



WELS Mentor Standards of Practice
and Continuum of
Christian Mentor Development

August 2021

Introduction

The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) Mentor Standards of Practice and Continuum of Christian Mentor Development communicates mentor knowledge, abilities, and character to advance the culture of learning and instruction in WELS schools. This document is a culmination of partnerships from a variety of organizations in collaboration with WELS New Teacher Induction. It presents a complete view of WELS instructional mentoring, based on a foundational Christian Mentor Standard and five professional Christian Mentor Standards:

- **Foundational Standard: Christian mentors are faithful servants of Jesus Christ.**
- **Christian mentors engage, support, and advance the professional learning of each new teacher.**
- **Christian mentors create and maintain collaborative and professional partnerships to support new teacher growth.**
- **Christian mentors use knowledge of student content standards, teaching pedagogy, and professional WELS teaching standards.**
- **Christian mentors use assessments to promote new teacher learning and development.**
- **Christian mentors grow in skills to advance mentoring, the teaching ministry and positive outcomes for students.**

The foundational standard and several elements clarify the mentor's role as a Christian leader. Cultivating spiritual growth requires that Christian mentors themselves be rooted in an ever-deepening relationship with Jesus. Only then can Christian mentors support, encourage, guide, and nurture a new teacher's spiritual growth. Save the foundational standard, the other five standards presented do not represent a hierarchy or suggest a sequence of Christian mentor development. Each contains aspects of mentoring practice which are interconnected and work together to provide a holistic view of effective Christian mentoring practice.

How to Use

The WELS Mentor Standards of Practice and Continuum of Christian Mentor Development can be used in several different ways.

Self- Assessment

The WELS Mentor Standards of Practice and Continuum of Christian Mentor Development allows mentors to gain insight into their own professional practice through focused reflection. To self-assess, Christian mentors read across the levels in the continuum. Each level provides descriptors of instructional mentoring. A Christian mentor selects an element that best describes current practice or an area in which to grow. The Christian mentor identifies the descriptor on the continuum of the element and may set goals with projected accomplishment dates.

Goal-Setting

The WELS Mentor Standards of Practice and Continuum of Christian Mentor Development aids Christian mentors in examining their own mentoring and making choices about their development as professionals. Collaborative efforts with peer mentors and program leaders can guide a process for setting goals. Individual Ministry Development Plans can provide strategies to assist Christian mentor development while documenting progress. Stopping to reflect at mid-year and year-end can help Christian mentors thank Jesus for blessing various achievements, while encouraging them to revise and continue their personal learning so that professionalism is apparent in all that is accomplished.

Christian Mentor Professional Development

The WELS Mentor Standards of Practice and Continuum of Christian Mentor Development is not meant to be a rubric defining performance/expectations or an observation tool. This document provides a common language that describes Christian mentoring practice and it assists program leaders and Christian mentors in discussing practice and subsequently planning professional development that advances instructional mentoring practice. The WELS Mentor Standards of Practice and Continuum of Christian Mentor Development gives program leaders a tool to support Christian mentor development in the same way they expect Christian mentors to support new teachers.

Glossary of Terms

- District:* a geographical area of WELS congregations and schools
- Standard:* one of six areas of WELS Christian mentoring practice that comprise the continuum
- Continuum:* a document describing different levels of practice or knowledge across various stages of development
- Level:* the stage of mentor development that indicate what a Christian mentor should know and be able to do
- Descriptor:* an individual cell, or box, corresponding to the developmental-progression in the continuum
- Element:* a sub-area of mentoring practice within any of the six standards

Establishing:

a level of professional development in which the Christian mentor relies on ongoing assistance from more experienced colleagues for support, guidance, and survival. The mentor is trying to internalize and apply what she/he has learned about mentoring. The Christian mentor is moving toward becoming more self-directed and independent in her or his practice.

Applying:

a level of development in which the Christian mentor is able to mentor independently, internalizes, and easily applies what she/he has learned about mentoring.

Integrating/Innovating:

a level of development in which the Christian mentor is fully skilled, confident, and able to integrate such complex elements as reflective conversations, formative assessment, differentiated support, and the design of professional development. The Integrating/ Innovative mentor often becomes a leader among peers by contributing to the educational community through staff development, research, or professional writing.

Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod Mentor Standards

FOUNDATION: Christian mentors are faithful servants of Jesus Christ.

- F.1** Models faith in Christ through words, ministry, activities, and relationships.
- F.2** Shows joy and enthusiasm for teaching, learning, leading, and serving.
- F.3** Uses a uniquely Christian worldview to weigh words, actions, and ideas.

STANDARD ONE: Christian mentors engage, support, and advance the professional learning of each new teacher.

- 1.1** Uses reflective language to engage the new teacher in collaborative problem solving, and reflective thinking to promote self-directed learning.
- 1.2** Uses a variety of strategies and resources, including technology, to respond to the new teacher's professional needs and to the learning needs of all students.
- 1.3** Uses data to engage the new teacher in examining and improving practice.
- 1.4** Facilitates learning experiences for new teachers that promote collaborative inquiry, analysis, and reflection on practice.

STANDARD TWO: Christian mentors create and maintain collaborative and professional partnerships to support new teacher growth.

- 2.1** Creates a Christian environment of trust, caring and honesty with the new teacher to establish and maintain strong relationships and promote professional growth and find solutions that focus on each student's success.
- 2.2** Uses coaching and collaboration time to implement procedures and routines that support the students' learning.
- 2.3** Understands and builds relationships with the new teacher's school and community to foster the new teacher's success and student achievement.
- 2.4** Promotes development of the new teacher's professional responsibility and collaboration with families and broader school community.
- 2.5** Designs professional development with school administration to promote understanding and application of program responsibilities.

STANDARD THREE: Christian mentors use knowledge of student content standards, teaching pedagogy, and professional WELS teaching standards.

- 3.1** Uses knowledge of pedagogy and instructional strategies to advance new teacher and student development.
- 3.2** Uses knowledge of content standards to advance new teacher and student development.
- 3.3** Uses knowledge of professional teaching standards to advance new teacher and student development.

STANDARD FOUR: Christian mentors use assessments to promote new teacher learning and development.

- 4.1 Implements formative assessments to advance classroom practice.
- 4.2 Uses results of formative assessments to guide mentoring.
- 4.3 Develops the new teacher's abilities to self-assess based on evidence, to set professional goals, and to monitor progress.

STANDARD FIVE: Christian mentors grow in skills to advance mentoring, the teaching ministry and positive outcomes for students.

- 5.1 Develops Christian professional growth goals and pursues ongoing opportunities to improve.
- 5.2 Collaborates with administrators and instructional leaders to extend knowledge of standards-aligned, formative assessment, teaching/mentoring cycle and the impact on instruction and student achievement.
- 5.3 Reflects on mentoring practice in support of new teacher growth and impact on student learning.

FOUNDATION: Christian mentors are faithful servants of Jesus Christ.

Ministry Traits	Establishing	Applying	Integrating/Innovating
F.1 Models faith in Christ through words, ministry, activities, and relationships.	Models faith in Christ - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through words, “You are chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Peter 2:9). • Ministry, “Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” (Ephesians 5:1-2). • Activities, “Become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life” (Philippians 2:15,16a). • Relationships, “Dear friend, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another” (1 John 4:11). 		
F.2 Shows joy and enthusiasm for teaching, learning, leading, and serving.	Promotes generally positive attitude toward mentoring. Fosters a love of learning.	Models a love of learning with a new teacher. Shares learning resources as situations arise.	Engages in professional dialogue with colleagues. Fosters a love for teaching among colleagues and inspires others to consider their leadership potential. Displays an attitude of faithful service.
F.3 Uses a uniquely Christian worldview¹ to weigh words, actions, and ideas.	Expresses the importance of Christian faith in a sinful world.	Applies the Christian principles to the teaching profession and the culture in which he/she lives.	Leads new teachers to compare teachings, practices, philosophies, and worldviews to God’s Word, the ultimate standard (John 7:24 and 1 John 4:1).

- *In which areas have I grown spiritually?*
- *How may I seek out opportunities to continue developing spiritually?*
- *In what areas of my ministry do I engage in Christian leadership? What opportunities do I have to engage in Christian leadership?*
- *What areas of ministry have given me joy?*

¹ In this document Christian worldview is synonymous with confessional Lutheran worldview. This confessional Lutheran worldview is stated in the Bible and expounded on in a number of formulated writings put together in The Book of Concord.

STANDARD ONE: Christian mentors engage, support and advance the professional learning of each new teacher.

	Establishing	Applying	Integrating/Innovating
1.1 Uses reflective language to engage the new teachers in Christian growth, collaborative problem solving, and reflective thinking to promote self-directed learning.	Learns protocols of mentoring language. Listens attentively to respond appropriately. Engages participating new teachers in problem solving. Promotes studying the Bible.	Uses mentoring language to facilitate positive, productive, reflective conversations. Applies instructive, collaborative, and facilitative mentoring strategies consciously to promote Christian thinking and professional problem solving.	Strengthens repertoire of reflective conversation skills. Moves fluidly among mentoring strategies to promote new teacher confidence and autonomy. Effectively addresses sensitive issues and resistance. Encourages ongoing reflection, critical thinking, and risk taking through a Ministry Development Plan to promote both self-direction and collaborative problem solving.

- *When I assess my practice using the mentor standards and expectations, what areas of strength can I identify?*
- *How may I improve in using the MDP to improve new teacher effectiveness?*
- *How may I improve my use of mentoring language?*

1.2 Uses a variety of strategies and resources, including technology, to respond to the new teacher's professional needs and to the learning needs of all students.	Provides resources and materials as requested by the participating new teacher and makes suggestions for additional resources. Uses technology as a mentoring resource.	Selects from a variety of research-based teaching strategies to support the new teacher's pedagogy, content knowledge, and instructional skills. Models and advocates for the effective use of technology to promote student learning.	Seeks and shares new knowledge of strategies and resources related to ongoing learning from the professional community. Facilitates the new teacher's strategic integration of those resources to influence practice, promote student achievement, and differentiate instruction. Facilitates integration of technology.
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- *What skills and knowledge do I need to address the needs of new teachers and diverse needs of students?*
- *How might I model instructional strategies and skills to foster continual growth for the new teacher?*
- *How can I encourage the new teacher to implement and integrate the strategies, resources, and technology?*

STANDARD ONE: Christian mentors engage, support and advance the professional learning of each new teacher.

	Establishing	Applying	Integrating/Innovating
1.3 Uses data to engage the new teacher in examining and improving practice.	Records the reflective conversation and assessment data using tools that help facilitate data analysis and data-driven conversations.	Responds to the needs of the new teacher by providing specific formative assessment data and data analysis for both short- and long-term teaching goals and for problem solving and decision-making.	Integrates multiple methods and tools of observation and data collection to create and use opportunities for examination and improvement of practice.

- *In what ways may I improve in collecting and analyzing data?*
- *How can I better respond to the needs of the new teacher through data collection and analysis?*
- *How can I collaborate with the new teacher to encourage examination and improvement of practice?*

1.4 Facilitates learning experiences for new teachers that promote collaborative inquiry, analysis and reflection on practice.	Collaborates with the new teacher to effectively utilize the inquiry cycle of plan, teach, and reflect in order to improve teaching practice.	Methodically infuses the inquiry cycle by collaborating with the new teacher on designing a lesson, observing the lesson, and analyzing the student work and observation data generated from the lesson.	Fosters a habit of mind for generating inquiry questions and consistently executing the inquiry cycle of plan, teach, and reflect.
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- *Am I regularly using the inquiry cycle with the new teacher?*
- *How does the mentor language I'm using allow the new teacher to reflect upon practice?*
- *What language stems are needed to advance collaborative inquiry?*

STANDARD TWO: Christian mentors create and maintain collaborative and professional partnerships to support new teacher growth.

	Establishing	Applying	Integrating/Innovating
2.1 Creates a Christian environment of trust, caring and honesty with the new teacher to establish and maintain strong relationships and promote professional growth and find solutions that focus on each student's success.	Builds an effective Christian relationship with the new teacher. Explains the role of the mentor. Listens actively, maintains confidentiality, and honors commitments. Celebrates successes.	Builds and maintains a positive Christian relationship of trust, caring, and honesty. Practices ongoing conversations about what is working, what are the concerns/issues, what are the next steps for the new teacher and for the mentor.	Fosters a sustained positive Christian relationship based on professional honesty and mutual respect. Collaborates with the new teacher to move from the status-quo to a willingness to take responsible risks in addressing complex teaching issues and concerns.

- *What steps does the mentor take to build a trusting relationship?*
- *What reflective tools can be identified to monitor student success?*
- *How can these successful techniques be shared with mentor peers and with lead mentors?*

2.2 Uses coaching and collaboration time to implement procedures and routines that support the students' learning.	Respects the new teacher's time, meets individual needs, provides ongoing collaboration, and completes program requirements.	Anticipates the needs of the new teacher and is alert to entry points that will open up dialogue around a teaching concern or issue. Prioritizes and balances program requirements and the new teacher's immediate needs.	Provides seamless integration of the program requirements, mentoring processes, and the new teacher's needs. Uses procedures, routines and tools that increase efficiency and help energize the mentoring experience.
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- *What are the program requirements I am accomplishing?*
- *What are the mentoring processes I am regularly using?*
- *What new teacher needs have been identified?*
- *How do I monitor the collaborative time spent?*

STANDARD TWO: Christian mentors create and maintain collaborative and professional partnerships to support new teacher growth.

	Establishing	Applying	Integrating/Innovating
2.3 Understands and builds relationships with the new teacher's school and community to foster the new teacher's success and student achievement.	Gathers information about classroom, site, parents, students, and community/cultural context. Initiates a relationship with the site administrator and other site and district personnel to communicate program expectations. Recognizes school and district goals that target student academic success.	Collaborates with the new teacher on ways to promote ongoing communication with parents. Strengthens relationships with administrators and staff by being knowledgeable about school plans and programs and making connections to mentoring.	Embraces the role of transformational leader for the new teacher, by possibly attending professional meetings with the new teacher, facilitating application in the new teacher's practice and/or providing professional networking opportunities for the new teacher.

- *What expectations have been shared by the administrator regarding interactions between a mentor and new teacher's staff?*
- *What do I know about the new teacher's school?*
- *How would I evaluate my relationship with the school administrator?*
- *How am I promoting ongoing communication?*

2.4 Promotes development of the new teacher's professional responsibility and collaboration with families and broader school communities.	Shares information about professional expectations such as e-mail etiquette, parent conferencing protocols, student pre-assessment data collection, Back-to-School events.	Supports the new teacher in working collaboratively with families, resource personnel, colleagues, and community members. Supports the development of the new teacher's leadership skills and contributions to the learning community.	Collaborates with the new teacher in applying leadership skills and using a wide variety of strategies that ensure effective interactions with site personnel, families, and community groups.
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- *What do I need to learn about the new teacher's school and surrounding community?*
- *What information may be gained about the community from the administrator?*
- *What are the expectations for community involvement?*

STANDARD TWO: Christian mentors create and maintain collaborative and professional partnerships to support new teacher growth.

	Establishing	Applying	Integrating/Innovating
2.5 Designs professional development with school administration to promote understanding and application of program responsibilities.	Identify with school administration practical teaching strategies that can be used in the new teacher's classroom to achieve program responsibilities.	Consult with school administration how the new teacher's collaboration with colleagues is impacting students (what is working, challenges, goals).	Establishes with school administration ways to engage new teachers in multiple activities that explicitly and seamlessly teach and apply program responsibilities.

- *How am I partnering with the new teacher's principal/director to achieve this goal?*
- *How am I promoting connection to professional development opportunities through MLC NTI and other institutions of higher education?*
- *What goals are being partnered to apply expectations?*

STANDARD THREE: Christian mentors use knowledge of student content standards, teaching pedagogy, and professional WELS teaching standards.

	Establishing	Applying	Integrating/Innovating
3.1 Uses knowledge of pedagogy and instructional strategies to advance new teacher and student development.	Supports the new teacher on lesson design that engages all students, assesses students, and addresses one or more student content standards. Offers a variety of instructional strategies for differentiating instruction.	Uses student assessment data to guide lesson design. Shares research-based teaching strategies to meet the needs of all students. Supports the new teacher with analysis of student work to inform next steps.	Supports the new teacher in using differentiated instruction strategies tailored to the needs of the new teacher and the students. Tracks the effectiveness of the strategies through formative assessment conversations with the new teacher. Offers ideas about subject-specific pedagogy during lesson design.

- *How do I use entry points throughout a mentoring conversation?*
- *What formative assessment tools are most effective to meet the needs of the new teacher?*
- *How do I engage in analyzing student work?*
- *What resources are available to move towards differentiated instruction?*

3.2 Uses knowledge of content standards to advance new teacher and student development.	Provides comprehensive structure for the new teacher that ensures efficient, effective acquisition, clarification and integration of student content standards into unit and lesson design.	Offers specific differentiated instructional strategies and additional assessment options to use with students who need interventions to master student content standards.	Supports the new teacher to consistently use essential questions, graphic organizers, and ongoing formative assessment to ensure student mastery of content standards. Focuses new teachers in developing diverse academic literacy appropriate to content.
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- *How am I learning specific content standards at the new teacher's school?*
- *What resources are needed to discuss possible student interventions?*
- *How will I know the impact upon student learning?*

STANDARD THREE: Christian mentors use knowledge of student content standards, teaching pedagogy, and professional WELS teaching standards.

	Establishing	Applying	Integrating/Innovating
3.3 Uses knowledge of professional teaching standards to advance new teacher and student development.	Understands the classroom application of professional teaching standards. Collects appropriate data, based on teaching standards, to be used during reflective conversation, regarding student-learning outcomes.	Supports new teacher reflection to self-assess and prioritize areas for growth. Facilitates the professional goal-setting process based on the teaching standards. Co-creates a Ministry Development Plan with the new teacher as directed by administration.	Guides the new teacher in collecting evidence/data that validates and celebrates the effective execution of professional teaching standards. Encourages the new teacher to share artifacts that demonstrate the teaching standards.

- *What teaching standards element does the new teacher identify?*
- *What teaching standard(s) does the new teacher need to focus (prioritize) for growth?*
- *What evidence does the new teacher need to collect to show growth?*

3.4 Uses knowledge of equity principles to deepen the new teacher's application of standards.	Promotes the new teacher's understanding, valuing and building upon student cultures, knowledge, languages and experiences. Uses data to guide the new teacher's awareness of achievement gaps for groups of students.	Guides the new teacher in assessing how their own life experiences, perspectives, culture, language and racial identity impact their teaching and their students' learning. Uses data to guide the new teacher's examination of contributing factors affecting student access to content.	Enhances the new teacher's abilities to identify inequities in curricula and to avoid identified inequities in lesson design. Supports the new teacher in ensuring equal access to content for all students.
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- *How am I addressing the awareness of possible inequalities in the new teacher's classroom?*
- *How may I discuss personal bias awareness?*
- *What tools will support the new teacher to find/identify inequalities within the curricula?*
- *How do I model a growth mindset and articulate fostering socially and emotionally safe learning environments?*

STANDARD FOUR: Christian mentors use assessments to promote new teacher learning and development.

	Establishing	Applying	Integrating/Innovating
4.1 Implements formative assessments to advance classroom practice.	Follows guidelines for implementing a formative assessment system. Integrates formative assessments into ongoing work with the new teacher using natural entry points.	Plans and organizes for integration of formative assessments in ways that are matched appropriately to meet the individual new teacher's needs. Supports the new teacher in reaching long-term professional development goals.	Matches needs and interests of the new teacher by embedding formative assessments into coaching conversations. Integrates professional teaching standards, student-content standards, and program requirements into formative assessments.

- *What are some examples of natural entry points?*
- *How does viewing formative assessments look when a mentor is working long-distance with a new teacher?*
- *What are the guidelines for implementing a formative assessment system?*

4.2 Uses results of formative assessments to guide mentoring.	Develops an understanding of the role of formative assessments related to the new teacher's professional development. Uses formative assessments to focus conversations with the new teacher and to identify immediate needs and mentoring next steps.	Expands skills, knowledge, and use of formative assessments to promote new teacher growth. Uses results of formative assessments to analyze progress in professional teaching standards and program requirements. Based on analysis and reflection, selects next steps to achieve short-term goals for mentoring.	Deepens understanding of potential and limitations of formative assessment processes and tools. Collaborates with teachers and mentor colleagues in ongoing analysis and reflection on formative assessments to gauge and calibrate new teacher progress toward both short- and long-term goals.
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- *Which formative assessment tool guides the mentoring conversation to next steps?*
- *How often are the WELS Teaching Standards and Continuum used in reflective conversations?*
- *How might I confer with a peer mentor to analyze new teacher growth?*

STANDARD FOUR: Christian mentors use assessments to promote new teacher learning and development.

	Establishing	Applying	Integrating/Innovating
4.3 Develops the new teacher's abilities to self-assess practice based on evidence, to set professional goals, and to monitor progress.	Guides the new teacher to develop professional learning goals and to assess progress based on data.	Develops the new teacher's capacity to reflect on strengths and areas for growth and to design professional growth plans.	Supports the new teacher in the ongoing self-assessment process. Redirects to promote new teacher development as needed. Engages the new teacher in selecting appropriate formative assessment tools to gather desired data. Builds self-assessment processes as a habit of professional practice.

- *When will the mentoring conversation discuss professional new teacher learning goals?*
- *What conversations are in need to support a Ministry Development Plan?*
- *How often are professional goals visited?*

STANDARD FIVE: Christian mentors grow in skills to advance mentoring, the teaching ministry and positive outcomes for students.

	Establishing	Applying	Integrating/Innovating
5.1 Develops Christian professional growth goals and pursues ongoing opportunities to improve.	Participates in spiritual growth opportunities. Uses mentor standards to self-assess and reflect on strengths and areas for growth. Develops professional goals. Participates in professional growth opportunities as part of mentor responsibilities.	Shares professional goals with lead mentor. Selects evidence that shows goals have been met and completes goals in a timely manner. Seeks professional development opportunities within and outside the program.	Creates a Ministry Development Plan to guide spiritual and professional growth and promote both self-direction and collaborative problem solving. Uses and models research-based mentoring practices to grow as a mentor and educational leader. Designs and leads professional development for other mentor teachers and teacher leaders to support their growth toward professional goals.

- *Where may I grow as an instructional mentor?*
- *What opportunities am I using to communicate with the lead mentor?*
- *How might I incorporate mentor growth within a Ministry Development Plan?*

5.2 Collaborates with administrators and instructional leaders to extend knowledge of standards-aligned, formative assessment teaching/mentoring cycle and the impact on instruction and student achievement.	Builds a network of professional contacts and collaborates with colleagues and administrators. Advocates for working conditions that promote teacher success. Considers local policies and procedures, and their context, when working with a school community.	Communicates, problem solves, and advocates to build effective working relationships between colleagues, administrators, parents and other partners. Uses knowledge of the school's policies and procedures to foster collaboration, inquiry, and reflection on practice.	Collaborates with others to initiate innovative practices that support the professionalization of teaching. Advocates for equitable professional opportunities within a diverse teaching population.
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- *How am I using entry points to engage with the instructional leadership team to analyze student learning?*
- *What supports do I need to have in-depth conversations to learn more about school policies and procedures?*
- *How comfortable am I in addressing instructional inequalities?*

STANDARD FIVE: Christian mentors grow in skills to advance mentoring, the teaching ministry and positive outcomes for students.

	Establishing	Applying	Integrating/Innovating
5.3 Reflects on mentoring practice in support of beginning teacher growth and impact on student learning.	Learns from reflecting on analysis of practice and welcomes constructive feedback. Collaborates with mentor colleagues to analyze teacher feedback to make program improvements.	Elicits feedback from colleagues. Collaboratively reflects on both mentoring practice and program elements to make ongoing improvements and to ensure a high-quality program.	Actively seeks constructive feedback. Contributes to the professional growth of self and others to elaborate on and extend professional practice. Uses multiple sources of feedback routinely to analyze impact of mentoring practice and induction program with mentor colleagues. Leads collective actions to elaborate on and extend professional practice.

- *How do I engage in reflective conversations with mentor peers to grow as an instructional mentor?*
- *How may I position myself as a lifelong learner?*
- *What am I contributing towards the growth and development of Christian mentors?*