

# ARKANSAS LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

Arkansas Leadership Academy  
1 University of Arkansas  
College of Education and Health Professions  
346 N. West Avenue Room 300  
Fayetteville, AR 72701  
479-575-3030  
Fax 479-575-8663  
[www.arkansasleadershipacademy.org](http://www.arkansasleadershipacademy.org)

**Exhibit F**

# Arkansas Leadership Academy

## Purpose

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

## Vision

An innovative academy preparing educational leaders who develop high performing learning communities throughout Arkansas.

## Mission

To develop and sustain a cadre of leaders in public education in Arkansas through collaborative governance by Academy partners resulting in an expanded vision, statewide system change initiatives, synergy among stakeholders, and leadership development institutes.

## Beliefs

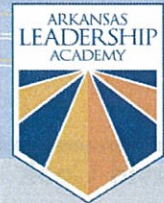
- People support what they help create.
- Diversity is embraced and valued.
- To change others, change yourself.
- The greatest leaders are known by the number of leaders they create.



**Arkansas Leadership Academy  
School Support Program  
Staff Credentials**

<b>David Cook</b> Director, Arkansas Leadership Academy	Individual Institute Graduate Team Institute Graduate Coaches Training Central Office Institute Pilot Graduate M.A. Human Resources Management; Pepperdine University Ed.S. Education Administration; UofA Fayetteville
<b>Dr. Debbie Davis</b> Associate Director, Arkansas Leadership Academy	Master Principal Designee National Distinguished Principal Ed.D. Educational Leadership; UofA Fayetteville
<b>Jennifer Medeiros</b> Research & Data Specialist	Teacher and Building Level Administration Certification M.Ed. Educational Leadership; UofA, Fayetteville Ph.D. pursuant Curriculum and Instruction; UofA Fayetteville
<b>Belinda Akin</b> School Support Program Leader	Master Principal Institute Phase 3 Graduate National Distinguished Principal
<b>Amanda Linn</b> Curriculum Coordinator, Institute Facilitator,	Teacher Institute Graduate, TLC Milken Award Winner National Board Certified Teacher Ed.D pursuant Adult and Lifelong Learning; UofA Fayetteville
<b>Dr. Diana Peer</b> Master Principal Program Leader, Capacity Building Leader	Master Principal Designee Ed.D. Educational Leadership; UofA Fayetteville
<b>Blaine Alexander</b> Capacity Building Leader, Master Principal Institute Facilitator	Master Principal Designee Ed.D pursuant Adult and Lifelong Learning; UofA Fayetteville
<b>Dr. Tom Bennett</b> Capacity Building Leader	Team Institute Graduate J.D. ASU Jonesboro Ed.D. Educational Leadership; UofA Fayetteville
<b>Joe Fisher</b> Capacity Building Leader	National Distinguished Principal Ed.D pursuant Educational Leadership; UofA Fayetteville
<b>Joe Franks</b> Capacity Building Leader	Master Principal Institute Phase 3 Graduate M.S. Education; UCA Conway
<b>Tracey Montgomery</b> Teacher Institute Facilitator	MPI Phase 2 Graduate Coaches Training Graduate ESOL Certified
<b>Jerry Vaughn</b> Capacity Building Leader	Master Principal Institute Phase 3 Graduate National Distinguished Principal Ed.D pursuant Educational Leadership; UofA Fayetteville
<b>Marie Parker</b> Consultant for School Support Program	A.B.D. Education Administration, UofA, Fayetteville; M.A. Ouachita Baptist University Educational Administration Certification Former Director of Great Expectations of Arkansas and Arkansas A+ Schools





# Superintendent Institute



*"I have attended many leadership trainings in our state and across the nation and it is without reservation that I state that the Arkansas Leadership Academy programs are model programs that absolutely make a difference in the professional capacity of those that attend."*

**Tony Thurman**  
Superintendent  
Cabot School District

The Superintendent Institute provides learning experiences that foster collective learning for a statewide professional learning community of superintendents. These formal learning experiences focus on the five leadership performance strands and are directly connected to each superintendent's needs within their districts. The superintendents apply their district's data to real teaching and learning issues to positively impact student and adult achievement.

## INSTITUTE FEATURES

- Whole-group focus sessions where major concepts and objectives are introduced with an opportunity for reflection and inquiry.
- Knowledge and skill-building sessions where participants focus on practice, information, and competencies related to individual district developmental needs.
- Applied learning skills addressing local needs and issues, as well as on-going work.
- Feedback from Academy staff and facilitators on individual and team process and content strategies.

## LENGTH OF INSTITUTE

- Session 1: three days
- Session 2: three days
- School Site Visit
- Session 3: three days



Follow this link for more information about the Superintendent Institute .

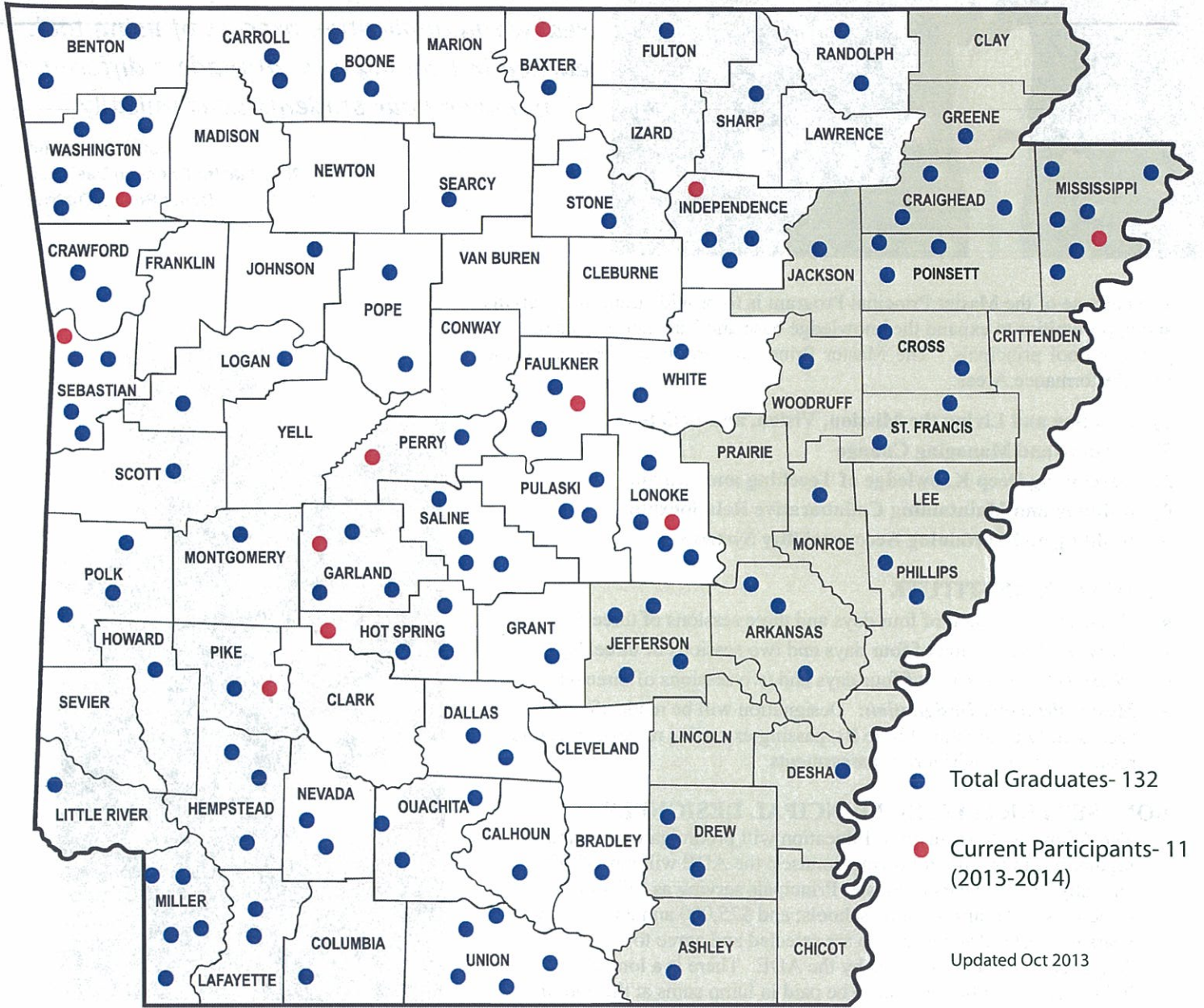
<http://arkansasleadershipacademy.org/8456.php>

Contact: Jackie Mulkey 479-575-3030 [jbase@uark.edu](mailto:jbase@uark.edu)



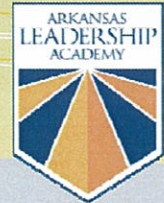


# Arkansas Leadership Academy Superintendent Institute Participation





# Master Principal Program



*"The training gained through the Master Principal Program was like no other training I have been through as a professional. The real world application process of using tools learned in training is what made a difference in moving our students academically."*

**Donny Forehand**  
2013 Master Principal Designee  
Dover School District

The purpose of the Master Principal Program is to provide training programs and opportunities to expand the knowledge base and leadership skills of public school principals. The Master Principal curriculum focuses on the Five Performance Areas:

- 1) **Creating and Living the Mission, Vision, and Beliefs**
- 2) **Leading and Managing Change**
- 3) **Developing Deep Knowledge of Teaching and Learning**
- 4) **Building and Maintaining Collaborative Relationships**
- 5) **Building and Sustaining Accountability Systems**

## LENGTH OF INSTITUTE

- **Phase I:** One session of four days and three sessions of three days
- **Phase II:** One session of four days and two sessions of three days
- **Phase III:** One session of four days and two sessions of three days
- **Master Principal Designation:** Designation will be made after successfully completing Phase III, passing extensive reviews of school results, and passing rigorous assessments.

## BONUSES FOR MASTER PRINCIPAL DESIGNEES

The Arkansas Department of Education will promulgate rules and regulations to pay the following bonuses: the ADE will pay \$9,000 annually for five years to Master Principals serving as full-time principals in Arkansas public schools; and \$25,000 annually for five years to Master Principals who are selected and agree to serve in a "high need" school as defined by the ADE. There is a longevity hold-back of \$5,000 per year to be paid in lump sums at the end of the third and fifth years.



Follow this link for more information about the Master Principal Program.

<http://arkansasleadershipacademy.org/8333.php>

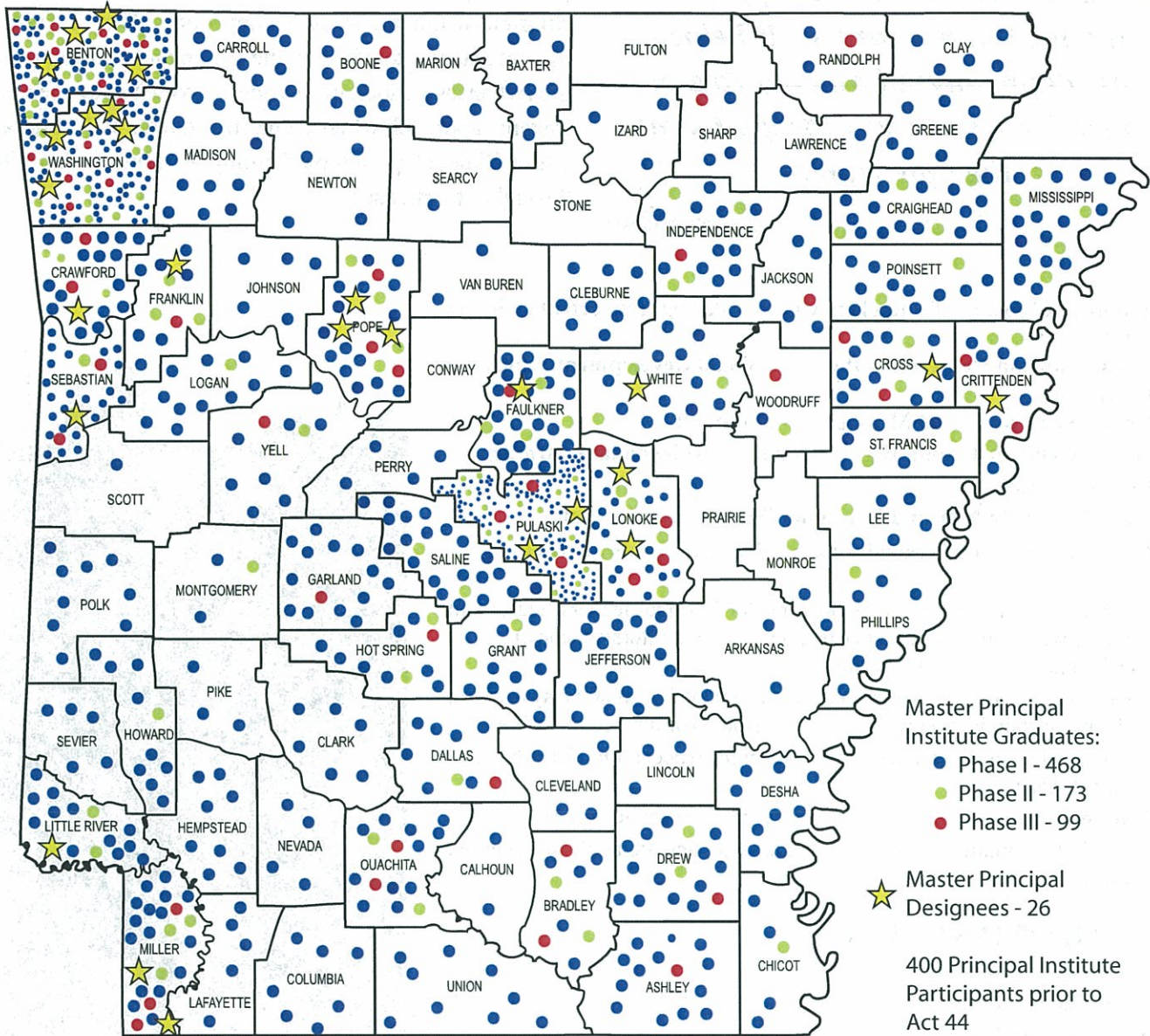
Contact: Diana Peer 479-575-3030 [dpeer@uark.edu](mailto:dpeer@uark.edu)





# ARKANSAS LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

## MASTER PRINCIPAL INSTITUTE PARTICIPATION





# Teacher Leadership Institute



*"I loved it! The Teacher Leadership Institute absolutely changed me as a teacher. It was a pivotal moment in my career. It helped me define myself and my role as a leader. Thank you for giving me the opportunity."*

Forum 22 Graduate

The Arkansas Teacher Leadership Institute provides learning experiences, resources, and support for aspiring and practicing teacher leaders who are committed to improving the performance of all learners, adults and children, within the systems they work. The Teacher Institute strives to advance the vision and mission of the Arkansas Leadership Academy which is to use the systems approach when preparing educational leaders who will develop high performing learning communities throughout Arkansas.

The professional journey for teachers will include engaging activities in the following areas:

- **Using Data and Research in the Professional Development of Best Practices;**
- **Reflective Practice and Message Development;**
- **Building and Sustaining High Performing Professional Learning Communities;**
- **Experience with New and Emerging Digital Resources; and**
- **Practical Tools and Strategies for Student and Adult Learners**

The Teacher Leadership Institute is looking for informal leaders (classroom teachers), as well as formal leaders (instructional facilitators/coaches,). The ideal nominees are teachers who:

- Have a desire to improve student achievement by creating systems to build and sustain high performing professional learning communities.
- Are respected by their peers and hold high expectations for adult and student learners.
- Believe to change others, you must be willing to change yourself.
- Are able to commit the time to attend and participate at all the required sessions.

## LENGTH OF INSTITUTE

- Session 1: four days
- Session 2: three days
- Session 3: three days
- Session 4: three days



Follow this link for more information about the Teacher Leadership Institute.

<http://arkansasleadershipacademy.org/8337.php>

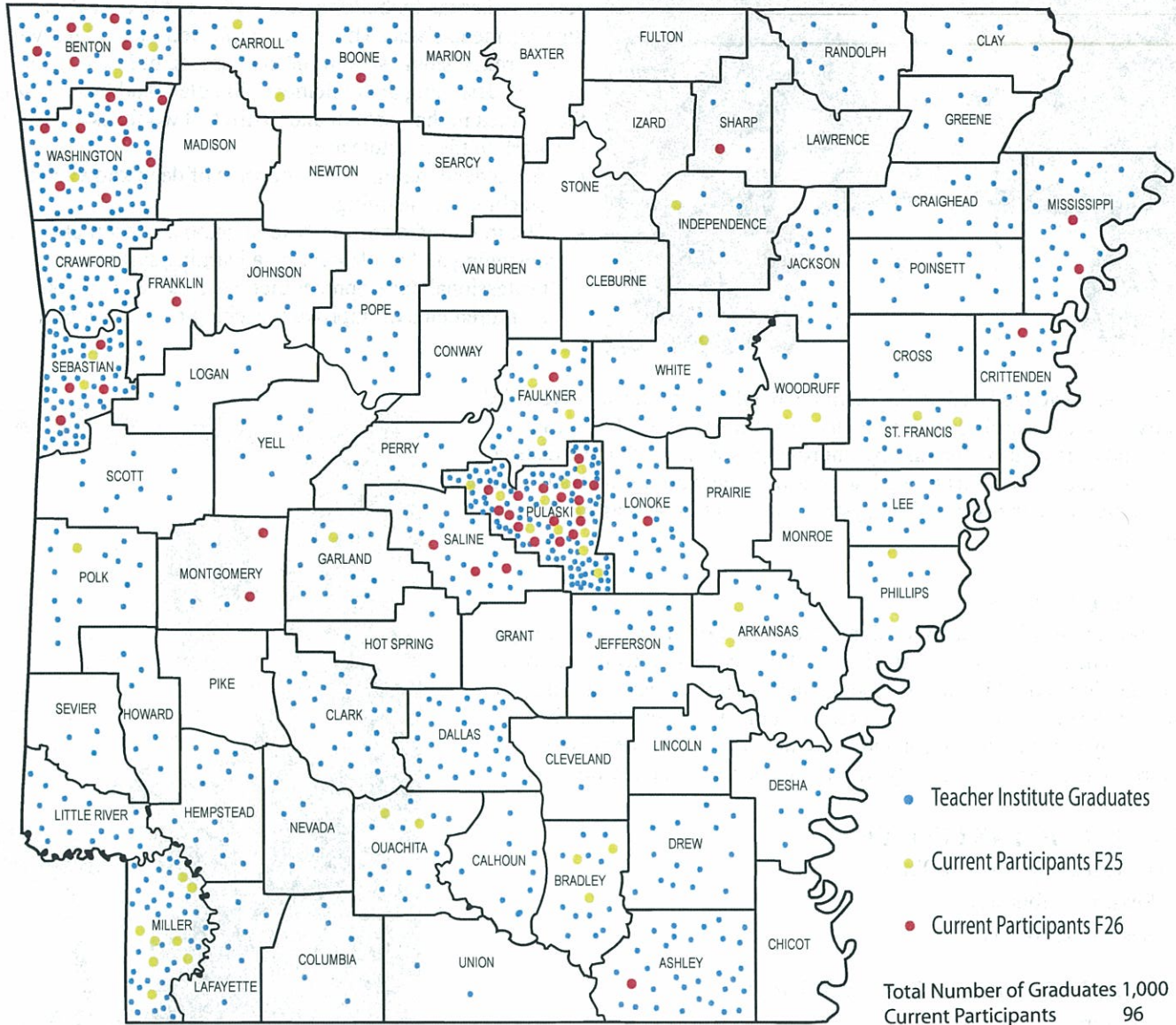
Contact: Amanda Linn 479-575-3030 [aclinn@uark.edu](mailto:aclinn@uark.edu)

Contact: Tracey Montgomery 479-575-3030 [tamontg@uark.edu](mailto:tamontg@uark.edu)





# ARKANSAS LEADERSHIP ACADEMY TEACHER INSTITUTE GRADUATES AND FORUM 25 & 26 PARTICIPANTS 2013-2014



July 2013



# Deep Knowledge Leadership Team Institute



The Deep Knowledge Leadership Team Institute takes deep knowledge of teaching and learning to scale in school districts across Arkansas by building leadership capacity within districts themselves. This is accomplished by working with teams from a single school for the purpose of learning the process, designing an implementation plan, and then leading the process in their school and district. Two focus areas for the work in the Institute are:

- An understanding of the concepts of deep knowledge of teaching and learning.
- The tools and opportunity to develop an action plan for designing and implementing a learning system for professional development that has clear accountable measurements of improved teaching and learning.

The Deep Knowledge Leadership Team Leadership Institute seeks to build capacity to create learning environments, move the work of the district, school, and organization forward by improving systems within the district, and provide tools and skills to work as a team. The work of the team should significantly move the work of the system and result in increasing student achievement.

## PARTICIPANTS

The principal must have completed at least Phase I of the Master Principal Program. The school's principal will select the leadership team members. Representation should include teacher leaders, math/literacy coaches, and the district-level person in charge of curriculum. The team should be supported by the superintendent and be an integral part of the school structure focused on continuously improving teaching and learning.

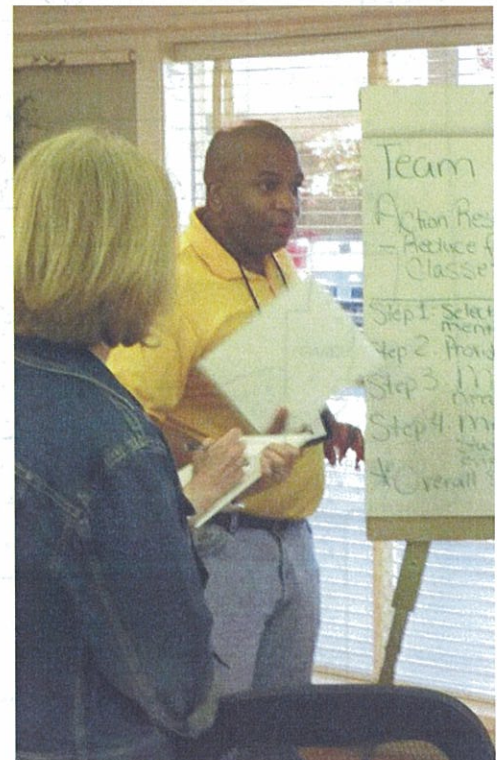
## LENGTH OF INSTITUTE

*Team Leadership Institute Year 1:*

- Session 1: four days
- Session 2: two days

*Team Leadership Institute Year 2 and Year 3:*

- Session 1: two days
- Session 2: two days
- Session 3: two days



Follow this link for more information about the Team Leadership Institute.

<http://arkansasleadershipacademy.org/8336.php>

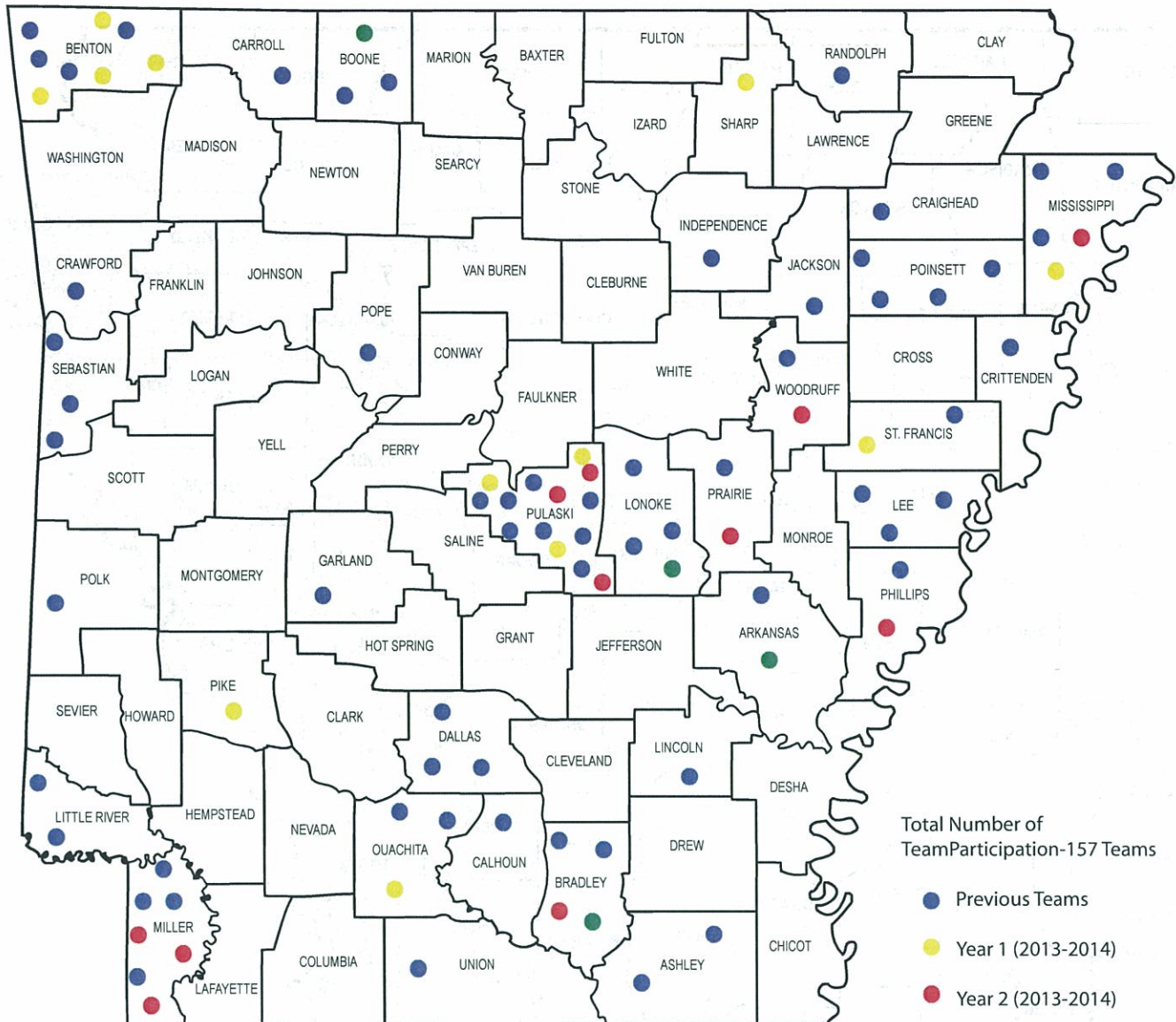
Contact: Becca Bertram 479-575-3030 [beccab@uark.edu](mailto:beccab@uark.edu)





# ARKANSAS LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

## Team Institute Participation



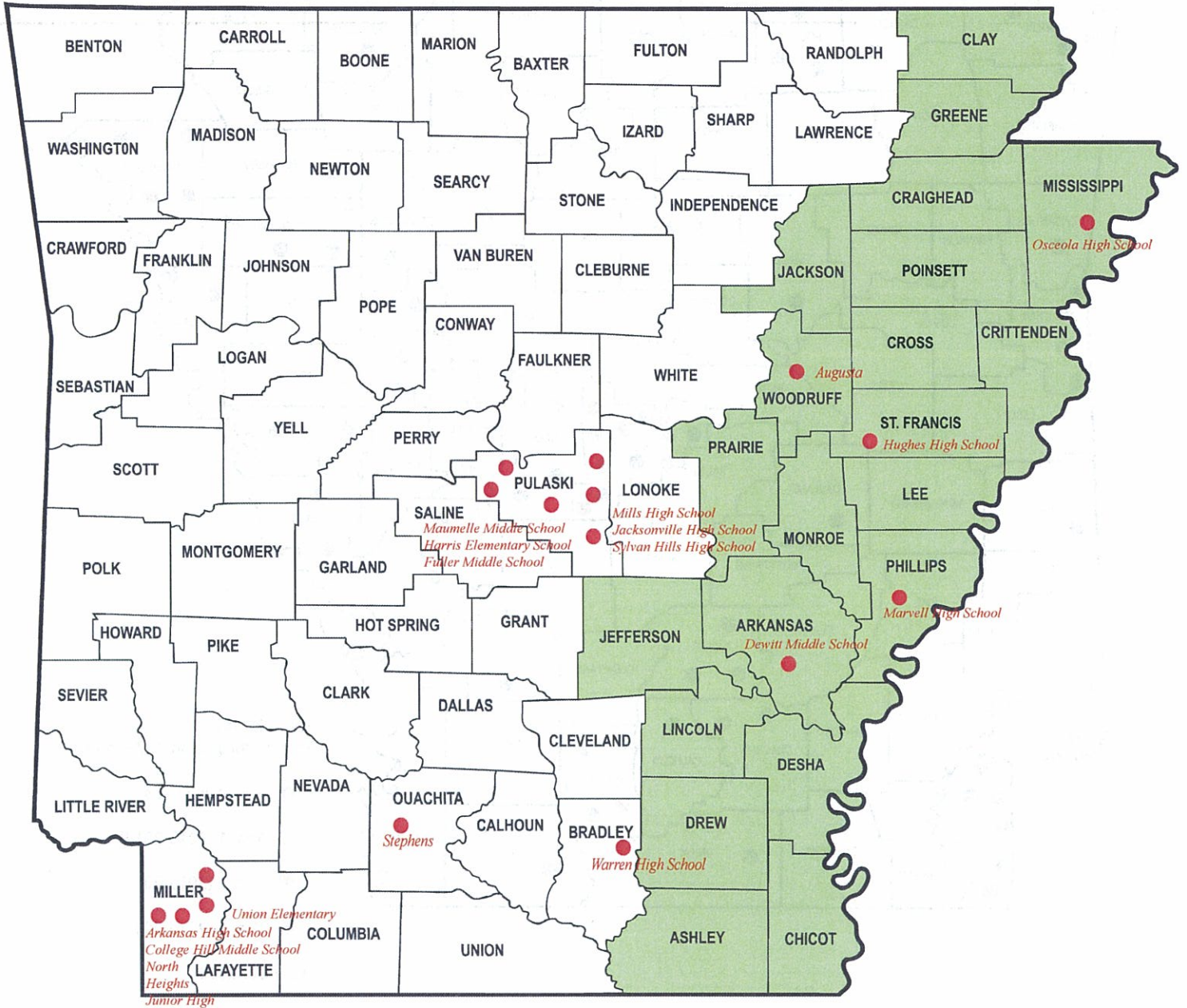
Total Number of Team Participation - 157 Teams

- Previous Teams
- Year 1 (2013-2014)
- Year 2 (2013-2014)
- Year 3 (2013-2014)

As of Oct 2013



# Arkansas Leadership Academy School Support Program Schools 2013-2014





**SCHOOL SUPPORT  
PROGRAM PURPOSE  
AND OBJECTIVES**



# PURPOSE OF SCHOOL SUPPORT

- In the School Support Program, Arkansas Leadership Academy, in collaboration with the Arkansas Department of Education, provides support to applicable schools or school districts in School Improvement for three consecutive school years.



# OBJECTIVES

- Build the leadership capacity of the school and district personnel;
- Train a diverse school leadership team, including, but not limited to, the superintendent/designee, school principal, and teachers;
- Provide a cadre of highly experienced, trained capacity building leaders to work in the school on a regular basis;
- Visit the school at least weekly to facilitate leadership activities and provide follow-up on professional development implementation;



## CONTINUED...

- Work with the school, school district staff, school board members, parents, community members, and other stakeholders as necessary to provide a comprehensive support network;
- Work with the school board once every 5-6 weeks to establish goals for the school district and engage in strategic planning to meet district goals; and
- Engage the community to gather input concerning strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and barriers within the school/district



# NOTEWORTHY

“Arkansas Leadership Academy had the best record for getting schools back on track.”  
(p. 28)

*Review of School Improvement Consulting Expenditures and Results Presented by the Bureau of Legislative Research to the Joint Education Committee February 7, 2012*



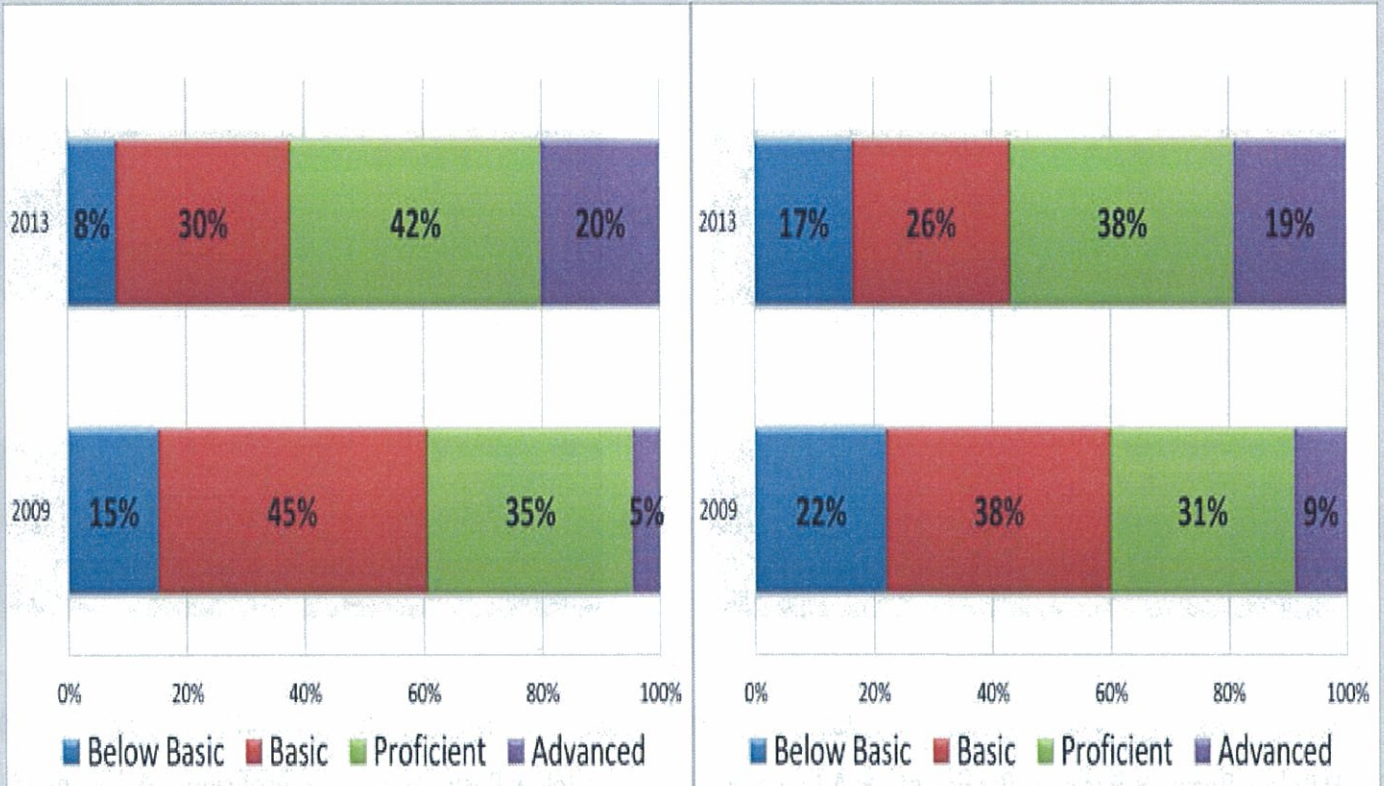
**SCHOOL SUPPORT  
PROGRAM  
OUTCOMES**



# RESULTS FOR CURRENT SCHOOLS WITH 4 YEARS SSP

**Literacy**  
Baseline-4 years of SSP

**Math**  
Baseline-4 years of SSP



## Descriptive Results:

Consistent movement toward higher achievement for students in all performance levels.

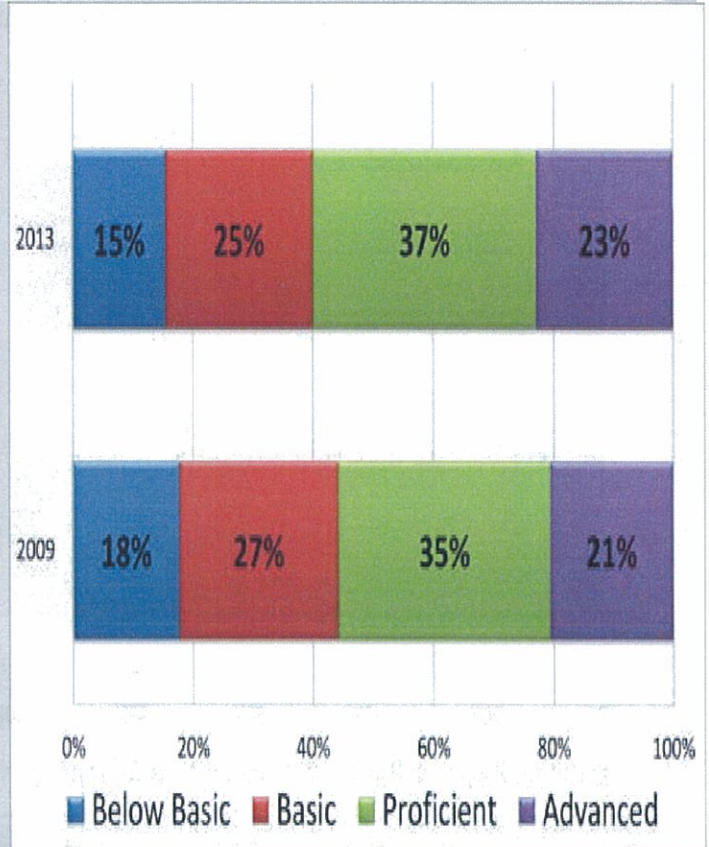
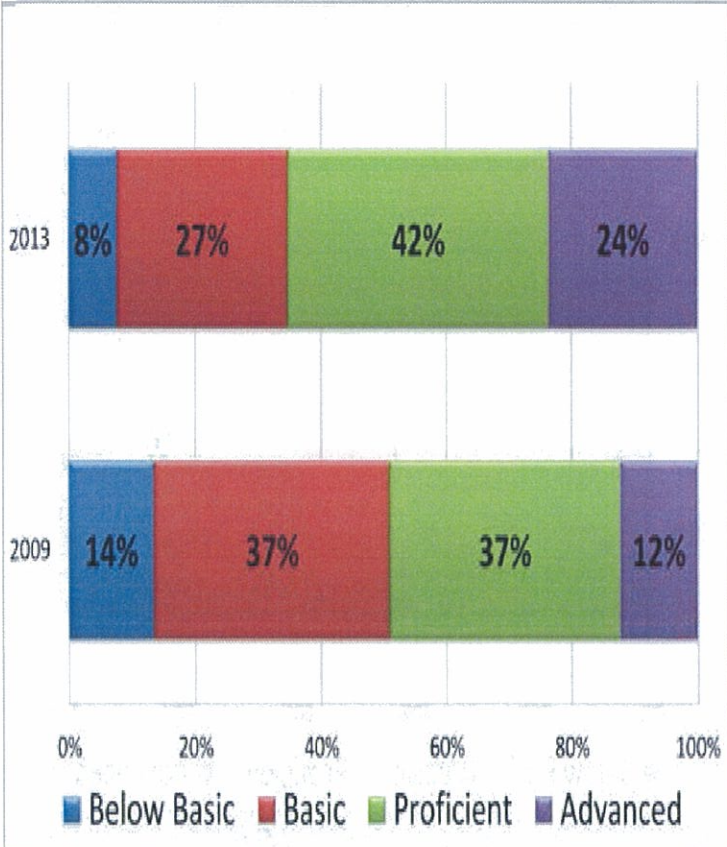
This group includes 12 high schools, 7 middle schools and 3 elementary schools.



# RESULTS FOR ALL SSP SCHOOLS OVER 4 YEARS

**Literacy**  
**Baseline-4 years of SSP**

**Math**  
**Baseline-4 years of SSP**



## Descriptive Results:

Consistent movement toward higher achievement for students in all performance levels even after exiting the SSP after 3 years of service. SSP builds capacity in schools to sustain positive change after the completion of 3 years.

This group includes 14 high schools, 8 middle schools and 9 elementary schools.



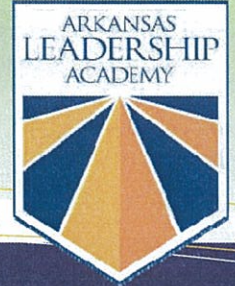
# BEATING THE ODDS

- Union Elementary School in Texarkana (SSP Cohort 4) was recognized by the University of Arkansas' *Office of Education Policy* as a "highest-poverty" elementary school (90% or more FRL) that scored above the state elementary GPA average in mathematics **and** literacy.

<http://officeforedpolicy.com/2013/09/19/round-two-of-the-oep-awards-beating-the-odds/>



# Arkansas Leadership Academy School Support Program

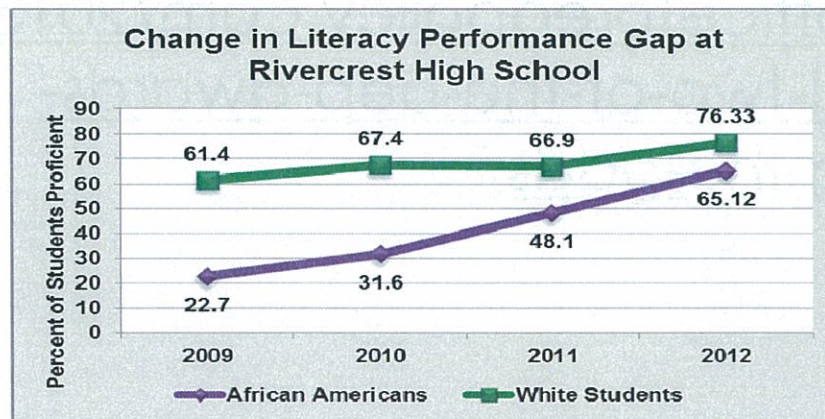


*“You’re going to love the Academy experience.”*

Tom Bennett, Former Principal  
Rivercrest High School

## Using Student Voice to Close the Gap

The Academy SSP places particular emphasis on building the capacity of leaders throughout the school and engaging all stakeholders, administrators, teachers, support staff, students, parents and community in an effort to improve the learning community. In one school, African American students were encouraged to use their voices to help their peers understand the achievement gap and engage in strategies to close the gap, particularly in literacy. Through a student developed organization, the Gentlemen of Knowledge, students engaged in problem solving and goal setting to tackle the gap. The dramatic results of their efforts are illustrated in the figure below. It is a goal of the Academy SSP to help all schools replicate this dramatic success.



*Connecting People, Ideas, Perspectives and Experiences*



# Report Card

August 2011  
www.arsba.org

THE JOURNAL OF THE  
ARKANSAS SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION

## Student Voices

Rivercrest High School knew it had a problem with how African-American students were scoring on state exams, so it asked the students what was wrong and how to fix it. The result: Students took charge, academics became cool, and minority test scores rose 17 points in one year.

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P.O. Box 165460  
Little Rock, AR 72216

The Gentlemen of Knowledge:  
Front – DeSean Gordan, Tay Baber, Robert Cooney  
Middle – Timothy Talley, Rakeem Stewart, Ty Baber  
Back – Kavian Ingram, Terrian Tyler, Khalil Williams





**GENTLEMEN OF KNOWLEDGE.** Inspired by their school's student voice project, a group of Rivercrest High students formed the Gentlemen of Knowledge to hold themselves and their classmates accountable academically. Front, sophomore DeSean Gordan and junior Robert Cooney. Back, sophomore Rakeem Stewart, freshman Kavian Ingram, freshman Timothy Talley, junior Tay Baber, junior Terrian Tyler, freshman Khalil Williams, and junior Ty Baber.

# Student voices

How one Arkansas high school raised minority test scores 17 points by listening to its students

By Steve Brawner  
Editor

WILSON – Rivercrest High School English teacher Lindsey Kelley and Assistant Principal Tom Bennett could not accept that, on the 2010 end-of-course exam for literacy, only 30.8 percent of their school's African-American juniors scored at least proficient while 64.7 percent of white students

scored at that level. So they tried a new approach known in education circles as "student voice": They asked the African-American students to help them solve the problem.

The result? In one year, that population's test scores rose 17 points, to 47.8 percent scoring at least proficient on that exam.

The junior class at Rivercrest is unusually small – only 22 African-Americans and 63 total, so a swing of a few students makes a big difference.

Still, African-American juniors at Rivercrest scored almost as high as their white counterparts in a state where, overall, the achievement gap remains a

gaping problem. In 2010, 68.9 percent of white students in Arkansas scored at least proficient on that junior level literacy exam, compared to 38.5 percent of students who are African-American.

How did the student voice concept help Rivercrest buck that trend? Teachers were armed with new information about how their students best learned. Students felt they had ownership of their education. And a group of African-American male students banded together with a mission to improve their own and their fellow students' academic performance.

They called themselves the Gentlemen of Knowledge.



The idea of giving Rivercrest's students a voice in their own education began to take shape last summer when Kelley took a professional development course at a Teacher Institute offered by the Arkansas Leadership Academy, a training consortium involving a number of education organizations, including the Arkansas School Boards Association. She wanted her action research project to focus on African-American test scores but wasn't sure about the details when the ALA's Blaine Alexander, a school support capacity builder, suggested a student voice project where students were asked how to solve the problem.

A former principal in the Cabot and Pulaski County school districts, Alexander had tried to incorporate student voice into the schools where he worked, but only informally and never to this extent. He saw the concept as the best way to motivate Rivercrest High students to become more involved in their own academic success.

"In so many of our high schools, the adults make the decisions, and we try to force education on the students, and the students sit there doing everything that they can do not to get an education," he said. "And so it seems like many times there are two sides, and so we felt like if we get everybody on the same side, adults and students, then we would be much more successful."

Kelley presented the idea to the assistant principal, Tom Bennett, a former assistant football coach and Rivercrest High graduate. He was immediately receptive. "I thought it was an outstanding idea because for years I think that education is something that we do to kids," he said. "We tell them, 'You come in this classroom. You sit in this chair. We're going to tell you what you need to know. We're going to do this to you.' We don't ever ask for their input. We don't ever ask their opinion. That's kind of what this student voice project is all about."

The focus would be on English, Kelley's subject, and the three of them, all Caucasians, began mapping out a rough course of action that would go far beyond typical student participation projects such as student councils and prom committees. "To say that we had a full goal to reach at the beginning would be saying too much because we didn't really know where we were going," Kelley said. "We were on the very beginning of something, and we knew it was going to be good, but that doesn't mean we had a full plan."

### Student Leadership

Figuring that students would more likely listen to peers than to them, they decided to show the test scores to two of Kelley's star students, Terrian Tyler and Robert Cooney, both of whom are

African-Americans, and ask for their help. Taken aback by the disparity, they were eager to solve the problem.

"My initial response was, I was like, we need to boost the scores up because it was kind of ridiculous to me while other ethnicities were making 60 percent, we were down to 20s," Tyler said. "I mean, I felt kind of ashamed. Although I was trying hard for me to get my personal test scores up, I hadn't really thought about helping other people get their test scores up, so it seemed like a pretty good idea to me."

For Kelley, a 24-year-old graduate of all-white Valley View High School in Jonesboro, the conversation was "a little bit" awkward, but the two young men said they had no problem with her delivering the news. In fact, they said that it might have been an advantage to hear the news from her because she offered a perspective they might not have gotten from a teacher of their own race. More important to them was the fact that she is young and can relate to them. "No," Cooney said. "It's like, I know Miss Kelley, she's my teacher, she's not racist or anything like that, so I wasn't offended. But I was kind of hurt – I guess you could say 'hurt' – because the scores that were shown, it's not accurate of the African-Americans in this school because (everyone's) smarter than what the scores showed."

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## EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATIONAL ARCHITECTURE

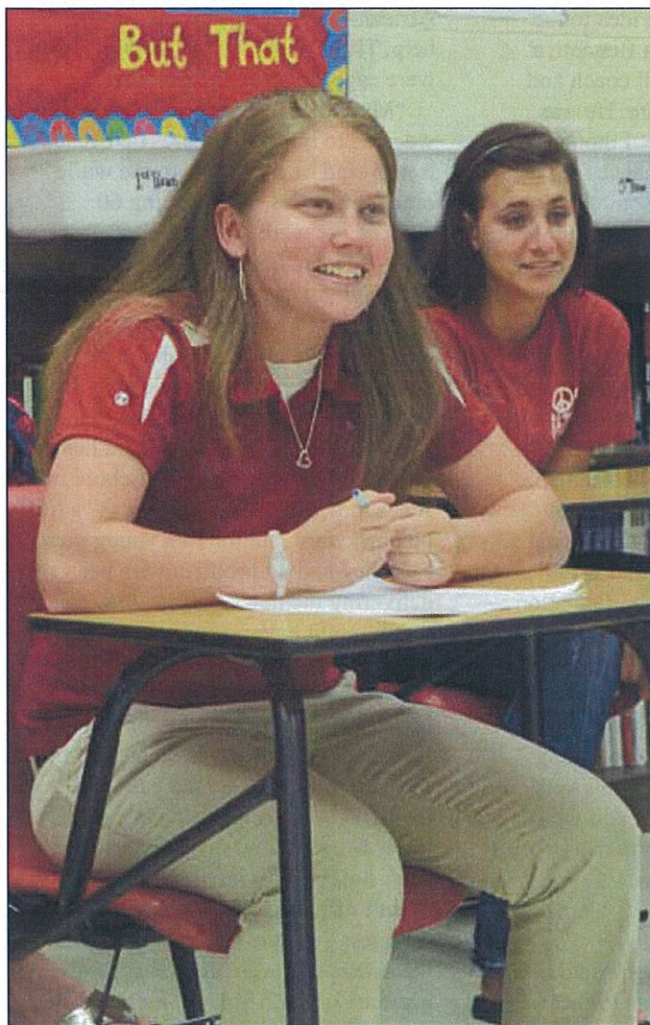
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[wddarchitects.com](http://wddarchitects.com)





**VISIONARY.** Eleventh grade English teacher Lindsey Kelley listens to her students present a book report with student Hannah Kirk.

Two sophomores, Rakeem Stewart and DeSean Gordan, both suggested by Tyler and Cooney, were recruited to the effort. And then two weeks later, an unusual announcement was made over the intercom: All African-American ninth-graders, please report to the library. As the students left their desks and made their way down the hallways, they wondered why they had been singled out by race. Waiting for them were Tyler, Cooney, Stewart and Gordan, along with Kelley and Alexander.

The process was repeated with each succeeding grade. Tyler would open the discussion. Each time, he could see the students were wondering what was happening and why he was up there. He would let the conversation die down and then, using flip charts, explain the test scores' three-year trend line and the purpose of the meeting, emphasizing that this was not meant to be an occasion for teacher-bashing. "It's a serious problem, so I used a serious tone," he said. "I made sure they knew I was not joking. These are real scores. This is really what's happening, and if you want to do better, you have to make a real effort to fix it."

After the data was presented, each class was broken into smaller groups to delve into why African-American scores were lower and what could be done about them, with each group then presenting their findings to their classmates. Even the ninth-graders took the project seriously, offered realistic solutions, and vowed to take accountability for their own improvement. Tay Baber, then a junior, said, "At first I was a little dumbfounded. I was like, 'OK, as long as I've been at Rivercrest, I've never heard anything like this, so what did we do?' OK, so when we get to the library, I saw what they called us in for. I was like, 'It's about time.' I was kind of happy they did it because it kind of makes us look bad, like everybody else is above us, and we're down here. It's not that we can't do the work. It's just that we choose not to do it."

Most of the suggestions related to the students' own motivation and study habits, but they had ideas for educators as well. One clear message: Students work harder for teachers who they know care for them. Students said they needed more encouragement and explained that sometimes teachers were rushing through lessons in order to stay on schedule, even when the students needed more time and a little more help to understand a concept.

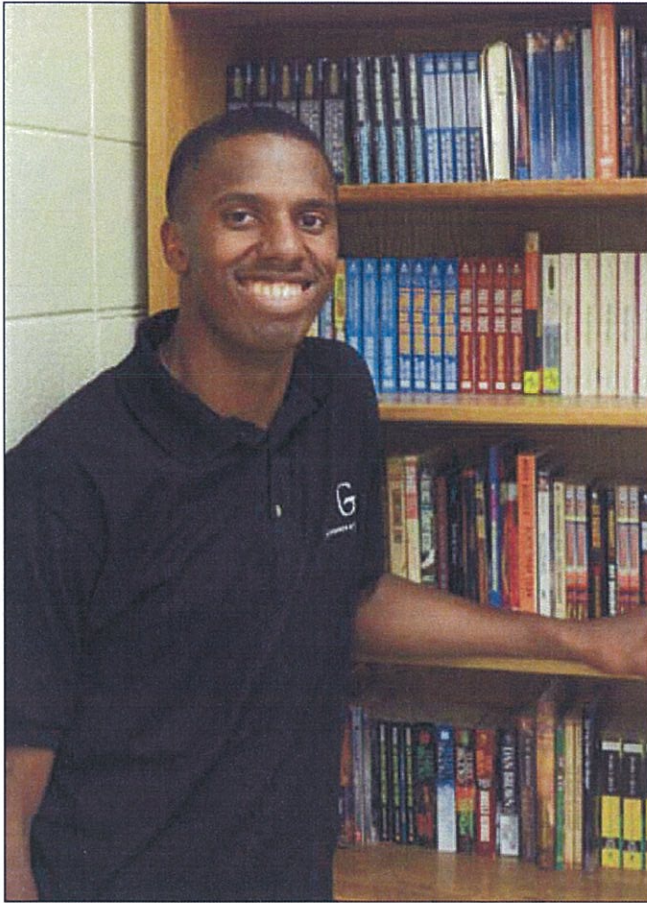
These were not race-specific issues, and only a few of the students made any charges related to racism regarding the mostly white faculty. But some of the non-school-related problems were more severe among African-American students, such as poverty, families with absent fathers, and living environments where academics isn't stressed. African-American students questioned for this story said that they are recognized more for athletic achievements – Rivercrest won state championships last year in football, boys basketball and track – than for academics.

"Whenever I go out, they look at me and they'll say, 'Well, you're tall and you're black. You must play basketball, or, you know, he must be some wide receiver on the football team. He must be some all-star track runner,'" said Tyler, who estimated he has seen his birth father twice in his life. "They never really consider the fact that I could have something up here (pointing to his head). ... It offends me, and it makes me feel bad, but it makes me want to do better because I'm like, I'm fixing to break this stereotype. I'm tired of everybody thinking all we can do is shoot a basketball or throw a football or just run around a track. We can do more than that, but a lot of people act like they don't know it."

While frustrated by the stereotype, Tyler said it's up to students to overcome it. "Sometimes I do feel like people put a label on us, but most of the time I feel like we put a label on ourselves," he said. "You know, we can talk all day about what teachers do wrong, what we do wrong, but it starts with us. We put in an effort to do our best. I can say a teacher's the worst teacher in the world. There are more teachers in here teaching the same subject, so why am I sticking myself with the same teacher knowing that I can go get help and get another teacher?"

For Tyler, the biggest challenge was leading the discussion with the senior class. Not only was he talking to older





“ It’s a serious problem, so I used a serious tone. I made sure they knew I was not joking. These are real scores. This is really what’s happening, and if you want to do better, you have to make a real effort to fix it. ”

- Terrian Tyler

Located 45 minutes northwest of Memphis in rural Wilson, the school is part of the South Mississippi County School District, a conglomeration of small towns and wide spots in the road. Almost half of Rivercrest students come from economically disadvantaged homes.

That doesn’t mean that the students are unaware of the societal problem of racism. Tay Baber’s twin brother, Ty, said that players on opposing all-white football teams will use the “N-word” in the heat of battle, especially when it’s a rival, and that it was especially bad in last season’s playoffs. “I feel like some people don’t know how it feels to be African-Americans,” he said. “But, I mean, it makes you mad, but in the end it makes you a better person. You take more, but it is like a motivation to do better in life.”

*Continued, next page*

students, but he also was talking specifically about their test scores at a time when it was too late for them to do anything about them. The seniors were surprised to learn the news and wondered why it had taken so long to try this approach, but they gave helpful feedback about their junior year English class that Kelley soon began incorporating into her teaching.

After the class meetings, Coach Bennett and the ALA’s Alexander personally interviewed all of the African-American students in the junior class in groups of about three at a time. Students were asked about their personal learning styles and where they liked to sit in the classroom. That information was given to each of their teachers. At the end of each session, Bennett looked each student in the eye and asked to be held accountable for following through on the recommendations. “They looked at him in a totally different light, like, wow, this guy really cares about us,” Alexander said.

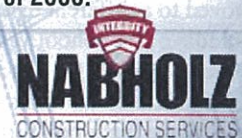
Afterwards, students were asked to give their impression of the whole process, and comments were positive. At the time, Cooney said, “It gave me a sense of direction and motivation. It was like a ‘revival’ for learning.” Junior Micha Harris said, “I loved these meetings! I am happy that everyone is noticing that we all need help, and it makes me feel important.”

The process may have been easier because of the environment at Rivercrest. The ratio of white students to black students is about 60-40, and the African-American students interviewed for the story describe it as a racially harmonious school community where friendships cross ethnic lines.

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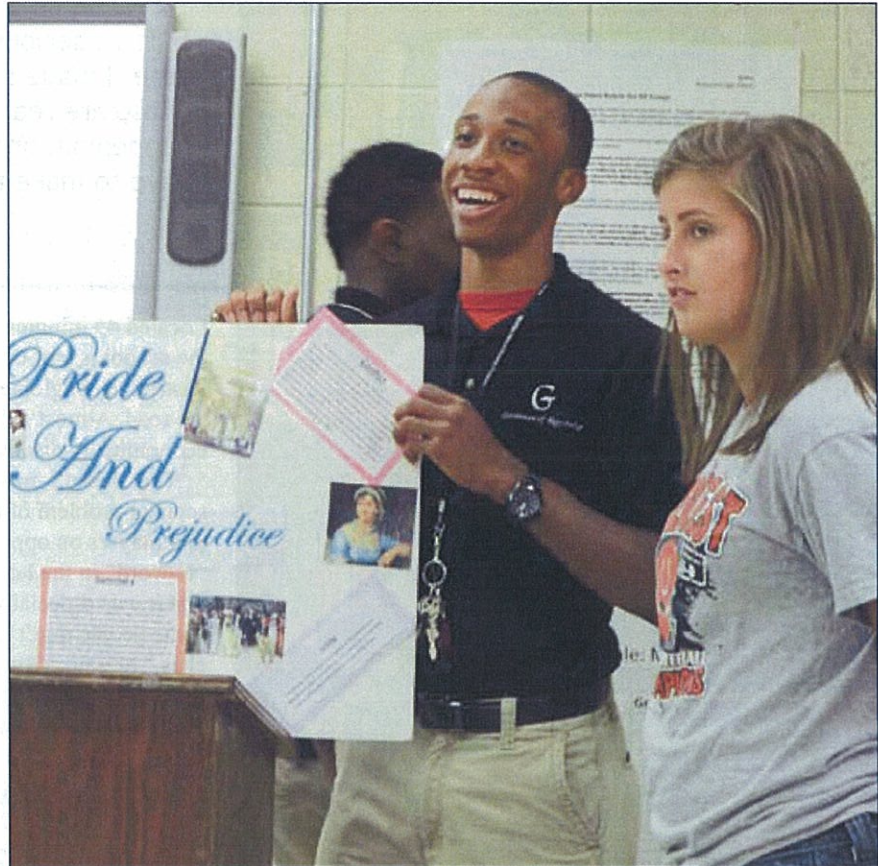


The information collected from the class meetings and individual interviews was given to faculty members, some of whom had been skeptical when they first heard of the project. Students had asked for a mentoring program, and while that is still being organized, adults were assigned to each student to check on their well-being on a regular basis.

Meanwhile, teachers were involved in a “data wall” project that contributed to the student voice project’s success. This was a room taped with individual cards for all students starting in grade seven containing scores on previous standardized tests along with demographic information such as their ethnicity and their free and reduced lunch status. Those cards were organized for each tested subject in four color-coded rows: green, the top row, if a student was likely to score proficient on the benchmark exam; yellow if they needed help to reach that status; orange if they needed more attention; and red if they needed significant attention. For teachers, the walls provide a powerful visual representation of student achievement. The walls are located in a meeting room not frequented by students, but Kelley did tell them individually about the project and about where their cards were located as a competitive inducement for them to improve.

### Gentlemen of Knowledge

Meanwhile, something else was happening that the adult planners hadn’t expected: The students were becoming leaders and role models. The four original students – Tyler, Cooney, Gordan and Stewart – began inviting other male African-American students to join their group based on their leadership, academic performance, and enthusiasm during the initial class meetings. Tay and Ty Baber, who had spoken out on nearly every question with good insight, were obvious choices to join from the junior class. Sophomore Clifton Boone was asked to join, though he moved to a different district during the middle of the school year. Three freshmen – Kavian Ingram, Timothy Talley and Khalil Williams – also were invited. Once the group formed, Kelley presented its members with the option of



**STUDENT LEADER.** Junior Robert Cooney presents a book report while his classmate, Bailee Tyler, looks on.

finding another sponsor, but they wouldn’t even consider it. They wanted her, the teacher they knew had believed in them from the beginning.

The group needed to create a name that would uniquely describe themselves and what they were trying to accomplish. For an hour-and-a-half, Tyler said, “We went everywhere.” According to Tay Baber, “The first thing we were going to be was like, ‘Boys to Men,’ but then we were like, ‘Naw, it’s already been taken.’ ... You know, The Temptations, how long it took them to come up with a name? It was something like that.” Gordan quipped, “I wanted it to be ‘Justice League,’” the fictional name of the alliance of DC Comics superheroes.

Finally the group came up with “Gentlemen of Knowledge,” which summed up what its members were trying to accomplish. As a motto, Tay Baber suggested, “Impossible,” a word that broken into two parts creates the phrase, “I’m possible.” The young men even bought matching shirts with logos.

The young men, all athletes and most the product of single-parent homes, became a support group for each other and a source of healthy competition. “The group helped me because I don’t want to lose to any of them,” Talley said, drawing a laugh from the rest. “Because if his grade is better than mine, I might come up to him and ask him what I should do, but really I’m not going to lose to any of them academically and in my grades.”

Meanwhile, the young men became an outspoken inspiration for other students. The Gentlemen requested and were granted a meeting with the entire junior class the day before the state end-of-course exam in which they gave their fellow students a motivational speech about how important it was for everyone to do their best. A few of their peers questioned why the test was important, but the Gentlemen did not back down. Some of the football players – black and white – later told Coach Bennett that the assembly was the



# The Achievement Gap

Arkansas still has a long way to go in assuring an equal education for all. Below are percentages of students scoring proficient or advanced on the state's benchmark exams. Could Rivercrest's student voice model be the answer? Sources: Rivercrest High; Arkansas Department of Education website.

## Rivercrest

	Combined	African-American
2011 11th grade literacy	55.4	47.8
2010 11th grade literacy	52.3	30.8

## State - 2011

	Combined	African-American
Grade 8 Mathematics	63	37
Grade 8 Literacy	77	58
Grade 7 Science	39	13
Grade 7 Math	74	54
Grade 7 Literacy	67	49
Grade 6 Mathematics	77	58
Grade 6 Literacy	71	53
Grade 5 Science	56	27
Grade 5 Mathematics	78	58
Grade 5 Literacy	77	62
Grade 4 Mathematics	82	67
Grade 4 Literacy	82	69
Grade 3 Mathematics	85	72
Grade 3 Literacy	76	61

reason they tried hard on the test. "You would be amazed by the other African-American students that pay attention to what these young men do," Kelley said. "I think that's something that I didn't foresee at all."

The result was that 17-point increase described at the story's beginning. Two of the junior Gentlemen scored advanced and the other two scored just below it. In the entire junior class, four students scored advanced, compared to one in the previous four years. While the Gentlemen celebrated their achievements, they were not satisfied. Informed by Coach Bennett of the 48 percent showing, Tay and Ty Baber's response was that next year's score should be 58 percent.

From an outsider's perspective, the ALA's Alexander said he could see a change not just in a few students but in a culture. When he brought visitors to the building, he made sure to introduce them to the Gentlemen, who were so

fired up about the upcoming exams that they actually were high-fiving each other.

With leadership comes responsibilities, and the students are well aware that wearing shirts that proclaim themselves the "Gentlemen of Knowledge" can put targets on their backs. While people are following their example, they also are watching to see how they perform. And that's OK with them.

"Actually, it's not just in the classroom," Terrian Tyler said. "It's on the football field and basketball courts. Like, say for instance, I mess up on a dumb play. (Someone will say), 'Come on, baby, you're a Gentleman of Knowledge.'"

From its current nine members, the group plans to grow in number this upcoming year. A group of white students innocently had wanted to form their own group – a cringe-inducing concept that Kelley hoped would die on

*Continued, next page*

# Multiple Choice

Name: John Smith  
Date: 1-2-09  
Final Exam

**A+**

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 Carrier  Carrier  Carrier
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**Report Card**



its own when she learned it was percolating. Thankfully, the Gentlemen soon approached her saying they didn't want a competition to form between the races, so this year the group will become multiracial. A girls' group also is forming.

The Gentlemen also are spreading their message. Luxora Elementary School, which also is in the district, invited the young men to speak to students there before they took their benchmark exams. A Skype session with administrators at an Arkansas Leadership Academy conference brought tears to grown men's eyes and led to Skype sessions with student groups at Arkansas High School in Texarkana (story, page 15) and Sylvan Hills Middle School. The Gentlemen are scheduled to address the Arkansas School Boards Association's annual conference in December. Coach Bennett has spoken to educators in Memphis.

As for the individual students, they have big dreams that reach well beyond high school. Several, particularly the younger ones, hope to be professional athletes, but they have plans regardless of what happens on the field or on the court. Terrian Tyler wants to be a mechanical engineer, Robert Cooney an aeronautical engineer or a sports trainer. Tay Baber wants to be a diesel technician, while brother Ty wants to be a graphic designer. Rakeem Stewart plans to be a doctor, while Deshaun Gordon hopes to start his own business. Among the freshmen, Kavian Ingram would like to be a sports trainer or technical engineer, while Timothy Talley and Khalil Williams would like to coach at the professional level if they aren't able to get paid as players.

As for Rivercrest High, educators are reflecting on what worked and what didn't this first year. One lesson learned: Inform the parents first. Summoning African-American students to the library based on their race came as a surprise to some of their parents, and Bennett had to meet personally with three or four of them to explain the project's purpose. Once they understood the school's intentions, all the parents were supportive. But next time, Bennett plans to take care of that on the front end. One thing

## What is the Leadership Academy?

The student voice project at Rivercrest High wouldn't have happened without Blaine Alexander and the Arkansas Leadership Academy.

Based out of the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville, the ALA is a partnership between 49 entities, including 15 universities, the Department of Education, and nine professional associations, including ASBA. Its purpose is to design creative programs for the state's educational community and provide professional development opportunities for educa-

tional leaders, including school board members.

Alexander is one of six school support capacity builders with the ALA that work with schools that are in at least year five of school improvement. He works full time with Rivercrest High, Luxora Elementary, Marked Tree Elementary, and Whitten Elementary School in Marianna.

For more, check out the ALA's website, [www.arkansasleadershipacademy.org](http://www.arkansasleadershipacademy.org), or call 479-575-3030.

the school knows it did right: It listened to the students. According to Bennett, a student voice project won't succeed if students believe they are being ignored. "If you're going to ask them their opinion, you'd better be ready to do something with it when they give it to you," he said. "And that's a challenge that we're going to meet."

This year students will be given an even greater voice in their education. The school plans eventually to interview students as young as the seventh grade, where teachers have expressed an interest in the project. A mentoring program suggested by the students is being organized. So is a tutoring program, also a student suggestion. Bennett hopes to involve students in other facets of school administration, including serving on the technology committee and helping change the school handbook.

Special attention needs to be paid to one subpopulation: white students. Thanks to the improvement in African-American test scores, the school's junior literacy exam performance was its best ever, with 55.38 percent of students scoring proficient or advanced, more than four points higher than the previous year. But scores for white students dipped significantly, from 64.7 percent last year to 57.9 percent this year, the lowest since 2008. With the upcoming junior class containing a large number of high-achieving African-American

students, it's conceivable that Rivercrest could be looking at another achievement gap – except this one would be going the other direction.

This year may be more challenging than the last one was. Skepticism among the faculty melted away as test scores were revealed, but many expressed a healthy concern about the future and a desire to build on their success. Next year's junior class is larger and the sophomore class even larger than that, so the next two years will go a long way toward demonstrating if the student voice project is really making a difference or if that 17-point increase is merely a statistical fluke brought on by a handful of students doing better than expected.

Bennett and Kelley understand those worries, but they already have come so far and will have a powerful ally in the Gentlemen of Knowledge, whose members will be returning to school a year older and, one hopes, equally as inspired. "I think the challenge for us and for other faculty members – the easy part really is this year," Bennett said. "The difficult part is going to be making sure that the momentum doesn't stop – and carrying this forward."

"And living up to their expectations," Kelley added. "... They have expectations of learning that our teachers will have to live up to for this to work, for them to believe that they have a real voice in their education."



# ALA ACADEMIC ACTIVITY

PRESENTATIONS AND SUBMISSIONS  
FOR PRESENTATION OR PUBLICATION



# MASTER PRINCIPAL PROGRAM: REFLECTIVE PRACTICE & PEER SUPPORT NETWORKS

Study presented at the 2011 University  
Council for Educational Administration  
Annual Convention

November 19, 2011 Pittsburgh, PA

Bengtson, E., Airola, D. T., Peer, D., &  
Davis, D.

Bengtson, E., **Airola, D. T.**, Peer, D., &  
Davis, D. (2012). Using Peer Learning  
Support Networks and Reflective  
Practice: The Arkansas Leadership  
Academy Master Principal Program.  
*International Journal of Educational  
Leadership Preparation*, 7(3), 2-17.



# PRINCIPALS' SENSE OF EFFICACY: THE INFLUENCE OF THE ARKANSAS LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

Paper accepted for presentation  
at the 2012 University Council of  
Educational Administration  
Annual Convention

November, 2012 Denver,  
Colorado

Airola, D. T., Bengtson, E., & Davis,  
D.

\*Manuscript submitted for  
publication (2013)



# LEADERSHIP EFFICACY

- SSP initial focus is on building leadership capacity—hypothesize that as leadership capacity increases, leadership efficacy will increase.

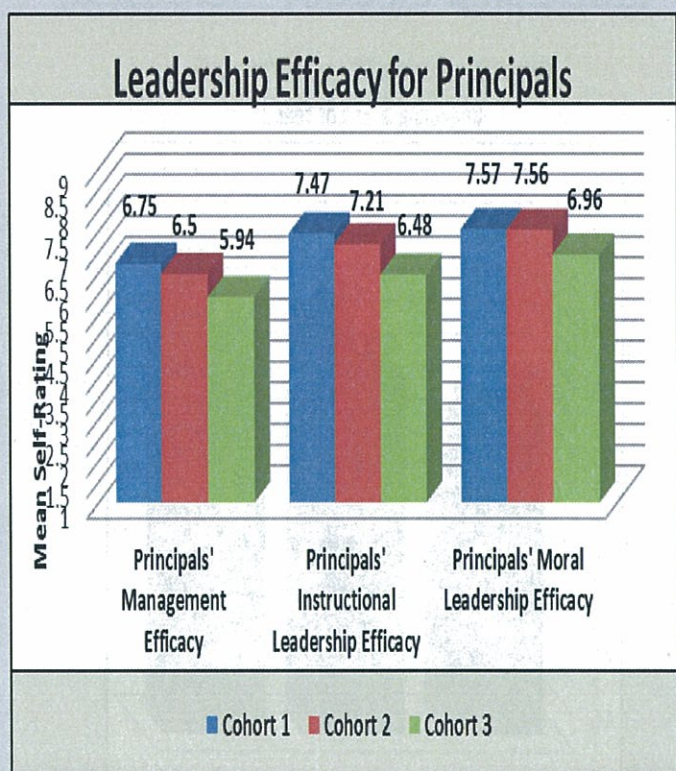
Measuring:

- Management Efficacy
- Instructional Leadership Efficacy
- Moral Leadership Efficacy



# HOW CONFIDENT IS A LEADER IN THEIR ABILITY TO ACHIEVE LEADERSHIP TASKS AND PERSIST THROUGH CHALLENGES AND OBSTACLES?

- Principals starting their Year 3 of SSP had higher leadership efficacy in all areas, with significantly higher efficacy in Instructional Leadership Efficacy as compared to principals starting Year 1 of SSP.



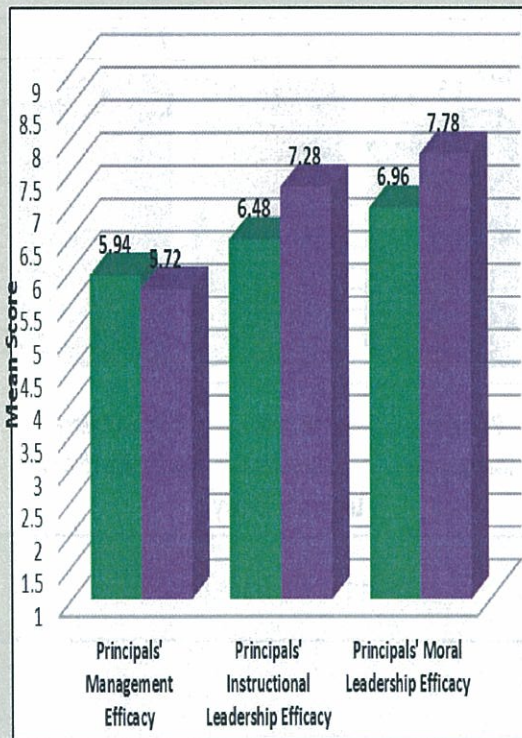


# WHAT WE ARE LEARNING ABOUT LEADERSHIP EFFICACY DEVELOPMENT?

After 1 Year of SSP: Instructional and moral leadership efficacy increased.

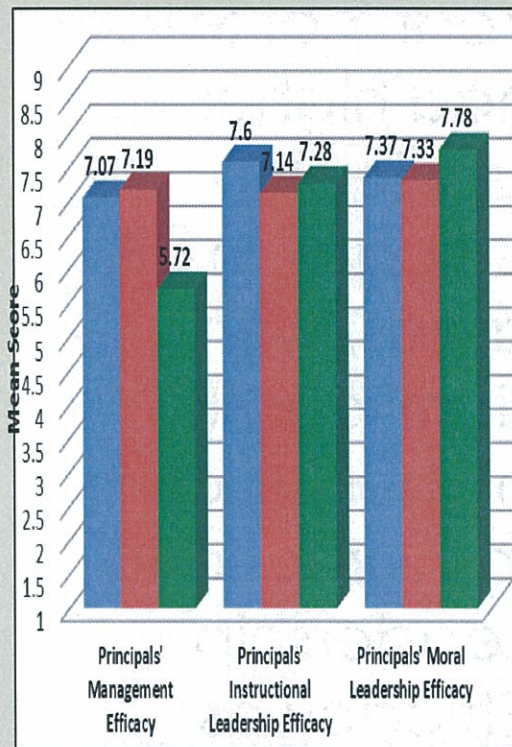
After 1 - 3 Years of SSP: management efficacy increased.

Cohort 3 Leadership Efficacy for Principals  
Beginning & End of Year 1



■ Fall 2011 ■ Spring 2012

Leadership Efficacy for Principals  
Spring 2012



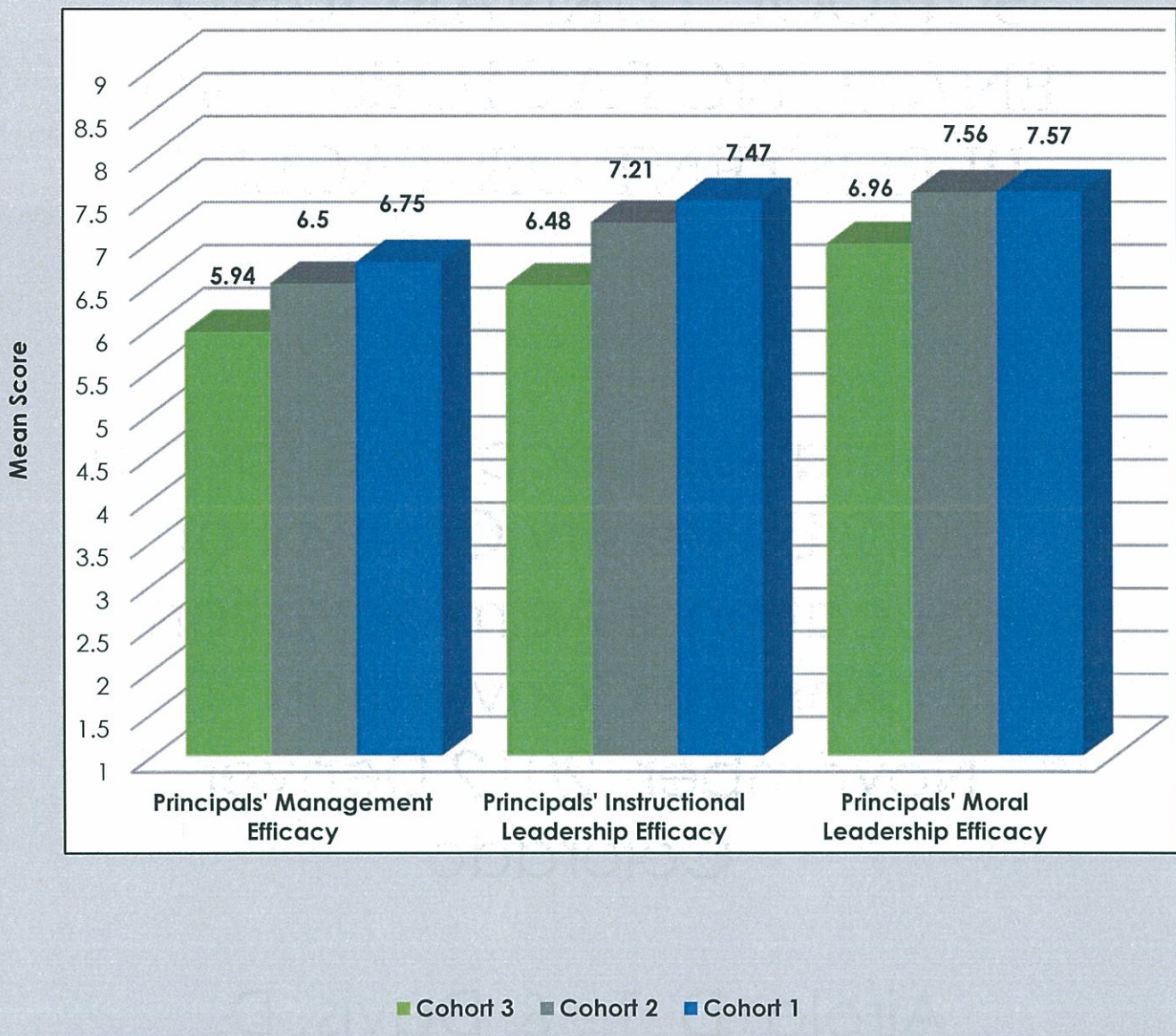
■ Cohort 1 ■ Cohort 2 ■ Cohort 3

Leaders exhibit higher Instructional Leadership Efficacy after 1 year of SSP and sustain it over the next two years.

Leaders in 2 or 3 years of SSP exhibit higher management efficacy.



## Leadership Efficacy for Principals



PRINCIPALS IN SSP FOR THEIR 3<sup>RD</sup> YEAR HAD SIGNIFICANTLY HIGHER INSTRUCTIONAL & MORAL LEADERSHIP EFFICACY THAN THOSE JUST STARTING WITH SSP.



A VIEW FROM THE INSIDE:  
SCHOOL TURNAROUND  
ENABLING FACTORS AND  
PERSISTENT OBSTACLES

Presentation accepted for the  
2012 University Council of  
Educational Administration  
Annual Convention  
November, 2012 Denver,  
Colorado

Airola, D. T., & Davis, D.



# INSIDE SCHOOL TURNAROUND: INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP EFFICACY AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Paper submitted for  
presentation at American  
Educational Researchers  
Annual Conference  
April 2013 San Francisco, CA

Airola, D. T., & Bengtson, E.



**MODELS OF EXTERNAL  
SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL  
IMPROVEMENT  
TO IGNITE  
TRANSFORMATION AND  
BUILD CAPACITY FOR  
EQUITY:  
THE ARKANSAS  
LEADERSHIP ACADEMY'S  
SCHOOL SUPPORT  
PROGRAM**

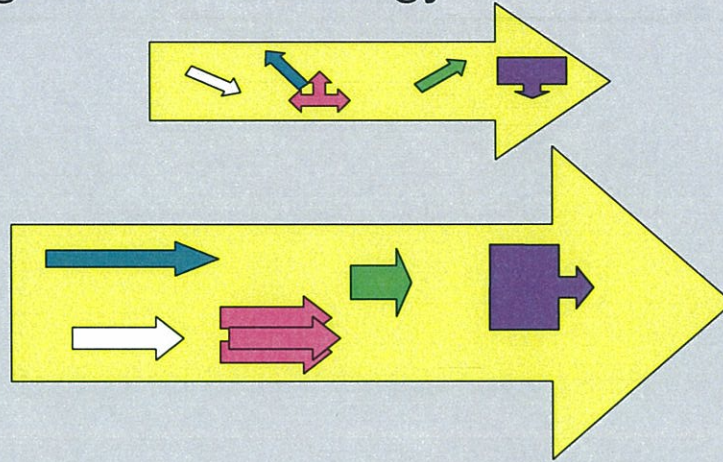
Symposium accepted for the 2013  
University Council of Educational  
Administration Annual Convention  
November, 2013  
Indianapolis, IN

Airola, D. T., & Medeiros, J.



# Building Capacity to Accelerate Organizational Change

## Organizational Energy



## QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS

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By the way, I'd like to know if you have any other...

Thank you very much.



# QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS



Thank you very much for your  
 contribution to the project.  
 We will be in touch with you  
 again in the near future.