

Finding a Cot Mentor and Developing a Strong Relationship

- ❖ Think about what schools you might want to observe and teach in
- ❖ Talk with people (e.g., fellow CoTers, family) you know in schools and see if they can recommend a possible mentor. Converse with members in seminar(s) to get ideas, they are an invaluable resource.
- ❖ **Always contact the school's administrator in charge of student teacher placements first (contact info can be found on the Participating Schools document).** You can do this by email. Ask for permission to contact the teacher.
 - What to include in email
 - Your name and the name of the program you are in at IU
 - Reason you want to observe and visit
 - Teacher(s) you would like to visit, or ask for suggestions of teachers you could visit/observe.
 - Send follow up emails if they (principal) do not respond back to you. If your repeated emails don't get a reply, try calling, and even enlisting the help of office assistants, etc., to make a connection.
- ❖ Visit the teacher's classroom. Arrive in a professional manner and dress! Explain your need for a CoT mentor only if you are interested in the teacher. Always thank the teacher for allowing you to visit. Follow up with emails or letters of appreciation.
- ❖ Ask to visit again if you are still interested in their classroom.
- ❖ Visit other teachers
- ❖ Make a list of pros and cons. Decide what classroom appeals to you the most (e.g., student-teacher engagement, subject matter expertise, opportunities for collaboration). If you need to student teach, it is very important you find a classroom that appeals to you and that your mentor seems open to working with you throughout the learning process.
- ❖ Build a strong relationship with your mentor. Be hardworking and reliable. When time permits, ask questions to elicit your teacher's practical knowledge about teaching.
- ❖ Be reflective in your process and practice. Reexamine reflective handout given first day of seminar.

What your involvement may look like in this classroom:

- ❖ Observe at first and become familiar with the classroom.
- ❖ Get more involved as time goes on. For example, work with small groups, work one on one with students, help with grading, etc.
- ❖ As your relationship develops, ask to attend meetings (e.g., IEP, parent and school meetings, and faculty meetings) with the teacher. Also, ask to teach small/whole group lessons and do collaborative planning with the teacher.
- ❖ As student teaching is approaching, work hard to take over as much responsibility as possible. Learn the details of your mentor's job.
- ❖ Throughout this process, work hard to help the teacher feel comfortable with you and gain of their confidence. Make sure you establish trust and remain reliable. This sometimes leads to your mentor teacher treating you like a peer!

All mentor situations look different for many reasons. The above recommendations are meant to be helpful getting started with finding a mentor, however, there are many variations of what this will look like based on type of school, teacher's comfort level, etc. Lastly, review semester requirements noted in your syllabus addressing mentor relationship and professionalism.