

STRATEGIC PLAN PROCESS ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS

Most Organizations Have Strategic Plans, However the Plans Often Fail Because:

- They tend not to be living/evolving documents
- They usually have little impact on daily operations
- 80% fail to meet their targets (goals)
- The above three bullets are reasons for failure not because of poor strategies, but rather because they result from lack of successful implementation and systematic review of individual strategic goals and objectives.

Problems

- Leadership today is often forced to address short-term operational problems that continually emerge rather than spending the majority of their time on big-picture strategic leadership.
- Very few plans build in comprehensive accountability guidelines that include positive and negative consequences.
- The constant turnover at all levels of leadership in school districts is a major deterrent.
- Most school districts have too many goals.
- A large number of district goals are not realistic, measurable, sustainable, time-bound, or adequately funded.

Routes to Success

- Select proper metrics to measure the progress of strategic plan goals and objectives.
- Align the district's overall budget with the strategic plan's resource needs.
- Plans need constant monitoring and adjusting (use balanced scorecard and data dashboard tools).
- Work on executing the long-term plan while delivering short-term results.
- A great sense of urgency is needed from the board, superintendent and internal leadership team. *Successfully implementing the strategic plan should be the most important thing a school district's leadership does.*
- Remember, strategic planning is the easy part; the difficulty is in strategy implementation.
- Be aware that over the timeline of many strategic plans, boards and their organizational leaders tend to have spent more time on the strategy development process rather than actual implementation and achievement of the plan's selected goals.

● KEY ELEMENTS IN THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

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- **1. Strategic Planning Team:** the development of a diverse team of leaders/thinkers is necessary for the effective creation of GAPS strategic plan. Each member should represent a key function and or interest group of the district and community to ensure the plan has comprehensive input and buy-in. The team should meet regularly and have clearly defined tasks to accomplish from meeting to meeting.
- **2. Beliefs:** represent the district's fundamental guidelines regarding how it wants to operate and what it wants to be known for. Beliefs provide guidance for the board and staff to demonstrate desired district behaviors that directly relate to the preferred district culture.
- **3. Mission Statement:** represents the district's fundamental purpose. It is a brief statement of why the district was founded and why it continues to exist.
- **4. Vision Statement:** is what the district wants to challenge itself to strive for and become in the next three to five years. The statement should be broad enough to include the main areas of impact but narrow enough to define a path.
- **5. Strategic Goals:** are broad-based improvement actions created to achieve the district's vision for the future. They are the most important component of the strategic planning process.
- **6. Performance Indicators:** are specific, measurable, and realistic targets used to achieve strategic goals. The indicators are assigned to individuals who are accountable for them during the implementation process.
- **7. Year One Implementation Strategy:** once the multi-year plan has been completed, a first year set of strategies is built that prioritizes what should be accomplished in the first year and aligns district resources to the expected accomplishments. Each year a new one-year plan is developed to ensure implementation progress takes place.
- **8. Monitoring of the Plan:** during implementation of the plan it is essential to monitor the success and challenges of the strategic goals, performance indicators, and accountability methods. When assessing the plan, it is mandatory to periodically evaluate stated metrics for the goals and indicators. It may be necessary from year to year to retool the plan and its assumptions if any elements of the plan do not achieve satisfactory progress.