EAB

How School Districts Can Improve Teacher Morale

The Overlooked Barrier to Pandemic Recovery

Day One: March 23rd, 12:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m. Eastern Time

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Many Thanks to the Advisors of this Work

Teacher Morale Advisory Council
Session #1 Participants

Districts Profiled in Research

Crete Public Schools, Nebraska
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Kelly Schooler, *Superintendent*

Salem City Schools, Virginia
Curtis Hicks, *Superintendent*

Arkport Central SD, New York
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Harvard CUSD, Illinois
Corey Tafoya, *Superintendent*

Norton Public Schools, Massachusetts
- Joseph Baeta, *Superintendent*
- Jen O'Neill, *ASI Teaching & Learning*

Parkway Public Schools, Missouri
- Keith Marty, *Superintendent*
- Chelsea Watson, *Deputy Superintendent*

Prosper ISD, Texas
Bernadette Gerace, ED Human Resources

Republic School District, Missouri
Matt Pearce, *Superintendent*

Objectives for This Session

Challenge conventional beliefs about how schools and districts can best improve teacher morale

Deconstruct the process successful organizations leverage to raise and sustain employee morale

Provide concrete steps that you and your team can take to launch the adoption of this proven process in your district today

Hearing From Your Colleagues
Breakout Session

Please accept your breakout room invitation

Discussions will last for

🕐 7 Minutes

→ Joining Breakout Room…
Breakout Room 1
This may take a few moments

- ✓ Introduce yourselves
- ✓ Discuss the question: *If you make progress on teacher morale, what initiative that you've had to pause this year will you be able to move forward?*
- ✓ Re-convene with the larger group

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Discussion Questions

- Introduce yourselves and please include your name, your district, state, and title

- If you make progress on teacher morale, what initiative that you've had to pause this year will you be able to move forward?

Not Only Are District Leaders' Jobs Harder Than Ever…

Evergreen Challenges Worsen

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

New Challenges Always Emerging

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

But the Teaching Profession Keeps Getting Harder, Too.

Mental Health Counselors

Safety Patrol

Learning Accelerators

Healthcare Workers

Substitute Teachers

Ever-Increasing Challenges Make Progress an Uphill Battle

> " We've had to pause our strategic plan this year because of teachers…and learning acceleration is a pipe dream at this point. Teachers are barely holding on let alone innovating in how they are pacing and accelerating learning. And it isn't that they can't do it—they have the skills…They are just too spent to do anything new."

Superintendent
Large School District, Alabama

Limits on What District Leaders Can Do to Improve Situation

Hire More Teachers?

▼

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

Increase Salaries?

▼

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

Reinvent Public Perception?

▼

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

Improving Morale Only Remaining Lever

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

Morale Synonyms are Close, But Not Quite Right

"Stress" can help accomplish goals

Definition: Pressure or tension resulting from demanding circumstances

"Dissatisfaction" too low a bar

Definition: Contentedness, comfort with a job

"Burnout" often too narrow in scope

Definition: Feeling unable to do the job because of unmanageable stress

"Demotivated" implies lack of care

Definition: Less eager to work

> "Whereas burnout happens when teachers are entirely depleted, demoralization happens when teachers are consistently thwarted in their ability to enact the values that brought them to the profession."

Doris A. Santoro
Author, Demoralized: Why Teachers Leave the Profession and How They Can Stay

Sources: Kruse, Kevin, Forbes, What is Employee Engagement, 2012, Price, Olga, Santoro, Doris, EdResearch, Structural Supports to Promote Teacher-Well-Being, October 2021; SHRM, Developing and Sustaining Employee Engagement, 2017; EAB interviews and analysis.

The Decline of Teacher Morale Overtime

Data from from NCES, MetLife and EAB[1]
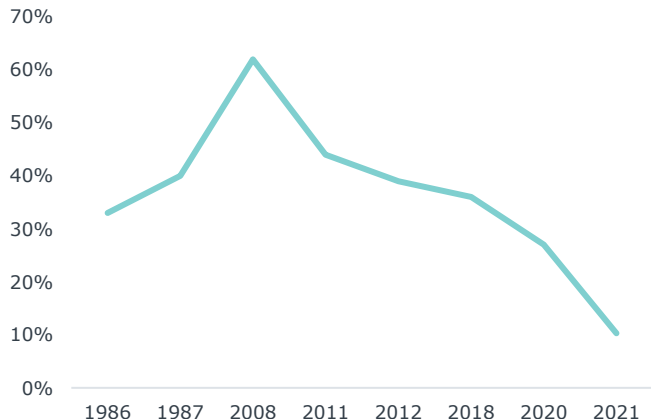
88% Of district leaders agree teacher morale is **worse today** than five years ago[2]

75% Of teachers report **morale is lower** than pre-pandemic[3]

70% Of teachers agreed they are **not able to be the best teacher** they can be for students[2]

And the Future of Morale, As It Is, Discouraging

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

Negative Impacts on Districts

~80%

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

~50%

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

Negative Impacts on Students

70%

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

78%

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

At A Time When…

Students Academic and SEL Needs at All-Time High

Growing Substitute and Teacher Shortages

Public Perception of Public K12 Is Strained

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

Mental and Physical Health in Jeopardy

Increased Physical Health Risks

23% Increase in chances of a heart attack

Tied to higher likelihood of Type 2 diabetes, coronary heart disease, headaches, respiratory and gastrointestinal issues.[1]

Increased Mental Health Risks

10% Increase in chances of a major depressive episode

WHO Acknowledges Threat to Health

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

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

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

A Strategic Investment in Morale Is…

Too Corporate

Teachers do not work for a careless corporation. They work in schools because they care and are passionate about their students. Our district's mission inherently takes care of morale.

Too Costly

School districts can't create working environments with swimming pools and full restaurants like the tech giants or even offer flexible remote arrangements for most staff.

Too Complex

Too much of what negatively impacts teacher morale is outside of the school districts' control like pay, public perception, parents, pandemics, politics, etc.

Wellness And Teacher Appreciation Most Common Strategies To Improve Morale

80%

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

95%

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

But Despite Good Intentions, Morale Has Stayed Low

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

Superintendent
Midwestern School District

Some efforts causing backlash from teachers

"One day soon we're going to have a conversation about how the term 'self care' is being weaponized against teachers. No amount of yoga or massages will fix this. Educators are operating in full crisis mode and need structural changes from the top."

Dr. Tracy Edwards
@tracyrenee70

Me, trying to make it through the 2020/2021 school year

Them: "Don't forget to practice self-care!"

Sources: Edwards, Tracy (@tracyrenee70), *Twitter,* 25 September 2021; "Teacher self-care", *Facebook*; EAB interviews and analysis.

EAB's Four-Part Research Methodology

Exploring Beyond K-12 to Uncover the Secret to Success

Review Existing Research

50+ years of research on psychology of motivation, morale, and engagement studied

Conduct Nationwide Survey

2600+ teachers and district/school leaders surveyed by EAB to capture current state of morale and engagement

Analyze Critical Factors

130+ key factors analyzed for impact on teacher morale

Search for Aligned Best Practices

100+ organizations examined for best practices to raise employee morale and engagement

Two Decades of Morale Investment Across Other Industries

1981	1990	2000s	2010	Today
Maslach measures burnout	'Engagement' coined	Morale rising to top of organizational priorities	Healthcare sector gets onboard	Investment in morale non-negotiable

But School Districts Lagging Behind

- Morale metrics uncommon in district success assessment
- Annual climate surveys still the industry's standard

- Piecemeal strategy to improve teacher morale the norm
- Narrow focus on retention and recruitment

- No dedicated owner
- Leaders cannot articulate an overarching strategy

Sources: 15five, "Ultimate Guide to Employee Engagement: What It Is, Why It's Important, and How to Measure It", Accessed 8February, 2022; Merlino, James, Raman, Ananth, "Health Care's Service Fanatics", *Harvard Business Review*, May 2013; EAB interviews and analysis.

'Doctor' Archetype Most Likely to Improve Morale

...But Also, Least Common in Public Education

80% of Districts

CAREGIVER

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

17% of Districts

GENERALIST

Attempts to operationalize every morale factor they can find

3% of Districts

DOCTOR

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

Specific Morale Strategies Not as Important...

...As Choosing a Morale Strategy Like a Doctor

Cleveland Clinic
Started a clinician celebration program

FICO
Adopted fully remote work ability prior to pandemic

Self-Regional
Hosted new opportunities for staff to exchange ideas

The Morale Doctor

- Diagnoses organizations' unique **root causes** of low employee morale

- Designs approach and solutions in **partnership with employees**

EAB's Teacher Morale Momentum Loop

Diagnose **CAUSES** — Prioritize **THREATS** — Co-Design **SOLUTIONS**

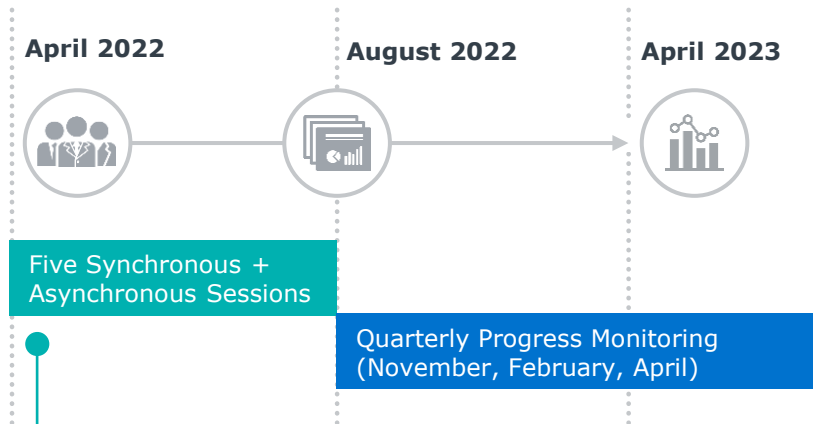| Diagnose Causes of Low Morale Using a Quarterly Diagnostic System | Prioritize 1-2 Threats to Morale at a Time Based on Impact & Feasibility | Involve Teachers in Co-Designing Solutions by Lowering Input Barriers |

EAB's Nationwide Collaborative to Raise Teacher Morale

Schedule Overview

April 2022   **August 2022**   **April 2023**

Five Synchronous + Asynchronous Sessions

Quarterly Progress Monitoring (November, February, April)

REGISTER NOW!

Limited spots remain for April 2022 start date.

During this guided program, EAB experts will provide the insights and tools you need to successfully establish today's practices in your schools, while a nationwide cohort of peers will create the community and shared accountability needed to see it through.

Step-by-Step Guided Implementation

Peer Collaboration and Shared Accountability

Quarterly progress monitoring and long-term support

Five Commitments Underpin Continuous Morale Improvement

Believes that **organizations can improve morale** and takes ownership

Recognizes that **sources of low morale will vary** between districts

Commits to **understanding problem before acting**

Tests **1-2 ideas at a time**

Revises solutions each year using teacher feedback

Shifting Mindsets
Self Reflection

Which of the new mindsets will be hardest for you and your leadership team to adopt?

Spend 1 minute reflecting or writing down your thoughts to the above question.

New Mindsets

- Believes that organizations can improve morale and takes ownership
- Recognizes that sources of low morale will vary between districts
- Commits to understanding problem before acting
- Tests 1-2 ideas at a time
- Revises solutions each year using teacher feedback

Collective Ownership Paramount for Sustained Improvement

Assigning Morale as One Individual's Side Job Common, But Insufficient

78% Of organizations think people strategy is **only HR's** responsibility

▼

But one person doesn't have the knowledge, power, or resources needed
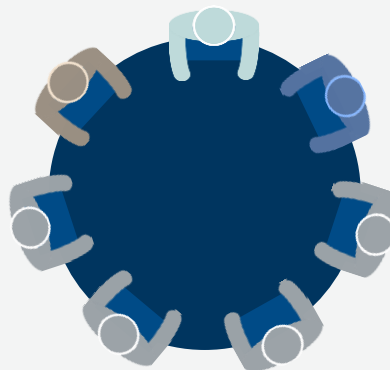
...And Districts Can't Just Hire an FTE

Hiring a full-time 'Chief Experience Officer' is not feasible for districts

Instead, Districts Must Embrace Shared Responsibility

- Superintendent
- Other District Leadership
- Teacher Leaders and Union Reps
- Principals

Source: The Predictive Index, "The 2020 State of Talent Optimization Report;" EAB interviews and analysis.

DISTRICT LEVEL

Add Teacher Morale to Official District Priorities

Harvard CUSD's includes happiness among their BHAGS (big hairy, audacious goals) for the year to ensure it is a formal priority for district leadership.

Goal: "All work will be done by **deliriously happy people**."

Corey Tafoya
Superintendent, Harvard CUSD

BUILDING LEVEL

Embed Morale Questions Into All 1:1 Check ins

- Incorporate morale questions into all teacher check-ins
- Add 1-2 questions to faculty meetings, grade-level PLCs, etc.

Include Morale in Principal Evaluations

Arkport Central School District uses 360 evaluations for their building leaders to keep principals accountable to support teachers' growth and overall morale.

Source: Harvard CUSD, Harvard, IL; Arkport Central School District, Arkport, NY; EAB interviews and analysis.

Diagnose **CAUSES**   Prioritize **THREATS**   Co-Design **SOLUTIONS**

1
Diagnose Causes of Low Morale Using a Quarterly Diagnostic System

1. Quarterly Morale Diagnostic Questions
2. Teacher Productive Conversation Guide
3. Proactive Stay Interviews

2
Prioritize 1-2 Threats to Morale at a Time Based on Impact & Feasibility

4. Threat Prioritization Playbook
   - Solvable Threats Register
   - Threat Decision Matrix
   - 60-Minute Decision Agenda

3
Involve Teachers in Co-Designing Solutions by Lowering Input Barriers

6. Morale Booster Compendium
7. Time Bank Incentives
8. Scaled Input Social Media Posts

Diagnose CAUSES — **Prioritize THREATS** — **Co-Design SOLUTIONS**

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Step #1: Diagnose Causes
Self Reflection

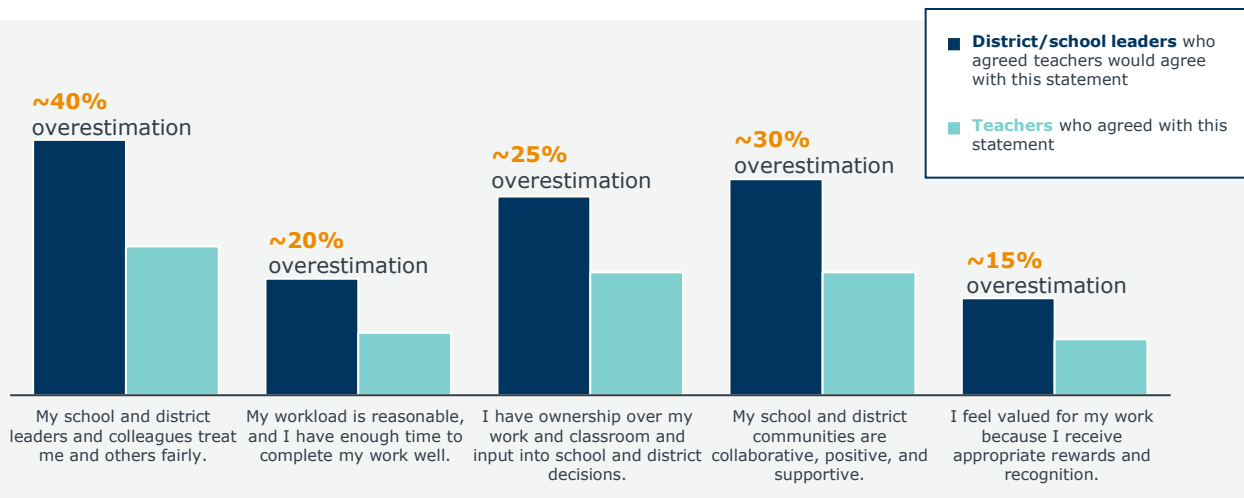**How does your district currently collect input from teachers on engagement and morale?**

- *What types of input do you gather?*
- *How frequently do you gather input?*

Spend 1 minute reflecting or writing down your thoughts to the above question. You will use this reflection in a breakout later in this session.

Leadership Versus Teacher Perspectives on Morale Threats
EAB Teacher Morale Survey, October 2021[1]

■ **District/school leaders** who agreed teachers would agree with this statement

■ **Teachers** who agreed with this statement

~40% overestimation

~20% overestimation

~25% overestimation

~30% overestimation

~15% overestimation

My school and district leaders and colleagues treat me and others fairly.

My workload is reasonable, and I have enough time to complete my work well.

I have ownership over my work and classroom and input into school and district decisions.

My school and district communities are collaborative, positive, and supportive.

I feel valued for my work because I receive appropriate rewards and recognition.

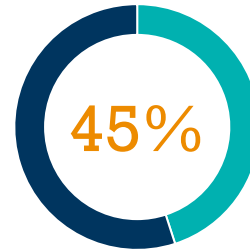Sources: EAB interviews, surveys and analysis.

Few leaders are clear on causes of low morale

78%
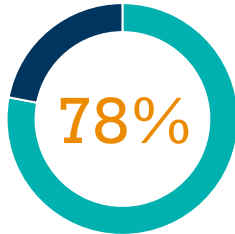
Of organizations[1] do not know what drives their employees' disengagement

Less than half attempt to move from measurement to diagnosis

45%

Of organizations[1] claim to regularly diagnose employee engagement

1) Based on data from 600 surveyed executives across 20 industries

Sources: The Predictive Index, The State of Talent Optimization, 2020; EAB interviews and analysis.

Annual Climate Surveys Flawed

✖ Conducted too infrequently (once annually or less)

✖ Focus more on measurement than diagnosing threats

✖ Fail to communicate results and action in a timely fashion (causes survey fatigue)

Teacher Conversations Often Unproductive

✖ Ask questions that leaders cannot respond to, undermining teacher trust

✖ Often only hear from the 'loudest voices in the room'

✖ Focus on sourcing solutions too early in the process rather than diagnosing problems

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DIY Diagnosis Causes a Cascade of Issues

Few plug and play options available

Internal survey expertise limited

Cognitive biases promote assumptions

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Defining Categories for Threat Diagnosis

Rigorous Analysis to Identify Diagnostic Questions

✓ Synthesized 130+ morale and engagement theories

✓ Adapted preeminent research in this field (Maslach, Gallup) for K12

✓ Analyzed 250+ engagement survey questions

✓ Applied findings and feedback from EAB's fall teacher morale survey

Six Threat Categories to Assess

1. Personal safety and belonging
2. Time and resources
3. Leadership trust & values alignment
4. Ownership and input
5. Recognition and value
6. Professional growth

Sources: Advisory Board, 2022; Gallup, 'Gallup's Employee Engagement Survey: Ask the Right Questions With the Q12 Survey', Accessed December 2021; Mashlach, Christina, "Six areas of worklife…", Journal of Health and Human Services Admniistration, February 1999; Qualtrics, 'The ultimate guide to employee pulse surveys', Accessed December 2021; Weiss, Laure, 'Burnout from an Organizational Perspective', October 20, 2020; EAB interviews and analysis.

A Research-Based Recipe for Success

Components of an Effective Morale Diagnostic

Aligns With Research

Includes proven morale and engagement questions, customized for the K12 environment

Requires minimal effort and time

Distinguishes relevant questions by school and district level

Aligns With Reality

Supplements or replaces existing annual climate & engagement surveys

Compatible with existing survey tools (e.g., Qualtrics)

Frequency is Key for Impact and Analysis

Benefits of Quarterly Morale Surveys

Improve Engagement

19% Increase in employee engagement scores when surveyed 4+ times per year
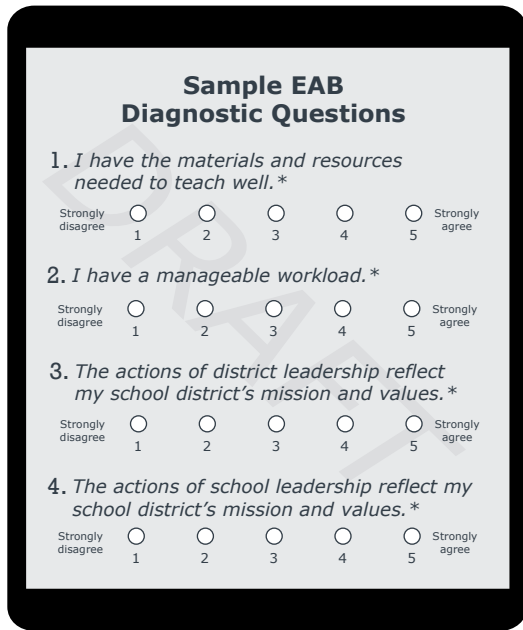
Identify Flight Risks

2.6x Employees who do not respond to 2+ surveys are 2.6x more likely to leave

Sources: Nobes, C., "The Top 3 Benefits of Pulse Surveys," Achievers, Sept. 29, 2020; "Ultimate Guide to Employee Engagement: What It Is, Why It's Important, and How to Measure It," 15Five; EAB interviews and analysis.

EAB's Diagnostic Questions Available This April

To Make Quantitative Diagnosis Easier for School Districts

Sample EAB Diagnostic Questions

1. *I have the materials and resources needed to teach well.* *
   Strongly disagree ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5 Strongly agree

2. *I have a manageable workload.* *
   Strongly disagree ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5 Strongly agree

3. *The actions of district leadership reflect my school district's mission and values.* *
   Strongly disagree ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5 Strongly agree

4. *The actions of school leadership reflect my school district's mission and values.* *
   Strongly disagree ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5 Strongly agree

Assesses **6 Research-Backed Threat** Areas

Designed for Up To **Quarterly Use**

Fewer Than **20 Questions**

Customized for **K-12**

*Specifics of questions subject to change

Sources: Advisory Board, 2022; Gallup, 'Gallup's Employee Engagement Survey: Ask the Right Questions With the Q12 Survey', Accessed December 2021; Mashlach, Christina, "Six areas of worklife…", Journal of Health and Human Services Admniistration, February 1999; Qualtrics, 'The ultimate guide to employee pulse surveys', Accessed December 2021; Weiss, Laure, 'Burnout from an Organizational Perspective', October 20, 2020; EAB interviews and analysis.

What Causes Survey Fatigue:

☑ Length of survey

☑ Ask unsolvable questions

☐ Insufficient communication about survey results, next steps

Communication Traps That Contribute to Survey Fatigue

Untimely (or no) communication

Share survey data without clear next steps for action

Fail to share why behind decisions

> 66
>
> "The common reason people don't want to fill out your survey is that you haven't done anything since the last one. **They don't have survey fatigue; they have lack of action fatigue**"
>
> Didier Elzinga
> Culture Amp CEO

Sources: Yohn, D.L., "Employee Feedback Is Good For Employee Engagement; Action Is Better," Forbes, Aug. 6, 2019; EAB interviews and analysis

Four Musts of Morale Communication

1 Communicate within 4-6 weeks of survey's close

2 Provide summary of survey and qualitative results

3 Describe next steps district intends to take

4 Explain consistent prioritization process that guides next steps

Norton Public Schools & Arkport Central School District **Use Multiple, Existing Channels**

- Monthly newsletters
- Faculty meetings
- School board meetings
- Districtwide faculty & staff meetings
- Emails from the SI

Better Communication Increases Survey Participation

60%
Average engagement survey response at Norton School District, who surveys more often than average

38%
Increase in employee engagement when organizations use similar communication strategies

Sources: Arkport Central School District, New York Norton School District, Massachusetts; Penn, George, 'Open Source Change', CEB, September 2016.

Step #1: Diagnose Causes
Breakout Session

Please accept your breakout room invitation

Discussions will last for:

🕐 7 Minutes

Joining Breakout Room...
Breakout Room 1
This may take a few moments

✓ Read scenario
✓ Discuss the questions below
✓ Re-convene with the larger group

- What do you think went wrong for District A?
- What are ways District A could improve their actions to get better information and response rates for their survey?
- Do the mistakes District A made remind you of challenges your district has faced?

Scenario for Step #1: Diagnose Causes

District A used a teacher morale survey for the first time in the 2020-2021 school year, prompted by the increased challenges teachers were facing. The district got only a 20% response rate. Last year, the survey helped district leaders know that teacher morale was low, but they weren't sure what else to do with the information. They are now contemplating whether they should use the survey again in 2022.

Discussion Questions

- What do you think went wrong for District A?

- What are ways District A could improve their actions to get better information and response rates for their survey?

- Do the mistakes District A made remind you of challenges your district has faced?

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Diagnose CAUSES

Prioritize THREATS

Co-Design SOLUTIONS

Five Reasons Why the Momentum Loop Improves Morale

Diagnoses the root of morale issues rather than treating symptoms

Addresses 1–2 root issues at a time

Partners with teachers to design solutions

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

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

Sources: Morgan, Jacob, "The Employee Experience Advantage", 2017; EAB interviews and analysis.

To Prepare for Tomorrow
Self Reflection

1. **How are you making decisions around what threats to morale to address and do teachers understand those decisions?**

2. **How are you partnering with teachers to ensure solutions meet their needs without unintended barriers or consequences?**

Please Share Your Feedback

Please take a moment to answer this final poll question to provide your overall experience on today's session.

We have also shared a link to a short online evaluation in the **Chat** and we would appreciate if you could take 2-3 minutes to give us additional feedback on your experience today.

How School Districts Can Improve Teacher Morale

The Overlooked Barrier to Pandemic Recovery

Day Two: March 24th, 12:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m. Eastern Time

District Leadership Forum

Objectives for This Session

Challenge conventional beliefs about how schools and districts can best improve teacher morale

Deconstruct the process successful organizations leverage to raise and sustain employee morale

Provide concrete steps that you and your team can take to launch the adoption of this proven process in your district today

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- Solvable Threats Register

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3 **Involve Teachers in Co-Designing Solutions** by Lowering Input Barriers

6. Morale Booster Compendium

7. Time Bank Incentives

8. Scaled Input Social Media Posts

Districts' Typical Approach to Collecting Qualitative Input

Host town hall or faculty meetings

Include open-ended question(s) on survey and during discussions with teachers

Use exit and/or entrance interviews for teachers

Why It Doesn't Work

Only the loudest voices are heard

Results in laundry lists of grievances and ideas that are ineffective or impractical to address

Impact is limited in scope and reactive, often too little, too late

This Leaves Teachers Feeling...

Undervalued

Ignored

Disengaged with Process

Source: EAB interviews and analysis

Improve Discussions to Better Diagnose Causes

EAB's Conversation Guide Makes Productivity Easy

Make Teacher Conversations More Productive

▸ EAB's agenda should take no more than **30 minutes**

▸ Base questions on established HR best practice

▸ Clear questions and explicit goals of agenda make the time well spent for all

Sample EAB Agenda

Intro/Opening (5 mins.)
- Today we'll be focused on leadership trust and workload.
- What was your initial reaction to learning that we'd be talking about workload today?

Questions for Discussion (20 mins.)
- What has made you feel supported by building leaders in the past?
- What has worked to address workload in the past? What hasn't worked?

Closing (5 mins.)
- Is there anything you thought we'd talk about today that we didn't touch on?
- Timeline for updates and next steps.

Two Ways to Use Conversation Guide

Formal Focus Groups
Parkway Schools, Missouri

Holds formal focus groups during first semester specifically on morale concerns

✔ Provides in-depth information

✔ Participating teachers feel really heard

Faculty Meeting Post-Its
Republic School District, Missouri

Uses post-its to gather answers from teachers to targeted question during faculty meetings

✔ More teachers heard

✔ Efficient way to get input

Sources: Parkway Schools, Chesterfield, MO; ABC, "First-Year Nurse Retention Toolkit," 2017; Oliver, "The Five-Step Approach To Fixing Employee Morale," Forbes, 2020; SHRM, "How to Develop Questions for an Employee Focus Group," 2022; Republic School District, Republic, MO; EAB interviews and analysis.

Stay Interviews Offer Details, Elevate Teacher Voice

Prosper ISD's Take on Stay Interviews

Prosper ISD conducts 30-minute conversations with dozens of district teachers annually to **better understand teachers' experience** in the district and **make them feel heard**

A Recipe for Success

- Stay interviewer must build trust with teachers so they feel comfortable sharing

- Conduct stay interviews on the teachers' 'turf,' in their classrooms

- Interviewers follow up with teachers on next steps, even when they cannot deliver

Stay Interviews Can Improve Morale, Retention

<8% Dissatisfaction at one company (BWSC) after implementing stay interviews

78% Of the reasons employees leave are preventable by the employer; stay interviews can surface these issues before employees leave

> " I know that it's working because these teachers stay in touch with me—they continue to share their thoughts, requests, and feedback with me after the interview has ended. And teachers I haven't interviewed before continue to be enthusiastic to speak with me."

Bernie Gerace
Director HR, Prosper Independent School District

Sample Stay Interview Questions:

Positive Stay Factors

- What causes you to enjoy the teaching role?
- What reasons do you give others for liking your job?
- Do you feel like you are doing the best work of your life?
- What brought you to this district and keeps you here?

Negative Experiences, Feedback

- Is there an experience you can describe that you've had in school that has negatively impacted you?
- When was the last time you thought about leaving this school and what prompted you to think about leaving?

Spends more time on different sections depending on whether the teacher seems to be having a more positive or negative experience

Most important question to indicate attrition risk[1]

Next Steps

☑ Use **EAB's morale diagnostic questions** to collect quantitative data from teachers quarterly, available in April.

☑ **Develop a plan to communicate survey results** within 4-6 weeks and share next steps with teachers.

☑ **Get beyond the quantitative data with targeted focus groups and proactive "stay interviews."** Be sure to equip facilitators with EAB's conversation guide.

Diagnose **CAUSES**   Prioritize **THREATS**   Co-Design **SOLUTIONS**

1 **Diagnose Causes of Low Morale** Using a Quarterly Diagnostic System

1. Quarterly Morale Diagnostic Questions

2. Teacher Productive Conversation Guide

3. Proactive Stay Interviews

2 **Prioritize 1-2** Threats to Morale at a Time Based on **Impact & Feasibility**

4. Threat Prioritization Playbook

   • Solvable Threats Register

   • Threat Decision Matrix

   • 60-Minute Decision Agenda

3 **Involve Teachers in Co-Designing Solutions** by Lowering Input Barriers

6. Morale Booster Compendium

7. Time Bank Incentives

8. Scaled Input Social Media Posts

Step #2: Prioritize Threats
Self Reflection

How are you making decisions around what threats to morale to address and do teachers understand those decisions?

Spend 1 minute reflecting or writing down your thoughts to the above question. You will use this reflection in a breakout later in this session.

Request for Teacher Input
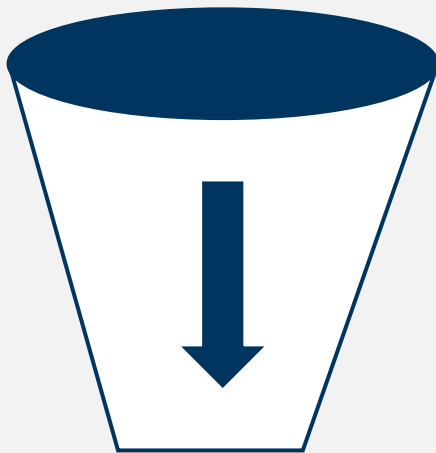
100s of survey responses, quantitative data

100s of comments, qualitative responses

10s of threats to morale from teachers

Common Mistakes in Responding

✖ **Try to solve too many problems**

✖ **Prioritize projects that are "possible" rather than critical**

✖ **Select projects based on popularity**

✖ **Determine next steps without clear rationale to teachers**

Lack of Informed Prioritization Results in Ineffective Strategies

All Threats   or   Wrong Threats

Resource intensive and often **poorly executed** morale-boosting strategies.

Four Elements of Effective Threat Prioritization

Threats Must Be...

Achievable

Commit to 1-2 prioritized threats at a time so districts can robustly and effectively address threats

Impactful

Select threats with the greatest likelihood to improve morale

Prioritization Process Must Be...

Efficient

Make decisions quickly for timely teacher communication

Consistent

Establish a repeatable decision-making process so teachers can understand decision rationale

Sources: Zenger, Jack, Folkman, Joseph, 'The 3 Elements of Trust', Harvard Business Review, February 2019; EAB Teacher Morale Prioritization Playbook; EAB interviews and analysis.

Consistently & Efficiently Select 1-2 Morale Threats

EAB's Prioritization Playbook Makes Effective Threat Prioritization Possible

Teacher Morale Threat Prioritization Playbook

District Leadership Forum
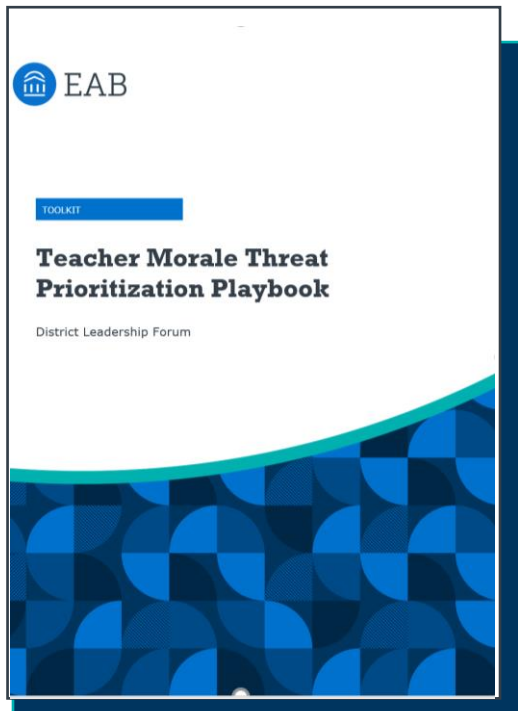
The Playbook Includes...

60-minute Decision Meeting Agenda

Solvable Threats Register

Threat Decision Matrix

Sources: EAB interviews and analysis.

First, Translate Teacher Input into Solvable Threats

Morale Threat Register Offers 30+ Problem Statements to Get You Started

75%
Of teachers disagree that the actions of district leadership reflect the district's mission and values

Broad, general threat to morale identified by diagnostic

Example Solvable Problems for 'Leadership & Values' Threat

Teachers are uncertain of the district's mission and values	District leadership's actions don't clearly reflect mission and values	Teachers unaware of district leadership's actions and decisions	The link between district leadership's actions & district's mission is unclear to teachers

Ideal Problem Statements Are:

✓ Limited to problems within your locus of control

✓ Comprised of branches that are mutually exclusive, collectively exhaustive (M.E.C.E)

✓ Based on teacher input, not assumptions

Next, Prioritize Threats Based on Impact, Feasibility

Decision Matrix Helps Narrow Down Which Problems to Tackle

5 standardized questions to plot problems on the impact and feasibility chart

Prioritization playbook also includes threat hierarchy cheat sheet to aid in assessing impact

Chart Impact, Feasibility of Threats

High

Feasibility

Problem

Problem

Problem

Problem

Problem

Problem

Problem

Problem

Problem

Problem

Problem

Low

Impact

High
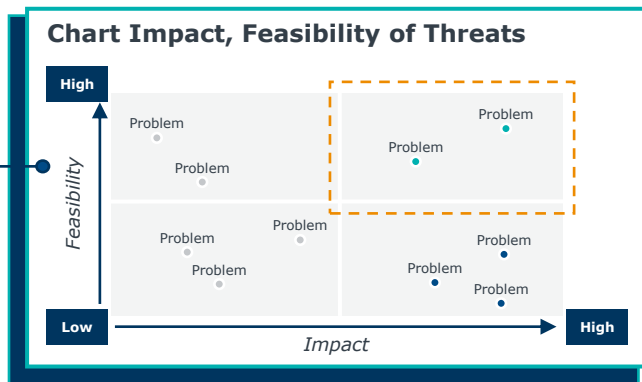
A Consistent and Efficient Process Improves Morale

EAB's Prioritization Playbook Helps to:

Decrease Time, Improve Efficiency

🕐 1 Hour

Average time spent to arrive at prioritized list of threats to focus on when using the playbook, allowing leaders to inform their teachers of next steps quickly

Increase Consistency, Improve Trust

📊 17%

Increase in employees' trust of leaders when leaders rated high in 'consistency'[1] and the playbook provides leaders with a repeatable, consistent process to explain decisions to teachers

1) Consistency is one of the three most important elements of trust according

Sources: Zenger, Jack, Folkman, Joseph, 'The 3 Elements of Trust', Harvard Business Review, February 2019; EAB Teacher Morale Prioritization Playbook; EAB interviews and sources.

Step #2: Prioritize Threats
Breakout Session

Please accept your breakout room invitation

Discussions will last for:

🕐 7 Minutes

Joining Breakout Room...
Breakout Room 1
This may take a few moments

✓ Read scenario
✓ Discuss the questions below
✓ Re-convene with the larger group

- What do you think went wrong for District A?
- What are ways District A could improve their follow up after the engagement survey and planning around next steps?
- Do the mistakes District A made remind you of challenges your district has faced?

Scenario for Step #2: Prioritize Threats

After completion of their survey, District A disaggregated most of the data to give to school leaders to use to design next steps. This resulted in school leaders meeting independently to brainstorm lists of strategies they could implement at their schools to help improve morale. They were responsible for communicating whatever actions they decided to take back to their teachers. District leaders noticed that school leaders varied in getting back to teachers on their action plans.

Discussion Questions

- What do you think went wrong for District A?
- What are ways District A could improve their follow up after the engagement survey and planning around next steps?
- Do the mistakes District A made remind you of challenges your district has faced?

Next Steps

☑ **Analyze teacher input** based not only on popularity and feasibility but **also impact**

☑ **Prioritize 1-2 solvable threats** to address that target underlying teacher morale problems

☑ Communicate **your consistent decision-making process** and the rationale behind your set priorities to teachers

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Prioritize THREATS

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Step #3: Co-Design Solutions
Self Reflection

How are you partnering with teachers to ensure solutions meet their needs without unintended barriers or consequences?

Spend 1 minute reflecting or writing down your thoughts to the above question. You will use this reflection in a breakout later in this session.

...Making Co-Designing Morale Strategies A Challenge

Silence

Leaders and teachers alike **struggle to think of potential solutions** to improve on the prioritized threats to morale

Noise

Leaders struggle to sort through **ineffective and/or impossible potential solutions** suggested by teachers

50+

Superintendents shared with EAB during focus groups and research interviews that leaders' and teachers' inability to identify solutions that effectively solve morale threats is a **main barrier to co-designing solutions**

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Initiative Fatigue

72%
Of surveyed teachers did not agree they're eager for new initiatives

Available Time

78%
Of surveyed teachers did not agree that they have enough time in the day
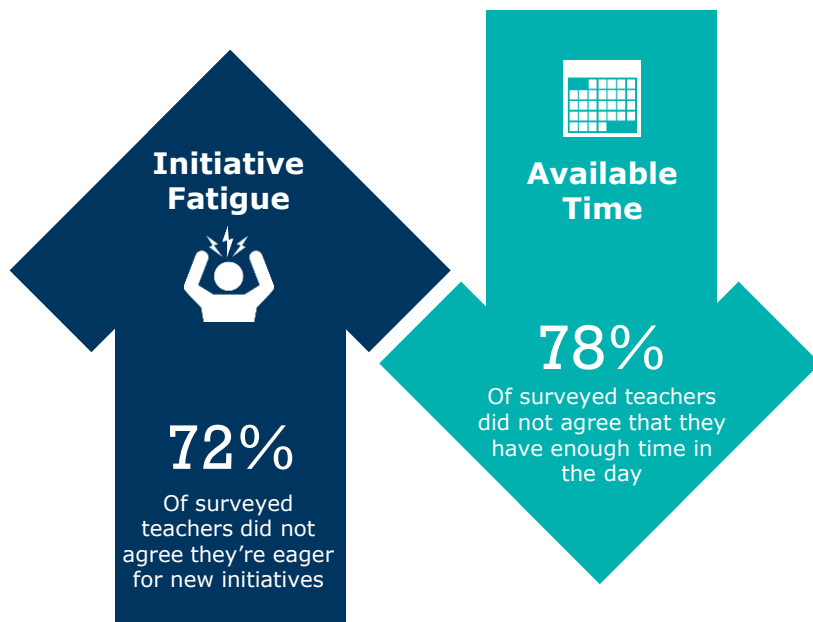
Morale Compendium Offers a Starting Point

30+ Morale-Boosting Strategies to Jumpstart Co-Design Conversations

Includes 30+ Solutions with Descriptions

Solutions Organized By Six Threats

Feasibility and Effort Guidance Included

Sources: EAB interviews and analysis

A Sneak Peak into the Compendium

$ Time & Resources

Teacher-Led Time Audits

- School leaders dedicate time at least once a year for teachers to create a detailed scheduled of a typical day

- Building leaders review these logs with teachers to find areas to decrease time spent

1 hour
Saved in instruction weekly for teachers in one grade level

$$ Leadership Trust & Values Alignment

Reverse Mentoring

- Involves a teacher who serves as a mentor to a school/district leader, reversing the typical power dynamics of mentorships

- Increasingly common outside of the education industry, with companies seeing increased trust and respect of participants

87%
Mentors/mentees feel empowered by the experience and have developed greater confidence

$$$ Professional Growth

Teacher Career Ladder

- Teachers apply for a special designation that offers financial and professional benefits at one Texas district

- As teachers advance, they are compensated financially and given more professional opportunities and responsibilities

95%
Annual retention rate of teacher participants

Sources: Vozza, Stephanie, SHRM, The Power of Reverse Mentoring, February 2022; EAB interviews and analysis.

Use Compendium To Avoid Silence & Noise

1 **Use Strategies for Inspiration**

Share 2-4 leader-selected strategies to workshop with teachers to avoid silence during solution brainstorming

2 **Vote on Promising Strategies**

Ask teachers to vote on top strategies for prioritized threat areas to avoid too much noise or unproductive ideas

Benefits of Using EAB's Compendium to Codesign Solutions

Maintains focus on possible solutions

Provides starting point, helps with initial brainstorming

Ensures strategies are grounded in proven strategies and research

Show Appreciation for and Incentivize Participation

Stanford
HEALTH CARE

Key Features of Time Bank Incentives

Prove to teachers that leaders value participation in morale efforts by offering time incentives for joining committees, focus groups

Ensure time rewards are reflective of actual needs or wants of the district's teachers

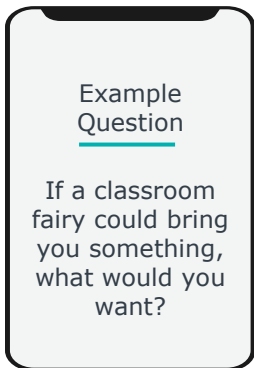Scale up (or down) offered incentives based on district resources at any given time

Potential Time Rewards

- Central office staff take lunch and/or recess duty

- Central office staff member does all printing, etc.

- Additional preparation time coverage

- An additional ½ personal day for 3+ focus group participations

Sources: Schulte B, "Time in the bank: A Stanford plan to save doctors from burnout," The Washington Post, August 20, 2015; EAB interviews and analysis.

Streamline Teacher Input with Social Media

Terrell ISD Quickly Gathers Teacher Input Via Well-Crafted Questions

TERRELL ISD
Expect More, Achieve More

Example Question

If a classroom fairy could bring you something, what would you want?

1 STEP

Write a clear, concise, and direct question related to a prioritized threat

2 STEP

Collect all replies in one easy to sort place (e.g., excel)

3 STEP

Look at all replies and identify trends across replies

4 STEP

Identify opportunities for the district to act on the results

200+ Actionable responses from teachers[1]

Used responses to stock a classroom 'market' where teachers could 'buy' supplies with district-provided currency

1) Of an approximately 300 teacher district

Step #3: Co-Design Solutions
Breakout Session

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This may take a few moments

✓ Read scenario
✓ Discuss the questions below
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- What do you think went wrong for District A?
- What are ways District A could have avoided some of the pushback from teachers?
- Do the mistakes District A made remind you of challenges your district has faced?

Scenario for Step #3: Co-Design Solutions

As a part of their new engagement survey, District A included an open-ended question that asked teachers 'What can the district offer you to help cope with the challenges of your job'? Many teachers shared that they needed more time without students to get planning work done and to decompress. The district responded by cancelling several days of school around the winter holidays. But teachers said it was too little, too late, and the district just ended up dealing with a lot of pushback from parents and the community.

Discussion Questions

- What do you think went wrong for District A?
- What are ways District A could have avoided some of the pushback from teachers?
- Do the mistakes District A made remind you of challenges your district has faced?

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Next Steps

☑ Use **EAB's morale-booster compendium** to ground conversations with teachers in proven strategies

☑ Develop a plan to **establish opportunities for teachers to provide input on solutions**

☑ Write **targeted questions** based on prioritized threats to make it fast and easy for teachers to co-design solutions

Diagnose **CAUSES**

Prioritize **THREATS**

Co-Design **SOLUTIONS**

Keep in Mind When Using EAB's Morale Momentum Loop

Continue to check in on success of solutions

Deploy at district-level but empower school leaders to use too

Permanent process, the loop is never complete

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Encourage Leaders to Register for April Webinar

April 6th and April 7th at 2:00 pm – 3:00 pm ET

All school and district leaders welcome to learn the information you learned this week about teacher morale to get them informed and onboard with this important work

Why Teacher Morale Became the Overlooked Barrier to Pandemic Recovery and How School Districts Can Improve It
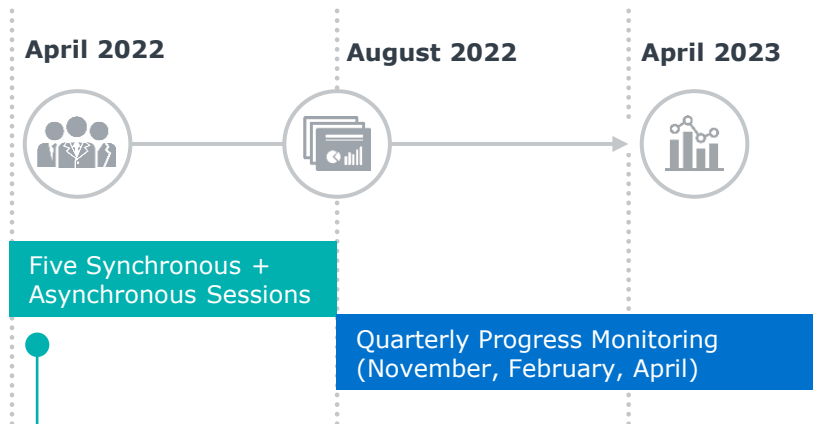
Apr 06 - 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM — ET - Virtual - Morale

Why Teacher Morale Became the Overlooked Barrier to Pandemic Recovery and How School Districts Can Improve It, ET - Virtual - Morale

If you are a partner, please log in to register and view event information. If you have additional questions, please contact your Dedicated Advisor.

EAB'S Collaborative Schedule

April 2022

August 2022

April 2023

Five Synchronous + Asynchronous Sessions

Quarterly Progress Monitoring (November, February, April)

REGISTER NOW!

Limited spots remain for April 2022 start date.

During this guided program, EAB experts will provide the insights and tools you need to successfully establish today's practices in your schools, while a nationwide cohort of peers will create the community and shared accountability needed to see it through.

Step-by-Step Guided Implementation

Peer Collaboration and Shared Accountability

Quarterly progress monitoring and long-term support

Sharing the Morale Momentum with Teachers

> " The benefit of building this morale momentum loop is that it helps demonstrate a commitment to addressing issues of morale over time. Because it's a systemic change, initiating the momentum loop illustrates to teachers that the district is serious about addressing morale.
>
> *Josh McDowell, Superintendent*
> Crete Public Schools,
> *EAB's Teacher Morale Advisory Council* "

What is one thing you want to communicate to your teachers about the morale momentum loop?

Final Thoughts

Please take a moment to answer this final poll question to provide your overall experience on today's session.

We have also shared a link to a short online evaluation in the **Chat** and we would appreciate if you could take 2-3 minutes to give us additional feedback on your experience today.