

THE SARASOTA COUNTY, FLORIDA SCHOOL DISTRICT
LEADERSHIP TRAINING PROGRAM — A DESCRIPTIVE CASE STUDY

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by

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Educational Leadership

Abstract

Each year, thousands of educators make the difficult transition from classroom to administrative office. A large body of research supports the view that many of them are inadequately prepared to meet the demands of their new role. Researchers have found that university training programs need to be supplemented and reinforced with field-administered programs that emphasize practical knowledge and skills. Their research shows that leadership training programs can significantly facilitate a first-year administrator's successful transition and raise the performance of experienced principals.

This descriptive case study, describes how the Sarasota County, Florida, School District conceived, planned, and designed a four-tier administrator-training program using the Leadership Academy Model. The tiers were designed to serve, respectively, aspiring administrators, assistant principals, new principals, and experienced principals. During the period studied, only the first two tiers were implemented. The case study narrative covers the design concepts and details of all four tiers and the implementation experiences of the first two tiers.

Program participants completed a written survey at the close of their academy year. The program directors used the surveys to help gauge how the program was received and to identify areas for improvement. The survey results indicated that the program was being well received. The case narrative includes a summary of these results.

I served as the director of the Sarasota program over the timeframe covered by the study, but prior to undertaking the study, I had moved to another staff position within the district.

In this work, I trace in some detail how leadership training in public education has been research driven, and how it evolved from early Effective Schools Research. I also briefly review a number of notable implementations of such programs across the United States, both at the state and local district level.

I am hopeful that this documentation will prove helpful to other school districts that are considering the implementation of leadership training programs. Toward this end I have included a final chapter documenting the insights I have gained over the course of my career in educational leadership and from my research and experiences while conducting this study. The chapter includes specific recommendations for future program designers and implementers, and suggests several areas for possible future research.

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