

How to become a "Morale Doctor"

Successful schools require one resource above all others: great teachers. But increasing demands, challenging working conditions, low pay, and lack of public appreciation have led to historically low levels of employee morale in districts nationwide. The result? More teachers leaving mid-year, and those who remain feel unable to do their best work. EAB research found that current approaches to raising employee morale can be described with three archetypes, but only one consistently delivers results. Which best describes your district today?

Three Ways Districts Are Working to Raise Teacher Morale



The Caregiver	The Generalist	The Doctor
Creates opportunities for employee self-care and doubles down on regular employee appreciation initiatives	Identifies a list of factors affecting employee morale and tries to address as many as possible	Takes additional time to diagnose the root drivers of low morale, then partners with employees to design solutions
Represents 80% of districts	Represents 17% of districts	Represents 3% of districts



What makes the Doctor successful? Rather than trying to minimize the symptoms of low morale through self-care and appreciation, they dive beneath the surface to find the underlying problems. Rather than building a checklist of problems, the doctor determines which can and should be solved first. Most importantly, rather than assuming that their remedies will work, they partner with those affected to prevent unintended consequences. Want to earn your "morale doctor" license? Start with the guidelines below.

DO THIS

NOT THIS

Diagnose Causes of Low Morale

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Take diagnostic pulse surveys quarterly ▶ Communicate results district-wide ▶ Utilize targeted "stay interviews" and listening tours | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Perform single, annual engagement surveys ▶ Allow communication to vary by school ▶ Ask open-ended questions in large group settings |
|--|--|

Prioritize Threats

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Use a consistent decision process to identify 1–2 critical threats each quarter ▶ Communicate priorities and the process ▶ Acknowledge additional needs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Try to solve too many threats at once ▶ Share initiatives without rationale ▶ Sugarcoat the situation |
|---|---|

Co-Design Solutions

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Engage employees in the design of morale-boosting solutions ▶ Make it easy for employees to participate in solution design ▶ Formally recognize employee participation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Assume that the leadership team can design solutions ▶ Copy solutions from other districts without consulting employees ▶ Take employee task force participation for granted |
|--|--|