

Strategic Planning Terms for School Districts

1. **Vision:** *What is our district story?*

A brief description of the ideal experience for students in your district. This is the “north star” that provides the long-term direction and inspiration. What will this district contribute to the lives of students, families, communities, employers, and society more generally?

2. **Goal:** *Where, more specifically, are we going?*

A fundamental issue the district chooses to address. Goals provide direction for how to pursue a larger, more abstract vision. Although goals may represent desired ends, they are not necessarily attainable or quantifiable. They represent the intermediate picture of “where” the district is going given the needs of students.

3. **Outcome:** *What will we see happening for students when we get there?*

A clear, concrete statement of what will be different or improved for students. What will they know, accomplish, or be able to do differently? Outcomes represent “what” the district is trying to accomplish. It is about what kids are doing and not about what adults are doing. Outcomes should be based on identified goals and will guide decisions about a district’s actions, services, and expenditures.

4. **Actions and Services:** *How will we get there?*

A specific set of strategies—actions and services relate to the delivery of instruction, administration, facilities, pupil support services, technology, etc. This is “how” the District will act to achieve its desired outcomes for students. Actions and services are not highly detailed tasks, but programs or practices that guide decisions about resource allocation (time/attention, money, expertise, etc.). What major steps will be taken and who will take them? Actions and services should be adopted based on evidence about how they are likely to support desired outcomes for students. Districts may choose to adopt new services, improve service quality, expand the quantity of available services, or do a combination of all three.

5. **Metrics:** *What information and tools will help us measure our progress?*

Statements about what districts will measure to determine: (a) how well their efforts/strategies are achieving desired outcomes for students, and (b) to what extent they are implementing key strategies in an effective manner. Metrics will allow districts to communicate annual progress, analyze successes and challenges, and make appropriate modifications to actions and services.