



Frequently Asked Questions

The AES Signature Experience

K12 EXECUTIVE PERFORMANCE LAB SERIES

Practice the decisions. Prepare to lead.

The AES Signature Experience is a hybrid executive leadership program for K-12 leaders who are preparing for the next level of district leadership. This FAQ answers the questions we hear most from prospective applicants and from the superintendents and boards who sponsor them.

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

What it is and who it's for

What is the AES Signature Experience?

It is the flagship program in the AES K12 Executive Performance Lab Series, offered by AES (Academic Excellence Solutions). Instead of lectures about leadership, participants practice the decisions district executives actually make, then get expert feedback and coaching on how they handled them. The program is built around four elements:

- **Real-world simulations** that put you in the seat of a senior district leader
- **Expert feedback** from experienced K-12 executives on your decisions and reasoning
- **Executive coaching** to turn that feedback into a personal leadership plan
- **Practical preparation** for the roles you are working toward

Who should apply?

The program serves a deliberately mixed cohort, which is part of its value:

- **Rising district leaders** such as principals, directors, chiefs, and assistant or deputy superintendents who see themselves moving into senior district roles
- **Sitting superintendents** who want insight into how larger urban districts are led, or who are exploring leadership roles adjacent to K-12 (state agencies, education organizations, and similar)

Working alongside leaders at different career stages and from different district contexts broadens every participant's perspective and network.

How is this different from other leadership academies?

Most leadership programs focus on what leaders should know. The Signature Experience focuses on what leaders do under pressure. You will rehearse high-stakes decisions in a setting where mistakes become learning rather than headlines, and you will leave with coaching tailored to how you actually lead.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

Schedule, format, and attendance

How long is the program, and what is the format?

The program runs from February through April 2027 and includes eight program days in a hybrid format: two three-day in-person sessions that open and close the program, with two virtual days in between.

Session	Dates (2027)	Format and location
Opening session	Wed–Fri, February 3–5	In person • Tampa, FL Marriott on the Tampa Riverwalk
Virtual session 1	Wednesday, February 17	Virtual
Virtual session 2	Wednesday, March 10	Virtual
Closing session	Wed–Fri, April 14–16	In person • San Antonio, TX

Daily session times will be shared with admitted participants.

Do I need to attend every session?

Yes, full participation is expected. Simulations and coaching build on one another, and your cohort learns from your contributions. We know district leaders face emergencies, so there is some flexibility. If a conflict comes up, contact the AES team as early as possible so we can help you plan around it.

How much time away from my district does this require?

Six of the eight days are in person, in two Wednesday-to-Friday sessions (Tampa in February and San Antonio in April). The two virtual days are single Wednesdays you can join from your office or home, which keeps travel and time out of the district to a minimum.

CREDENTIALS AND OUTCOMES

What participants walk away with

What do participants earn?

- A leadership endorsement and certification from the AES K12 Executive Performance Lab Series
- Coaching-informed insight into your strengths and growth areas as an executive leader
- A professional network of peers and experienced leaders across district types and roles

Does the certification count toward state licensure or renewal hours?

The AES endorsement is a professional credential. It does not replace state administrator or superintendent licensure. Some states and districts may accept program hours toward renewal or professional learning requirements, so check with your state agency or HR office. AES can provide documentation of hours and content on request.

Is there support after the program ends?

Yes. Graduates stay connected through the AES network, which provides ongoing peer connections and access to leaders who can help as you pursue your next role.

COST AND FUNDING

Investment and how districts pay for it

How much does the program cost?

Tuition is \$4,999 per participant.

Travel and accommodations for the two in-person sessions are not included in tuition and are the participant's responsibility.

Can federal funds be used?

Often, yes. Federal and state rules decide what is allowable, and your district's federal programs office makes the final call. These are the options districts most often explore:

Funding source	How it may apply
Title II, Part A Supporting Effective Instruction	The main federal source for preparing, training, and recruiting principals and other school leaders. Leadership development is a core allowable use when it is aligned to your district's needs assessment and Title II plan.
State Title II leadership set-aside	States may reserve up to 3% of their Title II, Part A funds for principal and school leader programs, and more than half do. Ask your state education agency whether leadership grants or scholarships are available.
Title I, Part A	Possible when the participant leads or directly supports Title I schools and the training ties to the schoolwide plan or school improvement goals. Generally more restrictive than Title II.
Local and other funds	District professional learning budgets, professional development provisions in administrator or superintendent contracts, education service agencies, foundations, and association scholarships. Districts can also split costs across sources.

Federal allocations and allowable uses can change from year to year. Confirm current-year availability and alignment with your federal programs director before committing funds. This guidance is general information, not legal or compliance advice.

What can AES provide to support a funding request?

We can supply a program description, learning objectives, agenda, hours, and an invoice. Federal programs offices typically need these to document alignment with the district's plan. Contact us about purchase orders and invoicing.

APPLYING

Application and selection

How do I apply?

- **Step 1:** Complete the [online application form](#).
- **Step 2:** Selected applicants are invited to a follow-up interview with the AES team.
- **Step 3:** Applicants are notified of their admission decision.

Apply online: [Start your application](#) Deadline: **December 4, 2026**

What is the interview for?

The interview helps us understand your leadership experience, the roles you are working toward, and what you hope to gain. It also helps us build a balanced cohort where participants learn from one another.

Do I need my district's support to apply?

Many participants are sponsored by their district, and we encourage you to talk with your supervisor or superintendent early, especially if you hope to use district or federal funds. Self-funded applicants are also welcome.

FOR SPONSORING DISTRICTS

Questions from superintendents and boards

Why should our district invest in this program?

- **Build your bench.** Develop internal candidates for senior roles instead of relying only on outside searches.
- **Strengthen succession planning.** Prepare leaders before vacancies happen, so leadership transitions are smoother for students and staff.
- **Retain strong leaders.** Investing in high-potential leaders signals a future for them in your district.
- **Get value right away.** Participants practice decisions they bring back to their current roles during the program.

How much time will our leader be away?

Eight program days between February and April 2027. Six days are in person, grouped at the beginning and end, and two are virtual.

Can we sponsor more than one leader?

Yes. Districts often send a small team so leaders build a shared language for decision-making.

CONTACT

Still have questions?

Learn more about AES and our team at aesadvisory.com/about.