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The Need for Heroes

In my workshops around the country, I ask educators to remember and give some thought to memorable teachers from their past who alternately pushed and pulled, expected and inspected, stood their ground when it came to quality student work, and accepted no excuses on the road to developing talent, skills, and young minds. Having instructed workshop participants—themselves often new or aspiring teachers—to describe their teacher heroes, I listen closely and never fail to note the passion with which they tell their stories. In their discussions, they will invariably tick off a list of characteristics, beliefs, and actions that placed these remembered and revered teachers in the top tier of educators. Listening to these workshop participants share, I am always reminded that they understand that teachers matter, and the best teachers matter most.

Schools can be new and expensive; they can boast the latest in technological advances; they can be beautifully landscaped, ecologically sound, and replete with resources and materials—yet, as Whitaker (2004) reminds us, “without great teachers, the school lacks the keystone of greatness” (p. 9). And, good teachers *do* make a difference for students. In an analysis of studies in several states and districts, Haycock (1998) reaffirms what has always made sense to me: Effective teachers get more out of students than less effective teachers, and the gap widens with low achievers. In Tennessee, in 1996, research done by Sanders and Rivers (Haycock, 1998) showed that the most effective teachers showed student-improvement gains of 39 percentage points more than the least effective teachers when working

with low-achieving students (Haycock, p. 3). In looking at the research on teacher effectiveness, Haycock also concluded that while content knowledge is critical, especially at the secondary level, it is most effective when combined with teaching skills (p. 6). A good teacher induction program ought to combine professional development focused on improvement of teaching skills with college courses or other training geared toward improving content knowledge.

In almost four decades in education, I have come to the conclusion that there are (at least) nine qualities shared by highly effective teachers. Having observed hundreds of classrooms over the past 16 years, these qualities seem to be present in classrooms where achievement and morale are high, where time and energy are not wasted, and where students respect their teachers and enjoy coming to school. In less-effective classrooms, these qualities are often lacking; and in those cases, the body language of students—and often teachers—runs the gamut from indifference to outright hostility. Referencing great teachers and highlighting what makes them powerful role models is useful in demonstrating for new—or veteran—teachers that to which they can aspire.

In the next few pages, I'll explore these nine qualities. At the same time, I'll begin to look at new teacher induction and mentoring in the context of these qualities by offering suggestions to administrators and mentors alike. I certainly don't claim this list is in any way complete, but I do believe that exceptional teachers

1. Avoid the blame game and instead focus on affecting learning;
2. Anticipate what *might* happen, plan ahead, and work at perfecting procedures individually and collectively when possible;
3. Learn to listen, build quality relationships, and enjoy coming to school every day;
4. Understand that the students need to do 80% of the work done in the classroom;
5. Function as process facilitators rather than purveyors of information;
6. Work on improving student performance, letting the tests take care of themselves;
7. Provide a consistently calm and steady keel on which students can rely;

8. Commit to a personal and professional continuous-improvement process; and
9. Enlist humor as a motivator and encourage much laughter in the classroom.

Avoid the blame game and instead focus on affecting learning

I can remember entering many a faculty lounge in my earliest years as a teacher, and as much as possible, I avoided long sojourns there because of the negative commentary that (along with the smoke) seemed to permeate the atmosphere. On occasion, I fell prey to playing that game—blaming the parents, the students, the curriculum, the textbooks, the administration, and (always) the lack of time. The irony of spending my free time *complaining that there was not enough time* escaped me in those early days in the profession.

Jenkins (2003), says that blaming fixes nothing, allows those in charge to escape responsibility (as everyone tries to fix blame on someone or something else), and perhaps worst of all, it “stops the search for underlying causes,” meaning that what needs fixed remains broken, and badly needed progress is either slowed or stopped in its tracks (p. xxvi). In a collaborative and risk-free school culture, where teacher leaders are free—and indeed encouraged—to pursue practical solutions, no one has time for playing the blame game because they are too busy brainstorming ideas, solving problems, and improving instruction. Those school environments that are essentially isolationist and where a top-down management style is the rule, teachers may be left to solve their own problems (without the capacity to do that effectively) or simply ignore them—and play the blame game day after day.

Mr. Crandall, the fictitious principal whom we met in the Prologue, long ago abandoned isolationism and a top-down management style for one of collaboration, experimentation, and innovation. Trey, along with others who served as mentors, knew they could experiment and take risks based on a set of core principles in operation all year long. The fear that can permeate an autocratic school-house environment and impede growth was markedly absent in that middle school. Shellie and the other new teachers were fortunate to be part of a collegial staff that included support personnel like teacher assistants, office staff, and custodians. It was the custodial staff in Shellie’s school that readily agreed to prepare her classroom first, along with those of the other new teachers, so that they could use July and early August to get everything arranged. Mr. Crandall knew that

teachers who could get a good deal of the logistical preparation out of the way early on were much more likely to enter the school year in a positive frame of mind.

Teachers are much more likely to complain on a regular basis if the overall climate of the schoolhouse is negative and if regular support is lacking. New teachers entering this environment may begin to identify with the “negaholics” in the building, especially if October and November bring a deterioration of discipline in the new teacher’s classroom. Lacking a strong and effective support system, new teachers may try to find someone to blame for their predicament, or they may simply get so discouraged they leave the profession early.

Administrators would do well to make certain that mentors are chosen from among the ranks of positive teachers; mentors should not be chosen simply because they know the subject matter or because they have been in the school a long time and therefore know all the ins and outs of the building and culture. Administrators should also create an atmosphere where positive behavior is encouraged *and modeled at the top*. The object here is to swell the ranks of those who refuse to blame others and instead take responsibility for their own actions. One way to decrease the number of those who play the blame game is to spend a good deal of time with the faculty searching for root causes of problems and then solving those problems as part of a regular and predictable continuous-improvement process.

*Anticipate what might happen, plan ahead,
and work at perfecting procedures individually
and collectively when possible*

Great teachers do not waste time, nor do they react in an unpredictable fashion to what happens in the classroom. The best teachers I have observed over the years are those who take the first week of school to turn procedures into routines. Many superb teachers I know refuse to hand out textbooks or other subject-area materials until students practice over and over having structured and purposeful conversations with everyone in the class. Those teachers practice bringing students back to them with a visual signal until the kids have it down to a few seconds. In those classrooms, procedures for setting up, cleaning up, and lining up are practiced until they become routine. Before anything is said about history, reading, math, or science, students are primed and ready to function as members of an efficient and productive classroom culture in which they learn they can share and contribute constructively in an emotionally safe

environment. This kind of procedural consistency can often be a powerful part of the total collective—and collaborative—school environment.

In 2008, I visited an outstanding school, Sanders Corner Elementary, located in Loudoun County, Virginia. While walking through the hallways with Principal Kathy Hwang, I observed groups of students walking quickly, quietly, and safely from one room to another. This procedure of moving in an orderly fashion was in evidence no matter where we traveled in the school for over thirty minutes.

This did not just happen, and it did not come about as a result of a memo or edict. Sanders Corner is a school with an active and effective leadership team dedicated to continuous improvement. Hwang related that in a brainstorming session concerning what could be improved, the teachers suggested the hallways were consistently noisy—something that had a negative effect on classes all over the building. Hwang did not *prescribe* anything by way of a cure; she simply asked the teachers to consider what they thought might be done about it. She realized that by reflecting on both the problem and possible solutions, her staff was fully capable of solving the problem on their own.

They came up with the idea of instituting a schoolwide procedure for making the hallways quiet, something that involved practicing walking quietly in the hallways for many days. On occasion, teachers would hear talking in the ranks, and they would simply turn around, stop the students with a hand signal, and point back toward the room. The students would turn around and go back, starting over again—this time quietly. Teachers did not shout, complain, or scold. They simply took the students back to the room, doing it all over again until they got it right. What I observed was the result of many weeks of work as part of an overall commitment to respectful behavior in the school.

Great teachers—and *all* the teachers at Sanders Corner Elementary—understand that positive and predictable results come from planning and thinking about what *could* go wrong; considering in advance what *might* happen; and in the case of this faculty, working together to find a common solution to what they agreed was a considerable—and common—problem. This requires frontloading, and while some teachers may come to this kind of proactive planning instinctively, others can come to it in their turn when collaboration and innovation are the norm in the schoolhouse. Sanders Corner principal, Kathy Hwang, and her entire staff work together in an atmosphere where the blame game is not acceptable and collaboration is the norm.

New teachers need to understand that the process horse comes before the content cart, and administrators and mentors can work with protégés to frontload their own classroom system with solid procedures, rules, and beliefs that can jump start a great year. This is why Trey and Mr. Crandall began to work with Shellie immediately; Trey met with her soon after she signed her contract, and the summer became far less apprehensive for Shellie and the other three new teachers because administrators, teammates, and her mentor, Trey, took it upon themselves to make her feel at home and anticipate questions and potential problems well in advance of the first week of school for students. Trey was a fantastic teacher, and he understood the value of frontloading the process with proper planning, but it was the *system* at the school that best served Shellie. Trey could have retired at any time, but the *system* at that school would take over and assist Shellie in her first years in the profession.

Once again, while great teachers may come to this frontloading process naturally, every teacher can work toward being proactive, using the summer to think about what *might* happen and what *might* arise over the course of the school year. Mentors can help new teachers reflect on the coming year as a way of surfacing issues that can be part of the planning process necessary to a smooth-functioning classroom.

***Learn to listen, build quality relationships,
and enjoy coming to school every day***

Along the road in my professional journey, I had occasion to serve as a salesman and sales manager for a school yearbook printing company. On one rather memorable (in the way painful experiences can be memorable) occasion, I had spent the better part of 40 minutes presenting the highlights of our program to a school principal and his yearbook adviser. I had prepared what I perceived was a superb presentation that would captivate and engage them, and ultimately result in my getting the contract for the following year. I had spent a good deal of time the night before constructing a great plan that could not help but succeed, and I let it rip for those 40 minutes. When I was done I was exhausted, but confident I had made my case.

While I put away my displays and sample books, the principal and yearbook adviser went to his office to talk it over, and in a few minutes the adviser came back, thanked me for my presentation, and said the principal would like to see me. I walked confidently down the hall, and his secretary took me in to meet with him, shutting the door on her way out. He began by saying, “You did *not* get

the contract for next year, but I like you, so I'm going to tell you why and give you some advice." He went on to say that in those 40 minutes all I did was talk. I did not try to get to know him or his yearbook adviser. I did not even ask *what they wanted* in a yearbook program. I had made no attempt to build any kind of relationship. Finally, there were a great many things in what I had offered that they could not afford and/or did not want, but I had not taken the time to find out what they *did* want or need. In short, I simply did not listen. I did not ask questions. I made no attempt at building a relationship. *I just talked for 40 minutes.*

I learned a valuable lesson from that experience relatively early in my sales career, and the lesson carried over to my reentry into teaching a few years later: Even the best-designed lesson plan can't overcome the absence of relationship building, and this applies in teaching as it applies in sales. To put this in very practical terms, no one will buy what you're selling *until they buy you*. Salespeople and teachers who ignore this basic principle will see otherwise beautifully constructed plans fail for a lack of planning in the all-important building of meaningful relationships. Part of putting the process horse before the content cart involves foundational relationship building that ensures students are in the right frame of mind for the content they know will follow. Great teachers learn to do far more listening than talking.

Bondy and Ross (2008) affirm that, especially when it comes to high-poverty schools, well-designed lesson plans are not enough if students are not engaged (p. 54). Rather than waiting and hoping relationships magically develop in the classroom, great teachers build relationships deliberately and work to get to know students on a daily basis and in many seemingly small, but effective, ways: "A smile, a hand on the shoulder, the use of a student's name, or a question that shows you remember something the student has mentioned—these small gestures do much to develop relationships" (Bondy & Ross, 2008, pp. 55–56).

The (relatively few) great teachers and professors from my past made the time to get to know me, and they paid attention to my talents and to what I enjoyed doing. These teachers stand out in my mind because they cared about me and demonstrated that with what they said and did; their actions supported their words. Mentors need to spend time with their protégés reflecting on the qualities of their own great teachers. It may be that these outstanding educators inspired the protégé to become a teacher in the first place. It is not difficult to imagine that what new teachers see in their heroes is that

to which they aspire. Uncovering those natural aspirations as part of a reflective process may well serve as a good starting point for mentors who desire to develop their own personal and professional relationship with the protégé looking to them for support. Mentors need to be as proactive in developing relationships with new teachers as new teachers are in developing relationships with the students in their care.

Over the years, I have seen enough negative teacher attitudes to convince me that negativity is as destructive as it is contagious. There are people who have the ability to drain a meeting or classroom of every positive aspect; I call them the negaholics. They drag themselves to school every day and admittedly (and vocally) wish they were somewhere else. The antidote to this malady is a schoolhouse climate that is pervasively and consistently positive; it is an environment that does not give in to the negaholics and eventually either changes them, neutralizes them, or chases them away.

New teachers need mentors who love coming to school every day; they need mentors who will help them learn to navigate *on their own* the somewhat rocky shoals of even the most positive school climate. Bluestein (2008) encourages teachers to develop a “self-caring behavior” that helps us “avoid or minimize our exposure to negative people, information, or influences” (p. 259). A new teacher who finds he or she has no way to deflect, deal with, or ignore these negative influences is in for a long school year and may enjoy coming to school less each day. Mentors can help novice teachers come up with a plan to stay positive (and effective) in the face of those who have become both negative (and ineffective) over the years.

***Understand that the students need to do
80% of the work done in the classroom***

No coach ever lectured his or her way to the big game on Friday night, and no player ever joined the basketball team to watch the coach . . . well . . . *coach*. The only way kids on a team are going to improve is to be part of an effective feedback loop. The coach models; the players *do*; the coach provides feedback; the players incorporate the feedback into a new level of doing; the coach provides more feedback—and both the individual players and the team improve as the learning curve moves inexorably in an upward direction. One of the best teachers I know uses this same feedback cycle with her fifth graders. She models, and then they *do*; she provides feedback, and they incorporate the feedback into a new level of doing. The beat goes on, the grades go up, and the kids . . . well . . . they love being in that classroom, and they are totally engaged.

My major in college was history, and my first teaching position was eighth-grade United States history. I was determined to display for those students the depth and breadth of my knowledge, not realizing that my job should have been to develop the depth and breadth of *their* thinking and knowledge. I lectured, showed educational videos and filmstrips, administered countless quizzes and tests, and gave them the benefit of my understanding of the subject area. I entertained, I explained, I elucidated, I assigned—in short, I did most of the work. They sat, they listened, they read out loud, they took notes, they smiled—and they went to a better place in their minds while I rattled on, oblivious to their lack of engagement.

In the faculty lounge the teachers, most of whom were doing most of the work, complained about the work ethic (or lack thereof) on the part of the students. It never occurred to us that we did not give them much to do; we did not give them a chance to explain, elucidate, entertain, infer, compare, contrast, give examples, or otherwise become involved in their own learning. In short, students learn more by being engaged in something than they do by simply watching teachers work. The great teachers understand this and engage students at every turn.

One of my favorite teachers was a sixth-grade language arts teacher who clearly understood that if we were to improve our writing skills we had to write. We wrote frequently, and we received mountains of feedback. We learned punctuation in the context of the sentences, paragraphs, essays, and poems we wrote. We used up tons of tablets and # 2 pencils—and we learned through doing. There were blackboards on three walls, and we were constantly on our feet practicing our writing skills while she provided individual feedback and encouragement. Each of us moved more or less quickly along the continuous-improvement highway, but in my case I discovered a love for words and a passion for the ways in which they wielded power in combination with one another. She modeled; then, she let us do what we needed to do in order to get better while providing practical and immediate feedback.

Students who are engaged in a task need feedback that is, according to Marzano, Pickering, and Pollock (2001), corrective in nature, that is, feedback that “provides students with an explanation of what they are doing that is correct and what they are doing that is not correct” (p. 96). It is by doing, getting feedback, redoing, getting feedback, and redoing that students make progress along their own continuous-improvement pathways. Mentors would do well to have their protégés reflect on the efficacy of student engagement with meaningful

work as opposed to the behavioral implications of having students disengaged (and disinterested?) in the classroom.

*Function as process facilitators
rather than purveyors of information*

Teachers in the industrial age were often one among a very few sources of information. The print resources of the school and local libraries, a personal set of encyclopedias (often woefully out of date), a textbook, and the classroom teacher provided the information base for students. One click of a computer mouse today can open the electronic doorways to a seemingly limitless amount of information on any subject imaginable. *Wikipedia*, the online encyclopedia, is constantly and instantly updated, and it is free. Teachers today have shifted from being one among a very few sources of *information* to helping students sort through and *make sense* of the mountainous amount of information to which they have immediate access at all hours of the day or night.

Today's teachers need to be process facilitators, according to Allen (2010), giving students strategies for "coping with large amounts of information," and helping them uncover and learn "key ideas" on the road to developing ways to do this on their own throughout the course of their lives (p. 94). In this era of information overload, helping students deal with this involves not only helping them locate key ideas, but separating opinions from facts, making critical decisions, solving problems, and finding their way in a global economy. Doing all this requires critical thinking skills that great teachers of any era instill and develop in their students; skills that will help them survive and thrive in today's world.

One obstacle to dealing with this information-rich age as a teacher is that the teaching methods of the industrial age (lecture, videos, filmstrips, worksheets) have survived the transition because tradition is a powerful force. New teachers who were lectured to in high school and college may adopt this as their main delivery method with students used to rapid transitions on television and in video games. Images on TV change every few seconds, and students, according to Allen (2010), "developed shorter attention spans but increased their abilities to multitask and rapidly shift topics" (pp. 29–30). Today's highly effective teachers have adapted their delivery methods to this new reality, and mentors need to reflect with novice teachers on the efficacy of shifting tasks and activities frequently, perhaps every few minutes. Short periods of lecture can be followed by student-to-student conversations on the topic, and short video clips followed by

a discussion can replace the showing of entire 30-minute segments. Worksheets can be replaced by a visual display on the screen, with students in trios or quartets discussing that information on their feet. Mentors can arrange for protégés to observe classrooms in which teaching and learning have come together in the capable hands of teachers who have adapted to the new reality.

*Work on improving student performance,
letting the tests take care of themselves*

We have become a nation of testers, and we as educators too often succumb to what Bluestein (2008) calls the “obsession for testing” and “lust for high scores” that has become pervasive in the United States (p. 269). Fear of not reaching a benchmark on state testing drives schools and teachers to teach to the test and sometimes reduce physical activity in favor of seat time. Teachers who fear falling behind in the race to “cover the curriculum” choose pacing over depth and form over substance. That race to the state-testing finish line may exhaust teachers and students alike, and it can frustrate everyone in the process.

The very best teachers I have seen over the years concentrate on steady improvement over time, with feedback and formative assessments providing students with critical information about what they are doing correctly and incorrectly along the way. These teachers do not worry about the state tests. They understand that students who enjoy coming to school every day and are not afraid to take risks in a safe classroom environment will take care of the end-of-year or end-of-course tests. The great teachers understand it is the kids that need to do most of the work while they facilitate process and provide feedback in the name of continuous improvement. In the other two volumes in this series, *The Active Classroom* (2008) and *The Active Teacher* (2010), I have mentioned Cindy Rickert, a superb fifth-grade teacher. Her students actually look forward to the tests at the end of the year, and they can’t wait to see the results—no wonder, because for three years in a row all her students passed the state writing test . . . and hers is the inclusion team!

A sports team that is well led in practice by a coach who understands the continuous-improvement process will win its share of games—without worrying overmuch about the games or their results. Games are won in practice, and tests are passed because great teachers know how to engage and involve students in their own learning . . . and ably facilitate that process over time. Once again, mentors need to provide opportunities for their protégés to see teachers

who do this well inside and outside their own schools or districts. Find those teachers, and arrange for protégés to spend a day observing how those powerful and effective teachers do what they do.

Provide a consistently calm and steady keel on which students can rely

Every teacher in the country ought to have these two phrases of Dr. Fred Jones (2007) engraved above the classroom door, painted on each floor tile, and inserted at the bottom of every lesson plan:

**CALM IS STRENGTH.
UPSET IS WEAKNESS.**

Great teachers understand that staying calm in the face of adversity is a definite advantage for a teacher. Jones (2007) puts it this way, “You will never be able to control a classroom until you are first *in control of yourself*” (p. 180). Teacher mentors need to spend time on this with novice teachers, once again reflecting on classroom situations where teachers were either in or out of control as a matter of course.

I had occasion once to visit a classroom where the teacher closed the classroom door and verbally berated the students with considerable force, blaming them for something even I could see was the teacher’s fault and not theirs. The rules posted in the classroom called for mutual respect, something that appeared to be lacking, as evidenced by this temper tantrum on the part of the teacher. In such an atmosphere, nothing much happens by way of improvement or learning. I have also been in classrooms where a pervasive calm and safe climate served as the perfect medium for progress. Taking risks or surfacing curiosity was possible in those classrooms in a way that would have been impossible in that first—and completely dysfunctional—classroom.

Schools that have professional libraries (usually within the school library) should stock them with books that deal with creating school and classroom environments conducive to learning, safe for the risk takers, and encouraging to the merely curious among students and faculty alike. The months prior to the start of the school year are perfect for conversation and reflection among all the mentors and protégés, and a well-appointed professional-development library might be a great place to meet and begin the relationship-building process. Again, mentors and administrators can make arrangements for new teachers to see cool, calm, and effective teachers in action.

*Commit to a personal and professional
continuous-improvement process*

Teachers are in the continuous-improvement business. The object is to help Eddie do something today he could not do yesterday, and to assist Eddie and his classmates in their own steady and relentless progress along many fronts. Working with students to set and achieve goals constitutes an important part of their continuous-improvement journey, and teachers need to be relentless in that pursuit of excellence. Students and parents, on the other hand, have every right to expect that teachers be fully committed to their own continuous-improvement efforts.

In our determination to get well when we are ill or stay well when we are healthy again, we enlist the support of medical professionals whom we trust to be current with the latest in medical knowledge and skills. We want our doctors to know everything there is to know about the human body, and we rely on them to avail themselves of every bit of professional development at their disposal. By the same token, students and parents have every right to expect that the teachers in whom they place the education of their children know as much as possible about how the brain operates as it pertains to learning. Since what science is discovering about how the brain functions grows at an ever-increasing rate, teachers and the administrators who support them need to put in place professional-development programs that will ultimately facilitate the intellectual growth and educational progress of students and teachers alike.

Mentors need to arrange for protégés to observe highly effective and successful teachers inside and outside their own buildings (and districts). New teachers need to be part of a collective effort at continuous improvement within the schoolhouse. Faculty meetings can move from being information dumps to becoming opportunities to work on instructionally related issues. Book clubs can help teachers stay abreast of the latest research in the field, and groups of teachers can look at assessment data with an eye toward improving instruction and closing gaps. New teachers who are part of a professional learning community early on will benefit by developing good habits early in their careers. For these less-experienced teachers, Hord and Sommers (2008) maintain, “the connectedness that grows out of studying, learning, and finding new ways to be effective will provide meaning for themselves personally and make a difference professionally” (p. 150).

In observing highly effective teachers in their classrooms, I have noticed that they are constantly trying new strategies and adjusting

old ones. One teacher regularly elicits the feedback of students after introducing something new in order to get their perspectives. Keeping what works, discarding what doesn't, and introducing new ideas into the mix can ensure that teachers and students consistently move forward in their own continuous-improvement model. While the best teachers seem to do this instinctively, helping novice teachers adopt a model for continuous improvement is something mentors and building administrators can and should do. A teacher who gets in the improvement habit early is going to need much less help or intervention later on in his career.

Enlist humor as a motivator and encourage much laughter in the classroom

My favorite college professor had an incredible sense of humor, and his lectures were replete with funny stories and asides that made us laugh . . . and encouraged us to listen lest we miss anything. A junior high school history teacher told terrible jokes. He knew they were terrible; we knew they were terrible; *he* knew that *we* knew they were terrible . . . and that was rather the point. We laughed—and groaned loudly as I recall—at each joke and somehow looked forward to the next one. Many teachers I have observed have demonstrated a marvelous ability to use self-deprecating humor that displayed a heaping helping of self-confidence.

I have seen some pretty tense classroom situations defused by laughter, and I have seen some classrooms where laughter is discouraged because it “takes away from the business at hand.” McCutcheon and Lindsey (2006) says that being humorous is not about telling jokes one after the other but is “simply a matter of creating an environment in which students are given permission to chuckle or chortle or even cackle” (p. 236). It turns out that chuckling, chortling, and cackling are healthy as well. According to Smith (2005), laughter has beneficial effects on blood pressure, depression, and cognition (p. 162). Smith says that “people are better able to deal with cognitive challenge

when they approach the challenge through shared laughter with others” (p. 162). Laughter is beneficial, then, on many levels, and mentors should work with protégés to encourage its use.

Administrators, official teacher mentors, and those who are

Mentor/Protégé Focus

No matter when teachers are hired, during the spring, summer, or just prior to the beginning of the new school year, teacher mentors need to make certain their protégés are provided with opportunities to observe veteran teachers who exemplify great teaching.

enlisted in the new-teacher induction process at the school level would do well to reflect on these (and other) qualities shared by highly effective teachers. There is one other thing teachers who embrace these nine qualities have in common—they get results in the way of performance and student satisfaction. New teachers should visit the classrooms of those teachers (anywhere they can be found) who demonstrate the best qualities and get the best results. In every school district there are teachers who have built into their classroom instruction and management system a continuous-improvement model capable of facilitating progress every year. Once the leadership team of a building identifies these outstanding teachers, the next step is to get new teachers (all teachers in fact) into those classrooms.

Final Thoughts

Any single person or team in charge of a districtwide or schoolwide new-teacher induction program should identify those teachers, principles, and qualities that together set the qualitative standard to which new teachers or even veterans new to the district or individual school should aspire. The qualities successfully internalized by highly effective teachers are well worth emulating. In Chapter 2, we'll explore what a powerful new-teacher induction program might look like before moving into the role of the teacher mentor in Chapter 3.

