

## **LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE: INITIAL FINDINGS OF A MENTORING/INDUCTION PROGRAM FOR NOVICE PRINCIPALS AND SUPERINTENDENTS**

For many professions, the use of mentoring relationships to facilitate and sustain professional development is an age-old tradition. Mentoring programs are studied widely and are reported to be effective in enhancing career development in private industry (Clutterbuck, 1987; Hall, 1976; Kram, 1985; Roche, 1979) and graduate education (Brause, 2002; Erkut & Mokros, 1981). Mentoring and peer relationships in the areas of teacher education (Jonson, 2002; Showers, 1985) and teacher professional growth (McCann & Radford, 1993; Wilkin, 1992; Zimpher & Rieger, 1988) have also been well established for several years. However, the concept of mentoring is a relatively recent phenomenon in the field of educational administration, as calls for administrator in-service programs only began to converge in the mid-1980s (Daresh, 2004). Mentoring models for novice principals and superintendents began to be created in the late 1980s and early 1990s by university-based administrator preparation programs and state policymakers as a vehicle for stimulating reflective practice and providing technical expertise, role clarification, and socialization in a more authentic context (Barnett, 1995; Crow & Matthews, 1998; Daresh, 2004; Kirkham, 1995).

Although clinical experiences have become an integral focus of pre-service leadership preparation programs and are well documented in the professional literature base, research related to administrator mentoring programs—particularly induction programs for first-year school administrators—is just beginning to flourish. As new principals and superintendents enter the profession, the development of effective mentoring/induction programming provides an invaluable opportunity to socialize novices into the changing landscape of the field (Bandura, 1997; Daloz, 1998; Phillips-Jones, 1982; Sheehy, 1976). Such programs provide benefits to protégés, mentor administrators, and school districts (Harris & Crocker, 2003). However, many mentoring initiatives have suffered from a lack of sufficient funds and sporadic planning efforts (Daresh, 2004). Consequently, many mentoring programs have provided inadequate training for mentors and protégés, lacked a clear set of goals and responsibilities, and employed poorly conceived methods for mentor selection and mentor/protégé pairing (Daresh, 1995, 2004). Additional research is desirable to identify salient components of mentoring programs and provide improvement recommendations concerning these commonly overlooked, yet critical features of successful mentoring programs.

This article reports findings from formative assessments of one state's administrator mentoring and induction program during two years of program piloting in 2002/03 and 2003/04. The purpose of this evaluation research was to establish baseline data and to detect problem areas so that changes could be made in subsequent years. More broadly, the study provides a window into successful components of an administrator men-

toring program, according to these novice and experienced administrators. Theoretical perspectives on effective mentoring programs in educational administration are first presented. Quantitative and qualitative data from two surveys of principal and superintendent mentors and their protégés are then presented and analyzed, including trends that arose from the data. The study concludes by presenting recommendations for the design and implementation of administrative mentoring programs of this type.

### **Theoretical Perspectives**

With the exception of studies addressing pre-service internship experiences (Caldwell & Carter, 1993; Daresh & Playko, 1988; Kirkham, 1995), research related to the effectiveness of mentoring programs for novice administrators is minimal (Trenta, Beebe, Cosiano, & Eastridge, 2001). Thirty-two states currently have enacted laws and policies related to supportive programs for administrators; however, Daresh (2004) notes that these programs have been “designed for individuals in the earliest stages of their work lives” (p. 501). These programs have focused on novices who enter into the principalship, without attending to the needs of administrators who transition into the superintendent positions. An extensive review of literature disclosed that the empirical research relates to principal mentoring programs, and no studies could be found concerning the effectiveness of superintendent mentoring programs.

Some key perspectives related to administrative mentoring programs have surfaced, including the importance of the mentor-protégé socialization experience (Crow & Matthews, 1998). New administrators are more likely to value the formation of supportive relationships as most important to their initial success, and enhanced development of skills is generally a secondary concern (Crow, Matthews, & McCleary, 1996). Zachary (2000) has noted that the focus of mentoring is moving away from a product orientation to a process-oriented model that emphasizes relationship-building and professional reflection. Daresh (2001) suggested that effective mentoring programs should provide professional feedback, role clarification, and socialization into the profession, while lessening the sense of isolation that novices typically experience when assuming their administrative positions. In addition to role socialization, this arrangement also provides an opportunity to deliver customized and individualized professional development (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004).

#### *The Importance of Mentoring*

Many scholars assert that support programs for novice school leaders can be a critical element to their success (Barth, 2003; Daresh, 2004; Daresh & LaPlant, 1985; Thody, 1993). Crow and Matthews (1998) found that mentoring was paramount not only to pre-service administrative preparation programs but also was highly valued by experienced administrators. In fact, Crow and Matthews noted that the establishment of informal mentoring relationships is common practice among practition-

ers. In addition, they discovered that principals cited mentors as their primary source of assistance in becoming successful school leaders as opposed to coursework or educational leadership professors.

Well designed mentoring programs can be beneficial for not only protégés but also the mentors and school districts. However, many programs that are not well conceived can exhibit such limitations as inadequate financial support (Daresh, 2004), ineffective or uncommitted mentors (Crow & Matthews, 1998), haphazardly created mentor/protégé pairings (Malone, 2001; Walker & Stott, 1994), and a lack of goal focus (Kirkham, 1995). Poorly designed mentor programs can result in mentor relationships that are detrimental to protégé development. Common problems include protégés who develop an over-reliance on mentors, leading to a myopic and inflexible approach to problem solving and a stifling of professional growth. When they are ineffectively developed, mentor programs can be systematic mechanisms to reproduce and perpetuate mediocre and ineffective leadership methods. However, carefully conceived mentoring programs can lead to novice leaders displaying more confidence in their professional competence, more effectively translating educational theory into practice, developing improved communication skills, feeling more comfortable in their new positions, and becoming more aware of the “tricks of the trade” (Daresh, 2004, p. 504). Effective mentoring programs also can enhance the mentor’s professional growth through increased job satisfaction, increased recognition from peers, and further opportunities for personal career advancement. School districts benefit from mentoring programs by gaining more capable administrative staff members with higher motivation, improved self-esteem, and greater productivity (Daresh, 2004). Additionally, Reyes (2003) suggested that mentoring of school leaders increased female and minority job placement through increasing candidate visibility, cultural acuity, networking, and access to job opportunities.

### *Key Components of Effective Mentoring Programs*

An analysis of successful principal mentoring programs disclosed several key elements, including the importance of socialization, networking, and the opportunity for professional reflection and introspection (Barnett, 1995; Crow & Matthews, 1998; Dappen, 2001; Gehrke, 1988). Enhanced socialization is an important outcome of well-developed mentoring programs because novice administrators typically experience a loss of support systems (Hartzell, Williams, & Nelson, 1994) and feel “a deep sense of professional isolation and a lack of feedback” on their job performance (Daresh, 1990, p. 2). In addition to a primary focus on socialization, Crow and Matthews (1998) contend that mentoring should provide protection from damaging decisions, encourage novices to undertake challenging and risk-taking activities they may otherwise avoid, increase novices’ confidence and competence, and help diminish role ambiguity. Barnett (1995) suggests that mentors should facilitate the transition of protégés from dependent, novice problem solvers into autonomous, expert problem solvers.

The development of reflective practice has also been noted as key to effective mentor relationships. Effective mentors ask reflective questions rather than give prescriptive advice, suggesting that this approach “puts mentors where they need to be, out of the action, looking on, encouraging, rather than taking over and doing the work for the learner” (Megginson & Clutterbuck, 1995, p. 28). Gehrke (1988) notes that mentors should give protégés “wisdom and awakening” through “reflective conversation” (p. 193), and Barnett (1995) recommends the use of cognitive coaching techniques to employ reflection as a catalyst for protégé growth. Finally, networking is considered a key benefit to administrative mentoring. Well-designed mentoring programs help protégés to develop networks for potential job openings, gain friendships with other administrators, provide visibility among administrative peers, and provide an extended cadre of potential mentors in specialized arenas (Crow & Matthews, 1998; Crow et al., 1996; Reyes, 2003).

### **The Iowa Mentoring Program**

The Iowa Administrator Mentoring and Induction (IAMI) program was a two-year pilot program encompassing the academic years 2002–2004, funded through a \$350,000 grant from the Iowa Department of Education. Participating partners included the School Administrators of Iowa, which is the state’s professional organization for building- and district-level administrators, and the 15 Area Education Agencies, which are the intermediate school agencies within the state. The program was intended for superintendents and principals who were completing their first year in leadership positions. The program established specific goals that included the strategic recruitment, selection, and pairing of mentors with novice administrators, a comprehensive training program for mentors, development of training materials, and ongoing program assessment. This enhanced focus on mentor training differed from many mentoring programs, as explained by Daresh (2004):

As several states have mandated mentoring programs for beginning principals, little has been stated about who shall be designated as mentors and even what mentors should be expected to do. In no case has any form of training for mentors been required, and no minimum qualifications have been identified. (p. 510)

#### *Program Changes During the Pilot*

Assessments were conducted during the two-year IAMI pilot, so that necessary changes could be made during this period of program development. These annual assessments of the program’s effectiveness, through the lens of mentors and novice administrators, were beneficial for identifying needed improvements as well as confirmation of successful components. Additionally, the second pilot year differed slightly in format from the first year of the project. For example, because the program initially began in mid-year, during the first year mentor/protégé pairings

were formed in January and these partnerships continued for a period of six months; in the second year, pairings were created in August and relationships extended throughout the academic year. Other changes implemented in the second year included replacing written journals with audio journals, requiring reflection logs only from mentors while eliminating that requirement for protégés, changing from elective regional workshop offerings to mandatory statewide training meetings, and developing a website survival guide to replace written resources. These modifications were implemented, based upon feedback from mentors and protégés in the first-year formative assessment survey (2002/03).

Varied measures were used to assess the effectiveness of the pilot. This article provides a brief summary of results gained from the end-of-year open-ended survey that measured the perceptions of the mentors and protégés who participated in the two pilot years. Where appropriate, comparative data between the 2002/03 and the 2003/04 surveys are discussed as a way to determine whether program modifications were successful. In presenting this information, it should be noted that this study represented only an informal, formative assessment, and it does not provide an in-depth, formal evaluation of the overall program's effectiveness.

### *Selection of Mentors*

A limitation of many mentoring programs is that “mentors are often selected without a great deal of thought and rarely trained” (Crow et al., 1996, p. viii). Often mentors are selected simply because of their seniority within their positions (Daresh, 2004). Acknowledging these deficiencies, the IAMI program developers created a list of quality indicators as prerequisites for mentor selection, which included evidence of four years of exemplary administrative service, a positive influence on student achievement and the use of data-driven decision making, a commitment to student success, and a willingness to provide personal time and attention to a protégé. Mentor candidates completed an application and interview process and efforts were made to actively recruit women and minorities to serve as mentors. School district standardized test data and letters of recommendation from supervisors also were employed as selection criteria.

### *Training Sessions*

The IAMI provided for a series of group-wide training and orientation sessions for both mentors and protégés throughout the year, including regional and statewide meetings in August, September, December, March, and June. The mentor training was based on National Staff Development Council standards and linked to the Iowa Standards for School Leaders (ISSL) and local school districts' state-mandated Comprehensive School Improvement Plans. Training focused on mentor responsibilities; 12 content specific topics such as school culture and reform leading to student achievement gains, diversity, and community involvement; reflective questioning and coaching techniques, strategies for guiding protégés, and

understanding adult motivation. Participant mentors were required to maintain reflection logs to document interactions with protégés. For pre-assessment purposes and to help individualize training, a comprehensive survey was administered to each IAMI participant that asked them to rate the importance of and their current skill levels for 33 variables linked to effective leadership in schools as developed from the ISSL standards. In addition, protégés and mentors were provided website access that contained relevant information, practical support (through a Frequently Asked Questions section), opportunities for reflection, and active interaction with their cohort groups and administrators across the state.

### Methods and Population

A formative assessment was administered at the conclusion of each of the two pilot years of the program, using an open-ended survey (Appendixes A & B) that was developed into an electronic file and sent via email to participants: 62 in 2002/03 and 111 in 2003/04. An explanatory message accompanied the survey, which included the purpose of the survey and directions for completing and returning the survey. The email was sent to participants annually in May, with two additional follow-up emails. Returns equaled 43 (69%) in 2002/03 and 89 (80%) in 2003/04.

#### *Disaggregated Return Rates*

As shown in Table 1, the total participants in the 2002/03 and the 2003/04 mentor program included 27 elementary principal mentors, 30 elementary principal protégés, 26 secondary principal mentors, 24 secondary principal protégés, 33 superintendent mentors, and 33 superintendent protégés. Over the two years, 132 (76%) surveys were returned, with 63 (72%) from the protégés and 69 (80%) from the mentors. Elementary participant returns totaled 45 (79%), secondary principal returns totaled 35 (70%), and superintendent returns totaled 52 (79%).

**Table 1**

*Total Returns of the Summative Survey of the 2002–2004 IAMI Pilot Groups*

	Total participants		Surveys returned	
	Mentors	Protégés	Mentors	Protégés
Elementary principals	27	30	22	23
Secondary principals	26	24	22	13
Superintendents	33	33	25	27

When compared with the total program population, the returns were relatively comparable within all group configurations: mentor/protégé (80% vs. 72%), elementary/secondary (79% vs. 70%), and principal/super-

intendent (75% vs. 79%). The return rates within all subgroups were at an acceptable study level and none of the differences were significant.

#### *Comparing Returns From 2002/03 and 2003/04*

In addition to a much larger population ( $N = 89$  in 2003/04 and  $N = 43$  in 2002/03), overall return rates had significantly increased from 69% returns in 2002/03 to 80% returns in 2003/04. The increased returns likely were due to two factors: administration of the survey earlier in the month of May, and providing two reminders to participants after the initial survey distribution. Another difference was a lower return rate (50%) from secondary principal protégés in the 2003/04 survey. Returns were much higher for mentors, elementary principals, and superintendents in 2003/04; secondary principal returns remained lower in both years and at about the same level (69–71%).

#### *Modifications to the 2003/04 Survey*

The formative assessment survey was modified slightly in the second year of the pilot. The 2002/03 and 2003/04 surveys permitted open responses, as well as four-point Likert rating scales for each of the program's components (see items #3, Appendixes A & B), and changes reflected the elimination and addition of program features in 2003/04, as well as the addition of two survey questions. The 2002/03 survey (see Appendix A) contained assessments of program components including the mentor training, workshop opportunities, written resources and articles, and reflection logs (for mentors and protégés). The 2003/04 survey contained additional assessment inquiries including contact with the mentor/protégé, statewide training and networking meetings, audio journals, professional growth plans, and the website survival guide. These changes in the program occurred as a result of formative assessments from the 2002/03 pilot year. First, protégé comments in the 2002/03 survey citing concerns with mentor/protégé contacts prompted the inclusion of a rating for this program component. Second, a statewide meeting was added in the second year, so that all participants could be fully informed of the program goals and activities. Third, written materials that were costly to duplicate and distribute in 2002/03 were exchanged for a mentoring website that provided immediate access for participants. Fourth, audio journals and professional growth plans were required of both mentors and protégés in 2003/04. Finally, reflection logs were discontinued for protégés in 2003/04 because the 2002/03 protégés had not found them to be helpful in promoting their personal reflection. In addition, two open-ended questions were added to the 2003/04 survey asking participants what new skills or insights protégés gained from their mentor, and what skills mentors found most important when working with novice administrators. Additionally, the 2003/04 participants represented a wider variety of administrative positions, including assistant principals, curriculum directors, and assistant superintendents. To simplify data analysis over the

two-year pilot and maintain reasonable participant *N*-values for comparative purposes, data were categorized in the following ways: principals in K–12 and special education schools were listed as elementary principals, assistant principals were listed as principals, middle school principals were listed as secondary principals, and assistant superintendents and curriculum directors were listed as superintendents.

## Results and Analysis

When analyzing results, data were disaggregated between elementary and secondary, principal and superintendent, mentors and protégés, male and female, and central office directors versus building administrators, in addition to reporting an overall summary result. A narrative summary based upon these various configurations is provided for the findings on each of the survey questions. Numerical data can be found in Tables 2 and 3, while pertinent responses to open-ended survey questions are incorporated into the summaries.

### *Meeting Program Expectations*

Participants were asked the extent to which this project met their expectations. This question scored a 3.20 on a four-point scale (4 = met all of my expectations, 1 = did not meet my expectations) in both years, indicating that protégés and mentors generally were satisfied with the program (see Tables 2 & 3).

**Table 2**

*Disaggregated, Subtotaled, and Totaled Results of the 2002/03 IAMI Survey*

	Survey questions				
	Program met expectations	Benefit of mentor training	Benefit of workshops	Benefit of reflection log	Benefit of written resources
Elementary protégés	3.30	N/A	2.90	2.50	3.60
Secondary protégés	2.80	N/A	3.20	2.40	3.20
Superintendent protégés	3.10	N/A	3.40	2.70	3.00
Protégé total	3.10	N/A	3.20	2.50	3.30
Elementary mentors	3.20	3.30	2.30	3.00	3.00
Secondary mentors	3.20	3.50	2.30	3.00	2.80
Superintendent mentors	3.40	3.40	2.60	3.30	2.80
Mentor total	3.30	3.40	2.40	3.10	2.90

*(continued)*

**Table 2** (continued)

	Survey questions				
	Program met expectations	Benefit of mentor training	Benefit of workshops	Benefit of reflection log	Benefit of written resources
Elementary principal total	3.20	N/A	2.60	2.80	3.30
Secondary principal total	3.00	N/A	2.80	2.70	3.00
Superintendent total	3.30	N/A	3.00	3.00	3.00
Total respondents	3.20	N/A	2.80	2.80	3.10

Scale: 4 = highest mark, 1 = lowest mark.

**Table 3**

*Disaggregated, Subtotaled, and Totaled Results of the 2003/04 IAMI Survey*

	Survey questions							
	Program met expectations	Mentor training	Mentor/protégé contact	State-wide training	Audio journal	Prof. growth plan	Reflection log	Website survival guide
Elementary protégés	3.25	N/A	3.47	3.20	2.75	2.80	N/A	2.86
Secondary protégés	2.88	N/A	3.14	3.50	3.38	2.88	N/A	1.83
Superintendent protégés	3.53	N/A	3.76	3.19	2.88	2.53	N/A	2.12
Protégé total	3.22	N/A	3.53	3.26	2.93	2.70	N/A	2.35
Elementary mentors	3.19	3.27	3.75	3.25	2.75	2.50	2.86	1.93
Secondary mentors	3.07	3.54	3.69	3.56	2.73	2.81	3.06	2.44
Superintendent mentors	3.25	2.93	3.94	2.87	2.69	2.40	2.69	2.00
Mentor total	3.17	3.24	3.79	3.23	2.72	2.57	2.87	2.09
Elementary principal total	3.22	N/A	3.23	3.23	2.75	2.65	N/A	2.38
Secondary principal total	2.98	N/A	3.52	3.54	2.96	2.83	N/A	2.27
Superintendent total	3.39	N/A	3.85	3.03	2.79	2.47	N/A	2.14
Total respondents	3.20	N/A	3.67	3.24	2.82	2.63	N/A	2.24

Scale: 4 = highest mark, 1 = lowest mark.

However, superintendent and elementary protégés were more satisfied with the program than secondary protégés in both years. This pattern was consistent with mentors in that, in 2003/04, superintendent (3.25) and elementary (3.19) mentors expressed higher levels of satisfaction as compared to secondary mentors (3.07). In the 2002/03 survey, superintendent mentors (3.40) similarly expressed higher levels of satisfaction than principal mentors (3.20). Additionally, curriculum directors, participants in 2003/04 only, ranked the highest in their satisfaction levels (4.00). Cumulative mentor and protégé ratings for the program showed no significant differences in either year. When comparing program expectation ratings between the 2002/03 and 2003/04 surveys, scores were similar except that superintendent protégés ranked the program much higher and superintendent mentors ranked it much lower in 2003/04.

### *Program Component Assessment*

Three program components remained the same between 2002/03 and 2003/04, three were added in 2003/04, and one was changed from print media to a website. Because the changes were minor, data from 2002/03 and 2003/04 were generally comparable across similar program components. Where program features were unique or changed, only the 2003/04 data are reported. Components were rated on a four-point scale (4 = highly beneficial, 1 = not beneficial). All data are reported in Tables 2 and 3.

*Mentor training.* When compared with the prior year, the 2003/04 mentor training and orientation workshop received equally high and consistent ratings from elementary and secondary mentors. However, a dramatic drop in superintendent mentor satisfaction with the mentor training was noted (from 3.40 to 2.93). Respondents in 2002/03 had suggested that mentor/protégé pairings should occur before the school year began, with the orientation meeting held in early summer or during the August state administrator conference. Although this training did occur early in 2003/04, this change did not result in improved satisfaction with superintendent mentors. Open-ended responses pointed to concerns related to inability to attend statewide training sessions and suggestions for regional training, desire for additional scheduling options, and conflicts created by other state-mandated training that competed with mentor training commitments.

*Mentor/protégé contact.* The mentor/protégé portion of the survey was new for 2003/04 and yielded generally high marks from all respondents, ranging from 3.14 to 3.94, meaning most if not all respondents found contact with their mentoring partner to be fairly if not highly beneficial. Despite the high marks, the predominate concern voiced in all open-ended responses focused on the lack of face-to-face mentor/protégé contact. Elementary, secondary, and superintendent mentors and protégés agreed on three concerns: (a) frequent required face-to-face contacts were necessary, (b) initiating contacts should be the mentor's responsibility, and (c) mentor/protégé pairs needed to be closer geographically. Overall, the open-ended responses indicated frequent mentor-initiated contacts

were viewed as highly important components of the program; workshops, trainings, and other program components were at best only marginally important. This finding was reinforced by comments that statewide training meetings should include more protégé/mentor reflection time or group-wide networking and unstructured discussion, rather than traditional training, information dissemination, or what several called “talking head” in-service.

*Statewide training and workshops.* When summed across all participants, the workshop opportunities were rated fairly to highly beneficial. However, superintendent mentors ranked statewide training at a lower level and all superintendents ranked the training lower than did principals. The most pronounced difference occurred between the superintendent mentors and protégés, which may have been a result of experienced superintendents finding the training content to be less focused on district-level issues.

During the 2003/04 program, changes included eliminating workshops and implementing statewide training sessions, in response to calls to modify this program feature. This revision was overwhelmingly successful, with the largest score increase observed in this area and one of the highest ratings of all program components.

*Audio journals.* Audio journals were another new feature to the mentor induction program for 2003/04 and were rated just below the “fairly beneficial” range (2.82), although more popular than either the professional growth plan or the website survival guide. In open-ended responses, superintendent mentors stood out as the one group enthusiastic about retaining this component of the program.

*Professional growth plans.* Professional growth plans were a new component to the 2003/04 program and were rated midway between “not very beneficial” and “fairly beneficial” at a 2.63 rating. All respondent categories rated this component similarly and no comments—either positive or negative—were found. The only reference was a consistent response noting that “busy work” program components (i.e., the growth plan, audio journal, and reflection logs) were infrequently used and not as effective as face-to-face communication.

*Reflection logs.* The use of reflection logs produced a relatively low rating of 2.50 by protégés in the first year, but mentors rated them more favorably at 3.10 (Table 2). Consequently, reflection logs were discontinued for protégés in 2003/04 but remained a requirement for mentors. However, in 2003/04 the elementary principal mentors and superintendent mentors did not rate these logs as favorably, when compared with the previous year. Among all mentors, this the rating dropped from 3.10 in 2002/03 to 2.87 in 2003/04 (Table 3). In open-ended responses, participants indicated that they viewed reflection logs as “busy work” and did not find them especially helpful in promoting their personal reflection.

*Website survival guide.* When analyzed as an entire group, the participants ranked the website survival guide as the lowest of all compo-

nents at 2.24 (Table 3). In 2003/04 the website replaced written resources and articles that in 2002/03 yielded a higher rating (3.10). The website ratings were dramatically lower. Participants noted that written resources were preferred over the website, because materials were distributed and read collaboratively at required meetings, while few found the time to access the website.

### *Written Responses*

The open-ended section of the survey was modified for 2003/04, through the addition of a question regarding new skills or insights protégés had gained, which they attributed to having a mentor, and a question to mentors concerning their most important skills when working with protégés. The majority of written responses in both years were of a positive nature, noting the program's value in promoting the participant's professional growth and expressing support for the program's continuation. Although respondents made improvement suggestions, they often noted that this feedback should not be misinterpreted as a lack of enthusiastic support for the program. These suggestions are presented thematically, and responses concerning skills learned by protégés and skills utilized by mentors are reported separately.

*Time.* The most frequently cited critical feedback expressed the lack of available time for mentors and protégés to meet. This concern especially was pronounced among secondary and elementary principals, although it was nearly absent in superintendent comments. Time issues became a connecting theme throughout the assessment, representing a desire to have increased communications, particularly face-to-face, between mentor and protégé. Pressed for time in their positions, novice administrators suggested a requirement of time for increased interaction, perhaps sparing this time by eliminating perceived "busy work" activities.

*Structure.* Written responses indicated that both protégés and mentors believed that mentors should assume greater responsibility in initiating contacts. Protégés reported a desire for mentors to increase the meeting structure and wanted the mentor program to require regular communications, while ranking reflection logs as ineffective. Generally, program changes in mentor training had eliminated role confusion for most mentors. For example, the first-year survey indicated that mentors and protégés reported a shared deficiency in maintaining open communication; in the second-year survey, all participants understood that it was the mentor's responsibility, even when little communication occurred. Participants suggested 3–4 additional required meetings for face-to-face discussions or required weekly mentor-initiated contacts.

*Distance.* Closely connected to time and structural changes, participants indicated a strong agreement that mentors and protégés should come from either the same school district or districts in close geographic proximity. Unlike mixed messages from the 2002/03 survey, all 2003/04 respondents noted that mentor/protégé pairs should be physically close to

expedite drop-in conversations. Pairings from the same district provided overwhelmingly positive feedback, dispelling any concerns about intra-district placement. However, although some 2002/03 participants desired geographically-close mentors who were familiar with issues within their districts, others appreciated having an objective and safe confidante from outside the district. This variation among respondents highlighted a critical concern when designing mentor programs: Participant needs vary based upon their current position, personal and professional life stages, and school context.

*Skills attributed to having a mentor (protégé only).* Respondents provided key insights regarding what protégés most valued from their mentor interactions. Overwhelmingly, protégés noted the greatest virtue of the mentors was their availability to listen, provide different perspectives, ask reflective questions, and provide general support throughout the year. Second, protégés valued the informal administrative networks into which mentors introduced them, connecting them with others they could consult for assistance. These networks will extend far beyond the one-year duration of the mentoring program, as novices will join their peers at local and regional meetings. Finally, it was notable that protégés were particularly silent when it came to listing specific skills, like budgeting, evaluating staff, instructional leadership, as highly valued outcomes of the mentor/protégé relationship. It appeared that establishing these initial networks and relationships were more important to them than skill attainment.

*Most valuable mentor skills (mentors only).* Mentors listed skills that they perceived were most important when working with protégés. Most mentors responded with the same four points, including: (a) listening, rather than advising; (b) asking reflective questions rather than giving answers; (c) maintaining frequent contact with the protégé while taking responsibility for initiating the communication; and (d) providing encouragement, empathy, and support as opposed to specific content knowledge and skills.

### *Additional Analyses*

During the course of the qualitative analysis of the 2002/03 data, several themes arose that were not original key purposes of the survey, but which provided some additional insight into potential program improvements. These themes included data trends discovered when comparing responses from mentor/protégé pairs and distinguishing by gender and grade level. In order to investigate for similar alternative themes, analyses were conducted for the 2003/04 data.

*Mentor/protégé pairs.* Generally, the overall program received equivalent ratings from mentors and protégés; however, mentors scored mentor/protégé contact higher than did protégés. Conversely, mentors scored most other program components (audio journal, professional growth plan, and website survival guide) lower than did protégés. These results are understandable, because mentors would have less need to uti-

lize these program components and thus may not be as familiar with them or see their value.

*Grade level differences.* In both survey years, differences were noted in program satisfaction ratings when comparing by grade levels, with superintendents consistently giving the highest ratings, followed by elementary principals, and then secondary principals. However, when comparing ratings on the program components in the second year, secondary principals consistently provided the highest scores, followed by elementary and then superintendent respondents. Superintendents expressed the highest satisfaction with the overall program and with the mentor/protégé contacts but generally found the least interest in individual program training components. Conversely, secondary principals were the least satisfied overall, but generally found the components the most useful. These findings may be explained by considering the time issue. Secondary principals, who have challenging and time-intensive schedules, found communications with their mentor to be lacking and thus may have been more appreciative of alternative materials. Superintendents, who reported satisfaction with the rate of communications, would find alternative materials less useful or necessary.

*Gender differences.* During the course of the qualitative analysis in the 2002/03 survey data, several themes arose that provided some additional insight into developing effective mentoring programs. Generally, with the exception of the different value placed on the workshop opportunities and reflection logs, mentor and protégé pairs scored items similarly. There was much greater distribution between average scores when comparing the gender of mentors and protégés.

In 2002/03 there were nine male/male partner teams, two female/female teams, and 10 male/female teams represented in the returned survey data. When analyzing the data, several themes arose that spoke to traditional gender differences. Male respondents tended to express a desire for more structure and more required components, while females focused on the importance of forming relationships. Only female respondents noted relational importance in their surveys, and only female/female pairings included comments indicating that the program had resulted in a “friendship,” a “life-long colleague,” or a “confidante.” Additionally, females generally favored less structured interaction and did not suggest the need for required, structured topics for mentor/protégé meetings, although this request was quite predominant in comments from male/male pairings. Although one might assume that the pairings consisted of a male mentor and a female protégé, almost an equal number of arrangements involved female mentors and male protégés. Comments indicated that in a mixed pairing, females generally expressed less satisfaction and comfort with the interpersonal dimensions of the mentoring arrangement. Although males in these mixed teams reported that their interactions had “developed into a close relationship,” their female counterparts reported that they had not interacted with sufficient frequency, that their conversations were limiting and less than satisfying, and requested that group meetings be held so that they could interact

with “more mentors and protégés” to discuss issues.

One dramatic difference in the results of the 2003/04 survey was the absence of differences in ratings and comments between male and female respondents. As one possible explanation for this change, it is notable that program developers implemented the recommendations from the 2002/03 survey report and paired female mentors with female protégés, thus speaking to concerns voiced in the previous year when more male/female pairings were present.

One piece of gender data to note is the higher number of female survey respondents in the 2003/04 program. Females participating in the mentor induction program equaled 35%, slightly higher than the Iowa state average for female principals (30.6%). However, as a result of non-respondents being mostly male, the overall survey returns included 46% female, a rate higher than the state average. Although this variance is not significant, due to the fact that male and female responses were similar, the predominance of female survey respondents introduces possible sampling error on these survey results.

### **Discussion and Recommendations**

This evaluation study confirms previous research that notes the most important component of mentoring programs is the development of a supportive mentor-protégé relationship, with an emphasis on role socialization into the profession, reflective conversation, and role clarification, with relatively little benefit from skill enhancement or specific advice in how to address difficult issues (Crow & Matthews, 1998; Daresh, 1995; Gehrke, 1988; Megginson & Clutterbuck, 1995). The participants in this study did not perceive that this mentoring program was an important venue for skill development; instead, protégés stressed the importance of having a seasoned administrator who was willing to listen to their concerns and who could introduce and socialize them into informal administrative networks. Daresh (2004) asserts that mentoring programs should assist novice administrators in seeing “daily translations of educational theory into daily practice” (p. 504). Administrative mentoring programs should address novices’ professional development needs, in addition to their needs to become integrated into the profession. If the goal of the mentoring program is too narrowly defined as promoting role socialization, then at this initial stage of induction into the profession, novice administrators may not fully develop a personal commitment to continuous professional growth.

This study also points to the critical importance of recognizing time as a crucial consideration, given the extremely busy work lives of administrators. Because administrators’ time constraints can diminish the effectiveness of mentoring programs (Daresh, 2004), it is vital that programs maintain a focus on high-quality activities that are perceived and identified as promoting protégés’ professional growth, rather than activities that are of marginal usefulness.

Encouraging administrators to maintain reflective journals has

been advocated as an opportunity to stimulate discussions and develop administrators' capacity to reflect on their practice (Barnett, 1995). Although this pilot intended for the participants to engage in reflection, the mentors and protégés did not voice strong support for the use of these journals. The purpose of the journals may not have been clearly defined to the participants, and it is unclear whether they made the connection to reflective practice or if they viewed this activity as simply "yet another thing to do." This lack of interest in journaling may have been a reaction to the issue of time constraints, or it may have been a resistance to developing principles of reflective practice.

The study also provided support to research suggesting that gender is an important component when establishing mentor/protégé pairings (Matters, 1994) and that careful consideration should go into training mentor/protégé pairs (Crow et al., 1996). Mertz (2004) asserts that not only gender but also race are two important variables that should be considered in mentoring programs. Because of the state of Iowa's relatively homogeneous population, participants in this project all were Caucasian. However, whenever possible, developers of mentoring programs should attend to issues related to race and gender and consider how they may influence the development of supportive relationships.

This study led to several important recommendations for the design and implementation of administrative mentoring programs. These recommendations include: (a) begin mentoring programs and establish mentor/protégé pairs before the onset of the school year; (b) provide concurrent initial mentor/protégé training and require combined socialization activities, but develop separate skill training for protégés and mentors as well as superintendent versus principal participants; (c) encourage professional reflection, while permitting alternative reflection approaches that mentors are trained to implement, such as cognitive coaching (Barnett, 1995); and (d) select mentor/protégé pairs that account for geographic proximity (Trenta et al., 2001), a shared style of thinking (Ashby & Maki, 1996), and gender (Malone, 2001). In assigning mentor/protégé pairings, consider such issues as participants' desire for more/less structure and for nurturing relationships. An initial survey could be completed by participants, in which they would rate the importance of such factors as a nurturing and supportive relationship, structure in the pairing, someone who is in close geographic proximity, and someone of the same gender or race.

Finally, mentoring programs should acknowledge the benefits that accrue to both mentors and protégés (Daresh, 2004). In addition, they also must recognize the highly individualized nature of the process of socialization into the profession, as well as the unique organizational context in which each novice administrator is situated. Therefore, programs should incorporate flexibility in program scheduling, content, communication processes, and delivery models to accommodate individual needs of both mentors and protégés.

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## Appendix A

### Iowa Administrator Mentoring and Induction Program Assessment: 2002/2003

1. Please select the category that describes your role in this project.  
 First-year principal  
 Mentor for a first-year principal  
 First-year superintendent  
 Mentor for a first-year superintendent
  
2. To what extent did this project meet your expectations? (Use the following scale: 4–Met all of my expectations; 3–Met most of my expectations; 2–Met few of my expectations; 1–Did not meet my expectations) \_\_\_\_\_  
  
Please provide a brief rationale for your response:
  
3. Please rate the benefit of each of the following activities (4–Highly beneficial; 3–Fairly beneficial; 2–Not very beneficial; 1–Not beneficial):  
 Mentor training  
 Workshop opportunities  
 Written resources and articles  
 Reflection logs
  
4. What barriers or challenges prevented the program from being most helpful to you?
  
5. What changes should be made, to improve the program's effectiveness in mentoring first-year superintendents and principals?
  
6. Please note any additional information that you would like to share concerning the mentoring/induction program.

## **Appendix B**

### **Iowa Administrator Mentoring and Induction Program Assessment: 2003/2004**

1. Please check the category that describes your role in this mentoring/induction project.  
 First-year principal  
 Mentor for a first-year principal  
 First-year superintendent  
 Mentor for a first-year superintendent  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. To what extent did this project meet your expectations? (Use the following scale: 4–Met all of my expectations; 3–Met most of my expectations; 2–Met few of my expectations; 1–Did not meet my expectations) \_\_\_\_\_  
  
Please provide a brief rationale for your response:
  
3. Please rate the benefit of each of the following activities (4–Highly beneficial; 3–Fairly beneficial; 2–Not very beneficial; 1–Not beneficial):  
 Mentor training (mentors only)  
 Contact with mentor/mentee  
 Statewide training & networking meetings  
 Audio journals  
 Professional growth plans  
 Reflection log (mentors only)  
 Website survival guide
  
4. Mentee: What new skills or insights can you attribute to having a mentor for this year?
  
5. Mentor: What skills did you find most important in working with a mentee?
  
6. What barriers or challenges prevented the program from being most helpful or rewarding to you?
  
7. What changes should be made to improve the program’s effectiveness in mentoring first-year administrators?
  
8. Please note any additional information that you would like to share concerning the mentoring/induction program.