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St. John's University

Oakdale

Building Bridges: Strengthening the Principals Induction Process through Intentional Mentoring

Article Summary

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This article examines the effects of the implementation of a well-designed mentoring program for principals and the obstacles many mentoring programs face (Department of Education, 2009). According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 56% of current public school principals are age 50 or over, which puts them within reach of retirement age (Department of Education, 2009). This statistic demonstrates the need for effective mentoring programs for new administrators (Hall, 2008). Strengths-based mentoring programs date back to the 12th and 13th centuries, when various associations formed with the purpose of building bridges. Craftsmen train and work under the watchful eye of a master until they meet the standards of high-quality work. Now in the 21st century principals are being viewed as master artisans and school districts are looking to them to serve as mentors for new principals learning the ropes (Hall, 2008).

In 2002 the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) identified six key standards for what principals should know and be able to do (NAESP, 2002). The Principals Advisory Leadership Services (PALS) Corps was introduced in 2003. One component of PALS was the National Principals Mentoring Certification Program. This program is a yearlong professional development opportunity to train current principals to be master artisans so they may guide, nurture and support their rookie colleagues. This program consists of a three-day institute and a nine-month mentoring internship which includes in-depth mentoring, monthly conversations, frequent professional reading, and continuous self reflection projects to create a meaningful and effective program where veteran administrators become master mentors and learn to steer clear of ad-hoc relationships that are possible when new principals are hired in a district where there is no formal strengths-based mentoring program

(Hall, 2008). In an effort to provide a successful program, Hall discusses the possible obstacles when beginning implementation. The five obstacles discussed are:

- Lack of common language – terms and meanings are discussed and agreed upon to ensure an effective partnership for all stakeholders.

- Unclear roles and responsibilities – clear expectations, well trained mentors needs to be established as not to damage new administrators and for a mentor program to be sustainable.

- Time constraints – Provide quality time and possible benefits for mentors to make time commitments more attractive.

- Mentor/protégé mismatching - coordinate authentic relationships and properly match mentors with protégés

- Absence of clear goals – Establish finish lines and outline the course with benchmarks.

This article served as an introductory source of information on the topic of strength based internal mentoring programs for administrators. While it did not contain quantitative, statistical data from the study, it spoke to the qualitative data collected from surveys distributed to the participants. Several quotes were included in the article. One common theme emerged: developing the protégé's strengths and abilities by deliberately compelling him or her to engage in accurate and productive self-reflection (Hall, 2008). This article demonstrated internal and external validity. Although he did not include the location of the participants that were surveyed, he included his findings and was able to project the results and establishment of a strengths-based formal mentoring program for

new administrators to be effective for all new administrators if implemented as described in the study. This article speaks to the dire need for strong, well-developed mentoring programs for administrators due to the statistic that 56% of current public school principals are age 50 or over and within reach of retirement (Hall, 2008). It will be necessary for school districts to attract, hire, and retain great leaders in an effort to create a safe, healthy, engaged, supported, and challenged learning environment with their staff and for their students.

References

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