Arkansas Leadership Academy: Annual Report

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ALA's Ultimate Goal

To realize **educational equity and excellence** for Arkansas students.

ALA's Vision

To be the state's **premier leadership development hub**, where all educational leaders find personalized professional learning **pathways** that best meet their needs while developing **leadership capacity**, resulting in **systemic change** and leading to improved teaching and learning.

ALA's Mission

The ALA exists to **lead**, **inspire**, **develop**, and **enhance** Arkansas educational **leaders and systems** through professional learning and capacity-building services, based on research connecting **leadership practices and improved student outcomes**.

ALA's Core Belief

At the ALA, we believe that as leaders grow, they grow other educators. As all educators grow, they grow students. Therefore, we expect that...

- All Teach.
- All Learn.
- All Lead.
- All Improve.

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ALA's Clear and Compelling Direction

A Brief History of the ALA

- Established in 1991, by the State Legislature
- Added the Master Principal Program in 2003
- Current Partnership begins operation in 2021
    - Focus: Expand Access
        - REACH- Live and On-Demand Learning
        - 100% of counties represented
            - Emphasis: South Arkansas, AR Delta
        - Traditional and Charter Inclusion
    - Focus: Expand Transparency
        - Annual 3rd Party Evaluation
        - Growth Data Analysis and Tracking
    - Focus: Expand Participation
        - Serve 430 educators in cohort programs
        - 400+ in live and on-demand professional development
        - Doubled prior operator's participant count
    - Focus: Streamline Personnel
        - 3 full-time employees
   - 6 part-time/ shared employees

LEADERSHIP SUPPORT SERVICE

DIVISION OF ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY EDUCATION
&
ARKANSAS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

APSRC
Arkansas Public School Resource Center

STATE
ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

EDUTAS
at The University of Oklahoma Outreach

Any current or aspiring Arkansas leader may register to participate at any time

Teams of teachers, building leaders, and district leaders

District, regional, and state leaders in executive positions (e.g., superintendents, assistant superintendents, educational service cooperative directors, higher education, DESE, and statewide organizations)
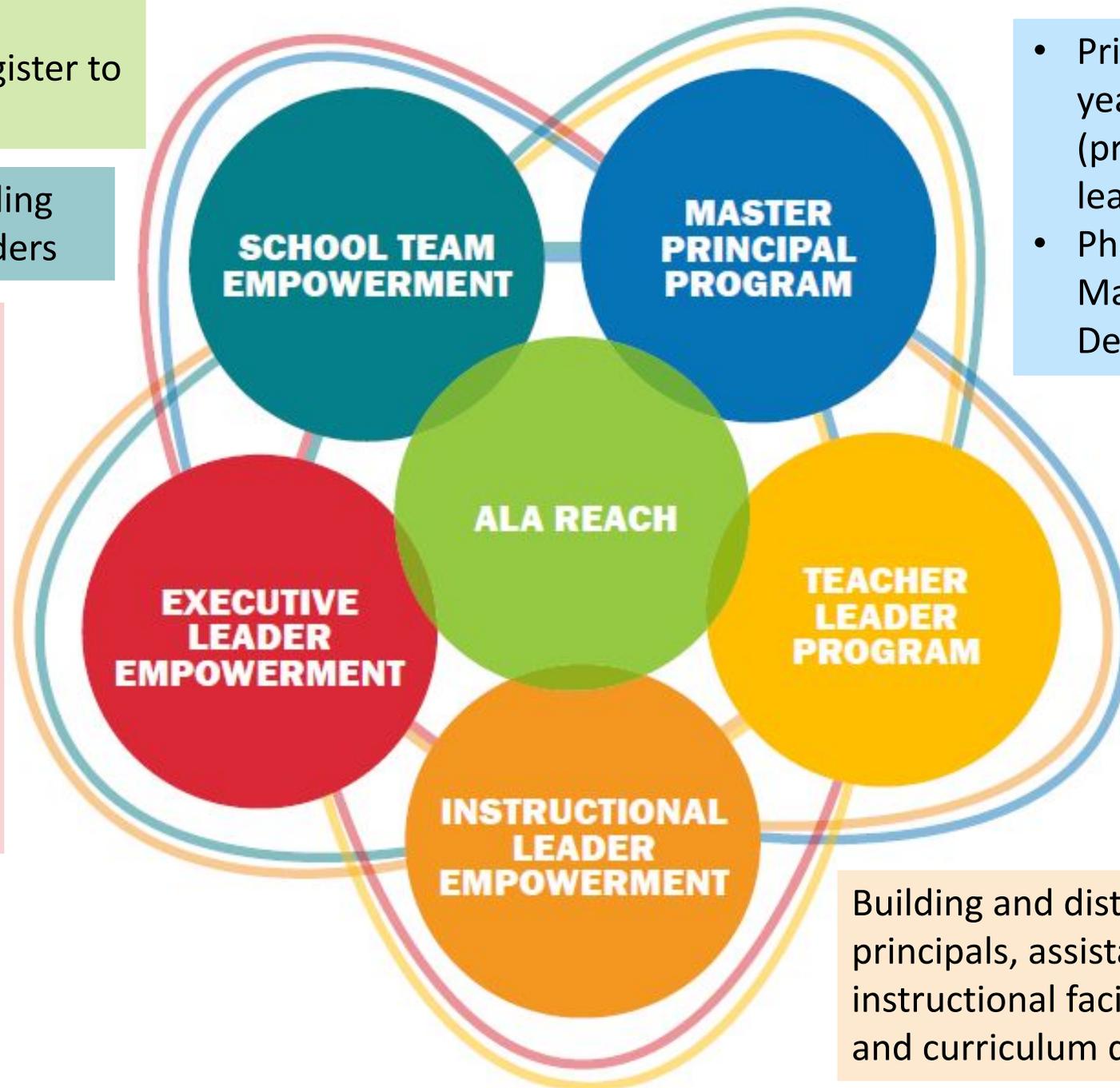
- Principals with at least one year of experience (preference given to more leadership experience)
- Phases I-III, leading toward Master Principal Designation

- Current and aspiring teacher leaders who intend to lead from the classroom
- Completers may be eligible for Lead Professional Designation

Building and district leaders (e.g., principals, assistant principals, instructional facilitators/coaches, deans, and curriculum directors)

SCHOOL TEAM EMPOWERMENT

MASTER PRINCIPAL PROGRAM

ALA REACH

EXECUTIVE LEADER EMPOWERMENT

TEACHER LEADER PROGRAM

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADER EMPOWERMENT

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*Year 5 Applications received to date (25 days): 560	Approved Proposal Projections	Prior Operator Average	Participation in 2022-2023 (Yr 2)	Participation in 2023-2024 (Yr 3)	Participation in 2024-2025 (Yr 4)
ALA Reach	300	Not Offered	436 Unique Participants (646 attendees)	331 Unique Participants (584 attendees)	In Progress
Master Principal Program	40 (Phase 1) + 40 (Phases 2 and 3)		62	65	76
Teacher Leader Program	75		57	99 (Expanded to 2 Cohorts)	165 (Expanded to 3 Cohorts)
Instructional Leader Empowerment		Not Offered	51	54	110 (Expanded to 2 Cohorts)
School Team Empowerment			30	64 (Expanded to 2 Cohorts)	52 (Added a Year 2 Pilot)
Executive Leader Empowerment	35		27	26	27
Total	>455	300-400 (Including District Funded Participation)	663	639	~800

Expanding Participation

	Last three years under prior operator (2018-2019, 2019-2020, & 2020-2021)	Year 1 (2021-2022)	Year 2 (2022-2023)	Year 3 (2023-2024)	Year 4* (2024-2025)
Districts and Charters	101 (36%)	152 (54%)	189 (67%)	194 (69%)	206 (78%)
Counties	51 (68%)	62 (83%)	68 (91%)	70 (93%)	75 (100%)
Education Service Cooperatives	15 (100%)	15 (100%)	15 (100%)	15 (100%)	15 (100%)

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Programmatic Participation

Student Value Added Growth Scores and Value Added Growth Percentiles of MPP Phase 3 Graduates vs. Non-Participants '23-'24

	Average Combined VA Growth Score
With a MPP 3 Grad	82.32 (Started at 79.9 in 2021)
Without a MPP 3 Grad	80.4

Schools with MPP 3 Grad:
*p=0.019 (statistically significant difference)

	Average Combined VA Growth Percentile
With a MPP 3 Grad	62.8 (Started at the 45.8 in 2021)
Without a MPP 3 Grad	47.43

Schools with MPP 3 Grad:
*p=0.07 (statistically significant difference)

*Analysis by eTeam, University of Oklahoma

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Evaluation Findings

Designations and Designation Eligibility

Teacher Leader Program

- 38 Lead Professional Designations
- 150 In Process Portfolios (July 15 Deadline)

Master Principal Program

- 5 Designated Principals (2021-2023)
- 2 Current Site Visits (Spring '25)
- 3 Scheduled Site Visits (Fall '25)
- 11 Additional Student Growth Score Eligible Principals (Phase 1 and Phase 2)

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Evaluation Findings

Case Study: Impacts on Free & Reduced Lunch Populations

Gentry High School of Gentry School District, Principal Justin Blanchard-
- Overall Math Growth of 10.19 points over 6 years (3 years prior to participation vs. 3 years in Master Principal),
- Math growth for students served by Free and Reduced Lunch by 9.15 points
- Overall ELA growth of 4.63 points over 6 years
- ELA growth for students served by Free and Reduced Lunch by 3.8 points

Stewart Elementary School of Forrest City School District, Principal Rafael Smith-
- Overall Math Growth of 12.15 points over 6 years (3 years prior to participation vs. 3 years in Master Principal)
- Math growth for students served by Free and Reduced Lunch by 11.96 points
- Overall ELA growth of 8.69 points over 6 years
- ELA growth for students served by Free and Reduced Lunch by 8.94 points

Increased Geographic Representation in MPP Designation Visits
- 2025 Visits awarded to Roberts Elementary (LRSD); Stagecoach Elementary (Cabot)

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Evaluation Findings

Category	# of Schools	Amount
Top 5% Achievement	4	$259,392.75
Top 6%-10% Achievement	6	$145,339.86
Top 5% Growth	5	$224,743.59
Top 6%-10% Growth	4	$110,979.88
Total	19 (14 Traditional/ 5 Charter)	$740,456.08 (10.6% of all awarded funds)

Amount of Recognition and Rewards Funding allocated to schools under the Leadership of ALA Master Principal Program participants '23-'24

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Evaluation Findings

Participants rated their instructional leader performance as high or very high following their participation than before.
'23-'24
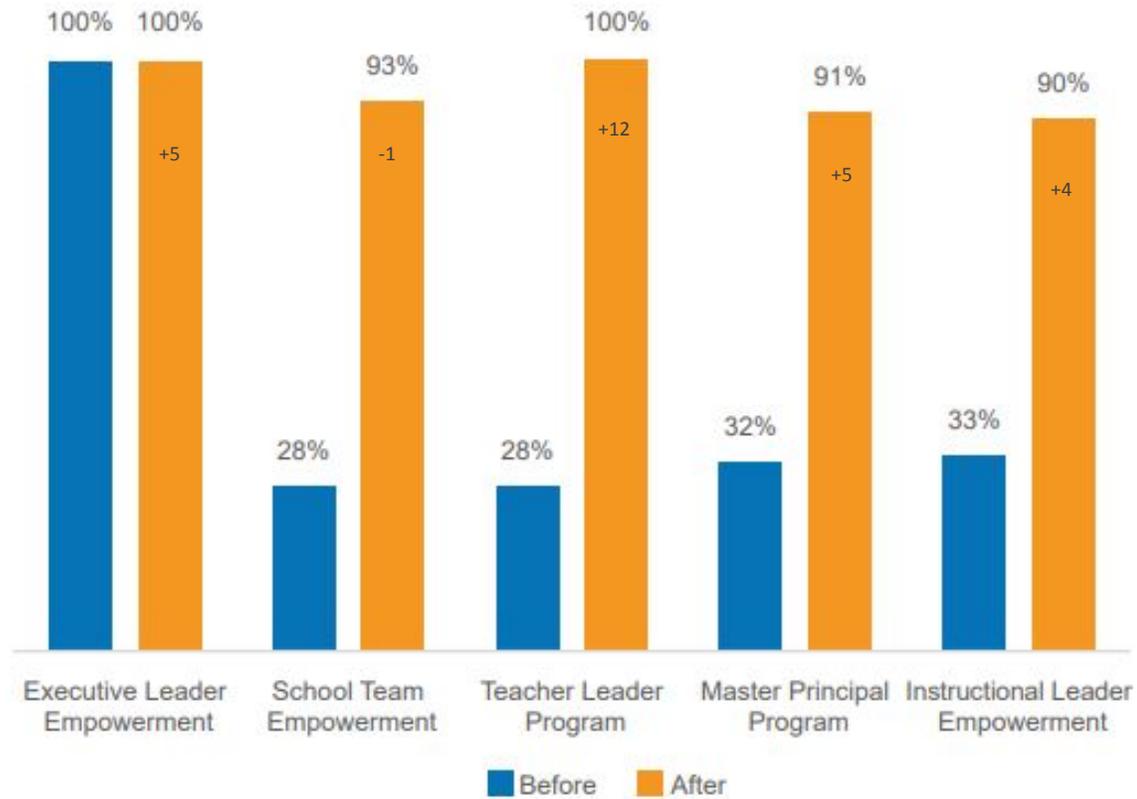
Figure 4. *Percentage of ALA participants who rated their performance as instructional leaders as high or very high before and after their participation in the program. Some respondents participated in more than one program; their results appear for both programs in which they participated.*

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Evaluation Findings
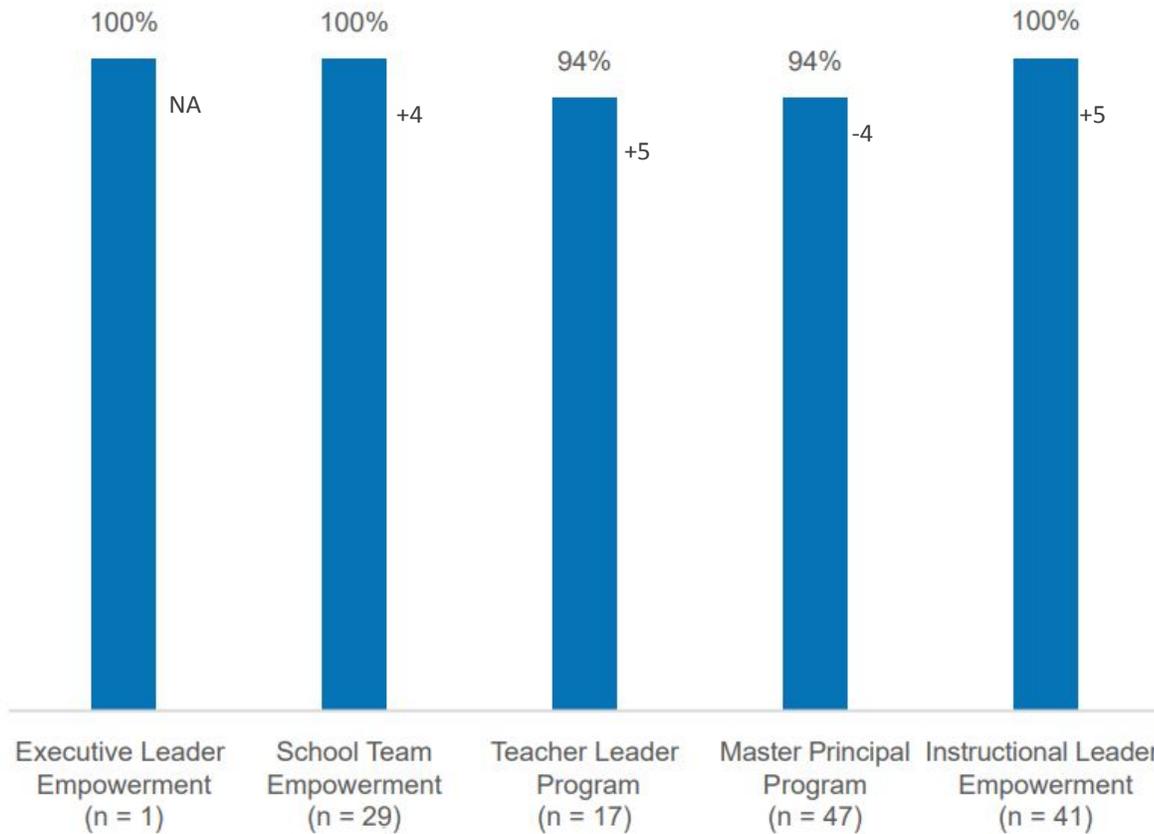
Figure 5. *Percent of participants who rated the level of improvement in instructional effectiveness in their school or district as 'some improvement' or 'a great deal of improvement' due to their participation in the ALA. Some respondents participated in more than one program; their results appear for both programs in which they participated.*

Eighty-nine percent or more of respondents (by program) indicated that their school or district improved in instructional effectiveness due to their participation in the ALA some or a great deal.
'23-'24

Evaluation Findings

Expenditures by Category
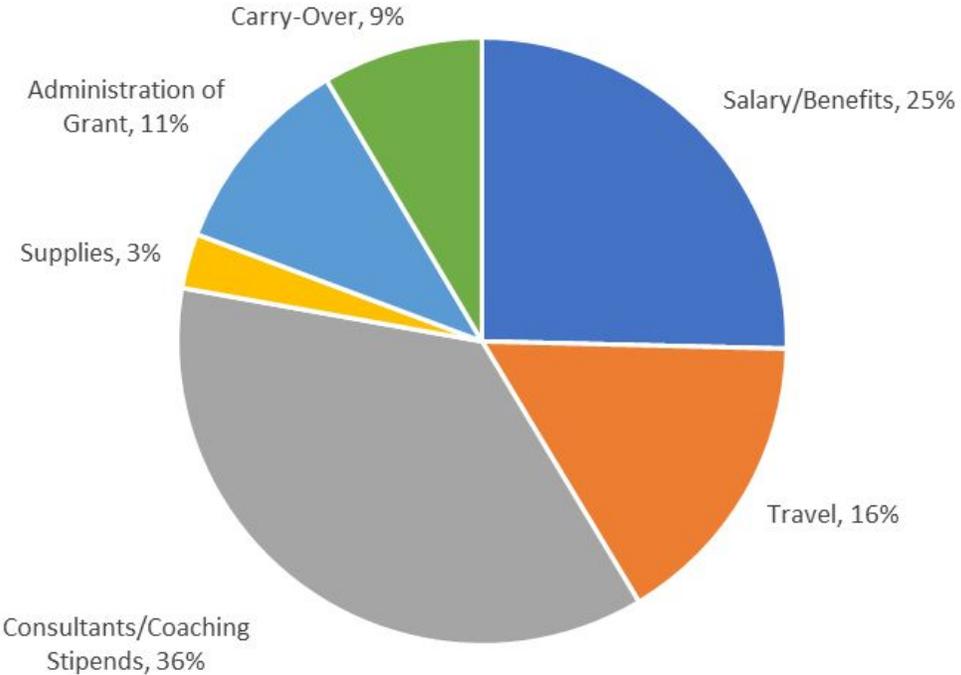
Expenditure Categories	Percentage
Salary/Benefits	25%
Travel	16%
Consultants/Coaching Stipends	36%
Supplies	3%
Administration of Grant	11%
Carry-Over	9%

Year 3 Recap

ALA GRANT
$1,400,000 PER YEAR
$500,000 for Master Principal
$900,000 for Everything Else

Three partnering entities
APSRC, A-STATE, EDUTAS
Multiple part-time employees at each entity; 3 full-time employees

Grant Allocation $ 1,400,000

Expenditures $ 1,280,751

Funds Remaining $ 119,249

Day One Leadership Recommendation Alignment

Day One Ready: Recommendation

1. Leadership Preparation Programs
- **Update standards and competencies** to reflect modern leadership demands.
- **Ensure practical internship experiences** aligned with real district needs.
- **Create stackable credentials** and job-embedded leadership pathways.

2. Statewide Administrator Professional Development
- **Define and promote instructional leadership** tied to L.E.A.R.N.S. priorities.
- **Tailor experiences** for rural and urban leaders through coaching and mentorship.

3. Educator Career Continuum
- **Elevate non-traditional leadership roles** (e.g., teacher leaders, lead mentors).
- **Build grow-your-own leadership models** to enhance internal talent pipelines.

Arkansas Leadership Academy Programming Response

1. Leadership Preparation Programs
- **ALA Strands and Indicators** aligned with DESE Leadership Competencies
- **Action Research and Cycles of Inquiry** acting on current district needs
- **Designations for Master Principal and Lead Professional**

2. Statewide Administrator Professional Development
- **Focus on High Quality Teaching and Learning** through Collective Efficacy with participation in 100% of AR Counties
- **Role-Alike/ Regional groupings** within program delivery

3. Educator Career Continuum
- **5 Cohort Groups** (Central Office/ Principal/ Instructional Leader/ Teacher Leader/ School Teams)
- **TLP → ILE → MPP → ELE Pipeline**

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Delivering Arkansas Programming

- Integrate program graduates into content planning and delivery
  - REACH! Sessions Highlighting Arkansas Practitioners/ Best Practices
  - Designated Principals Mentor, Score, Serve on Site Visits
  - TLP Designees mentor/ provide feedback to participants
  - Content Delivery from Program Graduates
- Addressing time out of building concerns and barriers to participation
  - Piloted online TLP cohort
- Increase charter school integration and outreach
  - Charter Board presentations, Charter Leader Recruitment
  - Participation represents between 18-30% across MPP Cohorts
- Intentional grouping and collaboration considerations
  - Program based planning sessions

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Evaluation Recommendations

- Continue to prioritize time for collaboration, networking, and processing
  - Program based planning sessions
  - Opening multiple Master Principal Designation Windows
  - Regional Support for TLP and MPP Applicants
- Continue aligning the ALA's content to state initiatives and legislation
  - [Alignment with DESE Administrator Competencies](#) and Day One Ready Leadership Report (2024)
  - Focus on Designation of Lead Professional Licensure (TLP)
    - TLP Designees:
  - Designation of Master Principals
    - Designees by Year: '16 (1), '17 (2), '18 (3), '19 (1), '20 (3), '21 (1), '22 (3), '23 (1)
  - Support for HQIM Adoption, Inclusive Practices, Assessment and Accountability, School Safety, Feedback and Evaluation Practice
- Organize ALA alumni events
  - Fall 2025 Event tentatively planned for Hot Springs

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Evaluation Recommendations

"We have found over the past year that our staff members are feeling more empowered. They don't just basically see themselves as educators anymore. They see themselves as learners and as contributors to the team. So, they're not afraid to take those risks and to jump in there for the students. We've also found that by looking at the data and then just going back to our core beliefs that every decision is made with intent for a specific purpose. We're just asking the questions, what are we doing this for?"

— Master Principal Program participant

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Experienced Results