



School Board Work Session
Monday, March 7, 2022 5:00 PM
Location: District Office
104 - 5th Avenue South
South St Paul, Minnesota 55075

Agenda

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| I. | School Board Governance Training | 2 |
| II. | Superintendent Transition Preparations | |
| III. | Other Items Deemed Necessary by the School Board | |

Education Leadership System™ Guidebook

Living out your district's mission
by aligning the adults
in Partnership.

The logo for Teamworks International features the word "Teamworks" in a bold, black, sans-serif font. Below it, the word "international" is written in a smaller, purple, lowercase sans-serif font. The text is flanked by five colored squares: a blue square on the left, a red square below "Team", a green square below "works", a purple square below "international", and a purple square on the right. The entire logo is tilted at an angle.

Teamworks
international

Education Leadership System - Introduction

What is the Education Leadership System™ (ELS)?

The Education Leadership System (ELS) is an established approach for aligning school boards, administration, staff, and the public to increase learning for all students. ELS clarifies the roles, responsibilities, and relationships that are most often at the source of tension and conflict among these groups of adults.

In public school districts, there are six distinct groups of adults. Each operates with different roles and responsibilities. Their authorities and accountabilities are unique and connected, and serve the partnership in different ways. The authorities of Governance and Management (the board, superintendent, district administrators, and building principals) serve through the lens of district interest. Those with the authority of Consultation (the public, staff, and parents) serve through the lens of self interest. This balance of interests allows for well-rounded development of the direction of the district, allocations of its resources, and service to its customer - the student and their family.

What makes ELS effective and beneficial?

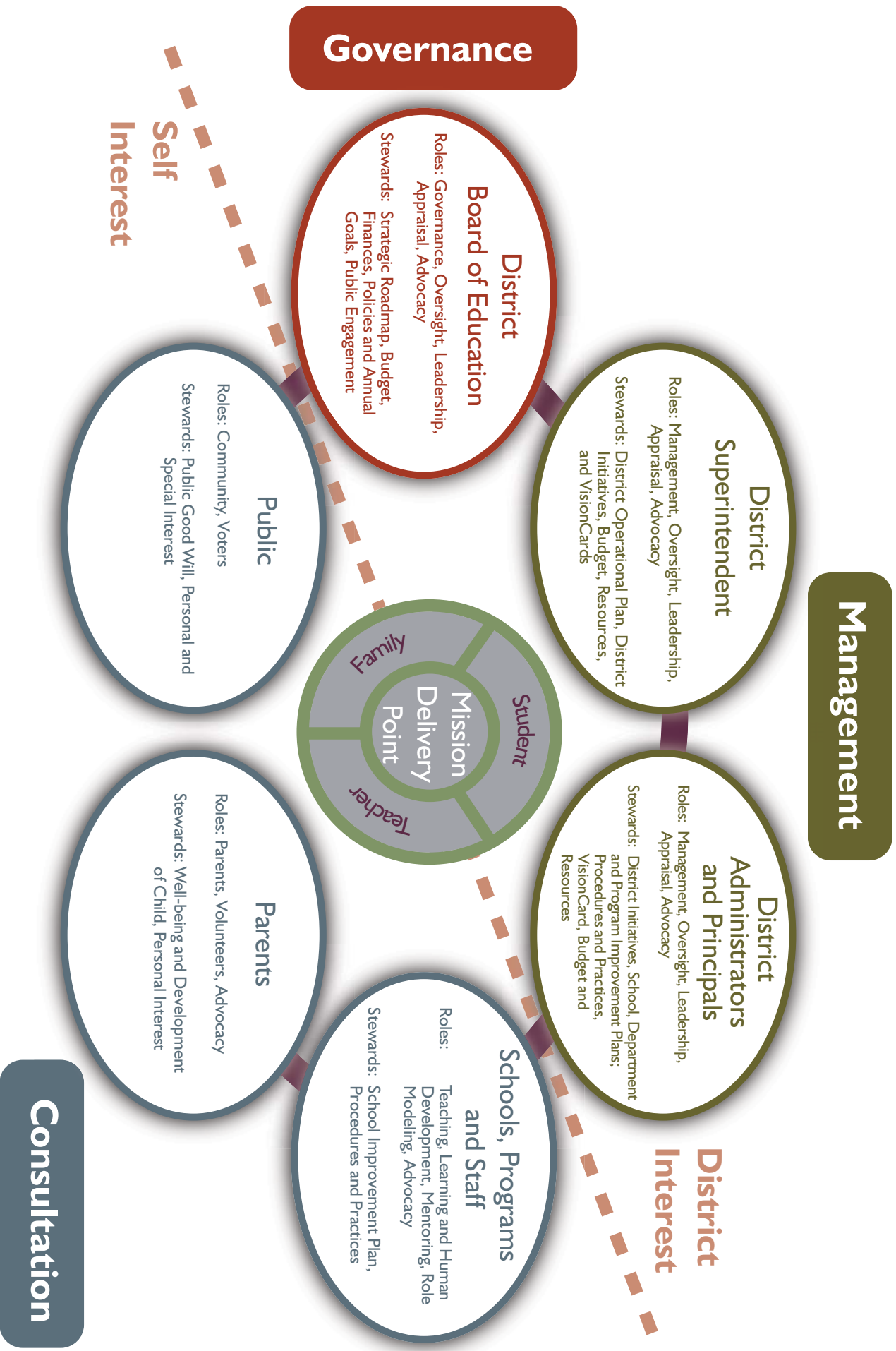
- Clarification of the adults' roles and responsibilities which empower boards to govern well, administrators to manage well and the staff/public to consult well
- Acknowledgement that there are differing authorities at play and differing interests of the adults in the district
- Partnership across the six groups of adults through tools, processes, language, and images which are designed to help increase levels of trust, competence, transparency, and interdependency
- Unity through focus on learning, development, and performance of high intellectual and critical life skills performances for all students
- Identification of student learning achievement and comparison through effective use of data and analysis
- Development of Partnership as a capacity of the district, not just the individuals, to promote a robust and resilient response to change, challenge, and opportunity

The Leverage Points: Board and Administration

Two key groups hold pivotal roles in the pursuit of the district's mission and vision. The board and the principals are leverage points for alignment, implementation and communication. When change or improvement stalls, it is most likely traced to what these two groups say and do.

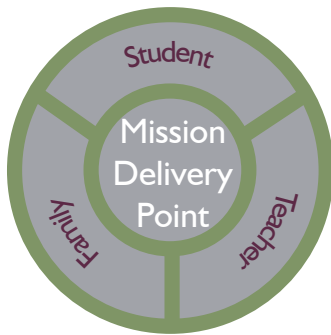
As stewards of the strategic roadmap, budget, finances, policies, annual goals, and public engagement, the board's vision for the school district guides the partnership and continuous improvement process. Excellence in their role establishes a clear direction for implementation by management.

The principals enhance the partnership between the district level and their buildings. The implementation of the district's vision is translated into the improvement plans. Excellence in their role as instructional and building leaders ultimately supports the delivery of learning in the classroom and the resources that support it.



Mission Delivery Point

The behind-the-scenes work that supports the district's mission funnels through a critical relationship we term the Mission Delivery Point. This dynamic between the teacher, student, and the student's family is the point at which the lofty goals of the district are delivered and supported for student achievement. The ideal alignment of this relationship would present the perfect classroom scenario: engaged, well-rested students who develop high intellectual and life skills performances in partnership with a talented and committed teacher. Unfortunately, this is not the rule; reality is more complex. Outside of school, many students deal with sickness, tragedy, addiction, violence, homelessness and other stressors. Parents may work 60-70 hours a week. The student's family may or may not value education. Many teachers are talented and some are not. Programs and course offerings may be expanded in growth years or cut in lean years. Technology can open up a new world, or be a limiting factor without adequate equipment, training and access.



Due to many of these variables, as well as demographic changes and misaligned structures, it became apparent at the turn of this century that the traditional way we were approaching education was increasingly failing to meet the needs of students. Our country made a bold commitment to assure learning and career, community and college readiness. Since 2001, schools have redirected their efforts to improve accountability. Schools are moving from measuring class and grade level averages to monitoring individual student progress.

Teachers and administrators collaborate with each other and use data instead of relying mostly on opinion and experience. The work has only started – improving schools requires more than gathering heaps of data and standardizing curriculum.

Those outside of public education have a difficult time understanding the skills, tools, and collaboration needed to manage all of the variables. Those inside of public education not only recognize the dynamic of the Mission Delivery Point, but they resonate with the idea that it is necessary to redesign the traditional educational structures and relationships. They know there is a need to create a sustainable system that is tuned to the needs of the students, not the adults.

When the adults are focused on the Mission Delivery Point, they work within their ELS responsibilities. When they understand their role and authority in ELS, they can engage in the pursuit of Excellence in Governance, Management or Consultation. The three authorities are aligned through the philosophy of Partnership, the Strategic Roadmap and VisionCards.

Alignment of the adults in a school district depends heavily on the board and the principals. If they model excellence in their respective authorities, the other adults in the system will more readily accept and carry out their roles and responsibilities. The superintendent has a pivotal role as the link between governance, management and consultation and also holds the clearest and broadest accountability for the district's success.

Developing a Capacity for Partnership

We intuitively understand that Partnership is limited when organizations manage from the top-down. We've probably even been part of an organization that has tried to implement a less hierarchical structure in pursuit of greater equality. However, when organizations face challenges or tension they tend to gravitate toward a more traditional, hierarchical structure. In this structure, "the boss" steps into "the chaos," takes command of the situation, and moves everyone to a greater condition of control as quickly as possible with little room for discussion or disagreement. This leap from chaos to control is driven largely by the leader's hierarchical position of authority and/or the force of their personality.

While we've all felt that collective sigh of relief as we feel chaos give way to control, we've also felt the longing for a way to increase our overall sense of participation and contribution. That's where Partnership comes in.

Partnership is a different way of thinking, a different way of working, a different way of leading. Partnership doesn't diminish differences in authority and power. Partnership is the ability of people with differing levels of authority and power to accomplish shared goals. To do this, people must suspend their own need to control a situation.

They need to assume that others are worthy of trust and can be relied on to carry their own weight for the benefit of the whole. In times of crisis, leaders can choose to set conditions so the people they lead will accept both responsibility and ownership for creating and implementing solutions. In some cases, this means the organization may not implement the leader's solution. However, Partnership is not the ideal approach to all situations. Management, while only a portion of the leader's time, is where trust and competence is built. This foundation allows for others in the organization to enter into partnership after seeing fair, consistent, and timely management practices; especially in times of crisis with high risk and little time. Successful leaders are those who are able to intentionally make the shift between the two, discerning what actions, tools, and ways of relating will best ensure the desired outcome. They are able to

**“Partner when we should and
Manage when I must.”**

TeamWorks proprietary FrameWorks™ are the tools that build your district's capacity for Partnership. They are simple graphics that align the adults through consistent images, processes and language. They are designed to support common acts of leadership including decision making, difficult discussions, in-the-moment assessments, conflict resolution, and staff appraisal/development. They also assist in addressing issues rooted in power, authority, trust, personality and preference.

Partnership

70% of the time

End In View



FrameWorks™ invite consultation

People collaborate with leader

Capacity of organization is built

Management

30% of the time

End Determined



Limited consultation

People comply with leader's decision

Trust is built

It's All About Balance

So far we've been talking a lot about balance and choices; ever since John Dewey first called for school reform in 1897, educators have performed another balancing act between engaged learning and responsible resource management. Districts that experience high levels of achievement and sustainability understand the importance of work that maximizes efficiency and effectiveness while keeping a focus on innovation to continuously build capacity in the district. Let's start by taking a look at the lower left corner.

Low Efficiency and Effectiveness/Low Capacity for Change is the quadrant characterized by stagnancy and dependency. In school districts, this means strained relationships: micro-management by the board, personal relationships creating privilege, and cultural development of organizational silos with competing agendas and procedures. The gap-based approach for resource management reinforces a federation of schools that limits flexibility and discussion of new ways of working. The environment is static and "strategic efforts" do the same work with less people and less money. Decision making and accountabilities reside with a few individuals and compliance is expected by everyone else. The achievement gap grows.

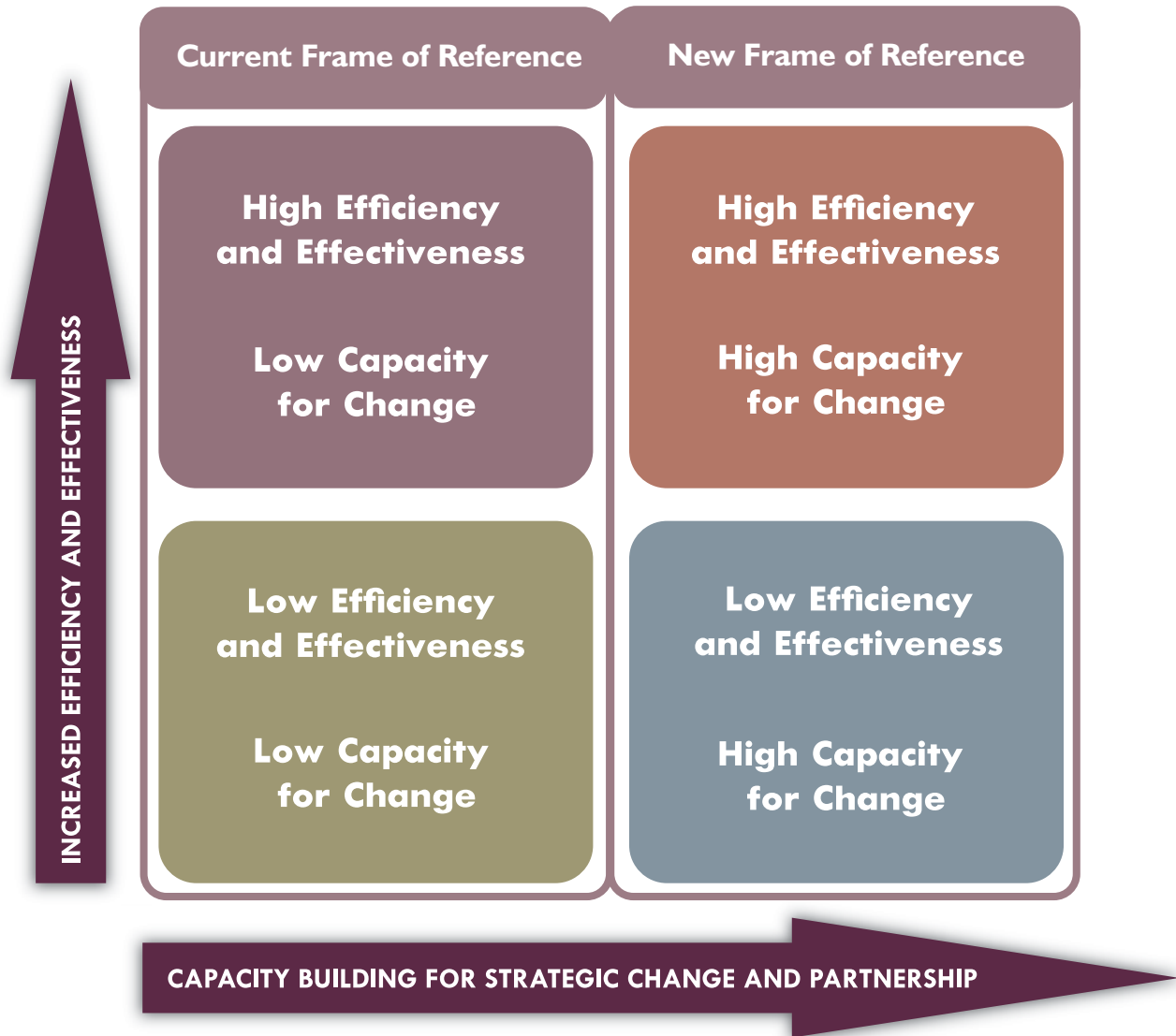
High Efficiency and Effectiveness/Low Capacity for Change has a higher level of professionalism and alignment. The board is able to remain in a governance role most of the time, yet personal initiatives still receive attention in planning. Data compiled through standardized testing is valued for its ability to fulfill minimum state and federal requirements. The curriculum is aligned for efficiency, not necessarily philosophy, and while Professional Learning Communities may have been established as a structure, they are seen as a peripheral part of the job. The achievement gap grows.

Low Efficiency and Effectiveness/High Capacity for Change is a highly dynamic yet unpredictable state. An overreliance on flexibility blurs roles and responsibilities and the board moves between governance and management on a whim. Leaders are gauged on their charisma and relationships, not direction and accountability. Those employed are either comfortable with ambiguity or in fear of losing their job with the next initiative that gets tried out. Learning outcomes do not change from year to year, but the programming to address it does. The achievement gap grows.

High Efficiency and Effectiveness/High Capacity for Change is the quadrant characterized by alignment, partnership, and innovation. Districts performing at this level are characterized by boards that operate at a high level of governance, speaking with one voice for the district. The superintendent is a trusted delegate of the board and the leadership team of the district includes directors, principals, and (in many cases) representation of the employee groups such as union leaders. Staff are regarded as professionals and they, the families and the public are key in large scale decision making processes. Curriculum, staff development, and assessment is aligned to district vision. Formative and summative assessments measure change and frequent feedback loops provided by the professionals in the building are highly valued. Sharing and action research are commonplace. A global approach to student learning is achieved through vertical and horizontal partnership. The achievement gap is addressed at multiple levels and shrinks.

The frame of reference that a district chooses dramatically affects the whole system: the culture of the organization, the work that it accomplishes, and the processes, systems and policies that drive it. Movement to High Efficiency and Effectiveness/High Capacity for Change requires a high level system change as well as the underlying culture and relationships. The districts that transition well understand the investment in the shift.

Efficiency/Capacity



Adapted from the Immediate Result/Creation of Potential Model, ISEOR. 2011.

One such tool is the Efficiency/Capacity Framework™. It differentiates the strategic approaches and 'Frames of Reference' districts use to redesign and improve performance. Increasing efficiency is quite different than increasing capacity. The distinction and blend is critical for Strategic Growth and Change. Along the "Increased Efficiency and Effectiveness" axis, work is tactical, transactional, and problem-solving. In other words, looking at the current way things are done and either refining what's working or repairing what's not. "Capacity Building for Strategic Change and Partnership" illustrates the longer term, transformational, strengths-based work of the district. This work is imaginative and innovative and moves the organization to sustainability and growth by doing things differently.

Three Authorities

The six groups of adults in ELS have three key purposes: Governance (authority held by the board), Management (authority held by the superintendent, administrators/principals) and Consultation (authority held by staff, students/parents and public).

While there is some degree of overlap in roles and accountabilities, it is more important to understand the differences between the groups, especially in terms of authority. People will frequently use personality or political influence to usurp, or circumvent, someone else's authority. The Education Leadership System™ encourages each adult to operate "in their own sandbox" increasing accountability, transparency, and interdependence of action for all.

The Board has the Authority of Governance

No one else has it. The board has five primary responsibilities:

1. District governance and policy
2. Operational performance oversight and organizational development direction
3. Board governance policy
4. Superintendent relations
5. Public engagement, community relations and advocacy of public education

The Administration has the Authority of Management

No one else has it. Administrators have five primary responsibilities:

1. Resource management: financial, human and physical
2. Instructional leadership at the principal level
3. Performance management and professional development
4. Continuous improvement
5. Procedures and practices aligned with district policy
6. Staff, parent and community relations

Staff, students, parents and public have the Authority of Consultation

No one else has it. They have four primary responsibilities:

1. Voice of self and collective interest
2. Assessing risks and merits of various options as part of decision making processes and/or the daily operations of the district
3. Responsibly resist or oppose change
4. Provide input and feedback to Management and Governance

Excellence in Governance in Public Education

The key purpose of a board is to serve as a single governing body. The role represents the public interest and provides oversight for the institution of public education.

I. District Governance and Policy

- Ends Policy defining what (results) is to be provided to whom (stakeholders) at what cost (budget and capital)
- Limitations Policy (unacceptable means) to attaining the results
- Monitoring Reports (data-informed analysis that describes how effectively the results have been achieved and the unacceptable means have been avoided). Monitoring Reports are tools that communicate high quality data and analysis from the administration to the board. They are based on the district's performance on VisionCards and district goals. The reports explain the performance of the district and implementation of district policy, identify emerging governance and management issues, and recommend processes/programs for refinement. Monitoring Reports are also a key element in the superintendent's annual evaluation. More will be discussed on this later.

2. Operational Oversight

- Strategic Roadmap articulating the district's Mission (purpose), Core Values (drivers of words and actions), Vision (the desired state in the short term), Strategic Directions (focus of time and resources)
- Oversight of operational issues, challenges, and opportunities
- Partnership through board Excellence in Governance and the superintendent's Excellence in Management to address the dynamic and unpredictable realities of public education

3. Board Governance Policy

- Governance policy and practices
- Structures and systems of governance, partnership, and consultation
- Board self-management and appraisal

4. Superintendent Relations

- Superintendent relations policy and practices
- Partnership relationship and communications
- Recruitment, hiring, appraisal, retention, development, and discipline of the superintendent

5. Public Engagement

- On issues of policy development
- On issues of education, public need, and critical systemic decisions
- Advocacy for public education at the local, regional, and state level

Forces Pushing Against Excellence in Governance

A. Boards govern, councils manage, and most people do not know the difference. The public assumes that the board is the “city council” of the district and responsible for management. To that end, board members are often asked to provide “management” solutions or take on a management role, whether at a board meeting or during casual conversations in everyday social situations.

B. State and Federal laws that assume or require a board to actively engage in management. These statutes, regulations, and laws tend to be highly prescriptive in that they limit risk and focus on processes (The “How”) rather than descriptive where they expand opportunities and focus on results (The “What”).

C. Staff and parents strategically pressure the school board to engage in management when it is in their self interest to do so and complain when their self interests are no longer served.

D. Board members run on campaigns designed around promises of management solutions as a practical tactic to get elected. These promises are often made without in-depth data or knowledge of the complexities of public education or the current reality of their district. Once elected, board members find that these promises make it difficult to govern. For many members, the strategies for election are opposite of the actions and focus of governance.

Some Popular Myths about serving on a School Board

It is common for a minority of board members (1 – 2) to engage in, or unknowingly preserve, these myths which allow them to operate as a “council person” with independence and little accountability for words and actions.

1. Governance is theoretical and optional.

The board is the only entity providing governance. Most state statutes delegate all governance authority for the establishment of public school districts to the board of education, and also delegate all management authority to the superintendent. In this way the Authority of Governance becomes the sole responsibility of the board. If a board operates without Excellence in Governance then the district does not receive it. The board does not have the right to deny Excellence in Governance to the district.

2. Freedom of speech grants the right for individual opinion, even after an act of governance.

Governance assumes that robust discussion encourages strongly held opinions and beliefs to be debated. The board establishes a position, and many times this occurs with varied levels of agreement. The act of voting creates a single position and voice. While freedom of speech is a legal right, board members have a critical responsibility to speak with a “single voice.” Freedom of speech is a legal construct and governance is not. Governance is an organizational construct recognized as a fundamental process for effective oversight of private and public entities.

3. Board members can “turn off” and “turn on” board status and position whenever they desire.

This is most often experienced when a board member engages in public discussions regarding public education and claims status as parent, tax payer, voter, etc. as if they weren't also a board member. Board member status is always “on,” in both public and private settings. This is also an important issue if a board member is a parent in the district. Most staff find they must relate to them as a board member first and a parent second.

4. Board members represent a portion of the civic community, or a specific political orientation/party.

Unless specifically elected from a district region and party-designated board seat, board members are accountable to all stakeholders. Solely speaking for, or representing, a subset of the whole community is often a violation of state statutes and district policy. An interesting fact is that most board members are elected from a quite small minority of the public. Virtually no board member has a “mandate” from the public.

5. Those who work in public education are less competent, qualified or professional than in other professions.

This view is used to justify operational “management” by those who work outside of public education. It is also usually found with board members who, operating as individuals, believe their primary role is to seek out and fix the minutia of what is perceived to be not working well in schools. Many times, these will be the same board members who view the reports of what is working well within the district as “fluff” and “avoiding the real issues.” Most board members do not have enough experience and are not qualified to be educators or administrators in a public education setting.

6. Public education will operate better if it is “run like a business.”

Public education would most likely cease to exist if it operated at the same success ratio of small business and corporations. Public education would be more effective if it integrated elements of sound professional management practices. Most businesses would not perform well with their current practices and structures if their boards and management were required to operate in the open, public environment of a school district.

7. There are low expectations of school boards to be professional and competent.

Board members with this assumption are not prepared for board meetings, do not read materials, are normally silent or aggressively dominant during board meetings. They find ways to be absent from most opportunities for development and training, and do not engage in Partnership or collaboration. Few boards provide professional appraisal for superintendents, and many that do typically provide it at a low level.

“Bobby’s Rules”

Adopted from the work of Jim Slaughter, Certified Professional Parliamentarian-Teacher & Professional Registered Parliamentarian

In order to achieve Excellence in Governance, the board is required to responsibly conduct the manner in which they discuss issues, motions, and reach agreement. Agreement does not mean that the board reaches consensus, the board’s responsibility is to engage in robust conversation and even disagreement before a vote that defines the full board’s position. It does not matter if a vote is 7-0, 6-1, 5-2, or 4-3, it all equates to single-voice. Speaking with one voice after a decision gives sound direction to those in management.

Too often, boards find that discussions are governed by personality with a loose version of Robert’s Rules (that we like to term “Bobby’s Rules”) and used only when it benefits an individual’s agenda. It is recommended that the board practice Robert’s Rules of Order for meetings and decisions. Below are some basics that refine discussion and condense meetings into sessions that benefit the district and help the board to remain in a governance role.

Parliamentary Motions Guide

Based on Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised (11th Edition)

The motions below are listed in order of precedence. Any motion can be introduced if it is higher on the chart than the pending motion.

YOU WANT TO:	YOU SAY:	INTERRUPT?	2 ND ?	DEBATE?	AMEND?	VOTE?
Close meeting	I move to adjourn	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
Take break	I move to recess for	No	Yes	No	Yes	Majority
Register complaint	I rise to a question of privilege	Yes	No	No	No	None
Make the board follow agenda	I call for the orders of the day	Yes	No	No	No	None
Lay aside temporarily	I move to lay the question on the table	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
Close debate	I move the previous question	No	Yes	No	No	2/3
Limit or extend debate	I move that debate be limited to ...	No	Yes	No	Yes	2/3
Postpone to a certain time	I move to postpone the motion to ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Refer to committee	I move to refer the motion to ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Modify wording of motion	I move to amend the motion by ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Kill main motion	I move that the motion be postponed indefinitely	No	Yes	Yes	No	Majority
Bring business before assembly (a main motion)	I move that (or “to”) ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority

Parliamentary Motions Guide

Based on Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (11th Edition)

Incidental Motions - No order of precedence. Arise incidentally and decided immediately.

YOU WANT TO:	YOU SAY:	INTERRUPT?	2 ND ?	DEBATE?	AMEND?	VOTE?
Enforce rules	Point of order	Yes	No	No	No	None
Submit matter to assembly	I appeal from the decision of the chair	Yes	Yes	Varies	No	Majority
Suspend rules	I move to suspend the rules which ...	No	Yes	No	No	2/3
Avoid main motion altogether	I object to the consideration of the question	Yes	No	No	No	2/3
Divide motion	I move to divide the question	No	Yes	No	Yes	Majority
Demand rising vote	I call for a division	Yes	No	No	Yes	None
Parliamentary law question	Parliamentary inquiry	Yes (if urgent)	No	No	No	None
Request information	Request for information	Yes (if urgent)	No	No	No	None

Motions That Bring a Question Again Before the Assembly - no order of precedence.

Introduce only when nothing else pending.

Take matter from table	I move to take from the table ...	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
Cancel or change previous action	I move to rescind/ amend something previously adopted	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	2/3 or majority with notice
Reconsider motion	I move to reconsider the vote ...	No	Yes	Varies	No	Majority

Excellence in Management in Public Education

The superintendent and administrators of a public school district constitute the district leadership team. For principals and district administrators, the primary responsibility is district leadership and the secondary responsibility is school/department management.

1. Resource Management

- Effective design of operational and improvement plans in partnership with staff and parents
- Efficient management of resources in the delivery of the district, department, and school operational and improvement plans

2. Instructional Leadership at the Principal Level

- Ensuring the quality and robustness of the school's core process: learning
- Professional development of self as leader and mentor
- Professional development of staff and potential leaders to be qualified stewards for the mission of the district

3. Performance Management

- Design of the fundamental performance management structure with vertical and horizontal modes of feedback. Peer to peer accountability is an important part of structure and culture to support and broaden vertical performance
- Delivery and reinforcement of a culture of Partnership performance and customer service

4. Continuous Improvement

- Improve the quality and consistency of inputs
- Improve the flexibility of the process to meet the variability of the inputs
- Establish higher frequency outcome measurements for determining the effectiveness of the core processes

5. Procedures and Practices

- Implementation of board policy through the effective delivery of procedure and practice
- Inform the board of ends/limitations policy and other governance questions

6. Parent and Community Relations

- Engagement of parents and community around what goes on at the school and regional levels
- Partnership and resources focused around the Mission Delivery Point of student, family, and teacher

Forces Pushing Against Excellence in Management

- A. Some administrators operate in isolation** and feel compelled to protect their building or department from the school board, superintendent, and even other administrators and schools. In this case, the district operates like a federation of individual schools instead of operating like a school district.
- B. Administrator preparation programs are largely designed to prepare graduates for risk, crisis, and tactical management, not leadership or Partnership.** Once hired, the core process of learning, its quality, and its continuous improvement are the highest priorities of any principal in any school. Ideally, a principal has the opportunity to develop across a 3-5 year apprenticeship under a qualified mentor principal.
- C. Collective bargaining agreements that give up management responsibilities to those in consultation roles, thereby limiting the authority of principals.**
- D. A preference to avoid lawsuits at all costs and manage around “rights” and “privileges” (non-negotiated rights) of staff.** In addition, there is often a preference to leave the substantially underfunded (or unfunded) mandates or limiting statutes from state and federal government unchallenged.
- E. The public (and sometimes board members’) expectation that the administration should operate with complete transparency.** The emergence of online technologies allow parents and community members to take their issues and complaints online; many times without names or accountability.
- F. Staff operating largely around time, not outcomes.** Their schedules are rigid with little opportunity for collaboration, coaching, and continuous improvement. Their professional progress is largely determined by years of service and level of education, not performance.

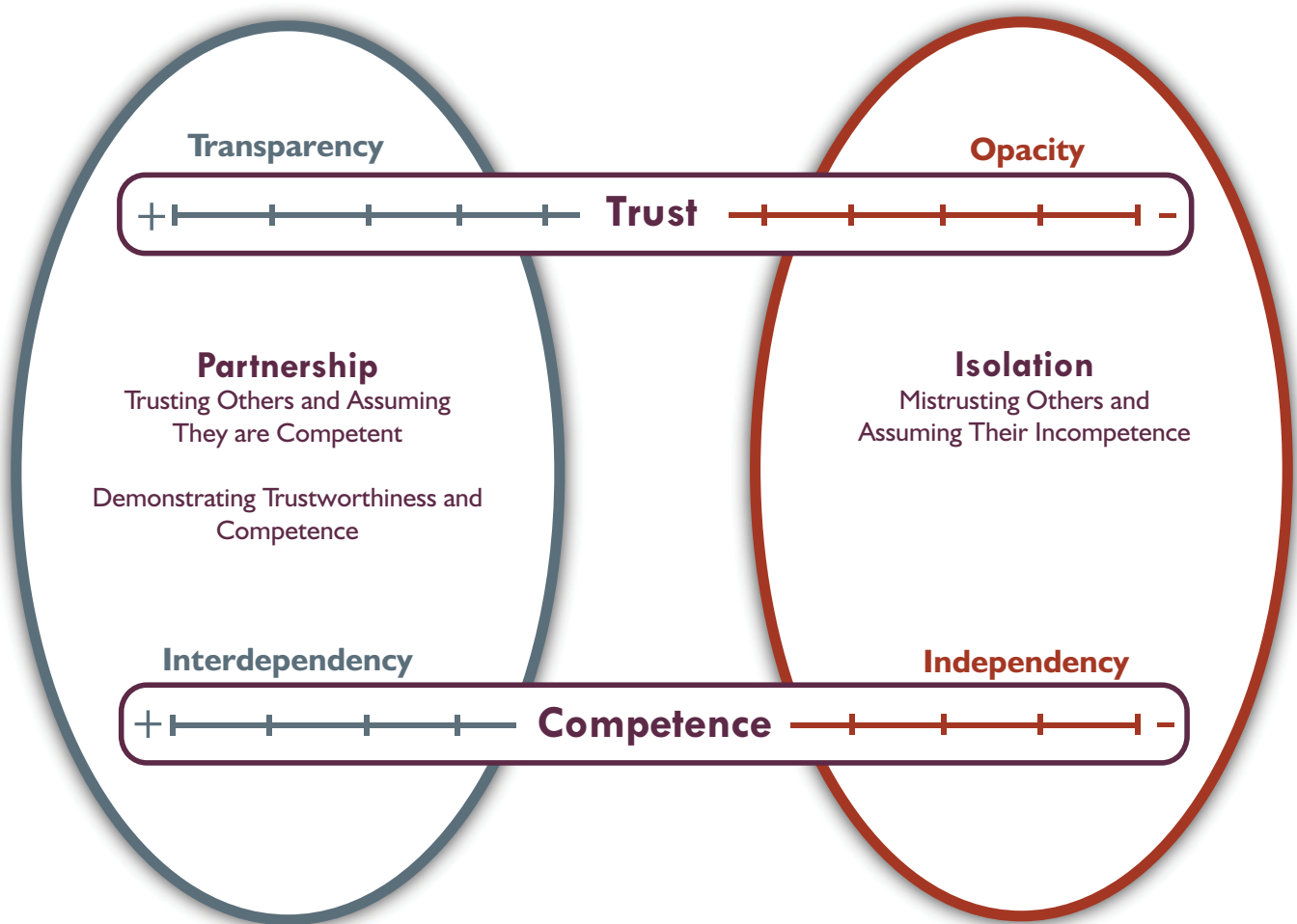
Popular Myths About Being in a Management Role

- 1. Principals implement change to the degree their staff agrees with the change.** Principals can often find themselves playing in the middle of the district plan and the building implementation. The temptation to back away because of the immediate pressures cannot outweigh the responsibility of implementing the district plan with efficacy.
- 2. There are two classes of employee: teachers and everyone else.** The responsibility of the superintendent and administrators is to engage all employee groups in consultation to the district. In most districts, only about 50% of employees are teachers.
- 3. Employees are union members first and employees second.** A teacher is hired by the district to engage students in the core process of learning. The union ensures fairness and boundaries for that work, but does not supersede it.
- 4. Staff is not accountable for student learning.** The core process of every school is learning, not teaching. Teachers are no longer accountable for simply teaching the prescribed lessons, but for the learning that their students have acquired and, in many performance models, principals are accountable as well.
- 5. The administrators’ loyalty is first to their staff and comes before accountability to the district.** As mentioned earlier in the ELS model, principals are one of two critical leverage points for alignment and performance. Inconsistent messages and implementations fracture the partnerships and alignment critical to supporting the Mission Delivery Point.

Four Partnership Practices for Those Who Govern and Manage

Practice #1: Leadership Choices FrameWork to deal with the dynamics of trust and mistrust

On a daily basis, “stuff” happens (angry phone calls or e-mails, bad news, miscommunication) increasing tension among individuals and groups, often leading to feelings of doubt, disappointment, and anger. Faced with increasing tension, people’s reflexive, and largely unconscious, response is to blame others and see them as either incompetent or not worthy of trust. In a school district setting, this response results in board members and administration operating with increasing isolation and opacity: second-guessing each other, questioning motives, giving credence to rumors and weaving stories that diminish the ability for either group to maintain focus on their primary responsibilities.



It is easy to work in partnership and transparency when things are going smoothly. When doubt arises, The Leadership Choices FrameWork requires leaders to pause for a moment and be fully present as they consider how to respond to consciously pull oneself out of the reflexive feeling of mistrust and reengage in partnership.

Boards and administrators who use this FrameWork to guide their daily work have a tool for personal and group reflection. Leadership Choices mediates conversations among a number of people as they conduct their work and meetings. This clarity in communication paves the way for greater efficiency, respect, and collaboration.

Practice # 2: Differentiation between Governance and Management

As the degree of public division over an issue or event increases, the forces pushing boards into a management role become stronger and more influential. Boards facing these difficult issues will typically find themselves operating from:

- Individual opinions, stories, "expert advice," and demands for more information (consistently from the same board members)
- Strong emotion on the part of some board members and conflict avoidance on the part of others
- Points or views stated and restated with increasing degrees of emotion or demands, usually driven by individual personality or political influence
- Discussions that divide the board and are based solely on individual views and extreme personalities
- Decisions that are made without the benefit of using sufficient data; some board members may resist accepting and using data that does not support their pre-established positions

To avoid responding to issues in this way, the board must ask,

“What are the key **governance questions presented by the issue or situation?”**

Governance questions are largely concerned with “Why?” “To what end?” “At what cost?” and “Through what policies?” They can usually be addressed by using the tools and practices detailed under “Excellence in Governance.” Identifying governance questions will assist the board in working with greater focus and will lead them to speaking with one collective voice.

Then the board must ask,

“What are the key **management questions presented by the issue or situation?”**

Management questions are concerned with “What?” “When?” “How will this get done?” and “Who will be responsible for doing it?” By doing this, the board and administration can identify the things that push board members into a micro-management role where they assume the responsibilities reserved for administration.

The more politically sensitive an issue is, the greater the temptation for board members to engage in micro-management. However, this rarely leads to effective implementation of solutions. Administration sees the intrusion into their authority as a threat, which leads to an increase in mistrust and feelings of incompetence. These feelings are easily manipulated by other board members, special interest groups or the media who may be acting to further self interests instead of district goals. This district “in-fighting” diminishes the effectiveness of leadership as a whole and can contribute to negative perceptions by the public.

A board that can differentiate these questions to clarify an issue in terms of authorities is able to stay rooted in governance while providing the superintendent with direction to address the management questions. This act alone will contribute greatly to district alignment.

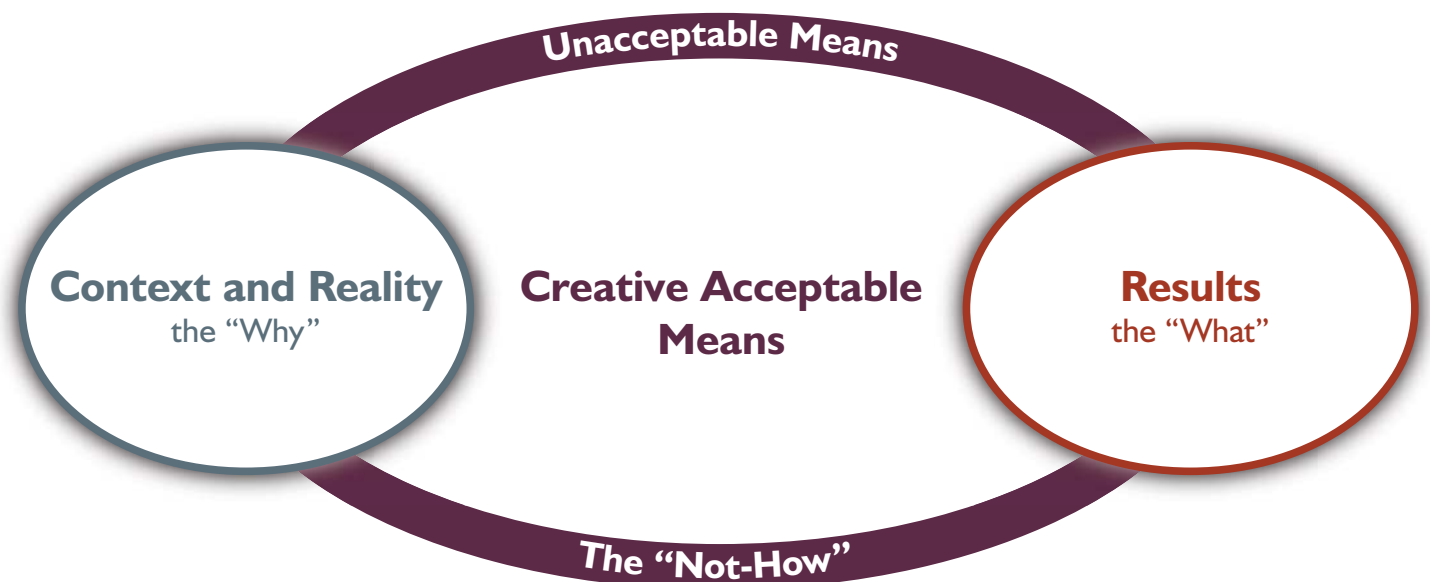
Practice # 3: Informal Consultation to the Superintendent through Statements of Consultation

Statements of Consultation are powerful tools by which the board can provide informal and non-binding input to the superintendent without being so tightly rooted in *Robert's Rules of Order*. Statements of Consultation work best when there is clarity about what the management questions are. They are especially useful when the board has particular opinions regarding the issue or there is a public relations risk. In these situations, the board acts in consultation to administration:

- Verbally, allowing the superintendent to gain an understanding of the variety in opinions and positions held by the individual board members while maintaining independence of thought and action. Putting all opinions “on the table” is an act of transparency that will result in higher levels of support for the decisions made by the superintendent, even if there are differing levels of agreement within the board.
- In writing, providing statements as one voice with diverse views and gradations of support. This provides the superintendent with knowledge of the board’s views, concerns, and hopes.

Practice # 4: Formal Consultation to the Superintendent through the Guiding Change FrameWork

The public education environment is extremely dynamic. Frequent changes in budget, legislation, best practices, technology, public opinion, leadership and expectations for student learning require school districts to constantly change practices to stay competitive. Through it all, districts are also asked to hold on to the traditions and identity they have established in the community. The Guiding Change FrameWork is used by boards to provide formal consultation with a single voice. The resulting document describes the desired results and provides limitations on what means can be used to achieve them. This formal consultation is written, motioned and voted on before being sent to the superintendent. In most situations, the draft Guiding Change document is prepared by the administration for the board and/or its executive committee. The Guiding Change document provides the superintendent guidance in regards to management questions while allowing the board to remain focused on governance questions.



Excellence in Consultation in Public Education

Of the three authorities, consultation is the least developed and least understood. Consultation is often confused with consensus due to a movement in the 70's and 80's in which consensus and shared decision making was utilized to broaden participation and ownership at the school level. Those with the authority of consultation were involved in management and choice making without any delegated accountability. This not only minimized the management authority of the administration, but led to confusion about the consultation authority of stakeholders.

Consultation is the authority of staff, students, parents and public who offer their experiences, ideas and professionalism as a resource to management and governance. While accountability for district decisions lies primarily with governance and management, some of those with the authority of consultation do hold a certain level of management authority – teachers manage their classrooms, bus drivers manage the bus environment and nutrition services personnel manage the cafeteria – but they are primarily considered to be among those with the authority of consultation.

1. Voice of Self and Collective Interest

- Offer a personal perspective
- Join in offering the perspective from those immediately in contact with students, colleagues, families, and communities
- Encourage input from underserved groups

2. Assess Risks and Merits

- Participate as an active partner in the district's continuous improvement
- Clarify what is or isn't serving the needs of those represented in the Mission Delivery Point

3. Responsibly Resist Change

- Push back on change that is not clear, understood, or aligned with district mission and vision
- Perform the role of "watchdog" as a responsible citizen, employee, or customer

4. Provide Input and Feedback to Management and Governance

- Expand the shared understanding of the district's current reality
- Provide expertise and experience critical to designing and delivering the district's plan

Forces Pushing Against Excellence in Consultation

A. Parents moving beyond advocacy to setting expectations and making demands on behalf of their child as if public education were a private institution.

B. Decision Making processes on broad, critical issues which are not explicit, transparent, consistent, and planned. Loose, unprofessional, or exclusive public processes limit the practice of Excellence in Consultation; they will also create feelings of doubt, suspicion, mistrust, and even anger toward the board and administration.

C. Often frustration and demands move those in the role of consultation to act outside of the ELS structure. If staff and public do not fully understand how the district operates they may not realize that the items and actions they are demanding of the board are not in the board's realm of responsibility.

D. Management and governance often disregard consultation as less valid or important. While it is the responsibility of those who consult to do so responsibly and appropriately, it is the responsibility of those who govern and manage to use the opinions, data, and perspectives provided to them by those who consult. Unique solutions often present themselves when created by people who are somewhat removed from the situation.

Popular Myths of Those in Consultation Roles

1. The people who want to provide input will.

Districts often do not hear from the families of underserved students. The district must make a conscious effort in planning and decision making processes to engage those who are not familiar or comfortable with the "system."

2. The public knows about education – they were all students once.

In other words, you don't become a mechanic by driving a car. The most important perspective that parents and public can give is around their experience and current reality. staff, management, and governance will figure out how to implement.

3. Those in Consultation believe that their input and feedback need to be fully adopted.

Every opinion does not have to be acted upon for consultation to be professional and legitimate. Staff members and parents often consult with management, offering opinions rooted in experience or expertise that differs from the general public. The public provides an external perspective that is often used by the board in making difficult choices. All consultation groups are not necessarily involved in every decision, and the board and administration need to remain independent in thought and action to operate with the district's interest taking precedence over individual interests.

4. Emotional appeals trump data.

Unfortunately, some boards and administrators perpetuate this myth. With a solid plan, comprehensive and frequent assessment, and partnership practices throughout the district, an emotional appeal is not enough to incite change.

Continuous Improvement - Introduction

- | | | |
|-----|----|--|
| Yes | No | Do you believe that it is possible for all students to attain high intellectual and life-skills performance? |
| Yes | No | Do you know how to do that? |

The second question has proven to be the more important. Virtually all schools, when fully engaged in the “how” of high student performance, will discover certain consistent elements:

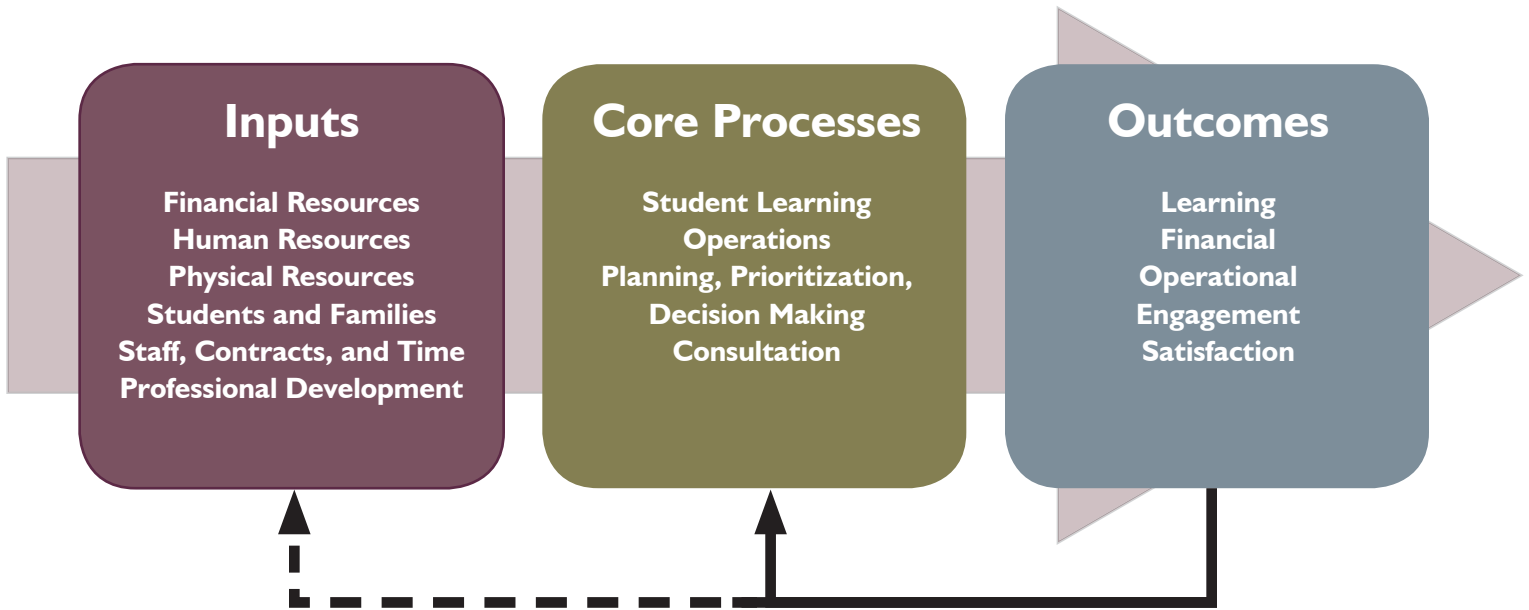
- There are classrooms within every school where high levels of learning are occurring for all students, and have been for many years.
- Many Continuous Improvement processes being used in schools do not utilize available data and analyses to their full potential.
 - For some, there is a belief that Continuous Improvement doesn’t apply to schools; that it is a business practice and the Mission Delivery Point is too dynamic to support a process that is perceived as being prescribed, predictive and production-driven.
 - Teachers are frustrated at the constant demand to improve student learning and instructional performance when they feel as if they are already doing the best they can.
 - Public schools have the data, the tools, and the opportunity to increase learning for all students. They also have broad support as the majority of staff, parents and students and public share this common vision for success.

The Need for Continuous Improvement

In the past, principals typically managed data at the school or grade level. Instructional and assessment approaches were tuned to homogenous student populations, and teachers managed their time and classrooms to teach to the majority. Schools and districts operated with the assumption that averaged school or district scores provided an acceptable representation of student learning and achievement. However, the learning scores of students who were “different” – due to race, ethnicity, income or ability (both high and low) – were not reflected by the average, and as a consequence their learning and achievement issues were not always adequately seen, understood, or addressed.

Today, demographic and cultural changes are resulting in a much higher level of variability and difference in our schools than ever before. Schools are trailing behind these demographic and cultural changes by years, and even decades in some districts. It is often assumed that students will adapt to the values, structures, practices and instruction of the teachers. Adaptation is expected from the students to a greater degree than from the adults; however it is the adults who have the greater responsibility to adapt. Continuous Improvement guides these adaptations in a meaningful, structured, and effective manner.

Inputs, Processes and Outcomes



The basics of any continuous improvement model revolve around measuring the inputs, processes, and outcomes of a function or an organization. The measurement of each of those aspects is done through feedback loops.

Unfortunately, in education, the continuous improvement cycle is under-utilized. There is a general understanding for the need of assessment and evaluation, yet often the feedback is regarded as an outcome. Let's take a deeper look.

Inputs

Inputs are the resources that come into the organization. Their abundance or scarcity heavily impacts the processes and, in education, many of them are highly variable and outside of the immediate control of the school district. Those within the district's control are well designed and purposeful with direct correlation to achieving the mission and vision.

Processes

When the inputs come in, the processes put them into action. These are the practices for running the schools and delivering education and are, for the most part, under complete control of the schools. Innovation, refinement, and measurement of processes are effective strategies for improvement in classrooms and schools.

Outcomes

Outcomes are the measurements of how effective the processes are. Some of these are set through external mandates, some are set internally – all should inform approaches to inputs and processes through effective feedback loops.

Feedback

The arrows at the bottom of the graphic explain the primary and secondary loops that signal where refinements must be made. In the case of student learning, traditional and mandated feedback loops such as state testing occur too infrequently to truly inform the approaches to continuous improvement. Formative assessment must regularly supplement inputs and processes to produce meaningful change. Qualified teacher judgement on a weekly basis is the richest pool of information available for continuous improvement.

Continuous Improvement Process

The majority of school districts employ a traditional and fragmented accountability system which does not include alignment tools such as VisionCards or Monitoring Reports. District and school goals are often based on state level test scores and outcomes instead of Strategic Directions, and do not include high levels of tactical detail. These approaches push boards into a micro-management role, instead of allowing them to practice Excellence in Governance.

The Continuous Improvement Process connects planning, prioritization, strategy and action in an integrated feedback loop that works to build the capacity for Excellence in Governance, Management and Consultation across the district.



Strategic Roadmap: An Act of Governance

A Strategic Roadmap is a one-page document that outlines the mission statement, core values, vision statements, and strategic directions. Strategic directions are incorporated into the Vision Scorecards to guide administrators and staff, and are the primary guidance for Improvement Plans. Strategic directions are the structural strand that links together all of the accountability tools. Boards also utilize budget, long range financial models, policy, and 2-3 year board agenda map of governance issues and work.

VisionCards: An Act of Management

VisionCards measure the district's success in achieving the strategic directions. Administrators create VisionCards and the board provides guidance through the Strategic Roadmap. VisionCards provide the data to support and assess progress toward the narrative vision outlined in the Strategic Roadmap. The VisionCards can be used to measure growth or gaps in district performance. VisionCards set the ongoing district goals for performance and continuous improvement.

Improvement Plans: An Act of Consultation

Improvement Plans can be created at the district and building levels to map out improvement initiatives and measurable actions. The Strategic Growth and Change FrameWork is used to guide this process.

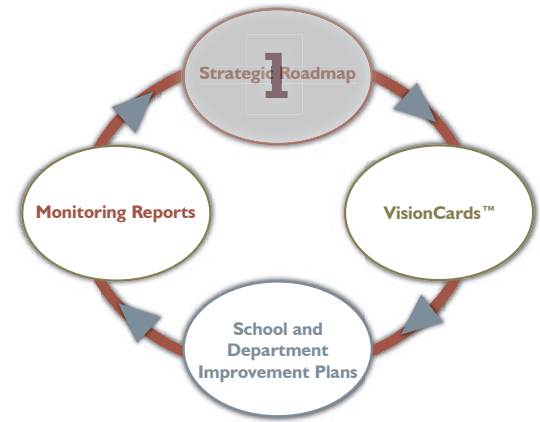
Monitoring Reports: An Act of Management and a Tool of Governance

The Monitoring Report is a communication tool created by management to inform the board on how the Strategic Roadmap and policy has been implemented. Effective Monitoring Reports are designed around a strategic direction and/or VisionCard. They summarize the measures used, the performance achieved, and the level of compliance to the accepted interpretations of district policy, and the continuous improvement plans to move towards vision.

Strategic Roadmap

A Strategic Roadmap is a concise, one page document that provides directional clarity for the district and community. The Strategic Roadmap contains:

- **mission statement**
- **core values**
- **vision statement**
- **strategic directions**



Mission Statement

“An organization’s mission statement — one that truly reflects the deep, shared vision and values of everyone within the organization — creates a great unity and tremendous commitment. It creates in people’s hearts and minds a frame of reference, a set of criteria or guidelines, by which they will govern themselves...They have been brought into the changeless core of what the organization is about.”

-Covey, Seven Habits of Highly Effective People

A mission statement represents commitment, promise and focus for the organization. They are used to guide the daily actions of all members of the district and challenge individuals who have committed themselves to inaction. A mission statement is designed to be more enduring than a vision statement; it is the purpose that drives the district, the standard by which all actions are measured, and the compass that gives the district direction. An example of a good mission statement:

It is the Mission of the District to:

- ***educate all students to the highest levels of academic achievement;***
- ***enable them to reach and expand their potential; and***
- ***prepare them to become productive, responsible, ethical, creative and compassionate members of society.***

Core Values

Core values are intended to influence the language, images and actions of the district. The board, administration and staff should be appraised on the degree to which their words and acts reflect the core values, because these values should be lived, not just hung on the wall. An example of core values:

- ***Accountability*** - *To fulfill one’s roles and responsibilities and be responsive to the results.*
- ***Courage*** - *Doing and saying the right thing at the right time in the right way.*
- ***Excellence*** - *A relentless and intentional effort in continuous improvement.*
- ***Innovation*** - *Purposeful, courageous, continuous improvement through research and action.*
- ***Integrity*** - *Always aligning our actions with our values and beliefs.*
- ***Learning*** - *Continuous, meaningful, and challenging effort that results in student success.*
- ***Respect*** - *Listen to, accept, and value each individual in the school district and community.*
- ***Shared Responsibility*** - *Working together interdependently and in collaboration, learning from one another, entrusting one’s self interest to another and taking ownership for our individual and collective actions and decisions.*

Vision Statement

A vision statement is an articulation of what the district and its schools will be like in three to four years. It is rooted in the district's mission and influenced by an environmental scan (a report that details the district's internal strengths and limitations, as well as the external challenges, opportunities, influences and future trends). The relatively short scope of Vision Statements often creates a compelling desire in board members to set goals and see them through to completion before the end of their elected terms. A good example of vision statements:

Vision 2014 - Our Schools will be experienced as and known for Achievement and Responsiveness whereby:

- *All students are engaged in and accountable for their learning*
- *All students are achieving their potential and prepared for success beyond K-12*
- *All students are accessing individualized and challenging programming*

Innovation and Professionalism whereby:

- *All staff are high quality and engaged with a clear focus on students and learning*
- *All students and staff are integrating technology innovations which accelerate learning and assure success for all*

Leadership and Unity whereby:

- *All embrace and are engaged and are utilizing the comprehensive strategic roadmap to guide every priority and decision*

Strategic Directions

Strategic directions define the focus of human, financial and physical resources of the district which will take to move it from its current state to the future state described by the vision statement. Strategic directions become the foundation for VisionCards and district initiatives. New initiatives that do not align with a specific strategic direction should be discarded, because they will take focus and resources away from priority initiatives that will help the district achieve its vision. An example of strategic directions:

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

Our Focused Allocation of Resources

- A. Elevate student expectations and achievement while closing the gaps between student groups*
- B. Integrate personal and individualized learning within a coherent educational program*
- C. Live and learn in safe, respectful and effective environments*
- D. Maximize the development and use of our financial, physical and human resources and professional development*
- E. Engage the community in partnership to live our Mission and achieve our Vision*
- F. Operate with excellence in governance, management and consultation*

The strategic directions provide structure, alignment, and continuity to the strategic roadmap (governance), VisionCards (management) and continuous improvement plans (consultation).

VisionCards

VisionCards are the design of measures and metric aligned to the Strategic Directions determined by the district. Keeping in mind that the Strategic Directions prioritize the district's resources and time, it is important to measure their progress. Each Strategic Direction has a VisionCard to accomplish that task. An adaptation of the balanced scorecard methodology introduced by Kaplan and Norton (1992), they are valuable in private, public, and the non-profit sectors. As Drs. Kaplan and Norton have noted, since public organizations "strive to deliver mission outcomes, not superior financial performance ... these organizations need a comprehensive system of measures to motivate and evaluate their performance." The partial example below depicts the key elements of a useful scorecard:



When a district is fully utilizing VisionCards, they can be tailored to the district's specific needs and developed with three different views:

District View

Looking at the details across all VisionCards provides an overall view of district performance with details. The VisionCards, specifically those focusing on Student Learning and Development, provide the data for assessing district performance of all student groups.

Primary and Secondary School "Feeder" Views

Oftentimes, primary and secondary schools will have differing measures for success. This perspective looks at the performance of specific groups of schools.

A "Feeder System" view is a structure to align the leadership, staff, and processes of the high schools with the middle and elementary schools that "feed" the high schools as one system.

School and Classroom Views

This view details the performance of the individual schools and provides details at either the grade and/or classroom level. Because of data privacy laws and staff contracts, these views and data syntheses are treated as confidential information.

Strategic Direction A: Increasing measurable achievement for every student and subgroup.

		Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Score
	Weight	1.0-1.9	2.0-2.9	3.0-3.9	4.0-4.9	5.0	
Measures	40%	Less than 60% of all student groups meet/exceed expected growth targets	60-64% of all student groups meet/exceed expected growth targets	65-69% of all student groups meet/exceed expected growth targets	70-75% of all student groups meet/exceed expected growth targets	Greater than 75% of all student groups meet/exceed expected growth targets	3.7

Title: Strategic Direction __: With narrative

Measure: 5-7 key measures that will be good benchmarks of progress for hitting Vision on each Strategic Direction. The measures should be more than just outcomes; measures of process and inputs create a well-rounded picture of progress. It is best to begin by finding measures that are already in place in the district and only create new ones if necessary.

Weight (%): Weights are determined by what is most pressing and important to the district. The weights have a large impact on the overall performance score given to each additional VisionCard. All the measures under a single VisionCard are weighted individually by priority, but their sum will always be 100%. Formative (leading) measures should be weighted higher than Summative (lagging) measures.

Metrics: A 1-5 scale with quantitative metrics linked to the measures.
 Level 1: Intervention - highest priority, focus of extra time and resources
 Level 2: Concern - frequent feedback and reporting
 Level 3: Baseline – transition and refinement
 Level 4: Progress – practices are becoming the standard way of doing things
 Level 5: Vision – the hard work has paid off and the metric indicates success

Score: The score for each measure is determined by performance on the metrics. The score is placed on a metric continuum ranging from 1 (intervention) to 2 (concern), 3 (baseline), 4 (progress), and level 5 (vision). The total score for each VisionCard is developed by taking the average of the weighted scores for each measure. For example, if Measure A is weighted at 40% and scores a 3.7 while Measure B (not pictured) is weighted at 60% and scores a 1.2, the overall score for that VisionCard would be 2.2.

The VisionCards serve as a tool for the duration of the strategic plan. Designed to show the trend of improvement, they differ from SMART goals that set short term parameters. Once vision (Level 5) is attained, resources can be concentrated on measures that lag behind.

Improvement Plans

Improvement Plans evolve from the overall district planning process. Once the current reality and vision are set at the district level, schools and departments design the change sought on the smaller scale and prepare the way for well-informed Monitoring Reports to the board and public. The ELS approach develops an Improvement Plan for each school through StrategyCards, ActionCards and definition of work with Strategic Growth and Change FrameWork.



During the Continuous Improvement Process, the first steps in a new direction can be complicated. Often, discussion moves too quickly to “How” and participants or decision makers bring their ideas and solutions to the table. While well-meaning and often very well-thought out, these plans are created in an individual’s frame of reference and the meeting shifts from good intentions to defending the outcome they each desire. Partnership requires an investment in shared understanding before that process begins. The following approaches are helpful in establishing the “Why,” “What,” and “Who” to ensure a well-rounded approach to implementation.

Key Questions to consider when developing Improvement Plans:

- Based on our current VisionCard performance, what are the top 3 – 4 measures we need to improve to best leverage our resources, skills, and time?
- What improvement goals are we setting for ourselves in the coming year? (i.e. movement from a 3.2 to a 3.8 performance)
- What are the key risks in our current reality to achieve the change projects and initiatives?
- What is our level of confidence in achieving the performance improvement goals?
- What will we do if improvement is not achieved? Are there any consequences?

Using StrategyCards

The StrategyCard is a simple document adapted from the work of Robert Fritz. The one-page “card” is created in three phases. Initially, the group begins by defining the current reality of a Strategic Direction or Key Process through an in-depth look at the data, practices, influences, trends, and attitudes that are evident in all affected groups. After this ground work, the Vision is set; “What do we want to be (and see) 3-5 years from now?”

Recognizing that there are structural and intangible roadblocks to currently being at vision, the discussion shifts to the projects and initiatives that will pave the way from today to tomorrow’s vision. Those projects and initiatives are each given their own ActionCard.



Using ActionCards

ActionCards follow much the same progression as StrategyCards. One project or initiative is chosen and the process of defining current reality and vision is repeated. Once complete, the actual steps to accomplishing vision are plotted out, delegated and given a deadline. ActionCards become implementation plans.

The Strategic Growth and Change Framework

Using the graphic on page 39, each project and initiative's actions are broken down into an implementation map with three key types of work. Learning and Research Work around what possibilities exist as ways to accomplish our vision, Implementation Work when we choose one of those possibilities and implement it, and Standard Work when our Implementation Work becomes the normal part of our day-to-day way of generally operating.

Key questions to engage in the development of the Strategic Growth and Change map are:

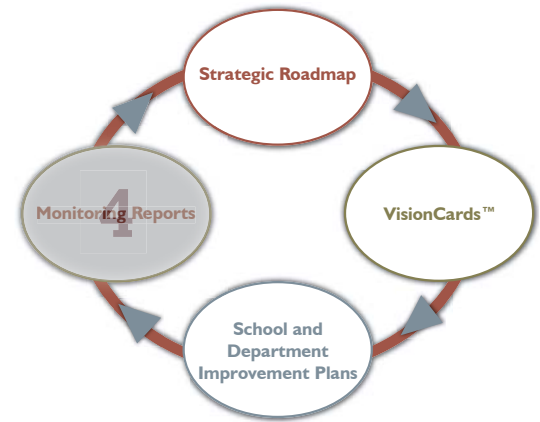
- Where is the “gold,” the Level 4-5 performance in our schools?
- Where are the “gaps,” the Level 1-2 performance in our schools?
- What Standard Work needs refinement?
- What Implementation Work needs to occur to improve performance?
- What Learning/Research Work needs to be done to be able to make a Choice?
- What Needs to Leave our school in order to engage in this plan of continuous improvement?

Partnership in Continuous Improvement

The StrategyCards, ActionCards, and TeamWorks FrameWorks™ provide the tools for inviting the groups of adults of the ELS into partnership. While some planning and decisions need to be made in a management, end-determined mode, the effective implementation of the full strategic plan requires understanding and buy-in that comes from an end-in-view mode with input and communication at many levels.

Monitoring Reports

The fourth element in the Continuous Improvement Process is the Monitoring Report. This communication tool is created by those with the Authority of Management in the district (usually the superintendent and cabinet) to inform the board on how well the Strategic Roadmap and district policy has been implemented through the district's buildings, programs and departments. Considering responsibilities of the board (district governance and policy, operational oversight, annual budget and capital development, superintendent relations, and public engagement), the need for information beyond the annual budget and audit is critical for serving at the governance level. When the board receives superficial or limited information they may either get pulled into a micro-management role or begin to mistrust the superintendent and district administration. Excellence in Management allows for Excellence in Governance and vice-versa.



The Monitoring Report's appearance varies somewhat from district to district. All effective Monitoring Reports include:

- a statement relating the report to district policy
- an executive summary with Insight Statements
- descriptions of the areas of highest and lowest levels of performance
- a list of key governance and management questions
- descriptions of how the department and school Continuous Improvement Plans address the key performance issues
- appropriate VisionCards with disaggregated data at the district and school level

Statement Relating the Report to District Policy

Operating with Excellence in Governance, the board initiates the Continuous Improvement Process with the foundation of district governance ends and limitations policy. The board partners with management to get the desired results. This section of the Monitoring Report explains how continuous improvement in the VisionCards relate to the policies set by the board.

Executive Summary with Insight Statements

Another section of the Monitoring Report will have insights from the district administration in the interpretation of data that has been collected. As a governing body, the board might have only reports, budgets, and objective data, and may not have the depth of experiential knowledge available to management. Insight statements become a critical way of making the connections that mere data points don't. They are short narrative summaries, grounded in the VisionCard data, which combine experience, observation, interpretation and trends. Insight statements generally unify, focus and commit the administration to address the gaps and celebrate the successes of their performance. They are considered internal documentation and are not intended for use in political campaigns or board members' public comments. In today's transparent and political environment of public education, the creation of insight statements is often an act of courage and risk; it is also an act of practicing Excellence in Management.

Insights can be correlative in nature and may humanize a situation; they may also serve as a perspective for the board to consider further action and perhaps even adjustment of policy. Perhaps one of the schools experienced a drop in spring semester test scores – that can be alarming information unless it is accompanied by the fact that unexpected construction in the building disrupted classroom work for the two weeks prior to the testing days.

Example

Strategic Direction A: Increasing measurable achievement for every student and subgroup

Insight Statements

1. Our teachers have a greater influence on our students' achievement than do student demographics. The achievement gap between classrooms can be much greater than the achievement gap between student groups.
2. Poverty is a very predictable indicators for our achievement gap and we have been unwilling to address this fact.
3. Most adults in our district hold a perception of difference between “my kids” and “those kids,” especially regarding Early Childhood Education, ELL and Special Education.
4. 5 – 7 years is the typical time frame for new English Language Learners to become academically proficient and we have been operating with an assumption of 2-3 years.

Description of the Highest and Lowest Levels of Performance

Within the district will be Level 4-5 Vision performance and Level 1-2. Both extremes are helpful in diagnosing problems as well as finding successful and perhaps innovative solutions.

Key Governance and Management Questions

Once insights have been formulated and data interpreted, Monitoring Reports will address the questions that arise as a result. These questions can be divided into management questions and governance questions that should be considered as the strategic direction and resulting initiatives move forward.

For example, if a past VisionCard score showed that the public was not as supportive as the district had hoped, the governance issue might be the need to establish differentiated communication and trust building strategies for staff, parents and public. The management issue might be an effort at the building levels to devise new ways of engaging the community around their particular neighborhood.

Descriptions of how the Continuous Improvement Plans Address the Key Performance Issues

With the understanding that the Improvement Plans are an act of management, this portion of the report explains the ways in which management will be addressing key performance issues on the way to fully implementing a Strategic Direction. This allows the board to remain in a governance role and refrain from micro-managing.

Monitoring Reports are scheduled out over the course of the year as data and information becomes available. The cabinet member or director most closely related to the strategic direction will be responsible for the Monitoring Report for that area. Reports are completed and approved by the superintendent who will then deliver the Report to the board according to the designated schedule.

The information presented in the Monitoring Reports is eventually used by the board to refine or create Strategic Directions, allowing the Alignment and Accountability System to progress as part of Continuous Improvement for the district.

Continuous Improvement Process - Sample

Strategic Roadmap:

After considering the trends of magnet programs and the community desire for multifaceted offerings, the district develops a strategic direction to “tap into each individual student’s needs and nurture the spark that leads to personal success through a variety of academic, athletic and social offerings.”

VisionCard:

The measures below were on the “Student and Family Engagement” VisionCard. “Students can name their ‘spark’ and identify who supports it” was an item added to the student and family survey and reinforced that any adult in the building can be a supporter of a student. “Personalized Learning Plans” had been in place for a few years, but no data had been gathered on the value of the plans; this was added to the student and family survey and staff survey and shaped teacher conference discussion.

Here are the measures and metrics the district came up with;

		Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Score
	Weight	1.0-1.9	2.0-2.9	3.0-3.9	4.0-4.9	5.0	
Students can name their “spark” and identify who supports it	30%	Students in grades 5, 7, 9 and 11 on average identify less than one person	Students in grades 5, 7, 9 and 11 on average identify one person	Students in grades 5, 7, 9 and 11 on average identify two people	Students in grades 5, 7, 9 and 11 on average identify three people	Students in grades 5, 7, 9 and 11 on average identify four or more people	2.3

		Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Score
	Weight	1.0-1.9	2.0-2.9	3.0-3.9	4.0-4.9	5.0	
Personalized Learning Plans	40%	Less than 25% of students have a PLP appraised to be of high to very high quality	26-34% of students have a PLP appraised to be of high to very high quality	35-50% of students have a PLP appraised to be of high to very high quality	51-64% of students have a PLP appraised to be of high to very high quality	Over 95% of students have a PLP appraised to be of high to very high quality	4.2

The Improvement Plan:

The Improvement Plans for the district, department, or school are created specifically to address the initiatives and programming of each that is required to achieve Level 5 performance on the VisionCards.

The creation of a StrategyCard led insight about the gap between the district's current reality and their vision:

“In the past year there has been a decrease in teacher/student interaction and this has led to disconnection for students and dissatisfaction for teachers.”

The following initiatives were crafted to address the gap:

- Flexing instructional time to allow 60 minutes a week for a teacher-sponsored activity in the classroom
- Development of a “mentor” program that pairs teachers with gifted students of varying disciplines
- Begin Learning/Research Work to collaborate with Community Education and find new ways of connecting with the community
- Encourage student participation in extra-curricular activities by creating several new student-led clubs and events

These initiatives are given concrete schedules and resources through the use of an ActionCard and the Strategic Growth and Change FrameWork. The Improvement Plan's progress will be monitored, assessed and communicated to the district and board through the use of a Monitoring Report.

The Monitoring Report:

The Monitoring Report was scheduled for early spring as students were registering for activities and sports for the second half of the year and families had attended at least one teacher conference. The Monitoring Report delivered both the data needed for the Board to accomplish their governance work as well as the following insight statements.

1. “Some teachers are uncomfortable interacting with students that are culturally different from them and this is increasingly an issue as the district's demographics shift. The district is researching methods and training programs to increase staff comfort level and create a more welcoming atmosphere for our diverse student population.”
2. “Students in elementary are more easily able to name adult supporters than the other levels. Less interactive classes in the secondary levels limit discovering student abilities beyond homework completion. This is not just a teaching style issue, but also a curricular one.”
3. “Personalized Learning Plans are shifting from being an informative report to a planning tool. A hurdle is limited technology outside of the school building. A task force is looking into mobile versions for smartphones/tablets as those are more widespread than computers and home internet access for some of our families.”
4. “Teachers are excited about the new initiative around Personalized Learning Plans, but also remember previous attempts by the district to enact similar initiatives in the past. They are looking for more support from district and school administrators to really make this an effective classroom practice.”

Common Challenges to Implementing Continuous Improvement

There are some persistent practices in education that challenge the integration or institutionalization of continuous improvement:

1. When a Process intended to improve Outcomes is seen as an Outcome in itself, feedback and continuous improvement stops

Teachers may view attendance at professional development and trainings as an Outcome; the clock hours, the book, the experience and the CEU's are Outcomes. However, with this definition of "Outcome," change may not find its way into how they teach or manage the classroom. True professional development is an Input that creates the expectation of change in professional practice (Process) to improve the Outcome of student learning.

2. When teachers assume that "teachers teach and kids learn"

While seen more often at the secondary school level than the elementary level, this assumption provides a rationale to believe that the Input of information will inexorably result in the Output of learning with little regard for process. This disconnects the teacher from the Mission Delivery Point relationship, reducing their effectiveness and accountability for all students' learning.

3. When district and school Inputs, Processes and Outcomes are increasingly fixed

When most of the Inputs, Processes and Outcomes are fixed, staff accountability and ownership dramatically decline because there is little incentive for professional creativity. Flexing Inputs and Processes that are traditionally fixed (time, instruction, staff collaboration, instructional materials) gives teachers a greater range of possibilities for how to improve. Continuous Improvement is, by definition, the modification of Inputs and Processes. Without flex, Continuous Improvement is extremely limited.

4. When feedback loops are not ongoing or comprehensive

Annual federal and state tests yield the least valuable data for continuous improvement. Standardized formative assessments given multiple times throughout the year are much more useful. Curriculum-based and class-based assessments on a daily and weekly basis provide the highest value. These assessments are often lacking in district support and structure, however this provides the flex necessary for each teacher to most effectively assess their classrooms with input from their professional learning teams.

5. When a district operates with short-term thinking and temporary solutions

Under these conditions it is not uncommon to make decisions that don't effectively address the issue at hand because of other constraints. Some projects need to be completed within the fiscal year, even though it would be beneficial to spend another couple of months in development. Other initiatives are chosen because a short-term benefit might help a board member retain their incumbency during an election year. Often these "band-aid" approaches to larger, unaddressed problems lead to unforeseen consequences in the future. Using the ELS Alignment and Accountability System helps address long and short-term issues and creates plans that work with district constraints while transcending some of the more problematic factors in pursuit of the district's mission.

Continuous Improvement Summary

Continuous Improvement is widely understood to be the way in which an organization improves its Outcomes (products, services, mission) through evaluation and modification of its Inputs (raw materials, resources, funding, technology, etc.) and Processes. The cycle of evaluation and modification creates a feedback loop.

Public education is quite different in that the primary inputs are the students. Some student populations have high levels of mobility and that, combined with the sometimes unstable dynamics of family life, ensures that the classroom student portfolio will change on a continual basis throughout the school year. Effectively managing this constant change of Inputs requires teachers and principals to maintain a high degree of awareness. Data and analysis gathered about Outcomes cannot be merely summative but must also be formative.

Inputs in public education are a combination of factors, some of which are fixed and some of which can be flexed. Fixed Inputs are the ones over which the district has little control, if any. Examples of these would be state and federal funding, mandated services and standards, and student/community populations. But districts can make the choice to flex the Inputs that are within their control: time, classroom management, instruction, assessment, evaluation, professional development and collaboration.

Processes in public education can almost always be flexed. They change often according to the latest research, the most popular psychology, the political climate, or the best practice of the day. Public educators spend a lot of energy pursuing new Processes, often without success measures, and these pursuits do not always result in improved Outcomes.

The ELS and the Continuous Improvement Process are the structure upon which a district balances the capacity for Partnership with efficiency and effectiveness.



Tools for Partnership

Partnership is the underlying leadership philosophy that energizes the ELS structures and tools. Operating in Partnership requires the use of FrameWorks to facilitate the actions and relationships of all six groups of adults. FrameWorks serve many functions; they define authorities, bring clarity to process, identify roles and responsibilities and act as a rallying point to mediate conflict. There are four FrameWorks that are particularly helpful in using the elements of Continuous Improvement in ELS: Decision Making, Guiding Change, Strategic Growth and Change, and Whole System View.

Decision Making FrameWork

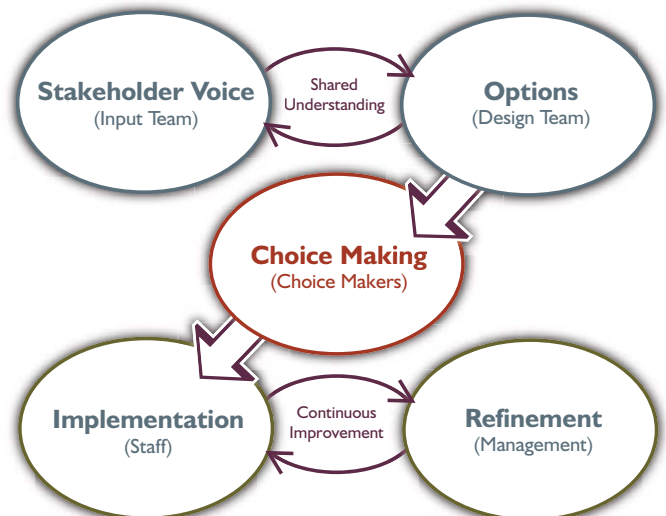
The Decision Making FrameWork defines roles and responsibilities for all six groups of adults and all three authorities in the decision making process. It gives them clear ways to participate and clear boundaries to establish both accountability and task delineation. It also helps to develop a refinement loop, ensuring that the choice is implemented well. In this FrameWork, making a decision is understood to be a process, and making a choice is but a step in that process. Choice Making is an act of management and governance; those involved in choice making are using those authorities. Creating options and implementing the choice is an act of management, and providing input to create options and refine the choice is an act of consultation.

In Decision Making, there are different groups of individuals with clearly defined roles and responsibilities. The process starts with identifying who will be in each group, beginning with those who will be accountable for the implications of the choice. These are the Choice Makers; for the types of decision making processes listed above, the Choice Makers usually are the school board, superintendent and executive directors. The next group to be identified is the Design Team.

This group includes people who will be managing Implementation, and/or have specific technical or experiential knowledge beneficial to the process of designing options. They are charged with the responsibility of creating viable options which meet the parameters defined in the Guiding Change document. The final group to be identified is the Input Team. They are responsible for providing insight and experiences, ideas for refinement of the options, and high-quality feedback about the implementation of the choice. This group includes school staff, students, parents and the public; those with the Authority of Consultation.

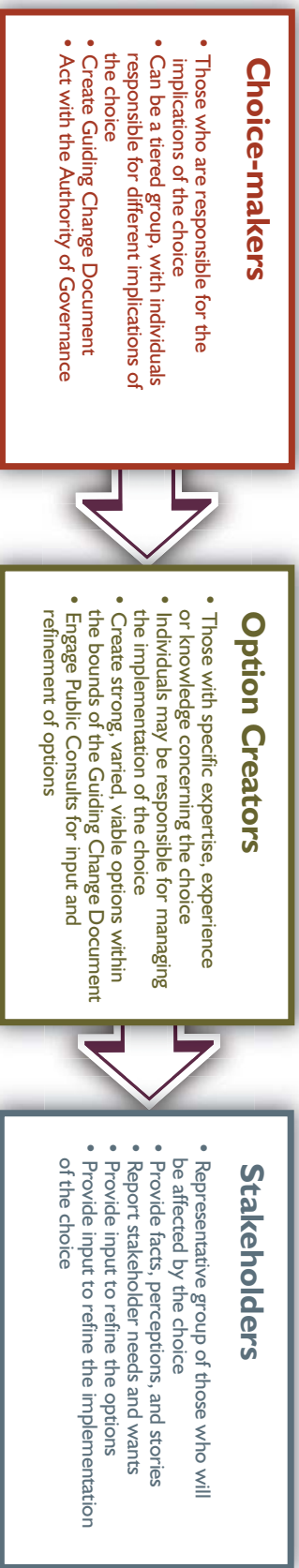
Once groups have been identified, it is the responsibility of the Choice Makers to create a Guiding Change document to guide the Design Team in the process of creating Options. In most situations, the administration develops a draft Guiding Change document for the Choice Makers to refine and finalize. The Input Team works with the Design Team, providing data, stories, and community opinions, to refine proposed options and align them with the current Shared Reality. Refining options at this stage of the process is valuable in that it improves buy-in and sparks rich discussion that aids the creation of multiple and, in many situations, improved options.

When the Design Team feels they have several options that achieve the results outlined in the Guiding Change document, they present them to the Choice Makers. It is the responsibility of the Choice Makers to choose the best option for Implementation and they are accountable for the implications of that choice. The next task is to implement the choice well and continuously refine it. How the choice is implemented, and the method of assessment for refining the choice, is the responsibility of administration. The loop of Refinement and Implementation continues until the choice is implemented well.

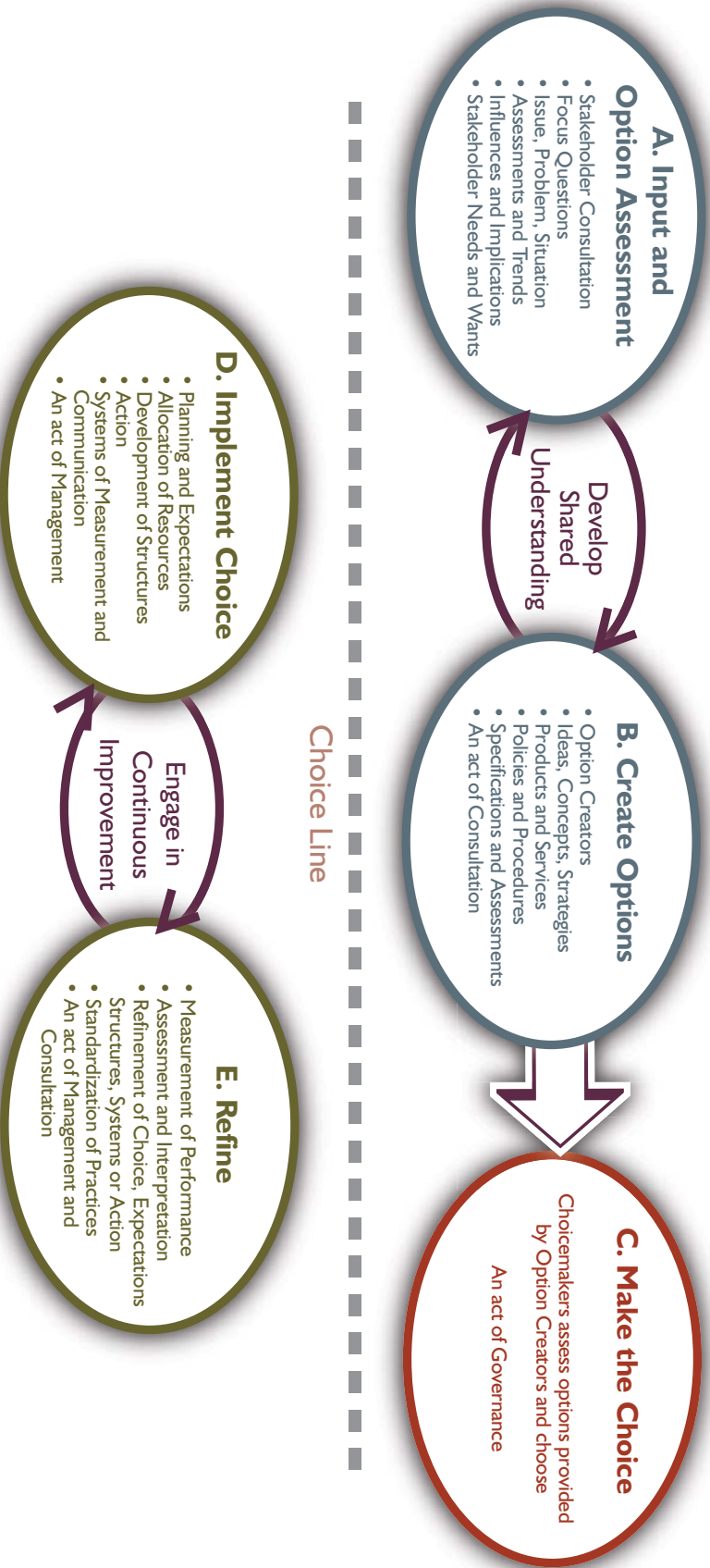


Decision Making Process Map

Identify Groups



Process



Guiding Change

Guiding Change is a leadership tool used by Choice Makers to establish the “container” which the Design Team uses to create options. It is also used by boards in the development of policy governance and to avoid micro-management.

Choice Makers can unintentionally interfere in the work of the Design Team if they specify strategies or actions (Creative Acceptable Means) to achieve the desired Results. When Choice Makers operate in this way it limits energy, creativity and does not leverage people’s strengths. In times of crisis it is sometimes necessary for Choice Makers to forego the use of FrameWorks and enter a “Manage when I Must” mode to make a choice quickly. To work in Partnership requires that Choice Makers establish clear, realistic Results and Unacceptable Means that are neither too loose nor too restrictive.

The Design Team uses the Guiding Change document as a statement of results and boundaries, as well as a tool to facilitate communication with the Choice Makers. In many critical district decision processes, the Guiding Change document is negotiated and refined between these two groups.

Elements of the Guiding Change Framework

Choice makers provide descriptions of the following in relation to the focus question, issue or decision making process:

Context and Reality - The “Why”

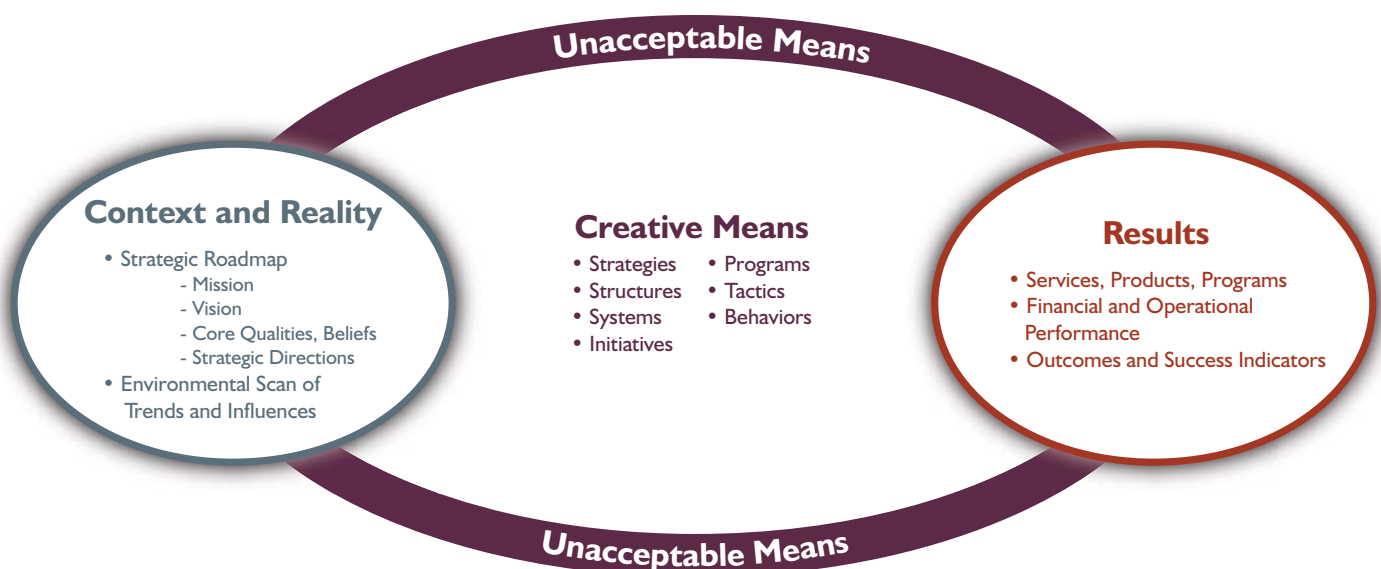
Define the current conditions of your district and its environment in terms of:

- Strategic Roadmap “Who are we and what do we want to accomplish?”
- External influences and trends “How are changes in our world affecting us?”
- Internal influences and trends “How are changes within the district affecting us?”
- Data, facts and perceptions “What evidence supports that this change is beneficial?”

Results - The “What”

Define the desired outcomes in terms of:

- Benefit to the district “What do we want to gain from this change?”
- Vision for the future “How will the district be different when this is accomplished?”
- Option requirements “What criteria do viable Options need to meet?”



Unacceptable Means - The “Not How”

Unacceptable means are the few, high level approaches, behaviors or intentions that the district will not engage in to achieve the desired Results. These Unacceptable Means are often predetermined by district policy, state statute, or federal law. Additional Unacceptable Means are defined to preserve integrity and district culture or to create boundaries around resources or risks. These might include some of the following:

- No person will knowingly or willingly violate law, contract or agreement
- No person will place the district in legal, fiduciary or identity/reputation risk
- Disagreement with policy or decisions is not an acceptable reason for non-compliance or inability to implement
- Assets will not be mismanaged or allocated for unintended uses
- No person will engage in behaviors that are in conflict with the district values

Using the Guiding Change document to define boundaries provides an excellent opportunity for transformational discussion between people in the district. If there are too many Unacceptable Means, or if they are too restrictive, there will be limitations to the levels of creativity and collaboration in finding a solution. If there aren't enough Unacceptable Means, or if they do not provide enough guidance, the process of creating solutions may be confusing, ambivalent and unfocused. In many situations, the discussion concerning Unacceptable Means is ignored or limited by district leadership. When this occurs Creative Means are developed from assumptions and rumors instead of clarity, focus and purposeful intent.

Creative Means

These are the strategies, ideas, products and services the district will use to achieve the desired Results. People who know the Results and Context and Reality of the situation are free to create new options using their expertise. This process of developing creative solutions in the absence of the Choice Makers promotes Partnership across the district and increases buy-in for Implementation.

Strategic Growth and Change FrameWork

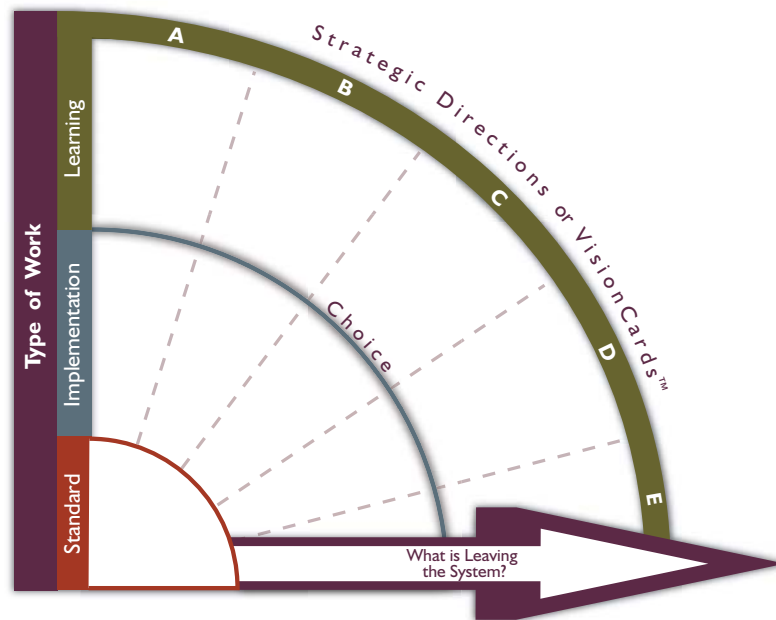
The Strategic Growth and Change FrameWork maps the district's change initiatives and aligns them with Strategic Directions. It can be scaled to a variety of applications: individual, work team, department, school, school group, district or board.

Learning/Research Work

Learning/Research Work is the pre-choice preparatory work done to decide whether or not to implement an initiative. When a district begins to conduct a math curriculum review, district and school staff look at current learning performance data, compare it to similar/model districts and research best practices to begin forming options for the district's Choice Makers. Many district initiatives and school improvement projects will begin as Learning/Research Work. The importance and value of this work is the ability to be thoroughly informed before having to accept or reject an idea.

Implementation Work

Implementation Work is designed to become Standard Work at a set point in the future. The choice has been made to incorporate new initiatives into standard practice, and this work establishes deadlines, boundaries, task dependencies and responsibilities to make that happen. For example, if a district did the Learning/Research work and Choice Makers decided that, in pursuit of their Strategic Direction to "Maximize Physical District Resources," elementary school attendance boundaries need to be redrawn to better reflect the student population. The Implementation Work would be to create a list of tasks necessary to achieve this objective and assign each task a deadline, a person to be responsible for its completion, and a place in the Initiative and Program Action Plan. The consideration of "What Needs to Leave" is an important discussion that will shape further Implementation Work as measurable steps are made towards completing all stated goals.



Standard Work

Standard Work is defined as the actual practices and systems in use by the staff and school. An example of Standard Work would be the quarterly expectation for teachers to complete student performance reports and communicate them to parents. In many districts, this practice left the system when electronic grading software was implemented that allows parents to constantly monitor the student's progress. This new practice requires teachers to maintain current daily grade records, which has now become part of their Standard Work.

What Needs to Leave

The Strategic Growth and Change FrameWork is unique and powerful in that it requires answering the critical question, "What Needs to Leave?" Any time a project or initiative becomes Standard Work, there are

always elements of the old Standard Work which must leave the system in order for implementation of the new initiative to be completed well. For instance, when adopting a new math curriculum there are elements that need to leave the school (old books, old lesson plans, old practices and old worksheets) before the new books can be used to adopt new practices and create new lesson plans to implement the curriculum well. The Whole System View FrameWork is a complimentary assessment tool used to help determine "What Needs to Leave?"

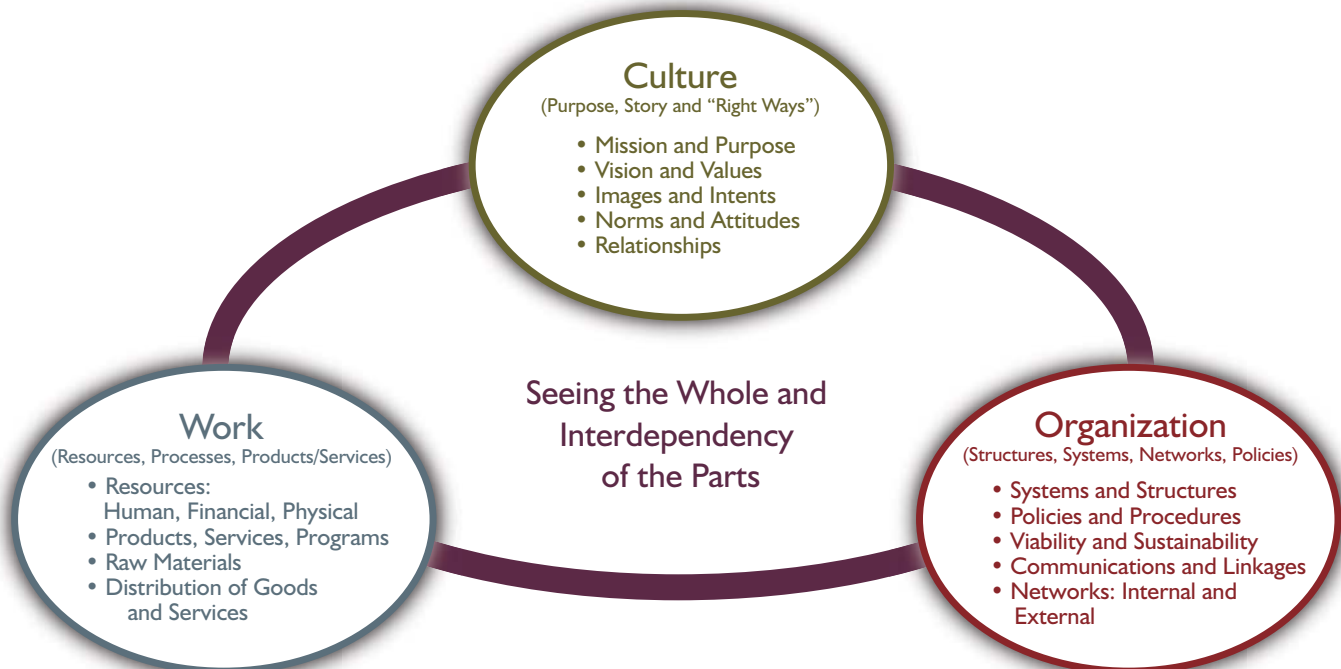
Whole System View FrameWork

The Whole System View FrameWork is used for quick situation assessment of any opportunity or challenge emerging for a school or a district. It encourages leaders to address issues that occur in one arena with solutions that are grounded in the other two arenas. For example, your district is required to cut next year’s budget by \$3 million. This is a Work arena issue and is most effectively addressed by looking at questions and possible changes to Culture or Organization; the district could scale back on programs that are less aligned with the mission or the district could restructure time constraints by going to an **8-hour**, four day schedule.

This FrameWork is useful for systemic assessment of “What Needs to Leave?” a critical component in the Strategic Growth and Change FrameWork. Sometimes Culture items, like irrelevant attitudes and beliefs, need to leave. Sometimes Organization items, like procedures and practices, need to leave. Other times there are Work items, such as old lesson plans, worksheets, text books, and even people, need to leave in order for change to occur.

Boards can use Whole System View when interpreting data to gain a balanced perspective of the district’s current reality (the objective view of trends and influences that affect your district). This systemic perspective, and the understandings gained from it, will help board members create more robust strategic directions to address the district’s specific challenges and opportunities.

With emerging technologies, data is abundant and its impact can be profound. When using this, or any, FrameWork it is important to establish your current reality with high-quality data, because the quality of data has a large influence on its interpretation and eventual use.



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Change is inevitable. In organizations, most of the problems with transition and change result from inadequate preparation and lack of buy-in. Changes can and should be planned, not with a blueprint, but with an understanding of how people move through the change process and how organizations can guide change effectively through partnership.

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Applications include:

- Student Learning and Alignment to Achievement Pathway
- Boundary Change Analysis
- School Enrollment Projections
- Facilities Planning Analysis
- Demographic Trend Analysis
- Custom Demographic Creation

Lead through partnership rather than isolation

What partnership is:

- A different way of organizing that is illustrated by shared performance and accountability
- An approach that clearly outlines roles, responsibilities and authority
- A way of working together that allows for flexibility and nimbleness in response to shifting conditions.
- A strengths-based, or asset-based, environment

Partnership Leadership Development as capacity building within the organization is designed according to the needs of the client. Appropriate for leadership throughout the organization, these discussions and applications of our proprietary FrameWorks provide not just the theory, but real-time tools that may be used the very next day.

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