

2024

2025

SCHOOL LEADER PARADIGM RESOURCE

DISTRICT LEADER CALENDAR



**SCHOOL
LEADER
COLLABORATIVE**

There are few occupations more challenging yet impactful than being a district leader.

Over the last 30 years, the job has changed dramatically in terms of the complexity and variety of competing responsibilities, with improving student learning moving to the top of the list. Unfortunately, in numerous studies, school leaders report finding time to lead these improvement efforts as one of the key challenges of leadership.² In addition, changes in responsibilities along with world-wide events have also led to increased job-induced stress in school leaders. Results from the 2022 State of the American Teacher and State of American Principal Surveys indicate that 85% of principals reported experiencing frequent job-related stress, with 48% reporting experiencing burnout.³

Fortunately, studies are showing that district leaders who can manage their time are able to focus more of their energies on activities that build the culture, systems, and learning of their schools.⁴ Furthermore, researchers have found a key to managing job-induced stress is strong time-management skills, which leads to perceived time control, which leads to less professional stress.⁵

To assist you manage your time more effectively and help you stay focused, organized, and growing — critical attributes of any district leader — we at the Association of Wisconsin School Administrators (AWSA) in partnership with the members of the District Leader Collaborative (see back cover) have developed the District Leader Calendar. This robust resource provides you with monthly lists of essential responsibilities, dates to remember (some just for fun), critical professional development opportunities, and timely advice on key leadership topics. While the District Leader Calendar is comprehensive, it is not exhaustive. Also, the calendar is not delineated by grade level but provides responsibilities for each. You are encouraged to edit and customize it to meet your context.

Overall, our hope is that you will find the District Leader Calendar to be a useful tool to help you on your leadership journey. Please contact us at AWSA if we can assist you in any way. Call us at 608-241-0300 or visit awsa.org.

Learning Leader

A leader who uses personal, social, and systems intelligences to transform a school into a learning organization through a mindset of growth, service, and cultural responsiveness.

Learning Organization

An organization that uses ongoing cycles of inquiry to drive a student-centered culture, vision- and mission-focused systems, and reflective learning practices that result in producing equitable opportunities and outcomes for students and adults.



For your convenience, hyperlinks in this document are **bold and underlined**. For additional information about any of the programs or resources mentioned, visit the **AWSA website**. As always, please don't hesitate to pick up the phone and call a member of the AWSA Team if there is anything we can do to assist you.

table of contents

Introduction	2
Building your calendar	4
Recurring tasks	8
June/July — Starting a new year	10
August — Learning renewal	15
September — How do you use your time?	17
October — Delegation is a critical resource!	21
November — Taking care of your staff	23
December — Taking care of yourself	27
January — Self-management	31
February — Gratitude	35
March — Social Media for the District Leader	37
April — Strengthening community engagement	39
May — Supporting social-emotional needs	41
Endnotes	43

 = CULTURE DOMAIN

 = SYSTEMS DOMAIN

 = LEARNING DOMAIN

Building your calendar ...

Plan to Plan

Creating space in your calendar for reflection, planning, and thinking helps you identify ways to get better, manage activities and tasks in the present, and vision cast for the future. This allows you to be proactive versus reactive. Dr. John Maxwell writes poignantly about this in his book *Thinking for a Change: 11 Ways Highly Successful People Approach Life and Work*.⁹

As part of your planning process, share and get input from your significant others, colleagues, and close friends. Take a few minutes each month, week, and day to review your calendars, get feedback, and discuss work-life balance. Look for opportunities to incorporate work activities with leisure, social, or fitness activities. For example, most school leaders like to be visible during passing periods which is an excellent time to get steps in. When you are required to be at school for special events, consider including family. Review tasks to see if you can delegate items to free up personal or professional time (see October — Delegation is a critical resource). Some districts rotate supervision responsibilities with their leaders, so they can have more time at home during the week. For you to improve as a leader, stay on top of your work, and move your organization forward, consider the following tools.

Master Calendar

Begin by reviewing the master calendar for your school with all scheduled events for the year. If your school does not have a master calendar, consider creating one. This is a task that can be delegated to an administrative assistant to put together. Start the development as soon as dates become available for the next school (spring). Keep in mind that this is a working document that will change throughout the year as things are canceled and rescheduled.

An electronic copy that can be easily viewed and distributed allows for easy edits and updates. Some leaders prefer to have an in-house master calendar with everything, and an edited version of the same calendar for public distribution. This calendar should include:

- Important dates from the district master calendar.
- Regular scheduled meetings (school board, school committees, PTA, etc.).
- Athletic events (home and away).
- Fine arts events.
- Testing dates.
- Regularly scheduled field trips.
- Grade-reporting periods, progress reports, report card distribution days.
- Final & AP exams.
- Deadlines for state reports.
- Holidays, vacation days, in-service days, etc.
- Special events (award ceremonies, dances, Open House, Parent/Guardian and Teacher conferences, etc.).

- Compliance dates and deadlines from the [Department of Public Instruction](#).

Professional Yearly Calendar

The master calendar becomes the building block for your professional calendar. Once it is created, copy it and begin creating your own yearly calendar. Block out a day or two every summer to get out of the office (by yourself) and map out the year ahead. For your planning, include your professional development goals, your school's strategic plan, your school's master calendar, and tasks to be completed each month. For tasks to be done, the School Leader's Calendar could prove useful as a starting point.

We highly recommend creating this electronically to allow for easy editing. Some leaders color-code items on the calendar to identify their responsibilities. For example, they may color-code supervision activities differently than events they are responsible for leading. Some choose to code by priorities. You may wish to include personal and family obligations in your calendar, so that everything is all in one place. Whatever you do, you must create a system that works for you!

Monthly Calendar

From your professional calendar, begin creating your monthly calendar by adding in your monthly lists of essential responsibilities and legal requirements. Every month, designate a time to plan for the following month.

The School Leader Calendar provides you with a sample list of monthly recurring tasks. Responsibilities specific to a particular month follow. Your previous year's calendar and meeting agendas from each month are also useful tools for this task.

Your monthly calendar drives the development of your daily calendar. Begin building your daily calendar by answering these questions:

- What times of the day must you be in the halls, lunchroom, or visible in the building?
- What are other daily responsibilities that must be scheduled?
- What time of the day do you work best?
- What are your priorities for the day?

With this information, create a template daily schedule. Then, select times to:

- Return phone calls and emails.
- Work your priorities list. Schedule this during your best work time.
- Eat lunch.
- Observe in classrooms, take care of referrals, etc.

Vary these times day to day to ensure your presence at scheduled meetings and classroom observations. You don't need to fill every hour of your day. You'll need time to schedule meetings, appointments, and have down time.

Arrive 15-20 minutes early each morning to plan what you would like to accomplish that day. Reflect for 15-20 minutes at the end of each day to identify what went well, recognize possible improvements, and note a good starting point for the next day.

Stick to your daily schedule as much as possible. Although there will always be emergencies and situations that need your immediate attention, your goal is to minimize interruptions, to focus on what's important. By taking ownership of your time, you can increase your efficiency and productivity, achieve your professional and school's goals, reduce stress, and improve your work-life balance.

The District Leader Calendar

DATES TO REMEMBER

You will find legal holidays and those which may bring some enjoyment to your day (i.e., Talk Like a Pirate Day). There is also an area to record important dates relevant to your school and/or district.

RESPONSIBILITIES

These tasks offer you a comprehensive list of work you should consider throughout the year. To help with your organization, the tasks are organized by Paradigm Domains — Culture, Systems, and Learning, and then by specific dimensions of that domain. Every dimension will not have a task assigned every month. There are recurring monthly tasks as well as month-specific tasks.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS AND EQUITY CHALLENGES

The monthly building relationships challenge offers ideas for building relationships with all stakeholders — inside and outside the walls of your schools. The monthly Equity Challenge provides ideas on how to keep equity a critical focal point of your leadership to ensure ALL students in your learning organization are served well.

CYCLE OF INQUIRY, PROFESSIONAL LEARNING, AND RESOURCES

This section provides information about the continuous improvement process through a Cycle of Inquiry, professional learning opportunities, and suggestions for growing your leadership knowledge and skills. Don't forget the AWSA offers a wide range of professional development and resources.

*“The bad news is time flies.
The good news is you’re the pilot.”¹⁰* — Michael Altshuler

RECURRING TASKS

There are several monthly recurring tasks that are important to remember. These tasks are not considered daily tasks, unless otherwise noted.



= CULTURE DOMAIN



= SYSTEMS DOMAIN



= LEARNING DOMAIN



Relationships

- Complete Building Relationships challenge.
- Conduct daily check-ins with office staff, guidance counselors, etc.
- Conduct daily check-ins with new teachers, struggling staff members, and students.
- Be visible in the building throughout the day.
- Acknowledge student and staff birthdays.
- Meet with external stakeholders to develop relationships (service organizations such as Rotary, medical professionals that work closely with the school, local police, religious leaders, community leaders, local businesses, etc.).
- Meet and greet parents and students at student activities. Consider attending on nights when multiple events happen simultaneously for maximum exposure and relationship building. Remember to take pictures for social media networks, website, and hallway bulletin boards.
- Provide morning inspirational message to staff (quote, funny story, good news, etc.) 2-3 times a week.
- Attend PTA/PTO/PTSA meetings.
- Incorporate "climate/culture builders" into faculty/staff meetings.
- Supervise school activities.

Student Centeredness

- Meet regularly with student groups such as Student Council to share ideas and get feedback.

Wellness

- Engage in daily professional planning, assessing, and reflecting to improve effectiveness.
- Connect (be present) with loved ones (significant other, children, parents, siblings, friends, etc.) on a daily basis.
- Engage in daily wellness activities (physical, mental, social).
- Promote faculty and staff wellness activities (physical, social, emotional).

Equity

- Complete monthly Equity Challenge.

Traditions/Celebrations

- Acknowledge faculty and staff accomplishments.
- Acknowledge student accomplishments.
- Acknowledge school accomplishments.

Global Mindedness

- Pursue partnerships and community connections that promote a global-minded perspective.



Vision/Mission & Strategic Management

- Engage in ongoing organizational planning, assessing, and reflecting.

Communication

- Respond to mail, emails, phone calls, etc. in a timely manner.
- Monitor and regularly post on school social media platforms.
- Communicate with appropriate stakeholders using various communication mechanisms.
- Create and distribute a weekly notice (e.g., newsletter, email, etc.) for staff highlights from the week, important reminders for the next week, upcoming events, teaching tips, birthdays, etc.
- Provide regular updates to students and parents using newsletters, videos, and social media. Highlight the incredible things happening in your school along with upcoming important dates to remember.
- Conduct monthly staff meeting. Incorporate recognitions, morale boosters, and professional development.
- Attend monthly board meetings.

Collaborative Leadership and Data Literacy

- Delegate tasks to other individuals and monitor progress.
- Meet with administrative leadership team (weekly).
- Meet with teams (grade level/subject area/departments, etc.) on a regular basis to plan, assess, and reflect on current school goals to determine next steps utilizing collected data.
- Meet with the following individuals/groups to share good news, plan for upcoming events, and address areas of concern:
 - non-teaching staff (administrative assistants, head of maintenance, food program director, nurse, counselors, social worker, psychologists, director of transportation, etc.)
 - student leaders and advisors
 - Special Education Administrator
 - office staff
 - Paraprofessionals
 - Cafeteria staff
 - Parent and community organizations
 - Key community leaders

Safety

- Monitor school facility and safety (daily).
- Supervise lunchroom, passing periods, extra-curricular activities, bus drop-off and pick-up, etc. (daily).
- Working with tech staff, regularly review school website and social media outlets to ensure they are up-to-date and secure.
- Conduct required emergency drills, complete necessary paperwork, and notify parents, central office, and local authorities.

Operations

- Conduct regular building walkthroughs with head custodian to identify areas of concern and plan accordingly.
- Assess and monitor physical plant/building/school operations.
- Assess and monitor fiscal and non-fiscal resources.
- Check student eligibility (weekly).
- Update school's master calendar as needed.
- Keep an extra copy of the student and staff handbooks at your desk. Label each "Changes." If you find an error or something that needs to be modified or added for the next year, highlight it and make a note of the recommended change(s).



Reflection and Growth & Human Capital Management

- Conduct scheduled teacher evaluations.
- Establish and commit to a specified number of walkthrough observations per week, each month. If applicable, include assistant principals. Regularly review the data collected from these walkthroughs to determine schoolwide and individual professional development needs.
- Engage faculty and staff in cycles of inquiry for professional growth by setting goals, developing and implementing plans for meeting those goals, assessing progress, and reflecting and determining next steps.
- Provide data-driven, individual professional development (workshops, mentoring/coaching) as needed to meet growth goals.
- Provide an induction and year-long mentoring program for new teachers.
- Communicate with district office any concerns regarding teacher performance to ensure compliance with district and state laws.
- Monitor and reflect on professional growth and your school's growth using the cycle of inquiry process.
- Monitor the status of your own evaluation process. Collect artifacts. Check-in with your supervisor.

Result-Orientation, Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment

- Review state assessment calendar and check in with ISBE for updates.
- Lead staff in regular reviews/discussions of assessment data and school improvement goals.
- Conduct classroom walkthroughs.
- Participate in scheduled faculty team meetings as needed (grade level, teams, departments, etc.)
- Participate in scheduled student meetings as needed (IEP, 504, behavior, etc.).
- Work with faculty and staff to identify struggling (academic & behavior) students and develop individual improvement plans (Plan, Implement, Assess, and Reflect), and communicate with parent(s)/guardian(s) as needed.
- Respond to student discipline issues.
- Provide school-wide, data-driven professional development to improve instruction as needed.

Innovation

- Provide opportunities for faculty and staff to explore new ideas through such avenues as professional development, visits to exemplary schools, book reads, etc.

**JUNE/
JULY**

DATES to Remember

June 5	World Environment Day
June 6	D-Day
June 14	Flag Day
June 16	Father's Day
June 17	Eid al-Adha begins (major Islamic holiday; begins at sundown on previous day; may impact student attendance)
June 19	Juneteenth
Jun 30	End of the fourth quarter of fiscal year
July 1	First day of the fiscal year
July 4	Independence Day (federal holiday; legal school holiday)
July 18	Al-Hijra (major Islamic holiday; begins at sundown on previous day)
July 23	Parents' Day
July 28	Milk Chocolate Day



Relationships

Building Relationships Challenge. Conduct daily walkthroughs of summer programs. Meet regularly with summer staff. Meet personally with new faculty and staff. Utilize the flexibility of the summer schedule to meet formally and informally with external stakeholders. Meet with local police and fire officials to review policies and procedures and set dates for emergency drills. Meet with parent/guardian and teacher organization to schedule meetings for the year.

Student Centeredness

Plan for new student orientation. Develop/revise new student mentoring program and select mentors.

Wellness

Take some time for YOU! Get a least two consecutive weeks out of the office to recharge, spend time with family, and do something you enjoy.

Equity

Equity Challenge.

Traditions/Celebrations

Begin preparation for back-to-school celebration activities.

Ethics

Review licensure and professional development requirements are current.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS CHALLENGE

Spend some time getting to know your new faculty and staff. This can be as simple as a phone call or having them stop in for coffee. Create a "Getting to Know Our New Staff" bulletin board/website post/social media posts with individual pictures and information (with their permission) for the first day of school to help everyone become better acquainted.

EQUITY CHALLENGE

Provide staff with a list of all cultural celebration months. Moving forward, how can your learning organization plan to celebrate your diversity more frequently?



Vision/Mission

- Develop final report/presentation of progress on school improvement plan.
- Continue development of school improvement goals and plans for the next school year.

Communication

- Change your building phone message to include summer office hours and/or summer school contact information. Ensure information is posted on the school's website and social media channels.
- Inform parents/guardians of registration information; student medical/vaccination requirements; handbook, acceptable use, academic integrity, and picture policies; and provide a copy of the school calendar.
- Evaluate your current communication tools: parent newsletters, weekly staff bulletin, school website, social media, etc. Determine if there is a need to create new communication tools.
- Prepare and send faculty and staff a welcome back letter. Include school-opening packet, beginning-of-the-year schedule (institute days, faculty meetings, opening student assemblies, and parent nights), trainings to be completed before the first day, and an introduction to new faculty and staff

Collaborative Leadership

- Meet with the leadership team for annual teambuilding and school improvement plan development.
- Conduct facilities walk-through with maintenance staff to ascertain readiness and identify final needs. Review checklists for the year.
- Meet regularly with office staff to review summer checklist and continue planning for upcoming school year.
- Meet with cafeteria staff to discuss the upcoming year.
- Meet with transportation staff to discuss the upcoming year. Review student discipline procedures.
- Meet with athletic director to ensure the coaches' handbook and training sessions have been finalized, fall schedules/contracts with opponents and officials have been verified, and all known activity dates have been submitted for inclusion

on the master school calendar.

- Meet with fine arts director and club and class sponsors to ensure all known activity dates have been submitted for inclusion in the master school calendar and fund-raising activities have been approved.
- Meet with guidance staff to ensure all known testing and activity dates have been submitted for inclusion in the master school calendar.

Data Literacy

- Provide a summary of previous year's assessments to share with district office and faculty and staff.

Strategic Management

- Plan and schedule your new teacher orientation program. Assign mentors and include them in the in-service. If possible, try to schedule the first meeting several weeks before the start of school to allow new teachers time to prepare.
- Schedule time to meet with other new staff members (i.e., custodians, secretaries, kitchen staff, etc.). Ensure everyone feels welcomed and receives the training they need to be successful.
- Plan first faculty meeting of the year. Build in team-building time as well as professional development. Set the tone to focus on instructional and academic issues.
- Plan beginning of the year institute days.
- Plan student registration/pictures.
- Develop/review/revise protocol to distribute textbooks and devices.
- Plan for first week of student attendance including opening assemblies and parent nights.
- Plan and strategize with your administrative assistant(s). Create documents, weekly communication, and meeting templates to be used throughout the year. Create yearly checklists with individual responsibilities identified. Identify operating procedures for answering calls, messages, visitors, etc.
- Establish meeting schedules for the upcoming year with your key teams and committees (leadership team, school improvement team, department chairs, grade level teams, PLCs, curriculum committee, etc.).
- Plan substitute teacher orientation.
- Prepare internal and external school calendars for

the upcoming year.

- Create chain-of-command when you are out of the building.
- Update general building forms.

Safety

- Review new board policies and state and federal requirements.
- Update student and staff handbooks and planners.
- Verify that student and staff handbooks and planners have been approved by the school board, are printed, and ready for distribution. Create a master list of any changes to distribute at the first staff meeting. Review and include your code of conduct and any other contracts for parents. It is in the school's best interest to have students and parents acknowledge receipt of the Student Code of Conduct, Acceptable Use Policy, Academic Integrity Agreements, etc. In addition, have parents sign-off for pictures.

Operations

- Review new board policies, state statutes, and changes to the collective bargaining agreement if applicable.
- Review daily bell schedules and update as needed.
- Review purchase orders to make sure materials are present or scheduled for back-to-school delivery. Ensure orders are distributed to the appropriate personnel.
- Ensure building facilities (inside and out) are ready to go.
- Review master schedule to ensure class sizes are balanced and classroom occupancy is appropriate. Ensure classrooms have adequate number of desks.
- Ensure collaboration time for staff and intervention time for students.
- Review the master schedule and notify staff of any changes in classroom or teaching assignments. Ensure in compliance with collective bargaining agreement.
- To the extent possible, finalize dates and times for field trips and fundraising activities for the year.



Assessment

- Prepare assessment calendar for next school year.
- Finalize teacher in-service days/professional development for next school year.
- Review report cards and grades.

Curriculum & Instruction

- Monitor summer school.
- Finalize class lists.
- As part of the induction/mentoring program, ensure new teachers meet with mentors/grade-level/department chairs to review the curriculum, the school's instructional playbook, and lesson plan design to ensure curriculum and instructional alignment.

- Review teacher's contract.
- Determine a teacher evaluation schedule to begin the process based on the contract and recent changes in legislation.
- Create an evaluation procedure sheet outlining the evaluation process.
- Complete hiring of staff.
- Finalize new teacher and staff induction/mentoring programs including selection and training of mentors.
- As part of induction/mentoring program, ensure new teachers understand the evaluation process, the rubric to be used for evaluation, and the roles and responsibilities of those involved.

Human Capital Management

- Review state statute for changes related to teacher evaluation.

Starting a new year ...

“The first days are critical. What you do on the first days of school will determine your success or failure for the rest of the school year.”¹¹

In their classic book, *The First Days of School*, Harry and Rosemary Wong emphasized the importance of the first days of school. Although the book focused on teachers, their insights also apply to school leaders.

Those first days set the tone for the school year, and investing significant time during June and July to ensure a triumphant start to the new year is vital. In addition to the identified tasks found in the School Leader Calendar, here are a few compiled tips and ideas from your fellow administrators on how to succeed at the start of a new school year.

Onboarding New Staff

New teachers can have a tremendous impact on a school, and it is the responsibility of school leaders to ensure they are successful. This is not something you want to leave to chance. Simple things like the placement of new teachers in classrooms or who you select as mentors can have a significant impact on their success. For example, do you want your new teacher's classroom between your best teachers or your worst? Do you want your most effective teachers mentoring your new teachers or your worst?

Effective induction and mentoring programs are the key to new teachers' success. In addition to safeguarding the quality of teacher performance, impactful induction and mentoring/coaching programs increase new teachers' job satisfaction, professional growth and development, and retention. Leaders are encouraged to start the program two to four weeks before the school year begins to allow time for new teachers and mentors to meet and begin working together to ensure a great start to the school year.

Don't forget your other new staff members such as administrative assistants, nurses, custodians, school psychologists, counselors, cafeteria personnel, bus drivers, etc. They can also benefit from induction/mentoring programs. Todd Whitaker, in his book *What Great Principals Do Differently*, explains how important it is to ensure your staff clearly understands your expectations and have the training they need to be successful.¹² For example, how do you want your administrative assistants to answer the phone or handle students sent to your office for discipline reasons? Or, if you expect bus drivers to handle discipline on their buses, you should train them. In the words of Brené Brown, “Clear is kind. Unclear is unkind.”¹³ Providing essential training and support can save you from unnecessary personnel issues down the road. In some instances, you may need to look outside the district for a mentor, because the new person is the only individual in that role in your district. Work through your professional contacts at AWSA to identify possible mentors.

First Staff/Faculty Meeting

The first faculty/staff meeting of the year is filled with excitement, anxiety, hopes, and fears. Here are a few tips and ideas from your fellow colleagues to help you design that meeting:

- Break the ice with the Relationship Building Challenge found in the August Responsibilities list.
- One of the things that I have always found helpful at the first faculty and staff meeting is to review some of the wins or accomplishments of the prior year, especially in relation to our strategic plan. Then, set

goals for the year ahead and identify the strategies and resources that will be in place to help achieve them.

- For the past two years, I have made my actual meeting shorter and focused on setting the broad vision for the year. I have removed all the boring minutia (all those things that need to be said but puts everyone to sleep) and put all of that into a Google slide shows and forms that teachers are to complete on their own and send me proof of completion before the students arrive (including mandatory trainings available on [Ed Leaders Network](#)). I have chosen to empower them to be professionals whom I can trust to be accountable for doing what they ask students to do all the time.
- Introduce new staff. Don't make the rookies give an impromptu speech. I had to do that, and it was brutal. Do the talking for them and let them know prior to the meeting that this will take place. This eases them into the pool, and they can network and catch up after the meeting. Those people are usually surrounded after the meeting by my more approachable teachers who want to help the rookies.

General Advice

- Reach out to parents by email, text, or social media to let them know how excited and ready you and your staff are for the return of their students.
- Plan a parent meeting for those who will be new to the school along with the parents of the students transitioning in from another school. This is an excellent time to discuss items such as school/home communication, the code of conduct, extra-curricular activities, and opportunities for parental involvement. Consider utilizing current parents as part of the presentation team to help plan and share their perspectives. And while parents/guardians are meeting, consider running a parallel meeting with new students led by the guidance team and current students as part of your new student induction/mentoring program.
- Stay connected. Go to your Region's beginning-of-the year get together. Networking with fellow professionals keeps you current and helps your sanity — we're not alone in this difficult field.
- There's only one first day. Enjoy it!

DISTRICT LEADER TIPS *for you*

One of the easiest ways to change the culture of your school is through your new hires.

Create an FAQ document for new hires. It should cover all types of little things like who to call for what, when to do this, when to do that, what if I'm running late, etc. This will save you and the new hire time.

Create a Day One Checklist for teachers for the first day of student attendance. This way they can see all the tasks to complete with the kids on the first day and plan accordingly for completing these tasks and their own activities.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND RESOURCES



School Leader Networks

These **year-long programs** are targeted for school leaders in each phase of development.

- **Aspiring** – to establish the mindset, leadership intelligences, and community of peers necessary for aspiring administrators to envision themselves as future learning leaders.
- **Launching** – to provide skills, resources, and community of peers necessary to cultivate culture, assess systems, and understand the leadership necessary for the unique context of their learning organization.
- **Building** – to equip established administrators with the supports needed to effectively sustain culture, build systems and develop their learning organization, while affording the self-care necessary to build a sustainable career as a learning leader.
- **Mastering** – to promote the self-actualization of learning leaders through the continuous growth of themselves and their learning organization to ensure a school of equity and excellence which leaves a lasting legacy.



AWSA Coaching Program

A wide variety of **coaching support** is available including instructional and collaborative goal setting, action planning, and monitoring of results and impact. Coaches provide you support in meeting the daily responsibilities for operations, management, supervision, and teacher development, and to create a positive school culture and establish performance expectations and supports to ensure sustained success.



Communications Support

Effective school leaders engage stakeholders in meaningful ways to promote student success. The following resources support you in this important work. **Crisis Communications:** One of the most important aspects of dealing with a crisis is knowing what to communicate, along with to whom and how. With this in mind, **the Donovan Group**, an education-focused communications firm, provides crisis communications support to AWSA members. **Communication Tools:** Are you maximizing your website, social media and other communications tools to engage key stakeholders in support of your students? **These tools** will help you assess your communication strengths and help identify areas of growth. **Communication Templates:** Working with the Donovan Group AWSA monitors social media issues impacting schools and provides templates for school leaders to use in communicating with their students, parents, and communities.

Registration is open for the Administrative Assistants Conference. Register today at **awsa.org**.



AUG.

DATES to Remember

Aug. 4	President Barack Obama's Birthday (commemorative/school holiday)
Aug. 13	Left Hander's Day
Aug. 26	Women's Equality Day

Relationships

- Building Relationships Challenge
- Plan a parent meeting for those who will be new to the school along with the parents of the students transitioning in. Include communication between school/home, code of conduct, athletics, and parent involvement opportunities.
- Leave a note and a small gift (piece of candy, fun school supply item, t-shirt, etc.) in the staff mailboxes on the first day. The note can be a preprinted cardstock bookmark with a welcome and reminders.
- Greet families and students as they arrive. Make sure school counselors provide buddies/student mentors to new students.
- On the first day of school, be in the cafeteria and have extra support staff on hand to provide students with direction regarding food lines and behavior expectations during the lunch hours.
- Review policy for building use by outside agencies.

Student Centeredness

- Conduct/oversee new student orientation.
- Conduct opening day student assembly to reaffirm expectations, vision, etc.
- Prepare and distribute student accommodations (IEPs, 504, etc.) as well as allergy and medication lists for teachers and other appropriate staff.
- Schedule hearing and vision screenings.

Equity

- Equity Challenge

Traditions/Celebrations

- Plan assemblies and special events (i.e., Homecoming, dances, etc.).

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS CHALLENGE

For your first faculty/staff meeting of the year, break the ice with a photo sharing game. Ask each individual to pull out their phone and select one of their favorite photos from the summer. Then, tell them to find someone they don't know well in the room and share the photo and explain why it's their favorite. After 3-5 minutes, have them find a new partner and share, and so forth. If someone doesn't have a phone picture, they can simply provide a verbal description of their favorite summer moment and why.

EQUITY CHALLENGE

Review data on all the various diverse cultures that exist within your learning organizations (staff and students). How do you acknowledge and celebrate their cultural backgrounds (holidays, etc.)? See resource- Equality, diversity and inclusion: simple principles to start getting it right.



Vision/Mission

- Prepare school opening inspirational remarks for staff. Be prepared to reaffirm the shared vision for the school.
- With school improvement team, finalize school improvement goals and objectives and improvement plans for the school year based on state student achievement data from the previous school year.

Communication

- Send letters to students with schedules for opening day.
- Using multiple means (registration materials, social media outlets, local newspaper, community agencies, etc.), share information about free and reduced breakfast and lunch programs and encourage all that are eligible to participate.
- Send a parent letter, email, social media, or website message the first week with a welcome and any important dates/reminders for the first week of school. Emphasize immunization exclusion information. Include a personal invitation to the school's Open House.
- Review school website to ensure annual calendar and staff information is current.
- Post laminated directional signs in hallways and classrooms to help students find their classrooms. Ensure important information is posted in classrooms and around the school. For example, opening day bell schedule.
- Prepare announcements that need to be made to open the day. Provide reminders for staff regarding forms that may need to be distributed and collected from the students.
- Prepare opening remarks for first day assembly.
- Develop staff group text, email, GroupMe and/or emergency telephone list (staff only).
- Post all programs, performances, meetings, and athletic events on the district calendar.
- Promote your free and reduced lunch program and encourage all that are eligible to participate.
- Ensure that all parents and students receive the student handbook.
- Distribute faculty and staff handbooks to appropriate faculty/staff members and collect acknowledgment of receipt forms. Review key provisions with appropriate faculty/staff members.
- Conduct Open House/Back-to-School Night.
- Meet with key school committees, coaches, and team members to finalize plans for the upcoming school year.
- Working with sponsors/coaches, meet with all Fall extra-curricular participants

and parents to review rules and code of conduct.

- Create "Who is in charge when the principal is out of the building" list and distribute to faculty and staff.

Collaborative Leadership

- Working with leadership team, prepare for Open House/Back-to-School Night.
- Working with appropriate individuals, prepare for fall field trips. Obtain School Board approval if necessary.
- Schedule meetings (principal/faculty/staff) with all key groups to discuss concerns, needs, and goals for the year.
- Meet with school counselors to review policies for college visits, standardized testing, identifying kids who are not on track, providing scholarship information, social-emotional support, etc.

Safety

- Review school safety plans with staff. Ensure emergency systems are in order.
- Review updated student handbooks with all staff members (instructional and non-instructional).
- Finalize dates for fire, disaster, and emergency drills. Communicate protocols to staff and parents.
- Ensure all faculty and staff have access to mandated training courses.

Operations

- Conduct final building walk-through with head of maintenance including sport fields and facilities.
- Review budget needs and expenditures.
- Review first day procedures with transportation, first day count, etc.
- Ensure all needed supplies have been received and teachers have what they requested.
- Ensure facilities are reserved and ready for concerts & other extra-curricular activities.
- Prepare fall event coverage schedule including sports, fine arts, etc.
- Ensure all IHSA/IESA fall sports activity forms and fees are sent.
- Ensure athletic director and coaches have completed all required IHSA/IESA training (concussion, etc.).
- Provide training for individuals handling money (ticket sales, concession stands, fund raising, etc.) to ensure district policies and procedures are followed.
- Finalize all fall athletic/fine arts transportation schedules.
- Schedule fall activities photos.



Instruction

- Spend time in the classroom early and often to identify struggling teachers and provide support as needed for success.
- Review school's instructional playbook (key instructional strategies, procedures — "What we should always see," "What we might see, What we should never see," etc.) with faculty and staff.

Assessment

- Review assessment calendar with staff.

Human Capital Management

- Review updated enrollment for any necessary staffing changes.
- Prepare a substitute teacher availability list. Have teachers prepare substitute folders and emergency lesson plans.
- Conduct required staff state mandated trainings.
- Conduct new staff orientation.
- Conduct substitute teacher orientation.
- Review district evaluation policy and procedures with all staff members (instructional and non-instructional).
- Distribute documentation on evaluation timelines.
- Define and communicate protocol for formal and informal classroom observations and walkthroughs.
- Ensure that staff members have a copy of their specific evaluation instrument.
- Ensure all teaching credentials are registered.
- Visit all classrooms to connect, offer encouragement, and provide assistance. Give particular attention and time to new teachers.
- Meet with new teachers weekly during the first month of school to share/clarify information and gather feedback.

Reflection and Growth

- By the first day of student attendance, obtain and review the administrative evaluation tool for the year. If you will be evaluating school leaders (principals, assistant principals, deans, .), ensure you have issued them the written notice of evaluation as well as the rubrics and ratings matrix.

SEPT.

DATES to Remember

- Sept. 1** Spinal Cord Injury Awareness Month begins (Wisconsin commemorative holiday)
- Sept. 1** Ovarian and Prostate Cancer Awareness Month begins (Wisconsin commemorative holiday)
- Sept. 1** Brain Aneurysm Awareness Month begins (Wisconsin commemorative holiday)
- Sept. 2** Labor Day (federal holiday; legal school holiday)
- Sept. 6** Krishna Janmashtami begins (major Hindu holiday; may impact student attendance)
- Sept. 8** Grandparents' Day
- Sept. 10** Nat'l Arts in Education Week begins
- Sept. 11** Day of Remembrance/Patriot Day (Wisconsin commemorative holiday; commemorative school holiday)
- Sept. 13** Think Positive Day
- Sept. 15** National Hispanic Heritage Month begins (runs through October 15)
- Sept. 15** POW/MIA Recognition Day (Wisconsin commemorative holiday)
- Sept. 17** Constitution Day
- Sept. 19** International Talk Like a Pirate Day
- Sept. 19** Preventing Lost Potential Day (Wisconsin commemorative holiday)
- Sept. 22** American Indian Day (Wisconsin commemorative holiday)
- Sept. 24** Gold Star Mother's Day (Wisconsin commemorative holiday)
- Sept. 30** End of the first quarter of the fiscal year



Relationships

- Building Relationships Challenge

Student Centeredness

- Conduct hearing and vision screenings.

Equity

- Equity Challenge

Traditions/Celebrations

- Finalize plans for homecoming activities.
- Plan for fall sports awards ceremonies.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS CHALLENGE

As an ice-breaker activity for your September faculty/staff meeting, ask each individual to share with a colleague one word they would use to describe the opening of the school year and why. Each person gets one minute, then rotates to another. After a few rounds, pull the group back together and ask individuals to share their

favorite word they heard. Then, break into smaller groups and identify what worked well, what needs improvement on flip chart paper. Come back to share with entire group. Collect responses to update planning for the next year.

EQUITY CHALLENGE

Ask your staff to set one equity goal to better understand the various cultural groups that exist in their classrooms. Provide staff with data on student's racial identities and/or ask your parents to share cultural values/beliefs that impact learning. Consider having staff share their goals with their peers during a PLC or full staff meeting.



Vision/Mission

Finalize, receive board approval, and implement School Improvement Plan.

Communication

Communicate the results of first quarter benchmark assessment with students and parents.

Collaborative Leadership

Working with leadership team(s), prepare for Parent/Guardian and Teacher Conferences.

Safety

Send notices for students who have yet to turn in physicals and/or receive required vaccinations.

Operations

Send notices for students who have yet to pay fees.

Conduct student picture day.

Prepare for any Fall Season Post Season Tournaments you may be hosting — participants and parents to review rules and code of conduct.



Reflection & Growth/Result-Oriented

Begin the teacher observation process with the establishment of growth or improvement plans and pre-observation conferences.

Assess and reflect on professional and student growth goals and plans.

Assessment

Conduct first quarter benchmark assessment.

Human Capital Management

Provide in-service for new teachers focused on effective assessment and grading including the process and guidelines for submitting grades. Invite all staff to attend.

Provide in-service for new teachers on how to prepare for Parent/Guardian and Teacher Conferences.

How do you use your time?

Once you begin using your calendars — self-assessment and reflection are powerful tools to help you understand and further develop your time management skills. As you complete the first couple of months of the new year, begin asking yourself the following questions:

- Do I find my calendars useful or are they one more thing to do?
- Do I often find myself unable to accomplish my priorities due to time limitations?
- Do I find myself taking work home or answering emails and phone calls at night?
- Do I have any idea of how much time I spend each day on tasks?
- Do I tend to focus my activities on a specific Paradigm Domain?
- Are there things I intentionally or unintentionally avoid?
- Do I know how to prioritize my responsibilities?

If you find yourself struggling with time management and accomplishing your priorities, you are not alone. It is a huge challenge for today's school leaders, but the good news is that there are things you can do to improve your skills in this area.

“Everyone in the building knows what you’re about by how you spend your time.”¹⁴

— Danny Steele

For 2-3 days, track your actions every 10 minutes. Use an electronic device to setup your 10-minute reminder (phone, watch, etc.). Every 10-minutes, record your action. An easy tool for this can be found on the resource page. This simple to use Excel spreadsheet can be downloaded to your device of choice. For Google Users, save and then drag into Google Drive if you want to use on your personal device. You will need to download again as an Excel File for the filter to work.

To get started: Determine the daily time period you would like to track. For example, on day one you get to school at 7 a.m. You would begin tracking at 7 a.m. with your first entry and your last entry would be the 10 minutes before you go home. For example, on day one you leave at 4:30 p.m., so your last entry would be 4:20 for a total of 57 entries for the day (line 10 of the Excel sheet to line 66=57 entries. Code your actions for 2-3 days as follows:

- **C — CULTURE DOMAIN** — actions that relate directly to the Culture Domain (building relationships, student centeredness, wellness, equity, tradition/ celebrations, ethics, global mindedness).
- **S — SYSTEMS DOMAIN** — actions that relate directly to the Systems Domain (vision/mission, communication, collaborative leadership, data literacy, strategic management, safety including handling of discipline issues, operations).
- **L — LEARNING DOMAIN** — actions that relate directly to the Learning Domain (creating a culture of self-assessment, result-orientation, curriculum, instruction, assessment, innovation, human capital management).
- **P — PERSONAL** — lunch, breaks, restroom, errands, personal business.
- **O — Other**

After coding for 3-5 days, disaggregate your data. In line 3, click on the dropdown arrow next to day one and uncheck Select All, then filter by each of the four areas. For Culture, click C and it will filter all the C entries. This will give you the number of times that item was coded during that particular day (number is in bottom left-hand corner). Take that number and divide by the total number of entries for the day, and you'll get a percentage of time spent on that action. For another action, go to the drop down and Select All to reload the data, then check Select All, then check the action you want to total. Do this for each area to get a percentage of time. Using our example from above, let's say our principal had a total of 23 Systems entries: 23 entries/57 entries = 40%. On this particular day, our principal spent 40% of her time on System issues. Do this for each day of coding. These 2-3 days of coding become your data to answer

the question, How am I currently using my time? Once you know where your time goes, you can develop a plan that is more in line with your priorities. For example, if your goal is to spend 50% of your time on Learning but find yourself spending 75%+ on Systems issues every day, it's time to dig into this data and consider:

- Letting go of some tasks and delegating to others (see October Delegation is a Critical Resource).
- Examining the impact of some of your actions. Could there be a better use of this time?
- Restructuring some tasks to make more time. For example, do I need to be in the cafeteria the entire lunch period every day?
- Learning more about effective time management and how other school leaders are successful in finding time for their priorities.

This activity might also identify your areas of strength. Individuals tend to focus more on areas of strength and less on our weaknesses. In his 2022 blog post, Dr. Scott Seaman, Executive Director of Association of Washington School Principals explains:

An effective leader knows how to lead in each of the domains, but I would argue that each one of us has a primary strength of leadership. For lack of a better description, I'd say we each have a primary domain. Some are more natural Culture leaders, while others are more comfortable with Systems leadership. Still, others might feel most at home in the Learning Domain.

Having a primary domain doesn't mean that you can't lead in the others. It also doesn't mean that you are an ineffective leader. It simply means that you naturally and inherently lead from your strength. That's great. We should focus on strengths-based leadership. However, leaders fall into trouble when they do not intentionally reflect and make leadership adjustments to accommodate their less dominant domains.¹⁵

What's your primary domain? What leadership adjustments do you need to make to accommodate your less dominant domains?

Based on the analysis of your data, develop an improvement plan aligned to your priorities. Implement, assess, and reflect on your plan to see if it's working, which may include doing another 2-3 days of time tracking a couple of months later. For more information on how to design improvement plans, see the [School Leader Cycle of Inquiry](#).

DISTRICT LEADER TIPS *for you*

Schedule everything on your calendar. Keep a task list and delegate as much as possible to people you trust.

Block out time on your calendar that is sacred to the task, and let your assistant know that you should not be bothered unless there is an emergency or "right away" need. Without this, things will be overwhelming as they build up.

Find your calendar method ... the phone is great, but it's nice to come in to see a whole day laid out. It is something you have to spend time with organizing either daily, weekly or monthly. A good calendar saves you from missing something.



OCT.

DATES to Rememb

- Oct. 1 National Principals Month Begins
- Oct. 1 School Board Member Appreciation Week Begins
- Oct. 2 National Custodial Workers Day
- Oct. 2 Child Health Day
- Oct. 2 Rosh Hashanah (begins at sunset)
- Oct. 6 World Smile Day
- Oct. 9 Leif Erikson Day
- Oct. 9 National School Lunch Week begins
- Oct. 11 Yom Kippur (major Jewish holiday)
- Oct. 13 Students must meet vaccination/ health requirements or be excluded from school (unless school district has earlier date)
- Oct. 14 Columbus Day (federal holiday; legal school holiday)
- Oct. 15 Navaratri begins (Major Hindu Holiday; may impact student attendance)

- Oct. 16 Boss's Day
- Oct. 16 National Bus Safety Week begins
- Oct. 23 Red Ribbon Week begins
- Oct. 23 National Character Counts Week begins
- Oct. 24 Dussehra (major Hindu holiday)
- Oct. 31 Halloween



Relationships

Building Relationships Challenge
Send an introductory email and invitation to your legislators to visit your school.

Student Centeredness

Conduct hearing and vision screenings.

Equity

Equity Challenge

Traditions/Celebrations

Prepare for Veteran's Day Assembly and invite local veterans to participate.
Review your district's policies regarding holiday in-classroom activities, programs, and displays with all staff members.
Prepare for fall college athletic signing.
Finalize preparations for holiday celebrations.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS CHALLENGE

Review current partnerships with community organizations and clarify purpose and recent activities. Reach out to each organization to jointly review the partnership, assess its impact, and plan for next steps. When appropriate, include faculty/staff involved in the partnership in these meetings.

EQUITY CHALLENGE

Encourage your staff to meet with other staff members from a different ethnic or cultural background. Provide them with a list of questions to support dialogue to better understand how culture impacts engagement and learning.



Communication

- Communicate with parents the process for accessing their student's 1st quarter grades.
- Conduct parent/teacher conferences.
- Meet with all winter extra-curricular participants and parents to review rules and code of conduct.

Operations

- Finalize preparations for parent/teacher conferences.
- Ensure facilities are reserved and ready for winter concerts & other extra-curricular activities.
- Prepare winter event coverage schedule including sports, fine arts, etc.
- Ensure all IHSA/IESA winter sports and activity forms and fees are sent.
- Ensure athletic director has verified winter schedules/contracts with opponents and officials.
- Finalize all winter athletic/fine arts transportation schedules.
- Schedule winter activities' photos.
- Provide training for individuals handling money (ticket sales, concession stands, fund raising, etc.) to ensure district policies and procedures are followed.



Instruction

- Appraise staff development provided to- date and revise/expand plans as analysis indicates.

Assessment

- Ensure teachers finalize and submit 1st quarter grades.
- With staff, review first quarter benchmark assessments and grades. Provide interventions as needed.

Innovation

- Begin planning instructional program for next school year. Identify curricular changes, staffing needs, and necessary resources.

Human Capital Management

- Continue teacher observation cycle.
- Meet with new teachers to follow-up on the first quarter grading experiences and parent/guardian and teacher conferences. Identify possible professional development needs.

NOV.

DATES to Remember

	Nov. 3	Standard time returns (set clocks back one hour)
	Nov. 11	Veterans Day Observed (federal holiday, legal school holiday)
	Nov. 12	Diwali/Deepavali begins (major Hindu Holiday; may impact student attendance)
Nov. 13		World Kindness Day
	Nov. 13	American Education Week begins (runs through Nov 17)
Nov. 15		National Recycling Day (commemorative school holiday)
Nov. Nov. 28		Thanksgiving Day (federal Holiday; legal school holiday)
Nov. Nov. 29		Day After Thanksgiving



Relationships

Building Relationships Challenge

Equity

Equity Challenge

Traditions/Celebrations

Conduct Veterans Day Assembly.

Provide reminder about your district's policies regarding holiday in-classroom activities, programs, and displays with all staff members.

Plan holiday activities including winter concert.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS CHALLENGE

At the November faculty meeting, take a few minutes to talk about faculty/staff social, emotional, physical, and professional needs. Share the Self Check-in Questions from the Taking Care of Your Staff section. Review the resources the school/district has available to support and/or assist individuals.

EQUITY CHALLENGE

Watch Recognizing Bias and Promoting Equity in Early Childhood Settings. Explore and compare your biases prior to watching this, and how any potential differences will shape your personal and professional purpose.



Vision/Mission

- Review 1st Quarter data with School Improvement Team.

Communication

- Review inclement weather procedures with students, staff, and parents.
- Communicate with students, staff, and parents about test preparation for upcoming end-of-term exams.
- Communicate the results of second quarter benchmark assessment with students and parents.
- Review process for submitting requests for the next school year's budget with faculty and staff.

Strategic Management

- Develop semester exam schedule.

Safety

- Review inclement weather procedures.

Operations

- Prepare for facilities work to be conducted over the holidays.
- Working with the athletic director, prepare for any holiday tournaments you may be hosting and needed supervision.
- Finalize forms for budget proposal requests for the next school year.



Instruction

Continue planning instructional program for next school year. Identify curricular changes, staffing needs, and necessary resources.

Assessment

Conduct second quarter benchmark assessment.

Human Capital Management

Review interrater reliability of teacher evaluations.

Assess completion of classroom evaluations and walkthroughs.

Appraise fall staff development and revise and or expand plans as data analysis indicates (quarterly assessments, teacher observations/walkthroughs, individual staff needs, etc.).

Prepare for second semester teacher in- service/professional development.

Taking care of your staff ...

It's November, and most faculty and staff have found their groove, but you may have members of your faculty/staff struggling – professionally, mentally, emotionally, and/or physically.

Occasional staff check-ins help to identify faculty/staff needs and build community. Offering a self-check-in questionnaire is a good start. Be sure to include resources the school/district has available if someone needs support and/or assistance.

- How are you?
- How are your family, close friends, pets, etc.?
- Have you been taking time for yourself, family and/or friends?
- What are you grateful for today?
- Does your diet fuel your body? Are you drinking enough water to stay hydrated?
- Are you getting adequate rest?
- Are you concerned with any physical or mental issues that may require professional attention?
- Are you engaged In mind-body activities and taking mental/physical breaks? (I.e. quiet times for reflection and reading, jogging, yoga exercise, outdoor walks, breaks from electronics, setting an end time to my workday)
- Are you finding opportunities for fun, laughter, and inspiration? (I.e. fun conversations, funny movies, tv shows, books, podcasts)
- Do you have a fellow staff member that you can turn to for support? When was the last time you checked in with each other?

One-on-one conversations with individuals are a way to identify professional support needs. The following questions can help jump-start those conversations:

- What are you doing that you would like me to observe and/or provide feedback? (i.e. certain lesson. Innovative approach)
- What is going well for you?
- Is there something you are struggling with?
- What do you need to be successful?
- What specifically can I do to help or support you?
- What student(s) are you most concerned for right now?
- Why specifically do you have these concerns? What support does the student(s) need?

DISTRICT LEADER TIPS *for you*

Model healthy habits like time management, family, exercise, and social-emotional needs. Get up early, take care of yourself so you can take care of others.

Schedule time to check-in on staff, and not just related to work. Ask about their lives, exciting things you know are happening, recognize the little things. A leader that cares promotes a staff that feels better emotionally.

Make sure you are meeting with teams, or individuals face to face. Be able to read the room and be understanding of burn out!

DEC.

DATES to Remember

Dec. 2 Computer Science Week begins

Dec. 7 Pearl Harbor Veterans' Day
(commemorative school holiday)

Dec. 10 Human Rights Day

Dec. 24 Christmas Eve
(major Christian Holiday)

Dec. 25 Christmas Day
(federal holiday; legal school holiday)

Dec. 25 Hanukkah begins
(major Jewish holiday; begins at sundown)

Dec. 31 New Year's Eve

Dec. 31 End of second quarter of fiscal year



Relationships

- Building Relationships Challenge

Student Centeredness

- Work with staff to offer after school opportunities for students to get tutoring and study assistance for finals.
- Plan for winter sports awards ceremonies.

Equity

- Equity Challenge

Traditions/Celebrations

- Plan mid-year recognition program. Consider including recognition of supportive community members. Review qualifications and involve staff in selecting recipients.
- Plan faculty holiday party.
- Finalize winter concert.
- Plan mid-year student recognition program. Consider including recognition of supportive community members. Review qualifications and involve staff in selecting recipients.
- Plan school-wide holiday celebrations.
- Plan faculty/staff holiday celebrations (Secret Santa, holiday breakfast/lunch/dinner, etc.) along with any special individual gifts.
- Plan for retirement celebrations.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS CHALLENGE

December is a time for giving. Form a committee (teachers, staff, students, parents/guardians, and community members) to organize a school-wide funding raising project to support a local charity.



Vision/Mission

- Review School Improvement Plan with School Improvement Team to identify progress, needs, and required tasks.

Communication

- Communicate final exam expectations to students, parents, and staff regarding students who request to take exams early, exam review and preparation, exam dates/ times, etc.
- Communicate winter break hours with teachers, students, parents, and community. Update school website and other social media tools with appropriate information.
- Prepare for course request meetings with classes.
- Prepare for incoming freshman night.
- Ensure appropriate winter break office coverage for mail, phone messages, FOIA requests, etc.

Operations

- Ensure all activities are covered for the winter break.
- Review second semester schedule to ensure class sizes are balanced and classroom occupancy is appropriate. Ensure classrooms have adequate number of desks.
- Prepare second semester schedules for distribution.
- Plan winter break work schedule with head custodian.
- Review current budget.



Instruction

Continue planning instructional program for next school year. Identify curricular changes, staffing needs, and necessary resources.

Human Capital Management

Identify teachers at-risk of termination for professional growth planning and additional support.

Taking care of yourself...

Taking care of yourself is the best gift you can give your staff and students.

Over the past several years, school leaders have started to be concerned with students' mental health and well-being, and for good reason. But how often do school leaders overlook their own mental well-being?

Use these tips to help you address your mental health.

- Do I have a physical or mental condition that requires professional attention?
- Am I getting adequate rest including plenty of sleep at night and a nap through the day?
- Am I maintaining a healthy diet and staying adequately hydrated?
- Have I engaged in mind-body activities and taken mental/physical breaks? (i.e. quiet times for reflection and reading, jogging, yoga, exercise, outdoor walks, breaks from electronics, setting an end time to my workday)
- Have I stayed connected to family and close friends?
- Have I stayed connected to colleagues who I can turn to for support, encouragement, and accountability?
- Do I have a system that helps me effectively manage my time and tasks including following up on inquiries and/or assistance requests I receive from others?
- Do I regularly review what I can delegate to others?
- Am I intentionally scheduling time to check-in with staff to see how they are doing, determine their needs, watch a lesson, and offer some encouragement?
- If my staff is large, have I ensured my leadership team has the entire staff covered?
- Have I communicated with my leadership team to be sure to report to me staff members and students who may need my individual attention?
- Am I offering adequate support to my team during this time including consistency, compassion, communication, and coaching?

Sleep

What happens when adults don't get the 7 to 8 hours of good sleep at night that experts recommend? After 7 days of 6 hours of sleep your cognitive performance nosedives like a dart into the ground and it doesn't show any signs of leveling off. Matthew Walker, author of *Why We Sleep*, said in an interview. Lack of sleep has physical effects too, causing your lungs to not be able to process oxygen as efficiently, and lactic acid builds up quicker, making you sorer, faster. Here are three tips for better sleep from Matthew Walker:

- Regularity — Go to bed around the same time and get up around the same time. This helps your body best regulate your sleep chemicals.
- Light — In the hour before you go to bed, avoid screens. Screen time delays the release of the sleep chemical melatonin, making it harder to fall asleep and causing you to miss the deep REM sleep that we all need.
- Keep it cool — Your brain needs to drop its temp by 2-3 degrees Fahrenheit for you to fall asleep. It may seem counter intuitive, but a warm bath or shower can actually help lower your core body temperature

Community

There is a body of scientific work that suggests loneliness has a direct impact on our physical and mental well-being. "It's important to distinguish between being alone, and feeling alone," said John Cacioppo, director of the Center for Cognitive and Social Neuroscience at the University of Chicago. "It's not whether you're with someone, it's whether you feel connected to them." And social isolation can be a self-perpetuating condition. "Many of the people who end up lonely give off signals they want to be alone out of anxiety ... Feeling left out has a huge effect on our psyche," psychiatrist Jacqueline Olds told the Washington Post.

Studies suggest that being lonely causes you to be sick more, and for those illnesses to feel worse. So, what can you do? Research is still being done on this, but here are some practical tips from psychiatrists and researchers.

- Connect with your peers — AWSA offers an online community via AWSA Forums and your local region often has socials and other opportunities to connect.
- Volunteer in your community outside of the school — Volunteering is a great way to meet and connect with people with shared values.
- Embrace a project — Get immersed in something important to you. A creative project, a home project or a community project can bring enjoyment into your life. It's hard to feel lonely when you are excited about what you are doing!

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is scientifically proven to reduce stress and increase focus. It is generally achieved through some form of meditation.

Meditation is simply paying attention only to the present moment. It is not about trying to relax or unwind. Instead, meditation is about developing a sense of being, not doing. This can be a challenge for administrators who are used to doing from morning meetings to night time extracurricular activities. Patience is an important component of meditation, because it is about a willingness to practice meditation, particularly when one might have other reasons not to.

So where to start? There are smartphone apps to help you with mindful meditation. We specifically recommend Headspace for Educators, which is free for you! Learn more at [headspace.com/educators](https://www.headspace.com/educators).

DISTRICT LEADER TIPS *for you*

Network and talk with colleagues. Have a person outside of education you can talk and vent to for a different perspective. Exercise, eat healthy, rest, make time for family and fun activities, know that there is always tomorrow, walk away knowing you did your best today.

Utilize a gratitude journal to help remind you of the why.

Gym, gym, gym. Even if you have never been to a gym, just go for 10 minutes and walk on the treadmill. If you don't want to join a gym, buy a foldable air bike and push yourself to get physically tired so you can rest your brain.

JAN.

DATES to Remember

Jan. 1 New Year's Day (federal holiday; legal school holiday)

Jan 19 National Popcorn Day

Jan. 20 Martin Luther King Day (federal holiday; legal school holiday)

EQUITY CHALLENGE

Take time to read this short article by Dr. Monica Williams of the University of Connecticut to better understand the effect that racism can have on one's mental health.



Relationships

Building Relationships Challenge

Send an introductory email and invitation to your legislators to visit your school.

Student Centeredness

Review students' first semester grades to ensure appropriate class placement, possible retention, etc.

Equity

Equity Challenge

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS CHALLENGE

As an ice-breaker activity for your January faculty/staff meeting, have individuals find a partner and share one new year resolution or hope they have for the new year. Allow two minutes to share and rotate.

Follow-up with an activity to create one New Year's resolution for your school. Explain that the resolution should be simple - something we all can do right now to improve relationships in our school community (with each other, with students, with parents/guardians, with community members). Divide into groups of 4-5, give groups 10 minutes to generate ideas, come back together, and each group shares their ideas. As ideas are shared, combine like ideas and start to narrow the list. Take time to clarify ideas, then vote narrowing the ideas down to 2-3 to further discuss, trying to reach consensus on at least one. Examples: Try to smile more; listen to each other; make one positive parent/guardian phone call each week; share positive happenings from classrooms



Communication

- Provide procedures for parents to access their child's semester grades. Share these procedures with staff and teachers.
- Provide procedures for students and parents about the student class scheduling process for the next school year. Share these procedures with staff and teachers. Meet with students and parents (if necessary).
- Conduct course request meetings with classes.
- Plan for upcoming parent and guardian/teacher conferences, if applicable.

Collaborative Leadership

- Working with key personnel, begin development of next year's master schedule.

Operations

- Ensure teachers finalize and submit semester grades.
- Prepare for spring field trips. Obtain Board approval if necessary.
- Prepare for any winter post season tournaments you may be hosting.



Instruction

- Review final 1st semester grades.
- Continue instructional planning for next school year.

Assessment

- Prepare for administration of upcoming state assessments.

Human Capital Management

- Finalize budget requests for the next school year and submit to the district office.
- Review interrater reliability of teacher evaluations.
- Assess completion of classroom evaluations and walkthroughs.
- Review district procedures and hiring guidelines and develop criteria to guide selection of new staff members.
- Post open teaching and other staff positions.
- Conduct evaluations for nonprofessional staff according to district policy.

Self management ...

Happy New Year! January is a time individuals make resolutions for the upcoming year. Maybe one of yours is improving your time management skills, but keep in mind what we blame as a lack of time is usually poor decision-making. Thus, the issue...

Simple solutions and quick fixes may work for a time, but often fail for the same reason we abandoned New Year diets — they don't change the underlying mindset responsible for traits we want to change. Use these tips to begin making change today.¹⁶

- Be honest with yourself — Are you working toward the life you have imagined? When we are grinding as hard as we can at what we are most passionate about, it seems that everything that needs to get done gets done. Work of passion and purpose ignites us, and we seldom struggle completing this work.
- Be honest with the ones you love — Most likely, you have assigned yourself tasks, responsibilities, and more importantly guilt in areas that nobody else has. This guilt pulls in multiple directions, kills your joy, and creates a logjam of priorities that need not exist. Ask those people you love most what they need from you. Most likely, it is less than you imagine.
- Remember everything is a choice — Transform your thinking of “I have to” into “I get to.” This mindset allows you to take back ownership of your time. You will never be able to truly manage yourself without believing you own your time.
- Toss it/tell it/teach it/ today or tomorrow
 - This is a process that you can invoke for everything that comes across your desk, through your email, or that is placed on your to-do list.
 - The first questions you should ask yourself are “What is it?” “Why do I have it?” “Do I absolutely have to do this?” “What am I going to do with it?” If you don't have good answers, Toss It!
 - If you don't toss it, ask yourself if you can tell (ask) someone else to do it — Tell it. This is not DELEGATION. This is automation. An example of this would be asking your administrative assistant to scan something and send it to whomever requested it.
 - If you cannot toss it or tell it, then

consider Teaching It. Think of it as capacity building instead of delegation. Think about who in my organization could most grow from this opportunity. Although it may take more time than just doing it ourselves, part of being an efficient and effective person is figuring out what we can spend time on today, so we will not have to spend time on it in the future (see October — Delegation is a critical resource).

- If after going through these steps the work is still on your desk, do it if necessary. If not, wait until tomorrow or add it to your tickler files.

DISTRICT LEADER TIPS *for you*

Take time to read about what it is that makes you uncomfortable and get better at it. Personal and professional growth should be an ongoing focus.

Be willing to do the work with your leadership team. If you are working to grow and hold yourself accountable for things you say you will do, it makes it easier to ask that of your staff. You are the single igniter of the culture in your building. How you act will guide how staff acts.

We have our faculty and staff do “One Word” instead of New Years resolutions. The “One Word” is a focal point for the year. Many teachers have their students pick one word as well.

Reach out to your peers and make time to discuss building issues, celebrations and any topic to work through. Make time to look at problems and find the right people to problem solve with.



FEB.

DATES to Remember

Feb 1	Black History Month begins
Feb 2	Groundhog Day
Feb 6	Safer Internet Day
Feb 8	Kite Flying Day
Feb 13	Lincoln's Birthday
Feb 14	Valentine's Day
Feb 15	Birthday of Susan B. Anthony
Feb 17	Random Acts of Kindness
Feb 17	Washington's Birthday & Presidents' Day (federal holiday)



Relationships

Building Relationships Challenge

Equity

Equity Challenge

Traditions/Celebrations

Begin planning for end-of year events: graduation, grade promotion, academic awards, prom, Etc.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS CHALLENGE

Try implementing the Afternoon Gratitude Email activity (from February). If you find it effective, consider expanding to include gratitude emails for students, parents/ guardians, and community members.

EQUITY CHALLENGE

Provide staff with a list of all cultural celebration months. Moving forward, how can your learning organization plan to celebrate your diversity more frequently?



Vision/Mission

- Review 2nd Quarter data with School Improvement Team.

Communication

- Conduct parent and guardian/teacher conferences, if applicable.
- Prepare for parent meetings with students who are transitioning school buildings.
- Prepare for Kindergarten parent night and Kindergarten registration.
- Communicate the results of 3rd quarter benchmark assessment with students and parents.
- Communicate with parents about appropriate meetings to discuss transitions and registration for the next school year.
- Communicate with Kindergarten parents about parent night and Kindergarten registration.
- Meet with all spring extra-curricular participants and parents to review rules and code of conduct.
- Communicate spring break guidelines and reminders with parents/guardians and students.

Operations

- Finalize next school year's budget based on feedback from district and share with faculty and staff.
- Ensure facilities are reserved and ready for spring concerts & other extra-curricular activities.
- Prepare spring event coverage schedule including sports, fine arts, etc
- Ensure all IHSA/IESA spring sports and activity forms and fees are sent.
- Ensure spring coaches have completed all required IHSA/IESA training (concussion)
- Ensure athletic director has verified spring schedules/contracts with opponents and officials.
- Finalize all spring athletic/fine arts transportation schedules.
- Provide training for individuals handling money (ticket sales, concession stands, fund raising, etc.) to ensure district policies and procedures are followed.
- Schedule spring activities photos.



Instruction

Continue instructional planning for next school year.

Assessment

Conduct third quarter benchmark assessment.

Prepare for administration of upcoming state assessments including training for those administering the tests.

Human Capital Management

Appraise staff development provided to-date and revise/expand plans as analysis indicates.

Complete all teacher and staff evaluations.

Prepare for anticipated RIFs, non-renewals of probationary teachers, and dismissals of tenured teachers.

Post open teaching and other staff positions.

Hire staff.

MARCH

DATES to Remember

March 2	Read Across America Day
March 3	National School Social
Workers	
	Appreciation Week begins
March 5	Ash Wednesday
March 8	Maha Shivratri (major Hindu holiday; begins on the evening before)
March 9	Daylight Savings Time Begins (set clocks ahead one hour)
March 11	Ramadan begins (major Islamic holiday; begins at sundown; may impact student attendance)
March 14	National Potato Chip
Day March 14	National Pi Day
March 17	St. Patrick's Day)
March 25	Holi (major Hindu holiday; begins on previous evening)
March 29	Vietnam War Veterans' Day (commemorative school
holiday) March 31	End of third quarter of fiscal year



Relationships

Building Relationships Challenge

Equity

Equity Challenge

Traditions/Celebrations

Continue planning for end-of year events: graduation, grade promotion, academic awards, prom, Etc.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS CHALLENGE

Working with your parent/guardian and teacher organization, plan "An Evening with the School Leaders" event. Its purpose is to seek feedback about the current school year in order to plan for the next. Instead of having one large open mic event, decide what you would like feedback on and setup stations to collect the information with a member of the leadership team at each station. If you are the only administrator in your building, invite your teacher leaders to help you. To draw in the crowds, consider pairing it with student performances or presentations. During the event break, ask parents/ guardians to visit break rooms to provide feedback. For those parents/guardians unable to attend, make available an online survey option. Don't forget to ask your students for feedback!

EQUITY CHALLENGE

Watch this interview of author/educator, Tim Wise. In this interview, Wise discusses colorblindness, white flight and its impact on student populations, the role of school principals in strengthening the learning of all students, Affirmative Action and white preferences, and the opportunities college offers students who are open to deepening their understanding of their own identities while learning about the cultural identities of others.



Communication

- Communicate with parents the process for accessing their student's 3rd quarter grades.
- Contact parents/guardians of students in danger of being retained or not graduating.
- Communicate expectations for prom with students and parents.
- Conduct parent meetings with students who are transitioning school buildings.
- Conduct Kindergarten parent night and Kindergarten registration.

Safety

- Conduct preschool screenings.

Operations

- Ensure budgeted funds are spent for the current school year.
- Finalize building budget for next school year and submit to superintendent for final approval.
- Begin planning for summer cleaning and maintenance.
- Prepare for spring college athletic and academic signing.



Instruction

Ensure teachers finalize and submit 3rd quarter grades.

Draft preliminary master schedule for next school year.

Continue instructional planning for next school year.

Begin planning for summer school.

Assessment

Oversee administration of state assessments.

Human Capital Management

Hold teacher summative evaluation meetings in accordance with district requirements and deadlines.

Post open teaching and other staff positions.

Hire staff.

APRIL

DATES to Remember

April 1	April Fool's Day
April 3	Paraprofessional Appreciation Day
April 4	National School Librarian Day
April 7	National Library Week begins
April 7	National Assistant Principals Week
April 12	Passover begins (major Jewish holiday; begins at sundown; may impact student attendance)
April 13	Palm Sunday
April 15	Tax Day
April 20	Volunteer Recognition Day
April 20	Easter
April 22	Earth Day
April 23	National Talk Like Shakespeare Day
April 23	Administrative Professionals Day
April 24	Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day
April 25	Arbor Day



Relationships

Building Relationships Challenge

Student Centeredness

Plan new student orientation for next school year.

Wellness

Plan for personal summer vacation and time out of the office.

Equity

Equity Challenge

Traditions/Celebrations

Prepare for Teacher Appreciation Week. Continue planning for end-of year events: graduation, grade promotion, academic awards, prom, spring sports awards, etc.

Celebrate Administrative Professionals Day

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS CHALLENGE

By this time of the year, everyone could use a good pick me up! To energize your faculty/ staff and students, organize a short, fun, school-wide activity such as the large group Rock, Paper, Scissors Challenge. You could do it as part of an assembly, by individual rooms/hallways/floors, or by lunch periods.

EQUITY CHALLENGE

Survey your staff on your diversity and equity initiatives to gauge perceptions about the initiatives' impact. Additionally, the survey could help identify the professional growth needs of your staff related to diversity and equity.



Vision/Mission

- Review 3rd Quarter data with School Improvement Team.

Communication

- Ensure summer school dates and applications are available to students and parents in print and on website. Counselors should contact students directly who are behind in credits to ensure they are registering for summer school courses required for graduation.
- Communicate the results of 3rd quarter benchmark assessment with students and parents.
- Communicate year-end exam and AP exam schedule with teachers, students, and parents.
- Communicate with parents of students who are going to be retained or will not graduate.
- Communicate District calendar, attendance days for next school year with students, parents, and staff.
- Communicate with all faculty and staff end-of-school procedures and checklists.

Operations

- Work with counselors, department chairs, your media specialist/librarian, and technology directors to place textbook and technology orders and to identify books in need of rebinding to ensure arrival in time for summer registration.
- Finalize work on faculty and student handbooks for next school year. Submit changes to the superintendent for Board approval.
- Develop year-end exams and AP exams schedule.
- Obtain supply requests from teachers, coaches, activity directors
- Prepare school's summer vacation calendar.
- Conduct building walk-through with maintenance staff to identify maintenance needs to be addressed over the summer. Submit report to Superintendent.
- Prepare for any spring season post-season tournaments you may be hosting.



Instruction

Continue instructional planning for next school year.

Finalize class schedule for next school year.

Build summer school program.

Assessment

Conduct third quarter benchmark assessment.

Identify students who will be retained a grade or will not graduate.

Prepare instructions and schedules for May Advance Placement exams.

Human Capital Management

Post open teaching and other staff positions.

Hire staff.

Assess new teacher induction/mentoring program and make needed changes for upcoming year.

MAY

DATES to Remember

May 5 Cinco de Mayo

May 5 National Teacher Appreciation Week Begins

May 7 National Teacher Day

May 8 School Nurse Appreciation Day

May 11 Mother's Day

May 18 Visit Your Relatives Day

May 26 Memorial Day
(federal holiday; legal school holiday)



Relationships

- Building Relationships Challenge

Student Centeredness

- Work with staff to offer after school opportunities for students to get tutoring and study assistance for finals.

Equity

- Equity Challenge

Traditions/Celebrations

- Celebrate National Teacher Appreciation Week. Consider including all your staff in your appreciation activities and making it Teacher/Staff Appreciation Week. Use your school's parent organization for planning events and get the local business community involved.
- Finalize planning for end-of year events: graduation, grade promotion, academic awards, prom, spring sports awards, etc.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS CHALLENGE

May is one of the busiest times of the year for faculty and staff. As part of your daily walkthroughs, try to touch base with everyone to see how things are going and if support is needed.

EQUITY CHALLENGE

Provide your staff with a list of diversity & equity resources to learn more about diversity and equity, maybe over the summer? Challenge them to pick one equity goal for the 2025-2026 school year.



Vision/Mission

- Review School Improvement Plan with School Improvement Team to identify progress, needs, and required tasks.
- Begin development of school improvement goals and objectives for next school year.

Communication

- Review teacher websites. Make sure they are up to date with summer reading and preparation requirements (such as reading assignments for AP classes.)
- Post important end-of-year information on website and other social media sites.
- Review the school's website homepage to ensure summer office hours, the process for registering new students, the next year's school calendar, and other relevant information is up to date.
- Communicate final exam expectations to students, parents, and staff regarding students who request to take exams early, exam review and preparation, exam dates/times, etc.
- Communicate graduation and promotion ceremony expectations with parents.
- Provide procedures for parents to access their child's semester grades.
- Notify staff of dates/times that parts of the building may be inaccessible during the summer due to floor waxing, painting, etc.
- Notify staff of teaching assignments for the next school year.
- Meet with students graduating or going through promotion ceremonies to practice and review expectations.
- Review athletic and activities websites to ensure all camp, tryout, and other relevant information is current. Include contact information for coaches and sponsors.
- Provide teachers with an end-of-year checkout sheet.
- Post positive end-of-year message on website, social media outlets, school sign etc.

Collaborate Leadership

- Plan summer leadership retreat days.
- Meet with all key teams and committees to begin planning for the next year.

Operations

- Finalize summer cleaning and maintenance schedule.
- Ensure teachers finalize and submit end-of-year grades.
- Prepare and communicate end-of-year procedures for teachers and staff (i.e., last day of school, final reports due to office, classroom checklist, etc.)
- Order supplies and textbooks for next school year.
- Have custodians place trash cans in the locker bays for easy disposal of unneeded locker contents. Ask teachers to assist with locker cleanout supervision.
- Meet with Athletic and Activities Directors concerning summer camps, no contact weeks, etc.



Instruction

Continue instructional planning for next school year.
Finalize summer school plans.
Identify students for summer school remediation.

Human Capital Management

Review staff evaluations to determine professional development needs for next school year.

Prepare in-service days/staff professional development for next school year.

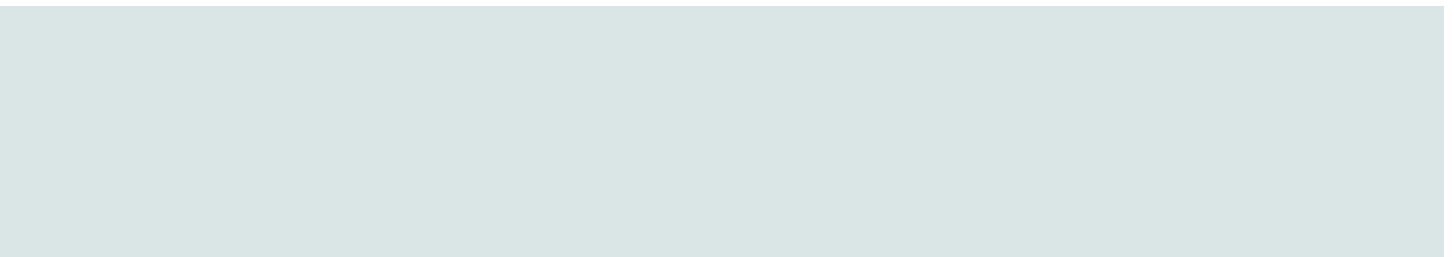
Continue to post open teaching and other staff positions. Hire staff.

Ensure licensure and professional development is up to date. Don't forget to do this for yourself as well.

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NOTES





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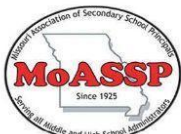
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