



White Bear Lake Area Schools

*Leading with Focus: Strengthening
Outcomes through Principals and
instructional Practice*

AMSD Conference 2025

Introductions

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**White Bear Lake
Area Schools
ISD 624**

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*Principal on Special Assignment &
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Session outcomes

- I feel connected to other leaders.
- Learn about our district's approach to bringing principals, teachers, and central office leaders together around **shared goals, common language, and coherent practices.**



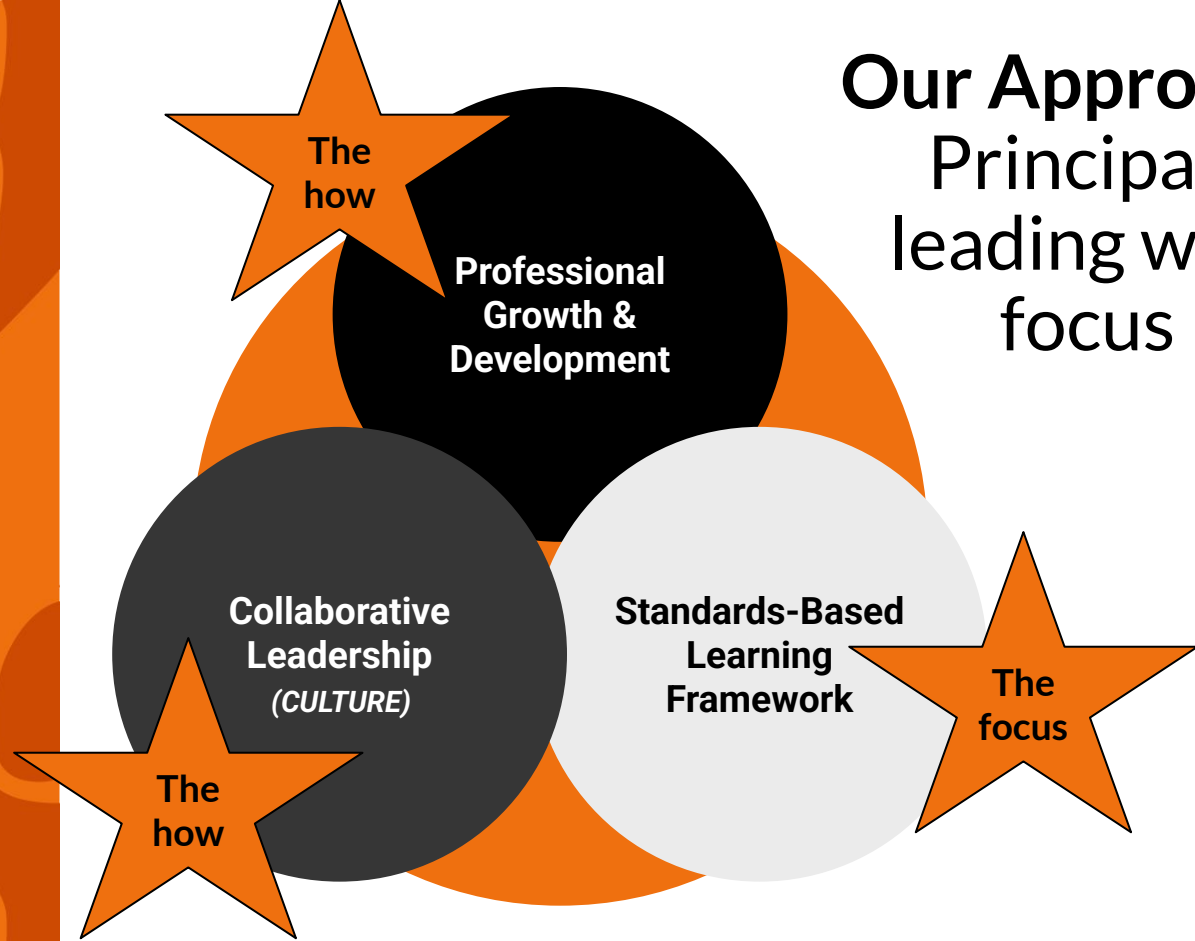
Grounding

Share:

- Name
- Role
- School/district
- What word or phrase best describes your district's approach to cross-district learning and leadership?

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Our Approach: Principals leading with focus



The focus

White Bear Lake Area Schools

Standards Based Learning Framework Exceptional Learning for Each Student



Student Experience: Culturally Responsive, Inclusive, and Affirming

UNIVERSAL TIER 1
How we serve all students

Guaranteed Viable Curriculum *What we teach*

Guaranteed and Viable

- Inclusive
- Accessible
- Clearly-defined

Curriculum

- Learning materials
- Aligned to standards: Academic & Social/Emotional

Evidence:

Standards Based Learning Unit Plan

Universal Instruction *How we teach*

Strategies

5 Dimensions of Teaching & Learning
Instructional Framework

- Purpose
- Student Engagement
- Curriculum & Pedagogy
- Assessment for Student Learning
- Classroom Environment & Culture

Evidence:

5D+ Rubric for Instructional Growth and
Teacher Evaluation

Assessment *How we ensure learning*

Practices

- Evidence of learning aligned to standards
- Data-driven decision making
- Clearly-defined

Evidence:

- Standards Based Grading and Reporting
- Proficiency Scales
- Common Assessments

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Our Professional Learning

The how

Professional Growth & Development

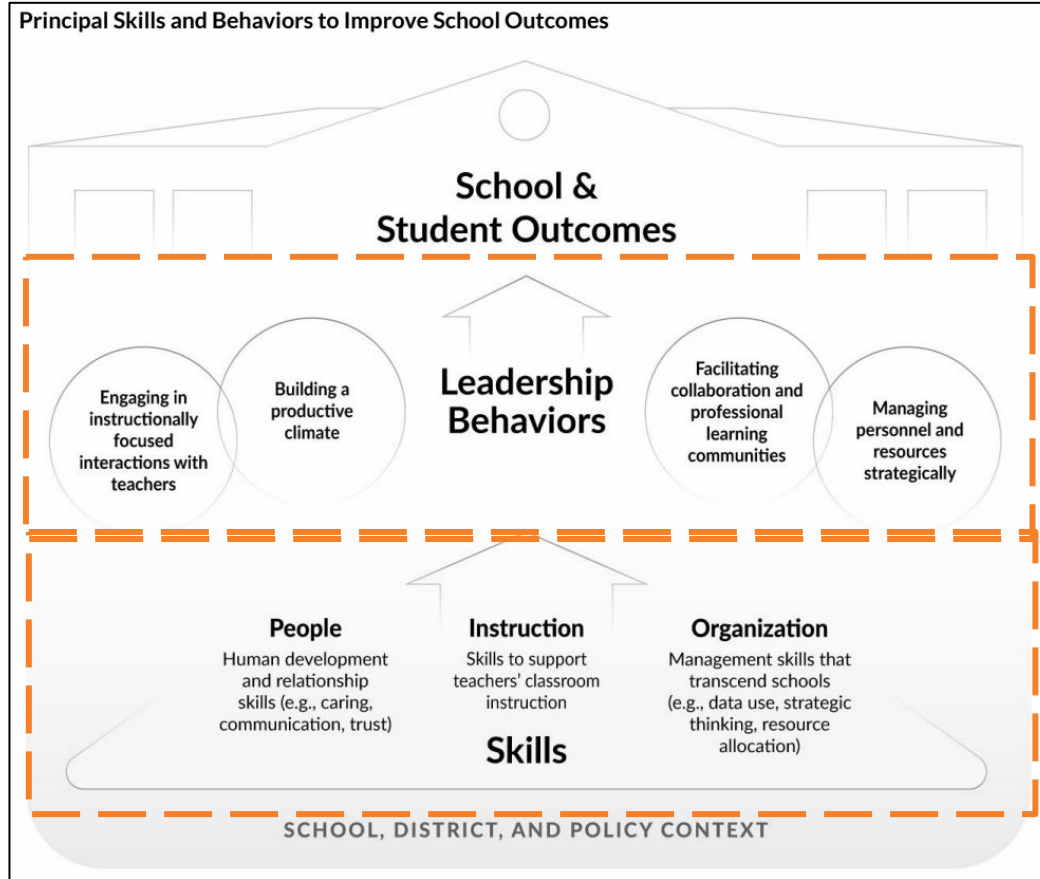
Collaborative Leadership
(CULTURE)

Standards-Based Learning Framework

How Principals Affect Students and Schools

A Systematic Synthesis of Two Decades of Research

Grissom et al., 2021



Context for Leadership Growth and Development

Current State

Ideal State

Roses, Buds and Thorns RE:
Dimension 2

School and site leader growth and development plan lacks clarity, inclusion of APs & Deans, and consistent implementation

Principals, APs & Deans desire clarity in leadership expectations

Principals, APs, and Deans feel isolated in the work and desire more collaboration and collegiality.

Current State

Actionable
Next Step

Actionable
Next Step

Actionable
Next Step

Actionable
Next Step

Ideal State

Every school and site Leader will engage in a reflective growth process aligned to Dimension 2 of the 4D Framework—grounded in coaching, data-driven check-ins, collaborative learning walks, and a shared commitment to instructional leadership that drives equitable outcomes for all students.

23-24 District Leadership Team





Vision (Why?)

Grounded in the **4D of School Leadership**, our commitment to leadership development is about more than individual growth—it's about system-wide impact.

By equipping school and district leaders with the skills to **navigate change, build authentic family and community partnerships, and reflect deeply on their own practice**, we create the conditions for **instructional excellence and equity-driven outcomes**.

Our growth as leaders fuels the environments where both educators and students thrive.

What: Principal Support

How:

District Leader Development

Principal Support Framework: Center for Educational Leadership

- Action Area 1: Foster an inclusive leadership culture focused on creating equitable experiences and outcomes
- Action Area 4: Develop a strategic partnership between the central office and principals

District Department Action Plan

Department Goals in service of district and school goals	Action step priorities in service of district and school action steps	District Leader Individual Growth & Development Plan aligned to Principal Support Framework action areas.
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What: Principal Growth and Development

Why?

- Enhance principal leadership skills to improve teaching practices, school performance, and student achievement
- Supporting principals' increasing effectiveness and professional growth over time using an ongoing, annual cycle of continuous improvement.

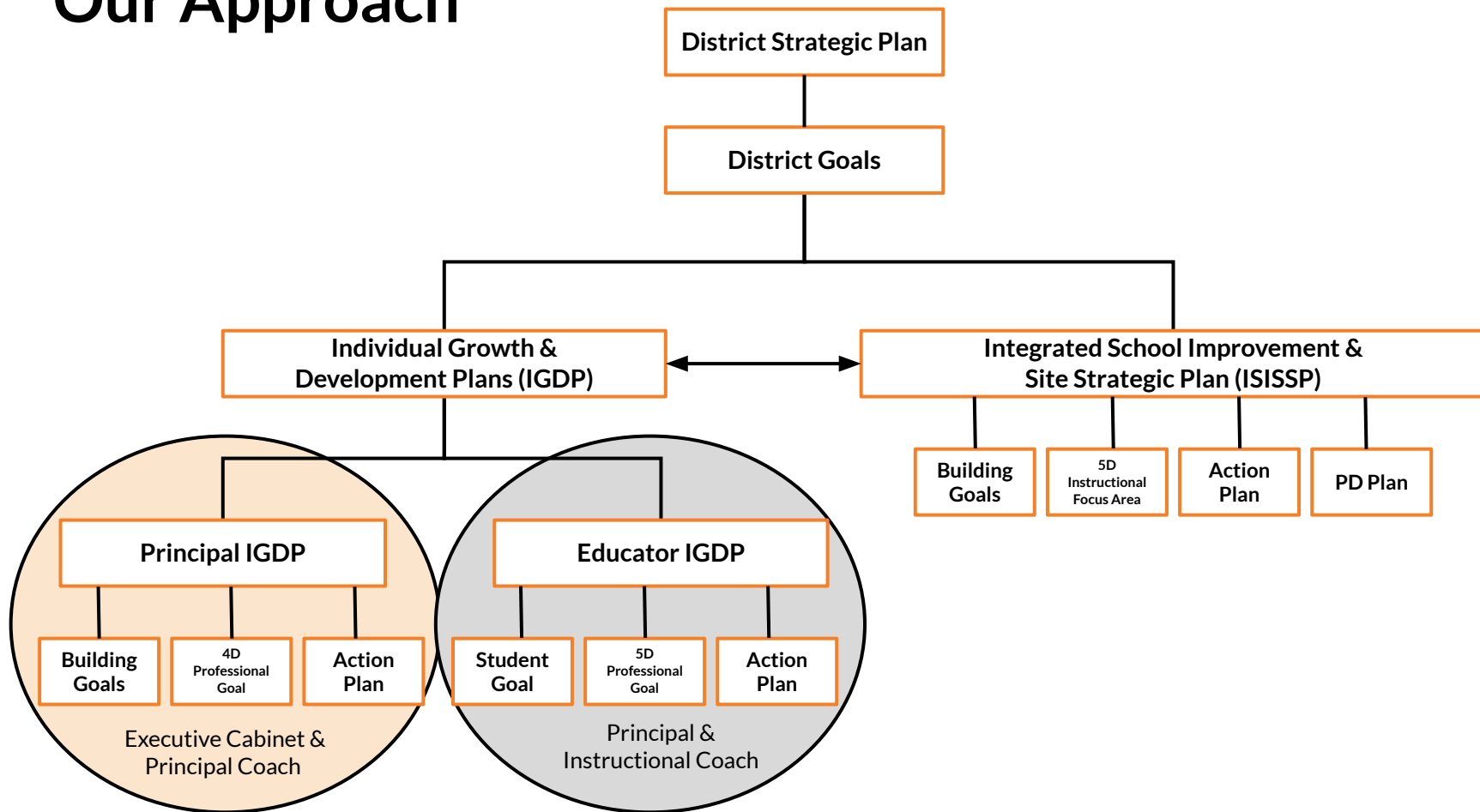
What: Principal Growth and Development

How:

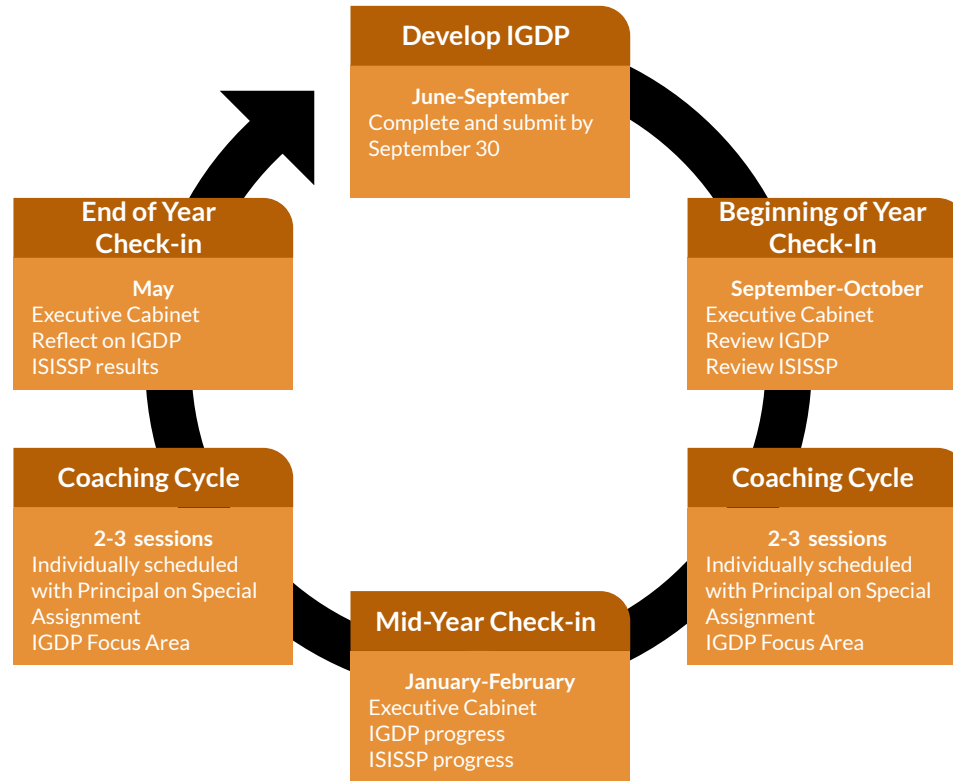
Instructional Leadership Development			
<i>4 Dimensions of School Leadership</i>			
• Dimension 2: Learning & Teaching Environment			
Principal Individual Growth & Development Plan (IGDP)			
Minnesota Instructional Leadership Academy	Center for Educational Leadership Partnership	Principal Coaching	Instructional Leadership Development within Principal Meetings

“The professional growth plans developed by principals...need to focus on achieving the goals of the school’s improvement plan, so as to move their school closer to achieving its vision.”

Our Approach



WBLAS Principal Growth and Development Cycles



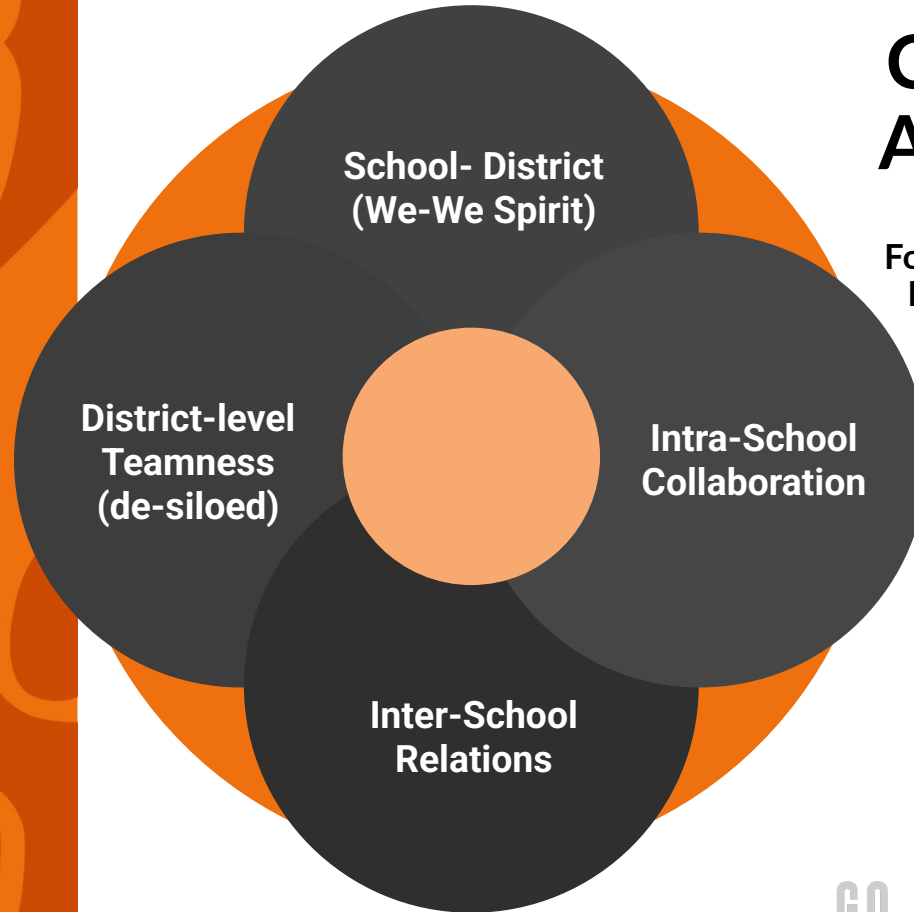


Ideal State: Fully Implemented Leadership Growth Plan

- Every Principal engages in a **rigorous, reflective IGDP process** —anchored in self-assessment, goal setting, and progress monitoring aligned to Dimension 2 of the 4D Framework.
- **Coaching with Cynthia** , our Principal Coach, supports targeted instructional leadership growth, with regular cycles of feedback and thought partnership.
- Principals participate in **beginning, mid, and end-of-year check-ins** , grounded in **student learning data** , equity indicators, and school-wide progress measures.
- **Learning walks** —involving school staff, district leaders, and fellow Principals—foster collective inquiry, shared accountability, and cross-school learning.
- Instructional leadership is evident through **consistent, embedded practices** that support teacher self-reflection, collaborative planning, culturally responsive teaching, and the use of data to drive equitable outcomes.
- A **district-wide culture of feedback, trust, and continuous improvement** emerges—centered on our shared vision for high-quality teaching and learning in every classroom.

Collective Autonomy

Four Dynamics of School
District Coherence



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What: Start, Stop, Continue

How:

Principal Leadership			
Area of Focus	Start	Stop	Continue
Communication and Problem Solving	Principal newsletter	Overload of emails from district departments	Principal Meetings (refine)
Alignment across schools	Standards-based learning framework Guarantee and Viable Curriculum Expectations District Instructional Leadership Teams Instructional Cabinet	Reactive PD and curriculum decisions	Collaborative problem-solving in Cabinet, Executive Cabinet and Principal meetings

What: Collaborative Leadership Culture

How:

Instructional Leadership Culture			
5 Dimensions of Teaching & Learning MnMTSS Framework			
District Instructional Leadership Team	District MTSS Leadership Team	Instructional Leadership Teaming: Principals, Instructional Coaches, Teaching & Learning	Instructional Cabinet



Connect with another Leader

**After reflecting on our
approach, what is your
“a-ha”?**

Questions

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References

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