

THE METHOD ARCHITECTURE IN ACTION

A Field Guide for District Transformation

Grade-Level Proficiency and College & Career Readiness for Students Like Ours

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Read This First

Start with two sets of charts.

The first set is the one your district would rather not publish: the **flatline charts** — ten or more years of reading and math proficiency that has barely moved. Different superintendents, different programs, different curricula, the same flat line. Behind every point on that line is a cohort of children who passed through your schools and left without the skills their futures demand.

The second set is the one almost nobody shows: classrooms and schools — in your own district, and across your state — where **students like ours** are performing at dramatically higher levels. Same demographics. Same neighborhoods. Very different results.

Put the two sets side by side and they generate what we call **the irrefutable logic**:

If students like ours are succeeding somewhere, then low performance is not destiny. And if low performance is not destiny, then continuing to tolerate it is moral failure.

Serious people are called to action.

That logic is the engine of this entire guide. The root cause of the flatline is not the children and it is not the teachers. It is a belief system—the **Innate Ability Paradigm**—the disabling cultural belief that intelligence is fixed at birth, and that some have it, and some don't. That belief quietly rations expectations, sorts children, and excuses the results. Dismantling it, and building a district that runs on its opposite, is the work.

This guide turns *The Method Architecture* into a sequence: twelve phases, three tiers of responsibility, every phase bound to the tools you need to run it. *It is not a program to adopt. It is an operating system to build — and it only runs on commitment.* Before you turn the page, answer the question this document will keep asking: **Are we serious?**

The Mission and the Four Commitments

The Mission is the North Star — clear, public, measurable, and morally binding:

Grade-Level Proficiency for all students, leading to College and Career Readiness (CCR). Within five years, 90% of our students will graduate ready for college courses or career training without remediation.

Not a slogan. A standard. It guides every decision about budget, staffing, professional development, curriculum, assessment, and leadership priorities. If a policy or practice does not move students toward proficiency and CCR, it is on the table for elimination.

The Mission rests on four commitments:

- **Students are capable of reaching high standards.** Virtually all of them. There is nothing wrong with our children.
- **Educators are capable of organizing instruction to get them there.** The expertise exists in your buildings right now. It needs to be mobilized, not mandated.
- **Difficulty is feedback, not evidence of fixed limits.** Failure And Difficulty Are Feedback — FADAF — for students and adults alike.
- **The district must organize itself for continuous, evidence-based movement toward the Mission.** Belief without structure is sentiment. Structure without belief is bureaucracy. The Architecture demands both.

The Core Operating Concepts

Seven concepts make up the Architecture. Master the vocabulary — it is not jargon, it is the framework.

1. The Get Smart Mindset (GSMS)

The psychological foundation of Transformation. Intelligence is dynamic: contemporary neuroscience confirms the brain is especially plastic in childhood, remains plastic across the lifespan, and reorganizes in response to learning, practice, and experience. The educational implication is not that “trying hard” magically changes the brain. It is that **Effective Effort** — tenacious engagement, focus on feedback, and strategy formulation — repeatedly activates and refines the neural systems that build skill and knowledge. **Effective Effort improves performance and intelligence.** The GSMS is the direct refutation of the Innate Ability Paradigm (the belief that intelligence is fixed at birth and unequally distributed), and it must be internalized in this order: leaders first, then educators, then students and families.

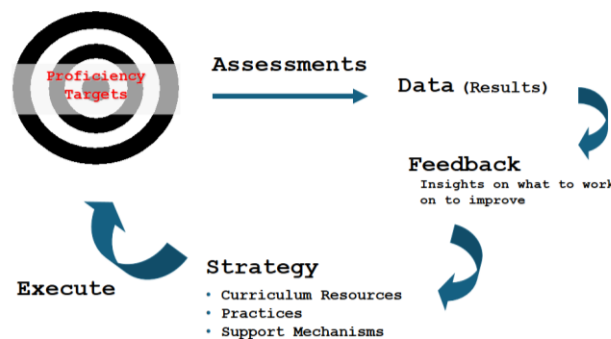
2. FADAF — Failure And Difficulty Are Feedback

Students routinely interpret struggle as a verdict: “I’m not smart.” FADAF overturns the verdict. Failure and difficulty are not judgments about permanent deficits; they are information about what to work on to improve. Understood this way, difficulty actually accelerates development. FADAF is learnable, teachable, and liberating — it immunizes students against frustration and shame in exactly the moments when learning is most challenging.

3. The Mission

Grade-Level Proficiency for all students culminating in 90% College and Career Readiness within five years. The North Star that gives every educator, student, and family a common purpose.

4. The Self-Directed Improvement System (SDIS)



The district’s architecture for focusing human intelligence on specified, targeted outcomes. The SDIS is recursive: the same system operates at every level of the organization, and each time a target is reached, the next, more demanding target engages the same machinery. It is how a district climbs.

5. The Data/Feedback/Strategy Method (D/F/S)

The working engine inside the SDIS, and the single most-used tool in this guide. Every participant — superintendent, principal, teacher, student — learns to ask three questions:

- **Data:** What happened? What do the results actually show?
- **Feedback:** What does this tell us we need to work on?
- **Strategy:** What will we do differently next — concretely, by when, with whom?

D/F/S works for individual users, but its greatest power is collaborative.

6. The Data Stream

The continuous flow of performance information — classroom, grade, school, district — that feeds the SDIS and D/F/S. Without the Data Stream, teams are guessing. With it, they are aiming. One rule is absolute: data is used to guide strategy and reduce variation, **never to shame people**.

7. Results-Focused Teams (RFTs)

The primary collaborative structure — an evolutionary leap beyond the older PLC, with a sharper focus: use evidence of student performance to adapt instruction and policy toward one concrete objective, Grade-Level Proficiency. Three kinds operate simultaneously:

- **Teacher RFTs** — grade-level or subject teams meeting bi-weekly, using D/F/S to drive instructional strategy.
- **Administrator RFTs** — school and district leaders using D/F/S to reshape policies, schedules, staffing, and supports.
- **Student RFTs** — teams of three to four students using D/F/S to drive their own learning.

Empowered, data-driven RFTs using D/F/S to achieve clear proficiency objectives are the engines of transformation. Every RFT decision faces one **acid test**: *does this strategy move students toward proficiency, or not?*

How the Sequence Works: Two Tracks, One Mission

The twelve phases below are numbered for clarity, but transformation is not a straight line — it is two tracks advancing in parallel, each feeding the other:

- **The Culture Track:** leadership GSMS validation → public declaration of the Mission → educator mindset shift → student mindset shift. *This track builds belief.*
- **The Systems Track:** Superintendent's MPE Support Team → Data Stream and common assessments → RFTs at every level → capture, scale, and report. *This track builds the machinery that turns belief into proficiency.*

One sequencing rule is non-negotiable: **the Data Stream launches *with* — not after — the Teacher RFTs.** An RFT without common-assessment data has nothing to analyze at its first meeting, and a team that spends its first month waiting for data learns that the initiative is talk. Build the fuel line as you build the engine.

And remember the recursion: the whole system runs on D/F/S. Each phase ends not with a checklist of artifacts but with evidence: data on whether the phase worked, feedback on what it revealed, and strategy for what to adjust. The district must eat its own cooking.

Phase 1: Leadership Validation — Walk the Talk Before You Talk

Who owns it: Superintendent and District Leadership Team

Nothing in this guide works if the leadership team is performing adherence to belief it does not deeply hold. Rank-and-file educators will begin their own journey by assessing one thing: *Does the superintendent walk the talk, or is this another flavor of the month?* If you are inauthentic, they will sense it — and the initiative dies in the all-hands meeting where it was announced. So the first work is internal: validate the Get Smart Mindset **for yourselves**, as professionals and as people.

The Work

- **Internalize the GSMS.** Work through the evidence and your own lived experience of effort-based mastery and contemplate the literature on “getting smart” until your belief is genuine: students like ours can reach the standard, and educators like ours can get them there.
- **Confront your flatline.** Have the data office prepare flatline charts for each school, multiple grade levels, and the district aggregate — at least ten years of reading and math proficiency.
- **Check your proficiency standard for rigor.** If your district participates in NAEP, use NAEP scores. If you must use state proficiency tests, verify the standard is aligned with NAEP rigor — a watered-down state standard will produce flattering charts and a false sense of progress. Build the Mission on a real standard or don’t bother.
- **Find the positive exceptions.** Identify classrooms and schools — in your district and from your State Department of Education’s data on demographically similar schools — performing far beyond expectation.
- **Assemble the irrefutable logic.** Flatline plus exceptions equals the moral wake-up: students like ours are already succeeding; therefore low performance is not inevitable; therefore we are obligated to build the system that gives our children what they deserve.
- **Finalize the Mission statement and design the Mobilizing Professional Expertise (MPE) Support Team.** The MPE Support Team is the superintendent’s instrument for Mission execution throughout the organization.
- **Draft the calendar for the first year of the transformation.**

RESOURCES

- **PowerPoint: 2 Models jph demo** — the introduction; present in a questions/reactions format

- **PowerPoint:** *FADAF Deck* — discuss implications for students, teachers, and the Leadership Team itself
- **PowerPoint:** Neuroscience Research Deck
- **Reading:** Two Mindsets (jph)
- **Reading:** Milbocker, et al, (2024) Maintaining a Dynamic Brain Summary
- **Reading:** Blackwell and Dweck (2007), Implicit Theories of Intelligence Summary
- **Reading:** Ericsson and Charness (1994) Expert Performance Summary
- **Reading:** The Flatline Charts and the Irrefutable Logic (jph)
- **Exercise:** GSMS Shift for Educators, with the Adult GSMS Experience form — your own history of effort-based mastery is the most personal validation available

Evidence of progress — run D/F/S on this phase itself:

- **Data:** Every leadership team member and every principal has completed the GSMS validation process and the Adult GSMS Experience exercise.
- **Feedback:** Where does doubt remain on the team? Doubt that survives Phase 1 will surface in Phase 2 — in front of a thousand educators.
- **Strategy:** Resolve it now: more evidence, more discussion, more exceptions data — before the public declaration, not after.

Phase 2: Declare the Mission — Publicly, Unambivalently, Twice

Who owns it: Superintendent

Declaration is not an announcement; it is a commitment ceremony. First to your educators, then to your community, the superintendent stakes the district's purpose and their own credibility on the Mission and the GSMS. The declaration gives your people common purpose. Your evident belief in children's *and educators'* capabilities gives that purpose its moral and cultural foundation.

The Work

The all-hands educator meeting — well-choreographed, unmistakable in intent:

- **Declare your belief:** *"There is nothing wrong with our children. Virtually all of them have the capacity to reach the standards they need to be successful in our society."* You don't have to demand everyone shift immediately — demonstrate that *you* have.
- **Show the flatline charts.** Name the record for what it is: unacceptably low, for too long, and morally indefensible given what we now know.

- **Announce the Mission:** Grade-Level Proficiency for all students; 90% CCR. “Children’s futures depend on it; they are fully capable of achieving it; it is therefore our responsibility to get them to this standard.”
- **Establish the irrefutable logic** with the positive-exception statistics: students like ours are already doing this — in our own district and others like it.
- **Promise support, not blame.** Make it unmistakable: you believe the district’s professional educators can transform instruction to achieve the Mission, and district policy will back them. Teachers are the engine of this work and have the authority to shape it. They will never be its scapegoat.
- **Preview the MPE Support Team** — the structural proof that this is action in the trenches, not rhetoric from the podium.

Then take it to the community: *Use same format as the educators’ all-hands meeting above.*

- Make the outreach dramatic and broad — the mayor and city council, the school board, business leaders, parent leaders. The declaration must be logically compelling, unambivalent, uncompromising and morally grounded: “How could we **not** do this?”
- Specify every stakeholder’s role: educators own the day-to-day strategies that move students to proficiency; community members are collaborators and supporters; parents reinforce the GSMS, FADAF, and D/F/S at home. Allies, not bystanders.
- After each meeting, schedule a GSMS workshop for anyone who wants to go deeper.

RESOURCES

- **PowerPoint:** Stakeholder Pitch Deck — the Mission, clearly articulated for every audience
- **Reading:** Honig (2010), Central Office Transformation for District-Wide Teaching and Learning Improvement — Summary
- **Reading:** Reeves (2007), Closing the Implementation Gap — Summary
- **Reading:** The Flatline Charts and the Irrefutable Logic (jph)

Evidence of progress — run D/F/S on this phase itself:

- **Data:** Educator all-hands held; community meetings held; Mission published; stakeholder roles in writing.
- **Feedback:** What are educators saying in hallways and the teachers’ lounge, not just in meetings? Skepticism is data — it tells you exactly where Phase 4 must work hardest.
- **Strategy:** Adjust the workshop plan to meet the skepticism head-on, with evidence rather than enthusiasm.

Phase 3: Establish the MPE Support Team — Mobilizing Professional Expertise

Who owns it: Superintendent (appointing a deputy superintendent or equivalent to lead)

Announcements fade. Structures persist. The Superintendent's **Mobilizing Professional Expertise (MPE) Support Team**, with real staffing and an appropriate budget, is the structural manifestation of the commitment — proof of concrete action in the trenches. It exists to organize and strengthen the people doing the work, never to command compliance from them.

Its operating ethic comes from Robert K. Greenleaf's (1970) formulation of **Servant Leadership** (adapted):

The leader's primary role is to serve the growth, well-being, and effectiveness of others. Servant leaders use their authority to support people and strengthen the Mission — never to control people or elevate themselves.

The Work

- **Validate the GSMS for yourselves first.** The Support Team carries the mindset shift to every school; the same authenticity test applies to them as to the superintendent.
- **Appoint a deputy superintendent (or equivalent) to lead the MPE Support Team.** Define team membership, budget, and a district-wide calendar. Ensure all team members validate the GSMS for themselves before carrying it to schools.
- **Orchestrate the GSMS shift** across every school and administrative office in the district (Phase 4).
- **Support adoption of the Mission** with the flatline charts, positive-exception data, and the irrefutable logic.
- **Stand up the Data Office and the Data Stream** (Phase 5) **and organize Results-Focused Teams** (Phase 6) — simultaneously.
- **Teach RFTs to use the D/F/S method as their operating system.**
- **Confer real authority on RFTs**, with the superintendent's blessing: authority to define problems, choose what works, and eliminate what doesn't, judged by the acid test of student proficiency.
- **Equip RFTs with AI.** Ensure teacher teams have current guidance for using AI to save time and improve instruction, and administrator teams have effective AI applications for data analysis, progress reporting, scheduling, and policy drafting.
- **Capture and spread what works; align evaluation and professional learning; report progress** (Phases 10–12).

RESOURCES

- **PowerPoint:** 2 Models jph demo
- **PowerPoint:** Neuroscience Research Deck
- **Reading:** Two Mindsets (jph)
- **PowerPoint:** FADAF deck
- **Exercise:** GSMS Shift for Educators exercise with Adult GSMS Experience form
- **Reading:** Milbocker, et al, (2024) Maintaining a Dynamic Brain Summary
- **Reading:** Blackwell and Dweck (2007), Implicit Theories of Intelligence Summary
- **Reading:** Ericsson and Charness (1994) Expert Performance Summary
- **Reading:** The Flatline Charts and the Irrefutable Logic (jph)
- **Reading:** Honig (2010), Central Office Transformation for District-Wide Teaching and Learning Improvement — Summary
- **Reading:** Reeves (2007), Closing the Implementation Gap — Summary
- **Reading:** Garzon, et al, *AI in Education*, Summary
- **Reading:** Joshi (2025), *Strategic Integration of Artificial Intelligence in K-12*, Summary

Evidence of progress — run D/F/S on this phase itself:

- **Data:** Team appointed, funded, and operating on a published calendar; GSMS workshop plan, RFT launch plan, and Data Office launch plan complete.
- **Feedback:** Is the team being received as servants of the work or inspectors of it? The answer determines everything downstream.
- **Strategy:** Do course corrections visibly and early — the team's first interactions with schools set its reputation for years.

Phase 4: Shift Educators to the GSMS — Belief Built on Evidence

Who owns it: MPE Support Team

Educators cannot authentically teach a mindset they have not internalized. This phase is not a motivational exercise — it is a belief-shift process grounded in three converging streams of evidence: the research base, the educators' own experience of effort-based mastery, and the data on classrooms where students like ours already excel. The shift creates bedrock: teachers *can* organize instruction at the level the Mission demands, and children *can* learn to the standard.

The Work

School by school, and with visible support from principals, the Support Team runs **GSMS workshops for principals and faculty that include:**

- **The Two Models presentation.** Name both models honestly: the Innate Ability Paradigm — “some have it, some don’t” — versus the Get Smart Mindset. Present, don’t sell; let questions and reactions run.
- **The evidence readings** — neuroscience, mindset research, expert performance.
- **The Adult GSMS Experience exercise.** Every educator has lived the GSMS — a moment when sustained effort and strategy produced real competence. Personal experience locks in what research introduces.
- **FADAF for adults.** How do we respond to our own professional difficulty? The same reframe we will teach students applies to us.
- **The Flatline charts and positive-exception data** presented as basis for the stark choice, put plainly: “Our students are capable of much, much better than what we’re getting. Can we really continue to accept low performance when others do so much better? Can there be any doubt of our obligation?” Encourage vigorous discussion. Discomfort here is the sound of the old paradigm cracking.
- **The instructional implications.** What will teaching look like when we truly believe all our students can reach proficiency? Begin the working list of practices to strengthen — and practices to eliminate.

RESOURCES

- **PowerPoint:** 2 Models jph demo — the anchor presentation
- **PowerPoint:** Neuroscience Research Deck
- **Reading:** Two Mindsets Reading (jph)
- **PowerPoint:** FADAF Deck
- **Exercise:** GSMS Shift for Educators, with the Adult GSMS Experience form
- **Reading:** Milbocker, et al, (2024) Maintaining a Dynamic Brain Summary
- **Reading:** Blackwell and Dweck (2007), Implicit Theories of Intelligence Summary
- **Reading:** Ericsson and Charness (1994) Expert Performance Summary
- **PowerPoint:** Effective-Ineffective Practices Deck — sets the stage for RFT work on what to build and what to eliminate

Evidence of progress — run D/F/S on this phase itself:

- **Data:** Workshops completed in every school; educator reflections collected; school-level readiness assessed.
- **Feedback:** Which schools shifted and which are holding back? Readiness variation now predicts RFT effectiveness later.

- **Strategy:** Differentiate support — the schools slowest to believe get more evidence and more presence, not more pressure.

Phase 5: Open the Data Stream — Fuel Before Ignition

Who owns it: MPE Support Team and the Data Office

This phase deliberately precedes the RFT launch. A Results-Focused Team's first meeting must open with results to focus on. Stand up the Data Office and the common-assessment system now, so that when teacher teams convene in Phase 6, the fuel line is already flowing. Transformation runs on a continuous stream of useful performance information — timely, understandable, connected to instructional decisions, and aligned to a rigorous proficiency standard.

The Work

- **Establish the Data Office** under Support Team oversight, charged with ensuring every RFT has the data it needs.
- **Build the common-assessment system** — common assignments and assessments on a published calendar, generating classroom-level data for grade-level teacher teams.
- **Establish flatline chart templates for the district, school, and classroom levels.**
- **Build Positive-Exception data presentation.** Use data (from your district and others) for districts, schools and classrooms with similar demographics
- **Deliver every level of the Stream:** classroom data from common work; grade-level progress toward proficiency; school trends and variation; district movement toward the Mission; and student improvement scores — growth, not current performance.
- **Hold the rigor line.** All proficiency reporting aligned to NAEP-level standards. Flattering data is worse than no data.
- **Hold the dignity line.** Data goes to the people responsible for action, framed for improvement. It is never used for humiliation — not of teachers, not of schools, not of students.
- **Align all proficiency reporting to NAEP or NAEP-aligned benchmarks.** A watered-down state standard produces flattering charts and a false sense of progress. Build the Mission on a real standard or don't bother.
- **Build the common assessment calendar, classroom data report formats, and school and district progress dashboards.** Establish a variation-analysis protocol so RFTs can use the data to reduce variation, not to rank or shame.

RESOURCES

- **PowerPoint:** Efficacy SDIS-DFS Deck — the operating system for every meeting
- **Reading:** The Flatline Charts and the Irrefutable Logic (jph)
- **Reading:** Haack and Marshall (2021) *How PLCs Can Get Better at Using Student Data* Summary
- **Reading:** DuFour and Eaker (1994) *Professional Learning Communities at Work*, Summary

Evidence of progress — run D/F/S on this phase itself:

- **Data:** Data Office operational; first common assessments scheduled; dashboards live.
- **Feedback:** Can a fourth-grade teacher team open a report and know what to do with it in five minutes? If not, the report fails — redesign it.
- **Strategy:** Iterate report design with real teacher teams before the Phase 6 launch.

Phase 6: Launch *Teacher Results-Focused Teams* — The Engines of Transformation

Who owns it: MPE Support Team and Principals

Teacher RFTs are where the Mission meets Monday morning. Grade-level and subject-area teams, meeting bi-weekly, use common assessments, student work, and D/F/S to answer one question relentlessly: *which instructional strategies are moving students toward proficiency, and which are not?* Mandated by the superintendent, supported by the MPE team, and — this is the difference between an RFT and a meeting — **empowered:** authority to choose what works and eliminate what doesn't, judged by the acid test.

The Work

- **Organize the teams:** grade-level or subject-based, bi-weekly, on protected time, tied explicitly to proficiency targets.
- **Run the disciplined D/F/S cycle every meeting:** review the data (what did students understand, where did they struggle, which classrooms showed stronger results?) → generate feedback (what does the evidence say about student needs and instructional effectiveness?) → select strategies (what will we reteach, revise, model, practice, or assess differently?) → assign action (who tries what, by when, with which students?) → review impact next meeting (expand, revise, or drop).
- **Eliminate permanent ability grouping.** RFT members support one another in removing it from their repertoires. Acknowledge real differences in current capability — and

address them with flexible *capability* grouping that accelerates students needing more support, never with permanent tracks that quietly enforce the Innate Ability Paradigm.

- **Study what makes teams work.** Effective RFTs are structured, data-driven, and focused on instructional effectiveness — read the research, watch the proof points.
- **Use AI deliberately** to reclaim time and sharpen instruction, with the Support Team supplying current guidance.
- **Log and share.** Keep the instructional-strategy log; feed what works into the district catalogue (Phase 11).
- **Establish the D/F/S meeting protocol, a data-reporting template, and an instructional-strategy log** for every RFT to use from its first meeting forward.

RESOURCES

- **PowerPoint:** Efficacy SDIS-DFS Deck — the operating system for every meeting
- **Reading:** Haack and Marshall (2021) *How PLCs Can Get Better at Using Student Data* Summary
- **Reading:** DuFour and Eaker (1994) *Professional Learning Communities at Work*, Summary
- **Reading:** Garzon, et al, *AI in Education*, Summary
- **Case Study:** The Palm Beach County Case Study
- **Video:** The Peres School Video (Richmond, CA)
- **PowerPoint:** The Peres Video Deck — accompanies video
- **PowerPoint:** Effective-Ineffective Practices Deck

Evidence of progress — run D/F/S on this phase itself:

- **Data:** Rosters set; bi-weekly calendar protected; first cycles completed with the common-assessment data from Phase 5.
- **Feedback:** Are meetings producing strategy changes, or producing minutes? The strategy log tells the truth.
- **Strategy:** Where teams stall, the Support Team coaches the D/F/S discipline — it serves the teams, it does not grade them.

Phase 7: Teach Students the GSMS and FADAF — Recruit Them to the Mission

Who owns it: Teachers

Students are not the objects of this transformation; they are its most important participants. They will take responsibility for their own learning when they see that you genuinely believe: in the GSMS; that proficiency matters for their lives; and that they are capable of reaching it. Belief is not lectured into children — it is demonstrated, experienced, and earned. Teaching the GSMS is not separate from academic learning; it is achieved *through* it.

The Work

- **Teach the GSMS directly, K–12.** Younger students: Think You Can → Work Hard → Get Smart. Middle and high school: Confidence → Effective Effort → Development.
- **Demonstrate it in real time.** Every academic success becomes evidence: “So you see — you really can Get Smart when you refuse to quit. When you sustain your effort at learning something difficult, you can master it.”
- **Teach FADAF explicitly.** Mistakes and difficulty are information about what to work on to improve — not verdicts. This understanding immunizes students against frustration and shame and accelerates learning precisely when work gets hard.
- **Tap their own experience.** Every student has already lived the GSMS — riding a two-wheeler, learning a game, mastering something “really hard.” Have each write an example; in groups of three, find the similarities. The pattern they discover is the mindset.
- **Run the three-challenge sequence.** Design a moderately difficult task that, with real Effective Effort, everyone can master. When they succeed, ask: “What does it mean that you were all able to do this?” Then a harder challenge. Then harder still. The first success is eye-opening; by the third, the GSMS and FADAF are imprinted on their minds and spirits.
- **Recruit them to the Mission.** Show the elements of year-end proficiency in each subject; display exemplars from previous students. Make the target visible and the standard real. “This is what proficiency looks like. Our job this year is to make sure everybody in our class hits this standard. Will you join me?” Our young people want to believe — to know — that they can Get Smart and reach the standard when they apply Effective Effort and refuse to give up. Give them that knowledge. It is a gift that rewards them for life.
- **Exercise:** After a challenging quiz, have students work in groups of three to analyze data from a quiz or assignment and help one another make feedback: “What do I need to work on to improve?” — a direct rehearsal for Student RFTs

RESOURCES

- **PowerPoint:** Get Smart Pres for Young Students Deck
- **PowerPoint:** 2 Models Pres Older Students Deck

- **PowerPoint:** FADAF Deck
- **PowerPoint:** Neuroscience Research Deck
- **Reading:** Brain Science for Elementary
- **Reading:** HS Students FADAF Testimonials
- **Form:** Student Get Smart Example form
- **Exercise:** Three-Challenge Sequence for Student GSMS Internalization (doc in Mindset Folder)

Evidence of progress — run D/F/S on this phase itself:

- **Data:** GSMS and FADAF lessons taught; three-challenge sequences completed; proficiency targets and exemplars visible in classrooms.
- **Feedback:** Is the shift audible? Listen to classroom language about difficulty. Do you hear a shift from: “I can’t do this,” to “I can’t do this yet — what’s my feedback?” Here is an important tell for the shift: students begin to use FADAF as a verb—“It was hard, but I FADAF’d it.”
- **Strategy:** Where the old language persists, more demonstrations — belief follows experience, not exhortation.

Phase 8: Teach Students the D/F/S Method — Hand Them the Engine

Who owns it: Teachers

Once students understand Effective Effort and FADAF, give them the tool the adults use. D/F/S puts students in the driver’s seat of their own improvement — a simple, repeatable method for turning any returned assignment into a plan:

- **Data:** How did I do? (The grade or score.)
- **Feedback:** What does this show I need to work on?
- **Strategy:** What, concretely, will I do next to improve?

The Work

- **Teach and demonstrate the method**, suitable for elementary and secondary students alike.
- **Build the routine:** every returned quiz, writing assignment, math assessment, reading check, project, and practice task gets the three questions.
- **Track improvement scores** so students see their own growth — the most convincing GSMS evidence there is.

- **Establish student reflection sheets, a classroom protocol for reviewing returned work, and an improvement-score tracking system** so students can see their own growth over time.

RESOURCES

- **Guide:** DFS Reading and Practice — Elementary
- **Guide:** DFS Reading and Practice — Secondary

Evidence of progress — run D/F/S on this phase itself:

- **Data:** D/F/S routines running on returned work; improvement scores tracked.
- **Feedback:** Are students generating their own strategies, or waiting to be told? Ownership is the indicator.
- **Strategy:** Model, release, repeat — until the three questions are reflex.

Phase 9: Organize *Student RFTs* — Getting Smart Together

Who owns it: Teachers

Now close the loop. The same structure that improves teaching improves learning. Student Results-Focused Teams — three to four students each — use D/F/S collaboratively to analyze returned work, make feedback, and build strategies. Once students are recruited to the Mission, they embrace their RFTs as instruments for Getting Smart together. Introduce them the way one professional describes the work to another:

“Results-Focused Teams are how the teachers in this school use the D/F/S Method to improve our teaching. I want you to use RFTs to improve your learning. When I give back an assignment, test, or quiz, you will work together as a team to look at the data, make feedback, and help one another develop strategies to improve. D/F/S works well when you use it alone — it is even more powerful with a team.”

The Work

- **Form the teams** (3–4 students), set the norms, and teach the discussion protocol.
- **Equip the teams** with peer-support sentence starters and student improvement logs.
- **Establish a D/F/S student discussion protocol.**
- **Serve the teams: monitor and coach** — the teacher’s role mirrors the MPE Support Team’s: monitor teams to ensure they stay on track, intervene as required to strengthen their work.

Evidence of progress — run D/F/S on this phase itself:

- **Data:** Student RFTs meeting regularly on returned work; improvement logs in use.
- **Feedback:** Are students pushing one another's strategies forward, or just comparing scores?
- **Strategy:** Coach the protocol; celebrate teams whose improvement scores climb together.

Phase 10: Use Administrator RFTs to Align Budget, Policy, Evaluation, and Professional Learning

Who owns it: Superintendent, Leadership Team, and MPE Support Team

Here is where most initiatives die: the new vision gets layered on top of unchanged structures, and the old structures win. If the budget, the policy manual, the evaluation system, and the professional-development calendar still serve the old paradigm, the district is hedging — and everyone can tell. Using the D/F/S method to align all functions and operations with the Mission is how the district walks the talk at the institutional level.

The Work

- **Reshape the budget** toward what the Mission requires: common assessments, protected collaboration time, data systems, professional development for high-expertise teaching, intervention supports, MPE staffing, and AI tools that save teacher time or improve instruction.
- **Audit every policy** against one question: does it help or hinder Grade-Level Proficiency, CCR, effective instruction, flexible student support, RFT collaboration, data use, and student agency? Keep, revise, or eliminate accordingly.
- **Transform teacher evaluation** from what Kim Marshall calls “a compliance ritual” into a system for improving teaching: reinforcing effective practices, providing feedback on mediocre ones, and recognizing use of evidence, responsiveness to feedback, contribution to RFTs, and student movement toward proficiency.
- **Connect professional learning** directly to problems surfaced in RFTs, strategies with measurable gains, GSMS and FADAF, D/F/S practice, and high-expertise teaching.
- **Build a professional development calendar** tied directly to what RFTs surface. Document the changes made and make them visible to educators.
- **Develop and publish district guidance for AI use** in classrooms and administrative functions, so RFTs have a clear framework for applying AI tools to instruction, data analysis, and scheduling. This should be a ‘living document’ with regular updates tracking advances in artificial intelligence.
- **Complete budget alignment, policy alignment, and evaluation alignment reviews.**

RESOURCES

- **Reading:** Kim Marshall (2013), Rethinking Teacher Supervision and Evaluation — Summary; moving evaluation from compliance ritual to improvement system
- **Reading:** Jon Saphier (2023), Disrupting the Teacher Opportunity Gap: Aligning 12 Processes for High Expertise Teaching (Corwin)

Evidence of progress — run D/F/S on this phase itself:

- **Data:** Budget, policy, evaluation, and PD reviews completed, with documented changes.
- **Feedback:** Where do educators still feel the old system pulling against the new work? That friction list is your agenda.
- **Strategy:** Eliminate the contradictions, publicly — every removed obstacle is proof the district means it.

Phase 11: Capture, Share, and Scale What Works — The Force Multiplier

Who owns it: MPE Support Team

Professional collaboration is a **force multiplier**: effective RFTs are networks where collective intelligence exceeds the sum of individual insights. Completely new understandings and practices *emerge* from professional interaction. The Support Team's job is to amplify that effect across the whole system — so a breakthrough in one fourth-grade classroom becomes, within a semester, the property of every fourth-grade classroom in the district.

The Work

- **Catalogue innovations:** a district library capturing generalizable policies and instructional practices that emerge from RFTs.
- **Apply an evidence standard:** the acid test again — practices spread when they demonstrably move students toward proficiency.
- **Cultivate network effects:** facilitate communication between RFTs across grade levels, buildings, and organizational tiers — effectively creating second-order RFTs — so everyone works with a whole-system perspective.
- **Make the district a learning organization:** networked RFTs are how an entire school system becomes capable of continuous, evidence-driven movement toward the Mission.

Evidence of progress — run D/F/S on this phase itself:

- **Data:** Catalogue live; practices submitted, vetted, and adopted across schools.
- **Feedback:** Is knowledge flowing across buildings, or pooling inside them?
- **Strategy:** Engineer the exchanges — network effects are cultivated, not assumed.

Phase 12: Report Progress and Reduce Variation — “Level Up”, Never Shame

Who owns it: MPE Support Team and Superintendent

The district must continuously show whether the transformation is working — to keep the Mission visible, maintain urgency, and learn from variation. Variation between classrooms and schools is not an embarrassment to hide; it is the most valuable information the system produces. Where results are stronger, something is working. Find it, name it, spread it.

The Work

- **Produce monthly school-level progress reports, quarterly district Mission reports, and public progress updates.** Apply a variation-analysis protocol and issue RFT strategy-adjustment memos where progress is too slow.
- **Report on a rhythm:** monthly school-level progress reports; quarterly district Mission reports; public-facing updates that keep the community enrolled.
- **Ask the working questions:** Are more students reaching proficiency? Which classrooms and schools are improving fastest, and what explains it? Where is progress too slow, and what support is needed? What gets scaled, revised, or stopped?
- **Use variation to level up.** Comparative data is never used to shame people — it prompts RFTs to generate strategies that reduce variation, raising performance across schools and the whole district to reflect the proven capabilities of children and educators.

The standing questions for every report:

*Where is success emerging — and how do we spread it?
Where is it slow? How can we support them?*

Evidence of progress — run D/F/S on this phase itself:

- **Data:** Reporting rhythm established; variation analyzed and discussed in RFTs at every level.
- **Feedback:** Is reporting generating strategy, or generating anxiety? The tone test is as important as the trend line.
- **Strategy:** Pair every variation finding with support — the question is always “what do you need,” never “what’s wrong with you.”

Who Owns What: The Role Summary

The Superintendent and Leadership Team

Declare the Mission and model the GSMS. Align budget and policy with the Mission. Establish and empower the MPE Support Team. Publicly commit the district to Grade-Level Proficiency and 90% CCR — and maintain urgency and credibility by walking the talk, every day, in every decision.

The MPE Support Team

Coordinate the Transformation, district wide. Orchestrate the GSMS shift. Stand up the Data Office and the Data Stream. Organize and serve RFTs at every level. Train educators in D/F/S. Capture and spread innovations. Align evaluation and professional learning. Report progress and lead the work of reducing variation — all in the spirit of servant leadership.

Principals

Protect collaboration time as sacred. Support teacher RFTs and reinforce the GSMS and FADAF in every faculty interaction. Use data to support teachers, never to rank them. Connect school operations to the Mission and lead the reduction of variation across classrooms, in the spirit of servant leadership.

Teachers

Join RFTs and drive instruction through D/F/S. Validate the GSMS personally, then teach it — and FADAF — to students through demonstration and experience. Recruit students to the Mission, hand them the D/F/S method, and organize them into Student RFTs. Replace permanent ability grouping with flexible capability grouping.

Students

Internalize the GSMS. Treat difficulty as feedback. Use D/F/S on every piece of returned work. Support teammates in Student RFTs. Own your personal climb, and the collective climb of your classmates toward proficiency.

Parents and Community

Reinforce the GSMS, FADAF, and D/F/S at home. Support the Mission publicly. Encourage Effective Effort. Participate as allies, not bystanders.

The Timeline: From First 90 Days to Year Five

First 90 Days — Foundation

- Leadership Team, including building principals, completes GSMS validation (Phase 1).
- Flatline charts prepared on a NAEP-rigorous standard; positive-exception data gathered; the irrefutable logic assembled.
- Mission statement finalized; superintendent prepares the educator declaration.
- MPE Support Team appointed and funded; Data Office designed; first-year calendar drafted.

Months 4–6 — Declaration and Mobilization

- All-hands educator meeting; school board and community declaration meetings begin (Phase 2).
- MPE Support Team launches school-by-school GSMS workshops (Phase 4).
- Data Office goes operational; common-assessment calendar published (Phase 5).
- Teacher RFTs organized and trained in D/F/S; first cycles run on real data (Phase 6).

Months 7–12 — The System Comes Alive

- Teacher RFTs meet bi-weekly; the Data Stream flows at every level.
- Teachers run student GSMS and FADAF lessons and the three-challenge sequence (Phase 7); students learn D/F/S (Phase 8); Student RFTs launch (Phase 9).
- Progress reporting begins; early instructional innovations catalogued.

Year 2 — Deepen and Align

- RFTs grow more skilled; variation across classrooms and schools is analyzed and addressed.
- Successful practices scale across buildings; evaluation and professional learning fully aligned (Phase 10).
- Leveling-up processes operating in overdrive.
- Community progress reports become routine; student ownership of learning strengthens.

Years 3–5 — Acceleration to the Mission

- Districtwide proficiency gains accelerate; CCR indicators move to the center.
- RFT network effects mature; effective practices become institutional habit.
- The district operates as a learning organization — and the 90% CCR Mission moves from declaration to expectation.

The Essential Logic — and the Question

Strip everything else away and the operating logic fits in one breath:

Adopt the GSMS. Declare the Mission. Organize adults and students into Results-Focused Teams. Feed them useful data. Teach them D/F/S. Capture what works. Scale it. Keep going until Grade-Level Proficiency and CCR are simply what this district does.

That is the Architecture. The science is settled enough. The proof points exist — in your own state, likely in your own buildings. The tools are in your hands, bound to every phase of this guide. The children are ready; they have always been ready. What the flatline measures is not their capability. It measures your organization.

Somewhere in your district tonight, a teacher is already getting students like ours to the standard — proving every day that the Innate Ability Paradigm is a lie. The only question this guide cannot answer is whether you and the district will decide to organize yourselves around what that teacher knows.

Are we serious?