

SUPPORTING THE ONTARIO LEADERSHIP STRATEGY

Supports for System Leaders

What Supports Are Provided to System Leaders?

System leaders, including supervisory officers and directors of education, are provided with various supports based on the different phases and contexts of their careers. Professional learning opportunities are designed to align with the core leadership practices that evidence shows have the greatest influence on student achievement. On the basis of current research and input from key partners, system leaders are offered focused and intensive support through the following initiatives:

- mentoring for newly appointed system leaders
- executive programs for supervisory officers and directors of education

Why Are Supports Provided?

- The first two years in a system leadership role are both rewarding and challenging. As newly appointed system leaders make the transition to their new role, they require supports tailored to their unique responsibilities.
- Mentoring has been found to be one of the most powerful approaches to supporting ongoing leadership development, one that embeds learning and growth in the day-to-day work of the new system leader.
- System leadership is a complex and demanding role. Tri-level alignment of supports and initiatives that fosters school, district, and provincial collaboration and commitment to student success is essential to building and strengthening capacity throughout a system leader's career.

Key Elements in Supporting System Leaders**Mentoring for Newly Appointed System Leaders**

- The ministry is promoting a proven and uniform approach to mentoring that incorporates key features demonstrated through research and professional practice to be essential to quality mentoring.
- In 2007, the ministry launched a provincial mentoring and coaching pilot project for both school and system leaders.

- In 2008, the ministry launched an expanded field test, in partnership with system leaders' associations (the three supervisory officers' associations and the three branches of CODE, the Council of Ontario Directors of Education), to determine how mentoring could best meet the needs of newly appointed system leaders.
- System leaders' associations are provided with funding to continue offering mentoring to newly appointed system leaders.

Executive Programs

- The Learning Partnership (TLP) has been contracted by the ministry to develop, deliver, and evaluate two executive development programs – one for supervisory officers with at least one year of experience in the role, and one for directors of education or potential director candidates. In partnership with the Rotman School of Management at the University of Toronto, the programs encompass leadership development, relationship development, and management development issues for business, operations, and human resources.
- Each executive program consists of six 2- to 3-day modules of classroom training, interwoven with learning applied to a district-based education improvement project initiated and led by the participants. Participants are able to focus on improved district systems, processes, or student achievement initiatives.
- The Centre franco-ontarien de ressources pédagogiques (CFORP) has been contracted by the ministry to develop, deliver, and evaluate an executive development program for French-language supervisory officers and directors of education both from Ontario and outside the province. Other candidates include those with a master's degree who are aspiring to the role of supervisory officer.
- The CFORP program consists of two phases offered during the summer (two weeks each). It provides a rigorous training and professional development program focused on contemporary expectations of high-quality leadership, and is intended to support leaders in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities within French-language school boards. The program provides system leaders with the knowledge, skills, and competencies they need in order to deal with strategic, institutional, structural, cultural, and operational challenges of their organization.

Goals for Supporting System Leaders

These initiatives are intended to:

- assist districts in attracting highly skilled and motivated people to fill district leadership roles;
- support associations in offering programs for system leaders that contribute to the development of leaders who are able to focus on improving teaching and learning while still fulfilling their administrative duties;
- provide system leaders with opportunities to gain the critical knowledge they need to be effective leaders of district-wide improvement and to align resources and management systems, with the goal of achieving strategic district objectives consistent with the directions of the ministry.

Orientation Program

Each year, the Institute for Education Leadership (IEL) delivers the Orientation Program for Newly Appointed Supervisory Officers. The program provides an opportunity for participants to gain a more in-depth understanding of the ministry's key education initiatives and the critical role that system leaders play in supporting student achievement.

What Has Been Accomplished?

Mentoring for Newly Appointed System Leaders

- In 2009–10, system leaders' associations, in partnership with the ministry, provided a mentoring program for newly appointed system leaders. The associations have also, with ministry support, produced handbooks and manuals that can be used to foster professional growth among new system leaders.
- Directors who participated in a web-based survey on the effectiveness of the mentoring initiative identified opportunities to reflect on professional practice, an increase in confidence about their role as educational leaders, and improved leadership knowledge and practice as the key benefits to both mentors and mentees.
- For the broader system, reported benefits included improved performance of new administrators, capacity building, support for system priorities, and access to external ideas and support.

Executive Programs

- Participants commented that the program provided the personal support needed to lead challenging reforms.
- All participants identified one or more issues they were able to resolve successfully, based on their learning in the program. Most of these issues were focused on leadership skills.
- Participant co-consulting groups were formed to provide feedback on the district-based improvement projects. The co-consulting processes were consistently identified as a positive aspect of the program.

What's Next?

The Ontario Leadership Strategy (OLS)

Launched in 2008, the OLS is a comprehensive plan of action designed to support student achievement and well-being by attracting and developing skilled and passionate school and system leaders. System leaders have an opportunity to consolidate their leadership development efforts as part of the board leadership development strategy (BLDS), including succession planning and talent development, mentoring, and performance appraisal.

District Effectiveness Framework

Based on an Ontario empirical research study, a district effectiveness framework (DEF) is under development, and will serve as a component of the Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF). It identifies the characteristics of school systems that support improved levels of student achievement. The DEF includes four broad dimensions:

- **core processes** – characteristics of school systems that have the most direct effect on the quality of teaching and learning
- **supporting conditions** – conditions that enable the core processes
- **leadership** – professional leadership and elected leadership
- **relationships** – those within the system and between the system and external partners

Supervisory Officer Performance Appraisal

- A Supervisory Officer Performance Appraisal (SOPA) Work Group was established to make recommendations for the appraisal process, appraisal cycle, and the evaluation criteria.
- A best practices guide will be completed, and a SOPA pilot will take place in 2011–12.

LEARN MORE

Mentoring for Newly Appointed System Leaders
www.ontario.ca/eduleadership

CFORP – Institute d'été – Leadership pour le personnel cadre supérieur
www.cforp.on.ca/formation/cadre.html

Executive Programs – The Learning Partnership
www.thelearningpartnership.ca