Elevating Your Principal through the School Leader Paradigm

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School Leader Paradigm

Ongoing leadership development for all school leaders throughout the journey of "*Becoming* while *Doing*”.

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The School Leader Collaborative is a consortium of state principal associations that supports the professional growth of school principals and their leadership teams. It enhances the capacity of partner associations by creating a network of shared resources, best practices, and research.

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Experiential Learning

Research indicates it takes 3-5 years to change the culture of a school, but you can’t wait that long. What kind of leader do you need to accelerate the change process? Who do they need to be? And, where do they start to begin shifting the culture?

Think - Stare - Pair - Share

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Overarching and Guiding Questions:

- What is the current reality facing school leaders across the country?
- How can we all best support the ongoing growth and sustainability of school leaders?
- What is it like for your principal to be on the other side of your leadership?

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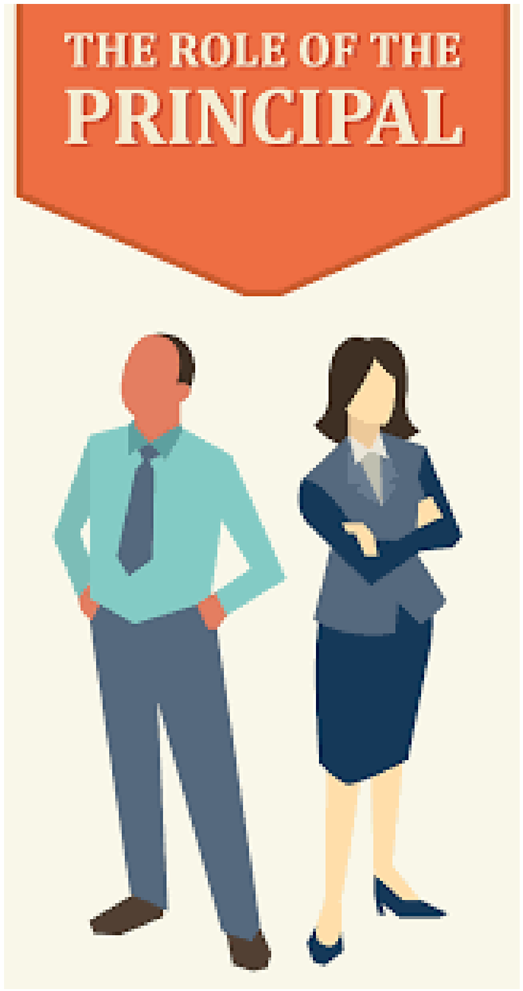
What we know about leadership….



The role of the principal has grown exponentially over the last 15 years to a point where the job is often referred to as unrealistic and untenable. This reality is resulting in alarming turnover rates, low job satisfaction, shrinking candidate pools, and an increase of unqualified leaders stepping into building leadership roles.

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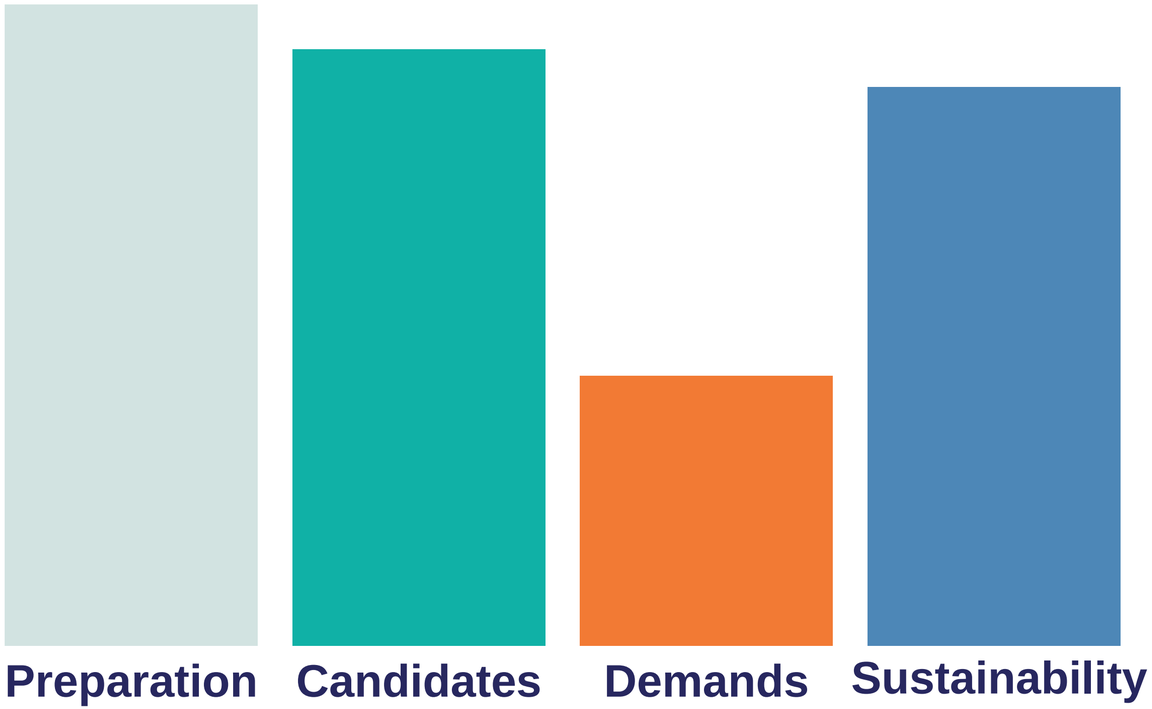
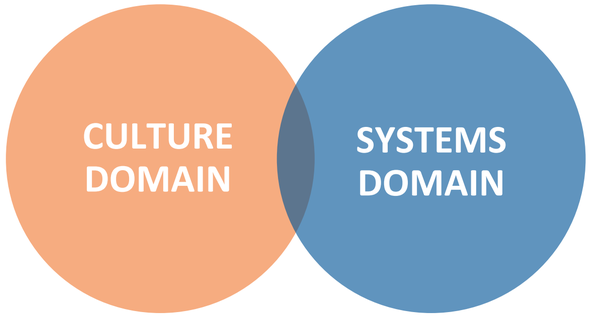
What we know about leadership….

Time, Support, Programs and Funding for pre-service and Year 1 Support ⟶



Leadership Then…



Principal as "Manager"

"**Most** students **should** be successful."

*2010 Demands

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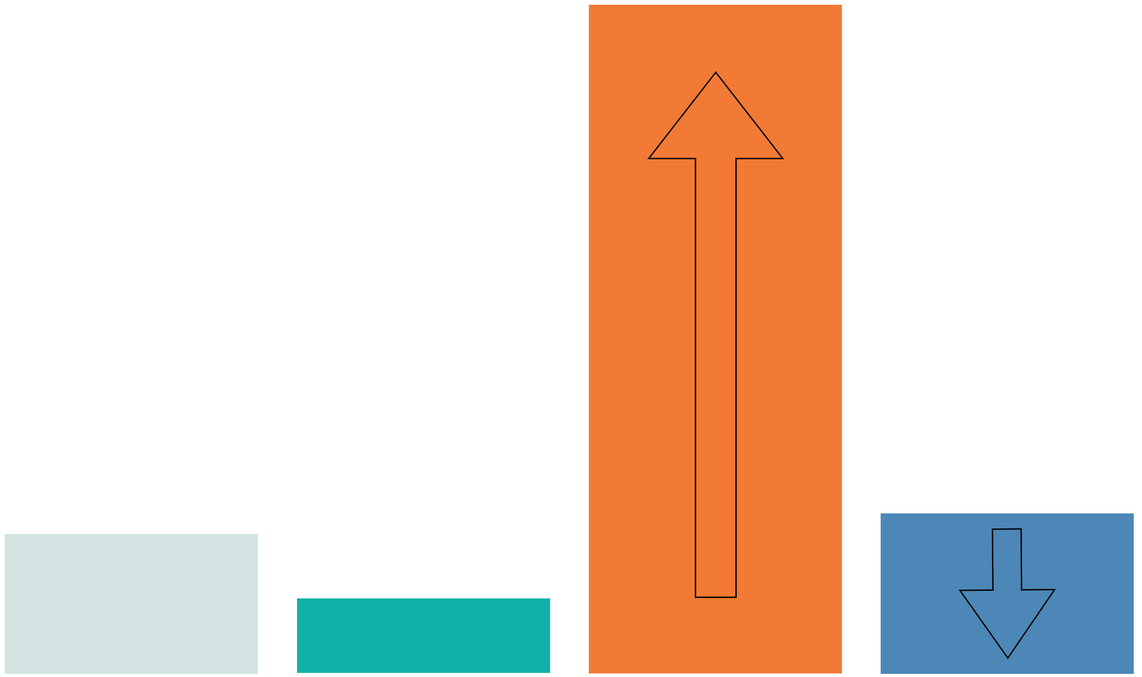
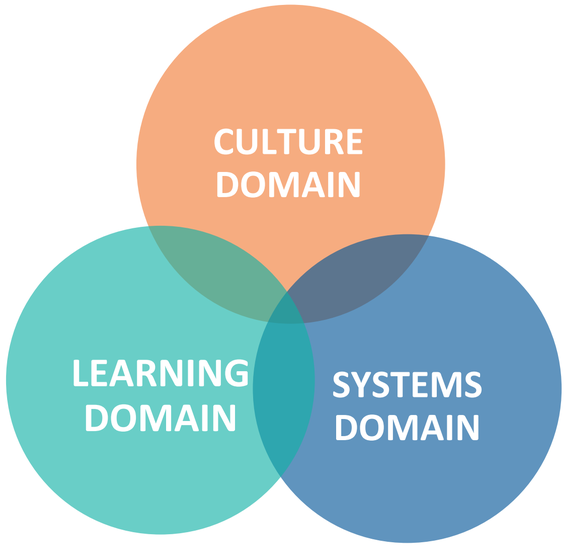
What we know about leadership….

Time, Support, Programs and Funding for pre-service and Year 1 Support ⟶



Leadership Now…



Principal as "Manager" and "Instructional Leader"

"**All** students **must** be successful."

*2025 Demands

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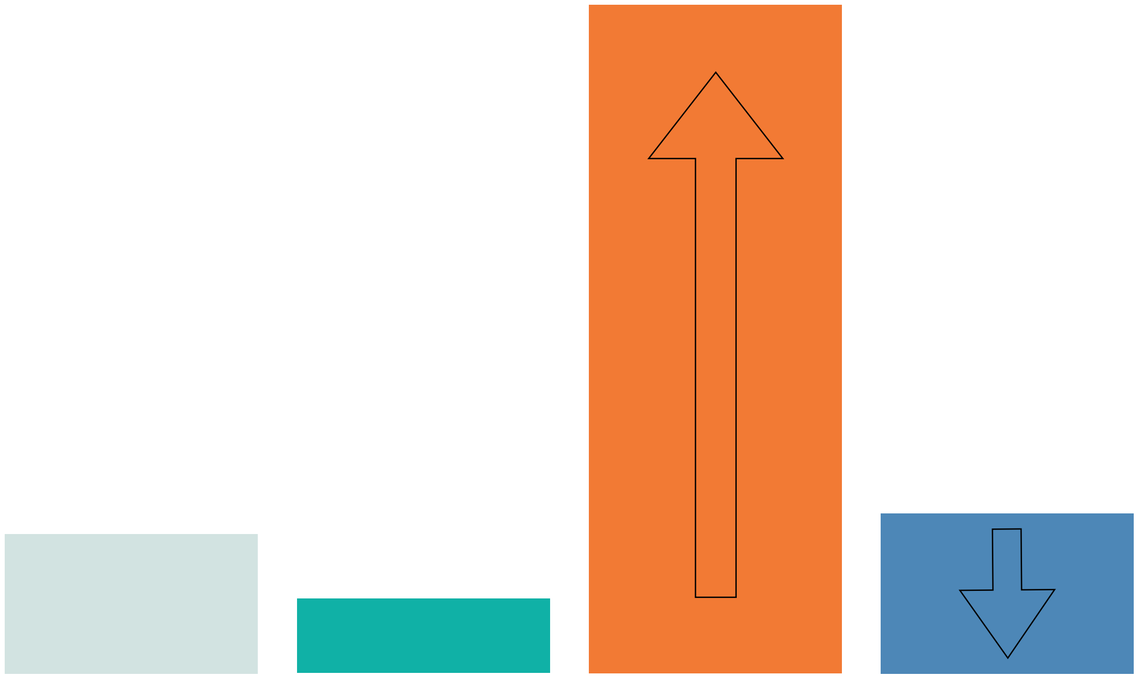
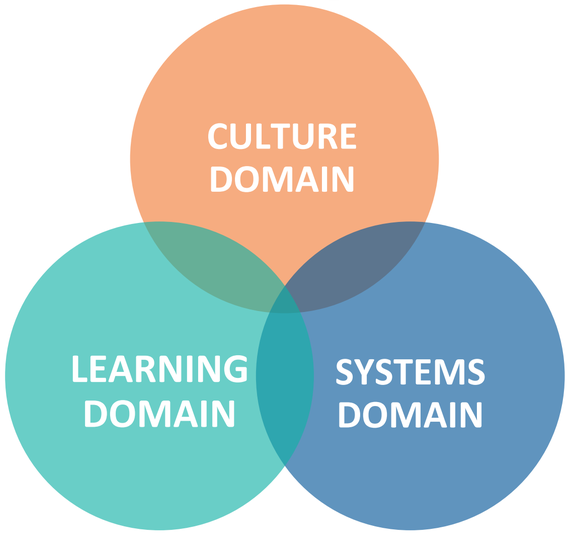
What we know about leadership….

Current Reality = Leadership Turnover

Time, Support, Programs and Funding for pre-service and Year 1 Support ⟶



Leadership Now…



Principal as "Manager" and "Instructional Leader"

"**All** students **must** be successful."

*2024 Demands

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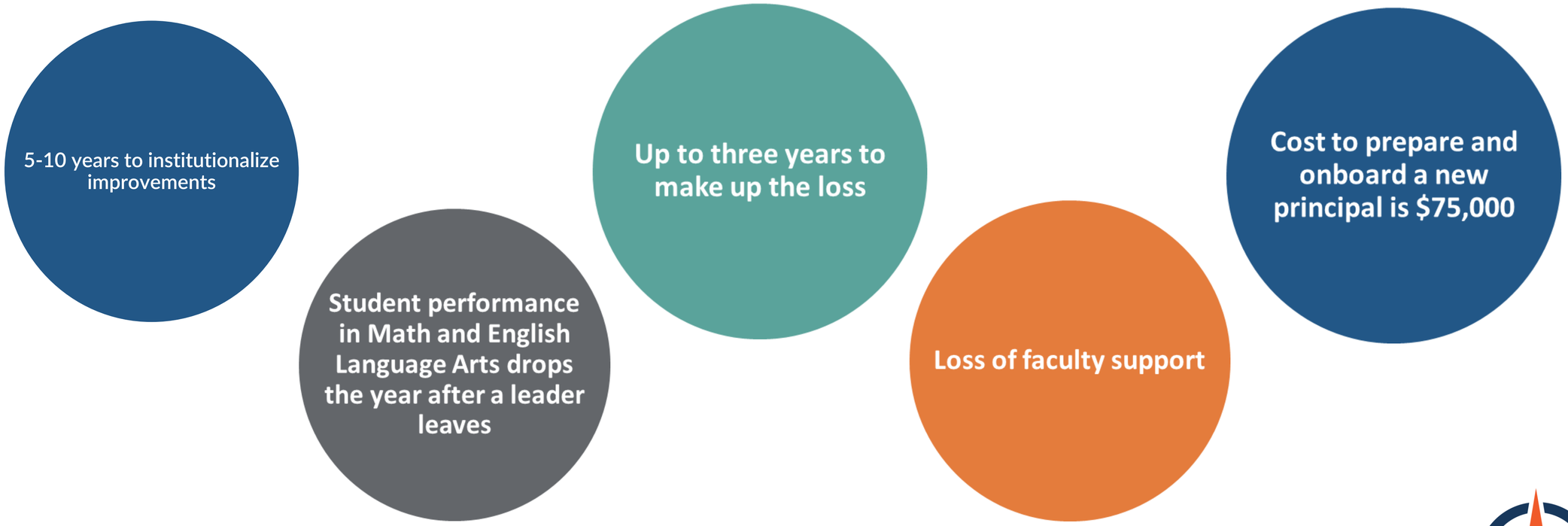
What we know about leadership….

Leadership turnover is bad for students, staff, districts, and the school community.



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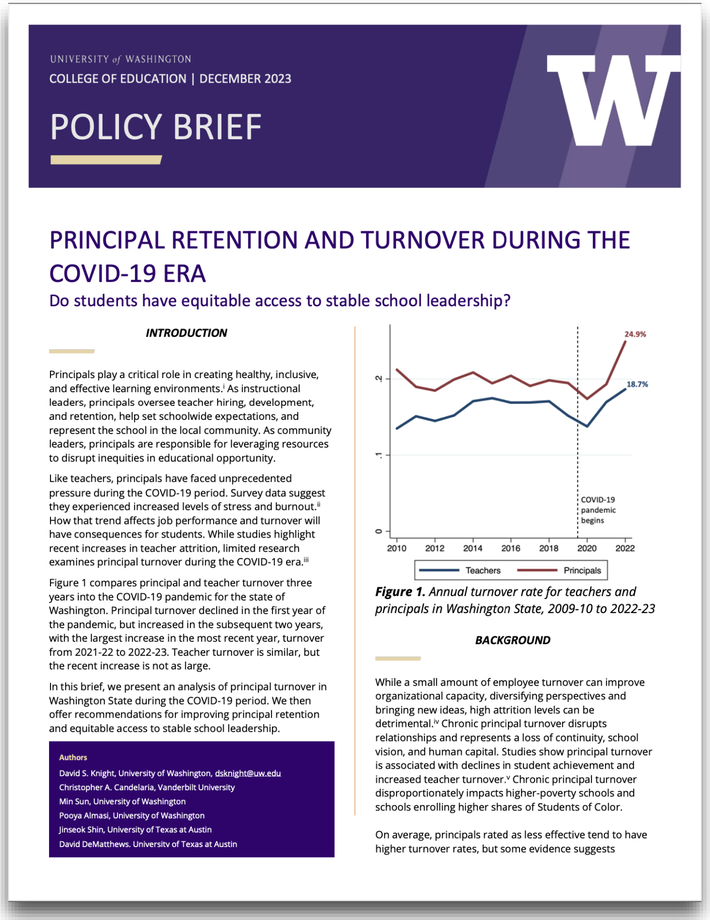
What we know about leadership….

“The loss of a school leader has ripple effects on school staff, students, and the local community. Inclusive, equitable, and effective schools require a dynamic school leader who has deep knowledge of a school’s history and connections to the local community.”

University of Washington
Policy Brief
Principal Retention and Turnover During the COVID-19 Era.
Do students have equitable access to stable school leadership?



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POLICY BRIEF

PRINCIPAL RETENTION AND TURNOVER DURING THE COVID-19 ERA

Do students have equitable access to stable school leadership?

INTRODUCTION

Principals play a critical role in creating healthy, inclusive, and effective learning environments.[i] As instructional leaders, principals oversee teacher hiring, development, and retention, help set schoolwide expectations, and represent the school in the local community. As community leaders, principals are responsible for leveraging resources to disrupt inequities in educational opportunity.

Like teachers, principals have faced unprecedented pressure during the COVID-19 period. Survey data suggest they experienced increased levels of stress and burnout.[ii] How that trend affects job performance and turnover will have consequences for students. While studies highlight recent increases in teacher attrition, limited research examines principal turnover during the COVID-19 era.[iii]

Figure 1 compares principal and teacher turnover three years into the COVID-19 pandemic for the state of Washington. Principal turnover declined in the first year of the pandemic, but increased in the subsequent two years, with the largest increase in the most recent year, turnover from 2021-22 to 2022-23. Teacher turnover is similar, but the recent increase is not as large.

In this brief, we present an analysis of principal turnover in Washington State during the COVID-19 period. We then offer recommendations for improving principal retention and equitable access to stable school leadership.

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David DeMatthews, University of Texas at Austin

Figure 1. *Annual turnover rate for teachers and principals in Washington State, 2009-10 to 2022-23*

BACKGROUND

While a small amount of employee turnover can improve organizational capacity, diversifying perspectives and bringing new ideas, high attrition levels can be detrimental.[iv] Chronic principal turnover disrupts relationships and represents a loss of continuity, school vision, and human capital. Studies show principal turnover is associated with declines in student achievement and increased teacher turnover.[v] Chronic principal turnover disproportionately impacts higher-poverty schools and schools enrolling higher shares of Students of Color.

On average, principals rated as less effective tend to have higher turnover rates, but some evidence suggests

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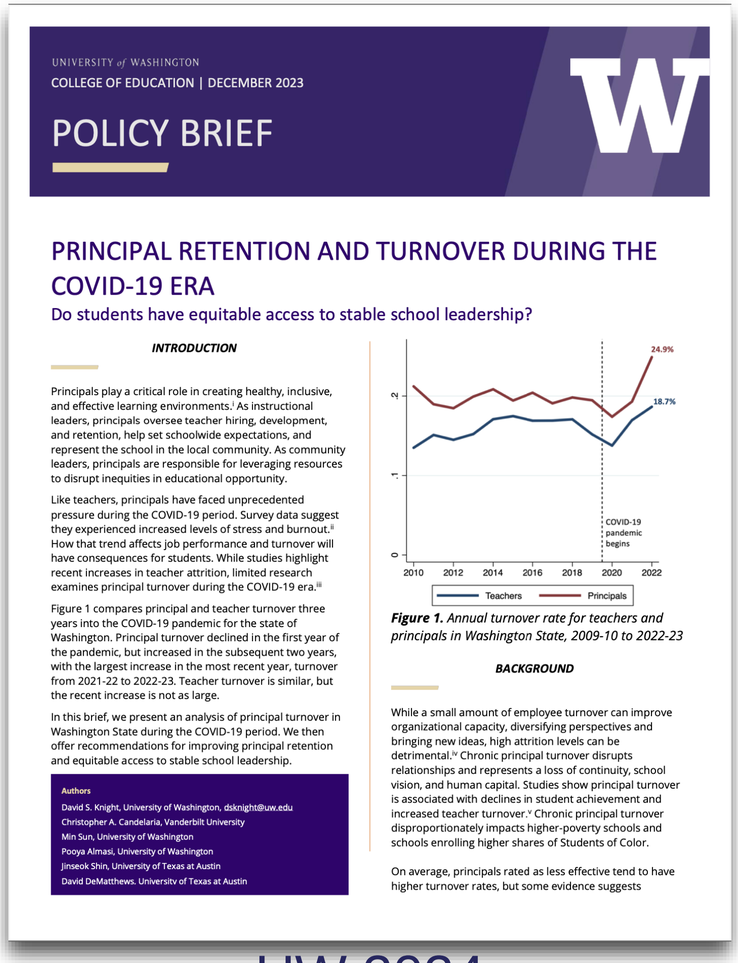
What we know about leadership….



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What we know about leadership….

“Schools that serve a higher percentage of low-income students and students of color have higher principal turnover rates, and the magnitudes of effects are relatively large.”

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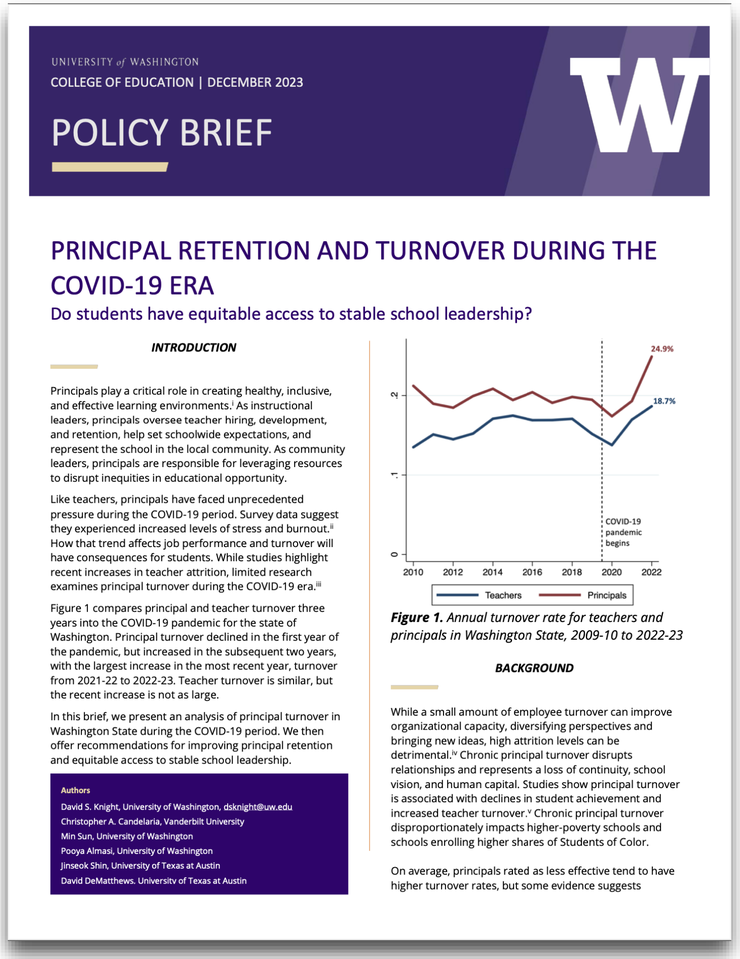

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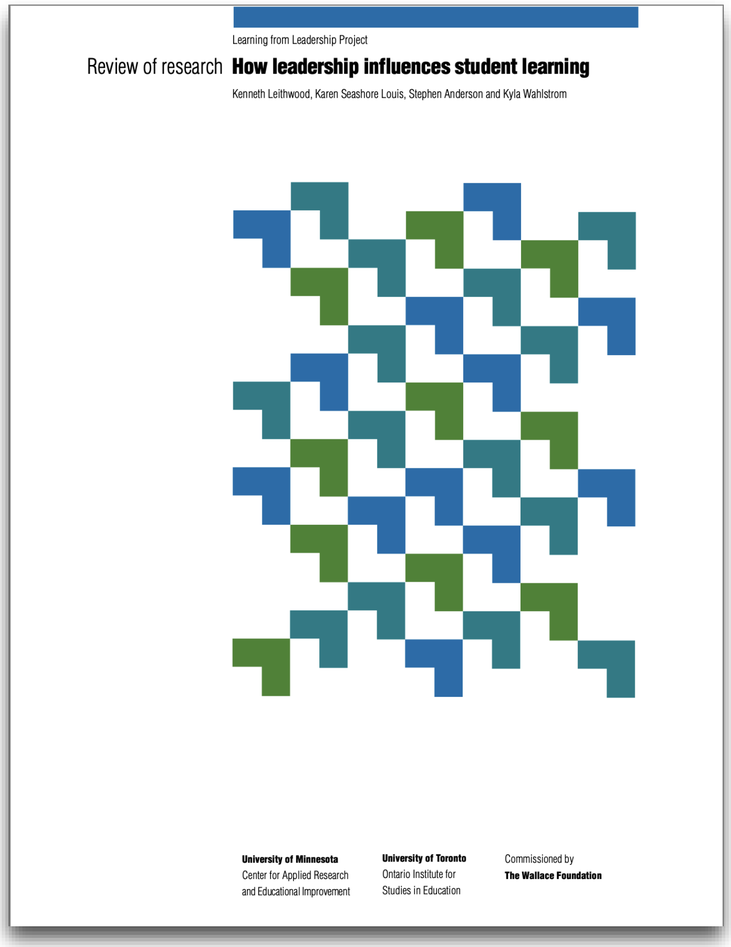
What we know about leadership….

“It turns out that leadership not only matters: it is second only to teaching among school-related factors in its impact on student learning.”

Wallace Foundation
“How Leadership Influences Student Learning” 2007



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What we know about leadership….

"**The impact of an effective principal has likely been understated**, with impacts being both **greater and broader than previously believed: greater in the impact on student achievement** and **broader in affecting other important outcomes, including teacher satisfaction and retention** (especially among high-performing teachers), **student attendance**, and **reductions in exclusionary discipline**."

The Wallace Foundation®

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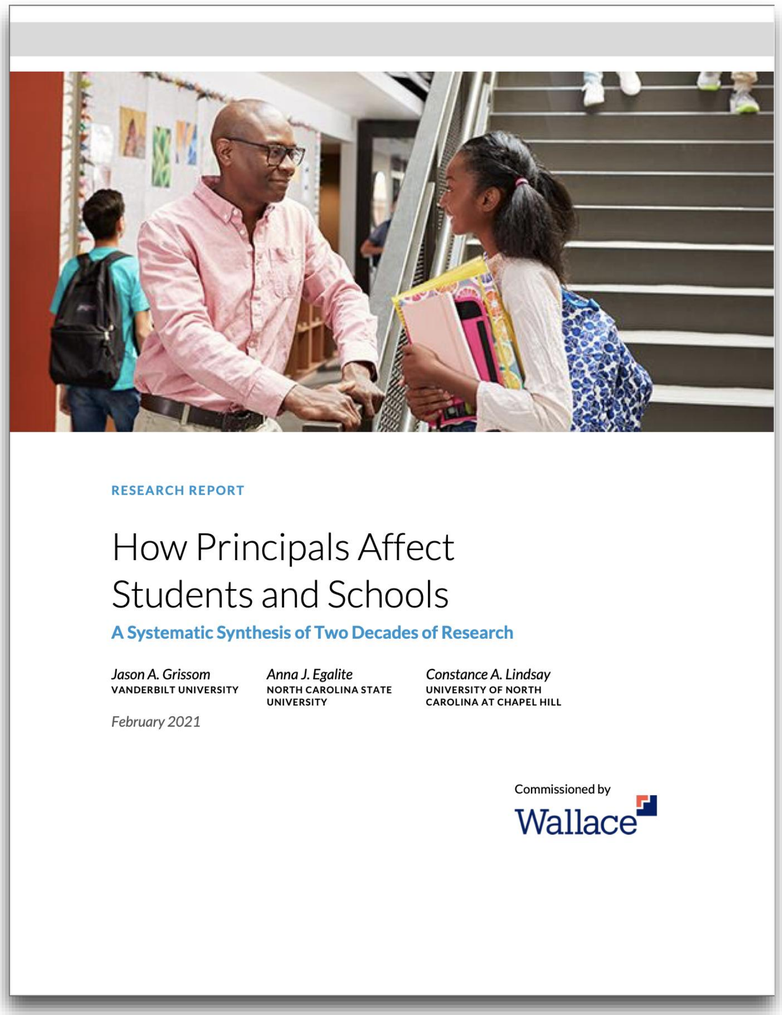
What we know about leadership….



“An effective principal’s impact is stronger and broader than previously thought, making it “difficult to envision” a higher return on investment in K-12 education than the cultivation of high-quality school leadership.”

Wallace Foundation
“How Principals Affect Students and Schools: A Systematic Synthesis of Two Decades of Research” 2021

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What we know about leadership….

The absence of systems to grow, support, and sustain school leaders is one of the greatest inequities in education.

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What we know about leadership….

If we know that leadership matters…

…then supporting leaders should be a top priority in the system.

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What *else* we know about leadership….

Leadership takes time.

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What *else* we know about leadership….

Leadership takes time.

Effective and sustained leadership creates and maintains CULTURE, dismantles and then builds SYSTEMS, and leads ongoing LEARNING that results in HOPE for students and adults.

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What *else* we know about leadership….

Years 1-2

Years 3-5

Years 5+

“Culture, like trust, must start on day one, takes years to build, and only seconds to lose.”

CULTURE

ASPIRING EMERGING DEVELOPING TRANSFORMATIONAL

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What *else* we know about leadership….

"Systems can often remain untouched through the constant change of leadership."

Years 1-2 | **Years 3-5** | **Years 5+**

SYSTEMS

CULTURE

ASPIRING | EMERGING | DEVELOPING | TRANSFORMATIONAL

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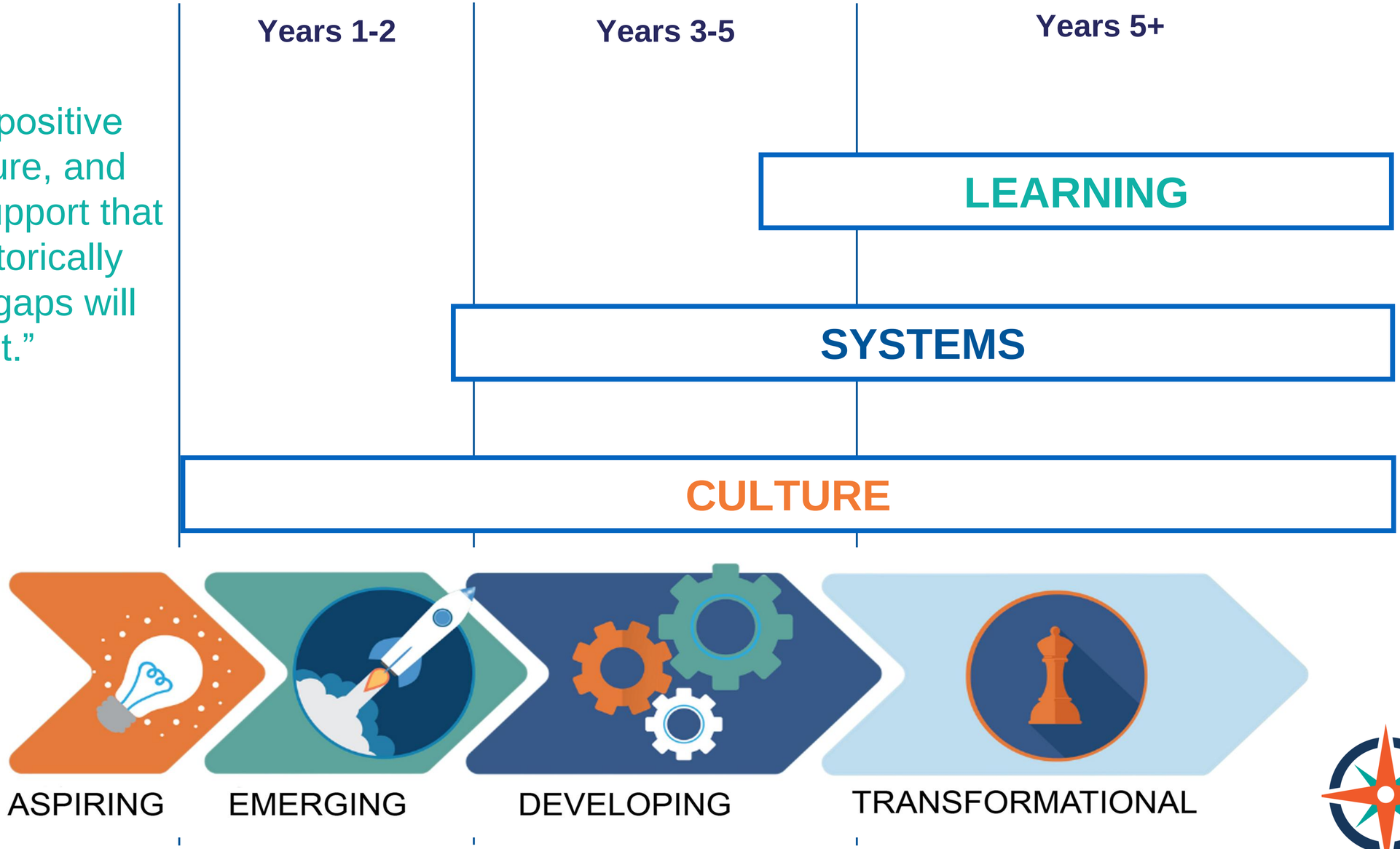
What *else* we know about leadership….

"Without a positive school culture, and systems to support that culture, historically inequitable gaps will persist."



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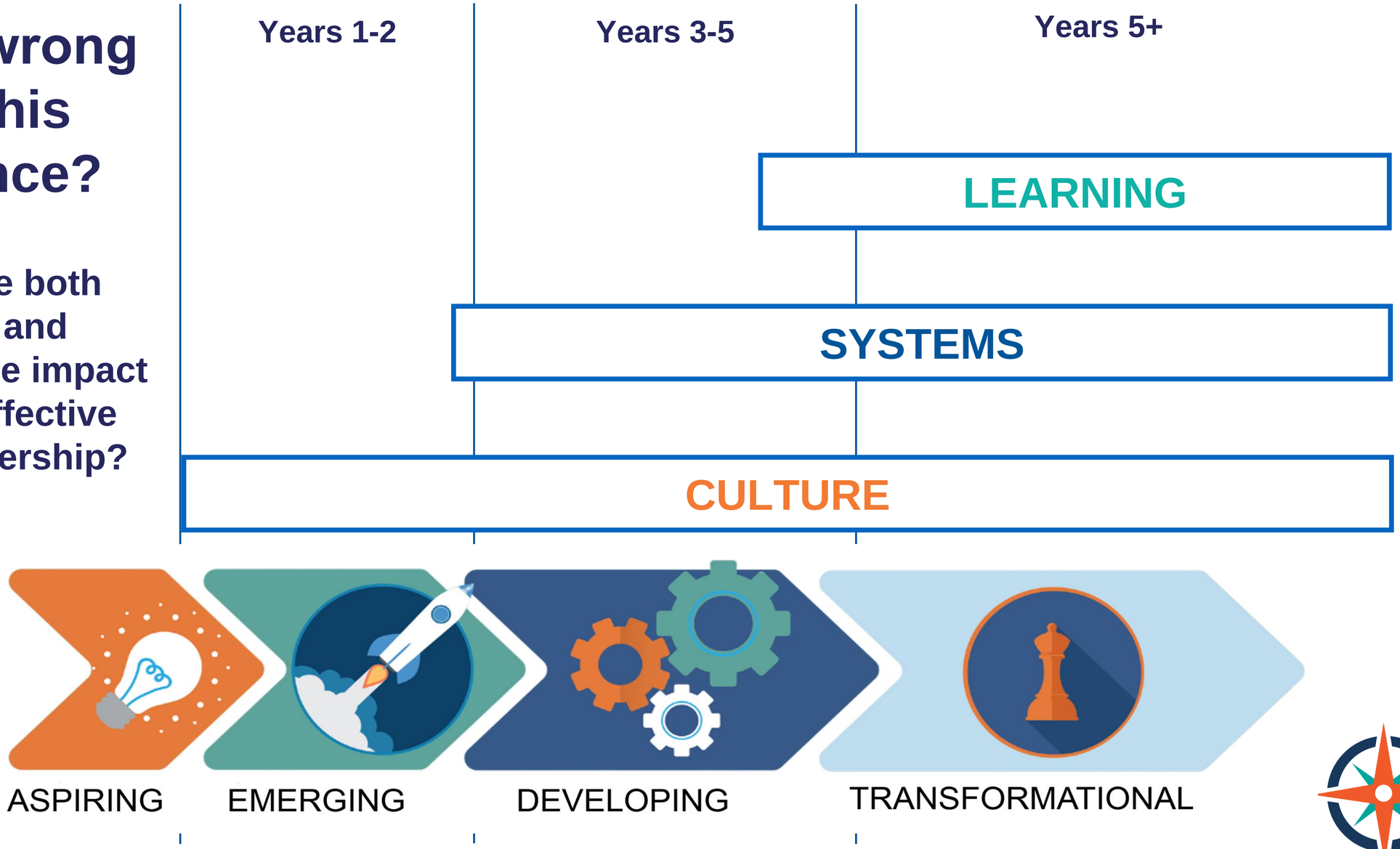
What *else* we know about leadership….

What's wrong with this sequence?

How do we both support and accelerate the impact of highly effective school leadership?



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What *else* we know about leadership….

How do we both support and accelerate the impact of highly effective school leadership?

How does CONTEXT (**individual**, **school**, **community** and **political**) influence leadership effectiveness?

Years 1-2 | **Years 3-5** | **Years 5+**

LEARNING

SYSTEMS

CULTURE

ASPIRING | EMERGING | DEVELOPING | TRANSFORMATIONAL

SCHOOL LEADER COLLABORATIVE

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LEARNING

SYSTEMS

CULTURE

“1 in 4 principals are in the same building after 5 years.” -NASSP Research

“Schools with the greatest need turn over leaders at twice the rate.” - SLC Data

“It takes 3-5 years to change an elementary school, 5-7 to change a middle school, and 7-10 to change a high school.” -Wallace Foundation

ASPIRING EMERGING DEVELOPING TRANSFORMATIONAL

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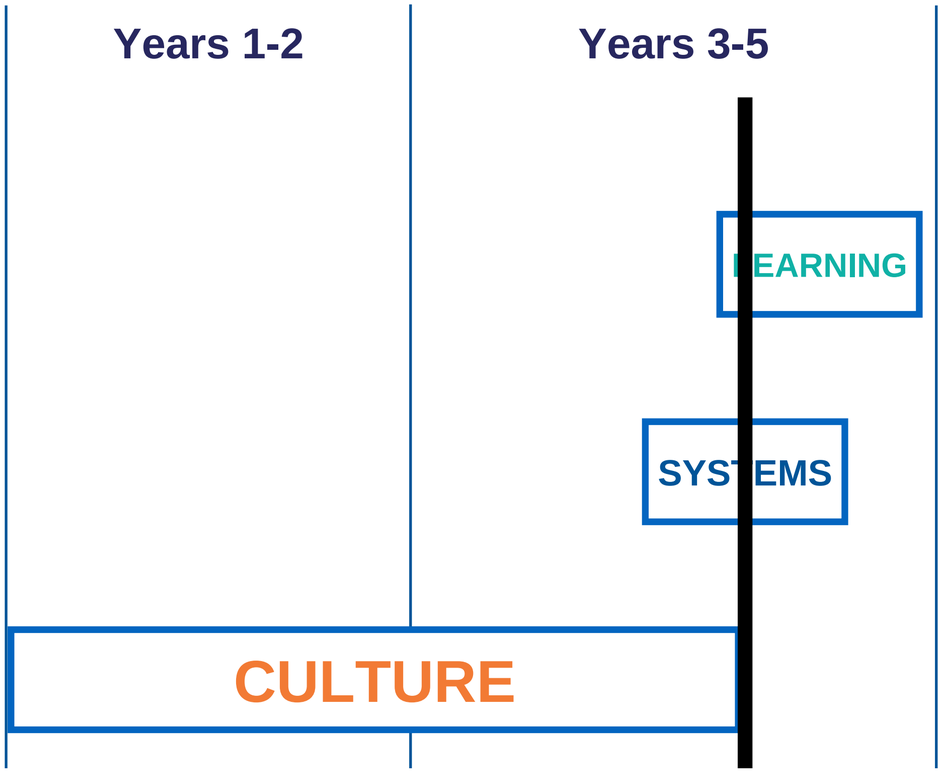

Is it *Context* or *Leadership*? Or both?

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Years 1-2

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Years 5+

LEARNING

SYSTEMS

CULTURE

What does it take to surthrive and be an effective leader in today's schools?

What are the leadership traits required to build **CULTURE**, change **SYSTEMS**, and lead **LEARNING** at an accelerated pace in this continuum?

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What we know about leadership….

What does it take to surthrive and be an effective leader in today's schools?

A relevant leadership language and system of support for leaders as they are *becoming* while *doing* the work.

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Our Theory of Action

A common leadership language and system of support for leaders as they are *becoming* while *doing* the work.

If we insist upon a leadership language that captures the complexity and demand facing school leaders, then we can build a continuum of resources that accelerate and increase leadership effectiveness and sustainability while reducing the harmful compounding consequences of leadership turnover.

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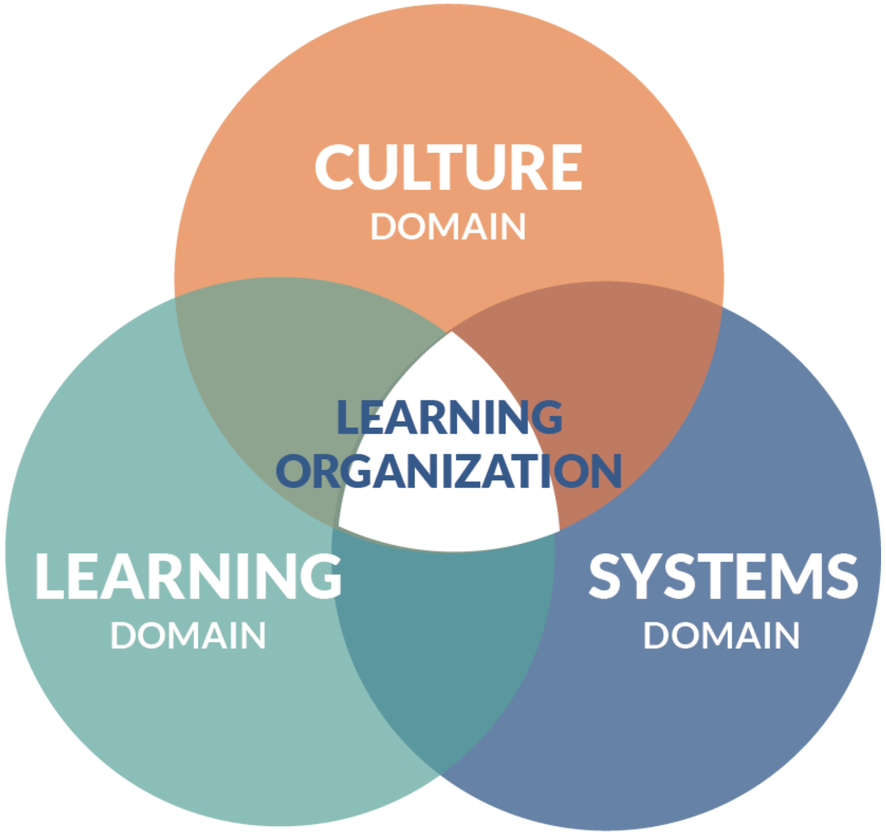
SCHOOL LEADER PARADIGM

Becoming While Doing

Dispositions
“Becoming”



Actions
“Doing”

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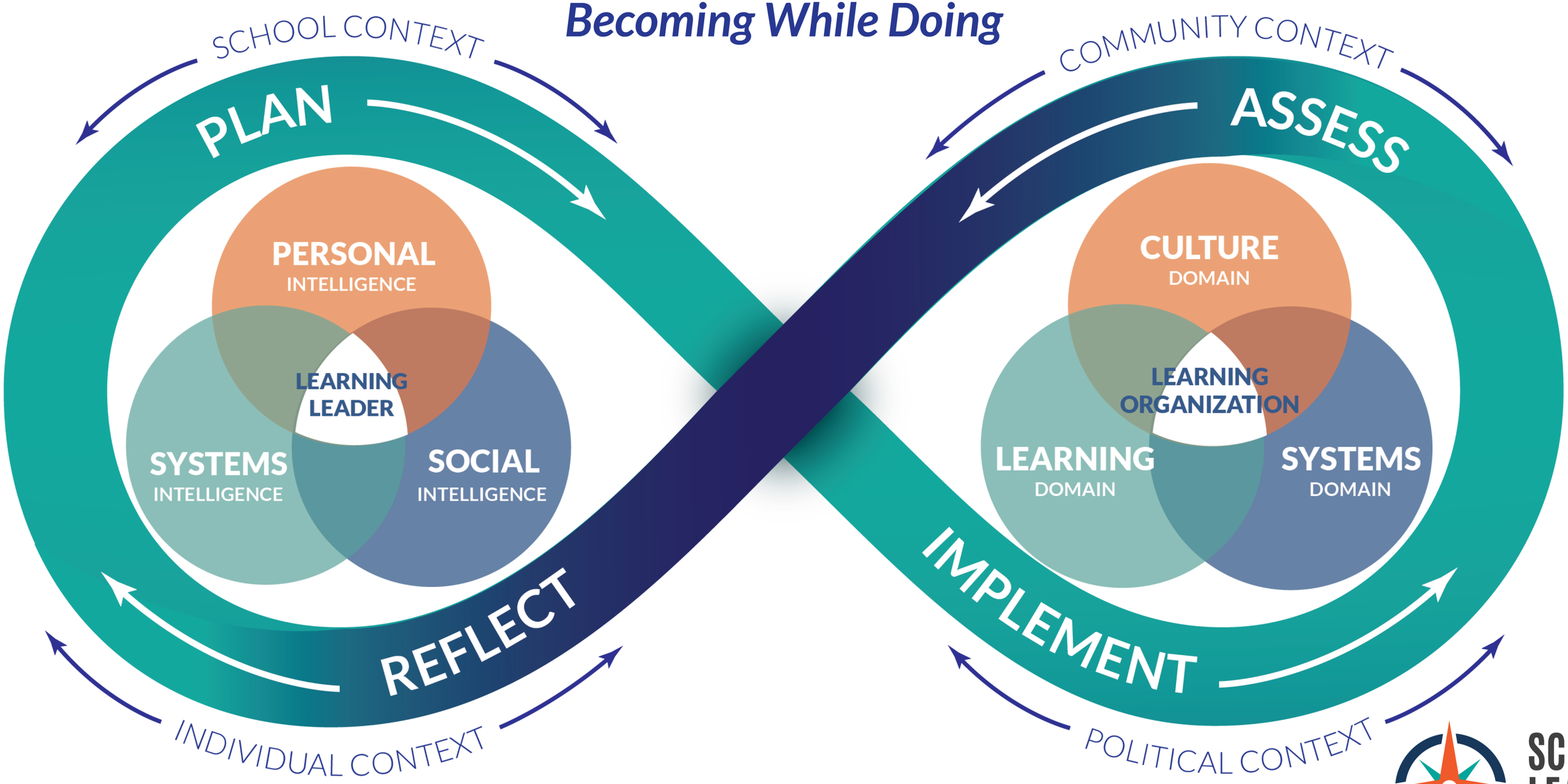
SCHOOL LEADER PARADIGM

Becoming While Doing



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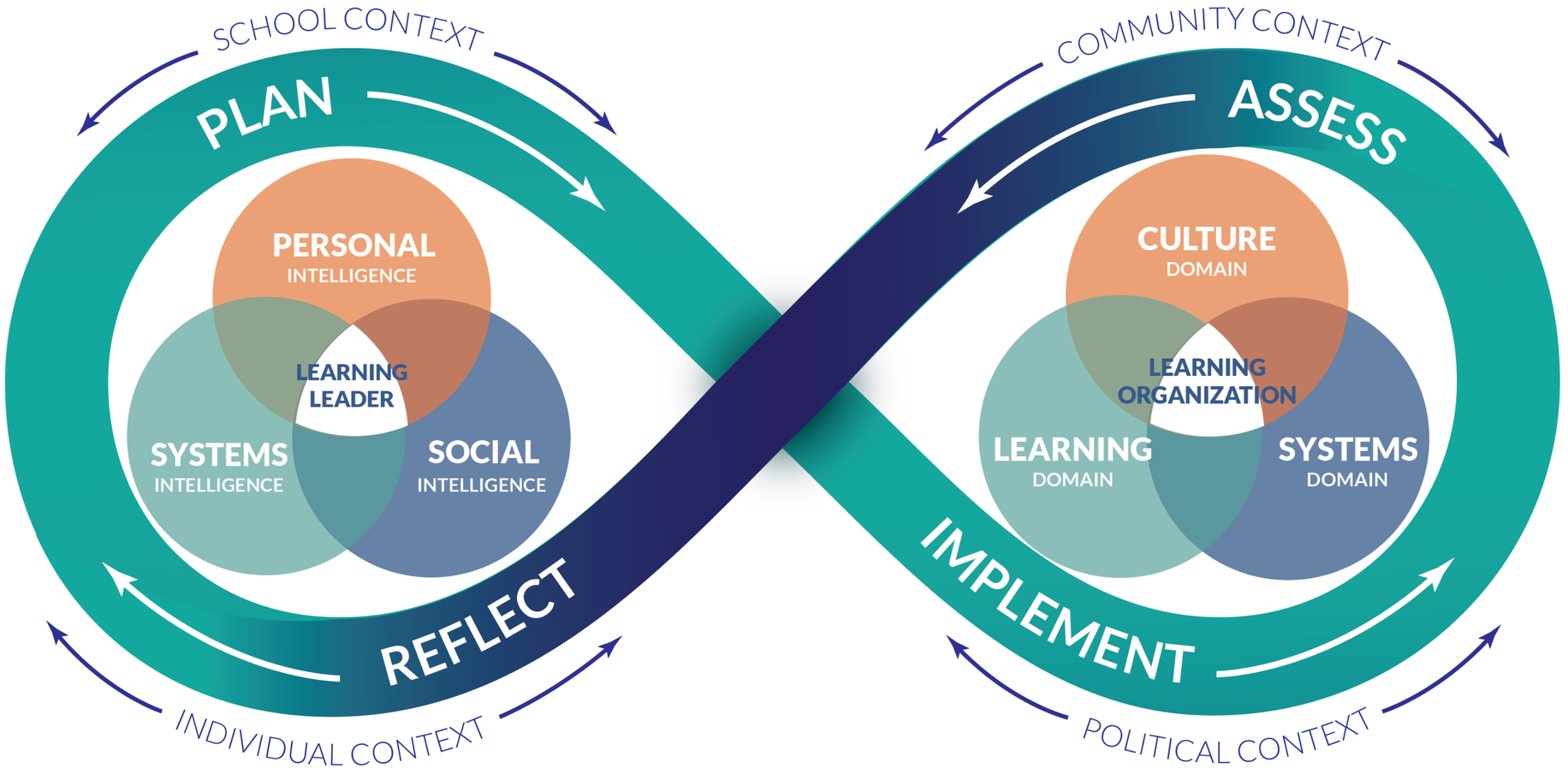
SCHOOL LEADER PARADIGM

Becoming While Doing

The Language of Leadership



What are the big rocks of the Paradigm? What jumps out at you?

What terms match or relate to the leadership language currently used in your district?

Think - Stare - Pair - Share

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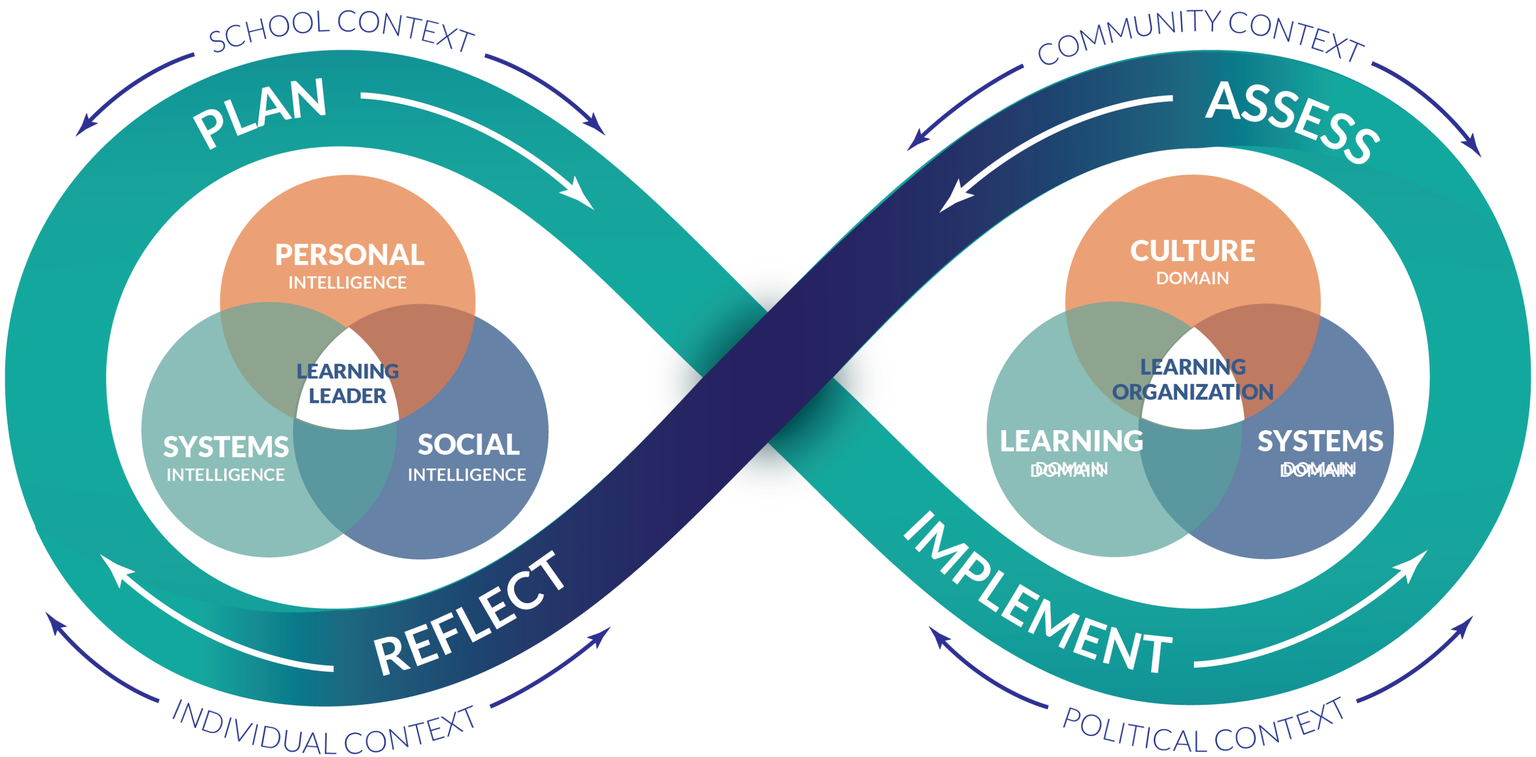
Foundational Blocks of the School Leader Paradigm

- Contexts (Individual, School, Community & Political)
- Domains (Culture, Systems & Learning)
- Intelligences (Personal, Social & Systems)
- Cycle of Inquiry (Plan, Implement, Assess & Reflect)



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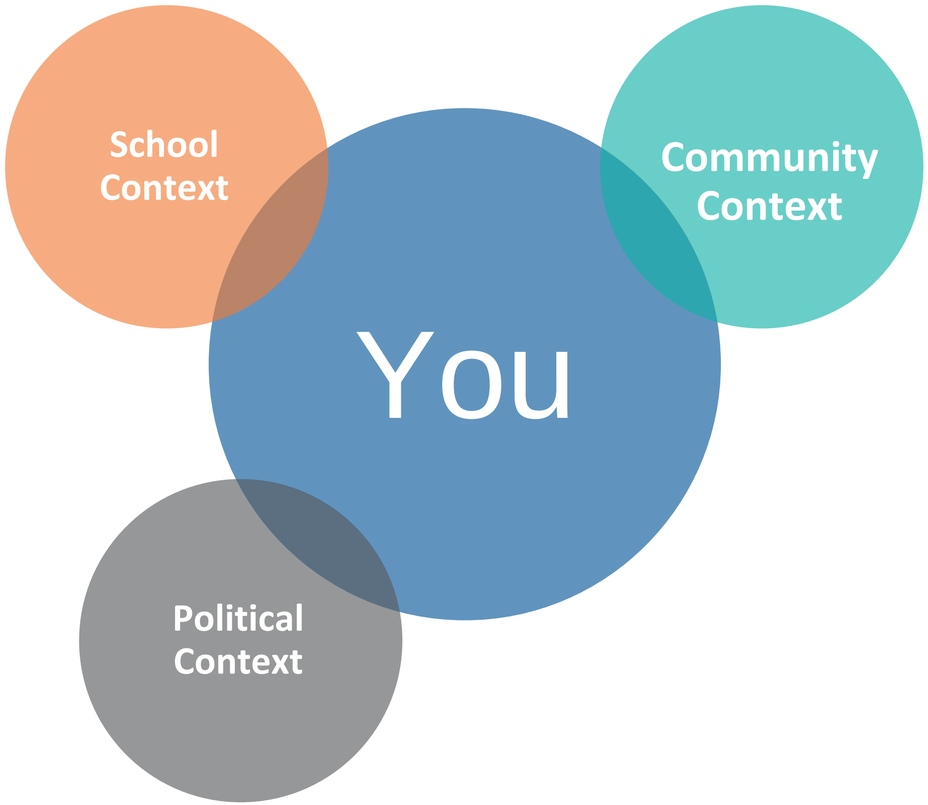

SCHOOL LEADER COLLABORATIVE

Foundational Blocks of the School Leader Paradigm

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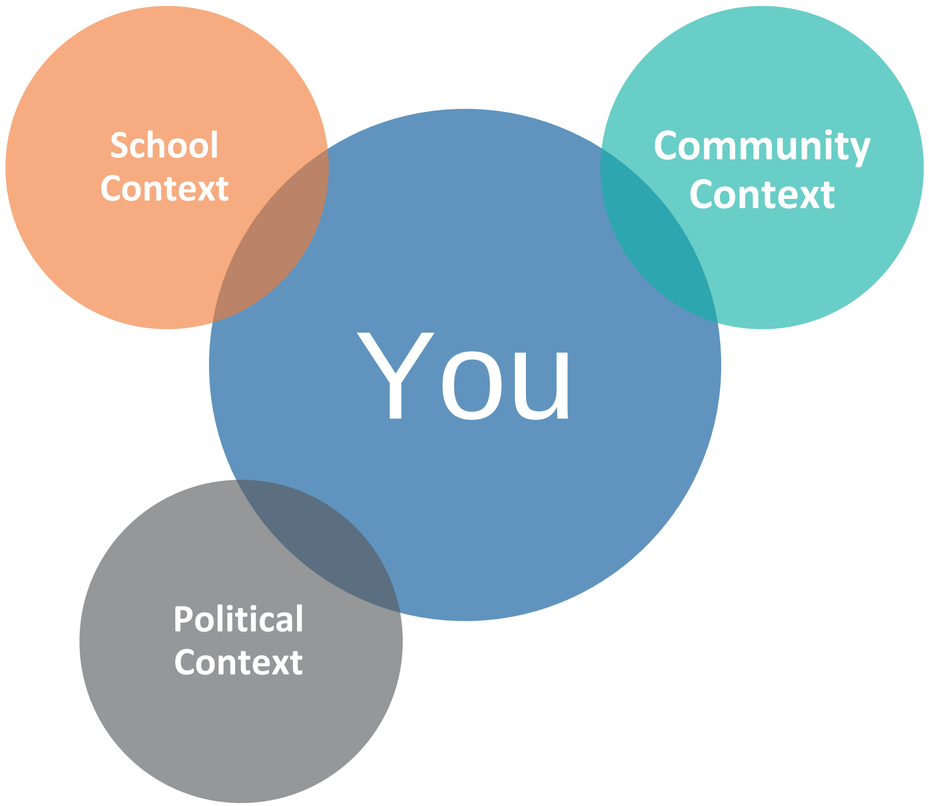

Key CONTEXT Questions:

- What is context?
- Why does it matter?
- What are the differences between contexts?
- How does context influence the impact of leadership?
- What are the contextual influences at play in your school or district?

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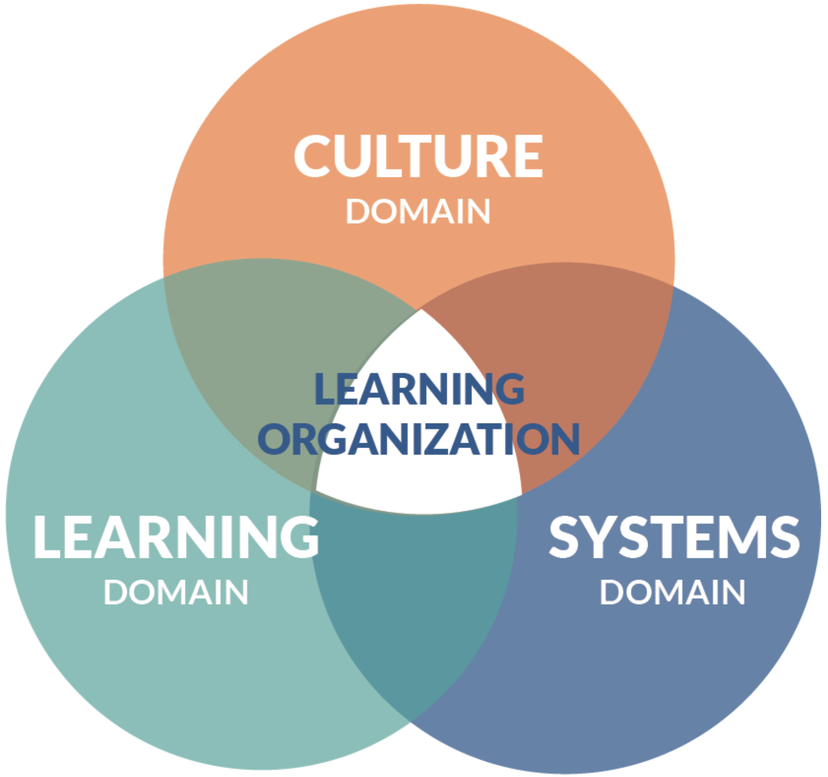

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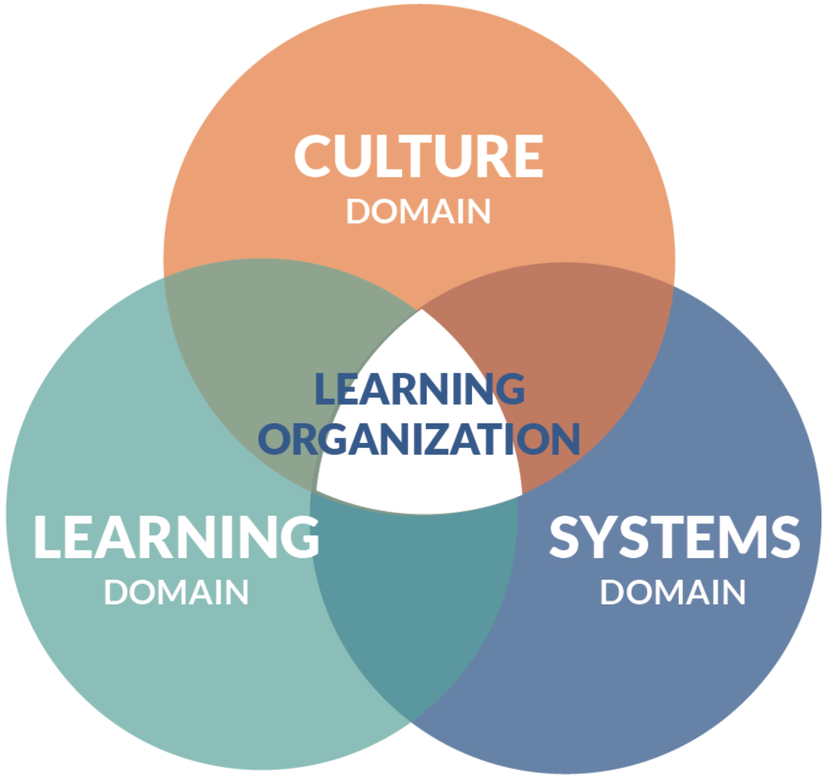

Key DOMAIN Questions:

- What is your primary Domain strength?
- What is not your strength area?
- Why does it matter?
- How are you leading with your strength?
- What are the strengths of those around you?
- What/Who is the Learning Organization?

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Key INTELLIGENCE Questions:

- What is your primary Intelligence?
- What makes you effective?
- What are the blind spots of your leadership?
- How are you leading with your strengths?
- What are the strengths of those around you?
- Who is the Learning Leader?

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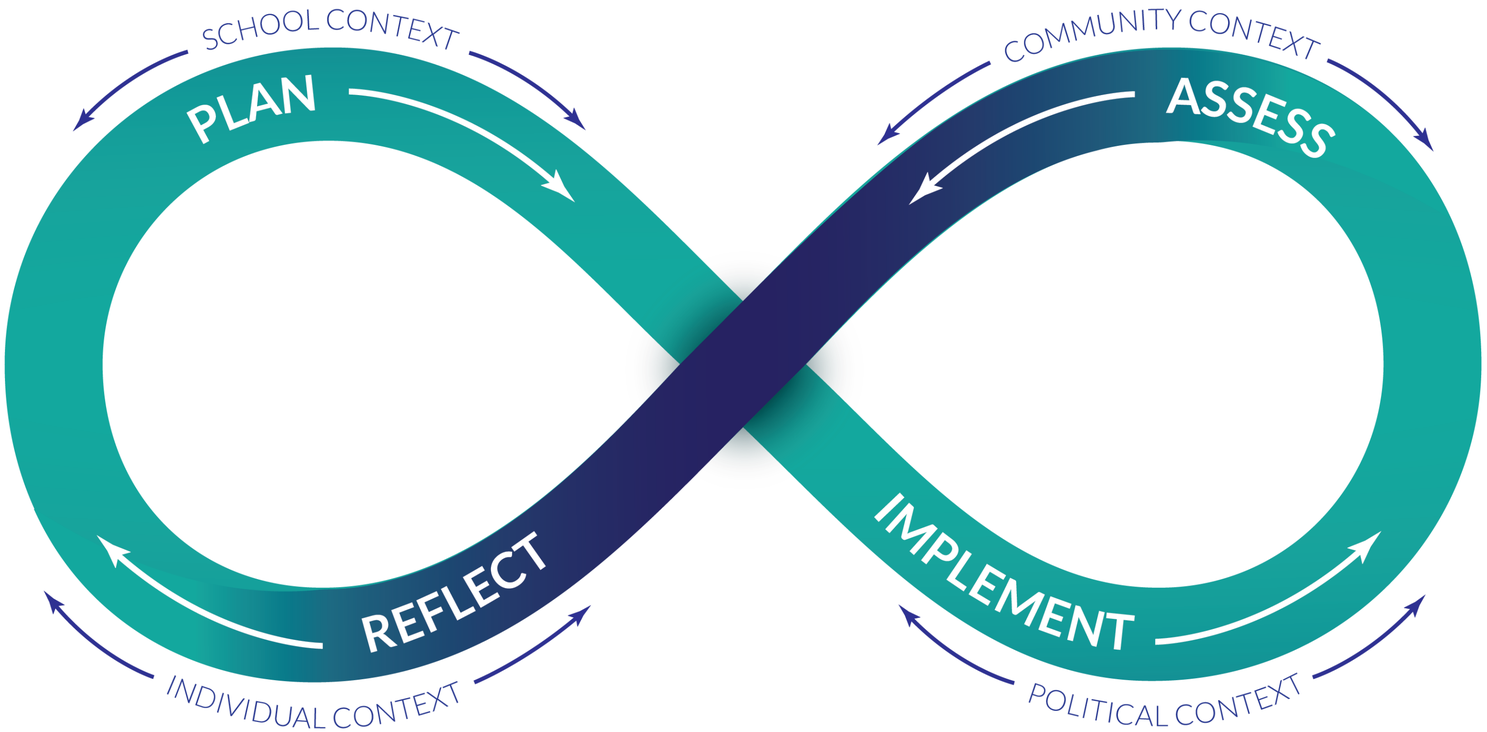

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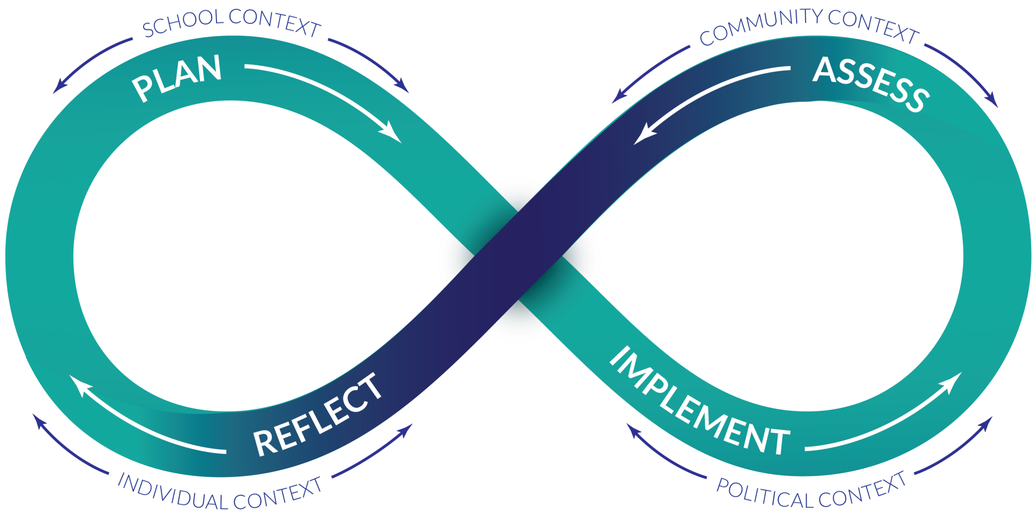

Key INQUIRY Questions:

- What is something that we need to address? How do we know?
- How are we going to tackle making the change?
- How are we going to monitor our progress and make adjustments as needed?
- How are we going to reflect, assess, and learn from this leadership experience? How will we move what we learned into our goals for next year?

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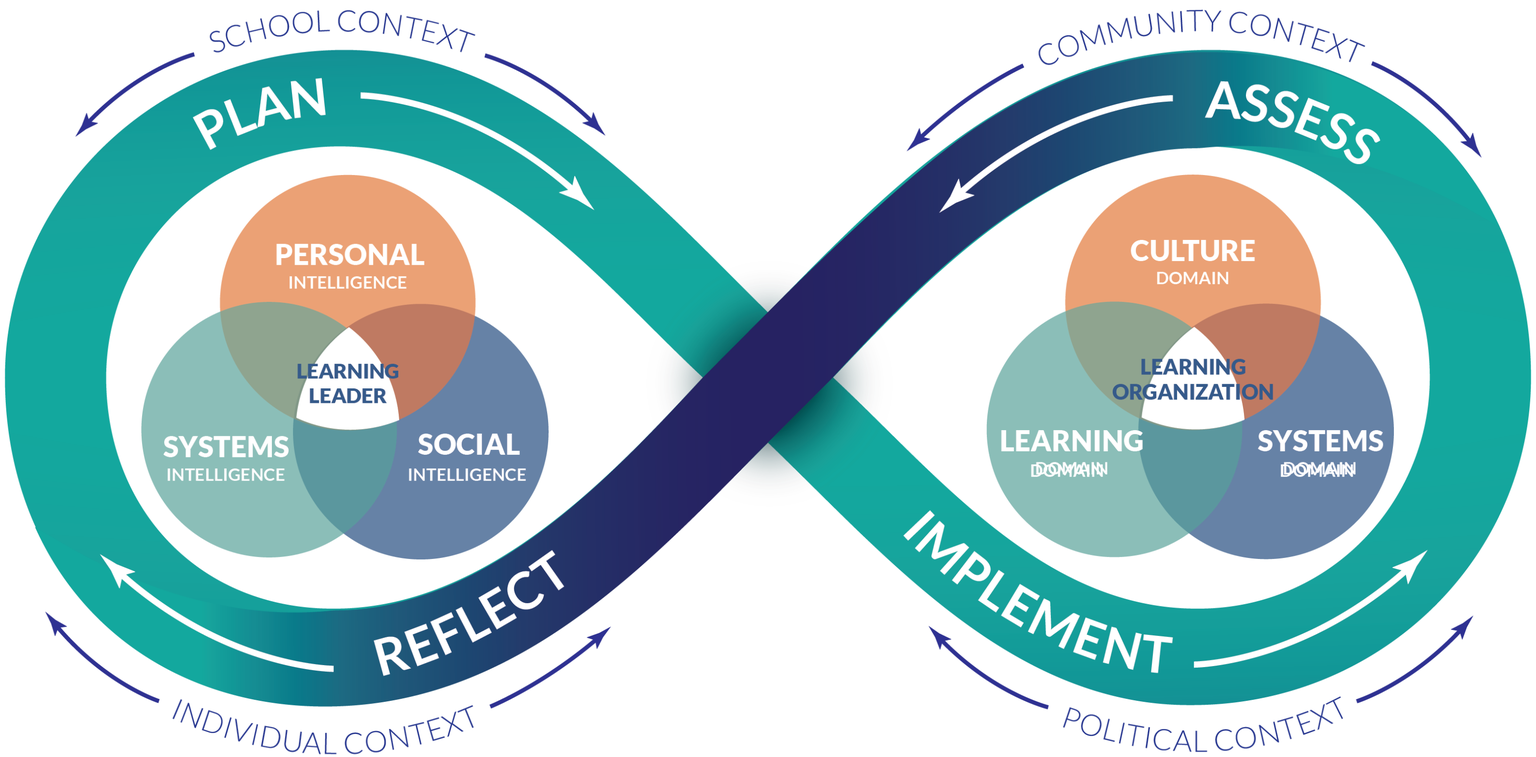

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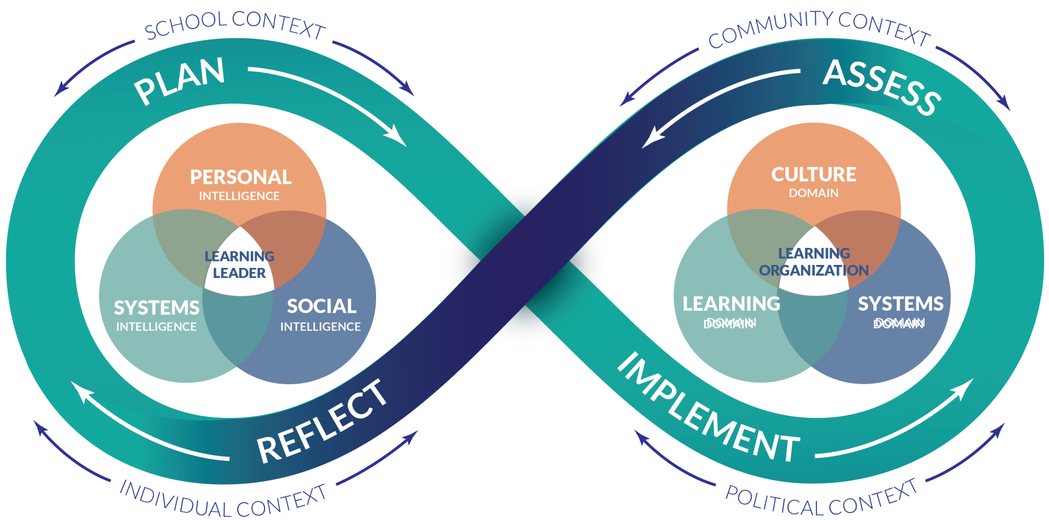

Key PARADIGM Questions:

- Where are YOU in the leadership journey?
- What is the interplay between the Learning Leader and the Learning Organization?
- How can you leverage this language in your school/district?
- How can principal supervisors shift the conversation from evaluation to ongoing reflection and growth?

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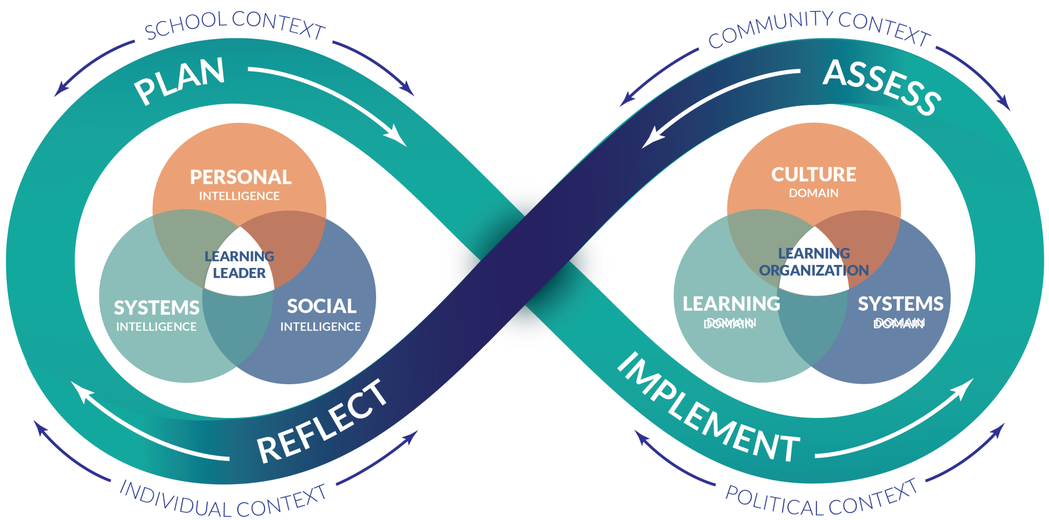

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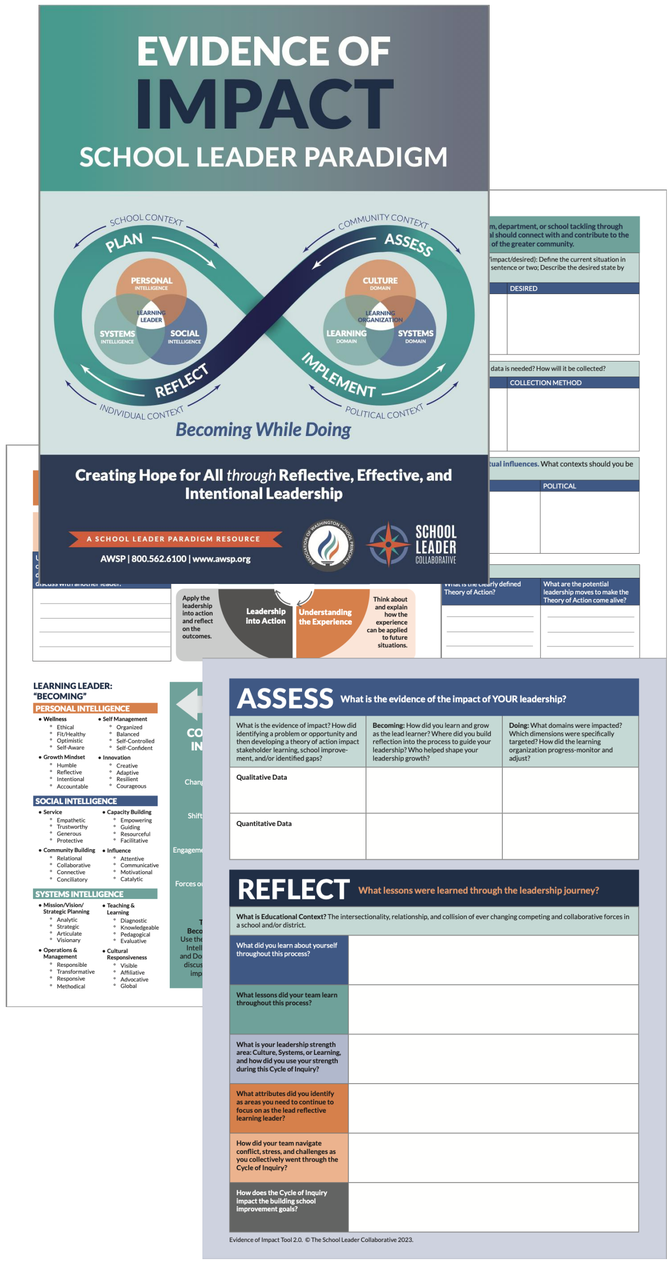

How can principal supervisors shift the conversation from evaluation to ongoing reflection and growth?

Collaborative Top 10 Growth Support Questions:

- How are you? No really, how are you?
- How is your Problem of Practice going?
- Have you had to adjust your Theory of Action? How so?
- What data are you tracking and sharing?
- What Domains are you working in?
- How is context impacting your effectiveness?
- What (or who) is impacting your progress?
- How are you (and your team) leading with your strengths?
- What have you learned about yourself (and your team)?
- How can I/we help you? What do you need from me/us?

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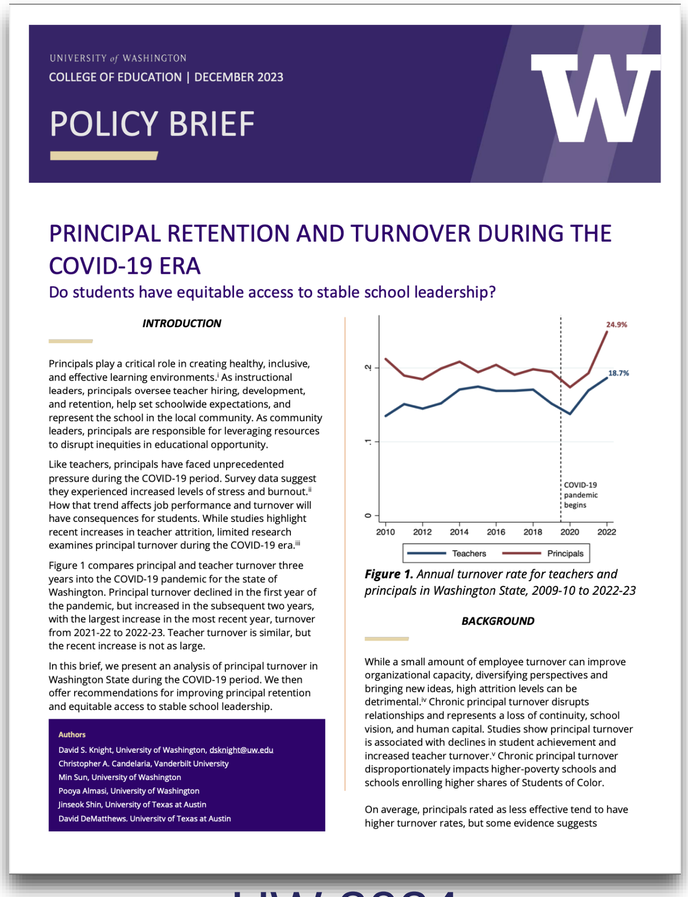
The Research

“Ensuring all students have access to stable, high-quality school leadership is a shared responsibility of district leaders, regional service providers, and state education leaders.”

University of Washington
Policy Brief - 2024
Principal Retention and Turnover During the COVID-19 Era.
Do students have equitable access to stable school leadership?



UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION | DECEMBER 2023

POLICY BRIEF

PRINCIPAL RETENTION AND TURNOVER DURING THE COVID-19 ERA

Do students have equitable access to stable school leadership?

INTRODUCTION

Principals play a critical role in creating healthy, inclusive, and effective learning environments.[i] As instructional leaders, principals oversee teacher hiring, development, and retention, help set schoolwide expectations, and represent the school in the local community. As community leaders, principals are responsible for leveraging resources to disrupt inequities in educational opportunity.

Like teachers, principals have faced unprecedented pressure during the COVID-19 period. Survey data suggest they experienced increased levels of stress and burnout.[ii] How that trend affects job performance and turnover will have consequences for students. While studies highlight recent increases in teacher attrition, limited research examines principal turnover during the COVID-19 era.[iii]

Figure 1 compares principal and teacher turnover three years into the COVID-19 pandemic for the state of Washington. Principal turnover declined in the first year of the pandemic, but increased in the subsequent two years, with the largest increase in the most recent year, turnover from 2021-22 to 2022-23. Teacher turnover is similar, but the recent increase is not as large.

In this brief, we present an analysis of principal turnover in Washington State during the COVID-19 period. We then offer recommendations for improving principal retention and equitable access to stable school leadership.

Authors
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David DeMatthews, University of Texas at Austin

Figure 1. *Annual turnover rate for teachers and principals in Washington State, 2009-10 to 2022-23*

BACKGROUND

While a small amount of employee turnover can improve organizational capacity, diversifying perspectives and bringing new ideas, high attrition levels can be detrimental.[iv] Chronic principal turnover disrupts relationships and represents a loss of continuity, school vision, and human capital. Studies show principal turnover is associated with declines in student achievement and increased teacher turnover.[v] Chronic principal turnover disproportionately impacts higher-poverty schools and schools enrolling higher shares of Students of Color.

On average, principals rated as less effective tend to have higher turnover rates, but some evidence suggests

UW 2024

SCHOOL LEADER COLLABORATIVE

Elevating Your Principal through the School Leader Paradigm

Ongoing leadership development for all school leaders throughout the journey of "*Becoming* while *Doing*".

Questions? Comments?

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