

## AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

### “Ayers Institute Lunch & Learn” Podcast Episode 24 – February 2019

Title: *What I Want My Mentor Teacher to Know*

#### SPEAKERS

<b>JO</b>	Julia Osteen	Technology Integration Specialist, Ayers Institute for Teacher Learning & Innovation
<b>AR</b>	Alondra Ramirez	Teacher Candidate, Lipscomb University College of Education
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#### FULL TRANSCRIPT

##### *INTRODUCTION:*

**AR:** That goes with the mindset you need to have as a mentor a teacher– of knowing that this teacher candidate will not know a lot of things. They're here for– they're in the classroom, in your classroom, for a reason to learn how to be a teacher. You just need to be accepting of that.

**PD:** Just as much as my professor is my teacher, *you* are my teacher, as well. The mentor is my teacher, as well. And so I want to learn just as much from you as I am learning from my professor.

**JO:** Welcome to the “Ayers Lunch & Learn” podcast presented by the Ayers Institute for Teacher Learning and Innovation at Lipscomb University, where we're all about education. These podcast episodes are sponsored by EdSouth which promotes interest and awareness of higher education opportunities to students, families, and schools. Each Ayers Lunch & Learn podcast episode provides bite sized portions of professional learning.

Today's topic is: ‘What I Want My Mentor Teacher to Know.’ We'd love to hear your thoughts on this topic as well using the Twitter hashtags #AyersLunchAndLearn and #MentorTeachers. My name is Julia Osteen and I'm the Technology Integration Specialist for the Ayers Institute. Participating in the conversation today are Peyton Dishman and Alondra Ramirez, two teacher candidates attending the College of Education at Lipscomb University.

I wonder if you would take just a minute to tell a little bit about yourself and your background.

**PD:** Of course. My name is Peyton Dishman. I'm a senior music education major here at Lipscomb and I'm from Kansas City, Missouri.

**AR:** And I am Alondra Ramirez. I'm an elementary education major and this is my third year at Lipscomb and I'm from Nashville, Tennessee.

**JO:** Welcome.

**PD:** Thanks for having us.

**AR:** Thank you.

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### EPISODE BODY:

**JO:** As a teacher candidate, I'm wondering how it feels when you kind of get stuck and you're looking to your mentor teacher. In that moment, what is most helpful for you as a candidate?

**AR:** Maybe most importantly, step in. I will– I will not be offended if you step in. If you see that I'm struggling and I'm stuck, as a mentor teacher it would be very helpful to step in, but then also afterwards give me advice on how to do better.

**PD:** I think, give the teaching candidate the opportunity to regain the classroom control. But if they don't, and there's a fine line I think between letting the children run all over the teaching candidate, and then also being able to give the teaching candidate the opportunity to gather the children, then you need to step in and regain the confidence and have the candidate regain their confidence in order to continue to teach.

**AR:** I think that also goes with the mindset you need to have as a mentor teacher of knowing that this teacher candidate will not know a lot of things. They're here for, they're in the classroom, in your classroom for a reason to learn how to be a teacher so they're not going to know how to do things sometimes. And you just need to be accepting of that instead of expecting a perfect– cause they're not going to be perfect.

**PD:** Just as much as my professor is my teacher, *you* are my teacher, as well. The mentor is my teacher, as well. And so I want to learn just as much from you as I am learning from my professor. And I think that a lot of times mentor teachers feel like a professor is coming to observe them and so they're going to give the critiques and they're going to give the feedback and everything like that, but I also want feedback from you as the teacher of the classroom that I am teaching. And so, don't be afraid to critique me, don't be afraid to make suggestions to better help my learning and my understanding when it comes to education.

**AR:** Yeah I think the worst thing for a mentor teacher to do is to not give feedback. I think feedback is the most important thing.

**PD:** Or give feedback, but at the end when everything's over with. And so after everything's done and we're leaving and then I get the final evaluation that says, "Oh you could have done this better" or, "You could have done this better." I've taught in your classroom seven times. Why wasn't that a discussion that we had in the in the beginning? Communication is just big. I feel like every candidate just wants clear communication with their mentor teacher because again, it's their classroom and their expectations and their students. And so I think that teaching candidates tend to walk on eggshells a lot. And so, if that line of communication is open they don't feel like they're constantly walking on eggshells in a classroom that they're supposed to be teaching.

**JO:** As you are talking about the different things that the mentor teacher can do and you just mentioned that communication is really important. Along with that mentor teachers have a lot of expertise to share. And so I wonder if you would speak to that?

**AR:** Mentor teachers do have a lot of expertise to share with their teacher candidates, so it's important to make sure to always give feedback, not at the end but throughout the teacher candidate's experience. I feel like a lot of times they're afraid to share their suggestions.

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**PD:** I think they're afraid to share their suggestions, because they feel like they're not your professor. But I do want them to remember that they are still my mentor; and so they still can share their suggestions and they still can do that. I want to know and I want to learn what your teaching style is, because I feel like every teaching style is different and so there's so many different styles of teaching.

**AR:** Yeah. And I think it goes about establishing a relationship to where you don't feel awkward talking about those things.

**PD:** I think that also boundaries are a big thing when it comes to mentor teachers and teaching candidates. Because I've found at a placement that I was just in the teacher was younger and there was a fine line between becoming a friend and being a mentor. I really wanted a mentor, but I think that the mentor teacher really wanted a friend. And so, I think it's just important to set those boundaries as not only a mentor teacher, but also as a teaching candidate: you can set those boundaries as well. So, I think it's really important to be like, "Hi, my name's Peyton. I'm so excited to be your mentee." Like really stress that relationship of you are my teacher. Because if you come in with the attitude of, "Hey we're gonna be friends and we're gonna be pals" and then I think that things can get a little skewed sometimes.

**AR:** Yeah. And I feel like I've had the opposite experience where the mentor teacher has kept too much of a distance and creates an awkwardness. There's, like you said, you need boundaries. But that also includes not keeping too much of your distance because you need to keep that communication.

**JO:** Part of that that you're talking about has to do with expectations. And I think sometimes mentor teachers don't quite understand the expectations that the candidate has coming in. And I think the candidate might not understand the expectations the mentor teacher has coming in.

**PD:** Totally. Which is why communication is such a big thing. I feel like it's always awkward the first day that you go into your mentor teacher's classroom, because you never know the exact things to say or the exact way that the teacher is going to teach. And so, it's always awkward. Which is why I highly encourage mentor teachers to have a meeting with their teaching candidate before the first day of school or before the first day of working with the teacher candidate.

**AR:** I agree with that, because if you just go into it trying to co-teach without even knowing each other, that's a very awkward situation. And you need to first establish how you're going to communicate, how you're going to do things in the classroom. I feel like sometimes mentor teachers are afraid when it comes to classroom responsibilities of sharing them in general; and I understand that it's hard to give away the control in the classroom, but that's also how teacher candidates learn.

**PD:** As a teacher candidate, I feel like the hardest thing would be to give up control of my classroom; because it's my classroom. It's my— There's some stranger coming in and it's their responsibility now to teach my children? But I think the best way for teachers to learn *is to teach*, and so at some point you have to do that. Which is why I think that in CP1 [clinical practice] we do talk about different ways to co-teach. And one of the best ways to co-teach is to split the lesson. I feel like that is such a great way to introduce a teaching candidate into the classroom: where they watch you teach a section and then they get to teach a section. It's kind of partner teaching rather than, "Okay, you get the whole class to yourself and you go for it. And then I get the whole class to myself and then I go for it."

**JO:** Okay. I wonder if each of you would share a little bit about your best experience in someone else's classroom and your worst experience?

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**PD:** My best experience in someone else's classroom has been one where the teacher was very experienced. She had been teaching for a very long time and she completely knew all the right things to say in order to guide me to be a better teacher. Every lesson that I would do she would write her critiques and then I would also get my professors critiques. And then every activity that I would have with the children, she would pull me aside afterward and say, 'Okay, this is what you can do better. And then this is what you did great.'

And so just that constant feedback was the best experience that I could have had then, especially because I was working with elementary students. It was awesome because I was so nervous about working with the little ones that I was like 'I don't know how I'm gonna— how am I gonna be responsible for 32 kindergartners in a music classroom?' And she just like made me feel totally at ease. Ready to go.

My worst experience was one where I would teach a lesson and there would be *no* feedback. There would be hardly anything said it was like okay cool, awesome thanks for coming to my classroom appreciate it. See you later. And very like you're a guest: 'You come in, you teach a lesson, great. Bye.' And so, I always look forward to critiques and to praise, as well.

I think praise is such a huge thing when it comes to teaching candidates, because they're already nervous. And so when they get the praise it means a lot to them and they carry that with them

**AR:** For me, my worst experience was similar to Payton's where I felt more like a guest than an actual teacher candidate. I would teach a lesson and she wouldn't give me any feedback or I would send it to her through email and she wouldn't give me any feedback and she would just keep it very minimal.

As a mentor teacher you're taking on the responsibility of being a host.

**PD:** I agree. You agreed to have someone in your classroom. So, do the work in order to make that person feel welcome and make that person have the most successful experience that they can have.

**AR:** I also have had positive experiences.

I worked at this summer camp that promoted literacy in elementary school students, and I was an intern in a classroom where they had two actual teachers. In the beginning when I first met them, they were like, "Here we made you this. You could have this space area for yourself if you need it." And then they asked me about myself. We talked. We got to know each other, and then as— throughout the experience they would give feedback of when I would do lessons in the classroom like read-alouds. And they would also give suggestions. So also, not only giving praise, but also giving advice on how to do better.

**JO:** To close our conversation today, I want to ask you one more question. If this were going to be the very last word for you to share with mentor teachers, what is it you want to communicate to them?

**PD:** You are just as much a mentor to me as my professor is. And so, don't be afraid to critique. Don't be afraid to praise. And don't be afraid to suggest.

**AR:** I also would want to add— As a mentor teacher, stay committed to that role throughout the entire experience. Have clear expectations. Set clear expectations to the candidate, but also know the expectations that the teacher candidate has. So, communication as well. And I think those are my biggest things. Clear communication, clear expectations, and staying committed to your role as a mentor teacher.

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### *CONCLUSION:*

**JO:** In our conversation today, Peyton and Alondra shared what they would like mentor teachers to know about sharing classroom responsibilities, teaching the candidates they work with, and sharing their expertise. They have given us a lot to think about and discuss with colleagues. A probing question for you and your colleagues to explore is: “What approach will you take as a mentor teacher to build capacity and encourage success in teacher candidates?”

As we close today's episode, we would like to encourage you to continue the conversation on ‘What I Want My Mentor Teacher to Know’ with your colleagues. There is a graphic organizer file available for download as you continue thinking about this topic. The graphic organizer is found on eduTOOLBOX at <https://www.edutoolbox.org>.

The Ayers Lunch & Learn podcasts are produced by Julia Osteen and technical production is provided by Forest Doddington. Don't forget we'd love to hear your thoughts on what mentor teachers should know using the Twitter hashtags #AyersLunchAndLearn and #MentorTeachers. Also follow or like the Ayers Institute and Lipscomb College of Education on Twitter and Facebook: @AyersInstitute and @LipscombCofEd.

We hope your appetite for bite sized portions of professional learning was satisfied with his podcast presentation sponsored by EdSouth. Look for other episodes of the Ayers Institute Lunch & Learn and other professional learning podcasts at <http://podcast.ayersinstitute.org>.