



Get to Great: Year 1

Schools and school districts are good places but they don't always achieve great results. Everyone works hard, with noble intentions, but hard work and plenty of activity doesn't necessarily translate into achievement. Get to Great's mission is to get good school districts to great results.

Results: Results are outcomes you can see and measure. They come from a change in behavior, radically improving existing practice, innovating in ways that outperform what has gone before. Results come from setting stretch targets and doing whatever it takes to get there: every student will graduate; every student will read at or above grade level by third grade.

Activity is different. You may have accomplished the activity but, so what? Where is the evidence of achievement? Typically, many school districts throw new programs at problems: we will change the penalties for class cuts; we will implement a new reading series.

What Get to Great is and isn't: Get to Great is not another new program. It is not another layer of work, laid on top of already overburdened administrators, teachers, and staff. Instead, it challenges people to work differently. During the first year, it is professional development for leaders, causing them to think, act, and lead in ways that directly influence student achievement. Then, during the second year, it is an organizing framework, joining together teachers, staff, parents, and board members in teamwork to achieve greater results.

Leadership as the starting point: Research and experience shows that schools and districts that are remarkably successful are led by outstanding principals and superintendents, leaders who achieve results. District leadership teams learn to identify, self-assess, and use the characteristics and skills of results leaders. They redirect their energy, time, and communication to advance the schools and the students in measurable ways. Often districts choose to include teacher association presidents on the leadership team from the start.

Prototypes as practice: Leaders immediately put the results approach into practice by designing and running a prototype project. They identify an area of their responsibility where they want to significantly improve results. Past examples include ensuring that 7 out of the usual 10 seniors who fail to graduate cross the stage; doubling the number of fourth grade students writing at the highest level. Leaders choose an area of under performance, determine the baseline, set a stretch target, identify the data to track progress, establish an initial strategy, and then modify the strategy at each step along the way as the data show what works and what doesn't, always driving to hit the target. Individuals learn about what it takes to achieve results, the leadership team learns

together, and the varied prototypes provide a clear window into much that needs to change in the schools and district.

Targets, teams, and time: The prototype process is the model of the way in which teams of teachers responsible for the achievement of the same group of students, and teams of support personnel responsible for the same result (clean schools, safe buses), will work together to raise performance in year two. During the first year, the board of education and leaders of the teacher and support personnel associations are included in the work. Board, administrator, faculty, and staff leaders decide on a handful, no more than five, major district goals expressed as targets which, when attained, will move the district closer to world class status. Part of the work during the first year is to identify or create available time for faculty and staff teams to meet during the second year.

Keys to success: The first and most important factor in success is the full commitment of the superintendent and principals. You cannot delegate results. The energy and example of every leader is primary, and it takes the entire leadership team. Where there is distance between central office and building leaders, or reluctance on the part of certain principals, closing the gap and engaging all leaders is part of the work. Board members aspire to higher results - it is essential that they are on board. Teacher and staff leaders are critically important, especially the teachers association. Many teachers already feel under the gun with state testing. The push for greater achievement involves further accountability. The superintendent and the board must make clear that accountability is shared and non punitive. Succeeding together involves learning together and, sometimes, learning from falling short.

The second year: Get to Great positions districts to proceed on their own beyond the first year, but many choose to continue for a second year. The thrust of the second year is to take the results work to scale across the schools, classrooms, and operations. Faculty and support teams identify areas of under performance, set targets, and combine their best thinking to hit the targets, using the prototype model. The results that the various teams achieve, taken in combination, converge toward accomplishing the five or fewer major district goals. Teams communicate obstacles and successes in a constant professional dialogue directed toward ever greater results and the entire district moves ahead toward becoming a true results culture.