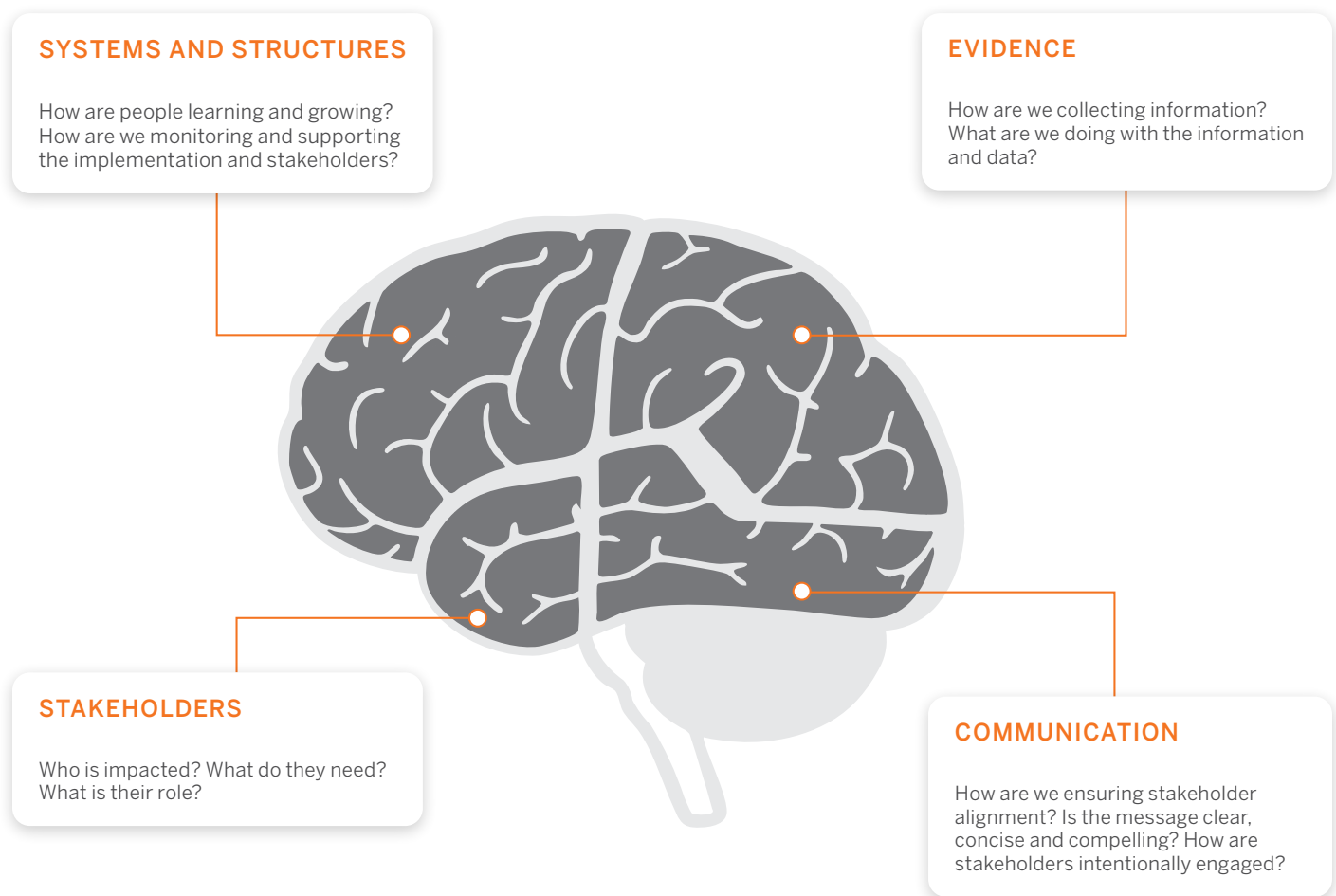


Transforming leadership: Leveraging implementation for impact

by Amplify Education, Inc.





The Leadership Brain

District leaders operate in a complex, fast-changing environment. You must juggle multiple initiatives with unique demands, timelines, and outcomes, and balance competing priorities, all the while working to improve schools and support student success. All this means that district leaders must make decisions that not only connect across initiatives but also align with the district's broad strategic vision.

Successful leadership in this environment requires more than sharp management skills. It depends on the capacity to think clearly, strategically, and comprehensively across competing demands. That's the idea behind a powerful framework for guiding leadership and action: **the leadership brain**.

The leadership brain is a mental model that helps leaders integrate four key domains of effective decision-making: **stakeholders, systems and structures, evidence,** and **communication.** Introduced by educational neuroscience expert David Sousa, this framework translates cognitive science into a practical model for leadership and decision-making. When leaders understand its key components and how to apply them, they're better equipped to make integrated, strategic decisions that drive meaningful change in schools.

Building habits derived from the leadership brain model can help you make decisions that are effective as well as efficient, and are grounded in care for people, process, and practice. The goal, of course, is to make change more manageable and more likely to succeed because the model encourages development of a supportive environment where stakeholders feel confident in any process of change, including, of course, implementation of a new curriculum.



Here's how the leadership brain translates into everyday leadership thinking and action.

LEADERSHIP BRAIN

1

Stakeholders

- **Understand who's affected.** Actively consider the diverse needs, expectations, and roles in your community, not only those of the students and teachers, but also of the parents and other members of the community.
- **Engage people with purpose.** Define stakeholder roles and create real opportunities for them to share their perspectives. Participating in the process of change increases trust. It also fosters buy-in and collaboration.

2

Systems and structures

- **Facilitating growth.** Design systems and structures that can support ongoing learning and professional development. This will often happen naturally as you create an environment where growth feels possible—and expected.
- **Monitor and adapt.** Develop strong structures with ways to track progress and offer real-time support. Feedback loops help you make timely adjustments and keep initiatives moving in the right direction.

3

Evidence

- **Collect meaningful data.** Build systems to collect relevant information to help you understand what's working and what needs attention. Look for data from assessments, observations, and surveys, and don't forget to consider if there are other feedback sources you should be looking at.
- **Use data to drive decisions.** Making sense of all the data is as important as collecting it. Leverage that data to identify where your district has been successful and where challenges are. Then use that information to clearly plan your next steps.

4

Communication

- **Align around shared goals.** Keep everyone focused on the purpose of the work with clear and consistent communication. Direct, compelling messages will help keep stakeholders aligned and energized during a process of change.
- **Invite feedback and dialogue.** Create space for updates, questions, and input—make sure stakeholders feel heard, not just informed! Build trust and strengthen collaboration by being open.

Approaching your work through the leadership brain model will better equip you to manage the complexities of an educational change. This structured yet flexible framework is, of course, simply a tool; the people who implement change are the key to success! The hope is, however, that this tool will be a great help in navigating the many daily decisions and challenges involved in change. When you can make all the elements of change work together, you will help to lay the foundation for lasting progress and stronger outcomes for all students.

The transformer cohort has been instrumental, I believe, in our success. In the past we've adopted a resource, and we've left it to the teachers and the buildings to use and to put into practice. I was determined that we needed to do more than just that for both our teachers and our students. That really is where working with the Transformer program and thinking through the leadership brain concept has come into play. Both provided the framework and key questions that I just needed so that I could reflect, process and determine what was next throughout the first year of implementation.

—Lori Riehle, Assistant Director of Curriculum, Northwest Local School District



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