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ABSTRACT

This paper reviews processes used to develop a cross institutional, pilot administrator entry year program which provided leadership and learning support for beginning principals, assisted in further development of Ohio's administrative portfolio, provided a collaborative learning community, and created a statewide learning community to help reshape the principal's role. The program relied on the cluster as the level in which to develop mentor-mentee relationships, professional networking, and a portfolio for submission to the Educational Testing Service. First-year program evaluation examined the views of the Coordinating Committee, facilitators, mentors, and mentees about the program and investigated how major program components compared with independent standards for those type of components and examined program value as a means for beginning principals to fulfill requirements for the 5-year license, develop portfolios for assessment, and develop support programs for professional growth and development. Second-year evaluation investigated and identified seven significant program components and functions. Most mentors and mentees stayed with the program through its duration, which indicated perceived program value and success. The Coordinating Committee maintained collegial relationships between the Northeast Ohio graduate programs that prepared educational administrators. It also grew over the term of the pilot. (Contains 17 references.) (SM)

ADMINISTRATOR ENTRY YEAR PROGRAMMING A CROSS INSTITUTIONAL PILOT PROGRAM— PROCESS, PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS, AND LESSONS LEARNED

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Introduction

In 1999 the State of Ohio established five groups to develop and pilot test entry year programs for administrators. The Northeast Ohio group took as the primary objectives of the project to develop, operate, and evaluate an entry year program for principals designed to reflect its own vision of what such a program should be. While created to assist the Ohio Department of Education in preparing to administer the State's new licensing law for administrators in 2003 and therefore somewhat constrained by the requirements of the law, the participants, as university professors and district administrators, had experience with past and current induction efforts for new administrators. While each participant's grasp of the literature related to administrator induction programs would naturally vary, the various ideas expressed in recent literature on the topic were brought forward in the course of the discussions and activities of the coordinating committee.

One key idea related to the relationship between the educational administration preparation program and the first job as an administrator. Mosrie (1990) in writing about a principal training and development program stated that graduate school alone was not an

adequate preparation for the principalship and reviewed a principal support program in which the new principals had a support team working with them for their development during their first year (pp. 14-15). While writing specifically about mentoring new school leaders in the United Kingdom, Southworth (1995) made an applicable point when he noted that mentoring could be a vehicle for stimulating reflective leadership or a simply a means to preserve the current accepted views of the school leader's role. He argued for the stimulation of reflection and noted that the passing on of current role assumptions would not prepare school leaders for the challenges of schooling over the next century (pp. 26-27). Zachery (2000) recently noted that the focus of mentoring has shifted "from a product oriented model, characterized by the transfer of knowledge, to a process-oriented relationship involving knowledge acquisition, application, and critical reflection" (p. 4).

Over the years, John Daresh has consistently noted that new principals needed support in "responding to problems with role clarification, limitations on technical expertise, and difficulty with socialization to the profession at large and to the norms of specific school systems" (1987, p. 21). In a May 1990 article, he added to that list "...a deep sense of professional isolation and a lack of feedback concerning the extent to which...[they] are performing their jobs effectively" (1990, p. 2). Hartzell (1994) writing about new assistant principals spoke of lost support systems as well as isolation and lack of feedback (p. 29). Writing in the United Kingdom, Kirkham (1996) also noted the need of "a secure environment where they [new heads of schools] can explore ideas and possible change with colleagues who understand their words and the issues they regularly face" (p. 82).

At the heart of the efforts to help new administrators is the mentor. Geismar, Morris, and Lieberman (2000, May) provide an extensive review of the characteristics of mentors suggested

in the literature (pp. 235-236). Among the characteristics they and others have mentioned as needed by an effective mentor are experience regarded as effective in the administrator role, ability to ask the right questions rather than giving the right answers, acceptance of alternative ways of carrying out the role, an expressed desire to help people surpass them, knowledge of models of continuous learning and reflection, awareness of the political and social realities of administrative life (Capasso 2001, p. 103; Daresh & Playko, 1990, p. 74), and a personal style with which the new principal feels comfortable and secure (Wilmore, 1995, p. 93). A study of a British headteacher mentoring program had the new headteachers and mentors rank order the characteristics and skills desired in the mentor: Listening skills; open, warm, and enthusiastic behavior; experience of headship; providing feedback; being non-judgmental; and counseling skills (Bolam, McMahon, Pocklington, & Weindling, 1996, p. 39). Whatever the characteristics and skills, the matching of mentor and mentor is best done collaboratively with the mentor, mentee, and the organizing body each having input (Walker & Stott, 1994, p. 73).

Beyond the characteristics of the mentor is the nature of the contacts between the mentor and the mentee (new administrator). Richardson and Prickett (1991) in their evaluation of a beginning principals intern program recommended that the principal interns have multiple group meetings at regional sites (p. 67). Bolam et al. (1996) suggests a minimum of five to six meetings over a 12-15 month span (p. 38). Zachary (2000) suggested a relatively short duration for the relationship with the length of time controlled by the accomplishment of specific learning objectives (p. 3). She also noted that current technology allows the relationship to be less face-to-face than was true in the past (p. 4).

The content of the interactions has also changed. Coleman (1996) noted that almost all mentors in England reject the transmission of expertise concept in favor of a two-way

relationship (p. 11). Daresh (1987) said some of that when he wrote about mentors' not telling new principals what to do but rather guiding them to make their own choices (p. 20). Southworth (1995) argued against the expert-novice enactment of mentoring in favor of a stimulating, reflective leadership oriented to the learner and critical and developmental in nature (p. 26). Zachary (2000) took this a step further and wrote that the mentee shares responsibility for the learning process with the goal of becoming self-directed (p. 3).

Recommended starting points might seem to vary and yet seem to coincide on a need to begin by building the relationship. Trust, openness, and respect must be established (Walker, 1994, p. 74 and Bolam, 1996, p. 41). In terms of the work to be done, running a school, Bolam et al. (1996) suggests beginning with practical, short term concerns and technical advice as best fitting the needs of the new administrator and later move into more fundamental issues (p. 41).

Walker and Stott (1994) wrote about the benefits of a supportive structure for the mentor-mentee relationship, recommending competent, trained facilitators to work with the mentor-mentee pairs (p. 75).

Wilmore (1995) put forward logs of activities as a way for new administrators to document continued growth. These are kept in a professional portfolio which, along with the logs, helps keep the mentees focused on their development plans (p. 95). Shipman and Murphy, (2001, February) writing about a development program for current administrators, spoke both of portfolios being for professional development—addressing specific needs or challenges—and of a prototype portfolio developed primarily for relicensure (p. 2).

This paper will review the process used in developing the pilot, a description of the program as implemented, and the lessons learned from this pilot

Program Development

Cross Institutional Structure

Two university professors were asked to coordinate the effort in Northeast Ohio. They solicited participation from the superintendents of the region, practicing principals, and faculty member/representatives of the other universities in the region that have administrator preparation programs. In the process of organizing, the superintendent of a county Educational Service Center agreed to be a third coordinator and act as fiscal agent for the project.

A Coordinating Committee included active and retired public school administrators, and one or two representatives from each of the colleges and universities in Northeast Ohio that have programs to prepare educational administrators. It created a program pilot that featured four clusters of mentors and mentees facilitated by a member of the Coordinating Committee.

Basic Considerations in Designing the Program

The goals of this program as put forward by the Ohio Department of Education were to:

1. Provide leadership and learning support systems for first and second year principals.
2. Assist in further development of Ohio's administrative portfolio, with articulation to the Ohio Administrative Competencies passed by the Ohio State Board of Education in January 1998.
3. Provide a collaborative learning community to share best practices and best ideas between higher education institutions and principal preparation programs.
4. Create a statewide community of learners to best assist in reshaping the role of the principal to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

As the Coordinating Committee shaped up and began discussing the pilot program, the basic considerations the Committee accepted as underlying the pilot were to:

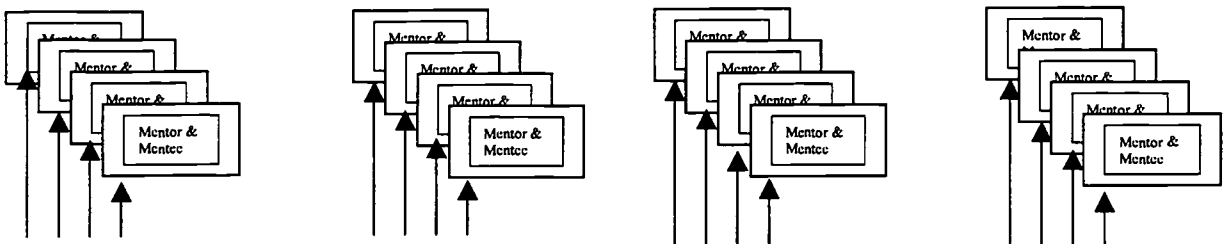
1. Create an enriched initiating experience for beginning school principals.
2. View this as a hand-off from University training to in-the-field induction/training.
3. Value the capabilities and right of participants to make decisions within the cluster.
4. Limit regional educational experiences to universal needs of participants.
5. Rely on the cluster as the level in which it was best to provide for or develop
    - Mentor-mentee relationship
    - Networking among like professionals
    - A portfolio for submission to the Educational Testing Service.
6. Ensure that the Coordinating Committee had direct knowledge of the activities of the clusters.

Program Description

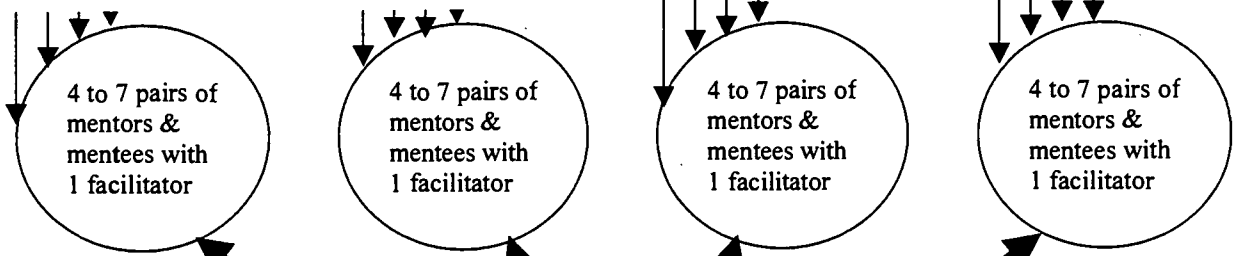
The Coordinating Committee generated the structure of the program (see next page) and provided the planning and implementation of the large group (all the facilitators, mentors, and mentees in the pilot program) meetings. The facilitators reported to the Coordinating Committee the activities, results, and problems experienced in the small groups and obtained advice. The facilitators also met together to discuss their various activities, expectations, and alternatives. In facilitating the small groups the facilitators organized the groups' meetings, provided motivation to carry out the program activities, and gave suggestions and advice to both mentors and mentees as needed on an individual basis.

NE Ohio Principals Academy Interactions in Support of Mentor-Mentee Relationship

Mentor-Entry Year Administrator One-on-One Interactions



Cluster Groups: Facilitated Group Interactions

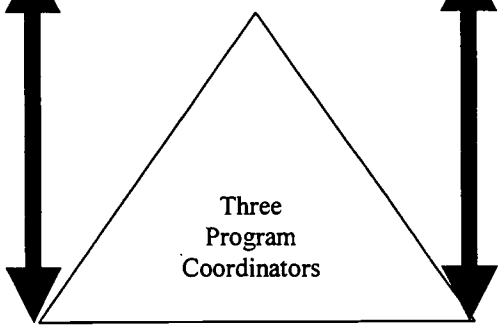


Facilitator Interact

Coordinating Committee Members Interact

Coordinating Committee composed of field administrators (superintendents and principals), retired administrators, college professors of educational administration, and the three Northeast Ohio Coordinators. Four of the members selected to be facilitators of the cluster groups.

Coordinators Interact



In creating the mentor-mentee pairings two strategies were used. First, those mentors and mentees who had been recommended together by their superintendents were accepted as "given" or "natural" pairs. Second, others selected for the program were assigned to small groups in balanced numbers and in rough geographic proximity. At the initial large group meeting and after some group development activities, these unpaired mentors and mentees were invited to make their own matches from those in their small groups.

The use of technology to facilitate communication between mentor and mentee, among the members of the small groups, and among all participants in the pilot was intended to be a major contribution. Notebook computers were made available to all participants both as an incentive and as a vehicle for addressing the program objectives. A website was created that enabled email communications and bulletin board type sharing and responding to information.

The initial large group meeting provided an overview of the program, its goals, and its structure. There was some presentation and discussion of the mentor-mentee relationship in the large group, but once the smaller groups were defined and mentors and mentees paired up, the continuing development of role expectations and group ground rules was left up to the facilitators and the small group members. Within the small groups the personal relationships were fostered and the work begun on the portfolios.

As the pilot ended, 48 out of the initial 55 mentors and mentees had stayed with the voluntary program for the two-year experience.

Program Evaluation

As part of the pilot, one member of the Coordinating Committee and an outside person were asked to evaluate the program's first year for the purpose of improving the program in the second year. In the second year they were asked to undertake a second evaluation. This second

evaluation was to determine the workability of the program as a whole and the differential effectiveness of its major components in developing portfolios and as a contributing factor to school improvement. The first year's evaluation was not put into place until nearly nine months into the program. This restricted evaluation of activities from the early months to data collected for other purposes and the recollections of the participants looking back in time.

The First Year

Four questions focused the first year's evaluation. First, what were the views of the Coordinating Committee and facilitators (those delivering the program) about the program—what worked and what could be improved? Second, what were the views of the mentors and mentees (those receiving the program) about the program—what worked and what could be improved? Third, how did the major components of the program compare with independent standards for those types of components? And, fourth, what was the worth of this Entry Year Program as a means for the entry year principal to fulfill the requirements for the 5-year license, develop his/her portfolio as an assessment device, and develop a support program for professional growth and successful entry into educational administration?

The major information sources were the minutes and documents of the program, evaluations of the two regional meetings held prior to authorizing the evaluation, an open-ended survey of the Coordinating Committee, interviews with the facilitators, and a survey of the participants—mentors and the entry year administrators. The information gathered was analyzed and summarized according to the major components of the pilot program and identified benchmarks related to mentor programs and effective meetings.

The data were then interpreted to respond directly to the four focusing questions. General evaluative comments were prepared. Finally, conclusions in the form of identified strengths, weaknesses or problem areas, and recommendations were developed.

The Second Year

The second year was three months underway when the Coordinating Committee authorized the second year evaluation. Over the next two months the proposed focus of the evaluation shifted from an evaluation paralleling that of the first year to one that would result in recommendations from all those engaged in the project to the Ohio Department of Education and other interested parties.

The evaluators worked with a sub-committee of the Coordinating Committee to identify the significant components and functions of the pilot entry year program. Seven were identified: Introductory informational work and meetings, the mentor-mentee relationship, personal and interpersonal aspects of the program, the portfolio, organization including time and expectations, the use of technology, and training. All participants in the program were surveyed for their comments on each of these seven plus the open-ended "other."

The responses were coded by content, regrouped, and send back to the participants for additional confirmation and/or comment. There were six groups of comments centering around mentoring, meetings, portfolio, organizational aspects, technology, and miscellaneous. A summation of the comments was prepared for each of the topical areas and the second round comments were added separately to the summation.

The Coordinating Committee reviewed the initial responses and noted that school improvement and student achievement had not received many comments. It determined to make this a major aspect for the recommendations and seek more input on it at a general meeting of the

participants. The general meeting was organized so that there were seven centers of topical interest, each led by a facilitator and a scribe. The participants rotated through the seven centers, considered the data from the surveys, and made suggestions for recommendations related to that aspect. The scribes and facilitators then wrote a statement intended to capture the general consensus of the participants. These statements were reviewed by the full group and assented to as representative of the opinion of the group on the topic.

Lessons Learned

From the Participants

The participants in this program—Coordinating Committee members, mentors, and mentees—reviewed the successes and problems in this pilot and prepared recommendations about the structure and operation of the entry year program that will be required by the State in 2002. They structured these ideas into six topical areas: The mentor-mentee relationship, the meetings, the organizational structure, the portfolio requirement, the use of technology, and the relationship of the entry year program to school improvement. The essential recommendations include:

1. The mentor-mentee relationship: This relationship is a strength of the program. The participants identified four key themes as important for constructing a mentoring program and for relationship building for the entry year principal (EYP, mentee): Training, proximity, the first year, and networking. They see a critical need for training the mentors particularly about portfolio development, since this is the evaluative product for the entry year administrator, but also training about how to mentor using sound coaching and socializing skills. The participants recommend as a key aspect the proximity of the mentor-mentee

pairings with consideration for the pair working at the same education level and with communities having comparable socio-economic demographics. Geographic proximity makes frequent contact easier and demographic proximity would increase the likelihood of common issues to discuss. About the first year, the recommendation is that the first year be one of "getting to know" one another, each other's communities, and each other's talents and needs. To aid in this process both mentor and mentee should write reflections. During this first year, the mentors should be engaged in professional development as mentors. There would be no portfolio work done this year other than that provided for mentors as part of their training. Crucial to building the new support networks for the entry year administrators are supportive superintendents who authorize and encourage blocks of time to be devoted to this experience. The use of cluster groups increased the networking capabilities of the participants and was recommended for inclusion in the State's program.

2. The meetings: An introductory meeting which gives a very clear picture of the goals of the program is important. The structure of this program with regional and cluster meetings was endorsed with particularly strong support for maintaining the small group/cluster meetings involving four to six pairs of mentors and mentees. Indeed, the participants called the cluster group meetings "the engine that drives the entire entry year process" (Trenta and Covrig, *Evaluation*, p. 11). The participants did recommend more structure, that is, timelines, for the completion of parts of the portfolio in conjunction with the cluster group meetings. The regional meetings should be fast paced and

organized in ways supportive of the cluster group meetings. State level meetings were not particularly valued.

3. The organizational structure: Maintaining the Regional, Cluster, and Mentor-Mentee structure was widely supported. There was a clear call for much clearer direction and goal statements from the State during the beginning of the program and the timeline for the portfolio preparation was strongly criticized. The university–field administrator collaboration was deemed a strength and should generate more suggestions for the cluster group discussion by way of the Coordinating Committee.
4. The portfolio requirement: Interestingly, despite the number of complaints and concerns expressed about the portfolios, portfolios were seen as a strength of the program although with frequent, pointed comments about making the portfolio development a two or three year project with more refined time lines and alignment to the ISLLC standards. More specifically, they recommended work on the portfolio should not really commence until the second year of the entry program and some believe that two years from then ought to be allowed for its completion—a total of three years. Beyond that, it appeared critical that the rubrics and procedures for evaluation must be clearly and completely spelled out at the very beginning of the program. There were some calls for making the portfolio content requirements be more practical, that is, more closely parallel to the work functions of principals in their first years.
5. The use of technology for communication: Provision of a laptop computer was highly endorsed but not as an incentive; rather the participants saw technology as

an important tool for effectiveness as an administrator. The program website was judged valuable although there were difficulties in easily accessing it. The use and potential of technology for communications was accepted even as emphatic calls for better training in the use of the computer and the website were made by participants.

6. The relationship to school improvement and student achievement: The program as presented did not provide a strong connection to school improvement and student achievement. Although few commented on this aspect initially, when it was pointed out, the participants emphasized this focus as the essential focus of the entire program and recommended that cluster group discussions have this as a common theme, using research and journal articles to inform the discussions.

From the Program Coordinators

Moving to reflections from the Program Coordinators, it must be emphasized that they participated in the development of the total group's comments and recommendations and supported them as they were presented for adoption by the group. The comments or lessons brought forward here are more individual in origin and status. Nonetheless, they are significant in that the Program Coordinators were responsible for starting and supporting the process that developed the program and recommendations described above.

One lesson learned was that this entry year program generated a complexity of relationships. As can be seen in the diagram on page seven above, there were five levels of relationships evident in this pilot. First there was the mentor-mentee relationship—a one-on-one relationship. Second was the small, geographic group relationship involving from 4 to 7 sets of mentors and mentees with a facilitator. Third was the relationship of the facilitators with each

other as they supported and educated each other. Fourth there were the interactions among the members of the Coordinating Committee as program creator, as oversight and resource to facilitators and small groups, and as provider of experiences through the large group meetings. This interrelation included the additional complexity for the facilitators of serving as intermediaries between the small groups and the Coordinating Committee. Finally, there were the interactions among the three Program Coordinators including their liaison role with the State.

Second, with regard to mentors, the Program Coordinators note that a program such as this should initiate and maintain its efforts to recruit a diverse and highly qualified cadre of persons to be assigned as mentors to entry year principals. The selection by solicitation of superintendents' recommendations was accepted as necessary for a start-up pilot program. Considering the need for experiences in diversity and the strong recommendations for training of the mentors, it is the judgment of the Coordinators that mentor recruitment not be left to chance or even simple recommendation. The program should actively seek out and recruit mentors to reflect the broader diversity of our society. Once identified as potential mentors, the cooperation of superintendents and boards of education should be sought to provide time for them to be trained and to participate in entry year relationships even for new administrators not in their districts. Relatedly, it is imperative that the new administrators participating in entry year programs receive both a satisfying experience as a mentee and also that the experience develop into a co-mentoring or mutually beneficial relationship with their mentor so that they are willing and ready to take on the role of mentor in subsequent years.

A third set of lessons learned revolves around the portfolio as a screening tool. If the portfolio is to be used to provide screening of entry year principals for licensure or other high-stakes decision-making, it is essential that a thorough validation be conducted, both of the

portfolio assessment procedures followed and of the applicable cut-off scores. Intensive assessor training should be provided to ensure the validity of these assessments. Roles should be defined among parties for handling individuals who do not meet the cut-off scores.

Clear definition of the portfolio, both operationally and in terms of purpose, should be provided to mentors, as well as intensive training in portfolio preparation. Consideration should be given to the expansion of portfolio content to include all core areas of principal performance, e.g., all state-adopted administrative competencies, interpersonal relations, etc.

Consideration should be given to the use of alternative or supplemental methods for the screening of entry year principals for licensure, to include the assessment of reflective writings, state-sponsored panel interviews, traditional superintendent recommendations, and paper-and-pencil tests.

A fourth point deals with consideration of the political realities that inserting a new program into the administrator development and retention process creates. The politics of state-sponsored mentoring and screening of entry year principals should be examined closely. Such an examination should consider funding issues and the support of school superintendents, administrator preparation programs, and state professional organizations. Our pilot did include representatives from the administrator preparation programs on an ongoing basis. Superintendent participation was more difficult to come by in terms of developing and coordinating the program, although as we moved into the second year several superintendents joined the Coordinating Committee and took an active role in the program. On the other hand, we are not at all certain about the types of support individual mentors and mentees received from their superintendents with regard to this program. Incidental comments passed along were

indicative of significant variations in awareness and support of the activities of the participant-administrators on the part of superintendents.

Finally, the Coordinators believe that a stable statewide web site with e-mail, chat, and links to professional resources, and discussion lists might further improve the use of technology for communication.

From the Evaluators

Several comments from the program evaluators are worthy of note related to developing and operating such a program. Within this program structure—with facilitators linking the Coordinating Committee and the small groups—the facilitators proved to be topically well-informed of the attitudes, opinions, and concerns of the mentors and mentees, more so than the Coordinating Committee as a whole. However, even though the facilitators did effectively communicate the topics, they were not as effective in communicating the intensity or priorities of those attitudes, opinions, and concerns.

Mentors and mentees tended to focus more on the here-and-now while Coordinating Committee members tended toward a more global perspective. In a sense, the planners probably recognized that this was a pilot with limitations of information and procedures, and the mentors and mentees probably saw this program as happening to them and making demands on their time and energy for work products with nebulous or non-existent standards for measuring progress and/or success. Reactions and feedback varied accordingly.

During the exercise intended to bring about a convergence of ideas for recommendations about entry year programs, Coordinating Committee members were used as table facilitators and scribes. This left very few Coordinating Committee members to rotate through the seven tables and to provide topic-by-topic input. The resultant recommendations might have been different to

some degree if a means had been devised for the facilitators and scribes to react to the data related to each of the aspects or if the facilitator and scribe roles had been spread out among all the participants.

Conclusion

The fact that 48 of 55 of the initial mentors and mentees stayed with the program from the initial meeting to the end of the pilot, an essentially voluntary program, is perhaps the best indicator of the perceived value and success of this particular program. Another is that the Coordinating Committee maintained a collegial relationship between the Northeast Ohio graduate programs that prepare educational administrators somewhat in competition with each other. Thirdly, the Coordinating Committee did grow over the term of the pilot, attracting more superintendents into an active role.

This pilot utilized many of the ideas noted in the literature review above and went beyond it in its attention to the complexity of relationships that this collegially developed and operated program generated. The importance of trust, respect, and caring—at all levels of the various relationships—just may have been the greatest lesson learned and confirmed by this pilot entry year program.

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