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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

- P2S3—May 4-6, 2010
- P1S4—Jun.15-18, 2010
- P1S1—Jul. 20-23, 2010
- P3S1—Sep. 14-17, 2010
- P2S1—Oct. 12-15, 2010

Superintendent Institute

- Session 1—Sep. 14-16, 2010
- Session 2—Dec. 2-3, 2010

Teacher Institute

- Forum 17, Session 4—
Jun.9-11, 2010
- Forum 18, Session 4—
Jun.23-25, 2010
- Forum 19, Session 1—
Aug. 10-13, 2010
- Forum 20, Session 1—
Sep. 19-22, 2010

DKL Team Institute

- Session 2a—July 26-27, 2010
- Session 2b—Jul.29-30, 2010

Facilitator Training

- September 23-24, 2010

Learn more about application deadlines and upcoming Academy Institutes at

www.arkansasleadershipacademy.org

This Issue

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Academy Partners Experience Master Principal Institute

In April, the Academy Partners met on Petit Jean Mountain for their spring meeting in conjunction with the Master Principal Program's final Phase 3 session of the year. Partners sat in on the principals' presentations of their action research findings from the year. Ten principals from around the state completed rigorous portfolios and assessments and graduated from Phases 1 and 2 of the Master Principal Program to participate in Phase 3 this year.

Phase 3 builds on principals' previous learning in Phases 1 and 2 while focusing on greater depth of leadership performance in each of the 5 Performance Areas, taking their work to scale, valuing equity of access to learning opportunities and equitable distribution of resources, engaging all district/community resources, and effectively telling their story. Principals choose their action research projects at the beginning of the year (common to each Phase of MPI) based on data analysis of a need in their school that can be addressed collaboratively to impact school improvement. For example, one principal implemented both gender-specific classrooms and regular mixed classrooms in two grades in her school to study the difference in impact on success. Another principal looked at the effectiveness of an after-school tutoring program on kindergarten literacy in her school. Two

principals in the same district worked together to research the implications of standards-based reporting in their district, in terms of students' mastery of skills, difference in grade level, parental support, and teachers' understanding of students' skills. Yet another principal studied the impact of developmental spelling analysis and word study instruction on student writing skills. Other principals implemented specific programs in their schools such as Reading 180, Failure-Free Reading, the Barton Reading and Spelling Method, and JEDI Math Fluency and looked at the effectiveness in improving students' literacy or math skills. Each principal involved teachers, staff, parents, and community members in conducting their research and developed a plan of action in response to the results of their projects.

After the principals' presentations, Partners spent time processing the findings of the action research projects, offered suggestions and questions, and discussed the implications of the research for their own organizations. Partners were also updated on the Academy's other institutes, the progress of the School Support Program, and the development of new Academy institutes for facilitators, assistant principals, and central office staff. Partners also recognized and honored retiring School Support Leader Chuck Leverett.

Academy Presents at OEP Conference in Little Rock

In April, Academy Director Debbie Davis presented in Little Rock at the University of Arkansas Office of Education Policy's annual conference. The 2010 conference, on the state of school leadership in Arkansas, was entitled "Preparing Effective School Leaders for Arkansas." Davis presented about the Academy's systemic approach to professional development in the Master Principal Program and School Support Program in a session called "How Can Professional Development and Mentoring Improve Principal Effectiveness?" Other sessions on school leadership, research, collaboration, and legislation were led by Gary Compton (Bentonville Public Schools), Scott Shirey (KIPP's Leadership Development), Reed Greenwood (UA), Bob Maranto (UA), John Pijanowski (UA), Tom E.C. Smith (UA), Diana Pounder (UCA), Joshua Barnett (Arizona State University), Ellen Hur (The New Teacher Project), and Arkansas Legislature Representative Les Carmine. State Commissioner of Education, Tom Kimbrell, also addressed attendees. Read more about the conference at www.uark.edu/ua/oep/2010_Conference_Proceedings.html



Lessons Learned

- Professional Development: teachers observe other teachers. HS—67%, MS—95%, ES—90%
- Time provided for collaboration. HS—100%, MS—85%, ES—100%
- Teachers share staff development information. HS—100%, MS—65%, 80% ES.
- Most schools provided this time during in-service meetings before school starts and after school meetings throughout the year.

Last month, superintendents participating in the Superintendent Institute: *Advancing System Change* met together on Petit Jean Mountain for their final session of the institute. The superintendents have been working in professional learning communities throughout the year on an action research topic specific to a need in their districts. In this last session, they shared their research findings, looked at how these results could be used to create an action plan and inform teaching and learning practices in their own districts,

and discussed taking to scale changes in their districts' instructional practices. PLC 1 asked the question, "What strategies are districts/schools using with students from low-income families to increase K-12 literacy performance?" After looking at OEP data and conducting a survey of the highest achieving schools, they discovered several common practices being used across grade levels: a priority reading program, CWTs for accountability, data-driven decisions, PLCs, quality teachers, and uninterrupted block time for literacy. PLC 3

Superintendents Share PLC Action Research

asked, "What are the top five strategies used in Arkansas Schools to increase student achievement in the area of literacy for low socio-economic students?" Through survey collections and data research, they determined the top 5 strategies: having experienced, committed, significantly resourced staff; flexible scheduling with 1.5+ hours per day for literacy programs; aligned and monitored curriculum; collaborative teacher and classroom interactions; and data-driven decision-making. PLC 4 asked, "Does school district policy affect teacher absenteeism?" After reviewing the literature and looking at school data statistics, they recommended lowering the sick day policy while allowing for sick banks, implementing an incentive pay policy to reward unused personal days, and improving collegial support through embedded professional development, teaming, and mentoring.

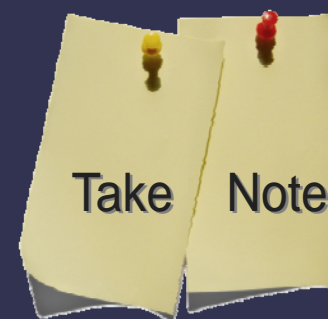


First Effective Meetings Training Held at Co-op

The Academy held its first Effective Meetings Training at the Wilbur D. Mills Co-op in Beebe last week. The training brought together principals, teachers, and curriculum coordinators from each of the schools participating in the Academy's School Support Program along with co-op representatives. Sharon Williams facilitated the day-long training. Participants discussed models and characteristics of effective teamwork and effective meetings as well as worked with a number of tools in each of the following categories: idea generation, problem-solving, decision-making, planning, and

team building. Participants also addressed the use of appropriate statements of intended results to design meeting agendas and how to develop a personal action plan identifying how they will apply their learning. Each part of the training was centered around the Academy's Five Performance Areas (Creating and Living the Mission, Vision, and Beliefs; Leading and Managing Change; Developing Deep Knowledge about Teaching and Learning; Building and Maintaining Collaborative Relationships; and Building and Sustaining Accountability Systems). Participants will now be able to re-

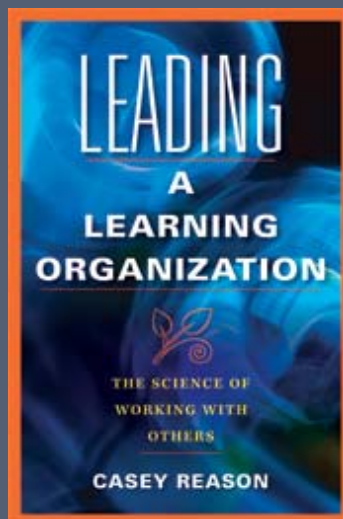
turn to their schools and organizations with templates and tools and use the strategies they've learned to effectively hold their own meetings and teach others to do the same. The Effective Meetings Training is part of the School Support Program's contract with its schools which calls for facilitator training in Year 1 of the program. It will also serve as a building block for the Academy's Facilitator Training which was piloted last November. More information about the next Facilitator Training in September will be available on the Academy's website at a later date. Stay tuned!



* In April, the Academy conducted interviews for two upcoming positions: School Support Program Leader and Capacity Building Leader. The School Support Program Leader position will be available July 1st when current leader Chuck Leverett retires June 30th. The Capacity Building Leader position will also begin July 1st to accommodate the needs of seven new schools to be added to the School Support Program in 2010-2011.

* The Academy, in collaboration with AAEA, held a Superintendent Focus Group in April at the University Systems Office in Little Rock to determine the professional development needs of superintendents and the future direction of the Academy's Superintendent Institute. Ten superintendents from around the state attended. A second focus group will take place in June.

Leading a Learning Organization: New Resource



At this year's recent spring Partner meeting, Academy Partners were given a new resource from Solution Tree called *Leading a Learning Organization: The Science of Working with Others* (2009) by Casey Reason. Reason is the president and CEO of Highpoint Learning and has worked with leaders worldwide on breakthrough strategies to improve performance and overcome resistance to change. *Leading a Learning Organization*, chosen as a Phi Delta Kappa International Book Club selection for 2009-2010, examines the role that emotion plays in school cultures and how current demands for rapid change and accountability contribute to levels of fear and

stress. Drawing on educational, psychological, and neuroscientific research, Reason shows how leaders can change the prevailing emotional climate or tone of a school to promote deeper learning at all levels. Written for principals and teacher leaders, this book teaches practical strategies for enhancing organizational learning including change, analysis, and reframing; purpose-driven inquiry; the creation of a defined learning culture; conscious use of current scientific knowledge about the way memory works; and frequent, effective collaboration. Reason journeys with readers to explore:

- * Why the rapid pace of change in education has cre-

- ated more fear and stress and why we become addicted to them;
- * How school leaders can reduce the impact of negative emotions and promote empowering ones;
- * How to establish a more focused and effective work environment;
- * Why new knowledge about memory can enhance learning at all levels;
- * How to handle an overwhelming learning agenda; and
- * How to make collaboration an integral part of school culture.