



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why does Holdsworth focus on leadership?

If we want better outcomes for students, we need great teachers. Unfortunately, America's teaching workforce has become increasingly undervalued and demoralized in recent decades, a trend that doesn't bode well for students.

We believe leadership is a critical piece of the solution.

Visionary, courageous and empathetic leadership can go a long way toward improving working conditions for teachers, encouraging them to stay in their jobs, supporting their innovative ideas and supporting them to do their best work.

[Decades of research](#) shows that effective principals can significantly impact student outcomes by adding around three more months of learning in math and reading during a single school year.

Like teachers, public school leaders have some of the toughest and most complex jobs in the nation. We believe they should have professional development opportunities that rival successful organizations.

Our leaders – superintendents, central office administrators, principals, assistant principals, instructional coaches and teacher leaders – come to Holdsworth as experts in education. We teach them to be experts in leadership.

What makes the Holdsworth Partnership different from other leadership development programs?

We go deep – Change takes time. That's why we spend five years in total working with our districts. And we don't just work to transform individual people, we work to change entire systems. At the district level, we embed Holdsworth consultants (District Support Team) to partner with administrators to design systems that will produce a strong principal in every school by building a deep bench of talent poised to take up leadership vacancies as they arise.

At the campus level, we work with principals and their school teams over two years to tackle a significant challenge tied to school culture and student outcomes.



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We believe in people – We don't believe leadership is an "it" factor that some people have and some never will. We invest in the people doing these jobs right now because we believe they have the ability to learn, grow and change, even those with decades of experience.

Team-based approach – Leadership isn't about superheroes, it's about teams of people working together to accomplish something big. That's why we include campus and district *teams* in our program and spend time in sessions working through team dynamics.

Top experts – We work to seed innovation among educators by inviting to our program sessions some of the nation's top thought leaders, authors and experts to discuss topics such as equity, continuous improvement, team dynamics and workplace culture. We also bring in guest lecturers from a variety of sectors including K-12 education, business, academia and government to help educators broaden their thinking about what's possible for their districts and campuses.

What is the experience like?

Over the span of our 2-year programs and as health and safety concerns ease, leaders will attend several multi-day learning sessions at our newly built Campus on Lake Austin with their teams starting this summer, where they get the opportunity to learn with top thought leaders from around the nation in addition to Holdsworth's expert in-house team. Pending current health and safety conditions, leaders will also travel to visit high-performing school systems and companies in the U.S.

Because of our cohort model, leaders typically form strong bonds with their peers from different districts across Texas, relationships that remain a source of support long after they have completed the program.

To reinforce the lessons learned during sessions, superintendents, key district leaders and principals receive on-the-job executive coaching for one year. Additionally, all leaders form peer coaching groups to provide ongoing support and get help with big challenges.

While the commitment level is often compared to a master's degree program, our leaders have called the experience "transformational" and "the best professional development they have ever had."



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“Being treated like a corporate CEO, professional development from the best of the best, benchmarking the best programs in the country and the world – it’s a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity,” said Dr. Thomas Randle, superintendent of Lamar CISD and a graduate of the District Leadership Program.

What does the program content cover?

Our curriculum has three main strands, and much of the learning is focused upon shifting behaviors and patterns of thinking rather than seeking immediate fixes.

Develop personal leadership – We believe leaders are developed from the inside out. A leader can’t inspire change in others if they don’t model the changes they seek. Holdsworth focuses on helping leaders connect to their “why” and expand their capacity for empathy, courage, flexibility and continuous growth.

Grow and empower others – The power of truly great leaders comes through their ability to cultivate and draw out greatness in others. Success is almost never achieved alone. The ability to coach up-and-coming leaders and build high-performing teams is essential to creating lasting change.

Create change – One of the most critical drivers of sustained excellent & equitable student outcomes is great campus leadership. At the district level, we support leaders to design the changes needed to build a deep bench of talent so that every campus has a strong leader. At the campus level, teams learn new ways to tackle complex problems that impact student success.

How does Holdsworth plan to measure success?

When we are successful, our alumni will be profoundly changed, and the districts we’ve partnered with will continue the work of developing leaders without us. And most importantly, students will feel empowered, cared for, and seen in ways that positively impact their learning.

Our goals for every district are to:

- Grow individual leaders and deepen their capacity to lead themselves, lead others and lead change.
- Strengthen talent systems to produce a strong bench of candidates for each principal vacancy.



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- Produce strong principal, teacher and overall staff engagement that creates emotional commitment to the mission of educating all children, demonstrated by stability and retention of the workforce.
- Meaningfully improve student achievement, measured not only by state ratings but also by student engagement and social-emotional learning.

Holdsworth collects a wealth of data from districts. Some data is provided by our partner districts, other proof points are collected through our own survey tools and reported annually in our [Impact Report](#).

What criteria does Holdsworth use to select districts?

We look for public school districts that are hungry to improve and see developing leaders as a critical priority to deliver on the promise of excellent and equitable outcomes for all Texas students. Ideal district candidates are open to new ideas, eager to make major improvements to their current practices and have demonstrated an ability to lead change.

We plan to launch Cohort IV of the Partnership in 2023 and hope to expand our impact to more districts in Texas later this year through new programs.

How much does becoming a Holdsworth partner cost?

Being a Holdsworth partner is a significant commitment of time over five years, but aside from in-state transportation costs, the first three cohorts will not pay for any of the programming, coaching, or embedded district support they receive. The initial programming is funded by a \$100 million investment made by founder Charles Butt, to be spread across multiple years. The Center invests approximately \$6 million per district over the course of five years.

What is the time commitment?

The time spent in learnings sessions and site visits is approximately 40 days over the 2-year District Leadership Program and 30 days for the Campus Leadership Program. The learning experiences will be rigorous and involve pre-reading and preparation as well as travel.



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Back in the district, central office leaders will also work closely with the Holdsworth District Support Team to strengthen their approach to identifying, developing, selecting, and supporting leaders.

How many leaders from the district get to participate?

The superintendent and five other district leaders participate in the District Leadership Program, including a District Champion selected by the superintendent to drive the team's efforts around developing a strong leadership pipeline.

The number of leaders in the Campus Leadership Program will depend on the size of the district. Over the course of five years, our goal is to include at least 50 percent of a district's campuses in the program. Campus teams include four people, a number that could expand for large, comprehensive high schools.

Why did Holdsworth build a campus?

The campus will serve as a permanent home for our current and future programs and will host leaders from across Texas for learning sessions and other events. Our founder, Charles Butt, sees the campus as a gift to educators and a symbol of his faith in our public school system. There's nothing like it in the nation – a truly special place where educators will gather for generations to come in order to learn, reflect, collaborate and form lifelong bonds.

What plans does Holdsworth have to broaden the reach of its programs?

Holdsworth is committed to serving all districts in Texas over the coming years.

With the completion of our Campus on Lake Austin, we are exploring ways to extend our reach with new programs outside of our 5-year partnership and are hoping to have more concrete plans to share later in 2021.