



# The Threat of Low Teacher Morale on District Success

District Leadership Forum

# Joining You Today...

## Meet Your Panelists



**Caleb Campbell**  
*Managing Director,  
Partner Development, EAB*



**Georgeanne Warnock**  
*Superintendent, Terrell  
Independent School  
District, Texas*



**Olivia Rios**  
*Associate Director,  
Research, EAB*



**Neal Dickstein**  
*Superintendent, Freehold  
Township School District,  
New Jersey*

# EAB Helps Schools to Support Students From Kindergarten to Careers

Research-Based Solutions to Systemic Challenges Across K-12, Higher Education, and Adult Learning

*Founded in 2007, EAB is a mission-driven organization based in Washington DC.*

**Everything we do stems from research**, with the purpose of helping institutions to support students at every stage of their journey



## Research and Insights

*8,000+ peer reviewed best practices identified and 500+ innovations tested annually*



## Year-Round Strategic Advising

*2,100+ institutions served throughout the US and across the globe*



## Research-Based Technologies

*9.5 million students supported by our student success management system*

K-12 | Community Colleges | Four-Year Colleges and Universities | Graduate and Adult Learning

# Many Thanks to the Advisors of this Work

## Teacher Morale Advisory Council

Session #1 Participants



**Crete Public Schools**, Nebraska  
Josh McDowell, *Superintendent*



**Cocksackie-Athens Central SD**, New York  
Randy Squier, *Superintendent*



**Goddard Public Schools**, Kansas  
Justin Henry, *Superintendent*



**Iowa City Community SD**, Iowa  
Matt Degner, *Superintendent*



**Perry Local SD**, Ohio  
Kelly Schooler, *Superintendent*



**Salem City Schools**, Virginia  
Curtis Hicks, *Superintendent*

## Districts Profiled in Research



**Arkport Central SD**, New York  
Jesse Harper, *Superintendent*



**Harvard CUSD**, Illinois  
Corey Tafoya, *Superintendent*



**Norton Public Schools**, Massachusetts

- Joseph Baeta, *Superintendent*
- Jen O'Neill, *ASI Teaching & Learning*



**Parkway Public Schools**, Missouri

- Keith Marty, *Superintendent*
- Chelsea Watson, *Deputy Superintendent*



**Prosper ISD**, Texas  
Bernadette Gerace, *ED Human Resources*



**Republic School District**, Missouri  
Matt Pearce, *Superintendent*

# Working in Schools Just Keeps Getting Harder



5

## Not Only Are District Leaders' Jobs Harder Than Ever...

### Evergreen Challenges Worsen

- Expanding academic gaps and needs
- State accountability and mandates
- Decreasing funds

### New Challenges Always Emerging

- COVID closures
- Mask and vaccine conflicts
- Mental health crisis
- CRT and other polarization

## But the Teaching Profession **Keeps Getting Harder**, Too.



# Tackling Teacher Morale Is Best Bet for Progress



## Limits on What District Leaders Can Do to Improve Situation



### Hire More Teachers?



Nearly 30% of teacher education programs saw **a decline in enrollment** this year.



### Increase Salaries?



Public school dollars are tight, finances are highly regulated, and **competitive pay is a long way off**.



### Reinvent Public Perception?



“What we need is a public figure to be to teachers **what Ronald Reagan was for the American soldier.**”

## Improving Morale Only Remaining Lever

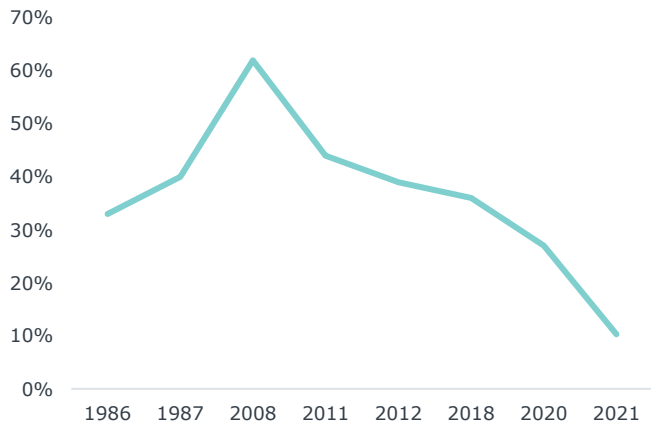


What we can do is make sure [teachers] have as much of a positive experience at school as possible. That is what we are trying to do-- show teachers they are valued and appreciated since they are doing so much.”

# Morale Will Not Improve Without Action

## The Decline of Teacher Morale Over Time

Data from from NCES, MetLife, and EAB<sup>1</sup>



88%

Of district leaders agree teacher morale is **worse today** than five years ago<sup>2</sup>

75%

Of teachers report **morale is lower** than pre-pandemic<sup>3</sup>

70%

Of teachers agreed they are **not able to be the best teacher** they can be for students<sup>2</sup>

## And the Future of Morale, As It Is, Discouraging

- Teacher responsibilities keep increasing
- Data trends on morale over past 20 years unpromising
- Crises (e.g., COVID) that exacerbate low morale will likely evolve into new crises

1) N = 4,000; n = 1,000; n = 2400

2) Data from EAB's Teacher Morale Survey, 2021

3) Data from EdWeek

# Low Morale Is Bad for Students, Bad for Districts



8

## Negative Impacts on Districts

~80%

Of partners agree that initiative fatigue has led them to postpone their learning acceleration plans until next year.

~50%

Of partners report an increase in mid-year resignations this year.

## Negative Impacts on Students

70%

Of relevant studies concluded that teachers with the lowest morale also had the lowest academic student outcomes across core subjects.

78%

Of middle and high school students report feeling less interested in class when their teachers appear "unenergized" or "disengaged."

## At A Time When...



Students Academic and SEL Needs at All-Time High



Growing Substitute and Teacher Shortages



Public Perception of Public K12 Is Strained

Sources: Buttner, Annie, Frontline Education, [The Teacher Shortage, 2021 Edition](#), 4.19.21; Gallup, [The Powerful Relationship Between Employee Engagement and Team Performance](#), 2020; Madigan, Daniel, Kim, Lisa, International Journal of Educational Research, [Does teacher burnout affect students...](#), November 2020. Will, Madeline, Education Week, [As Teacher Morale Hits a New Low, Schools Look for Ways to Give Breaks, Restoration](#), 1.6.21; EAB interviews and analysis.



# An Ethical Imperative to Protect Health and Well-being 9

## Mental and Physical Health in Jeopardy

### Increased Physical Health Risks

23%

Increase in chances of a heart attack



Tied to higher likelihood of Type 2 diabetes, coronary heart disease, headaches, respiratory and gastrointestinal issues.<sup>1</sup>

### Increased Mental Health Risks

10%

Increase in chances of a major depressive episode

## WHO Acknowledges Threat to Health

In 2019, WHO categorized the extreme form of low morale, burnout (defined as chronic, unmanaged workplace stress) as “**an occupational health hazard**” for the first time because of its known negative impact on individual health and wellbeing.

1) Additionally tied to a higher likelihood of cardiovascular disorder, prolonged fatigue gastrointestinal issues, respiratory problems, severe injuries, and mortality below the age of 45 years.

Sources: Patel, Chandani, M.D., ABC News, [Job Stress Linked to Increased Heart-Attack Risk](#), September 2012; Salvagioni, Denise Albiéri Jodas et al. “[Physical, psychological and occupational consequences of job burnout: A systematic review of prospective studies.](#)” PLoS one vol. 12,10 e0185781. 4 Oct. 2017, doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0185781; Turner, Ashley, CNBC, [The World Health Organization recognizes...](#), May 2019; Wang, Jianli, National Library of Medicine, [Work stress as a risk factor for major depressive episode\(s\)](#), June 2005; EAB interviews and analysis.

# Districts' Current Efforts to Improve Morale Fall Flat

## Wellness And Teacher Appreciation Most Common Strategies To Improve Morale



80%

Of partner districts offer **wellness supports** to employees as their #1 strategy for improving morale



95%

Of partners share that **increasing teacher appreciation efforts** is the #2 most important part of their strategy

## But Despite Good Intentions, Morale Has Stayed Low

“Despite our efforts, this is probably the worst years we have seen for teacher morale. We are doing what we can, but **we are kind of at a loss.**”

*Superintendent  
Midwestern School District*

# EAB's Four-Part Research Methodology

Exploring Beyond K-12 to Uncover the Secret to Success



- **Review Existing Research**  
50+ years of research on psychology of motivation, morale, and engagement studied

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- **Conduct Nationwide Survey**  
2600+ teachers and district/school leaders surveyed by EAB to capture current state of morale and engagement

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- **Analyze Critical Factors**  
130+ key factors analyzed for impact on teacher morale

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- **Search for Aligned Best Practices**  
100+ organizations examined for best practices to raise employee morale and engagement

# 'Doctor' Archetype Most Likely to Improve Morale

...But Also, Least Common in Public Education

80% of Districts

## CAREGIVER



Heavily invests in employee wellness and ramps up one-off appreciation efforts

17% of Districts

## GENERALIST



Attempts to operationalize every morale factor they can find

3% of Districts

## DOCTOR



Slows down to diagnose the root problem of morale and partners with employee to solve it

# Making the Shift From Strategies to a System



## Five Reasons Why the Momentum Loop Improves Morale



**Diagnoses the root of morale issues** rather than treating symptoms



**Addresses 1-2 root issues** at a time



**Partners with teachers** to design solutions



**Provides agility to respond** to any new or unforeseen disruptions to morale



**Shifts focus** from low morale to sustained investment in improved working conditions

# Panel Discussion



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# Join the Morale Movement



Join Districts Across the Country Improving Teacher Morale in Their Schools

## Teacher Morale Collaborative for District Leaders

**2023 Cohorts Now Open**



**Diagnose why morale is low**  
by collecting teacher input



**Prioritize threats** and possible  
remedies to low morale



**Involve teachers in co-  
designing solutions** by  
lowering participation barriers



The materials you provide are amazing! There is no way we could do all of this on our own. We appreciate our partnership with EAB so much!"

*Assistant Superintendent*



Listening to others—learning from other district leaders—it is helpful to hear new ideas and consider ways those may be impactful in our schools."

*Superintendent*



LOVE the structure of everything. It's taking a messy process and making it feel doable and possible!"

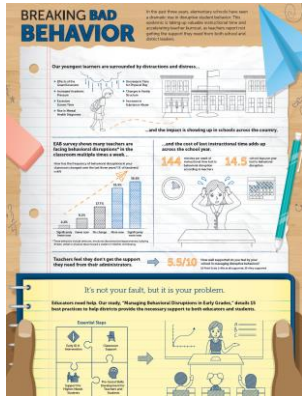
*Instructional Coach*

Registration Open for 2023 Start Dates: Limited Seats Available!

# Inform Our Ongoing Research

## Teacher and District Leader Survey on Student Behavior

### Then: Creating Conditions for Positive Behavior in Early Grades



- Addressing the challenge of disruptive classrooms
- Building social-emotional skills
- Promoting positive adult-student connections

### Now: Nationwide Survey on Student Behavior



Thank you for participating in EAB's research initiative on creating conditions for positive student behaviors. EAB is a research firm that serves K-12 educational institutions across the country. The results of this survey will provide schools like yours trends on the prevalence and types of student behaviors causing concern and the barriers teachers and districts face in trying to address these concerns. Participants will be eligible to receive early insights from the survey data.

This survey will take less than 10 minutes to complete and is anonymous.

- Take the survey before **November 1** to have your voice be heard
- Visit the [survey site](#) on eab.com to share it with your district's teachers, school leaders, and administrators



# How Else Can We Help?

I'd like to speak with someone further about...

- 1 Joining the nationwide Teacher Morale Collaborative
- 2 How to diagnose causes of low morale to understand teachers' actual needs and wants
- 3 Prioritizing morale threats to effectively tackle and act on root causes
- 4 EAB's research on promoting positive student behaviors
- 5 Something else? Choose this option and we will follow up with you



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