



SUFFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Superintendent's Theory of Action

Timothy M. Van Tassel, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools, Suffield Public Schools

This leadership theory of action reflects my beliefs and assumptions regarding the potential of our school district and the enormous opportunity we have to positively influence the lives of the students we have been entrusted to educate and care for. It is my deepest desire to see that all students are fully prepared to leave our elementary learning community and successfully transition into middle school.

It is important to note that my theory of action will evolve as the needs of our students, schools, and community change. Our mission, vision, goals, policies, and the culture of our district are all influences that will alter this theory of action over time.

My leadership efforts will always be guided by my core beliefs regarding teaching, learning, and the importance of organization coherence. Important to note, my core beliefs are based on the key premise that ***all students can be successful.***

- To have successful students, we must have a vision of the future – a vision that defines our ideals, our expectations, and our commitment to the teaching and learning process;
- To have successful students, we must foster a community of collaboration, organizational coherence, and a culture of respect within the school district;
- To have successful students, school leadership must remain highly visible and provide opportunities to connect with all members of the school community;
- To have successful students, we must implement programs and policies that are relevant to the instructional needs of students and are well-researched in practice;
- To have successful students, we must be confident in the collective capacity of leadership and teachers, and respect them as true professionals that are capable of sound decision-making and support them in these processes;
- To have successful students, we must provide meaningful professional development opportunities that are at the leading edge of effective teaching practices and instructional programming.

My Central Theory of Action:

1. If I facilitate the development of talent and collective responsibility through the intelligent allocation of our financial and human resources, then we will be able to effectively adjust our curriculum, programming, and instructional pedagogy to insure high levels of student achievement.
2. If I promote a district environment that is accepting, supportive, and motivating, then students, faculty, staff, parents and community members will feel appreciated and welcomed in our district.

3. If I assure that all staff are provided meaningful professional development opportunities that are current in theory, practical, and align directly with their responsibilities, then staff will be able to apply their learning and enhance their effectiveness in meeting the needs of our students.
4. If I foster a positive district culture with a high level of stakeholder engagement and collaboration, then we will be more effective in mobilizing students, faculty, staff, parents, and community members around continuous district improvement.

Organizational Theory of Action:

1. If **we** continue to foster a shared district vision around our Board Of Education goals and strategic plan among all stakeholders (Board of Education members, district leadership, educators, staff, and members of the community), then we will be able to create strategic goals and manage our resources to improve the instructional core of teacher, content, and student.

Action Plan: Annually meet with Board Of Education to review our district vision and set Board goals that reflect the needs of the Suffield Public Schools. Utilize this vision and these goals throughout the year in meetings, presentations, discussions, and program planning with all stakeholders as we implement new initiatives.

Evidence: There will be established metrics and reviews of practice in place to ensure our decisions are being guided by our vision, goals, and strategic operating plan.

2. If **we** establish clear expectations for students with a focus on academic achievement, positive citizenship, and civic engagement, then we will engage, inspire, and create the likelihood that our students will become life-long learners, responsible citizens, and productive members of the communities in which they live.

Action Plan: District leadership, in collaboration with the Board of Education, will establish, annually monitor, and adjust strategic goals. The focus of these strategic goals will focus on teaching and learning, resource allocation, and community outreach.

Evidence: After strategic goals have been created, at the conclusion of each school year, district leadership and Board of Education will meet to review the progress made toward meeting the districts strategic goals. This formal and collaborative review of performance trends will enable us to communicate our success in meeting the needs of our students and make adjustments to our strategic operating plan.

3. If **we** establish a system of monitoring through the use of student assessment data, curriculum review, and evaluation, then will be more effective in adjusting our curriculum, programming, and instructional pedagogy to insure a high level of student achievement.

Action Plan: Student benchmark assessments and standards-based reporting measures will be closely monitored by district and school leadership and teachers. This information will be utilized to determine performance trends that identify strengths and weaknesses in curriculum, programming, and instructional practices.

Evidence: Informational reports will be generated that display student performance trends on district benchmark assessments. Quarterly standards-based grade

reporting will be reviewed by curriculum leaders, school leadership, and teachers. This data will then be used to adjust instruction and programming to meet the needs of students.

4. If **we** work in collaboration with school principals and teachers with a focus on capacity building; then we will be more effective in developing organization coherence leading to high quality instruction and programming for our students.

Action Plan: Review the district's strategic goals. Create non-negotiable and collaborative professional learning community standards of practice through the use of school improvement planning, theory of action planning, goal setting, data team analysis, and professional development planning.

Evidence: District leadership, school principals, and teachers will engage in professional learning communities to establish a culture of collaboration. Utilizing the PLC model, comprehensive school improvement plans will be developed, theories of action will be developed, strategic goals in each school will align with district goals, data teams will occur, and meaningful professional development will happen throughout the school year. With the support of the Professional Development and Evaluation Committee, district resources will be allocated to assist individually schools in meeting their goals and objectives.

5. If **we** engage all members of the community in the many facets of district and school programming, then we will enhance the opportunities for our students and create a culture of support within the local community.

Action Plan: Create opportunities to engage parents and residents of the community into our school programming. Publications, meetings, open forums, art shows, plays, concerts, mentoring opportunities, business partnerships, and community service activities should be encouraged throughout the district. Additionally, school representation should occur at local community functions and celebrations.

Evidence: The school district website will be a primary vehicle of communication between the schools and the community at large. A calendar of school events will be maintained on the school district website. Additionally, each school will have created outreach opportunities intended to facilitate involvement and support from the community.

This theory of action is designed to provide district coherence in our efforts to improve the Instructional Core as outlined in the Public Education Leadership Project. In addition, the creation of this theory of action has been guided by the coherence framework developed by Michael Fullan and Joanne Quinn. The tenets of this framework include Focusing Direction, Cultivating Collaborative Cultures, Deepening Learning, and Securing Accountability. As we advance our efforts in meeting these outcomes, we will be better able to enhance the process of teaching and learning that occurs in our schools. This Theory of Action provides the strategies that align with the district's mission and vision and are aimed at creating the optimal conditions necessary for cultivating high levels of student achievement.

Fullan, M; Quinn, J. (2016). *Coherence: The Right Drivers in Action for Schools, Districts, and Systems*. Corwin, A Sage Company. Thousand Oaks, California.

Childress, S.; Elmore, R.; Grossman, A.; Johnson, S. (2007). Managing School Districts for High Performance. Harvard Education Press. Cambridge, Massachusetts.
