



# The Skyrocket Education Leader Coaching Manual

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VERSION 6

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with Kimberly Hamilton and Matthew Glass



**SKYROCKET  
EDUCATION**

Thank you for downloading the Skyrocket Leader Coaching Manual. This manual was created to pair with the Skyrocket Leader Coaching Framework. So many outstanding, bright, passionate, and dedicated leaders are suffering from similar obstacles when it comes to their leadership. There are innumerable books, essays, and philosophies on leadership, and so often, they tackle the what. You may even have one (or, if you're like most leaders I know, four or five) on your bookshelf. Despite numerous reads, annotations, post-its, and recommitments, these books rarely lead to measurable change for adults. More telling, they rarely lead to change for students and staff. One primary thing this manual and the accompanying framework seek to address is the how behind school leadership.

In this manual, you will likely recognize certain actions. There will likely be actions and practices listed here that you haven't considered. This is a great place to be.

As you dive in, please use this manual and the corresponding Skyrocket Leader Coaching Framework to create the foundational systems, expectations, coaching best practices, and leadership opportunities to make your school exactly what you want it to be.

And, of course, thank you to the countless school leaders who have welcomed me into your buildings and allowed me to play just a small part in all the incredible work you do every day. I am humbled by your vast experiences, knowledge, and generosity. This manual exists for and because of you.

Before you dive in, I'd like to give some more rationale for why I wanted to create both the framework and this manual as well as explain what, exactly, you'll find inside.

## THE WHY?

Similar to the Skyrocket Teacher Coaching Framework and Manual, in my observations at schools around the country, three trends emerged.

Trend number one is that schools don't have clear vision, values, expectations and goals, or if they do exist, they live in the shadows. They're talked about, perhaps mentioned at the beginning of the year and when teachers return from summer break, but they don't have a tangible impact on how the school functions, adults act, or students perform. Without these in place, school leaders and teachers operate without focus. This is not to say that they aren't focused (of course, educators are focused every day on trying their best for students), but that their day-to-day operations do not purposefully and strategically align to nor augment any greater goal or vision. When I ask leaders about what their goals are for the year, they often can't recall them. When I ask how they are driving progress to those goals, their answers are vague and incongruent. When leadership teams meet, they tend to be hyper-focused on whatever immediate need currently demands attention. To be clear, progress may still be made. However, without the foundational components of vision, values, expectations, and goals, it is incredibly difficult to act in a purposeful and targeted way that is consistent and equitable, and the likelihood is that goals are not met, outcomes are unchanged, and the cycle repeats the following summer.

Trend number two pertains specifically to leader and teacher coaching. Since we have the Skyrocket Teacher Coaching Framework and Manual, I won't dive into the specifics around those here. What I'll focus on instead is leadership development. In many schools, once a school leader is hired, that is where their development ends. If they're an assistant principal, they are assigned duties and responsibilities and expected to perform them at the highest level. Often, leaders are siloed and left to manage their direct reports how they see fit. What this leads to is stagnation—leaders not becoming more effective, and as result, teachers do not become more effective, and then, of course, students suffer. An example of this is lesson plan feedback. I've asked hundreds of principals about who gives lesson plan feedback, and I typically hear two responses: 1) we don't give lesson plan feedback, we check for submission, or 2) that's so and so's responsibility. I always ask the same follow-up question: how are teachers getting better at lesson planning? Sometimes leaders say that teachers meet with content teams, or they have a planning meeting each quarter with their manager, or, more often, I get a shrug. Teachers get better at lesson planning through targeted, manageable, and time-sensitive feedback. Leaders get better at giving lesson plan feedback when they are provided guidance and training on how to do so. The point here is that the school leader is responsible for the professional development and growth of every adult in the building, and that responsibility is a privilege that has to be taken just as seriously and sacredly as any other within the school.

The third trend is around a common refrain I hear in schools. Leaders want to empower the people who work for them so they provide very little direction. On anything. Now, having a staff of intrinsically motivated go-getters can certainly lead to greater team success, deeper organizational connections, and the attainment of educational goals. The problem is that the above rarely happens. Usually, staff members do what's asked of them with varying degrees of effectiveness and follow-through. While not doing what's not asked of them. From my experience, go-getters are rare. Empowerment comes from expertise. From knowing a curriculum, assessment, or pedagogical strategy so well that changing course based on the current situation is easy. From knowing so clearly how well students are doing that modifying the unit plan is made proactively, not reactively. But the only way to empower leaders or teachers is to be acutely attuned to the pulse and needs of the school and provide the corresponding training to meet those needs.

## WHAT'S INSIDE?

What we've created here is a step-by-step guide to executing leadership actions using The Skyrocket Leader Framework. Each leader action inside includes a real-world rationale for why it matters, and a section on what it looks like when the leader has the system in place or performs it with fidelity. Practice typically follows one of two paths (and often includes both): 1) the creation of the system or leader action if one does not exist, and 2) the execution and implementation of the system or leader action. Since this manual and framework exist to foster leader development and it's possible that some of these systems, actions, or documents are absent entirely from your school, you may wonder, where is the template for x? We considered including some or all of them, but choosing which to include became an impossible endeavor, and if all were included, it would make this manual four hundred pages as opposed to forty. So we strove for simplicity and user-friendliness.

As always, I hope you find this to be a useful tool. If you need anything or have any feedback for us, please reach out. We'd love to hear from you.

- Michael Sonbert



Michael Sonbert is the founder of Skyrocket Educator Training. He's trained leaders from over 80 cities around the world. His Skyrocket Framework for Teacher Coaching is currently being used in over 300 schools nationally, and his first book, "Skyrocket Your Teacher Coaching," was released by Dave Burgess Publishing in 2020. He has a Bachelor's Degree from Queens College and a Master's Degree in Special Education from Arcadia University. He started his career in education at Mastery Charter Schools in Philadelphia, first, as a literature and composition teacher, then as an Instructional Coach, and finally as the Director of Strategic Partnerships. In his spare time, Michael likes to write, play music, and wrestle with his children, Max, Teddy, and Penny.

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## Strand 1: Fundamentals

### **LEADER OUTCOME GOAL:**

The school is positive, organized, and purposeful. School leaders design systems, provide supports, and hold everyone accountable to schoolwide expectations. The school is an equitable environment for students, families, and staff.



## STRAND 1

**Leader Action 1** – Design and execute on foundational school systems and common expectations (vision, values, now/later goals, adult responsibilities, org. chart, etc.).

### Nickname – Foundational Systems & Expectations

**Rationale** – Picture your favorite restaurant. Maybe someone greets you at the door, another person takes you to your table, then the server takes your order back to the chef, etc. Everyone working at that restaurant has a clear, defined role, their expectations are explicit. If you went and asked the maitre'd for a refill on your drink, they'd tell you (politely) it's not their job, to see the bartender or your server. There's consistency, you know what to expect, the food is delicious, and so you return, time and time again. Just like a restaurant has a clear vision, adult responsibilities, values, so too does your school. Defining the vision is the crucial foundation not only to the technical running of systems but also to the alignment of the school experience to school values. Every stakeholder needs to know the mission of the school and how they act to uphold that vision. It is critical to the functioning of your school that everyone is explicitly clear on where to go, what to do, what they are responsible for, and most importantly, how those actions contribute to upholding the vision and values of the school community. When everyone is on the same page, it allows you as the leader to steer the ship when things go off course.

**What it looks like** – Vision statement and values are created with input from multiple stakeholders and are the foundation for all further school design and decision-making. These are posted in visible locations throughout the school and communicated first to every staff member, student, family, and outside stakeholder when introducing them to the school. They are referenced in meetings and written communication with staff and presentations to students and families. The leader constantly models the values and staff not only know the values, but follow the lead and embody them.

Staff expectations are explicitly defined by utilizing workflow charts, detailed descriptions of job responsibilities for every role, and thoroughly developed rubrics for role performance. Expectations are developed with explicit alignment to the vision and values of the school. Staff are clear on exactly what is expected of them for both performing their duties and how their contributions uphold the vision and values because the leader takes the time to define expectations at the start of the school year/their hire start. There is a clear system for promotions and performance concerns using transparent rubrics and defined metrics to measure objective success for each role. Role expectations are the foundation for observations, discussions of performance, coaching, and strategic planning.

Accountability measures explicitly define what unsuccessful implementation of systems or upholding of vision/values looks like and defines the appropriate outcome. The leader creates an official document that outlines the follow-up that will be taken when expectations fail to be met by a staff member/community member and ensures that all other leaders/managers read, understand, and maintain fidelity to the guidelines.

Goals are determined based on the school's vision and values. Using the school's previous metrics, the leader sets manageable and impactful later goals – goals that determine whether the school year was successful (i.e. decreasing suspension rates from 5% to 2%). Now goals are on-going leader or teacher actions and checkpoints which determine whether the school is on-target to hit the later goals (i.e. community meetings happen in every class at least 1 once per week to improve peer-to-peer relationships).

#### Practice

1. Provide a model of a vision statement and core values which support it. Share this vision statement and the values and explain what they communicate to all stakeholders, how they would be upheld throughout the school, and the accountability measures that would need to be in place. Ask the leader to script and refine the vision statement and core values using guiding prompts:
  - What student outcomes will the school deliver?
  - How will students and families feel when at the school?
  - How will staff act to deliver the outcomes?
  - What beliefs and values must school staff share in order to deliver the outcomes?
  - If a family read this statement, would they be explicitly clear on what to expect of their student's experience? If a potential hire read this statement, would they be explicitly clear on the beliefs they must agree to in order to be a successful member of the team?
2. Work with the leader to list out the daily responsibilities and job competencies for each staff role: what must a staff member do daily/weekly/quarterly in order to successfully uphold the school vision? Each expectation should be tagged to one of the defined values to maintain alignment. Leader should define what a failure of expectations looks like and determine the appropriate follow up, documenting all of this and sharing with any other managers in the building.
3. Share a template and sample data to use for setting now and later goals for the year (these will be used in S1.LA3 and in S3.LA2). Model how to identify priorities within each workstream of the school (instruction, culture, operations) and the later goals for each. Explain how the later goals are the long-term outputs that are:
  - a. Aligned to your vision
  - b. Have a start and end date
  - c. Manageable and measurable

Using current school metrics, support the leader in setting later goals within each workstream. Provide feedback on whether the later goals meet the above criteria.

Model how to set now goals that are aligned to the later goals. Explain now goals are:

- a. Predictive
- b. Influenceable
- c. Ongoing
- d. All aboard

Support the leader in setting now goals aligned to their later goals. Provide feedback on whether the now goals meet the above criteria. appropriate follow up, documenting all of this and sharing with any other managers in the building.

## STRAND 1

**Leader Action 2** – Design, implement, and monitor consistent school culture\* systems that ensure equitable treatment of all students and staff. \*See Skyrocket Culture Framework for reference

### Nickname – School Culture Systems

**Rationale** – When I was little, I played tee-ball, then little league baseball on Saturday mornings. Every game, and sometimes within games, I'd rotate positions. Sometimes I'd start, other times I'd be a substitute. My parents knew this was how the team functioned. Every kid got a chance to play every position, to hit, to pitch, etc. This not only gave everyone an even shot, it allowed the coaches to see where we thrived. There was a system designed to make sure all kids are treated fairly, and everyone knew what that system was. While school is not a little league, it does need to have systems in place so that all stakeholders are treated equitably. As the leader, you need to define which behaviors contribute to a positive school environment, and what staff should do to promote such a climate, ensuring that students enter a safe, productive, and joyful environment. Intentional culture systems keep all staff, students, and families aligned to shared values and expectations so that learning can thrive. Once they're established, you must monitor them to ensure they're being adhered to.

**What it looks like** – There is a specific manual for student & family expectations that all school community members review. Students and families are able to review the manual for clarity on the behaviors they are expected to maintain within the school and the systems that are in place to support them in meeting those expectations. Students and families sign this manual to confirm that they have read, understood, and agree to the code of conduct. Staff read this manual to understand what will be expected of students, and how they can support it, across the school and in each and every classroom.

All schoolwide systems/routines (arrival, lunch, transitions, dismissal, grading policies, etc.) are:

- Thoroughly defined and documented
- Written with the collaboration of multiple stakeholders
- Supported by clear success metrics
- Reviewed and rehearsed by staff at the beginning of the school year
- Aligned to the vision and values
- Upheld by leaders who use documents as guidelines for prompt feedback

There is a clear, defined system to manage positive school culture which explicitly outlines an aligned response system to student behaviors, including which behaviors to praise and which require a consequence. All staff know and uphold this system. Across all classrooms an aligned, transparent behavior management system is implemented with fidelity, which results in students knowing that expectations will be the same throughout the school.

### Practice

1. Provide the leader with a model of schoolwide systems and routines that uphold the school vision statement. List actions needed to execute the system and what that looks and sounds like when done well. Note what staff and students need to do in order for these systems to operate efficiently. Based on your model, have the leader identify all critical schoolwide systems & routines that uphold the school vision and then document the actions needed to execute the system. Write out exactly what should be seen and heard when the system is executed successfully; identify the exact staff and student actions that are necessary for success; create a plan to share the documentation with all staff through aligned training.
2. Conduct a joint school culture walkthrough to collect data on alignment in maintaining positive school culture. Ask the leader to identify trends across classrooms, noting the tone of adult-to-adult interactions, adult-to-student interactions, and student-to-student interactions. Then, have the leader identify 2-3 areas of strong alignment and 1-2 areas of misalignment. Work together to develop a plan to address areas of misalignment through a schoolwide reset of expectations.



## STRAND 1

**Leader Action 3** – Create and follow a weekly calendar that includes all goal-impacting and program critical leader actions. Leader spends >90% of their time on these school wide priorities.

### Nickname – Prioritize and Calendar the Big Rocks

**Rationale** – As a kid, I used to love going to carnivals and fairs. Inevitably, I'd find myself playing whack-a-mole or one of those games where a figure pops up and I'd have to shoot it down with a beebie gun before the next one popped up. It was fun, fast-paced, exciting, and rewarding. Every time I whacked a mole or aimed and fired straight, I felt successful. The best part: I got to feel this rush and sense of accomplishment repeatedly, and if I missed one, I hit the next. As a school leader, you can very easily get caught up in a game of school whack-a-mole: who is absent today? The printer is jammed? Mrs. Johnson is calling again? The laptop cart is missing two laptops? Every little mole that you whack feels good. What it doesn't do however, is move the needle for students and teachers. The majority of your time must be spent on the actions that generate positive momentum to accomplish your goals and priorities. It is critical that you design your calendar intentionally (including time to respond to emails, design, and lunch) and then stick to it. This will help you maintain focus. And yes, those moles will pop-up. And when they do, it's important that you quickly handle them and get right back to your goal-impacting and program critical items.

**What it looks like** – The leader uses schoolwide now/later goals to prioritize specific actions they will take each week. The leader then fills in the rest of their weekly calendar with program-critical responsibilities, and then other obligations.

Standing items to prioritize daily:

- Morning walkthrough to greet staff and sweep building
- Presence at arrival, dismissal and transitions
- Leadership meetings/daily huddles
- Inbox clearing (suggested: once in am, once midday, once in pm)

Standing items to prioritize weekly:

- Walkthroughs to gather trends and increase visibility
- Targeted observations of teachers
- 1:1 coaching meetings with direct reports
- Weekly leadership team meetings
- Staff meetings
- PD sessions (if applicable)
- Focused work time (data analysis, writing staff communication; planning meeting agendas, planning coaching meetings, etc.)
- Personal time

### Practice

1. Provide the leader with a sample calendar, including all the things that typically gobble up time. Share the calendar side-by-side with sample schoolwide goals/priorities. Model the thinking process needed to re-allocate time/responsibilities based on those goals/priorities and then share a revised calendar. Have the leader share their current calendar and identify everything aligned with schoolwide goals/priorities. For all other obligations, have the leader re-allocate their time or who is responsible for the task, and then have them recreate their calendar.
2. If possible, shadow the leader for a day. Document exactly when and where time is spent, and how that time is or isn't aligned with the school's goals/priorities. Share your analysis of the leader's time, and provide a revised schedule/calendar based on this analysis.
3. Ask the leader to review their schoolwide goals/priorities and then list the key actions they need to take in order to meet them (help them prioritize, reorder, or recreate goals/priorities as necessary). Have the leader generate a bulleted list of daily and weekly actions they currently take and then help them pare down the list by probing – "does this directly impact success in [schoolwide priority]?" If not, guide them to delegate or cut! Then, help the leader consider the ebb and flow of their week. Ex – does planning meeting agendas make more sense at the start or end of the week? Will they be better suited with stacking observations within a few days or have an even distribution across each day of the week?
4. Play the role of 'surprise emergency!' Throw hypotheticals at the leader and push them to make a priorities-based decision on how their calendar should respond; should the issue be prioritized, delegated, or ignored? Why? How will that choice impact the other priorities for the day or week?

## STRAND 1

**Leader Action 4** – Walk the building and be present and active during school-wide student events (morning arrival, transitions, lunches, and dismissal, etc.) to celebrate and reinforce common expectations.

### Nickname – Schoolwide Presence

**Rationale** – My favorite restaurant of all-time, which sadly is no longer in business, was small. It held maybe 30 to 40 people, and the chef/owner did something without fail, every seating. He'd walk around the restaurant, stop at the tables and ask us how everything was: the food, the service, the wait, etc. He saw all parts of the restaurant functioning, all the time. He knew if your food came out cold, if it was just spicy enough, if the bread was refilled on the table. His mere presence made everything happen in a more positive, effective way. Don't be a restaurant owner/chef who never steps out onto the dining room floor. Give your time and attention to what's happening in the building. Students, families, and teachers need to see you present and involved in schoolwide events. So they can look to you for support and get your feedback.

Consider both the regular and intermittent moments that you should be part of: daily arrival/dismissal, assemblies, lunches and presentations, showcases & games/matches. You should also consider the impact of being present for smaller moments – perhaps pausing any meetings to ensure that you are in the hallways to greet students during each class change.

The more public you are as a school leader, the more you will be able to leverage relationships to keep all members of the community invested in your leadership.

**What it looks like** – Leader is publicly and physically involved, moving around the space and meaningfully interacting with as many students, staff, and families as possible. Community members (staff, students, families) should be greeted and engaged in quick touchpoints about recent updates and accomplishments. The leader is seen modeling appropriate adult-adult and adult-student interactions, praising behaviors that uphold the schoolwide vision, values, and systems and appropriately addressing those that do not. The leader is consistent in this public presence, even if that requires moving around scheduled meetings.

### Practice

1. Provide the leader with a list of transitions and locations throughout the day and model your thinking process as you identify how you would move and when. Get granular here: how long would you stay in the specific location? What would you do/say? How would you interact with staff and students? Explain your rationale for each. Work with the leader to audit their daily schedule (see S1.LA3) to add space to attend transitions and schoolwide 'moments' (arrival, lunch, dismissal). Consider which locations in the school have the highest traffic at these times and plan to be strategically positioned near these areas. Make note of staff or students who have classes in these areas and prepare for authentic greetings and quick touch points.
2. Have the leader plan their event attendance for the quarter/semester. Consider the balance of type of events – perhaps rather than attending every home football game and nothing else, it is more impactful to pick a mix of football games, academic tournaments, and award ceremonies to ensure that they are public and interacting with the whole range of students and families.
3. Observe the leader during a class transition or during an all-school moment. Provide feedback on perceived authenticity, reinforcement of schoolwide culture norms, and modeling of adult actions.

## STRAND 1

**Leader Action 5** – Visit every classroom in a morning walkthrough to build positive relationships with teachers and reinforce culture expectations while ensuring the facility is bright, clean, and functioning.

### Nickname – Morning Touchpoint

**Rationale** – Have you ever walked into a store and seen an aisle littered with debris, a food spill, or shelves in disarray? How did it come to look that way? It could have happened just moments before you walked in, and maybe someone is on their way to address the issue. Or maybe the store manager isn't even aware that the aisle is in such a state, they haven't walked up and down the aisles in some time. As the school leader, you need to walk the aisles, see all components of your school, every day. You'll see the spilled milk (lightbulbs out), as well as get a chance to build relationships with your staff. It takes ten to fifteen minutes to see your building, to admire student work, check the emotional pulse of staff, or simply sweep the environment to ensure that rooms and hallways are clean and ready for the day. Making this a consistent daily habit implicitly sends the message that staff matter as individuals because you are using your time to monitor and check-in, that you have a strong, personal investment in their success and the success of the school environment.

**What it looks like** – The leader conducts this walkthrough as a daily practice. If working with a small staff, aim to greet everyone and keep track of anyone not seen to ensure that they are prioritized the next morning. With larger staff communities, plan a rotation by grade level or departments to ensure that you see each staff member equally.

The rapport with teachers is positive and optimistic –this is not the time to address larger concerns or invite negativity; however, if teachers are not meeting cultural or professional expectations, it is the time to address those quickly, directly, and positively. Set the mood for everyone. Make pop-ins positive, finding something to praise the staff member on or asking how they are feeling about their lessons for the day. If someone does bring up a valid concern, be attentive in acknowledging it but appropriately optimistic. This is also an opportunity to collect anecdotal evidence that can be shared in leadership briefings.

#### Practice

1. Provide the leader with a sample rotation for morning walkthroughs. Explain your rationale for how it was scheduled. Have the leader create an intentional rotational schedule for morning walkthroughs. Probe their thinking – does this rotation ensure that they speak to everyone at least once a week? Are there specific staff who are culture carriers for the rest of the staff? How can they prioritize having more frequent touchpoints with them to create a ripple effect?
2. Prior to doing a walkthrough together, model having a quick check-in conversation, with the leader playing the role of a teacher. Time out your conversation, explain your rationale for the questions asked and what questions to avoid, as well as scheduling follow-up conversations when necessary. Switch roles, and you take on the role of a teacher.
3. Role-play quick touchpoints with more recalcitrant staff. Push the leader to navigate around negative attitudes with an appropriate balance of acknowledging the staff member's thoughts/feelings and stamping conversation with an optimistic push.
4. Follow the leader's rotation and perform a walkthrough together. Take detailed notes to identify trends and glows/grows, and then debrief.

## STRAND 1

**Leader Action 6** – Use data collected during walks to inform daily leadership briefing and weekly leadership meetings, prioritizing logistics and problem-solving to ensure staff is informed and challenges are addressed.

### Nickname – Daily and Weekly Briefings

**Rationale** – At some point during every police-related television show, the lieutenant or lead detective gathers the team in a room to present the priorities of a current case. Some officers are going to canvas the neighborhood for potential witnesses, others will take statements from existing witnesses, some will man the phones, the forensics crew will re-examine the crime scene, and the lieutenant will question the primary suspect. Why does this happen? Because without that direction, no one knows exactly what they're supposed to, what new information has come to light, how the case is progressing, etc. The school leader is the captain and it is of utmost importance that you execute daily and weekly meetings with your leadership team to ensure that everyone is on the same page and is aware of the most important trends based on the data. This prevents cracks in the foundation and allows you all to maintain a united front for the community to respect and trust. The highest functioning leadership teams have both clear silos of responsibility/ownership and constant communication routines to keep each member informed and aware.

**What it looks like** – At a daily briefing, the focus is on key areas of alignment for the day and logistical information that may impact team members across ownership buckets. Data gathered from walkthroughs drives the content and everyone leaves the meeting informed of key priorities across the team and any necessary normed messaging is internalized by all team members. These meetings can either happen in the morning prior to the start of the school day or in the afternoon to preview the following day, but they must happen every day.

The leader uses the weekly meetings to get input from each team member, conduct pulse checks, preview calendars and logistics for the forthcoming week, dig into collaborative problem solving for school-wide issues that may have a ripple effect across each leader's areas of ownership, and to build leader skill. Ideally, weekly leadership team meetings regularly save time for the leader to model leadership actions or for the team to prepare and practice execution of said actions.

Both meeting types should have an agenda set prior to the meeting, with the leadership team meeting being sent out to staff 24 hours in advance (the briefing agenda should be virtually the same every day). Both should be facilitated with clear roles, time limits and a timekeeper, a notetaker, and clear follow up sent post-meeting capturing the key items discussed and necessary action steps per member.

#### Practice

1. Provide the leader with a sample daily and weekly meeting template, timed out for the different components. Role-play with the leader, having the leader pretend to be one of her staff. Share all the updates from the agenda. Model a specific skill/action for the leader. Allow the leader to throw a curveball, and then model how to respond in the moment.
2. Share hypothetical data points and have the leader practice planning an agenda for an upcoming daily and weekly meeting. Have the leader identify which items to cover and defend their rationale. Compare their agenda to yours and discuss the differences. If the leader has updated data from recent walkthroughs, have them prepare the next agenda. Probe the leader to pare down and get specific: is the planned agenda appropriate given the time constraints? Are the items up for discussion appropriate to have a whole-team consensus on? Are there key communication considerations for any action items that everyone needs to be aligned on?
3. Have the leader record facilitation of a meeting, then watch it together, and have the leader self-evaluate: did the agenda run as planned? Was it driven by data? Was that data the most important? How effective did the leader model? Did the team get to prepare and practice? Were team members collaborative? What missed opportunities were there to stamp needed alignment? Was the messaging normed? Was there equity of voice and input across the team?

## STRAND 1

**Leader Action 7** – Lead weekly 1:1 check-ins with individual leadership team members: culture, instruction, operations, etc., that focus on improving leader skill in consistently and equitably executing school instruction, operations, and culture systems and reinforcing common expectations.

### Nickname – Leader Check-Ins

**Rationale** – My father’s garden is really three gardens: fruits, vegetables, and flowers. In the fruits, there are trailing thornless blackberries and grape vines. Each of these are trellised so the vines can grow upwards away from the ground, which is mulched and watered lightly but frequently (especially when it’s hot). In the vegetable garden, there are cherry tomatoes (I know, technically a fruit), cucumbers, and squash. The cherry tomatoes are planted deep in the ground, and while the squash and cucumbers are trellised, they are all watered heavily each week. The vegetables are also protected by chicken wire to keep the squirrels away. In the flower garden, you’ll find roses, lilies, black-eyed Susans (yellow daisies) and daffodils. The ground here is raised and heavily mulched to allow for drainage, since the flower roots will rot if they get too wet. Each week, my dad tends to the gardens and does what each plant needs – each area of the garden needs something a little bit different than the other. Your leaders are like my dad’s garden: each team member needs (generally speaking) something different than the next, and they each deserve your undivided, individual attention in order to ensure that they are being developed as well as driving outcomes towards prioritized goals.

**What it looks like** – Each week, the leader should observe the individual members of the leadership team performing their duties and gather data from walkthroughs school databases. Using the observational notes and data, the leader has a 1:1 weekly meeting with each individual member (instructional, cultural, operational), with the intended purpose of increasing leader skill. Because each team member should have different goals, focus areas, and metrics (all, of course, driving towards the school’s vision and goals), the leader will need to have at least three different agendas, which include a combination of the observational notes and leading data/metrics for their particular workstream. The leader should share glows from each, as well as a targeted grow that will be the focus of the majority of the meeting. The leader should have planned a specific practice aligned to the grow, with clear criteria for success and actionable next steps.

#### Practice

1. Provide the leader with a sample standing agenda, along with metrics/data for a given week. Identify hypothetical instruction/culture/operation team actions based on the data/events. Model the appropriate action step. Have the leader role-play being a member of the instruction/culture/operations team and then provide feedback based on their execution of the action step/skill.
2. Have the leader create a standing agenda for this meeting. Provide feedback around time efficacy, clarity of priorities, and capacity-building moves that result in skill improvements for the instruction/culture/operations team.
3. Have the leader film one of these meetings, watch it together, and then have the leader conduct a self-evaluation: did the agenda run as planned? Did they guide focus to the most important data points and accurately summarize the trends? Were the next steps the most high-leverage actions to move instruction/culture/operations forward? Did the instruction/culture/operations team own, commit, and practice upcoming actions?

## STRAND 1

**Leader Action 8** – Ensure that a training series for all school staff on diversity, equity, and inclusion is delivered.

### Nickname – Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Training

**Rationale** – One of my favorite comedians once addressed an audience member who asked him, “Why are you yelling?” His response, “I’m not yelling, this is just the way I talk. I can go even higher if you want.” Knowing that was his communication style changed the entire tenor of the show. As educators, we know our staff and students come from a variety of backgrounds, have different ways of interpreting and interacting with the world, and it’s your job to ensure that every member of your school community is valued and seen. Every person who walks into your school needs to feel comfortable to be themselves. This cannot happen with wishful thinking or assumptions that people will automatically interact in a way that respects and honors all identities. Every adult in your building brings with them a personal history of experiences that has shaped their world view. But it is your job to ensure that all of the adults are explicitly trained in the tools they need to examine their biases and beliefs, to learn about the needs of others, and to respectfully and authentically communicate with all members of the school community.

**What it looks like** – As the work of reflection and growth is never truly done, DEI trainings should be ongoing. Planning a series for the school year ensures that this critical component of school culture is not left as an afterthought but rather as the underpinning for all of the other work in the school. The training series should be planned using a vetted professional development sequence or an outside partner. When designing goals for the sequence to accomplish, set data metrics that can be measured over time (reduction in disciplinary outcomes, increases in positivity ratios, reduction in SPED identification, increase in equitable representation across key academic programs, etc.).

Trainings should be framed to acknowledge varying levels of participant knowledge and comfortability while asking for full engagement from all. Open all sessions with core agreements to set the tone and culture of the meeting. Trainings should address identity markers, unconscious bias, micro and macro aggressions in the context of the classroom, and culturally responsive pedagogy. Encourage staff to be highly reflective and facilitate respectful discourse in which participants address or respond to intent versus impact.

#### Practice

1. While the school leader is unlikely to be the expert in delivering a training series on DEI, they can still analyze data and use that analysis to set goals for whoever will facilitate the training. Provide a scenario with data that demonstrates gaps in DEI metrics. Model how you’d plan to address these gaps, including a scope and sequence with measurable goals and objectives. Help the leader summarize key gaps in the school’s delivery on DEI metrics (you may need to help them create and deliver a survey or analyze key DEI data). Then, help them identify 2–3 measurable goals for this year’s training series and backwards plan the objectives for each training session that will map towards those measurable goals.
2. If the school leader will be delivering the training series, share a sample presentation meant to address a gap in DEI metrics. Model the framing of the content/conversation, the activities/ tasks, and why those decisions were made. Support the leader with feedback on an existing plan for an upcoming DEI session. Focus feedback around the setting of norms, the rationale for the session, the tangible tools that teachers should leave the session with and plans to preserve equity of voice.

## STRAND 1

**Leader Action 9** – Engage staff members in crucial conversations. Lead planned and unplanned conversations that are direct, urgent, and supportive to reinforce values and common expectations

### Nickname – Crucial Conversations

**Rationale** – In fourth grade, I cheated on a math test. I wrote some notes on a piece of paper and put that paper in my pocket. I wasn't particularly slick or adept, and I got caught peeking down about halfway through the test. When my parents found out, they sat me down and told me that, as a rule, we don't cheat. If we didn't study, or if we don't know something, it's our job to work harder, to get the help we need to fix the issue. We don't cheat. They didn't let it slide and say, "it's okay, he knows he messed up." They addressed the cheating as soon as they knew.

Crucial conversations are often something that school leaders shy away from, rationalizing that 'they knew they messed up, I don't need to salt the wound,' 'they didn't really mean it' or 'it will create more tension or problems if I address it.' While it is best practice to assume the best of all of your staff, leaving critical feedback unsaid can quickly gum the wheel. Note here that the word 'critical' means important, not negative. So, whenever something is said or done that objectively does not uphold the values and expectations you have set, you must follow up. The goal of a crucial conversation is to explicitly point out the action(s) that did not align to the schoolwide expectations, gain insight into the thought process of the staff member, and reach consensus on the change that is needed.

**What it looks like** – Conversations occur as immediate follow up; when the leader observes an action that does not align with the school-wide expectations of the staff, follow-up happens the same school day. The leader uses the DASH Communication Framework (data-focused, authentic, straight, helpful) to ground their mindset and follows these steps to communicate the discrepancy in action, expectations moving forward, and stamps the conversation with a clear action step:

- Greeting
- Name the issue
- Name the impact (use vision, values, goals, adult expectations, and/or data)
- Invite the other person to respond
- Redirect or affirm their response
- Set the expectation moving forward

End the conversation with explicitly clear consensus on what action(s) needs to be taken to change the behavior and/or what must be done if the situation arises again.

### Practice

1. Model having a crucial conversation based on an observation of a staff member at the school or based on a familiar scenario, and have them play the other staff member. Name for the leader the elements of the conversation, following the DASH framework. Then have the leader identify a necessary crucial conversation and plan a script following the DASH framework. If not immediately applicable, plan for a scenario that is likely to arise in the future. Support the leader in evaluating the plan: does this script follow the DASH framework? Deliver the script to the leader (playing role of recipient) as written and ask them to reflect – is the feedback explicitly clear or is there room for misinterpretation? Will the recipient walk away with a clear change or action step to make?
2. Have the leader practice delivering the script. In successive rounds, play the range of potential responses, going from role of amicable to recalcitrant staff member. Have the leader script additional nuance in their language to prepare for all initial response outcomes.



## STRAND 1

**Leader Action 10** – Lead recurring staff meetings to celebrate success, highlight growth opportunities, and build a sense of community among staff.

### Nickname – Staff Meetings

**Rationale** – Before becoming an educator, I worked in customer service for a company that provided print and online advertising. I would take phone calls from customers to help design their ads, or more frequently, problem solve around issues in existing ads. I'd come into work, log into my computer, put headphones in, and work. The only time the members of the customer service team met were for birthdays or if there was a major issue we had to be aware of. To say that we were a team is actually a misnomer. We were in silos. We didn't know how effective (or ineffective) we were, there was no community, we had nothing tying us together. It is very easy as a teacher to get caught up in the silo of the classroom, content, or grade-level. Staff meetings are a critical tool to maintain the alignment of schoolwide priorities and values, to build positive community bonds, and to inspire collective action to move the school forward. Explicit work around instructional development, however, should be saved for PD sessions that allow you to serve the specific practicum needs of subsets of the staff (e.g. for teaching staff, culture staff, or social workers). Staff meetings are not meetings for you to recite what could be the contents of an email! As a leader, you want staff leaving a staff meeting feeling connected to one another and the school's mission while also knowing exactly what deliverables/actions are needed from them for the week.

**What it looks like** – Though the extent of these activities will vary throughout the year, every staff meeting should have at least one opening activity that builds community. This may include one of the following: pair/team check-ins, sharing celebrations, or sharing out interactions with students from the past week. The meeting is grounded in the vision and values of the school. The agenda always includes updates, praise, and next steps for progress on schoolwide goals.

Any logistical information that impacts the entire community should be addressed during staff meetings since all staff are present. Use this time to communicate the rationale or why behind new initiatives or shifts; and, ensure everything has an illustrated connection to the schoolwide priorities or values. Though it may not be necessary in every staff meeting, these meetings are the right time to address/plan/build consensus/gather feedback on any key initiatives or events that will impact the entire school community (back to school night, report card conferences, open houses, or school-wide testing schedules, etc.).

### Practice

1. Provide the leader with a sample scope and sequence for recurring staff meetings and then model the components of one. Have a sample slide deck/ppt ready to walk the leader through each piece, modeling the community-building, connection to values, sharing of data/trends, and the rationale behind a proposed new initiative. Have the leader practice planning a scope and sequence for their recurring staff meetings for the quarter. Identify important schoolwide dates and backwards plan to ensure that communication with staff will be executed in a timely manner. Pre-planning community builders from a list of brainstorm and plugging into the scope and sequence can also help the leader be fully prepared for the more responsive work of planning the variable components of staff meetings.
2. Using your slide deck/ppt model, have the leader create one staff meeting presentation and have the leader practice presenting the content. Give feedback on the connection to schoolwide priorities/values, rationale, tone, and efficiency of the message.
3. Have the leader film a staff meeting, watch it together, and then have the leader conduct a self-evaluation: were all components of the agenda planned and executed? Did the leader build community? Was there equity of voice? Did staff leave with a shared vision, clarity on necessary information, and/or inspiration to progress towards school priorities?



## STRAND 1

**Leader Action 11** – Ensure recurring student community meetings happen to celebrate success, highlight growth opportunities, and build a sense of community among students and staff.

### Nickname – Student Community Meetings

**Rationale** – Have you ever been to a venue where the lighting, sound, visibility, or seating wasn't conducive to the experience as a spectator or fan? I was at one concert venue and sat behind a column and the speakers were right behind my head. I haven't been back. Likely, the venue was designed to maximize profit – fit as many people in as possible, and if the experience isn't great, so be it, as long as the numbers are good. That venue has forgotten about the audience. In school, it's easy to get caught up in numbers: attendance, graduation, retention, suspensions, state-test scores, and when we do, we forget about the audience: the kids. You need to make time for recognition, fun, and collective learning: these motivate students and staff. Build these opportunities into the fabric of your school. Community meetings are a powerful moment to drive forward on schoolwide vision and values, and connect all students and staff to a strong sense of community.

**What it looks like** – Whether daily, weekly, or monthly, student community meetings need to happen on a regular rotation to build consistency for students. The content and goals of student community meetings can vary greatly depending on school size, gradespans, and topical needs. For some agendas, having the entire student body together may be appropriate whereas other meetings may be more relevant to a subset of a grade level. A best practice is to ensure that all community meetings open with meaningful student celebration to build community and pride; consider rotating through acknowledgements to ensure that a variety of student interests and accomplishments are highlighted.

It is also worth noting that facilitating student meetings as a school leader is a high-leverage way for leaders to “walk the talk” and model best practices for staff. Leaders should utilize these meetings as a way to explicitly model a trending instructional/management move that the majority of staff need to see in action.

#### Practice

- 1. For leaders that run meetings themselves:** share a sample community meeting agenda, and then run the meeting. Model the tone, enthusiasm, and positivity you'd expect to see when run well. Instruct the leader to take notes on your model, and then debrief. Have the leader prepare and practice the student community meeting. Focus feedback on their replicable modeling of teaching moves, positivity & enthusiasm, and intentionality of topic choice.
- 2. For leaders that support team members who run these meetings:** share a sample proposed community meeting presentation and the feedback you'd give, explaining how and why you'd give it. Model having the conversation, with the leader taking on the role of the presenter.
- 3.** Give the leader another sample community meeting presentation, and have them analyze it and craft actionable feedback. Then practice the conversation, focusing the coaching around clear delivery of needed action steps and providing compelling rationale.

## STRAND 1

**Leader Action 12** – Send a weekly email to staff each Monday with shout outs, reminders, and a calendar of events for the coming week.

### Nickname – Weekly Email

**Rationale** – We all know someone who is disorganized: they keep to-do lists on random sticky notes, on their phone, the calendar, written on the palms of their hands, sometimes they just hope to remember what's coming up. This person is routinely late, misses deadlines, forgets to pick up milk, or doesn't remember to wish you happy birthday. There are so many things that go on within a school every week that, unless we provide all that information in a "one-stop shop," we risk our staff missing something (Did we win the basketball game? What time does back to school night begin?). Staff should miss nothing. Written communication in a weekly format keeps all staff informed of the most important logistical information and aligned on schoolwide priorities, and sending this email at the start of each and every week sets the tone for the week and ensures that all members of the school staff team are on the same page. This email succinctly, clearly, and consistently captures the mission critical components of your school and should frequently be referred to and referenced – it's also more efficient to respond to teacher inquiries with "that is in the weekly email for you to reference" vs. having the same conversation over and over.

**What it looks like** – It is important to strike a balance of thorough documentation and extraneous/overwhelming detail for weekly communication email. Key components to include are:

- Quick message of inspiration
- Celebrations/shout outs, explicitly aligned to school values
- Important calendar info for the week
- Announcements that require action from one or more staff groups
- Optional – update on schoolwide data aligned to yearly priorities (attendance, student achievement, culture metrics)

### Practice

1. Provide the leader with a sample email template, with all information filled in. Model your thought process behind which content to include, which to exclude, clarity of the message, and the tone. Ask the leader to create a standing template that includes headings for each component that they will include in the bulletin. The leader can save this template as an email signature to quickly pull up each week as a draft to build.
2. Have the leader create a draft of the bulletin and send it to you for feedback before it is shared with staff. Provide feedback on clarity, inspirational tone, key components, and efficiency of the message.

## Strand 2: Coaching

### **LEADER OUTCOME GOAL:**

Staff members receive observations, feedback, coaching, training, and evaluation that improve their teaching and student learning.



## STRAND 2

**Leader Action 1** – Actively coach school leaders using The Skyrocket Teacher and Leader Coaching Frameworks. Spend time each day improving leader skill through modeling, scripting, and role-playing biggest-lever leader actions for the members of the school team.

### Nickname – Coach Leaders

**Rationale** – When a great basketball player is in the game, it can be difficult to hear what the coach is saying from the sidelines over screaming fans. However, she knows what to do because the coach’s voice is in her head, guiding her instincts. Great sports coaches are great because their ‘voice’ lives within the head of all of their players – and great leaders are the same. As a school leader, your ultimate goal is that everyone on your team has the same instinct and vision even when they can’t hear you yelling from the sidelines. Intentional coaching of your leadership team ensures that your power is not limited to just you; you are creating a multiplier effect in building capacity and alignment across all leaders in the building.

**What it looks like** – Every meeting with leaders, either as a leadership team or in 1:1 meetings with each instructional leader, should feature a component of modeling, scripting, or role-playing to build leader capacity. The leader should be prepared with a specific gap to focus on to either model the conversation/coaching/planning that needs to take place or have a set protocol for having the other school leaders script and practice their execution. The leader names ahead of time what the team or individual is working on, the rationale and data supporting it, so that each team member is attentive and bought in. The leader delivering the coaching sets clear goals for success and schedules specific time to follow-up via observation or debrief.

#### Practice

1. Co-shadow a member of the leadership team during a specific duty, and take notes of glows and grows, and identify a specific growth area. Model having a coaching session in which you provide feedback (the school leader should play the role of their team member), design and implement a practice session, and detail clear, aligned next steps. Have the leader shadow a member of the leadership team during a specific duty. The leader should take notes around glows and grows and identify a specific area of growth. Have the leader plan a coaching session, focusing on providing a clear model for the other leaders. Playing the role of participant, replicate the leader’s model exactly and ask the leader to compare your ‘practice round’ to their desired outcome. If the translated model doesn’t land, coach the leader to tighten their model to follow replicable steps.
2. Have the leader film the coaching section of a leadership team or 1:1 meeting, watch it together, and have them conduct a self-evaluation: was the leadership team invested in the practice? Where was their model clear and where was it not? Have the leader analyze the impact of those unclear moments. Have the leader identify a specific shift to make and then script the shift into the next meeting plan.

## STRAND 2

**Leader Action 2** – Design and share a calendar and scope and sequence for teacher development to coordinate observations, feedback, coaching, and evaluation.

### Nickname – Calendar Teacher Development

**Rationale** – I spent numerous years as a volleyball coach. Most of the time, players came with little to no experience, and so, I had to create a system for teaching them the basic skills, and then build those skills into more nuanced, complex ones as we prepared and played in games. I knew that I had to have individual touch points with each player to see their progress, address gaps, and push them forward. I had to set this program out at the beginning of the season, and know, week-by-week, where everyone (including myself) should be. It's the same with your teachers. Teacher effectiveness is the number one driver of student outcomes and must therefore be the top priority for leaders. In far too many schools across the country, teacher development is left to sporadic professional development sessions or single evaluative visits once a year. Ultimately, students pay the price for underdeveloped teachers. Without regular observation and feedback, teacher development is left to the teachers themselves. While there are certainly teachers who will take their development in their own hands, it shouldn't be on a teacher to individually develop themselves. As a leader, you need to consistently be in teacher classrooms giving concrete, high-leverage feedback, and teacher efficacy across the entire building will improve and student outcomes will lift alongside it.

**What it looks like** – Observations (mix of announced and unannounced to ensure authentic class settings and instructional practices) are conducted regularly; all teachers, regardless of tenure or performance level, should receive the same minimum number of formative observations and evaluative visits. Formative observations should occur before any evaluative visits. The calendar and schedule of all observations, coaching, feedback, and evaluations are shared at the beginning of each quarter with the leadership team and coordinated for equitable distribution.

The scheduling of the development calendar includes time for leader(s) to observe, analyze, and provide feedback within a 24-to-48 hour window. Teachers review written feedback, reflect, and respond either in written correspondence or during a debrief meeting with the leader (in-person debriefs are best practice as the leader can respond to concerns and questions in real-time).

Coaching calendars span appropriate length, usually ~8 week cycles. The leader is intentional about using performance data in conjunction with schoolwide priorities to identify which teachers are most appropriate to choose for coaching in a given cycle.

#### Practice

1. Using a sample calendar (or with permission and access to the leader's calendar), provide a sample teacher observation/feedback/coaching schedule. The plan should include days, weeks for formative visits, a logical rotation, the evaluation period, and the general flow/focus based on teacher need. Be sure to build-in time in for feedback to be crafted and delivered. Have the leader look at the upcoming or current quarter and backwards plan – how many evaluative observations must occur based on staff size? How can at least one formative observation & feedback cycle be executed prior to any formal evaluations? The leader should create a weekly rotation that ideally results in all teachers receiving observations 2-3 times within the quarter. Push the leader to explicitly schedule follow-up work time to debrief data, synthesize trends, and write/prepare feedback for delivery.
2. Help the leader create data-driven priority groups of teachers to observe. Have the leader read through the three strands of The Skyrocket Teacher Coaching Framework; ask the leader to identify which strand each current teacher likely falls into and consider subgrouping teachers for targeted observation across the instructional leadership team.

## STRAND 2

**Leader Action 3** – Ensure that all teachers’ lesson plans are reviewed weekly and provided focused, written feedback using the Skyrocket Teacher Coaching Framework.

### Nickname – Lesson Feedback

**Rationale** – My first year as a teacher, I struggled with the amount of papers I collected, graded, and attempted to return to students. At one point, I had collected so much and was so far behind that I had to (gulp) throw student work away. I remember overhearing one of my students, Tommy, saying as I went to collect yet another worksheet, “It doesn’t matter, he’s not going to grade it anyway.” We don’t want our teachers feeling like my students did. We don’t ask teachers to submit lesson plans simply for the sake of submitting them. If we are asking teachers to submit lesson plans, we should provide feedback on them so that our teachers are getting better, both in planning and execution. If teachers don’t receive feedback, then there’s a good chance they’ll submit them for compliance’s sake, but their quality will suffer, and as a result, so too will the outcomes for your students.

**What it looks like** – Leader collects lesson plans (or copies) from teachers each week, ahead of instructional delivery, to review and provide feedback on. Core non-negotiables for lesson plan components should be defined and communicated at the very start of the year and all teachers should be producing plans that align to this framework.

Depending on the size of the teaching staff and the instructional leadership team, lesson plan feedback responsibilities can be divided (consider by grade-level, content area, or direct reports). Leaders should use the series of lesson planning Teacher Actions from The Skyrocket Teacher Coaching Framework to hone in on specific areas of strength and next steps. Feedback on lesson plans should be bite-sized and feasible to turn around within 24 hours of receipt, and expectations around implementing lesson plan feedback must be clear; leaders are not having the teacher scrap all of their hard work, but rather adding successive layers of action steps to tweak the quality of plans over time.

#### Practice

1. Using a sample lesson plan (or better yet, a teacher’s plans from the school), model providing actionable, bite-sized, and feasible feedback based on the school’s goals/priorities and core non-negotiables. Deliver this feedback to the leader in written form (mimicking precisely how it would go in reality) and then debrief with the leader on the tone, actionability, and feasibility of turning it around in 24 hours. Have the leader script out a full written feedback response to a lesson plan submission. Ask the leader to self-evaluate: if you received this feedback, would the next step be explicitly clear? Is the next step for the lesson plan manageable for the teacher to turn around and implement in 24 hours and on their own? If not, what is the plan to carve out time to dive into the planning process directly with the teacher?
2. Co-review a set of lesson plans representative of a beginner, intermediate, and advanced teacher from the team. Ask the leader to audit each lesson plan against the Teacher Actions from The Skyrocket Teacher Coaching Framework. Push the leader to identify progressively more rigorous action steps for each successive performance category of teacher.
3. Help the leader identify lesson plan trends and subsequent most important next steps. Review a subset of teachers’ plans and support in creating bite-sized and feasibly implemented feedback.

## STRAND 2

**Leader Action 4** – Ensure all teachers are observed and provided with focused, aligned feedback (written or verbal) using the Skyrocket Teacher Coaching Framework.

### Nickname – Observe Everyone

**Rationale** – As I stated back in S1.LA10, I used to work for a company that ran print and online advertising. I also stated that we didn't have meetings, we didn't know how we were doing, whether we were effective or not. I never got observed, I never received feedback (unless a customer asked to speak to my manager), and there certainly weren't metrics or a framework for success. Every once in a while, my manager would stand near my desk as I answered a call, and then she'd walk off. I heard the occasional, "Good job," but it didn't mean much. Now, when you call customer service, the standard, "This call may be monitored or recorded for quality assurance" plays. Well, you should be monitoring your teachers for quality assurance, and the Skyrocket Teacher Coaching Framework is the tool by which you can do so in an efficient and focused manner. Wherever you go into a classroom, and this should be frequently, it is incumbent upon you and/or your leadership team to give verbal or written feedback that supports teacher growth, otherwise, you'll just be my absentee manager, looking awkwardly over your teachers' shoulders without any growth to show for it.

**What it looks like** – Using the teacher development calendar, the leader, along with the instructional leadership team, executes planned and unplanned observations. Every observation has a clear objective and framework of 'what to look for.' The leader completes pre-work to familiarize herself with the lesson plan and standards before determining where each teacher is within The Skyrocket Teacher Coaching Framework.

Upon entering the classroom, the leader observes and collects data pertaining to the teacher actions and student outcomes in the Skyrocket Teacher Coaching Framework. The leader should start with classroom culture, collecting data around on-task metrics. Teacher words and actions, as well as the corresponding student words and actions should be recorded verbatim. The leader should take data around other teacher actions in strands 2 and 3, however, the leader must synthesize this observation data and identify the highest-leverage teacher action that will impact student outcomes, pulling directly from The Skyrocket Teacher Coaching Framework.

The leader provides focused, aligned feedback by clearly summarizing the glow(s) observed, highlighting the specific teacher action step, and providing data/rationale for the next step. All components of the feedback are connected to schoolwide vision, values, and priorities. The action step is specific, measurable, observable, and bite-sized. The leader plans and explicitly communicates the metric for success and the time-bound expectations for the teacher to master the action step. If delivering feedback in person, there is explicit practice time built into the meeting. Follow-up is scheduled and communicated so that the leader can observe the progress towards mastering the action step.

### Practice

1. Co-observe a teacher with The Skyrocket Teacher Coaching Framework in hand; have the leader first collect data and observations of student outcomes and then collect data and document teacher words/actions. Identify the highest leverage teacher action by analyzing the student outcomes in direct relation to the observed teacher actions. Observe another teacher and have the leader identify the highest leverage teacher action. Push the leader's analysis by forcing them to present clear data which supports their analysis.
2. Script out a feedback meeting based on a teacher you observed and then model that meeting, with the leader playing the role of the teacher. After the model meeting, give the leader time to jot notes/takeaways, and then debrief. Have the leader plan a feedback meeting script. Provide targeted feedback around clarity and feasibility of the feedback. Have the leader practice delivering the feedback, including facilitation of teacher action practice; play the role of teachers across various levels of skill to develop leader adaptability to various paces of teacher comprehension.

## STRAND 2

**Leader Action 5** – Actively coach a focus group of teachers using The Skyrocket Teacher Coaching Framework. Spend time each day improving instruction through pinpoint analysis, hyper-focused training meetings, and real-time coaching.

### Nickname – Small Group Coaching

**Rationale** – Think of a football team. When teams practice, players are grouped by position and skill. Quarterbacks work with quarterbacks, wide receivers with wide receivers, etc. When there are whole team based practices, the players are grouped by skill (note, I didn't say by experience). If the rookie running back is more skilled than the eighth-year veteran, that rookie running back works with the first team offense. Why do coaches group players this way? Because it makes their jobs easier. Coaching is hard, and coaching a variety of different position players, all at a wide range of skill levels at the same time means the coach has to juggle too many competing needs. So we simplify. We group by skill and position. Then we coach, knowing that there are going to be common trends within each group and that we can be much more targeted and focused this way. When we're more targeted and focused, the players are going to improve more efficiently. The same is true of coaching teachers. Don't try to coach all teachers at once on all things. Group them by skill, grade level, or content area. When you do this intentionally, not only will your teachers get better faster, your head won't be spinning as you juggle so many competing teacher needs.

**What it looks like** – Identify a group of teachers that have similar needs across one of the three strands of The Skyrocket Teacher Coaching Framework and develop a schedule to observe them more frequently. Ideally, the leader observes these classrooms multiple times a week to conduct pinpoint analysis on the 'very next' action step the teachers need to take or tweak.

The leader meets with these teachers at least once a week to deliver feedback in the form of specific action steps and thorough practice of execution. The meetings are hyper-efficient and focus on a tight model of the teacher action followed by multiple rounds of practice from every participant, using the Skyrocket Teacher Coaching Manual as a reference.

When visiting classrooms in the follow up from the weekly meeting, the leader should utilize real-time coaching techniques to support each teacher in mastering the action step in an authentic classroom setting. The leader should track progress of all teachers in the small group for demonstrated mastery of the action step(s).

#### Practice

1. Co-conduct a walkthrough of similarly-leveled teachers to conduct an initial analysis of strengths and growth areas. Model analyzing the trends in teacher skills and creating 1-3 focus areas for the group to dig into. Provide a draft of an ~8 week small group coaching plan, complete with weekly end goals. Co-conduct another walkthrough of similarly-leveled teachers and have the leader analyze the trends in teacher skills to determine 1-3 focus areas for this group to dig into. Then, have the leader draft an ~8 week small group coaching plan with weekly end goals aligned to the teacher training framework. Push the leader's thinking: are these the highest-leverage actions to build across the series? How will these 'practice clinic' group coaching sessions fit into the weekly schedule?
2. Model the creation and implementation of a hyper-focused training meeting for one of the observed teachers. Role-play this meeting with the leader being the teacher (you don't have to practice the entire meeting, however, you should model each part of the check-in, glows, grows, practice, goals, and next steps). Next, ask the leader to plan the agenda of a hyper-focused training meeting; the leader should specifically name trends in missed outcomes using data, name and expertly model the action step, and plan for multiple rounds of successively more rigorous practice. Provide feedback on alignment, rigor, and quality of the model.
3. Have the leader film a hyper-focused training meeting, watch it together, and then have the leader conduct a self-evaluation: where was the leader most effective? Where did the meeting lose traction? Were the teachers bought-in? Was the practice effective and meaningful? Are there next steps in place?



## STRAND 2

**Leader Action 6** – Design and deliver monthly, whole group professional development workshops to teachers and leaders on biggest-lever teacher and leader actions from the Skyrocket Teacher and Leader Coaching Frameworks.

### Nickname – Whole Group PD

**Rationale** – My favorite basketball team recently lost in the NBA playoffs. One of the main reasons was the team played very poor transition defense (for the non-basketball inclined: transition defense is when possession of the basketball switches from one team to the other, and in that transition of possession, the team that was on offense becomes the team on defense). My team didn't defend well in that immediate transition from offense to defense. In the offseason (this really should have happened during the regular season), the coach should work with the entire team on this trend. This is the essence of delivering monthly, whole group professional development on the biggest-lever teacher or leader actions from the Skyrocket Teacher or Leader Coaching Frameworks. As the leader, when you identify schoolwide trends, you should address them with the whole group.

**What it looks like** – Teachers and/or leaders come together with the leadership at least once a month to engage in whole group professional development workshops that focus on the most important teacher and/or leader actions to address school-wide trends.

The leader identifies school-wide trends in advance and identifies the teacher/leader action(s) from The Skyrocket Teacher or Leader Coaching Frameworks that the majority of teachers/leaders need to sharpen. The leader provides clear rationale and data supporting the PD, defines and models the skill in action, and allocates a majority of the time to teacher/leader practice and reflection. The leader actively coaches and provides feedback to teachers/leaders throughout the session.

Post-PD, the leadership team sets clear goals for execution of the teacher/leader action(s) across the school and sets specific times/dates for follow-up observations.

### Practice

1. With the leader, conduct a school-wide walkthrough or observe all members of the leadership team (this may take several days to get data on all teachers/leaders). Using the data, model creating a PD plan to address the highest-leverage teacher/leader action. Provide a script in which you state a clear rationale for introducing it to staff, a model of that skill, along with a practice session that improves teacher/leader skill. Have the leader prepare and send a fully-baked PD plan to address another high-leverage teacher/leader action. Review the plan and provide specific feedback around the opening 'buy in' rationale, the model portion, and the quality, rigor, and alignment of the practice.
2. Have the leader film the delivery of a PD session, watch it together, and have them conduct a self-evaluation: where in the PD participants were highly engaged and where they were not? Did the leader have an effective model? Did the leader monitor, coach and provide feedback to teachers/leaders throughout the session? Have the leader identify a specific shift to make and then script that shift into a follow-up PD session.

## Strand 3: Balanced Leadership

### LEADER OUTCOME GOAL:

The school uses data, input from key stakeholders, and training to improve the school experience for students, staff, and families. Leaders are responsive and nimble, using data to prioritize the biggest-lever actions to drive school and student success.



### STRAND 3

**Leader Action 1** – Conduct weekly instruction, culture, and operations walkthroughs to collect data and identify trends across the school, grade levels, and content areas.

## Nickname – Workstream Walkthroughs

**Rationale** – Think again about your favorite restaurant. What makes it your favorite? Likely, the food is excellent, at a price point you can afford, the atmosphere is good, the service better. If the restaurateur just focused on the dining room, she might miss something going awry in the kitchen, or something on the purchasing end that is costing the business money. You are your school's restaurateur: while the dining room (instruction) is where your bread is buttered, you need to have your finger on the pulse of the other components of building, namely culture and operations. By being aware of trends across all three workstreams of instruction, culture, and operations, you can make iterative improvements that benefit the entire school system.

**What it looks like** – The leader walks through the building (entire building, grade levels, or specific content areas), either individually or with a leadership team, weekly to maintain pulse check on systems across the three main workstreams of the school building. Walkthroughs are intentional and targeted, following a set rubric or set of 'look-fors' that the leader plans ahead of the walkthrough. These 'look fors' should be aligned to the school's now and later goals (S1.LA1). The leader spends walkthrough time intentionally observing and collecting evidence around key metrics for instruction, culture, and operations.

Post-walkthrough, the leader analyzes the collected data to identify wins and gaps in each area. The leader addresses the data via all-staff communication, meetings with individual staff drivers of success, or debriefs with the leadership team. Any gaps in observed/collected data are addressed with prompt follow-up.

### Practice

1. Provide or co-create the intended area of focus for the walkthrough along with aligned criteria for success to be observed. Provide the leader with sample data collection rubrics for instruction, culture, and operations. Conduct the walkthrough recording data around the prioritized metrics of focus.
2. Work with the leader to create a specific rubric for walkthroughs that have metrics of focus for each workstream. The rubric focus areas should directly align to schoolwide systems documentation and current weekly/monthly/quarterly schoolwide goals.
3. Conduct a walkthrough together, pushing the leader to intentionally observe for the metrics of focus. Post walk-through, have the leader identify trending wins and gaps. Have the leader synthesize the gaps and develop an action plan to address and follow up.

### STRAND 3

**Leader Action 2** – Track and respond to weekly and monthly now/later goals to prioritize time and resources to attend to the school’s highest needs.

## Nickname – Responsive Goals

**Rationale** – A few years ago, I decided to go on a diet. I had gained about twenty-five pounds, and I said to myself enough is enough. It wasn’t the first, nor will it be the last diet of my life. If I had set out to lose all that extra weight at once, I would have been incredibly frustrated (I’ve done this numerous times in the past). Instead, I set a weekly goal of losing one pound per week, tracked what I ate, and weighed myself daily. As I lost weight, I decreased my calorie intake. I worked out twice per week to start, then ramped up to three times per week. In six months, I lost thirty-five pounds. By setting small, weekly, responsive goals, and tracking them every day, I not only met my goal, I exceeded it. When you set goals as a leader, it is imperative that they are achievable and that you have a method to track and respond to trends. Improving school attendance is one thing: saying you’re going to improve school attendance from 89% to 95% from January 1st to May 1st, with a weekly attendance liaison who calls students of concern every week and makes house calls, all of which is tracked and logged, is much more precise and attainable.

**What it looks like** – Using data collected from various sources (walkthroughs, instructional observations, coaching data, academic assessments, etc), the leader analyzes these data points in relation to the now and later goals (SI.LA1) that were set based on analysis of data across the instructional, cultural, or operational buckets. Adjustments to goals are made in order to better align and push instructional, cultural, or operational areas of focus in order to ensure progress to goals are sufficiently met. All adjustments are shared with other leadership team members through existing mechanisms, such as leadership team briefings, 1:1 coaching meetings, daily huddles, etc.

In addition, each of those goals are public and the center of all communication with school’s stakeholders. Leader communicates progress towards goals in both public all-school settings such as weekly email communication and staff meetings, as well as in individual or grade level/content area meetings.

### Practice

1. Using sample or school data, share a hypothetical or authentic deep dive into a specific school trend. Model a summary statement of that trend, along with a long-term goal and the shorter-term weekly and monthly goals. Provide a data tracking mechanism that can be used to simply, efficiently, and transparently share progress towards the goal. Facilitate a ‘deep dive’ of data analysis with the leader to support a synthesis of trends. Ask the leader to come to the meeting with current data for instructional, cultural, and operational metrics. Have the leader take stock of the data and identify 1-2 statements that summarize the most urgent gaps in each bucket related to their now/later goals. Probe their thinking – ‘if this gap was closed, would our school definitively move closer towards our values or yearly intended outcomes?’ Then, have the leader adjust and set an end-of-quarter goal metric. Working backwards from that goal, have the leader identify monthly and weekly thresholds that must be met to make adequate progress towards the final goal metric. Identify the key actions each staff member will take to support this goal.
2. Support the leader in designing a simple, transparent tracking mechanism to monitor progress of the goals. Help them plan the time to add data collection and updating of the tracker into their daily/weekly calendar so that the tracking actually gets done. Then, have the leader identify 1-2 methods of communicating the progress schoolwide each week.

### STRAND 3

**Leader Action 3** – Design and deliver responsive, monthly trainings/goal-setting sessions to address schoolwide instructional, cultural, and operational trends

## Nickname – Monthly Responsive Training

**Rationale** – Let’s say you’re that restaurateur. You walk through the kitchen and notice that every night, loads of mushrooms are being thrown away. You spent a ton of time sourcing them fresh from a local grower, and you even modified the menu to include some mushroom-specific dishes. But the dishes aren’t being sold, and money is being lost. So what do you do? Do you cancel your entire contract with the mushroom farmer? No, you’re invested in supporting local produce. Instead, you gather your entire staff: the store manager will decrease some mushroom purchasing, the kitchen will utilize the mushrooms in more dishes (for which you have explicit ideas), the menu will be rewritten so that some of the new mushroom dishes are at the top, and your servers are going generate interest in others by making them “daily specials” that won’t be printed on the menu. Your money-costing mushroom trend has now been addressed at multiple levels of the business. When you walk through your building, not only should you identify trends across the three work-streams, you should create responsive PDs in a similar vein.

**What it looks like** – Monthly trainings reach all intended staff groups, whether cultural, instructional, operational, or all three. Trainings are designed around specific schoolwide trends or upcoming shifts to keep all staff stakeholders informed and aligned. The leader(s) of the training have intentionally identified the trend to address based on data, have defined the exact staff actions needed to address the trend, and have designed a tight model of what success looks/sounds like, and have developed clarity around specific actions/next steps that all staff must take within the context of their role. The leader underscores schoolwide focus on the trend with pinpoint communication and follow-up after the training to ensure alignment and fidelity to the goals set.

### Practice

1. Using walkthrough data (gathered using a rubric from S3.LA1), identify a specific trend in the school. Provide a model PD/slide deck that addresses the trend, and share this with the leader. Model the talking points of the PD, including how you’d share/frame the data, the rationale, and the practice/next steps/follow-up. Ask the leader to identify another highest-leverage schoolwide trend and define the ‘problem statement’; then work together to design a training agenda with sound rationale, data presentation, a tight model/stamped action step, and clear follow-up metrics.
2. Have the leader film the delivery of the training session, watch it together, and then have them conduct a self-evaluation: was the data presented clearly? Did the leader model success effectively? Were the next steps clear and measurable? Did the communication align to the school’s vision and goals? Ask the leader to identify a specific shift to make in either scripting or delivery. Then, have the leader script the shift into the next meeting plan.

### STRAND 3

**Leader Action 4** – Train teachers to analyze classroom and student level data. Hold data meetings once per month to analyze progress and inform lesson and unit planning.

## Nickname – All Students Every Time

**Rationale** – Profitable companies are such because they are relentless about reviewing data to track success of their products and services and, most importantly, using the data to inform changes that need to be made. Even with a cohort of teachers skilled in classroom management and capturing high levels of on-task metrics, instruction that isn't informed by data won't be the strongest. Just as those profitable companies are looking to maximize profits for shareholders, we as educators need to have the same urgency for maximizing learning for our students. Data is the key to maximizing learning. Regular data analysis allows teachers to have a close eye on how students are progressing towards objective mastery and can inform solution-generation for addressing unfinished learning of the content. When your teachers are skilled at data analysis, they will be able to efficiently pinpoint student misconceptions and develop airtight plans to address and close the gaps. Now that is maximizing the profit of deep and enduring student learning.

**What it looks like** – Teachers have a set framework for analyzing either formative or summative data. The leader trains teachers on selecting high leverage standards/skills of focus as the lens through which to examine student work. Teachers then conduct analysis by analyzing student work or outcomes along the lines of the chosen focus. Teachers are able to pinpoint specific error trends or gaps in student understanding. The leader trains teachers in developing concise data-driven instructional plans to explicitly address the gap in understanding and track growth along the specific area of focus.

For each monthly data meeting, teachers provide data or copies of student work, representing a range of skills, preparedness, etc., to the leader at least three days prior to meeting. The leader comes to the meeting thoroughly prepared: she knows the data, has identified the gap, and has suggestions for data driven instruction (DDI). The leader supports and prompts the teacher, who carries the cognitive load in the meeting, to come to the proper conclusions and DDI plan independently.

### Practice

1. Provide a sample framework for analyzing student performance data. Using student work (either manufactured or from the school), model how to use the tool for formative and summative student work. If it doesn't exist, help the leader design the framework for analyzing student performance data. Ask the leader to bring samples of student work, both formative and summative, and analyze the data against the designed framework(s) to test for efficacy and efficiency. Modify as needed.
2. Model the creation and introduction of a whole-group professional development around the data analysis tool. Be sure to include time to practice in this session. Have the leader plan whole-group professional development around the introduction of the data analysis framework (consider Leader Actions 2.6 and 3.3) and provide feedback on the clarity of the message, efficiency, and practice.
3. Conduct a co-analysis of a data set in preparation for an upcoming data meeting. Compare the gap statements and spar; what specific gap in student understanding is revealed by the data? Then, have the leader script a series of prompts that they would use to get teachers to that exemplary gaps statement. Play the role of teacher, adding successive practice rounds where the initial prompt doesn't land to push the leader to prepare for all levels of teacher comprehension.
4. Have the leader script out a full data meeting agenda, complete with an exemplary DDI plan for the responsive lesson. Provide feedback on the exemplars provided: does the suggested instructional method match the nature of the misconception [e.g. direct instruction for majority misconception, guided practice or peer discourse for data sets in which ~50%+ of students have access to the skill]? How can the leader embed prompts in their meeting script to get a teacher to make the same decision about the best instructional method?

### STRAND 3

**Leader Action 5** – Regularly host family and community engagement events, open houses, round tables, parent association meetings, and other events that are designed to bring together the school and community

## Nickname – Family & Community Engagement

**Rationale** – Who do you have the strongest relationships with? If you're anything like me, it's the people who I see the most in a variety of contexts: friends who I exercise with, go out to dinner with, attend sporting events with, have group text chains with. These are the friends who helped me move, and I helped move in return. When you increase the contact points and threads in which families and communities are involved in school, you weave a blanket thicker than any test score or attendance record. It shows that you are invested in the whole student, the whole person, and relationships like that last.

**What it looks like** – The leader schedules monthly events – leader-led or leader-supported – to keep families and community members informed of schoolwide goals, accomplishments, and celebrations. Communication of the events are timely and widespread to key stakeholders. Events may span games/matches, award ceremonies, family office hours/focus groups, academic advising, and other family support methods in partnership with local organizations. The leader gets the majority of appropriate staff involved. Leaders model enthusiasm and professionalism in all interactions with families and community members.

### Practice

1. Provide a model school calendar complete with monthly events. Explain the rationale for the existence and order of each monthly event, as well as what you'd hope to accomplish at each. Detail which community groups would have needed to be contacted and communicated with in order to organize and facilitate each event. For each event, provide a list of which staff members and stakeholders should be present, as well as how that will be messaged. Have the leader preview the upcoming semester calendar and identify appropriate dates for event options. Ask them to consider schoolwide priorities/values and to gather information about current family/community needs (consider public health priorities, cultural celebrations, fundraising needs, etc.) before generating a list of potential events. Encourage the leader to connect with different stakeholders in the school for potential event oversights. Then, have them audit the list for feasibility and timeliness.
2. Once a leader has a proposed set of events, guide them through defining the goals and stakeholders of each event. Even when leaders are not responsible for organization or execution, it is critical that they are prepared to communicate the guiding principles to those that have those responsibilities. Give the leader feedback on the clarity, specificity, and tone of their goals and principles.

### STRAND 3

**Leader Action 6** – Create a school advisory committee to meet monthly with the school leader to share ideas and solutions to school challenges.

## Nickname – School Advisory Committee (SAC)

**Rationale** – When the president takes office, one of their first duties is to establish a cabinet. You know the titles: Secretaries of State, Defense, Agriculture, Transportation, Education, Defense, Labor, etc. Why? Because the president doesn't have the time or mental energy to be expertly plugged into each one of those areas at the level needed to make informed, productive decisions. So these secretaries act as advisors, specializing in their different fields. Of course, the president takes the information given and then chooses a platform or course of action, but it's done with the input of a team. You need the same team of advisors in your school. This team could include folks from each of the different academic departments, athletics, arts, extra curriculars, community relations, culture, etc. Creating and regularly meeting with a school advisory committee builds an efficient and sustainable means of hearing exactly how it feels to be staff 'on the ground' and creates intentional space for hearing novel solutions to continue to improve the school.

**What it looks like** – SAC is formed of instructional, operational, cultural, athletic staff. There is a standing agenda to review upcoming dates and events, debrief data from current schoolwide goals, and review ideas for improvement from the SAC. The leader prepares the agenda 24 hours in advance for all to review with the input of SAC members, who share ideas with the leader prior to the creation of the agenda.

During the meeting, there is equity of voice between the leader and the SAC members. The leader is intentional about empathizing with concerns raised by SAC members while maintaining their stance on decisions that were made based on data and priorities of the school. The leader acknowledges which components of SAC feedback can be acted upon and transparently names which, if any, will not be feasible given the current constraints of resources.

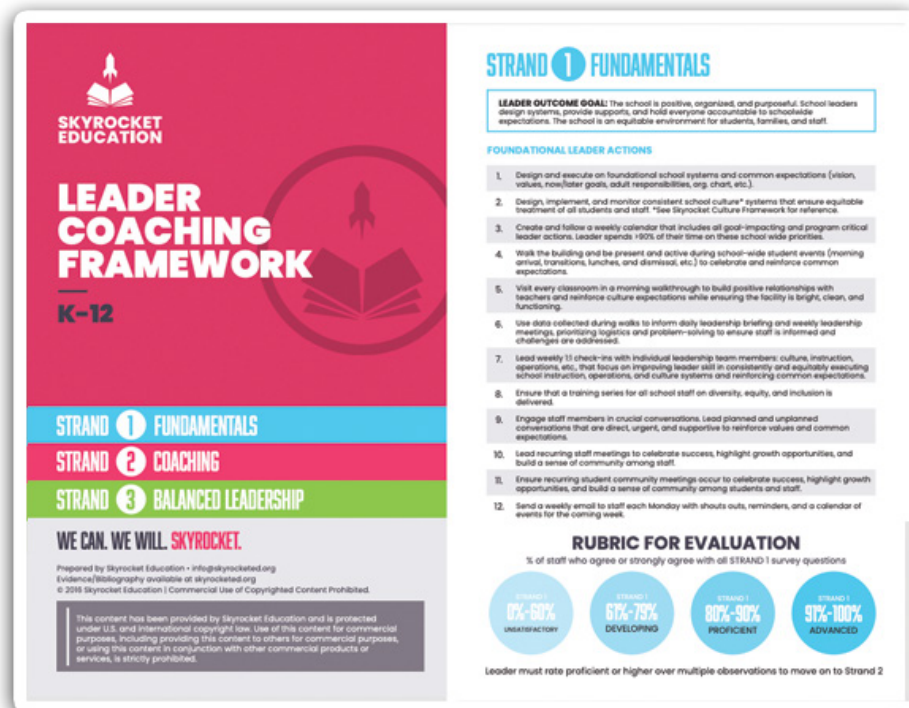
As in other meetings, there should be clear roles, time limits, a timekeeper, and notetaker. The leader, or an appointed notetaker, sends organized notes post-meeting capturing key topics discussed and identifying any follow-up action items with associated owners and timelines.

### Practice

1. Provide the leader with a sample SAC standing agenda template. The template should include time allocation for each member, potential topics, as well as workflow and roles/responsibilities. Model the facilitation of the meeting and have the leader take notes on feasibility and equity of voice. Have the leader draft the standing agenda and provide feedback: is this the right flow of topics? Is there equity of voice from all SAC members? Is the intended scope appropriate for the amount of time? What is the plan to define roles at the start of the meeting to ensure that notes and time are kept? How can they structure collaboration time to maintain efficiency (e.g. timing, using Google tools to allow for simultaneous drafting of material, charts to display multiple participant input at once?)
2. Role-play various challenging scenarios in a SAC meeting that may arise in order to script and practice appropriate effective responses (i.e. a SAC member is proposing an untenable idea/initiative, the data doesn't support the need, etc.). Have the leader script, practice, and revise to strike the balance between authentically acknowledging the SAC member's concern without giving into unreasonable requests.



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