Hallmarks of High-Performance District Leadership

How to Create the Capacity for Change

District Leadership Forum

EAB

Events for District Leaders

Superintendent Research Briefings

We summarize the latest research on K-12's biggest challenges to help district leaders *get smart* and *make progress*.

"EAB's research and information are some of the best I've seen...**simple**, **concise**, **easy to understand**."

Superintendent,
Missouri School District

A Unique Approach to Tackling Education's Most Complex Challenges

We Harness a Network of Progressive Education Leaders

Our college, university, and public school district partners are committed to working together to improve performance and elevate student success

2,500+
institutional partners
nationwide

28,000+
education leaders engaging with EAB every year

We Provide Research-Driven Solutions and Access to Expertise

Our proprietary research model and deep bench of subject matter experts provide innovative and practical solutions to our partners most pressing problems

30+
years researching strategic challenges for students and schools

500+
subject matter experts available to partner organizations

We Have a Relentless Focus on Turning Research into Results

Through expert consultations, diagnostic audits, implementation tools, and leadership training, we work closely with each partner to drive tangible results.

95%
of partners choose to continue our work together each year

The District Leadership Forum

Helping Superintendents and Their Teams Make Faster
Progress on Today's Most Complex Challenges

EAB

180+

District Partners

Set our research agenda

Share ideas, support each other

Advise EAB and pressure test our model

Our Commitment to Forum Partners

Research current challenges to
find innovative, practical solutions

Equip superintendents to
make the case for change

Partner with leadership teams to
build capacity for leading change

Engage teachers and staff to
tailor solutions to ensure progress sticks

Research Addressing Myriad Complex and Often Nitty-Gritty Challenges Confronting Districts Nationwide

Focal Issues for Our First Five Years

Still Just Scratching the Surface

Raising Early Literacy Scores	Reducing Disruptive Behavior	Closing College Access Gaps	Becoming an Employer of Choice	Rethinking Special Ed. Service Delivery	
Minimizing Chronic Absenteeism	Preventing Mental Health Crises	Developing Effective Principals	Managing Your District's Brand	Strategic Staffing Models	
Responding to District Flashpoints	Optimizing Crisis Communications	Winning the Public Vote	Navigating Opportunities and Pitfalls of AI	Characteristics of High Performing Leadership Teams	

Meet Your Presenters

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Partner Development*

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Opening Question:

Which Kind of Leader Drives Results That Last Beyond Their Tenure?

Surgeon Soldier Philosopher Architect Accountant

According to a study of 400 leaders of British Academies

Chronic Absenteeism   **Early Literacy**   **Disruptive Behavior**   **Mental Health Crises**   **Teacher Morale**

Problem

+8M

more students chronically absent in '22 vs. '19

Root Causes

Change in parent behaviors

- More protective
- More transactional
- More resigned
- Confused

Common Missteps

- Unclear policy
- Punitive communications
- Under-leveraging teachers in efforts to improve attendance

How We Help

EAB's Chronic Absenteeism Collaborative Program

- Build a best-in-class prevention campaign

- Establish an efficient process for early intervention

- Make discussing attendance with parents easy for teachers

Smithville Public Schools, MO

Percentage of students chronically absent from school

Bethlehem Area School District, PA

Percentage of kindergarteners scoring at or above the DIBELS benchmark composite

Washoe County Public Schools, NV

High school graduation rate

BEFORE

21%
in 2021

47%
in 2015

66%
in 2012

AFTER

10%
in 2022

84%
in 2018

84%
in 2017

What did they do?

Why did it work?

Could this be replicated?

Source: EAB Interviews and Analysis

The Hidden Truth

Beneath Every Success Story, We Find an Organization Hardwired for Change

- Shared vision and goals
- Role and ownership clarity
- Hardwired accountability
- Balance of non-negotiables and autonomy
- Data-driven decision-making
- Practice of sourcing and scaling innovation
- Outsized investment in leadership development
- Focus on employee engagement and agency
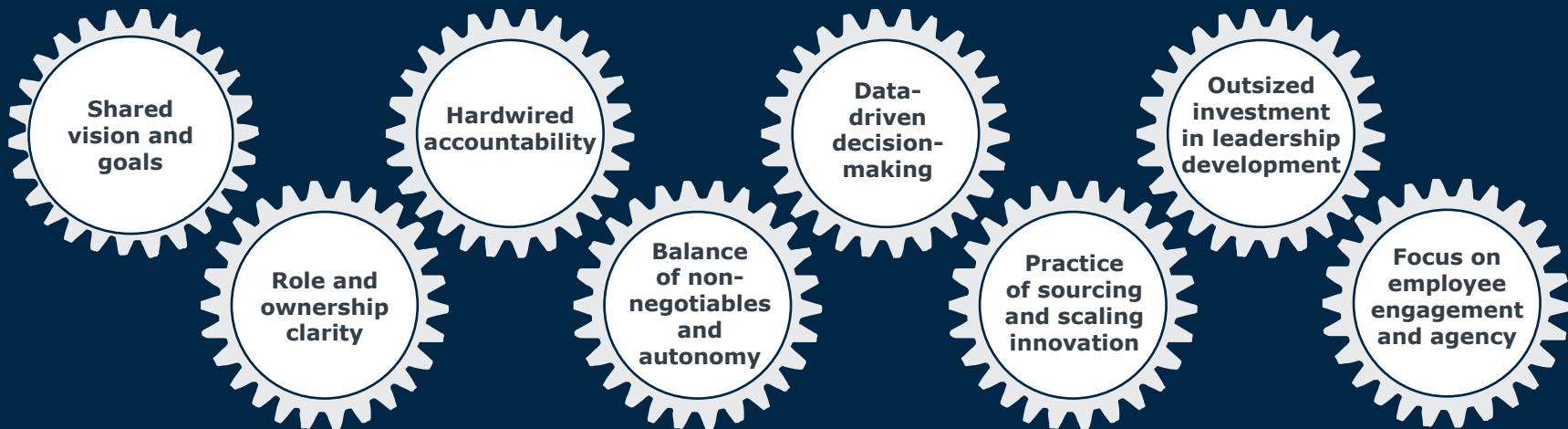
Where Strategic Superintendents Invest Their Energy

"

I strongly believe that building district capacity is our most important work as superintendents.

Superintendent, IL

"

"

Without a focused approach to building systems, we will continue to do "random acts of education."

Superintendent, OH

"

"

A great idea is no match for a dysfunctional organization!

Superintendent, TX

"

Finally… the Answer:

Which Kind of Leader Drives Results That Last Beyond Their Tenure?

Surgeon   Soldier   Philosopher   **Architect**   Accountant

According to a study of 400 leaders of British Academies

District Leadership That Works (Marzano & Waters, 2006)

District Leadership That Works

Five district leadership behaviors with a statistically significant ($p<.05$) effect on student achievement:

1. **Collaborative goal-setting**
2. **Non-negotiable goals** for achievement and instruction
3. **Board alignment** with and support of district goals
4. **Monitoring the goals** for achievement and instruction
5. **Use of resources to support the goals** for achievement and instruction

Related Frameworks and Texts Referenced by District Leaders

- Baldridge Excellence Framework

- Quint Studer's Nine Principles

- Franklin Covey Four Disciplines of Execution

- Lencioni's Five Dysfunctions of a Team

100% Of superintendents want more support and/or engagement on organizational development (n=75)

Source: EAB Interviews and Analysis; Waters, J.T. & Marzano, R.J. (2006). *District Leadership That Works.*

Current Guides are Descriptive, Not Prescriptive

"

> I have six degrees, and none of them really prepared me to manage enterprise performance and change. I need more than a framework, I need a "how-to" guide.

Superintendent, IN

Overwhelming To-Do List (Where to Start?)

"

> When looking at [organizational health] frameworks, I worry that our team has so many things to work on that they will feel demoralized and defeated before we start the work.

Superintendent, MA

K-12 Industry Challenges Not Adequately Addressed

"

> It's easy to view this as business 101 – and to some extent, it is. But superintendents also have to navigate historical structures that make this work even harder than in a corporate setting.

Superintendent, PA

Source: EAB Interviews and Analysis

Hardwire Your District for High-Performance

A Blueprint, Not a Framework

Discover tactical best practices

Annual Diagnostic Assessment

Diagnose where to focus

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Embed best practices

Case Study Roundtables

Discuss key challenges with peers

Take our self-assessment today!

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Open to EAB partner districts.
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April 30-May 1
Washington D.C.

June 5-6
Chicago IL

June 25-26
Dallas, TX

July 23-24
Washington, D.C.

Three Objectives for Today's Session

Shared vision and goals

Role and ownership clarity

Outsized investment in leadership development

1. Share three questions superintendents should be asking

2. Discuss simple but effective tools that support best practices in each terrain

3. Provide examples of innovative practices from three exemplary districts

Question #1

Shared vision and goals

Have we defined what success looks like for the next 12 months?

District To-Do List (Need another whiteboard!)

- ❑ Raise reading scores
- ❑ Increase pass rates in Algebra 1
- ❑ Get to 90% of students at 90% ADA
- ❑ Fill open positions (especially Special Ed)
- ❑ Decrease disruptive behavior
- ❑ Decrease disparities in discipline
- ❑ Increase students' access to mental health services
- ❑ Figure out policies for A.I. (and how we should use it)

84%
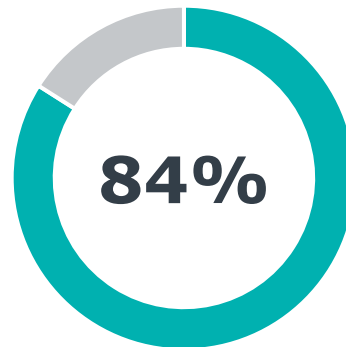
Of district leaders report that prioritization is very challenging for their leadership team (n=75)

Source: EAB Interviews and Analysis

Objective Categories

Variables	Critical	Important	Desirable
Expectations	Fixed	Best we can achieve	Fixed
Resources	First allocation of time and funds	Fixed	When can be spared
Timeline	Fixed	Fixed	Flexible
Number of Objectives	1	2-4	Remaining

Critical Objective

The one thing that *must* get done this year. Senior leaders should spend time on this every day.

Important Objective

Dedicated owners assigned and given fixed resources based on projected need.

Desirable Objective

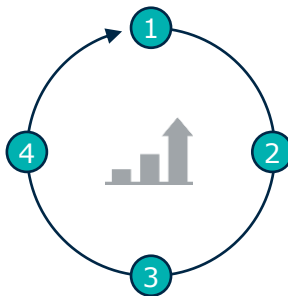Time and resources will be allocated if and when they become available.

Source: Lidow, D., *A Better Way to Set Strategic Priorities*, HBR (2017); EAB Interviews and Analysis

The Essential Question

"What's the one thing I can do, such that by doing it, everything else will become easier or unnecessary?"

Gary Keller, Author

Mansfield ISD's Site-Based Cycles of Accountability

1 **Identify the "one thing"** that would have the greatest impact

2 **Conduct a root cause analysis** for their chosen issue

3 **Craft a strategy** for addressing identified root causes

4 **Report on progress 4x per year** (make requested adjustments)

"It shouldn't be easy to choose their one thing – there should be a two, three, and four. That's where distributed leadership comes into play." ~Dr. Sean Scott, Deputy Superintendent
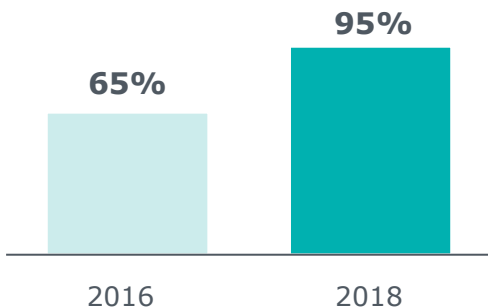
And Set a New Floor for Practice Across the District

Example 1

**Elementary Principal Unlocks
Rapid Growth in Reading Scores**

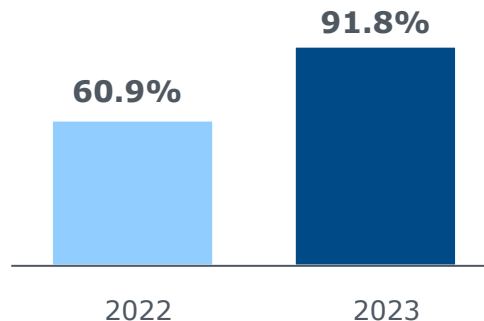*% of second-grade students reading on
grade level, as a result of a principal-led initiative.*

95%

65%

2016 | 2018

Example 2

**Summit High Makes Huge Strides on College,
Career, or Military Readiness Measures**

% of students graduating CCMR, Summit High School

91.8%

60.9%

2022 | 2023

"When we find practices that deliver results, that becomes the new floor for practice across the district.
We don't want our leaders to need to be heroes to be successful." ~ Dr. Sean Scott

Question #2

Role and ownership clarity

Have we clarified "who owns" each district priority and how individuals contribute at every level?

Hard to Overstate the Importance of Role Clarity

Engagement

"A lack of role clarity makes all other engagement elements less impactful"

~ Gallup, 2024

Efficacy

+27%

Increase in role performance among employees who report role clarity vs role ambiguity

Speed

+36%

Time to completion when adding an additional "owner" to an initiative

Frustration

"When people are unclear about who owns what, all of the questions go straight to my inbox."

Superintendent, Southwest school district

Necessary Central Office Team Growth
Happened Organically, Not by Design

+77%   Growth in the number of central office positions, 2000-2021 (NCES)
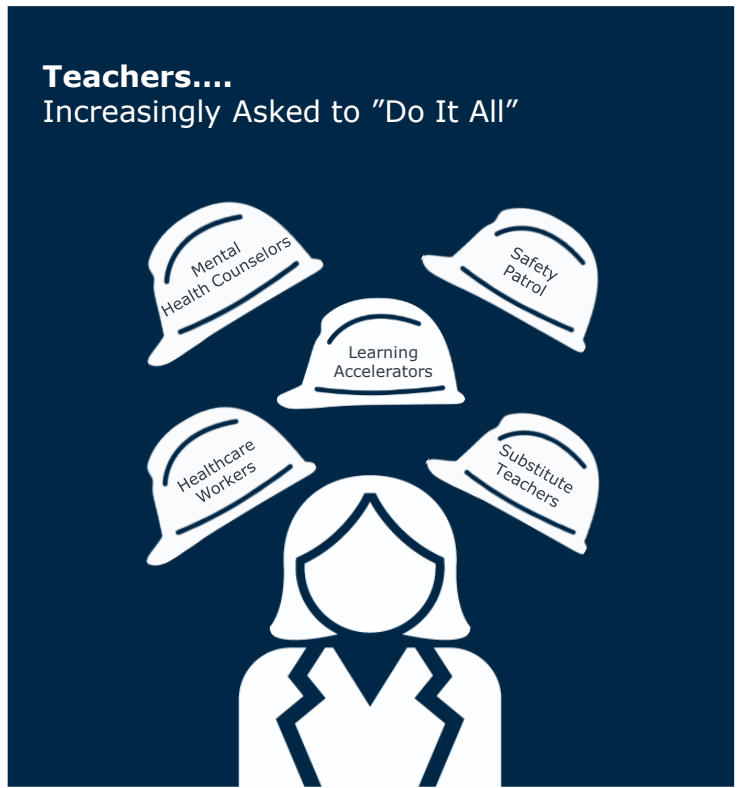
Common Observations

10+   Direct reports for superintendents

Departments "inserted" under senior leaders (CFO managing school improvement)

Overlapping job descriptions create justifiable questions about ownership

Teachers….
Increasingly Asked to "Do It All"

- Mental Health Counselors
- Safety Patrol
- Learning Accelerators
- Healthcare Workers
- Substitute Teachers

Source: EAB Interviews and Analysis

RACI Framework

R Who is **responsible** for doing the work?

A Who is **accountable** for each core requirement (ownership)

C Who should be **consulted** on the right approach?

I Who needs to be kept **informed** about the work?

Benefits of Documenting Roles By Priority

✔ People know who to go to with questions

✔ Individuals understand their expectations

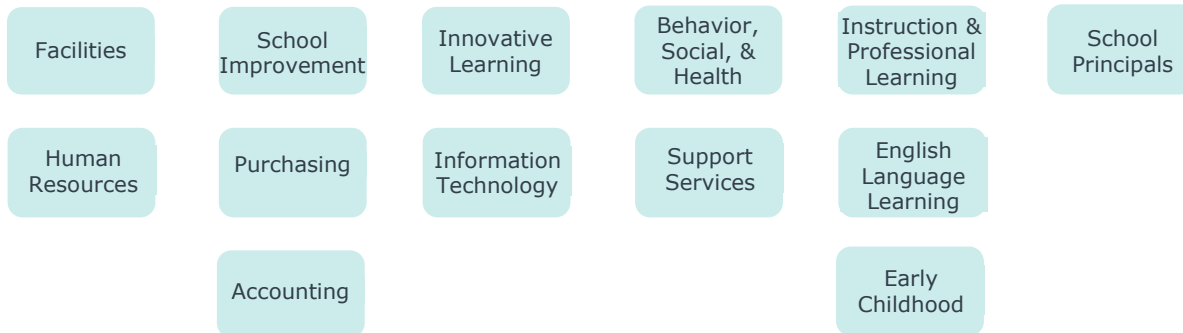✔ Easier to see how much each individual or team is being asked to do

⚠ Consider all stakeholder contributions, from the boardroom to the classroom

Source: Forbes Advisor (2022), *What is a RACI Chart?*; EAB Interviews and Analysis

Partial Representation of Inherited Structure at Tempe Elementary District 3
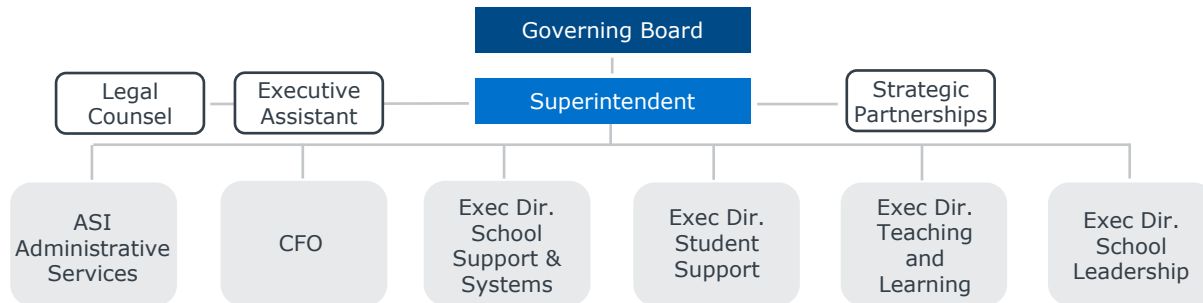
Situation in Brief

- 1Superintendent had 17 direct reports
- No consistency in the level of titles
- Unclear why some functions report to particular leaders
- Overlap in job descriptions led to "too many cooks"
- Hard to elevate cabinet discussions to strategic level

Source: EAB Interviews and Analysis

1. Four core priorities for the district (Enterprise model)

2. Established executive ownership through a core team of Chiefs

3. Aligned the organization under each enterprise/Chief

Student Success	Chief Academic Officer	✓ Re-wrote job descriptions and "re-hired" core team
Employee Experience	Chief of Employee Experience	✓ Clarified how roles connect and collaborate
Community Confidence	Chief of Staff and Strategic Partnerships	✓ Aligned Director roles within each Chief/ enterprise
Innovation and Imagination	Chief Technology, Innovation, and Imagination Officer	
	+ CLO, CFO, and COO	

Profiled Institution

Tempe
School District No. 3

TEMPE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT

TITLE: Chief of Employee Experience

Source: EAB Interviews and Analysis

Requirements

Building Trust

Buy-in for major change requires strong personal relationships.

Overcommunication

Must ensure that everyone understands the what, why, and how.

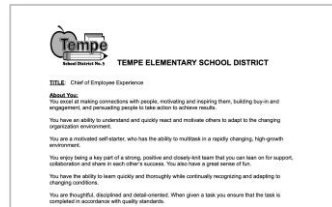### Risk Tolerance

Some people may leave (by design or by choice). It is impossible to predict all outcomes.

Benefits

More Productive Meetings

More time spent on strategic issues, making key decisions.

Less Time Spent on 1:1 Management

Number of direct reports reduced from 17 to 6.

More Time to Engage Community on Key Issues

Crucial for securing buy-in for necessary change.

Source: EAB Interviews and Analysis

Question #3

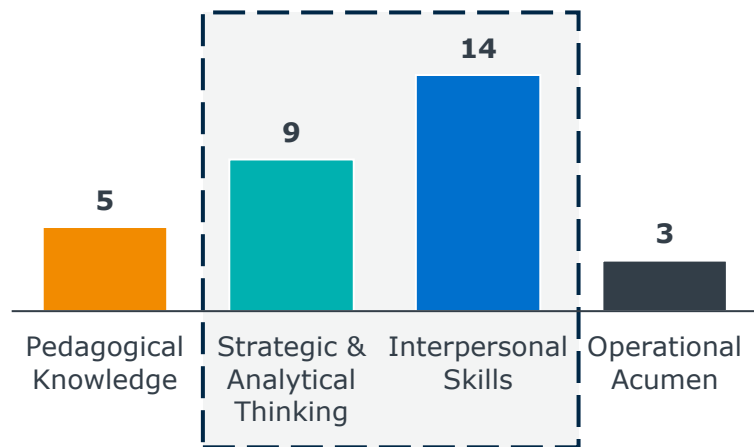**Outsized investment in leadership development**

Is your leadership team equipped to craft strategies and lead change?

(And do you have qualified candidates ready to continue their work?)

Which Competencies Matter for Highly Effective School Leadership?

Number of School Leadership Competencies Represented as Having a Positive Effect Size in EAB Meta-Research[1]

Pedagogical Knowledge	Strategic & Analytical Thinking	Interpersonal Skills	Operational Acumen
5	9	14	3

1) N=31 total positive effect sizes; see appendix for further details of meta-analyses results.

Can your school and district leaders:

✔ Diagnose root causes of problems?

✔ Lead collaborative development of solutions?

✔ Anticipate pitfalls in implementation?

✔ Allocate resources effectively?

✔ Build trusting relationships with staff?

✔ Communicate effectively across the organization?

✔ Adapt leadership style to the needs of the situation?

Source: Waters, T et al. (2003) "What 30 Years of Research Tells Us about the Effects of Leadership on Student Achievement"; Robinson, V et al (2008) "The Impact of Leadership on Student Outcomes"; Heck R.H. & Hallinger, P (2010) "Testing a Longitudinal Model of Leadership Effects on School Improvement."; Supovitz, J. "Instructional Leadership in American High School"; Scheeren, J (2012) "School Leadership Effects Revisited: Review and Meta-Analysis of Empirical Studies"; EAB interviews and analysis.

Business Leadership Training Focuses on Core Competencies

~80%

Of MBA programs require course related to either strategic thinking or interpersonal competencies

> University prep programs teach about laws governing schools, instructional practices, and other topics related to teaching and learning, but **principals don't really learn how to create and lead strategies, while getting everyone on board—even though that is what most principals need to do."**

~ Superintendent, Midwest School District

69% Of principals believe their **preparation programs were "out of touch"** with the realities of the job

Source: EAB Interviews and Analysis

Root Cause Analysis

Define all potential root causes of a problem and which need to be addressed in your schools

Six Thinking Hats

Prevent group-think and include diverse voices when making key decisions and crafting strategies
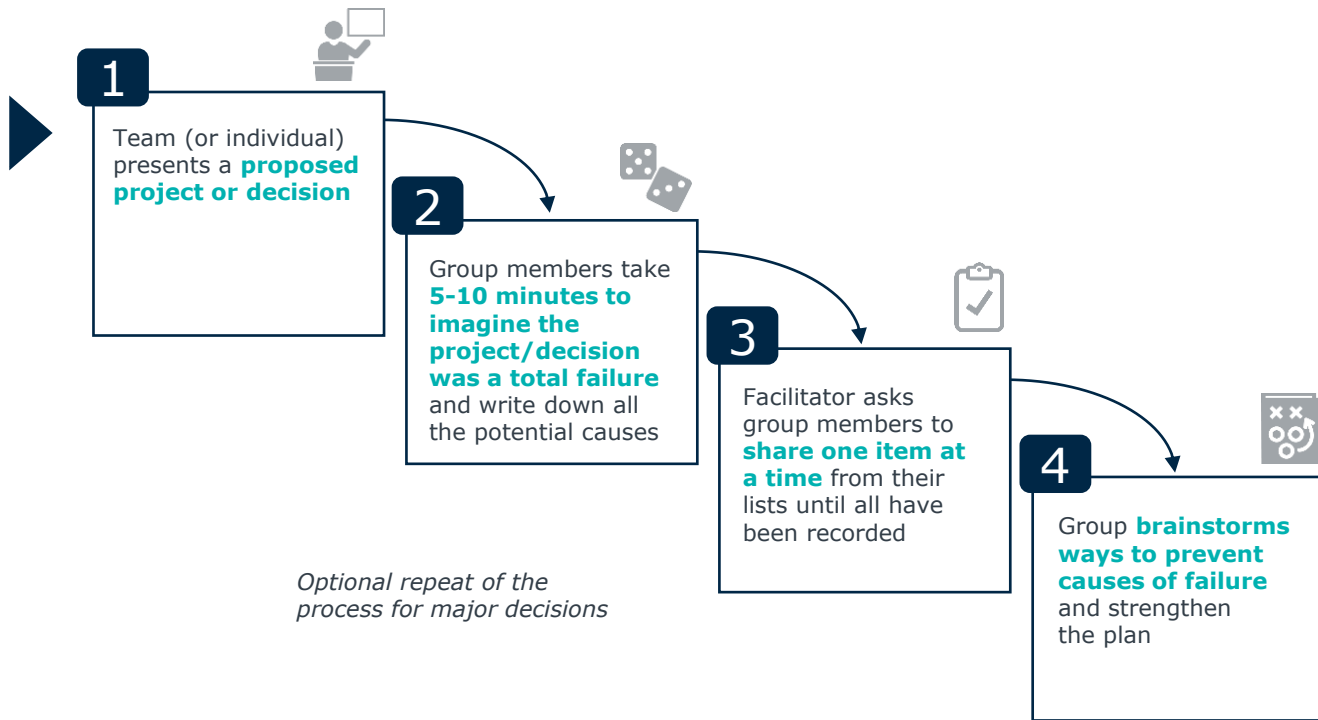
Pre-Mortem Analysis

Anticipate causes of failure and unintended consequences when making decisions or launching new initiatives

A Step-by-Step Guide for Conducting a Pre-Mortem Analysis

1 Team (or individual) presents a **proposed project or decision**

2 Group members take **5-10 minutes to imagine the project/decision was a total failure** and write down all the potential causes

3 Facilitator asks group members to **share one item at a time** from their lists until all have been recorded

4 Group **brainstorms ways to prevent causes of failure** and strengthen the plan

Optional repeat of the process for major decisions

"We should never have a leadership position open up without someone who is ready to take on the role." ~ Dr. Angel Rivera, Mesquite ISD

Mis-Aligned Preparation Programs

+

Enrollment in Leadership Programs "Only Option" for Advancement

=

Hard to Identify Right Candidates to "Tap"

Those enrolled not developing key skills

Enrollment often result of desire for career progress, not aptitude for leadership

"We have people certified for leadership positions, but are they ready to lead?"

Source: EAB Interviews and Analysis

How Mesquite ISD is Working to Get the Right People in the Right Roles

1 Require those in leadership positions to identify qualified successors for their roles

2 Establish in-house training to help future leaders develop key skills and navigate "leadership shifts"

3 Define leadership behaviors for each position and create "stretch activities" to demonstrate aptitude

4 Create alternatives to administrative leadership positions to keep talent in the classroom

What's In the **Leadership Through Ownership** Hub

Rubrics clarify role-specific behaviors

Resources guide staff through developing skills

Library of job-embedded opportunities for "building a resumé"

Reflecting on Today's Teaching Points

Shared vision and goals

Role and ownership clarity

Outsized investment in leadership development

1. Every superintendent we interviewed is looking for more support in building a "High Performance District"

2. Simple practices can make a big difference – are achievable for most teams today

3. To unlock the next level of performance, superintendents need to learn from real case studies and from each other

Hardwire Your District for High-Performance

A Blueprint, Not a Framework

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Implementation Collaborative:
Preparing Principals to Lead Change

EAB

80% of superintendents are dissatisfied with the quality of principal preparation programs today. This program equips district leaders to address those gaps and move their principals from managers to strategic change leaders who are equipped to drive continuous improvement in their schools.

Workshop 1:
Define Essential Competencies

1 **Review the latest research** on what separates high-performing principals from the rest, and how districts can build those capabilities

2 **Take the 360 assessment** to identify your principals' current strengths and areas for improvement

**Workshop 2:**
Design Your Leadership Programming

3 **Integrate essential trainings** into your professional development calendar

4 **Learn how to implement strategic improvement cycles** that help principals develop leadership skills while delivering results

Workshop 3:
Protect Time for Strategic Work

5 **Define the steps** that both district leaders and principals can take to minimize distractions and optimize use of time

6 **Craft a district-wide agreement** for the practices you will implement in the next school year

Workshop 4:
Hire the Right Candidates

7 **Discover leading-edge practices** for evaluating strategic leadership competencies in principal candidates

8 **Build a plan** to embed select practices in your hiring process for the next yea
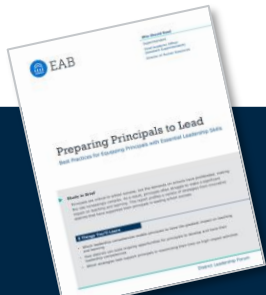
Build a plan for principal development that can be scaled across the district

Reserve your seats for our 2024 Preparing Principals Collaborative cohorts for District Leaders:

*Next cohort launches July 2024 – **Register by June 15***

The Anatomy of a Collaborative:
EAB's Unique Formula for Supporting Successful Implementation

EAB

Guided Planning Workshops
EAB experts provide step-by-step guidance for each phase of implementation and protected time to make key decisions

"Working through a process rooted in research gave my team clarity and confidence through understanding the "why" behind our actions."

~ *Superintendent, Michigan*

Implementation Resources
EAB creates every resource you need – including agendas and communications - to make leading change possible for your team

"EAB's resources were amazing. There's no way we could have done all of this alone."

~ *Assistant Superintendent, Missouri*

Weekly Office Hours
Sustain your momentum by working with EAB experts to navigate concerns and roadblocks as they arise

"One week we found ourselves with 100 questions from staff and scrambling for answers. Olivia helped us to slow down, craft efficient responses, and communicate with confidence."

~ *Chief Academic Officer, Virginia*

A Community of Peers
Learn and lead alongside a cohort of peers, all working to make progress together

"Learning alongside other others is crucial for school leaders. It's impossible – and unhelpful – for us to try and solve today's challenges alone."

~ *Superintendent, Texas*

Choose the Path That's Right For Your Team: Each collaborative can also be run for individual districts. Limited availability.

How Else Can We Help?

I'd like to speak with someone further to…

1 Reserve seats for an upcoming *Preparing Principal Leaders Collaborative* cohort

2 Get your copy of the High-Performance District self assessment

3 Learn how to register for EAB's Spring Leadership Roundtables

4 Something else? Choose this option and we will follow up with you

Prepare Your Principals to Lead Chang

Collaborative Series for Superintendents and Principal Supervisors

1. Define Essential Competencies

2. Design Your Strategic Leadership Programming

3. Protect Time for Strategic Work

4. Hire the Right Candidates

+

Year-Round Professional Development Series for Principals

Two virtual seminars a month:

1. Executive skill development (root cause analysis, change management, etc.)

2. Best practice solutions to current challenges (absenteeism, behavior, teacher retention)

Next cohort Launches in July   ▶   **Registration closes June 15th**

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The Eight Hallmarks of a High-Performance District

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