



**Arkansas
Leadership Academy**

Academy Action

September 2009

Volume 8, Issue 10

Upcoming Institutes:

Master Principal Institute
P3S1—Sept. 15-18, 2009
P2S1—Oct. 20-23, 2009
P1S2—Nov. 10-12, 2009
P3S2—Dec. 8-10, 2009
P2S2—Jan. 26-28, 2010

Superintendent Institute
Session 1—Oct. 5-8, 2009
Session 2—Dec. 9-10, 2009
Session 3—Webinar TBD
Session 4—Apr. 29-30, 2010

Teacher Institute
Forum 18, Session 1—
Sep. 20-23, 2009
Forum 17, Session 2—
Nov. 1-3, 2009

DKL Team Institute
Session 1—Dec. 15-18, 2009
Session 1—Jan. 18-21, 2010

Special points of interest:

- Academy Partners Work Group met recently to discuss plans for professional learning for assistant principals.
- Academy Executive Committee Meeting to take place in September.
- School Support Program holds School Board Orientations to begin its work with the boards.
- School Support Program works to open satellite offices across the state for staff members.

Academy Welcomes New Master Principal Leader Diana Peer



Diana Peer, Arkansas Leadership Academy Master Principal and former principal of Van Buren's Parkview Elementary, joined the Academy team in July as Master Principal Leader. Diana has served in Arkansas public schools for 30 years with 9 years as a principal. Read what she

had to say about this new endeavor with the Academy: **Why did you want to work with the Academy as Master Principal Leader?** "I've always known that being a part of a learning environment that is focused on relationships and results is my calling in life. I love learning and facilitating the learning of others, whether children, teens, teachers, graduate students or principals. Serving as the Master Principal Leader will be a continuation of what I've always done. I look forward to supporting principals by offering them new resources and tools, learning experiences, and opportunities to develop new professional relationships."

What had you learned from your previous involvement with the Academy? "As a learner, I tend to appropriate things as my own, so what I learned from my involvement with the Academy really became integrated into

my daily thinking and work. Curriculum from each of our five performance areas contributed to my knowledge and skills as an instructional leader. With new knowledge, vision, and the appropriate tools and strategies, I was able to effectively lead changes in my school which resulted in increased student achievement and a culture of adult collaboration and learning. As a Master Principal, I found I was also able to influence some practices in the district and even occasionally to have a voice at the state level."

What is your vision for the future of the Master Principal Program? "My vision is for every school to have the benefit of a principal that is not only well prepared and dedicated, but one that has the extended learning and ongoing supportive network created by our program. My vision includes building both the individual and collective capacity of Arkansas principals. Because of stronger principal instructional leadership and leadership teams, the result will be greater student achievement in a culture of collaborative learning for all."

What would you like to say to Arkansas principals? "Come and join us! The Master Principal Program is 100% focused on helping you achieve your professional goal of creating a successful school. It is rigor, relevance, and relationships in action. To help you create these conditions for your students and staff, take advantage of this opportunity and experience them yourself."

New Phase I Cohort Convenes



In July, a new cohort of 47 principals from across the state met at the Winthrop Rockefeller Institute to begin Phase I of the Master Principal Program. In Phase I, principals work on building professional learning communities, establishing support networks, discussing professional readings, clarifying the role of a principal, utilizing reflection tools, and understanding drivers of change and models for school improvement. Session 2 of Phase I will take place in November.

Phases II & III Portfolios Scored

Also in July, 12 scorers from throughout Arkansas and the nation spent several days at the Inn at Carnall Hall in Fayetteville scoring the portfolios of the Master Principal Program's Phase I and Phase II participants. Participants who complete Phases I and II can submit a portfolio consisting of professional letters of reference, a summary of professional contributions as a building administrator, student achievement data, and a narrative focusing on content and skill areas.

The scorers review the Master Principal performance rubric, which serves as the scoring basis, and practice with a sample portfolio to ensure Inter-Rater Reliability. Each scorer focuses on one strand of the rubric, and each section is scored by two individuals to ensure accuracy. If a discrepancy in scores arises, a third resolution scorer is brought in to re-score the section. At the conclusion of the session, 16 principals were accepted into Phase II for the upcoming year, and 10 principals were accepted into Phase III. Read more from the Master Principal performance rubrics at the Academy's website: http://www.arkansasleadershipacademy.org/master_principal.htm#scoring_rubrics

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Professional Development for Principals: Seven Core Beliefs



Principals in Phase I of the Master Principal Program have the option to work through several different articles with colleagues to determine key learnings. One of these articles is "Professional Development for Principals: Seven Core Beliefs" by Paula Evans and Nancy Mohr of the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island.

In this article, Evans and Mohr address the question of how to provide professional development for principals that can be maintained when the principals return to their schools and that will support them in their growing effectiveness. They maintain that professional development for principals must be a learning experience, rather than a "predigested 'in-basket' training," that expects participants to read and write for each session, articulate their own goals and dilemmas, and to be constructively critical of their own work and that of their colleagues. These are the

learning patterns they are then expected to bring back to their own schools.

Evans and Mohr base their work on seven core beliefs that mirror a principal's daily challenges and dilemmas. The Academy's Master Principal Program also incorporates the following ideas:

- 1) **Principals' learning is personal and yet takes place most effectively while working in groups.** Work in groups reinforces the value of building on one another's thinking and constructing knowledge together. These relationships also sustain the learning between gatherings.
- 2) **Principals foster more powerful faculty and student learning by focusing on their own learning.** To lead well requires that principals be learners.
- 3) **While we honor principals' thinking and voice, we want to push principals to move beyond their assumptions.** One way is to learn different ways of communicating that involve counterintuitive behavior.
- 4) **Focused reflection takes time away from "doing the work," and yet it is essential.** This leads to more effective practice and to greater consensus.
- 5) **It takes strong leadership in order to have truly democratic learning.** Leaders are most truly democratic when they listen carefully and then design the work for the group.
- 6) **Rigorous planning is necessary for flexible and responsive implementation.** Focus the work around one "essential question."
- 7) **New learning depends on protected dissonance.** We provide a safe setting in which to be stretched, to get know each other, to be uncomfortable, to have fun, to be wrong, to foster critical friendships, to learn.