Building a High Performing Team

Leveraging Collective Strengths and Unique Voices to Move Forward

Self care

Participation

Growth mindset + vulnerability

Respect + mutual accountability

# Nicole Woodward, Executive Director - SCRED

I am here to use my passion for people to create conditions for authentic connection, to model empathy and vulnerability, and to leverage the unique strengths of the collective, opening the hearts and minds of adults for the benefit of all children.

Where is SCRED?

SCRED has been nicknamed the "I-35 district" because our [member districts](#) dot the main highway heading north from the Twin Cities.

Heading north from Minneapolis, you'll reach Chisago Lakes, North Branch, Rush City, Pine City, Hinckley-Finlayson, and East Central.
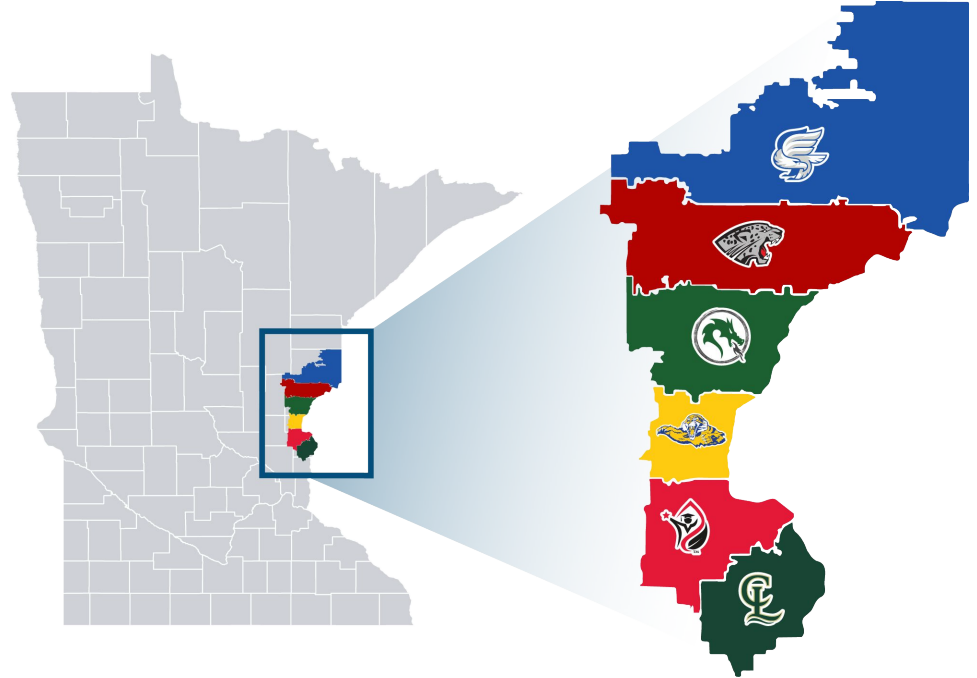
Engage.

Educate.

Empower.

Your
Future.

Our Focus.

Be the place
where every
student is
known, valued
and challenged
to succeed.

Inspire
Dreams,

Build
Integrity,

Instill Hope

Preparing
our students
for the
future.

Create global
citizens who
are lifelong
learners.

Maximizing outcomes
through partnership.

Our goals today:

1. Understand the key attributes of an effective team and the importance of establishing teams the function together like clockwork

2. Identify two "personality" tools and how those tools can be used to better understand yourself as a leader and the people who make up your teams

3. Define psychological safety and its importance

4. Describe how a structured process can move a team forward

5. Gain access to tools and resources to help support the work

How knowledgeable are you (on this topic)?

|	Label	What I'm Thinking
5	I'm an **expert**.	I understand this topic well and I could teach it to someone else.
4	I'm a **practitioner**.	I can mostly do this by myself but I sometimes mess up or get stuck.
3	I'm an **apprentice**.	I'm starting to get it, but I still need some coaching.
2	I'm a **novice**.	I'm just starting to learn this and I don't really understand it yet.
1	I'm a **blank slate**.	I read the title slide and have next-to-no idea what the topic is.

How interested are you?

	How I Feel	What I'm Thinking	What My Body is Doing	What I Can Do
5	**Exuberant**	'How long before I can ask a question?'	Eye contact, listening & comprehending	Stay engaged, hold onto questions
4	**Enthusiastic**	'I'm ready to learn.'	Listening, occasionally distracted	Ignore distractions and try to focus
3	**Intrigued**	'Let's see what you've got.'	Hearing, but not always listening	Listen for any useful ideas and info.
2	**Unsure**	'Maybe I'll be surprised.'	Checking clock, checking phone	Don't give up yet!
1	**Apprehensive**	'Get me out of here.'	Scowling, foot tapping	Respect group, voice concerns later

Think of some challenging/dysfunctional teams you've worked with - what made them so?
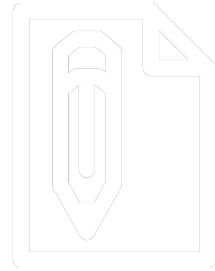
Think of the best teams you've worked with? What made that team great?
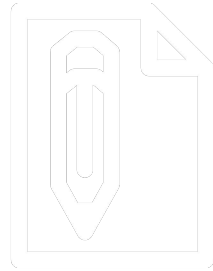
Why?

"The whole is greater than the sum of its parts."

~ Aristotle

Infrastructure for Continuous Improvement

Various **teams** functioning together like clockwork.

Necessary **resources** available (e.g., schedules, curriculum, training, coaching).

Implementation **plans** with shared accountability.

Data-Based Decision Making

Defining **who, what, when, and how we look at data** to guide decisions at the district-, school-, grade-, classroom-, and student level.

What connections do you see between Apollo 13 and one or more of the 5 elements of MnMTSS

MnMTSS

Assessment

Collecting **universal screening** data, **progress monitoring** data, and more.

Family and Community Engagement

Building **relational trust** and **equitable partnerships** with families and school and district staff to create **shared responsibility** between all stakeholders.

Multi-Layered Practices and Support

A strong **Tier 1** (core) — upon which we can layer **Tier 2** (supplemental), **Tier 3** (intensive), or **special education** ("Tier 3 on steroids") supports.

Effective implementation is characterized by a team accountable for "making it happen."
-National Implementation Research Network (NIRN)

Home

MTSS

Multi-Layered Practices and Support

Infrastructure for Continuous Improvement

Assessment

Data-Based Decision Making

Family and Community Engagement

St. Croix River Education District / MTSS / Infrastructure for Continuous Improvement

Infrastructure for Continuous Improvement

🎥 **What does it mean?** These are the mechanisms in a system that support people as they work efficiently together.

This includes **teams** organized to work like clockwork, implementation **plans**, well-allocated **resources**, useful **technology**, etc.

Infrastructure provides the stability for initiatives to be installed, sustained, and improved independent of specific people.

MnMTSS

Teamwork

The basic blueprint of teams in a district is explained below. Keep in mind that **team names will vary** and you also might create specialized **"satellite teams"** and/or **temporary work groups** that the teams below delegate tasks to.

The overarching goal is to organize our teams to work like clockwork. This means that:

- All of the essential tasks are getting done. We're not

zoom.u

Know What Makes a Great Team

1 Psychological Safety
Team members feel safe to take risks and be vulnerable in front of each other.

2 Dependability
Team members get things done on time and meet Google's high bar for excellence.

3 Structure & Clarity
Team members have clear roles, plans, and goals.

4 Meaning
Work is personally important to team members.

5 Impact
Team members think their work matters and creates change.

re:Work

Leaders must either invest a reasonable amount of time attending to fears and feelings,

or squander an unreasonable amount of time trying to manage ineffective and unproductive behavior

~Brene Brown

Identify the Need

"Be brave enough to start a conversation that matters."

~Margaret Wheatley

- **Be clear and honest**
- **Prevent blame**
- **Normalize struggle**

Provide Professional Learning

"You must undertake something so great that you cannot accomplish it unaided."

~Phillips Brooks

- **What makes a good team**
- **Psychological Safety**
- **Why it matters**

Get Vulnerable and Get Started

Assessment of Team Dynamics

From 2012-2014, Google engaged in a large-scale research project called Project Aristotle with the goal of identifying factors that make a team successful. Of the five key dynamics of effective teams that the researchers identified, psychological safety was by far the most important. "Team psychological safety" is defined as "a shared belief held by members of a team that the team is safe for interpersonal risk taking." The other four key factors were: dependability, structure & clarity, meaning, and impact.

This assessment is focused on the five team dynamics Google found to be important for team effectiveness. The assessment can help teams identify areas where they might want to improve and elicit ideas of how to do that.

nwoodward@scred.k12.mn.us Switch account

Not shared

* Indicates required question

Psychological Safety *

Signs that your team needs to improve psychological safety: (1) Fear of asking for or giving constructive feedback (2) Hesitance around expressing divergent ideas and asking "silly" questions

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
If you make a mistake on this team, it is often held against you.	○	○	○	○
Members of this team are able to bring up problems and tough issues.	○	○	○	○
People on this team sometimes reject others for being different.	○	○	○	○
It is safe to take a risk on this team.	○	○	○	○
It is difficult to ask other members of this team for help.	○	○	○	○
No one on this team would deliberately act in a way that undermines my efforts.	○	○	○	○
Working with members of this team, my unique skills and talents are valued and utilized.	○	○	○	○

Comments regarding your team's psychological safety (optional):

- It often feels like there are two teams and/or a group of individuals working in silos; the team is not unified
- Some team members feel psychologically safe with one or a few other team members, but not the team as a whole
- There is a feeling of limited support both from individuals and the system
- Varying degrees of experience, proficiency, and performance leave some without support and some overwhelmed by needing to provide it
- There is a fear of judgement and hurtful repercussions (negative t[...] eye rolls, dismissal) when voicing problems, questions and concer[...]
- Team members are reluctant to help; there is constant tension

- The team has general understanding of the main goal in supporting students with disabilities, but is unclear and fragmented in how to get there - what and who are we truly accountable to?
- Lack of clear roles and responsibilities - particularly with day to day tasks
- When new ideas are presented, there is resistance to changing structures and practices; some want to keep things the same as they've always been, others don't follow through
- Goal writing, progress monitoring, and progress reporting are all done by different people - CM writes goals and does progress report; service provider collects the data which leads to inefficiencies and confusion
- Meetings are not structured around a common, unified, collaborative purpose
- Need more leadership, structure, and support from administration, SCRED

- There is an imbalance between interdependence [...]
- Inconsistencies with work performance, urgency[...] ownership of responsibility to get the critical tasks done create frustration
- The team isn't working toward a clearly articulated shared goal
- Coordination and completion of progress monitoring/progress reporting is a common concern
- When decisions are made, it is difficult to obtain consensus and some continue to do it "their way"

SCRED Strategic Priorities

2025-2026

Grounded in [SCRED's Mission, Vision, and Values](#), these action-driven strategic priorities direct our collective efforts to create conditions where students thrive, families feel seen and supported, and educators are equipped to do their best work.

Objective 1: Create a Bold, Unified Vision for the Future of Specialized Programming Across SCRED

<u>Connection to SCRED Vision</u>: *Multi-layered Practices and Supports - provide every student with what they need, when they need it.*

Action Steps:

1. **Launch representative subcommittees for behavior and transition programs** with defined action plans and deliverables by **October 2025**

2. **Facilitate cross-district design sessions** (with leaders, staff, students, and families) to gather input to help define the *ideal future state* for Setting IV and 18–22 transition programs by **November 2025**

3. **Provide FY27 budget recommendations** for setting IV and 18-22 transition programs to the Superintendents Operating Committee (SOC) by **January 2026**

4. **Develop options for a bold, unified vision** (including advantages and disadvantages) for setting IV and 18-22 transition programs and present to the Superintendents Operating Committee (SOC) by **March 2026**

5. **Determine ideal future-state program structure** (e.g., one large vs. county-specific programs) and design a corresponding action plan for both programs, via SOC approval by **May 2026**

Objective 2: Build a Robust Continuum of Behavioral Services to Serve All Students in their Least Restrictive Environment

<u>Connection to SCRED Vision</u>: *Multi-layered Practices and Supports - provide every student with what they need, when they need it.*

Action Steps:

1. **Define the SCRED "continuum of behavior services" model**, including expectations for center-based behavior supports and inclusive practices by **November 2025**

Set & Live Out Team Norms

* NORMS *

- Be fully **present and engaged** — mentally and physically
- We will be **clear in what we want to accomplish** together, remain committed to our strategic objectives, and **share ownership** of the work and the action(s) needed to get there
- We will be both **honest/forthright and respectful** — of those present and absent — when speaking, listening, and during disagreement
- Assume **positive intent** with space to unpack
- Stay **curious, open-minded, and solution focused** — avoid problem admiration

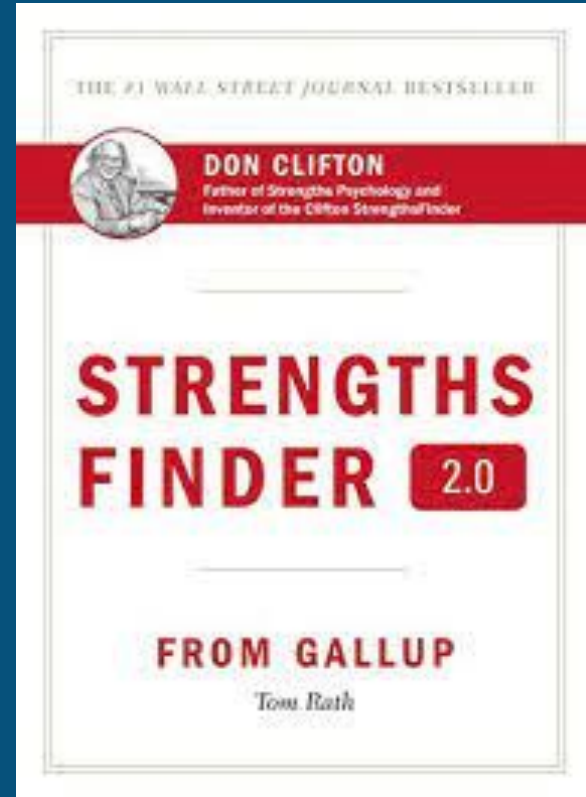# Understand the People. Unleash the Potential

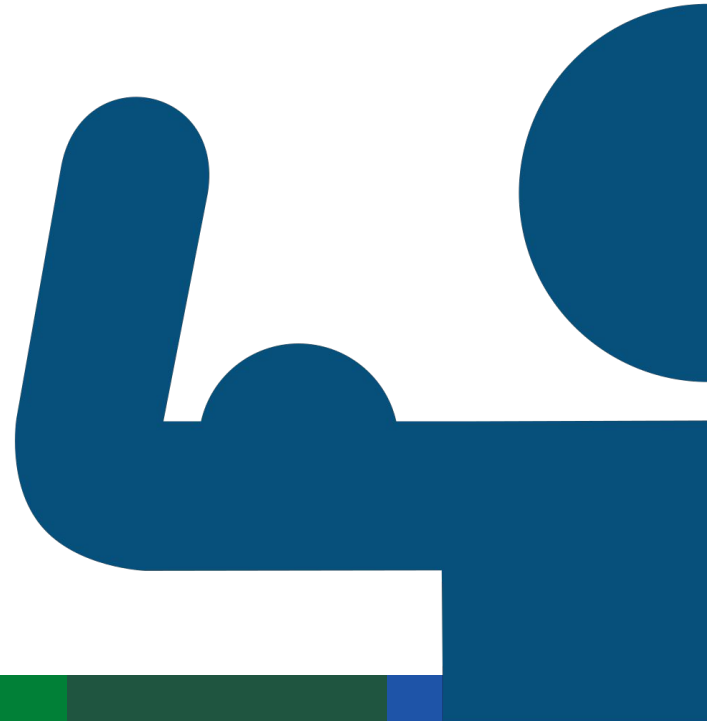# What tools have you used to learn yourself and your teams?

StrengthsFinder

"Discover your strengths and learn how to use your greatest natural talents to get the most out of your life."

No other person ever has, or ever will have, the unique blend of talents, strengths, and perspective that you have.
~Marie Forleo

Strengths Domain: Executing

Every team has goals to achieve. Work to accomplish. Tasks to complete.

High-performing teams rely on people with strong Executing themes because **they make things happen**.

When your team needs to get things done, look to people with the following Executing themes. T**hey can take an idea and make it a reality**. And **they'll work tirelessly to accomplish the goal**.

Strengths Domain: Influencing

Every team needs to communicate, both inside and outside the group. No matter your goals, effective communication is essential to achieving them.

High-performing teams rely on people with strong Influencing themes because **they take charge, speak up and make sure others are heard**.

When your team needs to sell its ideas and persuade others, look to people with the following Influencing themes. **They can help your team reach a much broader audience and convince others to aid in accomplishing your goals**.

Strengths Domain: Relationship Building

Every team is nothing more than a group of unique individuals. A team's power comes from each person being empowered to use their distinctive talents and appreciate others'.

High-performing teams rely on people with strong Relationship Building themes to **bring individuals together** and **make the team greater than the sum of its parts**.

When your team needs to become stronger and more cohesive, look to people with the following Relationship Building themes. T**hey can unite the group and galvanize them to achieve shared success. They are the bond that holds great teams together.**

Strengths Domain: Strategic Thinking

Every team needs people who keep everyone focused on what could be. People who devote their time and talents to understand what is necessary to routinely put their team in the position to succeed.

High-performing teams rely on people with strong Strategic Thinking themes to **absorb and analyze information that informs better decisions**.

When your team needs to become more **creative** and **innovative**, look to people with the following Strategic Thinking themes. **They can stretch the team's thinking for the future and inspire new ideas that can lead to high performance.**

SCRED StrengthsFinder Data

Cell AJ22

DIRECTIONS: Put an "x" under each of your 5 strengths from the StrengthsFinder assessment.

Domain groupings: **EXECUTING** (Achiever, Arranger, Belief, Consistency, Deliberative, Discipline, Focus, Responsibility, Restorative) · **INFLUENCING** (Activator, Command, Communication, Competition, Maximizer, Self-Assurance, Significance, Woo) · **RELATIONSHIP BUILDING** (Adaptability, Connectedness, Developer, Empathy, Harmony, Includer, Individualization, Positivity, Relator) · **STRATEGIC THINKING** (Analytical, Context, Futuristic, Ideation, Input, Intellection, Learner, Strategic)

Name	Ach	Arr	Bel	Con	Del	Dis	Foc	Res	Rst	Act	Cmd	Com	Cmp	Max	SA	Sig	Woo	Ada	Conn	Dev	Emp	Har	Inc	Ind	Pos	Rel	Anl	Ctx	Fut	Ide	Inp	Intl	Lrn	Strat	Tot
31 Anne Meyer												x					x			x		x	x												5
32 Rachel Adams			x																	x	x		x		x										5
33 Sheena Malm																								x		x					x	x			5
34 Steve Wagner			x									x						x												x					4
35 Tally Jo Staber																				x	x			x		x		x							5
36 Team Totals	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	4	4	1	2	2	1	2	0	1	0	1	1	2	0	0	
37 Team Totals Per Domain			EXEC 4									INFL 3								REL 17									STRAT 5						
38																																			
39 **Services Coordinators**																																			
40 Alyssa Jackson		x										x								x	x												x		5
41 Angela Christenson									x																x		x				x		x		5
42 Beth Hillerns	x																									x					x	x	x		5
43 Blake Springman																		x		x	x		x			x									5
44 Brigitte Rogers	x																			x								x			x		x		5
45 Christine Lund																				x								x		x	x		x		5
46 **Mitch Marinack**											x		x			x													x	x					5
47 Kevin Krzenski	x	x				x																		x								x			5
48 Kim Henke				x		x						x												x											5
49 Nic van Oss	x																												x		x	x	x		5
50 Rob Benner		x																		x	x			x		x									5
51 Team Totals	4	3	0	1	0	2	0	0	1	0	1	2	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	4	3	2	0	4	1	5	1	2	1	0	4	4	6	1	
52 Team Totals Per Domain			EXEC 11									INFL 5								REL 20									STRAT 19						
53																																			
54 **Related Services Staff**																																			
55 Amy Nelson			x					x						x				x															x		5
56 **Carrie Kelley**			x	x				x											x		x														5
57 Leah Anderson			x					x												x	x	x													5

Service Coordinators Domains

Office Staff Domains

- Executing 20.0%
- Strategic Thinking 40.0%
- Relationship Building 40.0%

Admin Domains

Executing
23.3%

Strategic Thinking
30.0%

Influencing
13.3%

Relationship Building
33.3%

Executing

Strategic Thinking

Influencing

Relationship Building
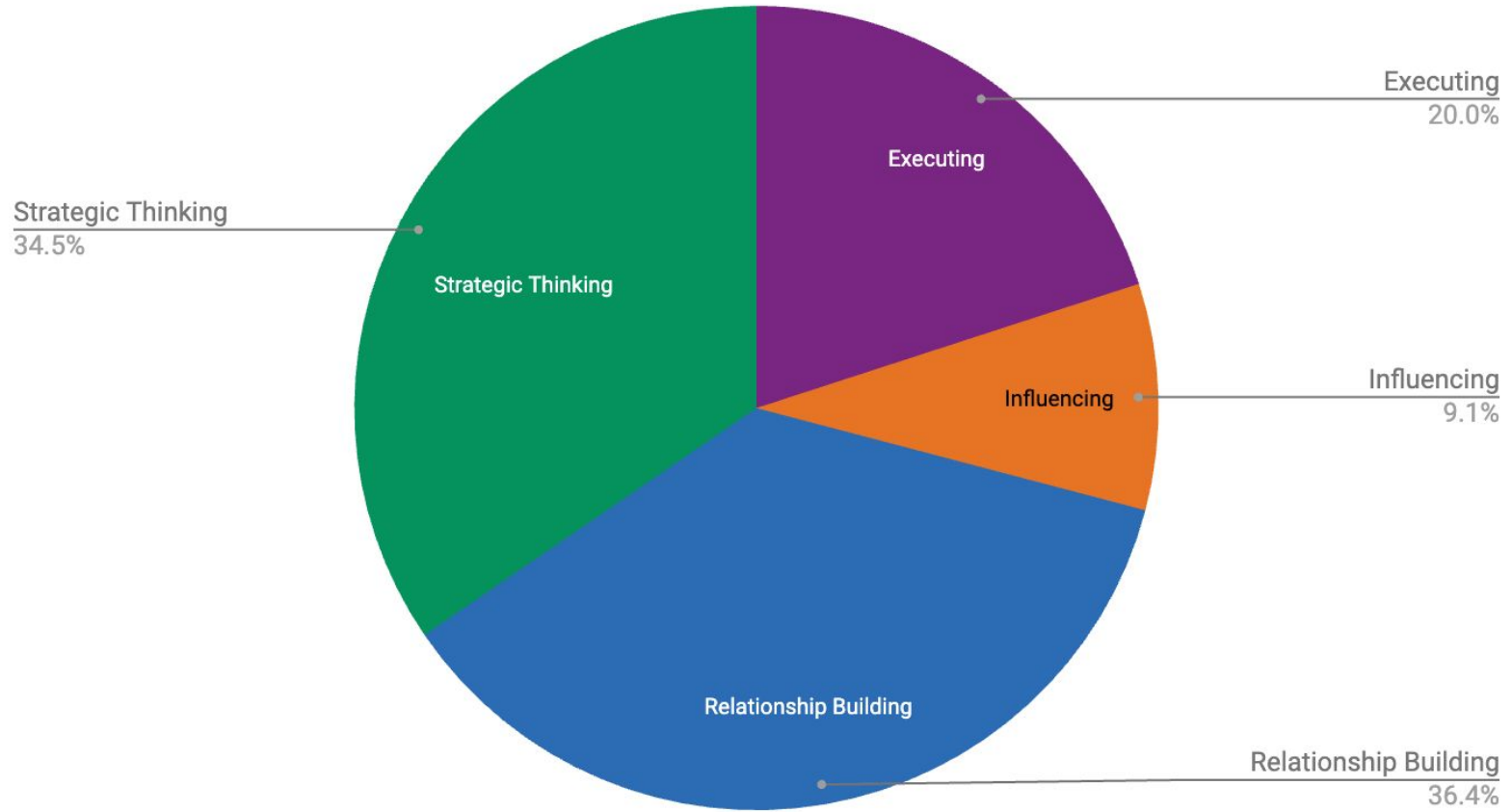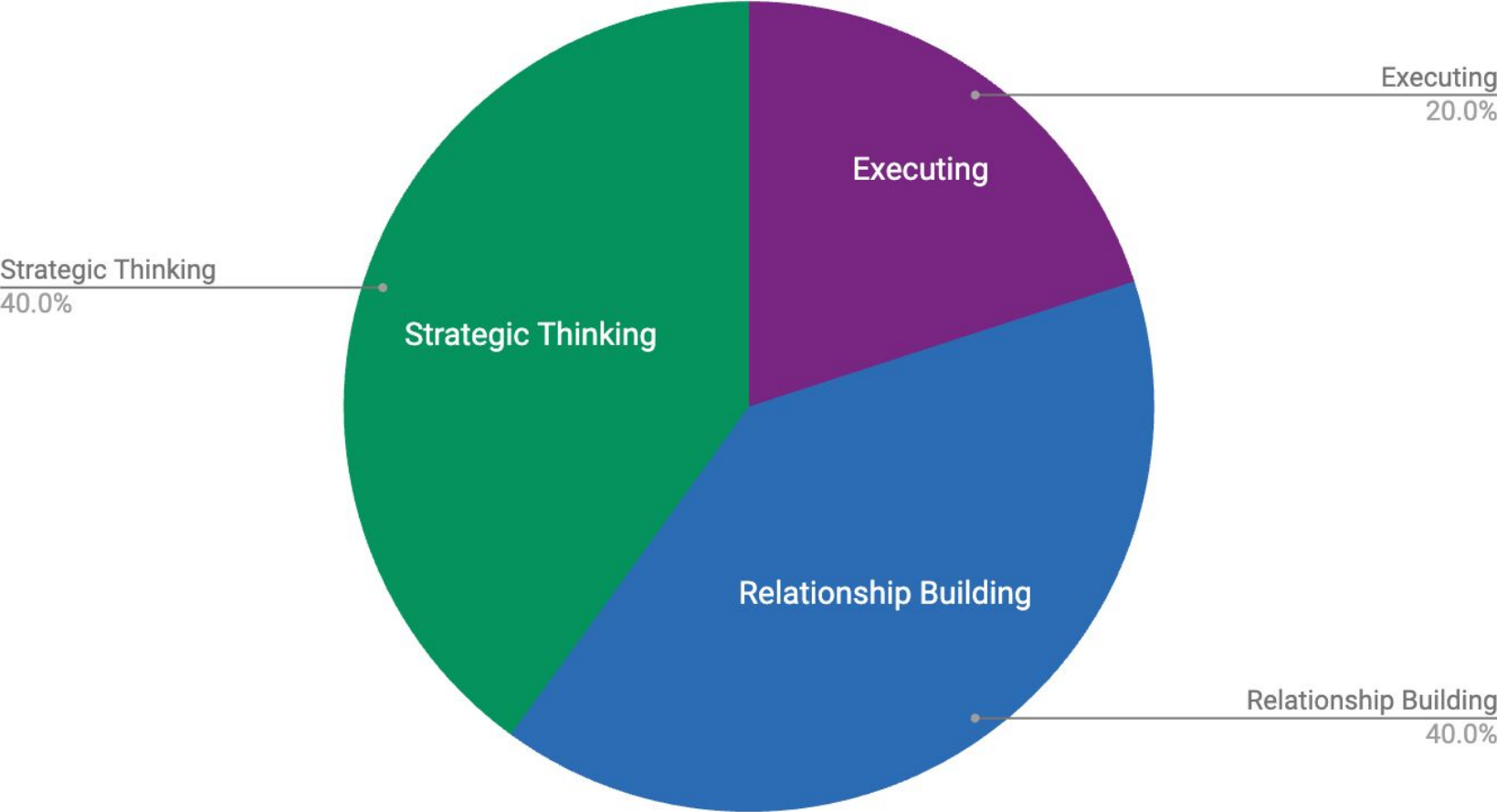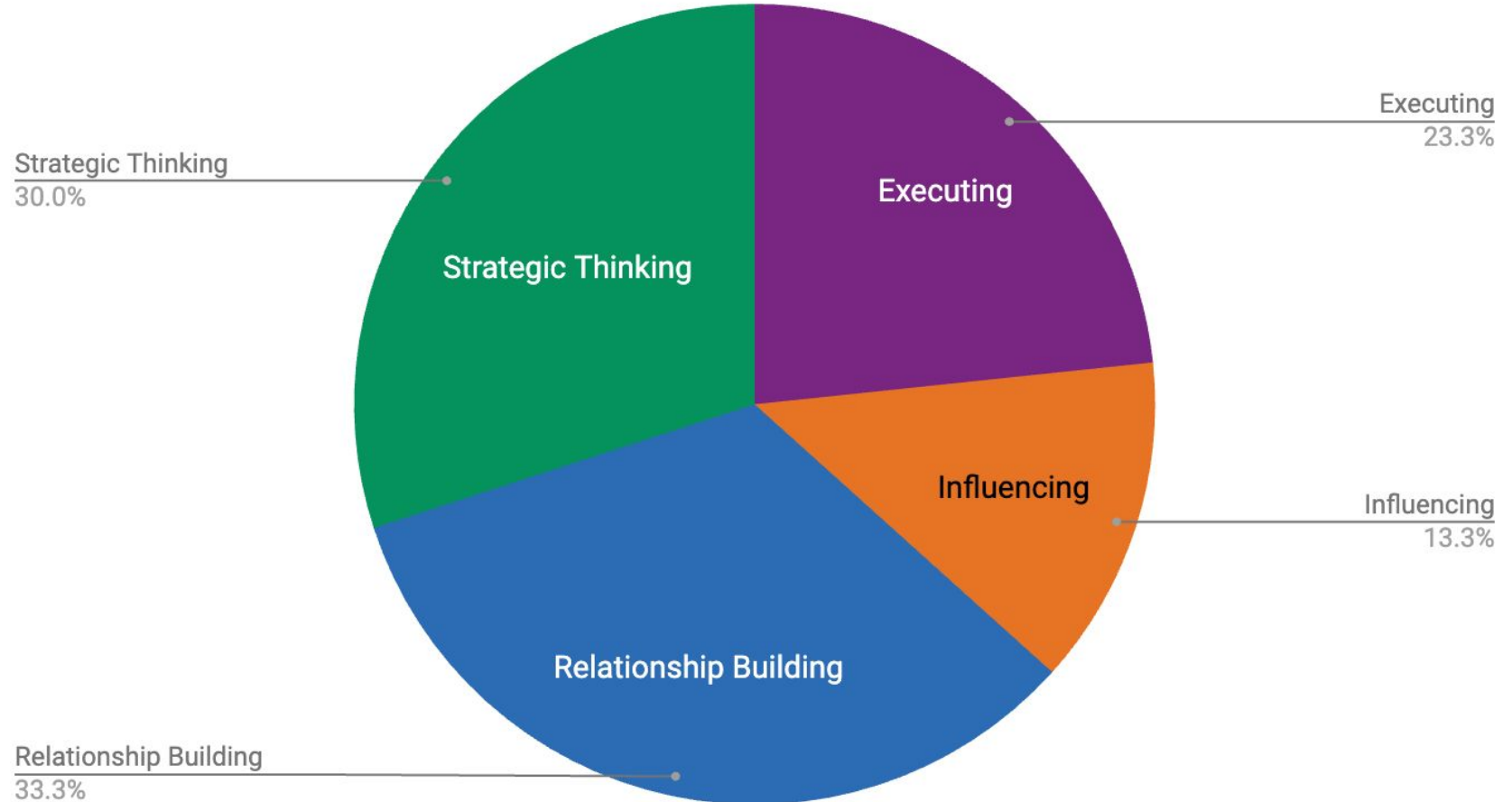
Use It or Lose It

Leverage Collective Strengths

> "

Alone we can do so little.

Together we can do so much

~Helen Keller

Strategic Thinking
Strategic Thinking
40.0%

Executing
Executing
40.0%

Relationship Building
Relationship Building
20.0%

Relationship Building
Relationship Building
40.0%

Executing
Executing
20.0%

Influencing
Influencing
40.0%

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4. SCREDster Strengths Spotlight 💪

A few recent examples of our unique strengths in action - because we can't leverage them if we don't know them! **TIP**: If you want a colleague to receive a shoutout in the next bulletin, just fill out this 👉 Google Form and share how they've used one of their strengths!

1. **Molly Weber** (school psychologist) married her **Analytical**, **Discipline**, and **Individualization** strengths when she devoted time synthesizing a great deal of data to rework the service delivery model at HES. With the initial reconfiguration complete, she met with case managers to hear their individual needs (hello, relationship building!), and executed the task to ensure, as a system, we were maximizing outcomes for students!

2. **Blake Springman** (Low Incidence Services Coordinator) was leaning into his **Adaptability** strength when he creatively shifted his approach to support a team in need. Recognizing a more concrete and scaffolded approach was necessary, developed a new plan to provide more targeted support. His willingness to flex in response to barriers goes a long way in building trusting relationships with teachers!

3. Shout out to **Becky Boland** (School Psychologist) who has been using both her **Arranger** and **Includer** strengths as there has been an influx of new students and systems shifts at Pine City Elementary. She plays a critical role in gathering input and utilizing these ideas or feedback to ensure students and staff have what they need to succeed!

4. **Katie Potter** (Occupational Therapist) showed us what it looks like to leverage her **Intellection** to when making decisions. After being given some time to think about the PLC changes being proposed at the TD&E Implementation Meeting, Katie identified critical implications that needed to be addressed before we could proceed. With Katie's input on the table, we were able to create a more thoughtful implementation plan that removed what would have been some major barriers!

5. **Steph Mohs** (Special Services Supervisor) has quickly demonstrated her relationship building talents when she deployed her **Empathy** and **Relator** strengths during a recent dispute between a family and the district. Instead of shying away from conflict, Steph leaned in, sought understanding, and ensured that the parents felt heard, understood, and supported while options were explored. She threw in her **Arranger** strength for good measure, leading the district to a workable solution that maximized resources AND met the needs of the student!
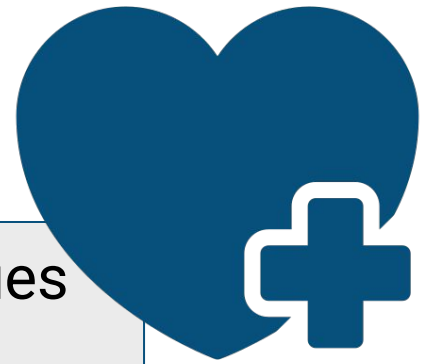
"No other person ever has, or ever will have, the unique blend of talents, strengths, and perspective that you have." - Marie Forleo

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Strategic (Q3)

Time	Topic	Notes
9:15 - 9:35	Set up	• Welcoming routine (e.g., celebrations & gratitude, community building) ○ Celebrations and bonus points if you include in your strengths in your celebration

5 Voices

"Everyone has a leadership voice, whether they know it or not. From the most quiet to the most gregarious, we all have the ability to lead others."

JEREMIE KUBICEK STEVE COCKRAM

5 VOICES

How to Communicate Effectively

with Everyone You Lead

The GIANT Worldwide Leadership Essentials

WILEY
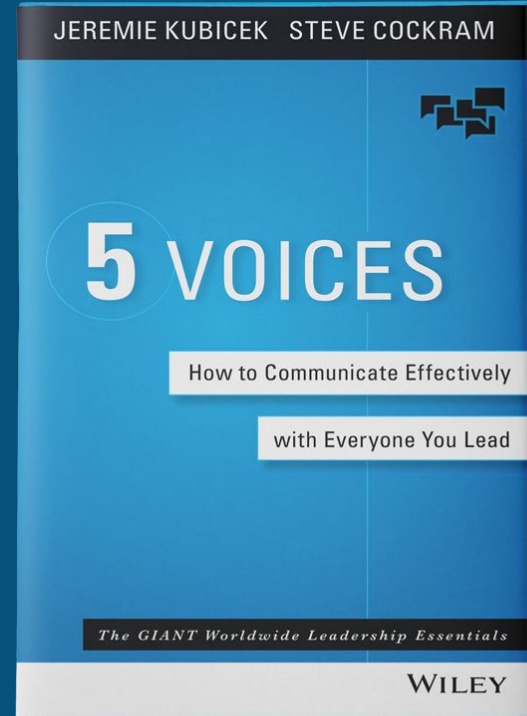
Nurturer (43% of the population)

Champion of... people, relational harmony, and values

Watch out for... nurturers have a fear of conflict and often won't speak out, beware of silence

Empower them by... let them speak first, affirm their competence and genuine value of the ir contribution

Volume: ◼☐☐☐☐

Creative: (9% of the population)

Champion of... future ideas, innovation, and organizational integrity

Watch out for... creatives can struggle to communicate effectively and have idealist perfectionist tendencies

Empower them by... don't judge them on what they say first, help them communicate their ideas. Let them know it's ok to be wrong sometimes

Volume: ■ ■ ☐ ☐ ☐

Guardian (30% of the population)

Champion of… due diligence, resources, and efficient systems and processes

Watch out for… guardians are risk averse, can be negative and bring excessive critique

Empower them by… welcome their challenging critique and commitment to due diligence

Volume: ◼◼◼☐☐

Connector (11% of the population)

Champion of... relational networks, collaboration, and effective communication

Watch out for... connectors always interpret challenge of their ideas as personal

Empower them by... give them time to share their ideas and passions, appreciate before you critique

Volume: ☑☑☑☑☐
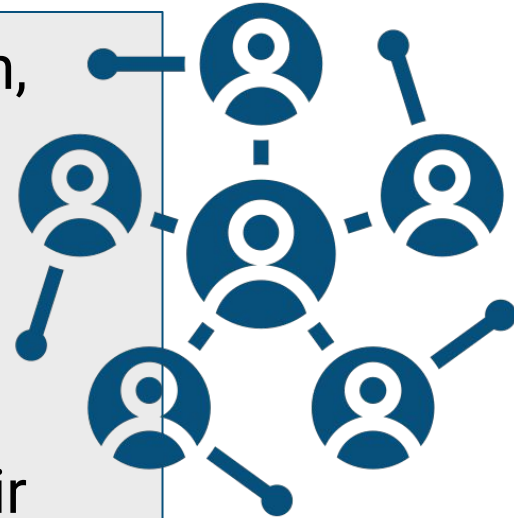
Pioneer (7% of the population)

Champion of… strategic, vision, results-focused, and problem-solving

Watch out for… pioneers lack sensitivity, can be unwilling to listen, and be perceived as arrogant

Empower them by… don't worry, they empower themselves, just affirm their competence

Volume: ◼◼◼◼◼

Services Coordination 5 Voices

|	Nurturer	Creative	Guardian	Connector	Pioneer
		Directions: Insert a "1" under your foundational voice and a "2" under your secondary voice			
Voice	Nurturer	Creative	Guardian	Connector	Pioneer
Volume	1/5	2/5	3/5	4/5	4.9/5
Description	Champion of People — Are you always concerned about the relational health and harmony of the group? Are you completely committed to protecting values and principles? Do you innately understand how certain actions, behaviors, or initiatives will affect people?	Champion of Innovation — Are you an outside the box thinker? Do you always believe things can be better? Do you often ask the question: "Why do people never seem to fully understand my ideas?"	Champion of Responsibility and Stewardship — Do you respect and value logic, order, procedure, and process? Do you seek clarity as well as logical and proven decision-making criteria even if you have to ask the tough questions to get there? Do you like to see established track records of success to justify trying something different?	Champion of Relationships and Strategic Partnerships — Do you rally people to causes and things you believe in? Are you good at building and maintaining large networks of personal and professional relationships? Do you often respond to challenges with: "Whatever we need, I can get it or I have a source"?	Champion of Results and Progress — Do you approach life with an "Anything is possible!" attitude? Do you believe visioning a new future is always the highest priority? Are you always looking for the quickest, fastest, and most efficient ways so that you can win?
Name					
Kevin Krzenski	2		1		
Angela Christenson		2		1	
Mitch Marinack		2		1	
Christine Lund	1		2		
Blake Springman		1		2	
Rob Benner		2	1		
Alyssa Jackson	1			2	
Kim Henke		2		1	
Beth Hillerns		1		2	
Brigitte Rogers	1	2			
Nic van Oss		2			1
Sarah Kloeckl	1		2		
Nicole Woodward		2		1	
Tia Ellis	1			2	
Kristin Orton		1		2	
Jennifer DuFresne			1		2
Kate Krzenski	2		1		
Total Per Voice (Foundational)	5	3	4	4	1
Total Per Voice (Secondary)	2	7	2	5	1
TOTAL	9	17	8	14	3

Foundational Voices

- Pioneer 5.9%
- Connector 23.5%
- Creative 17.6%
- Nurturer 29.4%
- Guardian 23.5%
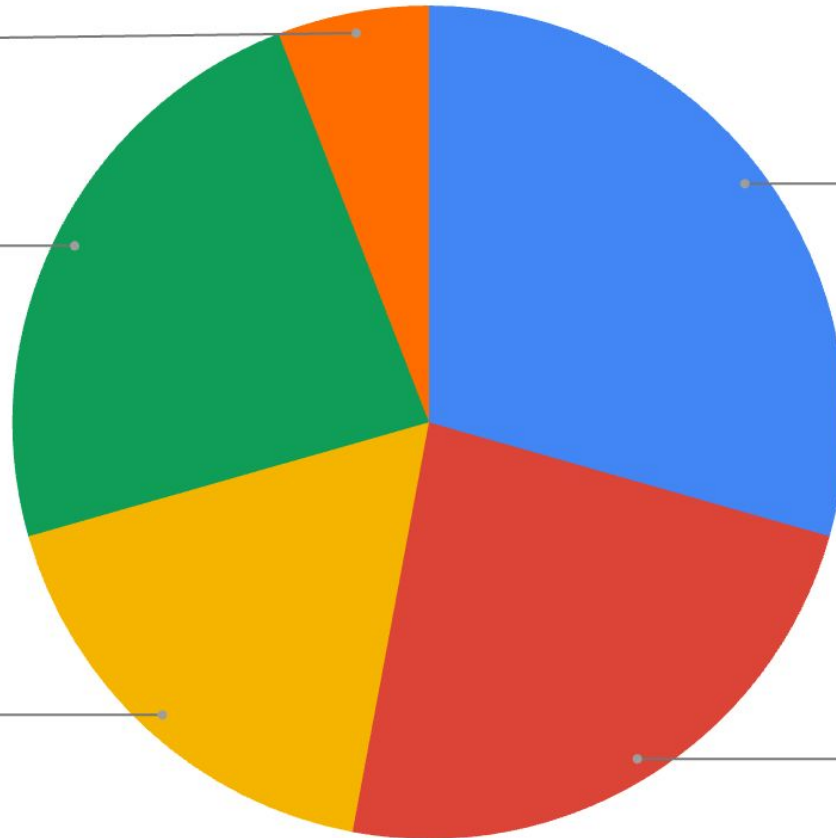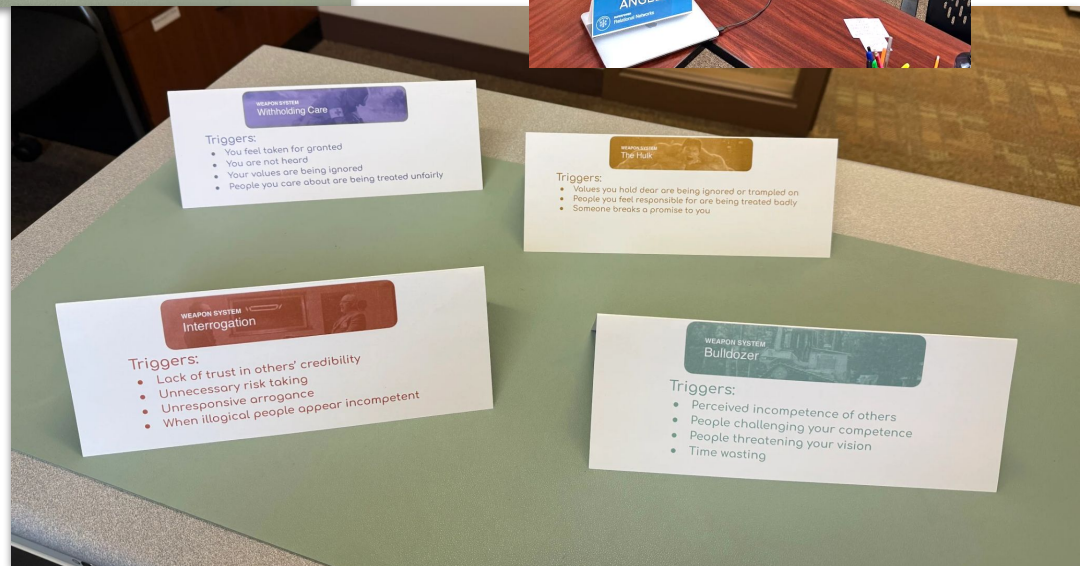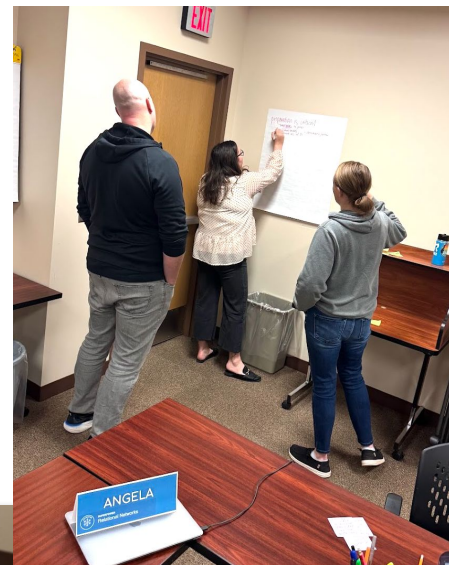
Cultivate A Culture Worth Committing to

St. Croix River Education District
Collaborate • Innovate • Advocate

HOME   OUR DISTRICT   MTSS   SERVICES   PROFESSIONAL LEARNING   DATABASES   PROGRAMS   STAFF

Home
Our District
Staff Directory
Employment
Culture
Strategic Plan
Member Districts
Governing Board
Policies and Procedures
Newsletter
Contact Us

St. Croix River Education District / Our District / Culture

Culture

Our core values — **Collaborate, Innovate, Advocate** — are the foundation of our culture. A culture that makes it possible to accomplish our mission: **Maximizing outcomes through partnership**. On this foundation, our culture is constantly under construction, constantly being built up and reinforced by the small everyday choices of SCREDsters in our office building and across our member districts.

Collaborate

We believe we are better together. We form partnerships where accountability is shared, vulnerability shines, risks are taken, stumbles and wins are both owned wholeheartedly, and innovations are cross-pollinated.

We Are Learners, Not Hiders

"Without psychological safety, your team members waste valuable time and energy avoiding embarrassment or hiding their mistakes rather than focusing on reaching team goals." - Eric Karpinski

Google's Project Aristotle revealed that **"psychological safety"** — *a shared belief held by members of a team that the team is safe for interpersonal risk taking* — is the factor most associated with team success. You can hear 🎙 researcher Amy Edmondson explain what led her to coin the term.

Our energy needs to be focused on learning, not "impression management" and worrying about our competence being judged. We need our teams to be "safe" places where people can experiment, freely share mistakes, and learn from them together. Watch 🎙 Simon Sinek explain how impactful this is.

Our team meetings and SCRED gatherings are deliberately optimized to foster trust, vulnerability, and shared accountability.

ANXIETY MODE   LEARNING MODE
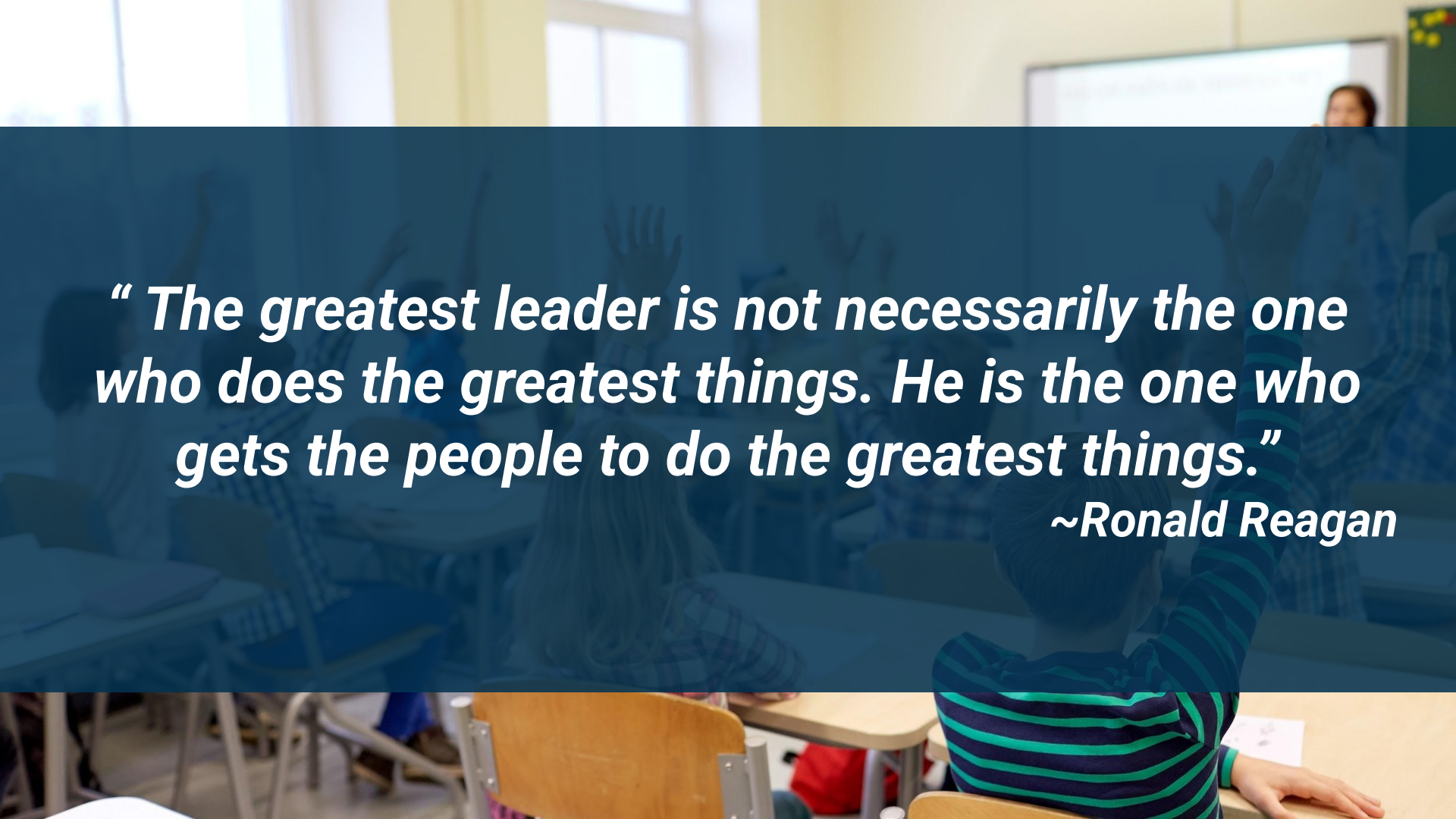APATHY MODE   COMFORT MODE

We Cross-Pollinate Wins

Our districts thrive off of synergy. We connect staff in different districts who are working on similar projects or struggling with similar problems. SCRED staff catalyze progress by sharing breakthroughs and insights. Because of this synergistic collaboration, our districts can take massive leaps forward in a short amount of time.

Within SCRED, we leverage each other's strengths. All SCRED staff complete the **StrengthsFinder** assessment. SCREDsters are encouraged to lean into their areas of strength and to share them with each other through collaboration. Need a strategic thinker? Borrow one! Have a vision and need someone to help you execute it? Partner with a meticulous teammate!

We Share Accountability

"Clear is kind. Unclear is unkind." - Brené Brown

" *The greatest leader is not necessarily the one who does the greatest things. He is the one who gets the people to do the greatest things.*"

~Ronald Reagan

STAY CONNECTED
with your SCREDsters