Five Criteria for Each Component of the Preferred Future Statement

A great school district mission should meet five criteria:

1. **State why we exist.** Clearly express the district's fundamental purpose and whom it serves.
2. **Keep students at the center.** Describe the difference we commit to making in every student's life.
3. **Be simple and significant.** Use clear, concise language that people can remember, explain, and use.
4. **Inspire commitment and guide decisions.** Help people see why their work matters and determine what deserves priority.
5. **Be enduring and aligned.** Remain relevant over time and connect to the vision, core values, and Graduate Portrait.

The test: Does our mission clearly tell people why we exist—and help us decide what matters most?

A great school district motto should meet five criteria:

1. **Capture our essential purpose or promise.** Express the heart of what we stand for in a few meaningful words.
2. **Be brief and memorable.** Make it easy to say, remember, and repeat.
3. **Inspire pride and belonging.** Give students, staff, families, and the community words they can embrace together.
4. **Be meaningful and authentic.** Reflect the district's identity and aspirations, using language people understand.
5. **Be enduring and aligned.** Connect to the mission, vision, core values, and Graduate Portrait—and remain relevant over time.

The test: Can people remember it, explain what it means, and see it reflected in district life?

A great school district vision should meet five criteria:

1. **Describe the future we want.** Paint a clear picture of what the district will become and what students will experience.
2. **Be bold and transformational.** Challenge us to imagine meaningful change beyond today's programs, structures, and practices.
3. **Keep every student at the center.** Express our aspirations for who students will become and how they will grow, lead, and thrive.

4. **Be clear, inspiring, and memorable.** Use language people can understand, remember, and feel motivated to pursue together.
5. **Be aligned and actionable.** Connect to the mission, core values, and Graduate Portrait—and guide goals, strategies, and resources.

The test: If we achieve this vision, will students experience a meaningfully different and better future?

A great set of school district core values should meet five criteria:

1. **Express what we stand for.** Identify the essential beliefs and commitments that define our district's culture.
2. **Keep every student at the center.** Reflect our responsibility for every student's learning, belonging, well-being, and future success.
3. **Be clear, distinct, and memorable.** Use a manageable number of values with simple language and minimal overlap.
4. **Translate into observable behavior.** Describe how we will act, treat one another, and make decisions—so people can see the values in practice.
5. **Be enduring and aligned.** Connect to the mission, vision, and Graduate Portrait, and guide choices even when doing so is difficult.

The test: Can people see our core values in what we do—not just in what we say?

A great school district Graduate Portrait should meet five criteria:

1. **Describe who graduates will become.** Identify the knowledge, skills, and dispositions students need for a fulfilling life, meaningful work, and responsible citizenship.
2. **Be future-focused and broadly relevant.** Prepare students for varied pathways and a changing world, including demands beyond academics.
3. **Apply to every student.** Establish shared aspirations while honoring students' different strengths, interests, identities, and future plans.
4. **Be clear, focused, and memorable.** Select a manageable set of distinct competencies, each with a short description people can understand.
5. **Be observable, teachable, and aligned.** Connect to the mission, vision, and core values—and guide curriculum, instruction, assessment, and experiences across grade levels.

The test: Can we show how every student develops—and demonstrates—these competencies before graduation?
