Mentoring Across Boundaries: Helping Beginning Teachers Succeed in Challenging Situations


Even in chapters covering familiar mentoring topics, Boreen, Niday, and Johnson provide information not typically found in other publications. For example, in the chapter on choosing and supporting good mentors, they briefly discuss the need for effective mentors to “confront troublesome situations as necessary,” pointing out that a key part of the mentor’s role is to identify problems and discuss them with the new teacher.

The bulk of the book focuses on “challenging situations” that may impact the new teacher or the mentor-teacher relationship. Included are chapters on age and gender, mentoring across cultures, mentoring in urban and rural schools, and mentoring teachers of at-risk students.

The authors say they were tempted to provide formulas “such as ‘Six Steps for Success in Cross-Cultural Partnerships,’ or charts contrasting the cultural characteristics of teachers.” But because they believe “such easy summaries are likely to oversimplify complex matters,” they take a different approach by briefly discussing the importance of such things as:

- An ability to understand that knowledge and pedagogy may be culturally conditioned; and
- An open attitude toward talking to one’s mentoring partner honestly about cultural issues since “hinting at issues is rarely a successful technique where cross-cultural partnerships are concerned.”

Short scenarios provide useful examples of challenging situations that might actually arise.