Open Letter to Potential Mentors

Dear Special Education Leader:

You are receiving this letter because you have shown strong skills in the position of special education director. But do you remember your first year in that job? Obviously, you survived and thrived, probably because of those strong skills and maybe, in part, because you had a more experienced colleague helping you to problem solve and avoid pitfalls.

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. This is a chance for you to pay it forward to the next generation of educational leaders. The Arizona Department of Education/Exceptional Student Services is committed to building the capacity of new special education directors and one important strategy is developing the Special Education Director Mentoring Program. 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.

To achieve these outcomes, the program needs skilled special education leaders like you to serve as mentors for someone new to the position. Mentors will provide support and assistance to mentees throughout the school year by sharing their knowledge and skills, confidence, competence, and awareness of the role’s demands. Individuals selected to be mentors will be provided a stipend, travel expenses, and free registration to the following year’s Directors’ Institute.
Minimum Requirements to Serve as a Mentor

- Currently in position of special education director OR retired from position of special education director for no more than two years
- Three years of experience as a special education director
- Three years of direct service experience with students with disabilities
- Superintendent’s approval to fully participate in the mentoring program

Mentor Responsibilities

- Conduct 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 mentee at least once every other week
- Ensure all topics in recorded curriculum are reviewed and discussed
- Be available for urgent phone or email consultation as needed
- 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 Aanya 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 the superintendent/director.

Thank you for your interest in becoming a mentor. This is a high-yield commitment in terms of the quality of education for children with special needs in our state. Should you have any questions, please contact Aanya Rispoli at Aanya.Rispoli@azed.gov.