



MENTORING FOR NEWLY APPOINTED
PRINCIPALS AND VICE-PRINCIPALS:

PROVINCIAL STATUS REPORT 2008-09 IMPLEMENTATION

Mentoring for Newly Appointed School Leaders is a key component of the Ontario Leadership Strategy. The strategy is designed to ensure that Ontario’s education system attracts and develops leaders of the highest possible quality, and acknowledges the critical role they play in supporting student well-being and achievement. This document provides a provincial snapshot of Mentoring for Newly Appointed School Leaders in its first year of implementation in 2008-09.

BOARD PARTICIPATION

Overwhelmingly, the 70 participating boards have given enthusiastic support for this initiative.

Provincial Participation as of July 2009					
	English		French		Total
Boards	59 (of 60)		11 (of 12)		70
Mentees	1 st Yr VPs	2 nd Yr VPs	1 st Yr Principals	2 nd Yr Principals	2,406
	775	622	522	487	
Mentors	Practicing		Retired		1,505
	1,427		78		
Total mentors and mentees					3,911

The boards have been rich sources of experience and expertise, sharing lessons learned and information through individual telephone interviews with mentoring leads, regional teleconferences and regional networking sessions, funding reports, and mentor and mentee electronic surveys.

The following briefly summarizes implementation trends across the province, along with the lessons learned and promising practices reported by boards in 2008-09.

“Mentoring has helped to grow my confidence as a leader in many ways. Now I use what I have learned to support staff, students, and parents.”
Mentor (2008-09)

IMPLEMENTATION TRENDS

Getting Started

- Boards invested start up time in their first year to develop locally tailored plans, resources and procedures such as a matching process for mentors and mentees, a local handbook, and both introductory and ongoing training programs.
- As a result, in the first year, the timing of matches of mentors with mentees, the training sessions and other annual milestones may vary from subsequent years.

“The positive relationship with an experienced and trusted administrator, the support, and the learning will sustain me throughout my career.”
Mentee (2008-09)

Steering Committees

- Mentoring steering committees have been established in 69 of the 70 participating boards.
- Committees set direction and program goals, gather and analyze data, plan, manage, support and monitor.
- They range in size from 2 to 15 members, relative to board size.
- 90% include principals / vice-principals, 75% include supervisory officers, and 29% include directors of education.

Matching processes

- Local considerations such as geography, board culture and the ratio of available mentors to mentees influence the matching process.
- Many boards use the Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF) as a resource.
- Group mentoring may offer mentees a range of available mentors.
- 45% of matches are centrally assigned based on mentor strengths and mentee learning needs.
- 55% of matches incorporate mentee input to the matching decision.
- Exit processes appear to be used infrequently.

Mentor/mentee preparation and resources

- Mentor and mentee preparation has been extensive and varied, with a high level of satisfaction reported.
- 95% of mentors received training while 89% of mentees received an orientation to mentoring.
- Boards typically found that the use of a mix of internal and external trainers supported their program goals.
- 69% of boards accessed the training available from the principal associations.

- Mentor/mentee preparation fell into two broad categories:

Mentoring Processes: A majority of mentors and mentees have received mentoring and/or coaching training and resources on the skills, attitudes, and practices central to successful mentorship. Programs ranged from a one-time orientation to 10 days of mentoring or coaching training and practice.

Mentoring Curriculum: Many boards also included a focus on knowledge and skill areas specific to the role and responsibilities of principals and vice-principals and aligned with system priorities, for example, SMART goals, “walk through” training, and aspects of instructional leadership.

Learning Plans

- 55% of boards use a confidential learning plan to structure and focus the work of the mentoring relationship.
- Learning plan templates are either locally developed, or drawn from samples in *Supporting Effective School Leadership: A Handbook for Implementing Mentoring for newly Appointed School Leaders in Ontario* (2009).
- Many boards intend to introduce learning plans next year.
- Participants indicated that the learning plans reflect mentee needs and interests, and tend to simultaneously support board and school priorities.

Lessons learned by boards in 2008-09		
Component	Promising practices and key learning	Key success factors
Steering Committees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Align mentoring as a key support to current board priorities and initiatives • Develop a database and gap analysis for the board as part of the planning process • Integrate mentoring with succession planning • Include mentee(s) and mentor(s) on the steering committee • Be familiar with the <i>School Board Guideline for Implementation of Mentoring for Newly Appointed School Leaders</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Mentoring training for all committee members ✓ Mentoring is an integral component of the board’s Leadership Development Plan ✓ Clear goals for mentoring are well communicated ✓ Alignment of mentoring goals with system goals ✓ Monitoring and systematic evaluation is based on goals and success criteria ✓ Acknowledge and celebrate successes
Matching Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the Ontario Leadership Framework as a resource • Facilitate mentee and mentor input to matches • Group across panels to build K to 12 continuum • Establish 1st time matches early in the year • Sustain strong matches in their 2nd year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Mentors are skilled instructional leaders ✓ Mentors are well trained and skilled in mentoring and coaching processes ✓ Ensure mentor is not a supervisor of the mentee ✓ Clear exit process that is well communicated
Mentor/Mentee Preparation and Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share training and costs with other boards • Regional networking and sharing of resources • Provide joint mentor training to principal mentors, NTIP teacher mentors, literacy and numeracy coaches, and others, as appropriate • Expand training for 2nd year participants • Show how mentoring/coaching skills transfer to multiple aspects of school leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Mentees and mentors understand the goals of mentoring and have solid grounding in the processes ✓ Accessing internal board mentoring/coaching personnel and resources such as NTIP ✓ Development of a board mentoring culture supported by system personnel and resources
Learning Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the Ontario Leadership Framework and train on how to set mentoring learning goals • Address technical challenges, but focus on the skills needed for adaptive challenges • Focus the learning in mentoring to encompass both individual needs and system priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The mentoring learning planning process is recognized as a key facilitator of individual, school and system goals ✓ Mentees and mentors collaborate on development and monitoring of learning plans, and adjust to support continuous growth
Mentoring Models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offering a combination of individual and group mentoring can meet a range of mentee needs • Schedule regular group mentoring sessions • Allocate and honour time at central meetings • Keep time commitments for interactions • Promote networking to build sustainable support, offering variety in mentors • Include job shadowing and observation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Senior administration promote mentoring and share a common language to support the development of leaders in the system ✓ Invest in sustainable mentoring programs ✓ Mentoring is seen as integral to “the way we do business” --- a positive, proactive and key support for newly appointed staff in a variety of positions

Mentoring Models

- Models range from:
 - 1 mentor to 1 mentee in the majority of boards
 - 1 mentor to 2 or 3 mentees
 - 2 mentors to 4 mentees
 - Larger group mentoring
 - A combination of these models.
- Group mentoring typically addresses technical or professional development topics such as school finance.
- Individual or small group mentoring/coaching often provides a confidential forum for the adaptive dimensions of leadership such as developing a mentee's skills in handling complex challenges, and providing individualized support while working through local school issues.
- Most mentoring interactions were face to face, followed by phone and email. Central scheduling facilitated time for face to face in some boards.

CRITICAL PRACTICES

Feedback from participants indicates that insufficient attention to the following key elements of successful mentoring has resulted in less effective supports for principals and vice-principals:

1. Not involving mentoring participants in the matching process
2. Not establishing and communicating the goals and success indicators of the program
3. Not providing at least some structured time for mentoring meetings, and for actively monitoring mentoring relationships, throughout the year so that intervention can be undertaken if necessary
4. Not making the learning plan – which may encompass both individual and school/system goals – central in training and in structuring mentoring relationships, so that there is a clear focus for the mentoring process.

“I found the first year in the role 10 times more challenging than I had anticipated and I was supported in every way by the mentors who were assigned to me and by the mentors whom I had connected with through various interactions. They were a huge part of my completing the year successfully.”

Mentee (2008-09)

BENEFITS AND NEXT STEPS

Many participants indicated that the mentoring/coaching skills they have learned transfer easily to their work with staff, students, parents, and colleagues.

In a mentoring culture, opportunities for mentoring/coaching are formally arranged but also are often recognized in day to day occurrences on the job. A number of participants indicated enhanced skill at being more “present in the moment” and “leading from beside”, particularly, greater skill leading staff and students to learn how to identify and work through problems—a process that develops staff and student problem solving capacity.

Mentoring and coaching skills were valued as applicable in a wide variety of ways, for example, building the leadership capacity of staff, working with learning teams, developing individual staff, and training senior students to mentor incoming new students.

Mentees reported feeling more in control and more reflective about their work and having increased confidence in their ability to handle the challenges of the role. For many, a network of valuable connections was established, reducing isolation and offering them a wide variety of available expertise and ongoing support.

Of the participants who responded to the electronic survey, a large majority of mentees indicated that they would consider arranging mentoring for themselves beyond the two year duration of provincial mentoring, to support them in their work. Over 90% of mentors who responded to the survey indicated that they would be willing to continue as mentors in the system after the current assignment.

A large majority of mentors and mentees would like to pursue further training to enhance their skills. As board steering committees reflect on their first year successes and lessons learned, including those outlined in this summary, they look forward to continuing and enhancing this highly valued support for newly appointed principals and vice-principals.

What did participants value most?

- Networking opportunities
- Sharing of best practices
- Confidence-building / validation
- Uninterrupted time to talk away from school
- Connecting with fellow mentees
- Getting practical support from experienced leaders
- The initial group mentorship process
- Trust and respect for the mentor
- Having a ‘neutral’ listener
- The ability to see things from a different perspective
- Confidentiality of mentor/mentee discussion
- Reflective questioning by the mentor
- Ability to reflect on strengths and learning needs
- Developing with colleagues as a learning community