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About the Arkansas Leadership Academy

The Arkansas Leadership Academy is a nationally recognized statewide partnership of 15 universities; 9 professional associations; 15 educational cooperatives; the Arkansas Departments of Education, Higher Education, and Career Education; the Arkansas Educational Television Network; Tyson Foods, Inc.; Wal*Mart Stores, Inc.; 2 superintendent representatives; the Office of the Governor; and the State Board of Education, a total of 49 Partners.

The Academy, through the use of research and best practices, designs creative and innovative approaches to establish learning communities in public schools by developing human resources and modeling and advocating collaboration, support, shared decision making, team learning, risk taking, and problem solving. Partners commit to changing their organizations to support system improvement.

Academy Beliefs:

- People support what they help to create.
- Diversity is embraced and valued.
- To change others, change yourself.
- The greatest leaders are known by the number of leaders they create.

Connecting People, Ideas, Perspectives, and Experiences.



A collaborative partnership
housed at the
University of Arkansas.



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Academy Action



Upcoming Institutes

Master Principal Institute

- P1S1—Jul. 19-22, 2011
- P3S1—Sept. 13-16, 2011
- P2S1—Oct. 18-21, 2011
- P1S2—Nov. 8-10, 2011

Assistant Principal Institute

- Session 1—Aug. 31-Sept. 2, 2011

Superintendent Institute

- Session 1—Sept. 27-29, 2011
- Session 2—Nov. 30-Dec. 1, 2011

Teacher Leader Institute

- Forum 21, Session 1—
Jul. 25-28, 2011
- Forum 22, Session 1—
Aug. 28-31, 2011

Team Leadership Institute

- Year 1, Session 2—
Jul. 11-12, 2011
- Year 2, Session 3—
Jul. 13-14, 2011

Facilitator Training

- Nov. 16-17, 2011

Learn more about application
deadlines and upcoming
Academy Institutes at

www.arkansasleadershipacademy.org



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Superintendents Identify District Instructional Challenges

In April, superintendents participating in the Academy's Superintendent Institute completed their final session on Petit Jean Mountain. This session focused on presenting and reflecting on the district instructional challenge each superintendent had identified in the first session of the institute and developing an action plan to address this challenge. Superintendents supported each other in their leadership efforts to address these teaching and learning challenges through professional learning communities. A few of these projects are summarized below:

➔ "Using Data to Drive Instruction"—One superintendent began combating the it's-always-been-done-this-way mentality by focusing on the use of data in the district. She researched the use of data to gain insight on students' thinking, strengths, and weaknesses; to become more efficient and effective and to select appropriate strategies, approaches, and material; and to reveal patterns and provide direction. She began ensuring that facilitators and teachers were trained in the use of data and that data was being used for student placement, needed professional development, and constant curriculum adjustments.

➔ "The Road to Effective Teaching in Every Classroom"—Another superintendent sought to ensure that 100% of her teachers were providing effective data-driven instruction. She began taking action steps with the district's leadership team, principals, teachers, instructional facilitators, and outside consultants to conduct CWTs and discuss observations, read and discuss research-based best practices, develop com-

munication plans, implement evaluation policies, structure collaboration, foster reflective practice, prioritize student voice, and manage group data.

➔ "Becoming a High-Performing School"—Another superintendent addressed a variety of strategies in developing his district's school improvement plan: creating a clear and shared focus and vision (among district teams, administrative teams, teacher teams, and parents), having high standards and expectations for all students (student by student, skill by skill), developing effective school leadership, sustaining high levels of collaboration and communication, frequent monitoring of teaching and learning, implementing focused professional development, maintaining a supportive learning environment, and building a high level of family and community involvement.

In this final session, superintendents discussed using the dimensions of scale to assess the implementation of their district action plans to change instructional practices. They drafted action plans to enhance the use of professional learning communities in their districts next year and determined a district leadership focus and key strategies for strengthening instruction for the upcoming school year based on student and adult performance data. In addition, they reflected on their effectiveness in achieving the leadership development goals they had set for themselves this year and designed professional development action plans for themselves for next year. Great work to all superintendents who participated!

From the Academy Team

"It's all about the students." "All kids can learn." If these are our true core beliefs, then why aren't all students learning? Where are our vision and mission statements? Almost all of them mention developing students to their full potential; yet, many schools are struggling with their drop-out and attendance rates, not to mention their academic scores.

It is the job of the SSP to make sure that we help schools maintain that focus as they work through the difficulty of change. CWT's, PLC's, data analysis, and the numerous tools from the ALA toolbox are avenues through which we get there. The Academy also begins to train representatives from all stakeholder groups in making it a collaborative journey to success. Someone once asked Socrates the best way to get to Mt. Olympus. Socrates replied, "By making sure that every step you take is in that direction." Once a strategic action plan is developed, it becomes the road map to our version of Mt. Olympus; everything we do should lead us in that direction.

There are three things that we must believe in order to teach students: 1) The subject matter is important; 2) The students can learn the subject matter; and 3) The teacher can make a difference! When it is your own child are not these three beliefs automatic?

The summation is this - All students deserve the best education we can give them. So, if we want to fulfill that obligation and turn schools around, then we need to start putting action to our words!

Delena Gammill
SSP Capacity Building Leader



Marked Tree Elementary (Marked Tree SD), set to participate in its third year in the ALA School Support Program in the upcoming 2011-2012 school year, was recently recognized by the University of Arkansas's Office for Education Policy (OEP) as one of five schools in its new "Spotlights on Success" report (June 6, 2011). Each of the five schools highlighted, whose students have experienced extraordinary growth over the past several years, were recognized at the Summer Leadership Institute at the University of Central Arkansas in June. According to the report, Marked Tree Elementary "has shown great pro-

gress in student learning in a high-poverty, rural setting. Since 2006, proficiency rates for the Marked Tree students have increased by 44 percentage points in math and by 34 percentage points in literacy." The report also noted that two underlying themes were observed: high expectations for all teachers and students, and strong networks of instructional and disciplinary support for teachers. These themes were interwoven in four observed characteristics: visible, supportive, and pro-active leadership; autonomous teaching driven by data; culture of success and high standards

SSP Spotlight on Marked Tree Elementary

permeating school; and collaborative environment for entire school family. Marked Tree Superintendent Annesa Thompson commented on their recognition: "Having our elementary highlighted through the 'Spotlights on Success' research project provides an external validation that we are making

significant progress in achieving our vision to focus on 'every child, every day, at every opportunity.' Certainly, the Arkansas Leadership Academy has been a significant partner to us in this journey." Marked Tree Elementary Principal Patricia Wilson also remarked on her learning from the Academy: "Attending the ALA's Master Principal training has given me the tools to continue building a positive culture which is focused on student achievement. I've also learned that being a principal means being an instructional leader and not a manager of people." Congratulations to Marked Tree Elementary for all their hard work!

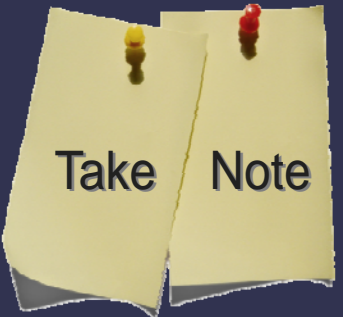


Academy Partners Gather in Little Rock

In June, the Academy Partners convened at the UA Systems Office in Little Rock for the semi-annual ALA Partner Meeting. At this gathering, Partners were updated on the status of all Academy programs and institutes as well as the progress being made in each of the schools participating in the School Support Program. Hughes Principal Gheric Bruce and Hughes literacy coach Jim Sibley (Hughes SD) spoke to the Partners about the adult learning, student achievement, and culture shift in Hughes over the last two years as well as the use of stimulus funds to improve school facilities.

Arkansas High School Principal Robin Stover and members of her leadership team (Matt Coleman, Brandy Eldridge, and Eva Nadeau) (Texarkana SD) also presented to the Partners and answered questions on their School Support journey and progress made over the last two years. Both schools are currently in Year 7 of School Improvement. ALA research specialist Denise Airola shared the preliminary data results from the first cohort of SSP schools (currently in Year 2 of SSP) and the significant strides being made toward achieving standards and raising subpopulation

scores as well as some preliminary results from the 2011 scores. Partners were also introduced to the newly named 2011 Master Principals and spent time discussing and reflecting on new learning to be taken back to each of their Partner organizations. In addition, each Partner left with a copy of Michael Wilkinson's book *The Secrets to Masterful Meetings: Ignite a Meetings Revolution!* (Leadership Strategies, 2005). Wilkinson is also the author of the bestseller *The Secrets of Facilitation*, used in the ALA Facilitator Training. Partners will meet together again in the fall.



* The Academy institutes are wrapping up their final sessions from the 2010-2011 school year. Don't forget to submit your 2011-2012 institute applications online, by mail, or by fax. Visit our website for more details and deadlines!

* Congratulations to Bragg Elementary (West Memphis SD) for being recognized in the UA Office for Education Policy's "Spotlights on Success" report! Bragg was identified for its exceptional progress in student achievement with a diverse student population composed of significant numbers of white and black students. Over the last five years, the proficiency rates for Bragg students have increased by 23 percentage points in math and by 24 percentage points in reading. Principal Terri McCann is a Master Principal Institute Phase 3 graduate.

Visit This: ArkansasLeadershipAcademy.Edublogs.Org



The Academy has entered the blogosphere! If you haven't seen the Academy's new blog, come check it out and leave your feedback. This blog, entitled *The Academy Way*, is designed to provoke conversations about teaching, learning, and leadership. Why a blog? The Academy hopes to model the use of this technology tool for its participants and graduates as a way to deliver new research-based best practices and experiences in the field and promote discussion via interactive comments to share in the learning. Blogs allow new material to be shared without replacing the

old, categorizing and archiving the latest information in an easy-to-read format. Blogs also give more people a voice and an opportunity to share their knowledge and opinions with others. Scott Rosenberg, author of *Say Everything: How Blogging Began, What It's Becoming, and Why It Matters* (Broadway, 2010), explains, "Blogging, the first form of social media to be widely adopted beyond the world of technology enthusiasts, gave us a template for all the other forms that would follow. Through its lens, people could see the Web for the first time as something they were

collectively building. It gave a multitude of formerly private people a public voice. It handed them a blank page and said: Learn." Moving into the world of Web 2.0, we are seeking to share ideas and resources and build two-way communication. Using the following questions to guide our efforts—How do we continually learn? How do we facilitate/model continuous learning for others?—members of the Academy staff will each contribute to the blog's content along with submissions from Academy participants, graduates, and partners.

