

UEN Board/Superintendent Teams Leading Through Change: A framework of proactive strategies for managing change in a complex environment

UEN Annual Dinner



Outcomes

- Explore the concept of “political leadership” in education;
- Introduce the Framework on Political Leadership; and
- Provide opportunity to apply the Framework (or elements of the Framework) to an issue or initiative of importance.

U.S. Public Education

Our goal is ambitious –

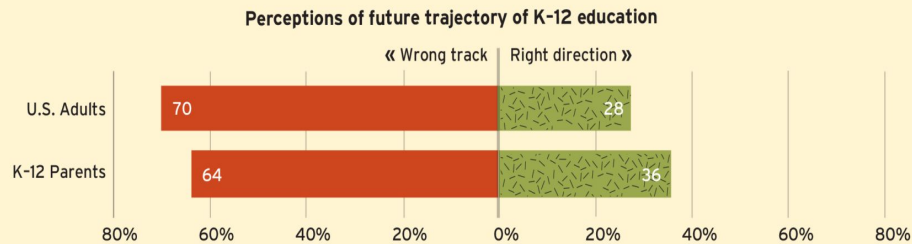
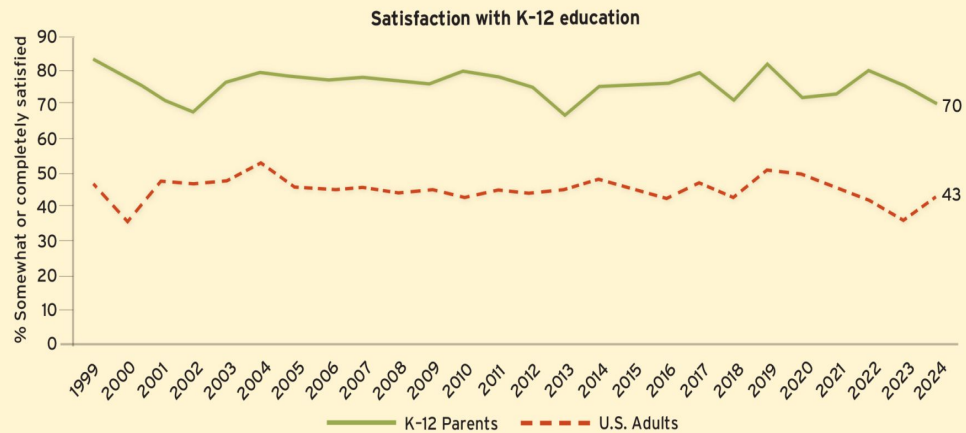


to provide a high quality education to every child
in America, no matter how they are situated in
relation to opportunity.

The Cost in Public Trust

Pessimism about Condition, Direction of K-12 Education (Figure 2)

Parents continue to be more sanguine than the general public about the state of U.S. schools, but a majority of both groups feel that K-12 education is headed in the wrong direction.



SATISFACTION QUESTION FOR U.S. ADULTS: Overall, how satisfied are you with the quality of education students receive in kindergarten through grade 12 in the U.S. today-would you say you are completely satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or completely dissatisfied?

SATISFACTION QUESTION FOR K-12 PARENTS: How satisfied are you with the quality of education your oldest child is receiving? Would you say you are completely satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or completely dissatisfied?

RIGHT DIRECTION/WRONG TRACK QUESTION: In the United States, do you feel things in K-12 education are generally going in the right direction, or do you feel things have generally gotten off on the wrong track?

SOURCES: Gallup, 2024, "Education | Gallup Historical Trends," <https://news.gallup.com/poll/1612/education.aspx> and EdChoice, 2024, "Schooling in America Survey," <https://www.edchoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Questionnaire-Toplines.pdf>

Satisfaction with K-12 education

Parents continue to be more satisfied than the general public

Perception of the trajectory of K-12 education

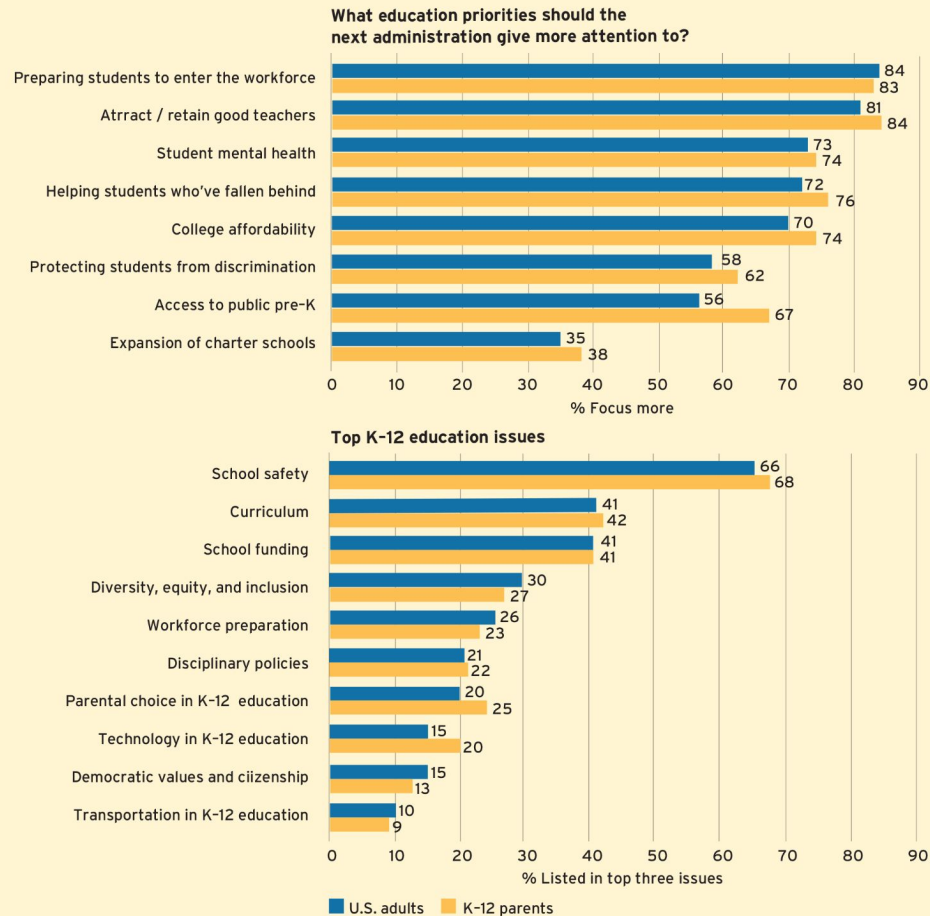
But a majority of both groups feel that we are going in the **wrong direction**

(Houston, 2024)

What Our Communities Want

Prioritize the Fundamentals (Figure 3)

Americans think K-12 education policymakers should focus on the basics of schooling, not headline-grabbing culture wars.



FIRST QUESTION: Regardless of who wins the presidential election, compared with the current level of focus would you like to see the administration in Washington focus more or focus less on each of these?

SECOND QUESTION: We would like to ask what issues in K-12 education are most important to you right now. Please rank your top three issues.

SOURCES: PDK Poll, 2024, "The 56th Annual PDK Poll," <https://pdkpoll.org/2024-poll-results/> and EdChoice, 2024, "Schooling in America Survey," <https://www.edchoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Questionnaire-Toplines.pdf>

Education Priorities

- Preparing students to enter the workforce
- Attracting and retaining good teachers
- Student mental health

Top K-12 Education Issues

- School safety
- Curriculum
- School funding

(Houston, 2024)



The Edelman Trust Barometer study, which has polled 32,000 people across 28 countries every year for two decades, shows that “in the past 20 years, we have seen a fracturing of trust, but an increase in its value. Trust has emerged, like freedom and security, as itself a barometer of a successful society.” (2022)

The Job Today: Civic Leadership



The State of the Superintendency:

Insights on how to navigate K-12 leadership in a challenging and politicized education space

Crossing the Partisan Divide in Education Policy

Lorén Cox, Ph.D.
Karen Nussle



EDUCATION
& SOCIETY
aspen institute

MARCH 2024

 The Holdsworth Center

Beyond Impossible

Making the shifts necessary to thrive
in the superintendent role

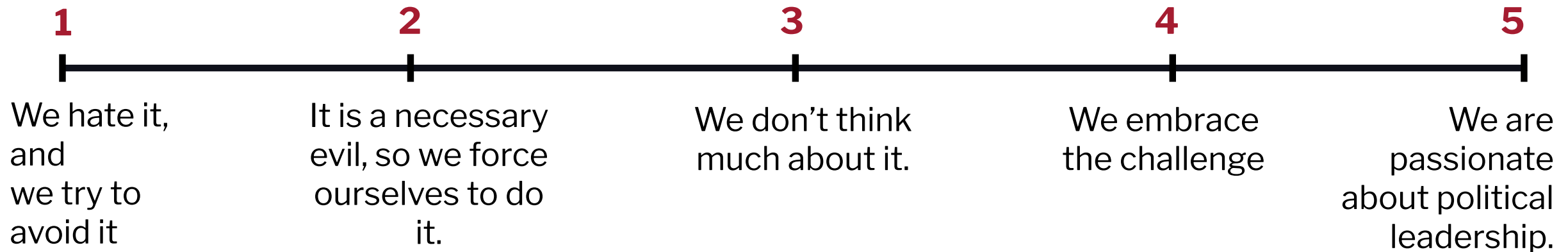
by Dr. Lindsay Whorton



Table Talk

How do you as a Board-Superintendent team feel about navigating politics in your community, especially today?

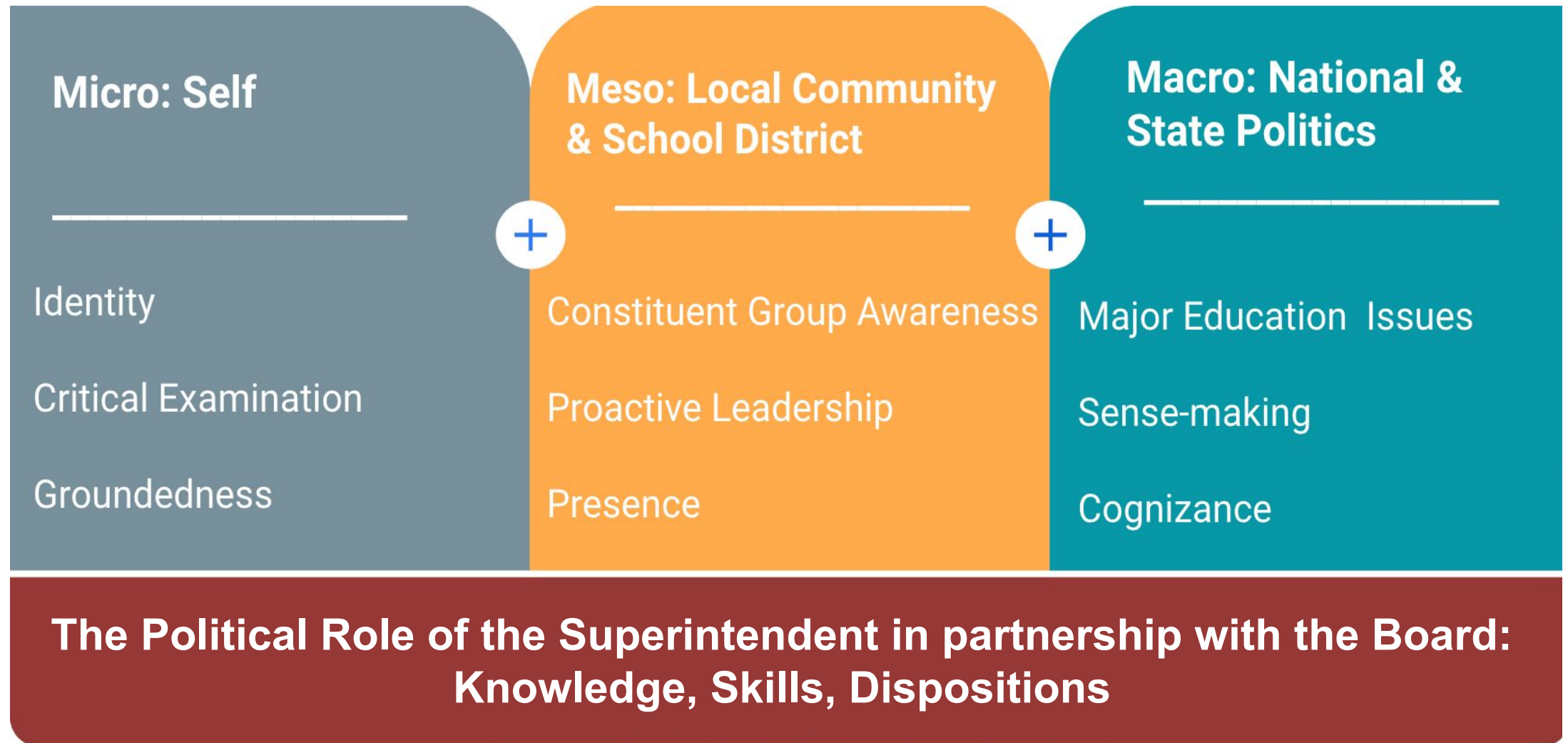
Rate your team on a scale from 1-5.



Defining political leadership in education

We define political leadership in education as the **knowledge, skills, and dispositions** necessary to **navigate competing interests** in a way that facilitates **positive outcomes** for our nation's youth.

Political Leadership Requires Key Knowledge, Skills and Dispositions



	MICRO (Self)	MESO (School District & Local Community)	MACRO (National & State)
KNOWLEDGE	Identity + Typical local constituent groups + Major educational issues		
	Understanding of how identity and values influence leadership	Awareness of typical constituent groups and how they work Including school board, local government, union, local news media, student groups, parent organizations, and advocacy groups	Understanding of federal and state education policies, laws, and school finance Awareness of education issues in national and global media
SKILLS	Critical examination + Proactive leadership + Sense making		
	Examining self as leader Exhibiting emotional intelligence Practicing cultural responsiveness	Visioning and Communicating Political mapping Movement building and mobilizing Ongoing relationship building	Influencing, interpreting and implementing education laws and policies Learning across communities
DISPOSITIONS	Grounded + Present + Cognizant		
	Resilient Curious Centered	Transparent Courageous Visible	Informed Active Connected

Proactive Political Leadership Skills

- **Visioning** → creating visions for success that speak to the largest possible swath of constituents

A district's vision articulates the aspirations of a community by defining what **excellence** in education looks like for every child and outlining the **values** that undergird that vision.

What is your district's vision for success?

Portraits of a Graduate



• PORTRAIT OF A GRADUATE •

ADAPTABILITY
A graduate...

- Works effectively in a climate of uncertainty and changing priorities.
- Exhibits agility in thoughts and actions.
- Understands, negotiates, and balances diverse views and beliefs to reach innovative solutions and creates an environment where others can do the same.

COMMUNICATION
A graduate...

- Conveys thoughts and ideas effectively using communication skills in a variety of forms and contexts.
- Listens actively and effectively to understand meaning and diverse perspectives, including knowledge, values, attitudes, and intentions.
- Considers all audiences and ensures equity of voice, especially in a group setting.

CRITICAL THINKING
A graduate...

- Evaluates the quality of one's own thinking by skillfully analyzing, assessing, and reflecting.
- Engages in metacognition that is clear, rational, open-minded, and informed by evidence.

LEARNER'S MINDSET
A graduate...

- Is motivated by curiosity to experience new ideas.
- Understands the concept of growth from failure.
- Expresses the desire to learn, unlearn, and relearn. Seizes opportunities to actively listen and embrace diverse perspectives from others.

EMPATHY
A graduate...

- Practices awareness, sensitivity, concern, and respect for others.
- Seeks to understand others' feelings, opinions, experiences, and culture.

GLOBAL CITIZENS
A graduate...

- Values diverse cultures and unique perspectives through mutual respect and open dialogue.
- Demonstrates personal, civic, social, financial, environmental, local, and global responsibility through ethical and empathetic behaviors.
- Educates themselves and takes personal action to make community and world a better place.

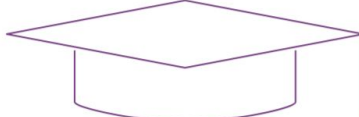


Dubuque COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

PORTRAIT OF A GRADUATE

THE DUBUQUE COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT IS COMMITTED TO DEVELOPING **world-class learners** AND **citizens of character** IN A **safe and inclusive** LEARNING COMMUNITY.

IN LIVING THIS MISSION, WE STRIVE TO CREATE GRADUATES WHO ARE...

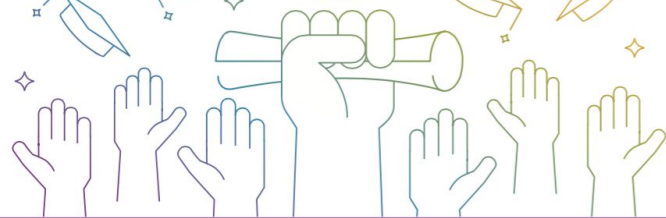
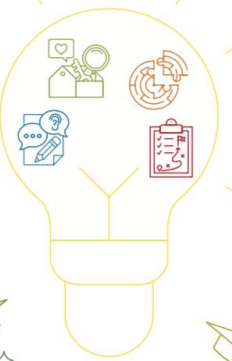


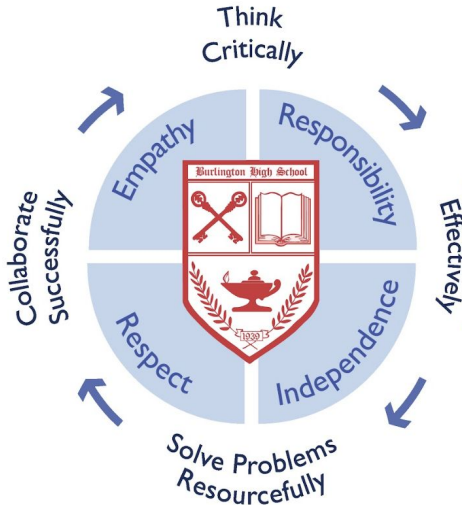
LIFE READY
Having self awareness and the social-emotional competencies to access resources in order to make responsible decisions that contribute to the larger society

INNOVATIVE PROBLEM SOLVERS
Seeking out and discovering original solutions

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATORS
Clearly, accurately and appropriately speaking, writing, listening and collaborating in a variety of contexts

GOAL ORIENTED
Setting goals to become a well-rounded person who is open to new challenges and experiences, persevering to achieve their goals, accepting and implementing feedback, and are able to reflect on their progress





Portrait of a Graduate

EQUIPPED FOR COLLEGE & CAREER

- Complete the College & Career Continuum.
- Enrolled/Enlisted/Employed (college, pre-apprenticeship, military).
- Earn an Industry-Valued Certification.
- Complete the Capstone Project with a grade of "C" or higher.
- AND
- Earn an ACT 22+, SAT 1100+, ASVAB 50+, NERC 3+, and/or complete alternative assessment.

READY FOR LIFE

- Individual Career and Academic Plan (ICAP) completed each year.
- Graduated on the Graduate Competency Rubric.
- Graduated in 4 years or 2 years in a World Language, participate in a community experience, and/or participate in a community experience.
- AND
- Complete the Financial Literacy course with a grade of "C" or higher.

ENGAGED IN COMMUNITY & CIVICS

- Complete 20 hours of community or service learning.
- Participate in a co-curricular and/or extracurricular activity.
- AND
- Eligible students register to vote.





Bettendorf Community School District
Portrait of a Graduate

Icons: Social Emotional Skills & Responsibility, Communication & Collaboration, Self-Direction & Growth Mindset, Critical Thinking, Interdisciplinary & Global Knowledge

Portrait of a Graduate

College and Career Pathways
CEDAR RAPIDS COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

This portrait is our promise to guide collective accountability toward our vision of Every Learner. Future Ready.



Proactive Political Leadership Skills

- **Communicating** → listening and speaking in ways that touch on values and avoid common pitfalls

Common Ground Exists: Four Insights That Resonate

- **Family is everything**
 - Frame communication in terms of shared hopes for children to achieve academically, secure economic stability, and contribute to their community's wellness.
- **Education is above politics**
 - Reframe divisive debates through student-centered language.
- **Schools teach kids what they need**
 - Emphasize readiness, independence, and age-appropriate content.
- **The U.S. is a good (not perfect) country**
 - Frame civic education as preparation for democratic life.

(Sullivan & Collins, in progress)

Proactive Political Leadership Skills

- **Political Mapping** → knowing your community well (internal and external), especially their hopes and fears

Political Mapping: The What

Among the most vital—but often underutilized—skills in our [political] repertoire is *political mapping*, a **strategic process of identifying, analyzing, and engaging with key actors** whose support or opposition can significantly influence a district's direction.

- Ray Hart and Julie Marsh

Political Mapping: The Why

Looking back: to gather historical insight on the history of the problem

Looking around: to identify key influencers and understand their current views

Looking ahead: to begin to build relationships before a crisis or when support is needed

(Hart & Marsh, in press)

Political Mapping: The How

- Start Early
- Do Your Homework
- Stay Open and Expansive
- Consider Formal and Informal Power Brokers
- Work Directly and Indirectly to Include Hard-to-Reach Actors

(Hart & Marsh, in press)

Proactive Political Leadership Skills

- **Mobilizing** → using that knowledge to both mobilize support for positive change and to protect the most vulnerable in our communities

Mobilizing- So That

Trusted authority: Shares reliable and credible information

Ambassador: Carries important messages to community members

Communicator: Shares information and returns with questions and feedback from constituents

Advisor: Provides guidance

Partner: Shares ownership and accountability for the work

Advocate: Pushes for change



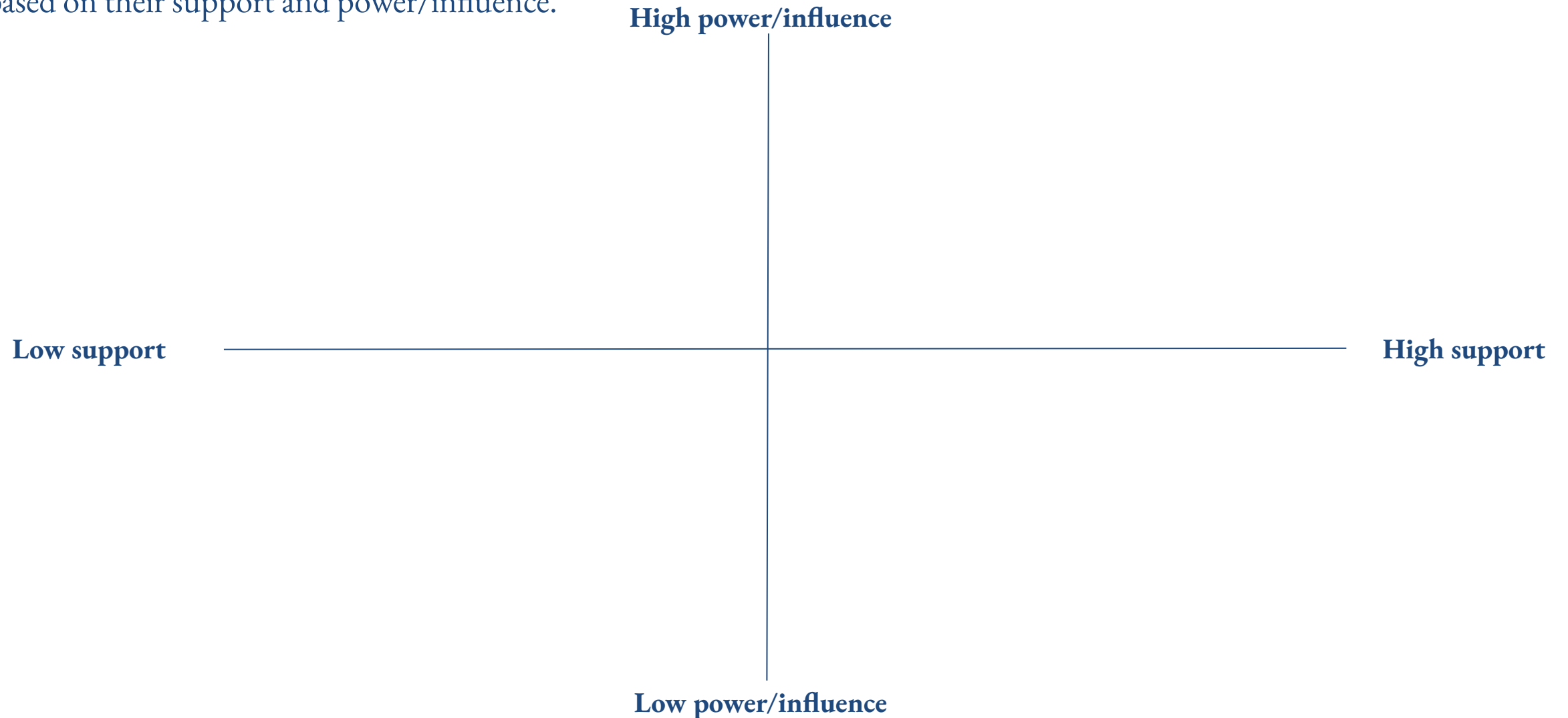
Relationship Analysis

- **High Influence/High Support:** Which people or groups fall into this quadrant? How might you leverage them?
- **Low Influence/High Support:** Which people or groups fall into this quadrant? How might you help them strengthen their influence through coalition building?
- **High Influence/Low Support:** Which people or groups fall into this quadrant? How might you come to understand their views? Or change them?
- **Low Influence/Low Support:** Which people or groups fall into this quadrant? Would it be okay to de-prioritize them?



Consider Power

Use initials (or some other symbol) to map each of the constituents with a focus on power, placing them on the matrix based on their support and power/influence.



Proactive Political Leadership Skills

- **Relationship Building** → continually building trust, especially across lines of difference

Two-minute Table Talk

What have you done to **build trust** lately?

- With whom did you build it?
- Why was it needed?
- How did you do it?
- What did it allow you to do?



Respect: Will the leader listen to me?
Meaning, not dismiss my point of view?

Personal Regard: Will the leader go out of
their way to see me and show they care, even
if we have differences of opinion?

Competence: Will the leader do their job well?
Meaning, will they stay focused on the things
that matter to our community?

Integrity: Will the leader keep their word?

RELATIONAL TRUST

Education researchers Anthony Bryk and Barbara Schneider (2002) describe **relational trust** as an essential ingredient for school improvement given the **mutual dependencies** that exist between principals, teachers, and parents. Leaders for equity understand that **they cannot do the work alone**, so building relational trust must be a fundamental objective of those early leadership actions.



Benevolence – How do we exhibit care, good will, and fairness towards others?

Honesty – How do we honor agreements and remain truthful in interactions and communications among ourselves and with our constituents?

Openness – In what ways do we share important information and power?

Reliability – How do we demonstrate consistency and commitment?

Competency – How do we implement the work and respond to issues according to best practices?

~Tschannen & Moran

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Relationship Building

Name of key person or group with a focus on those with the most influence but lack of support	How do you currently meet with them? How often? In what settings? Using what conversational tools and strategies?	What are the strengths and challenges of your approach?	What else might you try? What aspects of emotional intelligence might you draw upon? (e.g. self awareness, empathy, social skill, self regulation)

Proactive Political Leadership Skills

- **Visioning** → creating visions for success that speak to the largest possible swath of constituents
- **Communicating** → listening and speaking in ways that touch on values and avoid common pitfalls
- **Political Mapping** → knowing your community well (internal and external), especially their hopes and fears
- **Mobilizing** → using that knowledge to both mobilize support for positive change and to protect the most vulnerable in our communities
- **Relationship Building** → continually building trust, especially across lines of difference



How can you apply the framework to an issue or initiative of importance in order to get the results you want?

Issue/Initiative:

Visioning What does the Superintendent/Board team need to do to create a compelling vision for success?	Communicating What does the Superintendent/Board team need to do to communicate about the vision and strategy?	Political Mapping What does the Superintendent/Board team need to do to understand who is for, against, and why?	Mobilizing What does the Superintendent/Board team need to do to mobilize support? And what kind of support?	Relationship Building What does the Superintendent/Board team need to do to build trusting relationships across lines of difference?

Questions?

