Minnesota Principals Academy
Creating Great Schools by Supporting Great Leaders

“Principals are responsible for over 25% of school effects on student learning and also impact the hiring, training, and retention of teachers – who account for 33% of the effects.”¹

The Minnesota Principals Academy is the University of Minnesota’s executive development program for school leaders that focuses on creating schools where all students graduate ready for college or careers. The program, partially funded through a legislatively allocated grant from the Minnesota Department of Education, uses proven curriculum from the National Institute of School Leadership as its foundation, and is tailored to meet the needs of Minnesota leaders through the direct involvement of U of M faculty and practitioner facilitators.

Participants: Over 400 principals and school leaders have completed the academy to date. Currently cohorts are taking place in Thief River Falls and the Twin Cities with new cohorts slated to begin in the summer of 2017; one in a regional location and one in the Twin Cities.

Content: The two-day units cover a comprehensive look at the improvements of schools through a standards-based instructional system. Unit topics include: international benchmarking, strategic thinking, a standards-based instructional system framework, mathematics, science, literacy, ELL, special education, equity, data and assessment, teacher evaluation and coaching, professional development and team building, change processes, and program evaluation. Each participant completes an Action Learning Project where they analyze a problem of practice in their context, develop a strategy for improvement, and evaluate that strategy in order to make continued improvement.

Facilitators: The program is run by the U of M’s Principal in Residence. Sessions are facilitated by the Principal in Residence and practicing or recently retired school and district leaders in Minnesota. These leaders have gone through the program and are certified as NISL/U of M facilitators. Additionally, professors from the College of Education and Human Development provide consult and guest lectures related to their areas of research connected to the Principals Academy’s curriculum.

Cost and Funding: The cost of the program is $7000/participant. Currently the cost is in part covered for public school leaders through legislative funding appropriated to MDE. The grant from MDE covers $3500 of the cost. The remaining $3500 can be paid over two fiscal years, leaving the district responsible for $1750 per year. This legislative funding is expected to continue through 2018.

Schedule: The cohorts meet about every 6-8 weeks for two-day sessions over the course of approximately 18 months including time in the summer.

Contact Information: Further information can be found at www.mnprincipals.umn.edu or by contacting Dr. Katie Pekel, Principal in Residence at kpekel@umn.edu or 612-625-7002.

WHY INVESTING IN LEADERSHIP IS A SMART STRATEGY FOR RAISING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

The quality of school leadership indirectly but powerfully affects student achievement

“To date we have not found a single case of a school improving its student achievement record in the absence of talented leadership.” ¹

High-performing principals are essential for high performing teachers

“Supportive leadership is the standout, top- ranked item contributing to teacher retention.”²

Principals need leadership development beyond their licensure programs

“Historically, initial preparation programs for principals in the U.S. have been a collection of courses covering general management principles, school laws, administrative requirements, and procedures, with little emphasis on student learning, effective teaching, professional development, curriculum, and organizational change.”³

Academy Participant Testimonials:

“The Minnesota Principals Academy is the best professional development I have ever been a part of.”
- Joel Leer, Principal, Northfield High School

“...one of the things that separates the Academy from other professional development opportunities is that it’s really action-oriented. It’s not sit and get. From day one you are getting things that will help your school...”
- Eric Fort, Assistant Principal, Tartan High School

“The Minnesota Principal Academy was the best professional development that I have received in my eleven years as an elementary principal. The ability to network and share ideas with colleagues working in the field has been invaluable in my continued growth as the instructional leader in my school.
- Julie Greiman, Scandia Elementary School Principal

We are currently seeking input from school and district leaders from around the state to determine where the 2017-2019 Minnesota Principals Academy regional cohort will be held. If your region has an interest in bringing the Academy to a location that can serve 25-30 school leaders, please consider contacting Dr. Pekel.

² Data from a major national poll sponsored by Scholastic and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. 2010. Primary sources: America’s teachers on America’s schools.