

Mentoring–Leadership Redefined

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Ontario has been blessed with relatively stable teaching environments, strong leadership and excellent teaching for many years. We are indeed fortunate to have a variety of new young teachers trying to get their first position as teachers. We are also fortunate to have dearth of expertise within our more senior teachers. However, we will lose most of this potential mentor expertise over the next five years. In the Fifth Discussion Paper by the Ministry of Education on Teacher Excellence, dated August 16th, 2004, it was stated that 10,000 teachers will be retiring over the next 10 years.¹ It makes sense, then, for proactive leadership to facilitate a process of mentoring that engages these two groups to work more effectively and affectively together. This will redefine leadership as we know it. "New teachers need mentors,"² says Doug Wilson, the Registrar and CEO for the Ontario College of Teachers. "They want the help of veteran educators to fast track their on-the-job education as teachers. The faster they learn to become good teachers, the better it is for students and for the system in terms of teacher retention."³

For quite some time, there has been concern expressed about the high loss of competent new teachers within the first two years of their service as educators. There is also concern about the declining spirit of medium to veteran level

¹ Ministry of Education. Fifth Discussion Paper. Teacher Excellence: Unlocking Student Potential Through Continuing Professional Development. August 16, 2004. (v.2).

² A New Teacher Induction: Growing Into The Profession. Doug Wilson, CEO and Registrar. Ontario College of Teachers, 2004.

³ A New Teacher Induction: Growing Into The Profession. Doug Wilson, CEO and Registrar. Ontario College of Teachers, 2004.





teachers. According to the College of Teachers survey of first and second year teachers:

- more than half of new teachers are hired after school starts in September;
- one in five are asked to teach subjects they haven't been trained to teach; and
- almost one in five is at risk of leaving teaching altogether early in their career.⁴

More recently, May 2005, the Ontario College of Teachers is stating that the teacher shortage is now over and that "fewer teachers are leaving the profession in the early years of teaching. One in thirteen leave in their first three years."⁵ On a personal note, this is still a very high number considering what teachers have to go through to become a teacher. This may be a generalization; however, most come to teaching because they are a very committed group at the outset. Even with this new data, these teachers still need support.

In a sociological study done on school teachers, one of the most common complaints of teachers was the lack of time for any meaningful collaboration.⁶ The issue of teacher pressure on the job was raised by John Goodlad in his book, *A Place Called School: Prospects For The Future*. "Is it realistic to expect teachers to teach enthusiastically hour after hour, day after day, sensitively diagnosing and remedying learning difficulties? During each of these hours, teachers make 200 or more decisions."⁷ In the United States, where their teachers make significantly more money than their Canadian counterparts and the attrition rate is even higher than that of Canadian schools, the National Centre for Education Statistics concluded that "mentoring relationships play a critical role in the support, training, and retention of new teachers."⁸

Leaders from business are taking serious the loss of first and second year employees. They are concerned about ROI (Return On Investment.) According to Ron Zemke, a senior editor from *Training Magazine*, "it costs a company twice the

⁴ Professionally Speaking: Sharing Our Stories. Dierdre Smith, Manager, Standards of Practice and Education Unit, Ontario College of Teachers. September, 2004.

⁵ Your College and You. Ontario College of Teachers. Issue 21, May 2005.

⁶ School Teacher: A Sociological Study. Daniel Lortie. University Press. Chicago, Illinois, 1975.

⁷ A Place Called School: Prospects For The Future. John Goodlad. McGraw Hill. New York, N.Y. 1984.

⁸ National Commission of Teaching and America's Future. Department of Education. Washington, D.C. 1996.



yearly salary of an employee to replace and retrain an employee.”⁹ He further argues that the most successful businesses find ways to support their human assets. Educators are more concerned about ROE (Return On Expectations) which is totally unrelated to the support of staff. This raises many controversial issues about the teaching learning process which will not be discussed here. However, these issues add significant pressure to new teachers who lack the experience to balance these pressures with their working and personal lives. The College of Teachers noted that it costs roughly \$4,400 to recruit and hire a new teacher.¹⁰ In the Fifth Discussion Paper, the Ministry of Education reports that it costs more than \$14 million annually from wasted recruitment and hiring.¹¹ In addition, the board loses more in terms of the retraining, consistency of staffing, and stability of staffs at each site.¹² There needs to be a redefining of leadership with mentoring principles in order to support these new teachers through troubled times.

Currently with many boards, there are excellent “coaching models” designed and implemented to develop and select leaders from within. The best leaders have a clear understanding and the skills to use some mentoring skills with their charges. However, when the leadership models are examined closer, the majority follow the routine of a “coaching” model without the basic premises of mentoring. These program designs are largely for the recruitment and vertical mobility of existing middle level staff and not for the support and maintenance of beginning teachers. New evidence from the College of Teachers indicates that “school boards are challenged to fill leadership roles.”¹³ Even though there are 1000 teachers qualified to administer each year, the “College of Teachers has granted roughly 175 Temporary Letters of Approval to school boards each year to enable boards to fill principal and vice-principal positions with people who do not have the qualifications for those roles.”¹⁴ The missing component in the recruitment and

⁹ Training: The New Leaders. “The Unconventional Wisdom.” Ron Zemke. Pg. 14. August 2001.

¹⁰ A New Teacher Induction: Growing Into The Profession. Doug Wilson, Registrar and CEO. The Ontario College of Teachers. 2004.

¹¹ Ministry of Education. Fifth Discussion Paper. Teacher Excellence: Unlocking Student Potential Through Continuing Professional Development. August 16, 2004. (v.2).

¹² A New Teacher Induction: Growing Into The Profession. Doug Wilson, Registrar and CEO. The Ontario College of Teachers. 2004.

¹³ Your College and You. College of TEachers. Issue 21, May 2005.

¹⁴ Your College and You. College of TEachers. Issue 21, May 2005.



support of potential administrators is that of “mentoring and the training of staff for mentoring.” If you ask most directors of education, “Do you have mentoring in your board?” They will say, “yes.” However, most directors and superintendents have little information about the requirements of “quality mentor programs.” In spite of all the talk, there is little understanding of the powerful impact that mentoring can have on the culture of schools and education.

The Ministry of Education sites 21 experimental mentoring projects across schools in Ontario.¹⁵ This is a very small start. Less than 20% of new teachers participate in a minimal informal mentoring program. Yet, new teachers themselves identify mentoring as the number two most important support mechanism for them, second only to their own classroom experience.¹⁶ Beginning teachers are asking for this support. The leaders of the day are imploring that educators need to begin a process for mentor support to sustain these new teachers. Robert Hargrove, in his book *Masterful Coaching*, talks about transformational learning and that extraordinary results can happen by impacting people and the way they think and work together through attested mentoring practices.¹⁷

More importantly, mentoring has the potential to develop a positive culture within each school site. A process for mentoring needs to be developed appropriately and the mentors need to be trained. Further, teachers who have embraced the mentoring principles of support have found tremendous carry-over into the classroom. Also, mentoring can be tied quite nicely to portfolio development, personal goals and to the overall vision of individual schools and their community.

Mentoring should also be viewed as a partnership with both parties freely contributing to the issues—a discussion as equals working together with mutual respect. According to Gordon Shea, in his book, *How To Develop Successful Mentor Behaviours*, he states that, “a mentor may still have greater experience, insight and wisdom, but the relationship can be one of sharing (even material

¹⁵ Curriculum Update: Mentoring For New Teachers. In Reference To Discussion Paper On Teacher Excellence. Ministry of Education. sited page 7, December, 2004.

¹⁶ Ministry of Education. Fifth Discussion Paper. Teacher Excellence: Unlocking Student Potential Through Continuing Professional Development. August 16, 2004. (v.2).

¹⁷ *Masterful Coaching*. Robert Hargrove. Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer. San Francisco, California, U.S. 1995.





sharing) rather than only top-down giving and receiving.”¹⁸ This process for mentoring is empowering for all that engage the principles. “A profound solution would be to train teachers in a mentoring process that empowers employees to support each other from within.”¹⁹ It is the best value for your professional development dollar. As an international leader in mentor programs, it is recommended that a process for mentor training is essential so that potential mentors can learn how to become both effective and affective mentors.²⁰ Just because a teacher or administrator is experienced does not necessarily mean that he or she will be a good mentor. Training is an essential part to effective mentor programs. If you want effective results, have a vision for positive school culture and invest in these outcomes.

As we approach an era with 30% of our veteran teachers retiring, it is important that we protect and develop our most valuable and natural resource, teachers. The Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario for the Waterloo Region has made commendable efforts and taken action on the development of a small number of mentors for beginning teachers;²¹ and, the Ontario Secondary Teachers’ Federation had formed committees to talk about it. However, neither group had sufficient financial resources to bring teachers together for training and, again, this training is an essential component to effective mentoring.

Just as, Teacher Advisor Programs have floundered in Ontario (even though they were legislated) because of the lack of training for teachers, so, too, has the climate and culture within schools declined because of the lack of training and support from within. Mentor and coach training for teachers can support the culture of schools and reverse this trend. A positive approach to the business of teaching and learning can empower staff, improve the leadership selection process and create a stronger and more directed move of staff toward professional development.

¹⁸ Mentoring. “How To Develop Successful Mentor Behaviors.” Gordon F. Shea. Crisp Learning. Menlo Park, California, U.S. 2002.

¹⁹ Mentor Leadership Training. Wayne J. Townsend. Peer Mentor.net. 24 Muskoka Court, Kitchener, Ontario, Canada. 2004.

²⁰ Mentor Leadership Training. Wayne J. Townsend. Peer Mentor.net. 24 Muskoka Court, Kitchener, Ontario, Canada. 2004.

²¹ Mentor Leadership Training. Wayne J. Townsend. Peer Mentor.net. 24 Muskoka Court, Kitchener, Ontario, Canada. 2004.





We need to redefine leadership to include the training for specific mentoring principles. As a result of our 25 years of work with school districts, corporations, and community organizations across Canada, we have been able to identify the few, simple principles associated with best practices in mentoring. We've listed them on our web site and for those educators who want to create sustainable mentoring programs to maximize retention of staff, we have designed interactive training seminars.”²²

Formal mentor training through Peer Mentor.net, uses an adult learning model called the “Directed Active Training Approach” where participants not only learn the key elements of effective mentoring programs, but also have an opportunity to gain coaching from experts on their ideas and skills and customize mentoring principles to fit their back-home circumstances.²³ These leading-edge seminars are regularly available in Waterloo, Ontario and Halifax, Nova Scotia and can also be delivered in any area of Canada.²⁴

Every board and every business could empower their employees to be more proactive with professional development activities and the development of a stronger portfolio with the assistance of an effective mentor.²⁵ The mentor process needs to be formalized and mentors need action specific training. With a better vision of what schools could be like, mentoring is cost efficient and can influence the overall climate of a school, retain new staff, and improve staff development. Now is the time for action. We need to redefine leadership to include mentor training principles. New teachers need mentoring support and aspiring principals need mentoring support to become both effective and affective leaders that others will want to follow. The time is now to implement “Mentor Leadership Training.”

²² Mentor Leadership Training. Wayne J. Townsend. Peer Mentor.net. 24 Muskoka Court, Kitchener, Ontario, Canada. 2004.

²³ Mentor Leadership Training. Wayne J. Townsend. Peer Mentor.net. 24 Muskoka Court, Kitchener, Ontario, Canada. 2004.

²⁴ Mentor Leadership Training. Wayne J. Townsend. Peer Mentor.net. 24 Muskoka Court, Kitchener, Ontario, Canada. 2004.

²⁵ New Teachers Need Support: Effective Leaders Utilize The Principles of Mentoring. Wayne J. Townsend. Peer Mentor.net. 24 Muskoka Court, Kitchener, Ontario, Canada. 2004.

