

**PROPOSAL FOR FUNDING FROM THE VIRGINIA
ASSOCIATION OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
PRINCIPALS & THE VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF
SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS**



**VIRGINIA PRINCIPALS
MENTORING PILOT**

SUBMITTED DECEMBER 2023

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WHY MENTORING FOR VIRGINIA SCHOOL LEADERS?

SELECTED RESEARCH AND RELATED FINDINGS



Research shows that across six rigorous studies estimating principals' effects using panel data, principals' contributions to student achievement were nearly as large as the average effects of teachers identified in similar studies. Principals' effects, however, are larger in scope because they are averaged over all students in a school, rather than a classroom ([How Principals Affect Students and Schools: A ... - Wallace Foundation](#)).

This Wallace Foundation study stated that principals really matter. Wallace Foundation stated, "Indeed, it is difficult to envision an investment with a higher ceiling on its potential return than a successful effort to improve principal leadership."

Gimbel and Gow (2021) indicated that new school leaders are often left alone, serving in isolation, without much-needed support from colleagues serving in similar roles ([Leadership through Mentoring: The Key to Improving the Confidence and ...](#)).

Anderson (2004) stated that "Executive Coaching" is a proven way to develop individual, team, and organizational performance across industries. This Metrix Global study concluded that executive coaching has a 788% return on investment (ROI) based on factors including increases in productivity and employee retention ([Executive Briefing: Case Study on the Return on Investment of Executive ...](#)).

Bonneywell (2017) reported in case study on women leaders who participated in coaching shows that leadership coaching can improve: self-awareness, self-confidence, self-leadership, leadership style, as well as their relationship to power, conflict, and personal life ([How a coaching intervention supports the development of female leaders ...](#)).

Finally, in the 2020 *Principal Attrition, Retention and Mobility Study* by Virginia Association of Secondary School Principals, only one quarter of principals (25%) participating in this Virginia survey responded



that they had been offered coaching and mentoring by their school divisions. Yet nationally, the New Teacher Center in 2014 reported up to 50% of new principals left by year 5 due, in part, to lack of support ([Churn: The High Cost of Principal Turnover - New Teacher Center](#)).

PROPOSED OBJECTIVES OF THE VIRGINIA PRINCIPAL MENTORSHIP PILOT

The Virginia Principal Mentorship Pilot (VPMP) will serve two purposes. First, the VPMP will provide principals, with zero to three years of experience, knowledge, skills, and support throughout their initial appointment.

Second, the VPMP will establish a platform to train mentors to work with zero to three-year principals. After the pilot has been completed, the platform will be used to train additional mentors, building capacity and a scale-up for Virginia’s school systems experiencing a high-turnover of principals.

Most importantly, VMP Principals will participate in professional development that assists in the transition to school leadership, digs more deeply in the realities of principalship, and provides individualized support. The mentoring program will provide a safe space for zero to three-year principals to build their capacity, grow in the role of principalship, problem solve, and engage in inquiry with peers.

VMP Principals will avoid the “silo syndrome” by becoming members of a professional group that fosters collegiality, collaboration, and connections; serves as a source for learning and growth; addresses timely and relevant support; and ensures psychological safety. A short video by [NAESP](#) describes this process well.

DEFINITIONS

LLT:	Leading Learning Training: Pillars, Practices, and Priorities for Effective Principals for Elementary and/or Middle School Principals Building Ranks for Secondary and/or Middle School Principals
PD:	Project Directors (two, elementary and secondary)
LTs:	Lead Trainers (two, elementary and secondary)
PSM:	Principal Support mentor
CS:	Content specialists (three each day of three days of training)
VAESP:	Virginia Association of Elementary School Principals
VASSP:	Virginia Association of Secondary School Principals
VPMP:	Virginia Principal Mentorship Pilot
VMP Principals:	Zero to three-year principals recommended by their Superintendents
WCI:	Weekly check-ins by Principal Support Mentors
MFM:	Monthly formal meeting with principal support mentors
EQ-i 2.0®:	Self-assessment given to all zero to three-year principals and principal support mentors. The pilot may choose to use Clifton Strengths , a similar assessment.

SCOPE AND PROGRAM NARRATIVE

VIRGINIA PRINCIPAL MENTORSHIP PILOT: A RESEARCH-BASED MODEL

The VPMP is modeled after a successful mentoring program for zero to three-year principals in North Dakota, [Leadership & Educational Administrative Development](#). NDCEL (North Dakota Council of Educational Leaders, K12) and NASSP provided support to reduce the cost of the program as well as provide Building Ranks as the training focus.

The first leg of the research-based VPMP is a six-month Leading Learning Training (LLT) based on [Pillars, Practices, and Priorities for Effective Principals](#) for Elementary and/or Middle School Principals or [Building Ranks™ Focuses on Building Culture, Leading Learning - NASSP](#) (LLT) for Secondary and/or Middle School Principals. Middle school principals will be able to select the model that best fits their need (i.e., K-8 Principal vs a 6-8 Principal). All mentors will receive the same training as the principals. For a future scale-up, mentors will already have received the training that they need to deliver quality content to principals.

“NAESP’s Leading Learning Communities (Pillars, Practices, and Priorities of Effective Principals) presents a theory of the principalship organized around three main areas of focus— referred to here as pillars—that represent the “what” of the principalship. These pillars are mutually supportive, mutually dependent, and overlapping; without one, the strength of the other two is compromised. These pillars represent the basis of the three major sections of the publication.

Within each pillar are three key practices; these practices represent “how” effective principals operate. Each pillar and practice is informed by a shared set of priorities. These priorities constitute the “why” of what effective principals do every day; they represent core beliefs about the characteristics, in addition to quality academics, of successful learning communities.



NASSP’s Building Ranks™, an actionable, standards-based leadership framework, helps school leaders in this important role by defining the “what” and “why” of effective school leadership through two leadership domains, Building Culture and Leading Learning.

Based on the real-world experience of a wide range of highly recognized school leaders and extensive research on school leadership, Building Ranks is designed to help principals understand and embrace 15 critical leadership dimensions, including collaborative leadership,

innovation, human capital management, global-mindedness, and more. By identifying which of these dimensions best meets the needs of their school community and their own personal growth as leaders, principals can nurture each individual to live the shared norms, values, and beliefs, and to thrive and succeed in a safe, caring, and high-performing school community.”

Leading Learning (LLT) will engage the cohort members and mentors with content matching the needs of the zero to three-year principal. The VPMP will elevate the leadership skills of new principals to navigate and transition to their new position in the education system and support principal retention.

It should be noted again that VPMP will establish a job-embedded program for future first year principals and will strengthen and grow the leaders of Virginia’s most valued commodity: its children.

The second leg of research-based training, each VMP principal will be assigned a Principal Support Mentor (PSM). [Gimble and Gow](#) (2021) considered mentor/coaching a key enabler for leadership development because the mentee can work privately and individually with his or her coach/mentor to develop specific leadership competencies.



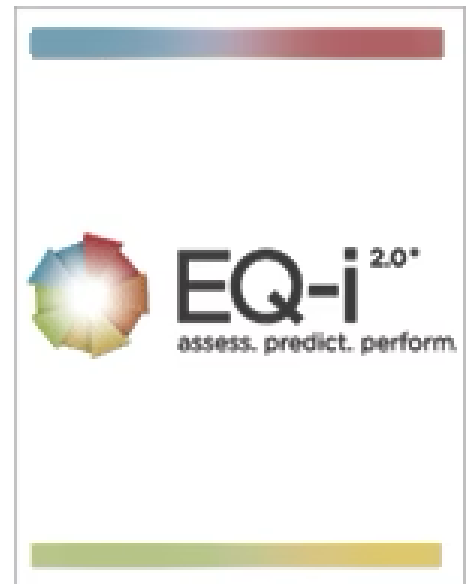


The Principal Support Mentors (PSMs) will incorporate strategies, research, and coaching approaches gleaned from professional training while working with their cohort principals. PSMs will be trained to provide a weekly check-in session and a monthly formal session for each assigned zero to three-year principal. These sessions will be individualized to address the principal’s progress with leadership development, including, job-embedded questions.

PSMs will provide direct, confidential, and individualized mentoring services to new principals and to assist them in applying their learning from LLT sessions.

The third leg of the research-based training utilizes the [Emotional Quotient Inventory 2.0® \(EQ-i 2.0®\)](#). The instrument, a 360° type, will be used VMP Principals. The instrument measures an individual’s emotional intelligence:

“Emotional Intelligence (EI) is a set of emotional and social skills that influence the way we perceive and express ourselves, develop and maintain social relationships, cope with challenges, and use emotional information in an effective and meaningful way. Emotional Intelligence is proven to be a key indicator of human performance and development. People higher in EI communicate effectively, form strong relationships, and create powerful coping strategies. The Emotional Quotient Inventory 2.0 (EQ-i 2.0®) gives a snapshot of an individual’s level of emotional intelligence (EI) using one total score, five composite scores in the areas of self-perception, stress management, decision making, interpersonal skills and self-expression.”



An alternate assessment, [Clifton Strengths Online Talent Assessment](#) may also be used. This assessment is a strengths-based approach to management that has been found to increase performance and lower attrition.

VMP Principals will gain insight and a deeper understanding of how the results of the EQ-i 2.0® or Clifton Strengths affect their workplace performance (e.g. conflict resolution, change

management, teamwork, decision-making and more). PSMs will assist principals in understanding how their EQ-i 2.0® or Clifton Strengths assessment can be used to strengthen their leadership practices.

PRINCIPAL SELECTION

Principals will be identified and recommended by VDOE and their division superintendent. Twenty-four principals to include eight each of elementary, middle, and high school principals will be selected.

Directors from VASSP, VAESP, and VFEL ([Virginia Foundation for Educational Leadership](#)), coordinating with the VDOE, will select twenty-four zero to three-year principals or principals entering their second year in a school that is underperforming.

TIME IS VALUABLE RESOURCE: CONSIDERATION FOR PARTICIPATING IN THE PILOT

As indicated in the timeline(s) below, monthly LLT training will take over a six-month period for both the zero to three-year principals and PSMs. PSMs will also receive an additional twenty-four (24) hours of training on the practice of coaching using Gimbel and Gow's book: *Leadership through Mentoring*.



VMP Principals and PSMs are expected to attend three (3) six-hour LLT in-person sessions and three (3) two-hour LLT Zoom sessions. These sessions will include not only information from one of the *Leading Learning* platforms (Pillars or Building Ranks), but will also include *case study analysis*, review, and time for collaboration and sharing among principals. *Case study analysis* is a critical part of the *Leading Learning* series. Case study analysis include short scenarios that are suited for today's principals. The case studies, written by program staff, will address hot topics from Virginia schools. Discussion will lead to an analysis of action steps that VMP Principals use when making future decisions.

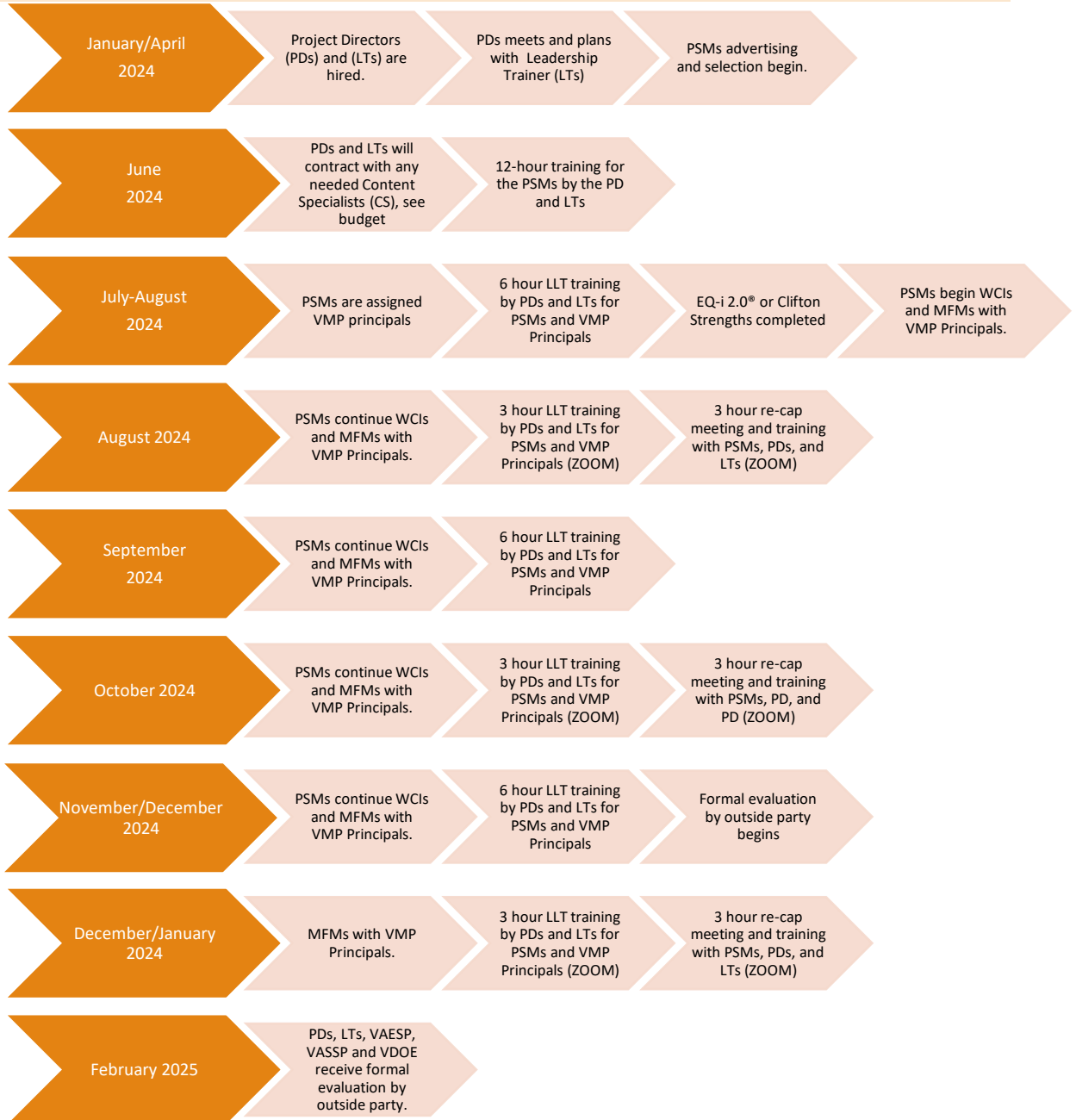
Moving the LLT to actual practice in the principal's first year is critical. PSMs will support Cohort members in developing LLT research-based best practices through weekly-check-ins (WCI) and monthly-formal-meetings (MFM) for six months as indicated in the timeline provided below.



In the timeline below, the Project Directors and Lead Trainers will begin in the Winter/Spring of 2024. Training for the PSMs will begin in June 2024. This would mean that funding and contractual requirements by VDOE would have to be completed by February 15, 2024.

TIMELINE OF ACTIVITIES

PROJECTED ACTIVITIES FOR THE VIRGINIA PRINCIPAL MENTORSHIP PILOT



PDs = Project Directors (two, elementary and secondary)
 LTs = Lead Trainers (two, elementary and secondary)
 PSMs =Principal Support Mentors
 CS = Content Specialists
 VMP Principals = Zero to three-year Principals
 WCI = Weekly Check-ins by PSMs
 MFM = Monthly Formal Meeting with PSM
 LLT = Leading Learning Training
 EQ-i 2.0®or Clifton Strengths = Self-assessment

STAFFING

PROJECT DIRECTORS AND LEAD TRAINERS

Two Project Directors (PDs), one with a focus on elementary and one with a focus on secondary, and Lead Trainers (LTs) will work closely together to develop and implement the LLT training and Principal Support Mentor (PSM) training. Selecting these four personnel are key factors in implementing the pilot. Like program directors, one of the two LTs will have a background in elementary and the other in secondary education. Both will be selected VAESP, VASSP with oversight by VDOE.



The PDs will provide communications, handle logistics, secure interest from superintendents, review applications for mentors and principals from VDOE, match mentors and mentees, and handle related paperwork. The PDs will maintain schedules of meetings and payments and provide supervision during curriculum writing sessions. The PDs will serve as a liaison with both VAESP and VASSP to VDOE.

The PDs and LTs must demonstrate a proven record of content delivery to principals or educators, understanding of adult learning, and be a continuous learner. Both may be retired principals or key instructional leaders with a minimum of ten successful years.

The PDs and LTs will plan professional development sessions (LLT) for both PSMs and VMP Principals that focus on timely and relevant topics and are aligned to Virginia's Principal Performance Standards. Both the PDs and the LTs will deliver monthly LLT sessions in person or virtually. Additional Content Specialists (CS) may be contracted as "guest presenters" when needed. For the VMP Principals, the training will include the EQ-i 2.0® assessment or Clifton Strengths.

In addition, both the PDs and LTs will plan and implement a six-hour initial training followed by three-four-hour recap sessions for PSMs on mentoring. This training will include reference to the EQ-i 2.0® or Clifton Strengths, but PSMs will not complete the assessment. The assessment is for the VMP Principals only.

PRINCIPAL SUPPORT MENTORS



Following the first six-hour LLT training, PSMs will make weekly contacts through brief weekly check-ins and one formal session each month. While close geographic location is a consideration, mentors may not be from the same district as their mentees. Mentor/Mentee pairings need to be same level (i.e., elementary with elementary, secondary with secondary), with considerations for schools that have overlapping grade configurations, such as K-8 or 7-12.

The PSM will serve as thought partners and facilitators in building leadership awareness, knowledge management, stakeholder interactions, and emotional intelligence. The PSMs will help the new principals in implementing their learning from monthly sessions with the LTs. They also will assist new principals on specific issues involving their school and connections with their division and commonwealth. All sessions are held as confidential, and documentation for the Weekly Check-In or Monthly Formal Meeting documentation are not shared under FOIA or evaluative in anyway.

The PSMs will engage with fellow PSMs three times during the pilot by zoom (after initial 2-day training) to address issues, receive guidance, and examine relevant topics for future meetings with their mentees. In these sessions, PSMs will identify and assist the LTs in preparing topics to be addressed during meetings with mentees, and address questions and concerns. The PSM will submit assigned paperwork, such as attendance and invoices for payment.

PSMs may be principals who have retired within the past five years or who may be a current principal with a minimum of (5) five successful years in the position. PSMs need to receive training in mentoring and the uses of the results for the EQi^{2.0} or Clifton Strengths self-assessment. Selection of PSMs will involve a variety of factors, including successful experience as a principal in Virginia, relevancy with current trends within the educational environment, willingness to wear both hats of mentor and coach, and ability to travel for possible on-site sessions. PSMs will not be assigned to a division in which they led as a principal or currently lead as a principal.

FISCAL AGENT

[Virginia Foundation for Educational Leadership](#) (VFEL) will be the financial agent, handling such areas including but limited to salaries, contracts with personnel, and ordering of materials. VFEL has contracted with VDOE in the past in similar projects.

COMMUNICATION

This is partnership with VFEL and VDOE with support from VASSP and VAESP.

With support and oversight by VFEL throughout the project, PDs will write, distribute, and monitor communications to superintendents regarding the VPMP. The VDOE will have oversight in approving the training modules.

PDs and LTs will communicate with their corresponding elementary/secondary groups (VAESP and VASSP).

VAESP and VASSP will send all project documents received including weekly check-in reports and monthly formal meetings by PSMs to VFEL. All final (not working) documentation will be placed in a shared Dropbox so that it can be viewed at any time by VDOE, VAESP, and VASSP.

VAESP and VASSP will submit all necessary documentation to VDOE through VFEL.

VFEL will identify and contract with the Project Evaluator.

PDs will work with the VDOE designee(s) assigned by the State Superintendent to secure the 24 zero to three-year principals.

PDs and LTs will work with VDOE, VAESP and VASSP to identify 12 PSMs. VAESP and VASSP will submit the vitas of all PSMS to VDOE. All PSMs must be approved by the VDOE State Superintendent or her designee(s).

PROPERTY RIGHTS

The purpose of this grant is to develop a training manual for mentors of zero to three-year principals. All copyrighted material used in the project will be lawfully respected. Any products developed by this grant award, such as the training manual, become the property of the Virginia Department of Education.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

An outside evaluator, identified by VFEL, will conduct, and analyze feedback from PDs, LTs, VMP Principals, PSMs, and trainings by way of surveys. The evaluator will write a summary report at the end of the sixth and twelfth month to be used for adjustments of the VPMP implementation and suggest direction for components of Virginia’s future school leadership institutes. These reports will be shared with VDOE, VFEL, VAESP, and VASSP. The program evaluation is part of the indirect costs indicated in the budget.

SCALE-UP

As stated earlier, VAESP, VASSP, and VFEL will have established a successful platform to train mentors as well as provide professional development and mentoring to zero to three-year principals. The demand from superintendents throughout the Commonwealth for additional mentors will require more than twelve mentors.

If the pilot is successful, evidence demonstrating that the return on investment for zero to three-year principals is positive, and superintendent’s support the desire to scale-up, funding will be needed.

The approach would be to seek additional funding for two years to train additional mentors each year. This funding will be used to develop a similar program to the VPMP pilot. VAESP and VASSP will partner through VFEL to establish a *Mentoring Center for Zero to Three-Year Principals*. Regionally, mentors trained by the pilot will train additional cohorts of mentors.

