

CHAPTER IV

The Role of the Superintendent Mentor



Good mentoring depends on a reciprocal learning relationship between the new superintendent and the mentor. Together you form a partnership to work collaboratively on achieving mutually defined goals that focus on developing your skills, abilities, knowledge and thinking. (Zachary 2009).

The Mentor-Match

One of the most valuable components of the Executive Leadership Series for Onboarding New Superintendents is the Mentor-Match of a first-year superintendent to an experienced superintendent mentor.

Serving as the chief executive officer of a school district is a challenging, daunting and gratifying experience, and it can also be a lonely one. Things happen that cannot or should not be shared with subordinates but would only be understood by someone in a similar position.

The mentor is key to helping the new superintendent navigate the superintendency and learn what works and what doesn't work within the school culture. Research conducted by one of the authors shows past participants gained the following from their mentor (Caldwell, 2015):

1. Created a focused and strong framework of support that successfully guided them through their first year as superintendent.
2. Gave confidence and direction for year two.
3. Expanded their network of colleagues from whom they could seek additional support.

This relationship has proven to be one of the most powerful sources for individual growth and performance among Kentucky's first year superintendents.

Matching Mentors and New Superintendents

KASA's program staff matches first-year superintendents through a variety of means that require different levels of consideration. Mentors are identified, selected and assigned following discussion with the KASA chief executive officer, general counsel, the director of executive coaching & mentoring, and the new superintendent. When possible, matches are made with pairings of similar districts.

The Onboarding Program has been an invaluable resource during my transition into the superintendent role. Having access to experienced leaders who genuinely understand the challenges and responsibilities of the position made a world of difference. The cohort provided not only practical insights and guidance, but also a strong network of peers and mentors who continue to support and encourage one another. It's reassuring to know you're not navigating this journey alone.

-Superintendent
Greg Conn

Knott County Schools

Cohort #13

The most successful matches are those that balance the following:

1. Mentor's expertise and strengths aligned to the participant's growth areas
2. Mentor and participant districts who are in close geographical proximity

This chapter is written especially for mentors who are matched to first-year superintendents enrolled in the onboarding program. It contains detailed information about mentor qualifications, essential duties, a pre-flight checklist for the first meeting, Individualized Learning Plan (ILP) development, and timelines. Most importantly, essential details and tools for supporting you as a mentor in the onboarding program are included.

Steps for Getting Started

The following steps will prepare you to mentor your new superintendent:

1. Read this guide in its entirety for full understanding of the program.
2. Contact your new superintendent by phone within one week to begin building the relationship and planning the schedule.
3. During your first call, remind your new superintendent to read this guide.
4. Schedule your first meeting with your new superintendent within one month to build your relationship and confirm the overall schedule.
5. Add the training dates located on pages [18-19](#) to your calendar to help support your new superintendent.
6. Ensure your new superintendent is prepared for in-person sessions as noted on pages [20-21](#) of this guide book.
7. Ensure you have access and are familiar with your new superintendent's digital portfolio using the SuperEval platform.
8. Ensure your new superintendent completes the pre-program self-assessment tool and shares the results with you.
9. Review the Essential District Data list located on pages [39-41](#).

I consider myself truly fortunate to have had a mentor who was readily accessible—whether by text, phone call, or email—whenever I sought guidance or support. I cannot imagine navigating the challenges of my first year without his steady leadership and willingness to invest time in my development. His mentorship has been instrumental in helping me build the capacity to lead effectively and serve the needs of our district community with confidence and clarity.

- Superintendent
Wendy Duvall
Owensboro Ind. Schools
Cohort #13

Overview of Mentor's Role and Responsibilities

Mentors serving in KASA's onboarding program are experienced, successful superintendents who volunteer to serve in this capacity and have two or more years of experience as a superintendent or are recently retired from a Kentucky school district. Mentors complete a required training program annually and are among the state's most successful superintendents.

Mentors guide new superintendents through a successful first year, providing a continuum of ongoing support and just-in-time learning. The mentor should meet in person at least once each quarter with the new superintendent in his or her district (initial, ILP, board meeting & Capstone) and communicates frequently to provide guidance and counsel. Note that joint attendance at a cooperative meeting does not take the place of a visit to the district.

Essential Duties for Successful Mentoring

The mentor's duties focus on three distinct areas:

1. Understanding the onboarding program's focus and available tools
2. Helping develop the new superintendent's ILP
3. Effectively guiding and evaluating the new superintendent's growth over time and offering a knowledgeable and empathetic ear for those issues that cannot be aired within the district

The detailed job description is located in the [Appendix](#).

To learn more about the value of the program click [here](#).



Overview of Mentor's Role and Responsibilities

Mentor's Checklist

The following checklist has been designed to assist you in supporting your new superintendent while serving as a mentor:

MENTOR DUTIES	ACTION ITEM
1. Understand the onboarding program's focus and tools. a. Participate in initial training, refer to mentor resources, and implement examples of best practices that are provided throughout the year. b. Access and use state data and survey information to effectively engage superintendents in discussions leading to understanding the district's profile, needs, and possible action items. c. Communicate quarterly with the executive coach to discuss and monitor success of your mentorship. d. Attend continuing professional learning with the new superintendent when possible. e. Be available in person, by telephone, email and virtually to support the superintendent. f. Possess good working knowledge of new superintendent's e-portfolio.	☐ Implement best practice strategies for mentors as shared through emails and other resources. ☐ When unavailable to attend, connect with your executive coach or program staff for updates and new information. ☐ Access, understand and use district data to involve the new superintendent in the process. ☐ Engage the superintendent in making data driven decisions for developing goals and taking action. ☐ Communicate quarterly with your executive coach and review action item checklist progress. ☐ Be available and accessible through face-to-face, email, mobile device and connect.kasa.org so that superintendents know they have access to you.

Mentor Checklist continued

2. Assist the new superintendent in developing his or her Individual Learning Plan (ILP)

- a. Utilize the pre-program self-assessment tool to determine growth areas for inclusion in the plan.
- b. Use the results of state data and survey data to develop the ILP with SMART goals (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound).
- c. Apply a reasonable timeline to the plan and set expectations for accountability to complete the plan.

3. Effectively guide and evaluate the new superintendent's growth over time.

- a. Support and guide the superintendent in the development of an e-portfolio based on the goals of the ILP. The professional Growth Plan (PGP) and 30-60-90 Plan must be completed by September 15.
- b. Throughout the year, assess incremental growth toward the goals.
- c. Evaluate the superintendent's success in growth toward the goals of the ILP by reviewing the e-portfolio prior to attending the portfolio review with the local school board.
- d. Visit the new superintendent quarterly in his or her district and attend board meetings to support and monitor superintendent presentations.
- e. Supervise the new superintendent's work and provide constructive feedback quarterly or more frequently if needed.
- f. Provide quarterly reports and a final evaluation to the executive director of coaching & mentoring.

- ☐ Help the superintendent build the ILP, PGP, and 30-60-90 Day Plan he or she develops with their board.
- ☐ Utilize the pre-program self-assessment tool to determine growth areas for inclusion in the plan.
- ☐ Ensure district data is reviewed within the first two months and substantive goals developed for the ILP.
- ☐ Help develop a personal timeline with milestones for the completion of key action items, ILP, submissions and the final Capstone presentation from year one.
- ☐ Make your first contact within the first week after notification and schedule your first in person meeting within the first month.
- ☐ Ensure artifacts representing evidence of growth toward an ILP goal are uploaded in the e-portfolio.
- ☐ Monitor progress of uploading artifacts on a continuous basis to track growth within each individual goal.
- ☐ Work with the superintendent on a continuous basis throughout the year to track growth within each individual goal.
- ☐ Assist in the development of the final Capstone of Learning presentation.
- ☐ Ensure quarterly meetings by scheduling in-district visits and attendance at board meetings.
- ☐ Schedule time to prepare appropriately for upcoming discussions.
- ☐ Respond to questions within 24 hours.
- ☐ Set clear next steps to close regular discussions.
- ☐ Follow-up on commitments.
- ☐ Submit quarterly reports to the director of executive coaching & mentoring October 1, December 1, April 1, and July 1 using the Mentor Quarterly Report template located in the [Appendix](#).

Connecting with Your New Superintendent

Following notification of the mentor assignment, contact your new superintendent to begin developing a relationship and establish rapport. Schedule your first meeting within the first month of your assignment. As one who walked the path of the new superintendent, you will share your experiences and expertise to challenge him or her toward achieving the goals of the ILP and completing the onboarding program.

All too quickly, your new superintendent will begin feeling overwhelmed and somewhat alone. It is important to spend time at your first meeting establishing your schedule for the year and the best way to communicate with each other. Email addresses, mobile phone and office numbers, and a preset schedule for the year will be critical.

While the relationship you develop will last a lifetime, it is also the cornerstone of your new superintendent's success.

One of the great things about the cohort is the relationship you make with your superintendent mentor. You can always pick up the phone and ask for advice, bounce ideas off each other, share documents, and vent. Your mentor is a resource, but in the end, you become friends. The relationships you make with your mentor, coaches and fellow superintendents through the program will help you get through your first year successfully.

- Superintendent
Tommy Burrough
McLean County Schools
Cohort #7

Pre-flight Checklist

This pre-flight checklist contains key discussion items for your mentor-new superintendent meetings. The mentor shall discuss every pre-flight checklist item with the new superintendent during their initial visit with the new superintendent.

First Call - within the first week

- ☐ Share your professional experiences and background.
- ☐ Determine ground rules, confidentiality, and expectations for the relationship.
- ☐ Establish a tentative meeting and checkpoint schedule for the mentor and mentee.
- ☐ Remind your mentee to read the entire eBook and schedule your first in-person visit.

First Visit - within the first month

- ☐ Review the Self-Assessment Tool results with the new superintendent.
- ☐ Establish superintendent-board leadership guidelines and methods for communication.
- ☐ Establish goals and review timelines of the onboarding program for the mentor and the mentee.
- ☐ Review the Kentucky Department of Education's [Important Due Dates for Superintendents](#).
- ☐ Discuss any district personnel challenges and opportunities.
- ☐ Examine current or pending legal issues.
- ☐ Review district budget, tax rates and bonding capacity.
- ☐ Assist with the set-up of the ILP. (The PGP and 30-60-90 Plan are due by September 15).
- ☐ Identify the Cooperative the new superintendent will attend.

Ongoing Visits - a minimum of one each quarter

- ☐ Discuss district assessment data including test score results and remediation needed.
- ☐ Assist with the continuing development of the ILP.
- ☐ Enhance superintendent-board leadership and suggest methods to improve communication.
- ☐ Discuss development of school board agendas and meeting facilitation support with the chairperson.
- ☐ Discuss district climate, possible morale boosters, celebrations, recognitions and early wins.
- ☐ Share professional learning and networking opportunities.

Pre-flight Checklist Continued

- ☐ Share professional learning and networking opportunities.
- ☐ Discuss superintendent participation in civic organizations, visibility, and community leadership.
- ☐ Discuss pupil attendance and enrollment data.
- ☐ Examine the district certified evaluation plan.
- ☐ Discuss other items noted in the Essential District Data section at the end of chapter two.
- ☐ Continue reviewing district budget and bonding capacity.
- ☐ Remind the new superintendent that he/she is expected to review progress on one Standard each month at the Board meeting.

Communication, meeting in-person, and connecting virtually are key to your new superintendent's success. Be sure to plan the year in advance as soon as possible.

Confidentiality and Trust

Confidentiality and trust go hand-in-hand in a mentoring relationship. Neither the relationship nor the outcome will reach its full potential without these important elements. Confidentiality is a component of ethical behavior and part of the best practices for ethics outlined in chapter two of this book. A promise of confidentiality builds trust between the mentor and the new superintendent.

Be sure to discuss confidentiality during the initial meeting, identifying those items to remain confidential. Your new superintendent will need reassurance that he or she can speak freely without worrying what may be shared with others. With trust driving the relationship, candid conversations will take place and you will be there to help as a mentor.

Quarterly Reporting

Mentors must complete and submit a quarterly report detailing all interactions and discussion topics with their new

superintendents. The reports are collected and compiled for use in the final evaluation and determination if the new superintendent successfully completed the onboarding program. Reports should be submitted to the director of executive coaching & mentoring on the following dates:

1st quarter	October 1
2nd quarter	January 1
3rd quarter	April 1
4th quarter	July 1

The Mentor Quarterly Report template is located in the [Appendix](#) (KASA Quarterly, 2014).

Accessing the Digital portfolio

Stay in touch and keep abreast of conversations with new superintendents at connect.kasa.org, a vibrant online community platform for collaboration and resource sharing among first-year superintendents, their mentors, the director of executive coaching & mentoring, and program faculty.

In addition, your new superintendent's ILP requires an electronic portfolio of artifacts for showing progress on the standards as listed on the ILP rubric and the KASA Effectiveness Standards. The digital portfolio is available through the SuperEval platform. It is organized by standard and is designed for your new superintendent to store his or her ILP artifacts and collaborate with you, the director of executive coaching & mentoring and the school board member liaison.

Your new superintendent's ILP requires an electronic portfolio of artifacts for showing progress on the standards. It is designed so that you may assist and collaborate for a strong first year.

connect • kasa • org

[Connect.kasa.org](https://connect.kasa.org) is a secure, private community platform that is purpose-built to improve engagement, promote information sharing, increase collaboration, solve problems, and provide a forum for innovation. Contact one of the KASA staff members listed on page [30](#) or visit www.kasa.org for access information and login credentials.



The online community platform, connect.kasa.org, is also supported on mobile devices. Download the Thrive 365 app from app store.

A mentor community called “New Superintendent Mentors” was created to enhance communication and provide valuable resources and support for those serving as mentors.

Individualized Learning Plan (ILP)

As part of the onboarding program, your new superintendent will design and implement an Individualized Learning Plan (ILP). The ILP is the foundation of the onboarding program and is directly tied to the KASA Seven Effectiveness Standards. The learning plan looks forward to what is to be achieved within the larger framework of the program and is used to develop the superintendent's year-end Capstone of Learning presentation.

Components of the ILP

1. Designed with the support and guidance of the executive director of coaching & mentoring, superintendent mentor, and designated board member liaison
2. Synthesized within the larger framework of the effectiveness standards
3. Aligned to give credence to the new superintendent's personal aspirations
4. Reflected in the 30-60-90-day plan and the PGP written by the superintendent that provides for a set of learning goals to be achieved over the course of the program year
5. Developed to provide an opportunity to build and collect evidence and reflective benchmarks for the new superintendent's evaluation through an e-portfolio

The ILP culminates with a Capstone of Learning presentation to the new superintendent's Board of Education. The Capstone will reflect the year of learning, development, and goals achieved on behalf of the school district. The Capstone is a learning record that looks to what has been accomplished during the first year and sets potential goals for the future. The ILP process can serve as a first-year superintendent's official evaluation within the five effectiveness standards if the Board of Education wishes.

The KASA Executive Leadership Series for Onboarding Superintendents was an invaluable experience during my first year as superintendent. The program provided the support and the tools that I needed to effectively operate a school district. The program's mentor component, which paired me with a veteran superintendent from a similar district, was instrumental in navigating difficult situations and answering any questions that I had. The relationships that I was able to build within the cohort will undoubtedly contribute to my success not just in my first year, but for years to come.

— Superintendent
Billy Edwards
Mayfield Ind. Schools

Cohort #13

*Components of the ILP Continued***The ILP Team**

The ILP team is comprised of the new superintendent, an executive coach, a superintendent mentor, and a school board member liaison. The team's purpose is to provide support, serve as a sounding board and act as a critical friend throughout the new superintendent's first year. The team provides guidance on a daily basis and assists with the development of the ILP and Capstone presentation at the end of the program year, as well as ensures successful completion of the onboarding program.

The team meets a minimum of two times per year, but may meet as often as the superintendent and the executive director of coaching & mentoring deem necessary or is desired.

Superintendent Effectiveness Standards and ILP Rubric

Five Superintendent Effectiveness Standards serve as a framework for understanding the complex elements of the new superintendent's work. The standards include:

1. Strategic Leadership
2. Instructional Leadership
3. Cultural Leadership
4. Human Resource Leadership
5. Operational Leadership

The ILP team is instrumental to the success of a Superintendent. The training sessions are not only engaging and timely but are also directly aligned with the specific demands of each segment of the school year. However, the most invaluable aspect is the unwavering support offered by the team. Whether it be through regular check-ins, in-person visits, or around the clock availability during critical moments, I couldn't be more grateful for their dedication and commitment.

– Superintendent
Rex Booth
Trigg County Schools
Cohort #13

Superintendent Effectiveness Standards and ILP Rubric Continued

The five effectiveness standards and the ILP rubric are very similar with only two exceptions:

1. Dispositions for leadership are embedded in the rubric.
2. The performance rating of “needs growth” in the effectiveness standards is replaced with “threshold” in the rubric.

The effectiveness standards aim to:

1. Help focus the new superintendent on the most important aspects of the job.
2. Serve as a roadmap for ongoing professional growth and effectiveness from career entry through career exit.
3. Form a basis of support from which the ILP team can determine the new superintendent's successful completion of the onboarding program.

The ILP rubric is the foundation of the KASA Superintendent Effectiveness Standards. The standards are also aligned to the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards, the superintendent evaluation document established by the Kentucky School Boards Association (KSBA), the Standards for Quality School Systems-AdvancED, and the North Carolina Standards for Superintendents (adapted from a Wallace Foundation study).

The ILP rubric includes a summary of each standard with an accompanying set of practices and indicators that clarify the levels listed. New superintendents develop lists of potential artifacts for each standard during training sessions. Performance ratings are also included in the rubric. The standards have been cross-walked with the Five Practices of the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) and the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL).

The standards-based model serves to illustrate proficient performance on the part of the new superintendent while recognizing he or she is unlikely to possess all the competencies and skills inherent in each of the seven effectiveness standards. Each new superintendent's ILP team uses the rubric to gauge his or her performance level in each of the standards.

Creating the Capstone presentation was a great way to self-reflect on the school year, and uploading documents for each standard throughout the year gave me a great starting point when I began creating my capstone presentation. The Capstone Presentation was also a great way to review each standard with the Board of Education. It allowed the School Board to not only read some of our team accomplishments, but to see the many pictures and artifacts that were a great representation of those accomplishments!

— Superintendent
Rick Wolf

Dayton Ind. Schools

Cohort #13

Components of ILP Continued

The new superintendent contributes to the rubric by conducting a pre-program self-assessment and provides evidence of his or her performance in each standard area throughout the year. Near the end of the program, each new superintendent, under the guidance of the ILP team, synthesizes his or her own performance against the standards, and shares those results with the board of education in a culminating Capstone of Learning presentation. At this point, the ILP team makes a consensus decision about the new superintendent's successful completion of the Next Generation Leadership Series for Onboarding New Superintendents or will recommend additional time in year two of the program. It is important to note a new superintendent's board of education is still responsible for the annual evaluation, which may or may not be distinct from the ILP team's performance appraisal.

Toward the end of the second semester, the new superintendent participates in a 360-degree review of the leadership practices demonstrated thus far in the new position through the use of the LPI- Leadership Practices Inventory (which has been cross-walked with the KASA Superintendent Effectiveness Standards). Coaches work with the new superintendents providing feedback and mentoring concerning the LPI Practices during the second year.

Completion of the ILP process is required of all new superintendents to comply with the provisions of [KRS 156.111](#) and to maintain certification to serve as a superintendent in the state of Kentucky.

The chart on the following page outlines the process for developing each phase and timeline for the ILP.

Completion of the ILP process is required of all new superintendents to comply with the provisions of [KRS 156.111](#) and to maintain certification to serve as a superintendent in the state of Kentucky.

Timeline for Developing ILP

Phases as a Process	Months (July - June)											
	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J
Phase 1: Collaborate with the ILP Team and discuss the inclusion of artifacts in the digital portfolio based on individual and district needs.	→											
Phase 2: Work throughout the year with the executive coach and mentor to identify and collect evidence based on action items in the ILP. Progress reports are required at the end of each quarter.	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→
Phase 3: Collect and review evidence and offer formative feedback quarterly.	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→
Phase 4: Upload evidence of success for the digital portfolio.		→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→
Phase 5: Review digital portfolio with the executive coach and mentor in quarter 4 and prepare for the Capstone presentation to the board.							→	→	→	→	→	→
Phase 6: Prepare Capstone presentation (digital portfolio artifacts) and receive feedback.										→	→	→
Phase 7: Suggest use of feedback from the LPI to create ILPs and Capstone presentations in future years.											→	→

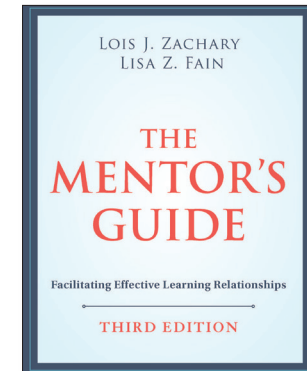
Recommended Reading

The following publications are recommended by program staff and mentors as helpful resources to coaches and mentors:

The Mentor's Guide

by Lois Zachary and Lisa Fain

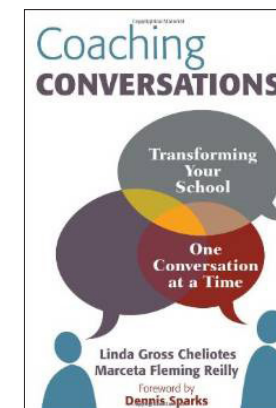
Mentoring is a proven way to promote growth and development in leadership. The book explores the valuable process of mentoring. Leaders in any setting will benefit from the practical tools shared in this book. The hands-on exercises provided in this unique resource will help the mentor successfully navigate the learning journey with their mentee. Using this guide will enhance the professional growth experience for the mentee and will serve as a self-reflection tool for the mentor as well.



Coaching Conversations: Transforming Your School One Conversation at a Time

by Linda Gross Cheliotas and Marceta Fleming Reilly

Backed by research, this book shifts responsibility for instructional improvement from the school leader to the entire school community. It has numerous tips for those who are coaching and mentoring. Learn how to engage your new superintendent to work on a grass roots level to achieve instructional transformation. Includes tips on developing open, reflective conversations, motivating staff, and adopting new habits internally.



The Leadership Challenge®

by James Kouzes and Barry Posner

TLC is a framework that provides the Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership®. TLC® is foundational to leadership and helps leaders transform values into actions, visions into realities, obstacles into innovations, separateness into solidarity, and risks into rewards.

