

News Release

Future Superintendents Academy Provides Practical Professional Development for Administrators

Dobbs Ferry, N.Y. August 6, 2015—How does a school district ensure a “strong continuum of school leaders”? The answer is... they go back to school. The Leadership for Educational Achievement Foundation (LEAF), the professional development arm of the New York State Council of School Superintendents (NYSCOSS), helps develop school district leaders through its Future Superintendents Academy. Dobbs Ferry Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, Douglas Berry, just completed the year-long program in June, and brings to his administrative role a new wealth of research information and practical insights into challenges facing school district superintendents each and every day.

Acceptance into the program is highly competitive and program participants, called Fellows, are required to attend a summer institute and intensive weekend sessions once a month in Albany. The program includes critical topics relevant to school superintendents such as communications; change theory, systems thinking and planning; governance; financial leadership; human resources; instructional leadership; and the search and interview process. Sessions were led by sitting and retired superintendents, as well as professionals in the field of law, finance and other relevant specialty areas. Participation in the LEAF program enables school leaders to learn from experts and from one another.

“The value of this program of study, and what sets it apart, is that it is based in practice, not theory,” said Mr. Berry. “We were able to delve into issues that superintendents face daily and come away with a variety of perspectives. The challenges are universal, but you get to see different viewpoints and it helps sharpen your understanding of the superintendent’s role and its complexities. We discussed topics such as strategic planning, establishing a vision, the tax cap, financial planning, the Common Core, identifying and retaining quality teachers, improving instruction and meeting the needs of all students.”

There were approximately 23 other school “leaders” in attendance from across New York State. The program is facilitated by two former superintendents Dr. Robert Bradley and Mr. Alan Pole, who assist with projects and coach Fellows throughout the year. The Fellows examine individual case studies together, and work in groups to come up with pragmatic ways of handling issues that superintendents deal with on a regular basis. Participants would be presented with a real-world issue and asked, “You’re the superintendent, what do you do next?”

“What sets this professional development program apart from others is that it is so hands-on,” said Mr. Berry. “It was a tremendous learning experience and opportunity to grow on-the-job. I appreciate that the Board of Education and Dr. Brady viewed this as a valuable endeavor and fully supported my participation and continued professional growth. It is more important than ever, given today’s changing educational environment, to study and understand what it truly takes to lead a district into the future.”

“The research bears out the fact that districts that do well, have long-term consistent leadership,” said Dobbs Ferry Schools Superintendent Dr. Lisa Brady. “The number of superintendents who are retiring is on the rise as the baby-boom generation starts to age out of the education workforce, and it is essential that we recognize, foster and support the next generation of school leaders.”

For more information, please contact:

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