

NAESP Principal Mentor Program

May 2024

Background

The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) partnership, initiated during 2022-2023, aims to develop a cadre of district-based mentors to support new, incoming, and future principals. This initiative seeks to improve leadership skills, foster self-reflection and growth, and enhance retention by offering FCS-specific guidance and resources.

Evaluation Questions

- 1) What is the probability that the NAESP program will contribute to principal retention over time?
- 2) What characteristics of the program would increase participation according to mentors? According to mentees?
- 3) What are the advantages of the NAESP program for principal mentees, assistant principal mentees, and mentor principals? What are the disadvantages?
- 4) To what extent do program participants report that the features of the NAESP mentor program provides greater value to their professional success than those who participated in the Georgia State Leadership Group model?
- 5) What are the potential benefits of the mentor program being led by FCS personnel rather than outsourcing to NAESP? What are the disadvantages?

Methodology and Data

The evaluation used a mixed-methods approach, including six focus groups divided by regions (zones) to gather qualitative insights from participants and a cost analysis to compare the existing mentorship model with potential in-house alternatives. The focus groups emphasized the critical role of mentor-mentee relationships in the program's success, highlighting their impact on leadership development, networking, and retention. The cost analysis assessed the financial implications of the program, identifying potential long-term savings through an in-house model while maintaining or enhancing program quality. This methodology provided a comprehensive understanding of both the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the program's effectiveness and sustainability.

Results

Question 1- Retention Potential

- **Mentor-Mentee Relationships:** These relationships are a critical factor in building leadership capacity, fostering professional growth, and creating a sense of investment by the district, which participants noted as a factor that could support retention.
- **Retention Potential:** While participants perceive the program as a sign of district investment, uncertainty about how the acquired skills translate into long-term impact suggests the need for ongoing communication changes.

Question 2- Increasing Participation

Both mentors and mentees identified key characteristics to enhance participation in the NAESP program. Clear communication about the program’s purpose, selection rationale, and expectations was a top priority, as many mentees felt their inclusion lacked transparency, leading to initial hesitations. Mentors, too, expressed uncertainty about the program’s long-term goals, which had an impact on their commitment.

Another factor that was mentioned often by participants was focused on scheduling flexibility. Participants recommended reducing the burden of arranging meetings through group events or better scheduling tools. Geographic challenges further emphasize the need of considering proximity when matching mentor-mentee pairs.

To improve participation, FCS should prioritize transparent communication, offer participants greater choice and clarity, and streamline logistics. These efforts would help foster trust, ease logistical challenges, and allow participants to focus more fully on building meaningful mentoring relationships.

Table 1. Participant Demographics by Role, Experience, and Cohort Year

Mentors	2022	2023	Mentees	2022	2023
District staff	6	0	HS 1-2 yrs	0	0
HS 10+ yrs	1	2	MS 1-2 yrs	3	1
MS 10+ yrs	2	0	ES 1-2 yrs	6	1
ES 10+ yrs	4	4	HS AP	3	5
HS 3-9 yrs	1	2	MS AP	2	6
MS 3-9 yrs	1	2	ES AP	2	7
ES 3-9 yrs	2	10	Other	1	

Question 3- Program Advantages and Disadvantages

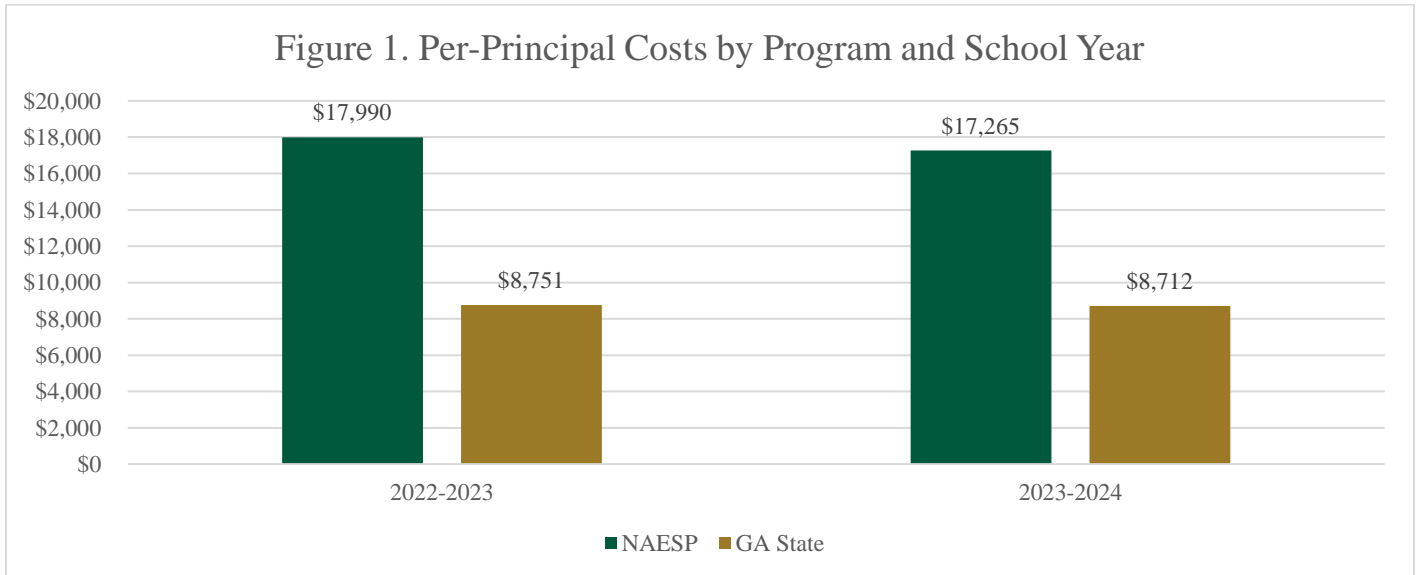
Table 2. Participant Feedback on Advantages and Disadvantages of NAESP

	Advantages	Disadvantages
NAESP Mentor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investment in themselves Leadership and personal growth Increased self-reflection Learnings from NAESP’s <i>Leading Learning Communities: Pillars, Practices, and Priorities for Effective Principals</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Burden of scheduling Lack of compensation School-level mismatch
NAESP Mentee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thought partner Exposure to levels of district personnel Increased network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of “global” lens

Question 4- Comparative Value

In this section, we describe the level of effort and associated costs for the NAESP program and compare it to the overall cost of the Georgia State program. Program costs include all activities needed to run the program including invested time and effort of participants. For NAESP, this covers recruiting principals, program activities, optional PLLD support, and evaluation. For GA State, costs include scheduling, time spent with coaches, and evaluation. We based calculations on the average hourly rate of middle school principals since their salaries fall between elementary and high school principals. For GA State’s two-year program, costs were annualized across cohorts, with 2022-2023 reflecting the second year of Cohort 1 and the first year of Cohort 2.

In 2023-2024, NAESP cost **\$345,294** and in 2022-2023, it cost FCS **\$305,832**. Although we would expect the 2022-2023 program year to be more expensive due to start-up costs, the addition of three extra staff members (20 vs. 17 mentors) drove higher human capital costs during the 2023-2024 program year. The per-principal program cost ranges from \$17,265 to \$17,990 across the two years (see Figure 1). While the GA State program is less expensive per trained principal, NAESP trains both mentors and mentees. When accounting for this, the per individual cost of NAESP in 2023-2024 is roughly half the per principal cost, making it comparable to the Georgia State New Principal Program.



Question 5 – In-House Program Leadership

- If the program is brought in-house it could potentially save the district approximately 40% in five years (this is an estimate and not a guaranteed calculation)
- During the 2022-2023 school year the NAESP program cost \$279,378. During the 2023-2024 school year the program cost \$313,238.

Table 3. Example Five-Year Projection

Year	Total Principal Mentors	Curriculum	FCS	Total
0	20	\$25,890	\$261,458	\$287,348
1	25	\$11,846	\$135,958	\$147,804
2	28	\$6,160	\$113,117	\$119,277
3	31	\$801	\$117,642	\$118,443
4	33	\$833	\$107,054	\$107,887
5	35	\$0	\$111,336	\$111,336

* Note. Includes 4% annual inflation adjustment. Curriculum costs include effort of PLLD Coordinator. FCS costs include technology, software, and effort from district and school staff during school hours

Recent Department Improvements

The PLLD department has already initiated changes to address key challenges. During the 2024-2025 school year, stipends are being provided to mentors as a recognition of their contributions and to increase their engagement with the program. These stipends are also being leveraged to support mentors in the development of a structured in-house curriculum, which will standardize and enhance the quality of mentorship. Additionally, efforts are underway to more clearly communicate the rationale for mentor-mentee pairings, fostering greater transparency and trust in the selection process.

Limitations and Considerations

In the calculations for Table 2 it is important to note that time spent on tasks for the program within the workday supplants other work during the day and may shift additional tasks to outside of work hours. These calculations for that practice were not able to be captured.

Conclusion

The mentor program holds promise for fostering leadership and supporting principal retention. The department's recent steps to address transparency and incentivize mentor contributions through stipends position the program for greater success. Continued improvements to its structure and communication will ensure sustained benefits for participants and the district.