

Chapter 1 Resources

School and district teams can use the following questions and activities to put the concepts from this chapter into action. Teams should retain artifacts resulting from these exercises to inform later work.

Collaborative Inquiry

Consider the following questions, then discuss your answers as a team.

- What are our goals, beyond completing the actions in the strategic plan or our yearly plan?
- Do we have an example of when the existing change process has led to substantive change or improvement? Do we have an example of when it hasn't?
- How do we measure the success of our actions?
- How much of your day is focused on the achievement of our mission?
- How do your colleagues typically react to a report on a strategic plan or the introduction of coming plans and initiatives?

Collaborative Activities

The following activities will help you and your team operationalize the ideas from this chapter. Each activity builds on the one before it, so we recommend completing them in the order shown. Be sure to review the instructions in advance and gather any needed materials, such as markers and chart paper.

Word Salad

Look at your school or district's core documents, and extract all the statements about values, mission, vision, learning principles, and so on. Put them all on a slide or piece of poster paper. Engage in dialogue on some basic questions such as:

- What are we trying to say with all these words?
- What is the connection between all these statements?
- How much of this text is focused on the organization, and how much is focused on students and learning?
- When scanning all these words and statements, how might we answer the question, "What do all of these words mean in terms of our goals for student learning?"

Language Activation

In this chapter, we discussed that the inert nature of language in most mission, vision, and value statements is an impediment to tangibly understanding their desired end. Take some inert language or weasel words from your Word Salad inquiry, and try changing some of this inert language into more concrete sensory language or "language that moves us":

This "language that moves us" is often comprised of sensory based language, because it describes the experiences we have through our physical senses: what we would see, hear, feel or do, taste or smell if that result were occurring. . . . So if a goal or result is to be measurable, then it must be able to be described in terms of what someone would see, hear, feel or do, taste or smell if that result were occurring. (Barr, n.d., p. 6)

What has changed with this change of language?

Missed Opportunities

Send a random curriculum unit or even a single assessment design to your team before you meet. Ask people to simply read this before meeting. After you have completed the Word Salad exercise, bring out the unit or assessment, and engage in dialogue on these simple questions.

- Which of the goals discussed in our Word Salad inquiry are explicit within this sample curriculum or assessment?
- Do we have missed opportunities to elevate these goals and explicitly include them in curriculum or assessment? What might those be?

Mission Walk

Individually or in pairs, go for a walk through the hallways of your school. Take pictures of things that you believe represent the achievement of your mission and vision (student work on display, highlights of school news, posters for upcoming events, the trophy case, and so on). Return to the group, and share some of these examples. Engage in dialogue on some basic questions such as:

- How does this piece of evidence represent the achievement of our mission and vision for learning?
- Did it result from purposeful actions we took, or have we interpreted it and retrofitted it to our mission?
- Do we provide feedback to our students on the mission-driven goals for learning represented here?
- How might we interpret the level to which it demonstrates elements of our mission? What might evidence of a higher level of alignment look like? A lower one? How might we differentiate the level of quality?
- What other evidence might we collect, and how might we interpret it?
- How might we answer the question, How do we know that we are achieving our mission and vision?

Goal-Setting Template

Our Operational Goals	Our Transformational Strategic Goals