

LEADERSHIP PLAYBOOK

for Chief State School Officers



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LETTER FROM CARISSA MOFFAT MILLER

CCSSO Executive Director

The Demand for Inspirational Leadership

Dear Chiefs,

Serving in the role of a chief state school officer is an honor and responsibility. As your membership organization, it is our belief that state education agencies (SEA), 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 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 across race, gender, ethnicity, language, disability, sexual orientation, family background and/or family income.” This is no small task, but states have been making progress against these ten equity commitments as detailed in the follow-up report, **States Leading for Equity: Promising Practices Advancing the Equity Commitments** and CCSSO is firmly committed to supporting you in making more progress.

Achieving this objective will require that you and your agencies take on new roles — some of which agencies may 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 students 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 the skills and abilities of state agency staff as never before. Additionally, enabling 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 his research on a leadership approach that is grounded in shared values, which is critical because:

- Only leadership built on shared values, driven by an unwavering commitment to all students, 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 calls 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 on impact.

This playbook is intended as a primer on what inspirational leadership at a state education agency looks like. While it includes the 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.

As I transitioned into the Executive Director role at CCSSO, I read the playbook to help guide my approach to leading an organization and reflect on my own leadership style. I hope that you also find this playbook to be a valuable resource as you continue to grow as a leader. 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,
Carissa

Playbook Development Process

CCSSO's Leadership Academy created this leadership playbook to help you on your journey to become the inspirational leader students and educators need. The evolution of this playbook was propelled by a group of current and former chiefs who offered insights and perspectives from personal experiences and provided the core content and feedback used to develop the playbook. The initial design process, described below, spanned eight months of refinements with the group of chiefs and additional voices to articulate best practices, real-life leadership stories, and guiding principles that illustrate what values-based leadership looks like for chiefs right now.



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

CCSSO conducted interviews 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.



Convening a Group of Chiefs

A group of chiefs convened to explore, test, and articulate the leadership characteristics required of chiefs today. They also reviewed and provided feedback on the draft leadership playbook content and structure.



A newer edition of the playbook was completed in the winter of 2018 to include case studies that reflect CCSSO's current membership and provide practical guidance as chiefs re-envision how they lead their SEAs in new and elevated ways, inspiring their staff to deliver on their highest priorities for students and schools. The result is a living, evolving leadership playbook created by, with, and for chiefs.



Case Studies from Chiefs

Twelve chiefs provided case studies that brought the four leadership imperatives to life, highlighting the complexities of SEA leadership and the impact of leading from a different playbook.



2016 Annual Policy Forum

A draft of the leadership playbook was shared with all chiefs, and a smaller cohort of chiefs tested its ability to help them navigate their leadership challenges.



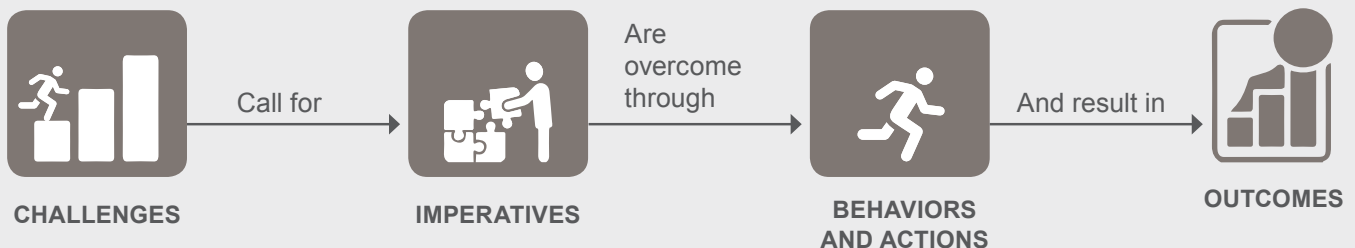
Updates to the Leadership Playbook

Eight new case studies were added to the playbook that highlight best practices and illustrate real-life stories that help translate guiding principles for values-based and inspirational leadership into the SEA context.

How to Use this Leadership Playbook

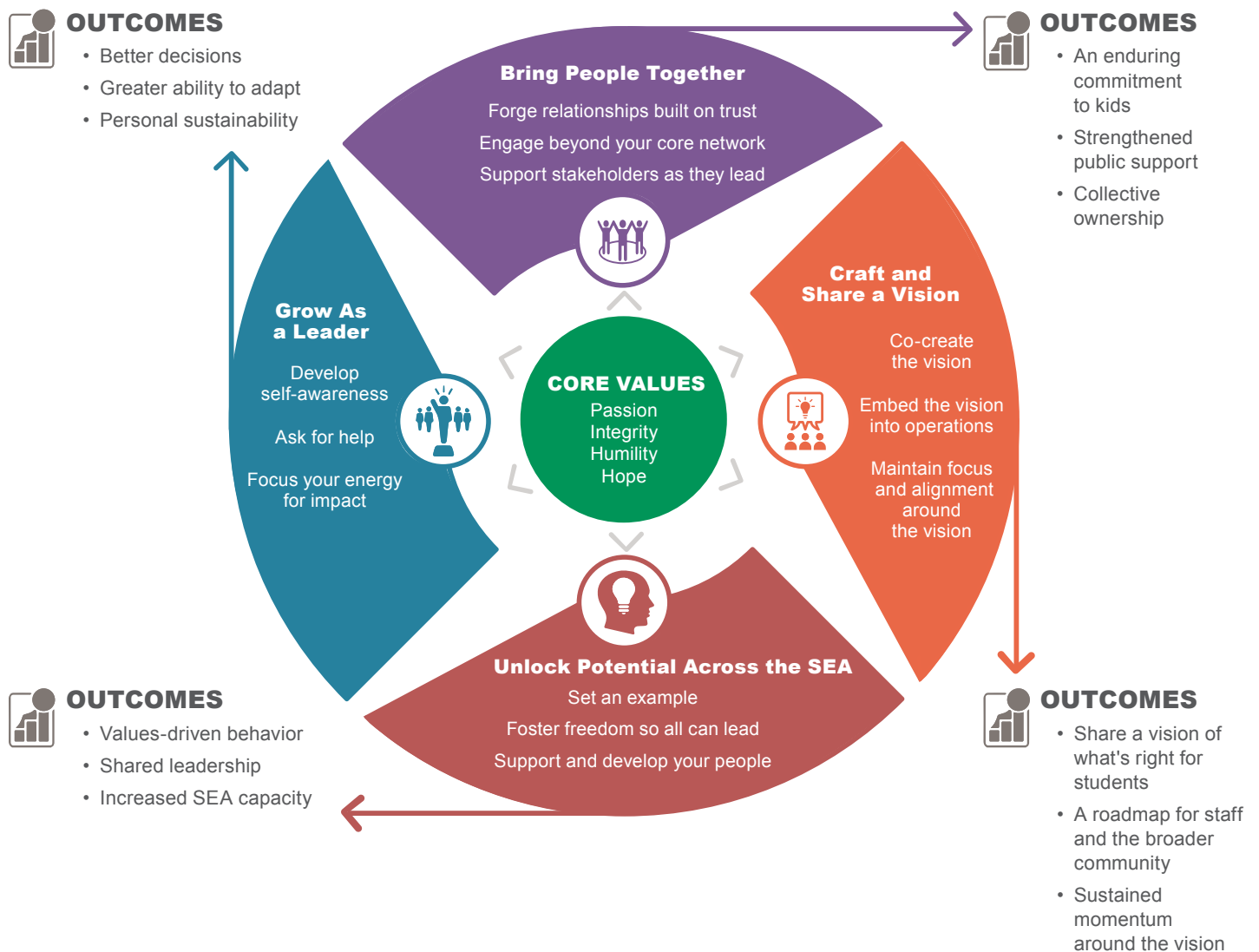
This leadership playbook outlines and describes a model of inspirational leadership for chiefs. It divides this work into four challenges and four imperatives that are critical to the work of leading a state education agency as well as the key behaviors and actions necessary to achieve those imperatives. The model is grounded in a set of core values for inspirational chief leadership identified by chiefs during the playbook development process. These values guide how you do what you do, and the playbook describes how to ground the work of each unique imperative.

Finally, the playbook is only useful if chiefs are able to act upon it. 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.



Inspirational Chief Leadership

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.





Building from Values

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 leadership playbook, CCSSO has identified four values that encapsulate and are consistently identified as core to the work of an SEA and critical to the leadership chiefs provide: Passion, Integrity, Humility, and Hope.

CORE 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.

VALUES-BASED LEADERSHIP

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. The graphic below 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.

	Command-and-Control-Based	Persona-Based
Structure and Information	Creates silos by hoarding information, afraid it might get into the wrong hands	Develops cliques and groupies by spinning information for a desired effect
Enlistment	Forces participation through coercive action Focuses on extracting value from stakeholders	Entrances others through a cult-like or celebrity following
Stakeholder Relationship	Focuses on extracting value from stakeholders	Exaggerates the value-add, perceives support as a privilege for stakeholders
Purpose and Mission	Doesn't maintain a mission to guide employees but rather gives directives as appropriate	Projects him or herself as the vision based on the popular ethos of the moment
Operations	Provides rules to employees as they appear needed; mission is unstable at best and nonexistent at worst	Hopes to singlehandedly operationalize the vision by being micro-interested in all organizational activities
Momentum	Threatens demotions and fires or disengages with those who can't cut it	Gives compelling speeches to rally the troops in the moment
Modeling Behavior	Models behavior that conveys personal strength, often unconscious of affect	Behaves in a way that conveys organizational strength, self-conscious of what the state of the organization says about him/her
Roles and Responsibilities	Believes that distributed leadership only adds risks for an organization, and expects employees to only do exactly what they are told	Perceives staff as a group of followers who should be working towards enhancing the leader's reputation
Employee Development	Development of employees occurs, if at all, by their own trial and error experiences	Assumes employees will develop by proximity to the leader and watching him or her in action
Self-Awareness	Unware of strengths or weaknesses, focused only on the future	Is keenly aware of strengths and relies on them to maintain persona
Personal Development	Unconsciously develops over time through practice leading, not necessarily in a productive direction	Quickly learns what is effective in the short-term, hones those skills and seeks out an audience for them
Prioritization	Creates priorities and lets others figure out how to manage how to prioritize accomplishing them	Triages challenges, dedicating the most resources to those with the highest visibility

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.

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

“ 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

Former 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

Former 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



1 BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER

The Challenge:

In this politically charged era, 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 students. They are asked to balance the views of external 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 should be engaged 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 students instead of solely relying on personal charisma or 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 students**. 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 internal and external 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 you need to work with.

TIP: Leverage school visits by inviting stakeholders to join. 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.

- 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.

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

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

- 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.

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

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.

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.

- Recognize that stakeholders have multi-dimensional identities and agendas; avoid pigeonholing them as caring about 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.

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.

- 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.

CASE STUDIES

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 real world scenarios. As you read these case studies, think about the following prompts, and try to imagine if you can develop a way to integrate their best practices within your state 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 eleven sovereign tribes has deteriorated in recent decades. This has 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 because they were receiving only federal funding. The SEA knew that in order 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, former Commissioner Brenda Cassellius spearheaded a series of trust- and relationship-building summits with leaders from the eleven 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 students, and earmarked funds to close the financing gap between BIE and public schools. To maintain momentum, 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.

When 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."

BEHAVIORS AND ACTIONS

Invite disenfranchised, uniformed, or antagonistic constituencies to the conversation. If necessary, tailor your outreach to their needs and anticipate how you can support them in contributing.

Prioritize shared purpose and in so doing transcend the potential for different interests to create friction across stakeholder groups and individuals.

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.

Recognize when it's better for others to take the lead, and validate their leadership.

South Dakota: Supporting Teachers by Building a Coalition for Action

Challenge

Anecdotal evidence suggested that low teacher salaries were a key factor contributing to challenges to teacher recruitment and retention in South Dakota. 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 skepticism in the field as to whether the Task Force would drive action that would result in change.

Approach

Former Secretary of Education Melody Schopp credits building relationships with legislators, the community, business leaders, and teachers as crucial to the success of the Blue Ribbon 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. Secretary Schopp and former 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. The bill was reconsidered, and it passed by one vote in the House, moved through the Senate, and was signed into law by the Governor in March 2016.

Impact

The law 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 that 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.

This effort consumed the majority of Secretary Schopp's energy for over a year. 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."

BEHAVIORS AND ACTIONS

Invest time to cultivate personal relationships and build meaningful human connections with the people with whom you need to work.

Recognize that stakeholders have multi-dimensional identities and agendas; avoid pigeonholing them as caring about one and only one thing.

Seek out others' input or expertise. At the same time, don't ask for advice if the decision has already been made.

Wisconsin: Using National Conversations to Start State Ones

Challenge

Tony Evers, former State Superintendent of Wisconsin, always led with a focus on equity and reached out and formed 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 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 focus of the Equity and ESSA Council, as it's officially called, has many of the same characteristics as the national Title I conversation. Its local advocates are looking for more freedom and autonomy for innovation, while state players are looking for guardrails. But the conversation moved 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 showed in the quick progress council members made.

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, former late Massachusetts Commissioner of Education, it was the outcomes that mattered 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's the system that has failed. Commissioner Chester emphasized the importance of equity to the Department's mission through messaging in regular meetings and weekly all-staff emails. In 2010, 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 most economically disadvantaged 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 budget 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. Where funds for staffing were lacking, Chester developed several public-private partnerships to supplement the Department's funds.

Impact

While the district still has a long road ahead, students in Lawrence are performing better. At the district level, math scores are outpacing those in Boston, and graduation rates are climbing. Asked why he thinks this approach created progress, Commissioner Chester 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."

BEHAVIORS AND ACTIONS

--- 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.

--- Recognize when it's better for others to take the lead, and validate their leadership.

--- Connect stakeholders with complementary resources or knowledge.



“ 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

“ We 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

“ Politics provide endless opportunities for distraction that have nothing to do with your vision—use your authority to demand that your schedule be your own and you won’t get consumed by those things. ”

JOHN WHITE

Louisiana 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. 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 the driver behind it. 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 students. 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.

CORE VALUES



PASSION:
Pursue a vision for students 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.

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.

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.

- 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; you must 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 support your goals, align with your vision, and can be 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.

TIP: Engage in a cycle of continuous improvement (assessing capacity, planning, setting targets, monitoring progress, etc.) to move beyond implementing standard-issue organizational best practices and towards practices that are specific to the SEA, its vision, and its culture.

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.

- Establish new metrics consistent with your vision, regularly measure progress, and be transparent in sharing what you've learned.

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

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.

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

TIP: There are multiple channels available to communicate the SEA's vision and value including official websites, newsletters, social media, webinars, conferences and focus groups.

- 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: 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: Research shows that recognition is most effective when it is personalized, peer-driven, and given as soon as possible after the act or behavior that is being recognized.



CASE STUDIES

Below are a few strong 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 are 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 the implementation challenges that 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 the state does 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 conducted focus groups that reached 15,000 people, and administered 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, Commissioner Wentzell was intent to ensure that its ESSA outreach meet all constituencies where they were, ensuring all voices were represented and heard.

Approach

When it came to ESSA, The SEA started by using surveys and focus groups led by its regional educational service centers. But critical to their new strategy was 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."

BEHAVIORS AND ACTIONS

Integrate the expertise and research of others, including those on the ground with different perspectives of how things really work.

Reinvent outdated processes and policies as you can, so that they are supportive of your goals, aligned with your vision, and documented in a transparent way.

Invite and listen to others' experiences and perspectives before responding or seeking to be heard.

Integrate the expertise and research of others, including those on the ground with different perspectives of how things really work.

Understand and describe interdependencies; that is, how stakeholders' successes and setbacks are inextricably linked to each other.

Nebraska: Developing a Shared Vision for Education

Challenge

When Matt Blomstedt was first named Commissioner of Education in Nebraska, he would write about things he wanted to accomplish, but it remained a challenge to make sure people bought into this vision. Historically the State Board of Education tended to adopt the vision of commissioner, without much input. Commissioner Blomstedt wanted to approach the relationship in a new way, developing a shared vision for education and articulating a new role for the Department of Education: that of change agent, rather than regulator.

Approach

In order to shift the dynamics of the relationship with the Board, Commissioner Blomstedt had conversations with Board members to identify priorities. Collectively, they decided a shared vision for accountability was a key priority and sought to build a plan for accountability, which was also a legislative priority. They asked each other a lot of questions, and ultimately built an accountability system with a broader vision in mind for education.

Commissioner Blomstedt and the Board were building a strong relationship. Although the work to define a vision for accountability was productive, they realized there were still gaps—accountability doesn't describe all the work of the agency or the system, and they did not have the same articulated mission. The Commissioner and the Board decided to launch a collaborative process to develop a strategic plan. Key to this process was to be "on the same page" and have a shared strategic mission, vision, and direction from the Board, to the commissioner, and throughout the agency. They hired an outside organization to facilitate the process. Commissioner Blomstedt and the Board articulated two main priorities for the plan. First, connect accountability to a broader strategic plan, and second, define measures around equity and achievement gaps to set high expectations.

The Commissioner, Board, and NDE staff dedicated about a year to developing the plan. Early on in the process they collectively outlined some key beliefs about what really matters, including that NDE itself has to be held accountable. Critical to this was defining the many roles NDE plays from champion, to regulator, capacity builder, connector and change agent. NDE staff created committees on specific topics to have detailed discussions and make recommendations to inform the plan based on trends in data and what would be realistic and possible. Once the priorities were articulated, they worked to align strategies for executing the work to the priorities, and aligned the budget to the strategic plan.

Impact

Commissioner Blomstedt sees several positive outcomes from the process to develop the [Strategic Vision and Direction](#). The high level of engagement from the Board helped to build ownership in the plan and its implementation. The Board now grounds conversations and presentations in the plan, and the legislature can use the plan to monitor progress. The plan also provided a good way to engage with partners and stakeholders, giving them something to react to and a way to offer input. A number of partners across the state have asked how they can support implementation of the plan, demonstrating they see value in the plan and alignment to their work. Commissioner Blomstedt also reorganized NDE aligned to the plan, to foster more collaboration on goals and priorities that cut across teams, and help staff see how their work aligns to the vision. Although this is an ongoing challenge, it spurred different kinds of conversations about the work and staff have established a common way to look at progress grounded in evidence.

BEHAVIORS AND ACTIONS

Enlist stakeholders in an open and shared effort to develop and articulate a vision grounded in improving learning outcomes.

Set and reinforce clear goals and objectives that establish a common understanding 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.

Bureau of Indian Education: Turning a Federal Directive into an Opportunity

Challenge

Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) Director, Tony Dearman, used a federal directive to develop a strategic direction for his agency as an opportunity to bring stakeholders together and build trust throughout the system and the communities they serve. As the BIE is situated within the U.S. Department of the Interior, it is subject to federal regulation and oversight. A U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) report found BIE was in need of “better management and accountability...to improve Indian education.” The GAO report explicitly noted high leadership turnover at BIE and a lack of an organizational strategic plan. Upon entering office, Mr. Dearman made developing a plan that included detailed goals and strategies for BIE a priority. The BIE operates 183 schools across 23 states and 64 reservations, making stakeholder input, especially consultation with tribes, critical to the success of developing and implementing any initiative or policy national in scope. Dearman outlined a process to develop the strategic direction that ensures the plan would incorporate feedback from key stakeholders at all levels of the system.

Approach

The planning process included four main steps. Director Dearman understands that no two tribes are alike, and approached engagement in ways that attained consensus among tribes. First, BIE leaders drafted a plan proposal. It was important to solicit feedback from as many levels as possible, to build buy in and trust, and gain input on the draft goals from its union, BIE employees, school boards, school level leaders and staff, as well as representatives from the National Indian Education Association, and National Congress of American Indians. Next, BIE engaged in formal tribal consultation with tribal leaders and Indian education stakeholders. Mr. Dearman knew that stakeholders view BIE as the federal government and designed the process to be inclusive and built around face-to-face communication. All comments were documented for implementation and reasons were provided if comments were excluded. Next, BIE solicited input through publication in the Federal Register, and relevant feedback was incorporated into the plan. Finally, Mr. Dearman sought approval of the strategic direction from the U.S. Department of the Interior leadership and began formal implementation of the plan in August 2018.

The [Strategic Direction](#) includes a vision, mission, core values, goals, strategies, milestones, and actions. Mr. Dearman emphasizes the inclusion of core values that focus on students, rather than adults, and includes the value of service to shift the mindset of the way BIE does business and to change the culture of BIE. In addition, Mr. Dearman underscores that goals are focused on what BIE needs to accomplish to support teachers and adults serving students, and highlights Goal Six, which is focused on BIE holding itself accountable for achieving the goals and improving support to the local level. Finally, Mr. Dearman points out the strategies are based on a theory of action, and outline the outcome they will achieve and how they will utilize measures to show progress and success.

Impact

Currently, BIE is implementing the Strategic Direction. Staff have formed cross-collaborative teams and hold monthly coordination meetings to increase collaboration across the agency to ensure they will achieve common goals and diminish long-standing organizational silos. Mr. Dearman is also working to help senior leaders think beyond their divisions and think about the entire organization. In addition, he has asked BIE staff to think about serving the field, rather than just checking for compliance, and work to improve consistency in messaging. BIE is using an online progress monitoring system to facilitate monthly reporting as a way to tell the story on progress. Understanding that data reporting has been a challenge in the past, Mr. Dearman convened a data governance board made up of staff from across BIE to support this work and provide real-time information on successes and obstacles. Further, after the second year of implementation, BIE will once again solicit feedback from tribes to improve service to tribes and students based on the data gathered each month.

This is the first Strategic Direction in the history of BIE, and through the inclusive development process, it reflects the needs and input of stakeholders at all levels of the system. Mr. Dearman sees the five-year Strategic Direction as the anchor of the organization that he hopes can withstand any future leadership transitions.

BEHAVIORS AND ACTIONS

----- Integrate the expertise and research of others, including those on the ground with different perspectives of how things really work.

----- 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.

“ 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

Former Hawai'i State Superintendent of Education

“ I am an inclusive leader and believe it is a part of my responsibility as a leader to grow leaders around me. **”**

KIRSTEN BAESLER

North Dakota State Superintendent of Schools

“ 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

“ 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



3 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. 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 vision.

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 **supports and develops** 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.

CORE VALUES



PASSION:

Create context and structures that focus the energy and capabilities of your staff to be more impactful than any one of them on their own.



INTEGRITY:

Extend trust and model a sense of individual and collective responsibility to promote long-term objectives over short-term successes.



HUMILITY:

Be reflective about how you can best serve and support others, recognizing your success is interconnected with their growth and well-being.



HOPE:

Foster sustainability at your SEA through long-term thinking and by building a values-based culture of leadership that can sustain your SEA as a truly great organization long after you have moved on.

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.
TIP: When discussing hard truths or controversial perspectives, focus on observable behavior and its perceived impact rather than assuming to understand someone's intentions.
- 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.
TIP: Reserve time in your cabinet or all-staff meetings for open discussion, collective problem solving, and questions.
- Encourage thoughtful, bold ideas and actions. Help everyone understand that mistakes are inevitable and create opportunities to learn from them.
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.
- Promote collaboration by creating opportunities for staff to work together across functions and toward shared goals and priorities.
- Create space for others to participate in shaping SEA work by providing ways to communicate feedback, best practices, input, questions, innovative ideas, and concerns, and then act upon them.
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.
- 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.

Support and Develop Your Team Members

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.
TIP: Assess the compatibility of your 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.

TIP: Surround yourself with advisors who aren't "yes" people. Cultivate their trust by seeking their input sincerely (i.e., not if you've already made a decision), by giving others credit for their input or ideas, and by creating space for disagreements.

TIP: Have one person (e.g., your Chief of Staff) play devil's advocate to ensure you are considering all options and thinking through any unintended consequences before making a final decision.

- 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.

TIP: Develop an internal mentor program so staff have a resource to aid their development that is unconnected to performance management and compensation.

- 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.

TIP: Use role-playing to practice seeing multiple perspectives within disagreements.

- 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.

TIP: Get out and among your staff by: rotating where you work, hosting open lunches, inviting staff to events outside of work that you care about. Most importantly, show them a personal passion of yours.

- 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.

TIP: Be creative in finding and utilizing outside resources, such as by partnering with local universities to take on policy interns.

- 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.

TIP: When possible, avoid incentivizing small, one-off projects with financial incentives, as it is most effective only in motivating rote rather than creative work and tends to make relationships more transactional.



CASE STUDIES

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 the best way to 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

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 others' research before starting her tenure. As several reports argued, there were huge holes in the Department. Entire sub-departments (including literacy, early childhood, and secondary education) were missing. 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.

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.

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.

— 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.

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 sub-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.

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

She didn't blame them for their lack of trust in the Department, given Mississippi's history of contentious race relations. In addition, Superintendent Wright wasn't a native Mississippian and was therefore relatively 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.

— Extend trust to others; don't require them to earn it.

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.”

— 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.

Utah: Utilizing Design Thinking as a Process for Solving Human-Centered Problems

Challenge

When State Superintendent of Public Instruction Sydnee Dickson assumed her position at the Utah State Board of Education, one of her main priorities was to address low morale and weak communication and coherence across departments. Staff expressed a desire for better communication but seemed resigned to remain in silos and lacked strategic initiative to change behaviors for stronger coherence. A cost-benefit analysis of all programs and projects implemented at the agency further confirmed this by calling attention to duplication of work and ownership of impact in the field as well as the prevalence of multiple, uncoordinated touchpoints in schools and districts. In order to address these organizational challenges, Superintendent Dickson looked for bright spots within her agency that demonstrated a collaborative and innovative approach to the work that she could replicate across all teams. She identified a cross-departmental initiative aimed at addressing math proficiency gaps in students with disabilities as a clear example to highlight and replicate as it was tackling tough, human-centered problems using the principles of design thinking.

BEHAVIORS AND ACTIONS

— Don't accept: "We can't do that." Ask instead: "How can we accomplish x?" Look to turn obstacles into opportunities.

Approach

Design thinking is a methodology that uses iterative processes to solve human-centered problems by understanding the user, challenging fixed assumptions, and re-defining the problem to creatively and collectively identify novel strategies and solutions. Superintendent Dickson and her leadership team used the approach to focus on cultivating a deep interest and understanding of the people in the field for whom the agency was designing its programs and services. They next tackled the problems through a hands-on approach that involved ongoing experimentation by sketching, prototyping and testing out concepts and ideas.

The principles of design thinking were first applied to a cross-departmental team intent on improving math proficiency for students with disabilities, a persistent gap in the state. Recognizing that this issue would require a multi-year and multi-pronged strategy, the team spent the first two years analyzing data, surveying the field, and meeting face-to-face with stakeholder groups through 100 different committee meetings to understand the root causes and develop a theory of change. Through this grassroots effort, the team identified three strategies in their theory of action which served as an anchor to prototype activities for nine LEAs that had math scores well below the state average. The lessons learned from the targeted pilot were then used to design activities for the rest of the state, specifically conferences and book studies to discuss the issue in more detail as well as highlight strategies for improvement.

— Encourage thoughtful, bold idea and actions. Help everyone understand that mistakes are inevitable and create opportunities to learn from them.

Impact

By applying design thinking principles to develop and pilot activities, the cross-departmental team was able to see statistically significant increases in math proficiency for students with disabilities immediately in the first year as well as in the subsequent two years of implementation. The progress made in closing the gap was commended by the State Board as well as the IDEA Data Center in the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs.

Internally, the success of the project served as an impetus for the formal adoption of design thinking. It began with an initial cohort of agency leaders, and followed by a second cohort of agency staff who used this professional learning opportunity to embed the processes in their personal and team goals. The process has not only led to a culture shift within the agency where staff feel empowered to contribute creatively and positively to solutions but it has also contributed to cross-learning and pollination. There are now 12 additional projects using design-thinking to tackle big problems across the state.

Tennessee: Aligning Agency Structure with Priorities for Students

Challenge

Former Tennessee Commissioner Candice McQueen inherited a tiny school improvement team that, was focused on ensuring that districts and schools received and used their school improvement funds appropriately. Additionally, there was no mechanism at Commissioner McQueen's disposal to support districts in school improvement other than through Tennessee's Achievement School District (ASD) — a state-run district for low performing schools. The Every Student Succeeds Act provided an opportunity to reprioritize school improvement, and also for the agency to dedicate resources for supporting at-risk districts and schools outside of the ASD.

BEHAVIORS AND ACTIONS

Approach

First, Commissioner McQueen moved the small but mighty school improvement team into the Commissioner's Office, reporting directly to her Chief of Staff. This both elevated the prominence of the school improvement work and enabled the team to access senior leaders and other department divisions more quickly in order to address critical decisions.

— Create structures that enable others to make impactful work decisions.

Second, the state's eight regional offices were reoriented around specifically supporting Tennessee's schools identified as low-performing. Whereas in the past these offices had prioritized supporting districts that had asked for help, those resources now go to underperforming schools first, whether the district proactively requests them or not.

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

Third, Commissioner McQueen directed her senior leaders and directors to create SMART goals that specifically relate to school improvement, and each is expected to spend at least 10-20% of his or her time on school improvement work. This sent a strong signal about school improvement as a priority, not only for dedicated school improvement staff but for all staff at the agency.

Impact

The clear expectations for agency staff and Tennessee's regional offices has changed behavior across the system. Support for low-performing schools, not just the distribution and monitoring of funds, is now a part of everyone's work and is understood as a priority for the agency.

— Match competencies to roles or support people so they can develop within their current role.

In addition, the new approach has changed how directors in the agency have hired for their teams. It became clear that some agency staff were having difficulty communicating and working with low performing schools. Personnel decisions had to be adjusted to ensure that staff were equipped with the experience and expectations to communicate effectively with school districts about improvement for all students.

North Dakota: Distributing Leadership and Empowering Staff

Challenge

When Superintendent Kirsten Baesler assumed office, the state education agency had been governed by her predecessor for 28 years and roles and responsibilities were decentralized across many offices. As an inclusive leader and experienced K-12 educator, she was committed to transforming the agency by developing a new vision and identity to tackle the challenges of the 21st century. This meant starting from within and changing the culture to be less hierarchical, more collaborative, and driven by leaders at all levels of the system who are empowered to make decisions, innovate and implement.

BEHAVIORS AND ACTIONS

— Create structures that enable others to make impactful work decisions.

Approach

Superintendent Baesler believes that an important part of her responsibility as a leader is to grow leaders. As such, she emphasized distributed leadership as critical to empowering people to do the work that is necessary within the system and to ensuring a transformational culture shift at the agency. She implemented this strategy through three key levers: 1) instituting a project-based approach to the work, 2) aligning funds to SEA priorities and key projects, and 3) providing opportunities for people across the agency to demonstrate leadership.

— 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.

By blending the budgeting process with the project-based approach, the agency was able to improve cross-office collaboration, develop better mechanisms for decision-making and distribute power by lifting funding constraints and centralizing requirements. Most importantly, this shift in how the agency does its work allowed the leadership team to make funding decisions based on project proposals and outcomes. Superintendent Baesler was also able to identify leaders not solely by their titles but also by their strengths and specific skill sets they used to implement key priorities and projects, providing opportunities for new staff to step up and demonstrate their leadership capabilities. The changes in how the agency functions, however, did not come without resistance. Cognizant that adjustments in behavior and culture require time, the leadership team gradually and deliberately engaged with leaders to institute reforms and make personnel decisions as needed.

— Be open and transparent with staff on how decisions are made and how you incorporated their feedback throughout the process.

Impact

By recognizing and rewarding this new approach to the work, the agency experienced a positive ripple effect as employees felt inspired, motivated and empowered to bring forth new ideas to the attention of the leadership team. Office directors across departments gave their team members space and opportunities to grow and lead. Broadly and most importantly, the reforms have been recognized and are appreciated by the field as the agency now has a stronger identity and is seen as a critical friend and thought partner in creating and implementing a better vision for education in North Dakota.

— Create space for others to participate in shaping the SEA work by providing ways for others to communicate feedback, input, questions, innovative ideas and concerns.

“ 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

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

MELODY SCHOPP

Former South Dakota Secretary of Education

“ Everybody has ways they can improve—identifying them can be hard because the more senior you get in organizations the less direct feedback you receive. If you take general public comment as feedback you’re not likely to get targeted, informed perspective. ”

JOHN WHITE

Louisiana State Superintendent 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

“ 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



4 GROW AS A LEADER

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. 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 another 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 prevent burnout so that chiefs can see the journey through and be at their best when it counts.

CORE VALUES



PASSION:

Lean into the hard work, grit and time needed to strengthen yourself.



INTEGRITY:

Take ownership and challenge your own growth with the same intensity you would expect from your team.



HUMILITY:

Adopt a learner's mindset, seek out and use feedback, and enlist others in your personal leadership journey.



HOPE:

Believe in the potential for continuous growth, especially for yourself.

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.
TIP: Be intentional about blocking off time for personal development and/or reflection, perhaps at home before you start your day.
- Be clear about your leadership style, priorities, and expectations.
TIP: Develop a "leadership manifesto" outlining your leadership style, priorities, and expectations, and share with your senior leadership team and staff at large.
- Play to and build on your strengths.
- Surround yourself with advisors who complement your areas for growth, particularly early in your tenure.
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.
- 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.
TIP: Develop a "first 100 days" plan.
- Check your biases and acknowledge your 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: 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

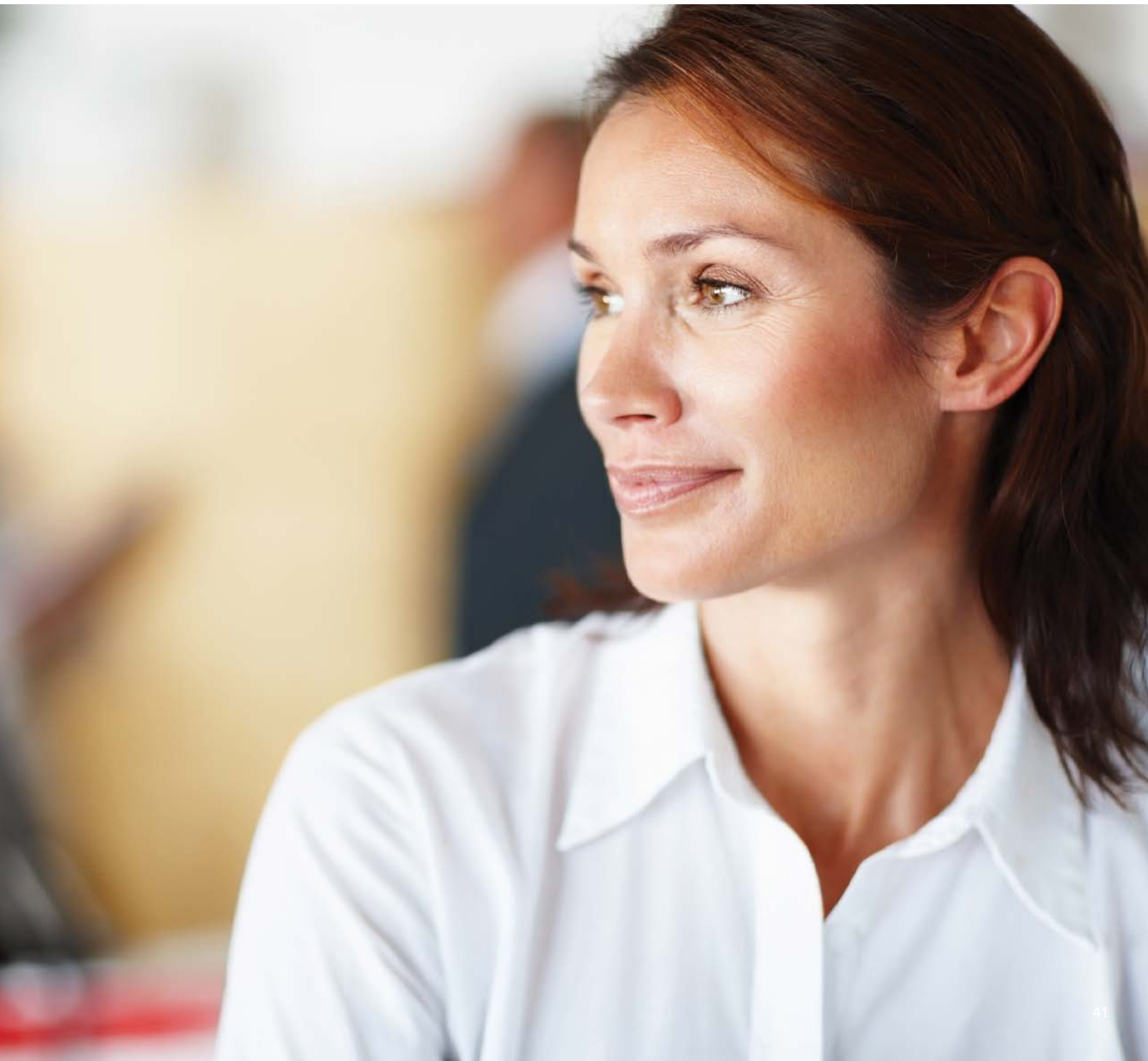
Your time is scarce and irreplaceable. Be strategic and thoughtful about how you use it.

- 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.
TIP: Ask your support staff that manage your calendar to track how, where, and with whom you are spending your time, and regularly review to ensure you are striking the right balance between your current priorities. It's helpful to set aside time every day to work on perhaps less urgent, but nevertheless important, long-term objectives.
TIP: When prioritizing, it can also be helpful to categorize items as: "non-negotiable", "nice but not necessary", "necessary but not now", or "need to know".
- 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.
TIP: Everyone has a to-do list, but you should also create a not-do list. This will help you get in the mindset and habit of scheduling your priorities, rather than prioritizing your schedule.

- 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.

TIP: Ensure your attendance at events hits certain criteria. For example: your attendance aligns with Board priorities; you're able to celebrate the work of your staff or other stakeholders; and the event aligns with a current initiative or focus area of the SEA.

TIP: Track your geographic coverage to be sure that there aren't any gaps. Visiting a school or district that has less formal power or fewer people can actually have a larger psychological impact on your efforts to engage your full scope of stakeholders.



CASE STUDIES

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 these inspirational chiefs, 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

Superintendent Hofmeister, having experience in the classroom and as a small business owner but lacking a substantive career in education administration, 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 took office.

Approach

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 ten 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 who 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 Hofmesiter'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 also been eager to act. 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."

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.



Colorado: Setting a Vision for the Future

Challenge

Colorado’s Commissioner of Education Katy Anthes was appointed Interim Commissioner during a period of multiple leadership transitions at the agency. After restoring Department stability, she knew it was time to decide whether she wanted to become the permanent leader of the Department and shift to a more forward-looking vision for the Department and Board.

The Interim Commissioner needed to do some soul searching herself about her leadership style, what she wanted to accomplish if she were to take on this big job, and if she was up for the challenge. Simultaneously, she would need to work with the State Board of Education to not only identify priorities and create a plan for the agency, but also to build the relationships and mutual understanding it would take to allow the Board to either name her Commissioner or select a different candidate. As a veteran staff member at the SEA, Commissioner Anthes had some experience and history with the Board, yet it was vital that she start her new relationship with them on the right foot.

BEHAVIORS AND ACTIONS

Take the time to pause and reflect on your performance, leadership style and areas of growth.

Approach

As time drew near for the Board to decide whether to remove her "interim" title, Commissioner Anthes did some deep reflection which resulted in a six-page document, titled *My Leadership Approach, Philosophy, and Direction*, that she shared with each Board member in one-on-one conversations. The document described who she was, her core values, how she planned to lead, and her commitments to working with the Board. In return, it described what she needed from the Board to be successful. Using this conversation and document as a foundation, Commissioner Anthes established herself and deepened her relationship with each Board member.

Be clear about your leadership style, priorities, and expectations.

Commissioner Anthes held well-formed beliefs about education, but as she engaged in a strategic planning process with her team she realized that as the Commissioner she needed to build consensus. Knowing her Board members often disagreed with one another, she had to balance her personal beliefs with building agreement and making compromises with the Board. In finalizing her strategic plan, she chose priorities on which the Board could mostly agree.

Surround yourself with advisors who complement your areas for growth, particularly early in your tenure.

Impact

Investing in honest, sincere interactions and setting clear expectations for what would be needed for Commissioner Anthes to lead with each of the State Board members paid big dividends for her—both internally for her as a leader and externally with the Board and others regarding how she would lead. Allowing the Board members to see who she was as a leader was outside of her comfort zone, but ultimately gave the Board the information they needed to make an informed decision about whether she would be the right fit as Commissioner. It also gave the Commissioner a clear foundation to move forward with the Board.

In the end, the Board decided unanimously to select her as Commissioner, making it easier for her and the Board to work together moving forward. The Board engaged in the development of and is committed to the new strategic plan, and is using the strategic plan to guide the agency’s work.

Louisiana: Personal Growth as a Leader

Challenge

Understanding the complex challenges facing students in Louisiana and the political realities of the position of state superintendent, John White continuously works to improve his management and leadership skills. Superintendent White thinks about his leadership role both internally, as the leader of the Louisiana Department of Education, and his external role of creating and setting a context that is advantageous to advancing the vision of the agency. He considers what is needed to be successful in each environment and know when to take action, reflects on his own leadership approach, and thinks about how to support the growth and development of his staff.

Approach

Superintendent White grounds his leadership approach in having a plan for what he wants to achieve. He develops specific goals and priorities each year, checks to see if he is making progress against his plan, and if it is not working he reflects on what he needs to do differently. He recognized the difference between inheriting and implementing someone else's plan or setting your own course. "Take ownership over your own plan. If you do have your own plan you have motivation to know if you're achieving it. That produces a kind of dynamism that makes you change personally." Superintendent White acknowledges that taking ownership of a plan depends on the level of autonomy a chief has within their state's governance structure. Despite his high level of autonomy, Superintendent White has built skills to address the internal and external barriers to implementing his priorities.

Internally, at the Louisiana Department of Education, Superintendent White initially focused on building a strong leadership team who would be able to grow and help him achieve his priorities. With a strong team in place, Superintendent White sought to build a culture of giving and receiving actionable and helpful feedback. He especially wanted feedback, recognizing that as a leader you tend to get less direct feedback. Through feedback, Superintendent White was able to identify areas of growth in his management approach, and develop strategies to address them. For example, based on feedback he received, Superintendent White worked to give feedback directly to individuals, rather than through third parties, and be explicit when he wants to dive into the weeds on an issue versus just wanting an update.

Externally, Superintendent White focuses on how he can influence the stakeholders across the education system to effectively get things accomplished in different contexts. He does so using various strategies. Superintendent White determines his priorities and areas of focus to help him stay focused in the midst of seemingly constant political distractions. He also translates big ideas into manageable action items that people can agree to. Superintendent White has spent time cultivating relationships, and acknowledges how difficult or adversarial some can be to start, but can be improved over time.

Impact

One way in which Superintendent White was able to see his vision for a change manifest was focusing on revising teacher preparation. Specifically, he wanted to redesign the curriculum and include a full year residency for all college seniors and aspiring alternative certification teachers. Superintendent White had to leverage his leadership both internally, supporting his team to work together, and externally, to build enough political support to initiate the work. In order to be successful, he developed an understanding of what he wanted to do, grounded that understanding in evidence, and used that to clarify the behavioral change at the classroom level and what it takes to scale a system. The process took around five years to complete, and was ultimately successful.

BEHAVIORS AND ACTIONS

— Seek feedback to continuously improve your leadership and maintain a learner's mindset.

Illinois: Utilizing Storytelling and an Inclusive Leadership Style to Set Goals for Equity

Challenge

For former Illinois Superintendent of Education Tony Smith, tackling inequities across the state is an economic issue as well as a moral issue that must be addressed to ensure access to quality education for all students, especially those most in need and situated in lives of poverty and exclusion. In conversations with the State Board and with education leaders at the agency and across the field, Superintendent Smith emphasized both the waste of human potential and precious resources, as well as the injustice of not pushing for more concrete student-level goals that bring to light these inequities and lead to a better way of tracking progress. Specifically, through an inclusive leadership style that unleashed the power of storytelling, he encouraged open and honest dialogue, and built shared understanding so that Illinois was able to have difficult and action-oriented conversations on equity.

BEHAVIORS AND ACTIONS

Approach

Early in his tenure, Superintendent Smith recognized that in order to have conversations on the deeper complexities of the equity challenges in the state, he needed to evolve personally and collectively as a state team. He and the team needed to undergo a shift from a “voyeur approach” to a “peace and justice approach” that underscored belonging and participation, created capacity and space for healing and dissent as a positive process, and appreciated that inclusive and iterative processes are more durable.

Check your biases and acknowledge your blind spots.

One of the key ways the Superintendent was able to infuse these values across the department was by establishing formal and informal structures for capacity building. This included his personal commitment to authentically coach his team by identifying opportunities that allow staff to share their stories during planned meetings and impromptu conversations. In addition, he introduced formal structures and processes, such as ED STAT, a meeting and process management framework, to engage all staff in solving problems. The ED STAT framework led to the development of short-term and long-term agency goals to support districts in improving student outcomes; the establishment of more consistent, coordinated, and cooperative decision-making processes; and the creation of ED SOLUTION teams comprised of people from across the agency to tackle specific problems to advance the work.

Acknowledge that you can't do everything. Reinforce this with your team and dispel the narratives that you need to sign off on everything. Remember this requires you give people the autonomy to make decisions themselves.

Impact

The efforts and leadership of Superintendent Smith, as well as the Illinois State Board of Education and education leaders across the state over the course of three years culminated in two substantive accomplishments. First, state leaders reformed state law to include a common definition of adequate support for public school students and a set of evidence-based practices in achieving student content mastery. Secondly, state leaders created a vision and values document to support the whole child, whole school, and whole community. The document represents a pivot both for how the agency works internally as well as its relationship with the field because it “acknowledges the role that historical and ongoing institutional policies, programs, and practices have played in contributing to disparate and statistically predictable educational outcomes” in Illinois and highlights the “significant gaps in performance outcomes for low-income students, English Learners, and African-American students.” The next part of the process is to more deeply incorporate the vision and values in how the agency works to support the field and to review all work that may limit districts from improving student outcomes and meeting all student-level goals.



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 students 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**
 - **First 100 Days as a Chief State School Officer**
 - **States Leading for Equity: Promising Practices Advancing the Equity Commitments**
 - **Unlocking Potential: Strategies for Building a Strong Communications Culture within Your SEA**




Appendix

From Chiefs, for Chiefs

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.



MISSISSIPPI
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION
Ensuring a bright future for every child

Mississippi Board of Education


Vision

To create a world-class educational system that gives students the knowledge and skills to be successful in college and the workforce, and to flourish as parents and citizens

Mission

To provide leadership through the development of policy and accountability systems so that all students are prepared to compete in the global community

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MISSISSIPPI
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION
Ensuring a bright future for every child

Board Strategic Plan Goals

- All Students Proficient and Showing Growth in All Assessed Areas
- Every Student Graduates From High School and is Ready for College and Career
- Every Child Has Access to a High-Quality Early Childhood Program
- Every School Has Effective Teachers and Leaders
- Every Community Effectively Using a World-Class Data System to Improve Student Outcomes
- Every School and District is Rated “C” or Higher

2

Tapping into Expertise and Passion

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.

Lunch ‘n Learn Summer Sessions Commissioner’s Conference Room 12:00 – 12:30 p.m. <i>Bring your lunch and expand your mind!</i> <i>Registration required – email Julie Boeckmann to save your spot.</i>		
June 22 On Point PowerPoint 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.		Nancy Bowles Communication Specialist, Communications
June 29 Missouri State Library 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. See flier		Sarah Irwin Outreach and Training Librarian, Missouri State Library
July 6 Abe Lincoln 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.		Mark Rehagen Supervisor, Adult Education and Literacy
July 13 Latin 101 <i>“Latin is a language, as dead as it can be. First it killed the Romans, now it’s killing me.”</i> 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, <i>“Rident stolidi verba latina.”</i>		Mark Rehagen Supervisor, Adult Education and Literacy
July 20 Total Fitness Plan 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.		Caryn Giarratano Assistant Director, Assessment

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

Leadership Book List

The following is a compiled reading list of recommended books on leadership by current and former chiefs. We hope you take the time to explore the titles below and let us know of others we should recommend to our members in the future.

1. *Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking* by Malcolm Gladwell
2. *Coherence: The Right Drivers in Action for Schools, Districts, and Systems* by Michael Fullan and Joanne Quinn
3. *Creativity, Inc: Overcoming the Unseen Forces that Stand in the Way of True Inspiration* by Ed Catmull and Amy Wallace
4. *Crucibles of Leadership* by Robert J. Thomas
5. *Good to Great* by Jim Collins
6. *Great at Work: How Top Performers Do Less, Work Better, and Achieve More* by Morten Hansen
7. *Leadership in Turbulent Times* by Doris Kearns Goodwin
8. *Lincoln on Leadership: Executive Strategies for Tough Times* by Donald Phillips
9. *Little Bets* by Peter Sims
10. *Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die* by Chip Heath and Dan Heath
11. *Originals: How Non-Conformists Move the World* by Adam Grant
12. *Radical Candor* by Kim Scott
13. *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* by Stephen Covey
14. *The Advantage* by Patrick Lencioni
15. *The CEO Next Door* by Elena Botelho and Kim Powell
16. *The Fred Factor* by Mark Sanborn
17. *The Influencer: The Power to Change Anything* by Joseph Grenny, Kerry Patterson, David Maxfield, Ron McMillan and Al Switzler
18. *The Sweet Spot: How to Accomplish More by Doing Less* by Christine Carter
19. *Turn the Ship Around* by L. David Marquet

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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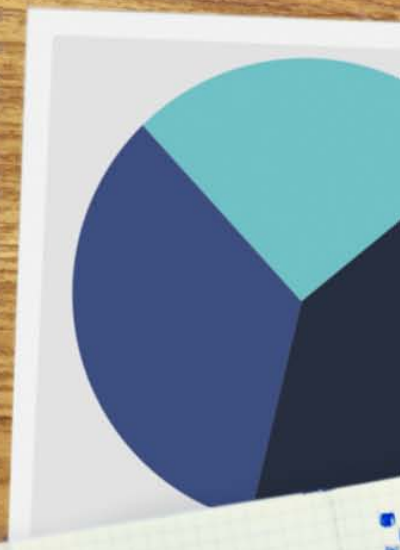
Strongly Disagree		Neither Agree, nor Disagree		Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
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INSPIRATIONAL LEADERSHIP SELF-ASSESSMENT (CONT'D)

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

Strongly Disagree		Neither Agree, nor Disagree		Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
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1	2	3	4	5



57% 0.56
21% 0.21
22% 0.22

MARKET



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

- | | | |
|----------|---|--|
| a | Forge Relationships Built On Trust - Add up items 3, 4, and 12 | |
| b | Engage Beyond Your Core Network - Add up items 13, 14, and 32 | |
| c | Support Stakeholders As They Lead - Add up items 21, 26, and 36 | |
| | | |

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

- | | | |
|----------|--|--|
| d | Co-Create The Vision - Add up items 9, 11, and 29 | |
| e | Embed The Vision Into Operations - Add up items 5, 7, and 27 | |
| f | Maintain Focus And Alignment Around The Vision - Add up items 2, 8, and 10 | |
| | | |

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

- | | | |
|----------|---|--|
| g | Set an Example - Add up items 6, 17, and 20 | |
| h | Foster Freedom So All Can Lead - Add up items 16, 19, and 33 | |
| i | Support And Develop Your People - Add up items 22, 23, and 34 | |
| | | |

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

- | | | |
|----------|--|--|
| j | Develop Self-Awareness - Add up items 24, 28, and 30 | |
| k | Ask For Help - Add up items 1, 31, and 35 | |
| l | Focus Your Energy For Impact - Add up items 15, 18, and 25 | |
| | | |

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.

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- Tony Evers, Former Wisconsin Superintendent of Public Instruction
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