

Online Leadership Training Overview

The SREB Learning-Centered Leadership Program's curriculum of online courses engages principals and school leadership teams in professional development through a Web-based learning environment of study, collaboration, reflection, and application of learning to authentic school reform efforts. These courses address a range of topics, from improving curriculum and instruction to improving the school as a system.

Each course requires participants to apply acquired skills and strategies to a real problem in their schools related to student performance. Participants will analyze the causes of the problem, arrive at solutions to the problem, and develop an action plan with implementation strategies to address the problem.

Who should take these courses?

Principals, teacher leaders, curriculum specialists and aspiring leaders will gain knowledge and skills from these courses to build and support a rigorous schoolwide learning culture. Teachers will gain practical skills, strategies and tools to ensure high levels of rigor in planning, teaching and assessing course content. Training can accommodate participation by individuals or engage teachers and administrators in developing and improving functional leadership teams.

How do SREB online courses help develop effective school leaders?

The curriculum of online leadership training courses is rooted in education research and based on SREB's 13 Critical Success Factors — practices derived from research and associated with principals who have succeeded in raising student achievement in high-need schools. Courses are built around clear objectives and key strategies that integrate real-world problems to build knowledge and skills in instructional leadership. These courses focus on what school leaders must know and be able to do to improve instruction and raise student achievement. Training in a variety of leadership topics can support principals in areas identified through evaluation processes as needing improvement.

What online study options are available?

Participants can enroll in facilitated courses or independent study opportunities. A hybrid option, involving online learning supported by some face-to-face coaching, is also available. Facilitated courses are led by trained and experienced educators who guide a lively, interactive mixture of teamwork, study, writing, reflection, collaboration and networking among participants. The independent-study option provides self-paced instruction in which no direct participation or feedback from others is provided.

Hybrid training opportunities — combining face-to-face and online training — offer the most value in terms of flexibility of schedule, the development of professional learning communities, and cost. On-site face-to-face training and site walkthroughs can be scheduled to suit to a school's needs, with additional follow-up scheduled as needed.

How can participants get the most out of these courses?

Online courses are divided into at least seven units. Each unit requires four to five hours of work to be completed within one week. Participants will normally take eight weeks to complete a course. Whether participants take courses as individuals or as part of a school team, they will gain the most value from this course by committing to regular online engagement, including completing assignments and applying learning to a course project based on an identified problem in their school.

Online Leadership Training Course Descriptions

Assessing Academic Rigor in School and Classroom Practices

Rigor in the school curriculum is one of the top indicators of a student's potential to graduate from high school ready to earn a college degree, and it must be recognized and expected by school leaders.

Academic rigor is the level of cognitive complexity of expected learning. This course introduces principals and school leaders to alignment tools to determine levels of rigor and core habits of mind in classroom practices and systemically in schools. Participants assess rigor in lesson plans, unit plans and course content; in teacher assignments and student work; in formative and summative assessments and rubrics; and in the tight alignment of these elements to challenging standards.

Participants undertake a course project that focuses on a problem they may be facing in their schools or organizations in recognizing and infusing rigorous expectations in their instructional and assessment practices. By analyzing classroom and schoolwide practices and a variety of strategies for improving rigor, including the role of cognitive complexity, high expectations and grade-level work, participants develop a plan to increase academic rigor schoolwide.

Mapping the Curriculum to Grade-Level and College-Readiness Standards

A deeper understanding of learning expectations of national, state, and college- and career-readiness standards enables school leaders to apply the standards to practice.

In this course, school and district leaders will evaluate standards, prioritize their value, align them to the curriculum and communicate them to teachers and students. Aligning and mapping standards into the curriculum is essential to communicate to students and teachers the high level of work expected from all groups of students. Curriculum mapping helps school leaders identify gaps between what is taught and what students are expected to learn. The process engages teachers in formulating the essential questions that build 21st century knowledge and skills and improve the achievement of all students.

Course participants learn the rationale, goals and benefits of prioritizing standards and aligning their curricula to identified standards. Participants undertake a project to build a curriculum map, construct essential questions and create a timeline and plan for monitoring continuous improvement. Participants demonstrate how to lead a team through the process and successfully implement a curriculum plan in their school or organization.

Using Root Cause Analysis to Create a High-Performance Learning Culture

School leaders who are able to uncover the real problems their schools face are more likely to close performance gaps among student groups.

In this course, principals and school leaders learn to engage individuals and teams to ask tough questions about which current school practices are limiting student learning and to mine a variety of data sources to clearly articulate the scope, cause and potential resolution of the problem. Participants learn strategies for improving student learning by creating a school culture open to change and innovation and expanding this culture to build among community stakeholders shared beliefs about effort, relevance and relationship. Participants in this course learn to uncover the underlying causes of underperformance and build a high-performance learning culture to tackle needed change at the building level. Using tools to

recognize and understand relevant sources of school data, participants identify high-priority areas of concern and create a plan to lead school teams in a consistent and relentless focus on data-based solutions.

Principals, teacher leaders, curriculum specialists and aspiring leaders can learn from this training how to engage individuals and teams to close achievement gaps by identifying problems, understanding their root causes and implementing research-based solutions within schools.

This course raises awareness of issues that adversely impact student academic performance and provide the information and tools to assist school leaders in identifying and solving these “red flag” issues in their schools or organizations.

Organizing Resources for a Personalized Learning Environment

Understanding how elements of the school environment (time, space, people and financial resources) impact student achievement is key to shaping the learning environment in ways that promote student achievement.

In this course, principals and school leaders engage in deep reflection about organizing elements of the learning environment, such as instruction, advisement, extra help, and student and family relationships, all with the goal of motivating students and making learning meaningful for them. School leaders learn to most effectively utilize time, staff, space and financial resources by addressing them to their schools’ most challenging problems and achievement gaps. This requires a strong, well-articulated communication plan. This course explores value-added communication and organization strategies that shape the learning environment in ways that promote student achievement.

In this course, participants learn how personalizing school can lead to student engagement in learning, how teachers have the ability to make a difference in student lives, and how learning organizations can have a positive impact on the community. The readings, activities and tools provided in the course help participants to apply these skills in their workplaces. Participants complete a course project that focuses on designing school practices around personalizing the learning environment.

Building Instructional Leadership Teams to Lead Change for Student Success

School change can rarely be accomplished alone; it takes leaders empowering teams to create high-performing learning systems accountable to all students.

This course focuses on forming instructional leadership teams, helping them define their purpose and goals, and working collaboratively with them to create a climate for change based on their

school’s needs. Participants will learn about the various human and organizational factors that impact a school’s ability to implement and sustain meaningful change. Teams will identify a vision of adaptive change — change that is deeply rooted in high expectations for all — and work on a framework for sustainable implementation of these concepts. The skills gained in this training are valuable to individuals as well as school teams. Participants undertake a course project that focuses on establishing effective teams in their schools or organizations.

Through this course, participants will gain an understanding of how shared leadership and a team approach to school improvement can help sustain improvement processes. Participants undertake a course project that focuses on establishing effective teams and using professional learning communities to lead a change initiative and build leadership capacity throughout the school.

Leading Schoolwide Literacy Initiatives

For instruction to be effective, leaders must spend time developing their faculty's understanding of literacy instruction and awareness of their students' cultures, backgrounds and experiences.

This course makes the case that literacy is everyone's job. Leaders learn the importance of teaching all content areas through strategies that help students get the most from written and spoken words. Participants investigate a wide variety of research-driven strategies that help students become better learners of standards-based content, and learn about differentiating the literacy needs of each student. The development and implementation of a schoolwide literacy plan are central to the course. Approaches that promote literacy in all areas of instruction are modeled throughout, and participants incorporate their learning into practice by completing a course project to design schoolwide literacy initiatives across disciplines and grade levels in their schools.

Through this course, participants lead the process of increasing student achievement through the use of strategies that promote literacy in their schools. Participants develop a deeper understanding of literacy; examine root causes of literacy problems in their schools; evaluate solutions through successful literacy programs; and develop a plan to address literacy needs, including a focused and sustained professional development plan to reach their literacy objectives.

Designing Assessment to Improve Student Learning

Assessment decisions should be related to the purpose of the assessment and the content to be tested, and school leaders should set the focus on assessment as a tool to improve instruction.

The purpose of this training is to lead participants to re-think the way they use assessments in the classroom and in the school as a whole. School leaders should take an active role in designing and implementing assessments that address the needs of all users of assessment information to promote learning and higher achievement. Information gleaned from the wide variety of student assessments should be used to guide instructional decisions at all school levels. In this course, participants learn the how and why of grades and grading, which practices are effective or need to change, and how to convey expectation of students' level of achievement toward grade-level standards to all stakeholders. An emphasis is placed on the development of students' higher-order thinking skills through assessment practices.

The goal of this course is to create and lead a process to increase student achievement through the use of assessment strategies. Participants complete a course project that focuses on aligning schoolwide assessment practices to standards, curriculum and instruction and developing solutions to school assessment issues through schoolwide balanced assessment programs.