

## Case Study:

# Partnering to Re-Envision School Management in Evansville, IN

Prepared by Katie Friend

## The Context:

Evansville-Vanderburgh School Corporation (EVSC) in Evansville, Indiana, serves a student population of over 22,000 students with 3,400 employees and has partnered with Mass Insight (Mi) for over a decade. After the success of the Mi-supported improvement zone in 2014, the district wanted to build on lessons learned to re-envision how schools were managed and supported.

## Our Approach:

Mi partnered with EVSC to design a clustered and differentiated school management model and support its implementation. In partnership with EVSC, Mi:

- Conducted an expansive strength and gap analysis of the current school management structure;
- Researched national models and proposed shifts to the EVSC school management structure;
- Designed an integrated principal supervisor role and differentiated zone portfolios to provide tailored support to schools and serve as a bridge between schools and central office;
- Facilitated planning and design workshops with district leadership to determine the EVSC model and implementation strategy; and
- Supported the hiring, onboarding, and development of new principal supervisors.

## The Impact

Over the course of a year and a half, EVSC entirely redesigned their support model to provide more strategic support and management of their 40 schools. The district created a principal supervisor role, the Director of School Support (DSS), and created initial portfolio clusters of schools based on feeder patterns. The district has since evolved the model to reflect differentiated school needs and performance and to ensure the highest needs school have access to the most intensive support and development. Each school has a designated supervisor and coach, as well as a zone coach team, to support schools in achieving their school improvement priorities and to ensure cohesion and alignment in central office service delivery to buildings. The new model ensured school leaders received meaningful job-embedded professional development, accountability structures, and differentiated support and coaching aligned to the needs of each school. School leaders reported feeling more supported, professionally developed, and valued by the district.

The school management model has become the linchpin of the district's delivery approach and the district's strategic priorities, including recent equity-focused school and resource rezoning. School leaders and personnel continue to name the DSS structure as EVSC's most valuable resource and a primary lever to the district's continued academic improvement.

## Our Partnership:

EVSC has always been a district committed to innovation and reform. Starting in 2009, the district developed and piloted an EQUITY framework, a model that gave participating schools greater autonomy over things such as schedules, school calendars, and professional development. Over the course of three years, all participating schools showed measurable improvement in test scores, and the success of the EQUITY schools demonstrated what was possible. The challenge facing the district in 2012 was how to expand that initial success to reach even more of the district's students.

Mi's partnership with EVSC began in 2012, with the creation of a Transformation Zone focused on streamlining support to schools, school autonomy, and strategic school management. During early zone implementation, three of five partner schools showed significant improvement within the state accountability framework, and all schools demonstrated indicators of success in student growth, teacher efficacy, and school culture. This success led to a continued partnership between EVSC and Mi to develop a sustainable and scalable approach to managing and supporting all district schools given the lessons learned from zone management. Mass Insight conducted national research on evidence-informed models to improve support to schools and principals, leading to a "portfolio management model." In this model, each portfolio (or zone of schools) was managed by a principal supervisor (a Director of School Support or DSS) who reported to central office and managed school performance and principals within their portfolio of schools. Mi also advised creating a Chief of Schools role to oversee DSSs and supported a transition plan while the Chief of Schools role was scoped and hired. By 2017, EVSC improved two letter grades in the state accountability system.

Darla Hoover, Chief of Schools and Instructional Core, shared that "Mass Insight remains a partner for us as we continue to analyze strengths and opportunities for growth with regard to the DSS structure." Mass Insight provided ongoing professional development and coaching support to the new DSSs and Chief of Schools, including a kick-off retreat, training sessions, progress monitoring check-ins, in-the-field coaching, and strategic planning support, all setting up the district to operationalize and sustain a long-term and adaptive school management model.

## Get in touch:



[equity@massinsight.org](mailto:equity@massinsight.org)



[www.massinsight.org](http://www.massinsight.org)



**Mass Insight Education & Research**

## Partner Insight:

"It has been rewarding to see the progress and increasing success of our students thus far, and we know with our continued focused efforts and supports, those results will continue to climb. The work with Mass Insight has helped shape the support we offer schools, which will ultimately lead to a better educational experience for EVSC's students."

-Dr. David Smith, Superintendent