

SUPPORTING THE ONTARIO LEADERSHIP STRATEGY

Mentoring for Newly Appointed School Leaders

What Is Mentoring for Newly Appointed School Leaders?

Mentoring for new principals and vice-principals is a key part of our commitment to developing a comprehensive leadership strategy to help ensure that school leaders have the support they need to succeed in their role. The following are key features of our approach:

- Mentoring provides support tailored to the unique role of newly appointed school leaders. It is an iterative and reciprocal learning process, and one that can be adapted to meet the changing needs of the newly appointed school leader.
- Mentoring usually refers to non-evaluative relationships maintained over time between a newer and a more experienced professional, and is often offered to an individual who is new to a position. The focus is on the professional learning needs of the mentee.
- Newly appointed school leaders can receive support through mentoring during the first two years of their new role. In turn, experienced leaders can receive support and resources to help them in their role as mentors and to help them reflect on and develop their own leadership practices and competencies.

Why Mentoring?

School leaders play a primary role in setting a vision focused on student achievement and well-being as they work with staff, students, parents, and the community. To support their success in this important and complex role, principals and vice-principals are provided with a variety of resources, ranging from peer support to professional learning opportunities, offered through the ministry, school boards, and principal associations.

The first two years in a school leadership role are both rewarding and challenging. Newly appointed principals and vice-principals engage in multiple tasks: making the transition to their new role, enhancing their leadership practices and competencies, building relationships within the school community, and implementing key school, board, and provincial priorities. Mentoring can accelerate learning, reduce isolation, increase confidence, and improve

the practices and competencies of newly appointed school leaders who are facing multiple demands and priorities.

Mentoring is a powerful stimulus for the professional learning of both new and experienced leaders. Learning is the primary purpose, process, and product of mentoring. The primary goal of mentoring interactions is to develop school leaders who are focused on acquiring the skills necessary to create the conditions required to improve student achievement and well-being.

Mentoring Approaches

- It is important that the mentor and mentee establish protocols for confidentiality and for working together at the beginning of the mentoring process. Throughout the mentoring process, mentors who have learned the necessary skills will be able to adopt a range of approaches in response to individual mentee situations, learning needs, and contexts. For example, a mentor may at times provide expertise (consult), plan with the mentee (collaborate), or support the mentee to reflect on and refine skills (coach).
- Consulting involves one or more individuals who provide expert information, resources, and guidance to others based on the specific knowledge or skills of the consultant(s).
- Collaborating is the equitable and collegial process of working together to identify and achieve goals.
- Coaching generally refers to a short-term relationship involving conversations that support job-embedded learning. The goal is set largely by the person being coached and typically has specific outcomes, such as enhancing performance, reflecting on practice, or examining and solving a problem.

Key Elements of Mentoring

An effective mentoring program includes the following:

- a mentoring goal that aligns with the board strategic plan and/or the board improvement plan for student achievement
- operational parameters

- a process for recruiting and selecting mentors
- a menu of professional learning opportunities for mentees and mentors
- a transparent mentee/mentor matching process based on the needs of the mentee
- clearly communicated roles and responsibilities of the mentor and mentee
- a process for the initial and ongoing assessment of mentee learning needs
- joint mentee/mentor orientation
- high-quality mentor training that is differentiated for new and experienced mentors
- a transparent exit process
- mutual learning opportunities and a learning plan focused on mentee needs to guide the mentoring interactions
- regular one-on-one interactions
- ongoing monitoring and evaluation of mentoring

Mentees have said...

“The networking is extremely reassuring. We realized that our successes and challenges were very similar. It allowed us to engage in an effective, objective, and reflective practice.”

“The learning curve occurs on the job. Mentoring enabled me to experience this curve with a safety net – my mentor! Mentoring was invaluable in helping me feel less isolated.”

“Mentoring enabled me to see my personal potential from someone else’s perspective and to speak candidly with someone who had the ability to think on a much broader scale than my experience allowed at this time in my career.”

“Mentoring was invaluable in helping me feel less isolated.”

“It is a two-way benefit as the mentor is also learning from the skills and experiences of new administrators.”

“The training, mentoring, and facilitating have all been an incredible professional growth experience – the most powerful that I have experienced in my 34-plus year career!”

“Mentoring creates a culture of open discourse where it is ok to ask questions and seek support and help.”

Goals of Mentoring

Mentoring is intended to:

- help fill school leadership roles with highly skilled and motivated people;
- attract candidates to school leadership roles in the face of daunting demands;

- support the development of school leaders who focus on supporting teaching and learning while still fulfilling administrative duties.

What Has Been Accomplished?

- As of June 2011, over 3500 principals and vice-principals in English- and French-language boards have benefited from the support of a trained mentor over a two-year period, and over 2000 principals and vice-principals have acted as mentors.
- Mentoring has enabled participants to engage in reflective professional dialogue to help develop their leadership skills and increase their motivation to learn and to lead. Both mentors and mentees have benefited from reciprocal professional learning and from increased opportunities to reflect on their own practice.
- For mentees, benefits included the development of a better understanding of their role, an increase in their confidence, improved ability to solve problems through shared experiences and networking, and expanded opportunities for reflection on their leadership competences and practices.
- Mentors reported increased awareness of alternative approaches to leadership and increased reflection on practices.
- Mentoring leads reported improvements in the quality of instructional leadership across their districts, an increased interest in leadership roles, and an increased number of candidates in the pool of aspiring leaders.

What’s Next?

Mentoring resources produced by boards will continue to be posted on the IEL website APPLIKI, at www.education-leadership-ontario.ca.

LEARN MORE

Mentoring for Newly Appointed School Leaders: Requirements Manual, 2011
www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/leadership/mentoring.html

Additional resources and programs are also available through:

- Ontario Principals’ Council (OPC)
- Catholic Principals’ Council of Ontario (CPCO)
- Association des directions et directions adjointes des écoles franco-ontariennes (ADFO)