NC National College for
School Leadership

Innovation in Headteacher Induction

Case Study 2: SAGE Principal Mentor Program, Australian Principal Centre, Melbourne

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Contents

Background information

Insightful leadership requires great influence. In building emerging leaders James Kouzes and Barry Posner [1]say people learn to lead by being exposed to three significant sets of experiences: trial-and-error, observation of others, and through education. These experiences suggest three key influential roles that mentors can provide in nurturing the growth of others. These are:

- **guidance** through the words and actions that give direction through the maze of leadership decisions and challenges
- **facilitation** of relationships with exposure to exemplar role models and provision of learning experiences that both stretch and confront; and through wise
- **input** related to developing effective leadership practice.

These three mentoring roles - guidance, facilitation and input, should only be entrusted to those who are willing to influence and invest in others. This case-study explores how Australian principals are being trained as mentors to use these influential roles to support the development of beginning principals.

The Australian Principals Centre's (APC)[2] SAGE Principal Mentoring Program grew out of a need for experienced principals to help establish and influence a mentoring succession plan that would help pass on the torch of learning to others. The word 'sage' was adopted as the cornerstone of the program because it encompassed the key features of what mentoring entails. At some stage in our own careers there has often been a significant person, as leader or a sage, who has been influential in our lives, and that person may have helped us build, share, and gather knowledge through the growth of wisdom - as well as being the person who holds and shares that wisdom. This was seen as an attempt to establish an ongoing program that could make a difference in leadership development where selected expert sage principals would be invited to own and take responsibility for the development of others. This nurturing is embedded in other professions, such as law and medicine, for example, but is not a well-established

tradition in education. At best, in the State of Victoria, principal mentoring is often informal and collegial, with little to support newcomers into the role[3]. The word 'sage' was adopted as an acronym to symbolize the features of what occurs in a productive collaborative mentoring relationship. These features are those of developing a joint enterprise with mutual engagement and development of a shared repertoire of skills, experiences and understandings. The word SAGE was used throughout the training program to stress and underpin the role of principal mentors in helping develop others.

S   Supporting
A   Accomplishing
G   Guiding
E   Enriching

The designers were invited to plan a regional program with a regional principal reference group involved in the development, trialling and implementation of the pilot program. Thus the seeds for a successful pilot SAGE program were sown, cultivated and nurtured through its first year of life. The need for a principal mentoring program was best explained by one principal:

> I have got a lot out of this job thanks to the nurturing of significant other people in my life at the time, and I felt it was now time for me to give something back and help someone else who is following me.

From its humble beginnings in 2000, the two-day SAGE training program has evolved with over 400 people having now successfully completed the program. From its initial conception, SAGE has grown into two different training programs:

Program 1: SAGE: The Art of Mentoring for experienced principals to build their capacity and train as accredited APC mentor principals to assist beginning principals as they take up their roles.

Program 2: SAGE: Leading and Learning Together allows mentors and mentees (assistant principals and aspiring principals) to attend together and develop their relationships, expectations and skills together during the program as they set out to be involved in a mentoring relationship, and finally become trained and accredited APC mentors to assist others.

The program was designed by Gary O'Mahony, former principal, project director and researcher at the Australian Principals Centre, Professor Bruce Barnett, international researcher, mentor, and teacher from the University of Texas at San Antonio, and Ian Miller a former principal, consultant, and a key resource on mentoring. It was felt that the program could best be developed by pooling the skills and expertise of the designers regarding the best mentoring practices for leaders, using knowledge about high quality adult learning, and developing a program that would impact and transfer into principal leadership practice.

This case-study will concentrate on **Program 1: SAGE: The Art of Mentoring**, which focuses on developing mentors to support beginning principals. Programs are undertaken each year with groups throughout Australia, with approximately 45 participants attending each program. The main focus has been in the state of Victoria where the Department of Education and Training has sponsored the program. Here regional groups are given places for selected principal mentors to attend programs offered during the year. In 2002, the program was extended throughout Australia to train most Lutheran school principals with 67 completing the program. So far, after three years, 344 principals have completed the SAGE: Art of Mentoring program supporting beginning principals while another 67 have completed the Program 2 SAGE: Leading and Learning Together where mentors and mentees to attend together.

Strategic aims

There are four main aims to SAGE:

- to build a support cadre of expert regional principals who can nurture and support the development of beginning principals as managers and leaders, as well as participate as mentors in the regional leadership programs

- to develop a high quality interactive program where mentor principals will help establish a mentoring network of contacts and begin building a community of practice for newcomers to tap and explore

- to design an accredited professional development training program that will build the capacity of experienced principals to critically examine their own leadership and mentoring role and support them in trying to implement and transfer their mentoring ideas

- to have the SAGE program recognised nationally for principal performance plans, post-graduate study and Australian Principals Centre accreditation

Program structure and design

The Sage program has two phases - Phase 1: the initial two day training phase and Phase 2: the Regional implementation stage where mentors are asked to directly work with new beginning principals.

PHASE 1: Two-day training program

The SAGE training program structure and design is outlined below and indicates some of the key information. (A more detailed guide is shown in Table 1 in the Appendix.) Regions invite experienced principals to attend SAGE based on a criterion of suitability for being an effective mentor (a copy of the selection criteria is reproduced as Table 2 in the Appendix). Participation is a voluntary commitment and many mentors feel honoured to be chosen by the region as an expert practitioner and are usually enthusiastic about having the opportunity to give back to the profession through helping develop future leaders.

The Regional Senior Education Officers (SEOs) attend the latter half of the second day to help outline the support for beginning principals, develop an annual plan as part of the regional strategy, and answer questions related to regional expectations and principal concerns.

The features of SAGE training program

Part of the challenge in designing a principal mentoring program that was significantly different to existing programs was explored by the developers with input from a principal reference group. They suggested incorporating the following features:

- It is expected that participants will commit to and attend each of the linked sessions where relationship building, and personal growth are seen as the keys to personal learning in the program.
- Provide an interactive mentoring training program for experienced principals to reflect upon the expert leadership experiences of the participants. Build the

capacity of principal mentors to support beginning principals by exposing them to the latest research on mentoring and beginning principals.

- Provide a challenging experiential program using the accumulated wisdom of participants. It is an expectation of the SAGE program that all participants will be willing to commit themselves to making a mentoring partnership work in a non-threatening environment which requires time, effort, accessibility and availability.

- A reflective mentoring role is seen as desirable and something to be encouraged so the teaching of techniques of reflection, reflective interviewing, shadowing and giving feedback should be key parts of the program.

- Develop a regional mentoring program template for principals to utilize and subsequently take responsibility for the development of regional approaches to mentoring.

What are the key elements of the SAGE training program?

The following is drawn from the promotional flyer sent to future individual SAGE participants. This stresses the importance of learning and demonstrating influential mentoring leadership roles in guidance, facilitation of relationships and input on effective leadership:

What will I get out of the SAGE Training Program that will help me?

SAGE is built around using the most effective principles of an interactive adult learning program. This involves:

- using the previous experiences of participants to help connect their previous learning with their leadership

- incorporating ideas from recent research on effective mentoring

- clarifying expectations and building of shared agreements and action plans

- building of leadership capacity around the four APC dimensions of leadership- educational, strategic, ethical and interpersonal leadership

- developing reflective practice skills, including an exploration of learning styles

- learning strategies for providing constructive feedback through skill building exercises

- learning to use techniques for observation and reflective questioning

- being exposed to models of mentoring to help assess the progress and development of the relationship

- exploring ways to incorporate and maximize implementation of mentoring relationships

- celebrating accomplishments throughout the program

SAGE training program process

The development of the three key mentoring roles of guidance, facilitation and input are woven into each component of the training program. The first day of the program is designed to focus on experienced principals as effective mentors. The program is not a lecture absorption program but is designed as a construction of individual and team learning activities. It uses the experiences of the participants to provoke and challenge, as well as provide comfort and solace to those selected to become principal mentors. The content focuses on individual surveys centred on: becoming an effective mentor, building a mentoring relationship, identifying personal and others' learning styles, and examining the leadership capabilities required by the Victorian Department of Education and Training for principal class members. An integrated set of interactive activities has

been designed to deal with: developing reflective skills through discussion, small group exercises, and peer group reviews; reviewing research and experience on mentoring; journal writing; and establishing a successful mentoring relationship.

A key aspect of SAGE is to expand mentors' skills as reflective practitioners. The second day focuses on the changing role of the mentoring relationship and skill building around reflection, which includes reflective interviewing, reflective case records, and role-plays. The incorporation of skill development was requested by the participants and includes practising the skills related to giving and receiving feedback, and developing rapport with a colleague. Skill cards developed from the requests of past participants are included in the manual as a practical resource for mentors to use in developing their mentoring relationships. (Detail of this process is shown in Table 1 in the Appendix.)

Training program content

The following outlines the key components of the program content:

1. The roles and functions of mentors
2. Personal styles and preferences
3. Personal commitment to a productive mentoring relationship
4. The developmental phases of a mentoring relationship
5. Tools for gathering and processing information
6. Regional implementation planning

In addition, SAGE mentors have identified these five elements as being critical for the success of the program:

- Developing a trusting relationship
- Finding time for the relationship
- Providing and accepting constructive feedback
- Taking risks to try out new ideas
- Assessing the progress and outcomes of the relationship

The specific content for the four sessions comprising the two-day Phase 1 training are as follows:

Day One

Session 1: launching the mentoring relationship

- Reflecting on best learning experiences

- Developing an effective mentoring program

- An international research perspective and update on mentoring/ principal mentoring

- Building a mentoring partnership

- Forming agreements

- Learning resulting from mentoring

Session 2: enhancing leadership through mentoring

1. Characteristics of good mentoring relationships

- Mentoring as reflective practice in action

- Case studies: translating theory into practice

- Building skills for mentoring and leadership skill development

2. The how of mentoring

- Excellence in characteristics of highly effective principals (e.g.: system role requirements Victorian Department of Education &Training/Catholic Education/Lutheran capabilities)

- Individual survey review of mentoring styles

- Tools required for an effective mentoring relationship

Day Two

Session 3: using advanced mentoring skills

- Skill development sessions in listening, critical questioning and giving feedback

- Building a relationship into a mentoring model

- Building your own capacity to learn as a role model

Session 4: designing an implementation plan

- Implementation action planning

- Recent research on beginning principals and their learning

- Review of outcomes and evaluation

- Determining future directions

PHASE 2: Regional implementation

After the two-day training, a series of meetings are convened in the regions where the collegiate principal groups plan the implementation with the regional SEO (who is usually given responsibility to co-ordinate the implementation of the mentoring plan).

Matching is done by the SEOs, in consultation with regional SAGE principal reference groups, using the selection criteria reproduced in the Appendix (see Table 2), and local knowledge of principals. Mentor principals begin working formally or informally with individuals or small groups of new principals in local geographic areas. The idea is to link new mentors with a regional strategy plan and put the SAGE program principles into practice where experienced principals can test their effectiveness as mentors.

Individual principals meet with their beginning principal mentees for up to a year in a more formal relationship, but often continue the relationship after the first year in the role. The exact nature of the relationship is negotiated between the mentor and the mentee.

Pairs usually arrange to meet at monthly principal and collegial group meetings, but also at times suitable to both parties. Further contact is made during school visits and informal

meetings over lunch, telephone, and email, with the inclusion of shadowing visits, if agreed to by both parties. Mentors and mentees are asked to produce a 'memorandum of understanding' guiding when they will meet, how often, and their expectations for the mentoring relationship to be successful. Examples of these memoranda are provided to mentors during the training.

Some regions implement follow-up social gatherings and skill training sessions for mentors and beginners to debrief and refine the program. Other regions have been more visionary and gathered a critical mass of trained mentors and mentees, using them to expand their succession planning and mentoring programs.

In 2001, the APC presenters were contracted to do a state-wide follow-up day after SAGE with represented regional principals and staff. This was entitled "The Twenty Questions You've Always Wanted to Ask about Developing a Principal Mentoring Program" and was planned to help regions devise a regional and state-wide strategy plan. This was achieved and now forms the basis for the regional implementation planning session during Day 2. The suggested phases emphasized in planning the implementation are: pre-planning, training and orientation, implementation and evaluation and celebration.

Developing a learning culture using the principles of SAGE
Following the two-day training phase, Phase 2 begins the process of trained mentors starting up their relationship with beginning principals. Reputations count for little as some SAGE principals are indeed tested. Trained mentors have to determine with the mentee what mentoring role is most appropriate and whether they can fulfil this role as a trusted confidante, sponsor and guide to a newcomer. Mentoring relationships are about embracing change, and the tenets established by Hall and Hord[4] apply equally to the development of approaches to regional mentoring by principal mentors. They argue strongly that change must be seen as a process that occurs through individuals, and does indeed take time, and some considerable effort, to become absorbed into an existing organizational culture. This needs to be recognized and addressed in implementation.

The key issue is how does a region develop a culture of collaborative mentoring as a community of practice within the existing organizational culture. Culture is a difficult commodity to factor in with regards to actions and support for beginning principals. The theory of 'leaving them alone and they will eventually understand it', which is experienced by most beginning principals, has been replaced by a cognizant need for the development of a team-centred cultural approach to learning. A new collaborative norm for professional interaction is beginning to emerge (see Figures 2 and 3 in Appendix which demonstrate how the building of a mentoring culture is being achieved). It indicates how the principles of the SAGE program are enacted, in regional and collegiate groups, to help underpin the mentoring principles of SAGE - Supporting, Accomplishing, Guiding, and Enriching others.

Ongoing training for mentors and facilitators

The question as to who will mentor the mentors is a real concern related to provision of ongoing mentor training and development. One region has decided to address this question by becoming proactive and is planning to extend mentor training by contacting business mentors and linking principals with local business representatives through the Chamber of Commerce. SAGE Mentors also meet in regional groups to continue their training and share experiences in ongoing meetings, and training sessions, and these have been conducted on specific regional topics of interest by a variety of providers. During 2003, principal mentors have been encouraging the presenters to launch a teacher mentoring program, for their schools, with a similar focus to SAGE, to help build a culture of mentoring, and this will occur during the year.

The Australian Principals Centre recognizes its mentors by awarding them an accredited status following the successful completion of both phases of the program and offers ongoing training for both mentors and mentees. The established of an APC Mentoring Hall of Fame for accredited mentors is planned for 2003 to continue and extend mentoring links. A link on the APC website (www.apcentre.edu.au) is being created for previously trained SAGE mentors to document their professional background, leadership preferences, and the particular knowledge and skills they would be willing to share with their colleagues. By posting this information electronically, it is anticipated that novices (and also experienced principals) will be better able to identify mentors who possess the particular expertise which matches their professional situations and learning needs.

14

Because the school leaders listed in the Mentors' Hall of Fame have completed the accredited SAGE program, they are well equipped to support, guide, and counsel colleagues who desire their particular area(s) of expertise as well as learn from each other through a website mentoring network.

Other requested programs have been provided as extensions and follow-up to the SAGE program for principal mentors, beginning principals and school groups. These include one-day sessions on Coaching for High Performance (over 200 principals and teacher teams have participated), and Coaching for Financial Management. PRISM is a two-day training program for principals on shadowing and reflection techniques (with 45 participants to date). Based on the Far West Laboratory's Peer-Assisted Leadership Programme, PRISM assists peer partners in shadowing one another and developing a school improvement project. These are shown in the appendix as Figure 1 as part of the suite of APC mentoring and coaching programs offered as ongoing support and continued training available to mentors and mentees.

Learning outcomes and impact

Internal and external evaluations of SAGE

(a) Internally: Written course evaluations of participants' reactions to the SAGE program and evaluation of their learning are collected at all training sessions. They indicate a very high degree of satisfaction with the program content and delivery. Samples of comments are provided below. Following each training program, survey data are collated and a report of trends, findings, and recommendations is presented to the Victorian Department of Education and Training (VDEAT) for their review.

(b) Externally: No formal evaluation has yet been undertaken by the VDEAT; however, anecdotal evidence has been collected by the presenters. This involved working with regional mentors and SEOs, as well as informal telephone surveys with trained mentors and beginning principals about the impact of SAGE. Evidence collected from the feedback from these various sources has provided insight and data which has helped shape and customize the program for training in the following year. Examples of this feedback are given in the following pages. During 2003, the presenters will be encouraging DEAT to conduct an evaluation of SAGE at different levels to determine how the programme has influenced support for beginning principals.

Principal mentors' written evaluation of the SAGE training program

What participants learned about mentoring from SAGE:

> "Sharing, discussing and learning the value of giving and receiving feedback and developing trust especially through the powerful tool of reflection."

> "Being exposed to the changing phases in the mentoring process, plus the opportunity to learn how to establish, and hold on to a relationship over time."

What participants learned about leadership from SAGE:

> "A good question is worth volumes of explanation in trying to understand the other's point of view so continually seek feedback and data."

"I've learned the value of what experience and insight can do and how to value others."

Principal mentors' written evaluation of the impact of the SAGE program in practice

"I have learned there is a need to take time to develop a safe and secure environment in which to support newcomers then help them to grow."

"Recognising that I have the skills to mentor someone else and harness these to help nurture the development of someone else. It has taken me off automatic pilot and made me question what I have to give and how I can learn from newcomers. I'm now open to that and plan to become a good mentor because I am learning along with them too."

"..learning when to lead, when to coach and when to just be there."

"I think I have learned more from my beginning principal than she did from me. I am thankful and grateful for being given the opportunity to share this experience at my stage of my career."

It was clear that the experienced principals were altruistic in wanting to be involved in SAGE as a means of giving something back to their new colleagues, but they were also pragmatic in wanting to model mentoring in their own work and to develop a mentoring culture in their schools.

What beginning principal mentees said about having a trained SAGE mentor

"The real value is having someone trained to assist me. He visited me often and listened to my agenda and helped me develop an idea for my school council meetings. I could call on my fellow principals as a network for good ideas."

"She rang me, came over and we talked about a range of things and agreed to meet often to debrief and consider what I am doing, she has offered to shadow and I will take her up on that."

Conclusion

Exposure to the best of leadership practice requires mentors to transcend their spheres of influence and provide the wisdom and guidance that emerging leaders need. The SAGE mentoring program phases build the capacities of principal to undertake this task by developing mentoring roles of guidance, facilitation and input, while concomitantly emphasizing the intrinsic gifts that participants bring to the mentoring role. These are the gifts so aptly articulated by Bolman and Deal as 'Leading with Soul'[5]. These gifts are celebrated in the training program and are about caring, ownership, authenticity, significance and pride which are brought to the mentoring relationship. These need to be shared and explored together so that each partner benefits. Through this process schools gain more effective leaders with far-reaching benefits through the whole system. Perhaps a comment from a new principal concerning the insights gained from her SAGE mentor underlines this benefit:

"I was infected by his passion; that it is a great job - heaps of hard work, frustrations, challenges, achievements…like a game, but one that counts!"

References

1. Kouzes, J M, and Posner, B Z, 1997, The Leadership Challenge, *How to Keep Getting Extraordinary Things Done in Organizations*. San Francisco, Jossey-Bass Publishers

2. The Australian Principals Centre is an independent centre for Australian principals established as a strategic partnership by the Victorian Principals Associations, Department of Education and Training, and the University of Melbourne in 1996 to become a principal accreditation and a professional development centre. The Centre works nationally and internationally with a range of systems, principal associations, universities and schools.

3. O'Mahony, G R, 2002, *Learning the Role: Through the Eyes of Beginning Principals,* Unpublished PhD study, Deakin University

4. Hall, G E and Hord, S M, 2001*, Implementing Change: Patterns, Principles and Potholes,* Boston, Allyn and Bacon

5. Bolman, L G and Deal, T E, 1995*, Leading with Soul. An Uncommon Journey of Spirit,* San Francisco, Jossey-Bass Publishers

6. Adapted from Holliday, R, 1992*, Teachers as Learners: A case study of the learning needs of primary teachers*, Paper presented at the joint conference of AARE and NZARE, Geelong

7. Adapted from Lewis, G, 2000, Mentoring Manager: Strategies for fostering talent and spreading knowledge, pp 35-37, London, Prentice-Hall

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Additional resources

Barnet B, O'Mahony, G and Miller, I, 2002, *The Promise of Mentoring*. Prime Focus, April 2002 pp.23-26

Appendix

Table 1: Structure and design of the SAGE program

PLANNING

- Invitations to attend forwarded with package of program information to participants.
- Forward a pre-reading package outlining the expectations of the participants and pre-reading of a mentoring monograph.

TRAINING

- Allow for choice in developing and directing the program around key concerns and issues participants want addressed in the program.
- Set time aside to address special topics or issues identified by participants for workshop or discussion, eg: giving and receiving feedback; telling people the bad news; when should I intervene in a problem situation?
- Discuss the program monitoring with participants at break times and adjust some key issues content as required.

CHANGE AGENT

- Learn that a natural mentoring process involves - an initiation, a development and separation phase.
- Discuss change agent strategies and approaches involving participants in addressing their concerns and discussing their role in developing the regional plan.
- Discuss various types and changing of mentoring roles - and how to undertake them.

Formal learning opportunities

Guided practice in using reflective practice

- Develop an understanding of reflection as a technique and process.
- Use reflective questioning techniques of reflective questioning, case record compilation and feedback.
- Provide mixed team groups with opportunities to share craft knowledge and expertise and discuss cross regional leadership issues.

Team learning

- Provide opportunities for co-operative and alternating collaborative team learning to occur in exploration of issues in mentoring.

- Explore as a study group the specific regional issues in mentoring and devise a year's strategy plan.
- Initially share values, beliefs and expectations then list them for the program agenda.
- Trust building exercise to learn to appreciate and validate their colleagues attitudes and skills experienced in a mentoring relationship.

Group discussion

- Paired tasks activities for sharing coffee and discussion on using the program and leadership skills in developing mentoring relationships.
- Conduct poster sessions to provide time for reflective walks and discussion of current mentoring issues.

Self assessment instrument

- Self-discovery: use of a mentor scale and the Kolb Learning Style Inventory to gain valuable information about skills, interests of oneself and others.

Individual reflection

- Have participants develop running records of ideas and thoughts about their future mentoring role to collect feedback and reflections on their individual and leadership behaviour as a mentor.

Journal writing

- Provide instruction on reflective journal writing in building an understanding of the process and content issues in developing a mentoring relationship.

Problem-based learning

- Use case studies in a series of videos for role-plays and group exploration in using reflection, feedback and reflective interviewing.
- Undertake the compilation of case study records to allow the use of a reflective cycle to analyse changes in relationships.

Reflective reading

- Allocate time for sessional and private reading of key articles to allow participants to reflect and discuss issues of interest. If leaders are to lead they must model that current professional reading is reflected in their own practice and in professional renewal.

Participants' resource folder

Leadership review

- Learn to understand the skills associated with expert leadership and thinking.
- Review and discuss the dimensions of leadership and Education Department & Training/or System (Catholic; Lutheran system).
- Read set resource articles on leadership and mentoring for class and group discussion of key leadership and mentoring issues.
- Link leadership capabilities with the leadership research findings of Kouzes and Posner (Reference: The Leadership Challenge).

Individual learning

- Use a mentoring survey to analyze individual skills of each mentor and develop a profile.
- Understand mentoring styles and the need to change styles through the mentoring relationship.
- Incorporate shadowing module training on request as a valuable technique to use with mentees.

Resource ideas

- Use the section on 'Questions often asked by mentors' for a group review and a planning device in establishing a mentoring program.
- Plan the use of mentor skills cards to use in reflective conversations.
- Review and use sample material in the SAGE implementation folder.
- Use the optional goal-action plan format to plan approaches to mentoring.
- Have regional groups use and apply sample phase ideas in the regional implementation planning guide.
- Plan and use of skill cards for specific program situations.

Informal learning opportunities[6]

Personal meaning - personal knowledge, critical reflection, personal experience

- Recognition that learning is an active and constructive process by which individuals try to make sense of the information and experiences they bring to the session.
- Realise participants bring with them beliefs and thoughts that guide the way they see and interpret life and influence their thinking and information processing.
- Provide time to allow individuals and groups to discover and explore correlations between self-understanding and leadership practices.

Collegiality - collaboration, co-operation, risk-taking

- Provide a series of getting acquainted activities to help socialize and unify a state-wide group.
- Build a model of trust and understanding of colleagues through developing a non-threatening and open format.
- Model the use of informal coaching and mentoring techniques by the presenters throughout the program.
- Work with members of the group to improve facilitation skills and problem-solving as a group .
- Recognise, address and use issues and controversial points to evoke discussion and debate.
- Use the experiences and background of participants to explore examples.
- Recognise that important social learning occurs in breaks and at dinners.
- Recognise the affiliation needs of all participants and try to develop inclusive strategies for all participants .

Empowerment - control, ownership, self-direction, risk-taking

- Provide opportunities for participants to monitor and evaluate their thinking and restructure their prior knowledge on leadership and mentoring issues.
- Treat all participants as valued learners whose experience is relevant and insightful to the program.
- Give people time to explore their thinking on given issues to reflect upon differences in processes of learning.

Action - practicality, pragmatism, doing, experience

- Try to immerse everyone in the program through active involvement and participation in the learning process.
- Recognize the context and background of their adult lives and how this might impact upon mentoring .
- Develop with interested groups or individuals an optional individual action plan.
- Ask participants to participate in, take responsibility for, and own the development of an annual principal regional mentoring plan.

Personal characteristics - self-image, self-worth, self-concept, view of self as learner

- Self-esteem and motivation are heightened when participants are placed in non-threatening situations where they feel their contributions are valued and accepted.

Table 2: Suggested criteria For participant selection[7]

Research has identified a number of attributes or qualities as being highly desirable qualities for the job of mentoring. The following criteria may be of use in beginning to identify practising principals to become mentors and support beginning principals. You may wish to add other qualities you think are important for your context.

1. Management perspective

- Someone who is an experienced and competent school manager and a leader of people
- Has a wide range of experience in different management roles or contexts

2. Organisational know-how

- Someone who knows how to get things done within the Department of Education organisational system
- Understands the cultural norms and values of the organization and knows how to get things done.
- Keeps in touch with latest trends and thinking for schools.

3. Credibility

- Someone who enjoys personal and professional credibility
- Sets a good example and is a good role model for others

4. Accessibility

- Someone who is able to make him/herself available to others when they are needed
- Treats others with respect even when holding contrary views

5. Communication

- Someone who has highly developed interpersonal and communication skills
- Someone who creates a supportive climate in which others can learn
- Checks frequently for understanding and clarity in discussions

- Listens attentively and promotes meaningful conversations

6. Developmental orientation
   - Someone who takes a keen and active interest in the development of others
   - Encourages others to take responsibility for tasks

7. Inventiveness
   - Someone who is open to new ideas and to different ways of doing things
   - Generates, examines, and evaluates a broad range of options and alternatives

8. Empowering orientation
   - Someone who creates a supportive climate in which others can learn
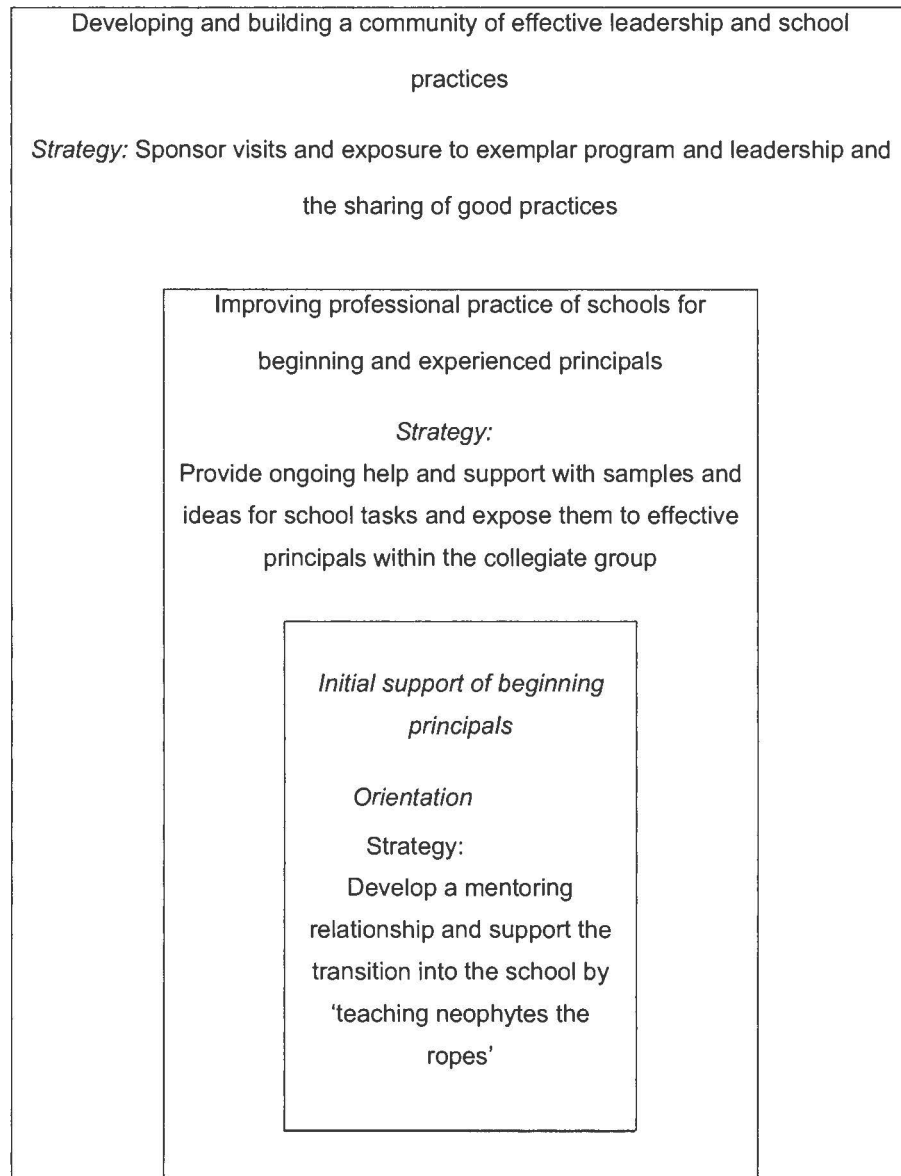   - Allows opportunity and latitude with others to develop ideas

Figure 1: Development cycle of APC ongoing mentoring and coaching programs

Preparation for the Principalship	**Beginning Principal** Induction	Ongoing development for New and Experienced Principals
Succession planning through experiences in:	**Helping beginning principals to "learn the ropes" using selected experienced principals through:**	**Providing a suite of programs to assist principals and teams to address individual and staff development through:**
■ **Mentoring**	■ **Relationship building**	■ **Coaching**
■ **Shadowing**	■ **Reflective experiences**	■ **Peer assisted leadership feedback**
■ **Assigned roles**	■ **Building a regional strategy plan**	
■ **Ongoing Leadership**		
■ **Development Groups**		

Preparation for the Principalship	Beginning Principal Induction	Ongoing development for New and Experienced Principals
MENTORING	MENTORING	MENTORING & COACHING
SAGE: Leading and Learning Together	SAGE: The Art Of Mentoring	Coaching for High Performance
*Mentors and mentees attend and build a mentoring relationship together	*Mentors are invited to become mentors by regional groups based on a criteria	Coaching for Financial Administration
*Training in: mentoring styles/building relationships/ mentoring learning styles feedback/shadowing and program implementation	*Mentors volunteer or are chosen by beginning principals to work with them	*Training in: types of coaching/theory and practice/ models/coaching skills
	*Mentors work with mentees to help develop leadership and management skills	PRISM
	*Training in: mentoring styles/building relationships/ mentoring learning styles feedback/shadowing and program implementation	Training in: building peer relationships and skills in shadowing and reflective interviewing
		* Peer Assisted Leadership
		Coaching, feedback and a school improvement project working with a partner

Figure 2: Developing a professional community of practice using SAGE principles

Developing and building a community of effective leadership and school practices

Strategy: Sponsor visits and exposure to exemplar program and leadership and the sharing of good practices

Improving professional practice of schools for beginning and experienced principals

Strategy:
Provide ongoing help and support with samples and ideas for school tasks and expose them to effective principals within the collegiate group

Initial support of beginning principals

Orientation
Strategy:
Develop a mentoring relationship and support the transition into the school by 'teaching neophytes the ropes'

Figure 3: Putting SAGE principles into practice: A support template for beginning principal mentoring

S Supporting
A Accomplishing
G Guiding
E Enriching

Orientation for new principals	On-the-Job training and professional training for new principals
Guiding	*Accomplishing*
Establishing a relationship and meeting times	Mentor and beginner attend workshops together and share information on management practices
School visits by mentors and beginners	Mentor works with beginner in their own school and attends finance management workshop together
Share school documents and practices	
Plan an orientation to the new school	
Gather information and set expectations about carrying out the role	Use reflective questioning to examine problems and school practices
Learn the ropes from the expert mentor	Use reflective case studies to explore difficult school issues
Share ideas and discuss practice	Explore perceived 'crises of practice' with mentees over coffee
Give and receive feedback by learning together	Set time-lines and expectations for the year with mentees

Observation and contact of expert principals in practice	Peer support and collegial activities
Enriching	*Supporting*
Mentor sponsors visits to expert knowledge principal to share their expertise with newcomers Allocate local collegiate meeting time to hear from knowledge mentors on a specific area Build an on-line email reference base of mentors and their skills for newcomers to contact on specific areas of management	Make a trained mentor responsible for a newcomer and develop a collegiate plan Invite mentors to debrief after collegiate meeting on key issues and ' in-the-basket' issues. Use trained mentors over the year for monthly group mentoring and facilitating group reflective meetings to share ideas and common issues

Commentary

by Kent Peterson

The SAGE Principal Mentor Program located in the Australia Principal Center is an extremely well designed and conceptually organised program. It provides a clear and detailed description of the skills, experiences, and understandings that will be addressed in the program. It has an understandable set of strategic aims and a well-designed set of structures to achieve those aims.

SAGE uses an integrated pair of programs to serve principals and its regions. Incorporating these two programs enhances each. The first, The Art of Mentoring, is a thorough and conceptually grounded effort to train highly effective mentors, both for the second SAGE program, but also for regional groups. The second, Leading and Learning Together, is focused on providing comprehensive and integrated mentoring and learning experiences for new principals. It is thoughtfully designed with a coherent curriculum.

The SAGE training program includes a set of thorough descriptions of purposes, processes, plans, and expectations for participants. For example, the list of "what participants will get out of the program" delineates a relevant list of underlying processes and expectations. It provides participants with a picture of what the varied efforts will be and provides mentors a portrait of the overall program.

Similarly, SAGE provides a list of "five elements" that are critical for success of the program. These five elements highlight core challenges and approaches that need to be addressed. Additionally, the content of the program is described in a set of six very understandable phrases. Mentors, mentees, and facilitators are more likely to be successful in a complex training program when core elements and processes of the program are specified clearly. Specifying the foundational approaches can provide cognitive maps for all involved thus enhancing the coherence and impact of the program.

The Art of Mentoring program offers a comprehensive set of skills and approaches to enhance the mentoring skills of these participants. The program helps future mentors learn about their roles, develop skills in building relationships, gain understanding of their

own learning styles and their mentees, and enhance their knowledge of the leadership model of the regional agency. All of these seem useful and relevant skills, knowledge, and understandings for effective mentoring. Additionally, the set of interactive activities used to accomplish these capacities (discussion, small group exercises, peer group reviews, research, journaling, and so forth), no doubt, provide models of activities that they could use with their mentees. Finally, all of these activities for mentors may, in important ways, enhance their skills in collaborative leadership and the development of teacher leaders that could be extremely valuable in their own school settings.

The content and organization of the four primary training sessions in Phase 1 are well thought-out and draw on much of what is known about adult learning and mentoring. The two-day program includes a good mix of research, practice, and personal reflection. The detailed curriculum for the sessions shows participants what is planned and the core ideas and skills that are being addressed. This may provide all participants with important advanced organizers that can enhance their learning.

Implementation of the mentoring is regionally coordinated with SEOs. The combination of meetings and visits by mentors, shadowing, and monthly group sessions offers a useful blend of approaches. Given the flexibility of activities, the "memorandum of agreement," an informal contract between mentor and mentee is a particularly useful technique to concretise expectations and plans. Rather than simply listing what mentors and mentees are expected to accomplish, this approach fosters reflection, planning, negotiating, and relationship-building skills.

SAGE explicitly details a number of important facets of the program. As noted above, "formal learning opportunities" are described in-depth, thus providing a clear and coherent document to enhance coordination and consistency across facilitators and mentors. Similarly, the function and structure of the "informal learning opportunities" are explained and described in ways that boost learning. These are richly textured portraits of quality formal and informal adult learning. The Criteria for Participant Selection offers a thorough and thoughtful model for identification of participants. Finally, the "support template" in Figure 1 presents an excellent list of activities and approaches that mentors can use to enhance their meetings with mentees. It is clear, coherent and enormously valuable for mentors.

SAGE also addresses the important challenge of developing a new "culture of collaborative learning." As in many districts and regions in many countries, the culture of early socialisation for principals is highly individualistic and isolated. This program is working explicitly to help transform the culture of isolation into a culture of collaboration and collegiate group learning. By working on this explicitly, the program is having an impact on existing principal cultures, but may also be helping new principals understand and shape collaborative cultures in their own schools.

A small, but useful point should be made about the name of the program—SAGE. In this program the acronym actually represents both a useful concept—using the savvy of practice—and a description of program elements: Supporting, Accomplishing, Guiding, and Enriching.

The program uses some important approaches to reinforce program culture. They build strong collegial relationships, offer time for social interaction, have a meaningful acronym for the name, and have established an APC "Mentoring Hall of Fame." There are important times to recognize contributions and to celebrate success that reinforce a "culture of mentoring."

One of the positive features of SAGE is the development of additional coordinated programmatic elements to extend and deepen learning of participants. Seeing the interest and need for extending initial skills, the program has added sessions on coaching for high performance, coaching for financial management, and PRISM, a program on shadowing and self-reflection. These bring participants back together in meaningful professional activities, which will further deepen their professional culture.

Recommendations
These recommendations are provided to suggest ways to refine, fine-tune and enhance existing qualities of the program. All programs are designed within fiscal, social, and contextual parameters. The ideas are provided as thoughts to consider as these programs move forward.

The two-day training session included some important skills. In some regions these are reinforced in follow-up sessions after mentors have actually established relationships and started working with their mentees. It is often useful to return to these core skills after they have first been used. Encouraging this in other regions is recommended.

There seem to be many important opportunities that shape the culture of the groups in the program. The program might consider developing more culture-building and symbolic elements in to the program, such as adding times for alumni to return and reconnect, and supporting symbolically the sense of identification with the program through participation in a convocation or other award ceremonies for mentors.

Finally, the program might consider offering consultation internationally on the development of mentoring programs. Many educational agencies around the globe are developing mentoring programs. SAGE could put their accumulated knowledge into a set of materials, videotapes, and training sessions for these agencies.

Commentary

by Dick Weindling

Beginning in a small way in 2000, this APC program has become very successful and almost 350 principals have now been trained as mentors. The program is based on a centre-periphery model, with a central two-day training course for experienced principals, and then an implementation phase at regional levels using the cadre of trained mentors who work on a one-to-one basis to support new principals.

Key components

This is an excellent program with a number of positive features. SAGE is built on the principles of adult learning and the best knowledge about mentoring. The developers and trainers bring together a strong combination of US research with first-hand knowledge and experience of Australian principals. Before the program was set up the developers sought advice from a principal reference group, and travelled to various countries to look at good examples of mentoring programs.

It is recognised that not all principals will make effective mentors. So the developers have produced criteria which are given to the regions to assist in the selection of experienced principals as mentors.

The course has a program which allows the participants to examine mentoring and their own learning style, with an emphasis on reflection and observation through work shadowing. Throughout the two days the program looks at mentoring skills and the phases of the process. The focus is on mentoring, learning, effective principals, and reflection.

An important component is the use of research to help practitioners. The course introduces research on beginning principals, mentoring, the change process (Hall and Hord), and leadership (Kouzes and Posner). There are very good materials such as key articles, some of which is pre-course reading. I particularly like the use of journals, and problem-based learning with case studies and video clips. Each of these techniques has been shown to be effective with adult learners.

In the second phase of implementation, the matching of the new principals and mentors is undertaken by the Senior Education Officers and a regional principal group. An important part of the scheme is that the SEOs from the regions attend the latter half of the second day's training. This is an attempt to ensure they all hear the central messages.

Once they begin the mentoring the pairs use a 'memorandum of understanding' to assist the process (examples of these are provided at the training). This encourages commitment from the participants and acts like an informal learning contract.

The quotations from the mentors and new principals demonstrate clearly the two-way nature of mentoring. There are effects on the new principal who becomes more confident and competent and reduces the feelings of isolation found in research on new heads and principals (Weindling and Earley, 1987). On the other side of the coin, the mentors re-examine themselves and the way they work as principals.

In response to demand, the original SAGE program has been expanded beyond principals and versions have developed for assistant principals, aspiring principals and classroom teachers.

Suggestions for improvement
This is a very good mentoring program which has been well thought out and successfully run for several years. Therefore there are only a small number of suggestions about ways of improving the scheme.

The new principals do not seem to attend the two day training. The national evaluation of the headteacher mentoring scheme in England and Wales (Bolam et al 1993), showed that where the new heads came to the last half-day of training they rated the subsequent mentoring process as more successful than those heads who did not attend. Although there may be practical problems in trying to get the new principals to attend the last part of the training, this is a powerful way of beginning the mentoring process.

While the centre-periphery model has the strength of control over the central elements, it also has potential weaknesses at the periphery level. With SAGE there appears to be

considerable variation in how the regions organise their facilitation and support for the new principals and their mentors. Greater consistency is therefore required across the regions. A key issue, recognised by the trainers, is how to develop a regional culture of collaborative mentoring as a community of practice. The trainers are now adding a follow-up day at regional level which should help a great deal.

So far only one of the regions has thought about ways of supporting the mentors. It is necessary to plan support mechanisms at the regional level so as to facilitate the ongoing learning and development of the mentors. Very few mentoring schemes seem to have done this, which means that after the initial training mentors are simply left to get on with the process with their new principal partner.

Such a major program as SAGE, which has now trained 344 mentors, definitely needs an external evaluation. The program planners are encouraging the Victorian Department of Education and Training to consider such an evaluation. Although requiring reasonable funding, an evaluation would provide important data about the ways in which SAGE has helped both the new principals, the mentors and their schools. The findings could also be used to refine and improve the program.

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