ADE/ESS Special Education Director Mentoring Program

Open Letter to New Special Education Directors

Dear New Special Education Leader:

Congratulations on your new (or relatively new) position! Are you ready to put all those shiny new leadership skills to work and implement all your wonderful new ideas? The Arizona Department of Education/Exceptional Student Services is committed to supporting you in your efforts and wants to help build your capacity to serve Arizona students with disabilities. One important strategy used by the ADE is the Special Education Director Mentoring Program, provided at no cost to eligible individuals. The program's desired outcomes are to:

1. enable new special education directors to be successful in their role,
2. increase retention and longevity rates among special education directors,
3. build confidence and leadership capacity among special education directors,
4. help to foster collaboration, and
5. create positive impacts on student achievement.

Having just such a support system can make the difference between that first-year director becoming a wonderful addition to the ranks of special education administration or becoming a casualty because of the intensive, multiple demands of the director’s job. If you choose to participate in this program, you will be assigned a mentor with experience as a special education director, who will be screened and selected by ADE staff. Mentors will provide support and assistance throughout the school year by sharing their knowledge and skills, confidence, competence, and awareness of the role’s expectations.
Requirements for Participation

- Be a new special education director with less than 2 years of experience in the position
- Obtain superintendent approval to fully participate in the mentoring program.
- Complete the application.

Mentee Responsibilities

- Host one on-site consultation each semester, 3-hour minimum, at a mutually agreed upon date and time
- Collaboratively review “Begin with the Basics” information module
- Communicate with mentor at least once every other week
- Review and discuss all topics in recorded curriculum
- Attend any scheduled face-to-face group meetings
- Maintain contact log and submit to ADE each semester
- Complete and submit Mentor Program Summary Survey to ADE at the end of the year
- Comply with all confidentiality regulations and rules

Application Process

Submit the following materials to Anaya Rispoli by September 14, 2018:

- Application form (available under the “New Director Mentoring Program” tab at http://www.azed.gov/specialeducation/schools/findretainstaff/)
- Résumé/vita
- Two letters of recommendation
- A letter of commitment from the superintendent/director of your district or charter, giving you approval to fully participate in this mentoring program (e.g., conduct consultation visits, participate in meetings). This letter needs to be on PEA letterhead and signed by superintendent/director.

Thank you for your interest in the Special Education Director Monitoring Program. Participation in this program can make your leadership experience a positive one and ultimately, have a significant impact on the quality of educational programming in our state for children with special needs. Should you have any questions, please contact Aanya Rispoli at Aanya.Rispoli@azed.gov.