



Participant Handout for the Orientation

Date: August 26

Time: 6:00-8:00 pm Virtual

Participant Handout

ACTIVITY 1: Welcome.

Identify who is in the room and what is the charge to the plan team.

- Team Roster
- Team Schedule of Meetings: Dates and Times
- Plan Team Roles and Responsibilities
- Refresh definition

Time: 30 minutes

ACTIVITY 2: Thinking about the future of education.

Ask the team to identify key concepts in the article they read that they feel should assist the team as it works together to set a new direction for the district.

Articles provide information and forecasts of workplace, careers, global trends and needs.

See Table Assignment Chart for Table and Article Assignment.

Time: 45 minutes

ACTIVITY 3: Set the framework and pathway for the strategic planning process.

Review the 4 strategic planning questions.

Team members will understand the journey we are on and what our time together will look like leading up to a draft of the strategic plan.

15 minutes

ACTIVITY 4: Hear short report about the status of the current plan.

Introduce the Accomplishments, Impacts, and Next Step document.

Learn about the journey the district has taken living the current plan.

<u>ACTIVITY 5:</u> Hear a short report about the need for school district strategic planning.		
Time: 5 minutes		
<u>ACTIVITY 6:</u> Preview Creating a Bold Vision for Tomorrow		
✓ Learn about the importance of visioning ✓ Hopes, Dreams, Aspirations ✓ Learn about Bold ✓ Learn about Transforming High Schools		
Time: 10 minutes		
<u>ACTIVITY 7:</u> Demonstrate how our work will be documented and accessible throughout the process for both team members and constituents on the website.		
5 minutes		
<u>ACTIVITY 8:</u> Looking Ahead.		
Preview the agenda and assignments for the Data Retreat.		
Appreciations		
10 minutes		
<i>Adjourn</i>		

Activity 1:

There are 96 members of the Refresh Strategic Plan Team.

Meeting Location: South Campus Library (4900 Willow Springs Road - Western Springs)

Website: <https://www.lths.net/board-of-education1122/strategic-plan>.

Strategic Planning Team Member Roster

Lyons Township High School District 204 Refresh Strategic Plan Team Roster			
Students	Certified and Noncertified Staff	Leadership	Families/Community
Lyric Brown Colman O' Sullivan Isla Riboul Marty Svelnis Matej Naunov Karina Delgado Truc Bui Samantha Rothman Dottie Rolek Hannah McDaniel Joe D' Antonio Celese Brittmon Nina Cedillo Colin Cassidy Clara Giese Sauter Candelaria Tatum Fyrdych Paula Calderon-Padilla Erik Hanson Marie Morrissey Brandon Irvine Andrew Narvaez Kim Tran Mario Reyes	Marty Crimmins Vikki Finn Kathryn Pieper Allison Doyle Cody Dailey Brittany Sidoti David Figueroa Lara Cuomo Shannon Eddy Jeff Bonk Lisa Plichta Jeremy Vrtis Nekeia Wilson Andrew Johannes Zuley Gonzalez Lisa Hammon Michelle Harbin Esai Velez Bridget Machalinski Chriss Bass Emma Dominelli Julie Jacobo	Leslie Owens Patrice Payne Jennifer Rowe Alicia Duell Jen Tyrrell Melissa Moore Jeanine Prucha Erin Groth Greg Gardner Sarah Smith Kurt Johns Drew Eder Kristine Zieman Ed Piotrowski John Grundke Gerry James Dan Buys Karen Raino Peter Foradas Bryan Radavich Brian Stachacz	Gioia Giannotti Frye Chris Kozelka Campbell Elias Lopez Shawn Kennedy Kari Dillon Jill Beda Daniels Tim Albores Sean Gilhooley Liz Otto Haskins Ellie Ambuehl Jennifer Hovanec Jeanine Arundel Carrie Mulderink Vicki Van Alphen Shawna McGee Alex Mason Jay Fulgencio Caitlin Sandaydiego Sharon Byrne Erin McPartlin Snadra Irwin Deborah Min Tamara Powers Candice Barrett Sarah Coffey Anthony McDaniel Taylor Groesbeck Cerna Castro Rand Monica Bhandarkar

Strategic Planning Team Member Schedule

Lyons Township High School District 204 Strategic Plan Team Schedule

Meeting	Purpose/Essential Questions	Date	Time
Orientation	<i>Who we are and what we are charged to do?</i>	August 26	6:00-8:00 pm Virtual
Data Retreat	<i>Where are we now? What is working well and what isn't?</i>	September 24	8:00-12:00 Face-to-Face
Vision Retreat	<i>Where do we want to be? How will we be different 5-10 years from now?</i>	October 27	12:00-4:00 Face-to-Face
Setting Direction Retreat	<i>How will we get from where we are now to where we want to be 5-10 years from now?</i>	December 9	6:00-8:30 Face-to-Face
Final Meeting of Plan Team	<i>What will we recommend to the Board of Education to set future direction?</i>	January 11	3:30-5:30 pm Virtual

Strategic Planning Team Member Roles & Responsibilities

- Represent Stakeholders**
Bring the perspectives, experiences, needs, and aspirations of the group you represent while keeping the interests of the **entire district** in mind.
- Engage and Contribute**
Attend meetings prepared, participate actively, share ideas, ask thoughtful questions, and contribute your expertise and experience.
- Study the Evidence**
Review district data, stakeholder feedback, trends, research, and current practices to help the team understand **where we are now and what the future may require**.
- Think Strategically**
Focus beyond immediate issues. Help answer the larger questions: **Where are we now? Where do we want to go? How will we get there? How will we know we are making a difference?**
- Challenge Assumptions**
Be willing to respectfully question current practices, conventional thinking, and proposed solutions. Ask, **"Is this still the right thing to do?"**
- Build Consensus**
Listen to differing perspectives, seek common ground, and help the team make decisions that reflect shared priorities rather than individual preferences.
- Shape the Strategic Plan**
Help develop and refine the district's **Preferred Future, strategic priorities, long-range goals, indicators of success, and strategies for improvement**.
- Serve as a Communicator**
Help others understand the planning process, share accurate information, listen to questions and concerns, and bring stakeholder feedback back to the team.
- Champion the Plan**
Once decisions are made, support the collective direction of the team and help build understanding, ownership, and commitment throughout the organization.

10. Keep the Focus on Impact

Continually ask: **"How will this improve the experience and success of our students?"** Help ensure the final plan is not merely a collection of activities, but a commitment to measurable results.

A Simple Way to Define the Role

Strategic Planning Team members are asked to:

Represent → Listen → Learn → Question → Contribute → Decide → Communicate → Champion

When a Strategic Plan Refresh Is Appropriate

Refreshing a strategic plan means **updating and strengthening an existing plan rather than starting over and creating a completely new one.**

A strategic plan refresh asks an important question:

"Given what we have learned, what needs to be refined, updated, expanded, or reprioritized so the plan continues to move us toward our preferred future?"

A school district should refresh its strategic plan rather than create a completely new one when the **core vision, mission, and long-term priorities remain valid**, but updates are needed to reflect changing conditions, progress, or new data.

In other words, the **foundation remains strong**, but adjustments are necessary.

Indicators That a Refresh Is Appropriate

1. The Vision and Mission Remain Relevant

The district's mission and core values still reflect the community's aspirations.

2. The Plan Is Mid-Cycle

Strategic plans often span **3–5 years**. If the district is midway through implementation, a refresh can realign priorities without starting over.

3. Progress Has Been Made but Refinement Is Needed

Early implementation may reveal areas where strategies should be refined or strengthened.

4. Leadership and Governance Are Stable

When district leadership and board priorities remain consistent, a refresh helps maintain continuity.

5. Conditions Have Changed but the Direction Has Not

External conditions—policy, data, enrollment, or community needs—may change without requiring a completely new strategy.

Activity 2:


SOLDWEDEL CONSULTING, LLC
 Transform Tomorrow

The Importance of Thinking About the Future

The future is not something that happens to us. It's something we create.



PREPARES US FOR CHANGE

Anticipating the future helps us see what's coming—so we can adapt, remain relevant, and thrive in a changing world.



GIVES US DIRECTION

A clear vision of the future helps us set meaningful goals and make today's decisions with purpose and focus.



INSPIRES INNOVATION

When we imagine what's possible, we open the door to creative ideas, new solutions, and bold thinking.



UNITES PEOPLE AROUND A SHARED VISION

A compelling future brings people together with a shared sense of purpose and commitment.



DRIVES BETTER RESULTS

Organizations that focus on the future align their strategies, invest in what matters, and achieve stronger, more sustainable outcomes.



BUILDS RESILIENCE

Thinking ahead helps us identify risks, seize opportunities, and build the resilience to overcome challenges.



The future favors the prepared.
 Great leaders don't just respond to tomorrow—they shape it.

“The best way to predict the future is to create it.”
 — Peter Drucker



LEADERS THINK FUTURE.
 They ask better questions.
 They see beyond today.
 They build a better tomorrow for students, staff, and communities.

Let's think bold. Let's lead forward.

Doing the **RIGHT** Things Before Doing Things Right | www.soldwedelconsulting.com

Our first activity is to think about the future. A strategic plan provides the district with a pathway to get to a new and better place for students. As a plan team we need to understand that requires us to think differently.

The future is NOT something that happens to us. It is something we create

- It prepares us for change
- Gives us direction
- Inspires us
- Unites us around a shared vision
- Drives better results
- Builds resilience

The future favors the prepared. Great leaders don't just respond to tomorrow—they shape it!

Homework Assignment:

Part A. For the Orientation, please read the article you have been assigned. You will find your assignment next to your name in the Table Assignment Chart. Click on the link to find your article

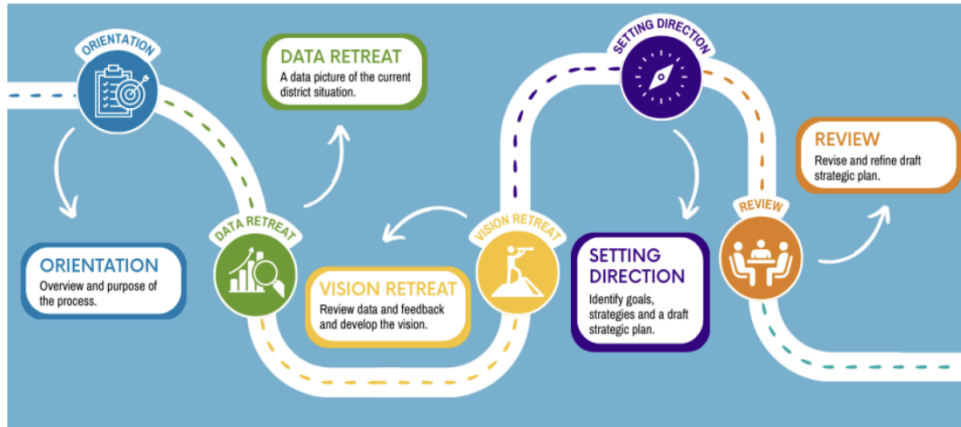
Article 1: Charting a New Course for Education	1
	2
Core Idea	3
What the Study Found	4
	5
	Be ready to share.

Article 2: Redesigning High School Core Idea What the Study Found	1 2 3 4 5 Be ready to share.
Article 3: What students report about Learning Core Idea What the Study Found	1 2 3 4 5 Be ready to share.
Directions: For that article, please <i>identify five important takeaways</i> that you would share with others who did not read the article to summarize what you learned that you feel will help you and others as you do your work as a strategic plan team member crafting future direction.	

Activity 3:

The REFRESH Strategic Planning Process

STRATEGIC PLANNING TIMELINE



Meeting	Purpose	Time
Orientation	The Orientation session introduces the strategic plan refresh process and establishes a shared understanding of the work ahead. The session centers on the guiding question: “Who are we, and what are we here to accomplish as a district?”	2 hours Virtual
Data Retreat	This session helps the strategic planning team develop a shared understanding of the district’s current performance and context. The primary outcome of the Data Retreat is the development of a draft SWOT Analysis that identifies district Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. The session centers on the guiding question: “Where do we want to be?”	4 hours Face-to-Face
Vision Retreat	This session focuses on defining the district’s Preferred Future Statement, which articulates the long-term aspirations for the district and the outcomes it seeks for students. The Preferred Future Statement serves as a guiding framework for the strategic plan, helping align priorities, decisions, and resources around a shared vision for the future. This session centers on the guiding question: “Where do we want to be?”	4 hours Face-to-Face

Setting Direction Retreat	This session translates the district's Preferred Future Statement into a draft strategic plan. The plan defines the district's long-term direction by establishing long-range goals, indicators of success (KPIs), and aligned strategies that prioritize the most important work ahead. This session centers on the guiding question: "How will we get from where we are to where we want to be?"	4 hours Face-to-Face
Recommendation	This session provides the strategic planning team with an opportunity to review stakeholder feedback on the draft strategic plan, refine the plan as needed, and prepare a final recommended strategic plan for submission to the superintendent and presentation to the Board of Education for approval. This session centers on the guiding question: "Is there any feedback, data, or additional information we should consider in refining our recommendation?"	2 hours Virtual

Four Strategic Planning Questions	
Where are we now?	What does the evidence tell us about our current reality—our strengths, challenges, opportunities, and needs? We will address this question at the Data Retreat.
Where do we want to go?	What is our preferred future, and what do we want students, staff, families, and the organization to experience? We will address this question at the Vision Retreat.
How will we get there?	What priorities, strategies, actions, resources, and responsibilities will move us from our current reality to our preferred future? We will address this question at the Setting Direction Retreat.
How will we know we are making a difference?	What evidence, indicators, measures, and targets will demonstrate progress and impact , and how will we use what we learn to continuously improve? This question will also be addressed at the Setting Direction Retreat.

The Soldwedel Strategic Leadership Journey

From Vision to Results Through Continuous Improvement



Activity 4:



The current plan has been in existence for 5 years and is ready to be refreshed.

A Reporting Our Progress was prepared by Goal Champions this summer. It has been shared with stakeholders kicking off this school year. It will be featured at the Data Retreat for the plan team to develop a shared understanding of the accomplishments, impacts, and next steps for improvement.

The Champions will also share a SWOT Analysis to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats as we begin to refresh the plan. After the data reports at the Data Retreat, the plan team will have an opportunity to refine that analysis.

Additional Notes:

Activity 5:

The Need for Strategic Planning

School districts engage in strategic planning because they cannot successfully prepare students for the future by simply reacting to day-to-day challenges. Strategic planning helps districts move from managing the present to intentionally creating the future. The need for strategic planning is driven by several important realities.

1. Education is changing rapidly.

Students are entering a world shaped by:

- Artificial intelligence and technology
- Changing workforce expectations
- Increased diversity
- New learning models
- Greater social-emotional needs
- Rapid access to information

Strategic planning helps districts anticipate change rather than simply respond to it.

2. School districts must establish a clear direction.

Without a strategic plan:

- Priorities become unclear.
- Initiatives compete for attention.
- Resources become fragmented.
- Staff members work toward different goals.

A strategic plan answers one essential question:
Where are we going, and how will we get there?

3. Districts need to align their work.

Strategic planning creates alignment among:

- ✓ Mission
- ✓ Vision
- ✓ Core values
- ✓ Graduate Portrait
- ✓ Long-range goals
- ✓ Strategies
- ✓ Action plans
- ✓ Budgets
- ✓ Professional learning
- ✓ Performance measures

Alignment ensures that every decision supports the same desired future.

4. Resources are limited.

Districts cannot do everything.

Strategic planning helps leaders:

- ✓ Prioritize initiatives
- ✓ Allocate resources
- ✓ Focus staff time
- ✓ Eliminate duplication
- ✓ Invest in high-impact practices

Strategic planning shifts organizations from "doing more" to **doing the right things.**

5. Districts need evidence to guide decision-making. Strategic planning encourages leaders to ask: • What evidence do we have? • What challenges must we address? • What opportunities should we pursue? • How will we know whether we are making progress? Data becomes a tool for improvement rather than simply a tool for compliance.	6. Stakeholders expect transparency and accountability. Students, families, staff members, board members, and community members want to know: • What are our goals? • Why did we choose them? • What progress have we made? • What evidence demonstrates success? • What are our next steps? Strategic planning builds trust by creating a shared understanding of both the journey and the results.
7. Strategic planning creates continuity. School districts often experience: ✓ Leadership changes ✓ Staff turnover ✓ Board transitions ✓ Changing community expectations A strategic plan creates stability by establishing a long-term roadmap that extends beyond any individual leader or initiative.	8. Strategic planning helps districts improve student outcomes. Ultimately, strategic planning exists for one reason: To improve the success and well-being of every student. A high-quality strategic plan helps districts: ✓ Increase student achievement ✓ Close achievement gaps ✓ Improve school climate ✓ Strengthen instruction ✓ Support educators ✓ Engage families ✓ Use resources responsibly
One simple statement: <i>"Strategic planning helps school districts intentionally create the future they want rather than simply reacting to the future they inherit."</i>	

Transforming High Schools

Transforming high schools means fundamentally redesigning the high school experience so that it better prepares students for success in college, careers, civic life, and an increasingly complex world.

Transformation is much more than making small improvements or adopting a few new programs. It involves rethinking the purpose, structure, culture, and learning experiences offered to students.

Traditionally, many high schools were designed to:

- Deliver content through isolated courses
- Measure success primarily through grades and test scores
- Prepare students for a limited number of postsecondary pathways
- Organize learning around schedules, departments, and requirements

A transformed high school asks a different question:

How can we create learning experiences that prepare every student to thrive in the future?

Transforming high schools often includes several major shifts.

Traditional High School	Transformed High School
Teacher-centered instruction	Student-centered learning
One-size-fits-all learning	Personalized learning
Memorization of content	Application of knowledge
Passive learning	Active learning
Isolated subjects	Interdisciplinary learning
Limited student voice	Student choice and ownership
Grades as the primary measure of success	Multiple measures of student growth
College preparation	College, career, and life readiness

From compliance to ownership

From passive learning to active, engaged learning

From one size fits all to multiple pathways

From learning subjects to solving authentic problems

From school as a classroom to school + community + workplace

From earning credits to demonstrating readiness for life

Some of the most common areas of high school transformation include:

Future-ready learning

- Critical thinking
- Creativity
- Collaboration
- Communication
- Digital literacy

- Problem-solving

Student ownership of learning

- Goal setting
- Reflection
- Student-led conferences
- Personalized pathways
- Capstone projects

Flexible pathways

- Career and technical education
- Dual-credit opportunities
- Advanced coursework
- Internships
- Work-based learning
- Industry credentials

Authentic learning experiences

- Project-based learning
- Real-world problem-solving
- Community partnerships
- Service learning
- Career exploration

Equity and belonging

- Expanded access to opportunities
- Culturally responsive teaching
- Strong student support systems
- Mental health services
- Inclusive school cultures

Technology and innovation

- Digital learning environments
- Artificial intelligence
- Technology integration
- Blended learning
- Digital portfolios

Many districts also use a **Graduate Portrait** as the foundation for high school transformation. Instead of defining success only by credits earned, they define the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and competencies students should possess when they graduate.

The essential question becomes:

If we were designing a high school for today's students and tomorrow's world, what would it look like?

The leadership lesson:

"Transforming high schools is not about changing schedules, programs, or courses. It is about redesigning learning so every student graduates prepared to succeed in a changing world."

Strategic Management: The Bigger Picture of Strategic Planning

Strategic planning is an event. Strategic management is an ongoing process.

Many school districts spend months developing a strategic plan only to discover that creating the plan was the easy part. The real challenge begins after the plan is approved and implementation begins.

Strategic planning answers the question:

"What are we going to do?"

Strategic management answers a much larger set of questions:

- How will we implement our plan?
- How will we align our resources?
- How will we monitor progress?
- How will we know whether our strategies are working?
- How will we adjust when circumstances change?
- How will we sustain improvement over time?

You can think about the difference this way:

Strategic Planning	Strategic Management
Creates the roadmap	Guides the journey
Defines priorities	Aligns the entire organization
Establishes goals	Executes goals
Develops strategies	Monitors implementation
Identifies measures	Analyzes performance
Produces a plan	Creates a management system
Often occurs every 3–5 years	Occurs every day

A strategic management system connects every part of the organization.

Vision → Priorities → Implementation → Measurement → Improvement

Dimension

Three Major Points

1. Leadership & Governance **Clarify direction** — establish purpose, priorities, and expectations. **Define roles** — ensure the board, superintendent, and leadership team understand responsibilities. **Model accountability** — leaders demonstrate the behaviors and commitments they expect from others.

2. Performance Culture & Change Management **Build the right culture** — create trust, collaboration, high expectations, and ownership. **Lead change intentionally** — communicate the why, engage

	people, and address resistance. Develop capacity — equip people with the knowledge, skills, and support needed to succeed.
3. Strategic Thinking & Planning	See the future — understand trends, opportunities, threats, and changing needs. Choose what matters most — establish a preferred future, strategic priorities, goals, and strategies. Make choices — strategy requires deciding what to pursue—and what not to pursue.
4. Alignment & Operationalizing Strategy	Translate strategy into action — move goals and strategies into specific action plans. Create alignment — connect district, school, department, team, and individual work. Establish ownership — identify responsibilities, timelines, resources, and measures of success.
5. Performance Reporting, Analyzing & Informing	Measure what matters — use meaningful KPIs and evidence tied to strategic priorities. Move from activities to impact — determine whether the work is actually making a difference. Use evidence to improve — report, analyze, learn, communicate, and adjust.
6. Strategic Project & Portfolio Management	Prioritize the right work — select projects that advance strategic goals. Manage the portfolio — understand all major initiatives and their demands on people, time, and resources. Finish what matters — monitor execution, remove barriers, and avoid initiative overload.
7. Process Improvement	Examine how work gets done — identify inefficient, inconsistent, or outdated processes. Improve continuously — use evidence, PDSA, and disciplined problem-solving. Standardize what works — build effective practices into sustainable organizational systems.
8. Sustainability	Make improvement last — ensure progress survives leadership changes and shifting circumstances. Build organizational capacity — develop people, systems, resources, and future leaders. Institutionalize excellence — embed successful practices into culture, structures, budgets, and everyday work.

The Eight Dimensions in Just 24 Words

1. **Leadership & Governance:** Direction • Roles • Accountability
2. **Performance Culture & Change:** Culture • Change • Capacity
3. **Strategic Thinking & Planning:** Future • Priorities • Choices
4. **Alignment & Operationalizing:** Action • Alignment • Ownership
5. **Performance Reporting:** Measure • Impact • Improve
6. **Project & Portfolio Management:** Prioritize • Manage • Execute
7. **Process Improvement:** Examine • Improve • Standardize
8. **Sustainability:** Sustain • Build • Institutionalize

One of the greatest mistakes organizations make is believing that the strategic plan itself will create change.

Plans do not create change.

People create change through consistent implementation, continuous monitoring, thoughtful analysis, and a willingness to adapt.

A strategic plan is a document.

A strategic management system is a culture.

A strategic plan asks:

"What is our destination?"

Strategic management asks:

"How do we ensure that we arrive there?"

The leadership lesson:

"Planning identifies the right destination. Strategic management ensures that the entire organization moves together toward that destination."

Activity 6:

Visioning-

"Visioning is not about predicting the future. It is about creating the future we want for our students."

A favorite quote about vision:

"The best way to predict the future is to create it." — Often attributed to Peter Drucker

A school district **vision** is not just a statement—***it is a unifying force that shapes culture, strategy, and student success over time.***

A **bold vision** is more than a statement about what a school district hopes to become. It is a clear, inspiring, and ambitious picture of the future that challenges people to think beyond current limitations and imagine what is possible.

A bold vision does not ask, **"How can we improve what we are already doing?"** Instead, it asks, **"What kind of future do we want to create for our students?"**

A bold vision is:

Future-focused.

Anticipates change.

Looks beyond today's challenges.

Prepares students for tomorrow's opportunities.

Aspirational.

Sets high expectations.
Encourages innovation.
Challenges the organization to pursue excellence.

Student-centered.

Focuses on the needs, strengths, and potential of every learner.
Defines what success will look like for students.
Ensures that all decisions begin with students.

Inclusive.

Reflects the voices of students, families, staff members, board members, and the community.
Creates a shared sense of ownership.
Builds commitment to a common future.

Innovative.

Encourages new ideas and creative thinking.
Questions long-held assumptions.
Embraces new approaches to teaching and learning.

Action-oriented.

Inspires change rather than simply describing it.
Influences goals, strategies, resource allocation, and decision-making.
Serves as a guide for continuous improvement.

You might think of **BOLD** as an acronym:

BOLD	Meaning
B	Brave enough to challenge the status quo
O	Opportunity-focused and open to new possibilities
L	Learner-centered in every decision
D	Driven by a clear purpose and a commitment to excellence

A district with a bold vision asks questions such as:

What knowledge and skills will students need in the future?
How can we create learning without limits?
What does belonging for all truly look like?
How can we empower students to own their learning?
What will define a future-ready graduate?
How can innovation improve learning for every student?
What will make our district exceptional?

Signs of a bold vision:

Instead of saying:

"We want to improve academic achievement."

A bold vision might say:

"Every learner will graduate as a confident, compassionate, and future-ready leader who can thrive in an ever-changing world."

The leadership lesson:

"A bold vision doesn't describe where we are. It inspires us to become something greater than we ever imagined possible."

Or, in one sentence:

"A bold vision challenges us to move beyond today's reality and intentionally create tomorrow's possibilities."

Activity 7:

Student Parent Staff Vision Surveys	
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Strategic Management Survey	
8 Dimensions	

Activity 8:

Next Steps	
Data Retreat	

Appreciations	