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Presentation & Resources



# The Director's Quest

From Firefighting  
to Future-Building

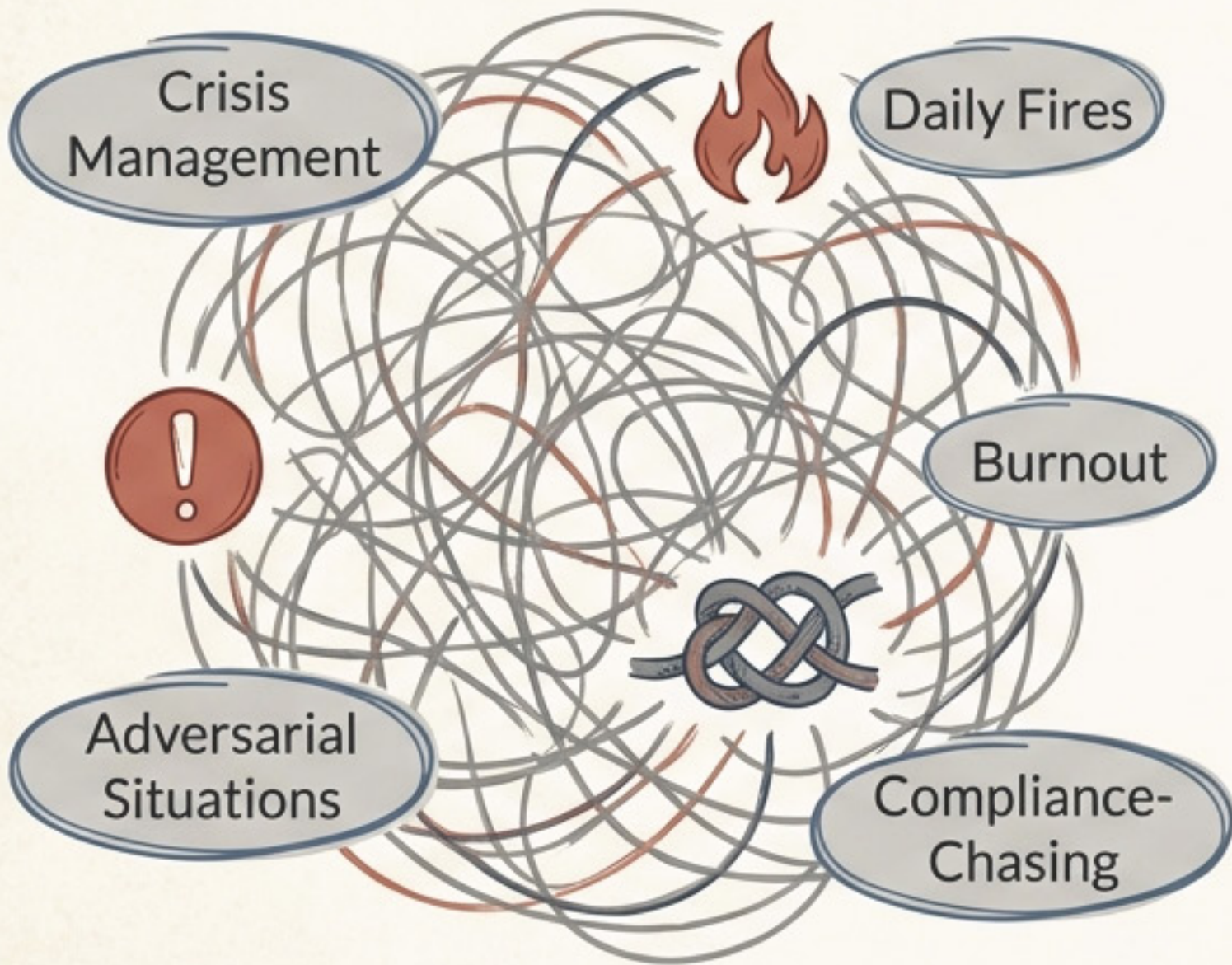


A Proactive Leadership Guide for New Mexico Special Education Directors

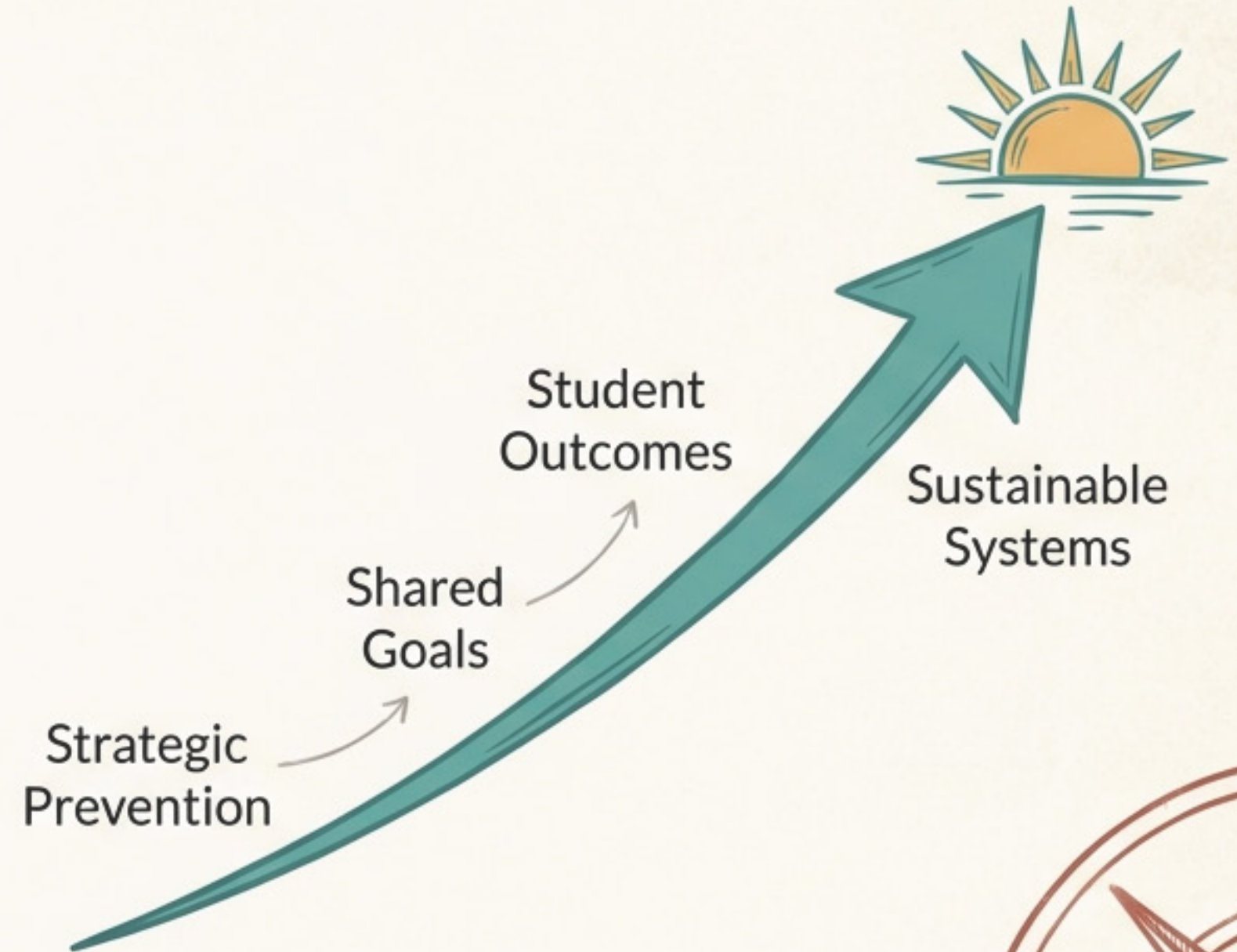


# The Two Paths of Leadership

## The Reactive Loop

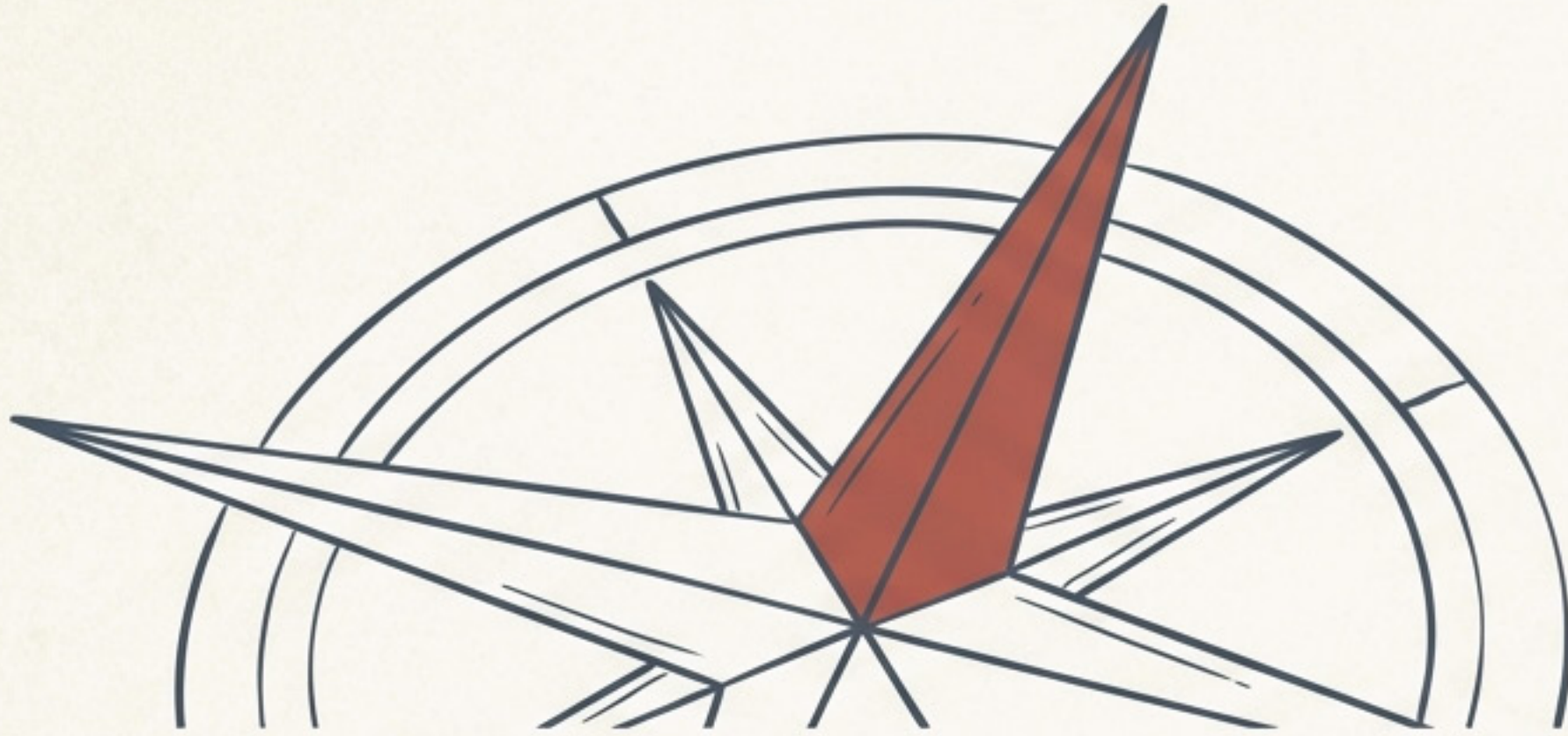


## The Proactive Path





# Your True North: The Purpose of the Quest



***“Monitoring is designed to improve educational results and functional outcomes for children with disabilities while ensuring compliance with IDEA.”***

This isn't just a requirement; it's our shared mission. Our goal is not simply to be 'in compliance,' but to architect success for every student. Compliance is the solid ground we build upon, not the destination itself.

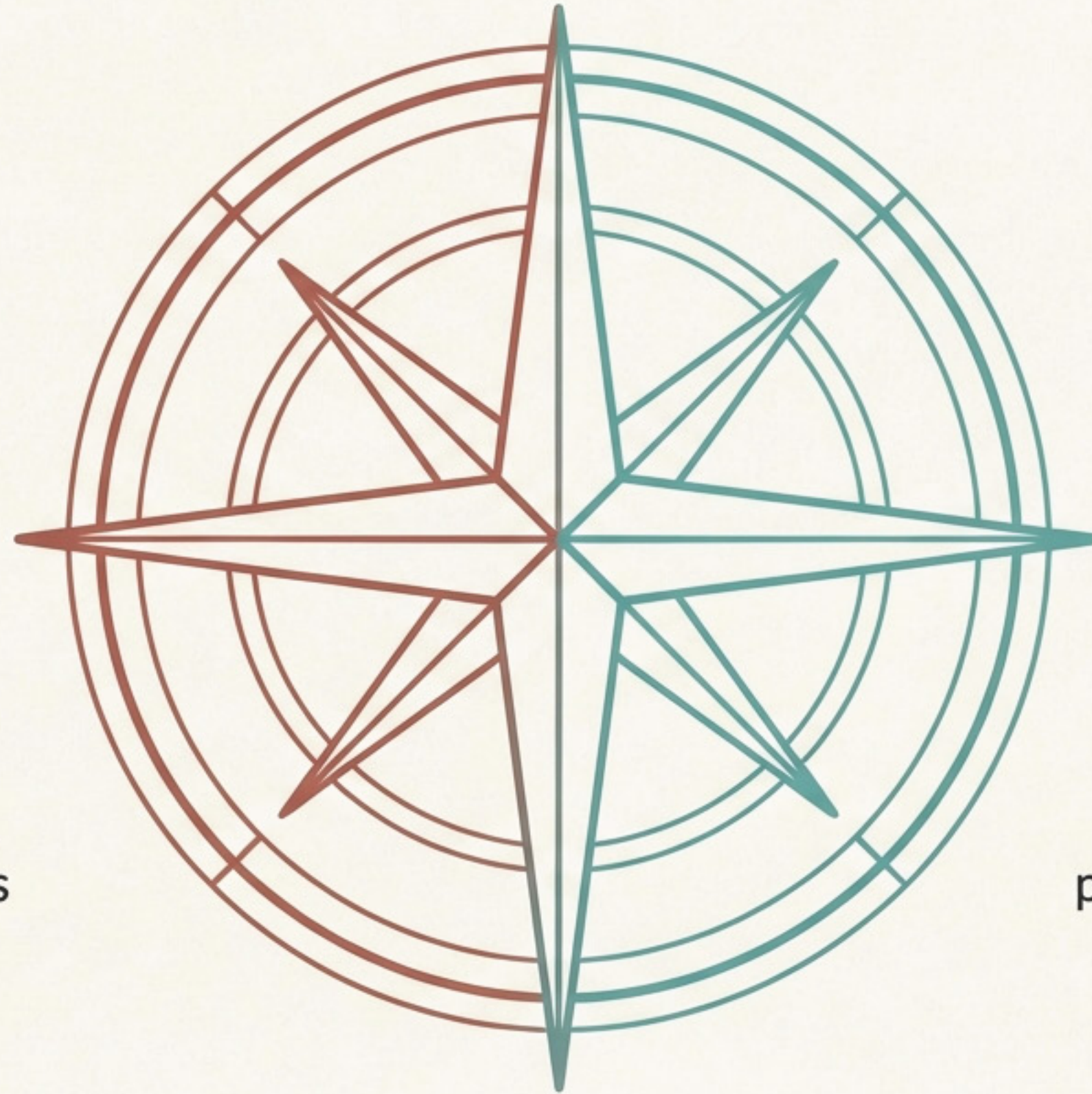


# The Leadership Compass: A Mindset Shift



## From Reactive to Preventative

Shift focus from fixing problems as they arise (e.g., late IEPs) to building systems and providing training that prevent them from happening in the first place.



## From Compliance to Outcomes

While compliance is the crucial 'floor,' direct your primary energy toward strategies that actively improve student learning and their functional, long-term life outcomes.



# Pillar 1: Forge Your Fellowship

A director's greatest strength is their team.



## Cultivate Trust & Collaboration

Foster open communication and establish shared goals. A cohesive team is your best defense against burnout and daily crises.



## Engage, Equip, & Delegate

Move operational tasks to capable team members. This maximizes staff potential and frees you to focus on long-term, strategic goals instead of being consumed by daily fires.



# Pillar 2: Chart the Course with Data

Use data as your map and spyglass to see what's ahead.



## Analyze Trends



Regularly review referral rates, placement data, and timelines. These are the topographical features on your map that reveal systemic issues before they become crises.

## Early Identification



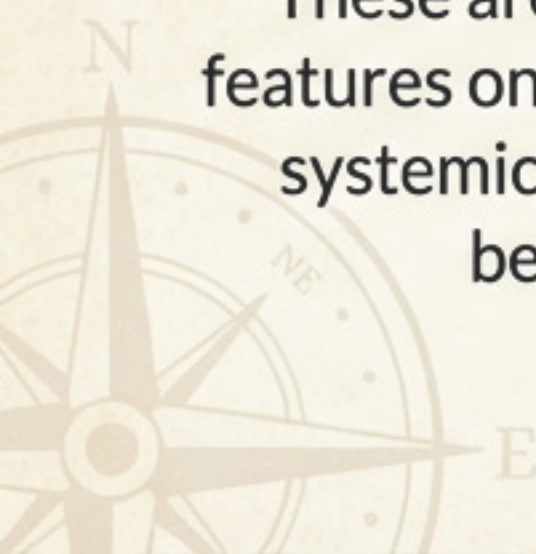
Use your data systems to spot students who are beginning to struggle, allowing for timely, effective interventions.

## Monitor Interventions



Continuously track progress to ensure that the evidence-based interventions you've put in place are actually working and adjust the course as needed.

*\*New Mexico uses compliance and results indicators to identify areas of need.*



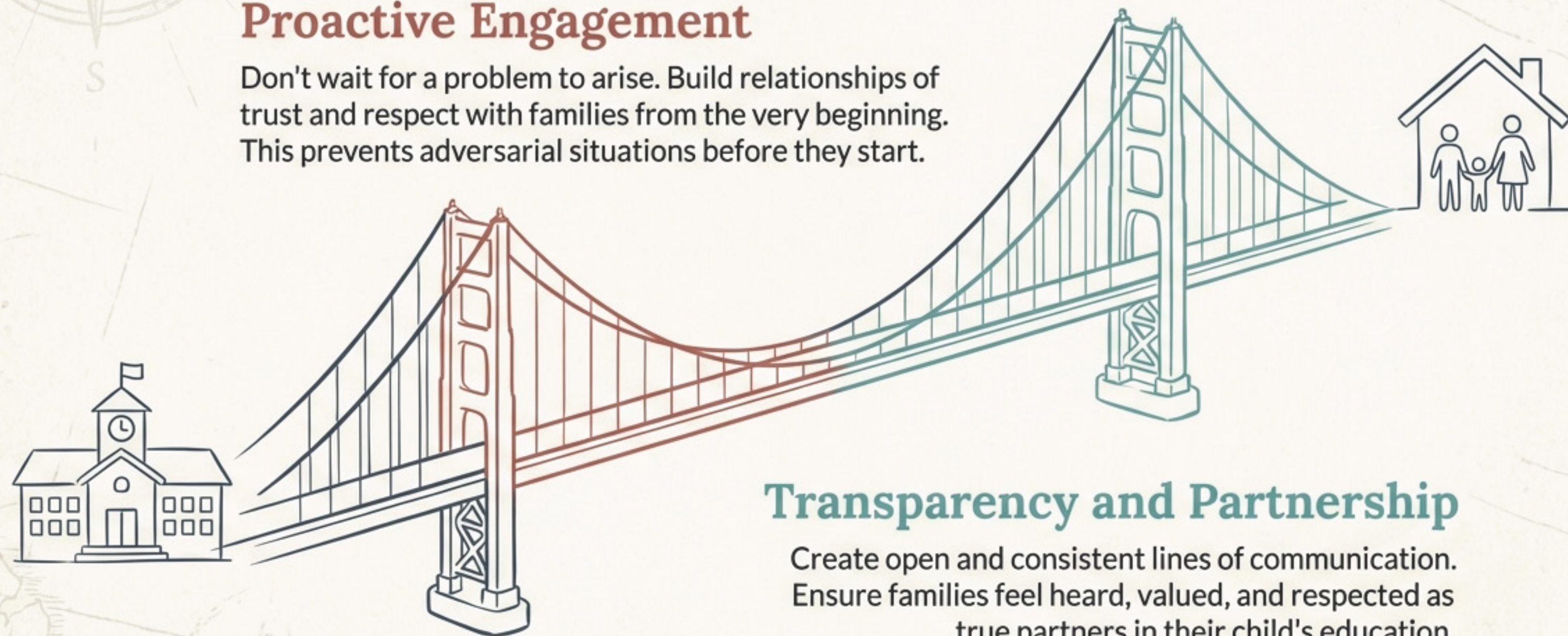


# Pillar 3: Build Bridges, Not Walls

Proactive family partnerships are your strongest alliance.

## Proactive Engagement

Don't wait for a problem to arise. Build relationships of trust and respect with families from the very beginning. This prevents adversarial situations before they start.



## Transparency and Partnership

Create open and consistent lines of communication. Ensure families feel heard, valued, and respected as true partners in their child's education.





# System 1: Fortify the Foundation

High-quality Tier 1 instruction is proactive leadership in action.

## Why it Matters

A strong general education system (Tier 1) is the most effective way to reduce unnecessary special education referrals and ensure equity for all students.

## Your Role

- Champion and support high-quality, inclusive instruction in the general education setting.
- Provide strategic training for all staff on best practices for supporting diverse learners.





# System 2: Master Your Tools and Retain Your Guides



## Strategic Use of Technology

- **Streamline Administration:** Use technology to automate scheduling, compliance tracking, and data reporting. This reclaims precious time for true instructional leadership.
- **Centralize Information:** Ensure IEPs and student data are easily and securely accessible to the entire team.



## Proactive Staffing & Culture

- **Create a Retention Culture:** Build pipelines with universities and, more importantly, create a supportive, professional environment where great staff want to stay and grow.
- **Implement Restorative Practices:** Shift from punitive discipline to addressing root causes. This reduces disproportionality and keeps students learning in the classroom.



# Navigating the Terrain: A Proactive Scenario



**The Challenge:** Data shows a significant increase in special education referrals for 3rd-grade reading difficulties at a specific elementary school.

## The Reactive Loop

- \* Focus on processing the referrals quickly to meet compliance timelines.
- \* Hire another diagnostician to handle the increased workload.

**\*Result\*:** A short-term fix that exhausts resources and doesn't solve the underlying problem.

## The Proactive Path

### Use the Toolkit:

- \* **Chart the Course (Data):** Dig deeper. Analyze the Tier 1 reading curriculum and instruction.
- \* **Forge a Fellowship (Team):** Meet with the principal and 3rd-grade teachers.
- \* **Fortify the Foundation (Tier 1):** Provide targeted professional learning on evidence-based reading instruction.

**\*Result\*:** Address the root cause, build staff capacity, and reduce future referrals.





# Your First Steps on the Path

Begin your shift with three high-impact actions.

# 1



## Establish Your Data Rhythm

**Action:** Institute standing monthly data reviews.

**Focus:** Timelines, IEP quality, and service delivery. This creates a predictable system for monitoring your course.

# 2



## Align Your Fellowship

**Action:** Set clear, written procedures & expectations for your staff.

**Focus:** Ensure these expectations are directly aligned with broader district goals to foster collaboration.

# 3



## Sharpen Your Tools

**Action:** Plan your professional learning calendar strategically for the entire year.

**Focus:** Move away from one-off trainings to a cohesive plan that builds capacity over time.



# The 90-Day Expedition



## Listen & Learn

- Meet your team.
- Review existing data systems.
- Build relationships with principals and key partners.

## Analyze & Plan

- Conduct a deep dive on key compliance and results indicators.
- Identify 1-2 key areas for systemic improvement.
- Launch your monthly data review rhythm.

## Act & Communicate

- Roll out your strategic professional learning plan.
- Communicate your proactive vision and expectations clearly.
- Celebrate early wins with your team.



# Your Council of Guides

**Every quest needs experienced mentors. You are part of a community of leaders dedicated to this work.**



The New Mexico Council of Administrators of Special Education (NMCASE) is your professional community.

Leverage the 100+ years of collective leadership experience within the NMCASE team.

Connect with your peers. Share challenges. Learn from their journeys.



# Your Quest Begins

This journey is a fundamental shift in your role:  
from the district's primary problem-solver to  
the **chief architect** of student success.

**What is the first proactive  
step you will take tomorrow?**



# Questions?

## Contact Information

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