



# Supporting Successful and Sustainable School Leadership

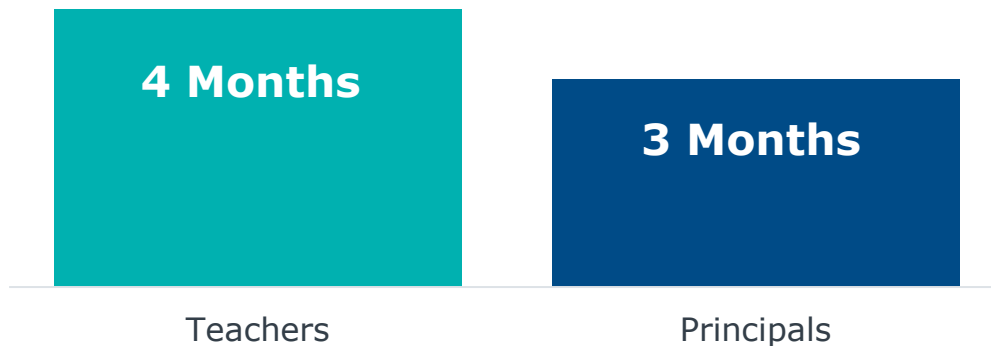
Adapting Proven Practices for Today's Context  
to Help Principals Thrive

# A School's Most Valuable Assets



Among School-Related Factors, Teacher and Principal Performance Matters Most for Student Growth

**Teachers and Principals at 75<sup>th</sup> Percentile of Performance  
Contribute to Additional Months of Student Academic Progress**

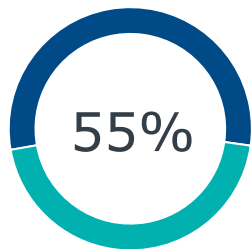


“It is difficult to envision an investment in K–12 education with a higher ceiling on its potential return than improving school leadership.”<sup>1</sup>

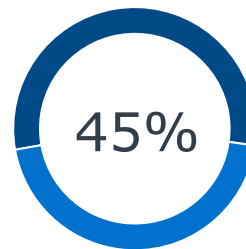
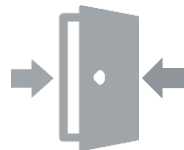
Source: Wallace Foundation (2021), *How Principals Affect Students and Schools: A Systematic Synthesis of Two Decades of Research*; EAB Interviews and Analysis

# Burnout Rife From the Classroom to Principal's Office

Exhausted and Demoralized, Approximately Half of Teachers and Principals Have One Eye on the Exit



of **teachers** thinking about leaving the profession earlier than previously planned (NEA)



of **principals** planning to leave position sooner due to COVID (NASSP)

70%

of teachers do not feel able to do their best work today, despite their best intentions (EAB Teacher Morale Survey)

59%

of principals cited **supporting teacher's mental health and wellbeing** as a top three source of workplace stress (RAND)



# Three Guiding Questions

And a Challenge to Apply Insights to Your Schools

## Today's Agenda

- 1** What matters most for developing successful principals?
- 2** What does a comprehensive principal support system look like?
- 3** What new types of support might principals need in 2022-23?

## Principal Support System Design Challenge

Combine inputs from each section to **imagine an ideal system of support** for principals in your district





# What Matters Most for Developing Successful Principals?

Key Insights From *Preparing Principals to Lead*

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SECTION 1

# Unsustainability of Principal's Role is Not a New Problem

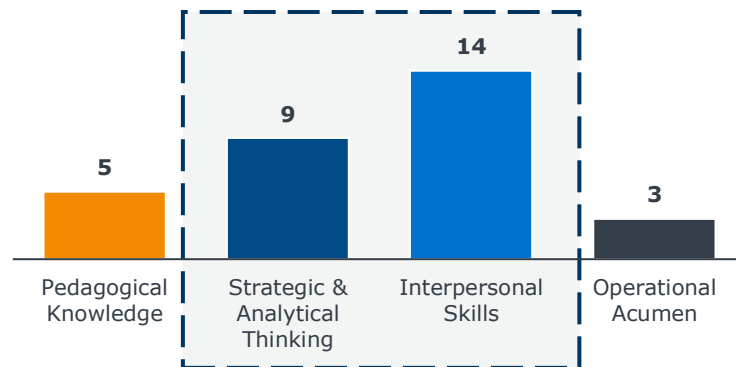
Wide Range of Principal Responsibilities Demands Core Transferable Skills

**With Principals at the Center of Every School Requirement...**



**What Makes a Great School Leader?**

*Number of School Leadership Competencies Represented as Having a Positive Effect Size in EAB Meta-Research<sup>1</sup>*



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

# Core Skills Central to Leadership Preparation in Most Fields



## Strategic & Analytical Thinking

- ✓ **Accurately predicts what could go wrong** and sets a vision and strategy to address underlying problems
- ✓ **Strategic allocates resources** to solve or prevent critical challenges
- ✓ **Uses data to monitor effectiveness** of school practices and inform strategy



## Interpersonal Skills

- ✓ **Adapts leadership approach** to the needs of the current situation and is comfortable with dissent
- ✓ **Establishes trusting relationships** with staff and teachers
- ✓ **Establishes strong lines of communication** with and among teachers and students

## Business Leadership Training Focuses on Core Competencies



~80%

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

# Ed Leadership Programs Focus on Industry-Specific Knowledge



8

## Most Principal Preparation Programs Have a Limited Focus on Core Competencies...

Percentage of principal prep programs that include coursework and instruction on how to<sup>1</sup>:

**13%** **Lead teams and work with families** and community constituents

**5%** **Managing school improvement via data** or empirical research



## ...And Have a Greater Focus on Teaching and Learning

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

*Superintendent  
Southwest School District*

**70%** of superintendents report feeling dissatisfied with the training new principals receive in principal preparation programs

1) From Harvard GSE analysis of 200+ university educational leadership preparatory programs



# Districts Not Yet Filling the Gap

## Principal Screening

Analyses of principal job listings and interview questions found that:

**98%** prioritize expertise in curriculum and instruction

**52%** Look for interpersonal expertise



## Principal Development

Interviews and surveys of principals found that:

**82%** Say their district provides inadequate training on executive and strategic leadership

**77%** Report inadequate or no training on mastering challenging conversations

“**Most principals I have worked with tell me that they don’t usually have ongoing opportunities to deliberately refine their essential leadership skills on the job.** If they get PD, it is usually not focused on how to be an effective leader. Rather it’s covering the new school laws or something else that is instructionally-related...”

**Dr. LeAnn Buntrock**

Former Executive Director of University of Virginia’s Darden/Curry Partnership for Leaders in Education and National Director for the Woodrow Wilson MBA Fellowship in Education Leadership

# Preparing Principals to Lead



## 15 Steps to Developing Highly Effective Leaders in Every School

### I

#### Cultivate Strategic and Interpersonal Competencies



1. Integrate competencies into leadership framework
2. Provide rigorous training on root cause analysis and change management
3. Embed analytical expectations into school improvement planning
4. Integrate core competency development into principal pipeline programs

### II

#### Transform Candidate Interviews to Screen for Core Competencies



5. Use case interview prompts to assess analytical thinking
6. Use simulation exercises to assess interpersonal skills
7. Remove bias from hiring processes with a Quantified Feedback Scorecard

### III

#### Provide Personalized Support Throughout Principals' Tenure



8. Promote reflection with 360-degree principal evaluations
9. Track progress with Principal Development Dashboards
10. Adjust principal supervisor caseloads by levels of need
11. Provide new perspectives through business executive peer mentorships

### IV

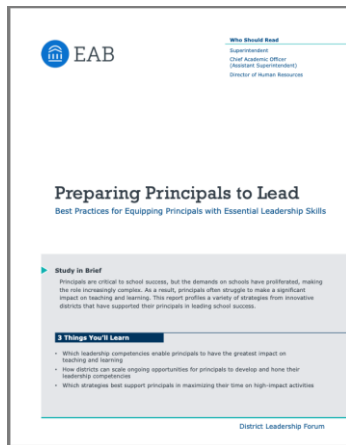
#### Refocus Principals' Time on High-Impact Activities



12. Provide ongoing time-management and prioritization support
13. Reduce the number of internal emails sent by district admins
14. Assign meeting representatives to create time for high-value work
15. Build a system of distributed leadership to increase capacity of current and future principals

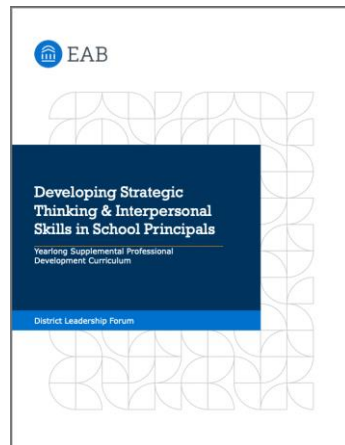
# Resources Available to EAB Partners

## Research Brief and Professional Development Guides to Increase Performance and Save Time



### Executive Brief for District Leaders

- Key takeaways from EAB research
- Guides to four key practices profiled in the study



### Professional Development Curriculum

- Year-long cadence of development sessions
- Discussion guides, work sheets, and links to additional resources for each session



# What Does a Comprehensive Principal Support System Look Like?

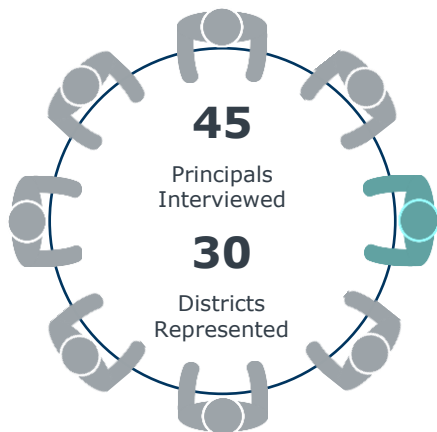
How One District Connects Key Practices to Make the Principal Role Manageable and Effective

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SECTION 2

# Rare Rave Reviews Provide an Opportunity for Analysis

EAB's Principal Listening Tour Unearthed a Single Example of Complete Satisfaction



”

“As a new principal, I would be sinking without everything the district has provided for us. All I need to do is make a phone call, and I have the support I need.”

*Principal, EAB Partner District*



What We Found Behind the Positive Press



**Comprehensive Approach**



**System Designed to Address Common Problems**



**(Mostly) Aligns With EAB Research**

# Three Barriers to Effective School Leadership



## Too Much to Learn, Apply, and Navigate Without Ongoing Support

### 4 years

Average tenure of a public-school principal in the US (2016-17)

#### *Total Years of Experience*

35% = <2 years

25% = 2-3 years

29% = 4-9 years

11% =  $\geq 10$  years

#### **Too Much to Learn**

Wide array of principal responsibilities requires a wealth of knowledge and skills

#### **Theory Clashes With Reality**

"No plan survives contact with the classroom," requiring constant reflection and adjustment

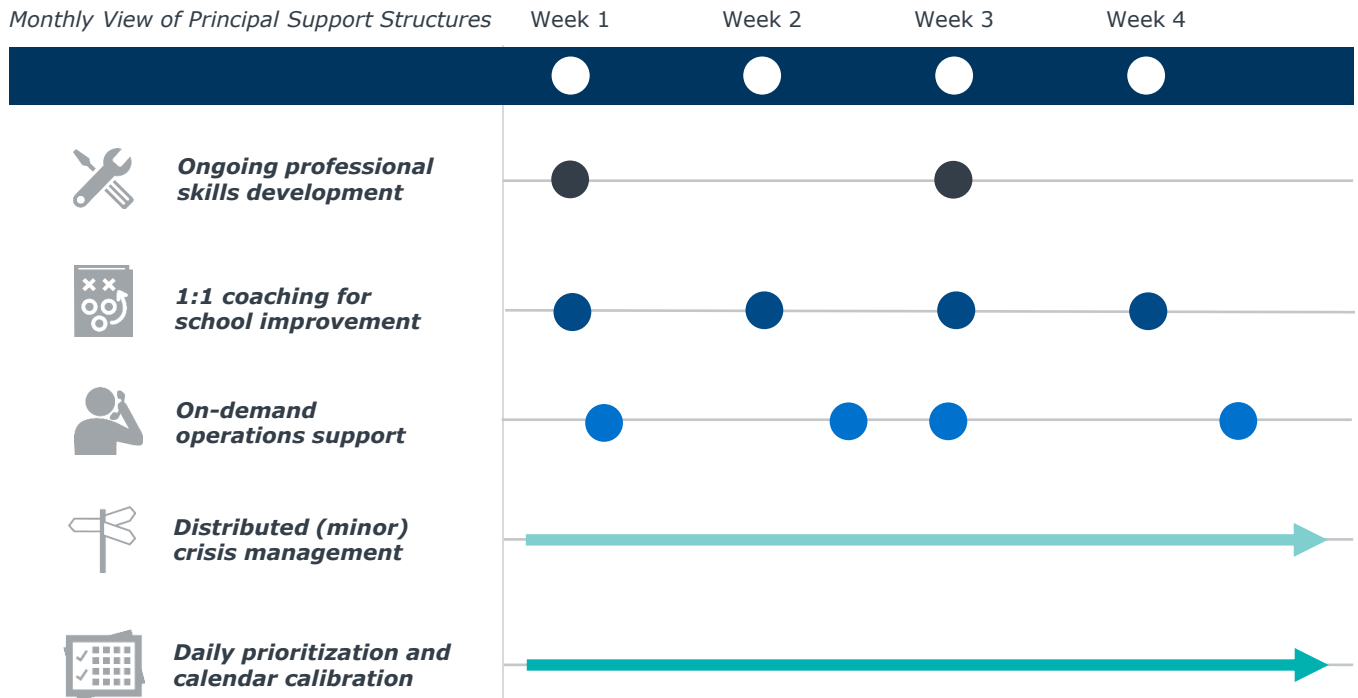
#### **Constant Crises Distract From Priorities and Progress**

Flow of urgent needs prevents principals from focused work on mission-critical priorities

# Just-in-Time Delivery of Training and Support



## Five Ways to Keep Principals Ahead of Expectations and Crises



*For each of these practices, please consider the following:*

**1** | **How does this align with practices in your district?**

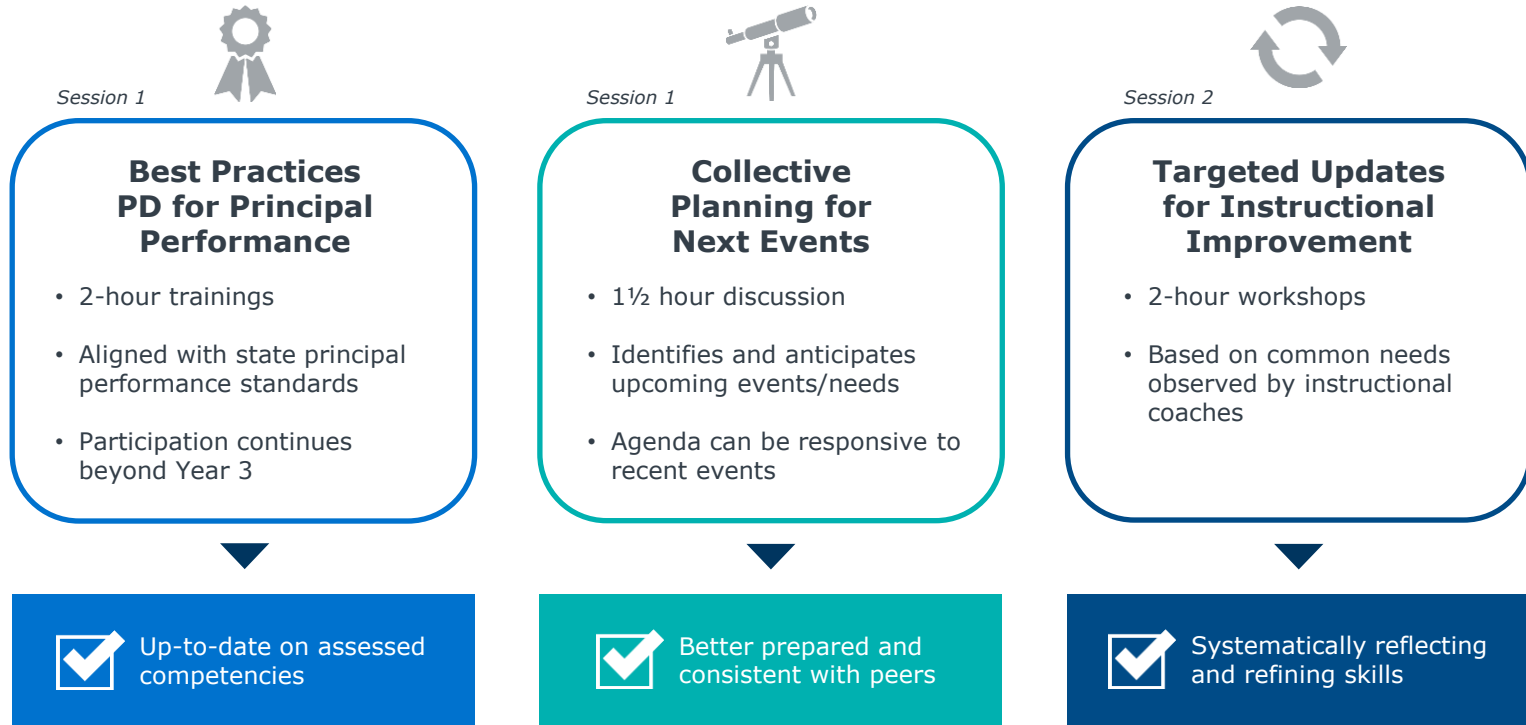
**2** | **What do you like about this practice?**

**3** | **How would you improve this practice?**



# Ongoing Development of Professional Skills

Three Goals for Monthly Principal PD Sessions During First Three Years in Seat

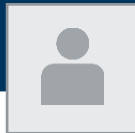


# 1:1 Coaching for School Improvement



## 'Executive Officers' Help Principals Grow Into Strong Instructional Leaders

### Profile of an Executive Officer



- ✓ An existing full-time employee
- ✓ Must be a former principal
- ✓ Provides 1:1 coaching to up to 12 principals
- ✓ Trained by the Center for Educational Leadership

### *Cycle of Responsibilities*

1

#### Annual Planning

- Set instructional goals for the year
- Apply skills learned in PD

2

#### Weekly Observation

- Observe the principal during duties related to instructional improvement

3

#### Bi-Weekly Reflection

- Review and discuss successes and areas for improvement

4

#### Monthly Refresh

- Determine needs for additional PD, then integrate into monthly trainings

# On-Demand Operations Support

Ensuring Someone Else Has the Answer Reduces Scope of Required Knowledge

**Designated District-Level Experts<sup>1</sup> Create Capacity and Consistency in Operational Excellence**



**Expert #1**  
Communication  
and Media



**Expert #2**  
Transportation  
and Maintenance



**Expert #3**  
Health and Safety

## Expectations for Designated Experts

- ✓ **Develop deep expertise** in assigned terrains
- ✓ **Support all schools** in the district on that issue
- ✓ **Pick up the phone** when a principal calls

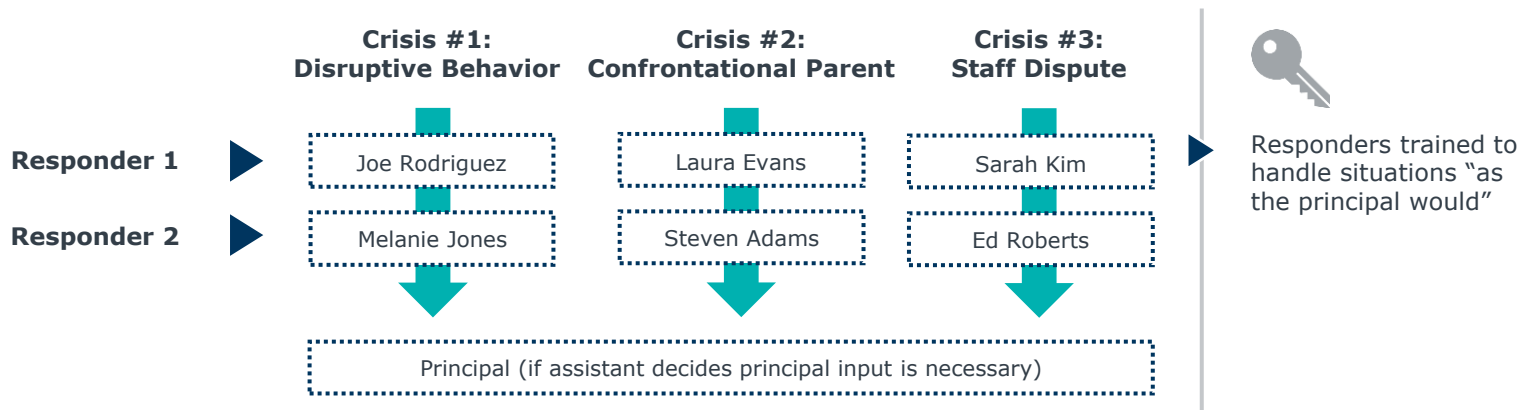
1) Typically an assistant superintendent or other district office staff

# Distributed Crisis Management Protects Time for Strategic Priorities



Principals Designate 'First Responders' to Take the Lead in Minor Disruptive Events

## Assistant Acts as Air Traffic Control – Directs Emergencies to First Responders



### System Benefits



Enables principal to focus on important leadership tasks

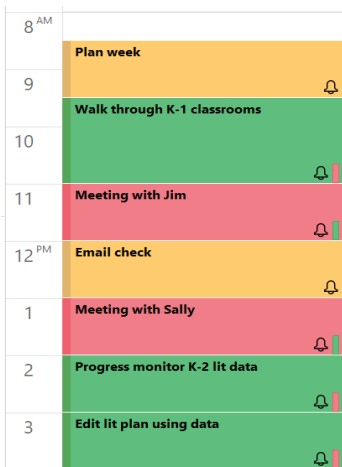


Builds on-the-job experience among aspiring administrators

# Daily Prioritization and Calendar Calibration

Principals Meet With a “Time Advisor” to Increase Likelihood of Efficient, Impactful Days

## Proactive Time Blocking to Prioritize Key Tasks



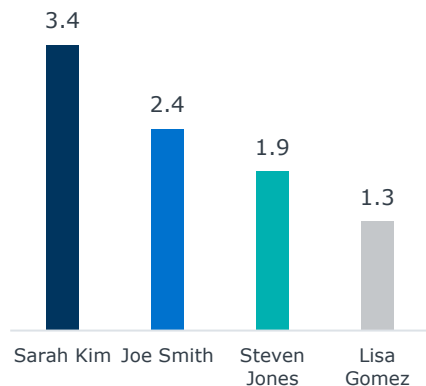
■ = Supports instructional improvement

■ = Personal activities

■ = Non-instructional operations

## Continuous Tracking to Ensure Effective, Balanced Time Use

Hours of collaboration per week, by staff member



## Reflection Questions for Adjustment and Continuous Improvement

### Sample Agenda

- How closely did your time spent match your goals yesterday?
- How productive was your time with each staff member?
- Where do you want to increase or decrease time spent tomorrow/next week?

**+9 hours per week** on instructional improvement

# System in Brief

A Cascade of Strategies to Enable Effective, Sustainable Principal Leadership

1



**Ongoing  
professional skills  
development**

2



**1:1 coaching  
for school  
improvement**

3



**On-demand  
operations  
support**

4



**Distributed  
(minor) crisis  
management**

5



**Daily prioritization  
and calendar  
calibration**

“The new principals training program was great, but there were still things I needed to learn throughout the year. But they’ve continued to hold our hands since then, and I know where to go when I have a question.”

*Principal, EAB Partner District*



# What New Types of Support Might Principals Need in 2022-23?

Using Design Thinking to Adapt Best Practices for Today's Challenging Environment

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SECTION 3

# Designing Better Support Begins With Empathy

Spring 2022 Listening Tour Documents the Leadership Experience to Uncover New Needs

## EAB's 2022 Principal Listening Tour



### Objectives:

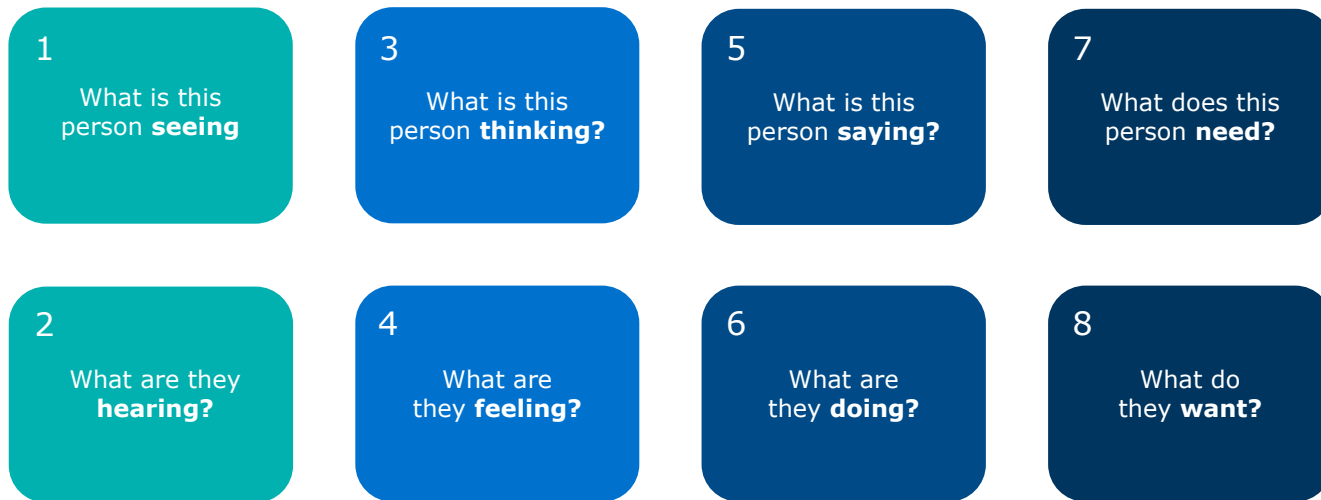
- Document the challenges, successes, and perspectives experienced by school leaders through the pandemic
- Clarify their needs and desires for the year ahead

### Sample Interview Questions

- What changes in behavior are you seeing among students, parents, and staff?
- What's top of mind for you as a school leader today?
- What are you proud of this year, and where do you feel stuck?
- What changes have you made to your communications and practices?



## *Anatomy of an Empathy Map*



*It's not 'us versus them' or even 'us on behalf of them.' For a design thinker it has to be 'us with them'*

*Change by Design, Tim Brown, IDEO*

# Creating a Snapshot of a School Leader's Experience

Role-Specific Categories Help Drive to Deeper Levels of Understanding

## Seeing and Hearing



From Students



From Parents



From Staff

## Thinking and Feeling



About Their  
Schools



About Their  
Own Work

## Saying and Doing



Approaches to  
Communication



Key Actions and  
Initiatives

## Needing and Wanting



Requests for Help



Desires for  
Next Year

### Directions

1. Fill out map individually
2. Compare and discuss with your group
3. Turn over the map and compare with EAB findings



- 1** | Which themes on our listening tour empathy map aligned (or didn't) with your own?
- 2** | How is the role of a principal different today than five years ago?
- 3** | How do you think the support that they need to be successful has changed?



# Imagining an Ideal System of Support for Your Principals Today

Combining Section Inputs to Provide Your School Leaders With a Platform for Success

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SECTION 4

# Three Annual Questions to Guide Principal Development and Support

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## Question 1

How can districts consistently develop highly effective principals?

## Question 2

How can districts leaders make the principal role more manageable and sustainable?

## Question 3

What new types of support might principals need in the year ahead?



How can we build a **better system of support** for the year ahead?

# Designing Support for Successful and Sustainable School Leadership

## Adapting Best Practices for Today's Context in Your Schools



### Step 1

#### Start with building blocks

- Monthly training
- Weekly coaching
- On-demand operations support
- First responder network
- Daily prioritization and calendar calibration

### Step 2

#### Integrate

development of strategic thinking and interpersonal skills into the case study structure

### Step 3

**Adjust or augment** the support system to meet needs identified on your Empathy Map

### Step 4

#### Identify 1-2 practices

that would be most valuable to principals in your schools, then:

- Consider barriers to implementation
- Discuss ways to work around those barriers

# Next Steps

## Upgrading Support for Principals in Your Schools

- 1** | **Review today's slides with your leadership team**
- 2** | **Build an accurate Empathy Map for principals in your district**
- 3** | **Identify 1-2 improvements to your principal support systems that meet their identified needs**

### *Schedule Today*

#### EAB Workshop

#### **Principal Support Design Lab**

- ✓ Audit your current principal development practices
- ✓ Clarify your principals' experiences, perspectives, and needs for support
- ✓ Create a prioritized roadmap for strengthening principal support programming in your district

