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Only one in five teachers feels “very well prepared” to work in today’s classroom (NCES, 1999). One reason cited was the lack of opportunity for conferring with colleagues. Among teachers whose schools dedicate time for working with other teachers, 40% say it improves their teaching “a lot”, and another third say it improves their teaching “moderately” (NCES, 1999).

From this and other studies, teachers are telling us that collaboration and having time to work with others is important to them, their teaching, and ultimately our children. Mentoring was mentioned as one vehicle to develop these associations. Sadly, however, only 19% of the teachers said they had been formally mentored by another teacher. Of those, over 70% said once-a-week mentoring helped their teaching and professional growth “a lot” (NCES, 1999).

Currently, twenty-eight states and the District of Columbia have instituted some form of mentoring (Halford, 1999). Obviously, policies to establish mentoring programs have been and continue to become an important issue. The wave of teacher retirements, the public’s focus on educational quality, and the high attrition rate of new teachers have compelled legislators and the public to create induction programs to support new teachers.

Education organizations have responded with special interest groups on mentoring, numerous working sessions at annual conferences and thematic issues. As my five year-old son would say, “It’s hot hot hot!”

This special thematic issue of the *Midwest Education Researcher* focuses on mentoring in the Midwest. Members of MWERA from various states who have conducted research in mentoring and who have been involved either in planning, implementing or evaluating mentoring programs were asked to contribute. We have attempted to bring a diverse range of views regarding mentoring. Bainer describes her research where issues regarding mentoring in elementary school settings have emerged. Stinson looks at the impact of legislated mentoring programs in New Jersey

and their implications for Wisconsin’s newly mandated teacher licensing in which mentoring is required. Giebelhaus gives evidence regarding the impact of mentor training on beginning teachers in her study. Runyan looks at why it is important to have a clear framework in implementing mentor programs and the importance in assessing their effectiveness.

Stakeholders in mentoring have also been addressed in this issue. Brock analyzes the importance and impact of principals with regards to induction year programs. Bendixen-Noe describes issues facing teacher unions as they negotiate contracts in which mentoring has become a factor.

Finally, two articles deal with the role of universities and mentoring programs. Salzman gives details about a university course that was designed for mentors of beginning teachers. Bowman and Ward write about an award winning university/school partnership program focusing on mentoring based on researched effective pedagogical principles and the use of technology in that program.

We think you will find the articles presented, ones that will not only inform you, but may encourage you to look at the mentoring programs in your area. The impact of mentoring programs are far reaching. Ultimately, such programs should help our children reach appropriate learning goals by ensuring that highly qualified teachers are in their classrooms.

References

- Halford, J. M. (1999). Policies to support new teachers. *Educational Leadership*, 56(8), 85.
- National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). (1999). *Teacher quality: A report on teacher preparation and qualifications of public school teachers*. Washington, D.C.: author.

Editorial Note: This special issue on mentoring is an invited issue. The articles were not peer-reviewed, but solicited by the editors of this special issue: Mary K. Bendixen-Noe and Carmen Giebelhaus. We would like to thank the two special issue editors for their hard work on this issue.