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ABSTRACT

A model designed to assist planners of professional development programs develop training programs for administrative mentors is described in this paper. A brief overview of basic concepts and definitions of mentoring is followed by a discussion of factors necessary to the development of mentoring, which are: trust, adequate resources, open communication, and sensitivity. The training model is based on five domains to prepare practicing school administrators to serve as effective mentors for their colleagues, which include: (1) orientation to mentoring; (2) instructional leadership skills; (3) human relations skills; (4) mentor process skills; and (5) contextual realities and implementation issues. (12 references) (LMI)

A TRAINING MODEL TO PREPARE MENTORS FOR SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

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The practice of mentoring serves as a very important part of planned efforts to support aspiring and practicing school administrators. School districts that are about to implement programs of professional development for their administrative teams will likely find it necessary to develop specialized training activities to help those individuals who have been identified as mentors to carry out their responsibilities as effectively as possible.

In this paper, we present a model that has been designed to assist planners of professional development programs develop training for administrative mentors. We begin with a brief overview of mentoring in general. Next, we consider some fundamental assumptions associated with the development of mentoring. Finally, we conclude by sharing the outline of a mentor training model that we have recently developed and used with a number of agencies across the nation.

Definitions of Mentoring

Making use of mentoring relationships as a way to enhance professional development activities is not a new idea. The concept of the mentor serving as a type of wise guide to a younger protege dates back to Homer's Odyssey. Mentor was the teacher entrusted by Odysseus to tutor his son, Telemachus. Based on this literary description, we have been provided over the centuries with a lasting image of the wise and patient counselor serving to shape and guide the lives of younger, less-experienced colleagues.

The image of mentoring persist in many of the most recent definitions of this practice. Ashburn, Mann, and Purdue (1987) defined mentoring as the "establishment of a personal relationship for the purpose of professional instruction and guidance." As a result, Lester (1981) noted that this activity is an important part of adult learning because of its holistic and individualized approach to learning in an experiential fashion, defined by Bova and Phillips (1984) as "learning resulting from or associated with experience."

Other related definitions are found in abundance. Sheehy (1976) defined a mentor as "one who takes an active interest in the career development of another person...a non-parental role model who actively provides guidance, support, and opportunities for the

protege..." The Woodlands Group (1980) called mentors guides "who support a person's dream and help put [the dream] into effect in the world..." Levinson (1978), in his classic analysis of the socialization of young men to professional roles, noted that a mentor, as a critical actor in the developmental process, is "one defined not in terms of the formal role, but in terms of the character of the relationship and the function it serves...a mixture of parent and peer. A mentor may act as host and guide welcoming the initiate into a new occupational and social world, and acquainting the protegee with its values, customs, resources, and cast of characters." Another definition recently suggested by Wasden and his associates (1988) is also relevant when considered in terms of its application to mentoring for educational administrators:

> The mentor is a master at providing opportunities for the growth of others, by identifying situations and events which contribute knowledge and experience to the life of the steward. Opportunities are not happenstance; they must be thoughtfully designed and organized into logical sequence. Sometimes hazards are attached to opportunity. The mentor takes great pains to help the steward recognize and negotiate dangerous situations. In doing all this, the mentor has an opportunity for growth through service, which is the highest form of leadership.

What ever the specific definition, the element that appears to serve as the foundation of any conceptualization of mentoring is the fact that this activity needs to be understood always as a part of the true developmental relationship that is tied directly to an appreciation of life and career stages. Kram (1985) examined

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mentoring in private industry and observed that different types of mentoring relationships are appropriate at varying times in a person's career. She divided these times into early, middle. and late career years and suggested that people tend to have vastly different mentoring needs in each of those time frames. As Kram observed, "Research on adult development (Levinson, et al., 1978; Gould, 1978) and career development (Hall, 1976; Schein, 1976) has established that, at each stage of life and a career, individuals face a predictable set of needs and concerns which are characteristics of their particular age and career history." What is interesting to note here is the fact that discussions of mentoring relationships in education have not taken on the same perspective suggesting the need for differentiated and developmental relationships. "Mentors" retain the same titles and responsibilities without regard for different needs and interests of people who need mentoring. The only recognition of varying support is found in the recent emphases on mentoring for first year teachers now found in many states.

Many states and individuals school systems across the nation have recognized the importance of mentoring as a way to provide support to school administrators. In addition to the recognition of the value of mentoring, however, many have also begun to appreciate

that the use of mentors is a somewhat more complex task than had first been expected. It takes more than simply matching a pair of administrators to form a pair that would provide a true mentoring relationship to one another. As a result of this complexity, many school systems have sought specialized training to prepare practicing school administrators to serve as mentors and coaches to their colleagues.

Assumptions for Mentor Training

Four major conditions need to exist in a school or district if mentor training is to be effective. Any system undertaking the establishment of a mentoring program will take steps to establish trust and openness among the administrators of the district, will invest sufficient resources to support a mentoring program, will develop and maintain open and honest communication patterns, and will show awareness and sensitivity to the unique learning needs of adults.

In our view, there is probably little value to be achieved in any school district that may attempt to establish a mentoring program for either its teachers or administrators if these four conditions do not exist.

A Training Model

During the past two years, we have developed a training model

that may be utilized for training practicing school administrators to serve as mentors to their colleagues. Training might be sponsored by a local school district, the state department of education, a university, or some other agency which might have an interest in such an effort. We make the assumption that this training experience would last for one week, and that it would probably be offered just before a mentor program might be initiated.

The training model that we have developed is based on what we have identified through existing literature as important for mentors. Our models contains five domains that we believe reflect the realities of administrative life as well as preparing individuals to become effective mentors for practicing school administrators. These domains are (1) Orientation to mentoring, (2) instructional leadership skills, (3) human relations skills, (4) mentor process skills, and (5) contextual realities and implementation issues. Our model is designed primarily to provide a foundation in the development and refinement of an independent, effective, successful instructional leader. Each domain is equal and interdependent on the other domains.

Orientation to Mentoring

We assume that most people have heard the term "mentor" before beginning our training. We also assume that the majority of

educators have had some experience with mentoring at some point in their professional and personal lives. We also assume that some time is also needed to clarify terms and assist mentors to articulate more clearly the ideas and experiences that they may have had in this area. As a result, the first thing that we do as part of the mentor training program is to spend a considerable amount of time helping people to learn about a variety of alternative definitions, and also consider some of the operational issues that are associated with programs of this kind.

We generally include discussions related to three major areas of operational concern to mentors. We consider, for example, the characteristics of "ideal" mentors (Daresh & Playko, In Press), along with their responsibilities in working with proteges. We also describe some of the responsibilities normally associated with "good" proteges as well. Second, we spend time considering some of the fundamental issues associated with the matching of mentors and proteges. We often find that such discussions are made somewhat less important because, in many cases, school districts simply assign proteges to mentors, without any form of structured matching process. Even in such cases, however, we point to some of the ways in which mentor-protege relationships can be enhanced by attention to the needs of both partners in the relationship. Third, we normally review some of the most important benefits to be achieved from

mentoring relationships, both from the perspective of the mentor as well as the protege (Playko, 1990).

Instructional Leadership Skills

We have found that one of the greatest shortcomings of mentoring programs for school administrators--indeed, perhaps, for all forms of administrator professional development--is the fact that there is often a lack of any clear vision of what the goals of professional development might be. What is the "ideal" administrator supposed to look like, after having been mentored? In order to address this issue as part of our training model, we believe that a critical domain involves the consideration of some of the most important recent research related to instructional leadership skills on the part of school administrators. We assume that a desirable goal of any mentoring relationship would be the increase of a person's effectiveness, and we believe that increased instructional leadership behavior would satisfy that goal.

Three elements are included in this training domain. First, we examine some of the most recent conceptualizations of instructional leadership activities as they relate to effective schools. Next, training session participants are provided with an overview of the importance of an individual educational platform. We stress the fact that effective mentors must begin with an awareness of their own

personal attitudes, values, and beliefs related to significant educational themes. The third issue we consider in this domain is related to the development of an appreciation for a validated knowledge base as a way to guide the actions of the effective educational leader.

Human Relations Skills

The essence of effective mentor-protege relationships is found in the ability of people to demonstrate good human relations skills. As a result, we devote a significant amount of time in our training model to this issue.

We begin this section of the mentor training with an overview of adult learning trends and issues. Our assumption is that mentorship makes a demand on individuals to appreciate proteges' unique adult learning needs. Second, we provide an overview of alternative learning styles that may be demonstrated by both the mentor and the protege. Finally, we look at the issue of alternative personality and social styles as a significant part of the establishment of an effective and dynamic mentoring relationship.

Mentor Process Skills

It is during this part of the training model when we address many of the "What are we supposed to do?" and "What next?" kinds of concerns that mentors typically face.

Three specific skill areas are included as part of training. We

begin by looking at a variety of alternative problem-solving strategies that may be used by mentors as they work with their proteges. It is our preference that mentors learn the characteristics of collegial problem-solving models because it is through such approaches that proteges are likely to learn more on their own. Next, we review interviewing techniques that may be utilized by mentors as they talk with their proteges. The emphasis in this discussion is to encourage greater reflectivity on the part of proteges as they work with their mentors. Finally, we look at the issue of observation techniques that may be used by mentors, and also by the proteges as they learn how to develop collegial relationships and greater reliance on other administrators with whom they work. We have found that the work associated with the Peer-Assisted Leadership (PAL) program first developed at the Far West Regional Educational Laboratory to be of particular relevance (Barnett, 1988). According to that model, administrators are taught how to engage in such activities as reflective interviewing and conferencing, and shadowing as a way to learn more about themselves as well as the work of colleagues.

Contextual Realities and District Needs

This final domain that we have included in the training model may, in fact, be viewed as the most important issue to be considered.

It is here that we alert mentors to the importance of making certain that their work is tailored to the needs, expectations, and conditions of local school systems in which they shall work. This domain involves the review of issues and concerns that are unique to the individual school districts in which the mentor programs are to be implemented. We provide time during our training institutes to address the issues of "Who, When, What, and How" things might get done in particular school districts. We believe that mentors need to receive general orientations to the goals of their districts, important policies, and procedures that are important in each district.

Our goal during this last phase of training is not to prescribe a course of action that should be followed in every district. However, we suggest that every district must have established ways of dealing with the following series of activities that we believe must be addressed before an effective mentoring program might be implemented. We recommend that school systems need to address the following ten generic steps in developing local mentor programs:

1. Secure commitment by the district central administration and local school board.

2. Establish a board policy.

3. Develop and convene a planning team that will coordinate the efforts of the mentoring program at the local school district level.

1. Engage in a needs assessment to determine the needs that should be addressed through the local program.

5. Plan a budget.

6. Determine the types of human and material resources that will be needed to carry out the program.

7. Design the basic structure of the program.

8. Develop the appropriate goals and objectives that should be addressed by the program.

9. Implement the program.

10. Evaluate the program.

These steps are meant to be viewed as part of an ongoing cycle for the improvement of a program.

Summary

In this paper, we have provided a brief overview of our efforts to develop a training program that may be used to prepare practicing school administrators to serve as mentors to their colleagues in local school systems. We began by reviewing some basic concepts and definitions associated with mentoring in educational organizations. Next, we shared some fundamental assumptions that we believe need to be considered prior to the initiation of a local mentoring program in any school district. Finally, we provided an outline of the domains of training that we normally include in programs that are designed to prepare individuals to serve as administrative mentors across the nation.

Ultimately, we believe that becoming an effective mentor is the product of several things. Effective mentors come to their responsibilities with a deep sense of wanting to serve others and provide expertise to colleagues. We also believe that there are training activities that may be provided as preservice preparation for those who may be called upon to serve in mentoring programs, and that these activities will enhance natural skills and attitudes that may be present on the part of practicing administrators. In short, training may help, but it will never be a substitute for finding talented and committed educational leaders in the first place.

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