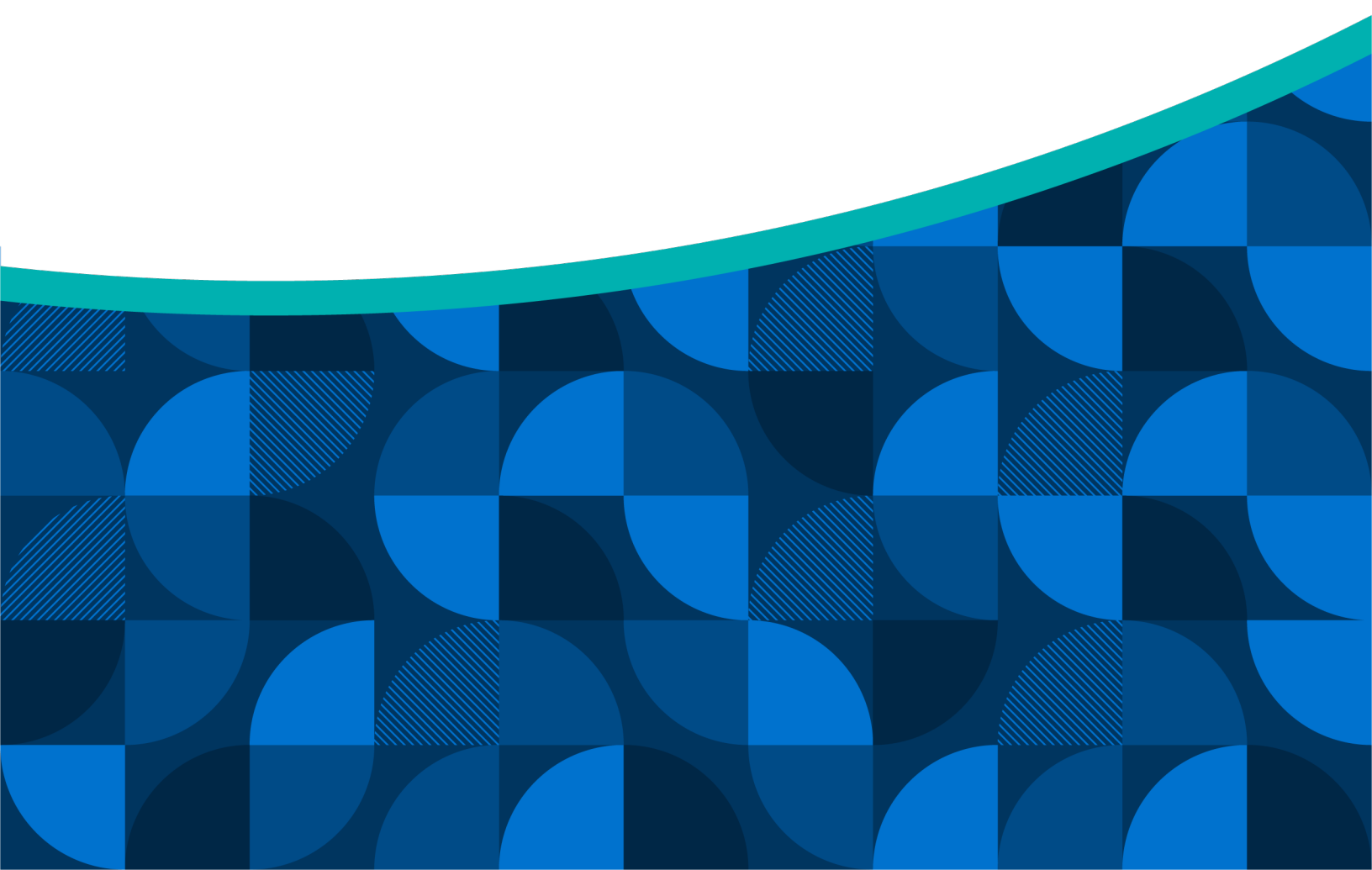




MORALE-BOOSTER COMPENDIUM

Ownership and Input

This resource includes strategies to address morale concerns in the Ownership and Input threat area. Use these templates and resources as a starting place to co-design solutions with teachers to address their morale challenges.



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Discretion Is Not the Only Way to Foster Ownership

Psychologists identify autonomy (or ownership) as a human need, meaning that an individual endorses the rationale behind their actions. Thus, feelings of ownership can be achieved not only by giving teachers discretion but also by getting teachers to endorse district policies or decisions. To optimize teachers' feelings of ownership, district leaders should always provide the rationale behind district decisions, collect teacher input and share how that input is used, and explain how these decisions align with teachers' values and the district's mission.¹ Even though teachers are not always explicitly making the decisions, leaders can foster feelings of ownership by increasing teachers' belief in and support of those decisions.

Three Leadership Tactics to Facilitate Teacher Ownership

Communicate Decisions with Intention

- Leaders should approach all communication about decisions as an opportunity to convince teachers of the value of the decision, so teachers support it and continue to feel ownership over their work and the district's work.

Provide Clarity on How Teacher Input Is Used

- Collect teacher input with clear guidelines and expectations. By asking for input on what teachers need if a decision is made, as opposed to asking teachers' preference on which decision to make, leaders can provide clarity on how input will be used.
- District leaders should always inform their teachers how their input was incorporated into the rationale behind new district initiatives and policies.

Find Opportunities to Give Teachers Choice

- Giving teachers guidelines instead of strict mandates can increase teachers' feelings of ownership. Having choice motivates teachers to remain creative and engaged.

1) Barker, Irena. "[Why Teachers Need More Autonomy and How to Give It to Them](#)". TES Magazine. 2022.

Sources: Weidman, Crystal. "[Investigating Employee Engagement through a Self-Determination Theory Framework](#)". Clemson University. 2016; Wool, Maggie. "[How to Build Trust in the Workplace: 10 Effective Solutions](#)". BetterUp. 2021; "[The Impact of Supporting Teacher Choice with ToT School Access](#)". Teachers Pay Teachers. 2015; EAB interviews and analysis.

Ownership and Input Strategies

Strategy	Capsule Description	Problem Addressed	Profiled Institution
<p>Design Fellows</p> <p>Who? District and/or Building Leaders</p>	<p>Establish a cohort of teachers and task them with solving a district-wide problem. First, educate these teachers in root-cause/design thinking. Then provide the cohort a task (e.g., SEL curriculum, student behavior) and time to research and recommend a solution to this issue. Teacher-led efforts to address challenges in the district have led to stronger investment from the districts' teachers and increases buy-in from their peers for the resultant initiative or change.</p>	<p>Teachers disagree that they have opportunities to provide meaningful input into district initiatives or that their input is valued. This strategy dedicates significant time in partnering with teachers to design comprehensive district initiatives and changes to make teachers feel fully part of the change and improvement process.</p>	<p>Large School District, South</p> <div data-bbox="1203 489 1515 756" style="border: 1px solid #00a651; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p>See pages 7-8 for a detailed case study of how one school district has deployed their design fellows program.</p> </div> <div data-bbox="1198 840 1515 930" style="background-color: #003366; color: white; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p>Complexity</p> </div> <p>High</p>
<p>Discretionary Professional Development (PD)</p> <p>Who? District Leaders</p>	<p>To offer teachers more choice in finding the best professional development for their needs and interests, one school district contracts three PD days a year that the district will provide a substitute for the teacher. Teachers can use these days at their discretion, including using this time for planning, collaborating with colleagues, or taking advantage of district-provided or external PD opportunities.</p>	<p>Teachers think existing training and skills are sometimes misaligned to what teachers need to be their best. This strategy gives teachers flexibility in some of their professional development opportunities, so they can choose what they most need for improvement or growth.</p>	<p>Medium School District Northeast</p> <div data-bbox="1198 1329 1515 1419" style="background-color: #003366; color: white; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p>Complexity</p> </div> <p>High</p>

Sources: EAB interviews and analysis.

Ownership and Input Strategies

Strategy	Capsule Description	Problem Addressed	Profiled Institution
<p>Guide to Solicit Input, Not Votes</p> <p>Who? District Leaders</p>	<p>When seeking input from teachers on district decisions, leaders need to stop asking for teacher votes and instead ask targeted questions about how the district can provide support, regardless of the final decision. Use this four-step guide to reframe how district leaders ask for teacher input to get useful information and to make teachers’ voices feel heard without misleading them. This process allows district leaders to use the insight from their teachers without giving teachers an illusion of choice.</p>	<p>Teachers disagree that their opinions are heard and valued by district leaders. Teachers can often mistake their input for a vote, leading to unrest and conflict when a decision does not align with teachers’ recommendations. This strategy provides district leaders with a guide to better request and use teacher input to make informed decisions without setting unrealistic expectations.</p>	<p>Fort Bend ISD, Sugar Land, TX</p> <p>See page 9 for the four-step process leaders can use to use teacher input and effectively communicate decisions.</p> <p>Complexity</p> <p>Medium</p>
<p>Teacher Choice Audit</p> <p>Who? Building Leaders</p>	<p>Building leaders should review at least annually the activities that impact teachers’ work environment and assess how much ownership teachers have over these activities. Use this EAB-designed checklist to observe where schools can make small changes to give teachers more ownership or improve alignment between activities and teachers’ values.</p>	<p>Teachers feel there are many activities or tasks that they have little control over or are unclear what elements of their classroom are under their discretion. This strategy allows building leaders to analyze opportunities to give teachers more discretion and ownership over their work.</p>	<p>EAB Tool</p> <p>See pages 10-11 for an easy-to-use Teacher Choice Audit for principals.</p> <p>Complexity</p> <p>Low</p>

Sources: EAB interviews and analysis.

Design Fellows Case Study

Use the below case study profiled from a large school district in the south, to create an impactful Design Fellows program.

Steps to Develop a Design Fellows Program

Year 1 Fall

1

Create Design Thinking Training



- Develop an internal training plan using Design Thinking Training Materials from IDEO and [Stanford](#).

Tip: If the district has a budget that can be allocated towards this program, IDEO provides excellent training resources. If not, Stanford offers various free training resources for design thinking.

Year 1 Fall

2

Choose an Initiative



- Identify and select an initiative that will work towards the district's strategic goals.
- Example: The profiled district chose personalized learning and socio-emotional learning as their pilot initiatives.

Year 1 Spring

3

Open an Application Process



- Have principals and superintendents communicate the inauguration of the program. This should advertise the program and include an application for teachers and specialists.
- Application should include:
 - The chosen initiative.
 - Questions to gauge teachers' previous experience and knowledge relating to the initiative.

Year 1 Summer

4

Conduct Training



- Schedule two days to provide training with these objectives:
 - Train teachers in design thinking.
 - Apply lessons from this training to start designing potential solutions to address the prioritized initiative.

Design Fellows Case Study (Continued)

Use the below case study to create an impactful Design Fellows program.

Steps to Develop a Design Fellows Program

Year 1 Summer

5

Plan for Implementation



- Meet several times post-training to accomplish these objectives:
 - Finalize solutions.
 - Decide how much time and what resources teachers will need for successful implementation.
- Set expectations such as:
 - Agree on metrics teachers will use to measure progress.
 - Determine how teachers should communicate updates with each other.

Year 2

6

Implement and Assign Roles



- Have teachers implement the initiative, revise, and retry, as necessary.
- Meet quarterly to discuss the progress, roadblocks, and lessons learned from implementing this initiative.
 - Assign teachers specific tasks to try in their classrooms.
 - Have teachers bring examples from their classrooms to revise with the rest of the cohort.

How Design Fellows Impact Teacher Ownership



Teachers Feel Seen and Heard

Teachers report improved feelings of ownership, and community. This program brings teachers together to work towards shared values and goals.



Popularity Grew Over Time

57 teachers participated in the pilot year of the program. In response to the positive results of the first cohort, 73 more teachers participated the following year.



Increases Buy-in for New Initiatives

Teachers are more invested in these initiatives because they were designed by fellow teachers.



Teachers Professionally Grow

Design Thinking improves teachers' abilities to solve school problems and expands their roles beyond individual classrooms.

Guide to Solicit Teacher Input, Not Votes

Fort Bend Independent School District, Texas¹

Establish Decision-Making and Expertise

1

- Determine and outline what is feasible for the district
- Decide where input is needed to move forward (does not need to be everything)

At Ford Bend ISD:

- Superintendent begins reopening the school planning process and identifies three potential plans

Identify Teacher Needs, Not Wants

2

- Ask what's needed to implement potential plans, not for a vote on plans
- Use surveys, focus groups, or other method(s)

- Central Office asks teachers what they would need to make each plan successful

Communicate Decision with Teachers

3

- Share final decision with teachers
- Highlight how input was used (e.g., "Most respondents needed little support for X, but not Y")

At Ford Bend ISD:

- Final plan shared with teachers, along with explanations

Implement Final Plan District-Wide

4

- Use resources strategically to introduce next steps
- Continually reinforce decision and reasoning

- Central Offices uses ADKAR model to implement changes to the district²

1) Fort Bend ISD's work was also profiled in EAB's webinar "[K-12's Path Forward: The Seven 'Wonders' of a Post-Vaccine World](#)". See Slide 29.

2) ADKAR – Awareness, desire, knowledge, ability, and reinforcement; a model for change management.

Sources: Prosci, [The ADKAR Model](#); McNeill et al. (2021). [K-12's Path Forward: The Seven 'Wonders' of a Post-Vaccine World \[Slide 29\]](#). EAB; EAB interviews and analysis.

Teacher Choice Audit Guide

This audit should be used by principals to review the activities that impact teachers' work environment and assess how much ownership teachers have in their schools. Follow the steps below to complete the checklist, analyze the results, and reflect on how schools can improve teacher autonomy going forward.

(1) Fill Out the Checklist



On the following page, review each activity and check the box corresponding with the amount of choice your school offers teachers for that activity.

Note: Grade each activity on a scale from 1-4. A score of 1 means that the activity is mandated by the school without input from teachers. 4 means that the school has given full discretion to teachers to decide that activity.

(2) Analyze the Results



Calculate the scores for each column in the checklist and record the total score in the bottom right corner. Analyze the implications of this score using the chart below.

Score	Implication
Low Discretion (<21)	Leadership may be limiting teachers by giving strict mandates on too many of their tasks.
Medium Discretion (21-30)	Leadership isn't micromanaging, but there is room to give teachers more discretion and ownership.
High Discretion (>30)	Leadership is creating a work environment where teachers have ownership over their workdays.

(3) Reflect On Next Steps



Take a moment to fill out the "Is There Room for Change?" section for each activity. Use this space to brainstorm potential solutions to give teachers more choices or ownership.

Reflect on the following questions:

- For activities that scored a 1 or 2: Is there any flexibility to give teachers more discretion on this activity? Can the school give teachers more ownership or make them feel they're working within a guideline, not a strict mandate?
- For activities where I can't give teachers discretion, can I communicate better to make sure teachers agree that these responsibilities align with their values?
- For activities that I scored a 3 or 4: Am I getting credit for this level of ownership with teachers? How can I communicate this to teachers?
- What resources would I need to give teachers more ownership over certain activities?

Teacher Choice Audit

Building leaders should use this audit to evaluate the extent to which school policies promote feelings of teacher ownership. Reference the Teacher Choice Audit Guide on page 19 for step-by-step instructions to complete this audit and interpret the results.

Activities Impacting Teachers' Work Experience	Principal Decides Without Teacher Input (1)	Principal Decides With Teacher Input (2)	Teacher Decides With Principal Input (3)	Teacher Decides Without Principal Input (4)	Is There Room for Change?
Lesson Plan Format	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Lesson Planning Time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Books and Learning Materials Selection	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Curriculum Decision-Making ¹	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Classroom Layouts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Classroom Behavioral Policies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
PD Goals/ Opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Teacher Collaboration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Recess Times	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Parent-Teacher Meeting Times	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Score					Total Score: _____

1) Respond to this activity multiple times for different aspects of the curriculum (e.g., math, reading)



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