerging from the data led to the identification of pre-service teachers' general concerns. They reported ongoing struggles and learning experiences with how to manage classroom behavior, developing differentiated lessons, using both formative and summative assessment strategies, and encouraging parental involvement.

Behavior/classroom management. Most pre-service teachers reported struggling with behavior or classroom management, but acknowledged observing and learning different strategies during their internship. Specifically, pre-service teachers observed their mentor teachers modeling compassion, caring, vocal inflection, ignoring, incentives, reminders, behavior plans and clear expectations. As one intern wrote,

Before this experience I had a very *laissez faire* approach to my management and this got me into

trouble. I have learned to use my voice and address expectations prior to any activity. The classroom is a very controlled environment and needs to be treated as such. I will take with me my newfound confidence in my abilities after a few bumps in the road that got me down. I will take with me my friendly, respectful demeanor accompanied with a stern tone when needed to maintain control and state expectations.

In this instance, the pre-service teacher reflected on classroom management strategies acquired during the internship and on future implementation plans.

Mentor teachers were nearly unanimous in validating their interns' beliefs that behavior management is difficult for all beginning teachers and improves with experience. Most responded by providing information about what strategies they employed earlier in the year that set the stage and outlined behavioral expectations. In response to behavioral and classroom management issues, mentor teachers provided encouragement or support by acknowledging pre-service teachers' feelings, and offered suggestions pre-service teachers might use in the future when establishing their own classroom behavioral expectations.

Assessment and differentiation. Pre-service teachers struggled with how to assess and design activities appropriate to their students' learning levels, yet reported strategies they observed or were encouraged to try during their internships. Many interns reflected on the importance of pacing, understanding their students' learning preferences to support differentiation, and monitoring students' progress. One pre-service teacher reflected,

Our classroom also has many different levels of learners. It's still hard for me to understand them. She [mentor teacher] can always monitor what students will benefit from certain lessons or activities and which student it will just be too hard or too easy for. She works a lot in small groups with the different levels of learners to make sure that they are at the right level. [She] also does assessment with them throughout the year to better understand their academic levels.

This entry clearly focused on strategies the mentor teacher utilized for progress monitoring and differentiating instruction based on students' individual needs.

Mentor teachers responded to pre-service teachers' assessment concerns using strategies Reiman (1999) classified as more direct in nature by providing information and suggesting informal strategies for assessing student learning including observations, exit slips, and grading specific elements of assignments (grading for content versus mechanics).

Parental involvement. Given the short amount of time pre-service teachers were in the classroom, they had limited opportunity to make connections with or become involved with parents. However, many reported strategies used by their mentor teachers and reflected on strategies they would like to try to engage parents in the future. One intern noted,

I haven't had the opportunity to interact with parents through any of my lessons or witnessed any family involvement/communication through my cooperating teacher. When I do have a classroom of my own, I want to include family as much as possible. I think it is really important to have contact with parents when students do something good as opposed to being called or contacted when a behavior issue comes up. During my internship, I wish I would have tried to make contact with parents on a better level by sending home letters or e-mail when their child did something outstanding. I also would have liked to plan something where families could come in to school-like an exhibition-to see all the hard work their children have been doing.

By contrast, other interns reported having opportunities which included sending a letter of introduction home, participating in parent conferences, and observing how to handle challenging situations with parents.

Interaction Patterns (Reiman, 1999)

In this study, mentor teachers used reflective dialogue journals as an opportunity to define and clarify their expectations of the professional intern in terms of lesson planning, preparation, and professional behavior. They explained their intentions in given situations, or expanded upon issues or strategies the intern observed. They explained things done prior to the pre-service teachers' arrival, creating a foundation for events the pre-service teachers observed such as establishing classroom guidelines, behavior contracts, teaching routines, individual conferencing with students, interest inventories, and pre-assessments. In their written dialogue, mentor teachers offered advice, suggestions, and resources to help pre-service teachers address specific areas of concern. All the while, mentor teachers provided reassurance and encouragement for pre-service teachers who were truly perceived to be making genuine efforts towards improvement.

Acknowledging and clarifying ideas. Mentor teachers acknowledged pre-service teachers' reflections on strategies or behaviors being used in the classroom and followed up with clarification, or provided elaboration on the topic, promoting and encouraging sharper focus and greater depth for future observations and reflections. As one mentor teacher wrote in response to the interns' reflection on making connections with students,

Building relationships with students is key to a successful teaching experience. Along with those items you mentioned, I also learn the most through simple, daily chats with students as they are entering the classroom or when I see them on bus duty. I also try to attend as many school related functions as possible to show students I truly care about them. Because of my belief in these relationships, I have volunteered to mentor a group of thirteen at-risk freshmen for the next four years. I try to pay more attention to these students

than those with a stronger support system. Once a month, I have a breakfast for them, and I constantly call them back to my desk to monitor their academic progress in other classes. These times are invaluable!

In this response, the mentor teacher acknowledged the intern's reflection on the importance of establishing relationships with the students and provided specific examples of strategies he/she utilized.

Praising or encouraging. In many instances, mentor teachers began their responses to pre-service teachers' reflection with praise for what they had observed, how they were attempting to address a situation, or how they approached a lesson. After providing recognition for the intern's response or reflection, mentor teachers followed up by clarifying and expanding upon the pre-service teachers' comments. One mentor teacher's response clearly demonstrates this approach.

Your behavior management has gotten so much better over the past two weeks. You are aware of students [who are] off-task and do a good job of redirecting them before it turns into a bigger problem. You have the rationale figured out for preventing & addressing behavior problems. Stating clear directions is one way to help prevent problems. When students understand the directions they are less likely to have time for misbehavior. It is also important to make it clear what you expect from students in all situations. Leave nothing to chance!

In this instance, the mentor teacher provided connected praise, followed by a suggestion for an additional strategy to expand the intern's classroom management repertoire.

Providing information. In some instances, mentor teachers use strategies Reiman (1999) categorized as more direct when they provided information to the intern regarding things that occurred earlier in the year that helped set the stage for expectations being observed later in the year or to explain why he/she responded in a certain way. They also provided suggestions based on their own personal experience. One mentor teacher suggested the following process for monitoring student understanding.

Listening to students and developing open lines of communication is essential to monitoring individual student understanding. I like to check homework on a one-on-one basis, so that I can get a feel for each student's problems. Students feel more comfortable admitting that they do not understand on a one-on-one approach rather than a whole group approach. I then take that information and use it as a whole group teaching tool. I also use assessments such as tests and quizzes to monitor understanding and request students retake tests and quizzes when they are unsuccessful.

When they retake I encourage them to see me for additional assistance prior to the retake.

In this example, the mentor explained the process, the rationale for the process, and how the information gained can be used to improve instruction and student learning.

In response to a pre-service teacher's reflection on maintaining a balance between controlling student behavior in the classroom and granting students more freedom, one mentor teacher explained,

I think that it is a balance that is different for everyone. My tolerance level is higher than most, so I can put up with more of what seems like chaos to others. Every teacher also has different things that will bother him or her. For example, I can't stand the use of the word "Gay." This is a word that students know that they can't use in my presence. Other teachers allow that one to pass where I can't tolerate it. This is in comparison to other rules that I might let pass because they don't bother me as much.

The mentor teacher's explanation helps frame the intern's understanding of the teacher's approach to classroom management and provides insight into his/her expectations.

Mentor teachers also provided information early on in their work with pre-service teachers when establishing expectations for lesson planning, school routines, and professional behaviors.

I know what my teacher expects from me because in the beginning of my internship we sat down and talked about what I would be in charge of, how she would like to see my plans, when she would like to see them and about her behavior management plan. [She] also provided me with a list of expectations on the first day and a chart mapping out exactly what I am in charge of each week. Since [she] gave me the information right away I was able to know what was expected of me, and follow through.

This direct sharing of expectations made it easier for the preservice teacher to understand his/her role in the classroom, and how he/she could support the existing structure of the classroom.

In one instance, a mentor teacher resorted to a more direct approach to reinforce the intern's expected behaviors and outcomes.

Lesson planning is essential to your success in the classroom. Being prepared is important for both the educator and the student. If the educator is not prepared students notice this and lose respect for the teacher and develop these bad habits that are set by his or her educator. As a new educator you can become overwhelmed by being in front of the class and it is easy to lose focus by questions or anything else that may happen. Having notes written out or prepared ahead of

time with examples helps increase student learning and keeps one from losing focus on the direction the lesson needs to be going.

In this instance, the mentor teacher outlined potential real-world outcomes associated with the intern's behavior and provided specific suggestions for addressing the area of concern in a respectful and non-judgmental manner.

Mentor teachers also provided pre-service teachers with examples from their own experiences explaining how they handled similar situations in the past. For example one mentor wrote, "For those students who need the extra challenge, I always provide a higher level choice on assignments. I also speak with students individually and make recommendations or use higher level questioning techniques that will stretch their abilities." Another mentor teacher said, "Flexibility is a skill that has developed out of necessity...I always over plan for a class session, knowing that there is always tomorrow." In both entries, mentor teachers elaborated upon interns' reflections and provided specific examples of how similar situations had been addressed.

For pre-service teachers demonstrating limited effort to improve, or a lack of reflection, more direct strategies (Reimer, 1999) were used, such as giving directions (i.e., offering detailed instructions, but encouraging greater self-direction) or providing information (i.e., relating information to relevant theory). For example, one mentor teacher frequently used a strategy of referring not to theory, but rather to 'what we as educators are expected to do/know/demonstrate.' The mentor use phrasing like, "As an educator..." and "We expect our students to be prepared when they enter our classrooms and the same should be expected of us as educators." By referring to the intern as an educator and using language indicating the intern is an education professional, the mentor teacher set up clear expectations and tied the intern's behaviors to expectations of the profession.

In all these examples, it is apparent that pre-service teachers and mentors felt comfortable observing, reflecting, and communicating about their experiences in the classroom. Mentor teachers utilized several indirect and a few direct strategies to help scaffold and support pre-service teachers' learning and on-going development in a safe, supportive, and non-threatening manner.

The data revealed that mentor teachers utilized several of Reiman's (1999) seven interaction patterns, most frequently using acknowledging and clarifying ideas, providing information, and praising or encouraging. Less often, mentor teachers engaged in giving directions. In only one case questioning was utilized to prompt inquiry. Addressing problems was not a category of response pattern utilized by the mentor teachers in this study. The closest one mentor teacher came to this type of response was to provide detailed directions and an explanation of her expectations of the intern.

Conclusions and Implications for Practice

Identifying the interaction patterns and nature of guided support being provided to pre-service teachers through reflective dialogue journals, and whether or not mentor teachers are attending to pre-service teachers' development using a reflective framework, allows researchers to design and provide targeted professional development for mentor teachers. This enables mentor teachers to be better prepared to provide developmentally-appropriate mentoring and targeted feedback to their pre-service teachers.

For instance, mentor teachers in this study utilized three of the four interaction response patterns Reiman (1999) identified as indirect (accepting feelings, praising or encouraging, acknowledging and clarifying ideas). Only one teacher utilized the indirect approach, prompting inquiry. As this was a surprising finding, yet not inconsistent with data gathered in the larger study, the researchers are developing recommendations and materials to assist mentor teachers develop skills in utilizing a broad range of questioning techniques to enhance reflection and development of their mentees.

Interestingly, mentor teachers in this study mainly utilized only one of Reiman's direct interaction response patterns (providing information) and in only one instance utilized giving directions and responding to problems. It may be that the nature of the prompts did not provide an opportunity for mentor teachers to use more direct approaches—having to respond to problems. In the individual interviews conducted as part of the larger study, mentor teachers reported having direct face-to-face conversations with pre-service teachers, as opposed to employing journaling as a strategy to discuss problematic situations. Frequently, university supervisors were called in to be part of these conversations and to help mediate difficult conversations. Typically, these situations relate to a lack of professional behaviors exhibited by the pre-service teacher (i.e., inappropriate dress, being prepared and on time).

The Forum for Education and Democracy (2009) recommended that in order to create an educational system for the 21st century, investments must be made in teaching. One recommendation was for the federal government to support mentoring for all beginning teachers. The Forum stated that, “for \$500 million annually, a federal program that matches state and local investments in mentoring programs for novices could ensure coaching support for every new teacher in the nation, as is provided in every high-achieving nation as a matter of course” (p. 4). With the initiation of Ohio's 4-year teacher residency program, a reflective dialogue journal between new teachers and mentors and coaches provides an alternative avenue for mentoring, and an alternate mode of communication that is respectful of the fact that teachers already have full teaching days with little time for collaboration and consultation.

Given that more than half of the states are implementing some form of induction program for all beginning teachers, it is critical to have easy-to-use, evidence-based tools with demonstrated effectiveness that can be incorporated into mentoring

and coaching programs at both the pre-service and in-service levels. Findings from this study contribute to the body of evidence that can inform policy-making at both the state and district level.

Lally and Veleba (2000) report that journals allow supervisors of language pre-service teachers to monitor the impact of affective variables in the teaching situation. If shared with university supervisors and teacher educators, reflective dialogue journals can guide discussions during internship seminars, and contribute to curriculum adjustments responding to pre-service teachers' on-going needs.

In a related study on mentoring conducted by two authors of the present study, many mentor teachers report they mentor pre-service teachers as a way to ‘give back’ to the profession. In a case study of eight mentor teachers, Koerner (1992) found that having a student teacher/professional intern in the classroom interrupted instruction, interfered with the mentor teacher's relationship with his/her students, and disrupted classroom routines. However, in the same study, teachers reported benefits of having an opportunity to co-teach with another adult, and to learn new strategies. Finally, the teachers reported that having a student teacher was ‘hard work’ and the supervision “added another responsibility to an already busy day” (p. 6).

Given the current demands being placed on educators, there is a need not only for support of pre-service teachers for purposes of training and retention, but also innovative and time-saving ways for mentors and coaches to provide mentoring and support. Dialogue journals can meet this need whether they are done in a traditional paper and pencil format, electronic, such as web-logs or blogs (Killeavy & Moloney, 2010), in an online mentoring forum (Gareis & Nussbaum-Beach, 2007), or via email or social media (Risser, 2013). In fact, some participants in the current study elected to carry out their journaling via email and kept electronic records of their correspondence to share with the researchers at the conclusion of the project.

The goal of providing research evidence for the effectiveness of low-cost, easy-to-implement mentoring tools that support experienced teachers in the mentoring of new teachers continues to be an on-going imperative with the high attrition rates in the teaching force, particularly in rural and low resourced districts. Research on using reflective dialogue journals with more participants in a different setting than the current study, such as urban schools, may further validate the current study and improve the generalizability of the results. As educators in schools and higher education institutions, we must work together to provide support and professional development for new teachers so as to ensure that students are provided with highly qualified, well-prepared and competent teachers. ^{SUP}

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Appendix A. Dialogue Journal Prompts

Week 1: Managing the classroom	What does your Cooperating Teacher do to prevent behavior problems in the classroom? How does he/she respond to repeated misbehaviors? Are there any behaviors that you felt needed to be addressed that seemingly went “unattended” by the Cooperating Teacher? What are some strategies you have developed from these observations? Provide specifics in your response/reflection. Why do you think he/she does this?
Week 2: Creating your map	What does your Cooperating Teacher expect from you in terms of 1) lesson planning, 2) professionalism, 3) preparation, 4) classroom management, 5) other? How do you know?
Week 3: Building connections	What does your Cooperating Teacher do to build relationships, connect, and get to know the students in the classroom in terms of: 1) each student’s cultural background, 2) what motivates individual students, 3) how to engage individual students, 4) monitoring individual student’s understanding? Be specific in providing evidence for each of these areas.
Week 4: Showing the passion	How does your Cooperating Teacher demonstrate his/her enthusiasm for the content? Give specific examples and students’ reactions for each example.
Week 5: Thinking on your feet	How does your Cooperating Teacher model flexibility in the lesson? Accommodating for: 1) unexpected interruptions, 2) teachable moments, 3) ‘deer in the headlights’ look, 4) need to re-teach, 5) need to challenge and provide opportunities for higher order thinking/skills.
Week 6: Dealing with dilemmas	Describe in detail a ‘dilemma’ that has occurred during your internship. A dilemma can be any difficult or perplexing situation or problem: 1) How did the dilemma emerge or develop? 2) How did you respond to the dilemma? 3) What other ways might you have dealt with the dilemma?

Appendix B. Dialogue Journal Codes and Code Families

<i>Classroom Management</i>	<i>Teaching Practices</i>	<i>Professionalism</i>	<i>Mentoring Strategy</i>
Proactive	Conferencing	Explicit expectations	Modeling
Prevention	Engaging lessons	Demonstrate passion	Providing reassurance
“With-it-ness”	Content Standards	Stay current	“Bag of Tricks”
Teach expectations	Lesson planning	Developing confidence	Sharing resources
Explicit expectations	Preparedness/Over planning		Advice/Suggestions
Picking your battles	Parental involvement		Supportive
Dealing with interruptions	Student involvement		Positive reinforcement
	Real-world connections		Monitoring learning
	Differentiation		Explaining/Clarifying
	Sharing learning goals		Providing examples

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