Enhancing Principals' Skills Through Sustainable Mentoring Programs

Webinar Presenter:

Lynn M. Scott, Ph.D.*

NAESP Leadership Development Consultant
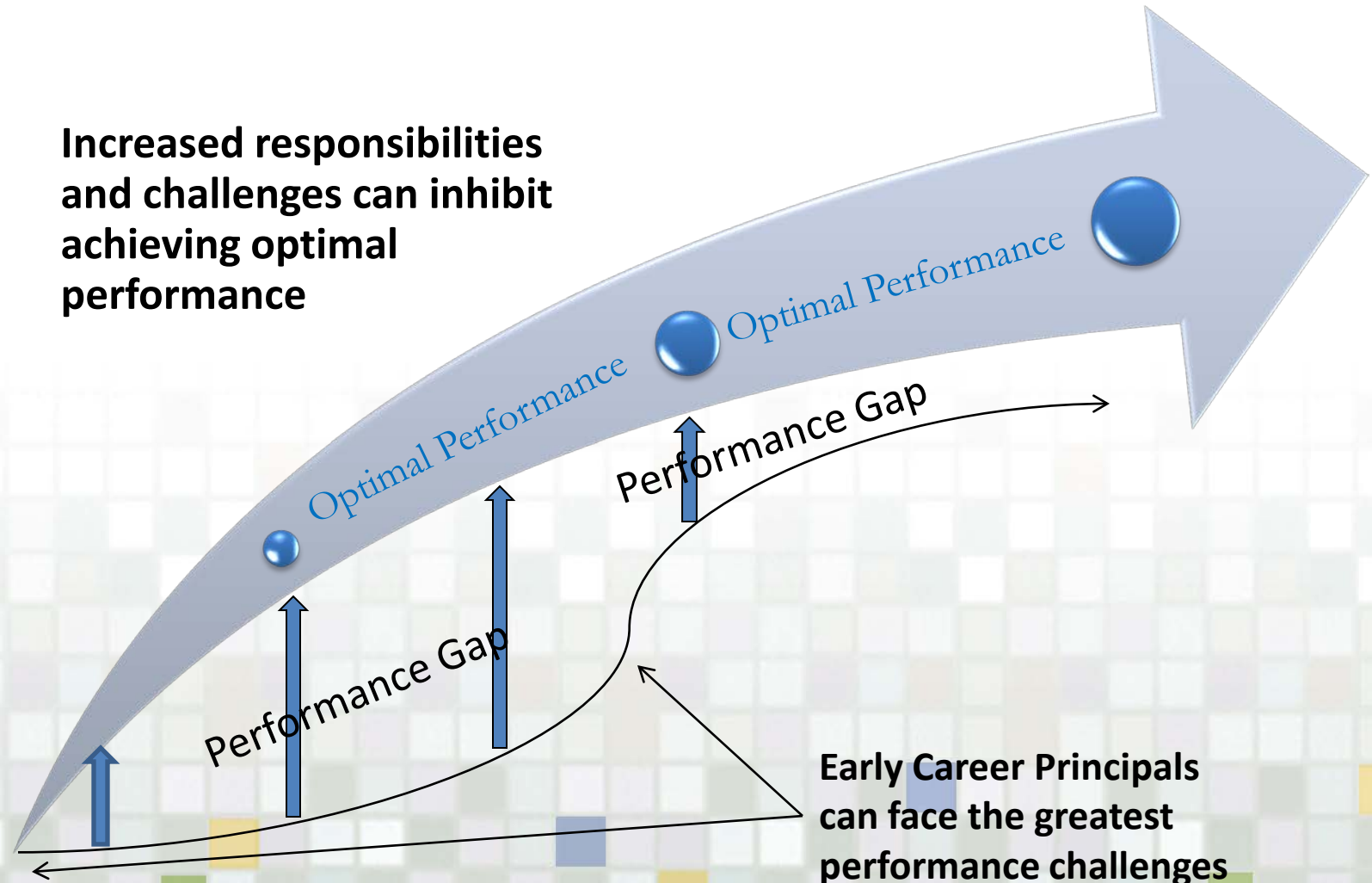
* lscott1120@comcast.net

naesp

Topics for Today's Webinar

- <u>Making the case</u> - Is there a need for principal mentoring?

- <u>What's the problem?</u> - What are the shortcomings of many principal mentoring programs?

- <u>What's the Solution?</u> - How are effective, sustainable, principal mentoring programs designed and operated

The Principalship is Fundamentally a Different Job Than a Decade Ago

Increased responsibilities and challenges can inhibit achieving optimal performance

Optimal Performance

Optimal Performance

Performance Gap

Performance Gap

**Early Career Principals can face the greatest performance challenges**

Principal Turnover Rate Study Highlights Problems for Early Career Principals

- Conducted by the University Council for Educational Administration and The University of Texas at Austin

- Produced Two Publications
  - Fuller, E.J., Young, M.D., & Baker, B. (Spring 2011) Examining the Impact of School Leaders and Their Preparation on Teacher Quality and Student Achievement. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 47: 173-216*

  - Fuller, E.J. & Young, M.D. (2008). The revolving door: principal turnover in Texas. *Texas Study of Secondary Education, 17(2): 14-18.*
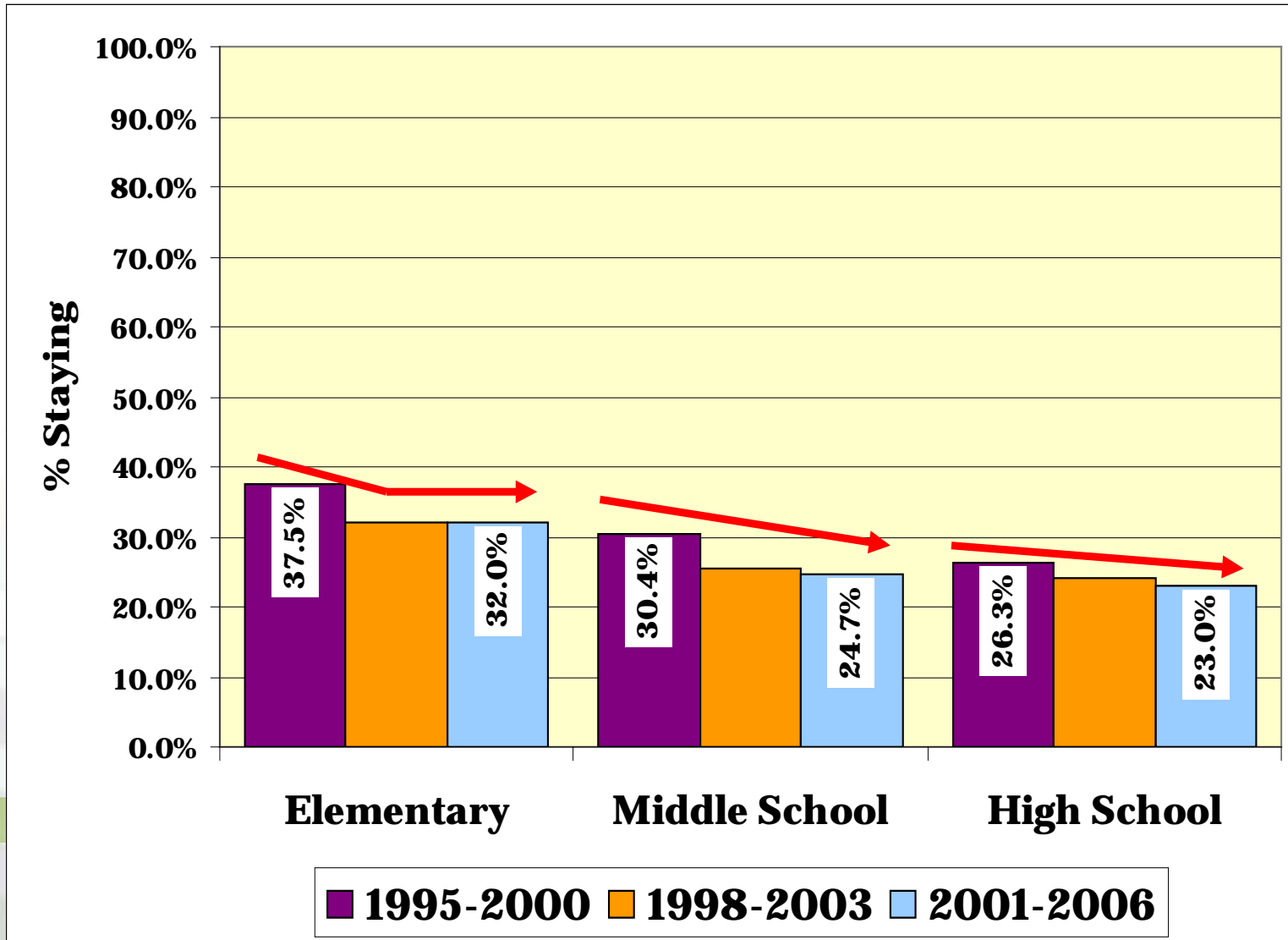
History of Troubling Turnover Rates
Percentage of Principals Returning to the Same School after Three Years
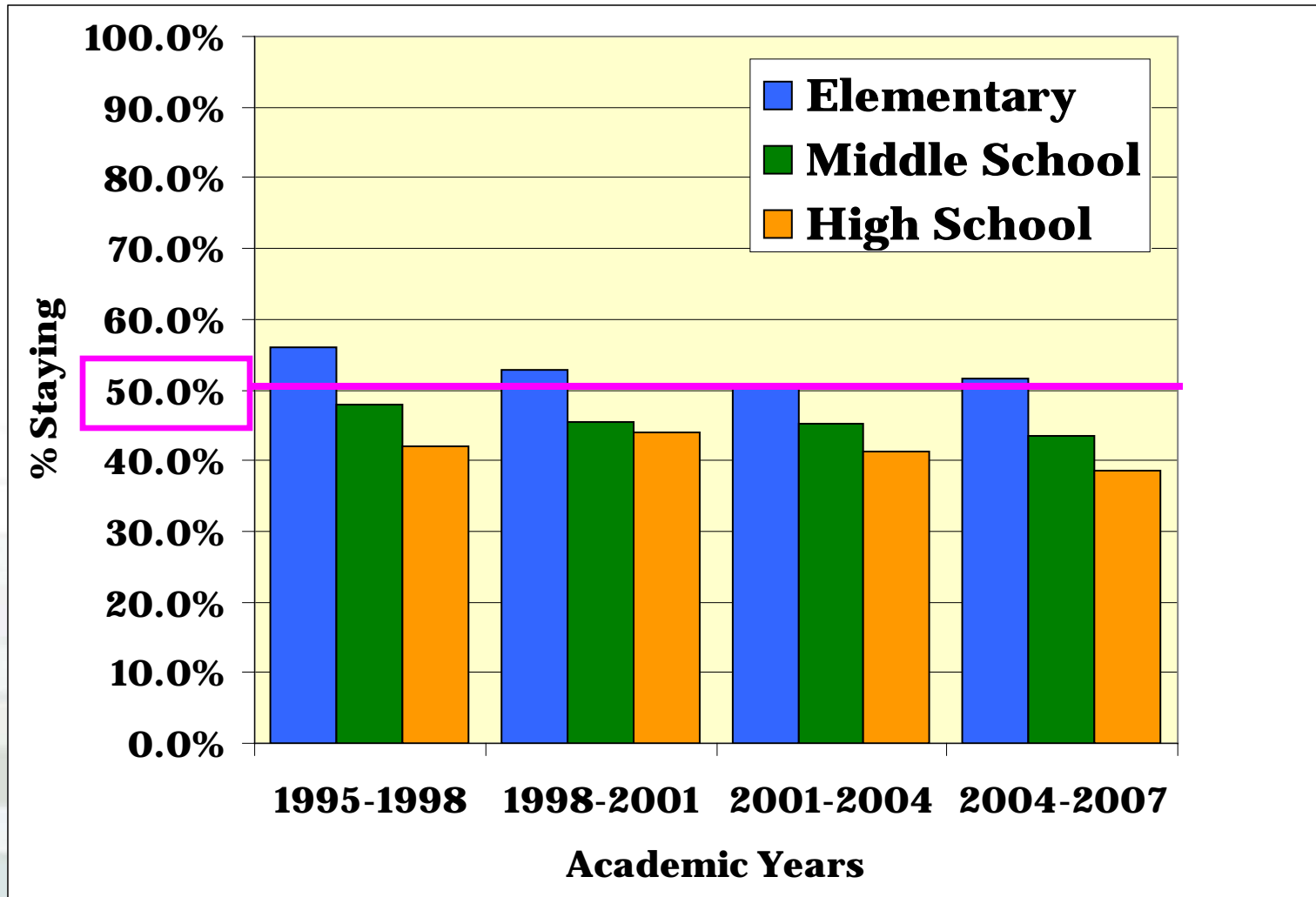
History of Troubling Turnover Rates
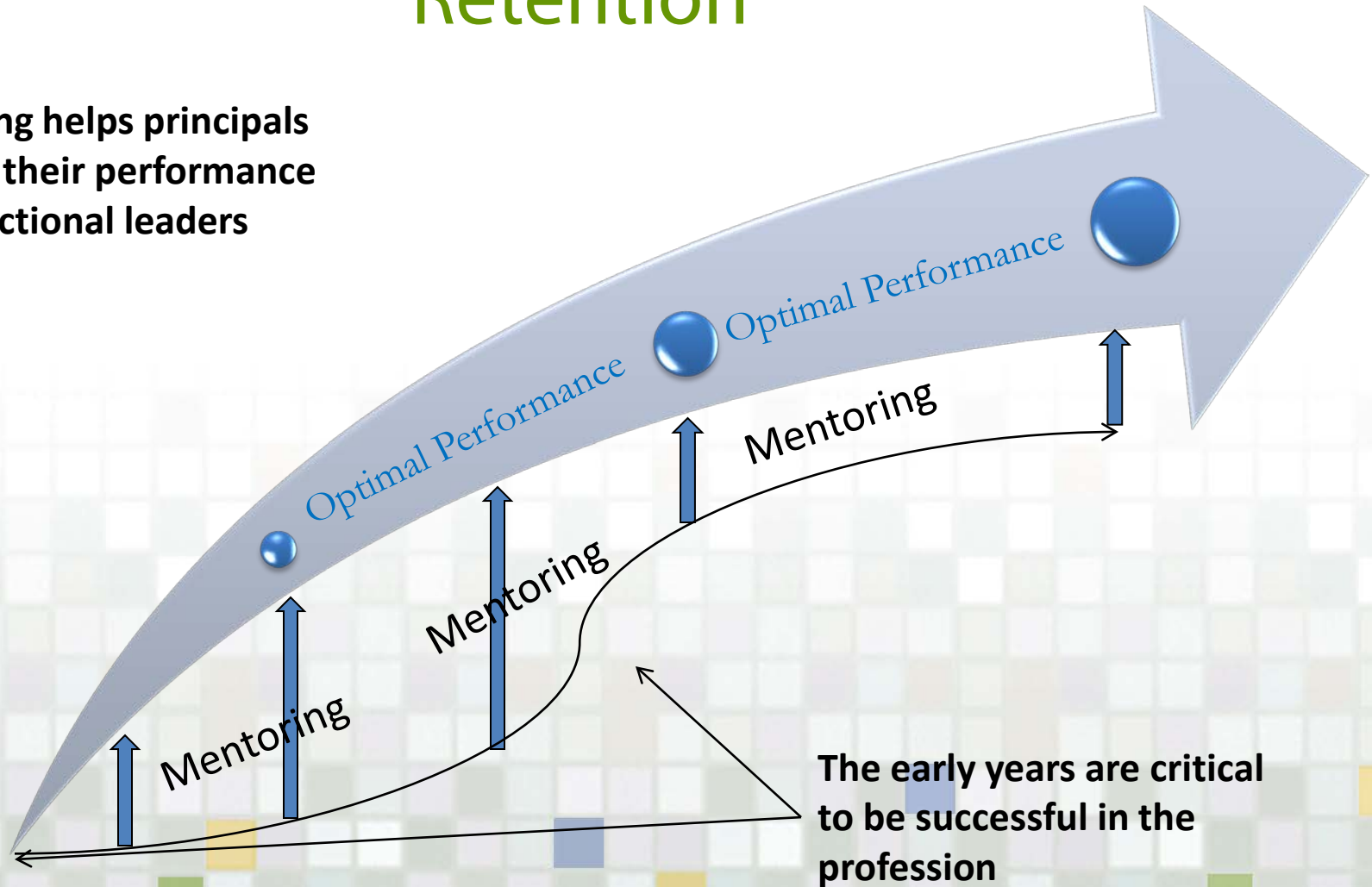## Principal Stability is Declining in Texas

The Study Identifies Three Reasons Why Principal Turnover is a Problem

1. School reform takes time

2. Principal turnover negatively affects teacher retention, teacher quality, and student achievement

3. Stability is needed to develop strong, trusting relationships and more positive working conditions

Principal Mentoring Should Be Designed To Enhance Performance and Increase Retention

Mentoring helps principals improve their performance as instructional leaders

Optimal Performance

Optimal Performance

Mentoring

Mentoring

Mentoring

Mentoring

The early years are critical to be successful in the profession

National Trends Around Mentoring Policy and Practice

- Roughly half of the nation's states have adopted mentoring requirements for new principals.

- Some form of mentoring is now required in at least 30 states.

- There is heightened appreciation and understanding of the critical role school leaders can play in sparking learning improvements.

- More tools and research are available to help make mentoring programs more successful.

Skill-Building Through Mentoring

- Mentoring helps principals learn how to reflect on how they do their job and understand their leadership style and development needs.

- Mentored principals are better able to develop instructional focus, clear missions, and increased collaboration that can lead to improved student performance.

Wallace Foundation Project

Problem: An examination of a sampling of mentoring programs across the country indicates there's a wide variation in quality and likelihood for sustainability.

Project Question: What can be done to improve the quality and increase the sustainability of mentoring programs?

Improving the Quality and Sustainability of Mentoring Programs

Wallace Foundation Project Gathered Information About
Mentoring Programs From Multiple Perspectives and Sources

National Survey

- Schools districts with mentoring programs
- School districts without mentoring programs
- 218 responses from at least 1 district across 40 states

Interviews

- Past Wallace grantee mentor program coordinators
- Program coordinators who have never received a Wallace grant
- Mentor program coordinators in three leading corporations
- Total of 14 interviews across 9 states and three industry sectors

Both Sources of Data Informed Deliberations About Enablers of and Barriers to Sustainable Mentoring Programs

Project Design

Survey and Interviews Sought to Learn Whether Mentoring Programs Had The Following Core Components; Whether the Presence or Absence of the Components Affected Sustainability; and Whether Mentoring Programs Provided Unique Value

Organization	Mentor Cadre	Mentor Training	Mentor Assignments	Evaluation
•Administration •Allocation of Funding and Resources •Accountability Process •Legitimacy through policies & laws •Active stakeholder participation	Formal Process for Recruiting and Selecting Mentors	•Training in Mentoring Skills •Training in Policies & Programs Affecting Principals' Schools	Presence of a Formal Process to Match Mentors and Mentees	•Principals' Development •Organizational Effectiveness •Mentor Selection •Mentor Training •Mentor Assignments

Important Findings

Survey Results: *Despite the national awareness of the importance of mentoring, we were surprised to find that only 41% of the survey respondents had active mentoring programs.*

- *21% of the programs were not funded*
- *24% of the programs did not assess their mentor's performance*
- *26% of the programs dedicate funds to program evaluation*
- *32% did not expect to have the necessary financial resources to sustain the program over the next 5 years*
- *There were different program designs and administration approaches*

Important Findings

Survey Results: The 128 respondents who did not have mentoring programs were asked about factors that would affect the creation of a program and…

- *88% said that they would not be able establish a program because they lacked the necessary the financial resources.*
- *55% said that if they established a program they would not have the necessary financial resources to sustain the program for 5 years.*
- *45% envisioned that they would dedicate funds to program evaluation*

Effective Practices
From The Survey

What components were critical or important for existing programs?

- – *Formal designation of an administrator or staff for the mentoring program (89%)*
- – *Active endorsement of the program by key stakeholders (94%)*
- – *Evaluating the mentor program's capability to achieve principal development goals. (88%)*
- – *Evaluating mentor training effectiveness (85%)*
- – *Summative assessment of principals' growth as instructional leaders (85%)*

What components were critical or important for envisioned programs?

- – *Formal designation of an administrator or staff for the mentoring program (97%)*
- – *Active endorsement of the program by key stakeholders (56%)*
- – *Evaluating the mentor program's capability to achieve principal development goals. (87%)*
- – *Evaluating Mentor Training Effectiveness (86%)*
- – *Summative assessment of principals' growth as instructional leaders (88%)*

Effective Practices

Interviews Identified Sustainable Programs That Incorporate Additional Core Components In Their Programs

- Rigorous Process for Recruiting and Selecting Mentors

- Formal Process To Match Mentors and Mentees

- Establishment of opportunities for ongoing mentor interaction and learning.

- Integrating mentors in broader roles of leadership development and school improvement.

Effective Practices
From Industry Mentor Program Interviews

Industry Interviews Surfaced Characteristics That Principal Mentoring Programs Should Seek To Achieve

- Mentoring programs are tied to the company's culture of sustained investment in their workforce

- Mentoring programs develop employees' performance in alignment with business strategy and business practices.

- Mentoring programs evolve based on program assessments, experience, company needs, and employee needs

Effective Practices
From The Survey

What Standout Features Do Mentoring Programs Possess For Principal Development and What Features Do Mentoring Programs Share With Other Types of Development?

- Asked survey respondents to check all of the features they thought applied to Mentoring, Job Embedded Professional Learning Communities, and Traditional Off Site Training

- Features could be assigned to multiple categories

- We were able to identify features that the majority assigned to mentoring

Effective Practices

**Surveys and Interviews Surfaced the Unique &
Distinct Contributions Mentoring Plays in Principal
Professional Development**

Mentoring Programs' Distinct Value

- Provide principals with strategies to confront specific needs of schools

- Offers principals with expertise that can accelerate their development

- The content shared during mentoring is linked to strengths or weaknesses of the principal

- Mentoring is responsive to principals' learning and development needs

Top 5 Characteristics That Strongly Distinguish Mentoring Programs From Traditional Development *

1. Content is linked to strengths or weaknesses of principal

2. Ensures that principals use what they learn to improve their leadership and teaching effectiveness

3. Ensures that principals' applications of what they learn increases student learning and achievement

4. Can be customized

5. Structured to encourage principals to take collective responsibility for district-wide improvements in student learning

* List of Characteristics with the greatest difference in responses between Mentoring and Traditional Development Programs

Effective practices

**Surveys and Interviews Surfaced the Unique &
Distinct Contributions Mentoring Plays in Principal
Professional Learning**

Mentoring Programs' Distinct Value

- Provide principals with strategies to confront specific needs of schools
- Offers principals with expertise that can accelerate their development
- The content shared during mentoring is linked to strengths or weaknesses of the principal
- Mentoring is responsive to principals' learning and development needs

Top 5 Characteristics That Mentoring Shares With Job Embedded Professional Learning Communities*

- Availability fits principals' schedules
- Geographically close to principals needing development
- Can be customized
- Insures principals use what they learn to improve their leadership and teaching effectiveness
- Provides principals with the strategies to confront specific needs of their schools

* (Survey response difference is ≤ 2%)

Main Challenges

These Barriers to Sustainability Need to be Aggressively Removed

Poor Organization	Mentor Cadre With Time Constraints	Incorrect or No Mentor Training	Ad Hoc Mentor Assignments	Limited or No Evaluation
• Absence of clear vision and goals • Overestimation of program requirements • Lack of integration with other professional learning programs • Absence of funding and resources • Low level of stakeholder commitment to provide either time for sitting principal mentors or funding for the program	• Over use of sitting principals when trained retired principals or other community leaders could be used	• Using mentors without recent and relevant knowledge about mentoring skill and district policies	Failure to use a matching process based on the needs of the principal and the characteristics of the mentor	• Principals' Development • Organizational Effectiveness • Mentor Selection • Mentor Training • Mentor Assignments

Project Conclusions

**The Best Practices Leading to Sustainable Mentoring
Programs Rely on the Following Components**

*Organization

- Dedicated Administration
- Ongoing Funding & Resources
- Accountability Process
- Legitimacy through policies & laws
- Active stakeholder participation

*Mentor Cadre

Formal Process for Recruiting and Selecting Mentors among Sitting Principals & Other Mentor Prospects

*Mentor Training

- Training in Mentoring Skills Based on a Mentor Professional Development Plan
- Training in Policies and Programs Affecting Principals' Schools

*Mentor Assignments

Presence of a Formal Process to Match Mentors and Mentees Based on a Common Language

*Evaluation

- Grounded in a Professional Learning System Focusing on:
- Principals' Development
- School Effectiveness
- Mentor Selection
- Mentor Training
- Mentor Assignments

NAESP Wants to Build Sustainable Mentoring Programs That Enhance Performance

- NAESP's Early Career Supports Mentoring Program will:
  - Leverage the NAESP mentor certification program to build and enhance a national mentor cadre.
  - Enhance the process for training and matching mentors with principals
  - Establish a network of educational supports for early career principals

- NAESP's goal is to establish sustainable mentoring programs that are governed by early career principals' development needs and comprehensive program evaluation.

- NAESP and its state affiliates will insure that mentoring programs have the critical components for effectiveness and sustainability.

- For more information contact: Dr. Christine Mason, NAESP Associate Executive Director for Research and Development. christine.mason@naesp.org