



ACSA Mentoring & Coaching: Where Do We Stand?

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ACSA Leadership Coaching Director Michael Bossi wrote the following article for EdCal. It is the first in a two-part series to conclude next week.

The ACSA Board of Directors established a Leadership Coaching program in 2006, with the ambitious five-year goal of providing leadership coaching services to any educational leader in California who wanted it.

Almost four years later, we're almost there, in our capacity. Through our partnership with the New Teacher Center, we are coaching principals and assistant principals from San Diego to the north central valley and northern foothills.

We have an Executive Coaching program for superintendents, big and small, rural, suburban and urban, and we offer a New Superintendent Support Program that includes both training and coaching. We are coaching many central office administrators, new and veteran, in curriculum and instruction, human resources, pupil services and special education.

Through our 10 local coaching affiliates, we are at work in Program Improvement schools and districts, in Quality Education Investment Act schools, in schools keeping pace with the increasing Adequate Yearly Progress expectations, and in high-achieving schools. We have more than 70 administrators acquiring their Tier 2 Professional Clear Administrative Services credential through our coaching services, and well over 100 others who are fully credentialed, benefiting from coaching support as they tackle the challenges of site, district, county and state leadership.

ACSA and NTC have trained hundreds of coaches in California. And despite budget constraints, a surprising number of superintendents continue to "find a way" to support the individualized, job-embedded, goal-oriented, and CPSEL-based professional development that coaching provides, creatively using Title 2, Title 1, PI, QEIA and federal stimulus funds.

This year, for the first time, we are providing coaching to a number of leaders who are paying for coaching out of their own pockets, seeing these services as an investment in themselves, in their present success and in their future. This year, ACSA is also starting a new Mentoring Program. Like coaching, this service is available to all educational leaders – coordinators to superintendents, assistant principals to principals.

Mentoring is off the ground in Region 2 and Region 6. A training in early February will enable Region 19 to begin to offer mentoring support. Possibly, Regions 3 and 4 will

move forward with mentor training this spring. Other ACSA regions are expressing interest, and we expect mentoring services to grow.

ACSA/NTC Leadership Coaching and ACSA Mentoring: What's the difference? Many use the two terms, mentoring and coaching, interchangeably. We don't.

Simply put, our mentoring services are aimed to provide educational leaders with professional support, geared mostly to give guidance and feedback on operational/technical/management issues, to address emotional and time management challenges, to promote networking, and to serve as a positive introduction to ACSA.

Mentoring is a rather informal support service and generally is offered between one and three hours a month. Mentors and proteges can communicate face-to-face, by e-mail, by phone, by Skype – any way that suits them, any time that suits them, in any place that fits their lifestyles.

Mentoring has no specific goals, and exchanges between mentors and proteges are pretty much determined by the protege. Mentoring can focus on providing support related to issues and challenges posed by the protege's current position, or can be focused upon securing guidance and accessing mentor experience and connections that will help the protege move successfully toward some future leadership aspiration.

Mentoring is a free service to the protege, provided by the mentor and sponsored by the ACSA region. The mentoring relationship can be rather short term, or can last for many years, as determined by the mentor and protege. Mentors are people who want to reach out and lend support to others engaged in building healthy, effective educational settings for our children. All mentors share a common foundation training and most continue to take advantage of follow-up trainings in mentoring techniques offered by their region and by state ACSA.

Is a mentoring "program" really necessary? I mean, haven't people entered into informal mentoring relationships for years? Of course. I can certainly look back on my 37-year educational career and express sincere thanks to several people who "took me under their wing," "showed me the ropes," and there was no "application," no training, no title given to our relationship. Most of my career I was lucky to be in districts that promoted these relationships. I was often fortunate to find someone I trusted, who also believed in me. But, at more than one point in my career I have found myself alone and adrift, not truly understanding the culture that surrounded me and feeling like I didn't have anyone to whom I could turn.



acsa mentoring

networking growth
reflection focus perspective

I'd be willing to bet there are some folks who feel that way today. The whole idea behind a professional association like ACSA is to ensure that no leader feels adrift or alone. Cultivating and mentoring California's educational leaders is part of ACSA's vision. We believe that mentoring support shouldn't be dependent upon being in the right place and bumping into the right person. ACSA wants every leader, at every point in the leader's career, to have access to a mentor. Our Mentor Program aims to make that happen.

ACSA/NTC leadership coaching is a different experience. Coaches certainly provide similar types of support to their coachees, but the program's focus is more upon "professional development."

Coaching is a more formal service, averaging between three and six hours per month. Most of our coaching tends to address the "big issues" of leadership related to school culture, vision and purpose, instructional practice, student learning, establishing and maintaining deep partnerships with parents and community, and understanding and representing the school in the larger district, regional and statewide contexts.

While the coach is available between sessions by phone or e-mail to meet immediate needs, most coaching takes place face-to-face, on campus, usually during the work day, and often involves collaborative classroom walkthroughs; formal teacher observations and pre/post conferences; and preparation/observation/feedback of coachee meetings with staff, parents, students and community.

Coaching is more embedded in the work life of the leader. Coaching services are goal-oriented. The goals are related to the California Professional Standards for Educational Leaders, but each coachee's goals are different, individualized to coachee experience, to need, to the challenges and issues of one's current position.

Coaching focuses on professional development that supports the coachee's success today, but, just as important, aims to build leadership capacity, independence and self-confidence so that the coachee is equipped for continuous growth and long-term career success.

Our leadership coaching program is generally accessed through our local affiliate coaching programs. However, Sacramento ACSA has the capability to provide coaching almost anywhere. The formal coaching relationship is usually two years, and there is a fee, typically between \$3,500 and \$4,000 per year, as determined by the local program.

A list of our local program affiliates and contact information may be accessed under Leadership Coaching on the ACSA Web site at www.acsa.org.

For those who need it, coaching also offers a pathway to the Tier 2 Professional Clear Administrative Services credential. ACSA/NTC coaches complete a rather extensive foundation training in Blended Coaching techniques and achieve "certification" after a one-year case study coaching experience that results in construction of a portfolio demonstrating competence in applying coaching concepts, skills and resources. Then, coaches are required to participate in formal, ongoing regional training and to engage in structured networking with other local coaches in their affiliate program.

Participation in Mentoring or Leadership Coaching is an indication that one is capable enough to assume a role as an educational leader and strong enough to accept the challenges of leadership, but is also wise enough to take advantage of the selfless support and experience of those who have gone before them.

For more information about ACSA Mentoring, contact Michael Bossi at mbossi@acsa.org or Mary Gomes at mgomes@acsa.org. For more information about ACSA/NTC Leadership Coaching, contact Michael Bossi or Nathan Cross at ncross@newteachercenter.org.