



PD E-News

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Guest Editorial

Mentors: A Drop in the Ocean, a World of Good!

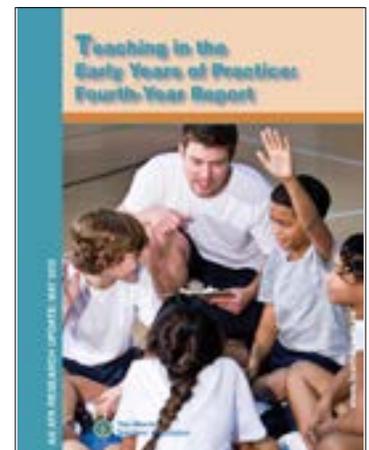
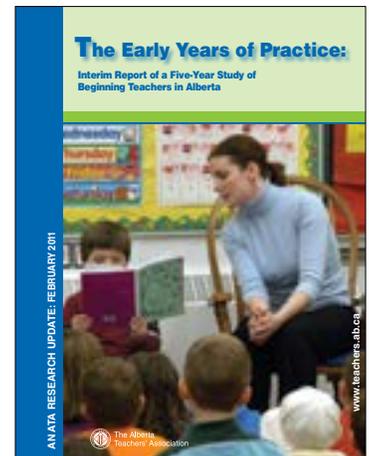
Françoise Ruban, Executive Staff Officer, Professional Development and Government



My apologies to Tara McHardy, author of a recent exemplary article in the *Globe and Mail*, for borrowing her title “A Drop in the Ocean, a World of Good!” The title epitomizes the profound impact that mentoring relationships can have on new teachers, in the beginning and throughout their careers.

Where would we be without mentors who quietly, convincingly and passionately guide us through the frequently perilous waters of our first years of teaching? This is a subject of considerable interest to the profession. The Alberta Teachers’ Association is now nearing completion of the fifth year of its longitudinal study of beginning teachers. Much statistical and anecdotal evidence can be found in two publications: *The Early Years of Practice* (February 2011) and the more recent *Teaching in the Early Years of Practice* (May 2012). Both publications reinforce the idea that a well-planned and well-executed mentoring program is characterized by a supportive district and school administration and provides embedded time during the school day. These characteristics are critical to the success of a mentoring program.

The elements of a successful induction program include an initial orientation to the program for mentors and protégés; opportunities for observation



The Alberta Teachers' Association

by both the mentor and the protégé; ongoing reflective practice, which may be supported by a professional growth portfolio; opportunities for mentors to engage in mentor support activities and for protégés to engage in similar activities with each other; ongoing PD activities for both groups; and the development of a PD growth plan that highlights the mentorship program as a key PD goal.

Within a mentoring program, mentor development includes recruitment, selection, delineation of roles and tasks, careful matching of participants (and remedial processes when mismatching occurs), initial training and coaching strategies, ongoing mentor support, participation incentives and recognition. These are essential elements of mentor development within a successful induction program.

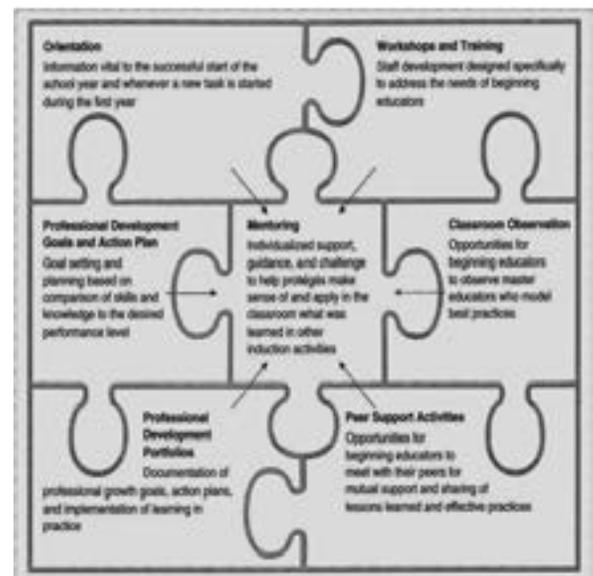
Key education partners—district and school personnel, mentors and protégés, members of local PD committees, provincial Association personnel—need to be part of program planning to ensure a successful program. I have experienced many powerful mentoring moments as a PD staff officer traversing this province to advocate for the benefits of mentoring to the convinced, the less convinced and the not even close to convinced. In my work, I explain the far-reaching advantages and value of providing mentors (who profoundly influence new teachers and ultimately their students) and their protégés with further training.

If I have learned one thing from the mentoring stories I have heard over the past four years it is that collaboration time is critical—and that does not mean the contrived collaboration time found in imposed PD collaboration activities

with predetermined topics and expected outcomes, or the hurried and harried, fleeting end-of-day moments in the hall. Purposeful collegial professional learning opportunities are necessary. Peer partners must have regular opportunities to meet during the school day, to exchange and reflect on their practice, to observe one another and to have insightful, unhurried conversations. The experience of savouring those amazing “aha!” moments will contribute immeasurably to the professional identity and capacity of our newest colleagues. Dedicated time for collaboration is essential. Its dividends in the future are incalculable but very real.

If you are considering ways you can support the development of the newest members of our profession, please contact me at françoise.ruban@ata.ab.ca.

Components of a High-Impact Induction Program



From *Leading the Teacher Induction and Mentoring Program*, B W Sweeny (Corwin 2008)

“Coaching—Collaborating for Success”

Joni Turville, Executive Staff Officer, Professional Development



The Association’s new workshop “Coaching—Collaborating for Success” is designed to help teachers and administrators become familiar with several types of coaching and the supports required for coaching programs to be successful.

Participants will have the opportunity to explore how to design and implement a coaching program in a school and to learn strategies that can be used during coaching interactions. The workshop does not focus on one specific type of coaching but, rather, encourages schools to consider what type of coaching program would be most appropriate for their specific context and needs.

Often, coaching for teachers is equated with mentoring. While the two practices do have some similarities, they are quite distinct. Mentoring is a formal or informal relationship in which a more experienced mentor guides and advises a protégé with less experience. Coaching has a more formal and intentional structure and focuses on sharing expertise rather than experience. Coaching has emerged as a popular method of teacher professional development. It began as a formal area of educational study in the mid-1980s, when Beverly Showers noted that teachers often have difficulty transferring their learning from off-site PD activities to practical instructional strategies in the classroom. Showers proposed

coaching as a method of bridging this gap by following up professional learning with classroom support.

Since then, coaching has been employed as a form of PD for teachers in many different ways. Today, in addition to providing follow-up support to off-site PD, coaching is being used by schools and districts as a means of implementing new curriculum and expanding teachers’ instructional strategies. Some coaching programs are subject-specific and employ coaches with specific expertise in literacy, mathematics or technology.

In 2008, Alberta Education initiated a consultation process with educational stakeholders to envision the future of education in Alberta. One priority that arose from the consultation was the need to make schools and classrooms more inclusive. Alberta Education has been exploring learning coach programs in which learning coaches with experience and expertise in inclusive practices would serve as a resource for other teachers. This initiative has prompted many school districts to explore ways they can use coaching to support teachers’ professional learning. If coaching is a topic of interest in your school or local, you may find this workshop helpful.

To book a workshop, contact Professional Development at Barnett House at 780-447-9485 (in Edmonton), 1-800-232-7208, ext 485 (toll free elsewhere in Alberta) or pdworkshops@ata.ab.ca.

Leader2Leader Mentorship for Administrators



Leader2Leader Mentorship

FOR ADMINISTRATORS

*Are you in your first or second year as a school principal?
Looking for PD to support your leadership development?
Would you like to have a peer mentor?*

The Alberta Teachers' Association, in partnership with Alberta Education, is offering a mentorship program for school principals new to their role. In this pilot project, experienced principals/coaches mentor beginning principals as they develop their leadership practices using cognitive coaching strategies in order to promote self-reflection and professional decision making. The program activities include professional development workshops focused on the Principal Quality Practice Guidelines and face-to-face and online opportunities to collaborate with other Alberta principals. Beginning principals in the program will determine their professional growth focus, based on the Principal Quality Practice Guideline, and considering school context. This individual professional growth plan will guide the coaching relationships.

The program will start in January 2013 and continue to June 2014. The professional development program consists of a minimum of six full-day workshops: three on school days and three on Saturdays (dates to be determined). Participants will be reimbursed for travel expenses and required release time to attend scheduled workshops. A variety of technologies may be used to support the coaching experiences and to keep travel to a minimum.

There is no cost to the program, however, registration is limited to 30 participants.

Applications are available at www.teachers.ab.ca. Please apply by **December 7, 2012**.

For more information, please e-mail Dr. Cal Hauserman, Program Director at cal.hauserman@gmail.com.



Lethbridge 51-5 Mentorship Program Update

Patrick Loyer, Executive Staff Officer, Professional Development



An exciting alternative approach to mentorship of teachers new to the profession is happening in southern Alberta. An arrangement between Lethbridge School District No 51, Lethbridge Public School Local No 41 and the provincial ATA sees a five-year approach as a new and innovative program format for beginning teachers. The 51-5 Mentorship Program steering committee is made up of representatives from the district (including mentors and protégés), the local and the Association. This program has extended the typical two-year term of support to five years. The idea is to provide a longer period in which new teachers can have access to a dedicated mentor. Because recent research indicates that up to one-third of new teachers will leave the profession in their

first five years of teaching, this initiative is designed to enhance support through this critical career period.

Ideally, new teachers and their mentors will work consistently together over the five-year term. With extended mentor support, it is anticipated that protégés will become experienced career teachers who not only remain in the profession, but are also able to one day serve as mentors themselves.

The steering committee is currently engaging in program planning to provide continuous and coherent programming for both the mentors and the protégés.

Upcoming Events

November

- 8-10 English as a Second Language Council Conference
- 9-11 Social Studies Council Conference
- 15-17 Guidance Council Conference
- 16-17 Le Conseil français Conference
- 19-20 Leadership Essentials for Administrators
- 22 PD Facilitators Meeting
- Convention Association Meeting
- 23-24 Fall Professional Development Area Conference
- 30-Dec 1 Invitational Curriculum Symposium

Reminder

If you are a new PD chair, please send your name, local and preferred contact information to barb.bossert@ata.ab.ca.

Webinars for Beginning Teachers



*Joni Turville,
Executive Staff
Officer, Professional
Development*

The Alberta Teachers' Association and the Alberta Regional Professional Development Consortia are cosponsoring a

project that features webinars designed to support beginning teachers. The webinars can be accessed from any computer with high-speed Internet and will provide an excellent opportunity for new teachers to engage in professional dialogue on topics of interest to them throughout the year. Links to information and registration will be posted on the ATA website under PD for Beginning Teachers.

The webinars will be offered approximately once a month until spring 2013. Upcoming webinars are as follows:

November 6, 2012

“Parents and Teachers: Same Goals, Different Roles”

Presented by Dave Sheehan

www.learning-network.org/programs/register/816

December 12, 2012

“Engaging Students—The Art of Effective Instruction”

Presented by Chantel Walker

www.learning-network.org/programs/register/817

Fall PDAC

The Fall Professional Development Area Conference (PDAC) will be held Friday, November 23 and Saturday, November 24 at the Mayfield Inn and Suites, 16615 109 Avenue, Edmonton.

Invitations were sent in September to PD chairs, local presidents, convention association presidents and program chairs, specialist council presidents, regional consortia executive directors and Association representatives, and members of Provincial Executive Council.

For more information, contact Joni Turville, executive staff officer, Professional Development, at joni.turville@ata.ab.ca, or René LaFrance, executive director, Learning Network, at rene.lafrance@learning-network.org.

Global Exploration for Educators Organization

Jesse Weisz, Executive Director, GEEO

Global Exploration for Educators Organization (GEEO) is a nonprofit organization that runs summer PD travel programs for teachers.

GEEO is offering many travel programs for the summer of 2013, including India/Nepal, Vietnam, Thailand/Laos/Cambodia, China, Russia/Mongolia/China, Turkey, South Africa/Mozambique/Zimbabwe/Botswana, Morocco, Peru, Ecuador, the Galapagos Islands, Italy and Costa Rica.

Educators can earn graduate-school credits and PD credits while seeing the world. The trips are 8–24 days long and are designed to be interesting and affordable for teachers. GEEO provides teachers with educational materials and the structure to help them bring their experiences into the classroom. The trips are open to K–12 and university educators and administrators, as well as retired educators. Educators are permitted to bring along a guest.

Detailed information about each trip (itineraries, costs, travel dates and more) can be found at www.geeo.org. GEEO can be reached toll free at 1-877-600-0105.



Succession Planning with Your Committee: Mentoring Local Leaders

Andrea Berg, Executive Staff Officer, Professional Development



The “fear of being replaced” needs to be substituted by a “desire to be replaced.”

—Ginger Brunner

(<http://volunteervictoria.bc.ca/blog/2011/02/09/succession-planning-is-your-organization-ready-for-the-future/>)

Succession planning is a critical area of need in most organizations and can enhance the strength and continuity of Association committees and subgroups. Everyone in the organization has a role to play in finding new leaders for the committee, and recruitment for leadership positions must begin long before the immediate need arises. It is important to begin conversations early in the succession planning process in order to develop concrete steps that will help to ensure the success of volunteer-based committees.

A review of research on the topic of succession planning reveals six areas to consider:

1. Do you have a strategic plan in place?

It is critical to have a long-term (three-year) strategic plan in place that reflects the educational trends and corresponding developments in the committee. A strategic plan should outline the long-term objectives and goals of the committee. Strategic plans must be based on an environmental scan of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

2. Have you identified competencies required of the volunteers to meet committee needs?

Defining the specific set of values, skills, knowledge and experience required of each position on the committee will

help you recruit volunteers best suited for the roles. Volunteers want to know precisely what will be expected of them in terms of skills and time commitment. It is helpful for members of the executive to evaluate role descriptions at the end of each term and to alter them based on their experiences. A review of role descriptions provides a good opportunity to discuss term limits for committee members, allowing for committees to rejuvenate themselves.

3. Do you have a recruitment plan in place?

All committee members must begin identifying a pool of possible replacement members long before they are needed. Networking is one way to begin this process. It is desirable to engage in a one- to three-year “courtship” process with potential recruits that will allow others to see the shared vision for the future of the committee. Consider all of your connections and networks to find potential new members. Pay careful attention at meetings of teachers to identify new faces. Ask other teachers to suggest people who may be interested. Think of those teachers who are comfortable expressing opinions on broad educational issues, who take pride in their work and who exhibit professionalism and passion. It is likely that you already know who would be good candidates. Teachers who become involved in one volunteer position often end up looking for additional opportunities. The 80 per cent/20 per cent trend demonstrates that often it is 20 per cent of the people who do 80 per cent of the volunteer work. Consider inviting members at large to attend regular or ad hoc meetings. After a year or so, encourage them to run for positions. Try to match people with



positions according to their motivation, knowledge, skills, experiences and time.

4. *How do you manage transition and orientation of new members?*

Once new members of the committee have been confirmed, it is important to provide support through the transition and orientation period. Creating a plan for how and when the transfer of knowledge will occur is helpful. Consider how your committee will archive materials to be passed on. Adequate documentation must be in place to identify history, vision, goals and procedures. Consider scheduling overlapping time for shadowing of positions and providing opportunities for mentoring. Gradually increase responsibilities, but be careful not to overwhelm members.

5. *How do you build capacity from within?*

If you invest in your volunteers now, they are more likely to commit to your committee or organization in the

longer term. Explore developmental opportunities that can help build the capacity of the current committee members. For example, webmaster training, writing or leadership courses might be helpful.

6. *How do you value your volunteers?*

The degree to which you value your volunteers affects the recruitment of new volunteers and the retention of existing volunteers, levels of volunteer satisfaction and how well volunteers do their jobs. The way you value your volunteers is essential to succession planning. Recognition or reward may come in a number of different forms. To reduce the possibility of criticism for awarding volunteers with gifts of a perceived value, it is important to be open about how you came to decide on that reward and to include guidelines in your committee handbook.

A thoughtful succession planning process can ensure smooth transitions and develop new leaders who are prepared for their roles in your organization.

