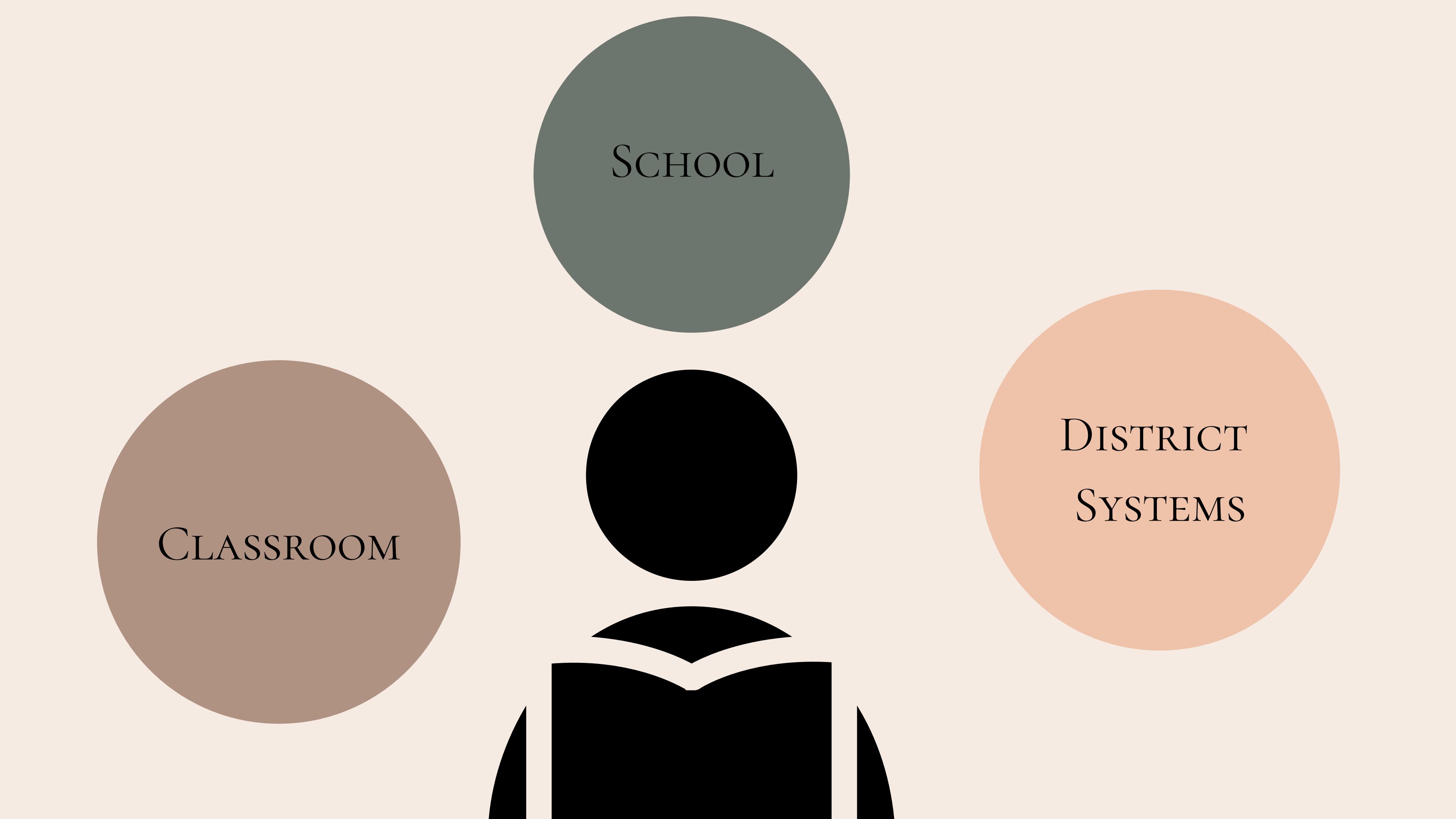


SYSTEMS SHAPE BEHAVIOR: LEADERSHIP FOR INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS

January 15, 2026

WHY THIS SESSION MATTERS

Behavior is shaped by systems, not just classrooms

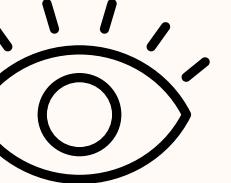
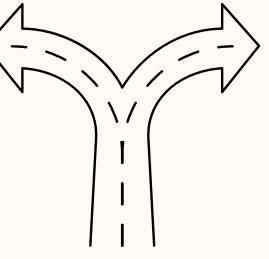


SCHOOL

CLASSROOM

DISTRICT
SYSTEMS

SESSION OUTCOMES

- Identify systems that impact behavior 
- Recognize leadership decisions that escalate or stabilize situations 
- Commit to one high-impact leadership action 

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN BEHAVIOR ESCALATES?

When student behavior escalates in your district, what leadership decision has the
biggest impact on what happens next?

TRAUMA-INFORMED LEADERSHIP: A PRACTICE LENS

- Predictable
- Consistent
- Grounded in adult regulation



REFRAMING BEHAVIOR THROUGH A LEADERSHIP LENS

Behavior is information - not defiance.

- Unmet Needs
- Missing Skills
- Environmental Stressors



WHERE DO YOU HAVE INFLUENCE?

Policies

How do we define discipline?

Placements

Where do we put resources?

Supports

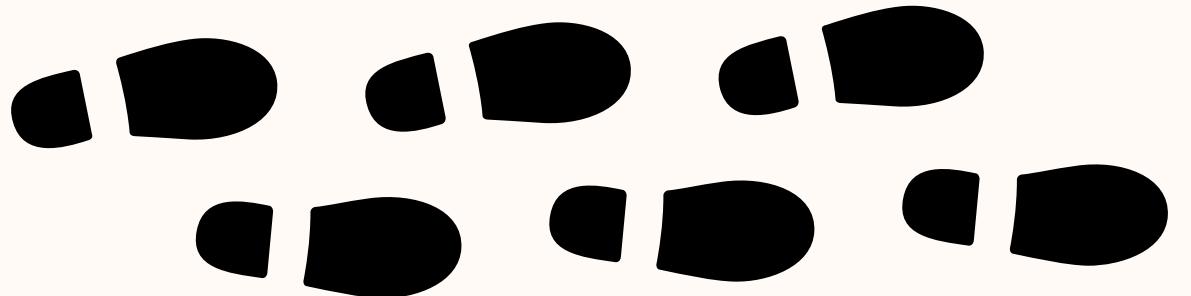
How do we train staff?

Expectations

What do we measure?

SYSTEMS WALK & TALK

Identify the systems that show up when behavior escalates.



SYSTEM WALK & TALK: STATION PROMPTS

Discipline

Does our system default to teaching a skill or assigning a consequence?

Inclusion

Is inclusion a place (a room) or a service that travels? What creates the barrier?

Safety

Who defines *safety*? Is it the absence of behavior, or the presence of regulation?

Staff Support

When staff are involved in a crisis, is the first response scrutiny or support?

DEBRIEF: WHAT DID YOU NOTICE ABOUT YOUR SYSTEMS?

Patterns

What keeps showing up?

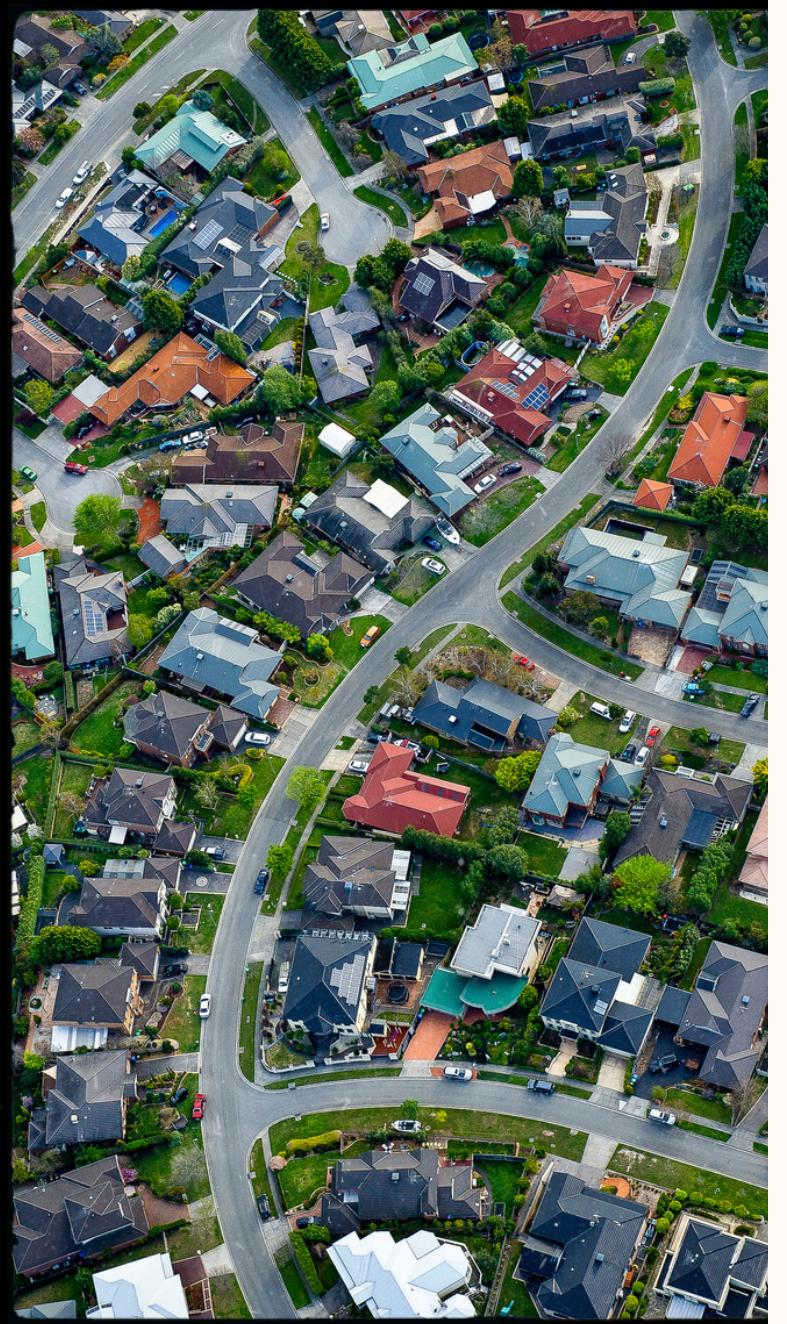
Strengths

What are we doing well?

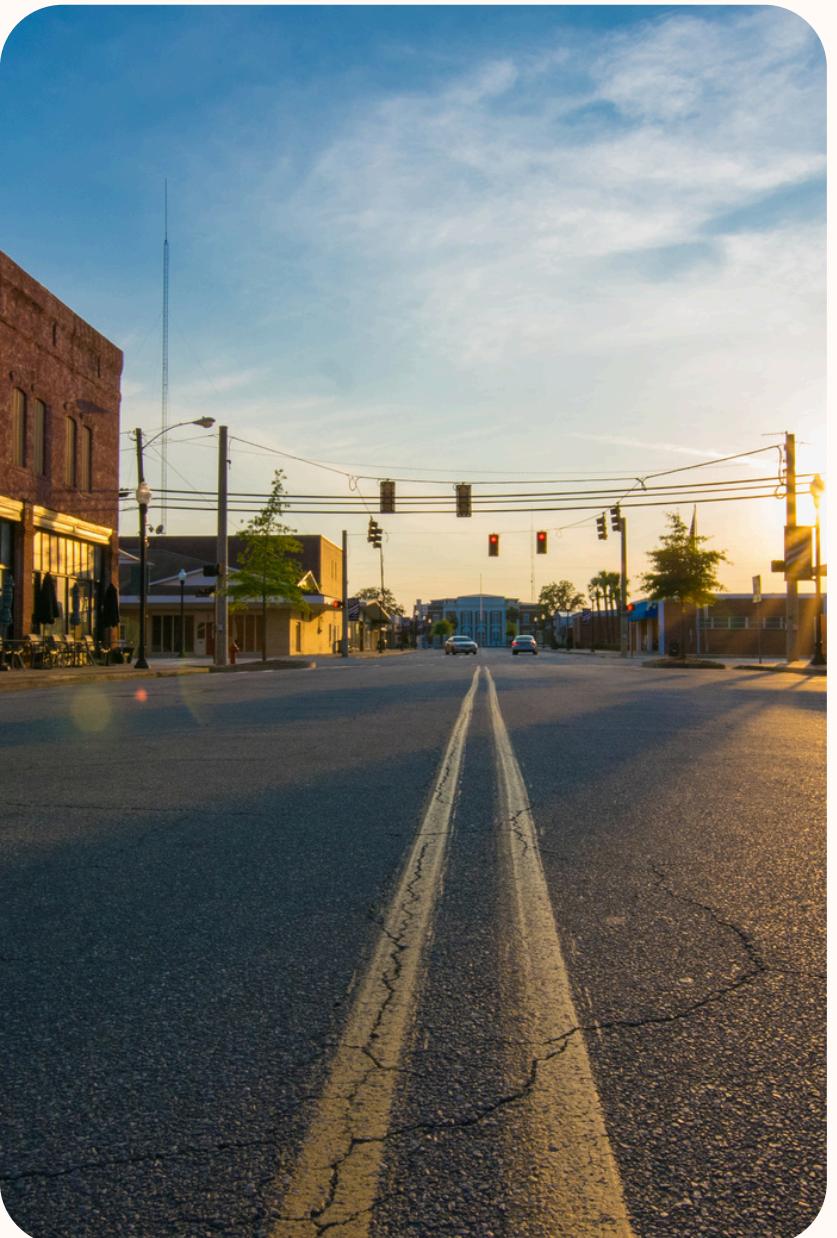
Gaps

Where are we reactive vs.
proactive?

CASE SCENARIOS: CHOOSE YOUR ADVENTURE



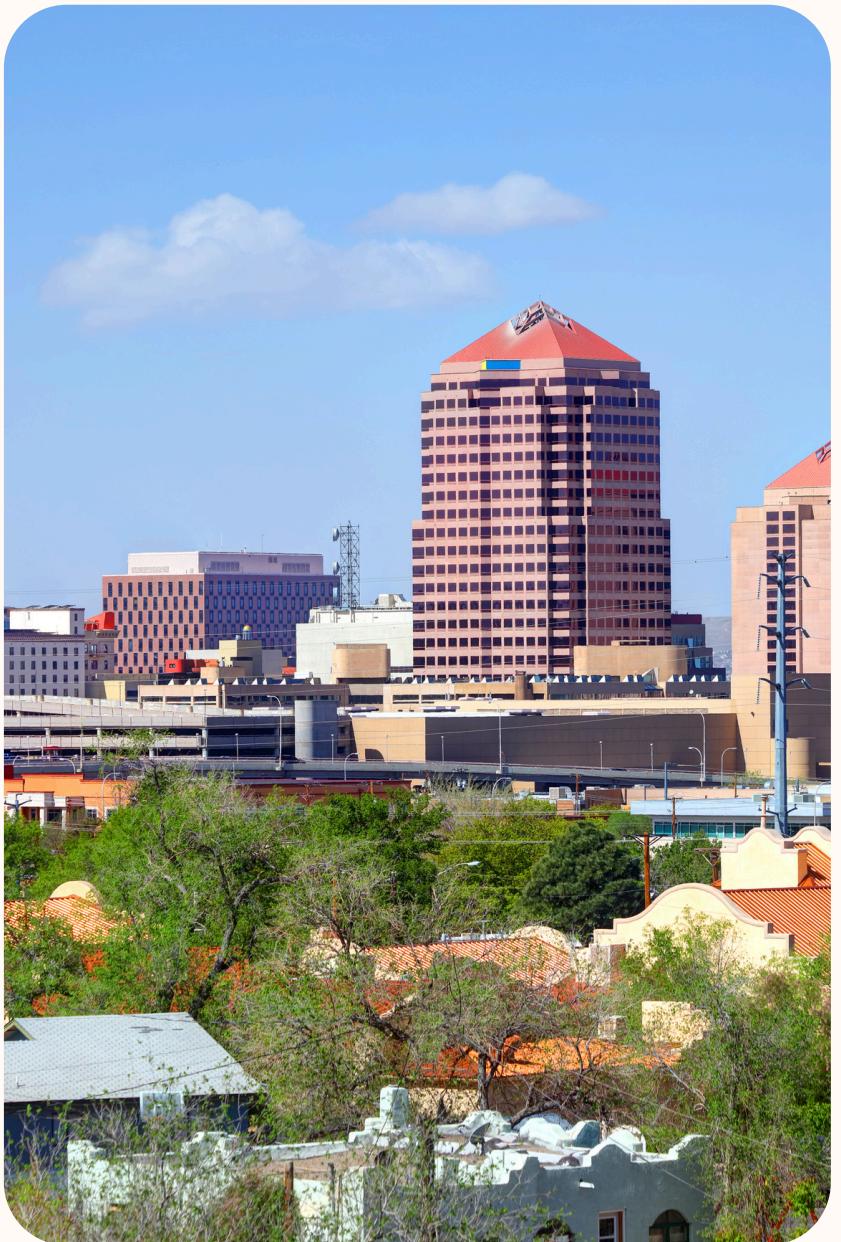
CASE SCENARIOS: THE RURAL GAP



"We don't have the staff/setting for this student." (Resource Tension)

Guiding Question: How do we leverage creative community assets when formal resources are missing?

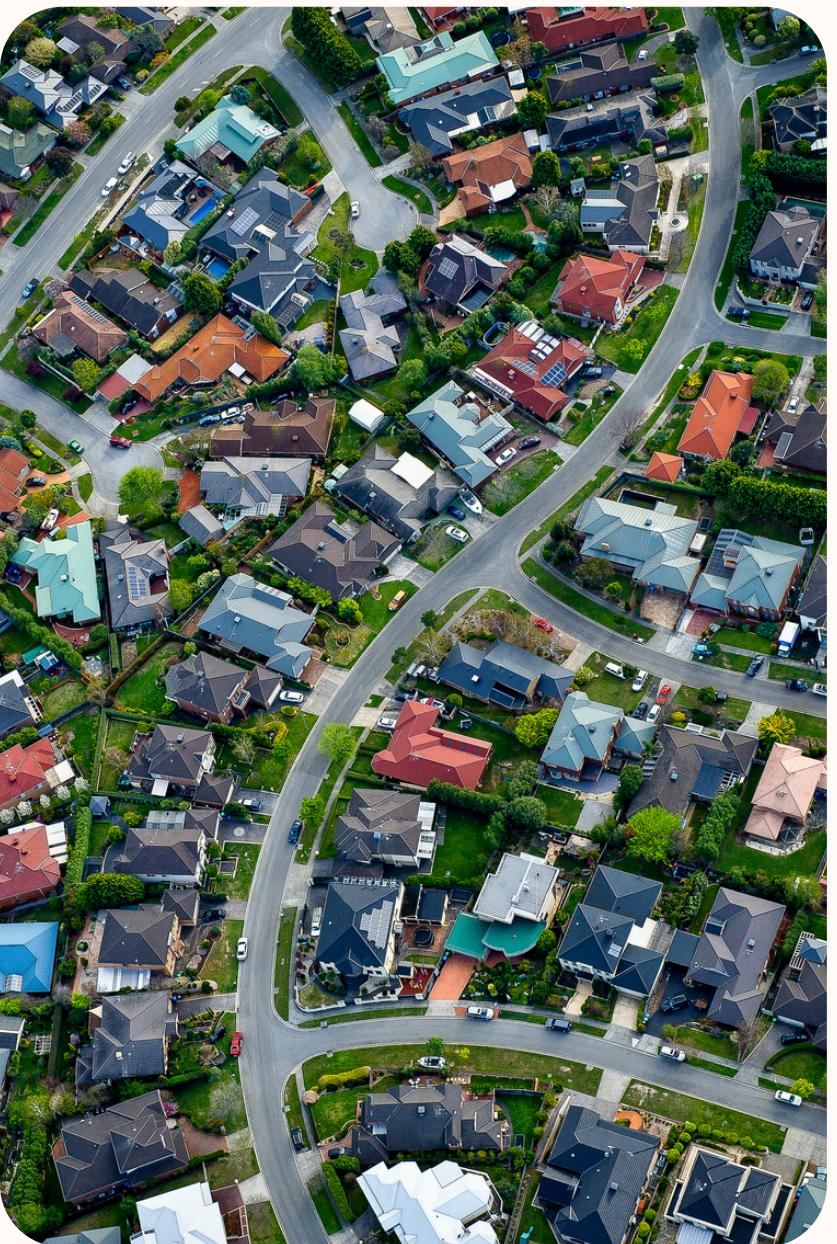
CASE SCENARIOS: THE URBAN SILO



"Crisis team is delayed; police called; parents angry." (Logistics Tension)

Guiding Question: How do we streamline communication between district silos to prevent the police call?

CASE SCENARIOS: THE SUBURBAN PRESSURE



"Community complaints demand the student be moved." (Political Tension)

Guiding Question: How do we protect inclusive values and support the principal against external pressure?

CASE ANALYSIS: LEADERSHIP DECISIONS THAT MATTER

- Which Systems were activated?
- What did leadership control?
- What one shift could reduce escalation next time?



BEHAVIOR PLANS: WHAT LEADERS SHOULD EXPECT

Build Skills

Teach the student
what to do instead.

Support Staff

Tell adults exactly
how to respond.

Reduce Incidents

Focus on prevention,
not punishment only.

INCLUSION IS A LEADERSHIP DECISION

Inclusion is built through systems—not placement alone.

INCLUSION

Inclusion is built through systems - not placement alone.

- Time
- Resources
- Expectations



WHAT CAN LEADERS INFLUENCE?

Barriers

Very real!

Funding

Staff Shortages

Trauma

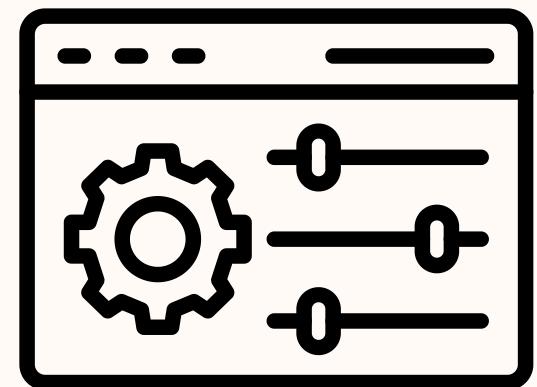
Levers

Still exist!

What are they?

HIGH-IMPACT LEADERSHIP LEVERS

- Clear Protocols: Everyone knows who to call and what to do.
- Aligned Expectations: Admin and Staff speak the same language.
- Proactive Planning: We anticipate needs before school starts.
- Adult Support: We care for the caregivers.



ADULT CAPACITY MATTERS!

- Recognize Burnout
- Address Secondary Trauma
- Retention Strategy
- Adult Support

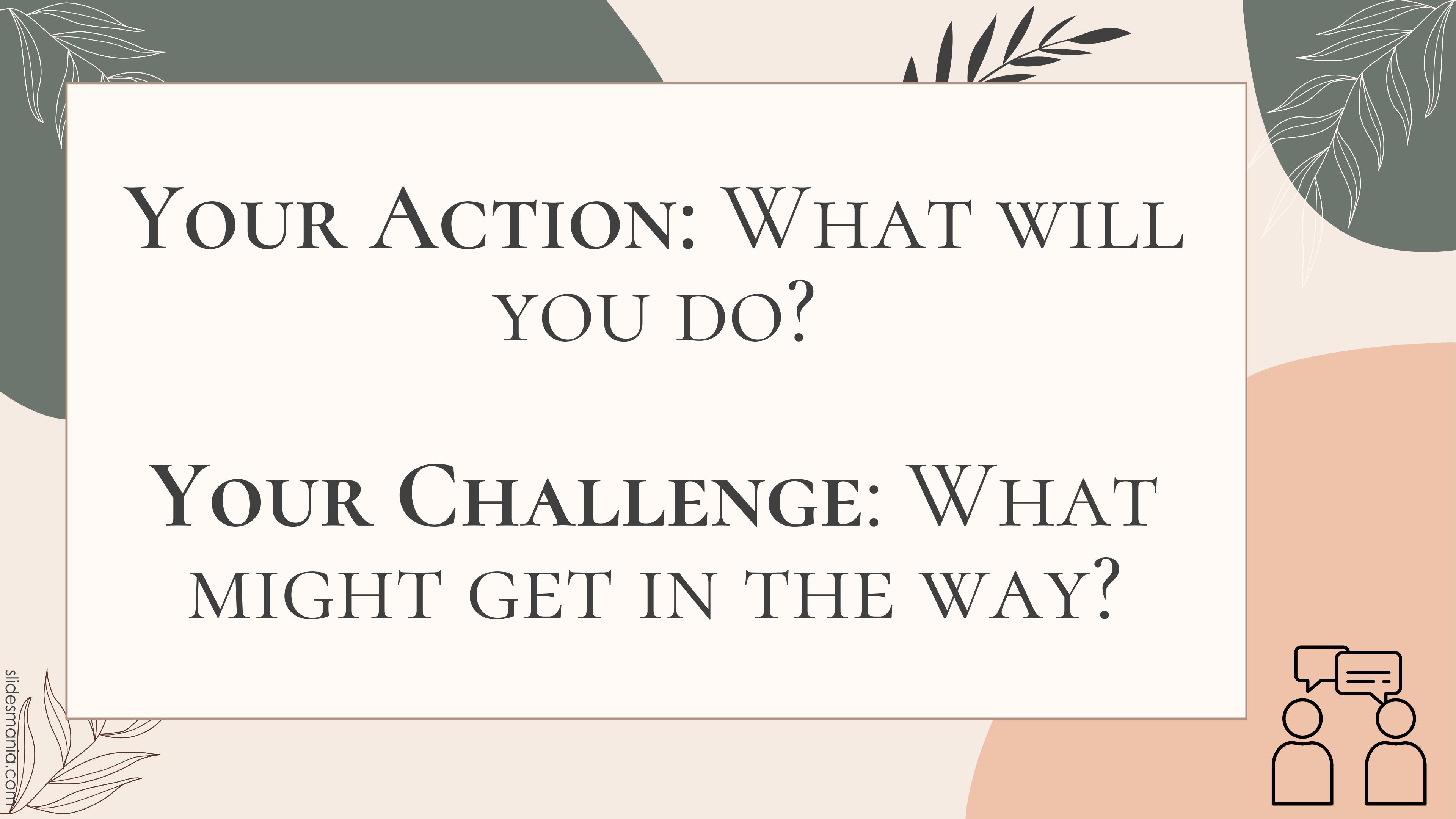


PERSONAL ACTION PLANNING

Commit to ONE thing:

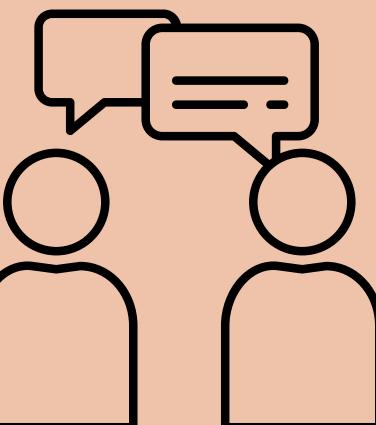
- One System to review
- One Decision to make differently
- One Next Step for Monday





YOUR ACTION: WHAT WILL YOU DO?

YOUR CHALLENGE: WHAT MIGHT GET IN THE WAY?



CLOSING REFLECTION: LEADING WITH INTENTION

What leadership question will you start asking differently?



LEADING WITH INTENTION

THANK YOU!

Do you have any questions?

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CREDITS.

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