

# MENTORING NEW COLLEAGUES

## How You Can Help MNSOTA's Work With New String Teachers

by Mary Schaefle

*The United States spends approximately \$12,500 on every teacher who leaves. That equals \$2.6 billion every year for teacher attrition. ("Tapping the Potential Retaining and Developing High-Quality New Teachers." Alliance for Excellent Education. <http://www.all4ed.org>)*

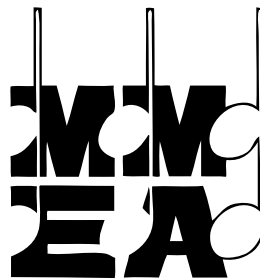
This past December, a task force was convened on mentoring with representatives from music education organizations across Minnesota. MNSOTA had a strong presence on this task force, with Lori Carlson (Winona Schools) and Mark Gitch (Wayzata Schools) providing input. This issue has brought so many people and organizations together in a significant collaborative effort. The task force's purpose has been to work together toward a single goal: find the best ways to induct and mentor new music colleagues to help them improve teaching and learning in their classrooms and to keep them in the teaching profession.

The task force has identified two pilot programs for this next year.

- A one-on-one mentoring program modeled on cognitive coaching. The mentor acts as a job-alike coach. Because some music positions, and particularly string positions, are limited within a district, the mentor may work with a new teacher outside of his/her district. A limited pilot program with 15 mentors and their mentees begins in the fall of 2006.
- A Web Resource Board to put teachers in touch with "advisers" who can answer specific questions that are often challenges to young teachers. The concept is to have a group of experienced teachers who can help new teachers with some quick guidance or suggestions. These advisors make a commitment to return phone calls or emails within a

couple of days, and we ask the young teachers to remember that no one teacher has all of the answers for every situation!

What can you do to help? First of all, thank the mentors that made a difference in your own teaching. Second, we are searching for string educators who you believe would be great advisors. MNSOTA will ensure that the potential advisor agrees to act in this capacity – we are simply



looking for recommendations from you. Please email Connie Aiken at [connie.aiken@moundviewschools.org](mailto:connie.aiken@moundviewschools.org) with your advisor recommendations.

Here is a beginning list of topics that has been generated. If you think of other challenges you remember from your early years of teaching, please pass those along as well.

- Help! I don't have any methods books. Where do I start?
- How do I tune 30-40 instruments at the beginning of class?
- In my high school, the big focus

is concert after concert. How do I do assessment and grading in this situation?

- How do I work *with* the band teacher (and all of the music teachers)?
- I have mostly beginners and a few students who have taken lessons for years. How do I keep all of them challenged?
- How do I do a quick repair on an instrument?
- How do I find really good literature for my middle level orchestra?
- How do I find the private teachers? I'm new in town.
- What curriculum/lessons should be focused on performance skills?
- What curriculum/lessons should be focused on non-performance skills?
- How do I work with the WBP? I'm a string player!
- How do I build a relationship with my principal? With parents?
- I'm running from school to school and having a hard time keeping all of my records and papers organized. Do you have any suggestions?

There is an African proverb that has been popularized – "It takes a village to raise a child." Well, it takes a community of string and orchestra educators to help the new teacher succeed. We don't live in the same village, but we can reach out to new teachers in our districts and across the state. Having your help in building this list of experienced "advisors" and topics is a great way to support our community.

*Mary Schaefle is director of MMEA. †*