



2024

ANNUAL REPORT

AUGUST, 2024

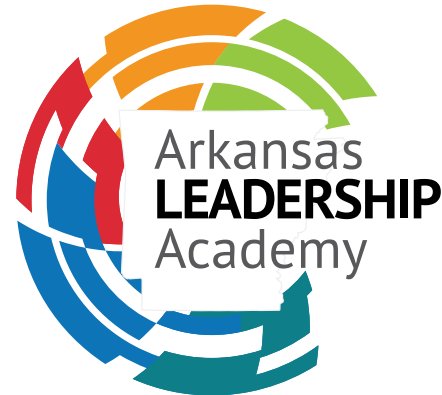
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Arkansas Leadership Academy

The Arkansas Leadership Academy (ALA) is a leadership development hub where Arkansas educational leaders can find personalized professional learning pathways to meet their needs while developing leadership capacity that will result in systemic change, leading to improved teaching and learning. The ALA's goal is to realize educational equity and excellence for all Arkansas students.

The ALA's capacity-building services focus on three evidence-based areas of study: collaborative leadership, collective efficacy, and cultural competence. Services emphasize the implementation of (a) data-driven decision-making, (b) effective instructional practices, and (c) social-emotional learning. Participants apply their learning and demonstrate growth, effectiveness, influence, and impact through various avenues, such as micro-credentialing, action research, the Teacher Excellence and Support System (TESS), and the Leader Excellence and Development System (LEADS).



The ALA's professional learning and capacity-building services align with and support the implementation of the Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education's (DESE) Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) State Plan and current school improvement initiatives, such as High-Reliability Schools (HRS), Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), cycles of inquiry, and the Reading Initiative for Student Excellence (R.I.S.E). The ALA also aligns with the Arkansas Vision for Excellence in Education: transforming Arkansas to lead the nation in student-focused education.

The ALA follows Learning Forward's *Standards for Professional Learning*, which were approved by the Arkansas State Board of Education. It uses adult learning principles to engage educators in a phased journey of leadership development that builds their capacity to influence school and classroom practices, peer and stakeholder involvement, and local and state policy. While it is essential for all leaders to have self-efficacy to effect change, they must also have the knowledge, skills, and capacities to equip and inspire others. The ALA's programs help participants build these skills through active learning in a community of peers with sessions facilitated by experts and practitioners who model and reinforce desired classroom instructional strategies. The ALA also incorporates participant choice and voice by offering multiple avenues or pathways of professional growth built upon a common foundation needed for all leaders. It accomplishes this through a hybrid delivery model of virtual and in-person learning, providing participants with personalized options to leverage their leadership potential.

Areas of Study

As a comprehensive leadership development program, three evidence-based focus areas pervade the ALA's programmatic offerings to enhance student-focused education, continual school improvement, and educational equity and excellence for Arkansas students: collaborative leadership, collective efficacy, and cultural competence.



Collaborative leadership is a shared style of team leadership (Heck & Hallinger, 2010) that emphasizes the roles teacher leaders, students, families, and other staff play in setting the direction of the school, based on research. It also underscores the roles principals and school leaders play in providing leadership opportunities for all adults in a school building and capitalizing on the leadership strengths of others.



Collective efficacy is the shared conviction among educators that they significantly contribute to raising student achievement (Hite & Donohoo, 2021). It focuses on the roles of principals and school leaders in building teachers' beliefs, knowledge, and skills to influence student outcomes through excellent instruction and conducive learning environments for students.



Cultural competence is an understanding of one's own culture, others' cultures, and the influence of culture on education (National Education Association NEA; n.d.). It highlights the role teacher leaders play in understanding their students' experiences and identities, recognizing students' strengths, establishing community relationships, and improving instructional practices based on the individual and collective needs of all student groups. It also accentuates how principals and school leaders set the conditions and expectations for teachers and students to thrive.

Partnerships

The ALA is a collaborative effort of three partner organizations that share a core belief that teachers and leaders are the most important school-based factors in ensuring student success. They recognize that to improve organizations systematically, the greatest resource is leadership capital, which must be developed to ensure the highest quality learning environments are provided to all students. The partnership is committed to producing leaders who rely on an integrated, student-focused education system based on evidence-centered design, teaching and learning competencies, and performance-based student outcomes.



The Arkansas Public School Resource Center (APSRC) is a service-oriented, non-profit membership organization that offers support, technical assistance, and training for Arkansas schools. The APSRC has a rich history of creating public-private partnerships to further its goal of enhancing Arkansas students' educational experiences.



Arkansas State University's (A-State) College of Education & Behavioral Science is the predominant producer of teachers in the state's eastern half and the primary producer of administrators in the state. It builds lifelong partnerships with graduates through its commitment to continuing education, with its primary focus on quality teaching.



Educational Technical Assistance Services (EDUTAS) at the University of Oklahoma Outreach/College of Continuing Education provides comprehensive professional learning and technical assistance to educators, schools, districts, states, and non-profit organizations. EDUTAS serves as a national expert in school improvement and leadership development initiatives.

Governance Committees

To ensure partner organizations and key stakeholder groups are included in conversations, committees were established to help guide the management, development, implementation, and evaluation of the ALA (Figure 1). Each partner organization is represented on the committees and assumes leadership in the outcomes of the committees' work. Additional committee members include staff from key stakeholder groups and advisory organizations.

Project Management/Leadership

Gives stakeholder voice to the project design, staffing and consultant needs, implementation, coordination, and continuous improvement of the ALA.



Evaluation

Gives stakeholder voice to the structure, content, and analysis of the evaluation, and offers recommendations for continuous improvement of the ALA.



Audit

Analyzes the ALA's financial resources.

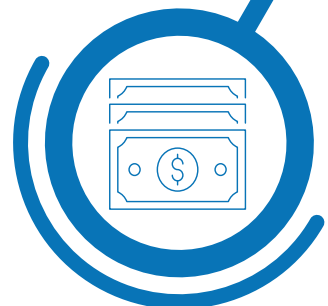


Figure 1. ALA committees



Publicity and Communications

Provides leadership for the development of a structured communication plan, press releases, social media presence, and tools and strategies to enhance content production from the other committees.



Fiscal

Facilitates the invoicing and payment of all accounts and ensures fiscal accountability for the ALA.



Governance

Gives stakeholder voice to the general oversight of ALA implementation.

Theory of Action

The ALA's Theory of Action describes the core beliefs and concepts that lead to improved outcomes for all Arkansas students by building the knowledge base and expertise of leaders and advancing the process of continuous improvement for schools (Figure 2).

The Theory of Action states that:

if we **expand** the reach of the ALA programs and initiatives, **establish** equitable access to ALA programs and initiatives for leaders in all regions of the state, and **integrate** learning opportunities across roles and regions, *and*

if we **deliver** evidence-based professional learning and capacity-building services in collaborative leadership, collective efficacy, and cultural competence for leaders at all levels of the PK-12 Arkansas educational system,

then regional, district, school, and classroom leaders will have the leadership knowledge, skills, and competencies to **influence** educational equity and excellence through a variety of **relevant outcomes**, including improved human capital management, school climate and environment, and effectiveness of classroom instruction,

so that these relevant outcomes will **impact** student achievement, learning, and well-being outcomes; equitable access to effective learning opportunities; and other student outcomes.

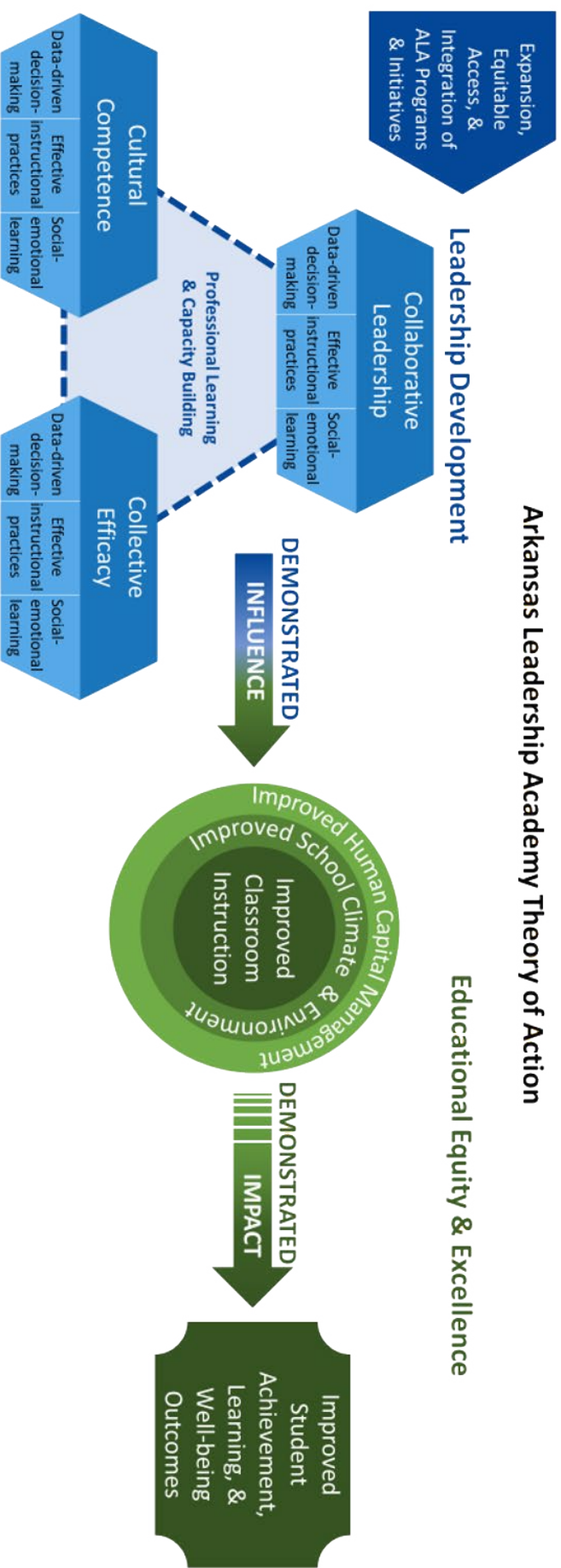


Figure 2. ALA theory of action

Programs and Offerings

The ALA's programs and offerings fall into two categories: ALA Reach and ALA Collaborative (ALAC). Reach services do not require an application or long-term commitment and are made available to educators across the state at little or no cost to districts.

For the purposes of this document and to align with the original project proposal, the signature programs and initiatives of the ALA will be identified collectively as ALAC. These programs include the Master Principal Program, Teacher Leader Program, Executive Leader Empowerment, School Team Empowerment, and Instructional Leader Empowerment. These services require a longer-term commitment from participants, and each program requires an application and acceptance into the program. All participants of the ALAC are encouraged to participate in ALA Reach offerings to supplement and personalize their professional learning journey.

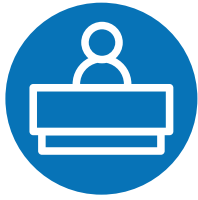


Reach

ALA Reach provides professional learning for current and aspiring Arkansas educational leaders. All Arkansas educators and policymakers are invited to participate in Reach opportunities and access its resources. Reach services include workshops, webinars, and seminars on emerging issues.

Spark! is a virtual learning network that fosters conversations and shares best practices about trending school issues and challenges. Each session focuses on a specific issue through a case study, short didactic, and conversation facilitated by ALA's Hub Team of Arkansas educational leaders.

Most Reach sessions, including Spark! sessions, are held virtually and are available for on-demand viewing. In-person Reach workshops are held periodically to foster regional collaboration among educational leaders and aspiring leaders.



Master Principal Program

The Master Principal Program was established through the passage of Act 44 of the Second Extraordinary Session of the 2003 Arkansas General Assembly to provide “training programs and opportunities to expand the knowledge base and leadership skills of public-school principals.” The Master Principal Program consists of three phases and a designation process. A school principal successfully completing all phases and requirements of the program is designated as a Master Principal by the ALA and is eligible for bonuses paid by the state.



Teacher Leader Program

The Teacher Leader Program is for individuals currently serving as classroom teachers in Arkansas public schools who are either currently in or aspire to take on leadership roles while remaining in the classroom. Teacher leadership is key to retaining excellent teachers, improving access to excellent educators, improving school and student outcomes, and enhancing the teaching profession. The Teacher Leader Program prepares participants for formal and informal teacher leadership roles in their schools, districts, regions, state, and nation. A teacher leader who successfully completes the program and demonstrates mastery of state standards in teacher leadership may apply for designation as a Lead Professional from DESE. Under the merit pay changes introduced by the LEARNS Act, which took effect in August 2023, designation as a Lead Professional will serve as one pathway for merit pay increases.

“...our principals that are coming back from Master Principal are saying, it’s some of the best PD they ever had. And I know their action research projects have been very timely and relevant to their building. I think it’s creating a culture of learning and continuous development in order to make ourselves better educators. And that’s very refreshing.”

— Executive Leader Empowerment participant





Executive Leader Empowerment

Executive Leader Empowerment provides professional learning and networking experiences for superintendents, assistant superintendents, Education Cooperative directors, and charter school superintendents or CEOs. Sessions focus on developing a plan for executive leaders to impact and support school culture, building principals, classroom teachers, classified staff, and instruction in the classroom.



School Team Empowerment

School Team Empowerment delivers professional learning and coaching opportunities for teams of school administrators, teacher leaders, district leaders, and other educational staff. The program provides individual and team growth through a differentiated approach to leadership development. Sessions focus on developing collective leader efficacy and nurturing collaborative teams to lead effective instructional practices. Each school team is paired with an experienced Arkansas practitioner to personalize learning and strengthen their ability to transfer theory to practice. Teams have multiple opportunities to engage in virtual coaching sessions as a value-added strategy to grow leadership capacity and assist with the application of learning.



Instructional Leader Empowerment

The purpose of Instructional Leader Empowerment is to support growth by focusing on improving classroom instruction. Instructional leaders impact and support teachers and classroom instruction within the school system. They may be principals, assistant principals, instructional facilitators, curriculum and instructional coaches, and district instructional leaders. Instructional Leader Empowerment supports growth by focusing on improving instruction through learning and sharing from national subject-matter experts and local educators. Sessions enhance development and implementation processes for instructional leaders who provide targeted instruction to classroom teachers.

ALA Evaluation

The ALA partnered with the Educational Training, Evaluation, Assessment, and Measurement (E-TEAM), a third-party research and evaluation department at The University of Oklahoma's College of Continuing Education, to evaluate the project. The evaluation is designed to provide ongoing formative feedback and annual summative data to inform the project's continuous improvement process (Figure 3).

As stated previously, the ALA's ultimate goal is to realize educational equity and excellence for all Arkansas students. The ALA has an overarching program objective to improve school, teacher, student, and leader outcomes in schools led by ALA participants.

As expressed in the ALA's theory of action, this objective is designed to produce individual leader-, district-, school-, classroom-, and student-level expected outcomes, including:

- Increased leadership knowledge, skills, and competencies of regional, district, school, and classroom leaders;
- Improved human capital management, school climate and environment, and effectiveness of classroom instruction; and
- Improved student achievement, learning, and well-being outcomes; equitable access to effective learning opportunities; and other student outcomes.

The overarching program objective and expected outcomes will be demonstrated through achievement of the following program targets:¹

- By 2024, students' mathematics and reading/language arts achievement in schools led by ALAC graduates will increase by 4 percentage points.
- By 2024, schools led by ALAC graduates will demonstrate improvements in student attendance, discipline, graduation, and grade progression outcomes.
- By 2024, schools led by ALAC graduates will demonstrate improvements in school climate.
- By 2024, 85% of teachers in a random sampling from the schools led by ALAC graduates will demonstrate improvement in instructional practices.
- By 2025, teacher turnover in the schools led by ALAC graduates will be reduced by 5 percentage points.
- By 2024, 85% of leaders in a random sampling of ALAC graduates' schools will demonstrate improvement in instructional leadership practices.

1. Data for the 2023-2024 school year was not available at the time of this report. Results related to these program targets will be provided in the 2024-2025 annual report.

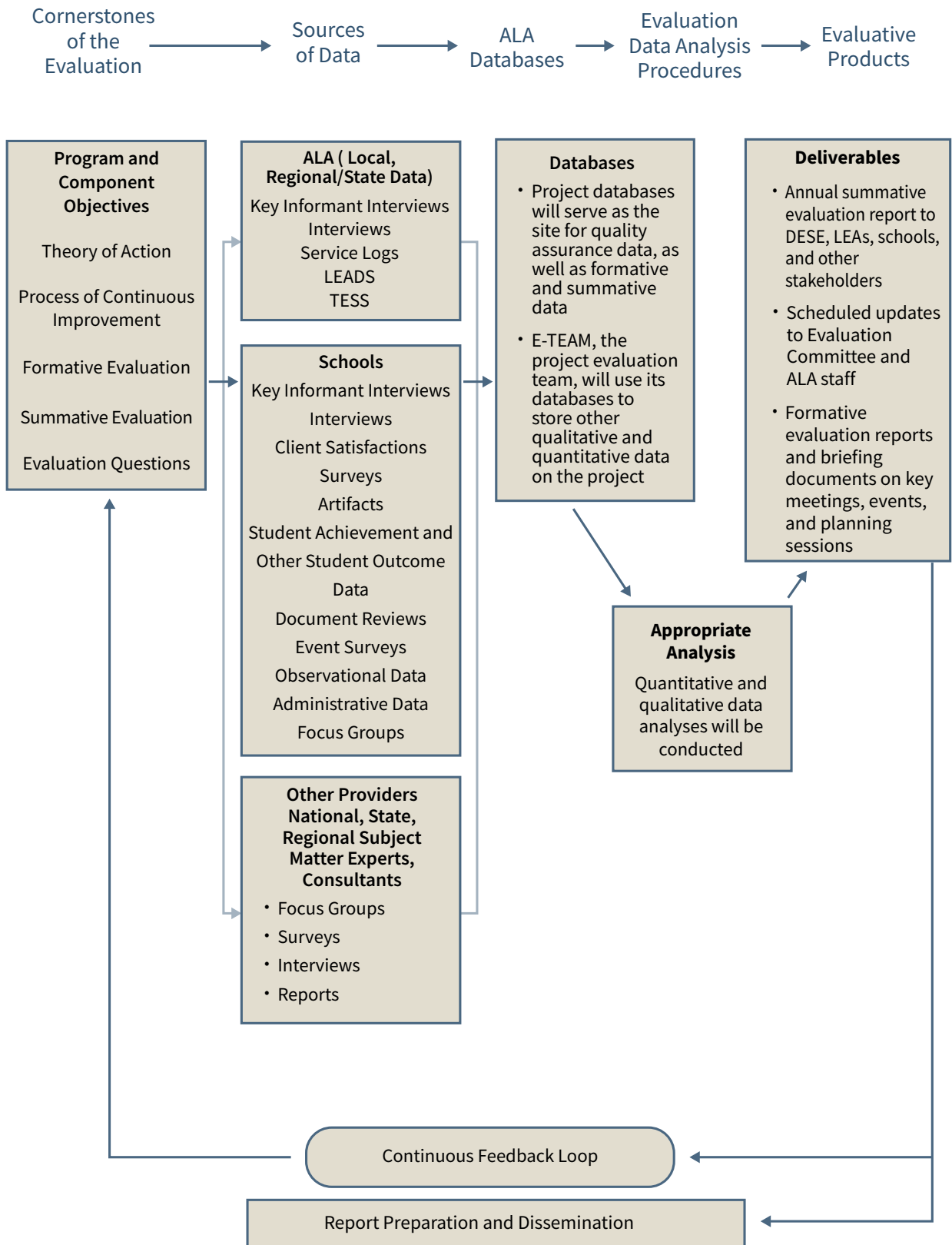


Figure 3. ALA evaluation logic model

The E-TEAM provides formative evaluation reports following each program session (Appendix B) and gives scheduled updates to the Evaluation Committee and ALA staff throughout the year. In addition, the E-TEAM completes an annual summative evaluation report at the end of each program year.

A mixed-methods evaluation design is used to study the ALA's implementation, outcomes, and impacts. Primary sources of data include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Administrative data from the ALA, the Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), schools, and districts
- Participant surveys
- Key informant interviews with staff and partners
- Interviews and focus groups with participants or other school staff
- High Reliability Schools (HRS) surveys
- Teacher Effectiveness and Support System (TESS)/Leader Excellence and Development System (LEADS)
- Program session agendas and materials

Annual Summative Evaluation

The results of the summative evaluation for fiscal year 2024 (FY24; July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024) are detailed in this report and consist of two sections:

- **Evaluation Questions** – The evaluation questions address the ALA’s implementation, outcomes, and impacts. This report section provides results associated with the evaluation questions for FY24.
- **Objectives and Targets** – The E-TEAM and the ALA worked together to establish objectives and targets to guide the program, document progress, and inform program improvements and impacts. This section of the report provides results associated with the objectives and targets for FY24.

Data Sources

The E-TEAM utilized multiple data sources to conduct the summative evaluation for FY24. These sources include:

Event Surveys

Following each ALA professional learning session, surveys were administered to participants to assess the quality, relevance, and usefulness of the sessions in helping to improve instructional and leadership practices. **Quality** refers to the effectiveness of professional learning sessions in providing evidence-based content and promising practices. **Relevance** refers to the professional learning and educational resources and materials that help participants improve policies, instructional practices, leadership development, and educational systems. **Usefulness** refers to professional learning and educational resources and materials that provide participants with the tools, information, knowledge, and skills to support their research, instructional practices, leadership development, and student learning. Surveys also included questions concerning changes in knowledge, ability, and understanding of the session’s learning objectives.

Annual Participant Survey

An annual survey was administered to program participants at the end of the program year to gather information about changes in self-efficacy, instructional effectiveness, school climate, and student outcomes. This survey also assessed the quality, relevance, and usefulness of the ALA sessions. Additionally, the annual participant survey documented changes in participants' knowledge, skills, and abilities related to cultural competence, collaborative leadership, and collective efficacy.

Key Informant Interviews

Key informant interviews are in-depth interviews with people who are experts in education and involved with the design and/or implementation of the ALA program. Interviews were conducted with ALA staff, ALA committee members, A-State staff, consultants, and DESE staff to collect information on program implementation, impacts, services, participation, partnerships, committees, and engagement.

Participant Interviews and Focus Groups

Interviews and focus groups were conducted with program participants to assess changes in behavior, beliefs, attitudes, knowledge, and skills; participation; program effectiveness; and student and school outcomes.

ALA Administrative Data

Administrative data was compiled from the ALA related to program participation, attendance, services, development, implementation, staff, and budget.

Evaluation Questions

To what extent do ALA participants improve their performance as school instructional leaders during and after program participation?

On the annual survey, respondents rated their performance as instructional leaders before and after participating in the ALA.¹ For most programs, more participants rated their performance as high or very high following their participation than before (Figure 4). Seventy-two percent of School Team Empowerment respondents (n = 29), 89% of Teacher Leader respondents (n = 18), 87% of Master Principal Program respondents (n = 47), and 86% of Instructional Leader Empowerment respondents (n = 42) indicated an improvement in performance. The Executive Leader Empowerment respondent (n = 1) did not indicate an improvement.

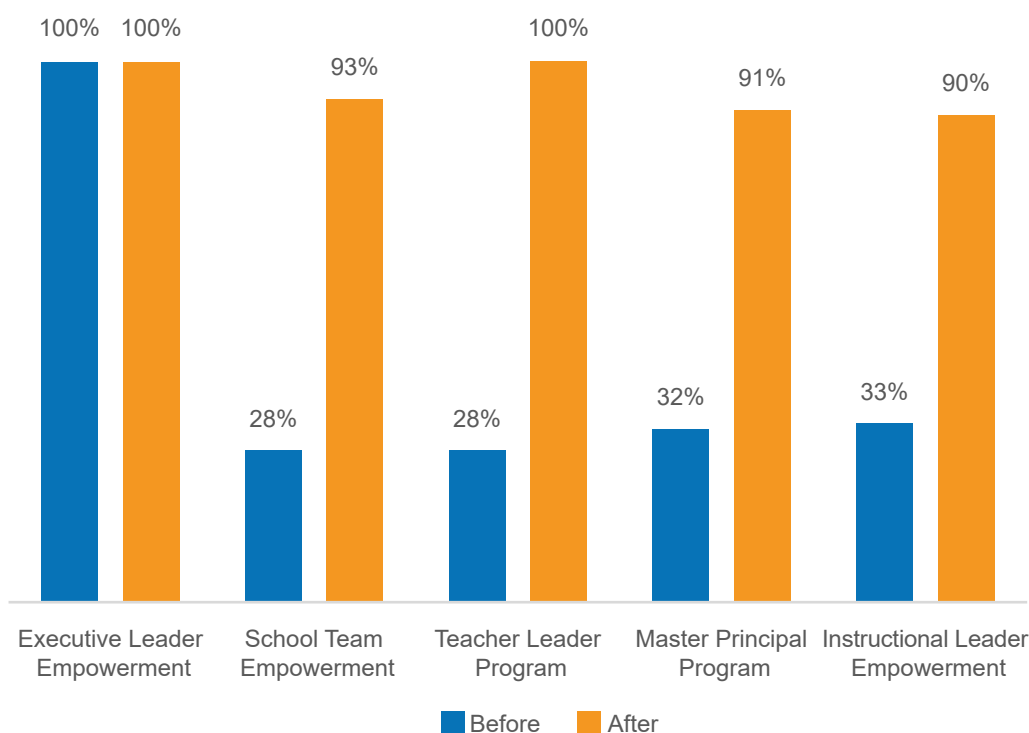


Figure 4. Percentage of ALA participants who rated their performance as instructional leaders as high or very high before and after their participation in the program. Some respondents participated in more than one program; their results appear for both programs in which they participated.

1. Ratings were made on a 5-point Likert scale with the following options: very low, low, neither high nor low, high, and very high.

In interviews and focus groups, program participants discussed how their performance as instructional leaders changed and improved throughout the ALA program in which they participated. These changes and improvements are described below.

- **Empowering Collaboration:** The level of collaboration between participants in each program fostered the development of leadership skills and provided a support system for implementing new instructional leader strategies. One participant from the Executive Leader Empowerment program said:

You see what someone else is doing and how they're doing it. [Another ELE participant] is only 15 minutes from me, so we can collaborate on everything, and if something happens at my school, I know I got him to depend on.

Because of this network of support through the ALA, school leaders felt more confident in navigating changes and empowering others in their schools, districts, and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). Several participants cited the ALA program as helping them realize ways to distribute leadership responsibilities and rely on others, rather than being the sole decision-maker. One Master Principal Program participant shared that the ALA “has been freeing” because they “can now see the power of building a strong leadership team and building that capacity in others.” This shift in perspective also encouraged the questioning of existing school practices to ensure alignment with their mission and vision. For example, a member of the School Team Empowerment program stated “...it challenges us as a leadership team to basically start questioning why we do the things we do, and if our practices are holding true to what we say our mission and vision is.” Across several focus groups, participants discussed the skills and resources they gained through the ALA and how they planned to empower others in their schools using these strategies. One principal said they were motivated to ensure that their teams were ready to “bring changes to the table” and have a voice in thinking about solutions to the challenges their school is facing. Many participants discussed changes in their approach to decision-making and leadership because of their ALA participation.

- **Enhancing Leadership:** Participants in the Teacher Leader Program and Instructional Leader Empowerment programs discussed the ways that the ALA enabled them to mentor and guide other teachers, both at a building level and in terms of their PLCs. Many participants discussed the value of modeling leadership and facilitating conversations around instructional practices. As one teacher explained:

We've been working [with] teachers who have speed bumps, and

I feel like the things in ALA have given me the ability to just go sit down with some of those teachers and be like, ‘hey, you know, what’s holding you up? What are you concerned about?’ And just talking through some of those issues.

The ALA was recognized for effectively “creating clarity” around common processes and terms related to instructional leadership, as well as providing practical strategies for managing it within schools. For example, one participant from the Instructional Leader Empowerment program shared that teachers at their school were initially skeptical of classroom observations and ambivalent about receiving feedback on their instructional strategies. However, after attending a session on formative assessment facilitated by the Instructional Leader participant, these teachers became more enthusiastic about classroom observations and feedback. This participant noted that teachers are now taking on more leadership roles, implementing new strategies, and collaborating more on instructional practices – something the participant attributes to their development and enhanced leadership through the Instructional Leader program. Overall, participants saw improvements in performance as instructional leaders, both in themselves and their colleagues. Notable changes were described by participants across all ALA programs in their confidence and ability to lead change in ways that benefit their students.

To what extent do project participants gain knowledge, skills, and competencies in each of ALA’s capacity-building areas: Collaborative Leadership, Collective Efficacy, and Cultural Competence?

On the annual survey, program participants rated their knowledge, understanding, and skills related to the ALA’s capacity-building areas: Collaborative Leadership, Collective Efficacy, and Cultural Competence.

Table 1 shows the percentage of respondents who rated their knowledge, understanding, and skills as high or very high in Collaborative Leadership prior to and following their participation in the ALA in FY24 and the percentage whose knowledge, understanding, and skills improved. In most programs, greater percentages of participants rated their knowledge, understanding, and skills as high or very high in Collaborative Leadership following their participation compared to their ratings before their participation, with 90% or more indicating a high level of knowledge, understanding, and skills after their participation. For most programs, 79% or more reported an improvement in their knowledge, understanding, and skills.

Table 1. Percent of Participants Who Rated Their Knowledge, Understanding, and Skills in *Collaborative Leadership* as High or Very High Prior to and After Participation

	Knowledge			Understanding			Skills		
	Pre	Post	Improved	Pre	Post	Improved	Pre	Post	Improved
Executive Leader Empowerment (n = 1)	100%	100%	0%	100%	100%	0%	100%	100%	0%
School Team Empowerment (n =29)	17%	97%	90%	21%	97%	79%	14%	100%	86%
Teacher Leader Program (n = 18)	17%	100%	94%	22%	94%	83%	22%	100%	94%
Master Principal Program (n = 47)	38%	98%	83%	32%	96%	91%	26%	98%	91%
Instructional Leader Empowerment (n = 42)	26%	95%	98%	24%	90%	95%	26%	86%	93%

Notes: Pre- and post-participation percentages represent the percentage of participants who rated their knowledge, understanding, and skills as high or very high. Some participants rated these aspects as high or very high prior to their participation, leaving little or no room for improvement. Some respondents participated in more than one program; their results appear for both programs in which they participated.

Table 2 shows the percentage of respondents who rated their knowledge, understanding, and skills as high or very high in Collective Efficacy prior to and following their participation in the ALA in FY24 and the percentage whose knowledge, understanding, and skills improved. In all programs, a greater percentage of participants rated their knowledge, understanding, and skills as high or very high in Collective Efficacy following their participation, with 86% or more indicating a high level of knowledge, understanding, and skills after their participation. For all programs, 78% or more reported an improvement in their knowledge, understanding, and skills.



Table 2. Percent of Participants Who Rated Their Knowledge, Understanding, and Skills in **Collective Efficacy** as High or Very High Prior to and After Participation

	Knowledge			Understanding			Skills		
	Pre	Post	Improved	Pre	Post	Improved	Pre	Post	Improved
Executive Leader Empowerment (n = 1)	0%	100%	100%	0%	100%	100%	0%	100%	100%
School Team Empowerment (n =29)	21%	86%	83%	21%	86%	83%	21%	93%	83%
Teacher Leader Program (n = 18)	39%	94%	78%	33%	94%	78%	33%	94%	78%
Master Principal Program (n = 47)	32%	94%	94%	34%	94%	87%	26%	87%	87%
Instructional Leader Empowerment (n = 42)	19%	93%	88%	21%	93%	86%	17%	88%	90%

Notes: Pre- and post-participation percentages represent the percentage of participants who rated their knowledge, understanding, and skills as high or very high. Some participants rated these aspects as high or very high prior to their participation, leaving little or no room for improvement. Some respondents participated in more than one program; their results appear for both programs in which they participated.

Table 3 shows the percentage of respondents who rated their knowledge, understanding, and skills as high or very high in Cultural Competence prior to and following their participation in the ALA in FY24 and the percentage whose knowledge, understanding, and skills improved. In most programs, a greater percentage of participants rated Cultural Competence as high or very high following their participation compared to their ratings before their participation, with 86% or more indicating a high level of knowledge, understanding, and skills after their participation. For most programs, 54% or more reported an improvement in their knowledge, understanding, and skills.



“ I’ve allowed my team to actually see some of the things that I do, like budgeting and staffing and some of the hard decisions that we have to make. And that’s been really good for my team. So I’ve seen that culture shift. ”

— Executive Leadership Empowerment participant

Table 3. Percent of Participants Who Rated Their Knowledge, Understanding, and Skills in **Cultural Competence** as High or Very High Prior to and After Participation

	Knowledge			Understanding			Skills		
	Pre	Post	Improved	Pre	Post	Improved	Pre	Post	Improved
Executive Leader Empowerment (n = 1)	100%	100%	0%	0%	100%	100%	0%	100%	100%
School Team Empowerment (n = 28)	32%	93%	68%	46%	93%	54%	34%	86%*	66%*
Teacher Leader Program (n = 18)	50%	94%	78%	44%	100%	78%	28%	94%	83%
Master Principal Program (n = 49)	31%	98%	84%	31%	100%	86%	29%	96%	86%
Instructional Leader Empowerment (n = 42)	38%	95%	95%	29%	90%	90%	31%	86%	83%

Notes: Pre- and post-participation percentages represent the percentage of participants who rated their knowledge, understanding, and skills as high or very high. Some participants rated these aspects as high or very high prior to their participation, leaving little or no room for improvement. Some respondents participated in more than one program; their results appear for both programs in which they participated. *n = 29

Both focus group discussions and key client interviews expanded on the ways that participant skills, knowledge, and competencies in Collaborative Leadership, Collective Efficacy, and Cultural Competence grew as a result of ALA.

- Empowering Leadership:** As a result of the interlocking ALA programs, many participants described a shift in their leadership perspective and the impact it had on teachers and instructional leaders. They explained that teachers now see themselves as classroom leaders, emboldened by enhanced teamwork and unity, which has fostered a collective drive towards achieving common objectives. At the level of school leader, this capacity building was discussed as being crucial to the continued growth of their schools and districts. One Executive Leader Empowerment participant highlighted the importance of viewing all individuals as contributing to a larger school ecosystem, and they saw their role as superintendent to build capacity and empower their team. They went on to say that they felt their role should be striving to “work [themselves] out of a job” in a way that their school team could just “pick up and run with the systems [they’ve] put in place.”

For members of the School Team Empowerment program, having a variety of people from different areas in their school on their team

was valuable in that it allowed for strengthened communication and planning on a school-level. This experience compelled them to think about who was at the table and who needed to be at the table for improved school operations and tackling their problem of practice.

A participant in the Teacher Leader Program also offered the following:

We're becoming better listeners. Even as teacher leaders in our building, we're trying to really hear what the other people are saying and tune into that more than just having a one-sided conversation. And so, I feel like, at a building level, we're becoming better listeners to each other.

- **Efficacy Impact:** Several Instructional Leader Empowerment participants discussed their enhanced ability to facilitate activities around efficacy for teachers because of their ALA involvement. One participant described sharing these activities with their PLCs at every grade level as a “valuable aspect” they were able to take back in their leadership role. According to the Instructional Leader Empowerment lead, Jeana Williams, this is an important component of the program due to its promise for impact on student achievement:

When we do collective efficacy, we don't just learn about collective efficacy, we learn how to build it. So, if they take that back and do that, that helps everything. Collective efficacy has the biggest impact on student achievement of every influence there is. So, we're always paying very close attention to what could impact or would impact student achievement and growth.

- **Cultural Competence:** Participants also recognized the ALA for its contributions to developing cultural competence. One Reach participant highlighted their enhanced ability to understand student behaviors, beliefs, and communication patterns across various socio-economic levels because of the learning experiences they had through ALA. They cited this enriched understanding as having improved their approach to addressing student behavioral challenges. Furthermore, numerous participants acknowledged that the ALA was instrumental in advancing their communication abilities and effectiveness in collaborating with individuals from a wide array of backgrounds.

What other factors do participants identify as contributing to students' academic and non-academic success?

Interviewees and focus group participants mentioned several factors they believe contribute to students' academic and non-academic success:

- **Quality Educators:** A consistent theme in participants' responses to the question of academic success factors was the quality of people, from the superintendent to the teacher level. One Executive Leader Empowerment participant outlined how they viewed leadership as something that trickled down to impact success in schools, describing it as, "principals who can effectively lead teachers, and teachers who can effectively lead students." This was echoed by another Executive Leader Empowerment participant who credited the building principal as having a key role in student success due to their ability to set the tone, inspire, and lead their staff. Indeed, creating an effective and cooperative team atmosphere was viewed as essential for nurturing academic excellence among students across the board, along with the support of school leaders to motivate and support their teachers. A Master Principal Program participant shared:

Great teachers make for great results. When a teacher feels supported and capable, they understand the goals and they feel tied to the same things. That's when you attain your best results.

Teacher preparedness also emerged as a frequently cited factor in student success. Instructional Leader Empowerment participants discussed the importance of teachers adhering to intentional instructional practices and starting early on lesson plans. One participant underscored how early planning led to increased confidence and decreased stress in teachers, especially as the school year went on. They emphasized the importance of intention for teachers, saying, "Be ready to involve those kids. Be intentional... have everything done, even your higher-level questioning techniques." According to several Instructional Leader participants, planning ahead enabled teachers to deliver effective lessons, engage students, and contribute to their academic success.

Most participants also emphasized the relationship between teacher and student as vital for the academic success of a student. They noted that students who felt safe and cared for were better able to focus on their academic development. As one principal said, "When they feel valued, their attendance seems to be better, as well as their participation." Additionally, having compassionate teachers who are attuned to the challenges students encounter beyond the classroom was repeatedly acknowledged as a key component of student growth and success.

- **Non-Academic Support:** ALA participants also suggested a variety of non-academic factors that benefit students outside of the classroom and school. School leaders in the Master Principal Program and Executive Leader Empowerment programs saw hosting community events and familiarizing families with school staff as important components in developing rapport and trust that could enhance student success. One principal discussed these as opportunities for “helping our parents [to] understand what we’re asking of students” and how the students are being “pushed” for growth. During focus groups, many participants highlighted the diverse family structures that their students come from and suggested that more recognition and intentional outreach in the community could help teachers and school leaders understand the various backgrounds represented in their student population. One teacher highlighted the role of compassion in interacting with students having behavioral issues that stem from unstable family environments:

...a willingness for other teachers to understand [students’] difficulties and see where they stood and why they struggle, and maybe not automatically wanting to give consequences. Especially in lunchroom and recess and those unstructured times. I would love for teachers to just have a little bit more compassion and understanding towards the struggles that these kids have.

Other participants noted the importance of engaging students in community service efforts outside of their time at school. One superintendent explained that “raising a level of expectation for our students outside of the classroom” is equally important in helping them prepare for life in general. According to several focus group participants, having some form of hands-on learning opportunities available for students is also a key to ensuring their academic and personal success.

To what extent are instructional effectiveness, school climate, and other teacher- and school-level outcomes improving over time in schools led by program participants?

On the annual survey, respondents rated their school’s or district’s level of improvement in instructional effectiveness due to their participation in the ALA (Figure 5).² Ninety-four percent or more respondents indicated that their school or district improved some or a great deal.

2. Responses were provided on a 5-point Likert scale. The response options were: no improvement, little improvement, some improvement, and a great deal of improvement.

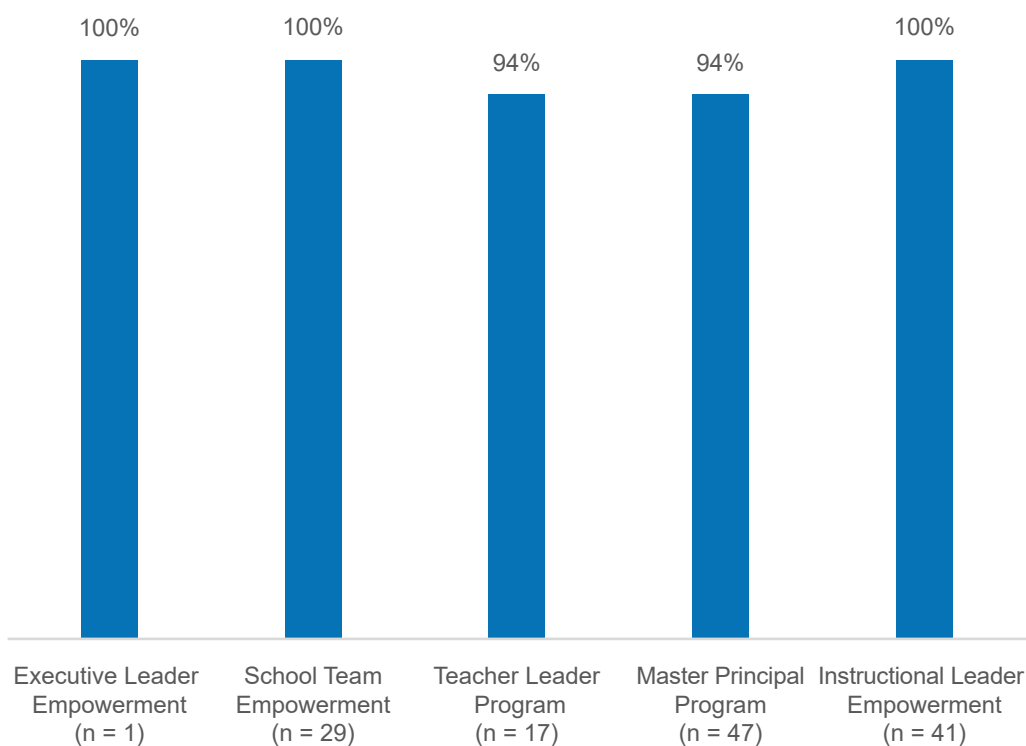
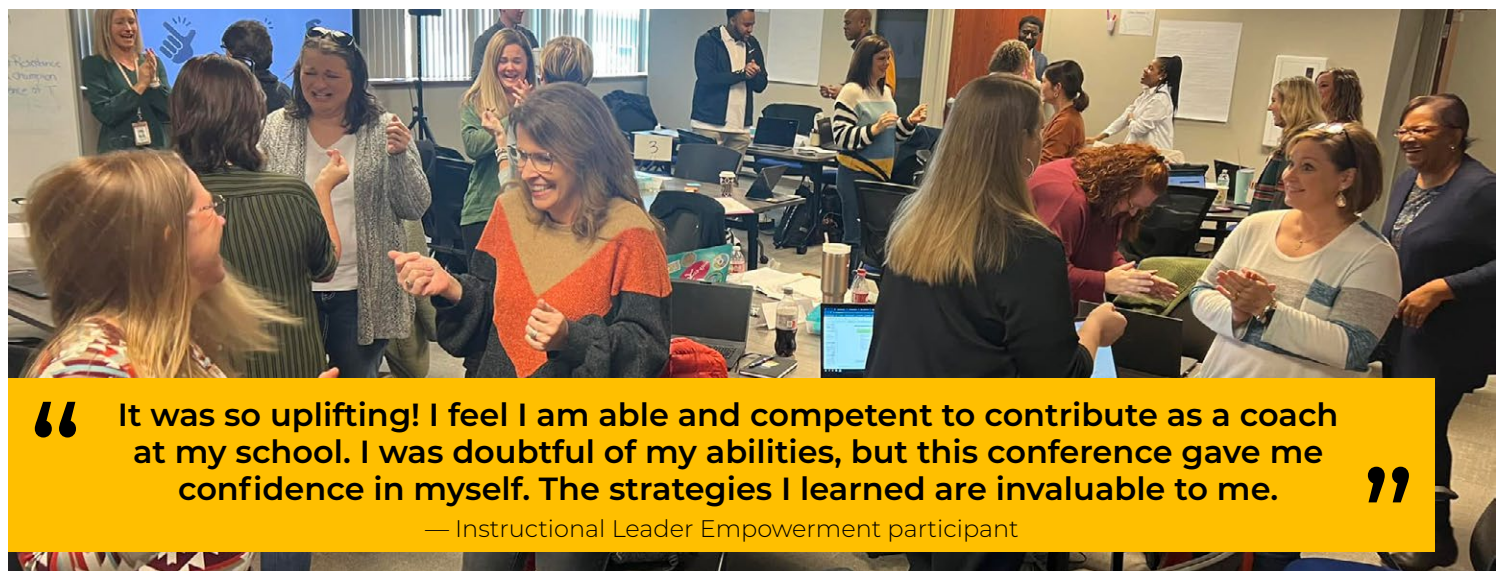


Figure 5. Percent of participants who rated the level of improvement in instructional effectiveness in their school or district as ‘some improvement’ or ‘a great deal of improvement’ due to their participation in the ALA. Some respondents participated in more than one program; their results appear for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

Respondents to the annual survey also rated the level of improvement in school climate in their school or district due to their participation in the ALA (Figure 6)³. Eighty-two percent or more respondents indicated that their school’s or district’s climate improved some or a great deal.



“ It was so uplifting! I feel I am able and competent to contribute as a coach at my school. I was doubtful of my abilities, but this conference gave me confidence in myself. The strategies I learned are invaluable to me. ”

— Instructional Leader Empowerment participant

3. Responses were provided on a 5-point Likert scale. The response options were: no improvement, little improvement, some improvement, and a great deal of improvement.

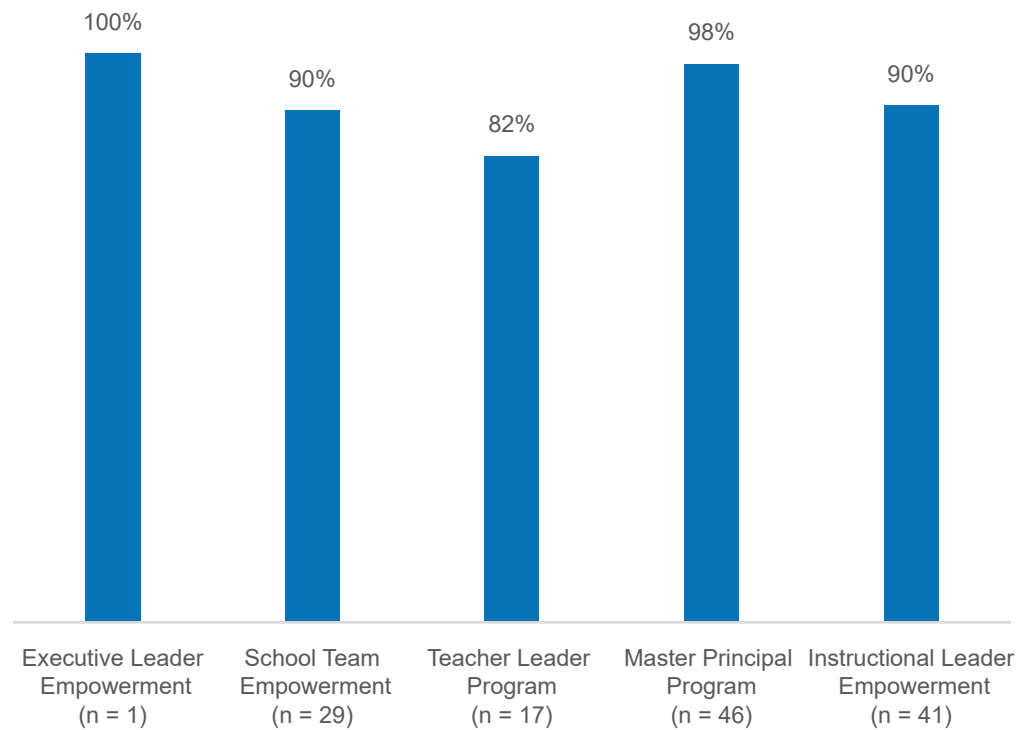


Figure 6. *Percent of respondents who rated the level of improvement in school climate in their school or district as ‘some improvement’ or ‘a great deal of improvement’ due to their participation in the ALA. Some respondents participated in more than one program; their results appear for both programs in which they participated.*

Across focus groups and key client interviews, ALA participants and leaders suggested ways in which instructional effectiveness, school climate, and other teacher- and school-level outcomes have improved. Participants from all programs discussed the tools, resources, and strategies they brought back to the schools, buildings, and PLCs as a result of the ALA. Participants in the School Team Empowerment program discussed new protocols for data sharing and event planning that they developed through the ALA. They also emphasized a newfound importance for documenting successes and meaningful changes resulting from these improved processes. One Reach participant shared how they used the homework chart in their own classroom and introduced it to other teachers in their department, eventually going on to lead a session for their PLC to discuss this as a new tool to improve the overall homework process. Across many focus groups, participants highlighted how the ALA helped them develop better communication skills, and, as a result, felt that meetings were more productive and intentional, leading to improved morale and more people feeling like their voice was being heard.

One school team that participated in the School Team Empowerment program took a closer look at their outreach and communication strategies aimed at adult learners who wanted to earn their high school diplomas. According to Rachel Horn, the lead for the School Team Empowerment program, the insights this team gained from the program enabled the school to better align its outreach efforts. This alignment helped students to “truly see themselves as part of the organization, fostering a sense of

belonging and motivation.” As a result of these improved strategies, the school experienced a remarkable 270% increase in enrollment. Speaking to this team’s ability to effectively address a major problem of practice in their school, Horn shared, “it was exciting to watch this team achieve so much success.”

One participant in the Teacher Leader Program discussed collaboration protocols and how they used these to work with students with behavioral challenges, helping the students to reduce peer conflict and learn how to effectively work together. In discussing this application of strategies, Jenni Donohoo, an expert consultant for the Teacher Leader Program, said:

We have evidence that they take what they learn, and they implement it back in their schools. And I think that’s one of the biggest strengths, you know, we model a lot of the useful protocols that can be used in professional learning that we know they take back and use with their colleagues. We model a lot of high effective instructional strategies, and that often resonates with them as classroom teachers, and they come back, and they explain and share how they’ve adapted or used the strategies in their own environment.

Similarly, participants in the Instructional Leader Empowerment program shared how the teachers they worked with were improving because of these instructional leaders implementing ideas and strategies from the ALA. Several instructional leaders highlighted examples of workshops they led with teachers or their PLCs that resulted in a “lightbulb” moment. One participant shared:

One of our initiatives has been common formative assessments this year in our PLCs, and so that’s been a heavy conversation, and I took Jeanna’s activity that she had us do at [Instructional Leader Empowerment], where we did kind of like the difference between formative and summative. And then we did the difference between observation [and] evaluation and [did] that activity as we went around the room. And I brought that back, and I did that as a [professional development] in our PLC by grade level, and the ‘a-ha’ light bulbs that went off for our staff as to why we have observations, and how that is teachers’ formative assessments... I mean, I had goosebumps all day long. It was absolutely amazing. And they were like, when are you coming in my room? Right? It completely changed the mindset around observations in our building and it went from evaluative to ‘no, you’re here to help, and you’re here to support the kids.’ And if my kids are being asked to do formatives, then, yeah, I should be asked to do a formative. And this is what that looks like. And so that was huge, huge.

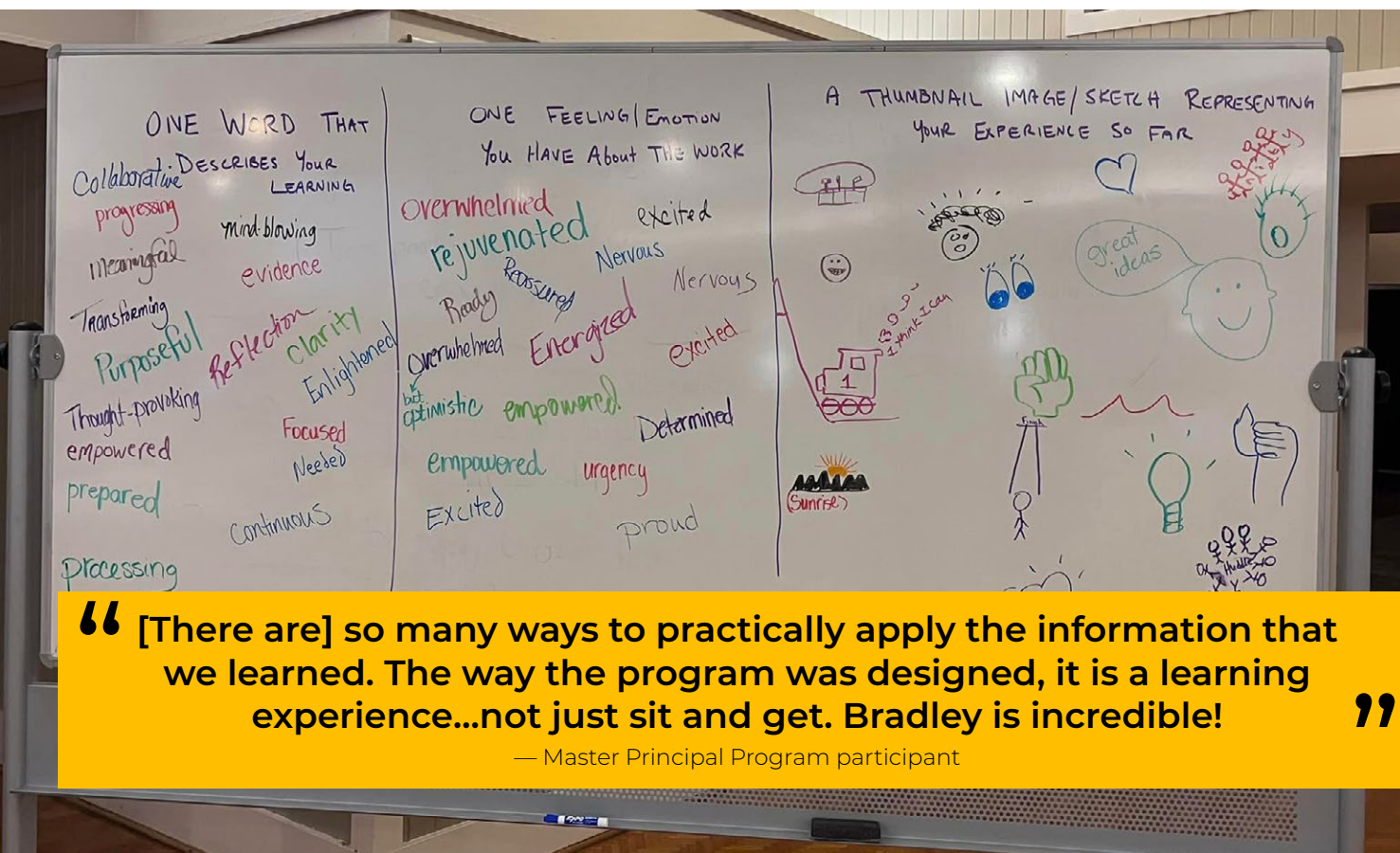
School leaders noted that teachers who either participated in or had a Teacher Leader Program graduate in their building were more confident

and more likely to participate in activities that enhanced instruction and school climate. One principal discussed the intentional mentorship strategy they implemented to help onboard newer teachers:

I've also paired teachers up and put new teachers with some people who have been in the building [longer]...like, here's how things work in our school, just to acclimate them to our building. So, anybody who's new to our building has had that partnership developed.

Overall, principals throughout the focus groups reported that they felt more effective in engaging their buildings, revamping visions and missions, and ensuring they were operating with intention. This was also echoed by Pam Castor, Director of Crowley's Ridge Educational Cooperative, when asked what she considered some of the outcomes attributed to participation in the ALA:

I think people have begun to analyze the 'whys' and try to get to the root causes more than ever before and ameliorate those things that would cause problems within the system. That type of organization,



that systems approach, has helped people align schools so they are more conducive to safety, they are more conducive to climate that is beneficial to learning. Teachers are happier, kids are happier, administrators are happier, and that's a good thing.

To what extent are student achievement and other student outcomes improving over time in schools led by program participants?

Participants across all ALA programs reported improved student outcomes as a result of their ALA involvement. One Executive Leader Empowerment participant expressed a goal to shift their school culture in a way that promoted a growth mindset, celebrated victories, and recognized student capabilities. Jenni Donohoo highlighted the variety of strategies and tools that teachers were leaving the program with, and the impact it would make on students:

I know that what they're doing is making a difference in their classrooms, and if they're stronger teachers, and if they have a variety of strategies that they hadn't had before that they're gaining through the program...then the students are going to benefit.

Pam Castor highlighted the significant improvements ALA graduates have made to the overall operation of schools. She noted that internal structures have become more efficient and thoughtful in terms of service provision, and these enhancements are expected to provide lasting benefits for students.

One principal noted changes that they saw in their school because of their ALA participation:

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.

Bradley Webber, Master Principal Program lead and ALA Director, emphasized the importance of ongoing discussions in the ALA about retaining excellent educators, using high-quality instructional materials, and maintaining collaborative teams as key to ensuring long-term improvements in student outcomes. He also shared exciting data trends that were emerging about Master Principal Program participation and its impact on schools:

This is the first year that we were able to get some hardline data around Master Principal participation and student results in schools...being able to compare the impact that those school leaders had on their campuses student growth-wise during their time in the program. And certainly, we understand there are multiple factors

that go into student growth and achievement. But, to be able to say, 'hey, if you've been in the program, then, compared to the state at large, you are more likely to be growing kids at a faster rate than principals who aren't necessarily in the program.' And so, I do think we're going to look...to continue to build on that [this upcoming year].

This insight underscores the impact that the ALA is making on educators, which then fosters student growth and development. It also highlights the importance of staff empowerment, viewing educators as learners and contributors, and making intentional, data-informed decisions for the benefit of students.

How successful is the project in increasing the number and expanding the diversity of prepared school leaders, including expanding the numbers of leaders in regions across the state?

Key client interviewees highlighted the ways that diversity improved this year in terms of geographical representation, school size and type, race/ethnicity, and gender. Bradley Webber outlined the strides made to reach underrepresented educational cooperatives, leveraging network connections and ALA graduates from those regions. Now that the program is in its third year, connections to program alumni have strengthened and there has been a focus on intentionally reaching as many people as possible with information about the ALA and applications for the cohort programs. He also shared that the ethnic and racial diversity “was much better this year compared to years one and two,” and applications for Year 4 were continuing to reflect high levels of diversity in geographic regions, gender, and race/ethnicity. Jeana Williams of the Instructional Leader program noted participation from schools of different sizes, and Rachel Horn reported charter school representation this year as well. In addition, 7 out of the 11 schools participating in the School Team Empowerment program were led by women. Ken Rich, Executive Leader Empowerment lead, reported that around half of their program participants (superintendents and assistant superintendents) were women, and they had a handful of participants from ethnic/racial minority groups. Overall, all program leads reported satisfaction with their ability to recruit and prepare diverse school leaders.

How successful is the project in increasing the number and percent of effective leaders serving in LEAs and schools with concentrations of high-need students?

Due to a shift in state-level definitions for high-need schools, this target was not able to be directly tracked. However, several ALA leads discussed the strategies they are using to increase program reach for educators working with high-needs student populations. Jeana Williams highlighted program shifts in Instructional Leader Empowerment to include more universal design elements to encourage instructional accessibility without increasing the workload for teachers and educators. Sharmane Evans, the

lead for Reach, discussed efforts to highlight session topics that address current challenges faced by educators and emphasized the importance of presenting these topics in an accessible format. The addition of an online cohort for the Teacher Leader Program in Year 4 was also confirmed as a strategy to address increased demand and promote involvement and development for those unable to travel for ALA programming.

How successful are ALA participants in being placed as new principals or in other school leader roles?

Currently, there is no existing data to address this evaluation question, as it is difficult to maintain contact with each ALA participant to determine if their roles have changed.

To what extent is teacher turnover reduced in schools led by ALA participants?

As previously mentioned, tracking the changes in roles and schools of the ALA's participants is difficult and not something accomplished in Year 3. Due to this challenge, there is no data available to address this evaluation question.

To what extent is the ALA implemented with fidelity?

Bradley Webber highlighted ways in which the ALA programming exceeded expectations in Year 3. Notably, the program added additional office hours to provide feedback to Teacher Leader Program participants on their portfolios in anticipation of applications for designation. These office hours were additional time that the ALA program leads and designated teachers were available to answer questions about the process and materials in an effort to increase the number of designation applications. He also explained that because of the shifting priorities at the state level, there has been a balance to strike in terms of meeting the original proposal goals and still being poised to meet state-level changes. Nonetheless, he believes that “the program has definitely been implemented with fidelity,” and moving forward they plan to “realign based on the current landscape and policy work that’s happening at the department and statewide.”

In FY24, the ALA worked to not only meet program deliverables but also to ensure an overwhelming positive participant experience. One of the strengths of the ALA, according to Peter DeWitt, an expert consultant, is the incorporation of feedback from participants in program planning and implementation. He praised the ALA for their efforts to collect meaningful feedback that could be used to improve future sessions:

...the feedback that ALA asks of participants is like no other I have experienced. It provides rich data to the presenter, which I learned from and used to create the next area of content.

Throughout key client interviews and focus groups, program leads and participants alike reflected on the ALA's purpose and described how it was achieved. The commitment of ALA staff to the program's purpose, the reception and implementation of feedback, and the adherence to integrity were evident throughout FY24. In discussing program impact and takeaways, one Instructional Leader Empowerment participant shared:

Hands down, one of the best training, learning, professional development [opportunities]. I felt validated being in there, like 'this is where I'm supposed to be.' The work that we were doing felt affirmed...I feel like that was y'all's mission, and it really helped support [us] by giving resources. It was tangible. We could do it right away. I felt prepared when I left, and I also felt like the work that we were doing here at our campus is on target of what we should be doing and what other schools were doing, and I thought it was a great place for me to talk to others who are in the same role and who are seeing a lot of the same issues or who are experiencing, you know, the same struggles or accomplishments.

How successful is the project at achieving the expected numbers and diversity of participants signing up for the project?

The ALA exceeded the expected participation numbers in FY24 (see Table 4 and Figure 7) for a geographical representation of all Reach and ALAC participants. There were 331 Reach participants, which was 10% higher than the target of 300. There were 217 teachers, teacher leaders, principals, and other building leaders who started an ALAC program.⁴ This exceeded the target of 75 by 189%. Of the 217 teachers, teacher leaders, principals, and other building leaders who started the program, 154 (71%) completed it. In FY24, 309 ALAC participants started a program; of those, 231 (75%) completed⁵ it.



“ Thank you for this opportunity and thank you for your continuous passion for doing what’s best for kids! ”

— Instructional Leader Empowerment participant

4. Excludes participants in the Master Principal Program and Executive Leader Empowerment.
5. For the Master Principal Program and the Teacher Leader Program, completion is determined by whether the participant completed enough of the program to move on to designation or the next phase of the program (for the Master Principal Program) or apply for their Teacher Leader designation. For the other ALAC programs, completion is defined by those who attended all sessions.

Table 4. Number of ALA Participants in Each Education Service Cooperative (ALAC and Reach participants)

	Education Service Cooperative	# of Participants
1	Arch Ford Education Service Cooperative	37
2	Arkansas River Education Service Center	13
3	Crowley's Ridge Education Service Cooperative	68
4	Dawson Education Service Cooperative	23
5	DeQueen-Mena Education Service Cooperative	29
6	Great Rivers Education Service Cooperative	13
7	Guy Fenter Education Service Cooperative	24
8	North Central Arkansas Education Service Cooperative	15
9	Northeast Arkansas Education Service Cooperative	22
10	Northwest Arkansas Education Service Cooperative	54
11	Ozark Unlimited Resources Education Service Cooperative	6
12	South Central Education Service Cooperative	11
13	Southeast Arkansas Education Service Cooperative	7
14	Southwest Arkansas Education Service Cooperative	9
15	Wilbur D Mills Education Service Cooperative	49

Labels for ALA Participants map below

Notes: Includes all participants who entered an ALAC program, even if they did not complete it. Includes all participants who viewed on-demand Reach events. Some participants did not provide education service cooperative information, did not have an education service cooperative, or were not located in Arkansas.

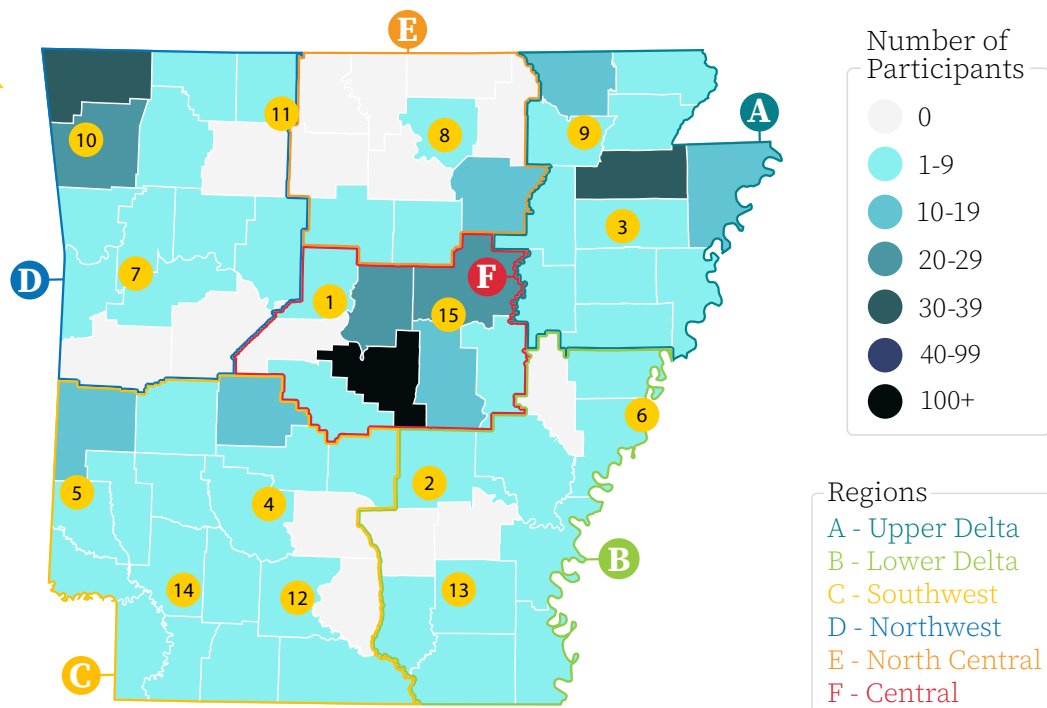


Figure 7. ALAC and Reach participation map

The ALA continues to face challenges in gender and racial/ethnic diversity that reflect state demographic trends. However, the School Team Empowerment program welcomed more schools led by women this year, and the Executive Leader Empowerment program continues to have a good representation of minority leaders participating. Overall, all key client interviews expressed satisfaction with the diversity of their participants and their continued efforts to recruit diverse educators.

To what extent are the interventions and services provided as described?

The annual survey asked respondents to rate on a 5-point Likert scale⁶ whether they agreed or disagreed that the ALA services were provided as described. Eighty-seven percent or more respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the services were provided as described (Figure 8).

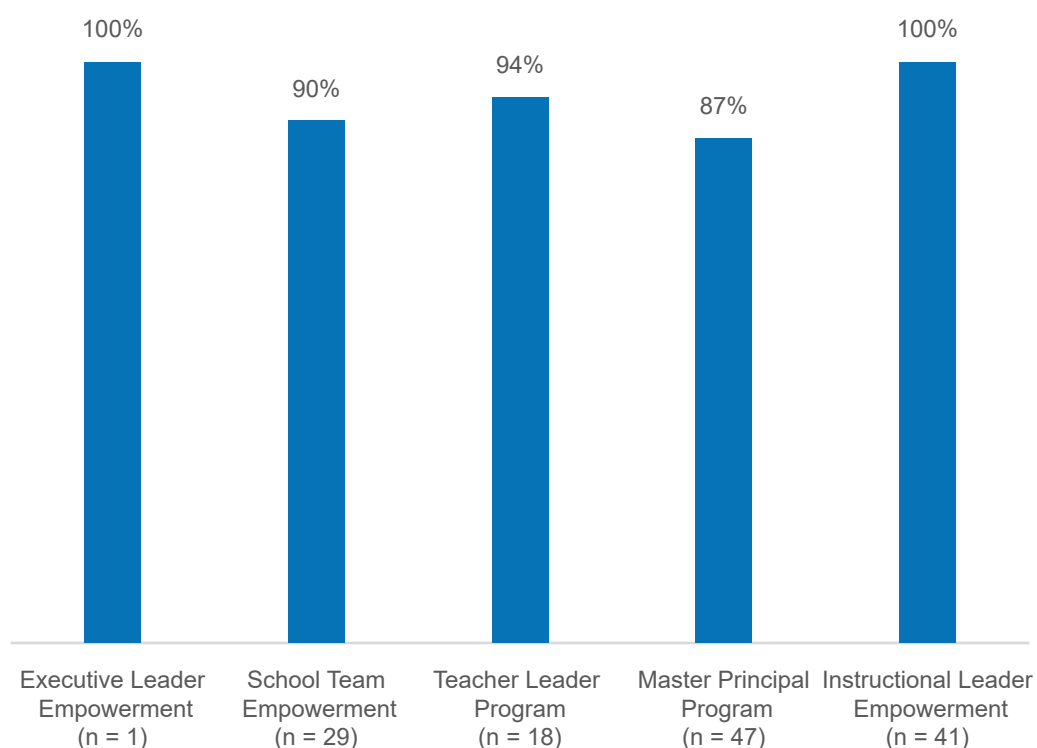


Figure 8. Percent of respondents who “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that the ALA services were provided as described. Some respondents participated in more than one program; their results appear for both programs in which they participated.

6. Response options were: strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, and strongly agree.

To what extent are the interventions and services provided on time and within budget?

Because of several key staff transitions, the ALA is expected to operate under budget for FY24, but there are already plans to use the surplus for the expansion of the Instructional Leader and the Teacher Leader programs. Ken Rich explained that carryover from Years 1 and 2 allowed for expanded cohorts in Year 3, and all programs are seeing a significant increase in applications for Year 4.

To what extent do participants fully participate in and complete the course of project services?

Program leads reported that the majority of participants fully engaged with and completed their program. However, as in previous years, balancing participation expectations with the needs of schools and districts remained a continuous challenge. For programs like Executive Leader Empowerment where all participants were either superintendents or assistant superintendents, unexpected events would cause some people to miss sessions. Ken Rich explained, “Sometimes things happen, you know? [They] will have a student discipline hearing that has to be held in so many days – that kind of thing.” All program leads underscored the ways that they set attendance expectations from the first session but realized that there would always be unforeseen challenges preventing 100% participation for many educators. For those commuting long distances, the structure of the sessions and the commute time added a layer of difficulty in participation. One Instructional Leader Empowerment participant explained, “...we would work a full day [at school], and then get in the car and have a 3 ½ hour drive [to the ALA session site], right? And then two back-to-back days, and then another 3 ½ drive home, right?” These participants often acknowledged that this was not necessarily the fault of anyone with the ALA but helped to explain the challenges of full participation in some of the programs.

Bradley Webber discussed the “seat time to mastery mentality” as a mindset shift he noticed in Year 3. He explained:

...it's not just about showing up and sitting in the seat. It really is about mastering the material and demonstrating mastery of it. That's what we ask of kids in our schools. And so, I think it's only right that we ask the same thing of our educators who are doing the work. Just because you come to an ALA event, you can get a certificate of participation for that. But that's not gonna get you Lead Professional designation. That's not gonna get you Master Principal designation, right? You really do have to show proficiency in those Teacher Leader themes where you've got to show mastery in those five Master Principal strands. And so, I think that's something that that is still probably a work in progress is trying to get people there, right? It's not just about showing up and participating. It really is about mastering that content.

The issue of the time out of their schools was mentioned throughout several focus groups and key client interviews. For the Teacher Leader Program, Nicole Covey, program lead, explained that “Principals don’t really like teachers being out of classrooms as much as they need to be for this program.” For schools that had leadership changes at the district or principal level, previous permission to attend the ALA might be revoked. One principal had received news that their ability to attend the next cohort in the Master Principal Program was in jeopardy due to a new policy about missed days of work. Because the total days they were out of the building due to their Master Principal Program participation, combined with personal days taken off work, exceeded the maximum number allowed under this new policy, they were informed that they would not be allowed to participate in the next Master Principal Program cohort. Jeana Williams explained that one participant was only able to attend one session because she was an administrator in her building, and if any teachers were out, she had to serve as a substitute for that class. Jeana went on to say, “So, even though the superintendent signed off...they took it back. So that, to me, is really our biggest barrier.”

Nevertheless, 75% of ALAC participants completed their program. Ninety-five percent of Master Principal Program participants completed the program (66 started, 63 completed), 54% of Executive Leader Empowerment participants completed (26 started, 14 completed), 72% of Instructional Leader Empowerment participants completed (54 started, 39 completed), 90% of Teacher Leader Program participants completed (99 started, 89 completed), and 41% of School Team Empowerment participants completed (64 started, 26 completed).⁷

To what extent do project participants view the professional learning, coaching, peer networking, and other ALA capacity-building services as being of high-quality, useful, and relevant?

Annual survey respondents rated their agreement with statements concerning the **quality** of the program sessions they attended.⁸ For all programs, nearly all respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the sessions were high quality. Similarly, on the end-of-session surveys, almost all participants in all programs agreed or strongly agreed that the sessions were high quality (Figure 9).

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7. Participants who did not show up to the first session or withdrew before the first session were not included in the numbers of participants who started the program.
8. Response options were: strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, and strongly disagree.

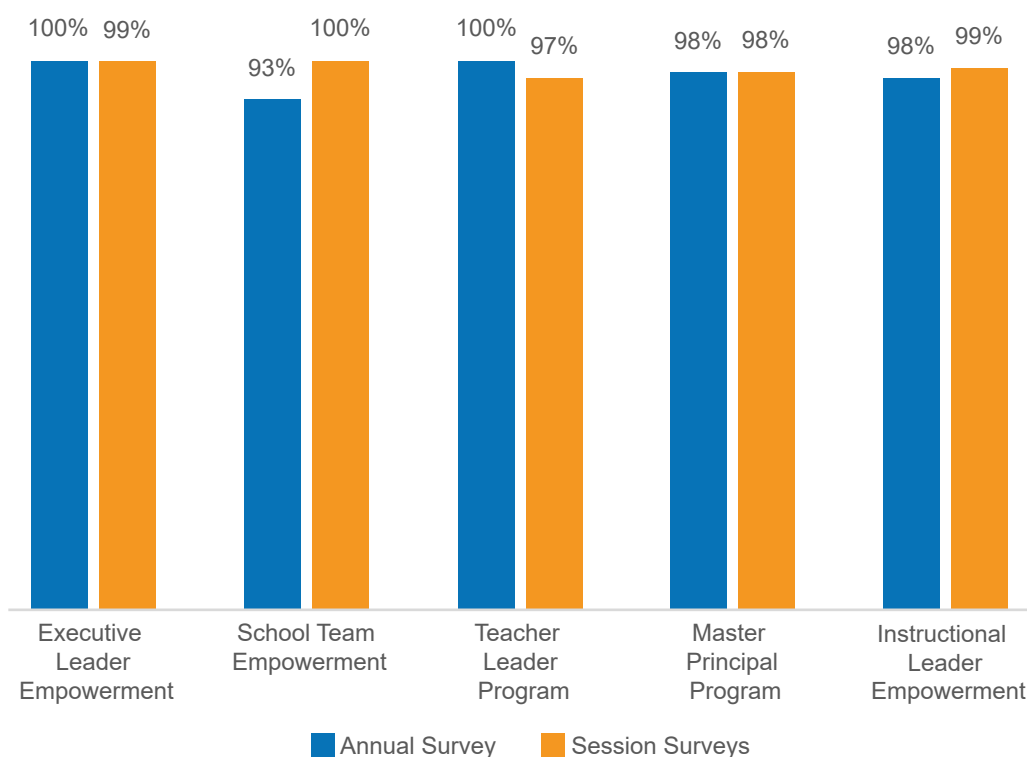
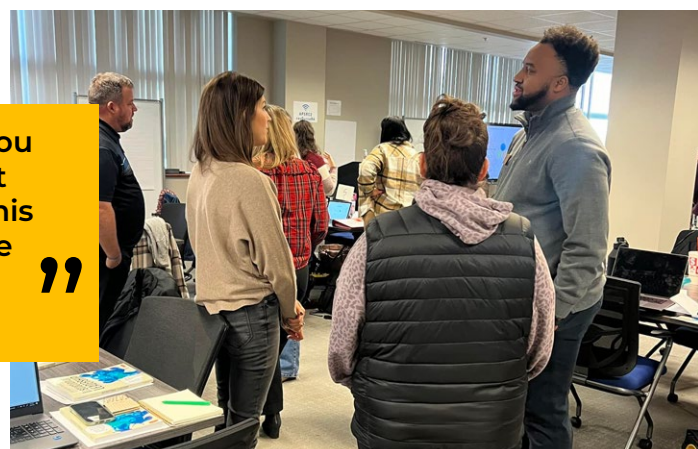


Figure 9. Percent of participants who agreed or strongly agreed that the ALA program services were high quality. Number of survey responses: ELE = 1 annual; 63 session (3 surveys); STE = 29 annual; 195 session (4 surveys, one included Reach participants); TLP = 18 annual, 382 session (5 surveys); MPP = 47 annual; 192 session (10 surveys); ILE = 41 annual; 171 session (4 surveys). Some respondents participated in more than one program; their results appear for both programs in which they participated.

Annual survey respondents rated their agreement with statements concerning the **relevance** of the program sessions they attended.⁹ For all programs, nearly all participants agreed or strongly agreed that the sessions were relevant. On the end-of-session surveys, at least 90% of participants in all programs agreed or strongly agreed that the sessions were relevant (Figure 10).

“ I thoroughly enjoyed the last two days. Thank you for this opportunity. Some PD sessions are not always worth your time, this was not the case this time. I have taken several things from both the PD and networking with others in the group. ”

— Instructional Leader Empowerment participant



9. Response options were: strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, and strongly disagree.

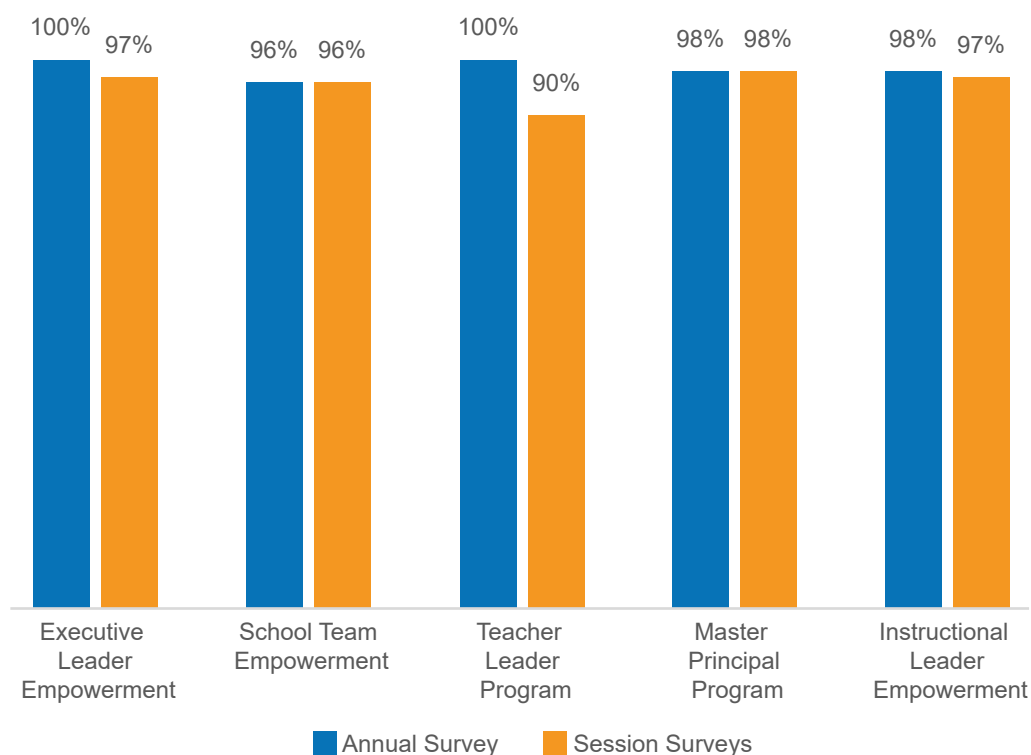


Figure 10. Percent of participants who agreed or strongly agreed that the ALA program services were relevant. Number of survey responses: ELE = 1 annual; 63 session (3 surveys); STE = 28 annual; 195 session (4 surveys, one included Reach participants); TLP = 18 annual, 382 session (5 surveys); MPP = 47 annual; 192 session (10 surveys); ILE = 40 annual; 171 session (4 surveys). Some respondents participated in more than one program; their results appear for both programs in which they participated.

Annual survey respondents rated their agreement with statements concerning the **usefulness** of the program sessions they attended.¹⁰ For all programs, nearly all participants agreed or strongly agreed that the sessions were useful. On the end-of-session surveys, at least 91% of participants in all programs agreed or strongly agreed that the sessions were useful (Figure 11).



“ Thank you! I appreciate this support and it comes at the exact right time :) It has been a great start to the year, and I used one of the activities you gave us to continue to focus on the kind of culture we want to have and continue to build here at [my school]! You are making an impact as well! Thank you for being a leader that grows other leaders :) ”

— Master Principal Program participant

10. Response options were: strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, and strongly disagree.

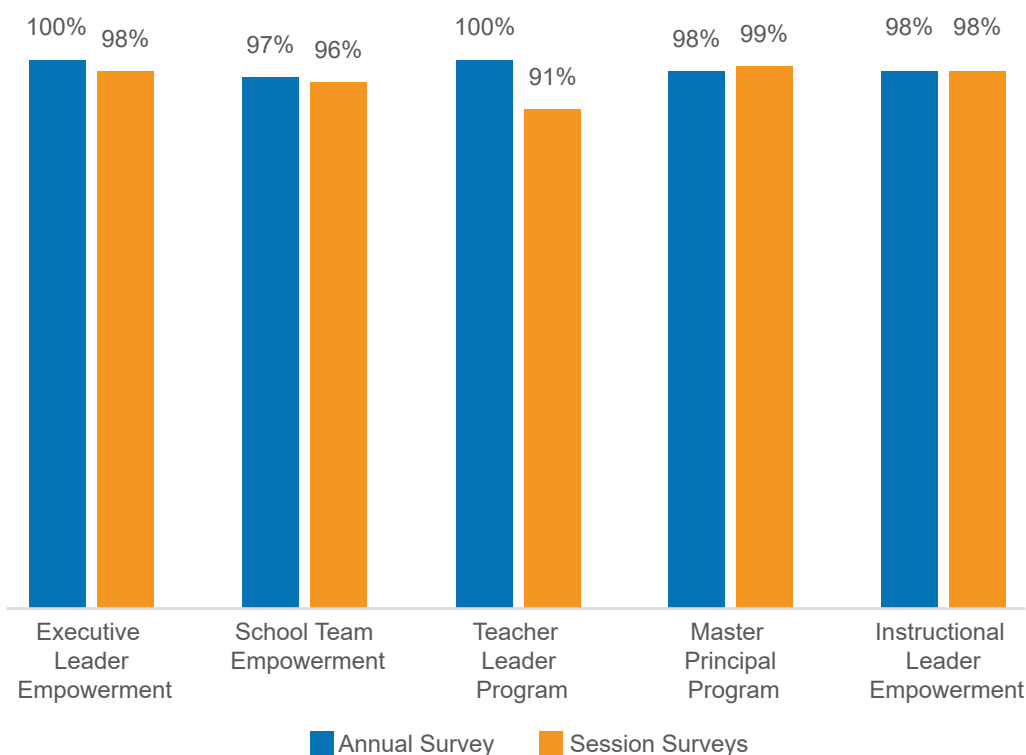


Figure 11. Percent of participants who agreed or strongly agreed that the ALA program services were useful. Number of survey responses: ELE = 1 annual; 63 session (3 surveys); STE = 29 annual; 195 session (4 surveys, one included Reach participants); TLP = 18 annual, 382 session (5 surveys); MPP = 47 annual; 192 session (10 surveys); ILE = 40 annual; 171 session (4 surveys). Some respondents participated in more than one program; their results appear for both programs in which they participated.

On the end-of-session surveys, participants rated their overall satisfaction with the sessions (Figure 12).¹¹ At least 97% of program participants reported being satisfied or very satisfied with the sessions.



11. Response options were: very satisfied, satisfied, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, dissatisfied, very dissatisfied.

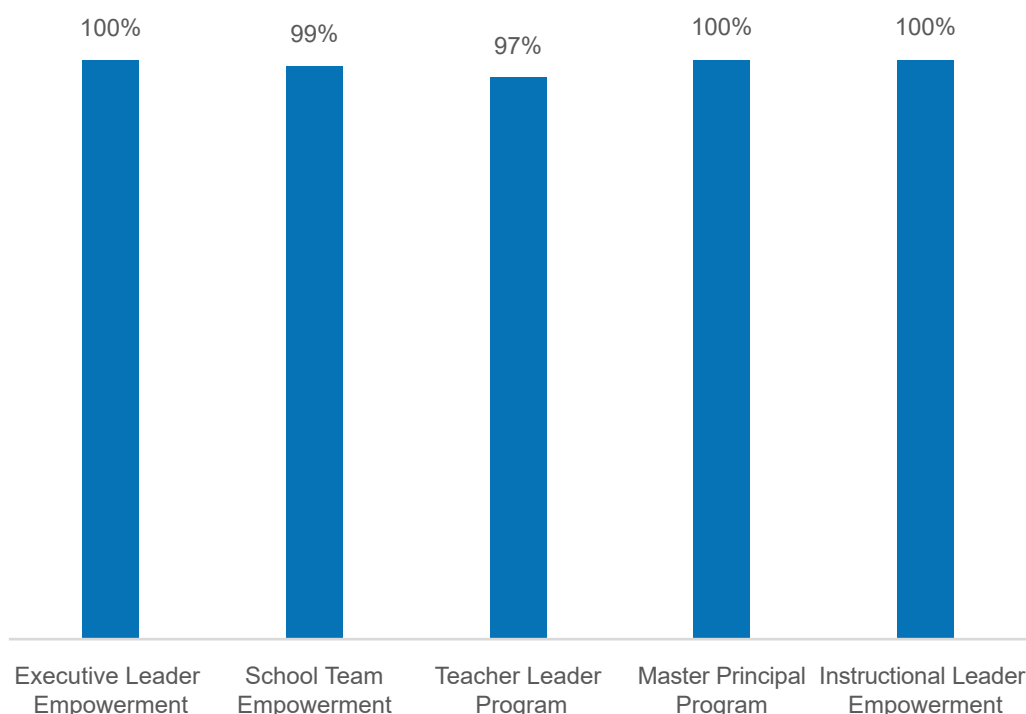


Figure 12. Percent of participants who rated their overall satisfaction with the ALA program sessions as high or very high on the end-of-session surveys. Number of survey responses: ELE = 1 annual; 63 session (3 surveys); STE = 29 annual; 195 session (4 surveys, one included Reach participants); TLP = 18 annual, 382 session (5 surveys); MPP = 47 annual; 192 session (10 surveys); ILE = 40 annual; 171 session (4 surveys). Some respondents participated in more than one program; their results appear for both programs in which they participated.

What are the successes and challenges with implementation?

ALA program leads reported many successes with the implementation of their programs in FY24. Responses were mostly program-specific; however, positive participant feedback, the structure of ALA sessions and learning, the support, and the ability to pivot were common themes throughout end-of-year interviews.

Bradley Webber described one major success being the Master Principal Program’s ability to keep principals engaged throughout the third cohort. Because these principals began the program with a different operator, the growth and ability to keep them embedded in Year 3 was celebrated as a major success. He highlighted the ability to create a sense of “psychological safety in the room” as one of the intentional practices he found great success with because it allowed space for networking, collaboration, and celebration among participants. Indeed, this sentiment was shared in many focus group discussions. One Master Principal Program Phase 3 participant described the engaging nature of the sessions, saying, “What we’re learning is meaningful. It’s relevant, and we actually get to engage with the learning.” Other feedback from Master Principal Program participants was glowing:

Sometimes, when you go to professional learning, it feels like a

dump – like let me dump all of these things on you, and then you figure out which pieces are valuable and what to use. And then, you know, by the time you get back in your building, you’ve tossed it all aside because it was just too much at one time. I feel like the model of “Here’s a piece, how can you see this work for you?” and you have some time to think and figure out how it could work in your building, or if it could work in your building before the next piece is brought on. I think that’s really important. Every time I leave Master Principal, I come away with at least one thing that I can do the very next time I walk in my building – like it is that applicable, that timely. It’s given me the time to really process and plan for that change.

I do feel like this training has been good for me as a leader because I don’t get really good principal leadership training. You know, I can get really good instructional coaching training. I can get good leadership training. I can get good school training. But to get good principal training is really hard to find, and this has been a place that has been, that’s been a respite for me. But it’s also been something that has been very foundational in making me a better leader, a better building leader every day. So, it’s exciting to me to see that others are noticing that around the state, and that happens because people that are attending go back to their buildings, and they are a changed leader as a result of that.

Rachel Horn described her collaboration with Peter DeWitt as successful in Year 3, as they worked together to adapt and shift programming according to the needs of the participants. Unlike previous years when already-established teams would come to the School Team Empowerment program, Year 3 saw brand new teams in attendance, which necessitated a mid-program pause to create the cohesion and group trust needed to move forward with tackling their problems of practice. Because of this shift, Rachel and Peter had already discussed doing a pre-coaching session in Year 4 for school teams that are new to working together. Peter described how the pivoting done in Year 3 helped keep them on track with the overall program purpose, saying, “The content catered to the needs of the participants, and we once again offered intersession coaching between each in-person session to get an understanding of how the team[s] were progressing.” He also highlighted the increase in intermixing between schools this year, which “created a stronger network experience” for participants and allowed them to get more out of the sessions due to the inter-school sharing and collaboration. Notably, this increase in school team interaction was implemented in response to participants’ feedback and recommendations from the previous program year.

The connection between theory and practice was also strengthened in Year 3 for the School Team Empowerment program. Although the concepts learned in a given session may feel confusing, participants were supported and encouraged to take these strategies back to their schools

and implement them. Rachel Horn described the transformation she saw when this happened, sharing, “Theory becomes practical when they start using it.” For participants, this implementation and space to work out new processes led to many positive developments, including improved communication for their school teams:

For example, whenever we have a maintenance issue, we know exactly who that’s supposed to go through, how that’s supposed to get up to the person, and then it gets resolved a lot faster. So, there are things like that where I think those processes have been improved. And so, it’s little things like that that I don’t necessarily know we would appreciate unless we were to look at what it was and how it is now. It’s just small tweaks, and I think we just continue with those small tweaks like that to improve that communication, where the messages are coming from one voice. That’s something where we just continue to try to streamline that too.

Ken Rich felt that the trip to San Antonio and the presentations by outside consultants were the biggest successes in the Executive Leader Empowerment program in Year 3. As an extra session this year, Executive Leader Empowerment participants were able to travel to San Antonio where they visited two schools. At one school, they were able to meet with administrators, tour the elementary school, and observe classroom sessions with teachers and students. They were able to talk to school principals about performance and merit pay, staffing, and strategies for student achievement, which many of the participants on this trip found valuable. One participant said:

I really enjoyed our trip to San Antonio. I really thought that was very practical. I took a lot of things that I saw in the [school visited]. I really liked the way they developed the system. I really like the way they didn’t veer off of the system. They had their own [professional development] built into their school. There were a lot of things there that got me to thinking and kind of changed some of my ideas. It kind of made me feel better about the direction that I’m going in, and so just having that and bringing it back to the school district or my team and saying, “This is what they were doing really well, and this is what we are doing really well, and how does that line up?”

As in previous years, Dr. Bob Thompson continued to be a well-received speaker to kick off the first session of Executive Leader Empowerment, and Ken discussed a transition that would occur in future years due to Dr. Thompson’s pending retirement. Ken explained that Dr. Thompson will be working with his successor in the upcoming year who would then take over facilitating the sessions from there. As a part of the second session, the Executive Leader Empowerment program hosted a business development expert from the medical field to discuss the similarities and differences between running schools and hospitals, which several participants found helpful. One participant noted that it was particularly

insightful to see that both fields face similar challenges, stating, “They are dealing with some of the same things!”

Nicole Covey said that increased time on portfolio building, content alignment, and program growth were major successes for the Teacher Leader Program in Year 3. As a result of feedback from previous participants, there was more time spent on portfolio development and added office hours where teachers could get feedback on their designation applications. She expressed excitement that there should be a “record number of submissions come July 31st” for designation as a result of these additions. Indeed, 40 Teacher Leader Program participants submitted portfolios to be reviewed for Lead Professional designation in FY24, far exceeding the two participants who submitted portfolios in FY23. Participants found the activities and resources provided through the Teacher Leader Program helpful, as well as the camaraderie that was developed. As one teacher put it, “just being surrounded by other educators who value education the way I do... it was invigorating.” Due to the Teacher Leader Program’s success and increasing demand, a third cohort will be added in Year 4, delivered in an online format. This addition aims to increase accessibility and further expand the number of teacher leaders in the state.

Jenni Donohoo described additional Teacher Leader Program successes. She said:

[They meet] during the program and then they forge a relationship that continues, even though they’re not from the same school or even the same area. I believe that we have a strong professional network of educators [as a result of ALA].

Jenni also discussed the strength of her colleagues in ALA as a whole:

Some strengths to the program...[are] the team that leads it. I love working with these people. They’re just really good thinkers, you know. They make me better because of that.

Jeana Williams felt that the speakers, focus on universal design, and continued conversations around new state initiatives were the greatest successes of the Instructional Leader Empowerment program. She shared that previous participants from the program would often reach out to request certain presentations so they could facilitate them with their school. Because of this, she said, “We always try to do something with particular content that they can immediately go back and do in their schools.” She went on to explain:

Everything is implemented as experiential learning, so they have to experience it in order to lead it. So, they experience it and know what it should look like when they go to lead it.

She highlighted the high levels of satisfaction from sessions and noted the growth she had seen in participants over the year. Jenni Donohoo and Peter DeWitt both led Instructional Leader Empowerment sessions that received praise. One participant said:

Oh, man, [Peter] was incredible. I have tabbed his book already, too. Like, that's my own homework, right? It seems like every time you guys give us another book, I'm at home and I'm devouring it. And I'm adding Post-it notes and my own little annotations, and [thinking] 'how can I incorporate this?' I mean, we're learning from some of the top people in the field. And that's incredible that you guys provided that for us, too.

In FY24, Jeana added content on universal design for learning as an inclusive practice due to emphasis on this at the state level. Based on participant feedback and this shift in focus, Jeana shared her plans to work with Novak Education in the upcoming year to meet some of these new goals. She said that her sessions covering the LEARNS Act and ESSA standards were also well-received, as participants got “helpful information on how to address it, how to handle it, and how to lead it.”

Bradley Webber, incoming ALA Director for the 2024-2025 year, spoke about some of the overall successes of Year 3. He credits the program's growth and consistent increase in applications as a testament to the implementation success and relevance of the ALA as a whole. Despite the ALA staffing changes, post-session surveys continued to show positive feedback, and Bradley shared:

I'm extremely proud of our team, especially looking at those eval[uation] reports that have come out of the spring semester. I don't see a drop off in quality [for] any of that programming, which I think is a testament to the level of work that our team did, even when operating with some vacancies.

Another success noted in Year 3 was the integration of ALA program graduates into session planning for Reach. These graduates provided insights based on their current observations, which led to the development of sessions that addressed hot-button issues facing Arkansas educators. Discussing the unique ability of ALA to provide both on-demand and long-term programming, Bradley Webber said:

These are timely, responsive, and on-demand topics that we can push back out to folks as quickly as possible, [in addition to] our long-term planning around content and design [for the cohort programs].

Accompanying the ALA's many successes in FY24, program leads also described the challenges they faced. One challenge that Bradley described was the need to balance changes at the state level with consistency in session content delivery. He highlighted the aim to ensure that primary

ALA objectives remain central to sessions while also being mindful of the complexities associated with evolving assessments and policies for the state. Bradley elaborated on this:

We have to not only be knowledgeable of those [state] initiatives but also fold them into that leadership work that we know is going to be transformative to schools. We've got to be knowledgeable and well-versed in those initiatives as well...and I think that's been part of the challenge. Are we doing the behind-the-scenes work to make sure that we're up to date and knowledgeable of those initiatives, those new calculations, those new assessment mechanisms, those factors that influence merit-based pay, so we can continue that foundational leadership work, but put it in the frame of 'here's how that's gonna influence your teachers' value-added measures. Here's how that's gonna influence your schools' viability for High-Reliability Level One status or Level Two status, right? Here's how that's gonna influence your staffing structure, your resource allocations.' Right? And so, I think that's been a challenge this year. It's just making sure that we are equally knowledgeable and ready to deliver, not necessarily changing the content, but putting that content through a lens of [the] most current practice.

As in past years, Year 3 also saw challenges with inclement weather, which forced some sessions to move online or necessitated make-up sessions, which could be difficult for participants to fit into their already busy schedules. Rachel Horn, said:

I think the two snow days at the end [of School Team Empowerment] were probably the most obvious challenge because when you look at our completion status, that significantly reduced the number of completers we had in the program. We made a decision to continue those existing days of the session virtually just because we didn't have any other dates in the calendar that we could delay [to] and make it up in person.

Nevertheless, because of the team cohesion and collaboration built over the course of the year, the virtual days held for School Team Empowerment were "some of the most powerful that we had," according to Horn.

For the Executive Leader Empowerment program, Ken Rich said that one of his biggest challenges was getting the curriculum for sessions set early, as well as trying to align these sessions with the schedules of legislators whom he wanted to speak to the participants. Due to the extensive commitments of Executive Leader Empowerment participants, scheduling emerged as one of the most significant challenges. Ken Rich expressed his hope to finalize the schedule earlier in Year 4 and to incorporate the school visit trip as a regular session. He expressed a desire to strike a balance between getting the topics and sessions set early enough to allow for ample planning, but also "keep up with the hot topics at the time."

One challenge in the Teacher Leader Program that Nicole Covey discussed was the significant demands of the designation process and the limitations that some teachers faced in gaining leadership skills and experience in their schools. She explained further:

I think there are those teacher leaders who have [attended the Teacher Leader Program] but maybe their principals haven't designated them as a leader yet, and they're limited on the leadership tasks that would lead to completion of the portfolio.

Additionally, as with other programs, participants in the Teacher Leader Program also faced challenges related to capacity and time in putting together portfolios and gathering the specific artifacts necessary to produce a strong application for designation.

Rachel Horn explained that the leadership changes for the School Team Empowerment program were another challenge unique to Year 3. Stepping in for Melody Morgan shortly before the year began, she initially felt uncertain about some program aspects and relied on expert guidance from Peter DeWitt. Together, they identified additional questions to include in the program application which would benefit future participants, such as whether teams were established before the School Team Empowerment program, and their capacity to undertake this work.

How do DESE and partners contribute to the success of the ALA?

Interviewees spoke about several ways in which DESE and partners contributed to the success of the ALA through their support, communication, and promotion of the program.

Interviewees discussed the support they received from DESE and partners. Nicole Covey noted the statewide need for mentor teachers and felt that the "APSRC [shows] their support for the Teacher Leader Program...and are supportive of what we do." She went on to say that whenever the ALA staff ask for support or guidance "[APSRC] would be right there to help us out."

Pam Castor highlighted the ways that members of the governance committees provided advocacy and promotion of the ALA through "talking to those people who might benefit...and just spreading the word wherever they happen to be." She noted that the Crowley's Ridge Educational Cooperative office processes finances for the ALA at no cost to the program "because we believe in the program and its mission and what it's doing for educators across the state of Arkansas."

Bradley Webber highlighted the open communication that the ALA had with DESE and other state partners, saying "they've been great partners in terms of keeping us in the loop." He also highlighted the involvement of State Board vice-chair Kathy McFetridge-Rollins in the program, as well as

DESE secretary Jacob Oliva stopping by a Master Principal Program session to “hang out for a couple of hours” because of his investment in school leadership. He went on to explain the “two-way collaborative partnership” that the ALA and DESE shared, as several ALA graduates went on to serve on a committee or work for DESE due to their leadership skills and ability to serve as “plugged-in educators.” Additionally, he noted that the ALA is invited to present and recruit at various summits and conferences which provide “good publicity opportunities.”

“ I think the biggest impact... will be the network and opportunities that we’ve had. Like, I’m hearing the responses of other leaders [through ALA]. And I’m taking that in and learning from it. And so, being able to network or having a group of individuals together like the ALA has brought together, I’ve been able to forge those relationships where we can pull on each other’s knowledge and resources. I think that’s gonna have a big impact on my district as well. I think it would also impact others as well.” ”

— Executive Leader Empowerment participant



Objectives and Targets

Continuous School Improvement

Objective 1: Provide professional learning and capacity-building services to a wide range of educational leaders with equitable representation from all geographic regions.

Target 1. By 2022, and each year thereafter, at least 300 Arkansas educational leaders will participate in an ALA Reach service.

There were 331 unique participants in ALA Reach sessions in FY24, which exceeded the target of 300 by 10%.¹²

Target 2. By 2022, and each year thereafter, ALA Reach service participants will represent all geographic regions.

In FY24, ALA Reach participants represented all 15 education service cooperatives (Table 5), 51 of Arkansas's 75 counties, and all six regions (Figure 13).¹³

Table 5. Number of Reach Participants in Each Education Service Cooperative

Education Service Cooperative	# of Participants
Arch Ford Education Service Cooperative	16
Arkansas River Education Service Center	9
Crowley's Ridge Education Service Cooperative	39
Dawson Education Service Cooperative	18
DeQueen-Mena Education Service Cooperative	11
Great Rivers Education Service Cooperative	6
Guy Fenter Education Service Cooperative	16
North Central Arkansas Education Service Cooperative	8
Northeast Arkansas Education Service Cooperative	14
Northwest Arkansas Education Service Cooperative	34
Ozark Unlimited Resources Education Service Cooperative	3
South Central Education Service Cooperative	3
Southeast Arkansas Education Service Cooperative	4
Southwest Arkansas Education Service Cooperative	3
Wilbur D Mills Education Service Cooperative	18

Notes: Includes all participants who viewed on-demand Reach events. Some Reach participants did not provide education service cooperative information, did not have an education service cooperative, or were not located in Arkansas.

12. This number includes those who participated in on-demand Reach sessions.

13. Some school districts and charter schools do not participate in education service cooperatives.

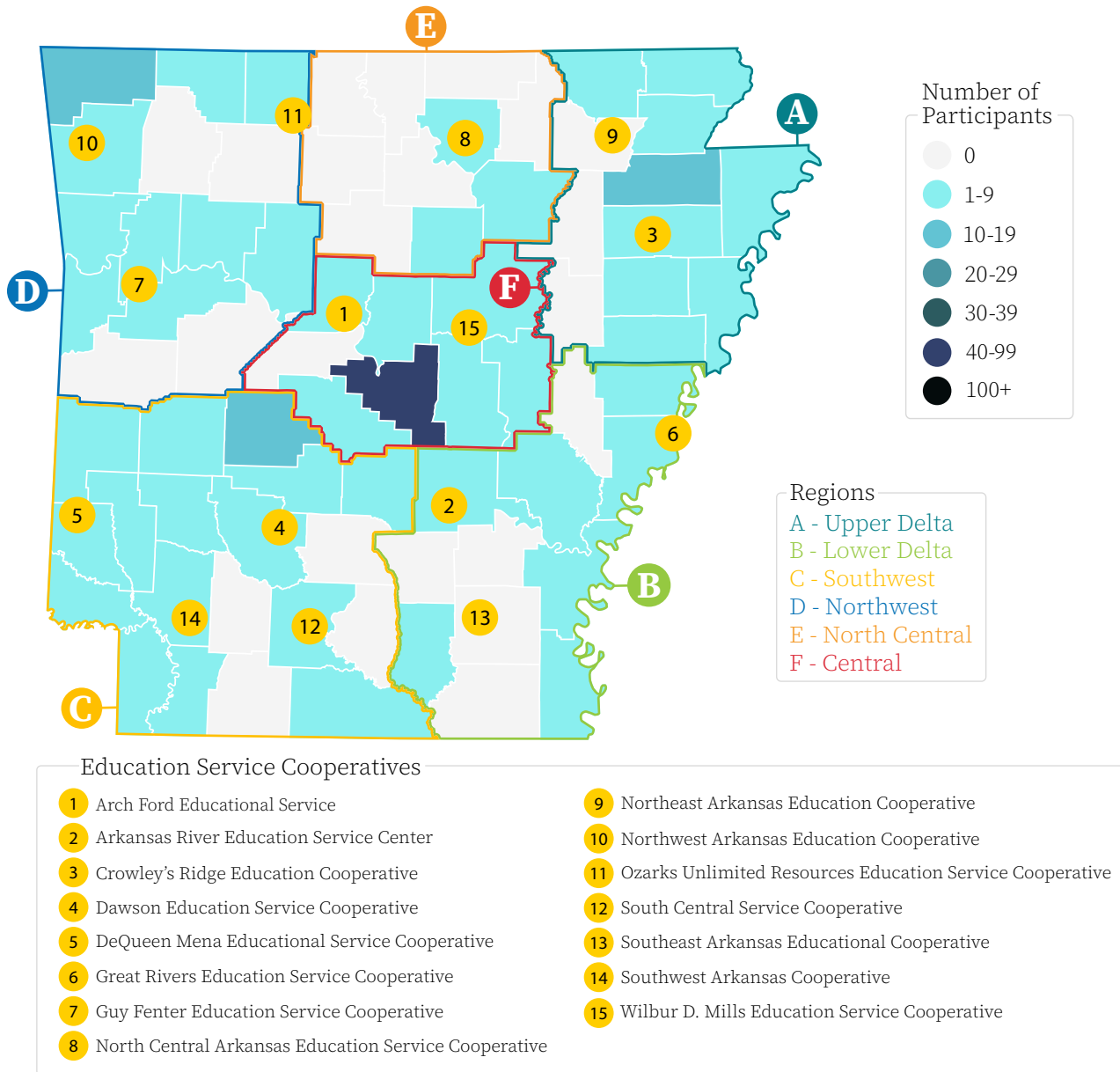
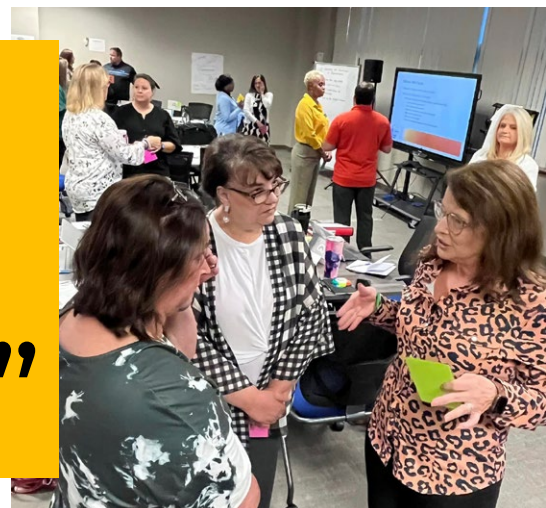


Figure 13. Reach participation map

“ I just want to take a quick second and say thank you for last week. It was hands down the best professional development in two days! I am not just saying this...you were truly intentional, fun, relatable, and taught us so much that we could immediately go back and support our teachers with. ”

— Instructional Leader Empowerment participant



Objective 2: Provide ALAC professional learning and capacity-building services to a wide representation of teachers, principals, and other building leaders with equitable representation from all geographic regions.

Target 1. By 2022, and each year thereafter, at least 75 Arkansas teachers, teacher leaders, principals, and other building leaders will participate in ALAC (excluding the Master Principal Program).

In FY24, the ALA exceeded its target of 75 ALAC participants who were teachers, teacher leaders, principals, and other building leaders by 189%. There were 99 participants in the Teacher Leader Program, 54 in Instructional Leader Empowerment, and 64 in School Team Empowerment (11 teams), for a total of 138 ALAC participants.¹⁴

Target 2. By 2022, and each year thereafter, ALAC teacher, teacher leader, principal, and other building leader participants will represent all geographic regions.

In FY24, ALAC participants who were teachers, teacher leaders, principals, and other building leaders represented 13 of the 15 education service cooperatives (Table 6), 31 of Arkansas's 75 counties, and all six of the six regions (Figure 14).¹⁵

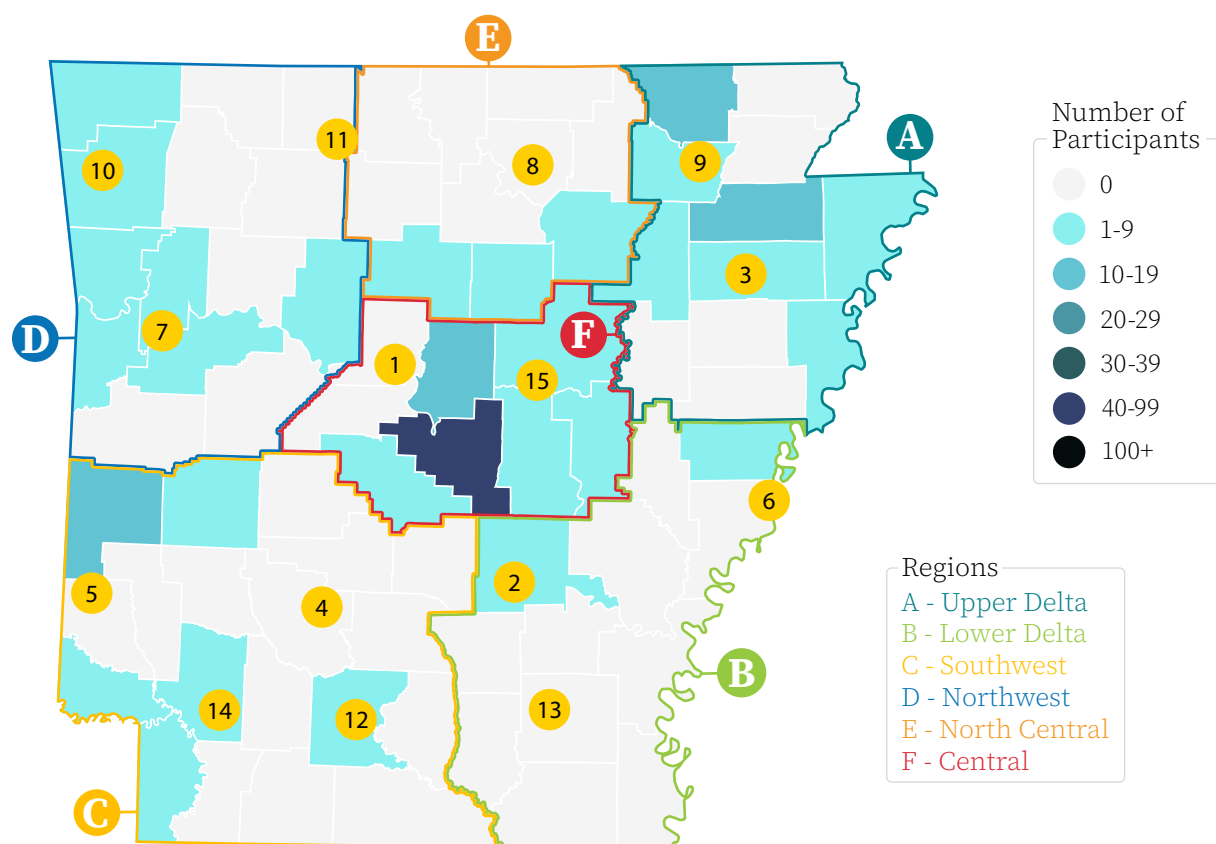
Table 6. *Number of ALAC Teacher, Teacher Leader, Principal, and Building Leader Participants in Each Education Service Cooperative*

Education Service Cooperative	# of Participants
Arch Ford Education Service Cooperative	22
Arkansas River Education Service Center	3
Crowley's Ridge Education Service Cooperative	32
Dawson Education Service Cooperative	3
DeQueen-Mena Education Service Cooperative	22
Great Rivers Education Service Cooperative	4
Guy Fenter Education Service Cooperative	6
North Central Arkansas Education Service Cooperative	7
Northeast Arkansas Education Service Cooperative	13
Northwest Arkansas Education Service Cooperative	12
South Central Education Service Cooperative	5
Southeast Arkansas Education Service Cooperative	0
Southwest Arkansas Education Service Cooperative	3
Wilbur D. Mills Education Service Cooperative	24

Note: Some participants did not have an education service cooperative.

14. This includes participants who started an ALAC program but did not complete it.

15. Some school districts and charter schools do not participate in education service cooperatives. This includes participants who started an ALAC program but did not complete it.



Education Service Cooperatives

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 Arch Ford Educational Service | 9 Northeast Arkansas Education Cooperative |
| 2 Arkansas River Education Service Center | 10 Northwest Arkansas Education Cooperative |
| 3 Crowley's Ridge Education Cooperative | 11 Ozarks Unlimited Resources Education Service Cooperative |
| 4 Dawson Education Service Cooperative | 12 South Central Service Cooperative |
| 5 DeQueen Mena Educational Service Cooperative | 13 Southeast Arkansas Educational Cooperative |
| 6 Great Rivers Education Service Cooperative | 14 Southwest Arkansas Cooperative |
| 7 Guy Fenter Education Service Cooperative | 15 Wilbur D. Mills Education Service Cooperative |
| 8 North Central Arkansas Education Service Cooperative | |

Figure 14. ALAC participation map (teachers, teacher leaders, principals, and other building leaders)



“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

Objective 3: Increase teachers' understanding of their role in school improvement through continuous cycles of inquiry.

Target 1. By 2022, and each year thereafter, teacher and teacher leader participants' self-report (perceptual) data on end-of-session, end-of-program, and end-of-initiative surveys will indicate an increase of at least .65 points, on average, over baseline (5 pt. scale) for items related to self-efficacy in school improvement leadership practices.

Teachers' and teacher leaders' self-efficacy in school improvement leadership practices was measured through questions on the annual participant survey, which included seven items related to self-efficacy in school improvement leadership practices for teacher and teacher leader participants, which were adapted from Bandura's Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (Bandura, 2006) and Tschannen-Moran & Hoy's (2009) Teacher Efficacy Scale. The survey items were as follows:

Please rate your ability to:

- generate enthusiasm for a shared vision for your school.
- motivate other teachers.
- cope with the stress of the job.
- prioritize among competing demands of the job.
- influence the decisions that are made in your school.
- involve parents in the education of their children.
- enhance collaboration between teachers and the administration to make the school run effectively.

These items used 5-point Likert scales,¹⁶ and participants were asked to rate their abilities before and after participating in the ALA in FY24. Self-efficacy scores were created using the sum of the responses for each participant, with a total score range between 7 and 35. Higher scores indicate higher levels of self-efficacy.

Of the 50 teachers/teacher leaders who provided complete responses to these questions, 20 (40%) participated in the School Team Empowerment program, 16 (32%) participated in the Teacher Leader Program, and 15 (30%) participated in the Instructional Leader Empowerment program.¹⁷ The average self-efficacy score for the 50 respondents was 20.6 before their participation in FY24, and 27.1 after participation. Ninety-four percent of respondents indicated an improvement in their self-efficacy. The average improvement over the baseline for each item was 0.92 points,¹⁸ exceeding the target of a 0.65 average point increase.

16. Response options and values were: 1 = no ability, 2 = minimal ability, 3 = average ability, 4 = above average ability, 5 = advanced ability

17. One respondent participated in School Team Empowerment and the Teacher Leader Program; their results appear for both programs.

18. Some participants rated their self-efficacy high prior to their participation in the ALA, leaving little to no room for improvement.

Objective 4: Increase principals' and other school leaders' understanding of their role in school improvement through continuous cycles of inquiry.

Target 1. By 2022, and each year thereafter, principals and other school leader participants' self-report (perceptual) data on end-of-session, end-of-program, and end-of-initiative surveys will indicate an increase of at least .65 points, on average, over baseline (5 pt. scale) for items related to self-efficacy in school improvement leadership practices.

Principals' and school leaders' self-efficacy in school improvement leadership practices was measured through questions on the **annual participant survey**, which included five items related to self-efficacy in school improvement leadership practices for principals and other school leader participants, which were adapted from Tschannen-Moran & Hoy's (2009) Teacher Efficacy Scale. The survey items were as follows:

Please rate your ability to:

- facilitate student learning in your school.
- generate enthusiasm for a shared vision for your school.
- create a positive learning environment in your school.
- motivate teachers.
- shape the operational policies and procedures that are necessary to manage your school.

These items used 5-point Likert scales,¹⁹ and participants were asked to rate their abilities before and after participating in the ALA in FY24. Self-efficacy scores were created using the sum of the responses for each participant, with a total score range between 5 and 25. Higher scores indicate higher levels of self-efficacy.

Of the 69 principals/school leaders who provided complete responses to these questions, 6 (9%) participated in the School Team Empowerment program, 44 (64%) participated in the Master Principal Program, and 20 (29%) participated in the Instructional Leader Empowerment program.²⁰ The average self-efficacy score for the 69 respondents was 15.5 before their participation in FY24, and 20.7 after participation. Ninety-four percent of respondents indicated an improvement in their self-efficacy. The average improvement over the baseline for each item was 1.03 points,²¹ exceeding the target of a 0.65 average point increase.

19. Response options and values were: 1 = no ability, 2 = minimal ability, 3 = average ability, 4 = above average ability, 5 = advanced ability

20. One respondent participated in the Master Principal Program and School Team Empowerment; their results appear for both programs.

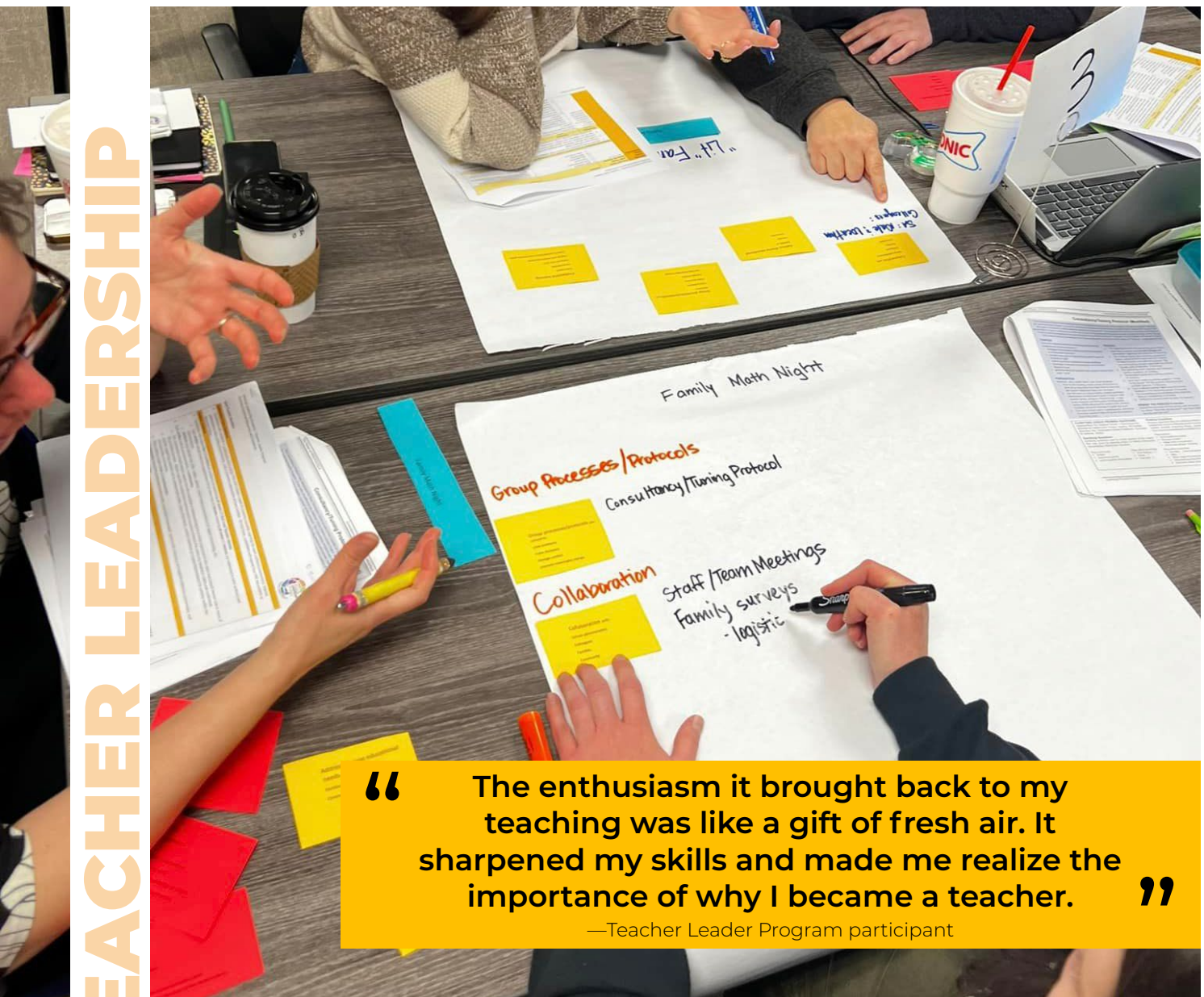
21. Some participants rated their self-efficacy high prior to their participation in the ALA, leaving little to no room for improvement.

Teacher Leadership

Objective 1: Increase the number of teachers completing a pathway to become designated as “lead” teachers.

Target 1. By 2023, and each year thereafter, 15 ALAC teacher and teacher leader participants will complete a pathway to become designated as “lead” teachers, according to the DESE career continuum.

In FY24, 40 teachers submitted portfolios to be reviewed for Lead Professional designation, exceeding the target by 167%.



Use of Experienced Practitioners

Objective 1: Provide professional learning and capacity-building services that involve current teachers who are working in high-performing Arkansas schools.

Target 1. By 2022, and each year thereafter, at least 30% of all ALA Reach and ALAC services will include current teacher leaders in the development and/or delivery of the professional learning that is provided through the ALA.

Nearly all ALA program leads highlighted their use of teacher leaders or past program completers in developing and delivering Year 3 sessions. Bradley Webber emphasized the expectation that designated teachers would return to provide feedback and mentoring to current participants, while designated principals would return to present for Master Principal Program sessions. Both the Teacher Leader Program and Master Principal Program incorporated program graduates in this manner in Year 3. Additionally, the Instructional Leader Empowerment program invited a former Teacher Leader Program participant to discuss inclusive learning practices, and ALA Reach hosted sessions where Teacher Leader Program and School Team Empowerment participants presented.

Objective 2: Provide professional learning and capacity-building services that involve current administrators who are working in high-performing Arkansas schools.

Target 1. By 2022, and each year thereafter, at least 30% of all ALA Reach and ALAC services will include current administrators in the development and/or delivery of the professional learning that is provided through the ALA.

In Year 3, administrators also played a role in ALA programming and content delivery. District-level administrators presented for the Instructional Leader Empowerment and Executive Leader Empowerment programs. Additionally, other program leads collaborated with administrators to develop session content for the Master Principal Program and Teacher Leader Program.



“ Anytime we deliver a lesson we want our audience to leave and grapple with that, and chew on it, and reflect, and take it, and make it their own. And that’s the way I feel every time I leave this training - I’m full to the brim, and it’s gonna take me a few days to process to know where my next steps are gonna be. ”

— Master Principal Program participant

Master Principal Program

Objective 1: Provide a career capstone professional learning and capacity-building service in the form of the Master Principal Program for experienced principals.

Target 1. By 2022, and each year thereafter, 40 Arkansas principals will enter the Master Principal Program.

In FY24, 33 participants entered Phase 1 of the Master Principal Program, and 21 completed the program. Though the ALA did not meet the target this year, this was a slight increase in enrollment as compared to FY23, and the enrollment was higher in FY24 than it has been since APSRC took over as the ALA operator. Further, Bradley Webber reported that they are on track to exceed the Master Principal Program enrollment goal in FY25, indicating improvements in enrollment numbers each year.

Objective 2: Transition the Master Principal Program to a new program that aligns with the trajectory for “next level” leadership.

Target 1. By 2021, the ALA will design, advertise, and enroll participants in the Master Principal Program, which will be a new program that aligns with the trajectory for “next level” leadership.

The ALA designed the Master Principal Program to support participants in reaching the next level of their career and/or influence in leadership. It involved various staff and advisors²² developing a curriculum and instilling into it competencies that master principals need to be successful.

Those interested in participating in the Master Principal Program are required to complete an application. This year, the ALA began discussing application timelines earlier than in the previous two years, and every cohort program’s application was ready to be released following spring break. Information about how to apply was shared with educational cooperative members and district superintendents, and personalized emails were sent to potential participants whose contact information was collected when they visited the “Contact Us” link of the ALA’s website and indicated that they were interested in a cohort program. Sending these personalized emails was a new strategy in FY24. The ALA also leveraged FY24 program participants, asking them to reach out to two people they thought would be a good fit for an ALA program and refer them to the program lead. The leads then sent personalized emails to these referrals. As in years past, program and application information was shared through social media, and the ALA’s staff participated in conferences where they

22. Principals who have designated as master principals, principals who have completed the Master Principal Program but have not designated, and leaders who have received awards and recognition in the state were included.

provided information about the ALA and how to get involved. Lastly, at the end of May, the ALA staff determined which geographic regions were underrepresented and gathered contact information to reach out and promote program participation in those areas.

In determining whom to admit to the Master Principal Program, the ALA looks for a diverse cohort that will challenge one another to improve in different ways. They attempt to admit participants from different school sizes, parts of the state, and levels of achievement or growth in their school. They also look for those who systematically assess the progress they have made in their school.

All applications to the Master Principal Program are scored against the ALA's rubric. Two reviewers who are ALA staff members, designated master principals, DESE staff, or ALA committee members score the application. If there is a large discrepancy between the two scores, a third reviewer scores the application. To progress into Phase 2, Phase 3, or Master Principal designation, applicants must achieve a particular score. However, to be admitted into Phase 1, there is no minimum score applicants must reach, though the application is still scored to inform the ALA of how to best meet the participants' needs.



“ Thank you for the support guys! We took a look at our Collective Commitments as a staff through the lens of what they Look, Sound, and Feel like, during our PD yesterday and it went great. I believe it helped to clarify what those commitments should play out in our building. I appreciate all of your help. ”

— Master Principal Program participant

Superintendents

Objective 1: Provide professional learning and capacity-building services in partnership with state or national organizations.

Target 1. By 2022, at least 25% of the ALA services for superintendents will be developed and/or delivered in partnership with the Arkansas Association of Educational Administrators (AAEA) or The School Superintendents Association (AASA).

As in FY23, the partnership between the ALA and AAEA remained limited. However, Ken Rich expressed confidence in successfully hosting the AAEA executive director to speak at an Executive Leader session in the upcoming FY25 year. He viewed this as a “move in the right direction” and is considering appropriate presentation topics for this session.

Objective 2: Increase superintendents’ and other district leaders’ capacity to lead leadership development and align school improvement work within their districts.

Target 1. By 2022, and each year thereafter, superintendent and other district leader participants’ self-report (perceptual) data on end-of-session, end-of-program, and end-of-initiative surveys will indicate an increase of at least .65 points, on average, over baseline (5 pt. scale) for items related to self-efficacy in leadership development practices.

Superintendents’ self-efficacy in leadership development practices was measured through questions on the **annual participant survey**, which included nine items related to self-efficacy in leadership development practices for the superintendent and other district leader participants, which were adapted from Bobbio & Manganeli’s (2009) Leadership Self-Efficacy Scale. The survey items were as follows:

Please rate your ability to:

- set a new direction for a group if the one currently taken doesn’t seem correct to you.
- change the attitudes and behaviors of group members if they don’t meet group objectives.
- choose group members in order to build up an effective and efficient team.
- optimally share out the work between the members of the group to get the best results.
- successfully manage relationships with all the members of a group.
- identify your strengths and weaknesses.
- help group members reach the group’s targets.
- motivate group members and arouse their enthusiasm when you start a new project.
- lead a group with the consensus of all group members.

These items used 5-point Likert scales, and participants were asked to rate their abilities before and after participating in the ALA in FY24. Self-efficacy scores were created using the sum of the responses for each participant, with a total score range between 9 and 45. Higher scores indicate higher levels of self-efficacy.

Of the seven superintendents and district leaders who provided complete responses to these questions, one (14%) participated in the Executive Leader Empowerment program, one (14%) participated in the School Team Empowerment Program, and five (71%) participated in the Instructional Leader Empowerment program. The average self-efficacy score was 30.4 before their participation in FY24, and 37.4 after participation. One hundred percent indicated an improvement in their self-efficacy. The average improvement over the baseline for each item was 0.78 points, exceeding the target of a 0.65 average point increase.

Target 2. By 2022, and each year thereafter, superintendent and other district leader participants' self-report (perceptual) data on end-of-session, end-of-program, and end-of-initiative surveys will indicate an increase of at least .65 points, on average, over baseline (5 pt. scale) for items related to self-efficacy in school improvement leadership practices.

Superintendents' self-efficacy in school improvement leadership practices was measured through questions on the annual participant survey, which included ten items related to self-efficacy in school improvement leadership practices for the superintendent and other district leader participants, which were adapted from Bobbio & Manganelli's (2009) Leadership Self-Efficacy Scale. The survey items were as follows:

Please rate your ability to:

- facilitate student learning in your district.
- generate enthusiasm for a shared vision in your district.
- create a positive learning environment in your district.
- motivate educators in your district.
- shape the operational policies and procedures that are necessary to manage your district.
- cope with the stress of the job.
- prioritize among competing demands of the job.
- identify potential future leaders in your district.
- mentor newer administrators/leaders in your district.
- establish programs or policies that prepare educators for future administrative and/or leadership positions.

These items used 5-point Likert scales,²³ and participants were asked to rate their abilities before and after participating in the ALA in FY24.

23. Response options and values were: 1 = no ability, 2 = minimal ability, 3 = average ability, 4 = above average ability, 5 = advanced ability

Self-efficacy scores were created using the sum of the responses for each participant, with a total score range between 10 and 50. Higher scores indicate higher levels of self-efficacy.

Of the seven superintendents and district leaders who provided complete responses to these questions, one (14%) participated in the Executive Leader Empowerment program, one (14%) participated in the School Team Empowerment Program, and five (71%) participated in the Instructional Leader Empowerment program. The average self-efficacy score was 33.6 before their participation in FY24, and 42.3 after participation. One hundred percent of respondents indicated an improvement in their self-efficacy. The average improvement over the baseline for each item was 0.87 points,²⁴ exceeding the target of a 0.65 average point increase.



“ Hands down, one of the best training, learning, professional development [opportunities]. I felt validated being in there, like “this is where I’m supposed to be,” the work that we were doing felt affirmed. And I feel like that was ALA and ILE. I feel like that was y’all’s mission, and it really helped support [us] by giving resources. It was tangible. We could do it right away. I felt prepared when I left, and I also felt like the work that we were doing here at our campus is on target of what we should be doing and what other schools were doing, and I thought it was a great place for me to talk to others who are in the same role and who are seeing a lot of the same issues, or who are experiencing, you know, the same struggles or accomplishments. ”

— Instructional Leader Empowerment participant

24. Some participants rated their self-efficacy high prior to their participation in the ALA, leaving little to no room for improvement.

School Boards

Objective 1: Provide professional learning and capacity-building services in partnership with state or national organizations.

Target 1. By 2022, at least 25% of the ALA services for school board leaders will be developed and/or delivered in partnership with the Arkansas School Boards Association (ASBA) or the National School Boards Association (NSBA), as documented by session agendas.

As in FY23, Ken Rich reiterated that the ASBA did not respond to their invitation to partner, perhaps viewing ALA as a competitor program. Consequently, no progress has been made on this measure.

Objective 2: Increase school board members' capacity to support leadership development and school improvement work within their districts as a result of professional learning and capacity-building services.

Target 1. By 2022, and each year thereafter, school board member participants' self-report (perceptual) data on end-of-session, end-of-program, and end-of-initiative surveys will indicate an increase of at least .65 points, on average, over baseline (5 pt. scale) for items related to self-efficacy in support of leadership development practices.

School board members did not participate in any of the ALA cohort programs. Ken Rich explained, "It's never really been a part of our plan to put board members in the executive leadership program. It's always been our plan for board training to be separate."

However, in FY24, a two-day training for school board members was held in October. Feedback from that training was positive, with all survey respondents (n = 6) indicating that the training was high quality, relevant, and useful, and all reporting that they were satisfied with the session. In addition, 92% of respondents reported an increase in their understanding of the Arkansas Leadership and Learning Framework and their ability to lead and manage change at scale through reflection, inquiry, and assessments for continuous learning and improvement.

Target 2. By 2022, and each year thereafter, school board member participants' self-report (perceptual) data on end-of-session, end-of-program, and end-of-initiative surveys will indicate an increase of at least .65 points on average over baseline (5 pt. scale) for items related to self-efficacy in support of school improvement leadership practices.

In FY24, there were no school board members who participated in ALAC programs. Please see the previous target for an explanation.

Public-Private Partnerships

Objective 1: Provide professional learning and capacity-building services in a public-private partnership that enhances the leadership skills of school principals, teachers, superintendents, other school administrators, school district board members, students, and other stakeholders.

Target 1. By 2022, and each year thereafter, the public-private partnerships will be effective for enhancing the leadership skills of participants.

Interviewees highlighted the various partnerships that contributed to participants' leadership skills and development. Pam Castor reflected on the diversity of input that strengthened ALA programming:

I think some of the success of ALA is due to the fact that a lot of people do contribute. You have people from the charter world that contribute. You have people from the business world that contribute. You have people who bring ideas from a lot of different sectors. You have political people that will contribute or have ideas. So, I think all those voices are valuable and I think they add to the success of the program.

Both national expert consultants, Jenni Donahoo and Peter DeWitt, were praised for their sessions on effective teamwork and instructional practices and expressed satisfaction in their continued collaboration with the ALA. Peter shared:

I could not do what I do if it were not for [the ALA team]. They are amazing and have context that I do not have. They also come with deep leadership experience that we all can learn from.

Jeana Williams discussed the transition of the Instructional Leader Empowerment program to integrating Novak Education, an organization aimed at enhancing instructor efficacy through tailored professional learning. This shift emphasizes universal design and inclusivity for classroom instruction, which has also been a statewide focus.

Bradley Webber emphasized the support provided by Arkansas State University through the Office of Community Outreach and Development, which has been instrumental in aligning programming goals for various stakeholder groups across the state. Additionally, the ALA continues to work alongside the PEER network and organizations like Arkansas ASCD. By fostering connections among current practitioners, alumni, and prospective educators, the ALA makes strides toward creating a cohesive and collaborative educational community through public-private partnerships.

Alignment

Objective 1: Provide professional learning and capacity-building services aligned to legislated programs and DESE initiatives to create a synergy that develops school leaders for the work of continuous school improvement.

Target 1. By 2022, and each year thereafter, ALA services will be aligned to legislated programs and DESE initiatives.

Bradley Webber provided several examples of how the ALA’s services are aligned with legislated programs and DESE initiatives. He explained that a key state priority is the implementation of a career continuum, where educators who pursue additional micro-credentials or designations become eligible for merit pay increases, and because the ALA is one of the pathways to designation, its services align well with this initiative. He went on to discuss the incorporation of state education initiatives into the ALA’s programming:

Especially when it comes to initiatives like inclusive practices and special education, when it comes to science of reading implementation through the R.I.S.E initiative, when it comes to social-emotional learning, RTI [Response-to-Instruction], and tiers of support, all of those elements are embedded in each of our cohort programs to some extent. [We are thinking about] how to support those initiatives, schedule for them, stack for them, and allocate resources for them at the appropriate level. Whether that’s the teacher level, the instructional leader level, the principal level, or the admin level. And so, we certainly discuss those initiatives. In some cases, we’ve even contracted or used state-based experts to come in and speak on them.

Additionally, he mentioned discussions with the APSRC on strategies to boost participation in the ALA, which increased the inclusion of relevant state initiatives and topics:

We have adopted and added the value-added measures components of the new assessment system. How are we tracking teachers [and their] impact on student learning and growth? And so, just about any session you go to, whether it’s Master Principal, Instructional Leader, Executive Leader, or Teacher Leader, you’re gonna hear from Jeana about value-added growth and value-added measures. You’re gonna hear about the different proportionality that’s going into letter grades in the state.

In interviews, the ALA’s program staff and stakeholders echoed Bradley’s comments. Jeana Williams reiterated the importance of using data from teacher growth scores to inform conversations around student growth among instructional leaders and teachers. She also discussed

her involvement in disseminating information about state initiatives and accountability measures through the APSRC, as well as upcoming changes to instructional practices. She said:

I want them to have as much of the information as they can have, and I want to help them lead the work. One of the reasons we're moving to the UDL [Universal Design for Learning] outside of RTI is because inclusive practices are a state initiative, and we need help. I mean, as a state we just need help [with inclusive practices]. And so that's why we've moved to UDL.

Sharmane Evans highlighted Reach's capability to adapt to new state and legislative initiatives through tailored session programming and by offering a platform for educator feedback. She emphasized the importance of engaging with educators statewide to address their concerns and questions regarding initiatives like the LEARNS Act, which Reach's programming can effectively facilitate. Ken Rich spoke about the ability of the Executive Leader Empowerment program to deliver timely and relevant information to superintendents and assistant superintendents to ensure they are well-informed about upcoming developments and equipped with the necessary tools and resources to prepare effectively.

Pam Castor also described the alignment, saying:

So, the ALA was really initiated through legislation, so you might say that it is very well aligned since it's a result of legislative action. In terms of being aligned with DESE, I think that's one of the main goals [of the ALA] – to align with the state. Not necessarily step-for-step with state initiatives, but [to promote] the intent of state initiatives. So, they're very well aligned with what's going on in the state, and you'll see [the] things that the state is emphasizing in [the ALA's programs].

Target 2. By 2022, and each year thereafter, ALA participants will describe ALA services as creating synergy with legislated programs and DESE initiatives to develop them for the work of continuous school improvement.

In focus groups, program participants highlighted various ways in which DESE initiatives and legislated programs were integrated into the ALA, fostering synergy and continuous school improvement. Participants in the Executive Leader Empowerment program shared how having representatives present on legislative initiatives like the LEARNS Act made implementation smoother because they better understood “what was coming at us.” Another Executive Leader Empowerment participant valued the ability to interact with decision-makers and highlighted the challenges school districts face regarding budget constraints. Due to a significant portion of the district's budget allocated to teacher salaries and operations, school leaders have limited flexibility in covering the costs of new policies and initiatives. Ensuring that policymakers understand this financial

reality is crucial for the successful implementation of these changes.

Although more information about the LEARNS Act emerged at the end of Year 3, one Master Principal Program participant anticipated that the ALA would offer a productive space to analyze and understand it:

I think there's definitely opportunity for us to talk as a group and [see] how each district is disseminating that information and how [they are] handling it. [I want to ask] 'Are you worried about lead teachers and master teachers and all the things that just came out of the LEARNS Act?' But it's also fresh and new.

Another Master Principal participant reflected on the beneficial discussions about assessment and upcoming changes in scoring during a previous ALA session:

So, we looked at how attendance was directly removed from what was going to be on report cards...and spent some significant time on that, and I thought that that was very helpful. That gave me a better understanding of what changes we're looking at as we're moving into ATLAS testing, which comes from the LEARNS Act.

An Instructional Leader Empowerment participant described their collaborative efforts with a fellow teacher to analyze ESSA data within their PLC. Together, they demonstrated how to effectively utilize this data to inform and develop actionable plans that could be built upon in the coming year.

We did a shared PLC [training] together where we showed the ESSA data that we had compiled together, and we shared some of the spreadsheets we made based on that [Instructional Leader Empowerment session], and we had some questions and activities to do together on that data...to get our staff understanding how we use our ESSA data and why it's so important. But then to be able to implement it for next year: 'Okay, now that you understand how to read this data, what's our next steps?' Right? And so, we kind of built a plan off of that, too.

In most focus groups, participants expressed that their involvement with the ALA boosted their confidence in implementing new initiatives due to the support they received from fellow participants. School leaders observed how their peers managed and executed new initiatives and appreciated having a platform within the ALA to discuss challenges. They also expressed trust in the ALA program staff to remain informed and incorporate relevant information about these new initiatives during sessions.

Staffing and Governing Structure

Objective 1: Employ or contract with appropriate personnel to deliver services.

Target 1. By 2021, and each year thereafter, ALA partners will employ or contract with appropriate personnel to deliver services with no more than 10% vacancies in needed positions at any one time.

There were several staffing changes during the FY24 year. During the first semester, there was a vacancy in the administrative assistant position for the Master Principal Program. They hired someone to fill the role during the spring semester, but she will not remain in the role in the upcoming year. The ALA will be hiring a contractor to assist with the Master Principal Program in FY25.

Bradley Webber, program lead for the Master Principal Program, began collaborating with outgoing ALA Director Kerri White during the spring semester to ensure a smooth leadership transition. By the end of Year 3, he had fully assumed the role of ALA Director for the upcoming 2024-2025 year.

Melody Morgan resigned from her role as the lead for the School Team Empowerment program at the end of FY23. Rachel Horn volunteered to take on the role for the FY24 school year but will only serve in a supporting role in FY25, as the APSRC has hired Caroline Nail to serve as the School Team Empowerment lead for the upcoming year.

Objective 2: Use a governance structure that effectively carries out all project components and meets other project objectives.

Target 1. By 2021, and each year thereafter, ALA partners will use a governance structure that supports the completion of the work and project objectives.

Six committees govern the ALA: (1) Governance Committee, (2) Publicity and Communications Committee, (3) Fiscal Committee, (4) Audit Committee, (5) Project Management and Leadership Committee, and (6) Evaluation Committee. Membership for these committees is drawn from a wide range of stakeholders and agencies.

Conclusion

FY24 was the third year that APSRC, A-State, and EDUTAS partners served as the service provider for the ALA. With increased cohesion and forward momentum, the program achieved significant successes in growth, implementation, and achievement of goals. However, challenges such as time and capacity constraints, scheduling issues, key personnel turnover, and changes in state assessments persist. Despite these hurdles, the ALA has consistently demonstrated a commitment to continuous improvement by actively incorporating participant feedback and making responsive adjustments to enhance participants' overall experience in the ALA.

The ALA achieved several notable successes in FY24, including operating within budget and maintaining high program fidelity. One significant achievement was the successful completion of the third-year cohort of the Master Principal Program, which embodied the program's growth and consistency in maintaining participant engagement. Throughout all of the ALA's programs, the level of networking, collaboration, and support among participants, especially those in cohorts, was another celebrated success. The educational exchange trip to San Antonio for Executive Leader Empowerment participants, which provided valuable insights and ideas for implementation back in Arkansas, was another significant accomplishment. Finally, for the Teacher Leader program, the expansion of programming for the review of designation components and the additional time allocated for portfolio feedback was a notable success.

Changes also occurred in the ALA during FY24. First, staffing changes brought a new ALA director and new lead for the School Team Empowerment program, along with decreased administrative support for the Master Principal Program due to a staff vacancy. The ALA staff began planning application timelines earlier in the year, soliciting participant referrals, and enhancing recruitment efforts through increased conference presentations, social media engagement, and website updates. They also analyzed geographic data to boost outreach efforts in underrepresented regions and leveraged ALA graduates to successfully build relationships with educational cooperatives in south Arkansas.

Overall, feedback from the ALA's participants for FY24 was overwhelmingly positive. Many participants expressed their appreciation for the ALA's services, highlighting how their involvement has enhanced their effectiveness as educators and positively impacted their schools and students. The program's ability to develop leadership skills that enable alignment with, and understanding of, state initiatives has not only maintained high levels of participant engagement but has also sparked growing interest, leading to the expansion of cohorts in the upcoming year.

Recommendations

Feedback from event surveys, the annual survey, key client interviews, and participant focus groups provided valuable insights about how the ALA can continue to enhance its programs. Based on this feedback, the following recommendations have been identified:

Integrate program graduates into content planning and delivery. Many ALA program leads discussed ways that they involved program graduates in content planning and delivery. With the program now having completed three years, a larger pool of graduates is available and could be utilized more extensively. The Master Principal Program and Teacher Leader Program have effectively integrated graduates in some components of their process, especially around portfolio reviews and designation feedback. Expanding program graduate mentorship and capitalizing on their experience for other cohort programs can enhance connections and help participants understand the interconnectedness of these programs.

The ALA should continue to bolster the number of newly designated teachers and principals who provide feedback on portfolios and mentor Master Principal Program and Teacher Leader Program participants in their application preparation and consider the utility of a program-supported designation mentorship program. Creating a mentorship program that pairs designated alumni with prospective applicants could increase the number of designation applications and strengthen connections among educational leaders. Additionally, enhancing cross-program collaboration between the Instructional Leader and Teacher Leader programs by having completers of one program present to current participants of the other could strengthen instructor-teacher relationships and foster mutual understanding. In discussing the School Team Empowerment program, Rachel Horn outlined plans to leverage “the talent we have here in Arkansas” for content development, reducing reliance on national expert consultants. While consultants will still be engaged for their credibility and expertise, there will be a strategic shift towards integrating more program graduates and local experts into the ALA.

Program graduates could also be leveraged in Reach programming through the development and delivery of niche topic sessions (e.g., online education, science or language arts subjects) as requested by participants. Given the promise of program alumni integration, it would be worth exploring the development of an advisory team of those who completed ALA programs to provide insights and consultation on content delivery across all programs.

Addressing time out of building concerns and barriers to participation. One of the most significant challenges identified by program leads and participants is the time educators spend away from their buildings

to participate in professional development. However, given the overwhelmingly positive feedback on the ALA's programming, advocating for educator attendance is justified. Several participants mentioned this as a challenge but recommended that the ALA consider ways to address this through more program promotion:

For my district, their complaint is the number of days that we're out of the building, and so they're limiting sick days and PD days. I guess if there was some research shared about the impact that this professional learning is having on adults that we could share with our administrators to help them to understand like, I mean, it's paying off in so many ways. I mean, [in] my school alone, I feel like we've made such huge growth the last couple of years, and so you would think they could make the connection.

We [had] some superintendent turnover down here...every couple of years we have a new one, and when they bring somebody in from out of state, they have no idea what ALA is or what its purpose is. I'm sure superintendents are bombarded with a thousand people, you know, pulling them in 16 different directions. But, man, if ALA could do some more positive push-out and really let people know what they do and why they do it, it would be beneficial.

School Team Empowerment lead, Rachel Horn, elaborated on this issue:

I think that people who do participate [in the ALA] have found it to be a worthwhile use of their time. But it's easy to write something off when you don't already have the experience of its power. Or you don't have the vicarious experience of a friend or, you know, a partner school who has gone through it. It's easy to say I don't have time for that, even when maybe you do. You could carve out that time, you just have other priorities.

To support this advocacy, a strategy for the ALA's program staff to consider is collecting participant testimonials through video or other mixed media methods. These testimonials could be used in outreach efforts to encourage district and building leaders to support and promote participation in the ALA. Furthermore, presenting data on the program's impact on schools and student achievement could bolster this advocacy and justify the costs associated with educators being out of the building.

Strategic outreach and communication with superintendents and other school leaders new to the role are recommended to secure greater buy-in for participation in the ALA. New school leaders who may be unfamiliar with ALA could benefit from hearing about the experiences of program completers. Additionally, soliciting completers' input on alleviating the challenges associated with educators' time away from their buildings would also be valuable.

Increase charter school integration and outreach. Several program leads highlighted the challenges of attaining charter school representation in the ALA, particularly due to frequent turnover among charter leaders. Bradley Webber expanded on this:

I think we do a really good job of getting charter applicants, but we don't get as much commitment from those applicants, largely because of turnover and instability and some of those charter network leadership pieces. You know, we have a number of charter networks in the state who are going through a leadership transition at the district level or network level right now. And so, you may have a principal who started in Phase 1 [of the Master Principal Program who] wasn't allowed to finish Phase 1, or a principal who started and finished Phase 1 but isn't allowed to come back to Phase 2 or has been moved or [has] transitioned into a new role because of shuffling at a district level. Right? You know, we ask for an affirmation of participation from the superintendent at the beginning of the year, or from a network director if you're in a charter school. But when that director gets moved to a new role in November, and somebody new comes on, they say, well, I didn't sign off on that. I'm not letting my principals come to Master Principal. I'm not letting my teachers go to Little Rock for three days in the middle of March. Right? That's something I would like to see some more consistency in.

To address this, the ALA should consider strategies for tracking and identifying new charter leaders and encouraging them to support their educators' participation in the ALA's programs. By incorporating testimonials and strategic outreach, the ALA could engage past program graduates from charter schools to help design and deliver these messages. These graduates could serve as liaisons, articulating the specific benefits of ALA participation for charter school educators and addressing any unique concerns that administrators have.

Intentional grouping and collaboration considerations. Program leads in the Instructional Leader Empowerment and Teacher Leader Program reflected on the impact of seating arrangements, noting that singleton educators—those who are the sole representatives from their building or district—might feel excluded during school-based planning. Feedback from individual event sessions throughout the year highlighted the necessity for intentional table or seating planning ahead of time. While some seating changes throughout sessions interrupted the planning process, others facilitated a diversity of perspectives. Jeana Williams had already begun thinking about changes to make in the upcoming year:

I think I need to add some different pieces to [table] grouping and almost, like, pre-assess them on where they are in different topics, and then group based on that. So, there may be some new groupings.

To address these concerns, program leads should carefully consider the composition of their participants and the planned activities for each session. This will enable them to design seating arrangements that respect both group dynamics from schools and districts, as well as the needs of individual attendees. Intentional seating plans could also foster cross-district and PLC-based collaboration, ensuring all participants feel included and valued.

Continue to prioritize time for collaboration, networking, and processing. Throughout the focus groups, participants repeatedly praised the value of the ALA in fostering networking and providing a space to strengthen educator relationships across Arkansas. The session structures allowed participants to process and consider how to implement concepts in their respective schools. The presence of like-minded educators was particularly impactful, as one principal noted:

We were all there for the same reason. We were all wanting to learn and to grow so that we could come back to our piece of the state and just grow our staff, grow our people, in order to grow our students [and] seeing that we're developing, not for today, not for tomorrow, but for the future.

The relationships formed within the ALA cohorts continued to influence participants beyond the sessions. Several focus group members mentioned that they can easily 'pick up the phone' and call a colleague for advice, thanks to the connections made at the ALA. One Executive Leader Empowerment participant emphasized that the collaboration with other district leaders served as a powerful form of professional development, particularly for superintendents and upper-level administrators who often lack time for such activities due to their responsibilities.

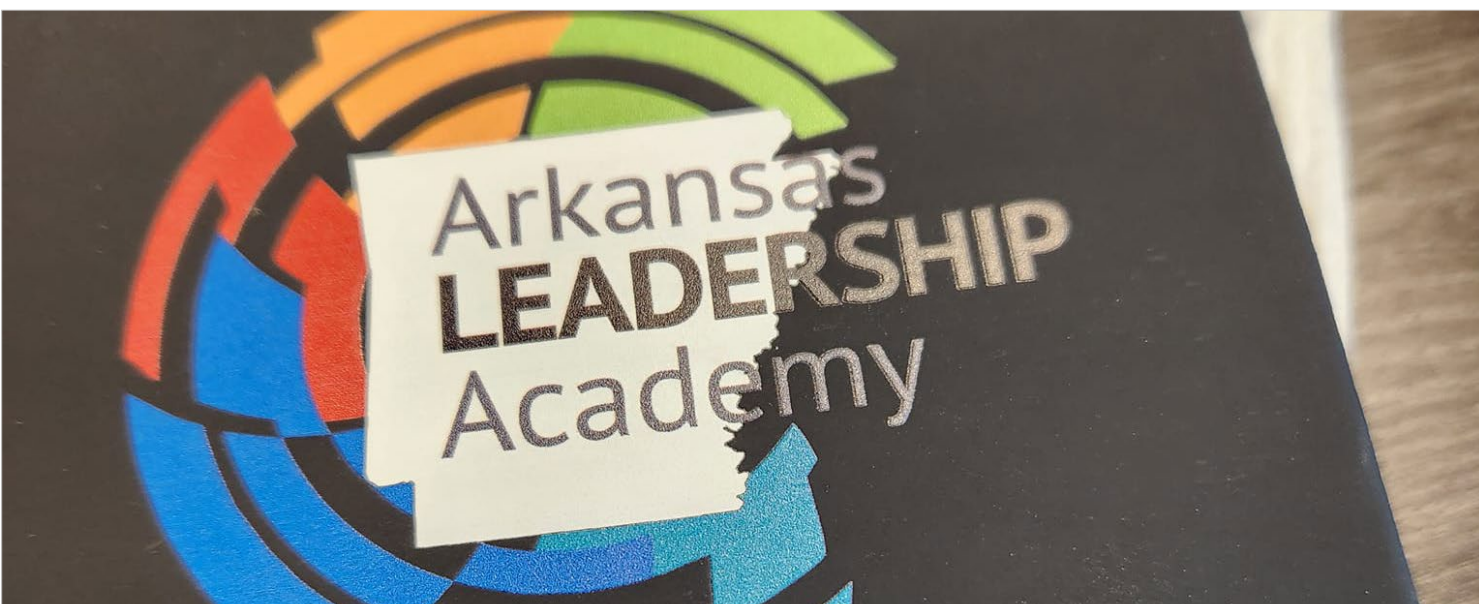
Continue aligning the ALA's content to state initiatives and legislation. Due to numerous changes in statewide initiatives and assessments, the ALA continues to play a crucial role in offering space for processing and up-to-date information. Several program leaders acknowledged the importance of maintaining a balance between keeping sessions on-topic and integrating new developments from DESE and legislative initiatives. They also emphasized that the ALA's primary role is providing leadership skills informed by these initiatives, rather than focusing on compliance and implementation. Bradley Webber underscored this:

Like I said, our job isn't to create that policy, [and] it isn't even necessarily to implement that policy, but really to help our educators digest that policy and put it within the context of the work that they're already doing. I tell our participants all the time, 'We're not here to add to your plate. We're here to help you manage your plate better.'

With new report card calculations and assessment scores rolling out in

the upcoming year, allocating time for discussion and processing will be beneficial for participants. Additionally, providing a platform for educators to engage with legislators by asking questions and voicing concerns about new measures is a worthwhile strategy for the program to explore. This would ensure that leaders remain informed and responsive to the needs of the education sector through open lines of communication and the facilitation of information by the ALA.

Organize ALA alumni events. Many focus group participants expressed a strong interest in attending an ALA reunion event for their respective cohort program. Participants completing the third year of the Master Principal Program emphasized the potential value of gathering once each summer to reconnect and catch up with each other. Given the high demand for additional years for the Teacher Leader Program and Instructional Leader Empowerment, organizing such an event during the summer could provide a valuable opportunity for participants to reconnect without interfering with the academic school year and programming schedules. This event could also hold the potential for gathering valuable feedback and program improvement ideas that would contribute to the relevance, impact, and evolving needs of Arkansas educators.



“ But I’m gonna tell you one of the things that stands out the most to me as being part of that teacher Leadership group was just being surrounded with other educators who value education the way I do. It was invigorating to be around other people and to make those connections with other people across the State. I now know that if I have a question, I have a great science teacher I can reach out to [from TLP] that will be able to help me with some ideas. And so, things like that have made a huge impact in my professional life, but also just keep me going, because this year has been very difficult.” ”

— Master Principal Program participant

Program recommendations. Focus group participants provided a range of suggestions for improving the ALA's programs for future cohorts. Below are the recommendations specific to each program where participants offered their insights.

Executive Leader Empowerment:

- Incorporate the school site visit trip as a regular program session.
- Develop intentional outreach strategies to recruit superintendents or assistant superintendents in their 2nd – 5th years of the role.
- Continue to invite representatives/legislators to discuss upcoming legislation and policy changes.

Instructional Leader Empowerment:

- Provide support and guidance in motivating teachers to prepare lesson plans well in advance, particularly as the school year draws to a close. Participants also underscored the significance of creating intensive support plans and emphasized how valuable this session was to their work.

Master Principal Program:

- Begin providing structures or evidence for the rubric strands earlier in the program, possibly starting in Phase 2, with an emphasis on real-world applications by showcasing how some schools are successfully implementing these strategies.
- Organize a session in Phase 1 that involves walking through a school that has achieved designation to see what that impact looks like.

School Team Empowerment Program:

- Support newly established school teams by conducting pre-sessions, helping them achieve equal footing with more established teams in addressing their problems of practice.

Spark!/Reach:

- Consider developing PLC-specific sessions that focus on collaboration and effective communication, as well as sessions for online educators.

Teacher Leader Program:

- Strengthen examples of designation artifacts and provide example portfolios from successful designation applications.

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Appendix A

Master Principal Program | Participant Agenda



Master Principal Program
2023-2024

Phase 3 Session 1 – Sept 27-29
Fairfield Bay Conference Center
101 Lost Creek Pkwy, Fairfield Bay, AR 72088

Learning Intentions:

- ✓ **Programmatic:** We are developing relationships with cohort colleagues to expand a network of professional learning
- ✓ **Programmatic:** We are using reflection to refine instructional leadership
- ✓ **Programmatic:** We are exploring the three ALA Leadership Development Focus Areas: Collaborative Leadership, Collective Efficacy, and Cultural Competency
- ✓ **Phase 3 Session 1:** We are identifying the components of systems thinking
- ✓ **Phase 3 Session 1:** We are developing school-based systems that connect school leadership and student outcomes

Times	Learning Experiences	Tools/Purpose	Strands & Learning Intentions
	Wed, September 27		
11-12:00pm	Lunch	*Served in the FFB Conference Center	LI 1.1- Relationships/ Network of Learning
12-2:00pm	Welcome Agenda Preview & Learning Intentions/ Intended Outcomes Learning Intentions: Phase 3 Session 1 Norm Setting/ Collective Commitments Tools/ Activity Sort MPP Rubric Sort Goal Setting/ OKR's for Phase 3	Wi-Fi Connected Device Slide Deck: Ice/ Water/ Vapor Charts Sticky Notes/ Chart Paper	LI 1.2- CL, CE, an CC LPSS 1.1.- Shared Purpose LPSS 2.1- Norms, rituals, traditions LPSS- Build and sustain collaborative relationships LPSS 3.2- System for strategic results
2:00-2:15	Break	Fellowship & Refresh	LI 1.1- Relationships/ Network of Learning

Times	Learning Experiences	Tools/Purpose	Strands & Learning Intentions
2:15-4:00	<p>Begin w/ the End in Mind: Designation</p> <p>A Systems Approach: Teacher Interactions</p> <p>Systems Brainstorm and Eisenhower Plot</p> <p>MPP Rubric Jeopardy</p>	<p>MPP Rubric</p> <p>Wallace Foundation Report: https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/How-Principals-Affect-Students-and-Schools.pdf</p> <p>Eisenhower Matrix</p> <p>Critical Friends Protocol</p> <p>JeopardyLab Template</p>	<p>LI 1.1- Relationships/ Network of Learning</p> <p>LI 1.2- CL, CE, an CC</p> <p>LI 1.4- M / V / CB</p> <p>LPSS 1.1.- Shared Purpose</p> <p>LPSS 3.3- Change research, processes, and tools</p> <p>LPSS 5.4- Improve adult learning and performance</p>
4:00-6:00	Evening Break	Reflect, Refresh, Rest	LPSS 5.4- Improve adult learning and performance
6:00-7:00	DINNER TIME	Fellowship	LI 1.1- Relationships/ Network of Learning
7:00-8:00	Leveraging your Chain of Influence	Paper Chain Supplies	<p>LI 1.1- Relationships/ Network of Learning</p> <p>LI 1.3- Personal leadership traits</p> <p>LPSS 2.2- Safe, positive, supportive climate</p> <p>LPSS 5.4- Improve adult learning and performance</p>
8:00-8:30pm	Debrief - Reflect - Provide Feedback (ALL)	Journal Feedback Form	<p>LI 1.5- Reflective practice</p> <p>LPSS 3.4- Use reflection, inquiry, and assessment</p>
	Thursday, September 28		
7:30-8:30	BREAKFAST	Networking & Nourishment	LI 1.1- Relationships/ Network of Learning

Times	Learning Experiences	Tools/Purpose	Strands & Learning Intentions
8:30-10:00	Preview Agenda for the Day Revisit Collective Commitments/ Norms Meet Me in the Middle Protocol 8 Community Sectors Force Field Analysis	Hourglass Model PROTOCOL RESOURCES: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Reform Initiative • National School Reform Faculty • lead4ward Instructional Strategies Playlist 	LI 1.1- Relationships/ Network of Learning LI 1.2- CL, CE, an CC LI 1.3- Personal Leadership Traits LPSS 1.3- Sense of Urgency LPSS 1.1.- Shared Purpose LPSS 2.1- Norms, rituals, traditions LPSS 3.3- Change research, processes, and tools
10:00-10:15	BEVERAGE BREAK	Fellowship & Refresh	LI 1.1- Relationships/ Network of Learning
10:15-11:30am	Wallace Foundation: Socratic Circles (Factors that Influence Student Outcomes) Socratic Circles Building Based Systems Force Field Analysis	Force Field Analysis 8 Sectors Handout	LI 1.1- Relationships/ Network of Learning LI 1.2- CL/ CE LI 1.5- Reflective Practice LPSS 4.3- Engage in learning experiences
11:30-12:30pm	LUNCH BREAK	Fellowship, Refresh, and Feed	LI 1.1- Relationships/ Network of Learning
12:30-2:15	Spider Web Graphic Organizer-Scaling and Leveraging Building-Based Systems Time Management Template	New Role, New Demands Time Log Template	LI 1.4- M / V / CB LPSS 1.1- Shared purpose through M/ V/ CB LPSS 3.3- Change research, processes, tools
2:15-2:30 pm	SNACK BREAK	Fellowship, Refresh, and Feed	LI 1.1- Relationships/ Network of Learning
2:30-4:00 pm	Strategic Action Planning Focus on SCALE: Shift in Ownership/ Sustainability	Plan/ Do/ Check/ Act Cycle Critical Friend Protocol	LI 1.2- CL. CE, CC LPSS 3.3- Change research, processes, tools
4:00-6:00	FREE TIME	Reflect, Refresh, Rest	LPSS 5.4- Improve adult learning and performance
6:00-7:00	DINNER TIME	Fellowship and Feed	LI 1.1- Relationships/ Network of

Times	Learning Experiences	Tools/Purpose	Strands & Learning Intentions
			Learning
7:00-8:00			
8:00-8:30 pm	Debrief - Reflect - Provide Feedback (ALL) Homework:	Journals Feedback Forms	LI 1.5- Reflective practice LPSS 3.4- Use reflection, inquiry, and assessment
	Friday, September 29		
Day 3 7:30-8:30	BREAKFAST	Networking & Nourishment	LI 1.1- Relationships/ Network of Learning
8:30-10:00	Preview Agenda for the Day (B. Webber) Revisit Collective Commitments/ Norms <u>Hourglass Model</u> : Current Reality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Systems Status Check and Sustainability Planning - Thinking through the Change you have on your plate this year Communication as a System	Daily Agenda Hourglass Model Improving Communication Efforts	LI 1.2- CI, CE, CC LI 1.4- M / V / CB LPSS 1.2- Develop a Strategic Plan
10:00-10:15	BEVERAGE BREAK	Fellowship & Refresh	LI 1.1- Relationships/ Network of Learning
10:15-11:30	Storytelling Practice Reflect on the Learning- -List out all the tools/ activities/ protocols State Initiative Cross-Walk Next Steps Affirmations Communications : Note Home Session Survey	End of Session Assessment	LI 1.5- Reflective practice LPSS- Develop/ Communicate a strategic action plan LPSS 1.3- Establish a sense of urgency
11:30-12:30	Box Lunches To-Go		THANK YOU & SAFE TRAVELS!

Appendix B

Teacher Leader Program | January 2024 Report

ARKANSAS LEADERSHIP ACADEMY REPORT TEACHER LEADER PROGRAM



TEACHER LEADER PROGRAM - JANUARY 2024

EVALUATION

The Educational Training, Evaluation, Assessment, and Measurement (E-TEAM) department at The University of Oklahoma serves as the external evaluator for the Arkansas Leadership Academy (ALA). The evaluation is designed to provide ongoing formative feedback and annual summative data to inform the project's continuous improvement process. Surveys are administered after all events and professional learning sessions as part of the formative evaluation. These surveys assess the quality, relevance, and usefulness of the professional learning experiences and the extent to which participants gain knowledge, skills, and competencies to inform and improve instructional and leadership practices.

EVENT OVERVIEW

On January 9-10, 2023 the ALA hosted the fourth Teacher Leader Program event of the 2023-24 academic year. Following the event, participants were asked to complete a feedback survey about the session's quality, relevance, usefulness, and participants' changes in knowledge and ability. E-TEAM developed the feedback survey, analyzed survey data, and prepared this report. There were 99 attendees in total, 45 for track A and 44 for track B. Seventy-five participants responded to the survey.

QUALITY, RELEVANCE, AND USEFULNESS

Participants were asked to rate several aspects of the quality, relevance, and usefulness of the session. Quality refers to the effectiveness of professional learning sessions in providing evidence-based content and promising practices. Relevance refers to professional learning and educational resources and materials that help participants improve policies, instructional practices, leadership development, and educational systems. Usefulness refers to professional learning and educational resources and materials that provide participants with the tools, information, knowledge, and skills to support participants' research, instructional practices, leadership development, and student learning.



Ninety-one percent of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the session was of high quality, 93% agreed or strongly agreed that the session was relevant, and 96% agreed or strongly agreed that the session was useful (Table 1).

Table 1. Respondents' Ratings of Session's Quality, Relevance, and Usefulness (n = 75)

Question	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
The presentations were of high quality. (Quality)	---	---	8%	36%	56%
This session was well-organized. (Quality)	---	---	11%	33%	56%
Following this session, I understand protocols for examining student work. (Usefulness)	---	---	3%	40%	57%
Following this session, I can describe the benefits of using a protocol to examine student work. (Usefulness)	---	---	---	47%	53%
Using what I learned in this session, I can use implications from research to strengthen collective efficacy at my school. (Relevance)	---	1%	4%	48%	47%
Following this session, I understand how to strengthen collective efficacy by applying findings from research. (Usefulness)*	---	---	5%	54%	41%
Following this session, I can name and describe different levels of implementation of evidence-based strategies. (Usefulness)*	---	4%	3%	57%	36%
Following this session, I can name four types of efficacy-shaping information. (Usefulness)**	---	4%	3%	47%	47%
Using what I learned in this session, I can achieve deeper levels of implementation of evidence-based strategies. (Relevance)**	---	4%	5%	53%	37%

Note: Due to rounding, percentages may not add up to 100%.

*n = 74

**n = 73

OVERALL SATISFACTION

Participants were asked to rate their overall satisfaction with the session. Ninety-one percent of respondents indicated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the session (n = 74).

LEARNING INTENTIONS

- We are continuing to learn how to support/facilitate high-quality collaboration in schools.
- We are learning how to strengthen collective efficacy by applying findings from research.
- We are learning how to achieve deeper levels of implementation of evidence-based strategies.
- We are learning about protocols for examining student work.
- We are learning to check our assumptions.
- We are learning more about the ALA Teacher Leader Program portfolio requirements.
- I can use implications from research to strengthen collective efficacy at my school.
- I can name and describe four sources of efficacy-shaping information.
- I can name and describe different levels of implementation of evidence-based strategies.
- I can identify barriers to achieving quality implementation of evidence-based strategies and determine ways to overcome the barriers.
- I can describe the benefits of using a protocol to examine student work.

CHANGES IN KNOWLEDGE AND ABILITY

Following the session, participants rated their knowledge of the ALA Teacher Leader Program portfolio requirements. Sixteen percent of respondents rated their knowledge as above average or advanced prior to the session, and 52% rated their knowledge as above average or advanced following the session (Figure 1). Fifty-seven percent of respondents reported an increase in their knowledge.

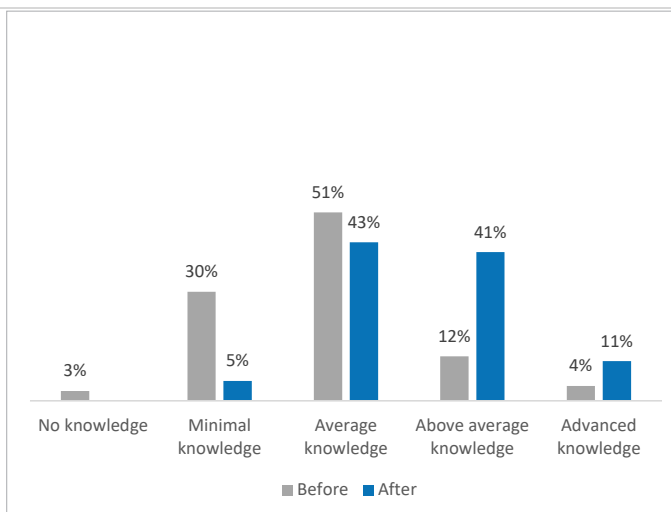
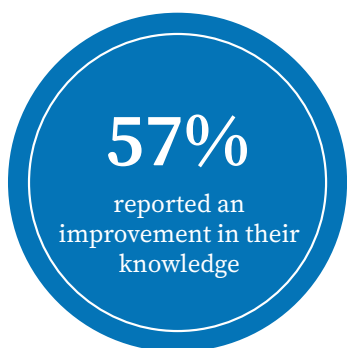


Figure 1. Respondents' ratings of their knowledge of the ALA Teacher Leader Program portfolio requirements before and after their participation in the session (n = 74). Note: Due to rounding, percentages may not add up to 100%.

Participants also rated their knowledge of how to support/facilitate high-quality collaboration in schools. Twenty-one percent of respondents rated their knowledge as above average or advanced prior to the session, and 70% rated their knowledge as above average or advanced following the session (Figure 2). Sixty-eight percent of respondents reported an increase in their knowledge as a result of the session.

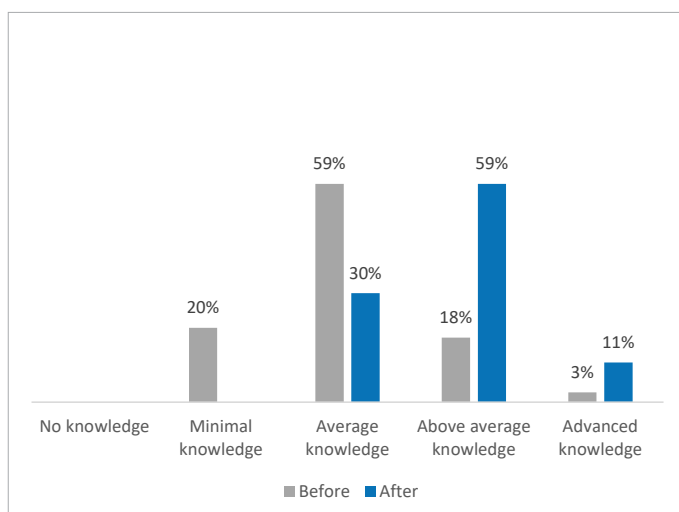


Figure 2. Respondents' ratings of their knowledge of how to support/facilitate high-quality collaboration in schools before and after their participation in the training (n = 74). Note: Due to rounding, percentages may not add up to 100%.



Participants rated their ability to check their assumptions. Fifteen percent of respondents rated their ability as above average or advanced prior to the session, and 60% rated their ability as above average or advanced following the session (Figure 3). Sixty-one percent of respondents reported an increase in their ability as a result of the session.

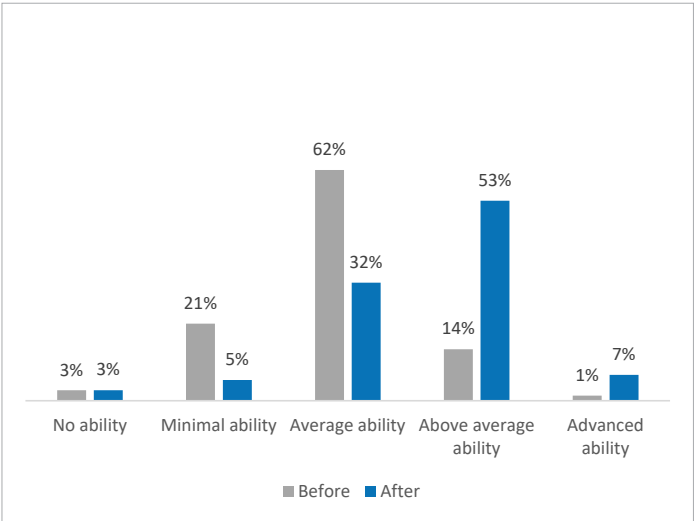


Figure 3. Respondents' ratings of their ability to check their assumptions before and after their participation in the training (n = 73). Note: Due to rounding, percentages may not add up to 100%.

Finally, participants rated their ability to identify barriers to achieving quality implementation of evidence-based strategies and determine ways to overcome the barriers. Eight percent of respondents rated their ability as above average or advanced prior to the session, and 56% rated their ability as above average or advanced following the session (Figure 4). Sixty-one percent of respondents reported an increase in their ability as a result of the session.

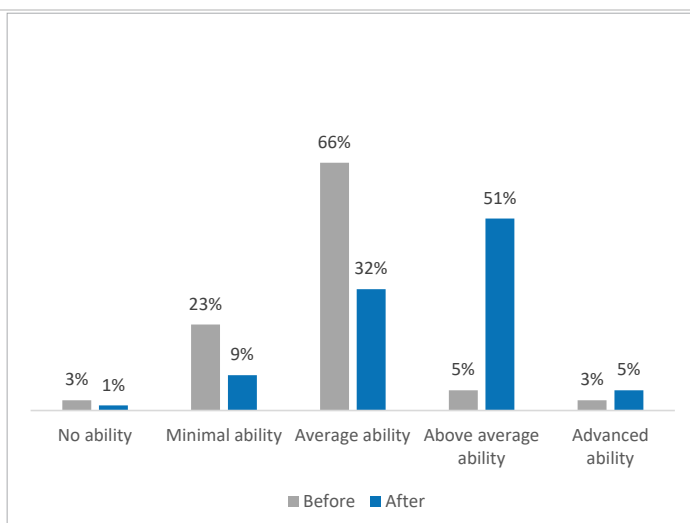


Figure 4. Respondents' ratings of their ability to identify barriers to achieving quality implementation of evidence-based strategies and determine ways to overcome the barriers before and after their participation in the training (n = 74). Note: Due to rounding, percentages may not add up to 100%.

OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

Participants were asked open-ended questions about the session. Comments for each question can be found at the end of the report. When asked what about the learning experience was most useful, respondents cited several themes, including the use of protocols, analyzing student work, and collaboration with peers. Respondents were also asked what they would change about the learning experience. Multiple respondents mentioned that they did not enjoy the hybrid format of the session and that in some cases, it made learning more difficult. Other respondents expressed that having presentation handouts would be helpful. One participant expressed that they would like to spend more time discussing the portfolio in March. Most respondents were enthusiastic and willing to bring what they had learned from this session into their own practice, including their PLCs.

SUMMARY

On January 9-10, 2023 the ALA hosted the fourth Teacher Leader Program event of the 2023-24 academic year. There were 99 attendees in total, 45 for track A and 44 for track B. Seventy-five participants responded to the feedback survey. Ninety-one percent of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the session was of high quality, 93% agreed or strongly agreed that the session was relevant, and 96% agreed or strongly agreed that the session was useful. Ninety-one percent were satisfied with the session. Fifty-seven percent of respondents indicated that their knowledge of the ALA Teacher Leader Program portfolio requirements increased as a result of their participation in the session. Sixty-eight percent additionally reported an increase in their knowledge of how to support/facilitate high-quality collaboration in schools. Sixty-one percent of respondents felt that their ability check their assumptions increased following the session. Sixty-one percent of

respondents reported that their ability to identify barriers to achieving quality implementation of evidence-based strategies and determine ways to overcome the barriers increased as a result of the session. Finally, respondents were asked several open-ended questions about their experience, and the responses were largely positive. Respondents noted collaboration and use of protocols were among the most useful elements of the session. When asked about what they might change about the session, most suggestions had to do with the hybrid nature of the session due to weather. Several other respondents suggested presentation handouts to make the session easier to follow.

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E-TEAM, at the University of Oklahoma, designs research and evaluations to help organizations understand and use information and data to solve real-world problems with progress and outcomes monitoring, technology solutions, study findings, and recommendations.

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E-TEAM also recognizes that privilege and intersectionality impact data collection and analysis and interpretation. We align our evaluations from planning, implementation, data collection, analysis, interpretation, and reporting with an understanding of these issues. In service to this, we recruit and hire staff from across diverse racial and ethnic groups, cultures, and perspectives.