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Statewide Programs for Administrator Training and Development: The Oregon Leadership Academy for School Administrators

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It is the best of times and the worst of times for America's schools. The aspirations, hopes, and expectations for what schools can do to enrich our lives and strengthen our economic and social structure have never been higher; the challenges to be met rarely as severe. Those who lead education into the twenty-first century must be prepared to deal with major shifts in the nature of students and the teaching force, how schools are funded, and what they are expected to accomplish. School leaders must have the capacity to foster the growth of high performance organizations in a dynamic environment. School administrators dedicated to the purpose of becoming more effective find they must shift from a traditional management style to an emphasis on proactive leadership.

The Leadership in Educational Administration Development (LEAD) program was established by Congress to help develop the leadership skills of school administrators. The United States Department of Education's sponsorship of the LEAD program has enabled each state to establish

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and operate a training and technical assistance center for practicing and aspiring school administrators. Approximately 40 percent of the states have selected a comprehensive statewide program whose services and activities generally include:

- Collecting and disseminating information on leadership skills, training, and practices
- Developing and delivering leadership training services
- Providing technical assistance and consultation
- Disseminating and supporting the utilization of information
- Fostering interorganizational cooperation

The programs are grounded in research on leadership, management, collegiality, and networking as well as adult learning and development. The target audience includes practicing and aspiring principals, assistant principals, district superintendents, or other local public/private elementary and secondary school administrators.

The comprehensive statewide LEAD programs work from a sound knowledge base by conducting problem and need analyses and building on current research and effective practices. Ultimately, comprehensive LEAD programs are challenged to 1) demonstrate commitment to leadership development in the state over the long term and 2) have a substantial impact on improving leadership development within the state.

The Oregon Leadership Academy for School Administrators is a comprehensive statewide leadership program whose purpose is to support school leaders in their efforts to create successful schools. The Academy is a statewide consortium effort, which brings together for the first time six major educational organizations to serve as the co-sponsors.

The mission of the Oregon Leadership Academy as a statewide LEAD project is to enhance the quality of Oregon's schools through practice driven and research-based technical assistance and training for educational leaders.

The work of the Academy encompasses a) contributing to the understanding of what administrators in Oregon do to lead and manage schools, b) developing and delivering leadership training services, c) enabling administrators to assess where they are in their professional development in relation to performing key professional tasks, d) providing technical assistance and support for improving the quality of schools, and e) fostering interorganizational communication and cooperation. The Academy programs are based on research and successful practices in leadership, management of high performance systems, organizational behavior, human resource development, and adult learning and development.

The Oregon Leadership Academy is founded on the guiding principle that excellence in Oregon schools can be enhanced by improving the leadership and management capacity of those who are leading our schools. This principle is based on research that indicates a) school administrators at the district and school level play a key role in school effectiveness, and b) that the most significant factor contributing to school improvement is leadership.

The Oregon Leadership Academy has three major program strands:

1. Institute for the Advancement of Leadership
2. Technical Assistance Center for School Improvement
3. Professional and Career Development Resource Center

**Program Strand I:
Institute for the Advancement of Leadership**

Educational administrators dedicated to becoming more effective find they must shift from a traditional management emphasis to an emphasis on pro-active leadership. The Leadership Institute assists them in their effort by providing long-term professional development opportunities which combine the best research findings with practical applications.

The Institute for the Advancement of Leadership curriculum is based on research studies of leadership from both education and business. Research presented by Leithwood and Montgomery (1986) suggests that leadership does make a difference in effective schools. Leithwood and Montgomery maintain that effective leadership must result in a school environment which promotes an increase in students' learning. They found that school administrators in successful schools and school districts were identified as focusing on things which eventually helped students learn more. Lori Manassee (1985) suggests that school administrators in high performing systems have vision, an image of the schools they wish to run, pro-active leadership styles, and an ability to establish goals and develop strategies to achieve them. The intent of the Institute program is to promote excellence in Oregon's schools through professional development that develops these leadership capacities.

The Institute for the Advancement of Leadership is a year long program that sponsors two statewide Leadership Symposiums and four regional meetings in eight regions of the state. Each region has a facilitator, and regional groups select their area of concentration for the year. The Institute is driven by the standard that the success of the programs will be measured by their ability to LAST. By "LAST" we mean to provide opportunities for participants to integrate the Learning, Application, Support, and Teaching of new knowledge and skills. The core curriculum includes leadership and participatory management development, human relations training, vision building, and strategic planning. Each participant develops a personal professional growth action plan to support his/her work during the year.

The regional program themes for the 1989 school year are:

- Regions 1 and 2: School Climate and Culture
- Region 3: Instructional Leadership and the Change Process
- Region 4: Strategic Planning and Leadership
- Region 5: Leadership, Collegiality, Learning Styles
- Region 6: Instructional Leadership through Collegiality
- Region 7: Instructional Leadership and Vision Building
- Region 8: Leadership and Empowering Employee Excellence

This program currently serves 30 percent of all school administrators in the state of Oregon. The exceptional response to this effort is evidenced by the fact that school administrators are not just signing up to attend a workshop, they are committing themselves voluntarily to eight-ten days of professional development during the school year.

Institute participants are from both public and private elementary and secondary schools, as well as universities and other state educational agencies. They include superintendents, high school principals, middle school principals, elementary principals, vice principals, aspiring principals, central district administrators, school board members, uni-

versity professors, and Oregon Department of Education administrators. Two areas of particular emphasis for the Institute are statewide accessibility to service resources and recruitment of women and minorities.

**Strand II:
Technical Assistance Center**

The Technical Assistance program provides the opportunity for school administrators to tailor professional development programs for job alike groups, school districts, and/or special interest groups. Following is an outline of programs currently being implemented.

1. **Superintendent Leadership Institute**
This Institute is a 2 1/2 day seminar focusing on the role of the superintendent as an Instructional Leader at the district level.
2. **Strategic Planning for School Improvement**
Districts are engaging in a one to two year strategic planning process for school improvement.
3. **Mentor/Protege Program for Aspiring Principals**
The purpose of this program is to support high potential candidates aspiring to be principals. The program is particularly designed to support women and minority principal candidates.
4. **District Level Technical Assistance**
5. **A Statewide Seminar Series**
6. **Collaborative training and development projects with public and private sector organizations.**
7. **Collaborative training and development projects with other LEAD Centers.**

**Program Strand III:
Professional and Career Development Resource Center**

The Academy supports the NASSP/COSA Assessment Center for Aspiring School Administrators. Other professional development resources include:

- A statewide administrative vacancy information network.
- A Position Change Workshop for school administrators.
- A resource handbook identifying key resource people in over 30 areas of interest.
- An information resource library including research articles, monographs, books, and videotapes.

The Oregon Leadership Academy is governed by a seven member board and a 24 member advisory committee representing educational, governmental, and private sector agencies. The board and advisory committee offer statewide access to expertise, guidance, and resources.

There is great excitement about the Oregon Leadership Academy. The Academy's guiding theme "Everyone Learns and Everyone Teaches" is central to our effort to create leadership opportunities for participants both as learners and as teachers. We have found that participating school administrators strongly value the new opportunities for learning as well as the collegial support they receive for applying innovative leadership practices in their schools and school districts. As one participating member recently stated: "Participating in the Leadership Academy gives me an opportunity to stop, reflect, learn, re-think, and teach. I like it."

For additional information about the Academy or the COSA organization, please contact Dr. Kate Dickson or Dr. Wayne Robbins, Assistant Executive Director of COSA, Salem, Oregon.