

8 Dimensions of Strategic Management

The Five Leadership Frameworks are the road. The Eight Dimensions are the vehicle. Without the road, you don't know where you're going. Without the vehicle, you can't get there.

The Frameworks answer *what should we do next?* The Dimensions answer *how do we lead that work exceptionally well?*

1. Leadership and Governance

Leadership and Governance is the foundation for all other dimensions. It is the collaboration between the board and executive leadership to set direction, establish expectations, and ensure accountability so the organization can fulfill its mission.

Five Leadership Questions Every Leadership Team Should Discuss

1. What are the RIGHT things our district should be leading to create better futures for every student?

This is the foundational question. It invites leaders to distinguish between strategic and operational work and to focus on the issues that create the greatest value for students.

- Strategic vs. operational leadership
- Mission, vision, and priorities
- The superintendent's role
- The leadership team's role
- Keeping the “main thing” the main thing

2. What does effective governance look like in our district?

Leadership succeeds when governance is clear, collaborative, and focused on student success.

- Board and superintendent roles
- Governance principles
- Shared decision-making
- Trust and communication
- Policy versus administration

3. How well are our leadership systems aligned to achieve our vision?

Leadership is more than individual effectiveness — it is about whether the organization functions as one coherent system.

- Organizational alignment
- Shared expectations
- Leadership consistency
- Cross-department collaboration
- Coherence across schools

4. How do we build leadership capacity throughout the organization?

Sustainable success depends on developing leaders at every level, not relying on a few individuals.

- Leadership development
- Empowerment
- Distributed leadership
- Coaching and mentoring
- Succession planning

5. What evidence tells us our leadership is making a positive difference?

Great leadership should produce measurable impact on students, staff, and the organization.

- Student outcomes
- Staff engagement
- Organizational culture
- Trust and confidence
- Progress toward strategic goals

Why I Like These Five Questions

1. What should we lead? (*Purpose*)
2. How should we govern? (*Structure*)
3. How do we work together? (*Alignment*)
4. How do we grow leaders? (*Capacity*)
5. How do we know we're succeeding? (*Impact*)

2. Performance Culture and Change Management

Performance Culture and Change Management creates an environment where high expectations, continuous improvement, and adaptability drive student and organizational success.

Five Leadership Questions Every Leadership Team Should Discuss

1. What kind of culture are we intentionally creating?

Culture doesn't happen by accident. Every leader shapes it through their actions, decisions, and expectations.

- Shared beliefs and values
- Trust and relationships
- High expectations
- Psychological safety
- A culture focused on student success

2. What behaviors define a high-performing organization?

High performance is more than achieving results — it's about the daily behaviors that consistently produce excellence.

- Accountability
- Collaboration
- Continuous learning
- Ownership
- Commitment to excellence

3. How do we lead meaningful and lasting change?

Every district experiences change, but not every district manages change effectively.

- Building urgency
- Developing a shared vision
- Engaging stakeholders
- Communicating consistently
- Managing resistance

4. How do we create a culture where people choose excellence rather than settle for compliance?

Lasting improvement occurs when people understand the “why,” believe in the work, and choose to be part of the solution.

- Shared ownership
- Empowerment
- Staff voice
- Recognition and celebration
- Intrinsic motivation

5. What evidence tells us our culture is improving?

Culture should be observable and measurable. Leaders need evidence that their efforts are strengthening the organization.

- Climate and culture surveys
- Employee engagement
- Staff retention
- Collaboration and teamwork
- Student and organizational outcomes

Why I Like These Five Questions

1. What kind of culture are we creating? (*Vision for culture*)
2. What behaviors produce excellence? (*Performance expectations*)
3. How do we lead change? (*Leadership practices*)
4. How do we build commitment? (*People and engagement*)
5. How do we know it's working? (*Evidence and impact*)

3. Strategic Thinking and Planning

Strategic Thinking and Planning is the process of looking ahead, making wise choices about what matters most, and creating a roadmap that guides decisions and action.

Five Leadership Questions Every Leadership Team Should Discuss

1. What bold future are we creating together for our students, staff, and community?

Strategic leadership begins with a compelling vision for the future. Leaders must have a shared understanding of the destination before determining the path to get there.

- Mission, vision, and purpose
- Preferred future
- Graduate Portrait
- Long-term direction
- Why the work matters

2. What does our evidence tell us about where we are today?

Great strategic plans begin with an honest assessment of current reality.

- Student achievement and readiness
- Organizational strengths
- Areas for improvement
- Internal and external trends
- Opportunities and challenges

3. What matters most for improving student success?

Strategy is about making choices. Leaders must identify the few priorities that will have the greatest impact.

- Strategic priorities
- Long-range goals
- Root causes
- Focus over fragmentation
- Resource allocation

4. How will we move from vision to action?

A strategic plan only creates value when it becomes the organization's roadmap for decision-making and improvement.

- Strategies and initiatives
- Indicators of success
- Implementation planning
- Alignment of people, time, and resources
- Shared ownership

5. How will we know our strategic plan is making a difference?

Planning is not complete until leaders determine how they will measure progress and adjust along the way.

- Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
- Progress monitoring
- Data-informed decision-making
- Continuous improvement
- Organizational learning

Why I Like These Five Questions

1. Where are we going? (*Vision*)
2. Where are we now? (*Current Reality*)
3. What matters most? (*Strategic Choices*)
4. How will we get there? (*Strategic Action*)
5. How will we know we're succeeding? (*Measurement & Learning*)

4. Alignment and Operationalizing Strategy

Alignment and Operationalizing Strategy ensures that everyone, every team, and every resource is connected to the plan. It turns strategy into clear actions, shared accountability, and measurable results.

Five Leadership Questions Every Leadership Team Should Discuss

1. How do we ensure our strategic plan drives everything we do?

A strategic plan should not sit on a shelf. It should guide decisions, priorities, and daily work across the district.

- Strategic alignment
- Decision-making
- Organizational focus
- From planning to implementation
- Living the strategic plan

2. Are our people, resources, and systems aligned to achieve our priorities?

Alignment means ensuring that every investment of time, talent, and resources supports what matters most.

- Budget alignment
- Staffing
- Professional learning
- Technology
- Facilities
- Resource allocation

3. How do we translate strategy into meaningful action?

Great strategies only create impact when they are broken down into clear actions, responsibilities, and timelines.

- Annual action plans
- Department and school improvement plans
- Roles and responsibilities
- Timelines and milestones
- Goal ownership

4. How do we create accountability without creating compliance?

Accountability should build ownership, collaboration, and continuous learning — not fear or micromanagement.

- Goal Champions
- Shared accountability
- Progress monitoring
- Leadership conversations
- Removing barriers and providing support

5. How do we know our organization is working as one aligned system?

The ultimate test of alignment is whether every part of the district is moving in the same direction toward a common purpose.

- Organizational coherence
- Cross-functional collaboration
- Consistent priorities
- Evidence of implementation
- Student impact

Why I Like These Five Questions

1. How does the strategic plan drive our work? (*Purpose*)
2. Are our resources aligned? (*Alignment*)
3. How do we turn strategy into action? (*Execution*)
4. How do we build ownership and accountability? (*Leadership*)
5. How do we know the whole system is aligned? (*Impact*)

Together, these questions tell the complete story of moving from strategy to execution.

5. Performance Reporting, Analyzing, and Informing

Performance Reporting, Analyzing, and Informing ensures leaders have the right information, at the right time, to make better decisions and drive student success.

Five Leadership Questions Every Leadership Team Should Discuss

1. What evidence tells us we are making a difference?

Leadership begins with evidence, not assumptions. We must understand whether our work is improving outcomes for students, staff, and the organization.

- Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
- Student achievement and growth
- Organizational performance
- Strategic goal progress
- Evidence-based leadership

2. Are we measuring what matters most?

Not everything that can be measured is important, and not everything that is important is easily measured.

- Meaningful metrics
- Leading and lagging indicators
- Balanced scorecards
- Alignment to strategic goals
- Data quality

3. What story is our data telling us?

Data should spark conversations, not end them. Leaders must look beyond the numbers to understand the causes, patterns, and implications.

- Data analysis
- Trends over time
- Root cause analysis
- Equity and subgroup performance
- Asking better questions

4. How do we communicate progress in ways that build trust and understanding?

Reporting is more than sharing numbers — it is helping stakeholders understand accomplishments, impacts, challenges, and next steps.

- Transparent reporting
- Accomplishments versus impacts
- Communication with the Board and community
- Celebrating success
- Building confidence through honesty

5. How do we use what we learn to improve future performance?

The purpose of reporting is not accountability alone — it is continuous improvement.

- Leadership learning
- Decision-making
- Adjusting strategies
- Continuous improvement
- Organizational growth

Why I Like These Five Questions

1. What evidence do we have? (*Measure*)
2. Are we measuring the right things? (*Focus*)
3. What does the evidence mean? (*Analyze*)
4. How do we communicate what we've learned? (*Inform*)
5. How do we improve because of what we've learned? (*Act*)

The purpose of performance reporting is not to prove success — it is to improve success.

6. Strategic Project and Portfolio Management

Strategic Project and Portfolio Management ensures we are doing the right projects, in the right order, with the right resources, to achieve the greatest results.

Five Leadership Questions Every Leadership Team Should Discuss

1. Are we working on the RIGHT work?

Leadership is about making intentional choices. Every initiative should advance the district's strategic priorities and improve student success.

- Strategic priorities
- Initiative selection
- Organizational focus
- Eliminating competing priorities
- Value creation

2. Do our current projects support our strategic plan?

Every project should have a clear line of sight to one or more strategic goals.

- Alignment of projects to goals
- Strategic relevance
- Initiative mapping
- Avoiding disconnected work
- Organizational coherence

3. Do we have the capacity to successfully implement our priorities?

One of the greatest leadership responsibilities is balancing ambition with organizational capacity.

- Staff capacity
- Leadership bandwidth
- Time and resources
- Initiative overload
- Setting realistic priorities

4. How do we monitor and support successful implementation?

Strategic projects require disciplined oversight, timely support, and regular communication to stay on track.

- Project monitoring
- Milestones
- Risk management
- Leadership support
- Removing barriers

5. When should we continue, adjust, or stop a project?

Great leaders are willing to make difficult decisions — to accelerate successful work, modify struggling initiatives, or discontinue efforts that no longer create value.

- Evaluating impact
- Lessons learned
- Resource reallocation
- Portfolio review
- Continuous strategic improvement

Why I Like These Five Questions

1. Are we working on the RIGHT work? (*Strategic Focus*)
2. Does our work align with our strategy? (*Alignment*)
3. Can we realistically accomplish it? (*Capacity*)
4. How do we ensure successful implementation? (*Execution*)
5. How do we continuously improve our portfolio? (*Stewardship*)

The goal is not to do more projects. The goal is to do the right projects, at the right time, with the right resources, to achieve the right results.

7. Process Improvement

Process Improvement is a disciplined approach to continuously improving how we work so we can better serve students and achieve our goals.

Five Leadership Questions Every Leadership Team Should Discuss

1. What are our most important processes, and how well are they working?

Every result is produced by a process. Leaders must first understand the systems and processes that drive student, staff, and organizational success.

- Identifying critical processes
- Mapping workflows
- Defining expected outcomes
- Process ownership
- Understanding variation

2. Where are our greatest opportunities for improvement?

Continuous improvement begins with identifying the gaps between current performance and desired performance.

- Root cause analysis
- Process bottlenecks
- Waste and inefficiencies
- Student, staff, and family feedback
- Prioritizing improvement opportunities

3. How do we improve our processes rather than simply fix problems?

Lasting improvement comes from redesigning systems — not repeatedly addressing the same symptoms.

- Improvement cycles (PDSA)
- Standardizing best practices
- Innovation and redesign
- Collaboration
- Preventing recurring problems

4. How do we know our improvements are producing better results?

Every improvement effort should be measured to determine whether it has created meaningful value.

- Process measures
- Outcome measures
- Data collection
- Monitoring implementation
- Measuring impact

5. How do we build a culture of continuous improvement?

The goal is to make improvement part of the organization's identity, where everyone is responsible for making the system better.

- Continuous learning
- Employee engagement
- Shared problem-solving
- Celebrating improvement
- Sustaining gains

Why I Like These Five Questions

1. What processes matter most? (*Understand the System*)
2. Where can we improve? (*Identify Opportunities*)
3. How do we improve the process? (*Improve the System*)
4. Did the improvement work? (*Measure the Results*)
5. How do we make improvement part of our culture? (*Sustain Continuous Improvement*)

That sequence reflects the way effective organizations improve: understand, analyze, improve, evaluate, and embed.

Process improvement is the disciplined practice of continuously improving the systems and processes that create value for students, staff, and the community. Sustainable excellence is achieved not through isolated fixes, but through a relentless commitment to making the way we work better every day.

8. Sustainability

Sustainability ensures our success today continues tomorrow and for generations to come. It builds the capacity, systems, and culture that keep our progress strong and our impact lasting.

Five Leadership Questions Every Leadership Team Should Discuss

1. How do we ensure our success lasts beyond today's leadership?

Sustainable organizations build systems that endure beyond individual leaders. Their success is rooted in shared purpose, strong processes, and organizational capacity.

- Long-term thinking
- Leadership succession
- Institutional knowledge
- Organizational resilience
- Leadership continuity

2. What systems and practices must become part of how we operate?

The goal is to move from isolated initiatives to consistent organizational practices that become “the way we do business.”

- Standard operating practices
- Embedded leadership systems
- Organizational routines
- Consistency across schools
- Continuous implementation

3. How do we continue building leadership capacity for the future?

Sustainable organizations intentionally develop the next generation of leaders while strengthening leadership at every level.

- Leadership development
- Mentoring and coaching
- Talent development
- Distributed leadership
- Succession planning

4. How do we continue learning, adapting, and improving?

Sustainability is not about preserving today's success — it's about continually evolving to meet tomorrow's opportunities and challenges.

- Continuous improvement
- Innovation
- Organizational learning
- Adaptability
- Strategic renewal

5. What legacy are we creating for future students, staff, and our community?

The ultimate measure of sustainability is whether today's leadership creates lasting value that benefits future generations.

- Long-term student success
- Organizational impact
- Community trust
- Stewardship
- Leaving the organization stronger than we found it

Why I Like These Five Questions

1. How do we sustain success? (*Continuity*)
2. What systems must endure? (*Institutionalization*)
3. Who will lead next? (*Leadership Capacity*)
4. How do we keep improving? (*Adaptability*)
5. What legacy are we leaving? (*Long-Term Impact*)

Together, they tell the story of sustainability — not as maintaining programs, but as building an organization that continues to thrive through changing circumstances and changing leaders.