

Introduction

Extra Support for Principals (ESP) is a mentor program created in 1995 to provide support for beginning principals in the Albuquerque (New Mexico) Public Schools. From this program evolved the concept of providing a safe, simple, and supportive approach to mentoring principals. This book is about an approach to mentoring that is designed to provide support, develop leadership, and help alleviate stress for new principals as they transition into their new positions.

As mentor programs develop, they may tend to include other district concerns and initiatives; programs can be laden with other agendas that can overwhelm the neophyte administrator. The Albuquerque principals mentor program has made a conscious effort to avoid a pattern that creates stress rather than encourages growth.

Addressing the issues of principal shortages and attrition were major justifications for developing the program, with an emphasis on respecting time as it relates to both the responsibilities of the mentor and mentee. Stress can be alleviated to some degree with the support of a formal peer relationship. Discussing problems, concerns, and mandates with an experienced colleague can be comforting and reassuring to a new administrator who may feel somewhat isolated. It is the intent of the program to provide mentor support for the new principal without the mentor or mentee sacrificing their individual school responsibilities.

The ESP program continues to have one primary purpose: to provide an unencumbered support system for beginning principals. It is a program designed with a practical “how to” approach rather than a “research shows” process. Although research and best practices were utilized in the design of the program, the ultimate objective was based on the experiences and needs as conveyed by principals dealing with school issues. It is a voluntary program. Participation in the program has been positive because principals know it allows effective day-to-day operations to continue in their own schools while mentor support from a partner school is provided.

2 • Principal Mentoring

The information presented here has evolved over the past twelve years through a process involving research, best practices, and practical experience. That experience has been the catalyst for *Principal Mentoring: A Safe, Simple, and Supportive Approach*. Every aspect of the program process will be presented in a simple format without excessive detail to allow the reader to quickly digest the concept, and perhaps the research

It is sometimes difficult to understand the complexity of keeping things simple.

—CJW

methods, and to permit development of a personalized district mentor-mentee program that encourages the growth of neophyte school leaders in small (including rural) and large school districts.