

Eric Thomas, Ph.D.

Professional Summary

- Equity-agent and advocate for *all* students and their futures.
- Collaborator that appreciates the value of collaboration and shared decision-making via 20+ years as a school, district, university, and state leader.
- Strategic thinker that understands and appreciates change and organizational leadership.
- Instructional leader that promotes alignment of rigorous standards, instruction, formative assessment, and intervention practices.
- Talent manager that inspires and honors the pivotal importance of teachers and school leaders.
- Innovator informed by data and research to improve effectiveness to achieve desired outcomes.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

2017 – Present

Georgia State Board of Education

Deputy Superintendent / Chief Turnaround Officer

Reporting directly to 14-member Georgia State Board of Education, responsible for developing and executing a state-wide support model to improve low-performing schools and to close achievement gaps. Presently engaged with eight school districts.

- Model is anchored by:
 - Four overarching components: talent management, leadership, instructional infrastructure, and school-district partnerships.
 - Addressing academic and non-academic needs. Examples of areas of focus include: student health/wellness, staff wellness, teacher retention, positive behavior intervention supports (PBIS), school board development, and securing/leveraging external resources.
- Increased growth and achievement levels for partner schools, outpacing state-wide improvement metrics.
- **Improved overall outcomes, in two years, which removed 40% of schools from being in bottom 5% in state.**
- Improved climate & culture metrics (discipline, attendance, staff perception, etc.) – resulting in average State Climate Ratings increasing from 2.4 to 3.3 on a 0-5 accountability scale.
- Increased teacher retention in 95% of partner schools.
- Engaged with state legislature to draft legislation to fund a strategic talent management approach to increase teacher recruitment and retention.
- Diffusing innovative practices to schools and districts throughout state. Examples include:
 - Data Dashboard – with focus on leading indicators
 - 90-Day Action Planning – anchored by four data-driven priorities
 - Aligned professional learning – involving school and district leaders
 - Principal and teacher leadership competencies

- Partnering with non-profits, state agencies, and higher education community to develop statewide Turnaround Collaborative – designed to increase coordination and cohesiveness of essential partners.
- Providing guidance to development and ongoing monitoring of districts’ budgets to ensure alignment to identified needs.
- Providing ongoing professional learning with focus on school and district leadership development.

2012 - 2017

University of Virginia Darden/Curry Partnership for Leaders in Education (PLE), Charlottesville, VA
Chief Support Officer

Partnership between the Curry School of Education and the Darden Business School. Led the redesign of the organization’s strategy on supporting schools and districts as they executed a transformation initiative. Organization partnered with rural, urban, and suburban school districts across the country. Size of districts ranged from 500 students to 350,000 students.

- **Increased overall reading and math scores by at least 20% over two years in 68% of partner schools.**
- Identified by the Rand Corporation (2017) as the most successful school improvement approach in the country.
- Provided direct guidance to superintendents and senior district leaders; with focus on talent management, leadership, instructional infrastructure, and support & accountability systems.
- Developed and facilitated nationally recognized Summit for principal supervisors. Focus aimed at execution of support strategies for principals, while simultaneously implementing tools and structures to hold principals accountable to high expectations.
- Launched organization’s focus on supporting school boards and clarifying the role of school boards during transformation efforts. Strong focus on strategic planning.
- Led organization’s efforts to assist districts in effective branding and marketing.
- Engaged with State Departments of Education to assist in their support efforts for low-performing schools.
- Received ongoing leadership development and organizational effectiveness training via the Darden Business School.

2004-2012

Cincinnati Public Schools, Cincinnati, Ohio (35,000 Students)
Chief Innovation Officer (2010-2012)

Leader of office that was responsible for executing district reform and improvement initiatives.

- **Teamed with other cabinet members to increase district’s overall grade from an “F” to a “B” – became the highest performing urban school district in Ohio.**

- Led the *District of Choice* model for the school district. Opened four new schools in two years, including a new Digital Academy, New Tech High School, and Gifted Academy. **Innovative choices increased district enrollment by 5,000 students.**
- Developed and led Principal Development Academy for assistant principals to become principals in district's lowest-performing schools. 100% of participants have become principals.
- Facilitated the district's School Performance Team. Focused on ensuring lower and higher performing schools improved.
- Acted as Superintendent designee in facilitation of Educational Initiatives Panel – collaborative structure to engage teachers and school leaders in decision making.
- Developed a district-wide initiative to support African American and other at-risk males (M.O.R.E. – Men, Organized, Respectful, & Educated). Program has now been launched in over 50% of the district's schools since its inception and has become a national model for supporting the unique needs of minority males.
- Led the design and implementation of the district's new teacher evaluation system. System became the model for the state, with a focus on teacher development.
- Oversaw an annual \$50 million budget.
- Launched the district's initial efforts to implement blended learning model. Model is now present in nearly all schools.
- Led district's Grants Department. Secured local, state, and national grants. Partnered with individual schools to support their grant efforts.

Cincinnati Public Schools, Cincinnati, Ohio

Turnaround Principal Coach (2008-2010)

Led team that provided guidance to group of schools that were executing a turnaround initiative. Thirteen of fifteen schools improved their state accountability rating from an "F" to at least a "C" on state accountability system.

Cincinnati Public Schools, Cincinnati, Ohio

Principal (2004-2010)

Collaborated with school community to implement strategies that led school's rise from *Academic Emergency (F)* to *Effective (B)* on state report card. Effort included a strategic approach to engage the local community as partners.

2004-2007

University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, Ohio

Adjunct Instructor & Facilitator, Educational Administration Program. (Part-Time)

2002-2004

Middletown City School District, Middletown, Ohio

Administrator, Garfield Alternative High School

1998-2002

Cincinnati Public Schools, Cincinnati, Ohio

District Coordinator, 8+ Program (For Overaged 8th graders)

1994-1998

Cincinnati Public Schools, Cincinnati, Ohio

Social Studies Teacher, Aiken and Taft High School

EDUCATION

Concordia University of Chicago	Doctor of Philosophy, Educational Leadership	2016
<i>Dissertation Focus: The Superintendent's Role in School Turnaround</i>		
University of Cincinnati	Post-Graduate Course Work, Superintendent Program	2012
University of Cincinnati	Master of Education, Educational Administration	2001
University of Cincinnati	Administrator Development Academy (ADA)	2000
University of Cincinnati	Bachelor of Science, Secondary Education	1993

AWARDS AND HONORS (Selected)

- Recognized at National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) National Conference. (2018).
- Selected to participate in Ohio School Leadership Institute. Buckeye Association of School Administrators. (2012).
- Received Administrator of the Year Award from the Cincinnati Association, Cincinnati. (2009).
- Selected to serve on Urban School Licensure Standards Committee for Ohio. (2008).

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

- Member, American Association of School Administrators (AASA)
- Member, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD)
- Member, National Alliance of Black School Educators (NABSE)

PRESENTATIONS (Selected)

- *Georgia's Turnaround Strategy*. National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) National Conference, Washington, D.C. (2018).
- *Collaboration and Partnership as the Driver of Turnaround*. Georgia School Boards Association, Savannah, Georgia. (2018).
- *Effective Practices for Principal Supervisors*. National Summit for Principal Supervisors, Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. (2018).
- *Leading Change and School Transformation*. Ohio State Fisher Business School & Ohio Department of Education SIG Principal's Academy, Columbus, Ohio. (2013)
- *A District Approach to Turning Around Low-Performing Schools*. Race to the Top National Conference, Columbus, Ohio. (2012).
- *Supporting the Needs of African-American and Other at-risk Males*. Council of the Great City Schools National Conference, Boston. (2011).

LINKS FOR REVIEW

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ssTMeiqFrHo>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KU22QO1jj4I>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v5i2Xmw1oII>