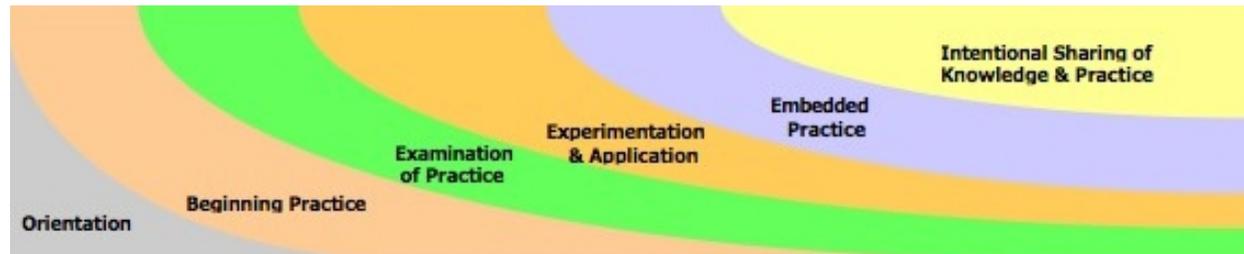


MENTORING MOMENTS: PRACTICAL TOOLS FOR MENTORS

Utilizing Scaling Questions in Debriefing Conversations



Opportunities for Beginning Teachers to reflect on practice and debrief with mentors can be powerful learning for both parties. One approach to debriefing conversations is “scaling questions” adapted from the solution – focussed conversation work of [Nancy McConkey](#).

What is powerful about this tool is not only that variety of mentoring contexts within which it can be applied but also the underlying assumptions described below.

Attributes Based Approach

A purposeful seeking out of strengths is at the heart of this idea. Often, the person you are mentoring has given their challenges considerable thought prior to speaking with you.

Islands of Competence

By asking about the positive things you ensure the conversation begins with a success. Even a “1” is better than a “0!”

Ownership resides with the Beginning Teacher

Your impression is set aside as ultimately the Beginning Teacher will be the one implementing the ideas in their classroom.

Flexibility of Stance & Role

As a skilled mentor you may choose to continue in the coaching stance or shift to consultant or collaborator, based on the needs of the person you are debriefing with.

Scaling Questions Conversation Map

- On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the worst morning you’ve had and 10 being the best, how was this morning for you?
- Oh a <e.g. 6> - What made it a 6?
- How might you bump it up a notch to a 7? (specific ideas)
- Continue with Coaching stance or shift to Consultant or Collaborator based on needs

Don’t like Numbers?

For some, applying a quantitative number to an experience may not feel comfortable. If that’s the case, the initial scaling question can be simply adapted as in the example below:

- *Thinking about both the worst morning you’ve ever had and the best one; how was this morning for you?*
- *Oh..the morning was “fine” – Fine sounds better than so so...what made it fine?*
- *How might you bump it up to “very fine” (specific ideas)*
- *Continue with Coaching stance or shift to Consultant or Collaborator based on needs*

At first, scaling questions may feel a bit like following a script but over time this tool can simply be embedded into a mentor’s repertoire of learning – focussed conversation strategies.



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More Practical Mentoring Strategies

In her book *Being an Effective Mentor* Kathleen Feeney Jonson shares her research about what specific strategies or actions mentors felt were most helpful to beginning teachers. The chart below aligns Jonson's findings with our NTIP context and provides "real world" examples of how mentors can provide meaningful support.

Mentoring Strategy	NTIP Mentoring Context
• Direct Assistance	• School Orientation / Consultant Stance
• Demonstration Teaching	• Observation / Debrief / Action Plan
• Observation & Conferencing	• Scaling Questions / Coaching Stance
• Informal Contact	• Building Trust & Rapport / Listening
• Collaboratively Assessing Student Work	• Moderated Marking / Collaborative Stance
• Role Modeling	• Interaction with Colleagues / Students
• Assistance with Professional Growth Plan	• Individual NTIP Strategy Form

Learning from Mentoring

One of the most powerful potential outcomes of this "intentional sharing of knowledge and practice" is the learning of mentors themselves. Here are three emerging learning themes that NTIP Mentors have expressed as a result of their learning from and with Beginning Teachers:

- **Increasing Reflection on Current Practice** – *Mentoring has opened me up to the possibility of growth and to the potential new ideas.... this has helped me become more reflective about my own practice.*
- **Fostering Inspirational Connections with Colleagues** – *Mentoring has improved my relationships with other teachers (not just new teachers). I've become more aware of the value of colleagues, and more encouraged to share.*
- **Impacting on Teaching Practice and Learning of Students** – *Learning about the importance of listening and coaching didn't just help me support Beginning Teachers, it helped me become a better mentor for my students!*

Ideas and Resources to Support Implementation

	Connect	Register for Upcoming Adobe Connect Professional Learning for Board NTIP Teams <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feb 23 – Learning at School: Principal Engagement in NTIP and TPA https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/NTIPPrincipalEngagement
	Listen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online to the Practical Tools for Mentors SlideCast http://conn-o.osapac.org/mentoringmomentsfebruary
	Join	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NTIP e-Community and collaborate with your colleagues from across Ontario https://community.elearningontario.ca