How to use 'Defining the Core of a Research Project Narrative' with your mentees

To scaffold speaking skills (implementation strategy):

1. This technique can be used more casually in one-on-one interactions or meetings with your trainees. It can be used at any stage of a trainee's project.
2. Ask trainees questions about the core elements of their own project, isolated and out of order. For example, "Chris, what gap in knowledge did this project address?" or "Chang-in, what was the objective of this project? What was it intended to accomplish?"
3. Get the trainees to elaborate and watch for drift – for example, identifying a gap that isn't specific enough to their project's purpose or confusing the purpose of their own project with the purpose of the overarching parent project it fits into.

To <u>analyze</u> existing writing (developmental strategy):

1. This technique can be used with individuals or groups and in a variety of settings, such as:
   a. Coursework for a class
   b. A journal club exercise
   c. For developing literature reviews
   d. Individual practice identifying core elements in posters, journal articles, etc.
2. Share the first worksheet (Defining the Core of a Research Project Narrative: Analyzing Existing Writing) with your mentees and discuss the core elements. Go over examples from articles in your field, pointing out well-written or not-so-well-written examples.
3. Ask them to find, underline, and label the core elements in a research article. (The article can be selected by you or by the trainees.)
4. Ask them to transfer the core elements they found in the article to the worksheet. (They can fill it out before meeting with you, doing the best they can, or you can all do it together.)
5. Analyze and discuss:
   a. Are any core elements missing or implied? If so, is there a good reason why?
   b. Do any core elements spread over 2 or more sentences?
   c. Do the core elements all relate to each other clearly and cleanly?
   d. Reading over the core elements they have recorded in the template, does a complete and logical story emerge?
   e. Where are the thin or weak spots? How might they be improved?

To <u>plan</u> upcoming writing, presenting, and speaking projects (implementation strategy):

1. Try working through one of your own articles first (on your own).
2. Share the second worksheet (Defining the Core of a Research Project Narrative: Planning Upcoming Writing or Presenting) with your mentees and discuss the core elements.
3. Ask them to begin filling out the worksheet with the core elements of their own work, there with you (whether in a group or individually)—or tell them to try to fill it out before meeting with you, doing the best they can. It may take multiple passes, with coaching, before they can complete it. *This is the hardest—and most valuable—part*; be patient.
4. Be rigid about these guidelines:
    a. *Adhere to the limit* of ONE sentence for each element.
    b. *Use complete sentences, <u>not phrases</u>.* Example: Write "Activation takes too long," not "activation time." This is very important.
    c. Sentences don't have to connect smoothly. *These are not paragraphs or draft sentences.*
    d. Forget creativity—just jot it down. Don't get stuck in trying to be eloquent.
5. Analyze and discuss what they have. Where are the strengths? The weak spots?
6. Once the core elements are in place, they can start 'building' out the draft. Note that gap and purpose are almost always near the end of the introduction.