

Part I

The Architecture of Mentoring

MENTORING SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

Why is it that some principals quickly learn to do their jobs in an effective manner while others stumble? The curriculum in most college and university programs covers school business and finance, law, public relations, school politics, communication, collective bargaining, data collection and analysis, evaluations, community relations, current issues, curriculum and instruction, and broader leadership, so beginning principals have similar training and preparation. The programs prepare students to read, write, and think critically. They are rigorous. They are beneficial. They are a requirement for certification and licensure in most states. They are enjoyable times to reflect and learn with others.

But they are not end-all learning programs for principals. They are preservice programs that equip aspiring principals with just a small portion of the knowledge that is necessary to effectively master the realities of the principalship. Those principals who think their learning stops once they've completed the college or university program will most predictably fail. That has been, and continues to be, the historical outcome for far too many beginning principals. The real learning for the principal begins when he or she is handed the keys to the school. And those who eventually succeed can identify one or more influential people who were very effective in helping them learn the important things about being principal. Those key individuals are mentors.

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Used as a noun, a mentor is a wise and trusted counselor or teacher. But as a verb, as in “to mentor a beginning principal,” it is more about a partnership of learning—both for the mentor and the mentee. Learning is the most important part of an effective mentoring program, and it is ongoing. When learning is not the primary focus, the partnership fails. In programs designed for mentoring teachers, most often a seasoned veteran is paired with a novice. There are many formalized programs that prescribe various objectives to be accomplished in some observable manner. The objectives focus on pedagogy, classroom management, formal and informal rules of the school, and a variety of other lessons necessary for learning the tricks of the trade. When the prescribed learning outcomes are met, the relationship frequently recedes to a level of friendship because the goals of mentoring are achieved.

Principals need similar kinds of support, but much, much more. Becoming an effective principal takes time, even years. It is hard to group all of the on-the-job learning objectives into any prescribed curriculum. Continuous learning and growth require reflection and an interconnected relationship among two or more people with an understanding of adult learner needs. Despite this acknowledged awareness and understanding, there are far too few school districts where formal or even informal mentoring programs for principals exist. Most beginning principals are left to find a mentor in their own way.

Beginning principals face a quandary. Where does one find a mentor? What are the qualities of an effective mentor? Who is a “principal” mentor? What does it mean to be a mentee, or a protégé? Is there a difference? What are the roles and responsibilities? How do certain people make something that is elusive work and come together?

In much of the literature, mentee and protégé are words that have evolved to interchangeably describe the novice learner. Most people envision the mentor as someone who shares knowledge and influences their lives. Most everyone can think of one or more personal examples of such people. In this book, protégé refers to one who was identified, encouraged, and nurtured by an experienced colleague prior to becoming a principal. The protégé received unconditional and faithful acceptance from his or her mentor. The mentor recognized the protégé’s ability and talent and committed himself or herself to helping develop that potential. A mentee is one who arrives at the threshold of the principalship without having been a protégé, yet is just as much in need as he or she begins learning the realities of the principalship. For the mentee, the partnership must be created; for the protégé, there was a more natural evolution over time.

For practical purposes, mentee and protégé are used interchangeably in this book. For any beginning principal, whether they’ve been groomed for the job as a protégé or not, the learning curve is steep. In one hand they

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have the keys to their new school, and in the other they need the hand of an effective mentor who will guide and nurture them toward mastery of the keys to becoming a successful, effective principal.

CREATING THE PARTNERSHIP

It is critical that practicing principals assume responsibility for creating meaningful and successful mentor-mentee partnerships. There is a tremendous need. But are all practicing principals capable or even willing? The answer is no.

Mentors love learning even more than teaching. They prefer to share rather than dominate, give rather than receive. By investing time in the partnership, they often learn as much or more than their mentee. In effective principal mentoring partnerships, wisdom is discovered through a learning relationship that enables both the mentor and the mentee to better understand the needs of the individual and the school. Mentors are less an authority figure, more a facilitator of learning. Rather than mentor driven, with the mentor assuming full responsibility for the mentee's learning, the principal mentoring partnership is based upon shared responsibilities, priorities, and principles of adult learning.

Qualities for Mentors

Practicing principals who become mentors must have a strong desire to learn and be willing to commit time toward that end. They must be capable of deep reflection and open to sharing their inner thoughts and feelings. They must admit their mistakes and teach and model by example. They must be able to identify and avoid the pitfalls of mentoring relationships. They must never think of mentoring as a chore. Those who strive to develop the most successful partnerships will realize a sense of pride and accomplishment that matters more than any amount of money.

Mentors must be capable of reflecting deeply upon their own experiences from a variety of vantage points, reaching deep levels of understanding, and sharing their learning with the mentee in meaningful, practical ways. They must clearly understand and recount their own professional career path and choices. They must be aware of the major events and life experiences that influenced them. Those who are skilled at critically reflecting on their own experiences will be best at modeling critical reflection for their mentee. They will help the mentee see and understand the connections. They must avoid trying to clone their mentee; instead, they must allow the mentee to choose a path that suits his or her needs.

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Mentees' Motivation to Learn

Research has provided a fairly reliable body of knowledge about how adults learn. From review of the literature, one can gather that adults learn best when they are goal oriented and self-directed. They seek out learning experiences when facing life-changing events. New principals' success when facing the steep learning curve during the first critical years of service depends on their ability to meet external expectations, develop interpersonal relationships, turn obstacles or barriers into goals and positive outcomes, and maintain their self-esteem and sense of pleasure in the work they do. Mentors need to be attuned to the factors that impact their mentee's motivation to learn. They also must help their mentee visualize how to apply basic concepts to the job-embedded situations they face. Guiding the mutual reflection on experiences and new learning within a standards-based framework is important work for the mentor. Problems and experiences need to be anchored, analyzed, and understood in ways that encourage, rather than minimize, the mentee's willingness to take risks. And perhaps most important, mentors must have experience working with adult learners. Mentees bring previous knowledge and experience to any situation, and the mentor must be skilled at acknowledging, tapping into, and using prior and relevant knowledge while facilitating the active participation in and personalization of learning new skills and concepts.

What implication does the mentee's motivation to learn have for mentoring partnerships? First, mentees' learning will be enhanced when they play a key role in the identification of the experiences, issues, or problems to be discussed. Their desire to stay on top of the ever-increasing challenges of principalship will motivate them to ask questions, analyze, reflect, and learn while seeking applications for their unique situations. The mentor needs to recognize the mentee's readiness to learn and draw upon knowledge, experience, and best practices while guiding and enriching the self-directed learning of the mentee. And most importantly, the mentee's self-esteem is always on the line. Bitter disagreements, accusations, extensive focus on shortcomings, and mentor vs. mentee power struggles will lead to anguish and isolation for both participants.

A Brief Overview of the Research on Adult Learning

Mentors must understand not only how they best learn but also how their mentees react to, process, and gain new knowledge. Learning how the brain works by storing, retrieving, and acting upon new and prior knowledge is significant to understanding how adults learn. Principals are masters at helping young children formulate their new experiences, but adults learn differently. Mentors must have a comprehensive understanding of what is known about adult learning (Knowles, 1980):

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- Adults learn best when they are involved in diagnosing, planning, implementing, and evaluating their own learning.
- The role of the facilitator is to create and maintain a supportive climate that promotes the conditions necessary for learning to take place.
- Adult learners have a need to be self-directing.
- Readiness for learning increases when there is a specific need to know.
- Life's reservoir of experiences is a primary learning resource; the life experiences of others enrich the learning process.
- Adult learners have an inherent need for immediacy of application.
- Adults respond best to learning when they are internally motivated to learn.

There are numerous books, articles, and Web sites with information about how adults learn:

The Adult Learner: The Definitive Classic in Adult Education and Human Resource Development (5th ed.), by Malcolm S. Knowles (1998), provides a clear review of the major educational theories of adult learning. It is a popular text in many college courses related to the subject.

Merriam and Caffarella's (1998) *Learning in Adulthood: A Comprehensive Guide* (2nd ed.) is an excellent textbook citing the most important contributions to adult learning from the 1990s.

Understanding and Facilitating Adult Learning: A Comprehensive Analysis of Principles and Effective Practice, by Stephen Brookfield (1991), details adult learning motives and processes, self-directedness, andragogy, the role of the facilitator, and learning in informal and formal settings. It is a good tool for any prospective mentor.

Mentors and mentees should read *30 Things We Know for Sure About Adult Learning*, by Ron and Susan Zemke (1984). Even though the article was written 20 years ago, the information is still accurate and relevant to mentoring partnerships.

Stephen Lieb's *Principles of Adult Learning* (1991) provides a concise description of four elements of adult learning that are key to every mentoring partnership. They are motivation, reinforcement, retention, and transference. Mentors, particularly, should review these elements. Mentors' awareness of their mentee's motivational interests and desired selfish benefits will help define and guide the partnership.

The American Association for Adult and Continuing Education publishes two periodicals. Information about *Adult Education Quarterly* and *Adult Learning* can be found by visiting their Web site at www.aaace.org. Visit <http://adulthood.about.com/> for resources with links to adult learning, continuing education, and coaching.

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Finding a Mentor

It was midmorning of my first day as a principal. After eleven years teaching high school band followed by two years in fourth grade in a district where I knew almost everyone, I was now a principal. For the first time in my career, I was the new kid in town. Other than my secretary and custodians, I had yet to meet my staff. I was trying to make order of my office when a visitor appeared at my door. Little did I know that this visitor would become a mentor and lifelong friend.

Jonn Simmons had learned of my assignment and had come to welcome me to the district. He had taught at my school, lived down the street, and served as an elementary principal at another school in the district. I sensed immediately that I would like him, and I knew that his knowledge of my school, my staff, the community, district politics, and the organizational priorities of the principalship would be invaluable. His smile, sense of humor, and genuine concern for my welfare immediately set me at ease.

I'm sure Jonn never dreamed that his assistance with my learning would someday serve as a foundation for mentoring other principals. He was mentoring long before it was in vogue to do so. He became my friend, coach, teacher, guide, confidant, sounding board, encourager, and motivator. Little did I realize how he would influence my success during that first critical year as a leader.

Before he returned to his school, he made three suggestions. "I encourage you to join our state and national principals' associations—OAESA and NAESP. Make sure you join both. You'll soon appreciate the support you'll receive. Sign up now for the fall conference, and if you like, you can go with me. Now here is my phone number. Write it down. I'm just a phone call away anytime you have a question. Don't you ever hesitate to call. If you don't, I can't know how to help you." And with those memorable and insightful suggestions, he left.

I made many calls to Jonn that year. He helped me through many dilemmas similar to those of my protégés that constitute the case study of this book. His advice and support were always appropriate. His friendship has become priceless. And his introduction to the opportunities within the principals' associations started me on a professional journey that culminated with the presidency of NAESP. Jonn's mentoring, and that of many others, has shaped and enriched my personal and professional life.

Where does a beginning principal find a mentor? Most conveniently, for proximity, a mentor works within the same school district. But district sizes vary. Some mentors, as well as mentees, are more comfortable with individuals they do not work directly with as colleagues. Likewise, some prefer to mentor colleagues. Age, race, and gender may be factors that will impact some partnerships but not others. Some districts assign mentors

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and mentees. Many individuals seek out their own. State and national professional associations can assist by identifying prospective mentors and mentees and can facilitate connections. College, university, and professional development centers can also be resources. There is no prescribed or recommended method for mentor-mentee pairing. Both must be willing, committed, flexible, and able to accept one another as they are.

The initial moments of introduction are critical in the development of a principal mentoring partnership. First impressions are powerful. The partners quickly size each other up for compatibility, common interests, and goals. It takes time to develop trust and reduce levels of fear. The mentor must avoid coming on too strong and give the prospective mentee the opportunity to ask questions and become comfortable in the setting. Future meetings should be arranged. At all times, the mentor and mentee should understand that they are free to establish partnerships with others without negative consequences. When the introductory session outcomes are less than desired and expected, the mentor should reschedule and try again to establish a connection within a short period of time.

What are the qualities of an effective mentor? Effective mentors are individuals who understand balance and mutual interests. They respect the needs of their mentee. They are open and clearly communicate expectations. They are generous with their time. They accept their differences with the mentee and maintain focus on the objectives and outcomes of the partnership. They are trustworthy and maintain confidences. They provide straightforward feedback and, when necessary, can be brutally frank. But they counter those moments with compassion and understanding in pursuit of the highest levels of communication. Mentors are filled with passion for the principalship. They have pride in their work. The pride they develop from the mentoring partnership will propel their motivation and create the vitality in the relationship that will enrich the experience of the mentee. Effective mentors encourage risk taking. They are courageous and bold. They are ambitious. They openly share their extensive professional network with their mentee. They exemplify the best of administrative abilities, positive attitude, and aspirations. They love to learn and love their learners.

Shared Responsibility

What are the roles and responsibilities of the mentor and the mentee? Are there rules? No—roles and responsibilities, yes.

Mentors must set about quickly to create a sense of interdependence in the partnership, avoiding the mentee's sole dependence on the mentor. Nothing will limit the potential for mutual learning more. Both must

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assume responsibility for identifying learning objectives, expected outcomes, experiences to share, times to reflect, processes for sharing information, ways to criticize, plans for sharing successes, and the creation of a climate conducive to trust, respect, and acceptance.

Mentors must initiate regular contact with the mentee. But contacts should not always be mentor initiated. Mentees must never hesitate to call, e-mail, or communicate with their mentor when they have a question or concern. Both must be respectful of time and personal commitments. When meetings are scheduled, punctuality must be respected. Obligations and respect for each other's needs must become high priority items. Fear, especially from any kind of personal or professional retribution or hurt feelings, must be eliminated from the relationship. A balanced relationship with a focus on learning must always be evident to everyone.

How do certain people make a mentoring partnership with so many elusive components work and come together? They focus on the development of their interpersonal relationship first. They do so through their commitment to each other and by maintaining focus on their love for learning. They respect their similarities as well as their differences. They acknowledge different learning styles. They are intuitive learners capable of making their own rules and creating learning processes that work best for them. Through trial and error, they develop a structure for their mentoring partnership that allows appropriate pacing, contains adequate challenges, and achieves mutual outcomes. They share self-interests and a common vision. They love to learn as a team.

THE FOUR PHASES OF PRINCIPAL MENTORING

Lois Zachary, in her book *The Mentor's Guide*, describes four phases of any mentoring relationship, whether formal or informal:

Preparing

Negotiating

Enabling

Closure

These stages resonate through the mentoring process experienced by the authors of this book. What follows is an analysis of each phase in the central case study of this book, with a description of what happened in the partnership.

Preparing

Because both Dustin and Jeromey were teachers at West School and Paul was their principal, it was logical that they would ask for Paul to be their on-site facilitator while they completed administrative internships in cooperation with Ashland University professors. Team planning and preparation were necessary to meet the requirements of the internship. Some activities and assignments were completed individually, while others were shared experiences between Dustin and Jeromey guided by Paul. The primary shared activity was the development of a Blue Ribbon Schools application for their school. This required hours of data collection, reflection, and analysis of school programs, which was ultimately beneficial to all three principalships.

Once Dustin and Jeromey completed the requirements of the administrative internship, the team moved from academia to the real world of preparing for and acquiring the first principalship for each protégé. Both asked Paul if he would continue to teach and guide them in preparation for their career advancement.

Much of the preparatory phase involved talking and considering various questions, including

- What is the real motivation for wanting to become a principal?
- What are the advantages of and/or obstacles to seeking a principalship at an early age?
- What readiness skills need continued support, and what new objectives need to be learned while an aspiring principal?
- What advantages are there to both mentor and mentee in developing a partnership?
- What does each individual bring to the partnership and receive in the end?
- Are the participants compatible for developing an ongoing learning relationship?
- What time commitments are necessary and expected to create an effective partnership?
- What are the roles and expectations of the participants?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of working as a threesome?

The preparatory phase occurred during the 2000–2001 school year while Dustin and Jeromey taught third grade after obtaining their master's degrees and certification. If we could relive history, we know now that while the questions above are important, it is better to devote

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adequate time to focusing on what is necessary for a solid partnership and developing the learning outcomes.

Negotiating

Negotiating the formation of a mentoring partnership is not an easy phase. It can be quite crucial to the partnership's success. The negotiating phase requires talk time to plan the learning goals, content, and desired outcomes of the partnership. It is also the time when a number of sensitive issues must be addressed. It is the critical time when many of the details of the relationship are discussed and worked out.

Much of the negotiating phase centers on discussion of the following topics:

- Confidentiality
- Trust
- Reliability
- Boundaries of the partnership
- Responsibilities
- Time commitments and expectations
- Accountability
- Identification and resolution of pet peeves
- Ability to deliver and accept criticism
- Level of commitment of participants
- Desire
- Maturity
- Character and ethics
- Establishment of learning objectives and outcomes

During the negotiating phase, there was common agreement and comfort with most of the details. However, many of the sensitive issues required individual private talk time and in-depth conversations. Personal hopes, aspirations, and goals were shared between protégé and mentor. We also discussed our frustrations. There was a series of informal tests that helped solidify our interpersonal relationship and respect for each other. And at all times the option remained to seek guidance and support elsewhere if the partnership appeared to be uncomfortable, cumbersome, or less than desirable for any participant.

During the negotiating phase, both the mentor and the mentee must talk about and become comfortable with process skills crucial for success in close personal relationships:

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- Building and sustaining the personal relationship
- Networking with others
- Coaching
- Communication (listening, checking for understanding, openness, articulation)
- Encouragement
- Facilitation of learning (planning, designing, implementing, and evaluating)
- Goal setting
- Guiding (role modeling and reflection)
- Conflict management
- Problem solving
- Providing and receiving feedback
- Reflecting (consideration of learning for future action)

Again, it is crucially important to spend time focused on these process skills and what they mean for both mentor and protégés. Then mentors and mentees may revisit negotiation of these skills while in the enabling phase of the partnership.

Figure 1.1 contains examples of ways to develop the requisite mentoring skills.

Enabling

During the enabling phase, the implementation of mentoring activities occurs. The enabling phase requires more time to evolve naturally than any other.

Proximity was an important factor affecting the partnership of the authors. When Dustin became the first to acquire a principalship, despite being less than 30 minutes away he sensed that he was removed, isolated, and alone. Because of Jeromey's continued immediate access to a mentor at West School, his personal relationship continued to evolve, grow, and strengthen while Dustin's was strained by perceived distance. Dustin's enabling issues and activities quickly became different from considerations for Jeromey. It is a credit to both that potential competitive jealousies and personal insecurities did not sabotage the three-way partnership and interpersonal relationships. There were issues, lessons, and discussions that were tailored to fit the specific needs of each, while at other times learning was applicable to both.

Even though proximity has been an advantage for our partnership, each protégé responds differently. Dustin has been more hesitant

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	Skill	Examples
1.	Building and sustaining the personal relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. talk time focused on feelings b. talk about mentoring and personal experiences c. get to know each other d. periodically review and discuss needs e. social time together
2.	Networking with others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. join professional associations b. attend state and national conference c. encourage involvement and leadership roles in local, state, and national professional associations d. model the development of contact networks e. discussion
3.	Coaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. fill knowledge gaps in a variety of "how to" situations b. observe performance on-site and identify learning needs c. "heads up" communiqués to alert protégés about deadlines and responsibilities d. identify ways to work smarter rather than harder
4	Communicating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. schedule mentoring breakfasts b. phone conversations c. e-mails d. review staff bulletins e. observe speaking opportunities
5.	Encouraging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. write notes, compliments, calls, praise, contacts, competition, listening
6.	Facilitating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. share files, read books, share work samples, co-present at conferences
7.	Goal Setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. review personal goals and aspirations b. develop and critique professional goals and progress updates for contractual evaluation c. encourage building initiatives and professional development d. encourage advanced degree work
8.	Guiding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. discuss, review options but do not tell protégé a specific way to do something b. listen, ask questions for clarity
9.	Conflict management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. discuss conflict reaction characteristics and comfort levels b. model resolution skills c. listen, share, and guide as situations develop in schools with students, parents, and staff
10.	Problem solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. brainstorm, evaluate, model, reflect
11.	Providing and receiving feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. evaluate oral and written communication b. review planning and implementation of programs
12.	Reflecting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. personal talk time; debrief; share stories; collect data; document events, activities, and incidents b. adult learning

Figure 1.1 The Roles, Activities, and Skills of Mentoring

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to initiate a contact when dealing with a problem. As a result, he has experienced stressful days and felt more isolated. He has learned that the protégé has as much responsibility to identify learning needs and initiate the phone call as the mentor.

In August 2003, the mentor and mentees became colleagues in the same district. There is frequent contact and communication between the district's nine elementary principals. More than ever, with cell phones the mentor is just a phone call away. The good mentor initiates contacts when he feels too much time has transpired without checking in.

During the enabling phase, Dustin and Jeromey have grown as our collaborative work has become intertwined, weaving together issues related to school management, instructional leadership, visioning, mentoring, and leading change within our community. We have become increasingly competitive and ambitious. We push and challenge each other and enjoy learning. We recognize that our interpersonal relationships are ever changing. We have made adjustments as the tugs and tears have developed. We share high standards and expectations.

The enabling phase continues as both protégés continue learning how to ask for assistance and receive, accept, and apply feedback, not only from their mentor but from a variety of other sources. We continue to share work and responsibilities between our neighboring and interconnected schools. Inevitably, things happen that test the viability of our mentoring partnership. These challenges would occur with or without our proximity. Because we have instinctively developed close personal relationships and trust each other, our partnership has persevered through

- District grapevine rumors and misinformation,
- Jealousy from colleagues,
- Personal attacks and affronts toward one or more of us,
- Mistakes and ineffective performance,
- Inaccurate assumptions of learned skill levels,
- Limitations of time and resources,
- Conflict between personal and professional time,
- Breakdowns in communication.

We have learned that we must periodically monitor the quality of our partnership and interaction. We reflect as a group or one-on-one. We have learned to acknowledge that there are certain courtesies that sustain our relationship, such as prompt return of phone calls, immediate attention to requests for information and assistance, recognition of successes, sharing, and initiation of contacts. We tweak when necessary and focus on how best to grow and focus on learning. We challenge each other to avoid apathy or cynicism. We monitor our interactions for stress and burnout. We help each

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other carry our burdens. Most of all, we work hard, but we also set aside time for social activities and the enjoyment of each other's company.

Closure

We recognize that closure of our mentoring partnership likely poses the greatest challenges. Experiences that each have brought to the partnership show that mentoring is an evolving process, and hopefully each of us will recognize the appropriate time for closure before we experience a bittersweet ending. Although we now assume that our personal bonds will remain rooted and strong for life, deep down we know that time and circumstances will likely cause things to be different than we anticipate. Closure has many emotional considerations, and we must work to avoid anxiety, fear, resentment, disappointment, or grief. Instead, we must focus on joy and accomplishment. We must always keep a focus on learning and growing. We will celebrate our successes and continue to share our stories. This book will become a testament to a very special shared moment in time, one filled with very satisfying and meaningful professional and personal experiences for each of us.

SHARING A VISION OF LEADERSHIP

For the principal mentor, one of the most challenging concepts is that of equipping and refining the mentee's vision of leadership. Being able to see the big picture, to understand the issues, and to influence people in ways that will enable them to change behaviors is an awesome undertaking. Some can envision what they would like their schools to become, but they cannot formulate a plan of action that will take them there. The importance of vision is often overlooked. Principals without vision are merely gatekeepers.

The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) publication *Leading Learning Communities: Standards for What Principals Should Know and Be Able to Do* defines standards for instructional leadership and quality in schools. A review of the indicators of quality is an excellent source of material for mentors as they engage their mentees in discussions of visioning. From the vignettes cited, mentees can take the bits and pieces that would work in their unique situation and adapt them to the vision of their school. To envision and create a quality school, most learners benefit from having multiple insights into what a quality school looks like. There is no reason to reinvent the wheel.

However, today's principals are challenged to know more than how to manage a school or be an instructional leader. They must have a vision and become masterful at simply *leading!*

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John Maxwell's *Leadership 101* is a recommended read for every principal. His description of the stages and levels of leadership and their related myths should be helpful to every principal as he or she wrestles with visioning these elusive concepts. Maxwell identifies the five levels as:

1. Position
2. Permission
3. Production
4. People development
5. Personhood

Position Stage

When aspiring principals win a job, they enter the “position stage” of leadership. They have a title, but security in the position is based on talent. The unfortunate assume they have “made it” and begin basking in the power of the position, assuming that subordinates will willingly comply with all their decisions and ideas. It's not that simple, and school leadership doesn't work that way. Principals, like all leaders, must aspire to move to the higher levels. But one can't rush. Leaders can't skip a level. Principals can't move to the second level, permission, until they know their job description thoroughly, demonstrate awareness of the history of the organization, become a team player by relating the history of the organization to the people of the organization, accept responsibility, perform with consistent excellence, do more than expected, and offer creative ideas for change and improvement. People will not follow “positional” principals. School leaders must work to move higher.

Permission Stage

At the “permission level,” people follow the principal because they want to. Principals can begin to lead toward a higher level because they have developed relationships with their staff. They devote time, energy, and focus on the followers' needs and desires.

To further advance to the third level, production, leaders in the permission stage demonstrate a genuine love for people, love people more than procedures, help those who work with them become more successful, see through other people's eyes, approach things from a position of “win-win” or choose not to do them, include others in the journey, and deal wisely with difficult people. People enjoy getting together just to get together.

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Production Stage

The third level is where school staff begin to realize results from their work together. People follow the principal because of what he or she has done for the school.

People still like to get together, but they like to get together to accomplish a purpose—they are “results oriented.” Most principals work at this level for long periods of time. They understand the importance of influence and the dues they must pay to earn it. To move to the fourth level, people development, they demonstrate mastery of initiating and accepting responsibility for growth and a development of a statement of purpose. They view their job description as an integral part of the statement of purpose. They develop accountability for results, know what to do to produce high returns, communicate the strategy and vision of the organization, and become a change agent. They understand timing and when to pick their battles. They become skilled at making the difficult decisions that will make a difference.

People Development Stage

At the people development stage, mentoring partnerships become a natural part of the principal’s interests and responsibilities. Loyalty to the leader is highest when followers have personally grown through the mentorship of the leader. Principal mentors have the experience and influence to effectively guide their protégés, share their vast professional network, and maintain a way to keep in touch with everyone.

Principals who reach the people development stage of leadership realize that people are their most valuable asset. They place a priority on developing people and modeling for others. They pour their leadership efforts into the top 20% of their people—the “superstars”—exposing them to continual growth opportunities. They attract others who have ambition and share high expectations. Principals who are people developers, quite often found serving as mentors, surround themselves with an inner core of professionals that complements their leadership.

Personhood Stage

Most leaders never make it to “personhood.” It is achievable, but it just takes longer than most people serve as a principal. The higher one moves through the stages, the longer it takes, and the higher one goes, the higher the level of commitment required. The higher one goes, the easier it is to lead! And leadership crumbles when a lower level is neglected.

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Principals who attain the personhood level of leadership have followers that are loyal and sacrificial. They spend much of their time mentoring and molding leaders. They become consultants and quietly share what they've learned, amazed by their career journey. They have schools named in their honor.

How does any of this help an aspirant or a beginner gain a vision of the principalship? Maxwell's work outlines a map. Many must read and reflect to formulate their vision. Others need concrete examples and models. Still others will gain the most working closely one-on-one with a mentor. Whatever their learning style, beginning principals must understand that their chances for success can be profoundly influenced by identifying and working with a mentor, forming a close partnership, understanding how mentoring naturally evolves, tending diligently to their role as a mentee, understanding the progression of leadership, and focusing always on learning and growing toward a vision of leadership.

The books referenced above are recommended for both mentors and mentees. Reading each, in addition to this book, will help all mentoring participants establish a framework for creating a solid partnership, smoothly map the course of mentoring activities, understand the elements and levels of leadership, and create a vision of an effective school.

To develop positive successful people, look for the gold, not the dirt!

—John Maxwell, in *Developing
the Leaders Around You*