

Preparing New Administrators in Oklahoma

FACED WITH THE IMPENDING RETIREMENT OF MANY of their technology center administrators, the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education took a proactive approach. The department now sponsors the Technology Center Administrator Program (TechCAP), which is designed to prepare new administrators to step into the roles of those leaving the field.

Oklahoma State *CareerTech* Director Phil Berkenbile calls programs such as TechCAP critical to the continued success of the state's technology center system and notes, "If we are to build on the reputation of this system as one of the nation's finest, we must prepare our teachers and administrators with the skills they need to succeed as our future leaders."

Oklahoma has an ongoing leadership program that provides a broad overview to all of the state's career tech delivery systems, but according to LaMecia Stidham, a technology center field service coordinator with the Oklahoma *CareerTech* Department who helps coordinate the program, "TechCAP provides an in-depth look into 'survival skills' for specific technology center administrator-related tasks. This program is the capstone to our other statewide leadership development programs."

Themes and Topics

In 2005, sessions were held at the Oklahoma Department of *CareerTech*, Pioneer Technology Center, Tri County Technology Center, Great Plains Technology Center and Francis Tuttle Technology Center. Themes of the meetings included history and philosophy, relationships/marketing/communications, student services, eco-

nomics development and facilities management. Among the topics were business/industry development, construction projects, purchasing, media and school board relations, team building, recruitment, integrated academics and assessment.

In 2006, the sessions were held at the state capitol, Central Technology Center, Moore Norman Technology Center, Metro Technology Center and Gordon Cooper Technology Center. The themes in 2006 included finance and accountability, quality of instruction and personnel, the legislative process, and innovation. Among the topics were political strategies, evaluation, the hiring/firing process, teacher certification, technology center finance, accreditations, workforce data and career clusters.

The final meeting, which was held in May in Stillwater, provided an opportunity to use scenario thinking and strategic planning while referencing knowledge gained from previous TechCAP sessions and included TechCAP graduation. The

objectives for the final meeting were to provide an opportunity for participants to discuss innovative approaches to planning programs and courses; provide an opportunity for participants to reflect on their most valuable TechCAP sessions; and develop an understanding of the issues and concerns facing our system today and in the future.

What Makes it Work

There are several aspects of TechCAP that Stidham believes make it very effective and that other states might wish to incorporate into their leadership programs. First is that the topics focus on actual issues that are very important in the state, and the participants deal with those topics through real-life scenarios.

"We tried to deliver all of the content through activity- and scenario-based experiences," Stidham explains.

Each month there is a new theme, and each program is planned by a different planning committee of experts. For exam-



▲▲ Drums, Fire and Leadership

Inspired by a chapter on Tribal Storytelling in Max DuPree's *Leadership is an Art*, Dr. Tom Friedemann, Deputy Superintendent, Francis Tuttle Technology Center, delivered a Oklahoma *CareerTech* history lesson to participants.

ple, when the topic was finance, there were lead chief financial officers and business managers from the tech centers as well as superintendents who were strong in the finance area on the planning committee.

Throughout the year, host superintendents make presentations in which they describe their own leadership style and philosophy. The superintendents also offer suggested reading about leadership. From an extensive list of books generated by tech center superintendents and class members, the TechCAP class chose three books to study: *Good to Great* by Jim Collins, *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century* by Thomas L. Friedman, and *Dealing with Difficult Teachers* by Todd Whitaker. TechCAP participants were divided into smaller study groups, and at the end of the year, the groups shared what they had gained with one another so that everyone benefited.

Stidham also sees the networking opportunities and the relationships that were fostered among the TechCAP participants as among the greatest benefits of the program. “Two days of each month for nine months, they get together in small groups and work on activities,” she says. “So they really get to know one another.”

A Network of Colleagues

Stidham shares the story of two women who attended TechCAP together and are now site directors. Although they didn't know each other before TechCAP, these women are now more than simply colleagues; they are good friends who talk almost every day and are able to bounce ideas off each other.

According to Stidham, the program won't be offered again until August 2007 or January 2008, but she is looking forward to the opportunity to help prepare the next

contingent of leaders for the Oklahoma CareerTech system.

“Many participants have said that their best administrative preparation came from TechCAP,” she notes.

One participant called it a tremendous experience and added, “I believe my school has benefited from what I learned through our sessions. Certainly I have gained a network of people that I can count on and rely on to help in any situation.”

When the next TechCAP sessions begin, participants and their schools in Oklahoma may reap even more benefits because Stidham says, “We learn each time we conduct a session so I think each program gets better.” ■

To learn more about the Oklahoma Technology Center Administrator Program, visit www.okcareertech.org, or contact LaMecia Stidham at lamecia_stidham@okcareertech.org.