

Rethinking School Leadership

SERVICE ASSOCIATES Q & A

Q. *What is Studer Education's Evidence-based leadership framework?*

A. Our Evidence-Based LeadershipSM Framework aligns organizational goals, behaviors/actions, and processes to support the core mission of school districts — which ultimately is to provide the best life opportunities for every child through a high-quality education. Applying Evidence-Based LeadershipSM, school districts and communities envision the future, define goals that reflect the realization of that vision, and then action plan and implement in an aligned way throughout the district to achieve outstanding results. The “evidence” in the framework is about defining how we will know when we are successful and our collective actions are yielding the desired results. Evidence-Based LeadershipSM also includes a set of proven (by evidence) tactics and best practices for engaging and leading our teams to achieve these important results for children and families.

Q. *What do you think is one of the biggest challenges facing Wisconsin schools? How can schools try to meet this challenge?*

A. I'd like to mention two: change and voice. Our external environment has changed dramatically and will continue to do so. The needs of the students we serve is constantly changing. Educational standards, expectations, working relationships, accountability, school funding — all of these factors are changing. The only constant is change itself. Given this, even the most successful school

districts cannot expect to continue to improve or even maintain current results and levels of success if they continue to operate in the same way. Voice for the many stakeholders who comprise a school community is the second great challenge, and is often related to the recent changes I just mentioned. Some perceive that change has silenced voices that matter. In our work with school districts, we coach leaders on tools and tactics to access and engage with the voices of students, employees, parents, families, and board members. To meet both of these challenges, leaders require the same opportunity that high-performing districts and schools have offered teachers for decades: ongoing professional development and coaching.

Q. *How can schools develop a school-work culture that values employees and pushes them to be their best?*

A. Leaders can create great school-work cultures that value employees and empower them to achieve at high levels by connecting the heart and the mind. We have found that employees desire reasonable things from their leaders: positive relationships, approachability, efficient systems, and the tools, resources, and development needed to get the job done. These expectations mean that leaders need to skillfully motivate our heart — the passion we bring to education — and inform our minds in order to fully engage each individual. Leaders who can manage both approaches — to heart and mind — achieve that “best place to work” culture that drives team members to achieve their best.



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Q. *What role does or should the school board play in bolstering/maintaining employee relations/development?*

A. Good school boards understand the core mission of the district, and they expect updates on how students are performing, relative to measures that have been established and communicated. Great school boards understand that student learning is not improved by only focusing on student test scores, but by also identifying and monitoring additional organizational measures and factors that have a strong influence on student learning. Of the school-based influences, teacher quality ranks number one. The quality of the school leader is the second highest school-based influence on student achievement. When we say “school based,” we mean “things we can control” — unlike our external environment. High-performing school boards provide the resources that superintendents need to create great workplace cultures for all faculty and staff, who are the ultimate drivers of teaching and learning in our schools. ■

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