

# FELLOW SCHOOL LEADERS,

## We talk a lot about the importance of trust in our schools.

When I served as a district superintendent in Michigan and later in Louisiana, I considered trust my go-to leadership tool. I spent considerable time building relationships with community leaders, parents, students, and staff. I used their feedback to shape our district's strategic vision, and I leaned on my communications and support teams to respond and keep those conversations open so that our community felt like we kept an open door and that everyone had a voice in the decisions we made.

The relationships you keep and nurture with families and others are the culmination of thousands of interactions across your school system every day. Leadership guru Stephen Covey said it best: "Without trust, we don't truly collaborate; we coordinate or at best, cooperate. It is trust that transforms a group of people into a team."

Be it conversations with bus drivers, teachers, counselors, or school resource officers, the quality of each of these engagements supports the very foundation upon which your school district's reputation — and, ultimately, its success — depends.

These interactions can't be left to chance, yet too many school districts are ill-equipped to take full advantage of these opportunities. To truly build trust, your team needs to listen and learn from your community, develop responsive action plans, and consistently provide positive experiences. Does your team have what it takes to leverage these relationships toward a better school experience?

This guide was created to help you define and build community trust in your schools. Our sincere hope is that you'll share the stories and practical ideas contained here with your teams and use this information to nurture critical relationships with different members of your school community. Because successful schools — and their teams — run on trust.

Yours in leadership and learning,



**Dr. Gerald Dawkins**

SVP, Superintendent and District Relations

### As you read this guide, consider the following questions:

- 1 What steps are you taking to build trust with your community?
- 2 What metrics are you using to measure the state of trust in your schools?