



**National Association of
School Superintendents**
United in Common Purpose: Each Other's Success

Dr. Adam Ehrman

**Bourbonnais Elementary School District #53
Bourbonnais, Illinois**

INTRODUCTION

Meet Dr. Adam Ehrman, Superintendent of the Bourbonnais Elementary School District #53 (BESD #53) in Kankakee County, Illinois. The district serves over 2,400 students across five schools in a diverse suburban setting. Known for its ambitious "Mission 2033" and a national reputation for academic recovery, the district thrives under a culture of high expectations and mutual support.

Dr. Ehrman's tenure is defined by his role as a "Systems Architect," specializing in transforming organizational culture into measurable student proficiency. His focus on continuous improvement for his leadership team and his district has earned him recognition as a model leader committed to the belief that high-achieving students require a high-trust adult culture.

Education

Adam holds a Doctorate in Educational Leadership and is nationally recognized for his research into the Psychology of the Superintendency, with a specific focus on superintendent stress and executive wellness.

Recorded Presentations/Interviews on my Superintendent Research (all found on Youtube/Spotify/Apple Music/etc.)

Ignite Presentation at IASA's 2019 Annual Conference - Dealing with Stress (5 min)

Shane Howard Podcast Interview - Accepting The Challenges (90 min)

IASA Podcast Interview - Discussing stress in superintendents (20 min)

Live Podcast Interview on Sustainable Teaching w/Rae Hughart (50 min)

Experience

His career in education is defined by strategic leadership and systemic turnaround. Since arriving at BESD #53 in July 2020, he successfully navigated a "perfect storm" that included a global pandemic and local labor challenges. He focused on rebuilding organizational health through his "Four Pillars" of Communication, Respect, Trust, and Purpose. Beyond his local role, he currently serves as the Treasurer/Membership/Communications Officer for the Three Rivers IASA Region. Previously, he served on the IASA Board of Directors for the Abe Lincoln Division and the IASA Governmental Relations and Advocacy Committee. He is also a dedicated mentor and university-affiliated supervisor for aspiring superintendents and principal interns across Illinois. Recently, named a 2026 DALI "Leader of Distinction" Recipient (*also named Superintendent of Distinction by IASA in 2018*)

Outstanding Achievements

Dr. Ehrman has a long list of remarkable achievements, most notably driving BESD #53 to become one of only 100 school districts in the United States to exceed pre-pandemic performance levels in both math and reading. Under his guidance, 60% of his schools have achieved "Exemplary" status, the highest rating in the state of Illinois. Most recently, Liberty Intermediate School in his district was honored with the Illinois Governor's Blue Ribbon Award, a first-ever accomplishment for both the district and the greater region. Additionally, Liberty Intermediate was recognized as a Model PLC School at Work®, placing it in the top 1% of schools globally. While these statistics are impressive, Adam remains focused on his primary goal: ensuring that "proficiency for all" is a guaranteed outcome of a well-designed system.

AN INTERVIEW

Tell us about how you see today's superintendent.

Today's superintendent must be a "Systems Architect" who views the district as a living organism. In an era of political friction and post-pandemic recovery, we must move beyond "survival mode" and focus on "Cultural Engineering." We must eliminate "political static" through radical transparency and "no surprise" board policies to protect the district's focus on student growth. Ultimately, I believe the health of the leadership team is a prerequisite for student proficiency; a burnt-out culture cannot produce high-achieving students.

What new understandings did you acquire after two or three years on the job?

My primary realization was the direct, quantifiable link between executive wellness and instructional equity. I learned that the "loneliness of leadership" is a systemic risk that can poison the classroom if left unaddressed. I also realized that "proficiency for some" is a failure of system design. By moving from a model of "teaching" to a model of "guaranteed learning," we transformed our district into a statistical anomaly that surpassed pre-pandemic achievement levels.

Share an idea to use or something you've learned with your colleagues.

Establish a "Fixed-Outcome Commitment" like our Mission 2033, where 100% of students must be proficient by 8th grade. To reach this, move away from traditional silos and implement disciplined Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) where teachers have daily collaborative data time. My advice is to focus on "Acceleration over Remediation", keep students in grade-level content with targeted, "just-in-time" support rather than repeating past grade-level work.

