



Guiding Questions to Support Mentor–Beginning Teacher Conversations During the TEAM Transition Year (2026–2027)

Supporting Reflective Dialogue and Professional Growth

During the transition to TEAM 2.0 in the 2026–2027 school year, it is essential that mentors are equipped with effective tools to facilitate thoughtful conversations and provide meaningful guidance to Beginning Teachers. To support mentors in this work, the guiding questions in this document are recommended to initiate discussions aligned with each corresponding module.

These questions are intended to serve as a starting point for deeper, more meaningful conversations between mentors and Beginning Teachers. They align with the framework and expectations of each module and are designed to encourage inquiry, promote reflective thinking, and support the professional growth of early career educators. Their purpose is not to evaluate or judge instructional practices, but rather to foster connections, inspire reflection, and strengthen the mentoring relationship.

Module 1: Classroom Environment, Student Engagement, and Commitment to Learning

Teachers promote student engagement, independence, and interdependence by cultivating a positive learning community through the following practices:

- Creating a classroom climate that is responsive to and respectful of the diverse backgrounds, interests, and learning needs of all students.
- Promoting active engagement and shared responsibility for learning, and providing opportunities for students to initiate questions and pursue their own inquiries.
- Providing explicit instruction in social skills to support students' social competence, responsible decision-making, and ethical behavior, using a continuum of proactive strategies that can be individualized based on student needs.
- Fostering clear and appropriate standards of behavior that support a productive and inclusive learning environment.
- Maximizing instructional time by effectively managing routines, transitions, and classroom procedures.

Guiding Questions to Support Reflective Dialogue

- What routines or structures in your classroom are working particularly well to create a positive learning environment? What routines are not working as effectively?
- How do your students know they are valued, respected, and included in your classroom?
- Which students seem most engaged during instruction, and which students might need additional opportunities to connect?
- What evidence shows that students are developing responsibility for their own learning? What strategies could further support independent learning?
- How do you intentionally teach and reinforce social skills and appropriate classroom behaviors?
- When behavioral challenges arise, which strategies have been most effective in maintaining positive relationships while addressing concerns?
- How are you incorporating students' cultural backgrounds, interests, and experiences into classroom activities?
- Which transitions or routines consume the most instructional time? What adjustments could improve efficiency while maintaining student connection?
- If you could strengthen one aspect of your classroom climate before our next meeting, what would it be and why? How can I support you in this work, and what resources might be helpful?
- How do students support and encourage one another during learning tasks?

Module 2: Planning for Active Learning

Teachers plan instruction that engages students in rigorous and relevant learning and promotes curiosity about the world by:

- Determining students’ prior knowledge to ensure that content instruction is appropriately challenging and differentiated to meet diverse learning needs.
- Developing and organizing coherent, relevant units, lessons, and learning tasks that build on students’ prior knowledge, skills, and interests, and that engage them in meaningful work within the discipline.
- Selecting appropriate assessment strategies to monitor ongoing student progress.
- Designing or selecting academic and behavioral interventions through differentiated, supplemental, or specialized instruction for students who do not respond to primary instruction alone.
- Incorporating strategies to teach and support content literacy skills—and, when appropriate, numeracy skills—across the curriculum.

Guiding Questions to Support Reflective Dialogue

- How do you determine what students already know before beginning a new unit or lesson?
- What student data do you typically use to inform your planning?
- How are your lesson objectives connected to broader, long-term learning goals?
- In what ways are you differentiating learning opportunities to address varied readiness levels and interests?
- How do you ensure that learning activities are both rigorous and accessible for all students?
- What opportunities do students have to make choices about their learning?
- How do your planned assessments help you monitor progress prior to the final assessment?
- What scaffolds have you included for students who may need additional support?
- How are literacy, communication, and critical-thinking skills embedded in your lesson plans?
- Looking ahead, what part of your planning process would you most like to refine or strengthen?

Module 3: Instruction for Active Learning

Teachers plan instruction that engages students in rigorous and relevant learning and promotes curiosity about the world by:

- Using a variety of evidence-based instructional strategies that enable students to apply prior knowledge and construct new learning.
- Implementing differentiated instruction and supplemental intervention to support students with learning disabilities and/or particular gifts or talents.
- Using technological and digital resources strategically to enhance and support learning.
- Guiding students to construct meaning through active learning strategies such as purposeful discourse and inquiry-based learning.
- Varying student and teacher roles in ways that develop independence through the gradual release of responsibility.

Guiding Questions to Support Reflective Dialogue

- Which instructional strategies are generating the highest levels of student participation and thinking?
- How do you determine when students are truly constructing understanding rather than simply completing tasks?
- What opportunities do students have to discuss, question, explain, or defend their thinking?
- How do you adjust instruction when students demonstrate confusion or reveal unexpected misconceptions?
- Which differentiation practices have been most successful during instruction?
- How are you gradually releasing responsibility from yourself to students?
- What role does technology play in supporting engagement and learning outcomes? How do you balance technology with play and other hands-on learning opportunities?
- How do you encourage students to apply their learning in new contexts or situations?
- What feedback from students has helped you refine or adjust your instructional decisions?
- If you observed your lesson through a student’s eyes, what aspect of the learning experience might stand out most?

Module 4: Assessment for Learning

Teachers use multiple measures to analyze student performance and inform subsequent planning and instruction by:

- Using and/or designing a variety of formative and summative assessments, along with criteria that directly align with learning objectives and honor the diversity of ways in which students learn.
- Drawing on a comprehensive set of data that provides both depth and breadth of understanding of student achievement at a particular point in time and across time.
- Collaborating with colleagues to review and interpret assessment data to monitor and adjust instruction to ensure student progress.
- Providing students with clear assessment criteria and individualized, descriptive feedback to help them improve their performance and take greater responsibility for their learning.
- Support student progress by communicating academic and behavioral performance expectations and results to students, their families, and other educators.

Guiding Questions to Support Reflective Dialogue

- How do your assessments align with the learning goals you established?
- Which assessment evidence provides the clearest picture of student understanding?
- How do you use formative assessment information to adjust instruction?
- Which students' progress concerns you most right now, and what evidence leads you to that conclusion?
- How are students involved in monitoring or evaluating their own learning?
- What types of feedback seem to result in the greatest student growth?
- How do you communicate information to families and other stakeholders?
- In what ways do you collaborate with colleagues to analyze student learning data?
- How do you ensure your assessments provide equitable opportunities for all students to demonstrate understanding?
- What assessment practice would you like to improve during this school year?

Module 5: Professional Responsibilities and Teacher Leadership

Teachers maximize support for student learning by developing and demonstrating professionalism, collaboration, and leadership through the following practices:

- Continually engaging in reflection, self-evaluation, and professional development to deepen their understanding of content, pedagogical skills, resources, and the impact of their instructional decisions on student learning.
- Seeking professional development opportunities that enhance their ability to teach effectively and meet the diverse needs of all students.
- Understanding the legal rights of students with disabilities and their families within the intervention, referral, and Individualized Education Plan (IEP) process.
- Understanding how one’s own race, gender, and culture influence professional interactions with students, families, and colleagues.
- Conducting themselves in a professional manner in accordance with [Connecticut’s Code of Professional Responsibility for Educators](#).

Guiding Questions to Support Reflective Dialogue

- How are you building and sustaining positive relationships with students and families?
- How are you building and sustaining positive relationships with colleagues and support staff?
- In what ways have your collaborative efforts contributed to a positive classroom and school climate?
- How do you seek and incorporate feedback from colleagues, administrators, families, support staff, and other faculty to improve your practice and strengthen your role in the school community?
- How do you ensure that communication is clear and accessible to all members of the school community and to families? How do you respond when your communication is received differently than intended?
- How do you balance confidentiality, professionalism, and transparency when using communication technology to support students and families?
- Considering your professional responsibilities, what is one area of collaboration or communication you would like to strengthen, and what steps might help you move toward that goal?
- What areas of professional development would be helpful to you at this time?
- How do you think you are perceived by other members of the school community?
- What can we work on together to help ensure that how you want to be perceived aligns with how colleagues view you in the workplace?
- Do you ask for help when you need it? If yes, whom do you typically turn to? If not, what can we work on together to support your ability to self-advocate?