



Straight A Leadership Assessment: Diagnosing for Improvement



Cooperative Educational Service Agency #9
(CESA #9)

January 2015

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide the Cooperative Educational Service Agency (CESA) #9 with results from the *Straight A Leadership Assessment* administered to leaders in the organization by consultants of Studer Education. The executive summary provides an overview of the *Assessment* and a summary of findings from the administration of the assessment in the Cooperative Educational Service Agency #9.

The Straight A Leadership Assessment is a sixteen-item organizational assessment. This leadership assessment was developed by Quint Studer and is described in detail in his book, *Straight A Leadership*. The assessment has been used by hundreds of organizations with more than 35,000 leaders completing the assessment, and continues to be the largest data collection process of Studer Group. The assessment was designed based on success factors identified in a research study (Organizational Change Process in High Performing Organizations: In-Depth Case Studies with Health Care Facilities) completed by the Alliance for Health Care Research and the work of John Kotter, *A Sense of Urgency*.

Using the success factors identified in the study, the *Straight A Leadership Assessment* is designed to diagnose *alignment, readiness for change, fundamentals, self-awareness, consistency, and accountability* of an organization based on the perceptions of leader groups within the organization.

The *Straight A Leadership Assessment* was administered to leaders of the Cooperative Educational Service Agency #9 (CESA #9) from January 21 – 29, 2015. A total of 19 individuals participated in the survey. Of the total possible respondents, 76.0% completed the survey.

The results from the *Straight A Leadership Assessment* based on the perceptions of CESA #9 leadership are presented in this report and are organized using six success factors: Alignment; Readiness for Change; Fundamentals; Self-Awareness; Consistency; and Accountability. The data are presented by item and by leader group to show the degree of alignment among leaders. The results provide information for leaders of CESA #9 to analyze and consider to support and enhance continuous systems improvement for their organization.

Summary of Findings

The following items are findings from the results of the *Straight A Leadership Assessment*. These findings are important for the organization to consider for continuous improvement.

- Participation rate for the *Straight A Leadership Assessment* was 76.0%.
- Alignment is relatively strong among leader groups around the organization's strengths and areas for improvement.
- A sense of urgency for change and improvement varies across leader levels, especially when predicting the agency's future success if continuing to operate as it does today.
- There is greater consistency among leaders around their perceived sense of accountability than there is around leader development or the standardization of leadership practices.

RESULTS OF THE *STRAIGHT A LEADERSHIP ASSESSMENT* Cooperative Educational Service Agency #9 (CESA #9)

The *Straight A Leadership Assessment* was administered from January 21 – 29, 2015, to allow CESA #9 leaders to participate in the survey. The items on the survey fall into six categories identified as success factors for high performing organizations. The categories are *alignment, readiness for change, fundamentals, self-awareness, consistency, and accountability*. The results from the assessment are provided in this section of the report and are organized based on these six categories.

Respondents to the Straight A Leadership Assessment

Table 1 below provides the number of respondents who completed the survey and the number invited to complete the survey. The percentage of participants by leader group who completed the survey provides information associated with consistency and reliability of performance which is directly aligned to accountability. The agency administrative team is the only category with 100% participation.

Table 1: Survey Respondents

1. What is your role in CESA #9?	Number of Responses	Personnel in Role	Response Rate
Board of Control Member	7	11	63.6%
Agency Administrative Team ¹	5	5	100%
Directors / Coordinators	7	9	77.8%
Total Respondents	19	25	76.0%

¹ Team includes Agency Administrator, Fiscal Administrator, Director of Special Education, and Director of WI Virtual School

Alignment

The first items on the assessment ask about a leader's perception of

- what the agency/organization does well and should continue to do,
- some opportunities for improvement, and
- barriers or challenges to achieving higher performance.

The responses to these initial questions provide insight into how aligned the different leader groups are with the situations provided in the survey.

Table 2 below displays the frequency of responses by leader group and item ranks are listed. These results indicate the top items that the Organization does well and should continue to do according to the responses of each leadership group. Financial and Fiscal Responsibility was the number one strength overall. The second highest ranked strength of the agency was Improving Member Districts and Consistency in Leadership ranked third. The lowest ranked items were Safety and Quality and Student Achievement.” Among the groups, only the Directors Coordinators had a different item within the top 3 strengths; they rated Accountability in their top 3.

Table 2: Organizational Strengths: Item Response Frequency by Role

<i>Choose the top three things CESA #9 does well and should continue to do.</i>	Board of Control Member	Agency Administrative Team	Directors / Coordinators	Total	Rank
Accountability	2	2	4	8	4
Consistency in Leadership	6	3	2	11	3
Financial and Fiscal Responsibility	4	3	7	14	1
Goal Setting	2	1	2	5	5
Improving Member Districts	6	3	4	13	2
Safety and Quality	0	1	0	1	7, 8
Student Achievement	0	0	1	1	7, 8
Standardizing Best Practices	1	2	1	4	6
Total	21	15	21	57	

Table 3 on the following page displays the frequency of choices by leader group for the top three barriers/challenges to higher performance as well as the rank of the items. Time and Priorities was a number one choice for all leader groups. This will be important for leaders to explore to determine if time is focused on the key drivers of success for the agency and if all actions align to fewer rather than many key drivers that define success. The second priority that had alignment among leaders addressed the lack of funding and resources to improve and achieve results.

Table 3: Barriers in the Organization: Item Response Frequency by Role

<i>What are the top three barriers/challenges you face that prevent you from achieving results in your area of responsibility?</i>	Board of Control Member	Agency Administrative Team	Directors / Coordinators	Total	Rank
Communication Skills	0	1	0	1	5, 6, 7
Industry Accountability Pressures	3	3	2	8	3
Lack of Employee Engagement / Buy In	1	1	0	2	4
Lack of Funding and Resources	4	3	4	11	2
Too Many Employees Lack Skill Sets	0	0	1	1	5, 6, 7
Too Many Non-Compliant Employees	0	0	0	0	8
Lack of Sense of Urgency to Move Quickly	0	0	1	1	5, 6, 7
Time and Priorities	5	4	6	15	1
Total	13	12	14	39	

Table 4 below provides the frequency of responses by leader group as well as the rank of each item based on the top three areas of focus for improvement as perceived by each leader group. The number one ranked item is Improving Member Districts as ranked across all leader groups. Technology was the second highest rated opportunity for the Board and Administrative Team; Directors/ Coordinators rated Focus on Strategic Direction and Improving the Organization equally with Technology.

Table 4: Opportunities for Improvement: Item Response Frequency by Role

<i>List the top three opportunities for improvement for CESA #9.</i>	Board of Control Member	Agency Administrative Team	Directors / Coordinators	Total	Rank
Communication	1	2	2	5	4
Compensation and Benefits	1	0	0	1	7
Consistency in Leadership	0	0	0	0	8
Employee Engagement / Buy In	1	0	3	4	5
Focus on Strategic Direction and Improving the Organization	2	2	5	9	3
Goal Setting	2	1	0	3	6
Improving Member Districts	6	4	6	16	1
Technology	5	3	5	13	2
Total	18	12	21	51	

Alignment cont.

Two additional items on the assessment focus on alignment of leaders within the organization in viewing the past and in viewing the future for CESA #9 as it relates to influence of the external environment. The two items with responses are found in Table 5a and Table 5b. The data collected have been transferred to a 100 point scale for ease of comparison.

Table 5A: The External Environment: Item Response Frequency by Role

Over the past five years, the external environment influencing CESA #9 has been:	Role Calculation ¹	Very Easy	Easy	Normal	Difficult	Very Difficult
Board of Control Member	53.57	0	1	4	2	0
Agency Administrative Team	65.00	0	0	2	3	0
Directors / Coordinators ²	75.00	0	0	1	4	1
Total (n = 18)	63.89	0	1	7	9	1
		0%	5.6%	38.9%	50.0%	5.6%

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

¹ Calculation: Very Easy = 0; Easy = 25; Normal = 50; Difficult = 75; Very Difficult = 100

² Missing 1 (n = 6)

Table 5b provides one of the most important data sets for CESA #9 leaders. The Studer Group benchmark findings in health care show that most board members and executive team members rate this item very difficult and other leaders rate this item as normal. In CESA #9 this was not the case.

Table 5B: The External Environment: Item Response Frequency by Role

Over the next five years, the external environment influencing CESA #9 will be:	Role Calculation ¹	Very Easy	Easy	Normal	Difficult	Very Difficult
Board of Control Member	64.29	0	0	3	4	0
Agency Administrative Team	75.00	0	0	1	3	1
Directors / Coordinators	75.00	0	0	1	5	1
Total (n = 19)	71.05	0	0	5	12	2
		0.0%	0.0%	26.3%	63.2%	10.5%

¹ Calculation: Very Easy = 0; Easy = 25; Normal = 50; Difficult = 75; Very Difficult = 100

Readiness for Change

In his book, *A Sense of Urgency*, John Kotter states that a major reason organizations do not achieve high performance is that the executive team doesn't understand that other leaders might not feel the same urgency. Kotter has found that the executive team mistakenly thinks leadership senses more urgency in the system than actually exists.

This next item helps an organization measure the degree of urgency perceived by each leader group. This is the first step in being certain that everyone in the organization understands the external environment in a similar way. Again executive leaders in the Studer Group health care results tend to see that staying the same will produce bad or very bad results. CESA #9 leaders' ratings on the question ranged from Very Good to Bad, though over 80% of leadership and the board rated this item above Average. This does not suggest a shared perception that change that may be required to meet the demands of the external environment, which over 70% of leaders agreed (see Table 5B) would be Difficult or Very Difficult over the next 5 years.

Table 6 shows the frequency of responses by leader group and converts the data to a 100 point scale for comparison purposes.

Table 6: Future Performance: Item Response Frequency by Role

If CESA #9 continues to perform exactly as it does today, CESA #9 results over the next five years will be:	Role Calculation ¹	Very Good	Good	Average	Bad	Very Bad
Board of Control Member	10.71	5	1	1	0	0
Agency Administrative Team	25.00	1	3	1	0	0
Directors / Coordinators	25.00	2	4	0	1	0
Total (n = 19)	19.74	8	8	2	1	0
		42.1%	42.1%	10.5%	5.3%	0.0%

¹ Calculation: Very Good = 0; Good = 25; Average = 50; Bad = 75; Very Bad = 100

Fundamentals

The two items from the assessment analyzed in this section assess two critical fundamentals for high performance: leader accountability and leader training. A leader evaluation tool must drive performance in order for an organization to achieve and sustain high performance. This means that the tool must be more than a data gathering tool to meet regulations of Human Resources.

The second item, leader training, must be effective in supporting leaders to meet the new challenges of the external environment as well as innovations within the internal environment.

Table 7 below provides the frequency of responses by leader group regarding how well the current evaluation system holds people accountable.

Table 7: Performance Evaluation: Item Response Frequency by Role

How well does your current evaluation system hold people accountable?	Role Calculation ¹	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor
Board Member / Superintendent	21.43	1	6	0	0	0
Agency Administrative Team	30.00	1	2	2	0	0
Directors / Coordinators	28.57	1	5	0	1	0
Total (n = 19)	26.32	3	13	2	1	0
		15.8%	68.4%	10.5%	5.3%	0.0%

¹ Calculation: Excellent = 0; Good = 25; Fair = 50; Poor = 75; Very Poor = 100

Below, Table 8 displays the frequency of responses by leader group focused on the perception of the effectiveness of leader training. The majority of all leader responses fell into the “Good” or “Fair” category.

Table 8: Leadership Development: Item Response Frequency by Role

How well does your current leadership development program prepare you for your leadership role?	Role Calculation ¹	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor
Board of Control Member	28.57	1	4	2	0	0
Agency Administrative Team	35.00	1	1	3	0	0
Directors / Coordinators	42.86	1	2	2	2	0
Total (n=19)	35.53	3	7	7	2	0
		15.8%	36.8%	36.8%	10.5%	0.0%

¹ Calculation: Excellent = 0; Good = 25; Fair = 50; Poor = 75; Very Poor = 100

Self-Awareness

Tables 9A and 9B assess how well the respondents perceive stakeholders would rate CESA #9.

Table 9A: Rating the Organization–Staff Member Perspective

Rate the following statements, “1” is Worst in Class and “10” is Best in Class; “6” is Average.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Mean
<i>From a staff perspective and point of view, how would a staff member rate CESA #9?</i>											
Board of Control Member	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	9.33
Agency Administrative Team	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	0	8.80
Directors / Coordinators	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	1	9.14
Total Number of Responses (n = 15)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	12	2	9.07
Total Number of Responses per Category	0						1		14		

Table 9B: Rating the Organization – Superintendent/Principal Perspective

Rate the following statements, “1” is Worst in Class and “10” is Best in Class; “6” is Average.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Mean
<i>From a superintendent/principal perspective and point of view, how would a superintendent/principal rate CESA #9?</i>											
Board of Control Member	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	9.00
Agency Administrative Team	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	0	8.80
Directors / Coordinators	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	5	0	8.57
Total Number of Responses (n = 16)	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	13	0	8.75
Total Number of Responses per Category	0						3		13		

Consistency

The *Straight A Leadership* tool measures another attribute for achieving and sustaining high performance: consistency or reliability. Consistency must cascade throughout the organization. If there is inconsistency at the executive level, there is inconsistency throughout the organization. One of the consistency items on the assessment asked respondents to rate the skill of the organization in standardizing best practices. The results displayed in Tables 10A and 10B show the frequency by response by leader group and an average by leader group as well as an average for the total responses.

Table 10A: Standardization of leadership practice: Skill Set in Implementing

Rate the following statements, "1" is Worst in Class and "10" is Best in Class; "6" is Average.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Mean
<i>Rate the skill set of CESA #9 in implementing and standardizing best practices throughout member school districts.</i>											
Board of Control Member	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	3	9.00
Agency Administrative Team	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	2	0	8.40
Directors / Coordinators	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	4	0	8.57
Total Number of Responses (n = 19)	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	7	8	3	8.68
Total Number of Responses per Category	0						8		11		

Table 10A: Standardization of leadership practice: Consistency

Rate the following statements, "1" is Worst in Class and "10" is Best in Class; "6" is Average.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Mean
<i>Rate your perception of the consistency in leadership behavior/practices throughout CESA #9.</i>											
Board of Control Member	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	5	9.57
Agency Administrative Team	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	3	0	8.20
Directors / Coordinators	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	2	1	8.29
Total Number of Responses (n = 19)	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	3	6	6	8.74
Total Number of Responses per Category	0						7		12		

Accountability

Accountability is the last component of the *Straight A Leadership* assessment. The importance of accountability with regard to leader evaluation was discussed earlier. In this section three items focus on performance management, how well employees are held accountable. The results from the first item are displayed in Table 11 and lists the number of employees supervised.

Table 11: Number of Employees Supervised

How many employees do you directly supervise?	Number of Responses
None / NA	11
1 to 10	5
11 to 20	1
21 to 30	1
31 to 40	0
41 to 50	0
51 to 60	0
61 to 70	1
71 to 80	0
81 to 90	0
91 to 100	0
Missing	0
Total (n)	19

The results of the second item in accountability, “the number of employees not meeting performance expectations” are displayed in Table 12 on the following page.

Table 12: Number of Employees Not Meeting Performance Expectations

How many of the employees that you supervise are not meeting performance expectations?	Number of Responses (n)	Number Not Meeting Performance Expectations
None	15	0
1	1	1
2	1	2
3	0	0
4	0	0
5	0	0
Total	17	3
Missing	2	

The final item on the assessment aligned to accountability is the number of employees currently in corrective action. The results of this item are displayed in Table 13. The comparison of the results in Tables 11, 12, and 13 is significant to addressing performance issues. CESA #9 leaders identified three (3) employees as not meeting expectations in Table 12, and all three are in some corrective action (Table 13). It may be helpful to investigate if there is a shared understanding or variation in expectations that led to the low number of employees in the “not meeting expectations” group.

Table 13: Number of Employees in Formal Disciplinary/Corrective Action

How many of the employees do you currently have working directly for you who are in formal disciplinary/corrective action?	Number of Responses	Number in Formal Disciplinary / Corrective Action
None	15	0
1	1	1
2	1	2
3	0	0
4	0	0
5	0	0
6	0	0
7	0	0
Total	17	3
Missing	2	