

Guide to Strategic Planning for Schools



Motivation for Strategic Planning

A strategic plan is a document that articulates the school district's mission and vision, as well as the goals and objectives that will move a district closer to the realization of their optimal future.

This three to five year plan provides the framework and guidance for school districts to align their work and resources to achieve maximum impact. Strategic planning is an ongoing process as opposed to an event that occurs every few years and is then not revisited until the next plan is written. There must be consistent measurement of progress, monitoring of goals, and re-alignment in order to continuously improve student outcomes and district performance.

Strategic planning addresses important fundamental questions:

- What is the mission of the district, in other words, for what purpose does the school district exist?
- What is vision or desired future of the school district?
- What is the current level of performance of the school district?
- What do stakeholders expect from the school district?
- What are the current issues and operational challenges of the school district?
- What are the history and culture of the school district?
- What specific goals, objectives, and actions will move the district to its desired future?

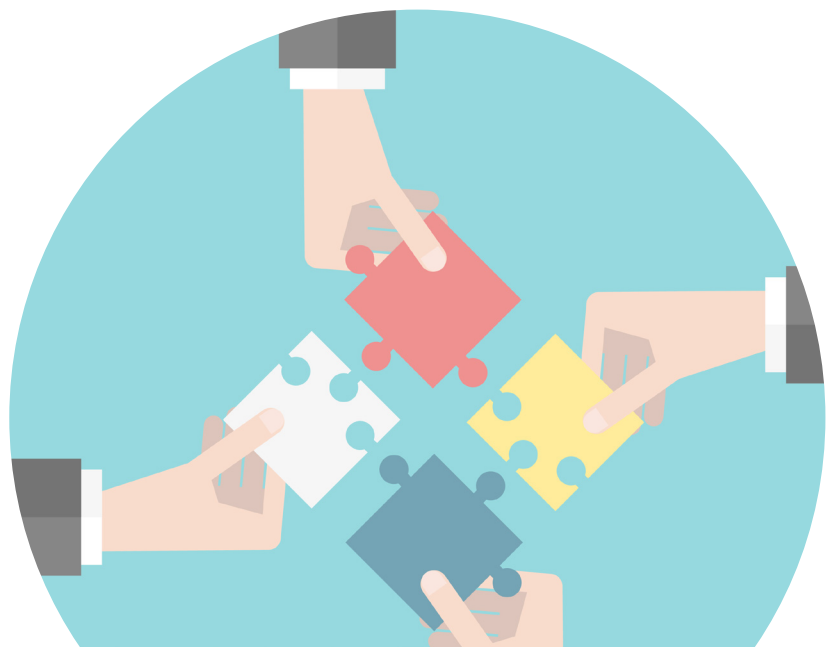
The completed plan provides a roadmap for all stakeholders regarding the direction and aspirations of the school district.

Successful strategic planning provides the following advantages & benefits:

- Establishes a shared mission and vision that define the optimal and agreed upon desired future of the school district
- Articulates and aligns school district priorities and goals with the mission and vision
- Creates a process whereby district initiatives and resources can be effectively deployed for maximum impact on student outcomes
- Effectively and authentically engages employees, students, families, and the community to commit to the shared vision and to work together to accomplish goals aligned to that vision
- Provides a base from which progress towards the achievement of goals can be measured
- Provides a communication vehicle to regularly inform stakeholders about district initiatives
- Creates a sense of pride and shared ownership of school district accomplishments
- Creates excitement and energy within the school district and community

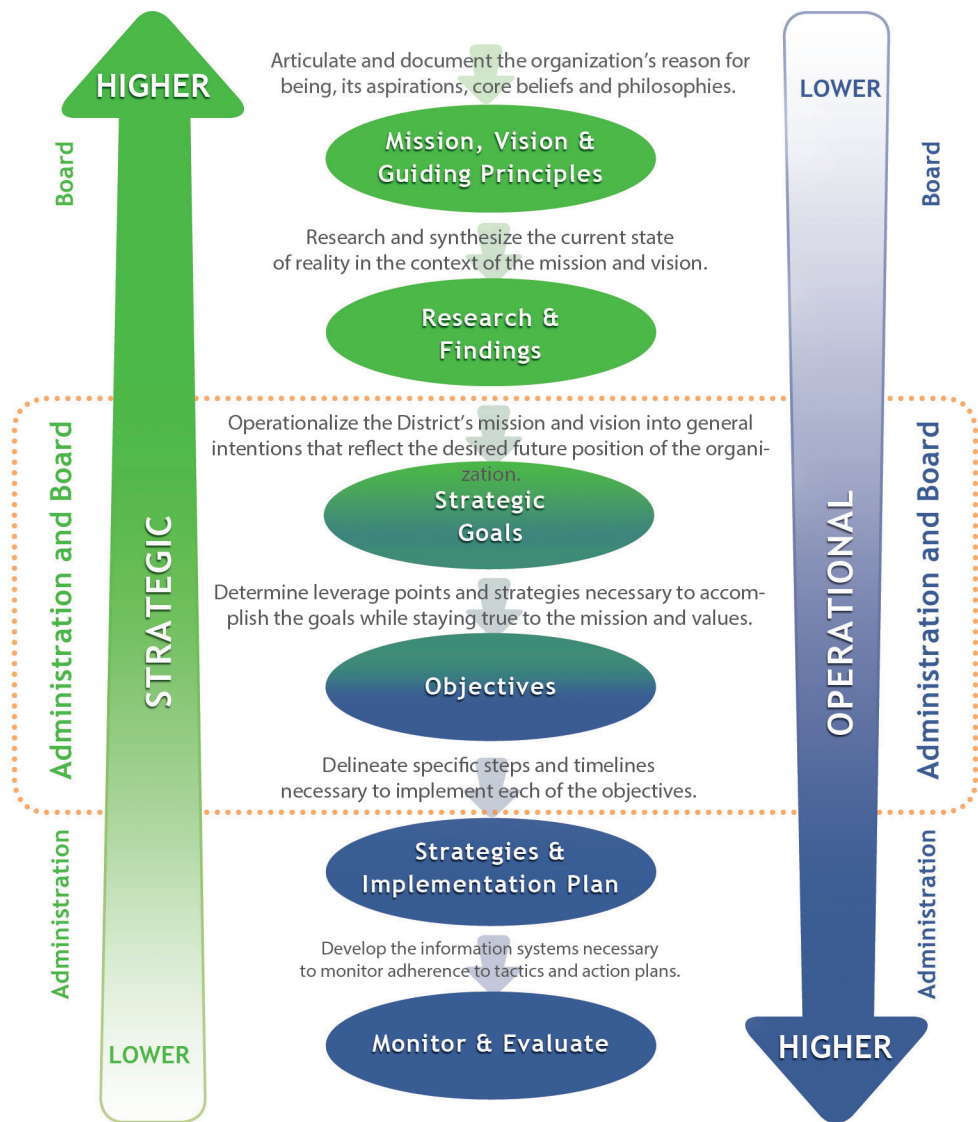
"I am hard pressed to think of any organization that has sustained some measure of greatness in the absence of goals, values, and missions that become deeply shared throughout the organization."

Peter Senge
The Fifth Discipline



HYA Strategic Planning Model

HYA utilizes a research based strategic planning model detailed in the diagram below. The HYA Strategic Planning Model has been proven successful in a variety of school districts and facilitates the process from inquiry to implementation, plan monitoring, and provides accountability to stakeholders.



The strategic planning process provides a values-based, systematic approach to assess community values and planning for the future.

Mission, Vision, & Guiding Principles

The existing school district mission, vision, and guiding principles are reviewed and evaluated. Data is used to update these statements and to ensure that they reflect the current views of stakeholders and best practice. By the end of the strategic planning process, the renewed mission, vision and guiding principles will articulate and document the district's purpose, its aspirations, core beliefs, and, philosophies.

Research Findings

Data are collected and synthesized in the context of the district's mission, vision, and guiding principles and articulated into research findings. In this "Engage" phase, HYA conducts in-depth research on stakeholder values and priorities for the district's future.

Strategic Goals

Strategic goals are extracted from the Engage phase findings. Strategic goals are broad, long-term aims that operationalize the District's mission and vision into general intentions that reflect the desired future position of the organization.

Objectives

The objectives are tangible strategies necessary to accomplish the strategic goals while staying true to the mission, vision, and guiding principles. Strategies may positively impact more than one goal area, as district functions are interconnected and ultimately student focused, but rest under a single goal based on the objective's primary purpose.

Strategies & Implementation Plan

Upon approval of the strategic plan, specific actions, timelines and resources necessary to achieve the goals and objectives are developed. As the model suggests, it is the role of the administration to further present achievement and other organizational data and to develop the implementation plan (often completed through the School and Department Improvement Planning Process) that delineates the steps, timelines and monitoring necessary to achieve the goals.

Monitor & Evaluate

An information system is developed to monitor adherence to the goals, objectives and tactics and progress towards achieving the vision; this governance dashboard highlights progress on key performance indicators linked to the strategic plan and promotes transparency and public trust. Results of activities need to be quantified, analyzed and utilized for recommendations for future action.



The Three Phases of HYA's Strategic Planning Process

The HYA strategic planning model provides a three to five year framework for decision making that builds upon the common vision and values held by the community. The three concrete phases empower leaders with critical information and strategies to bring decisions into focus.

The first phase of the strategic planning process involves documenting the current state of reality and desired future position of the school district through authentic stakeholder engagement. The Board of Education, administration, faculty, staff, parents, students, special interest groups such as the PTA, athletic boosters, ethnic organizations, and other community organizations are the cohesive groups that endeavor to create a vision for the desired future through their feedback, opinions, and ideas.



Engage

Measuring stakeholder satisfaction helps to identify problems that might otherwise go unnoticed by organizational leadership and can improve public trust and support for future programming and initiatives. Collecting stakeholder feedback by survey is a critical part of any strategic planning process as it allows for a large sampling where key issues emerge. Focus groups and interviews provide more granular detail regarding the key issues from smaller more disaggregated groups.

The Engage Phase involves the following key components:

- Customize the process with input from the Superintendent and School Board
- Conduct individual Board of Education interviews
- Conduct individual interviews with superintendent and selected district leaders
- Conduct focus group with key internal and external stakeholder groups including teachers, staff members, students, parents, community members, and community leaders
- Administer an online survey for broad based stakeholder input
- Review existing strategic plan including mission, vision, and guiding principles
- Review school district data
- Analyze, synthesize, and triangulate the data to identify themes and trends

"The true measure of a successful organization is not what it knows but what it does not know."

Warren Bennis

The second phase of the strategic planning process includes creating a framework for broad direction and priorities for the future in a formal strategic plan document. The plan begins as a draft, and with input from the Board of Education or Strategic Plan Committee, is revised until a final plan emerges at the end of the Focus Phase.

The Focus Phase involves the following key components:

- Document mission and vision for the district, guiding principles for future decision making, and the future direction desired by stakeholders.
- Synthesize the results of the Engage phase.
- Develop the strategic plan document to serve as a broad outline to guide direction for the school district. The strategic plan contains:
 - Mission
 - Vision
 - Portrait of a Graduate
 - Guiding Principles
 - Strategic Goals
 - Objectives

The third phase of the strategic planning process includes developing and documenting specific actions that will be taken in order to execute the objectives identified in the strategic plan. Each objective may require one or more actions to be fully executed. The implementation plan includes the information systems and metrics necessary to monitor progress toward the school district's vision and goals.

The Implement & Evaluate Phase involves the following key components:

- Provide training to administrators via a planning meeting to assist with the development of an implementation plan that includes the following:
 - Metrics
 - Actions
 - Timelines
 - Responsible Person
 - Resources
- Develop and train administrators to maintain the Strategic Dashboard to monitor progress towards goals.
- Periodic check by the HYA Associate in year one.



Focus



Implement & Evaluate

It is in the execution phase that the district takes complete ownership of the process and carries out the necessary steps to transform the plan into a decision-making framework that provides strategic performance feedback.

Monitoring Services and Data Solutions

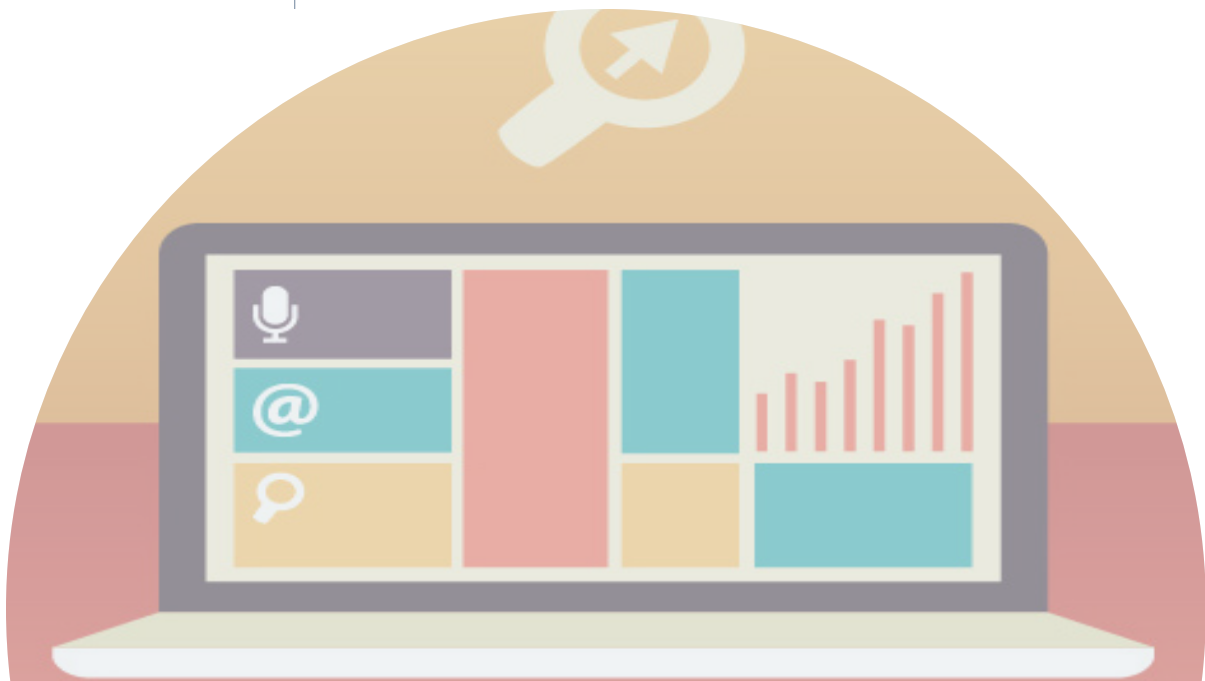
Governance Dashboards

Plans live or die in implementation. Research suggests that 90% of organizations fail to successfully implement their strategies. HYA's model supports administrators as they develop, implement, and monitor the living strategic plan.

In addition to helping facilitate and launch a district's strategic planning process, HYA provides an ongoing strategic dashboard service. The strategic dashboard is a multi-indicator dashboard that contains performance metrics and benchmarks aligned to the district's strategic plan. Collectively the indicators operationalize the vision of the strategic plan into a set of observable metrics and benchmarks that the board of education can use to govern progress of the strategic plan and the superintendent can use to align school improvement and other data processes throughout the system.

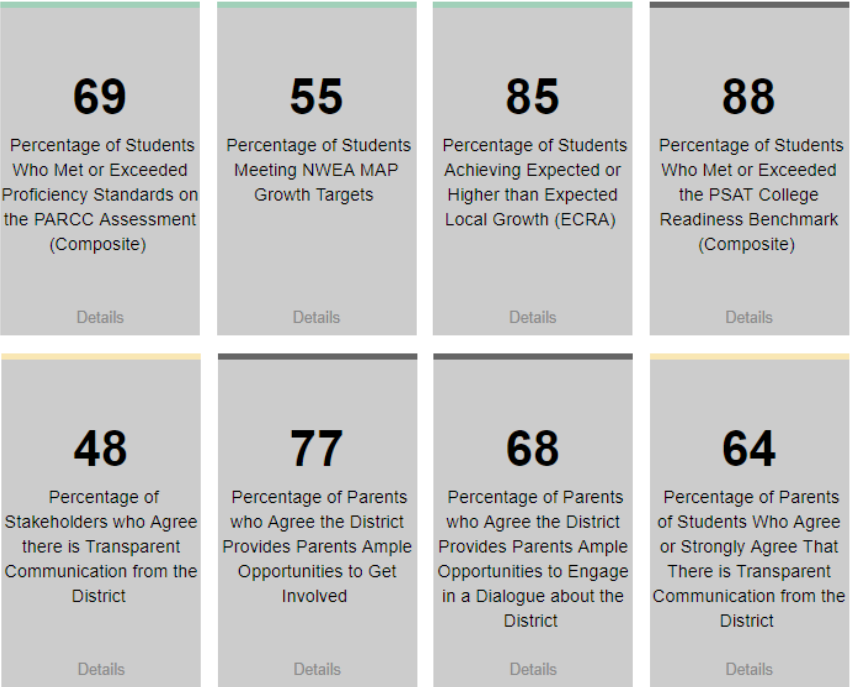
A Governance Dashboard can:

- Establish performance indicators and benchmarks to monitor progress toward strategic goals
- Establish national, state, and peer group comparisons
- Track demographic, economic, and other contextual conditions of the community
- Monitor the degree to which the school district is executing tactics and action plans
- Promote transparency and public trust by communicating District priorities and strategic initiatives



Establish performance indicators and benchmarks to monitor progress toward strategic goals

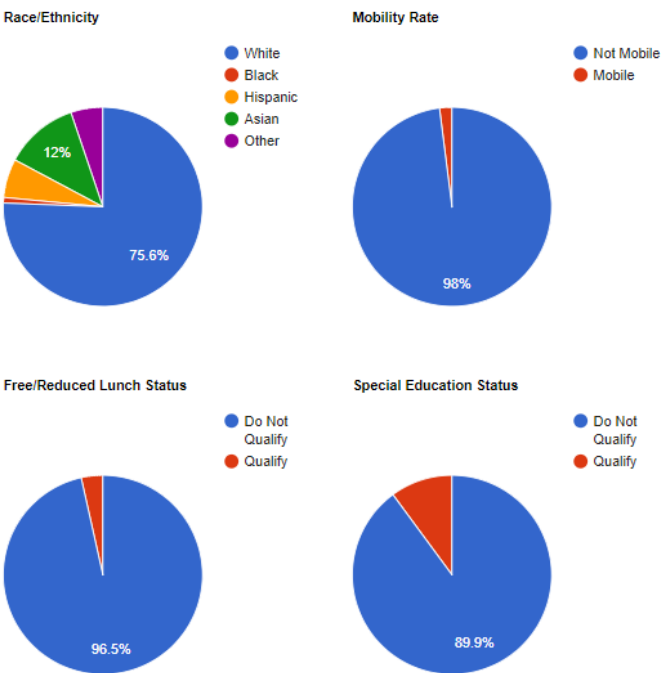
Performance Indicators



HYA delivers solutions for each phase of the strategic planning process including governance dashboards to monitor impact and return on investment that strategic goals are having on student achievement.

Track demographic, economic, and other contextual conditions of the community

Characteristics



Monitor the degree to which the school district is executing tactics and action plans

Our Firm & Our Associates

For 35 years, HYA has partnered with school districts to chart a course for the future. The foundation of HYA is the expertise and quality of the firm's associates. HYA can assemble a team of associates with the optimal blend of expertise in education and organizational change to meet the unique needs of clients.

Presently, HYA is represented by Associates across the United States who assist with the firm's mission to help school leaders focus on improving student outcomes through proactive, thorough and quality assistance in the areas of leadership, planning and analytics. HYA Associates bring extensive experience and broad educational backgrounds to its practice. Through continuing involvement in school and university work, HYA Associates are aware of current educational issues and policies that effect our schools.

HYA assigns an individual management team to each strategic planning process that it conducts. Associates assume direct responsibility for the coordination of all activities associated with the strategic planning process.

HYA has professionally staffed offices, a technological infrastructure and a fulltime employed staff; thus, HYA is capable to deliver solutions for each phase of strategic planning including the analytics that are an essential component for monitoring the degree to which the school district is executing action plans and measuring progress toward the strategic goals.

Finally, all of our firm’s activity has executive oversight by a Chief Associate for the Strategic Planning Collaborative to ensure no detail is overlooked. HYA’s office staff, which is highly knowledgeable and pleased to assist at any time, is available to the Board from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. CST, Monday through Friday.

HYA believes that communication and organization are critical to a successful strategic planning process. Our delivery system gives the Board anytime, anywhere access to all documents used throughout the planning. HYA has adopted a green process whereby all materials are delivered via a dedicated portal so the Board and its administration have access to all information associated with the strategic planning process in an organized and timely manner.

Conclusion

Unprecedented change is taking place in our nation’s education system. Without effective strategic planning, school leaders will be involved in crisis management, spending their time putting out fires instead of lighting fires of passion and learning in students. School leaders should embrace the importance of strategy by developing plans that are focused and that provide consistent monitoring and evaluation. Most importantly, the administrators who implement strategic plans should begin the process with confidence that their tactics and action plans will support the district vision and goals and truly influence student success.

“The most efficient way to produce anything is to bring together under one management as many as possible of the activities needed to turn out the product.”

Peter Drucker



HYA looks forward to the possibility of working with the Board and its Administration to develop a long range strategic plan. Please contact HYA at 847-250-7261 or hya@hyasearch.com with questions or requests for additional information.