

## GRADUATE DIPLOMA IN ADVANCED PROFESSIONAL STUDIES IN EDUCATION ADVANCED PROFESSIONAL STUDIES

### MENTORING IN A GRADUATE DIPLOMA

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#### **Common Features of Graduate Diploma in Advanced Professional Studies in Education (GDE) Programs**

*All GDE programs combine the following five dimensions of teacher development:*

- investigation of current theory, research and pedagogy in a selected theme;
- critical examination of related policy, curricular, instructional and assessment practices;
- focused planning, implementation and research connecting theme studies to the individual's professional context;
- development of a criteria-referenced portfolio demonstrating ongoing reflection and documenting significant learning over the duration of the program;
- ongoing participation in and contributions to both the cohort learning community and the broader educational community.

All GDE programs provide opportunities for K - 12 educators to engage in classroom- or school-based inquiry using a Field Studies framework. During a Field Study experience, each Mentor meets with a small group of students. The main purpose of these meetings is to allow students to identify or clarify issues that are currently at play in their practice. The networking, dialogues and problem solving that occur are also an important source of support and encouragement for educators struggling with curriculum and pedagogical change. At the end of the implementation and reflection period, students submit to the Mentor a portfolio documenting their learning.

#### **What is a GDE Mentor?**

GDE activities are designed to address the continuing education needs of experienced educators whose primary focus is school-based educational practice. Learning opportunities for educators are offered in a variety of formats that are constantly evolving. Mentoring has been incorporated into all GDE offerings as a means of supporting individual and collective inquiry and reflective practice.

A Mentor is firstly a sounding board — someone who can listen to a teacher's description of the challenges they are experiencing and identify the underlying issues at play. A Mentor is also a gentle questioner — someone who is able to ask clarifying questions that allow educators to identify, for themselves, beliefs, assumptions and issues that may need to be examined or re-examined. Mentors recognize the importance of encouraging students to do their own problem identification and problem solving. Unlike workshop leaders, whose primary role is to present information and give solutions or provide answers, Mentors offer educators the lenses and support they need to discover their own solutions.

#### **Support for Mentors**

The greatest challenge for Mentors is to offer educational guidance and encouragement without directing the learner's path or limiting opportunities for individuals to make meaningful professional decisions. Each Mentor finds different ways to help individual students develop confidence as self-directed learners and problem-solvers. Mentors also benefit from working and learning together as a supportive team. Team building is an important aspect of the Mentor development component provided by the university as part of this collaborative program.