

Third graders put their problem-solving skills to the test with our Saving Fred STEM challenge! Fred needed help getting his life preserver back, and students had to work together, think creatively, and use only the materials provided to save him! There was lots of teamwork, perseverance, communication, and creative thinking happening in our classroom today!



Kindergarteners Gummy Bear Math! Students partnered with a math buddy to sequence giant gummy bear cards from smallest to largest, then used bear counters to match the numbers on each card. This fun activity is packed in so many important math skills sequencing, counting, number recognition, one-to-one correspondence, and teamwork!



Pirates remain unbeaten with big victory over Blair-Taylor

by Coach Jesse Cyrus

The Cochrane-Fountain City football team continued its winning ways as the Pirates captured their second Dairyland Conference win this season—a 47-6 victory over Blair-Taylor on Friday night, Sept. 11.

The undefeated Pirates were led by a strong rushing attack and another great performance from the defense and special teams.

C-FC rushed for just under 300 yards on the ground led by Aidan Lisowski with 191 yards and three scores while quarterback Parker Kujak added 67 yards and two scores on the ground. Kujak also added a passing touchdown to Grant Yapp for another touchdown.

Ethan Holzer added ex-

citement with a punt return for a touchdown on special teams.

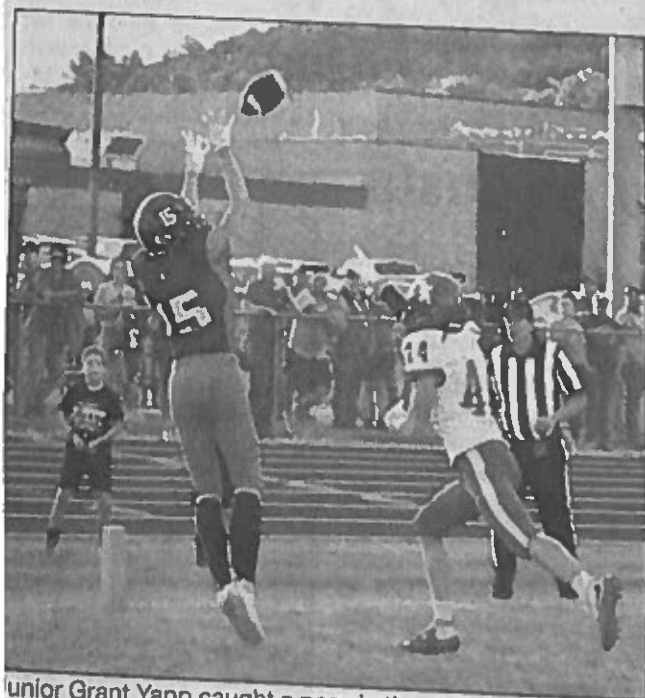
The defense was led by

Audi Schwanke with four tackles and two tackles for loss while Wesley Gensmer added eight total tackles.

This Friday, Sept. 18, the Pirates will take on Pepin/Alma at C-FC in a match-up of two 4-0 teams.



Ethan Holzer had an open field in front of him for a big C-FC gain.



Junior Grant Yapp caught a pass in the end zone for a C-FC touchdown.



Seniors Aidan Lisowski (14) and Gabe Blass (74) worked to take down B-T ball carrier Anthony Haas.

-Contributed photos

C-FC District welcomes six new staff members

by Beth Kraft

There are six staff members new to the Cochrane-Fountain City School District for 2026-27, filling a variety of teaching and support roles.

MaryKate Cizak is the new eighth grade math teacher and 4th-6th grade math intervention teacher.

For the past eight years, she taught 7th-12th grade math and various elective classes at a small charter school in Winona, Minn. She is excited to continue her teaching career at C-FC, back in her home state of Wisconsin.

Cizak says she is looking forward to sharing her love of math with the students at C-FC as she begins her first year with the district.

Outside of teaching, Cizak enjoys spending time on the water with her family and friends, whether it's a lake or a river. She also enjoys golfing, playing beanbags, cooking, reading, and gardening.

Crystal Hallin is excited to join the C-FC team this year as a new fifth grade teacher.

The 2026-27 school year marks Hallin's ninth year teaching and her sixth year teaching fifth grade.

She started her teaching career in the northern Wisconsin community of Siren, where she taught second

grade for three years before moving up to fifth grade for the next four years.

In 2025, Crystal and her husband, Tim, relocated to Winona, and she spent last school year teaching fifth grade math at Winona Middle School.

Hallin says fifth grade is her favorite age to work with, and she is thrilled to have the opportunity to teach fifth grade at C-FC.

Outside of school, Hallin enjoys reading, playing board games, snuggling her pets, and spending time with family and friends.

Devani Hinkelmann is C-FC's new Ag Marketing teacher. She graduated this past spring from the University of Wisconsin-River Falls with a degree in Agricultural Education and is excited to start her teaching career.

Hinkelmann is originally from the small town of Loyal, so she is happy to land a teaching position in another rural district.

She looks forward to meeting and getting to know her students and their families.

Outside of school, Hinkelmann loves spending time with her friends and family as much as possible. Some of her hobbies include photography, baking, and reading.

New para-educator Lella Koehler is originally from Osceola and moved to the area about a year ago.



Teachers new to the Cochrane-Fountain City School District for 2026-27 are (left to right) Lydia Sanke, 3K teacher; MaryKate Cizak, Math; Crystal Hallin, Fifth Grade; Makenna Sommer, English; Devani Hinkelmann, Ag Marketing; and Lella Koehler, Para-Educator.

-Contributed photo

She is excited to build connections with her colleagues, students, and the community and is looking forward to being a part of the team at C-FC. She is passionate about helping students feel supported and successful.

In her free time, Koehler enjoys spending time with friends and family, going on long walks, boating, and traveling to new places.

Lydia Sanke is excited to start a new journey as the

3K teacher at C-FC. For the past three years, she served as a special education teacher at Durand.

Now, she's excited for the opportunity to teach the youngest of learners.

Sanke said she is looking forward to getting to know all of the students and families and making the school year a fun and exciting year of learning.

A Pittsville native, Sanke moved to the area three

years ago when she started teaching at Durand.

Lydia now lives in Nelson with her boyfriend and their two chocolate labs. In her free time, she enjoys spending time outdoors, playing volleyball, traveling, and spending time at the lake.

Makenna Sommer will be teaching seventh, ninth and 11th grade English at C-FC.

She hails from Lewiston, Minn., and attended Winona State University, where she

studied English Education.

This school year, Sommer is most excited about creating positive relationships with students and staff. She looks forward to an amazing school year and meeting new people.

When she isn't at school, Sommer enjoys spending time with friends and family, going to musicals, and reading. Over the summer, she went to see *Wicked* and *The Great Gatsby* musicals.

C-FC New Staff

- Lydia Sanke – 3K
- Mary Kate Cizak – Math
- Crystal Hallin – 5th Grade
- Makenna Sommer – English
- Devani Hinkelmann – Ag Marketing
- Lella Koehler – Para-educator

CESA 4 Administrator's Report to the Board – September 2, 2026

CESA 4 Activities and Regional News

1. The 2026-2027 school year is officially off and running! The agency had 2 important meetings to get the year underway. The Itinerants reported to the building on Thursday, August 13th. Throughout the year they are in school districts working directly with students, so we don't get to see them too often. A portion of the morning was spent with those Itinerants who utilize fleet vehicles. A representative from Enterprise was present and review the app that they can utilize to make their experience with using the fleet vehicles even better. She showed them an easier way to find local service departments when they need an oil change, and also how to utilize the app if they ever need roadside assistance. We also had our first Agency Growth Day for the Directors and Support Staff of the Agency. The day allowed staff to get together for some learning around our new website, as well as our new phone system, RingCentral. We also utilized the time to review our Collective Commitments that were established. Based on feedback from staff, some slight adjustments will be made for the 2026-2027 school year. The afternoon of our growth day was spent 1:1 with staff and myself to talk about their work and how I can assist them this upcoming year.
2. As you know, our Alternative Licensing Pathways Supports and Services (ALPSS) program has been something we have considered discontinuing due to the costs of operating the licensing program. The staff worked extremely hard to market the program and as an agency we set a goal of having 6 new students to start the year. The summer began with much optimism, with several candidates reaching out about the program. As we moved into the month of July, we only had 3 applicants who submitted the necessary paperwork and down payment. At the end of the month, we needed to have at least 4 people enrolled in order to maintain the program. Just as we were about to pull the plug, due to only having 3 students enrolled, 2 individuals reached out and have committed to joining the ALPSS program. The timing always makes it difficult to plan for, but we have found that in late July and early August, districts make a late hire and are in need of a licensing program for the individual being hired. I am happy to report that we are continuing forward with our ALPSS program for the 2026-2027 school year.
3. We want to extend our deepest condolences to the family of Adam Massman, the school district of Alma Center-Humbird- Merrillan, their staff, and the communities. Adam was set to be a senior at Lincoln High School and recently passed away due to an injury he sustained on the football field. The outpouring of support to the family and school district from communities throughout the state was overwhelming. The Wisconsin Football Coaches Association asked that all football games last week would start with a moment of silence for Adam. Many of the districts also did some sort of collection for the Massman family. A big thank you to our CESA 4 school districts who reached out offering their support and any resources that were needed to get the family and school district through this tragedy.
4. The WASB Regional Meeting will take place at the West Salem High School on Thursday, October 1, 2026. There will be an election for the Regional Director for Region 6 that will take place at this meeting. The Pre-Regional meeting begins at 4:30 p.m., and dinner will be served at 6:15 p.m. prior to the start of the Regional meeting at 7:00 p.m. Registration is required for the meeting.

AIR – American Institute for Research

- Studied the implementation of LIFTtoFFS in 5 districts
- Observed 3 – 4 classrooms in each of the 5 districts
- Received survey feedback from 105 educators

BIG PICTURE TAKEAWAYS

- Educators need to be able to see themselves and their students in the LIFTtoFFS model when it is introduced to them.
- AI-driven platforms aligned with content area and grade level needs made personalized learning more possible.
- Educators need a safe, growth-orientated learning environment to be vulnerable to try new things and fail in front of leadership and students.

LEARNING QUESTIONS

1. How do educators experience LIFTtoFFS?
2. How do students experience LIFTtoFFS?
3. How, if at all, does the use of AI-driven platforms in LIFTtoFFS increase educator capacity to facilitate learning experiences for students that are personalized, future-ready, and focused on durability skill development?
4. How have educator practices and short-term outcomes (e.d. perceptions of efficacy to personalized learning) changed, if at all, since the start of LIFTtoFFS in their district? What is the relationship between educator experiences with LIFTtoFFS and these outcomes?
5. What are the conditions in which classrooms, schools, and districts thrive and/or struggle with LIFTtoFFS

Key Findings



Educators needed to see themselves and their students in the LIFTtoFFS model when it was first introduced.



Educators really liked using AI for planning and preparation. They had more mixed views on student AI use.



Educators were “very or extremely likely” to recommend LIFTtoFFS due to:

- Positive changes they saw firsthand in their students.
- LIFTtoFFS’ focus on student agency and personalized learning



Educators were “somewhat or not at all likely” to recommend LIFTtoFFS due to:

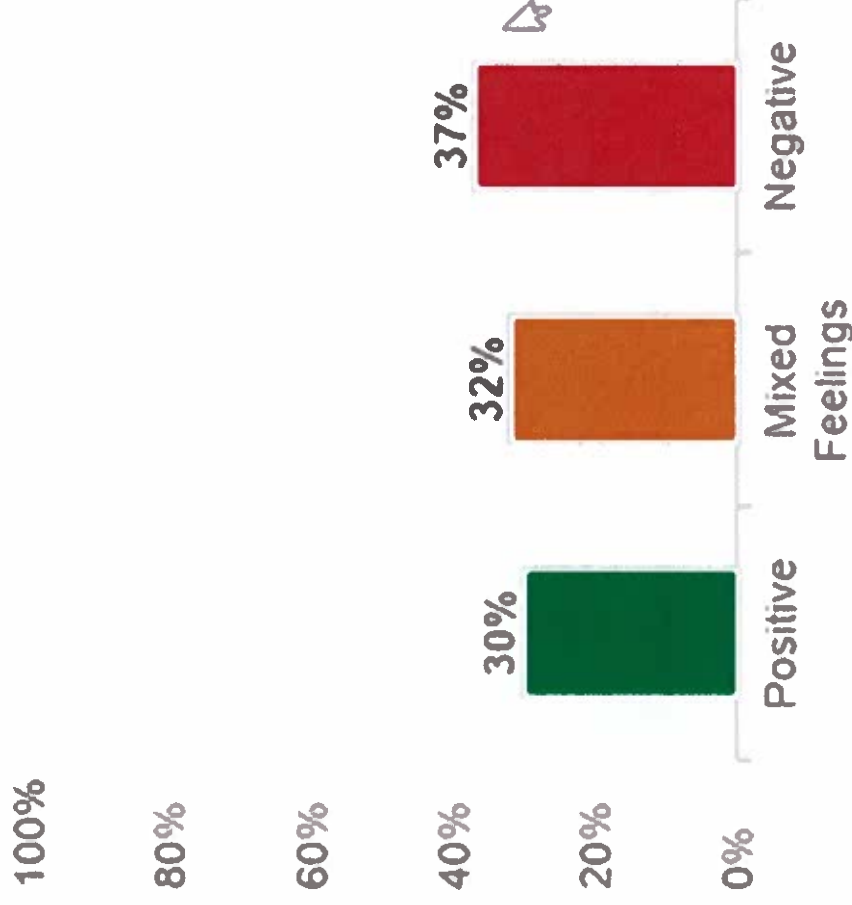
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- Uncertainty about how to use LIFTtoFFS in their specific classroom context.

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#1 - How do educators experience LIFTToFFS?

Classroom educator first impressions

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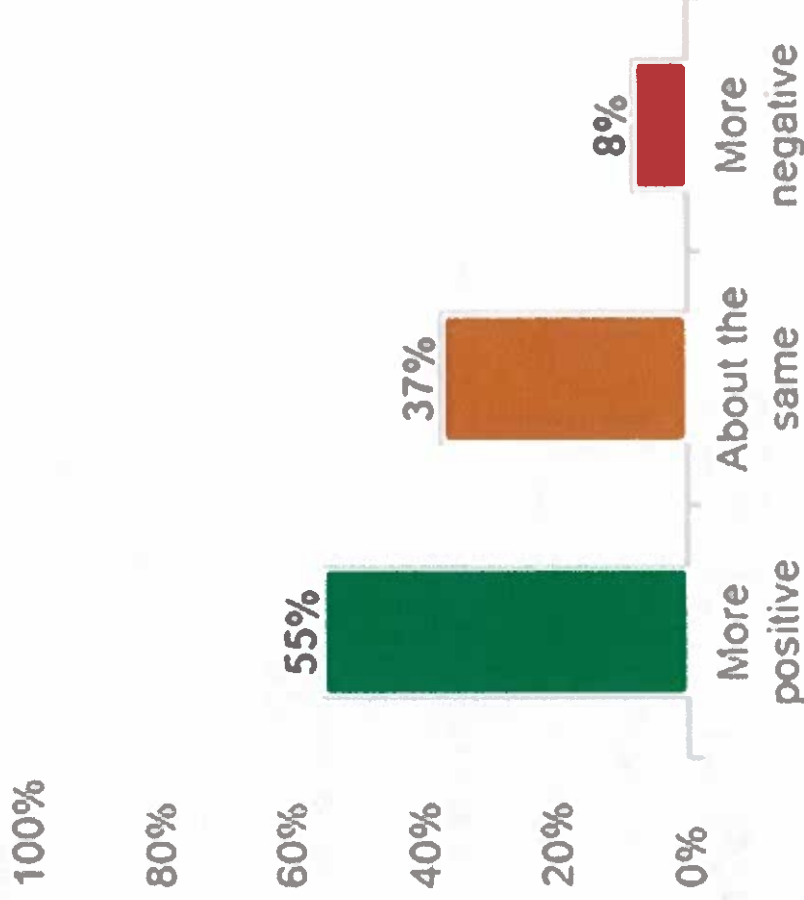


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Changes in perceptions throughout the school year

- By mid-spring, 55% of classroom educators reported feeling more positive about AI use and LIFToFFS compared to the beginning of the 25-26 school year.



LEARNING QUESTION #1 - How do educators experience LIFTToFFS?

Initially hesitant educators: Positive changes in perceptions

Of educators who were initially hesitant about AI and LIFTToFFS and felt more positive by mid-spring

- 43% Attributed the change to training and support they received from CESA 4 and school leadership.
- 32 % Saw student changes in real-time: increase engagement, excitement and enjoyment of learning, agency, general growth and improved work quality.
- 19% Increased valuing and efficacy to use AI. Educators described how they now used AI to reduce their workload and used the data from AI platforms to better meet student needs.
- 17% Valued LIFTToFFS model focus on personalized learning. Educators often paired this reason with changes in student engagement and enjoyment.

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Initially hesitant educators: Negative or no change in perceptions

Of educators who were initially hesitant about AI and LIFToFFS and felt the same or more negative

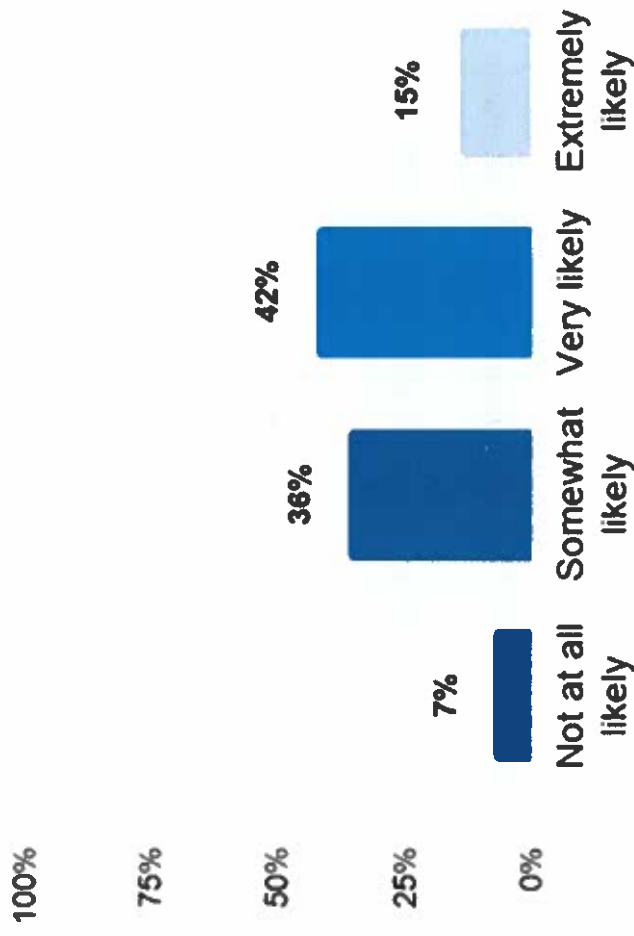
- 25% Attributed their views to a lack of alignment between LIFToFFS/AI platforms and their instructional needs.
- 25 % Still felt uncertainty about implementation. These educators generally valued the potential of LIFToFFS but needed more training, guidance, and hands-on modeling.
- 23% Felt discomfort about AI. Educators expressed hesitation and wariness about using AI in classrooms, didn't feel confident in their own ability to use AI, and/or cited a general dislike of AI.

LEARNING QUESTION

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Educator experience by the end of 2025-26.

- By the end of the school year, 57% of educators were “likely” or “extremely likely” to recommend LIFTtoFFS to a colleague.



LEARNING QUESTIONS #2 - How do students experience LIFTtoFFS?

During classroom visits, students were asked about their experiences as they used AI platforms (mostly ALEKS).

Pros

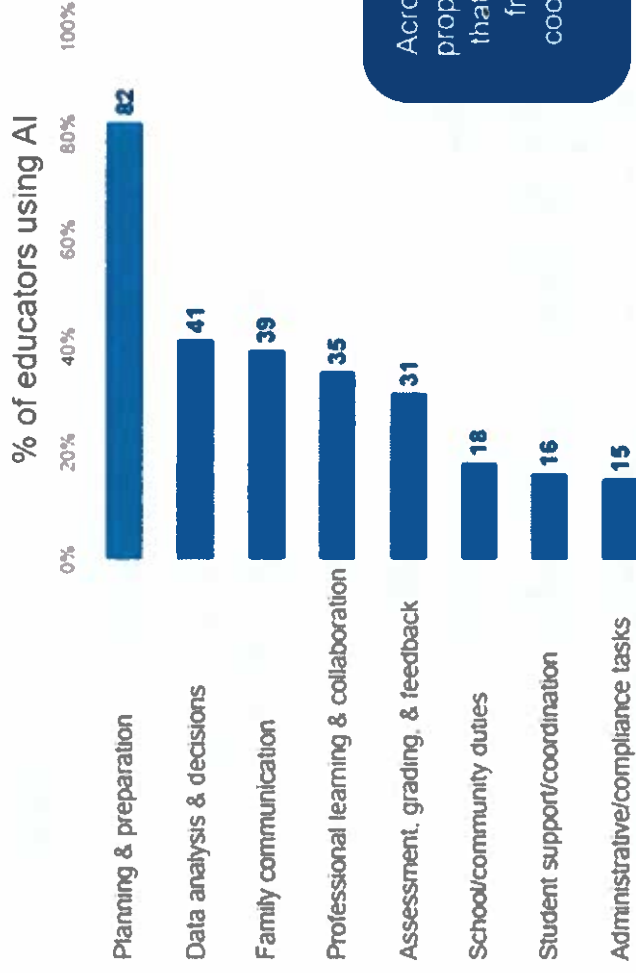
- Students valued self-paced learning, choice, and progress tracking.
- Built-in explanations and feedback provided support and greater independence.
- Students found ALEKS engaging and motivating, particularly the games and completion goals.

Cons

- Self-pacing and the “Knowledge Checks” on ALEKS could be frustrating, particularly for students who need more support.
- Some students found the “Explanations” feature confusing or over specific and wanted more opportunities to show their work.
- Extended screen time and challenging content could contribute to disengagement, while some students preferred paper-based learning.

Educator AI USE

In the end-of-year survey, we asked educators which activities they used AI for, and if AI had changed how much time they spent on these activities:



The **#1** activity that educators reported using AI for was **planning and preparation**, such as selecting instructional materials and preparing assignments

Of these educators, **75%** said that using AI **decreased** their time spent on planning and preparation by "a little" or "a lot"

Across the **remaining activities**, the proportion of educators who reported that AI decreased their time ranged from **35%** (student support and coordination) to **78%** (data analysis and decision-making).

Educator Capacity for Student AI Use

Educators we interviewed shared that using AI platforms expedited the feedback cycle process and enabled them to provide more tailored support

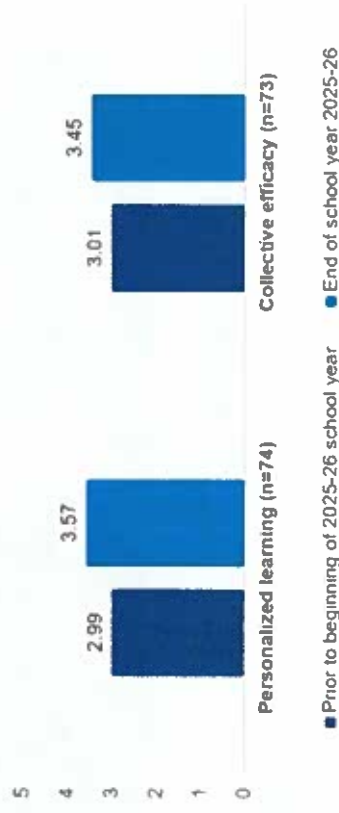


"The feedback is way more valuable to the kids and I can really, truly know where they're at... and what I can do. A mini lesson on a certain day if four kids are getting stuck on the same topic instead of making them all struggle at their desks by themselves"

— Educator describing ALEKS real-time reporting

Changes in personalized learning and collective efficacy

From the beginning to the end of school year 2025-26, educators reported increases in their competency for implementing personalized learning and collective efficacy to create change in their students.



Examples of personalized learning questions:

"I create opportunities for students to choose what they learn."

"I use technology (such as AI) to match course content to learner needs."

Examples of collective efficacy questions:

"Educators at my school effectively engage students in their learning."

"Educators at my school positively impact their students."

LIFTtoFFS Response to feedback

1. **Coalition for Redesigning Education**
2. **The CESA 4 Learning Innovations Hub**
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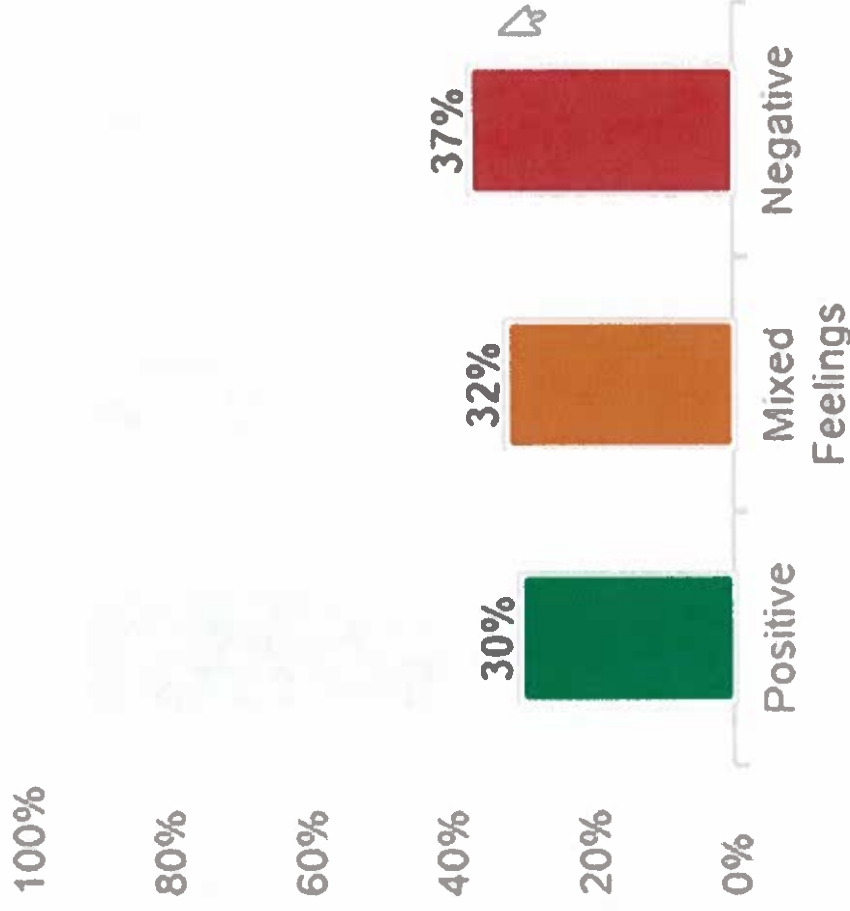
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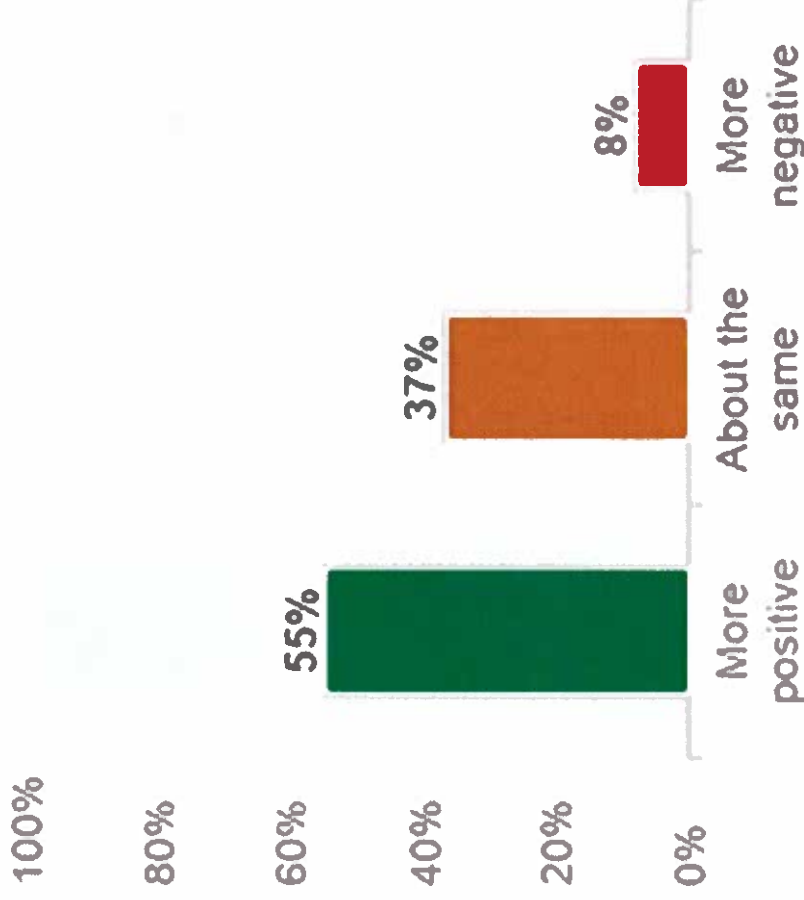
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Changes in perceptions
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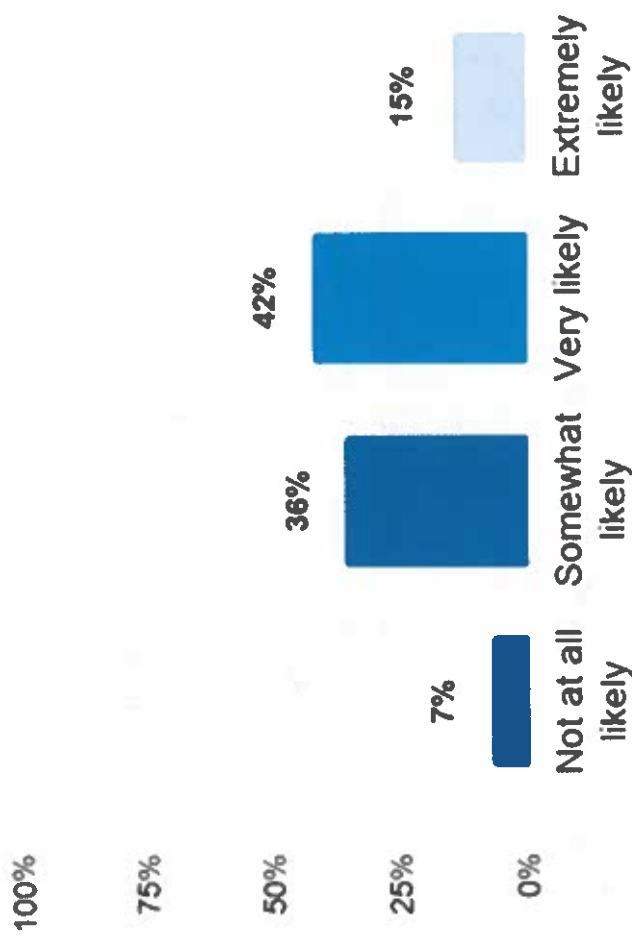
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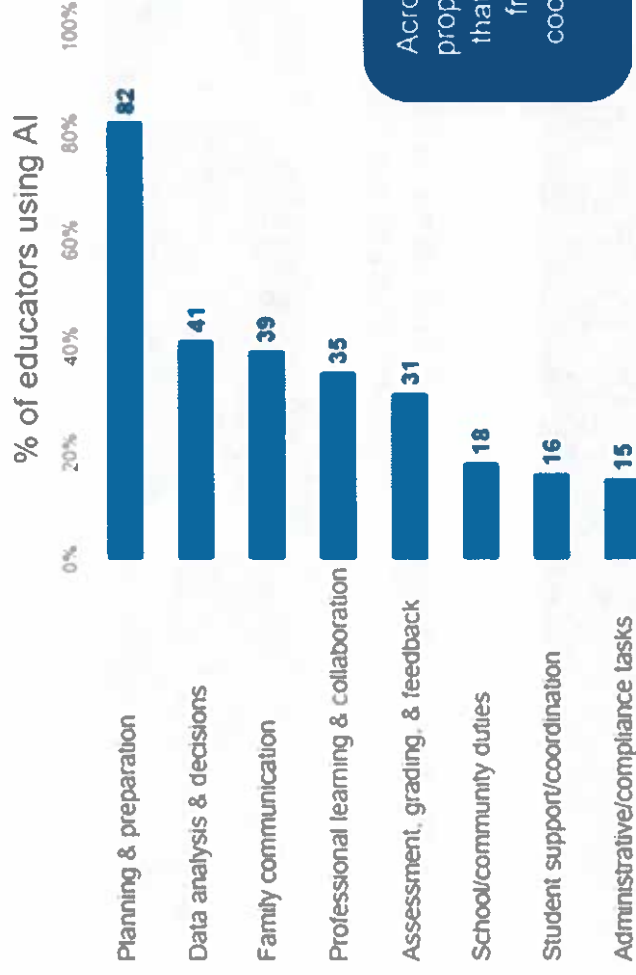
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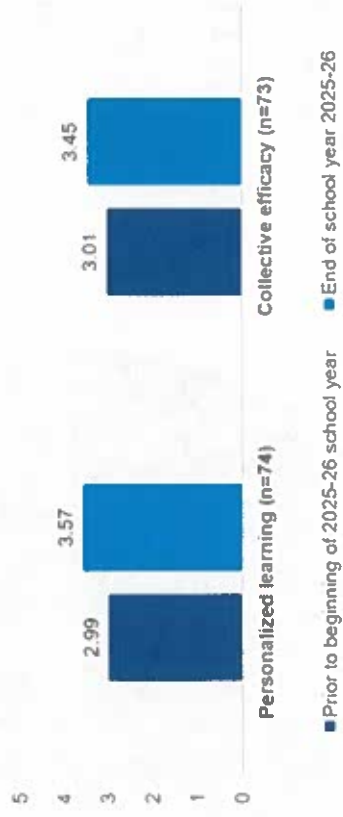


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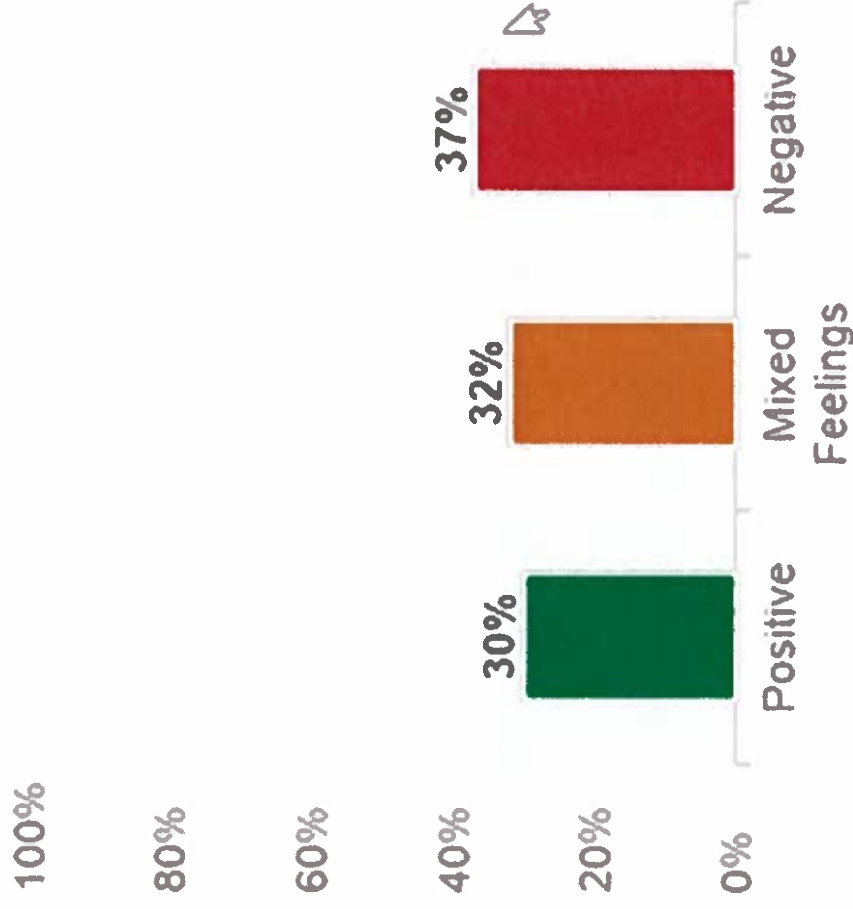
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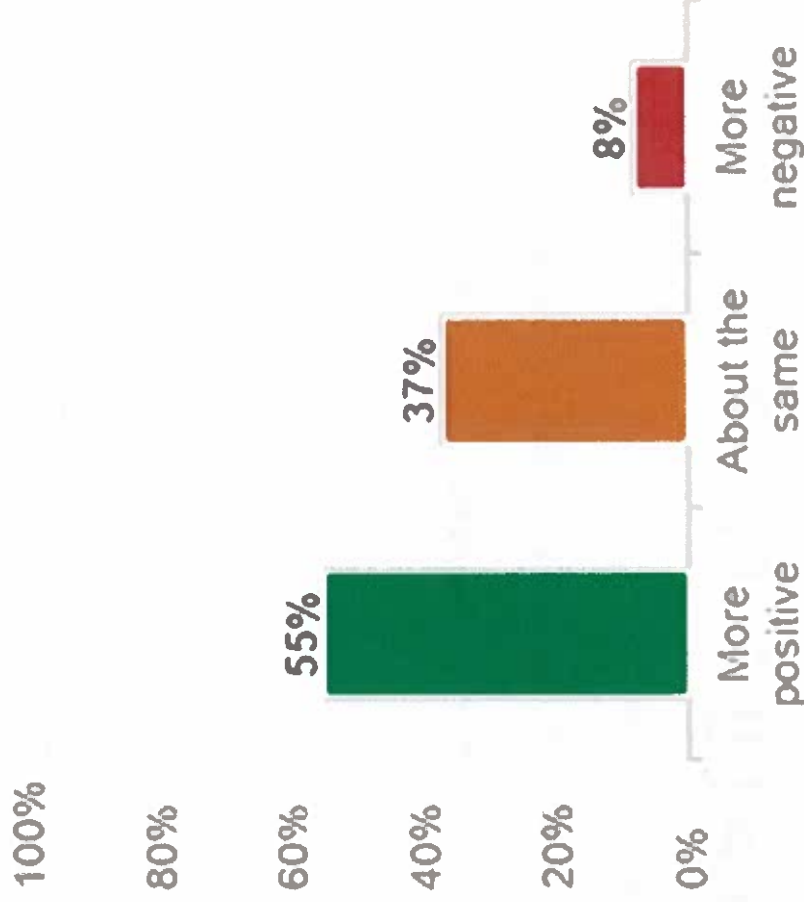


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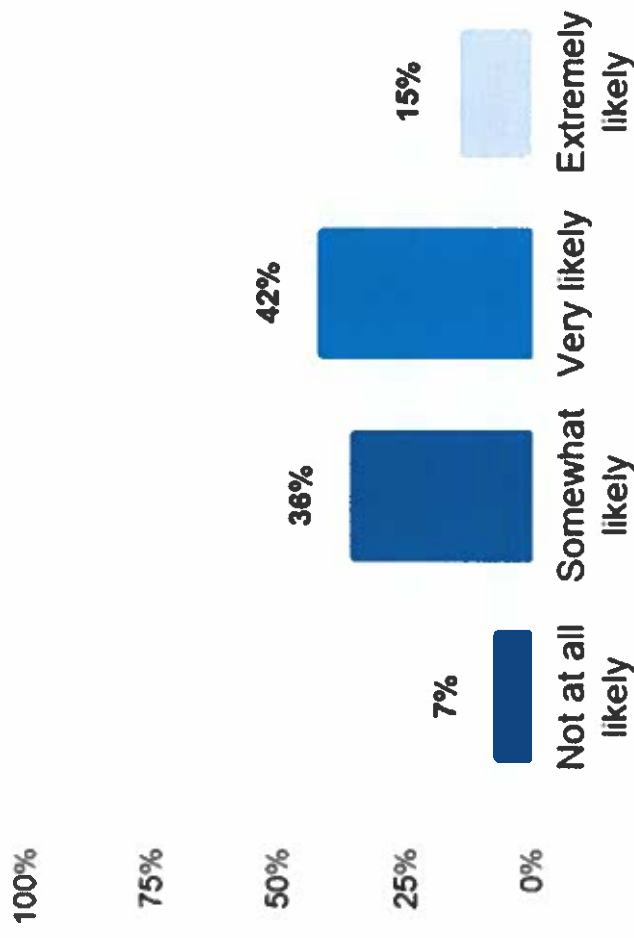
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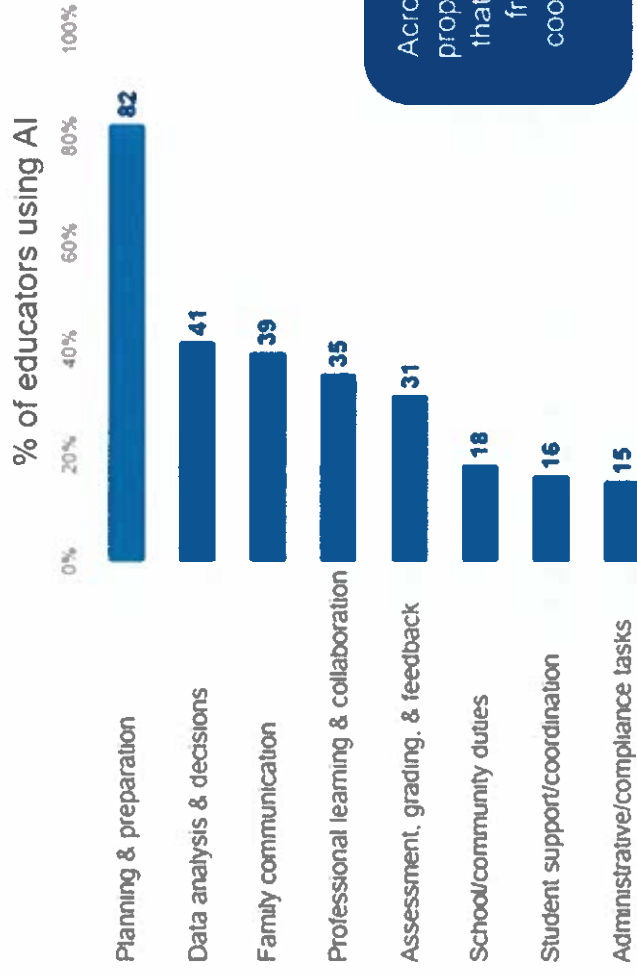
- Students valued self-paced learning, choice, and progress tracking.
- Built-in explanations and feedback provided support and greater independence.
- Students found ALEKS engaging and motivating, particularly the games and completion goals.

Cons

- Self-pacing and the “Knowledge Checks” on ALEKS could be frustrating, particularly for students who need more support.
- Some students found the “Explanations” feature confusing or over specific and wanted more opportunities to show their work.
- Extended screen time and challenging content could contribute to disengagement, while some students preferred paper-based learning.

Educator AI USE

In the end-of-year survey, we asked educators which activities they used AI for, and if AI had changed how much time they spent on these activities:



The **#1** activity that educators reported using AI for was **planning and preparation**, such as selecting instructional materials and preparing assignments.

Of these educators, **75%** said that using AI **decreased their time** spent on planning and preparation by "a little" or "a lot."

Across the **remaining activities**, the proportion of educators who reported that AI decreased their time ranged from **35%** (student support and coordination) to **78%** (data analysis and decision-making).



LIFT OFFS

LEARNING INNOVATIONS FOR THE TEACHING
OF FUTURE-READY STUDENTS

Educator Capacity for Student AI Use

Educators we interviewed shared that using AI platforms expedited the feedback cycle process and enabled them to provide more tailored support

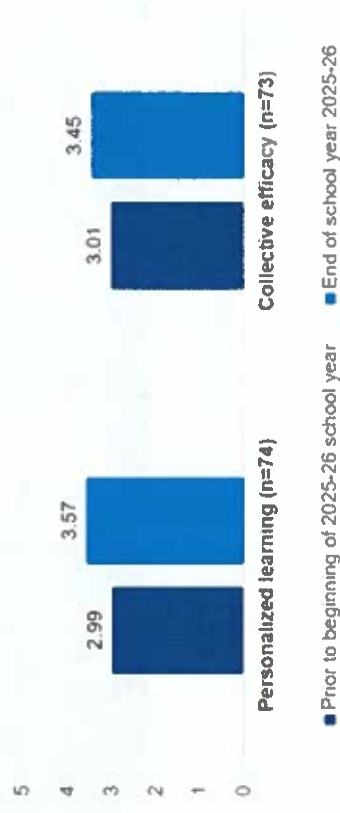


"The feedback is way more valuable to the kids and I can really, truly know where they're at... and what I can do. A mini lesson on a certain day if four kids are getting stuck on the same topic instead of making them all struggle at their desks by themselves"

— Educator describing ALEKS real-time reporting

Changes in personalized learning and collective efficacy

From the beginning to the end of school year 2025-26, educators reported **increases** in their competency for **implementing personalized learning and collective efficacy** to **create change** in their students.



Examples of personalized learning questions:

"I create opportunities for students to choose what they learn."

"I use technology (such as AI) to match course content to learner needs."

Examples of collective efficacy questions:

"Educators at my school effectively engage students in their learning."

"Educators at my school positively impact their students."

LIFTtoFFS
Response to
feedback

1. **Coalition for Redesigning Education**
2. **The CESA 4 Learning Innovations Hub**
 - **Design Sprint Days**
 - **Principal Implementation Support**
 - **Shifts to the Educator Experience**
 - **Shifts to the Student Experience**
3. **Attention to the Family & Community Experience**

Cochrane-Fountain City Superintendent Performance Evaluation

Appraisal Scale

Use the following numerical scale to indicate your appraisal of the Superintendent performance.

<u>Marginal</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Competent</u>	<u>Commendable</u>	<u>Distinguished</u>
1	2	3	4	5

1. Marginal: Performance is clearly below acceptable level.
2. Fair: Performance comes close to being acceptable but further development is recognizable.
3. Competent: Performance is capable of worthy of being accepted, satisfactory, sufficient.
4. Commendable: Performance is noticeably better than "acceptable".
5. Distinguished: Outstanding performance is clearly obvious to all.

Public Relations

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Conducts ongoing evaluation of the school programs and keeps the public informed. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Gives attention to problems or concerns of all groups or individuals. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Uses collaborative practices that engage students, staff, and the Board. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Demonstrates effective, authentic community and stakeholder engagement strategies. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. Attempts to develop and maintain cooperative relationships with the news media. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. Keeps staff, Board, and public informed of all matters of significance. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Comments:

School Board Relations

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Informs and advises the Board about the programs, practices, and problems of the schools. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Assists the Board in the formulation of school district goals, policies, and programs. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Participates in preparation of Board agenda and prepares all facts and information as needed to make informed decisions on agenda items. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Initiates recommendations to the Board for building and/or maintenance projects. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. Creates a sense of trustworthiness in Board – Superintendent relations. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. Remains impartial toward the Board, treating all Board members alike. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Comments:

Cochrane-Fountain City Superintendent Performance Evaluation

Staff Relations and/or Management

1. Maintains open, effective communication lines with all staff.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Delegates authority and responsibility effectively.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Develops and executes sound personnel practices.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Recommends for employment the best qualified and most competent personnel.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Recommends current employees for promotion and assigns employees effectively.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Develops and executes plans, procedures, routines, and operational systems.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Provides leadership in supervision of Principals and all administrative staff.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Directs the development and implementation of staff training activities.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Effectively implements and monitors the district's performance.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Creates a feeling of enthusiasm and maintains morale.	1	2	3	4	5

Comments:

Operations Management (Fiscal as well as Business)

1. Supervises long-range planning to maximize the use of the district's resources.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Guides all support services to facilitate the success of teaching.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Directs the process of fiscal planning and budgetary development and administers the budget as approved by the Board.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Allocates and manages expenditures consistent with district/school level goals.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Oversees and administers the use of all District facilities, property, and funds.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Communicates budget rationale to staff, community members, and the Board.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Designs and supervises the process for hiring certified and associate staff.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Monitors and assesses progress in all areas to ensure implementation of effective and rigorous standards-based units of instruction with measurable outcomes.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Complies with District policies regarding the maintenance and operation of facilities. See to the enforcement of these policies.	1	2	3	4	5

Comments:

Cochrane-Fountain City Superintendent Performance Evaluation

Professional Development

1. Maintains high standards of ethics, honesty, and integrity.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Earns respect and standing among professional colleagues.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Expresses ideas smoothly and articulately in oral and written communications.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Devotes time and energy effectively to the job.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Shows interest and enthusiasm toward work.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Demonstrates the initiative and persistence to accomplish goals and objectives.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Adjusts flexibly to changes in plans and procedures.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Is considerate and courteous.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Demonstrates a sense of humor.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Possesses and maintains the health and energy necessary to meet the responsibilities of the position.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Keeps professionally current and informed and keeps the Board informed on educational trends.	1	2	3	4	5

Comments:

Overall Evaluation Summary Rating

Strengths:

Areas Noted for Improvement:

Evaluation Summary

- ☐ Recommended for Contract Renewal.
- ☐ Recommended for placement on a Performance Improvement Plan.
- ☐ Recommended for Dismissal/Non-renewal of Contract.