

Planning for Successful Mentoring

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ABSTRACT

Collaborative approaches to leadership through district/university partnerships and through mentoring relationships have the potential for developing collaborative leaders. One way to facilitate experiences and relationships with practicing school leaders is through focused and planned mentoring processes. The purpose of this essay is to provide a conceptual rationale for the importance of mentoring as a part of leadership development and to propose a planned process of mentoring for leadership programs.

PLANNING FOR SUCCESSFUL MENTORING

Substantive change in leadership practice requires collaboration between universities and school districts seeking to grow their own leaders (Young, Petersen, & Short, 2002). This requires a focus on the practice of educational leadership. Since no one leadership reality is universally accepted, the contextualization of learning experiences becomes essential (English, 2006). Furthermore, if we are to shift paradigms, then the study of leadership should require the struggle with new ideas and the rejection of assumptions (Greene, 1988). According to Wenglinsky (2004),

Aspiring leaders must leave their preparation programs armed not only with a new set of behavioral attributes, but as masters of their own minds – reflective, inquiry-based, and full of the cultural capital they need to transcend the challenging circumstances of being a school leader. (p. 33)

And, if we desire for future leaders to understand the world critically, then the preparers of these leaders must help them view the world as a reality in process (Freire 1970).

Mentoring is a proposed strategy for supporting and developing leaders (Crow & Matthews, 1998) who can respond to problems of practice through a culture of reflective and reciprocal learning. Collaborative approaches to leadership through district/university partnerships and through mentoring relationships have the potential for developing collaborative leaders. Developing the intellectual (what we know) and the professional (what we can do) (Grogan & Andrews, 2002) requires an approach to leadership development that is highly personal and contextualized. Connecting inspiration to engagement (Goldring & Sims, 2005) can be facilitated through an approach to leadership preparation that situates theory in the demonstration and enactment of practice. The process of mentoring is key to the marriage of theory and practice. The purpose of this essay is twofold: to provide a conceptual rationale for the importance of mentoring as a part of leadership development and to propose a planned process of mentoring for leadership programs.

MENTORING AS A PART OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Browne-Ferrigno and Muth (2004) assert that becoming a principal is transformational and, thus, skill development is required through an active learning process that immerses aspiring leaders in real world settings and engages them in socially constructed activities. Browne-Ferrigno's (2003, 2004) earlier work found that a vital socialization experience for students aspiring to become leaders was working with administrators in real settings because it allowed them role socialization. According to Ryan (2003), practicing school leaders are key to revisioning leadership because they can influence practice in ways that individuals in academic institutions cannot. One way to facilitate experiences and relationships with practicing school leaders is through focused and planned mentoring processes.

It has long been established that mentoring provides benefits to aspiring leaders (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004; Crow & Matthews, 1998; Daresh, 2003, 2004; Ehrich, Hansford, & Tennent, 2004; Gardiner, Enomoto, & Grogan, 2000; Hubbard & Robinson, 1998; Mertz, 2004; Sherman, 2005; Sherman & Grogan, forthcoming). According to Grogan (2000, 2002), the benefits of mentoring include access to the unwritten rules, the power of knowing a veteran leader of influence, the support of having someone speak on your behalf, the gaining of self confidence, and the opportunity to establish a greater network of

support. Opportunities for feedback, reflection, encouragement, sharing, and professional development have been highlighted in the literature as well (Ehrich, Hansford, & Tennent, 2004). "Career mentoring is most strongly associated with the practices and support individuals receive as they move into leadership positions in K-12 education" (Sherman & Grogan, forthcoming). Mentoring is the opportunity for leaders and schools to build capacity through a process of reciprocal sharing (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004). It is, in part, the process of socialization.

According to Zhao and Reed (2003), mentoring is based on a personal relationship that many of us have experienced in some aspect of our lives. Kochan (2002) asserts that mentors are the people who help us move toward our goals and toward fulfilling our potential. In school settings, mentoring has, for the most part, existed as a top-down, dualistic relationship. However, more recent accounts describe it as a network of support to help a protégé achieve career success (Sorcinelli & Yun, 2007). Mentoring is an active rather than passive process with descriptors including teaching, coaching, advising, promoting, directing, protecting, and guiding (Gardiner, Enomoto & Grogan, 2000; Grogan, 1996; Brunner, 2000; Kochan 2002; Shakeshaft, 1989). Quality mentoring is an intentional relationship based on mutual understanding between at least two individuals to serve the needs of the protégé and, in turn, the organization (Gardiner, Enomoto, & Grogan, 2000, p. 52). In schools, the mentoring relationship is typically between a veteran principal and an aspiring or novice assistant principal or principal.

A mentor is a veteran leader who actively engages with a protégée by teaching, coaching, protecting, sponsoring, guiding, and leading (Grogan, 1996; Brunner, 2000; Kochan 2002; Shakeshaft, 1989). "Mentors provide their expertise to less experienced individuals in order to help the novices advance their careers, enhance their education, and build their networks" (Sherman, Munoz, & Pankake, 2008, p. 244). Hargreaves and Fullan (2000) added that mentorship, therefore, involves more than guiding protégés through learning standards and skill sets and extends to providing strong and continuous emotional support (p.53).

Mentoring as leadership development requires that protégés learn ways in which veteran leaders think, make decisions, and solve problems to facilitate cognitive and social development (Leithwood, Begley, & Cousins, 1992). The mentoring relationship should be centered around the mentee's desires and goals (Grogan, 2000, 2002) to support the development of sense of self. According to Daresh (2004), protégés become more confident through mentoring as they learn to apply theory to practice while developing a sense of community and acculturation. Mentors benefit from the relationship as well as it gives them a chance for reflection and professional development (Ehrich, Hansford, & Tennent, 2004). Roadblocks to successful mentoring relationships have been identified as lack of sufficient time between the mentor and mentee, mismatches between mentor and mentees, and professional and/or personal incompatibilities (Ehrich, Hansford, & Tennent). Additional challenges to creating formalized mentoring programs include district (and university) support, mentor training, selection of participants, and program evaluation (Ehrich, Hansford, & Tennent).

Traditional, informal mentoring is typically based on interest where the relationship is established by a mentor selecting a mentee or the relationship just naturally develops in a working environment between a veteran and a novice (Sherman, 2002). However, one problem with relying on informal mentoring only is that women, minorities, and nontraditional leaders are rarely chosen as mentees. In contrast, formal mentoring relationships are established through planned programs and, rather than promoting only a dual relationship between a mentor and mentee, they also promote an expanded form of mentoring through networking (Sherman). The planned program for mentoring outlined here has components of both informal and formal mentoring.

PLANNED MENTORING

While identified phases of mentoring relationships abound in the literature, the purpose for this essay is to put forth one process for planned mentoring that is built around Kochan and Trimble's (2000) micro view of mentoring that includes: laying the groundwork (assessment of strengths and weaknesses, identification of goals); warming up (developing the relationship, establishing norms); getting to work (leadership learning through practice, problem solving, and contextual experiences); and relating over the long term (change in relationship to co-mentoring or mutual friendship). I utilize the general premise

for their four phases of the mentoring relationship, but rename and expand upon their phases while also adding a fifth phase (see Table 1). Though the phases outlined here are taken from the literature on informal mentoring, the mentoring relationship itself is instigated in a planned and formal way by weaving it into internship experiences of a district/university leadership preparation partnership. The outline here focuses on the mentoring piece of the larger internship experience (see Sherman & Crum, 2009, for an expanded internship design) where aspiring leaders are immersed in contextualized, real-world learning with veteran leaders in the district.

Getting to Know Self

If mentoring is to promote cognitive development (Leithwood, Begley, & Cousins, 1992) and facilitate transformation (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004), understanding and getting to know self is vital. Decision making is based on personal values, culture, and experiences. Reflecting on personal experiences and beliefs helps one gain an understanding of leadership practice. Thus, before any mentor/mentee matching occurs between aspiring and veteran leaders, both should engage in activities that promote self awareness. Self-awareness activities might include the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator* (MBTI) and the *Learning Connections Inventory* (LCI). The MBTI, based on Jung's psychological types work, is a self-development tool that helps individuals understand how they perceive the world, make decisions, and interact with others. The *Learning Connections Inventory* (Johnston, 1998) helps those who take it understand themselves as learners and how this impacts their leadership practice. According to Stenhagen, Sherman, Hermann, Shakeshaft, Magill, and Clark (2011), results of the LCI help students understand themselves as learners and the varying learning styles of others – and the implications of extending this knowledge to school stakeholders. Once mentors and mentees gain an understanding of themselves and how they learn, each can create a profile summary that lists strengths and weaknesses. From this profile, mentees can determine goals for the mentoring relationship because, according to Grogan (2000, 2002), the mentoring relationship should be centered around the mentee's desires and goals. As mentees work on establishing and clarifying goals, mentors should be engaged in meaningful mentor training. Knowledge and skills developed during this phase include: self assessment; self knowledge; understanding strengths and weaknesses; insight into mentoring; personal responsibility; data-based goal selection/decision-making; ability to articulate goals; and insight into others' leadership and learning styles.

Relationship Selection

Because mentoring is an active rather than passive process, mentees should be proactive in approaching and seeking a mentor. District/university partnership programs would be wise to facilitate formal gatherings of mentees and mentors so that they can get to know one another through the profiles and goals that they create and to establish personal contact as well. Mentees should choose mentors based on the information that is gained through the self-assessment activities and mentors should accept mentees whose profiles are compatible. It is best that mentees not choose mentors who are their supervisors as this might be detrimental to trust-building. Knowledge and skills developed during this phase include: networking; promoting self; insight in how to create relationships; sensitivity and judgment; and communication.

Development of the Relationship

Gaining self awareness and making a good mentee/mentor match are preliminary, but vital, strategies for establishing a successful mentoring relationship. Once these tasks are accomplished, the intricate work of getting to know one another and establishing parameters for the mentoring relationship begins. Mentees should be proactive in clarifying (or reclarifying) their goals for the mentoring experience as well as sharing values and beliefs that significantly impact them as future leaders. Priorities, timelines, and norms should be discussed and established jointly between mentors and mentees (i.e. weekly face-to-face meetings, bi-weekly telephone conversations, etc.). Mentors and mentees should set aside time to get to know one another and establish trust, while also establishing formal times to discuss current trends in leadership. Knowledge and skills developed during this phase include: ability to clarify values

and goals; trust building; consistency; organization and planning; ability to collaborate; priority setting; listening; and sharing.

Growing the Relationship

Once a relationship has been established, the work of leadership learning must begin. Mentees and mentors should work together to plan and implement task assignments related to mentee goals and to facilitate the practice of skills. Mentees should be proactive in asking questions and should keep and share a log of their successes and failures with their mentors. Mentors should provide modeling and scaffolding when needed, give feedback, brainstorm solutions to problems, and share leadership stories. Time should be built into regular meetings for reflection, discussion, and the evaluation of the relationship. Knowledge and skills developed during this phase include: risk taking; judgment; modeling; empathy; listening; critical problem solving; reflection; assessment; collaboration; and flexibility.

Consolidating and Transforming the Relationship

The final phase of the mentoring relationship can lead in several different directions. An authentic relationship that is built on trust and reciprocity is one that is unnatural to discontinue once the formal need for the pairing in connection to the internship is completed. Thus, mentees and mentors can choose to reassess their needs, evaluate the relationship and make changes, or nurture and continue the relationship. Mentors should actively promote their mentees for positions and leadership opportunities and mentees should seek to transition the relationship to one where co-mentoring can occur as they become more experienced and can offer advice and support to their mentors. Knowledge and skills developed during this final phase include: reflection; data-based decision making; evaluation; networking and promoting; communication and discussion; adaptability; and transitioning.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this essay was to provide a rationale for the importance of mentoring as a part of leadership development and to propose a planned process of mentoring for leadership programs. Transformation in leadership practice requires change in leadership development. Collaborative district/university partnerships offer opportunities for aspiring leaders to contextualize their learning, connect theory to practice, and engage in real world learning through internship experiences. Mentoring is a vital aspect of leadership development and internship experiences. The planned mentoring process outlined here expands upon Kochan and Trimble's (2000) micro view of mentoring and includes five phases: getting to know self; relationship selection; development of the relationship; growing the relationship; and consolidating and transforming the relationship. The phases are fluid and work to promote the type of relationship that can support and develop future school leaders.

The expansion of the mentoring process to include the fifth phase of transformation is crucial to the refocusing on empowerment and rejection of the promotion of the status quo. As the mentoring relationship advances and mentees gain skill and confidence, they become capable of paying it forward not only to other future leaders, but to their actual mentors as well through a cyclical process of active and non-stop mentoring. It is unnatural for mentoring relationships that are authentic to abruptly discontinue simply because mentees gain leadership positions - particularly for women because their socialization has, historically, been focused not only on building relationships, but also maintaining them (Gilligan, 1982). Furthermore, traditional gender socialization encourages women to seek out horizontal connections rather than vertical connections with others (Gilligan). If, as the mentoring relationship progresses, it can be re-centered from a didactic foundation to a networking foundation where mentors and mentee pairs connect with other mentors and mentee pairs, a webbing effect becomes possible that has far more potential to transform leadership practice. It also stands to reason that the greater the number of successful leaders mentoring, networking, and collaborating with one another, the greater the chance for impact and lasting change on the field of education.

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Table 1. Planned Process of Mentoring, (based on Kochan & Trimble, 2000)

PHASE	MENTEE ACTIONS	MENTOR ACTIONS	KNOWLEDGE and SKILLS DEVELOPED
Getting to Know Self	<p>Assess Needs and Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Myers-Briggs • LCI <p>Create a Profile</p> <p>Determine Goals</p>	<p>Assess Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Myers-Briggs • LCI <p>Create a Profile</p> <p>Mentor Training</p>	<p>Self Assessment</p> <p>Self Knowledge</p> <p>Understanding Strengths and Weaknesses</p> <p>Insight into Mentoring</p> <p>Personal Responsibility</p> <p>Data Based Goal Selection</p> <p>Ability to Articulate Goals</p> <p>Insight into Others' Styles</p>
Relationship Selection	Actively Approach and Select Mentor	Acceptance of Mentee	<p>Networking</p> <p>Promoting Self</p> <p>Insight in How to Create Relationships</p> <p>Sensitivity and Judgment</p> <p>Communication</p>
Development of Relationship	<p>Clarify Goals</p> <p>Share Values</p> <p>Establish Priorities</p> <p>Establish Timeline</p> <p>Establish Norms</p> <p>Engage in Discussion</p>	<p>Share Values</p> <p>Establish Priorities</p> <p>Establish Timeline</p> <p>Establish Norms</p> <p>Engage in Discussion</p>	<p>Ability to Clarify Values and Goals</p> <p>Trust Building</p> <p>Consistency</p> <p>Organization and Planning</p> <p>Ability to Collaborate</p> <p>Priority Setting</p> <p>Listening</p> <p>Sharing</p>

Growing the Relationship	Plan and Implement Task Assignments	Assign Tasks and Learning Opportunities	Risk Taking Judgment
	Practice Skills	Provide Modeling and Scaffolding	Modeling Empathy
	Ask Questions	Give Feedback	Listening
	Keep (and share) a Log of Successes and Failures	Brainstorm Solutions to Problems and Share Stories	Critical Problem Solving Reflection
	Reflect and Discuss	Reflect and Discuss	Assessment
	Assess Relationship	Assess Relationship	Collaboration Flexibility
Consolidating and Transforming the Relationship	Nurture and Continue Relationship	Nurture and Continue Relationship	Reflection Data-Based Decision Making
	Reassess Needs	Actively Promote Mentee	Evaluation Networking and Promoting Communication and Discussion Adaptability Transitioning Future Planning