

Comal Independent School District

NEWS RELEASE

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Release Date: Feb. 10, 2010

Project LEAD helping potential administrators in Comal ISD

In most school districts, a teacher with administrative aspirations would have to go it alone on their journey into the campus front office world.

That used to be the case in Comal ISD, until Project LEAD (Leaders Engaged in Administrator Development) began earlier this semester.

Bob Presley, Comal ISD Assistant to the Superintendent, is spearheading the program, which is designed to give current teachers and district curriculum specialists who have their eyes on a future job as an assistant principal a better chance of being hired.

Through eight one-hour sessions at Comal ISD's Support Services Building, Project LEAD prepares potential administrators by covering topics like leadership development, employee relations, communication skills, curriculum and instruction, budgeting, purchasing, and school district operations.

Presley enlisted the help of Comal ISD elementary, middle and high school principals to come up with the topics to be featured during Project LEAD sessions.

"We tried to come up with things we felt were critical for someone who was going from the classroom to an assistant principal's position to know," Presley said. "Then I had potential members fill out an application."

Presley said he patterned LEAD after a successful administrator development program in San Antonio's Northeast ISD, and then tailored it to Comal ISD's characteristics.

"We actually have three Comal ISD assistant principals, Tracy Kottman (Timberwood Park Elementary), Jodi Rathburn (Spring Branch Middle) and Robert Watson (Spring Branch Middle) who went through the NEISD program,"

Presley said. "Based on their experience, they provided good insight as we tried to get the details of Project LEAD worked out."

Anyone attending Project LEAD had to be on track to finish his or her administrative certification by the beginning of the 2010-11 school year. Each Comal ISD campus principal had the opportunity to pick up to two teachers to participate in the program.

"I believe Project LEAD is very beneficial for the participants," said Smithson Valley High assistant principal Chris Smith, who will become the Spring Branch Middle principal next school year. "It provides a realistic view of the challenges and rewards of being a campus level administrator."

The Project LEAD topic covered on Feb. 3, "Leadership Development," included a panel of current Comal ISD principals and assistant principals who participated in a question and answer session on how to develop strong leadership skills.

"The Project LEAD program is a great way for potential administrators to learn about the expectations and administrative procedures of our district," said Stacie Wilkie, Hoffmann Lane Elementary librarian and a member of the first Project LEAD class. "I especially like the fact that the program provides an opportunity for current administrators and central office staff to share their expertise on leadership and management skills. Hearing their advice and recommendations on various topics is a valuable way of learning what it takes to be an exceptional leader."

Dr. Jodi Duron, Comal ISD Assistant Superintendent for Academics and Student Services, is excited about the boost Project LEAD will give to current Comal ISD employees who want to get into administration.

"Project LEAD will allow Comal ISD to grow our own future leaders," Duron said. "They will have the opportunity to interact and dialogue with administrators in many different district departments. They will also get to shadow a campus principal and assistant principal for a day, providing true insight for what our campus administrators do on a daily basis."

Stephen Foster, Comal ISD social studies instructional specialist, said he's receiving valuable skills in the Project LEAD program.

"The ability to hear the advice and wisdom of so many others who have been there gives LEAD program participants a window into the path they are going down," Foster said. "It also allows the LEAD participants to network and communicate their own shared experiences."

Presley said that although completing Project LEAD doesn't guarantee anyone a future job in administration, it will look very impressive on a résumé.

"If you go through a program like this, it definitely gives you an extra boost on your résumé," Presley said. "It also helps with your confidence level. If someone sat down in front of me while interviewing for an assistant principal's job and started talking about curriculum, budgeting, hiring and leadership, that would be pretty remarkable."

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IN PHOTOS: Rebecca Creek Elementary teacher Wendy Moore (left) and Comal ISD math instructional specialist Shannon Piles share a light moment before the Feb. 3 Project LEAD session begins. The program is designed to give current teachers and district curriculum specialists who have their eyes on a future job as an assistant principal a better chance of being hired.

Smithson Valley High teachers Martha Pittman and Dean Hofer discuss a topic during a Project LEAD session on Feb. 3. Bob Presley, Assistant to the Superintendent, enlisted the help of Comal ISD elementary, middle and high school principals to come up with the topics that needed to be covered during the program this semester.