

Arkansas Leadership Academy

The development of school leaders is a critical component of transforming education in Arkansas. Outside of educational leadership degree programs housed at an institute of higher education, ALA has been the primary provider of leadership development training since its inception.

The Arkansas Leadership Academy is established in statute and funded with a \$900,000 line item from the Public School Fund. The Academy offers a variety of teacher, school, board and community training programs at an additional cost, contracting directly with school districts.

ACA 6-15-1007 states:

- o The academy shall provide a variety of training programs and opportunities to develop the knowledge base and leadership skills of school principals, teachers, superintendents, other administrators, and school district board members.
- o The academy may enter into a private-public partnership or a public-public partnership if the partnership will enhance the leadership skills of school principals, teachers, superintendents, other school administrators, school district board members, students, or other stakeholders.
- o The State Board of Education shall have the authority to issue requests for proposals if the state board should determine to change the operator or the location of the academy.

The Master School Principal Program is outlined in ACA 6-17-1601 et al, and under that statute, it is administered by the Arkansas Leadership Academy. The Master Principal Program operation is supported by a \$500,000 line item. It consists of three phases as follows:

- o "Phase one", which shall expand the knowledge base and leadership skills of the principal;
- o "Phase two", which shall require the principal to apply strategies and to collect evidence of improvement in student learning and school processes; and
- o "Phase three", which shall require the principal to publicly demonstrate the ability and skills that lead to sustained academic improvement in a school and a school district.

Principals who complete the Master Principal Program are designated "Master Principals" and are eligible for a \$9000 annual bonus for 5 years. A Master Principal who works in a "high-need school" is eligible for a \$25,000 annual bonus for 5 years. These bonuses are paid by the Department of Education.

Under the Arkansas ESSA Plan, all schools are encouraged and expected to engage in continuous cycles of inquiry, using data from various sources to determine how to meet the needs of all students and driving dramatic, lasting improvements in schools. Since 2015, the state has operated under a new federal and state accountability system that has moved away from school improvement providers in low-performing schools to a system of Plan-Do-Check for continuous improvement on a pathway to excellence for all schools. The Arkansas Leadership Academy has been involved in past school improvement work and can be an important resource for capacity building and sustainable efforts for school excellence.

The ALA should be an integral component to bring together efforts to accelerate leadership opportunities for those closest to the work. We want teachers and principals to have opportunities to "lead" without "leaving" their positions, making Arkansas a state nationally recognized for investing in teacher and school leaders' professional development.

The Goal of the RFP process is select the location and operator of the Arkansas Leadership Academy for the next 5 years of operation with an annual report of performance to the State Board of Education. The successful applicant will align the work of the Arkansas Leadership Academy with Arkansas's updated

model for school improvement efforts that include evidence-based approaches to teacher and administrator leadership development, resulting in Arkansas's ultimate shift from adequacy to excellence.