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LETTER FROM CHRIS MINNICH
CCSSO Executive Director

The Demand for Inspirational Leadership

Dear Chiefs,
Serving in the role of a chief state school officer is a great honor and a great responsibility. As your membership organization, it is our belief that state education agencies, and those who lead them, play a critical role in ensuring that our schools and educators meet the needs of all of the learners they serve. In fact, in our recent report Leading for Equity: Opportunities for State Education Chiefs, we call on our members to make sure “that every student has access to the resources and educational rigor they need at the right moment in their education, despite race, gender, ethnicity, language, disability, family background, or family income.” This is no small task, but supporting you in achieving it is something to which CCSSO is firmly committed.

Achieving this objective will require that you and your agencies take on new roles or roles that agencies have struggled to take on in the past. Too often leaders are caught between wanting to drive meaningful reform and the realities of how state agencies typically operate. You and the agencies you lead cannot be content to simply perform the regulatory functions required by state and federal law. Meeting the needs of all kids will require executing a shift from a compliance-focused culture to one that fosters equity, accountability, innovation, and a service mindset. It will be necessary to build coalitions and to engage partners from across the political spectrum. It will require developing and implementing multiple interlocking strategies across the agency, and harnessing, as never before, the skills and abilities of state agency staff. To complicate matters further, the undertaking of these reforms will require that you and your team overcome extensive political division across the country and a pervasive lack of trust in government institutions.

Doing this kind of work—to achieve the ambitious goals we have set for ourselves in the face of daunting challenges—requires a new type of leadership. To help us better understand what that new approach to leadership looks like, CCSSO partnered with Dov Seidman and his team at LRN to develop this leadership playbook. In his extensive work defining effective leadership, Seidman has focused on the need for an approach to leadership that is grounded in shared values, which is critical, his research demonstrates, because:

- Only leadership built on shared human values, driven by an unwavering commitment to all kids, their future, and long-term outcomes can inspire diverse stakeholders to work together for mutual benefit.
- Only shared values can enable us to collectively and effectively navigate the daily moral challenges that confront leaders and educators in a digitally paced world.
- Only by scaling those shared values, and the behaviors that best embody them across our agencies and throughout the education system, can we bring about real and long-lasting change.
This values-based approach to leadership, what Seidman and his team call inspirational leadership, is not dependent on the command-and-control behaviors that some leaders employ. Rather it is a model in which the work of the entire system, both inside the state agency and among the wider education and policymaking community, is driven forward by a shared vision and shared values.

In order to apply this model of values-based leadership to the job of running an SEA, CCSSO and a team from LRN engaged with a group of current and former chiefs to lay out what it looks like when chiefs most fully act as inspirational leaders. Using feedback from these chiefs, we identified four imperatives — priorities you must focus on to truly lead in this new way:

• **Bring people together** by forging relationships built on trust, engaging beyond your core network and supporting stakeholders as they lead.

• **Craft and share a vision** by co-creating it with your stakeholders, embedding it in your agency’s operations and maintaining focus and alignment around it.

• **Unlock potential across the SEA** by setting an example, fostering autonomy so all can lead, and supporting and developing your staff.

• **Grow as a leader** by developing self-awareness, asking for help and focusing your energy for impact.

This playbook is intended as a primer on what inspirational leadership at a state education agency looks like. While it includes the basic good management practices one would expect to find in such a guide, this playbook also includes detailed descriptions of the types of behaviors and actions unique to inspirational leaders. In addition, we have included tips, case studies, resources, and guiding questions that together aim to make these concepts tangible and meaningful for your context.

We hope that you find this playbook to be a valuable resource as you continue to grow as a leader, and to support you and your teams, CCSSO will continue to develop leadership programming and resources aligned with the four imperatives of the Leadership Playbook.

Sincerely,

Chris
Playbook Development Process

CCSSO’s Leadership Academy created this leadership playbook in partnership with LRN and its founder, Dov Seidman, to help you on your journey to become the inspirational leader students and educators need. Informed by LRN’s research and experience helping organizations improve their leadership and culture, the evolution of this playbook was propelled by a group of current and former chiefs. They offered the kind of insights and perspective that can only be gained from personal experience and provided the core content and feedback used to develop the Playbook. The design process, described below, spanned eight months of refinements.

2016 Summer Leadership Convening
The concept of the Leadership Playbook and the broader inspirational leadership development agenda were introduced. Through a panel discussion and workshop, participants engaged in a conversation about the core behaviors, actions, and values needed to lead today’s SEAs.

Interviews with Chiefs
Interviews were conducted with 13 current and former chiefs to dive deeper into the fundamental qualities necessary for success, as well as the key leadership challenges chiefs face.
This Leadership Playbook outlines and describes a model of inspirational leadership for chiefs. It divides this work into four challenges and four imperatives that are critical to the work of leading a state education agency as well as the key behaviors and actions necessary to achieve those imperatives. The model is grounded in a set of values that have been identified as core to inspirational chief leadership identified by chiefs during the Playbook development process. These values serve as a guide for how you do what you do, and the Playbook describes how they ground the work of each imperative uniquely.

Finally, the Playbook is only as useful as it can be acted upon and realized by chiefs. We have therefore included tips, case studies, and resources collected from current and former chiefs to provide examples of what inspirational leadership looks like in action.
The diagram below describes the outcomes associated with the four leadership imperatives, their related behaviors and actions, and the values at their core. Each imperative is explained in the pages that follow.
Values are our deepest beliefs about what is important. They inspire us and help ground our actions in a constantly evolving world. Values focus us on what we should do, not simply what we can or cannot do, and help us make the right decision even when under pressure. A few fundamental values carry more weight than a hundred rules, making it critical that organizations identify their core values and put them at the center of everything they do.

Organizations may mistakenly articulate their desired outcomes as values. Outcomes are certainly things that are valued, but they are not values in and of themselves. Rather, outcomes are a product of a collection of behaviors, and by extension, a result of the values that animated those behaviors in the first place.

Through a series of conversations with the chiefs who informed the writing of the playbook, CCSSO has identified four values that most fully encapsulated and were consistently identified as core to the work of SEA’s and critical to the leadership chiefs provide: Passion, Integrity, Humility, and Hope.

### Building from Values

**Passion:** Demonstrate your personal connection and commitment to the work.

**Integrity:** Say what you mean, do what you say.

**Humility:** Recognize that your perspective is often incomplete and seek out the ideas, knowledge and skills of others to grow.

**Hope:** Affirm the possibilities of the future.
Always keep your relationships close even when they’re hard and difficult; when you’re not agreeing, you lean into them and you just keep at it. Because if you are all putting kids first…and trying to move the needle forward, then everybody can feel good about it.

BRENDA CASSELLIUS
Minnesota Commissioner of Education

I gain a tremendous amount of insight by seeing schools, meeting people, and having a chance to hear their concerns on a very personal level. And I think they see that the people that are working in the state offices really do care about what they think, and are real people too. Both sides begin to share an understanding that we have a common goal and a common focus on students.

KATHRYN MATAYOSHI
Hawai‘i Superintendent of Education

With Missouri being a diverse state, we believe there is great value in understanding the people that are being served first.

MARGIE VANDEVEN
Missouri Commissioner of Education
BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER

The Challenge:
In this politically charged era, there is a broader, more engaged and activist constituency whose views must be considered and acted upon.

Barriers
Chiefs need to recognize and navigate new and often conflicting agendas. They have to sift through what are often ideologically charged narratives in order to find ground upon which to build compromise, all without yielding on their core beliefs about what needs to be done for kids. They are asked to balance the views of stakeholders against their own expertise and opinion and that of their team, but also recognize and respond to political realities. And, perhaps most importantly, they often need to engage groups that have historically been left out of the conversation, who may have a deep-seated lack of trust, but who expect to participate as equal partners and have their voices heard.

Inspirational Leadership
To overcome these barriers and bring people together, inspirational leaders forge relationships built on trust, pro-actively sharing information before it is requested rather than defensively controlling it out of fear or for leverage. They engage beyond their core network by enlisting others in the journey towards better learning outcomes for kids. They don’t rely only on personal charisma nor do they settle for merely playing the self-interests of stakeholder groups against each other. Lastly, inspirational leaders bring people together by supporting the leadership of stakeholders, valuing and recognizing their work.

Outcomes
By employing these values-based leadership behaviors and actions, chiefs will be able to bring together coalitions that act as true partners and work together towards an enduring commitment to kids. They will gather more meaningful inputs, and strengthen the public support needed to bring initiatives to fruition, ultimately inspiring others to lead in a sense of collective ownership.

CORE VALUES

PASSION:
Create an environment in which a diverse group of stakeholders feel safe and inspired to contribute their collective and constructive thoughts and ideas.

INTEGRITY:
Recognize and value the perspective of others while having the audacity to act on the vision and values for which you were chosen to lead even when it’s inconvenient or unpopular.

HUMILITY:
Place your ego and expertise aside so that you can model a curiosity and learn from others’ experiences, perspectives and ideas.

HOPE:
Trust in best intentions and the power of thoughtful, committed people to drive change.
KEY BEHAVIORS AND ACTIONS

Forge Relationships Built on Trust
Build coalitions that challenge assumptions and push your thinking.

- Prioritize shared purpose and in so doing transcend the potential for different interests to create friction across stakeholder groups and individuals.
- Invest time to cultivate personal relationships and build meaningful connections with the people with whom you need to work.
- Engage in two-way, proactive, regular, and transparent communication; build mechanisms for feedback loops, and be clear about how that feedback will be taken under consideration by you or the SEA.
- Anticipate the second and third order impacts of your actions and proactively reach out to those who may be affected.
- Seek out others’ input or expertise. At the same time, don’t ask for advice if the decision has already been made.

Engage Beyond Your Core Network
Do the hard work to enable meaningful contribution from more stakeholders; inviting participation isn’t enough.

- Be intentional about establishing relationships with groups that you don’t know as well.
- Invite disenfranchised, misinformed, or antagonistic constituencies to the conversation. If necessary, tailor your outreach to their needs and anticipate how you can support them in contributing.
- Recognize that stakeholders have multi-dimensional identities and agendas; avoid pigeonholing them as caring about one and only one thing.

Support Stakeholders as They Lead
Validate and elevate the work of others so you don’t need to do everything on your own.

- Recognize when it’s better for others to take the lead, and validate their leadership.
- Don’t abdicate responsibility, but step back and nurture your stakeholders’ efforts with counsel, positive reinforcement, or other forms of help.
- Connect stakeholders with complementary resources or knowledge. Sponsor projects and initiatives that bring diverse groups together and create opportunity for those groups to lead.

TIP: Leverage and invite stakeholders to join school visits. For example, visit schools on days when legislators are not in session and invite them to join you.

TIP: Attend conferences or meetings that your stakeholders will be attending on a national or state level (e.g., legislative conferences). This will give you the context to proactively address conference content with those stakeholders.

TIP: Assign staff to be liaisons to key associations and advocacy groups, creating a stronger web of relationships.

TIP: Develop a student cabinet and meet with them quarterly. Create a formal application process with a rubric for acceptance that ensures you gain a diversity of perspectives.

TIP: When releasing drafts to your stakeholders for review, consider highlighting sections by different colors to indicate what is up for review, what isn’t, and where you’re looking for new ideas.

TIP: Recognize that when you engage with constituents, you should have some knowledge of their position and history beforehand. Do your homework and be prepared to listen and seek to understand.

TIP: Advancing an agenda often requires the use of task forces and working groups. Consider asking external partners to chair or co-chair these task forces, giving them a higher degree of ownership over the outcome.
CASE STUDIES

Develop Your Play
Below are some of the best examples of how chiefs brought people together, we hope that they can serve as models for how these aspirations can come to life in the real world. As you’re reading about these inspirational chiefs, think about the following prompts, and see if you can develop a way to integrate their best practices into your unique context:

- Which disengaged, misinformed or antagonistic constituencies do you need to expand your outreach to?
- What relationships do you need to deepen, given the challenges you are collectively facing?
- How will you create more trust and reaffirm interdependence among these groups?
- How will you create space and support them as they lead in a spirit of collective ownership?

Minnesota: Engaging Tribal Communities

Challenge
Although Minnesota was known as the Gold Standard in American Indian education during the 1970s, the state’s relationship with its 11 sovereign tribes deteriorated in recent decades. This led to a variety of poor educational results for American Indian children, including high rates of suspension and low rates of attendance and graduation. The SEA also discovered that the state’s four Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) schools were being funded at half the rate of other public schools, as they were receiving only federal funding. The SEA knew that to improve education for American Indian children it would need to engage and work together with the tribal communities, embracing and honoring their sovereignty and self-determination.

Approach
Over a period of several months, Commissioner Brenda Cassellius spearheaded a series of trust- and relationship-building summits with leaders from the 11 sovereign tribes. Commissioner Cassellius also held listening sessions with those leaders as well as American Indian people from the metropolitan areas and their advocates. The governor attended the listening sessions and spoke about the importance of this issue and his dedication to improving relations with the tribal communities. As a result, the SEA and sovereign leaders decided to work together to develop a common vision that unpacked what the governor’s education plan for the state meant for the sovereign nations. The SEA hired a director of American Indian relations to facilitate this process, and the coalition negotiated the legislation and consultation policies necessary to move the conversation forward.

Impact
Over the 2014 and 2015 legislative sessions, the state increased support and aid for American Indian children through equity provisions, a new funding stream specifically for American Indian kids, and earmarked funds to close the financing gap between BIE and public schools. To maintain the conversation, the SEA continues to communicate with the newly formed tribal education committee on all matters, including the Every Student Succeeds Act. While these efforts have enjoyed the support of the governor, Commissioner Cassellius says it was a historic hearing at the state’s capitol, where American Indian leaders, educators, and chiefs advocated on their own behalf, which ultimately convinced the legislature to act.

Asked why this effort had become a focus of her tenure, Commissioner Cassellius replied, “Every kid matters. A small percentage of our student body is American Indian, but they are our first peoples; they have a rich culture within our history in Minnesota. It seemed like the right thing to do. This will be a legacy that I leave: the advocacy to fix our relationship with the American Indian community.”
South Dakota: Supporting Teachers by Building a Coalition for Action

Challenge
Teacher shortage is an issue across the nation and South Dakota is no exception. Anecdotal evidence suggested low teacher salaries were a key factor. Research showed the state ranked 51st in the nation in average teacher salary, in the 2012-13 school year. In 2015, the governor created the Blue Ribbon Task Force for Teachers and Students to assess the current funding model and to seek public input on what was needed to improve education in the state. However, after 11 task forces over 17 years, there was a lot of cynicism in the field as to whether anything would actually come from it.

Approach
Secretary of Education Melody Schopp credits building relationships with legislators, the community, business leaders, and teachers as crucial to the success of the Task Force. She had already made a point to attend all legislative meetings concerning education, allowing her to develop personal relationships with various representatives and senators – including the chairs of the House and Senate that were appointed co-chairs of the Task Force. Before the Task Force convened, Secretary Schopp attended every stakeholder meeting, 12 in total, and gathered input from teachers, business leaders, parents, legislators, and community members. Some superintendents were suspicious of the Task Force, seeing it as disingenuous, but Secretary Schopp’s consistent presence had a considerable influence in validating a process that not only allowed the community to vent their frustrations but also more fully revealed the deep challenges facing South Dakota education.

Three bills were drafted in response to the Task Force’s recommendations. One called for an increase to the state’s sales tax to fund increases in teachers’ salaries and benefits. Trying to pass a tax increase in a conservative state during the run up to a major election year was no small feat. So Secretary Schopp and South Dakota Governor, Dennis Daugaard, embarked on a roadshow to garner support for the bill, meeting with community members to talk about the impact it would have on educating students in the state. “Communities saw it was something we were all invested in, not something that was cooked up in the middle of the night.” Secretary Schopp and her staff also met with legislators one-on-one to understand the conditions that would enable them to support the bills. After the first House vote failed, the Governor told the teachers in attendance he would continue to fight for them. After the bill was reconsidered, it passed by one vote in the House, moved through the Senate, and was signed into law by the Governor in March 2016.

Impact
Although the law only took effect a few months ago, it has already had a significant impact on teachers. Many said they had considered leaving South Dakota for neighboring states with higher teacher salaries, but have since decided to stay. Beyond the salary increase, teachers reported that, for the first time in many years, they felt respected for the work they did and the state was finally invested in them and their students. Districts are now required by law to certify that their teachers are receiving raises, and 85 percent of all new funding is specifically mandated for teacher salaries and benefits. “It definitely turned the profession around in the state,” Secretary Schopp reflected.

For over a year this effort consumed the majority of Secretary Schopp’s energy. When asked how she prioritized her time, she replied, “You can have the best standards … (but) if you don’t have a teaching force, it doesn’t matter. I needed people to know I was invested in this. This was one of the most important things, and would have a lasting impact on the state.”
Wisconsin: Using National Conversations to Start State Ones

Challenge
Tony Evers, State Superintendent of Wisconsin, leads with a focus on equity in everything he does, reaching out and forming relationships with constituencies that have historically not been brought into the conversation. This focus was sharpened by his experience negotiating the assessment and funding rules for Title I during the drafting of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). He saw how individuals representing state and local interests strongly opposed the positions taken by national representatives of advocacy organizations. State and local representatives frustrated by decades of student under-performance pushed for de-regulation, which would offer them greater autonomy and the potential for innovation. Meanwhile, national advocacy organizations considered regulations as guardrails for civil rights and were eager to participate in state-level conversations to make their case.

Approach
Superintendent Evers realized the groups invited to discuss the implementation of ESSA in Wisconsin had little or no experience engaging on state education policy or working with the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and would need time and resources in order to effectively contribute to a conversation on the legislation’s application. The Department approached this challenge by engaging with these groups on a national level. By tapping into these national organizations as resources for aligned local stakeholders, Superintendent Evers was able to create an ESSA council with strong representation from groups advocating for civil rights, disability rights, and the rights of ethnic communities.

Impact
The Equity and ESSA Council, as it’s officially called, has many of the same characteristics as the national Title 1 conversation. Its local advocates are looking for more freedom and autonomy for innovation, while state players are looking for guardrails. But the conversation is moving forward quickly and efficiently because the Department didn’t need to bring each of the advocacy group representatives up to speed one-by-one. Rather, its national organizations did a lot of the heavy lifting, and it shows in the progress.

BEHAVIORS AND ACTIONS

- Be intentional about establishing relationships with groups that you don’t know as well.
- Recognize that stakeholders have multi-dimensional identities and agendas; avoid pigeonholing them as caring about one and only one thing.
- Invite disenfranchised, uninformed, or antagonistic constituencies to the conversation. If necessary, tailor your outreach to their needs and anticipate how you can support them in contributing.
- Connect stakeholders with complementary resources or knowledge. Sponsor projects and initiatives that bring diverse groups together and create opportunity for those groups to lead.
- Don’t abdicate responsibility, but step back and nurture your stakeholders’ efforts with counsel, positive reinforcement, or other forms of help.
Massachusetts: Bringing People Together to Increase Equity

Challenge
For Mitchell Chester, Massachusetts’s Commissioner of Education, it’s the outcomes that matter when it comes to equity. From his perspective, if schools cannot give all students the skills they need to succeed and become functioning members of society regardless of background or demographic, then it is the system that has failed. Commissioner Chester has emphasized the importance of equity to the Department’s mission through messaging in regular meetings and weekly all-staff emails. But starting six years ago, he realized that he needed to employ more direct methods to assist the Commonwealth’s lowest-performing districts.

Since then, the Department has taken over three districts, including Lawrence, the poorest in the state. Only five percent of Lawrence’s funding came from the local community due to low income levels. In addition, most students in the district were also English language learners. As Chester admitted, “bottom line, these are kids many people would write off, as their circumstances would dictate their destiny.” The Department was intent on proving them wrong.

Approach
After the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education allowed the Department to take over receivership, Commissioner Chester and his team spent a lot of time on the ground in Lawrence. Via parent, open community- and district-wide meetings, he articulated a clear and consistent message: “There is a lot of talent in Lawrence (and) we need you … but you need to be willing to rethink how we do business if you are going to stay with us because continuing to do what we are doing here is not going to get us different results.” After setting the context, the department got to work. Half of the principals in the district were replaced. The school day was lengthened to provide more time for instruction, programming, and professional development for teachers. The teacher compensation system was reformed to reflect performance, including differentiated leadership roles for teachers. Authority for decisions over budget, staffing, and schedules was devolved to the school level. And curriculum was enriched to include the arts, theater, and physical education.

To develop the financial and human capital for the endeavor, Commissioner Chester had to get creative. The Department had limited money for the project, so he raised philanthropic funds and drew from federal dollars and a state line that supported general technical assistance work with school districts. He didn’t have the financial resources to expand his staff extensively, but instead focused on matching the project’s needs with relevant talent. For example, he recruited someone with deep experience in collective bargaining and labor relations and also brought in a local superintendent to run the turnaround unit. But where funds for staff did fall short, Chester developed several public-private partnerships that supplemented what the Department was able to bring to the table.

Impact
While Commissioner Chester admits that they have a long way to go, students in Lawrence are performing better. At the district level, math scores are outpacing those in Boston, and graduation rates have climbed from 50 to 70 percent. Asked why he thinks this approach created progress, the Commissioner said it can take time to change hearts and minds. In the meantime, he prefers a change in approach: “If the kids aren’t learning, it isn’t about the kids. It’s that we have to try something different as adults.”
Hawai'i:
Engaging the Education Community for More Effective Implementation

Challenge
The Hawai'i State Department of Education stands out amongst other public education systems as the state's one and only “local” education agency. During Race to the Top, there were a number of occasions when the time frame to implement a policy or program was very short. The Department found they were having to backtrack and clarify issues because they didn't have enough early feedback from their superintendents, principals, and teachers. As Superintendent Kathryn Matayoshi reported, “It’s one of those ‘go slow to go fast’ kind of moments. If we can get earlier feedback about the challenges schools will face, we can start at the starting line with a better process and more thoughtful implementation.” Because of these experiences, the Department developed a standard of reaching out to the education community at least three times to socialize concepts and gain input before implementing any policy or program. This became known as the three point rule.

Approach
The department recognized it needed more feedback prior to implementation of policies and programs. It began bringing up issues for general consideration and questions from superintendents or schools during time dedicated for open conversation at regular, bi-monthly meetings. This evolved into a practice of having a minimum of three touchpoints with the state’s Complex Area Superintendents (CAS) and members of the Department leadership team who serve analogous roles to district superintendents in other states. The CASs, in turn, would reach out to their principals and parent groups, and this input would be fed back to the Department during bi-monthly leadership meetings. Depending on the issue or program, the Department would engage in other data gathering efforts both internal and external to the agency.

Impact
The Department now receives feedback on operational issues closer to the beginning of the process, leading to a more efficient and successful implementation of policies and programs. Thanks in part to this three point rule, says Superintendent Matayoshi, actively soliciting feedback and input has become a natural part of issuing a program memo or statement of implementation.

BEHAVIORS AND ACTIONS

- Engage in two-way, proactive, regular, and transparent communication; build mechanisms for feedback loops, and be clear about how that feedback will be taken under consideration by you or the SEA.
- Prioritize shared purpose and in so doing transcend the potential for different interests to create friction across stakeholder groups and individuals.
- Recognize when it’s better for others to take the lead, and validate their leadership.
“People tend to think about impact and boldness as this initiative, that initiative; it’s the ‘big splash’ theory of change. You can also have impact and be bold from a sequence of thoughtful steps that are oriented towards where you want to go, (where) not any single one of them are the big splashes that some may be looking for.”

KEN WAGNER
Rhode Island Commissioner of Education

“People depend on local superintendents and local people to follow through with policies. I would much rather spend 100 hours on the front end getting general agreement than 100 hours on the back end trying to convince people of something for which they did not have any input. That’s a really important lesson I learned along the way.”

JUNE ATKINSON
Former North Carolina State Superintendent of Education

“For me, if you’re serving someone, it’s a different mindset when you walk into a conversation. It’s ‘What can I do to help you, what can I do to make your life easier?’ It’s not ‘I’m from central office and I’m here to help.’ You have to ask. You’re in their lives.”

CAREY WRIGHT
Mississippi Superintendent of Education
2 CRAFT AND SHARE A VISION

The Challenge:
SEAs need a clear vision that articulates an inspirational goal for improving learning outcomes, reflects the perspectives of diverse constituencies, and serves as a compass for the agency’s work.

Barriers:
The unique political challenges in each state, and the need to effectively navigate relationships between the SEA, the state board, the legislature, and the governor’s office may strain a chief’s ability to articulate or maintain focus on a coherent vision grounded in improving student outcomes. Additionally, the political perspectives of these and other stakeholder groups are likely to shift with time and membership changes, testing the SEA’s ability to maintain and communicate a consistent internal and external message. This challenge can itself be exacerbated by historically disconnected stakeholders and staff members who are skeptical of a new vision or new ways of driving towards or measuring success.

Inspirational Leadership:
To overcome these barriers, inspirational leaders can co-create a vision with stakeholders, framing the vision around goals for student achievement. They embed the vision into operations by having every team and employee understand their role in making progress to achieving the vision. In this way, the vision is not simply running parallel to the strategic plan, but is rather the driver behind it. And even in the midst of distractions and crises, an inspirational leader maintains focus and alignment around the vision, pausing to proactively reconnect the vision to decisions and actions.

Outcomes:
By co-creating and refining a vision with stakeholders, chiefs can help shape a shared vision of what’s right for kids. When operationalized, this shared vision provides a roadmap for staff and the broader community. And by maintaining alignment and focus on the vision, chiefs can develop the momentum needed to sustain it long-term.

PASSION:
Pursue a vision for kids with unrelenting energy, conviction, and resolve.

INTEGRITY:
Ensure the vision is at the center of everything you pursue, do, decide, and say.

HUMILITY:
Enlist others to directly inform, craft, and advance the vision.

HOPE:
Recognize you are on a journey, celebrating milestones and learning from setbacks along the way.

CORE VALUES
KEY BEHAVIORS AND ACTIONS

Co-Create the Vision
Enlist stakeholders in an open and shared effort to develop and articulate a vision grounded in improving learning outcomes.

- Frame the vision around better meeting the needs of all students and improving outcomes; make it about kids, not adults.
- Invite and listen to others’ experiences and perspectives before responding.
- Acknowledge and build from the history and actions of those who came before – both the good and the bad.
- Integrate the expertise and research of others, including those on the ground with different perspectives of how things really work.
- Commit to an ongoing dialogue with all stakeholders, and put in place structures to build and iterate on the vision.

Embed the Vision into Operations
Aligning on a vision is just the beginning; bring it to life in everything you and the SEA do.

- Set and reinforce clear goals and objectives that establish a common understanding of your priorities and how you plan to achieve them.
- Rethink processes, structures and policies, to ensure that they are supportive of your goals, aligned with your vision, and documented in a transparent way.
- Invite SEA staff to connect their own individual roles to the vision, deepening their alignment and clarifying their mandates to help deliver on it. By encouraging each person on your staff to articulate how they see themselves in the vision, you may also tap into talents, passions, and potential projects that you may not have recognized as a possibility for a particular individual.
- Establish new metrics consistent with your vision, regularly measure progress, and be transparent in sharing what you’ve learned.

Maintain Focus and Alignment Around the Vision
Build sustainable momentum, not just enthusiasm, both within the SEA and beyond.

- Pause to recall the vision and connect it with the opportunities of the moment; leverage all available communication channels.
- Explain decisions and initiatives in the context of how they contribute to advancing the vision and your SEA’s values.
- Understand and describe interdependencies; that is, how stakeholders’ successes and setbacks are inextricably linked to each other.
- Always look for opportunities to publicly recognize progress and hard work.

TIP: When holding critical feedback events (focus groups, town halls, etc.), consider hiring a court reporter to capture stakeholder feedback verbatim so nothing is lost in translation, and to maintain a record as evidence.

TIP: Consider giving your staff a certain percentage of flex time (e.g., 5%) to work on projects outside of their typical role but that still support the vision. Ensure the communication around this program is strong to connect people with similar ideas rather than create redundancies.

TIP: Connect budget line items to particular goals in the vision.

TIP: Discuss the vision and progress toward goals with your leadership team on a regular basis, such as by having it as a standing item on your weekly agenda.

TIP: Create a “spotlight in the field” (i.e., video- or photo-based brief) that highlights successes on the ground in schools and districts. Use the “spotlight” as a teachable moment to reinforce the vision by showcasing at Board meetings, and where the media and the general public are also invited.

TIP: Psychologically, recognition is most effective when it is personalized, peer-driven, and given as soon after the act or behavior that is being recognized as possible.
Measuring What Matters

It is often said that, “What you measure is what you get.” It follows, then, that organizations must measure what matters. This adage is no less true today than it was decades ago, but what matters has evolved. SEAs should of course establish and track metrics that directly assess the accomplishment of the vision’s key goals and objectives. But it is equally important that SEAs measure their level of: employee engagement and recognition, information sharing and collaboration, trust and organizational fairness, sense of inclusion, etc. By engaging in a cycle of continuous improvement (assessing capacity, planning, setting targets, monitoring progress, etc.), SEAs can move beyond implementing standard-issue organizational best practices and towards practices that are specific to the SEA, its vision and its culture. Making progress on this set of behavioral metrics will drive the SEA towards trust, informed risk taking, innovation, and progress.

Communicating the Vision and Values in Action

To build an effective culture, leaders should refer back to the language that underpins the vision and core values of the SEA so people can see examples of these principles in action. Whether it is referring to legislators, business partners, parents, students, or staff, chiefs should make it a habit to highlight examples of people living the agency’s vision and values. They should also constructively guide individuals back to the SEA’s vision and values when necessary. These days, there are multiple channels available to leverage the language we use:

• Official websites and other electronic communication mediums such as newsletters are great ways to formally communicate the SEA’s vision and values and highlight successes and examples of its values in action. Set aside space in regular communication mediums to ensure it becomes the norm to talk about your purpose.

• If you are communicating via social media, avoid using too much jargon – this is a space for natural language. Jargon in general can not only be confusing, but its accompanying feelings of alienation also tend to breakdown team identity and collaboration.

• When it comes to inspirational leadership, there’s nothing like the interpersonal touch that can only be delivered via face-to-face communication. Leverage webinars, conferences, and focus groups as forums to encourage constructive sharing and group discovery.

• When discussing how she has effectively leveraged social media, Oklahoma’s Superintendent of Public Instruction Joy Hofmeister said, “(Social media) is providing a bridge to connect with those in the classroom, providing the kind of opportunity for them to be aware of different professional development tools with the people with whom you need to work.”
CASE STUDIES

Develop your Play

Below are some of the best examples of how chiefs crafted and shared a vision, we hope that they can serve as models for how these aspirations can come to life in the real world. As you’re reading about these inspirational chiefs, think about the following prompts and see if you can develop a way to integrate their best practices into your unique context:

Do you need to craft a new vision, or perhaps reconnect to an existing one?

If you need to craft or shape a new vision:

• Who are the key stakeholders, both internal and external to your agency, who can contribute to the vision? Who can help energize the process because they have a stake in the outcome?

• How and when will you bring these people into the conversation to co-create a vision?

If you need to implement an existing vision:

• What structures and practices will you need to shape or shift to help make goals tangible and practical? If you are looking to strengthen the vision, are there parameters (from a board, governor, etc.) that you would need to work within?

Rhode Island:
Finding Your Own Voice in the Board and Council’s Vision

Challenge

Rhode Island’s “2020 Vision for Education” was developed by the state’s Board of Education and the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education. Four “prototypes” were created and refined using a thorough and co-creative process based on feedback from 11,000 survey respondents and gathered in 19 community meetings. A few months after the vision and strategic plan were completed, Ken Wagner assumed the position of Commissioner.

Given that the vision set forth the priorities of the Board, the Council, and the Rhode Island community, Commissioner Wagner had to find a way to align the vision with his values and perspective.

Approach

The state’s vision document outlined a broad strategic framework for the next five years. Although the framework was comprehensive, Commissioner Wagner determined the Department needed to focus on a few key priorities he believed could deliver significant impact. To establish areas of focus within the 50-page document, Commissioner Wagner spent the first few months of his tenure talking to people and listening. “That’s always been my style of leadership: Listen first and get the lay of the land, form your diagnostic, then introduce a vision that is true to what you think and feel as a leader but is also aligned to the people you are working with.”

Cognizant of implementation challenges states faced during the Race-to-the-Top era, he emphasized the need to develop grassroots support regarding how to put the vision into action. Because he was committed to empowering those closest to the kids in the classrooms, Commissioner Wagner was confident Rhode Island’s vision would have buy-in from Rhode Islanders, even if the theory of action was influenced by his own views on leadership and systems change. Wagner viewed this approach as critical to building a sustainability strategy into the vision.

BEHAVIORS AND ACTIONS

• Acknowledge and build from the history and actions of those who came before — both the good and the bad.

• Set and reinforce clear goals and objectives that establish a common understanding of your priorities and how to achieve them.

• Invite and listen to others’ experiences and perspectives before responding.

• Commit to an ongoing dialogue with all stakeholders, and put in place structures that enable sustained engagement and iteration.
Impact
The time that Commissioner Wagner spent talking with and listening to stakeholders confirmed he should focus on two things: providing access to advanced classes to help kids build the skills that matter for future success, and re-imagining how we do schooling for the 21st century with rigor, relevance, and student engagement.

His listening tour also surfaced a third focus area that he had not anticipated—a shared leadership strategy in which principals work with their teacher-leadership teams. Although Commissioner Wagner had to overcome some initial resistance, Rhode Island has embraced the shared leadership strategy and is examining the site-based leadership strategies that other states use in order to develop the best approach for Rhode Island schools.

Connecticut: Bringing Diverse Constituencies to the Table

Challenge
When Dianna Wentzell began her tenure as Commissioner in Connecticut, she was intent on crafting a strategic vision that incorporated perspectives and insights from as many Connecticut parents, experts, and educators as possible. She directed focus groups that reached 15,000 people, and conducted a survey that received some 7,000 responses. While the focus group participation mirrored the demographic diversity in the state, the same couldn’t be said of the survey, where voices of color hadn’t been proportionally represented. Learning from this experience, Connecticut was intent to ensure that its ESSA outreach meet all constituencies where they were, ensuring all voices were represented and heard.

Approach
When it comes to ESSA, Connecticut is still using surveys and focus groups led by its regional educational service centers. But critical to their new strategy is a more intentional effort to engage parents via the Commissioner’s Round Table for Parent Voice. This group of go-to parent leaders meets quarterly with Commissioner Wentzell to discuss their goals for their children’s education. The Round Table is made up of 30 parents from diverse backgrounds and perspectives. A few are representatives from various educational organizations, but the vast majority are parents nominated by their communities to represent them. The Round Table is also a critical resource for the State Education Resource Center (SERC), which enlists them to ensure that their ESSA information materials are parent-friendly and jargon-free. The SERC, which has an explicit parent education mission, distributes these tool kits in seven languages, and has done similar work with the Department on the Common Core and Assessments.

Impact
These efforts place a diverse set of parents at the center of stakeholder engagement. As a result, parents are spending less time getting up to speed on the latest educational developments and more time giving feedback. Supported by video-based skill training for parents put out by the SERC, many parents have begun to strike up conversations with their neighbors on education opportunities and challenges; conversations that are brought back to the Round Table for exploration. When asked what’s next for diverse parent engagement in Connecticut, Commissioner Wentzell was focused on long-term sustainable impact, replying: “One of our tasks that I’ve talked about with my team is how do we embed this so firmly into how the department does business that it doesn’t go away when I leave, so that we continue to have a go-to group for parent voice … [We should make] sure that we are authentically engaging this Parents Round Table in our decision making so that they keep coming and so that they really do see the payoff of their effort.”
Kentucky: Driving a Vision Through Systemic Transparency

Challenge
Terry Holliday, former Commissioner of Education in Kentucky, was appointed for his ability to articulate a comprehensive approach to continuous improvement and implementation. The conditions at the Kentucky Department of Education at the time of his appointment were ripe for a systemic approach. State legislation passed in 2009 (SB 1) required new standards, assessments, and an accountability system for schools. Commissioner Holliday saw an opportunity to leverage momentum from the new Race-to-the-Top legislation as well as garner strong support from the Gates Foundation to implement an approach to improvement that would embed the strategic vision into individual and team goals. He set out to make these goals and track progress publicly, a level of transparency and accountability that made some people uncomfortable. Holliday was boldly attempting to reset a toxic mindset prominent among some of his staff and colleagues: “If everyone knows what you know than you lose some of your power.”

Approach
Holliday brought cohesion to his approach by tying everything he did to the State Board’s strategy. It consisted of five specific and measurable goals, each with short- and long-term strategies, and was directly connected to budgeting via a transparent annual evaluation of districts. Guided by these five goals, Holliday set out to establish cross-functional collaboration, clear accountability, and transparency.

Commissioner Holliday increased the collaboration and effectiveness of his leadership team by focusing them on the Board’s core goal areas, bringing them out of their silos. He also created cross-functional teams that were accountable for each of the five goals. For example, the college career readiness team was composed of people from a number of departments, including career, curriculum, academics, budget, operations, and technology. Recognizing that this represented a new way of working for many, people in the Department were explicitly trained on how to have cross-functional conversations. And, a newly-created delivery unit, reporting directly to Holliday, worked with these teams to establish a habit of identifying gaps and leading indicators.

Commissioner Holliday encouraged accountability and communication within and between the Department and State Board by implementing a schedule of internal and external meetings where associates were responsible for updating their team’s progress against the five goal areas. In addition, he held biannual all-staff updates that communicated how each and every person on his staff was critical for achieving at least one of the goals.

Finally, Commissioner Holliday brought a high degree of transparency to the Department’s priorities and operations. Since the State Board publicly publishes district-level results, as well as the salaries of local superintendents, Holliday wanted to be clear to schools that he and the Department were being held to as rigorous a standard. He therefore published the Department’s progress against each of the goal areas on a regular basis using a simple color-coded “report card” (See Appendix A: “Rigorously and Transparently Measuring Progress”). And, assuming ultimate responsibility as a leader, Holliday also published his own individual goals as well as the Board’s annual reflection of how well he was performing. “I wanted to make sure I was walking the walk, not just talking the walk.”

Impact
Through these efforts, Kentucky was able to elevate mindsets to eschew information hoarding and embrace transparency in a spirit of service throughout its educational network. More directly, because the Department knew what it would be measured on, the relationship with the Board improved. Asked about why he thinks this systemic approach was successful, Holliday responded with a sense of humor: “If you poke a bowl of Jell-O it’s going to quiver all over. If you are doing one silver bullet, you are still going to poke the Jell-O. So you might as well think about how to put a mold around the Jell-O to hold it together when you start poking.”
“We have our administrators in training shadow me and our assistant superintendents, and that gives them such insight into what state offices do beyond their own school-level concerns and how complex some of these issues are.”

KATHRYN MATAYOSHI
Hawai‘i State Superintendent of Education

“Generally people are very gracious with advice … I find that it tends to become reciprocal … and that gives me the chance to represent the viewpoint of the agency and the administration which is an important part of my role.”

DIANNA WENTZELL
Connecticut Commissioner of Education

“I do get out frequently, but I also know I need to be visible in the office. You do need to walk the halls, visit with people on their floors…model what you expect to see.”

MARGIE VANDEVEN
Missouri Commissioner of Education
UNLOCK POTENTIAL ACROSS THE SEA

The Challenge:
Chiefs and SEAs are expected to implement policies and undertake efforts to significantly improve student outcomes often without additional financial or personnel resources.

Barriers:
As chiefs lead serious, intentional, and ongoing commitments to improved student outcomes, they may face internal cultural or organizational challenges that may be compounded by a lack of resources or flexibility in the talent management (recruiting, placing, and developing people) necessary to fulfill their charge. Furthermore, engaging with external stakeholders and constituents can often seem more urgent for chiefs than focusing on the engine behind that external work, the bureaucracy of their own state agency. Here chiefs may be confronted by a general apathy or skepticism due to high leadership turnover. Even when a chief can foster a sense of shared leadership throughout an SEA, it requires substantial patience, empathy, and thoughtfulness to make sure the priorities within the SEA can be woven together without straying from the larger vison.

Inspirational Leadership:
To overcome these barriers and unlock potential across the SEA, inspirational leaders set an example by modeling the values of their agencies. Instead of simply acting to fulfill the expectations of the role or maintain an artificial aura of strength, they seek out opportunities to make decisions, take action and share stories that highlight the SEA’s values. Inspirational leaders also institute structures and foster the freedom necessary for employees to experiment and innovate. These leaders expect clear and tracked criteria for success, but they also extend trust to employees, enabling them to pursue bold and thoughtful ideas and actions, instead of expecting employees to do only what they are told. Ultimately, inspirational leaders realize their ability to create meaningful impact hinges on the quality of their people on the ground. Some leaders expect their people to develop by trial and error or simply learning on the job. More effective leaders recognize the talent of employees and invest in their professional training and support them in the work they do. But inspirational leaders craft an agency culture that support and develop individuals based on what they have done, who they are, and who they can become.

Outcomes:
Unlocking potential across the SEA in this way drives towards increased levels of ethical- and values-driven behavior from bottom to top. It reduces organizational risk and brings a continuity of purpose to staff across the agency. An SEA with shared leadership empowers staff to direct themselves and make decisions to advance their work. The development and support of these values-driven, entrepreneurial leaders increases the capacity of the SEA to deliver on its mission for kids.
KEY BEHAVIORS AND ACTIONS

Set an Example
Seek out opportunities to model the behaviors needed to achieve your vision for learner outcomes. Staff will listen to what you say and follow your lead.

- Only make promises that you can keep.
- Extend trust to others; don’t require them to earn it. Create an environment where staff can think creatively, take action, and count on one another.
- Share responsibility, both when you succeed and when you fall short. Successes belong to your team; shortcomings belong to you.
- Don’t accept: “We can’t do that.” Ask instead: “How can we accomplish x?” Look to turn obstacles into opportunities.
- Speak up and tell the truth with care when acts fall short of your SEA’s values, even when it’s hard.
- Be open and transparent with staff on how decisions are made and how you incorporated their feedback throughout the process.

Foster Freedom so All Can Lead
Don’t just give direction. Create an environment where staff can direct themselves.

- Create structures that enable others to make impactful work decisions.
- Encourage thoughtful, bold ideas and actions. Help everyone understand that mistakes are inevitable and create opportunities to learn from them.
- Promote collaboration by creating opportunities for staff to work together across functions and towards shared goals and priorities.
- Create space for others to participate in shaping SEA work by providing ways for others to communicate feedback, best practices, input, questions, innovative ideas, and concerns, and then act upon them.
- Ensure you know enough about your SEA’s operations so that you can appreciate nuances of your staff’s work and provide perspective and resources to encourage their leadership.

TIP: When discussing hard truths or controversial perspectives, focus on observable behavior and its perceived impact rather than assuming to understand someone’s intentions.

TIP: Reserve time in your cabinet or all-staff meetings for open discussion, collective problem solving, and questions.

TIP: Consider giving your Chief of Staff a specific focus area (e.g., policy or “voice of the teachers”), in addition to managing day-to-day operations.

TIP: Make it a practice to have staff weigh both sides of an issue before coming to a decision. Not only does this ensure you consider all viewpoints, it gives your staff the opportunity to think deeply about issues and contribute to decision-making.

TIP: Optics aren’t everything, but they count. Hold alternating open and closed leadership meetings so that your leadership team can be seen leading and staff can be seen making proposals and contributing to decision making.
Support and Develop Your People

Set aside time, energy, and resources to grow your people based on what they have done, who they are, and who they can become.

- Bring together a leadership team on a foundation of mutual trust, with skill sets and attributes that complement each other and you.

- Invest in developing leaders at all levels. Be creative in providing development opportunities, and recognize the difference between developing skills and growing as a leader.

- Match competencies to roles as you can, or support people so they can develop within their current role.

- Celebrate and embrace your staff for who they are, what they have done, and what they can do. Adopt rituals that build connection and inclusion. Don’t underestimate the importance of feeling valued.

- Train staff on how to have productive conversations in order to resolve conflicts and so that they can more fully appreciate and act upon and see others’ perspectives.

- Seek to know your staff on a human level by learning about their personal and professional backgrounds, aspirations and challenges.

- Increase talent at your SEA by reimagining your pool of potential applicants, attracting them by your vision, and by hiring and promoting those aligned with your SEA’s values.

- Incentivize the behaviors you are looking for (e.g. collaboration across teams) or staff may be led to less than ideal behaviors (e.g. competing with colleagues) to achieve desired outcomes.

SPOTLIGHT

Senior Leadership Teams

Having a strong and effective senior leadership team is critical to running an SEA smoothly. New chiefs must quickly assess the compatibility of their team, considering both technical capacity and interpersonal dynamics. Trust your instincts if something feels off and act quickly; you have a short window (many chiefs said three months, tops) to make changes that will be in the best interest of the SEA.
CASE STUDIES

Develop Your Play
Below are some of the best examples of how chiefs unlocked potential in their SEA, we hope that they can serve as models for how these aspirations can come to life in the real world. As you’re reading about these inspirational chiefs, think about the following prompts and see if you can develop a way to integrate their best practices into your unique context:

• What behaviors do you want to model?
• What systems might you put in place to support the development and autonomy of your people?
• What resources might be available to support this work?
• How can you differentiate your plan for the short-, medium-, and long-term?

Missouri: From Regulators to Partners in Education

Challenge
The guiding principle for the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education is that to best serve children is to partner with and support those who are directly serving kids. Although the concept sounds simple, it is a shift from the Department’s previous top-down, regulatory-focused mindset. Commissioner Margie Vandeven believes that SEAs are called to do a very different task than a decade ago. As such, the Department focuses a lot of attention on growing the staff so they can make the transition from “dusty regulators” to supporting continuous improvement in schools. According to Commissioner Vandeven, “We are very clear about the fact that there are certain things we have to regulate. We’re not trying to minimize that, but our job is not to check boxes. Our job is to help districts understand how to best use their resources to best serve children. So we’re thinking very differently.”

Approach
The Department has focused on developing a culture of service by shifting mindsets, empowering staff, and investing in professional development. For example, the Department talks less about regulating and more about partnering. “We can’t do x, y, or z because of regulations” is no longer an acceptable answer. Instead, staff are encouraged to ask, “How can we do this in a way that meets regulations and serves our children?” Similarly, Commissioner Vandeven doesn’t ask her staff what they did the past week during meetings. Rather, she asks, “How did we help support our districts?” Finally, mid-level staff are being empowered to think of solutions to problems and asked for recommendations on how to dispel the expectation that all answers must come from the top. These shifts in messaging and framing help to change how people think about and engage in their work.

The Department believes that its people are its greatest asset and tries to operate under that mentality. This requires creative efforts to help staff grow and be as productive as possible, especially following budget cuts and staff reductions that have thinned the Department dramatically. To accomplish this, traditional HR training is combined with in-house Lunch and Learns conducted by staff on topics ranging from media relations to PowerPoint to Latin 101 to Abraham Lincoln (See Appendix A: “Tapping into Expertise and Passion”). The Department also seeks to create safe environments where staff can practice, test, and receive constructive feedback. For example, each person presenting at an Administrators Conference delivered their presentation to a peer team, creating a positive feedback loop where they can learn from each other.

BEHAVIORS AND ACTIONS

• Invest in developing leaders at all levels. Be creative in providing development opportunities, and recognize the difference between developing skills and growing as a leader.
• Don’t accept: “We can’t do that.” Ask instead: “How can we accomplish x?” Look to turn obstacles into opportunities.
• Create space for others to provide feedback and participate in decision-making. Seek out knowledge and in so doing foster collective ownership over both problems and solutions.
• Celebrate and embrace your staff for who they are, what they have done, and what they can do. Adopt rituals which build connection and inclusion. Don’t underestimate the importance of feeling valued.
• Promote collaboration by creating opportunities for staff to work together across functions and towards shared goals and priorities.
Impact
While these efforts are relatively new, the Department has received positive feedback from districts. Educational groups have changed how they introduce the Department in public and now use language like, “Our partners in education.” The Department is also getting out in the field and showing a personal face, such as having staff serve as facilitators at regional meetings (after receiving in-depth facilitator training). Participants in these activities were grateful to have the opportunity to speak with members of the Department and felt they had been heard. Additionally, there’s been a cultural change within the Department. Commissioner Vandeven reports, “There is a real energy level in our staff; they’re always trying to get better.”
Mississippi: Restructuring an SEA for Success

Challenge
Carey Wright, State Superintendent of Education in Mississippi, conducted her own research into the history and structure of the Department and reviewed other’s research before starting her tenure. This research made her upcoming structural challenges quite clear. As several reports argued, there were huge holes in the Department. Entire departments (including literacy, early childhood, and secondary education) were missing. And the Department lacked a chief operations officer and a technology leader, resulting in a hodge-podge of roles and work responsibilities dispersed throughout the organization. Superintendent Wright realized that to be successful she would need the flexibility to build a team of professionals with strong instructional and school experience.

Approach
Previous administrations struggled to build a strong staff in part because of the actions and policies of the Mississippi Personnel Board. While well intentioned, with a mission to “maintain a fair system of employment that provides employees a good future,” the boundaries it placed on the Superintendent’s ability to hire had become onerous. After Superintendent Wright learned the Department of Transportation had been able to separate from the Personnel Board, she decided to try to do the same with her department. She went directly to the Lieutenant Governor with her request and made her case to all the key legislators in the State Senate. As the conversation developed, she built stronger relationships with the primary stakeholders: education chairs, legislators, the Lieutenant Governor, and the Speaker of the State House of Representatives.

After receiving approval, Superintendent Wright intentionally took her time. She spent six months with her leadership team carefully assessing the skill set of the current staff in an effort to better match competencies to roles. Finally, Superintendent Wright established four new leadership positions that better matched needs in the field: Chief Academic Officer, Chief Operating Officer, Chief Performance Officer, and Chief Information Officer. “We knew we were given a golden opportunity to do this and wanted to do it in a very thoughtful way.” Some staff were subsequently placed in different departments, others became founding members in new ones, and gaps were identified and filled. Every single person on her staff needed to see themselves as driving the strategic vision and reform effort. If they couldn’t, she had to let them go.

Superintendent Wright received some pushback from the Black Caucus, who feared only African American staff would be let go. She didn’t blame them for their lack of trust in the Department. There is a deep history of race relations in Mississippi and, as she wasn’t from the state, she was a relative unknown. “They needed to get to know me ... [and] know where I was coming from in terms of my own vision and where my heart is set. That goes a long way here for people to know you are well-intentioned and not just on a mission.” Her efforts proved successful.

Impact
Board members describe the Department as “night and day” from what it used to be. The quality of service the Department now offers to the field is vastly improved, according to principals, teachers, and superintendents. Staff now have expertise relevant to the roles they’re performing, and having a strong team in place gave Superintendent Wright the flexibility to develop a more stringent and sustainable hiring strategy. “My message to the Department is … we are here to make education better across the state and to serve the districts. The only way we can serve the districts well is making sure we have quality.”

BEHAVIORS AND ACTIONS

- Ensure you know enough about your SEA’s operations so that you can appreciate nuances of your staff’s work and provide perspective and resources to drive their leadership.

- Bring together a leadership team on a foundation of mutual trust, with skill sets and attributes that complement each other and you.

- Create space for others to participate in shaping SEA work by providing ways for others to communicate feedback, best practices, input, questions, innovative ideas, and concerns, and then act upon them.

- Speak up and tell the truth with care when acts fall short of your SEA’s values, even when it’s hard.

- Extend trust to others; don’t require them to earn it.

- Increase talent at your SEA by reimagining your pool of potential applicants, attracting them by your vision, and by hiring and promoting those aligned with your SEA’s values.
North Carolina: Distributing Leadership in North Carolina

Challenge
North Carolina’s Department of Public Instruction (DPI) sought to operate under a model of distributed and self-directed leadership enabled by a strong foundation of trust. According to former State Superintendent June Atkinson, “each person in our organization needs to own a part of the contribution and work toward accomplishing the [strategic] plan.” Self-directed leadership working towards a common charge, Superintendent Atkinson realized, would require a very high bar of coordination.

Approach
DPI therefore looks to embed a unique ethos into everything it does, from how they onboard new employees to how they set goals and interact with external stakeholders. For example, each individual, group, and division is responsible for developing a plan that connects their role to the overall strategic plan. Guiding principles that inform how the State Board’s plan gets translated into division plans are collectively developed and agreed upon. Division heads are encouraged to use a similar approach with their teams. DPI recognizes it’s often easier for divisions working with school districts to feel connected to the plan but that support divisions are no less important to the Department’s overall success. A different set of guiding principles helps the support division see its contribution. Superintendent Atkinson reflected, “We want [the strategic plan] to cascade from the State Board to each person in our agency.”

The Department’s senior leadership team is also empowered to liaise directly with the State Board. Each senior leader is responsible for working with a Board committee on one strategic goal, communicating DPI’s vision and priorities, and vice versa. Weekly meetings ensure that DPI’s divisions are working in concert and proposed policies aren’t in conflict with other aspects of the Department’s goals. Superintendent Atkinson says, “I have to trust my staff [to let] me know if there are problems.” The cohesion and alignment among her and her team have paid off: “There have only been one or two times that I’ve been surprised.”

Impact
Superintendent Atkinson credits the Department’s process of cascading performance plans with fostering a strong sense of collective responsibility and ownership amongst DPI staff. Empowering her senior team to build relationships directly with the State Board and manage much of the day-to-day operations also frees her up to focus on complex issues or high value priorities. By encouraging all within the Department to see themselves as owners, giving them autonomy to create their own connection to the strategic plan, and by sharing leadership, Superintendent Atkinson is able to achieve exponentially more than she would otherwise.

BEHAVIORS AND ACTIONS

- Share responsibility, both when you succeed and when you fall short. Successes belong to your team; shortcomings belong to you.

- Create space for others to participate in shaping SEA work by providing ways for others to communicate feedback, best practices, input, questions, innovative ideas, and concerns, and then act upon them.

- Bring together a leadership team on a foundation of mutual trust, with skill sets and attributes that complement each other and you.

- Promote collaboration by creating opportunities for staff to work together across functions and towards shared goals and priorities.

- Extend trust to others; don’t require them to earn it. Create an environment where staff take risks, take action, and count on one another.
“Planning for longevity and succession is a critical part of leadership when you’re in a role with as short a shelf-life as ours. System leaders need to lay out a sequence...of thoughtful steps...that can survive inevitable leadership transitions.”

KEN WAGNER
Rhode Island Commissioner of Education

“...I had a very traditional educator career before this, so it’s important for me to listen in particular to where I didn’t spend my earlier working years, like business, (or to) the perspective of folks who have spent their whole lives in government.”

DIANNA WENTZELL
Connecticut Commissioner of Education

“All chiefs deal with certain things that become real personal in their lives...we need to let people see we are human.”

MELODY SCHOPP
South Dakota Secretary of Education

“It’s really important for a leader to determine, deliberately, how to spend one’s time. Circumstances, issues, and events will drive where you need to spend most of your time, (but) you have to have a balancing act between external and internal relationships. If you ignore either one, then you can get in trouble.”

JUNE ATKINSON
Former North Carolina Superintendent of Education
The Challenge:
Expectations and demands placed on educational leaders have always been high. But today, given all the new and increasingly complex demands placed on them, even experienced chiefs will need to reaffirm a commitment to continuous growth in order to lead through these challenges in an inspirational way.

Barriers:
With an educational landscape that is constantly shifting, the many stakeholders involved, and the sheer number of responsibilities chiefs are charged with, it can be difficult to invest in personal development. A chief’s day is consumed with delivering against their vision, addressing the needs, wants, and perspectives of others while also dealing with constantly emerging crises. New chiefs in particular, who may come from a district-level leadership position or work in some other sector or industry, will need to quickly get up to speed on the SEA’s work. Amidst these competing priorities and challenges, it’s often difficult to maintain the personal passion critical to driving the work forward without becoming consumed by it. It can also seem, given all the other demands on a chief’s time, that placing a focus on building one’s own leadership capacities is at best a luxury and at worst, self-indulgent.

Inspirational Leadership:
The strongest leaders are committed to thoughtful and intentional personal growth. These leaders, however, become increasingly inspirational if they can maintain that desire to grow despite the accomplishments, experience and expertise that accumulate over time. Some leaders assume lessons from their work will naturally be incorporated into future projects. At worst, they simply plow ahead, focused only on the next task. Confident inspirational leaders, however, develop self-awareness by investing time to pause in stride, carving out moments while doing their work to reflect on what’s working, what’s not and what can be done about it. They look to identify areas for growth and plan a way forward. When leaders assume they have reached their maximum potential it becomes easy to blame faults and shortcomings on others. To combat this, inspirational leaders regularly ask for help and intentionally seek out the advice and knowledge of others. They resist the urge to go it alone or latch onto whatever has already proven effective with current stakeholders in the short-term. Most importantly, they resist the reflexive temptation to discount the unfamiliar and actually try out the advice and new approaches they receive. In the end, the ability to use their agency’s values as a guide for what matters most in the long-term is the lynchpin for inspirational leaders. They focus their energy for greatest impact and refuse to limit their attention to delivering only on set, short-term goals, or simply those with the greatest visibility.

Outcomes:
By growing as a leader in this way, chiefs will make better decisions, decisions on how to go about their work, on who to enlist, and on how to understand results. They will also increase the reach of their impact, improve their ability to adapt to constant change, and expand the menu of options for addressing the challenges they face, allowing them to better deliver on their promises. This flexibility, accompanied by the guiding compass of the agency’s values, increases personal sustainability and can help to prevent burnout so that chiefs can see the journey through and be at their best when it counts.
KEY BEHAVIORS AND ACTIONS

Develop Self-Awareness
Understand your own strengths and weaknesses. Invest in your own growth.

• Take time to pause and reflect on your performance, leadership style and areas of growth.
• Be clear about your leadership style, priorities, and expectations.
• Play to and build on your strengths.
• Surround yourself with advisors who complement your areas for growth, particularly early in your tenure.
• Recognize your knowledge and skill gaps and take action to close them.
• Strike a balance when it comes to decision-making. Don’t let your desire for broad stakeholder support result in a lack of timely action.
• Check your biases and acknowledge that you have blind spots.

Ask for Help
Recognize the power that can be found in vulnerability and acknowledge your shortcomings.

• Admit your mistakes, be honest when you don’t know the answer, and respect the expertise of your staff and others.
• Pursue the advice and support of others in developing your knowledge and leadership skills. Seek out resources you can leverage and partner with individuals who can help you use those resources.
• Seek feedback to continuously improve your leadership and maintain a learner’s mindset.

TIP: Be intentional about blocking off time for personal development and/or reflection, perhaps at home before you start your day.

TIP: Develop a “leadership manifesto” outlining your leadership style, priorities, and expectations, and share with your senior leadership team and staff at large.

TIP: Look for potential advisors amongst those who interviewed you for the job.

TIP: Make sure you have a diverse team, and bring individuals from across the aisle onto your team, but be sure to have a strong relationship with them first.

TIP: Develop a first 100 days plan.

TIP: Personally interview your retiring staffers to better understand how you and the SEA can be using and prioritizing time.

TIP: Connect with other educational leaders and chiefs who most closely understand your challenges and role. Tap into their collective leadership experience and wisdom to inform not only your thinking but also how you lead.
Focus Your Energy for Impact
Your time is scarce and irreplaceable. Be strategic and thoughtful about how you use it.

• Use the SEA’s vision as a filter to prioritize your time and energy, especially when the external political environment may fluctuate, during campaign season for example. Consider your team’s perspective as well, as they may see things you don’t.

• Acknowledge that you can’t do everything and that not everything can be done with the same level of intensity or passion. Reinforce this with your team and dispel the narrative that you need to sign off on everything. Remember this requires you give people the autonomy to make decisions themselves.

• Demonstrate resiliency and maintain your composure, even in the face of attacks or crisis.

• Be conscious of the impact your presence can have, whether in the SEA or in the field, and plan when and how you engage accordingly.

SPOTLIGHT

Dealing with Crisis
Building a strong culture with shared ownership and individual empowerment helps prepare you in advance for the challenges ahead. This ensures that when the crisis of the day takes place, the levels of trust, and commitment, within the group will help the team be as prepared as possible to do what needs to be done. When you do run up against barriers and challenges, view these situations as opportunities to apply the four imperatives on a scaled-down basis. Which key stakeholders do you need to bring together, what is the shared approach to problem-solving, and whose potential will you need to unlock in order to respond to these challenges in an agile and aligned way?
CASE STUDY

Develop Your Play
Below is an example of growing as a leader that serves as model of how these aspirations can come to life in the real world. As you’re reading about this inspirational chief, think about the following prompts and see if you can develop a way to integrate these best practices into your unique context:

What is the context surrounding your leadership role?

- Do you fully understand the historical and political context of education in your state?
- Do you possess sufficient expertise in political, financial, and operational processes?
- Do you know the key influencers who will have an impact on your decisions and policies?

What are your strengths as a leader and in which areas can you improve?

- What will you do in each one of those areas to set an even better example as a leader?
- How will you measure or get feedback on your progress?
- How will you prioritize your time on the things that matter most?

Oklahoma: Standing on the Shoulders of Others

Challenge
State Superintendent Joy Hofmeister of Oklahoma took office following a tight race with the incumbent. Having experience in the classroom and as a small business owner but lacking a substantive career in education administration, Superintendent Hofmeister started off her tenure without a detailed transition plan from the previous administration. She realized that she needed outside perspective from tenured education administrators in order for her to have the most impact from day one. For example, new math and ELA standards were due for revision just days after she was to take office.

What They Did
Right after she won the election, Superintendent Hofmeister began to create a transition team. She wanted a full spectrum of viewpoints, so she appointed “people that would be recognized as experienced leaders with great wisdom” regardless of their political persuasion. This included the head of the GOP party platform committee, a previous Oklahoma State Superintendent with a 20-year tenure, and the former Oklahoma Secretary of Education. In some cases, she deliberately selected people who didn’t fully trust her yet, and really listened to them. When the list of names was released to the media, the resulting buzz produced the necessary momentum to kick-start her administration.

The transition team met weekly to evaluate the current agency, identify strengths and weaknesses, and craft a platform for the first legislative session, which was slated to begin 10 days after she took office. Twenty-four different groups were asked to sit down with the transition team, which, combined with 10,300 survey responses, quickly generated a groundswell of interest and input. The department now had a mandate and a large network of stakeholders felt included and heard: solve the teacher shortage and reform testing so it delivered increased value for students and more impactful instructional time.

BEHAVIORS AND ACTIONS

- Recognize your knowledge and skill gaps and take action to close them.
- Surround yourself with advisors that compliment your gaps, particularly as you’re starting your tenure.
- Pursue the advice and support of others in developing your technical and leadership skills. Seek out the resources that you can leverage and those who can help you.
**Impact**

The trust built with stakeholders through the transition team has paid dividends throughout Superintendent Hofmeister’s tenure. From that early foundation, she had a framework on which to build advisory groups and the department developed a track record of successfully acting on feedback. As a result, the legislature has been eager to act also. For example, her teacher shortage task force made 29 recommendations, eight of which required legislation. All eight were passed and signed into law by the Governor. Many transition team members continue to be closely involved with the department, serving on task forces and assuming advisory roles.

While Superintendent Hofmeister acknowledges her style might not be for every chief, and “consensus doesn’t trump conviction and principle,” she remains convinced of her early approach to building agreement across ideological division. “Here is our strategic proposal, now punch holes in it, help us think about what we’re missing and what we haven’t thought of... then produce something that has fingerprints of everyone all over it.”

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**BEHAVIORS AND ACTIONS**

- Strike a balance when it comes to decision-making. Don’t let your desire for broad stakeholder support result in a lack of timely action.
- Admit your mistakes, be honest when you don’t know the answer, and respect the expertise of your staff and others regardless of their seniority.
A CALL TO ACTION

This Playbook and the case studies presented here have used examples from a variety of chiefs and SEAs to illustrate specific, high-leverage, values-driven leadership behaviors. It was designed in a spirit of support and to enable you to become more intentional and deliberate in your own leadership practices.

We therefore close the playbook by encouraging you to take action, tied to your values and vision, driven by proven leadership and management practices, and dedicated to the goal of improving the effectiveness of the state agency you lead and the services it provides to kids and families.

We acknowledge the task before chiefs and their teams is a daunting one. Collectively, we have set a goal of building an education system that meets the needs of each and every child, no matter their background. It’s a high bar, and something no education system in the world today can claim to do. We have also embraced this challenge at a time when division and distrust confront us at every turn.

To succeed in this responsibility, we have new tools, passionate peers, and a collective recognition of the real stakes before us. But because the stakes are so high and the task so great, we also need inspirational leadership. Only inspirational leaders can maintain an unyielding focus on improving outcomes for all students and bring people together in new ways to develop and implement a shared vision. Inspirational leaders don’t just command; they empower others while also preserving a clear and consistent personal commitment and vision for the work.

Whether it was through a hard fought general election or a board or gubernatorial appointment, your current role is an expression of trust and confidence from someone who believes in your capacity to be an inspirational leader.

Embracing this trust and acting on this new model of leadership is the imperative for all chiefs. This is your imperative.

NEXT STEPS

1. Take the Inspirational Leadership Self-Assessment to get a snapshot of where you are right now. Included at the end of this playbook, the Self-Assessment is not a checklist, but rather a reflective tool that can help highlight strengths and identify gaps, so you can prioritize your time and energy most effectively as a leader.

2. Use the guiding questions posed throughout this playbook as a prompt and the resources in the appendix, to develop your own “plays.” By being honest about where you are starting and inviting others to help, you will set yourself up for success as a purpose-led and values-driven model for others to follow.

3. Connect with CCSSO’s Staff. CCSSO can provide tools and support to help address the gaps you identify through the self-assessment, along with strategies and support to help address issues and capitalize on strengths.

4. Complement this playbook with other CCSSO leadership resources:
   - Leading for Equity: Opportunities for State Education Chiefs
   - Let’s Get This Conversation Started: Strategies, Tools, Examples and Resources to Help States Engage with Stakeholders to Develop and Implement their ESSA Plans
Rigorously and Transparently Measuring Progress

In Kentucky, former Commissioner Terry Holliday used a simple “report card” to track progress against the strategic plan; the example shown here was shared at an annual State Board meeting. Since Kentucky holds transparency as a core value, the strategic plan’s goals, targets, and progress results were also shared with local education agencies and were posted online on a regular basis.

### Likelihood to Deliver

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<td>87.4%</td>
<td>88.7%</td>
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<td>✔️</td>
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<tr>
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<td>✔️</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increase 3rd Grade Proficiency</td>
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<td>62.3%</td>
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<td>✔️</td>
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<tr>
<td>Closing Achievement Gap</td>
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<td>38.1%</td>
<td>47.7%</td>
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Making an Articulation of the Vision a Routine

In Mississippi, Superintendent Carey Wright has implemented a template for use in all SEA presentations, in which the first two slides always highlight the vision and strategic plan. This repetition helps the vision and strategic plan to become intuitive for the SEA’s stakeholders and makes articulating these core aspects of the SEA a habit for her staff.
In Missouri, Commissioner Margie Vandeven has expanded professional development for her staff by building an in-house “Lunch and Learn” program. Conducted by staff, these sessions range from topics on media relations and PowerPoint to Latin 101 and Abraham Lincoln. Staff not only get to share their expertise but also have the opportunity to celebrate one another for who they are and what inspires them.

<table>
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<th>Lunch ‘n Learn Summer Sessions</th>
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<tr>
<td>Commissioner’s Conference Room</td>
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<tr>
<td>12:00 – 12:30 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Bring your lunch and expand your mind!</em></td>
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*Registration required – email Julie Boeckmann to save your spot.*

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Session Title</th>
<th>Presenter</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 22</td>
<td>On Point PowerPoint</td>
<td>Nancy Bowles</td>
<td>Communication Specialist, Communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PowerPoint is a great way to build an effective presentation. You’re invited to come learn helpful tips and best practices for creating slides to make sure your PowerPoint presentations are as effective as you want them to be.</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 29</td>
<td>Missouri State Library</td>
<td>Sarah Irwin</td>
<td>Outreach and Training Librarian, Missouri State Library</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sarah will highlight the books, articles, ebooks, newspaper pieces, legislative materials and business profiles you can access for FREE from the Missouri State Library Reference Services Division. <a href="#">See flyer</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>July 6</td>
<td>Abe Lincoln</td>
<td>Mark Rehagen</td>
<td>Supervisor, Adult Education and Literacy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Have a lunchtime visit with the Rail Splitter himself. The visit will begin with a brief presentation to generate questions from attendees about the life and times of the 16th President. Your questions are preferred so it will be a discussion to learn what attendees are most interested to hear about. The Lunch ‘n Learn will conclude with the Gettysburg Address.</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 13</td>
<td>Latin 101</td>
<td>Mark Rehagen</td>
<td>Supervisor, Adult Education and Literacy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“Latin is a language, as dead as it can be. First it killed the Romans, now it’s killing me.” So the verse has been repeated through the years by high school students who have studied the ancient language. Come learn for yourself just how practical the study of Latin is, and a few tips that will demonstrate the similarities to and differences from our modern languages. Your questions will be welcomed. In the end, as Ovid said, you too will say, “Rident stolidi verba latina.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 20</td>
<td>Total Fitness Plan</td>
<td>Caryn Giarratano</td>
<td>Assistant Director, Assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A Total Fitness Plan: Modern adults are overwhelmed with too much to do and neglect what should be the most important focus—their health. This presentation provides a clear path to reduce stress, feel better, get more done and prioritize needs.</td>
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*43*
Setting Context and Structures for Effective Leadership Teams

In Connecticut, Commissioner Dianna Wentzell has fostered a culture of care and safety in weekly senior leadership meetings. Regardless of the specific agenda items to be discussed, every meeting is framed with the same vision, purpose, goals, norms, and commitments. The content of this vision and the consistency ensures that the team is intentional about how they come together and encourages bold suggestions, candid collaboration, clear accountability, and forward-momentum.

Weekly Team Meeting

Purpose of the Meeting:
• To discuss high priority topics among senior leadership
• To share information among senior leadership across CSDE divisions
• To problem solve and seek solutions to high priority issues/concerns
• To plan projects/tasks that require cross division collaboration in order to accomplish larger Department goals and objectives

Our Goal:
To create a dedicated time and a “safe” space where senior leadership can candidly share bold ideas, express diverse perspectives, communicate needs and support one another in order to collaboratively accomplish both short- and long-term goals and objectives of the Department.

Meeting Norms
• Commit to Attend Regularly
• Begin and End on Time
• Come Prepared, Maintain Focus, Actively Participate and Follow-Through on Commitments
• Refrain from multi-tasking (e.g. email)
• Follow-through on commitments
• Show Respect for Colleagues
• Share airtime
• Respect diverse opinions/ideas/perspectives
• Give and receive feedback constructively
• Limit sidebar conversations
• Commit to confidentiality

Meeting Procedures and Commitments:
• Contribute to agenda setting prior to the meeting
• Review agenda prior to the weekly meeting (disseminated on Friday)
• Clearly develop and commit to next steps/action steps at each meeting
• Establish clear timelines/deadlines (To Do, By Who, By When)
• If absent from a meeting, take responsibility to follow-up with a colleague
• Set goals and celebrate accomplishments
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many voices contributed to this Leadership Playbook, but we would like to particularly thank the following chiefs for their partnership and contributions. Without their collective sense of passion, integrity, humility, and hope, this playbook would not have been possible:

• Katy Anthes, Colorado Commissioner of Education
• June Atkinson, Former North Carolina Superintendent of Public Instruction
• Brenda Cassellius, Minnesota Commissioner of Education
• Mitchell Chester, Massachusetts Commissioner of Education
• Tony Evers, Wisconsin Superintendent of Public Instruction
• Joy Hofmeister, Oklahoma Superintendent of Public Instruction
• Terry Holliday, Former Kentucky Commissioner of Education
• Kathryn Matayoshi, Hawaii Superintendent of Education
• Melody Schopp, South Dakota Secretary of Education
• Margie Vandeven, Missouri Commissioner of Education
• Ken Wagner, Rhode Island Commissioner of Education
• Dianna Wentzell, Connecticut Commissioner of Education
• Ryan Wise, Iowa Education Director
• Carey Wright, Mississippi Superintendent of Education
INSPIRATIONAL LEADERSHIP SELF-ASSESSMENT

You can use the Inspirational Leadership Self-Assessment regardless of tenure and at any point in time. It does not measure your competency, but rather is meant to identify specific leadership behaviors that can be areas of focus for development. These areas of focus will, and should, naturally shift over time. The self-assessment represents a snapshot in time and there is no “right” answer. It aims to be a mirror, raising your awareness about how you’re spending your time and energy and how you’re approaching situations and challenges – as well as where you’re not. Equipped with this insight, you can be cognizant of specific leadership behavior capacities that may need to be developed or emphasized as you continue to grow in the role.

1. I proactively admit mistakes to my staff.
2. I regularly remind stakeholders of their interdependence, how our successes and setbacks are inextricably linked.
3. In the face of opposition I make it a priority to build and maintain a sense of shared purpose.
4. I take time to cultivate deeper relationships with the people I need to work with.
5. I create processes, structures and transparently document policies that reflect and advance a clearly articulated vision.
6. I extend trust to others from the start.
7. I measure progress towards the vision and share it transparently.
8. I explain decisions and initiatives in relation to how they help the organization achieve the vision.
9. I take time to listen to others’ perspectives, paying attention to their point of view before responding.
10. I make it a point to publicly recognize the performance and hard work of stakeholders.
11. I acknowledge and build from the experiences and actions of those that came before - both the good and bad.
12. I engage in feedback loops with stakeholders about how and when stakeholder feedback will be considered and included.
13. I work to fully appreciate the multi-dimensional identities and interests of stakeholder groups in order to more fully understand their positions.
14. I dedicate time to anticipate the second and third order impacts of my team’s and my own actions and decisions.
15. I actively use our SEA’s vision as a filter to help me prioritize my time and energy.
16. I encourage thoughtful, bold ideas and actions from staff and help coach staff to use missteps as learning opportunities.
17. I only make promises I can keep and take responsibility for when my team can’t deliver on our promises.
18. I keep my composure in the face of attacks or crisis.
19. I create space for others to give feedback and participate in decision making in our team.
20. I speak up when I see actions from my team that don’t align with our values, even when it’s hard.
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19. I create space for others to give feedback and participate in decision making in our team.
20. I speak up when I see actions from my team that don't align with our values, even when it's hard.
| 21. | I allow and encourage stakeholders to take the lead on initiatives and drive our vision forward. |
| 22. | I promote and hire people who are aligned with our values. |
| 23. | I embrace and build rituals that strengthen connection and inclusion of all the staff. |
| 24. | I take time to pause and reflect on my performance as a leader. |
| 25. | I know and regularly review where and with whom I spend my time and adjust accordingly. |
| 26. | I cultivate the efforts of stakeholders through counsel, positive reinforcement and reminders of the long-term vision. |
| 27. | I help individual staff to connect their role to our overall vision. |
| 28. | I recognize gaps in my leadership and take action to close them. |
| 29. | When crafting or refining our vision I ground the conversation in the need for the vision to be focused on the needs and improved learning outcomes of all students. |
| 30. | I check my biases and acknowledge that I have blind spots. |
| 31. | I seek out resources that can help me develop my technical and leadership skills. |
| 32. | I deliberately cultivate relationships with groups I don’t know well, especially with those that have been historically disenfranchised, misinformed or antagonistic. |
| 33. | I create opportunities for staff to work together on shared projects and goals. |
| 34. | I ensure we train SEA staff on how to have constructive conversations and provide meaningful feedback. |
| 35. | I deliberately seek feedback for personal improvement from all levels of staff and various stakeholders. |
| 36. | I create or sponsor projects that bring diverse groups with complementary resources or knowledge together. |

To calculate your scores, follow the rubric instructions on the next page
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<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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**RUBRIC**

Your total score for the Self-Assessment indicates the degree to which you are embodying the behaviors of inspirational leadership as defined in the Leadership Playbook. While you can retake this self-assessment periodically as a way to track your progress in developing as an inspirational leader, it is in comparing the relative scores under each imperative that gives you a snapshot of your current areas of greater and lesser focus. Looking at these numbers, you can identify not only your strengths but also potential areas for renewed attention.

**BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER** - Add up the total scores of lines a, b and c below

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<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>Engage Beyond Your Core Network - Add up items 13, 14, and 32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>Support Stakeholders As They Lead - Add up items 21, 26, and 36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CRAFT AND SHARE A VISION** - Add up the total scores of lines d, e and f below

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Co-Create The Vision - Add up items 9, 11, and 29</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>Embed The Vision Into Operations - Add up items 5, 7, and 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f</td>
<td>Maintain Focus And Alignment Around The Vision - Add up items 2, 8, and 10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**UNLOCK POTENTIAL ACROSS THE SEA** - Add up the total scores of lines g, h and i below

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Set an Example - Add up items 6, 17, and 20</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>g</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h</td>
<td>Foster Freedom So All Can Lead - Add up items 16, 19, and 33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>Support And Develop Your People - Add up items 22, 23, and 34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**GROW AS A LEADER** - Add up the total scores of lines j, k and l below

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Develop Self-Awareness - Add up items 24, 28, and 30</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>j</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k</td>
<td>Ask For Help - Add up items 1, 31, and 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l</td>
<td>Focus Your Energy For Impact - Add up items 15, 18, and 25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Using this information, identify one or two areas of leadership or key behaviors that you want to develop, and set specific plans as to how you will make sure you do this. You can use the Leadership Playbook as a guide to help specify exactly what the key behaviors are, and the case studies can highlight what they look like in action.
Leadership comes in many forms, but not all are equally effective or sustainable. The Leadership Playbook for Chief State School Officers argues for the inspirational power of one form in particular: values-based leadership. On your journey as an inspirational leader, it’s helpful to keep in mind what you are striving towards as well as what values-based leadership is not. We have therefore provided a graphic below that compares and contrasts the dimensions of values-based leadership with three other popular approaches to leadership: strong willed command-and-control-based leadership, charismatic and magnetic persona-based leadership, and calculating carrots-and-sticks-based leadership. In general, we find leaders tend to best develop by consistently demonstrating behaviors progressively from the left to the right side of the graphic. Leaders with little formal or informal influence mistakenly fear that brute strength is required to command authority. Those who can garner new found influence often try to leverage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure and Information</th>
<th>Command-and-Control-Based</th>
<th>Values-Based</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creates silos by hoarding information, afraid it might get into the wrong hands</td>
<td>Develops cliques and groupies by spinning information for a desired effect</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enlistment</td>
<td>Forces participation through coercive-like actions, focuses on extracting value from stakeholders</td>
<td>Entrances others through a cult-like or celebrity following</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholder Relationship</td>
<td>Focusees on extracting value from stakeholders</td>
<td>Exaggerates the value add, perceives support as a privilege for stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose and Mission</td>
<td>Doesn’t maintain a mission to guide employees, but rather gives directives as appropriate</td>
<td>Projects him or herself as the vision based on the popular ethos of the moment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operations</td>
<td>Provides rules to employees as they appear needed, as mission is unstable at best and nonexistent at worst</td>
<td>Hopes to singlehandedly operationalize the vision by being micro-interested in all organizational activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Momentum</td>
<td>Threatens demotions and fires or disengages with those that can’t cut it</td>
<td>Gives compelling speeches to rally the troops in the moment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modeling Behavior</td>
<td>Models behavior that conveys personal strength often unconscious of affect</td>
<td>Behaves in a way to convey organization strength, self-conscious of what the state of the organization says about him/her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roles and Responsibilities</td>
<td>Believes that distributed leadership only adds risks for an organization, and expects employees to only do exactly what they are told</td>
<td>Perceives staff as a group of followers who should be working towards enhancing the leader’s reputation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee Development</td>
<td>Development of employees occurs, if at all, by their own trial and error experiences</td>
<td>Assumes employees will develop by proximity to the leader and watching him or her in action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Awareness</td>
<td>Unreal of strengths or weaknesses, focused only on the future</td>
<td>Is keenly aware of strengths and relies on them to maintain persona</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Development</td>
<td>Unconsciously develops over time through practice leading, not necessarily in a productive direction</td>
<td>Quickly learns what is effective in the short-term, hones those skills and seeks out an audience for them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prioritization</td>
<td>Creates priorities and lets others figure out how to manage how to prioritize accomplishing them</td>
<td>Triage challenges, dedicating the most resources to those with the highest visibility</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
their own popularity. And leaders who have already gained large systems and networks of influence are often tempted to calculate and maximize their impact. The graphic is intended to reflect leadership more broadly and is not tailored for leadership in education or the role of chiefs in particular, however we have intentionally used phrases to describe values-based leadership that map back to the imperatives of the Leadership Playbook for your reference. We hope this graphic, self-assessment and leadership playbook serve as valuable resources on your journey as an inspirational leader.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Carrots-and-Sticks-Based</th>
<th>Values-Based</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relies on loci of expertise and shares information on a need-to-know basis so as to use it as a bargaining chip</td>
<td><strong>Forges relationships</strong> built on trust by pro-actively sharing information and context before it is requested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruits others by focusing on overlapping self-interests</td>
<td><strong>Engages beyond a core network</strong> by enlisting others in the greater good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supports stakeholders based on a calculation of a fair cost for time and energy</td>
<td><strong>Supports stakeholders as they lead</strong> and looks to add value beyond expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crafts a vision based on input from stakeholders focused on success and achievement</td>
<td><strong>Co-creates the vision</strong> with stakeholders focused on long-term significance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sets up the vision as running parallel to the strategic plan of the organization, which is recalibrated on a regular basis for alignment</td>
<td><strong>Embeds the vision into operations</strong> so every team and employee understands their role in it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incentivizes stakeholders to achieve the bottom line by strengthening and weakening carrots-and-sticks as needed</td>
<td><strong>Maintains focus and alignment around the vision</strong>, pausing to proactively reconnect decisions and actions to the vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acts in alignment with what is expected of him or her, looking to be rewarded by fulfilling expectations</td>
<td><strong>Sets an example</strong> by seeking out opportunities to model values through decisions, actions and stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sees staff as layers of management, establishing a system of checks and balances that encourages leadership but provides unequal resources, trust, or opportunity</td>
<td><strong>Fosters freedom so all can lead</strong> by trusting employees to pursue bold, thoughtful ideas and actions and then evaluates results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides professional training for employees to do their formal roles and responsibilities more effectively</td>
<td><strong>Supports and develops</strong> employees by providing organization led education and fostering employee-lead experiences that develop individuals based on what they have done, who they are and who they can become</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learns about oneself by reflecting on past experiences and tries to incorporate learnings in the future</td>
<td><strong>Develops self-awareness</strong> by intentionally taking time to pause, to identify weaknesses/blindspots, develop growth goals, evaluate progress, and refine a personal growth strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pursues professional development opportunities as they are presented, prioritizing what would strengthen current leadership responsibilities</td>
<td><strong>Asks for help</strong> and intentionally seeks out the advice and knowledge of others, looking to develop oneself as a person capable of leading in multiple environments and different people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pays closest attention to delivering on set short-term goals and objectives</td>
<td><strong>Focuses energy for impact</strong>, using organizational values as a guide for what matters most in the long-term</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>