

## Public Abstract

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The purpose of this study was to explore how human resources are managed, what that can look like, and what organizational issues, tensions, and ambiguities may surface as a school district central office moves toward being more strategic. Surprisingly little is known about the central office, the heart of decisionmaking in a school district. Even less is known about how a district manages their human resources, particularly what it means to be strategic with those resources. Using interviews, observations, and analysis of documents, an exploratory case study was completed over two academic years in one Midwestern district. Through this study the researcher explored two main questions: (1) what does it mean for a district to be strategic and (2) how does a district go about being strategic (what does it look like), particularly regarding their human resources?

Findings from this research project indicated that defining strategic in this school district meant having foresight, pre-emptively planning, and using knowledge-based innovation, in order to align everything to district goals. Findings also indicated that the act of being strategic in this district focused on two key elements: systemic functions and strategic leadership. Acting strategically meant moving from silo-ed functions to more systemic structures, policies, and procedures. However, strategic leadership was necessary to guide necessary strategic behaviors. Six attributes of strategic leadership were elicited from this case study that worked to promote strategic behavior. Findings also indicated that various internal and external environments influenced the strategic functions and actions of district leaders.