

**This document contains a selection of professional development work samples from work done by Laura Dukess and Carmen Ramirez.**

Sample 1: Nine separate agendas for the South Dakota Leadership Program Redesign

**Objectives:**

- Understand the background that informed the recommendations made to the Board of Regents for South Dakota's new Principal Preparation Program
- Understand the recommendations made to the Board of Regents for South Dakota's new Principal Preparation program
- Understand how competency-based education impacts the development of South Dakota's new Principal Preparation program
- Select leadership standards that will be used to create competencies to undergird South Dakota's new Principal Preparation program

**Welcome, Introductions, and Getting Started**

- Review the facilitator roles
- Introduction of participants
  - Name and role
  - How your role positions you to engage in the work
  - Your hopes for the outcomes from this initiative
  - Clarifying questions

**Review of Project Objectives and the Work Ahead**

**Background to the Recommendations: Stakeholder Feedback**

**Background to the Recommendations: Research**

**Review of the Recommendations**

**Break**

**Beginning with Competencies:** What is Competency-Based Learning and How does it Impact the Development of South Dakota's new Principal Preparation Program

**Selection of Competencies to Guide South Dakota's new Principal Preparation Program**

**Closing**

- Plan for tomorrow
- One thing that has resonated with you or expanded your learning
- Reactions, Questions, Concerns

Objectives:

- Understand the need for learning frameworks and select/create learning frameworks to guide the development of learning outcomes
- Design learning outcomes that will demonstrate mastery of the competencies that will undergird South Dakota's new Principal Preparation Program
- Group the learning outcomes into themes that can be the basis for semester-long learning opportunities within South Dakota's new Principal Preparation program

Welcome and Setting the Stage for Today's Work

- Recap of Day 1 and Expectations for Day 2
- Welcome – Secretary of Education, Dr. Melody Schopp

Designating a Framework of Learning

- Review purpose for a framework of learning
- Selecting/Creating a framework of learning for the program

Designing the Learning Outcomes for South Dakota's New Principal Preparation Program

Lunch – Deans, association members and guests are welcome to stay after lunch, if we haven't completed the creation of learning outcomes

Designing the Learning Outcomes, continued, if necessary

Grouping Learning Outcomes

Closing

- Plan for tomorrow
- Recap, Reactions, Questions, Concerns



## Education Administration Program Development Day 3 – June 27, 2014

### Objectives:

- Group the learning outcomes into themes that can be the basis for semester-long learning opportunities within South Dakota's new Principal Preparation Program
- Develop familiarity with two tools for developing a principal preparation program curriculum
- Begin to develop a curriculum for South Dakota's new Principal Preparation program

### Welcome and Setting the Stage for Today's Work

- Recap of Day 2 and Expectations for Day 3

### Complete Grouping of Learning Outcomes, if necessary

### Review Tools for Developing a Principal Preparation Program

- UCEA's *Developing a Purposeful and Coherent Leadership Preparation Curriculum*
- EDC's *Quality Measures Principal Preparation Program Self-Assessment Toolkit*

### Begin the Process of Curriculum Design

- Share Progress and Concerns

### Closing

- Reflection on Progress and Process  
What's working well? What concerns do you have? How can we better support you?
- Recap, Reactions, Questions, Concerns



## Education Administration Program Development Days 4-6 – July 1-3, 2014

### Objective:

- Develop a curriculum for South Dakota's new Education Administration program

### Welcome and Setting the Stage for Today's Work

- Recap of Day 3 and Expectations for Days 4/5/6

### Continue Developing the Curriculum for South Dakota's New Education Administration Program

- Share Progress and Concerns

### Closing

- Reflection on Progress and Process  
What's working well? What concerns do you have? How can we better support you?
- One thing that resonated with you or expanded your learning
- Recap, Reactions, Questions, Concerns

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### July 3, Day 6 Only – Plans for Two Intervening Weeks

- Continuation of work over next two weeks
- Assignments



## Education Administration Program Development Day 7 – July 22, 2014

### Objectives:

- Review the Curriculum for South Dakota's New Principal Preparation Program as a Whole, and Through the Use of Research-Based Tools
- Begin to Address Remaining Program Components Included In Recommendations To Board Of Regents
  - Vision or theory of action for the program
  - Recruitment and selection for the program
  - Program completion requirements
  - Continuous improvement model

### Welcome and Setting the Stage for Today's Work

### Recap After Two Weeks Away from the Work

- Presentation of Work that was Completed by Group Members
- Looking at the Work as a Whole – What Did We Get Right? What Did We Get Wrong?
- What is Still to be Done?
- Feedback from Campus Colleagues

### Making Sure We Got it Right – and Addressing the Elements Included in the Recommendations

- Reviewing the Curriculum Using the UCEA and EDC Tools
- Developing a Vision or Theory of Action for the Program
- Recruitment and Selection of Candidates
- Program Completion Requirements
- Continuous Improvement Cycle

### Closing

- Reflection on Progress and Process  
Recap, Reactions, Questions, Concerns



## Education Administration Program Development Day 8 – July 23, 2014

### Objectives:

- Continue Addressing Program Components Included In Recommendations To Board Of Regents
  - Vision or theory of action for the program
  - Recruitment and selection for the program
  - Program completion requirements
  - Continuous improvement model
- Plan Presentation of Program Curriculum
- Present Program Curriculum to Deans and Invited Superintendents
- Obtain Feedback on Program Curriculum from Deans and Invited Superintendents

### Welcome and Setting the Stage for Today's Work

#### Continuation: Making Sure We Got it Right – and Addressing the Elements Included in the Recommendations

- Developing a Vision or Theory of Action for the Program
- Recruitment and Selection of Candidates
- Program Completion Requirements
- Continuous Improvement Cycle

### Planning Presentation of the Program for the Deans and Invited Superintendents

### Lunch

### Welcome and Introductions – EdAd Work Group, Deans, Invited Superintendents

### Presentation of the Program and Obtain Feedback from Deans and Invited Guests

### EdAd Work Group Response to the Feedback

### Closing

- Reflection on Progress and Process
  - Recap, Reactions, Questions, Concerns



## Education Administration Program Development Day 9 – July 24, 2014

### Objectives:

- Develop Next Steps and Action Plan to be Ready for December Program Proposal Submission to Board of Regents

### Welcome and Reflection on Feedback from Deans and Invited Superintendents

### Development of Next Steps and Action Plan – including, but not limited to:

- Continued Curriculum Development
- Designing Program Completion Requirements
- Designing Recruitment and Selection Process and Criteria
- Designing Continuous Improvement Model/Components
- Designing Organizational and Governance Structures and Costs for Shared Program
- Responding to University and Board of Regents Requirements
- Plans for Further Group Work

### Closing

- Reflection on Progress and Process  
Recap, Reactions, Questions, Concerns

### Lunch

Thank You and Goodbye!



## ***OnPoint Leadership Work Sample:***

A Principal Mentor Benchmark Analysis Report (authored by GLISl with OnPoint Leadership)

# Best in Class:

## A Benchmark Analysis of the GCPS Leader Mentor Program

Prepared by GLISI  
with OnPoint Leadership

October 2015



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report summarizes findings from a study conducted to benchmark the Gwinnett County Public Schools Leader Mentor Program against best practices in education leadership mentor programs as well as selected best-in-class private sector leader mentoring programs. The study considered expert knowledge about educational leader mentor programs, a review of literature, as well as close review of program materials and interviews from GCPS, Coca Cola and Southwest Airlines. The comparison demonstrates that, given its current investment in the GCPS mentor program, the district's implementation of the program compares favorably with world-class private sector and research-based mentoring practices.

The report concludes with an overall assessment of the return on investment GCPS enjoys from its Leader Mentor Program, as well as recommendations for how GCPS might further strengthen its already high quality mentor program for novice school leaders.








### THE GWINNETT COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS LEADER MENTOR PROGRAM COMPARES FAVORABLY TO WORLD-CLASS PRIVATE SECTOR MENTORING PROGRAMS AND RESEARCH-BASED MENTORING PRACTICES.

**The GCPS Leader Mentor Program.** The GCPS Leader Mentor Program provides individualized personal and professional support to all of the district's first and second year principals and assistant principals. The mentors, all of whom are retired successful GCPS principals, generally provide confidential and non-evaluative support to the novice leaders through coaching and mentoring practices. Once selected and matched with their novice leaders, the mentors are supported with significant professional development to ensure that they are up to date with the context of the principalship in the district and that they understand and can practice the behaviors and skills of effective mentors. Being a Leader Mentor is considered an honor and, in addition to receiving a competitive salary, Leader Mentors are both well-respected and supported by the district. In addition, the district supports the program and its improvement by collecting information about the mentor relationships, soliciting feedback from the principals, and obtaining a third party evaluation of the mentor program. The program is supported by diverse funding schemes and, for many years, has been recognized as a quality support for the district's leaders.

**Summary of Findings.** A review of literature and best practice yielded three categories of criteria by which to compare the GCPS Leader Mentor Program to other programs: 1) Structural Components of the Program; 2) Mentor and Mentee Experience in the Program; and 3) Innovative Practice. The GCPS Leader Mentor Program scored higher or the same as benchmark programs on nine separate criteria and lower than benchmark programs on only six criteria. In a cumulative total, the GCPS Leader Mentor Program out-performed the benchmark private sector programs, generally or fully meeting standards in twelve areas, compared to the best of the private sector programs, which generally or fully meets standards in ten areas. This comparison is illustrated in the table on the following pages.

## Comparison of GCPS Leader Mentor Program to World-Class Programs and Research

Standards of Leader Mentor Program Practice	GCPS Leader Mentor Program
<b>Research-Based Best Practice Category 1: Structural Components of Mentor Program</b>	
<i>There is a formal structure for the mentoring program that provides organizational support, as well as documents, processes, definitions and shared language as a means of ensuring shared expectations concerning roles and responsibilities of both the mentor and the mentee.</i>	
<i>There is a framework or philosophical grounding for the mentoring support program and its objectives. Education mentor programs are grounded in relevant/local standards, though there may be a more limited selection among the standards or focus areas for the beginning principal.</i>	
<i>There are incentives to ensure commitment of the mentor. Mentors in education programs generally receive monetary incentives, along with professional recognition.</i>	
<i>There is a rigorous recruitment and selection process for mentors to ensure that they are credible and well-qualified. In education mentor programs, the application and selection process ensures qualification with respect to knowledge, skills, practices and characteristics. <b>**Sustainability Requirement</b></i>	
<i>Mentors are deliberately and carefully matched with mentees – and there is flexibility to change-- in order to ensure that mentees are well-supported by appropriate mentors and in recognition of the fact that mentoring only works if the relationship between the mentor and mentee is comfortable. <b>**Sustainability Requirement</b></i>	
<i>There is a substantial and defined time for mentoring – a minimum of one year, preferably two years.</i>	
<i>There are specific goals - with benchmarks - for the mentor's work with the mentee. The goals are jointly set by the mentor and mentee working together to create a learning plan. In education mentor programs, developmental goals are often built around elements of the principal evaluation.</i>	
<i>There is a comprehensive program evaluation, reflective of mentor program effectiveness and principal development. <b>**Sustainability Requirement</b></i>	
<b>Research-Based Best Practice Category 2: Mentor and Mentee Experience</b>	
<i>There is a non-evaluative relationship. The mentor is not evaluating the mentee, nor is the mentor reporting to the mentee's supervisor for input into evaluation or contract decisions.</i>	
<i>There is a confidential relationship in order to ensure that the mentee is comfortable sharing challenges, taking risks, etc. In education mentor programs, the relationship is confidential unless and until significant ethical or legal concerns arise.</i>	
<i>The mentoring practice is feedback-focused and supportive of reflection.</i>	
<i>There is comprehensive training for mentors – in both the skills and practices needed for coaching and mentoring and in the programs and policies that affect the principals and their schools. <b>**Sustainability Requirement</b></i>	

Standards of Leader Mentor Program Practice	GCPS Leader Mentor Program
<i>There is training for new leaders in order to prepare them for engaging with the mentors.</i>	
<i>The mentor is available for on-site meetings that include observation of the new leader in her leadership role with responsive feedback, as well as over the telephone and through email.</i>	
<i>The mentee is given an opportunity to observe, visit or shadow other principals with the mentor, or with the mentor's support.</i>	
<b>Innovative Practice</b>	
<i>Mentors are selected based on particular needs, regardless of seniority or experience levels (i.e., reverse mentoring and peer mentoring).</i>	
<i>Mentoring is used in areas of specific, measurable business strategies. In education mentor programs, mentoring may be specifically aligned with measurable elements of the principal's evaluation.</i>	

**Key:** =Fully meets standard =Generally meets standard =Partially meets standard =Does not meet standard

**Recommendations.** Analysis was conducted to compare the GCPS Leader Mentor Program against best practices emerging from well-regarded education leader mentor programs as well as innovative programs from the private sector. Based on that analysis, recommendations for improving the GCPS Leader Mentor Program are organized into three categories: (1) clear expectations regarding the roles, practices, values, goals and behaviors that are to be supported by the mentor program; (2) the standards and processes used for selection and matching of the mentors; and (3) the usefulness of the data collected within the program.

***Recommendation 1: Clarify expectations regarding mentor roles and responsibilities.*** Program documents and expectations regarding the roles and responsibilities of the mentors should be clarified in order to ensure that mentors and their novice principals share an understanding of the nature of the relationship, the roles and responsibilities of each party, and the specific goals for their work together. Clarifying the practices and expectations regarding mentor behaviors can support the district in transmitting its very well-defined values to new leaders.

***Recommendation 2: Increase rigor in mentor recruitment.*** GCPS should document and implement more formal recruitment practices to identify mentors rather than rely on individual knowledge of a small number of staff who select mentors based on informal or personally accumulated knowledge. More formal recruitment processes will insulate the program from individuals who are strong principals but may not be effective mentors; more formal recruitment will likely create a more diverse pool of mentors than might otherwise have been considered, with skills, styles, interests and expertise relevant to

*the needs of the novice leaders. To build on a more open recruitment process, GCPS should create a transparent performance-based mentor selection process to ensure that it obtains mentors with needed skills as well as the practices, behaviors and skills necessary for effective mentors. A process for matching new leaders with mentors should consider objective factors like school level experience, student body similarities and geographic proximity, as well as more subjective factors that can support an improved match, like preferences for gender or a particular relationship style. In addition, the district should consider giving new leaders a role in the selection of their mentors and formally establish flexibility so that if a mentor relationship is not successful, a new mentor can be assigned.*

***Recommendation 3: Streamline data collection for more depth, less breadth.*** *GCPS should consider making changes to the data it collects regarding the Leader Mentor Program. While current system yields copious amounts of data, and provides insights into both the process and content of mentoring interactions, it is not adequately detailed to offer insights about how successfully mentors are helping novice leaders to move toward achievement of their goals. Other data that could be collected are goal-setting protocols and reflection documents that capture observations of novice leader progress toward those goals might provide more meaningful information to support the district's continuous improvement model. Such data – and the goal-setting protocols that would need to be implemented to structure the mentor-mentee relationship - would also give the district more compelling data to justify investment in the program overall. That is, it would permit the district to say, "X% of leaders successfully achieved their growth goals through support of mentors." It would also provide an additional feedback loop to the QPLA by highlighting any common themes in the goals that novice leaders set in their early years of professional practice, and their success – or struggles – in achieving those goals. Based on those data, new content or revisions could be made to the QPLA to help future novice leaders be more successful.*

## INTRODUCTION

Gwinnett County Public Schools is a widely-recognized district of excellence – both for its successful education of students and narrowing of achievement gaps and for its systemic support of leadership development. Its success, and its continuing efforts, have been celebrated by twice winning the Broad Prize for Urban Education and supported by selection by the Wallace Foundation to participate in the Principal Pipeline Initiative. As part of its system of continuous improvement, and its Wallace Foundation-supported effort to refine and maximize the effectiveness of the support provided to school leaders, Gwinnett County Public Schools (“GCPS”) has requested that GLISI benchmark its Leader Mentor program against best and innovative practices drawn from industry leaders in education and in the private sector. Based on that review, as well as deep knowledge of the research and extensive experience developing and supporting mentoring programs, this report raises questions and provides recommendations for further strengthening the GCPS mentoring program for novice principals. While GCPS also requested that we analyze the cost effectiveness of the Leader Mentor Program, because there is not yet an accepted method for making this analysis, this paper provides a purely qualitative analysis that describes effectiveness based on fidelity to best practice.

The paper begins with a broad-ranging discussion of leader mentor programs, focusing on using best practices drawn from research and extensive experience to build a shared understanding of the structures, practices, purposes and benefits of effective mentoring for novice leaders. Next we provide a detailed description of the GCPS Leader Mentor Program, paying particular attention to its reach, structure, organization, and practices. We are then able to benchmark the GCPS Leader Mentor Program, as well as the corporate programs informing this study, against the “best” and “innovative” practices drawn from review of the research. The comparison, or benchmark, is clearly presented in the form of a table so that each of the programs reviewed can be understood within the context of the best and innovative practices. This review raises questions about some of the structures and practices of the GCPS program and concludes with recommendations for further strengthening the program.

## MENTORING FOR NEW LEADERS: REVIEW OF RESEARCH AND BEST PRACTICE

From the first day on the job, every principal is expected to lead a community of adults and children, improve teaching and learning, hold teachers and students accountable, and manage a complex organization. As described by Superintendent J. Alvin Wilbanks, “[t]he demands of the job are great and require exceptional expertise. With enrollments of 1,000 to 3,000 students, staffs as large as 300 people, sizable local budgets, and key performance goals that must be achieved, a principal in Gwinnett is essentially the CEO of a good-sized company.”<sup>i</sup> While focused attention in recent years has led to more effective preparation programs for school leaders, even those with these more rigorous and clinically-rich preparation experiences are often overwhelmed with the breadth and seriousness of the challenges faced on a daily basis. Taking a page from industry and from teacher support – both of which have long provided mentors to new practitioners in order to socialize them to their new business or school environments and to provide trusted and expert support as they begin to practice and hone their new crafts – many school districts and states have been implementing mentoring programs for their new and novice school leaders. Gwinnett County is among those districts – not only supporting improved preparation and rigorous selection of leaders, but also providing ongoing support for new leaders through a wide variety of initiatives, including providing an individual mentor for two years through the Leader Mentor Program.



### *What Is Mentoring?*

Definitions of mentoring differ among researchers, writers, and program developers. They range from those that are fairly generic and speak only to the most basic elements of the relationship,<sup>ii</sup> to those that are “unambiguously focused” on fostering school leaders with a particular outlook and set of skills necessary for school improvement.<sup>iii</sup> In this paper we take a middle ground, adopting a more nuanced definition that speaks to particular practices and objectives typically found in mentoring for novice school leaders, but not reflective of a defined outlook or skill set. We define mentoring as the provision of individual support to a novice leader by an experienced leader who uses questioning, analysis and feedback to develop the novice school leader’s socialization to the role and expectations of leadership, the practice of reflection, and the skills and behaviors necessary for successful instructional leadership.

### *What are Best Practices in Mentoring?*

Research makes clear that there are several elements and practices included in highly regarded mentor programs that serve essential purposes. First among these are the rigorous selection, careful matching, and purposeful training of the mentors. Indeed, it has been made clear through many research studies that mentoring relationships are unsuccessful when the mentors are not well-suited to mentoring, when they are not properly supported by training and when they are not effectively matched.<sup>iv</sup>

Rigorous selection of mentors ensures that the mentors have capacity, readiness and expertise aligned with the needs of new leaders.<sup>v</sup> In addition to prior effectiveness in performing the role of principal and knowledge of current educational best practices, when selecting mentors effective programs seek and select individuals who can demonstrate that they are reflective, unselfish and enthusiastic. They should have the ability to analyze practice and concerns and both ascertain and answer the right questions arising from the new leaders’ practices. Ideally, mentors should appreciate that there are alternative ways to carry out the role of principal; understand the value of reflection; have an awareness of the political and social realities of being a principal; show compassion; actively listen; and provide constructive feedback. Finally, mentors should be unselfish in sharing their knowledge, their contacts, their networks, and their practices with the new leaders they serve.<sup>vi</sup> Going beyond the research, experience has taught that the most effective mentors are culturally competent leaders, attuned to and experienced in effectively reducing achievement gaps and conscious of looking beyond test scores to deeper issues impacting diverse students and community members. The most effective mentors not only bring this experience to their work, but they are courageous leaders who help their mentees to explore and address these issues as well.

Once selected, a careful and purposeful matching of mentors with the new leaders they support is a critical piece of an effective mentor program.<sup>vii</sup> The matching process should strive to create a relationship in which the mentor and mentee are comfortable working together and in which the mentor’s expertise and experience is relevant to and supportive of the new principal’s needs.<sup>viii</sup> Demographics and prior successful experience as a principal are minimum criteria that should be supplemented by knowledge and expertise relevant to the context in which the new principal leads (including such objective factors as school level, student needs, school size, and community characteristics ), consideration of learning style or preference with respect to the structure of the relationship, and personality.<sup>ix</sup> Ideally, new principals should be involved in the matching process – either by soliciting their input regarding the kind of mentor they want through survey or interview or

providing an opportunity for them to select their preferred mentor among several potential matches.<sup>x</sup> Significant research highlights the importance of effective matching, noting that among the most prevalent reason ascribed to unsuccessful mentoring is the failure to create an effective match between mentor and mentee.<sup>xi</sup>

The research into leading non-educational mentor programs supporting this paper has also elucidated an innovative matching practice of relevance here. The Coca Cola Company's global handbook that describes and supports the establishment of mentor programs throughout the company describes its willingness to provide mentors whose expertise is relevant to the mentee's particular content need, regardless of the seniority of the mentor. Their support of "reverse mentoring" where a more junior employee mentors a more senior employee – for example, in circumstances where the business strategy being supported is the effective collaboration with the next generation of leaders – speaks to the deliberate matching of need and expertise irrespective of preconceived notions of who can fill the mentor role. So, too, their support for the possibility of peer mentoring highlights the creative ways in which purposeful mentor matching can be carried out.<sup>xii</sup>

The necessary training for mentors should reflect the processes and substantive goals for mentoring – including facilitative mentoring practices (focused on starting the relationship, issue analysis, listening and communication, providing feedback, and coaching) and the policies and practices that define the context and expectations regarding the new leaders' responsibilities.<sup>xiii</sup> Together, the mentor and mentee should define the goals for the mentoring relationship and they should share an understanding of purposes, processes, goals and assessment for their work together.<sup>xiv</sup> Indeed, the setting and sharing of clear expectations for the mentoring relationship – through an agreement between mentor and mentee or through the formal structure, orientation and/or documentation provided by the mentor program – is among those characteristics reported to heighten the mentoring relationship and its effectiveness.<sup>xv</sup>

Additional structural elements of high quality mentoring programs that are considered best practices include a formal structure for the program that clearly communicates support for the mentor relationship as well as clear expectations with respect to the roles, responsibilities and practices of the mentors.<sup>xvi</sup> Without the support of the district as reflected in policy and documents, and without the communication of clear expectations regarding the practices, behaviors, roles and responsibilities, new and overwhelmed leaders may choose not to commit to the mentoring or mentors may provide support in ways that are inconsistent with the district's expectations or values. Among the expectations that should be made clear is that a significant amount of time is dedicated to mentoring – and that new leaders should be supported by mentors for a minimum of one year.<sup>xvii</sup> High quality programs are also supported by rigorous evaluation. As mentor programs have developed over time, evaluation has become more rigorous and is no longer merely input- or satisfaction-based, but should now be reflective of program effectiveness as well as principal development.<sup>xviii</sup>

Practices that new leaders experience within high quality mentor programs include confidential and non-supervisory or non-evaluative relationships with their mentors.<sup>xix</sup> Particularly because principals are engaging with their mentors at the very start and most challenging time of school leadership, it is critical that they be comfortable sharing their challenges, their questions, and their mistakes, and they must feel that they have the freedom to take risks.<sup>xx</sup> This kind of open and trusting relationship is only possible for most when it is confidential and non-evaluative. Finally, in high quality programs mentoring

should be delivered on-demand as well as when planned. Mentors should be available by phone and email in addition to meeting regularly in person to both observe the novice principal in action and give feedback.<sup>xxi</sup>

In addition to these elements and practices, research conducted by the NYC Leadership Academy for the Wallace Foundation has drawn out a separate set of best practices for mentor program sustainability. First, there should be a strong program organization with four components: formal designation of a program administrator; active stakeholders who articulate how the program purpose is consistent with the district's vision and goals; key stakeholders actively engaged to retain funding and resources; and administrative management of a program accountability process. Second, there should be a formal and rigorous process for recruitment and selection of a broad pool of mentors. Third, there should be comprehensive, developmental training of the mentors, both in mentoring and coaching skills and in the policies and programs affecting principals' schools. Fourth, there should be a deliberate process to match mentors and principals based on an alignment of principals' strengths, developmental needs, and school context with mentors' complementary strengths and experiences. And finally, there should be a comprehensive program evaluation.<sup>xxii</sup>

### *Purpose and Benefits of Mentoring for New Leaders*

Effective mentor programs for new leaders serve several purposes: They support socialization into the profession, they provide customized and individualized professional development and they ensure that new leaders are receiving feedback and support for reflection and introspection.<sup>xxiii</sup> Indeed, the mentor's ability to develop their mentee's reflective practice, as opposed to providing the mentee with "the answers," is often seen as one of the hallmarks of effective mentor practice.<sup>xxiv</sup> Being supported by a mentor during the early years can help "minimize frustrating and challenging situations that detract from a leader's development and growth"<sup>xxv</sup> and help those new leaders to become reflective practitioners and confident leaders.<sup>xxvi</sup> The new leaders benefit from the increased confidence as well as the facilitation of translation between theory and practice.<sup>xxvii</sup> In addition, mentees benefit from receiving instructional and emotional support, participating in problem solving and opportunities to network from their mentor relationships.<sup>xxviii</sup> Consistent with all of these benefits, it is perhaps not surprising that, according to Daresh, through mentoring, new principals "learn more about their professional lives and gain more insight into their personal needs, visions, and values than through any other kind of learning experience."<sup>xxix</sup>

Mentoring is also beneficial to the mentors. Those mentors who are also practicing principals report that being a mentor is itself powerful professional development – they report that problem-solving, questioning, providing feedback, reflecting, and trying to provide a model of leadership in their own practice and schools exerts a powerful influence on their own leadership.<sup>xxx</sup> In addition, practicing principals speak of the benefits of greater job satisfaction, greater opportunities for career advancement, collegiality and networking resulting from their mentoring activities.<sup>xxxi</sup> Mentors who are no longer practicing principals experience additional beneficial outcomes from mentoring including personal satisfaction, opportunity to give back to the profession, professional pride and recognition, and new learning experiences.<sup>xxxii</sup>

While mentor programs are often referred to as coaching, and vice versa, the purpose and often the processes of mentoring can be different from coaching.<sup>xxxiii</sup> Coaching -- which is more typically designed

to support the improvement or development of a particular skill or the implementation of a particular strategy -- is frequently provided by someone with supervisory authority over the new leader. In many instances, the failure to follow through on coaching is a matter for evaluation and formal repercussions. While a mentor develops rapport, engages in a "process of discovery" with the leader<sup>xxxiv</sup> and builds a supportive, trusting collaborative relationship, the coach's work is more focused on repairing or developing an aspect of performance, working on specifics in a technical way to improve the leader's execution of her job.<sup>xxxv</sup> While many programs maintain a strict division between coaching and mentoring, and do not ask their mentors to coach,<sup>xxxvi</sup> in others we see that there is a blurring or merging of the two. This may reflect a maturation of the idea of mentoring -- from one which initially focused primarily on the socialization of a new leader to one that, while non-supervisory and confidential, is more closely aligned with the objectives of the organization and the needs of the leader. So, for instance, the Coca Cola Company's mentoring programs are purposefully designed to support the development of specific areas of learning aligned with the organization's strategic initiatives. Similarly, some of the most highly regarded school leader mentor programs are now goal-oriented and designed to result in "the acquisition of awareness, and knowledge about instructional leadership," as well as "an increased acquisition and understanding of specific knowledge of the school district's culture, values, and norms."<sup>xxxvii</sup> Because many mentor programs use the terms interchangeably and because most highly regarded mentor programs -- including the GCPS Leader Mentor Program -- include a focus on instructional leadership and include training in coaching along with the expectation that mentors be able to coach, this paper adopts the approach of increasing numbers of researchers to include coaching within the definition of the mentoring program.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

## **GWINNETT COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS LEADER MENTOR PROGRAM**

The GCPS Leader Mentor Program provides mentoring services from exemplary, retired principals from the district to all of the new principals (and assistant principals) for a period of two years. In 2014, 12 mentors provided support to 89 assistant principals, as well as to 39 novice principals, 23 in their first year of leadership, 13 in their second, and 3 in their third or fourth year. Through careful records that track the mentor and mentee interactions, we know that these 12 mentors spent 991.75 hours interacting with their novice leaders -- 865 in face-to-face meetings, 91 on the telephone, 325 through digital means, and 3.25 through unknown means.

The job description for Leader Mentors, who report to the Assistant Superintendent of Leadership Development, makes clear that only those who were successful as school principals and who have some of the skills required for effective mentoring are eligible for the position. In addition to knowing effective practices in curriculum, instruction, and child development, Leader Mentors must have the ability to model the 21 leader responsibilities identified by research as having a significant correlation with student achievement. They must be skilled in problem solving, communication and interpersonal relations, and work effectively with both school and district staff. The job description specifies that the Leader Mentors provide encouragement and support through a non-evaluative relationship, and it delineates job duties that focus on providing new school leaders with opportunities for both personal and professional growth through practice and analysis of leadership practice, direction and clarification, partnership with a proven leader, and assistance with the use of the district's effectiveness and student achievement measures.<sup>xxxix</sup>

The position of Leader Mentor is sought after by retired principals, as it is widely regarded as an honor, it is a public recognition of effectiveness, and it is well-paid. Being a mentor allows leaders to continue to be engaged in school leadership, to continue their own professional learning and development and to support the next generation of leaders. In making the selection of who is hired for the position, the district aims for a diverse pool of leaders with expertise and experience that will meet the needs of its new school leaders. Leader Mentors are assigned to the novice leaders through an examination of objective criteria which aim to ensure that new leaders are supported by those with similar experience (for example, elementary school leaders are supported by former elementary school leaders) and with expertise aligned with their particular needs. There is no recruiting for the position, nor can mentors self-select into the position; rather, the district's Executive Director of Leadership Development selects among those former principals that he knows and that are recommended by other members of the district leadership team.<sup>xi</sup>

Once selected, Leader Mentors participate in an orientation and in regular and ongoing professional learning designed to ensure that they possess the skills, behaviors, and qualities of effective mentors and that they are up-to-date on the context of the principalship within the district. Leader Mentors participate in the "Skillful Observation and Feedback Laboratory," School Administrative Manager ("SAM") Data Collection Training, monthly professional development sessions, and the New York City Leadership Academy's Online Coaching Modules -- six modules that focus on the skills, strategies and relationship involved in the coaching model, and eight modules that assist with diagnosing and coaching to the dimensions of the leadership framework determined by the NYCLA as the foundational practices for new principals. Once assigned to the principals whom they will mentor, the Leader Mentors are expected to lead professional development for principals and attend all training and professional learning with their partner principals.

The Leader Mentor program generally provides confidential, non-supervisory support to new principals centered upon the district's leadership standards. However, there are important caveats around the content and nature of the relationship as described. There are certain protocols in place throughout the district that standardize particular points in the relationship in a way that is far more directive than typical mentoring. For example, there is a protocol with required roles and practices for the mentor and for the new principal when a principal is first assigned to a school. In this instance, a three page document spells out the responsibilities of the mentor and the departing and incoming principals in order to ensure a smooth transition from one leader to the next. In addition, while the relationship begins with the important and trust-building support of being both confidential and non-evaluative, it is expressly made clear that if a mentor senses a serious problem in the performance of the new principal, or if there is a legal or ethical concern, the relationship can and should change to one in which the mentor works directly with the assistant superintendent to provide more directive and coordinated support around an area in which supervision is required. If and when this occurs, the mentor plays a different role in which she is part of the supervisory team and conversations and interactions are both more directed and not necessarily confidential.

Each interaction between a mentor and her protégé is reflected in the Leader Mentor Log, a tool designed to capture the nature and substance of the conversations between Leader Mentors and novice school leaders. Through a dashboard in which mentors provide information about the process and substance of each interaction with their novice principal, the Leader Mentors document how they interacted with their novice principals and for how much time, as well as which of the leadership

standards the interaction concerned, what celebrations for prior work were discussed and what plans were made for next steps in the work together. In addition to helping the district to understand how their mentors are working with the principals, the Leader Mentor Log is meant to guide the reflection of the mentor, ensure that they are continually planning with their novice leaders, and help the district ascertain continuing needs of the new principals which are then further supported by the mentors providing group-based monthly professional development workshop for the principals.

Additional data collected through the Leader Mentor Program is derived from a semi-annual survey in which the new principals provide feedback about their mentor and the mentoring relationship. This data, as well as the data reflected in the Leader Mentor Log is support for independent evaluation of the Leader Mentor Program that provides the district insight into the practice and effectiveness of the mentors, contributes to insights about principals' development needs, and assesses the impact of principal mentoring on student achievement.<sup>xli</sup>

## **COST EFFECTIVENESS OF THE LEADER MENTOR PROGRAM**

While the district requested that this paper also explore the extent to which the Leader Mentor Program is cost-effective, research, including a consultation with the RAND Corporation – which is being supported by the Wallace Foundation to design a method for making such an analysis – has revealed that there is not yet a meaningful way to make this determination.<sup>xlii</sup> Indeed, the lack of an agreed upon method for making a determination of cost-effectiveness is confirmed by reference to the one study we found that attempts to ascertain the cost of a principal mentor program. There, the authors determined that providing a coach for induction support to every first year principal in the state of Washington would cost between \$143,000 and \$845,000 per year, representing a per-pupil cost between \$4.01 and \$12.35.<sup>xliii</sup> This is consistent with RAND's experience, which finds that districts are counting and reporting cost items in mentoring in different ways.

Since the costs and resources to be included in a determination of program costs have not yet been enumerated and the costs have not been collected by GCPS, a cost effectiveness analysis of the Leader Mentor Program cannot yet be made. Rather, the approach taken in this paper is consistent with RAND's likely approach, which will be focused on creating a framework for helping districts think about the resources that go into mentoring principals, and structuring an analysis that catalogs cost ingredients and the presence of research-based best practices so that districts can determine whether, for their costs, they are getting a program with weak, adequate, or strong relationship to emerging best practices of effective mentoring programs. For purposes of this paper, we make the same analysis: We suggest treating "cost" as fidelity to best practices and make the argument that only if a program is well-aligned with best practices can the cost be determined to be effective and the program be worth the cost – whatever it might be. Thus, the next and critical component of the analysis is benchmarking the Leader Mentor Program against the best practices in the field.


















## **BENCHMARKING MENTOR PROGRAMS: CONSIDERATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**


































The best practices among mentoring programs for new leaders can be best understood as structural components that define the program as well as organizational and operational supports that undergird the program, and program practices that define the nature of the relationship and the experience for

both mentors and mentees. Those that we have pulled from the research, from experience, and from the examination of local business mentor programs at The Coca Cola Company and Southwest Airlines<sup>xliv</sup> have all been referenced in the discussion above and are presented in the accompanying table, which presents a visual benchmark of the Leader Mentor Program and the two corporate programs against these best practices. Also included are several innovative practices gleaned from the corporate programs that provide additional food for thought with respect to possible improvements to the GCPS Leader Mentor Program. Each of the best and innovative practices is described in general and, when relevant, the description includes details that describe the practice in education leader mentor programs specifically.

The Benchmark Summary Table reveals a few areas where the GCPS Leader Mentor program is not completely aligned with the best practices and thus suggests a few questions for the district's consideration. The particular structures and practices of concern are clustered within a few broad areas – the extent to which there are **clear expectations** for mentors and mentees about the roles, practices, values, goals and behaviors that are to be supported by the mentor program; the standards and processes used for **selection and matching of the mentors**; and the usefulness of the **data collected** within the program.<sup>xlv</sup>

**Benchmark Summary Table**

Standards of Leader Mentor Program Practice	GCPS Leader Mentor Program	Coca-Cola Company	Southwest Airlines
<b>Research-Based Best Practice Category 1: Structural Components of Mentor Program</b>			
<i>There is a formal structure for the mentoring program that provides organizational support, as well as documents, processes, definitions and shared language as a means of ensuring shared expectations concerning roles and responsibilities of both the mentor and the mentee.</i>			
<i>There is a framework or philosophical grounding for the mentoring support program and its objectives. Education mentor programs are grounded in relevant/local standards, though there may be a more limited selection among the standards or focus areas for the beginning principal.</i>			
<i>There are incentives to ensure commitment of the mentor. Mentors in education programs generally receive monetary incentives, along with professional recognition.</i>			
<i>There is a rigorous recruitment and selection process for mentors to ensure that they are credible and well-qualified. In education mentor programs, the application and selection process ensures qualification with respect to knowledge, skills, practices and characteristics. <b>**Sustainability Requirement</b></i>			
<i>Mentors are deliberately and carefully matched with mentees – and there is flexibility to change-- in order to ensure that mentees are well-supported by appropriate mentors and in recognition of the fact that mentoring only works if the relationship between the mentor and mentee is comfortable. <b>**Sustainability Requirement</b></i>			
<i>There is a substantial and defined time for mentoring – a minimum of one year, preferably two years.</i>			

Standards of Leader Mentor Program Practice	GCPS Leader Mentor Program	Coca-Cola Company	Southwest Airlines
<i>There are specific goals - with benchmarks - for the mentor's work with the mentee. The goals are jointly set by the mentor and mentee working together to create a learning plan. In education mentor programs, developmental goals are often built around elements of the principal evaluation.</i>			
<i>There is a comprehensive program evaluation, reflective of mentor program effectiveness and principal development. <b>**Sustainability Requirement</b></i>			
Research-Based Best Practice Category 2: Mentor and Mentee Experience			
<i>There is a non-evaluative relationship. The mentor is not evaluating the mentee, nor is the mentor reporting to the mentee's supervisor for input into evaluation or contract decisions.</i>			
<i>There is a confidential relationship in order to ensure that the mentee is comfortable sharing challenges, taking risks, etc. In education mentor programs, the relationship is confidential unless and until significant ethical or legal concerns arise.</i>			
<i>The mentoring practice is feedback-focused and supportive of reflection.</i>			
<i>There is comprehensive training for mentors – in both the skills and practices needed for coaching and mentoring and in the programs and policies that affect the principals and their schools. <b>**Sustainability Requirement</b></i>			
<i>There is training for new leaders in order to prepare them for engaging with the mentors.</i>			
<i>The mentor is available for on-site meetings that include observation of the new leader in her leadership role with responsive feedback, as well as over the telephone and through email.</i>			
<i>The mentee is given an opportunity to observe, visit or shadow other principals with the mentor, or with the mentor's support.</i>			
Innovative Practice			
<i>Mentors are selected based on particular needs, regardless of seniority or experience levels (i.e., reverse mentoring and peer mentoring).</i>			
<i>Mentoring is used in areas of specific, measurable business strategies. In education mentor programs, mentoring may be specifically aligned with measurable elements of the principal's evaluation.</i>			

Key: =Fully meets standard =Generally meets standard =Partially meets standard =Does not meet standard



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### *Recommendation 1: Clarify Expectations for Mentor Roles and Responsibilities*

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The Benchmark Summary Table highlights opportunities for clearer expectations in several areas:

- the formal structure of a program clearly describing skills and practices for mentors,
- the definition of a leadership framework or philosophy undergirding the program,
- definitions and shared language used within the program, and
- the goals and benchmarks for the mentoring work.

While the GCPS Leader Mentor Program is supported by a structure that clearly defines some of these elements, on the whole each one of these areas could be made more explicit and expectations could be more clearly defined and communicated to mentors and principals. In addition, clear expectations can serve the purpose of transmitting the values of the district to new leaders. GCPS has strong and well-defined values that the mentor program can be a key vehicle in helping new leaders to understand and to live by. This is especially important at a time when the district's student, teacher, and leader population is diversifying and therefore at higher risk that those values may not clearly translate for each new leader. Without clear expectations around the mentor's role, the transmission of values is likely to be inconsistent. Clearly articulating detailed expectations in program documents as well as developing and delivering training about the practices, roles and behaviors of mentors could go a long way toward demystifying the practices and values desired throughout the district.

Program documentation includes a few specific roles and behaviors for mentors – those listed in the job description and those described in the transition plan to be used when principals are first assigned to schools. The job description is broad and varied and it reflects some, but not all, of the practices that effective mentors use. It does not explicitly state that GCPS mentors should: aim to develop habits of reflection in their new leader mentees; demonstrate cultural competence; be skilled in having courageous conversations; or introduce new principals to their leadership networks. The transition plan speaks to a more circumscribed role for the mentors. While monthly professional development for mentors also provides an opportunity to support the practices sought by the district for mentors, it is not clear that new principals share that knowledge. Their first experience with a mentor is in the transition to leadership – a time when the mentor functions much more as an administrative coordinator than a confidante and facilitator of reflective practice and instructional leadership.

Another area where articulating clearer and more detailed expectations could yield benefits is around goal-setting and benchmarks of success for mentors and mentees to guide their work together. Rather than leaving initial planning to an informal meeting during the period of transition, the relationship might be strengthened by clearly communicating expectations for the mentor and new principal to plan together, define their expectations for their work, establish goals and benchmarks, and create a development plan. This is the practice supported by the research-based practices as well as the mentor program at Deloitte Touche. A sample goal setting tool and individual development plan are included as Appendix A and Appendix B, respectively.

Finally, review of program literature and documentation did not allow a determination of whether the new leaders understand the limitations on the confidentiality of the mentor relationship. As long as it is an expectation of the district that mentors may breach confidentiality in certain extreme circumstances, the transparent communication of this to both mentors and new principals at the outset of the relationship will likely be better for the principal-mentor relationship in the long run.

#### *Developing Clear Expectations: Sample Role Definition*

- Leader Mentors play a critical role in developing and supporting new school leaders in GCPS. Leader Mentors are expected to forge a non-evaluative relationship with school leaders in which they provide school leaders with opportunities for personal and professional growth by: facilitating learning; modeling successful leadership behavior aligned with the Quality-Plus Leader standards; supporting the development of reflective practice; observing practice and providing feedback, coaching, and providing leaders with encouragement and support.
- Leader Mentors are expected to provide school leaders with support as they take on the managerial and instructional aspects of their positions, including transitioning to leadership, designing systems and structures to support school organization, supervising and evaluating staff, communicating effectively with parents and school community members, and effectively managing the use of time.
- Leader Mentors are expected to provide school leaders with encouragement and support through a confidential, non-evaluative, resource-rich relationship focused on development of personal and professional growth and high academic achievement. In some extreme instances in which Leader Mentors become aware of behaviors or situations that place students at risk at a school, Leader Mentors are expected to disclose this information to the district in order to intervene on behalf of children.
- Leader Mentors are expected to work with new leaders and their supervisors to set goals for personal and professional growth aligned with the vision and goals of GCPS, and, through their mentoring practices, they support the new leaders' efforts toward the documentation, measurement and attainment of those goals.<sup>xlvi</sup>

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#### *Recommendation 2: Increase Rigor in Mentor Recruitment, Selection and Matching*

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As reflected in the Benchmark Summary Table and the results of the Sustainability Audit, the GCPS Leader Mentor Program is not fully aligned with best practices in recruitment, selection and matching of mentors. While there is a job description for mentors, there is no active open recruitment of mentors. Mentors are selected by senior staff based on their knowledge of former principals. The benefit of this practice is that it ensures that mentors have prior experience as successful school leaders; however, it does not ensure that they will be successful mentors. As reviewed above, there are additional skills, practices and characteristics of good mentors and the extent to which these former principals meet these standards may be unknown to district staff absent more robust selection processes. In addition, by limiting broader recruitment or even mentor self-selection into a pool of prospective mentors, the district may be missing out on opportunities to create a more diverse pool of mentors. Even if the district continues to limit its mentors to former principals, the anemic recruitment process is likely to limit not only the racial and ethnic diversity of mentors but diversity in experiences and skills that may

be useful to some new principals. With or without a recruitment plan in place, a process to select among those interested in mentoring can help to ensure that those who become mentors already have some of the characteristics and skills of the most effective mentors. Just as the district – which knows how to develop leaders -- puts aspiring leaders through a selection process to bring in those with the most potential to be effective leaders, it should consider whether it could use a similarly rigorous process for bringing in those mentors with the best potential to be effective.

*Developing a Recruitment and Selection Process: Sample Components*

- Create and place mentor principal job postings and advertisements online, within the GCPS human resources locations, with local and state educational newsletters, professional associations, and periodicals likely to be of interest to school leaders. The advertisements should include a description of the purpose of the position, as well as some of the most important characteristics of effective mentors and any professional development or training that the district considers as a prerequisite for performance as a mentor. In addition, the advertisements should make clear that selection will be based on a determination of the candidates' track record of results, a performance-based interview, and matching candidates' qualifications with the needs of the district's new leaders.
- Prepare interview questions and scenarios to be used for role-playing of typical mentor interactions with new leaders during the performance-based assessment, along with a rubric to objectively determine the qualifications and behaviors that each applicant presents and to make final selections.
- Rewrite the job description for mentors to align with mentor standards or competencies,<sup>xlviii</sup> as well as the district's vision for effective leadership, and to include the particular characteristics of effective mentors that the district determines are most important. Mentors require competency in four areas: an orientation toward support, instructional leadership, human relations and process skills. Among the particular characteristics suggested for consideration in role definition are being reflective and fostering reflection; having excellent communication skills, including the ability to listen actively; providing critical feedback; advocating and providing resources; modeling effective leadership; coaching; being culturally competent; and having a good understanding of the responsibilities and expectations of current leaders within GCPS.

In addition to mentor recruitment and selection, there is room for improvement in the process used by GCPS to match mentors with new principals. In most highly regarded school leader mentor programs, the district uses a fairly sophisticated process to match mentors with mentees. They include, as does GCPS, objective criteria such as experience in the same school level, but they also make a purposeful effort to ensure that the specific needs of the principals can be served by the particular expertise of the mentor. Particularly in a district like Gwinnett County which collects significant data about leaders' experience, training, and needs, it could further strengthen the mentor program if this data were aligned with the characteristics and expertise of the mentors. In addition, in some districts – and in the Deloitte Touche mentor program – new principals are given a role in selecting their mentors. It could be that gender matters to some more than others; that geographic proximity plays an outsize role for some; that a personal style is more important for others; or any number of other characteristics could impact the likelihood of a successful relationship. It is recommended that the district consider creating a

more transparent, more accessible, and strengthened process for creating matches to enhance the mentor program. In addition, flexibility to make a change if a mentor match is unsuccessful should be built into the process.

*Developing a Mentor-Mentee Matching Process: Sample Components*

- As part of the matching process, solicit information from both the mentors and the mentees in order to ensure that mentors have relevant experience in the same school level as potential mentees, as well as skills navigating a similar context for leadership and any particular expertise aligned with the needs of the mentees.
- Because some mentees are particularly interested in mentors of a particular gender, race, or ethnicity, the matching process should include relevant information to make an appropriate match where this is the case.
- The mentors should describe their personal working and learning styles, as well as their geographic location and availability, and mentees should provide information about their preferred personal working and learning styles.
- Create or purchase software (think “Mentor eHarmony”) that analyzes the information provided by both mentors and mentees and produces a correlation of mentors and mentees whose experience, skills, demographics, characteristics, and style best match each other and, without identification of the name, allow each mentee to select a few potential mentors. The software, or staff, should then make matches that fulfill as many mentor selection requests as possible.<sup>xlviii</sup> GCPS should determine whether changes will be allowed if mentor matches are not successful and, if so, include notice of this policy within the mentor and mentee information-collection documents.

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*Recommendation 3: Streamline Data Collection for More Depth, Less Breadth*

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Finally, as is suggested by emerging best practices in district organizational learning practices, GCPS collects a wide variety of data about its students, its teachers, and its leaders and uses it in a continuous improvement process. Consistent with this practice, in Mentor Track the district collects a good deal of data concerning the mentoring – including information about the process and substance of every single interaction between a mentor and her novice principal. Also consistent with best practices in leadership development, GCPS has a rigorous principal evaluation system which, along with its strong emphasis on student achievement outcomes coupled with incentives and support,<sup>xlix</sup> defines its purpose as “provid[ing] leaders with meaningful feedback ... to support the continuous growth and development of each leader.”<sup>l</sup> If the purpose of evaluation is to improve the performance of principals and if this is an objective shared with the mentors, then it would make sense that the data collected as part of the mentor program similarly be useful to the district in driving performance improvement. While it is reported that the district makes use of the data collected in Mentor Track in ascertaining whether mentors are making enough visits and what standards are being addressed, it is not clear that this information helps to ascertain the extent to which mentors are helping their principals. Tying a conversation to a standard does not necessarily mean that the mentor and principal are doing meaningful work toward enabling principal mastery of the standard. Similarly, without deeper

knowledge (which the district may have), it may be appropriate that a mentor and new leader focus entirely on two standards for six months rather than making sure they “hit” each standard. Just as GCPS has moved from teacher evaluation emphasizing the collection of inputs regarding teacher practice and qualifications to focusing on outputs – what takes place in the classroom<sup>li</sup>-- this recommendation suggests reviewing what data is collected and for what purpose, and whether there is other data that could be more useful, either in helping to understand whether and to what extent the mentor is supporting the principal toward improved performance or the extent to which the mentor and new principal are moving toward realization of their goals.

*Developing Appropriate Data-Gathering Protocols: Suggested Data Elements*

- The number, type, and duration of contacts between the mentor and the mentee.
- The standard that most closely relates to the issue(s) addressed in each interaction.
- The principal development goal to which the interaction most directly relates. The mentor’s and the mentees’ reflection upon the progress (or lack thereof) being made by the principal toward jointly set goals. (The goal-setting and progress tool should be a document to which both the mentor and mentee contribute regularly and periodically - rather than each time that the mentor and mentee have contact with each other - with information as well as reflection.)
- The actions or next steps suggested by the mentor, and committed to by the mentee.
- The resources that have been or will be made available to the principal in order to support the next steps and attainment of goals or other needs demonstrated or discussed by the principal.
- GCPS should maintain the Principal Impact Survey.

## CONCLUSION

The Gwinnett County Public Schools Leader Mentor Program supports novice leaders throughout the district through a well-designed, tried and trusted structure that focuses on the development among new leaders of the standards and practices shown to have a significant correlation with student achievement. Consistent with best practices drawn from research and experience, the GCPS Leader Mentor Program is well supported by the district – which grounds the program in policies, procedures, and documents; provides funding from several sources and uses the funding – among other purposes – to pay a competitive salary to its mentors; and solicits feedback from leaders and funds a third party to conduct evaluations of the program. The program provides for a relationship between mentor and mentee that is, generally, confidential and non-evaluative, and mentors support leaders with whom they share relevant experience. The mentors are provided with ongoing training in both mentoring and coaching practices and in the district’s context, policies and expectations insofar as they affect principals. Like many mentoring programs today, the mentors are expected to act as supporters, confidantes, and partners with their mentees in the development of their leadership practice and they are also trained to and expected to be able to coach their mentees toward particular leadership behaviors. When compared with leading private sector mentor programs, as measured against standards drawn from leading education mentor programs and from professional and scholarly research, the GCPS Program compares favorably. In sum, the GCPS Leader Mentor Program is a high quality program contributing substantial support to its new leaders.

Nonetheless, a careful review of leading mentor programs in education, research on mentoring, and information from some local non-education programs with innovative mentor programs reveals a few

areas of improvement for the GCPS Leader Mentor Program to be on par with the best and most innovative practice. The particular elements of the program that might be improved through attention to these best practices are centered in three areas: clear expectations; recruitment, selection and matching of mentors; and data collection and continuous improvement.<sup>iii</sup>

We recommend that the district consider how it could make expectations clearer about the practices mentors are encouraged to use, the goals individual mentors should be supporting with their novice leaders, the roles that they want the mentors to play, and potential change in the relationship with respect to confidentiality. These expectations might be clarified through program documents and through mentor and mentee training. Documents that might help to clarify expectations include, among others, foundational documents, job descriptions, program descriptions, and goal-setting templates. And mentor and mentee training can clarify expectations if it prepares both parties for the relationship, provides common language and expectations regarding goal-setting, and helps to ensure both parties are ready for and committed to the relationship. Finally, to the extent that the District wants to consider either modification to, or improved communication around, the potentially changing nature of the confidential or non-supervisory relationship of mentor and mentee, role clarification might also be appropriate.

We also recommend that the district consider creating a recruitment process in order to diversify the population of mentors and potentially bring in those with skills and interests who might not be already in the minds of the district's administrative leaders. It is worth reiterating that being a successful principal does not necessarily translate to being a successful mentor and it is more important to make sure that the district is hiring the best mentors for the position, rather than the best former principals. The characteristics and practices of effective mentors are well understood and the district should create a transparent and rigorous selection process designed around these characteristics. With such purposeful recruitment and selection, the next important piece of effective mentor programs that the district should strengthen is the process used to match novice leaders with mentors. A transparent process that collects information from both mentors and principals, that allows for an exploration of learning style and relationship preferences as well as geographic proximity, relevant expertise and experience, and that provides choice as well as flexibility in the matches would further enhance the GCPS Leader Mentor Program.

Finally, the district is to be commended for a deep commitment to and use of a continuous improvement model of support. To build on this strong practice, it is recommended that the tools used for the continuous improvement of the GCPS Leader Mentor Program be reviewed. It may be useful to streamline the collection of detailed yet cursory data regarding every mentor interaction and increase data collection of elements that would illuminate the mentor work more deeply, including how effectively it helps to drive principal improvement, assess and improve the mentor program, and support the new leaders toward realization of their goals.

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<sup>i</sup> Gwinnett County Public Schools, "Message from the Superintendent on GCPS Initiatives." (Cited in case studies supporting *The Changing Role of the Principal: How High-Achieving Districts are Recalibrating School Leadership*. (Center for American Progress, <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education/report/2014/07/01/93015/the-changing-role-of-the-principal>)).

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<sup>ii</sup> See, e.g., Hansford, Brian, and Lisa C. Ehrich. "The Principalship: How Significant Is Mentoring?" *Journal of Educational Administration* 44 (2006) (defining mentoring as a structured and coordinated approach where individuals agree to engage in a personal and confident relationship that aims to provide professional development, growth, and varying degrees of personal support).

<sup>iii</sup> See, e.g., The Wallace Foundation. *Getting Principal Mentoring Right: Lessons from the Field*. 2007 (specifying that "[t]he primary of goal of mentoring should be unambiguously focused on fostering new school leaders who (a) put learning first in their time and attention and know how to rally their entire school community around that goal, (b) see when fundamental change to the status quo is needed in order to make better teaching and learning happen, and (c) have the courage to keep the needs of all children front and center and not shrink from confronting opposition to change when necessary.")

<sup>iv</sup> Hall, Pete. "Building Bridges: Strengthening the Principal Induction Process through Intentional Mentoring." *Phi Delta Kappan* (Feb. 2008); Hansford & Ehrich (2006); Allsbury & Hackmann (2006); *Making the Case for Principal Mentoring* (2003).

<sup>v</sup> Hansford & Ehrich (2006) (citing Ehrich, Hansford & Tennen (2004) and Trenta, Beebe, Cosiano & Eastridge (2001)); NYC Leadership Academy. *Strengthening Principal Coaching and Mentoring. Program Sustainability Audit and Action Planner: User's Guide*. Long Island City 2014; The Educational Alliance at Brown University. *Making the Case for Principal Mentoring*. Brown University 2003.

<sup>vi</sup> Hansford & Ehrich (2006); Dukess, Laura. "Meeting the Leadership Challenge: Designing Effective Principal Mentor Programs." (New Visions for Public Schools 2002); Hall (2008); Allsbury and Hackmann (2006).

<sup>vii</sup> *Making the Case for Principal Mentoring* (2003) ("The closer you can match the conditions under which the new principal is working with the mentor's experience and expertise, the more successful the mentoring process will be." (quoting Nadya Aswad Higgins); Allsbury and Hackmann. "Learning from Experience: Initial Findings of a Mentoring/Induction Program for Novice Principals and Superintendents." 37 *Planning and Changing* 3 & 4 (2006).

<sup>viii</sup> Dukess (2002); Ohio Department of Education, Beginning Principal Mentoring Program (September 2012) (<http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Finance-and-Funding/Grants/Competitive-Grants/Beginning-Principal-Mentorship-Program>).

<sup>ix</sup> See NYC Leadership Academy. *Strengthening Principal Coaching and Mentoring*. Long Island City 2014; The Ohio Department of Education (2012); Hall (2008); The Wallace Foundation. *Getting Principal Mentoring Right: Lessons from the Field*. 2007; Allsbury & Hackmann(2006); Dukess (2002).

<sup>x</sup> NYC Leadership Academy (2014); Ohio Department of Education, Beginning Principal Mentoring Program (September 2012); Hall (2008).

<sup>xi</sup> Hansford & Ehrich (2006).

<sup>xii</sup> Interview recording between Gwinnett County Public Schools and representative of The Coca Cola Company; "Leading Positively and Mentoring" power point presentation of the Coca Cola Company prepared for November 17, 2011 discussion with Gwinnett County Public Schools.

<sup>xiii</sup> NYC Leadership Academy (2014); The Wallace Foundation (2007); Dukess (2002); Ohio Department of Education, (2012). See also, Robinson, Joanne. "Mentoring and Coaching School Leaders: A Qualitative Study of Adaptive Expertise for School Administrators." Register Report (Summer 2011).

<sup>xiv</sup> Boylan, John. "A Study of Mentor Principal Training in Pennsylvania." Dissertation submitted to the University of Pittsburgh, 2013. Web. See also *Making the Case for Principal Mentoring* (defining effective mentoring as "a

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proactive instructional process *in which a learning contract is established between the mentor and protégé.*" (emphasis added) (and including clearly defined outcomes among those characteristics of effective mentoring programs).

<sup>xv</sup> Id.

<sup>xvi</sup> The Ohio Department of Education (2012); Hall (2008)

<sup>xvii</sup> Wallace Foundation (2007).

<sup>xviii</sup> Id.; Dukess (2002).

<sup>xix</sup> The Ohio Department of Education (2012); Deans, Fran and Louise Oakley, with James & Wrigley. "Coaching and Mentoring for Leadership Development in Civil Society." Praxis Paper 14. INTRAC 2007; Dukess (2002).

<sup>xx</sup> The Ohio Department of Education (2012); Allsbury & Hackmann (2006).

<sup>xxi</sup> Hall (2008); Allsbury & Hackmann (2006); The Ohio Department of Education (2012).

<sup>xxii</sup> NYC Leadership Academy (2014).

<sup>xxiii</sup> Allsbury and Hackmann (2006) (citing Daresh (2001) and Browne-Ferrigno & Muth (2004)); Boylan (2013).

<sup>xxiv</sup> Allsbury and Hackmann (2006); Boylan (2013).

<sup>xxv</sup> Robinson (2011).

<sup>xxvi</sup> NAESP Mentor Training Module 1

<sup>xxvii</sup> Daresh, J. (2004). Mentoring School Leaders: Professional Promise or Predictable Problems? 40 *Educational Leadership Quarterly* 495–517.

<sup>xxviii</sup> Hansford and Ehrich (2006); Allsbury and Hackmann (2006); Dukess (2002); Boylan (2013).

<sup>xxix</sup> *Making the Case for Principal Mentoring* (2003) (quoting Daresh, J. (2001). *Leaders Helping Leaders: A Practical Guide to Administrative Mentoring* (2d ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

<sup>xxx</sup> Boylan (2013); Robinson (2011); Dukess (2002).

<sup>xxxi</sup> Boylan (2013); Robinson (2011); Hansford & Ehrich (2006); Yirci, Ramazan and Ibrahim Kocabas. "The Importance of Mentoring for School Principals: A Conceptual Analysis." *International Journal of Educational Leadership* 5.2 (2010).

<sup>xxxii</sup> Hansford & Ehrich (2006); Yircu and Kocabas (2010) (citing Klasen, N. & Clutterbuck, D. (2002). *Implementing Mentoring Schemes*. Oxford: Butterworth Heinemann Publishing..

<sup>xxxiii</sup> For a general discussion about the differences and similarities between mentoring and coaching, see Deans & Oakley, James & Wrigley (2007).

<sup>xxxiv</sup> SREB Mentor Training Modules (taken from GCPS materials compiled as part of "Resources to Support the PLC's Position on Mentoring & Coaching")



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<sup>xxxv</sup> NAESP Mentor Training Module 1 (taken from GCPS materials compiled as part of “Resources to Support the PLC’s Position on Mentoring & Coaching”)

<sup>xxxvi</sup> See, e.g, Ohio Department of Education (2012).

<sup>xxxvii</sup> Lynn Scott’s Example of Definition of Mentoring for Early Career Principals that Integrates Features of Mentoring and Coaching. (taken from GCPS materials compiled as part of “Resources to Support the PLC’s Position on Mentoring & Coaching”)

<sup>xxxviii</sup> See, e.g., NYC Leadership Academy (2014); Robinson (2011).

<sup>xxxix</sup> GCPS Leader Mentor Job Description

<sup>xl</sup> *Quality Plus Mentoring: Strategies for Mapping, Monitoring and Measuring Leader Development*, Gwinnett County Public Schools Power Point Presentation; Telephone interview of Leslie Hazle Bussey with Glenn Pethel, January 23, 2015.

<sup>xli</sup> Results of Gwinnett County Public Schools’ completion of *Mentor Sustainability Audit and Action Planning Tool* (NYC Leadership Academy, Draft Version 1.6.2).

<sup>xlii</sup> Telephone Interview of Laura Dukess and Leslie Hazle Bussey with Susan Gates, of RAND Corporation.

<sup>xliii</sup> Lochmiller. "What Would It Cost to Coach Every New Principal: An Estimate Using Statewide Personnel Data." *Education Analysis Policy Archives* 22 (2014).

<sup>xliv</sup> While we were asked also to consider the mentor program at Deloitte Touche, there was insufficient information provided to include the structures and practices of this program in this analysis.

<sup>xlv</sup> There are two other areas that may warrant additional attention for improvement, though neither is reviewed in this paper. GCPS solicits feedback and a third party evaluation of the Leader Mentor Program, and its evaluation meets the best practices as revealed in the research. However it could do more to align with the standards of the NYC Leadership Academy’s research which indicate key evaluation practices to build sustainability. The criteria included and the results set forth in the Sustainability Audit suggest that the evaluation of the Leader Mentor program could be strengthened. Rather than re-state the results of the Sustainability Audit, reference is made to the Audit results for this possible program improvement. In addition, though it is not included in the research as among best practices, and because we do not have significant information about the nature of the specific professional development supports offered to the mentors, both experience and the stated desires of the Leader Mentors suggest that mentor training might be enhanced by additional in-person sessions focused on development and practice of the skills and behaviors of effective mentors. This is an area where practice and nuance are of critical importance, and it is perhaps more effectively supported by in-person support than by the online coaching modules currently used.

<sup>xlvi</sup> A very simple goal-setting protocol is provided in Appendix C of *“Leaders Helping Leaders – A Practical Guide to Administrative Mentoring.”* (Daresh, 2001). A slightly more complex mentor/mentee goal-setting protocol, with the related Individual Professional Development Action Planning Worksheet created and used by the Universidad del Este is attached hereto as Appendix A. Alternatively, any SMART Goal planning instrument can be adapted for use by mentors and mentees.

<sup>xlvii</sup> See, e.g., NAESP Mentor Standards, available at <http://www.naesp.org/sites/default/files/NAESP%20Mentor%20Competencies.pdf> ; Denver Public School Mentor Competencies, available at <http://careers.dpsk12.org/mentor-principalship/>; and the various mentor standards

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and descriptions provided in the Collier County Principal Mentor Handbook, available at <https://www.collierschools.com/staffdev/leadership/docs/PrincipalMentorHandbook.pdf>.

<sup>xlviii</sup> The Coca Cola Company uses a matching tool created by the Corporate Leadership Council. Other commercially available software that manages mentor matching (as well as software that fully supports mentor programs) can be reviewed and accessed through <http://www.capterra.com/mentoring-software/>. The authors of this paper did not review any of the commercially available programs, and make no recommendations regarding the quality thereof.

<sup>xlix</sup> MacLeod and Morgan. "Managing Principals for Results: Gwinnett County Public Schools." *The District Management Journal* 9 (2012).

<sup>i</sup> Gwinnett County Public Schools website: <https://publish.gwinnett.k12.ga.us/gcps/home/public/employment/gei>

<sup>ii</sup> MacLeod and Morgan (2012).

<sup>iii</sup> As noted above, improvements are also possible in two other areas: the professional development in coaching and mentoring strategies provided to the mentors and evaluation of the Leader Mentor Program. For information about the quality of the evaluation, reference is made to the NYC Leadership Academy's Program Sustainability Audit tool and results.

## ***OnPoint Leadership Work Sample:***

A flyer describing the *OnPoint Principals Learning Network*



## On Point Leadership Principals Learning Network

*Successful leaders see beyond operational issues to recognize fundamental forces that are relentlessly transforming our world and consider how to respond strategically.*

### What is the On Point Principals Learning Network?

- A monthly professional and collegial learning opportunity for NYC principals
- A committed group of leaders coming together with skilled facilitators to share challenges, learn new approaches, and take their leadership to the next level
- A safe place in which to explore challenges, share potential solutions and reflect upon success
- A cohort program, including thought partners, consultancy groups, and inter-visitations
- An antidote to isolation

*The On Point Principals Learning Network seeks to tap the experience of a socially conscious generation of leaders and help redirect and broaden their skills to fill critical leadership gaps in tackling major social and educational issues.*

*"The unrelenting focus on reflective practice centered around student learning is inspirational and has equipped me with the necessary skills and mindset to work towards transformation."*

### Who is the On Point Principals Learning Network For?

- NYC principals interested in further development of their leadership
- NYC principals interested in grappling with *the issues behind the issues* – social justice, equity, culture and expectations for schooling
- Leaders who are looking to make a greater impact on their school communities, build community capacity and sustain change for transformation, not just improvement

## How does the On Point Principals Learning Network Operate?

- Network leaders will present research-based practices, facilitate participation in engaging activities, including the use of open conversation as well as small- and whole-group protocols, and provide a space for practicing the skills and behaviors at the heart of the curriculum
- Network principals will be placed in consultancy groups which will support each other through facilitated problem solving and inter-school visits
- Network principals will engage with each other and with network leaders to explore the issues that make thoughtful and equitable leadership a challenge in our schools

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*“Through practical models and instructive case examples, On Point Leadership authentically connects the perils and promise of leadership to the risk and rewards for principals.”*

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## What is the Curriculum of the On Point Principals Learning Network?

The On Point Principals Learning Network Curriculum is based on the leadership competencies within the NYC School Quality Review, and aligned with the behaviors demonstrated by research to be at the heart of leadership success.

Session 1: Instructional Core – **Alignment** Among School Vision, School Practice, and the School Environment

Session 2: Instructional Core – **Capacity Building**, Adult Learning and Supporting the Refinement of Teacher Practice

Session 3: School Culture – **Social Justice** and Supporting the Opportunity to Learn for All Students in all School Communities

Session 4: School Culture – **Distributive Leadership**: Building and Supporting High Performing Teams and Other Leaders in the School

Session 5: Structures for Improvement – **Building a Culture of Feedback** to Support Teacher Development and Effective Performance Review

Session 6: Structures for Improvement – **Knowing Your Students and Building Interventions**, Structures and Supports to Ensure Success

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*The On Point Principals Learning Network is a safe place in which norms and expectations allow for openly sharing, exploring new ideas, expressing doubts or enthusiasm, and practicing new skills and behaviors.*

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### **What are the Logistical Considerations for Participating in the On Point Principals Learning Network?**

Monthly Meetings: The On Point Principals Learning Network will meet monthly, January – June 2014. Meetings are tentatively scheduled for January 29<sup>th</sup>, February 25<sup>th</sup>, March 26<sup>th</sup>, April 29<sup>th</sup>, May 21<sup>st</sup> and June 11<sup>th</sup>.

Meetings will be held outside of the members' schools, in a comfortable environment and over dinner. Parking will be available on-site, and the location is easily accessible by subway.

Cost: The cost for each principal is \$5,000. All materials, professional reading, food and drink will be provided. Once you join the Network, there are no additional costs.

### **Are You Interested in Learning More?**

Please contact us:

By email: [laura@onpointleadership.org](mailto:laura@onpointleadership.org)

By phone: (347) 262-8479

## ***OnPoint Leadership Work Sample:***

A Program Plan describing a short-term whole school support program designed and implemented for a low performing middle school in New York City.



## **On Point Leadership work at Middle School 80 September 2011 - August 2012**

(1) Leadership seminars for principal and instructional supervisors:

5 Bi-monthly half-day sessions (after school) and summer institute for principal, assistant principals and coaches; 3 day On Point/CCL Institute for principal.

On Point Leadership will support the instructional supervisors to become a high-functioning team. High leadership capacity schools are learning communities that amplify leadership for all, learning for all, success for all. These schools have developed a fabric of structures (e.g. teams, communities, study groups) and processes (reflection, inquiry, dialogue) that form a more lasting and buoyant web of interrelated actions. The principal is only one of the leaders in the school community and models collaboration, listening, and engagement. Each participant shares the vision, understands how the school is moving toward the vision, and understands how he or she contributes to that journey. The quality of the school is a function of the quality of the conversations within the school. (NSDC.org, JSD Spring 2005 VOL. 26, No. 2). These seminars will serve two purposes: helping to create a high-functioning team and helping them to lead the school to success.

Bi-monthly Sessions (November, January, March, May, June):

- Session 1 – November 8<sup>th</sup> (3:00 – 6:30 pm): How to become a team; why become a team; what is an effective team; how do you build team
- Session 2 – January 13<sup>th</sup> (3:45 – 7:30 pm): How does this team move the school forward through a focus on implementing a shared vision and healthy culture for the school
- Session 3 – March 16<sup>th</sup> (3:45 – 7:30 pm): How does this team model a culture of feedback -- giving and welcoming feedback among team members and between team members and other members of the school community
- Session 4 – May 11<sup>th</sup> (3:45 – 7:30 pm): How does this team set priorities, schedule and plan, remain accountable to action plans
- Session 5 – June 7<sup>th</sup> (3:00 – 6:30 pm): How does this team reflect on the year and plan for next year (check-in on accountability, team-functioning and changes)
- Secondary Planning Session – June 15<sup>th</sup>, 3:45 pm



*Leading a Challenging School* Institute – for principal (March 7 – 9)

Summer Institute (July):

- Influencer Institute (leading change)

(2) Coaching and Facilitation Skills Training for Assistant Principals, Coaches and Lead Teachers

5 bi-monthly half-day sessions (alternate months with leadership seminars)

Effective school leaders facilitate adult learning in order to foster student learning within their organization. They can only that ensure the learning needs of all students are equitably addressed if they are able to support the adults to learn and practice the skills needed to meet those needs. As a result, effective leaders must understand adult learning and they must understand how to coach and facilitate adults to improve their practice.

Bi-Monthly Sessions:

- Session 1 – October 28<sup>th</sup> (3:30 – 7:00 pm): Coaching
- Session 2 – December 9<sup>th</sup> (3:30 – 7:00 pm): Facilitation
- Session 3 – February 10<sup>th</sup> (3:30 – 7:00 pm): In-School Experiences and the Group Dynamics
- Session 4 – April 27<sup>th</sup> (3:30 – 7:00 pm): Feedback
- Session 5 – June 1<sup>st</sup> (3:30 – 7:00 pm): Difficult Conversations

(3) Individual Coaching for Assistant Principals, Coaches and Lead Teachers

Coaching is the practice of providing deliberate support to another individual to help him or her clarify and achieve goals. Once goals or a plan are articulated, the coach supports, challenges and motivate reaching the specified goals. In addition, coaches can support assistant principals to look beyond the issues immediately at hand and explore systemic structures and changes that can more broadly support the drive for school improvement.

On Point Leadership coaches will provide individual coaching to each assistant principal (twice a month), coach (once a month) and lead teacher (once a month). Coaching sessions for the assistant principals will focus on goal-setting and progress toward achieving stated goals related to school progress. Coaching sessions for coaches and lead teachers will focus on supporting their practice of facilitation and coaching of teachers.

(4) Development of Monthly Accountability Calendar

Each month On Point Leadership will create a calendar for supervisors designed to ensure that all members of the leadership team are sharing expectations for work required during the month and to be used to hold each other and the team accountable for follow-through and results.

#### (5) Accountability Support and School Quality Review Inquiry Team Coordination

On Point Leadership will support the leadership team by helping them create accountability protocols, as well as tools and strategies to better manage and organize school practices and procedures. In addition, On Point Leadership will attend monthly inquiry team meetings and coach members to remain accountable to their plans and the results of their inquiry.

#### (6) Instructional Audits

On Point Leadership will facilitate or participate in full school instructional audits designed to ensure fidelity to and effectiveness of the school's retooled instructional practices and improvement interventions. The audits will determine the extent to which practices are aligned with the school's Comprehensive Educational Plan, the School Quality Review and the State JIT findings. Each instructional audit will be followed by a report and recommendations responsive to the results.

- Audit 1 – November \_\_\_\_
- Audit 2 – March \_\_\_\_

#### (7) Instructional Rounds

Before delineating the content, focus or schedule for school-wide instructional rounds, On Point Leadership will coordinate with the ESO.