Agenda Topic: Evaluation and Recommendation for the Administrators’ Academy

Materials: Continuous Improvement Partnership Membership List

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Purpose of Agenda Item

• To provide the Board with information on issues related to the Administrators’ Academy; and

• To obtain input from Board members regarding the Academy.

Expected Outcome(s) of Agenda Item

• Board awareness of the current state of the Administrators’ Academy; and

• Board direction to staff on implementation.

Background Information

The Division of Certificate Renewal was assigned responsibility for the Illinois Administrators’ Academy in October 1999. During the last 15 months, the Division has been involved in a number of activities that have resulted in a set of recommendations for improving the Administrators’ Academy. Division staff have worked extensively with a subcommittee of Administrators’ Academy Coordinators representing the Regional Offices of Education and the Intermediate Service Centers to identify existing needs and formulate recommendations focusing specifically on the revision of the Administrators’ Academy Coordinators’ Manual based on those identified needs. The Continuous Improvement Partnership (CIP), the advisory committee for the Administrators’ Academy, has also worked with division staff to focus on core quality-control issues, identify needs and provide direction. In addition, division staff members have met with an ad hoc committee interested in examining and changing the requirements for administrative certificate renewal, a committee that evolved from the Illinois Association of School Administrators’ professional development committee. Finally, the Division contracted with a consulting firm, MGT of America, which
conducted the first formal evaluation of the Administrators’ Academy since it was created.

The Illinois Professional School Leader Standards serve as the primary focus around which the majority of the recommendations are centered. The School Leader Standards are already identified in each Administrators’ Academy course proposal, yet there is a need to bring each element of the current system into alignment and incorporate the priorities established by the Illinois State Board of Education and local School Improvement Plans.

The results of the formal evaluation conducted by MGT of America and the discussions held by the three independent committees indicate that all of the elements of a comprehensive professional development system are already in place within the existing structure of the Administrators’ Academy. As a result of the evaluation, the following eight core issues have been identified and actions to address each have been proposed.

**Analysis and Implications for Policy, Budget, Legislative Action and Communications**

Future actions regarding the Administrators’ Academy require policy changes which will be accomplished by Certificate Renewal Division staff members.

The requirement that all administrators create a personal professional development plan will require an amendment to the Administrative Rules.

A request should be made for the State Board to consider additional funding for the Administrators’ Academy for the FY03 budget.
Recommendations for Improving the Illinois Administrators’ Academy

January 2001

Summary of Recommendations and Actions to be Taken

- **Recommendation:** Develop and communicate a comprehensive vision and strategic plan for the Administrators’ Academy.

- **Action to be Taken:** Create and communicate a vision statement and strategic plan for the Administrators’ Academy aligned to the ISBE strategic commitments by July 1, 2001.

- **Recommendation:** Develop a program that provides a continuum of “professional development experiences” to promote growth in the six Leadership Areas specified in Section 2-3.53 of the Illinois School Code with a direct focus on the Illinois Professional School Leader Standards and additional focus on the ISBE priorities and local school improvement plans, when applicable.

- **Action to be Taken:** Develop a continuum of professional development courses, focusing on the six Leadership Areas and reflecting different levels of offerings for new and experienced administrators by July 2001 and ongoing.

- **Recommendation:** Revise the current requirements for the “Plans for the Continuing Professional Education of Administrators” to include the development of individual administrator professional development plans.

- **Action to be Taken:** Amend the current Administrative Rules in October 2001 to require each administrator to create a professional development plan and submit that plan to the local school district to be incorporated into the district Continuing Professional Education Plans of Administrators.

- **Recommendation:** Increase and expand the Administrators’ Academy course development process to better meet the needs and experience levels of all administrators.

- **Action to be Taken:** Expand the AA course development process to provide a wider variety of courses that focus more on the Professional Leader Standards; build the capacity of ROEs to design courses that provide effective staff development, and facilitate the development of more state level courses. July 1, 2001 to June 30, 2002 and on-going.
• **Recommendation:** Revise current policies on the delivery of Administrators’ Academy courses to ensure statewide consistency, availability, and accessibility.

• **Actions to be Taken:** 1) Review and revise the criteria for the approval of AA courses. 2) Offer professional development to all ROE and ISC staff members on the design of courses that are most effective. 3) Develop additional courses at the state level through contractual agreements. 4) Review all approved AA courses every two years and update as necessary.

• **Recommendation:** Enhance communication and streamline the operation of the Administrators’ Academy at the state, regional and local levels through the use of technology.

• **Actions to be Taken:** 1) The IAAMS database will become fully operational for all ROEs by July 1, 2001. 2) An on-line application system for submission and approval of AA courses will be developed and implemented for all ROEs and ISCs by October 2002.

• **Recommendation:** Initiate a process that provides for a periodic review and evaluation of the Administrators’ Academy beginning October 2002.

• **Actions to be Taken:** 1) Conduct random audits of course offerings regularly beginning January 1, 2001 and ongoing. 2) Conduct an annual review of the Administrators’ Academy operation in collaboration with the CIP, ROEs ISCs and all stakeholders beginning July 2002.

• **Recommendation:** Seek increased funding of the Administrators’ Academy for the purpose of implementing, and subsequently maintaining, the recommended improvements in the administrator professional development process.

• **Action to be Taken:** Request the State Board review the FY03 AA budget for a possible increase from the current average of $114.89 per administrator to support the required changes in the Academy.
ILLINOIS PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL LEADER STANDARDS

- Comprehensive Vision & Strategic Plan
- “Program” – a continuum of professional development experiences
- Individual Administrator Professional Development Plans
- Course Development Policies
- Course Delivery Policies

Seek Increased Funding to support Proposed Initiatives
Develop and communicate a comprehensive vision and strategic plan for the Administrators’ Academy. ISBE should continue to work with Administrators’ Academy stakeholders to develop and communicate a comprehensive vision and strategic plan for the Academy. The Administrators’ Academy has not had a shared vision and strategic plan since the formation of the CIP. As noted by MGT of America, “The research is clear about the vital role that school leaders play in school improvement. Similarly, the state should develop and disseminate a clear vision of the role the Academy is to play in the professional development of school leaders who, in turn, assume responsibility for impacting student achievement and improving schools.” That vision should be accompanied by a strategic plan that includes specific incremental goals for three to five years into the future, gradually expanding on what is successful in that context and offering support to those engaged in the change (Fullan, 1992; Louis & Miles, 1990). The Continuous Improvement Partnership committee has initiated discussions directed toward this purpose, but the activity is still a “work-in-progress.”

Develop a program that provides a continuum of “professional development experiences” to promote growth in the six Leadership Areas specified in Section 2-3.53 of the Illinois School Code with a direct focus on the Illinois Professional School Leader Standards and additional focus on the ISBE priorities and local school improvement plans. The meaning of the term “program” in the current requirement that administrators complete one Administrators’ Academy “program” every two-year phase, should be redefined to incorporate a continuum of professional development experiences that promote and document growth. It should be noted that successful professional development programs are those that approach change in a gradual and incremental fashion. But while the changes advocated in a professional development effort must not be so ambitious that they require too much too soon from the implementation system, they need to be sufficient in scope to challenge professionals and kindle interest (McLaughlin, 1990). Dennis Sparks, Executive Director of the National Staff Development Council, suggests that “there are four crucial components of quality learning programs for principals: standards-focused, intellectually rigorous, job-embedded, and sustained” (2000). While current policies incorporate degrees of the following, it is recommended that such professional development experiences must:

- be directly related to the Illinois Professional School Leader Standards,
- focus on priorities established by the Illinois State Board of Education and within an administrator’s local school improvement plan, when applicable,
- recognize and incorporate levels of professional growth and experience, with a particular focus on the needs of entry level administrators,
- have the effect of substantially increasing and expanding the requirements for certificate renewal for administrators, and
- incorporate skill development, application, and transfer to the local setting.
Revise the current requirements for the “Plans for the Continuing Professional Education of Administrators” to include the development of individual administrator professional development plans. The current requirement is that districts “shall submit to the State Board of Education a plan for the continuing professional education of the administrators employed therein (a “Plan”), Section 25.315 of the Illinois Administrative Code. Although some school districts require their administrators to develop individual professional development plans, best practices in professional development suggest that every administrator should be required to develop an individual plan. Studies on adult learning suggest that adults learn best when they perceive the outcomes of the learning process as valuable, contributing to their own development, work success, etc. Furthermore, adults’ readiness to learn is more directly linked to needs (i.e. needs related to fulfilling their roles as workers). Individualization of professional development plans would enable administrators to identify their own individual areas of need and establish professional development goals based on those identified needs. It is recommended that individual professional development plans:

- be focused on the Illinois Professional School Leader Standards, the Illinois State Board of Education priorities, and local school improvement plans, when applicable;
- provide for accountability;
- provide for continuous growth and levels of achievement; and
- provide for the transfer and application of acquired knowledge and skills at the local level.

Increase and expand the Administrators’ Academy course development process to better meet the needs and experience levels of all administrators. The Educational Research Service’s Informed Educator Series (1999) publication “Professional Development for School Principals” declares that effective staff development for administrators is long-term, planned, and job-embedded; focuses on student achievement; supports reflective practice; and provides opportunities to work, discuss, and solve problems with peers. Hirsch (1998) also notes “effective staff development uses a variety of staff development approaches to accomplish the goals of improving instruction and student success. MGT of America recommends “the continuum should include informational courses, skill development courses, study groups, along with coaching and reflective practice to engage administrators in enhancing their knowledge and skills”. Therefore, ISBE, in consultation with Administrators’ Academy stakeholders, should revise its policies on Administrators’ Academy course development to:

- provide a stronger focus on the Illinois Professional School Leader Standards;
- provide a wider variety of courses and professional development experiences that are job-embedded and focus more on skill development;
- provide a series of entry-level courses for new administrators;
- build the capacity of regional Academy offices to design courses that provide for the transfer of acquired knowledge and skills to the administrators’ current assignments in schools or school districts;
• build the capacity of regional Academy offices to design courses that focus on administrator needs as identified in individual professional development plans;
• facilitate the development of more courses at the state level, including train-the-trainer opportunities;
• enable third party providers increased opportunities to provide professional development experiences for administrators statewide;
• collaborate with professional organizations for business managers to develop and/or provide courses to meet the needs of this group of administrators; and
• require periodic evaluation and updating of courses.

Revise current policies on the delivery of Administrators’ Academy courses to ensure statewide consistency, availability, and accessibility. MGT of America found that “the number and variety of course offerings available in different Academy settings that were visited appear to be directly related to the number of administrators served by the regional Academy office. MGT also found varying quality in the presenters who deliver various courses across the state. ISBE should work with the Regional Offices of Education and the Intermediate Service Centers to develop policies on the delivery of courses and other professional development activities to ensure:
• the availability of courses and activities statewide;
• the accessibility of courses and activities statewide;
• that courses and professional development activities be delivered in a consistent manner; and
• that needed resources and personnel are available for the delivery and monitoring of courses and professional development activities.

Enhance communication and streamline the operation of the Administrators’ Academy at the state, regional and local levels through the use of technology. ISBE should streamline the operation of the Administrators’ Academy and enhance communication through the use of technology. Toward this end, ISBE should:
• complete the implementation of the Illinois Administrators’ Academy Management System (IAAMS), the state operated data information system for recording and updating Administrators’ Academy records, including the participation by local school administrators in professional development activities;
• develop an informational website for the Administrators’ Academy; and
• develop an online application system for the submission and approval of Administrators’ Academy courses and other professional development activities.

Initiate a process that provides for a periodic review and evaluation of the Administrators’ Academy. Effective evaluation is an opportunity to increase the direct impact on the effectiveness of professional development time and funds. It serves as a primary source of input about the future direction of professional development. ISBE should change its current policies and practices to require the periodic review and
evaluation of the Administrators’ Academy, including the operation of the Academy at both the state and the regional level.

Seek increased funding of the Administrators’ Academy for the purpose of implementing, and subsequently maintaining, the recommended improvements in the administrator professional development process. ISBE should consider increased funding for the Administrators’ Academy for the purpose of implementing the recommended changes. MGT of America concluded that, “The current level of state funding for the Academy does not lead to the development and consistent delivery of high quality courses for Illinois school administrators.” Current FY01 funding provides an average of $114.89 per administrator.
References


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Sparks, D. (April, 2000). *Results*.