

DISTRICT OFFICE TRANSFORMATION PROJECT

ABOUT THE PROJECT

The District Office Transformation Project was designed in 2024 by retired Illinois superintendents Mark Hansen, Diane Rutledge and Karen Sullivan. The project was piloted with five (5) district leadership teams during the 2024-25 school year; eleven (11) districts in 2025-26, and a second cohort in 2026 of nine (9).

WHY THIS WORK MATTERS

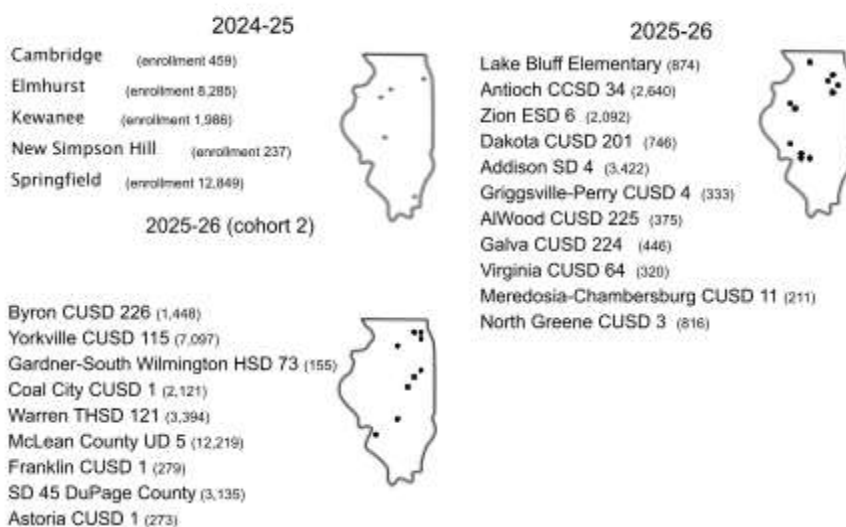
Our work with principals revealed that even strong instructional leaders struggle to apply new skills when district systems are not designed to support their work.

This project helps central offices shift their priorities, practices, and supports to create systems that strengthen excellent teaching and equitable student learning. The approach is grounded in Meredith Honig and Lydia Rainey's (2023) research on transforming central offices to better support principals, teaching, and learning.

THE PROCESS

The project includes an orientation and five in-person content sessions focused on core district systems, with trained coaches guiding leadership teams through content, gap analysis, and strategy selection.

Between sessions, coaches provide virtual support to help teams deepen their analysis, explore research, select strategies, and plan for implementation. Using a **District Office Transformation Tool**, each team examines how its systems currently operate, identifies priority gaps, and develops a multi-year plan to strengthen district systems around teaching and learning.



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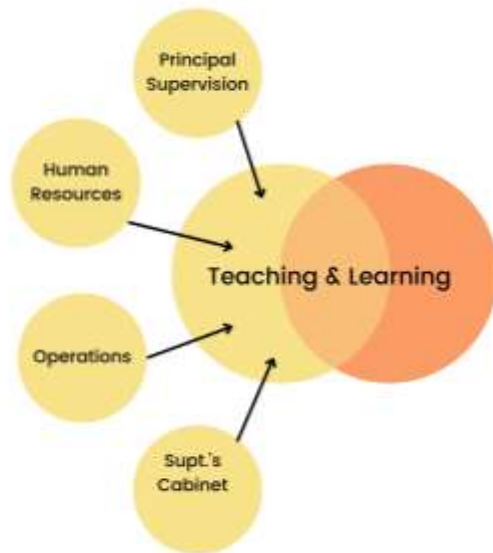
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CENTRALIZED SYSTEMS IN SCHOOLS

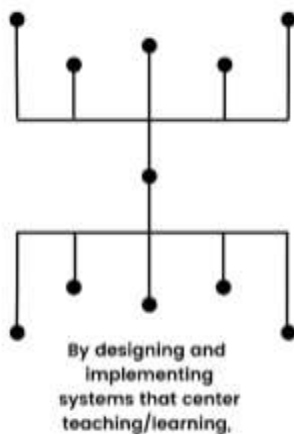
Whether a district is large or small,
urban, suburban or rural
these district office systems exist.

The organizing question:

In your district, are all of these systems intentionally designed, operating and coordinated according to best practices that have proven to affect improvements in student learning?



PROJECT THEORY OF ACTION



district offices can



affect change in instructional leadership and teaching practices



improve student outcomes so that students learn more, and more students learn.

WHAT DISTRICTS GAIN

Districts consistently report that the project helps them:

- align central office departments around a shared vision and priorities;
- strengthen support for principals and school leadership teams;
- improve coordination across teaching and learning, human resources, operations, and executive leadership;
- eliminate organizational barriers that slow district improvement efforts;
- build a sustainable, multi-year roadmap for strengthening district systems; and
- create the conditions for continuous improvement that lead to stronger outcomes for students.

TRANSFORMATION COACHES

- Pat Halloran • Karen Sullivan • Kaine Osburn • Mark Hansen • Jennifer Gill • Curt Simonson • Carol Kilver