

Purposeful Mentoring as the Foundation of Administrator Professional Development

Delivered as part of a symposium, Bridging Theory and Praxis through Professional
Development for School Administrators: A University and School District Collaboration

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Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Education Research
Association, *April 11-15, 2005, Montreal, Quebec*

One tangible benefit that has emerged from the Learner Centered Leadership program (LCL) is a purposeful mentoring model as a way to link learning and theory to administrators' daily practices. Research has shown the importance of mentoring for prospective administrators who are participating in an internship (Crow & Matthews, 1998; Daresh & Playko, 1992) as well as novice administrators who may be in their first two or three years of administrative experience (Daresh, 2001; Daresh & Playko, 1997). Mentoring plays an important role in administrative training. The purpose of this paper is to explore the effects of purposeful mentoring on four mentoring pairs (eight people) that have been involved in the LCL program. Specifically, this study considers the following questions:

1. What has been the impact of purposeful mentoring on participants' professional growth and learning?
2. What type of relationships is necessary for purposeful mentoring to be successful?
3. How can participants sustain the learning associated with purposeful mentoring beyond the three year LCL program?

Using methodology that is consistent with qualitative data analysis, the eight administrators participated in interviews that have been examined for common themes. These themes provide the foundation for the following discussion. Before considering these themes, a definition of purposeful mentoring along with a description of the mentoring process is provided.

Purposeful Mentoring

Research literature defines mentoring as an extended process of personal and professional growth. According to Johnson (1997), “mentoring means to facilitate, guide, and encourage continuous innovation, learning, and growth to prepare for the future” (p. 13). This growth occurs not only for those who are being mentored but also for those who are serving as mentors. Crow and Matthews (1998) claim that “a mentor is not only a teacher or coach who focuses primarily on the task and the results. Mentors focus on individuals and their development. They act as confidants willing to play part of an adversary if needed, to listen and to question so protégés can broaden their own view” (p. 27). The authors are not advocating a top-down approach suggested by Crow and Matthews (1998). This definition, however, reflects a level of teaching and learning that occurs on both sides of the mentoring relationship. Engaging in this adversarial relationship may require mentors to go beyond their comfort zone and challenge their own values and beliefs. Mentoring requires a level of reflection that leads to personal growth for mentors as well as novice administrators. This should not be discounted as an important part of the mentoring process. Both mentors and novice administrators benefit from the mentoring relationship and experience.

The Learner Centered Leadership program takes the definition of mentoring one step further by engaging participants in purposeful mentoring. Purposeful mentoring is defined as continuous individual growth and innovation related to school-specific goals and strategies that are outlined in a formalized plan of action. By focusing on school-related goals, mentors and those being mentored are able to connect theory, research,

and literature to strategic innovation that occurs at the sites. Professional development through the purposeful mentoring becomes embedded into daily practices of administrators. By formalizing the professional development in an action plan, reflection and assessment of personal growth become conscientious tasks, encouraging critique of one's own leadership.

With this as the framework and definition, effective mentoring relationships require a level of trust, respect, ethics, and communication (Hay, 1995; Johnson, 1997; Shea, 1994). In order to engage in intense dialogue about tough and complicated issues in meaningful ways, participants must establish a level of trust including the insurance that confidences will not be betrayed. Along with this, the participants must respect opinions and experiences that each brings to the mentoring relationship. Without this mutual respect, individual growth may not occur as a result of the dialogue and mentoring. Modeling leadership is also critical in a mentoring relationship. Ethics deals with practicing what is preached. Those in a mentoring relationship must act in ways that reflect the individual values and beliefs that each hopes to encourage in others.

Mentoring is also about effective communication that embraces listening and providing constructive feedback (Harkins, 1999; Starratt, 2003). This does not mean that ideas and opinions should not be challenged. On the contrary, a mentoring relationship should encourage shifting of thoughts, roles, and ideas. At times, this requires confrontation, but if the relationship is built on trust, respect, and ethics, then the result of this confrontation will be personal and professional growth for both mentors and those being mentored. To ensure that the appropriate foundation is set to engage in

these difficult conversations, relationships need to be formed that reflect trust, respect, and communication.

Developmental Stages of Mentoring

In the research on mentoring models, developmental stages are recognized in effective mentoring relationships (Bess, 2000; Daresh, 2001; Zachary, 2002). The Learner Centered Leadership program implemented four developmental stages in order to create the capacity for purposeful mentoring. The first stage identified was preparation and initiation of the participants. The focus was on developing characteristics like trust, communication, and understanding among the participants so that positive relationships flourished. The hope was to build relationships that went beyond the student/teacher or the assistant/supervisor relationships that tended to already exist. The second stage focused on negotiating collegial expectations between the mentor and the person being mentored through an action and mentoring plan. Implementation of the action plan defined the third stage. The final stage dealt with reflection, redefinition, and celebration.

Stage One: Preparation and Initiation

As part of the first stage of mentoring, each of the districts had an opportunity to host a workshop that focused on programs or strategies that they were using to work with high needs, urban communities. Two of the districts conducted workshops during the first year of the grant, focusing on data-driven decision making and facilitative leadership. Two more occurred during the second year with topics related to comprehensive school reform and innovative practices to align curriculum and

instruction to standards. Although developing relationships was an ongoing process, the four district-led workshops provided an opportunity for participants to see and hear about the hard work and reform efforts that occurred in each. It provided insight and developed a level of respect for the work being done in each district.

As a second step to fostering inter-district trust and respect, the Learner Centered Leadership program created smaller curriculum planning teams that included faculty members, district liaisons, and experienced administrators. Collectively, participants on these teams organized and facilitated sessions on a number of different topics related to needs assessments that were completed by novice principals who were receiving mentoring support associated with individual action plans. The planning teams were instrumental in breaking down the barriers between the university and districts and decreased the gap between the rich theoretical perspective valued at the university and the hands-on wisdom of practitioners.

The teams were formed around four mutually agreed upon strands that captured the needs and goals of the participating novice administrators. Those strands were 1) human relations and communication, 2) language and cultural diversity, 3) learner centered leadership, and 4) mediating change. The university-district teams collaborated on a series of workshops that were provided to the rising administrators around these four strands and reflected a strong connection between theory and practice. The collaboration that occurred in these teams reflected the idea that theory and practice do not stand alone, but rather help to inform each other. The difficult

conversations that the university had with the districts helped provide insight to both sides and created some space for growth for both districts and university.

Stage Two: Negotiation of the Mentoring Relationship

Once solid relationships were formed for mentoring, the second phase involved negotiation between the mentor and the mentored and the cultivation of expectations for the mentoring process. This second phase focused on defining the experience (Bess, 2000; Zachary, 2002). Both the mentors and the mentored needed to lay out expectations for the experience and came to a consensus about the actual experience and set realistic expectations that both sides were able to honor. This included setting a realistic meeting schedule to which both made a commitment.

The negotiation phase consisted of two interrelated parts: first, identifying a mentor who could help nurture and support the novice administrator during the writing and implementation of the action plan; and secondly, identifying a growth goal and creating an action plan that became the defining experience for novice administrators. The LCL activities during the negotiation phase focused on providing the participants with continued opportunities to tap into resources that met the needs they identified initially at the beginning of the program, that helped them advance their action plan goals, and that guided them in identifying mentors who could best assist with the action plan process and implementation.

To begin the process of matching mentors with novice administrators, a series of activities and workshops were provided which helped each of the districts select mentoring models that met their specific needs and goals. The first activity was a

workshop for the mentors to explore models of mentoring and to examine both formal and informal mentoring processes in which they have participated. The workshop revealed that all four districts were at very different levels in terms of their knowledge and use of mentoring as a form of professional development. All four districts recognized the role of informal mentoring relationships, and all of the participants believed they had done informal mentoring with rising administrators and teachers. But only two of the four districts identified any type of formal mentoring program currently occurring within their districts, and only in one of the districts was the formal mentoring model used with novice administrators. A formal model of mentoring for administrators was a relatively new concept for most of the mentors in the LCL program.

After this meeting, the project team made the decision to facilitate district level meetings that would focus the conversation about mentoring to meet the needs and knowledge of the districts due to the knowledge gap that existed between the four. Some districts were ready to move forward with selection of mentoring models, while others needed time to more closely examine the models that existed.

From October 2003 through March 2004, the project coordinator facilitated monthly meetings in each of the four participating districts to examine and select mentoring models that would best meet the participants' and the districts' needs. This process began in October 2003 with a general overview of mentoring models. This activity included a discussion of one-on-one, team, and organizational mentoring (Johnson, 1997). The teams also considered the differences between coaching,

counseling, and developmental alliances as frameworks for mentoring (Hay, 1995). In November and December 2003, the district teams each regrouped and engaged in richer discussions about the type of mentoring program they wanted to use. By winter break, the district participants made critical decisions about the type of mentoring they wanted to see unfold based upon district and participant needs.

In all four districts, the teams decided on a combination of mentoring models. The participants saw the need for the formation of a one-on-one relationship between a mentor and novice administrator. This one-on-one relationship acted to guide the novice administrators to new and valuable resources that were related to the action plan or daily on-the-job issues and challenges. Each of the district teams realized that research on mentoring made it clear that the mentoring relationships should be systemic and planned (Daresh, 2001; Hay, 1995; Johnson, 1997). As a result, each of the districts discussed the best way to form these pairings so they could be meaningful for both the mentors and those being mentored. For the one high school district, the team of participants decided to develop pairings that were based on location. With the three elementary districts, the pairings related specifically to the action plan goals. Each novice administrator was asked to select a mentor who had the expertise and knowledge that aligned with the action goal and needs of the person being mentored.

Along with this one-on-one relationship, the district teams also wanted to use a team coaching mentoring process. In this process, each novice administrator had a team of mentors who helped with the implementation of the action plan. The novice administrator identified a mentor(s) with each action step or strategy associated with the

plan. This mentor served as a coach who specifically assisted the novice administrator with the completion of that action step. The novice administrators were encouraged to use mentors outside of the district teams including university faculty and mentors from the other three districts. By doing this, the mentoring process became more collaborative and worked to develop inter-district and district-university relationships.

The district teams continued to meet in order to determine how to create the mentoring pairs. A process was used (called “five minute” dates by one of the districts) where each novice administrator had an opportunity to sit down for five to ten minutes with each mentor administrator. The novice administrator used this as an opportunity to present his/her tentative goal for the action planning process and to receive some critical feedback from each of the accomplished administrators who served as mentors. By the end of this session, the novice administrators were able to make some important decisions about which mentor could provide the best assistance through the action plan and action implementation processes. These meetings occurred through the month of February 2004. In all but one district, rising administrators were then asked to select a mentor who could guide them based upon the individual needs and goals that the rising administrator had identified. In the fourth district (the high school district), participants made the decision to select mentors based upon convenience rather than goals. By the end of March 2004, all rising administrators were paired with a mentor.

Based upon research on effective mentoring programs (Daresh, 2001; Crow & Matthews, 1998), the project team also provided the mentors in the program with a workshop on the nature of mentoring in April 2004. The purpose of the workshop was

to provide the mentors with some skills and strategies that they could use when working with the novice administrators over the next year of the LCL program. The workshop was facilitated by Gary Crow and Joe Matthews, two leading experts in the country on principal mentoring.

The second part of the negotiation process was the creation of action plans. The purpose of the action plan was to outline a goal and a series of strategies that could help the novice administrator improve professionally and strengthen his/her school community. The project team wanted to create a process that allowed for flexibility in the content of the plan. As a result, participants could focus on an individual professional growth plan, a school-level initiative, or an action research project as the foundation of the action plan.

To begin the action planning process, during the month of October 2003, those being mentored were asked to write action goals that were then shared and modified in a collaborative process with team members from their districts. The participants engaged in what they called “five minute dates” where the novice administrators met with each mentor for at least five minutes to share action goals and receive some immediate feedback. Novice administrators rotated around to each mentor over the course of about two hours. By doing this, those being mentored had an opportunity to formalize this action goal, meet potential mentors and coaches who they could later identify on their action plan, and receive immediate feedback related to resources or strategies that should be incorporated into the action plans. In analyzing these action goals, fifteen focused on new program implementation on campus; seven were action

research projects; and eight were geared toward professional growth opportunities for the individual administrator.

In April 2004, novice administrators attended a workshop on the action planning process. The project team did not identify any particular model for the action plan. The hope was that the novice administrators would select a model that worked best for them to reach their professional goals. Instead, the project team identified six critical attributes that needed to be reflected in the final action plans. In analyzing various models for action planning (Donaldson, Bowe, MacKenzie, & Marnik, 2004; Goldberg & Sifonis, 1994; National Study of School Evaluation, 2004), the LCL project team noted that the six attributes were critical regardless of an action plan's format or focus (e.g., professional development, program implementation, or action research). The attributes were:

- **Specific**-The most successful action plans are written at a high level of specificity. That is, when an action plan's goals and objectives are sufficiently focused and clearly articulated, there is less ambiguity and uncertainty regarding its purpose and the desired outcomes. Likewise, effective implementation, as well as accurate diagnosis of problems during the implementation stage, is enhanced when there is an adequate level of specificity and detail in a plan's action steps.
- **Observable and Measurable**-If the objectives and action steps are written to include unambiguous and observable measures, there is a greater likelihood that evaluation and assessment of progress toward the action plan's goals and objectives can be achieved. In the event that progress is not being made or the

- action steps are not achieving the desired goal, diagnosing and remedying the problem is more likely to occur if this critical attribute is addressed in the plan.
- **Data-driven**-It is important that action plans be data-driven at every decision point (e.g., needs assessment, diagnosing implementation problems, monitoring progress). In some instances, quantifiable data (e.g., surveys, standardized test scores) will be necessary, while in other situations qualitative data (e.g., interviews, observations) will be more suitable. Often it will be desirable to collect both types of data. In any case, the use of data in the development, implementation, and evaluation of action plans reduces the likelihood that resulting decisions will be based solely on subjective impressions and/or desired preferences.
 - **Continuous and Ongoing**-We often know the least about where we need to go or what we need to do when we are first articulating a plan of action. Frequently it is only through the implementation and subsequent revision of an action plan that we come to better understand the goals, objectives, and/or action steps that need to be a part of our action plans. Moreover, because change is an ever-present quality in the life of school leaders, the most useful action plans need to be continuous and ongoing, very much like an action research cycle or spiral. Because there will always be something that can be improved or done differently, today's action plans may contain seeds for solving tomorrow's challenges and dilemmas.

- Sustainable-The sustainability of a continuous and ongoing action plan is enhanced when active and relevant connections are made between and among a leader's vision, value and belief systems and a school's consensually-developed mission and culturally-defined values, beliefs, and assumptions. Sustainability is also increased when an action plan is specific (i.e., greater likelihood of agreement on purpose), data-driven (i.e., greater likelihood of agreement on need), and observable and measurable (i.e., greater likelihood of agreement on progress).
- Critically Reflective-Although it is important to have a reflective component in an action plan, the likelihood of significant growth, development, learning, change, and/or transformation is increased tenfold if the plan entails critical reflection. Each of the preceding critical attributes is essential for a plan to be reflective. However, in order for an action plan to be critically reflective it needs to embody active linkages and dialogic interconnections between and among theory, research, and practice. This may involve 1) deriving our action plans from actual problems of practice, 2) utilizing relevant empirical and theoretical literature in the development of the action plans, 3) surfacing and testing through the action plans the efficacy of our theories-in use, and/or 4) examining the extent to which our practice achieves our espoused outcomes. Consulting with other professionals who may hold different perspectives than us (e.g., critical friends) is another way to incorporate critical reflection into the action plans.

A comprehensive binder on action planning was distributed to all of the rising administrators. The contents included a description of the critical attributes as well as models, samples, and resources that they could use in the process of action planning and implementation.

Stage Three: Implementation of the Action Plans

The third phase of the purposeful mentoring experience was the implementation of action plans with a focus on goals and learning (Bess, 2000; Daresh, 2001; Zachary, 2002). The mentor assisted the mentored by working with the individual to implement the action plan and to assess progress. The mentor acted as a resource, problematizing strategies or actions and then coaching the mentored through ways to resolve the situations that developed. In situations where the mentor did not have the knowledge or expertise, the mentoring relationship became an opportunity for both to learn as they sought resources to resolve challenges. It was through these experiences that both the mentor and the mentored had the greatest opportunity to experience personal and professional growth.

Most novice administrators (22 total) implemented plans that focused on the development of new programs to increase student learning and achievement (i.e., literacy development, progressive discipline, or after-school tutoring) or the assessment of current programs through an action research model to determine the impact on student achievement. The action planning and implementation processes served to focus novice administrators on longer term goals and planning that went beyond the traditional reactive work that plagues their daily practices. The action plans capitalized

on the importance of developing and maintaining vision and goals that lead to comprehensive change and improvement efforts within organizations.

Stage Four: Reflection and Celebration

The last stage was characterized by assessment and redefinition (Bess, 2000; Zachary, 2002). Collectively, the mentors and the mentored reflected on the learning and assessed the growth and success. This was an opportunity for spiritual renewal and positive self-affirmation. School administrators had a chance to share stories and issues collectively with others in a session that brought the formal mentoring experience to a closure. Collective and personal reflection provided the opportunity for growth and renewal for the mentor and the mentored. The participants were encouraged to continue to develop an informal relationship as a system of support and collegiality.

The novice administrators were encouraged to revise the action plans and to continue a second round of strategic planning that would further develop or improve the programs that were considered. Novice administrators had a chance to share data, results, and next steps with district leadership teams. The leadership teams provided valuable advice to push novice administrators to think about both intended and unintended consequences of their work. District leadership also took this as an opportunity to express appreciation for the hard work and commitment that novice administrators demonstrated through the action plan process. They also expressed a sense of hope in the continued improvement of student learning and achievement at the school sites. The remainder of the paper is dedicated to exploring the impact of this

purposeful mentoring process on four pairs of participants (4 mentors and the four novice administrators who they mentored).

Participants

The sample for the study was drawn from 64 active participants in the Learner Centered Leadership program. The LCL program works with 32 novice administrators and 32 mentor administrators from four urban school districts. One mentoring pair from each of the four districts was chosen for this study. As a result, the sample includes 4 novice administrators and 4 mentor administrators, or a total of 8 participants.

In the LCL program, novice administrators were defined as beginning urban school leaders who served in teachers on assignment, assistant principal, or principal positions. Each had less than four years of administrative experience. The majority of the novice administrators served in assistant principal roles. Mentors were defined as those experienced school administrators (six or more years of experience) who demonstrated effective leadership practices that led to a positive school environment as well as increased student learning and achievement. The majority of the mentor administrators in the LCL program served as school principals, but also included district personnel and superintendents. All participants in the LCL program were public school educators in high poverty, high-needs urban school districts. Although participation in the LCL program was voluntary, participants were identified, recruited, and selected by district leadership teams.

In order to select participants for this study, purposeful sampling was used where participants were selected based upon pre-determined criteria of importance (Berg, 2004; Isaac & Michael, 1995). The eight participants (four mentoring pairs) were selected based upon the following criteria:

1. Participants who have been involved in the LCL program since its inception in January 2003 and who have participated in at least 80% of the LCL activities and workshops.
2. Participants who were committed to the mentoring process implemented by the program and the district.
3. Pairs of participants who had strong mentoring relationships based upon informal mentoring plans, mutual expectations, and a strong sense of collegiality.
4. Novice administrators who had active action plans that they were implementing.
5. Mentor administrators who demonstrated commitment to working with novice administrators on the action plan and implementation processes.
6. Participants who saw purposeful mentoring through the action plans as the foundation of the LCL professional development program.
7. Pairs of participants who were willing to participate in a one-hour interview in order to explore purposeful mentoring as a form of leadership professional development.

From these criteria, one pair from each of the four districts was selected. The mentor administrator from District A was a White female. She has been a principal for 19 years, presently at a K-5 school. She also served as a teacher for 10 years. The novice administrator from District A has worked as an assistant principal for three years, and was a teacher for 10 years. This participant was a White male.

From District B, the mentor administrator was White female. She has served as a principal for 7 years (currently a principal of a K-3 school), an intervention specialist for 1 year, and teacher for 7 years. The novice administrator was in his first year as a principal of a K-8 school. He worked as an intervention specialist for 2 years and a teacher for 10 years. He is a White male.

Looking at District C, the mentor administrator was an African American female. She has been a principal for 15 years, working currently in a K-8 school. She also served as an assistant principal for 4 years and taught special education for 21 years. The novice principal was in her first year as a principal in a K-8 school. She was a White female. She also worked as an assistant principal for 2 years and a special education teacher for 12 years.

Finally, in District D, the mentor administrator has been a high school principal for 14 years. Before this position, she served as an assistant principal for 8 years and a teacher for 9 years. She was a White female. The novice administrator from District D has been serving as the Dean of Students for the past three years in a high school. She also worked for 2 years as an assistant principal in a K-6 school in another district.

Before entering administration, she taught bilingual education for 5 years. The novice administrator was an Hispanic female.

Of the eight participants in this study, two were male and six were female. The two male participants were also White. Of the six female participants in the study, four were White, one was African American, and one was Hispanic. Attempts were made to select participants that represented the population of participants in the LCL program in terms of ethnicity, gender, and school level experience.

Analyses of Paired Interview Data

The mentor/novice administrator pairs were asked to respond verbally to the following questions posed by the interviewers:

- Background Information
 1. Have you been participating as mentor or rising administrator in the LCL program?
 2. Before participating in the LCL program, what was your experience with and knowledge of mentoring, both formal and informal?
 3. How would you describe the mentoring that you received before the LCL program?
 4. Before the LCL program, how would you describe your professional development experiences as an administrator?
 5. How have you learned on the job?
- Purposeful Mentoring Process

6. How would you describe the mentoring that occurred within the LCL program?
 7. How would you describe the process of pairing that was used to match you with a mentor/novice administrator?
 8. How have the formal experiences/activities of the LCL helped hindered the mentoring process?
 9. How would you describe the relationship that you have with your mentor/rising administrator?
 10. What type of feedback/support have you been receiving/providing?
 11. What role has the action planning played in the mentoring process?
 12. How has the mentoring helped you grow professionally? What have you learned?
- Future Use of Mentoring
 13. What has been the greatest benefit of participating in the LCL program?
 14. How do you hope to bring closure to your current mentoring relationship?
 15. What role do you see mentoring playing in your future professional development?
 16. What role will action planning play in your future professional development?

17. Is there anything else you want to say about mentoring related to the LCL program that you think is important to share?

Each participant was asked the same series of questions. The interviews lasted between an hour to an hour and a half. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for analyses.

Data Analyses

The transcripts were examined for themes using two different approaches. First, the responses to the questions were analyzed by matched pair responses (i.e., mentor and then paired novice administrator). The transcripts of the interviews were reviewed/categorized to identify similarities and differences in perceptions of the mentors and the novice administrators in these matched pairs. Second, an analysis was done to search for themes related to roles in the LCL program (i.e., mentor or novice administrator). A summary of the prevailing themes as gleaned from mentor responses is provided, and a summary of the prevailing themes as gleaned from novice administrator responses is detailed below. A summary of the salient points from both groups regarding the purposeful mentoring model is provided at the end of the paper.

Summary of paired responses

Mentor/novice administrator pair #1. Both mentor and the novice administrator agreed that learning to be an administrator was basically “on the job training” and that effective role models were important in order to learn on the job. “Face to face” communication with other administrators was also

important for learning. Both had previously participated in informal mentoring relationships.

The novice administrator stated he was isolated as a teacher, but when he became an administrator he had instant access to every central office administrator in his district. He had known his mentor prior to the LCL project and even though the project was coming to an end, he did not envision the relationship with his mentor ending. He hoped to continue working with his mentor. The mentor also hoped to continue building the relationship, because she had a series of short lived mentoring experiences that were informal in nature. She wished they would have been longer-term relationships.

Regarding professional development experiences, both the mentor and novice administrator stated their district has a variety of opportunities throughout the school year with speakers from all over the county and with experts within the district. The novice administrator felt that the most “important thing” he learned in the project was “best practices” by other principals. He also felt that presenting the action plans to one another in the district teams provided valuable feedback.

Related to the mentoring process, the novice administrator discussed confidentiality and trust as important aspects of mentoring. The LCL project provided an opportunity to build relationships and build rapport among administrators both within and outside the district. The novice administrator felt that his district had a specific mission and philosophy, so much of his focus was

internal to the district. He felt it was beneficial to learn what school administrators in the three other districts were doing, but he needed to stay focused on his district's vision.

When asked if the formal experiences in LCL helped or hindered the mentoring process, the novice administrator did not think the team building activities on Saturdays were as beneficial as the concentrated dialogue – working through challenges with others through the action plan process. Both the mentor and novice administrator emphasized the need to balance theory and practice. The novice administrator felt that Arizona State University faculty “should spend more time in the schools so they could get an idea of the context in which principals work”.

When asked how the mentoring experience helped them grow professionally, the mentor indicated that she has become a more reflective person and that networking was the greatest benefit of participation in the LCL program. The novice administrator stated the greatest benefit of participating in the LCL project was having time to meet with people in his district to talk about leadership. Both the mentor and novice administrator perceived that the mentoring relationship would continue beyond the end of the LCL project.

Mentor/novice administrator pair #2. The novice administrator expressed that the experience of learning is one that is “hands on”. He enjoyed discussing issues and then going out and practicing strategies that were proposed. The mentor hoped that she brought the same type of guidance and support to the

program that senior principals provided to her during her beginning years in administration. The mentor expressed that even after 18 years as principal there is still a “learning curve”.

Both the mentor and the novice administrator had experiences with informal and formal mentoring programs. The mentor saw professional development as continuous. The novice administrator believed that his main source of administrative professional development came with the college courses that he took as part of administrative certification.

When asked to describe the mentoring that has occurred within the LCL program, the mentor used the analogy of “arrows all over the place”. She felt there were various pairs to reflect on - novice administrator to novice administrator, mentor to mentor, mentor to ASU, ASU to the school. The novice administrator focused on the conversations and discussions that have occurred about school issues.

Both agreed that the self selection for pairing after hearing the action plans was successful. The novice administrator shared that the mentoring extended beyond the initial pairing. He expressed, “I have 20 mentors throughout the district, because they are all involved in the LCL project”.

Both expressed a concern with time for LCL. The informal format helped address the issue of time. They found email and phone conversations to be helpful in assisting with finding time to meet. The Saturday sessions were difficult after a 60 hour work week.

The novice administrator found his mentor to be supportive and helpful in networking with others to assist in the action plan. The mentor believed that the feedback provided in developing the action plan was positive in making revisions. They discovered the action plan process helped facilitate the goal and purposes of the mentoring relationship. Both strongly supported the action plan process. They agreed that the plan provided a focal point.

The novice administrator enjoyed the summer book discussions and the professional conversations at the LCL meetings. He enjoyed the opportunities to share strategies and ideas. The formal presentations that brought forth theory were appreciated.

Both agreed the greatest benefit was an opportunity to grow and learn. Time was the greatest barrier.

The mentor and novice administrator both felt the mentoring relationship would continue and they believed that they would remain in contact with each other. They both believed that mentoring would continue to be a part of their professional lives. In summary they both enjoyed the experience and believed it was successful.

Mentor/novice administrator pair #3. Both the mentor and novice administrator stated that administration is learned by on the job training. The mentor emphasized that administrators must know the mission and the vision of the school and stay focused on these two components. The novice administrator

stated that she knew she was learning as a result of being in the LCL program, because she could now complete tasks that she couldn't complete a year ago.

Both the mentor and novice administrator participated in mentoring programs prior to the LCL program. The novice administrator had directed a mentoring program previously and it was informally structured. The mentor perceived that the structure of the LCL mentoring program had "been really good at bringing together other peers and listening to their experiences and drawing from their experiences and some of the ideas from peers". The novice administrator perceived the LCL program as giving her the ability to "get in contact with people here and outside of the District".

An interesting comment from the novice administrator indicated that she was not paired with a mentor and no one seemed to know who her mentor was. The novice administrator selected her mentor because the "mentor" had been helping her anyway. They communicated through email, voice mail and sometimes in person, but stated her mentor always responded back to her. The mentor and the novice administrator had previously been teachers together before entering administration. Both the mentor and novice administrator enjoyed the summer reading discussion related to school law, but neither remembered the Crow and Matthews workshop on mentoring.

Both agreed the greatest benefit of participation in purposeful mentoring was networking and sharing with peers. Both the mentor and novice administrator agreed that "time" and the Saturday sessions were the greatest

challenges, but appreciated the advanced scheduling. When asked if the mentoring relationship would continue beyond the end of the LCL project both agreed the relationship would continue at least until the mentor retired. Both agreed participation in the LCL project was a positive experience.

One of the issues addressed by the mentor was her district's inability to spend grant subcontract money for professional development in the district or to pay for conference participation. She was also disappointed that three people in her district dropped out of the LCL project. She was concerned that no one knew the reason the three dropped out and thought that if they had known the reason, they might have resolved the problem.

Mentor/novice administrator pair #4. Both the mentor and novice administrator enjoyed the opportunity to self select in the pairing. They agreed that the informal process allowed for more dialogue as it related to the actual day to day functions of the job. The challenge was the same for both – time. However, both expressed an appreciation for the opportunity to network. The changing nature of the profession was raised as a challenge by both participants.

When connecting the LCL activities to mentoring, the mentor believed a disconnect existed. The activities including book conversations were important for professional growth but not connected to mentoring. She continued to share her perception about the value of the workshops. The mentor believed the professors who provided the mentoring workshop were too far removed from the reality of administration. However, she complimented the ASU professors

for being current on their connection of research and practice. “I really value the opportunity to have real dialogue with people like Arnie Danzig, Donna Macey and Dr. Hunnicutt. They are in the schools, keep a reality and hand in the schools while they are teaching.” The novice administrator shared that having a mentor who was in her school was beneficial. The day to day mentoring was important to her. The novice administrator enjoyed the summer book discussions. They both saw the benefit of discussing and networking with LCL participants from the other districts.

The novice administrator believed the LCL program changed the dynamics of the district. Colleagues from the LCL program share, reflect, and support each other. The mentor perceived that this relationship would continue after the LCL program ended.

Summary of themes for novice administrators

Looking across the interviews of the novice administrators, four themes emerge as important for purposeful mentoring and professional development: 1) action plan process provides for focused professional development for school administrators; 2) participants need to be able to select mentors based on needs and goals that they identify; 3) participants need formalized time to network and reflect with other administrators on the action plan in order to successfully implement; and 4) participants need to see the immediate connection between workshops and daily practice in order to view it as a meaningful learning experience.

Summary of themes for mentors

For the mentors, the following themes emerged from the interviews: 1) the action plan process brought structure and purpose to the mentoring experience, allowing for tangible benefits at the schools; 2) mentors also learned and grew professionally as a result of the opportunities to network and converse with colleagues; and 3) time is an issue in providing the type of in-depth mentoring that is engaging and meaningful, but the mentors plan on continuing to serve in this capacity.

Discussion and Final Thoughts

Narrative research assumes a comparative form when two or more individual accounts are included in the study. In this study, common themes, similarities, and contrasts appear in the eight interviews. The analyses of the paired interviews explore the contrasts and similarities in thought, while the analyses of interviews within the mentor group and novice administrator group consider common themes.

The basic assumption regarding the mentoring experience as determined by the purposeful mentoring model in the LCL Project was that teaching and learning occur on both sides of the mentoring relationship. Both the mentor and novice administrator benefit from the mentoring relationship, each experiencing professional growth.

The common themes that emerged from the interviews include:

- Purposeful mentoring requires trust, respect, ethics, communication, and confidentiality. This theme is supported in the literature related to effective mentoring. (Hay, 1995; Johnson, 1997; Shea 1994; Gorden, 2002; Robbins and Alvy, 2004; Zepeda, 2003).
- Mentoring must include effective communication that embraces listening and constructive feedback (Harkins, 1999; Starratt, 2003; Lovely, 2004).
- The blend of university and school district personnel to develop curriculum and workshops decreases the gap between theory and practice and promotes the use of research based best practices.
- Developing structured action plans for novice administrators is a valuable professional development experience.
- Time is the greatest barrier. Finding “time” to participate in the LCL Saturday project activities was difficult, but the activities were rewarding.
- Most of the participants interviewed perceived participation in the LCL project promoted significant professional growth. The action plan process allowed novice administrators to observe mentors “modeling” effective leadership in the work environment.
- A significant number of the participants believed the LCL project provided the opportunity for valuable networking and affirmed that they were not alone (Lovely, 2004).

- Most of the participants interviewed believed the mentor/novice administrator relationship would continue beyond the end of the LCL project.

The overall goal of the purposeful mentoring component of the LCL program appeared to be successful. Purposeful mentoring involves (1) continuous growth and innovation related to school specific goals and strategies that are outlined in a formalized plan of action, (2) supportive, positive relationships between mentors and those being mentored in order to engage in critical conversations that lead to professional growth and improved practice, (3) connection of theory, research and literature to strategic innovation that occurs at school sites, (4) professional development that is embedded into daily practices of administration, and (5) professional development that is blended into a formal action plan based on assessment of individual needs, reflection, and critiquing one's leadership.

The true measure of the success of the purposeful mentoring program is whether or not participation reduces attrition of valued rising administrators, improves morale and reduces stress among participants, and reinforces the concept that the school culture is one of caring, which strengthens new administrators' commitment to the organization. Capable principals are critical providers of leadership for schools, and it is important to construct models of excellence that guide and inspire practice (Copeland, 2001). Purposeful

mentoring may provide a model for inspiring effective leadership practices in challenging urban school environments.

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