

Discussion Paper: Aligning Structures with Vision for Learning

Introduction

Aligning Structures with Vision for Learning is a strategic leadership competency that calls system leaders to ensure coherence between their vision for student success and the systems that govern, support, and sustain that vision. It is about bridging the gap between aspiration and action—intentionally shaping systems so they reflect and reinforce the district’s deepest commitments to learning, equity, and engagement.

This competency asks leaders to look both inward and outward: to cultivate a clear, shared vision rooted in the needs of all learners, and to examine whether their systems—governance, human resources, financial planning, operations—are working in alignment with that vision. It requires ongoing reflection, evidence-informed decision-making, and the courage to challenge fragmentation in favour of focused, intentional design.

Deep alignment is not simply structural. It is cultural. It involves building shared understanding, distributed ownership, and a collective commitment to students. Drawing on Indigenous knowledge systems, leaders are reminded to activate collective voice, uphold cultural protocols, and create learning environments rooted in justice and relationality. When structures and values align, the entire system becomes a learning organization, capable of sustainable growth and transformation.

Considerations for Leaders

1. Lead Self

- Model strategic thinking by aligning your leadership practices with the values of the district’s learning agenda.
- Seek input from others and reflect on how your personal leadership supports collective goals.
- Act with integrity and clarity in relation to strategic priorities, and participate in processes that challenge bias and privilege.

- Embrace reflective and reflexive approaches when considering future needs and system alignment.

2. Lead Teams

- Empower teams to contribute meaningfully to shared strategic visioning and planning processes.
- Facilitate shared understanding of key language and concepts related to district goals and learning agendas.
- Integrate multiple perspectives—especially those of marginalized voices—into team decisions and initiatives.
- Support teams in aligning their work with district priorities and encourage team-based reflection on effectiveness.

3. Lead Organizations

- Ensure all systems—governance, finance, operations, instruction—are aligned with the district’s vision for learning.
- Build structures that embody the district’s values and promote coherence, rather than fragmentation.
- Assess and refine alignment regularly using evidence, strategic self-assessment, and feedback from diverse groups.
- Plan for the future by imagining multiple possible scenarios and leading system-wide conversations about priorities, opportunities, and challenges.

Reflective Questions for Leaders and Teams

1. How well are our current systems and structures aligned with our stated vision for learning?
2. In what ways do we model and support shared leadership in strategic planning and decision-making?
3. How are we activating and empowering voices that have historically been marginalized in our planning processes?
4. What mechanisms do we have in place to assess alignment, and how are we using that information to inform change?
5. Are we planning not just for today’s needs, but for the possible, probable, and preferred futures of our district and communities?