

# **MPA New Administrator Mentoring Program**

*(Adopted by the Professional Management Committee on September 14, 2004)*

**Developed by the Ad Hoc Committee to Develop a  
Mentoring Program for New Administrators - -  
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## **Introduction:**

In its mission, the Maine Principals' Association seeks to promote the principalship and support principals as educational leaders through a comprehensive professional development program based on the ISLLC (Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium) Standards for School Leaders and a companion administrator induction plan. As school leaders, new building principals find themselves at the center of competing priorities. Principals, assistant principals, vocational directors, and assistant vocational directors are expected to demonstrate competence in instructional/educational leadership and building/ human resource management often in isolation from administrative peers.

We know that mentoring administrators is vastly different from mentoring teachers. In fact, there is little research on administrator induction and mentoring. We must ensure that those accepting the challenge of the principalship have every opportunity to succeed. The MPA's induction plan identifies mentoring as a means of supporting building-based administrators new to the position. To this end, the MPA's comprehensive induction program strengthens and sustains the profession by addressing the changing demands of the role and promoting the profession as viable, satisfying, and desirable. While the induction plan identifies relationships, orientations, professional development, and advocacy as critical components, this document speaks to developing relationships and supporting them with professional development through a mentoring program.

## **Statement of Purpose:**

The purposes of establishing a mentoring program as part of a comprehensive induction plan are:

1. To provide and support a relationship that “stresses a holistic approach to adult learning and encourages new building administrators to grow professionally as well as personally” in order to provide a quality education for Maine’s students. (Daresh, p.24)
2. To help new building administrators gain professional success and personal satisfaction through the development of an honest and open mentor/protégé relationship, built around work supporting the ISSLC Standards.

### **Definitions:**

**Mentoring:** A process in which experienced administrators coach, collaborate, and consult with individuals new to school administration.

**Protégé:** An individual, new to school administration, engaged in an on-going relationship with a mentor to assure successful induction into the principalship.

**Mentor:** “... a person who is active, dynamic, visionary, knowledgeable, and skilled; who has a committed philosophy that keeps the teaching and learning of students in focus; who guides other leaders to be similarly active and dynamic” (Crow and Matthews, p.2).

### **ISLLC Leadership Standards:**

The ISLLC Standards provide a framework for professional administrator practice and certification. It is our intent that mentors and proteges will model those standards that define a highly qualified administrator.

“A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by...

1. facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.
2. advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.
3. ensuring management of organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.
4. collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs and mobilizing community resources.

5. acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.
6. understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.”

### **Goals of the Mentoring Program:**

Through a carefully defined, implemented, and evaluated mentoring program, the Maine Principals' Association anticipates significant positive outcomes for protégés, mentors, schools, school administrative units, and students. To achieve these outcomes, the following goals have been established:

1. Participants will gain enhanced confidence and competence as educational leaders.
2. Professional growth and development will be individualized and flexible to support the learning and needs of those involved.
3. Highly qualified and effective principals will find greater professional satisfaction leading to retention.
4. Participants will develop enhanced networks and professional relationships.

### **The Program:**

The success of an effective mentoring program depends on several factors. Developing strong relationships takes time and requires a long-term commitment from the mentor and protégé as well as substantial support from school administrative units. In addition to developing a mentor/protégé relationship, the mentor must simultaneously help the beginning principal succeed during the first years on the job and help the protégé recognize ways to improve. Participants committed to such relationships recognize the benefits of shared professional and personal growth and development connected to the ISSLC Standards. Furthermore, successful mentoring programs support reflective practices that evaluate the effectiveness of professional development and the mentoring relationship to assure a quality education for all students. In recognition of these best practices, the association's mentoring program will require:

1. A formal commitment by participants of two –three years.
2. Local district support and commitment consisting of:
  - a. A belief in the importance of mentoring as part of a formal induction process
  - b. Financial support

- c. Release time necessary for regular meetings between the mentor and protégé and effective professional development and reflection.
    - d. Recognition of the confidential nature of the relationship between the mentor and protege. Information will not be available to a third party without the protégé's permission.
- 3. A formal process through which mentoring candidates and protégés are selected and matched to ensure the greatest potential for developing positive relationships. As practical, mentors and proteges will be matched regionally. The process may include:
  - a. Opportunities for the protégé to nominate a mentor.
  - b. Matching based on individual mentor and protégé philosophies. Mentors with particular strengths should be provided to protégés with parallel needs.
  - c. Mentors should be instructional leaders who have successful experience with schools similar to the protégé's and whose school is sufficiently strong so that it will not suffer as a result of the time and energy spent by the mentor.
- 4. Training for both mentor and protégé consisting of:
  - a. Professional development and continuous support for mentors. Professional development for mentors consists of learning and practicing a variety of basic coaching skills including: trust building, listening, questioning, problem solving, assessment, and goal setting.
  - b. Common professional development for mentor and protégé linked to the ISLLC Standards.

**Characteristics of Effective Mentors (Daresh, pp.37-39):**

- 1. Mentors should have experience as practicing school administrators, and their peers and others should generally regard them as being effective.
- 2. Mentors must demonstrate generally accepted positive leadership qualities such as:
  - a. Intelligence
  - b. Good oral and written skills
  - c. A capacity to understand the messages of the past as a guide.

- d. Acceptance of multiple alternative solutions to complex problems
  - e. Clarity of vision and ability to share that vision with others.
3. Mentors ask the right questions of beginning administrators rather than providing the right answers all the time.
  4. Mentors must accept an alternate way of doing things and should avoid the tendency to tell beginners that the way to do something is “The way I used to do it.”
  5. Mentors should express the desire to see people go beyond their present levels of performance – even if it might mean that the proteges’ are able to do some things better than the mentors can.
  6. Mentors model the principles of continuous learning and reflection.
  7. Mentors must exhibit the awareness of the political and social realities of life in at least one school district – they must know the real way to get things done.
  8. In addition to the above, they typically demonstrate:
    - a. Enthusiasm that is sincere and convincing.
    - b. The ability to communicate to others a clear picture of personal attitudes, values, and ethical standards.
    - c. The ability to communicate in sensitive ways the type of feedback that is needed regarding another person’s progress towards desirable goals.
    - d. The ability to listen to colleague’s ideas, doubts, and concerns.
    - e. A caring attitude and belief in their colleague’s potential flexibility and sense of humor.
  9. Five important skills must be shown by mentors:
    - a. Willingness to invest time and energy in the professional development of their colleagues.
    - b. A strong conviction and belief that other administrators are likely to have a positive effect on the quality of schooling.
    - c. Confidence in their own abilities to coach as well as lead+.

- d. Possession of high standards and expectations for their own abilities and for the work of their colleagues.
- e. A belief that mentoring is a mutually enhancing professional development opportunity in which both partners will achieve satisfaction from the relationship.

### **Responsibilities of the Mentor:**

“People generally like the idea of starting a program of support for school administrators. Mentoring is an appealing concept. The one obstacle that does serve to discourage people to the extent that they ultimately decide to give up on mentoring is feeling as if they do not know what they are supposed to do in their assigned jobs. Research on adult learning and development consistently shows that (a) adults do not wish to feel as if they are incompetent – that they cannot do something to which they have been assigned; (b) people feel frustrated because they cannot master some skill, such as using a particular computer program; and (c) people sometimes feel inadequate to serve effectively as mentors for colleague administrators (no one wants to fail at an important task)” (Daresh p. 65).

1. Reflecting the protégé’s needs and facilitating his/her work are the essential tasks of the mentor. Mentors must direct the protégé in the development of an action plan that will eventually detail the work of the mentoring program. Mentors will help the protégé in the development of such a plan by being able to:
  - a. **Frame the Issues:** New administrators are faced with overwhelming tasks. They will need help narrowing the focus, or framing the broader issues, in order to identify specific goals.
  - b. **Identify Goals:** After framing the issues, realistic goals need to be identified that are measurable and must be agreed upon by the mentor and protégé.
  - c. **Promote Self-directed Learning:** Through active listening and sharing experiences, mentors can help proteges grow into their new roles and understand the consequences of their actions.
  - d. **Establish Limits:** It is essential that mentor and protégé recognize certain limitations. There are some issues and goals that they cannot address because the outcome is dependent on other stakeholders.
  - e. **Empower for Action:** It is the mentor’s responsibility to empower the protégé to take action by encouraging the protégé to do most of the talking, using role playing as a means of helping the protégé change perspectives, and remaining open and honest.

2. A structure needs to be provided to ensure the success of the mentoring program. A written action plan should be developed early in the relationship between the mentor and protégé. The plan will contain:
  - a. Identification of goals
  - b. Specific objectives
  - c. Activities that will assist in reaching the stated goals and objectives. These activities include the observation of proteges engaged in real work that will allow for targeted coaching including, at a minimum, a teacher observation cycle, facilitation of a faculty meeting, a case study of professional development, and a school culture analysis.
  - d. Assessment tools and process to identify whether or not the goals and objectives have been accomplished.

### **Program Evaluation:**

Reflective practices that assure frequent evaluation of program and relationship effectiveness are necessary for the long-term viability of a mentoring program. Such assessments are always about the program and never about the individual. An effective evaluation must address certain questions and may solicit the data in a variety of ways, including personal interviews with any number of stakeholders, questionnaires, reflective writings and other feedback protocols. John Daresh (pp. 98-103), in Leaders Helping Leaders, identifies essential questions that should be addressed in evaluating a mentoring program. These questions must be addressed in the MPA's evaluation protocols.

- a. **Was the program effective?** This question asks whether the program appeared to meet the stated goals and objectives.
- b. **How expensive was the program?** What costs were incurred as a result of implementing mentoring program?
- c. **Did the program meet the stated needs of all participants?** It is important to try to determine how those who were mentored and those who served as mentors perceived their experiences.
- d. **Did the mentoring program meet the needs of the school system?** A good mentoring program has the capability to add something to the school district in which the administrator serves.
- e. **Did the program really help the protégé?** Were the perceived benefits actualized?
- f. **Have we addressed program weaknesses as well as program strengths?**

- g. **Were the participants in the program provided with an opportunity to work together as a way to grow professionally?**  
Again, we desire to reduce the sense of isolation that is traditionally experienced by administrators through a mentoring program.
- h. **Did we allow ample opportunity for program participants to provide input into the overall assessment of the program?** Have we listened to those on the firing lines?
- i. **How well prepared were the mentors?**

### **Recommendations for the Maine Principals' Association:**

1. The MPA should form a standing committee in the Professional Division charged with overseeing the association's induction program and its mentoring component. This committee, for example, will work with MPA staff to establish specific policies, procedures, and practices associated with program implementation and evaluation.
2. The MPA staff member assigned to the standing committee will administer the mentoring program.
3. The MPA should seek outside funding for three-five years to further develop and implement the mentoring program. The request for funding should include a part-time person to coordinate the program.
4. To ensure success, the MPA should pilot the mentoring program with a limited number of proteges and mentors. Initially the committee recommends that no more than five pairs statewide participate with an anticipated expansion over time.
5. The MPA should integrate the mentoring program as much as possible with existing MPA professional development. For example, the existing four session series, Great Beginnings: An Orientation for New School Administrators might serve as common professional development for mentors and proteges.
6. As practical, the MPA should provide training for mentors and professional development for mentors and proteges regionally, taking into consideration the locations of program participants as well as cost effectiveness and logistical issues.
7. The MPA should set up a system to reward mentors for their participation. This includes a flat rate of financial compensation, which covers mileage and other expenses; public recognition; and enhanced skills, which might be linked to recertification plans. Clearly, the proteges' districts would participate in funding the mentors.

Because administrator induction and mentoring is the responsibility of multiple stakeholders, we reiterate the following recommendations from the MPA Induction Plan (adopted by the Professional Management Committee on September 16, 2003).

### **Recommendations for Schools Boards and Superintendents:**

School boards and superintendents should and must play a critical role in the induction of new administrators. Their responsibility includes creating working conditions to ensure success and providing resources and support to do the job. These resources and support include quality training and on-the-job feedback with a mentoring component, time, and the necessary funding.

School boards and superintendents should:

- Learn about the importance of induction for new administrators and successful induction models, which include a mentoring component.
- Develop and implement local induction programs, which include ongoing training, feedback, and mentoring. Because of conditions unique to Maine, districts in a region might jointly sponsor such a program.
- Encourage and provide the resources for school administrators to learn and network with others in like roles. Paying dues to state and national professional administrator organizations, encouraging, and paying for attendance at conferences, seminars, study groups, and courses; providing technology for interacting with others and accessing information; and encouraging participation in regional and statewide committees are examples of steps that school boards and superintendents can take.
- Encourage and provide support for school administrators to take part in MPA sponsored induction activities.

### **Recommendation for Administrator Preparation Programs:**

- Administrator preparation institutions (UM, USM, and UNE) should review their programs to ensure that they are relevant and that graduates are able to successfully lead Maine schools. Preparation programs should model best practices in induction and mentoring.

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