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## Outgrowths of a Focused Vision Process for Student Success

When a board begins to tie its conversations and decisions to student achievement, the primary goal is to improve student outcomes. School board members, school leaders and district staff see that when setting goals, there must also be a clear indication of the steps necessary for achievement, a timeline for accomplishment and an indication of who is responsible for each objective. This applies the pressure of accountability more evenly on the shoulders of all levels of school leadership, rather than placing it on the individual backs of district teachers. This shared responsibility leads to an improved school culture.

Becoming more informed on the expectations from both accreditation agencies and the community, as well as where the district stands in terms of these expectations, creates a more knowledgeable board. This requires study and often challenges the paradigm of board members who are used to the corporate model of board work that employs a more hands-off approach. One of the most important reasons for building the capacity of the board to understand the needs of students is to ensure that the board approves the allocation of resources that aligns with these goals.

### Necessary resources to align with goals include:



MONEY



EFFORT



ENERGY



INVENTIVENESS



COMMITMENT ACROSS  
THE SYSTEM

Additionally, this focus on student growth helps board members to educate and inform stakeholders. Many community members have a perception of the school district based on their own or family members' experiences with the district – whether those experiences accurately reflect the effectiveness of the educational enterprise or not. When boards are informed and diligently monitor, evaluate and publicize decisions, this leads to improvement in community relations.

### The following cornerstones are integral for school boards in the effort to improve teaching and learning:



INTEGRITY



TRUST



LEADERSHIP



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## Student Achievement: Visioning Process for School Boards

This visioning process has been developed over time and is designed to help a district move toward accomplishing goals — moving the district forward in terms of student achievement. This process should be designed to be tailored to district needs and circumstances. In the best situation, a district would use every step. However, it is recognized that communities vary in their needs and opportunities. It should be noted that each of these steps should be informed by data regarding current academic standing as compared to both norm-referenced and criterion-referenced standards. The following overview outlines a full visioning process:

**Initial Meeting With the Board for Self-Evaluation:** In this meeting, the board conducts a self-evaluation to assess where they are in the process of having a vision that they embrace, along with a set of clearly defined priorities for the district that structure both the board's decision-making and the work of the district staff. This is also an opportunity for the board to focus on their dedication to the process.

**Community Meetings/Gathering of Data From All Stakeholders:** The district conducts information-gathering sessions with interested members of the community (to include parents, business owners, community leaders, etc.) in a structured format that keeps them focused on moving forward for the betterment of the district. Many districts also create opportunities to solicit input from other stakeholders, including district employees and students. Using structured questions, time limits and facilitators keeps the conversations focused on the aspirations the community holds for its children. This is not a time for airing past grievances. Vehicles for communication with the district should already be in place. Participants should be guided to use those if they derail conversations.



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**Online Questionnaire:** Using data from community meetings, an online questionnaire should be developed to solicit further input from community members. This may include people who were not able to attend community meetings, or it may include people who want to comment further after attending the community meeting/meetings.

**Visioning:** The board uses input from the community sessions, as well as their own knowledge of the students, their learning environment and the community, to write a statement that creates an ideal picture of what is desired for the district in the long term. It should be attainable and cause the district to reach beyond where it is currently. This is the unifying statement that the leadership team uses to form their strategic plan for incremental improvement.

**Goal Development:** At this point, the board and the superintendent should write district goals based on the vision statement. District goals are more specific than a district vision. They can be short- or long-term and are focused on the results the district's leaders would like to see as part of the effort in achieving the vision and defining primary areas of focus in advancing student achievement. The goals address the issues the board would like the district's staff to spend special time, effort and resources on in the coming year and in the long term. The board should use these goals regularly to assess its decision-making.

**Superintendent Performance Goals Development:** The administration should use the goals to set work priorities for itself and the staff. In this phase, the leadership team meets to develop strategies or performance goals that move the district demonstrably in the direction of the district goals. These performance goals or objectives are then taken back to the board for agreement and adoption.

**Superintendent Evaluation Training:** Board training at this point helps the board examine superintendent evaluation strategically and assess how an ongoing evaluation cycle should fit into the goals of the district, establishing a cycle and defining expectations in advance for a process that aids in professional development and strengthens the working relationship with the board-superintendent team. This training should focus on both product and process. The instrument the board uses to evaluate the superintendent cannot be separated from the visioning work to which the team has committed.



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