



# MENTOR'S DESK

## Mentoring – A New and Solid Approach

by Jane Linde Capistran — MNSOTA Mentorship Advisor

In early September I had the pleasure and privilege of sitting down with colleague and friend Denese Odegaard, Fargo Public Schools' Performing Arts Curriculum Specialist and the new National President of NafME, to discuss the music mentoring program in the Fargo Public Schools and soon to be on the frontlines of NafME.

As Mentorship Advisor of MNSOTA, I had a lot to learn about the most recent developments in mentoring a new teacher. The Fargo Schools have incorporated specific requirements for both the mentee and mentor that meet with the philosophy of their mentoring program. Denese said many of these guidelines were implemented with the help of the **New Teacher Center** (<https://newteachercenter.org>) based in California. State funding has allowed mentors to participate in an extensive program (held in state locations) required for any Fargo teacher who wishes to be a mentor.

But we got back to the question—why do we mentor? Not only are we providing a support system for our first-year teachers, but also we allow them to think through solutions, listen and channel their ideas, letting them make decisions. With this mentoring, teachers have proven to be more successful and stay in their teaching vocation longer. A mentor should allow them to develop their ideas, and at the same time meet them halfway with our experience.

As an example of the mentor/mentee responsibilities of the Fargo teacher:

1. September—meet with mentee and

2. Observations are made weekly September through November, with pre and post briefings.
3. Mentee observes other teachers for a total of 6 hours by January.
4. January—a review of goals.
5. February—videotape teaching.
6. March and April—weekly observations made.
7. May—Mentee observes other teachers for a total of 6 hours.
8. Analysis of the student work (selecting one area e.g. rhythm, note reading, pitch)
9. Final reflection
10. Attend 3 or more New Teacher Meetings throughout the year.

Denese stressed an important part of mentoring in this new style is the type of conversation that must develop between the mentor and mentee. “In the olden days” it was typical for the experienced teacher to dictate to the first year teacher—simply telling them what to program, how to teach. We now want to assess the needs of the new teacher by making connections, building trust, recognizing what is working and sharing in their successes. They must identify their challenges, but we guide them with insight, allowing them to solve the situation.

It's critical to assist them in focusing on their specific tasks as well. A district will have its own Teaching Standards, professional goals and assessment tools—so we can provide guidance in their familiarity of

these areas. And of course, we can always recommend great repertoire and how to teach a shift!

NafME is also moving towards a new idea, using an online platform that will connect expert teachers with teachers who are looking for specific content that will assist in their teaching, calling this “Topic Experts.” Look for this in the future.

As we go into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we need our new teachers to stay in the profession, and only by our guidance and mentorship will we succeed. I urge you all to think about the great responsibility of mentoring, and also the great rewards.

Interesting data about mentoring:

NafME's Society for Music Teacher Education Supporting Music Teachers ASPA  
<http://smte.us/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Mentoring-Best-Practices-Presentation-NAfME-2016.pdf>

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