

Leading with Care, Confidence, and Connection: Building Resilient School Systems



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Special Education Today

- Supporting students with disabilities = high stakes
- Supporting staff = often reactive, inconsistent, fragmented
- This isn't just about SPED compliance. It's about:
 - Staff wellness
 - Belonging
 - Confidence in decision-making

Most systems aren't breaking because people don't care, they're breaking because people are overwhelmed.

Who I Am

- Former 6-12 principal
- 22 years in school administration
- First-time Director of Special Education



Timothy E. Worthington II

- Leading Banning USD across 8 school sites
- Passionate about empowering educators with tools that reduce workload

Our District

8

4246

103

184

40

889

21%

The Reality I Walked Into

- Principal calls, fragmented systems, bottlenecks
- Not just inefficiency—impact on people
 - Leaders second-guessing themselves
 - Staff feeling isolated
 - Inconsistent student support



This wasn't just a systems issue, it was a human capacity issue.

The Leadership Problem

Leaders cannot:

- Be the sole source of answers
- Scale themselves across sites
- Sustain high-quality support manually

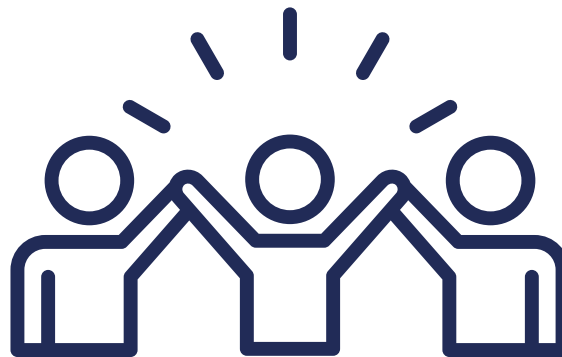
3 pillars of resilient systems:

- Care → Staff feel supported
- Confidence → Leaders trust their decisions
- Connection → Shared understanding across sites



Discussion: Turn to someone near you and share...

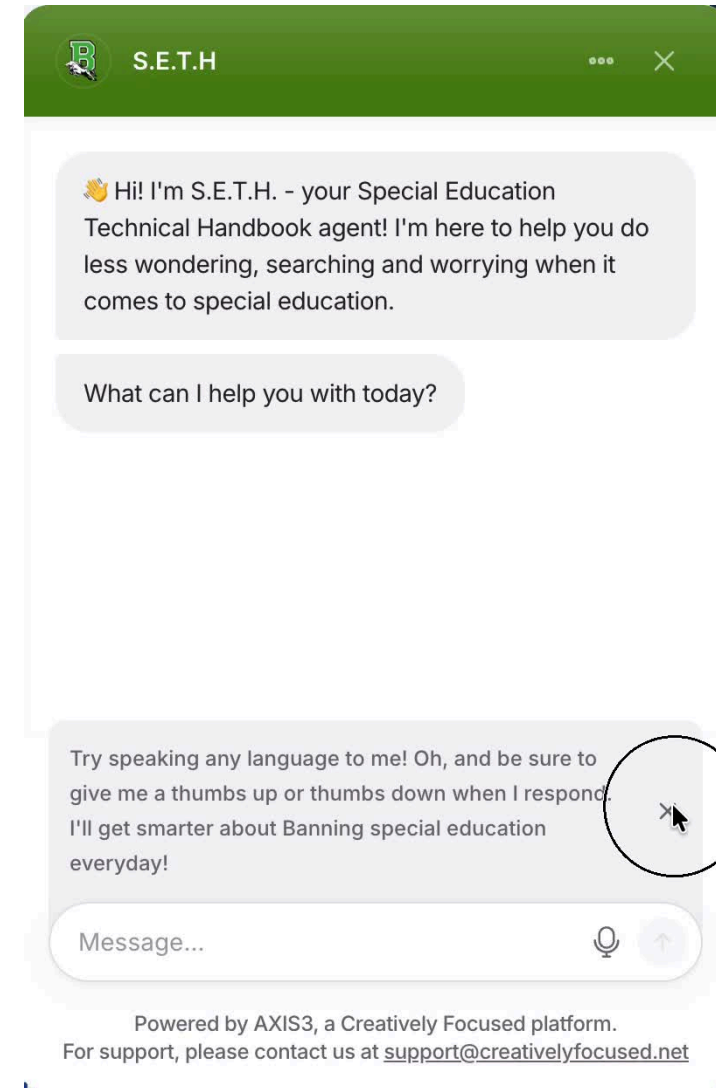
Where in your system are people working harder than they should to find answers?



Enter SETH: The System Shift

Our district-specific, closed-source AI support agent

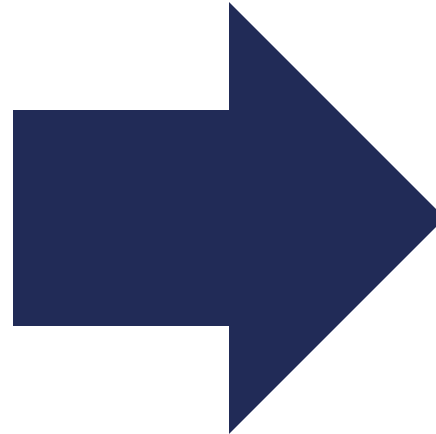
- Immediate answers → reduces stress
- Consistent guidance → builds trust
- 24/7 access → increases equity



Impact: From Burnout → Confidence

Before SETH

71% admin role clarity
26% missed timelines
17 late IEPs



After SETH

100% admin confidence
1.11% missed timelines
11 late IEPs

Impact: From Burnout → Confidence

Staff Wellness

- Fewer repeated questions
- Reduced cognitive overload
- Faster clarity

Confidence

- 100% admin confidence
- Principals acting independently

Equity

- Same answers across all sites
- Not dependent on “who you ask”

**Consistency is what
makes equity real.**

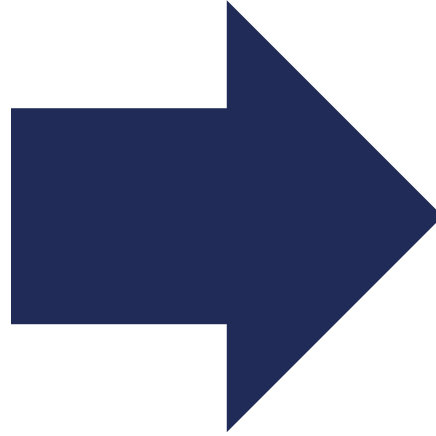
Impact: From Burnout → Confidence



The Real Shift: From People to Systems

FROM:

- Centralized knowledge
- Reactive support
- Leadership bottlenecks



TO:

- Distributed knowledge
- Proactive support
- Empowered teams

What Research Confirms



Evidence-Based Leadership Decisions

- Leaders using data and research make better choices than those relying only on gut instinct (Riad, 2023, Journal of Educational Leadership and Administration)
- Sharing expertise across teams builds capacity without adding staff (Shonk, 2024, Effective Leadership, Program on Negotiation)

Principal Self-Efficacy in Special Education



- Principals with quick access to reliable resources feel more confident leading special education programs (Woolley & Fishman, 2018, RSIS International)
- Consistent guidance across schools leads to better student outcomes (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Hoy & Miskel, 2008, RSIS International)

Learning and Development with Closed-Source AI



- Sharing knowledge across teams builds capacity without hiring more staff (Meng et al., 2023, Frontiers in Psychology)
- Real-time support reduces mistakes by 60% and helps everyone learn continuously (Meng et al., 2023, Frontiers in Psychology)

The Research Insight

What we experienced isn't accidental—it's aligned with what research tells us works.

How to Build This: Actionable Framework

Step 1: Identify Friction

Step 2: Capture Knowledge

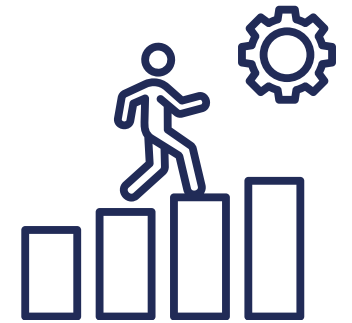
Step 3: Centralize + Align

Step 4: Deploy + Train

Step 5: Refine with Data



How to Build This: Actionable Framework



Step 01

Identify Friction

- Repetitive questions
- Bottlenecks
- Staff confusion

Step 02

Capture Knowledge

- Manuals
- Processes
- Decision rules

Step 03

Centralize and Align

- One source of truth
- District-specific

Step 04

Deploy and Train

- Roadshows
- Real use cases

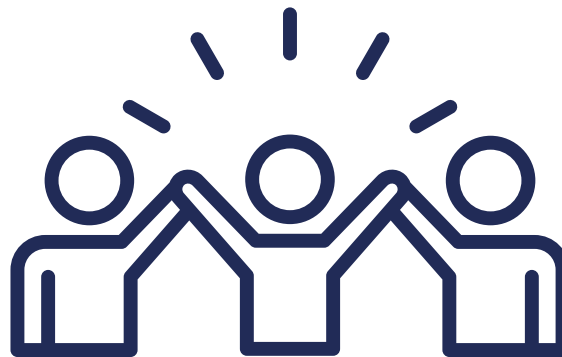
Step 05

Continue to Refine with Data

- Usage patterns
- Feedback loops

Discussion: Turn to someone near you and share...

Where in your system are people working harder than they should to find answers?



Leadership Next Steps

- **Care = systems that support people**
- **Confidence = access to clarity**
- **Connection = shared understanding**



**The goal isn't to have all the answers.
It's to build a system where the right answers
are always within reach.**

Thank you!



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