Professional Development: Implementing a Tutor-Mentor Program

Karen Waddington
EDLD 655, Winter 2011, University of Oregon

Introduction
When beginning a new job, there is always a period of time where one must learn which method is best to tackle a problem at hand in any particular situation. The assistance of someone who has done that same job and who is more experienced in which method works best with a particular issue may be helpful in decreasing the time of transition and limit the mistakes that could possibly be made by a new employee. As a result, the improvement goal selected is to implement a Tutor-Mentor Program for tutors working with college level students in a high stakes, tightly monitored environment.

The environment this program will be implemented in requires tutors to comply with rules of a governing association that include specific organizations as well as to increase satisfaction of both the student and mentor. The current orientation for new and returning tutors is a meeting at the beginning of the school year which reviews rules and regulations, etiquette of a one-on-one tutor/student session, and additional information helpful to the newcomers. The problem that arises from this situation is that tutors come in and out continuously throughout the school year leaving new tutors without the essential information to function in their new workplace most efficiently.

Finding the right mentors could greatly benefit the program as a whole. It has been stated that “successful mentors have many important aptitudes, but above all they are exceptional educators with a commitment to learning, to personal growth and development (Hanson, 2010).” The outcome of this program, if implemented correctly, will benefit the organizations, the new tutor, the mentor tutor, and most importantly, the students.

Goal and Justification of Program

In order to implement the proposed Tutor-Mentor Program, the organization is interested in implementing a Mentor Program that occurs each year in September prior to the fall academic term. A positive aspect of this event is that it is a fairly comprehensive day full of useful information. A negative aspect is that there is no application of the information to the tutor’s own class. Furthermore, another alternative may be additional professional development throughout the academic term. Professional development is currently on the agenda but is done on an inconsistent basis and only provided, on average, once per academic term. Additional training will be useful.

The purpose of implementing this Tutor-Mentor Program is to provide basic tutoring resources and experiences in order to guide new tutors through their first and second terms with students. The experienced tutor will provide their knowledge as well as examples of effective prior experiences to improve the overall effectiveness of all tutors in the building and therefore passing on the benefits to the students.

Justification for the implementation of the proposed Tutor-Mentor Program comes from the success of the popular Teacher-Mentor Programs. In this particular case, having a mentor will help the new tutors to gain experience, build relationships, and provide support to their peers. Additionally, the mentor will be helpful in reducing the stress and anxiety that new tutors may experience when starting a new job.

The three factors of implementation for a successful mentor program are outlined by Barlin (2010) to include: finding the right tutors to become mentors, aligning instructional-support efforts, and partnering with the organization.

1) The first step of implementation is connecting incoming tutors with the right mentor. Through evaluation of the experienced tutors focusing on observation by organization staff and evaluation by student’s on their experience, a mentor must be nominated by a staff member to ensure quality of tutor-mentor interaction. In connecting a mentor with an incoming tutor, defined as a tutor in their first or second term, the organization will match similar subjects, personally and teaching style of tutors, and level of experience.

2) In the second step of implementation, the instructional support must align with the organizations goals. The mentors will be trained by organization administrators in information that must be shared with incoming tutors, how to best evaluate one-on-one tutor sessions, and scheduling small leadership groups for future professional development. Once trained, the mentor must establish a relationship with their assigned tutees, schedule weekly small group leadership meetings, and establish a schedule of bi-weekly observations for immediate feedback. Ensure that the tutee and tutor are made available with sufficient time to ensure that the tutor provides feedback to the tutee, providing an opportunity to continue to use the resources of the mentor or any other staff in the building.

3) Finally, the administration in the building must be available for partnership with the mentors. It is vital that the learning specialists, academic advisors, and office managers provide effective leadership in implementing this Mentor-Tutor Program. The time and space must be made available through the group leadership meetings and they must be available for addressing any problems a mentor may have.

Plan of Implementation

Instructional and Support Efforts

The mentor will stay with the incoming tutors through two terms when the time is released to continue working with the tools provided including the option to continue to use the resources of the mentor or any other staff in the building.

Resource Impact

The impact of budget resources to implement this program will be very slight. Taking away the fall oriental will reduce cost of having all tutors in the office for eight weeks will leave funds that will become available for the program. The additional time required by both mentors and incoming tutors will need to be covered by the organization. Staffing resources will not be impacted as the program will be using the services of existing tutors by increasing hours worked and duties performed. Scheduling will be minimally impacted as it will be the responsibility of the mentor to schedule evaluations and small group meetings with incoming tutors.

The organization is provided with a decennial-sized budget that will allow them to provide additional resources in order for students to succeed. An initial and continuing investment is needed to provide the best outcome for students in the organization.

Plan B will provide budget resources to implement this program to the fullest extent as possible. The department has identified funding for professional development opportunities that can be used to further improve the program.

References


Projected Outcomes

Tutor Outcomes:
The intended outcome of this program would be to improve the overall effectiveness of tutors from the beginning of their employment as most tutors are employed a short period of time while they are enrolled as students themselves. In a study done on a comparable Teacher-Mentor Program, results showed that the benefits of the tutor, in this case, would include “improvements in teacher style, improvements in their ability to address [student] needs, and increases in their own professional growth and development (Grisham, et al. 2004).” These are results that will benefit the tutor in their current role as well as roles in future employment opportunities.

Organization Outcomes:
The main focus of this organization is to provide academic support for a particular college of students. This organization ensures that every student who has ever been involved receives the best opportunity to accomplish their academic goals and receive a degree. Furthermore, the results of increased student learning may lead to a decrease in need of continuous tutoring, directly effecting the amount of dollars on tutors in addition to increased student achievement.

Mentor Outcomes:
The mentors “are encouraged to become agents of their own growth (Hanson, 2010).” The outcome of this program should provide mentors with “professional, enhanced self-esteem, more reflective practices, and leadership skills (Hanson, 2010).” If even one of these outcomes exist once the Tutor-Mentor Program is implemented, let alone all, the mentor should come out with a positive experience being a mentor and contributor to this program.

Student Outcomes:
The student outcomes are the main focus of this potential program. As has been addressed in the Tutor outcomes, with the hopes that each tutor benefits in a similar way, the student will be the recipient of a higher level of instruction and practice then what is currently available. Another projected outcome of this program would be a decrease in the number of students requiring continuous tutor sessions as a result of the more effective quality within each session.

Outcomes from Mentor Program similar to that projected:

Table 1: Tutors based on the range of scores and test scores (5 strongly agree)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Mentor Mean</th>
<th>New Tutor Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall, the mentoring experience helped me get acquainted with the program</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>4.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My experiences in the mentoring program assisted me in learning how to find an answer to my questions about the program</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>4.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall, how would you rate the mentoring experience?</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>4.47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (Hughes, et al. 2010)

Contact Information
For further information, contact Karen Waddington, kwaddington@uoregon.edu

Image 46x2307 to 308x2550