

Evaluation Brief



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LEADERS MENTORING LEADERS Mentoring New Administrators in Virginia Beach City Public Schools

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ABSTRACT

The Leaders Mentoring Leaders program, implemented and delivered by the Office of Organizational Development, was designed to provide new and aspiring administrators with mentoring opportunities designed to complement their development as school leaders. The 2007-08 school year was the fourth year of the program, and a new component was added to incorporate mentoring opportunities for new assistant principals. During the 2007-08 school year, 5 new principals and 11 new assistant principals participated in the mentoring program. Overall, the new administrators (protégés) and their mentors expressed high levels of satisfaction with various components of the program. Protégés, mentors, and third-party evaluators reported improvements on the part of the new administrators in key leadership proficiencies following the mentoring program.

BACKGROUND

Beginning in 2004-05, the Office of Organizational Development (OD) in Virginia Beach City Public Schools implemented and delivered mentoring programs for new and aspiring administrators. The mentoring initiatives collectively referred to as the Leaders Mentoring Leaders program provided participants with a structured approach for setting goals and facilitating mentoring relationships between new/aspiring administrators and experienced administrators. During the 2007-08 school year, the program was expanded to include new assistant principals. This evaluation brief summarizes participants' perceptions of the mentoring experience and changes in key perceived leadership proficiency as a result of the new principal and new assistant principal mentoring programs.

The Leaders Mentoring Leaders program activities were funded through a grant from the Virginia Department of Education and involved the pairing of aspiring or new administrators with experienced administrators within the school division. Protégés in the New Principal and New Assistant Principal Mentoring program completed a form identifying leadership characteristics and provided three potential preferred mentors. Final mentor assignments were determined by assistant superintendents in the Department of School Administration.

Both of the mentoring programs consisted of a three-hour formal introduction to mentoring for protégés and mentors. During the session, protégés and mentors were given a

structured approach for setting goals and strategies for making the mentoring relationship successful. Training materials included a custom-designed discussion guide containing suggested topics and questions for discussion during the mentoring period. In addition, protégés and mentors were given time during the session to plan and discuss desired outcomes from their mentoring experience.

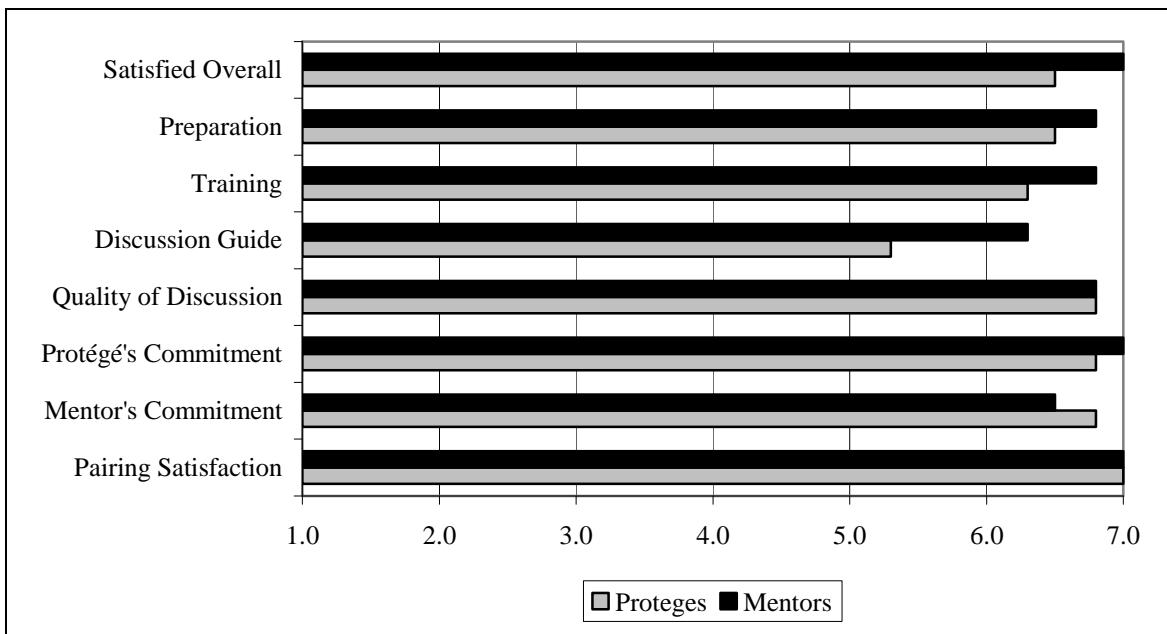
How frequently the mentor pairs had contact and the method of contact was determined by each pair. Participants were encouraged to use the methods that worked best for the pair and to base the frequency of contact on the needs and goals of the pairings. In addition, protégés and mentors in both programs met for several mandatory luncheons throughout the school year and four subsequent sessions for “Focused Conversation” on relevant topics.

New Principal Mentoring Program

Program and Pairing Satisfaction

Figure 1 displays the average ratings of new principals (protégés) and mentors for the items addressing program and pairing satisfaction. The average ratings for the items addressing satisfaction with progress made during the program, preparation for mentoring, the usefulness of training, the quality of the discussions between the pairs, commitment to the mentoring process, and pairing satisfaction were 6.0 or higher on a 7-point scale. Although the average rating of the item addressing the usefulness of the discussion guide was lower than the other ratings reported in Figure 1, the average rating for both groups of participants was still above 5.0.

Figure 1
Average Ratings of Program and Pairing Satisfaction Items – New Principal Program

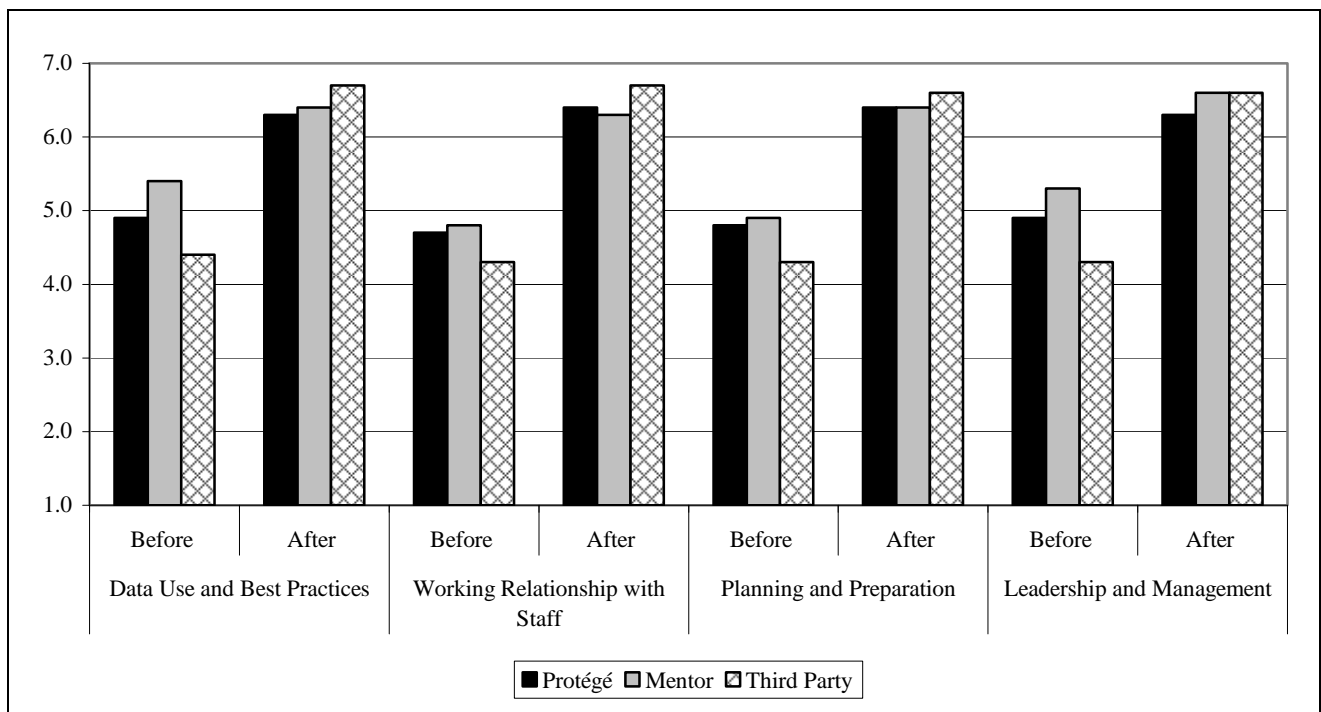


Principal Leadership Proficiencies

As part of the New Principal Mentoring program, a retrospective only pre/postassessment of leadership proficiencies based on standards defined by the Board of Education was completed by protégés, mentors, and the appropriate assistant superintendent in the Department of School Administration (third-party evaluator). The leadership proficiencies covered areas such as data use and best practices, working relationships with staff, planning and preparation, and leadership and management. Protégés, mentors, and third-party evaluators were asked to provide before and after ratings (i.e., postratings) for each of the leadership proficiency items in these categories. All items were rated on a 7-point scale with 1 representing the lowest rating and 7 representing the highest rating.

Figure 2 displays the average ratings provided by each participant group for the four leadership proficiency areas overall. All three participant groups reported higher ratings in each proficiency area following the mentoring program. Several of the largest changes were observed among third-party evaluators whose ratings were lower than those of the protégés and mentors when rating the protégé before the mentoring experience, but were higher following the mentoring program. The average postrating in each of the four leadership proficiency areas reported in Figure 2 exceeded 6.0 on a 7-point scale.

Figure 2
Average Principal Leadership Proficiency Ratings by Participant Group



The individual proficiency items and the average ratings provided by each participant group appear in Appendix A. With very few exceptions, the average postratings provided by the three participant groups were all above 6.0 on a 7-point scale for each of the individual items on the survey.

General Comments About the Program

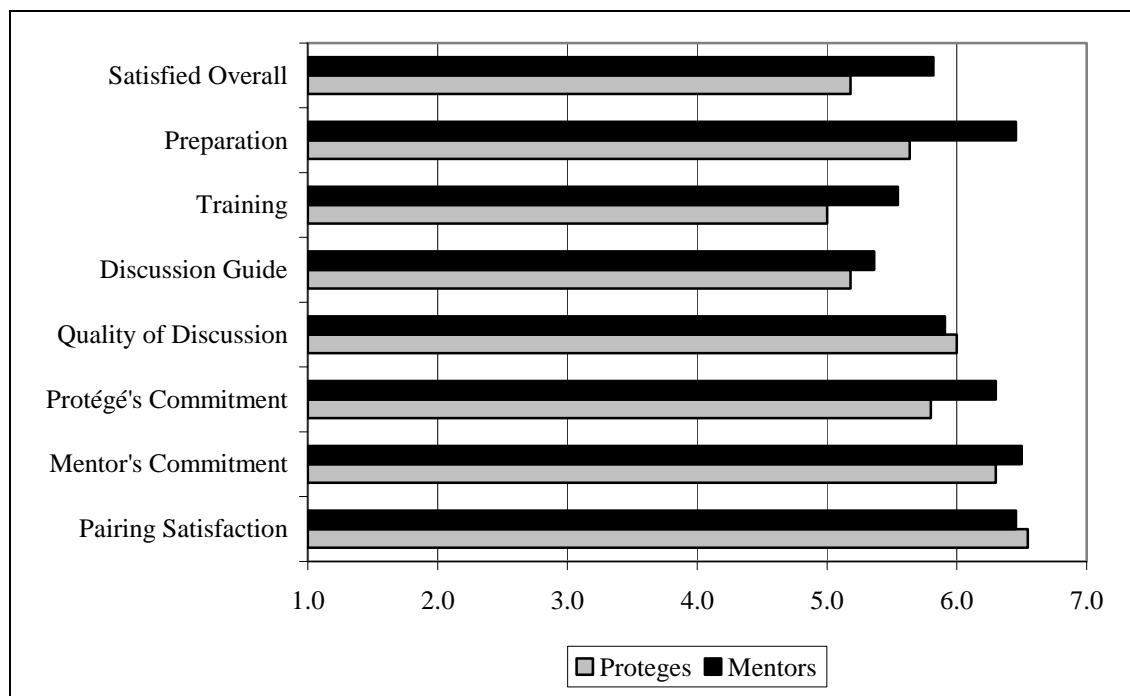
When asked to indicate what worked well in the mentoring relationship, protégés mentioned the open lines of communication and familiarity as factors that supported the relationship. Mentors also mentioned familiarity and trust as instrumental in the success of the program. Protégés did not offer any suggestions for improving the mentoring experience, while mentors mentioned a desire for more time with the protégé. The participants in the program indicated that the new principals gained a number of important skills as a result of the program such as how to deal with difficult parents, how to engage staff, and how to build professional learning communities.

New Assistant Principal Mentoring Program

Program and Pairing Satisfaction

Figure 3 displays the average ratings of new assistant principals (protégés) and mentors for the items addressing program and pairing satisfaction. The average ratings for the items addressing satisfaction with progress made during the program, preparation for mentoring, the usefulness of training, the usefulness of the discussion guide, the quality of the discussion between the pairs, the commitment to the mentoring process, and pairing satisfaction were 5.0 or higher on a 7-point scale. Among protégés, the item addressing the usefulness of the mentor training received the lowest average rating (5.0). Among the mentors, the item with the lowest average rating was the item addressing the usefulness of the discussion guide (5.4). Although these ratings were lower than the ratings observed for the other items, they were still 5.0 or higher.

Figure 3
Average Ratings of Program and Pairing Satisfaction Items – New Assistant Principal Program

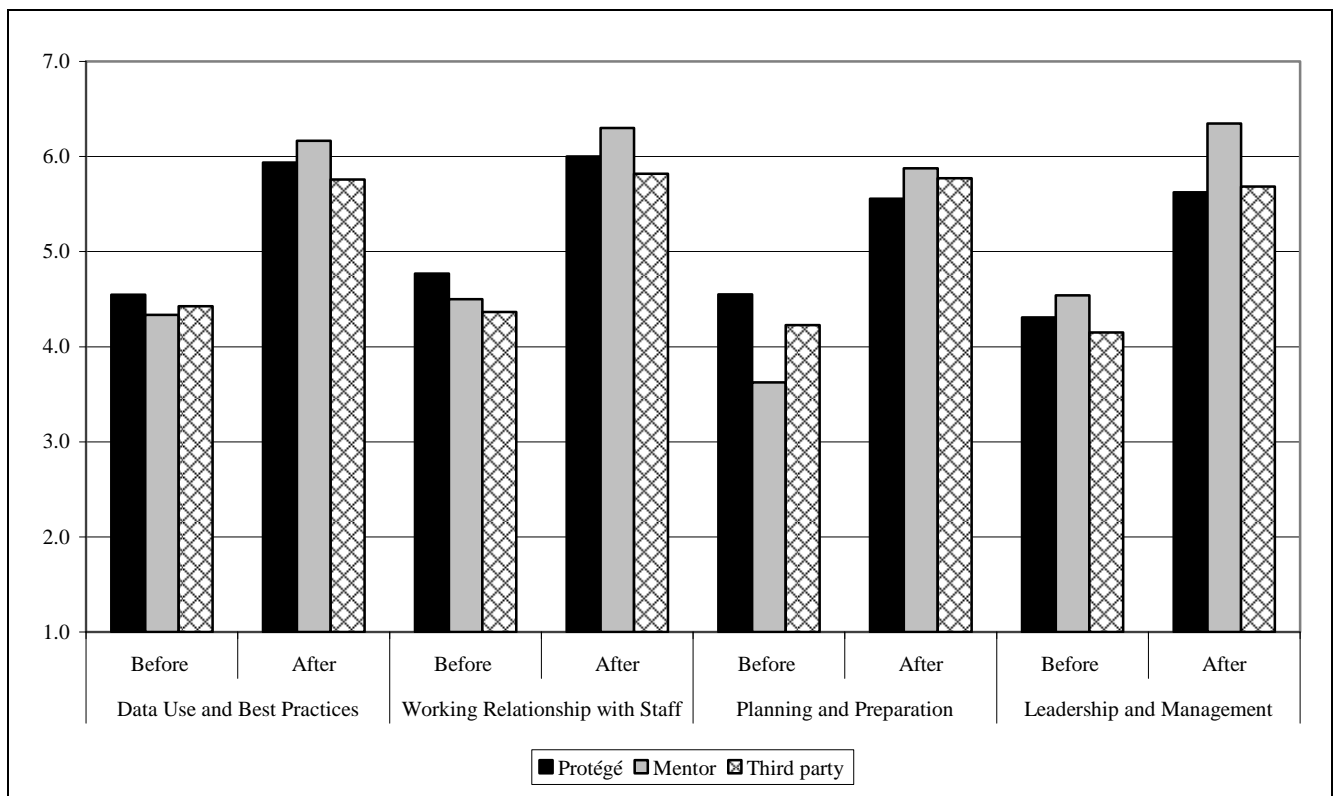


Assistant Principal Leadership Proficiencies

Leadership proficiencies for new assistant principals were also developed by staff in the Office of Organizational Development with assistance from the Adele Lynn Leadership Group. The new assistant principal proficiencies covered areas such as data use and best practices, working relationships with staff, planning and preparation, and leadership and management. Although the general categories of leadership proficiency items were the same for new principals and assistant principals, the individual items comprising the categories were specific to the role of assistant principals. New assistant principals (protégés), participating mentors, and the principals responsible for evaluating the new assistant principals (third-party evaluators) completed the retrospective only pre/postassessment of leadership proficiencies.

Figure 4 displays the average ratings provided by each participant group for the four leadership proficiency areas overall. All three participant groups reported higher ratings in each proficiency area following the mentoring program. For each of the categories reported in Figure 4, the average rating provided by the mentor following the program was higher than the average rating provided by the protégés and third-party evaluators. For all three participant groups, the average post-rating in each of the four leadership proficiency areas reported in Figure 4 exceeded 5.0 on a 7-point scale.

Figure 4
Average Assistant Principal Leadership Proficiency Ratings by Participant Group



The individual proficiency items and the average ratings provided by each participant group appear in Appendix B. In addition, an examination of the ratings provided to individual proficiency items revealed that all of the ratings provided by the three participant groups were 5.0 or higher.

General Comments About the Program

Participants' comments about the new assistant principal mentoring program were generally positive. When asked what worked well in the mentoring relationship, the protégés mentioned the level of knowledge and experience that their mentors brought to the relationship. Some also indicated that they were familiar with their mentor prior to the program. Mentors mentioned mutual respect, opportunities to interact, open dialogue and rapport as factors that enhanced the mentoring relationship. A number of protégés and mentors suggested that mentoring pairings should occur within the same building if possible. Protégés indicated that they often sought assistance from their fellow assistant principals, and a few participants indicated a desire to reduce the amount of time spent away from the school. A few protégés and mentors also indicated that the amount of time spent together could have been increased.

Protégés, mentors, and third-party evaluators listed a variety of skills and practices that the protégés gained as a result of the mentoring experience including time management, networking opportunities, parent communication strategies, scheduling, and working with special education issues. While most of the comments about the program were positive, there were a few comments that suggested the program was neither advantageous or disadvantageous for new assistant principals, the program did not offer anything new when compared to the Futures Academy, and rating the new assistant principal with respect to the leadership proficiencies would have required continuous communication that was not part of the program.

Summary

The results of the evaluation revealed that overall, participants and mentors in both of the Leaders Mentoring Leaders programs were satisfied with the program and their pairings. Protégés, mentors, and third-party evaluators in both programs reported increases in the new administrators' leadership proficiencies as measured by the pre/postassessment. Overall, the satisfaction and proficiency ratings provided by participants in the New Principals program were higher than those provided by participants in the New Assistant Principals program. A few of the comments made in response to open-ended survey items suggested that participants in the New Assistant Principals program perceived that they benefited from the program, but that being paired with another assistant principal in the same building could have made the experience even more beneficial.

Appendix A
New Principal Proficiencies 2007-08

New Principal Proficiencies		Group	Before Mentoring	After Mentoring
Data Use and Best Practices	How to review and discuss data to prepare strategies with faculty and staff members for the next school year.	Protégé	5.3	6.5
		Mentor	5.3	6.3
		Third Party	4.3	6.7
	How to analyze and discuss data and plans for instructional planning in a constructive manner.	Protégé	4.5	6.0
		Mentor	5.5	6.5
		Third Party	4.0	6.5
	How to learn from the best practices used by other schools in order to gain insights from their successes.	Protégé	5.0	6.3
		Mentor	5.3	6.3
		Third Party	4.8	6.8
Working Relationship with Staff	How to establish priorities and relationships with the leadership team, faculty, and staff.	Protégé	4.3	6.3
		Mentor	5.5	6.8
		Third Party	4.5	6.8
	How to establish oneself as an instructional leader in the eyes of the staff.	Protégé	4.8	6.5
		Mentor	3.8	5.8
		Third Party	4.3	6.5
	How to hold faculty meetings and how to gradually increase focus on instructional leadership.	Protégé	5.0	6.8
		Mentor	5.3	6.5
		Third Party	4.5	6.8
	How to involve the staff in the decision-making process to increase ownership, including budgetary issues.	Protégé	4.5	6.0
		Mentor	4.5	6.0
		Third Party	4.0	6.5
Planning and Preparation	Preparation for the school year.	Protégé	4.3	6.5
		Mentor	4.8	6.5
		Third Party	4.8	6.8
	How to prepare for state testing and evaluation throughout the school year.	Protégé	4.8	5.8
		Mentor	5.0	6.3
		Third Party	4.0	6.5
	How one would like to move the school forward next year.	Protégé	5.5	6.8
		Mentor	4.5	6.3
		Third Party	3.8	6.5
	How to plan for the closing of the school year.	Protégé	4.5	6.3
		Mentor	5.3	6.5
		Third Party	4.5	6.5
Leadership and Management	General leadership of faculty and staff.	Protégé	4.8	6.5
		Mentor	5.5	6.8
		Third Party	4.5	6.8
	How to address site-based school management teams or site councils.	Protégé	4.5	6.0
		Mentor	4.8	6.5
		Third Party	4.5	6.8
	How to manage time and maintain balance.	Protégé	5.5	6.3
		Mentor	5.5	6.5
		Third Party	4.0	6.3

Appendix B
New Assistant Principal Proficiencies 2007-08

New Assistant Principal Proficiencies		Group	Before Mentoring	After Mentoring
Data Use and Best Practices	Establishing and measuring goals as an assistant principal.	Protégé	4.7	6.1
		Mentor	4.6	6.1
		Third Party	4.4	5.6
	How to analyze, review, and discuss data to prepare strategies with the faculty and staff members for increasing student achievement.	Protégé	4.5	5.6
		Mentor	4.1	6.1
		Third Party	4.5	5.7
	How to learn from the best practices used by other schools/administrators to gain insights.	Protégé	4.4	6.1
		Mentor	4.3	6.3
		Third Party	4.5	5.9
Working Relationship with Staff	How to establish priorities and build relationships with the principal, faculty, and staff.	Protégé	5.1	6.1
		Mentor	4.7	6.5
		Third Party	4.7	5.9
	Knowing and understanding the preferred communication methods of the principal, faculty, and staff.	Protégé	4.7	5.9
		Mentor	4.9	6.5
		Third Party	4.2	5.9
	How to establish oneself as an instructional leader in the eyes of the staff.	Protégé	4.6	6.1
		Mentor	4.1	6.3
		Third Party	4.3	5.5
	How to hold and/or assist with faculty/committee meetings and how to gradually increase focus on instructional leadership.	Protégé	4.6	5.9
		Mentor	4.3	5.9
		Third Party	4.3	5.9
Planning and Preparation	How to prepare for state testing and evaluation throughout the school year.	Protégé	4.6	5.6
		Mentor	3.9	6.0
		Third Party	4.2	5.9
	How to plan for the closing of the school year.	Protégé	4.5	5.6
		Mentor	3.3	5.7
		Third Party	4.3	5.6
Leadership and Management	Understanding the role of the assistant principal.	Protégé	4.5	6.0
		Mentor	4.7	6.3
		Third Party	4.5	5.9
	How to balance all the facts, observations, and viewpoints involved in the decision-making process.	Protégé	4.7	5.9
		Mentor	4.7	6.3
		Third Party	4.1	5.5
	How to manage time and maintain balance.	Protégé	3.8	5.3
		Mentor	4.6	6.3
		Third Party	4.0	5.6
	How to build credibility within the discipline process by balancing empathy and fairness.	Protégé	4.7	5.9
		Mentor	4.6	6.4
		Third Party	4.5	6.0
	How and when to access resources for managing mandates and important duties.	Protégé	3.7	5.0
		Mentor	4.2	6.4
		Third Party	3.6	5.3