



INTRODUCTION

Districts need to prioritize strategic planning to align goals and activities to improve educational experiences for all students. To support this work, Hanover Research (Hanover) constructed effective strategic planning communication tools to help the district in communicating the strategic planning process to all stakeholders. These tools work in concert with Hanover's advisory services to provide additional support for achieving districts' mission, vision, and goals for increased student opportunities and academic achievement.

HOW TO COMMUNICATE THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Strategic planning frameworks typically include six components within three core areas. As the figure below illustrates, in the Situational Analysis phase, the district sets long-term aspirations and uses data to analyze the current state of reality in the context of mission and vision. In the Strategy Formulation phase, the district determines strategic goals and strategies necessary to accomplish them. Finally, in the Strategy Implementation phase, districts delineate specific steps and timelines needed to implement each objective.



Source: Multiple¹

This guide provides district leaders with strategies, activities, and other tools to communicate with stakeholders throughout the three phases of the strategic planning process. The guide highlights best practices to set up a communication plan to use throughout the strategic planning process. It also includes worksheets and templates district leaders can use to prepare communication messages for stakeholders at different stages of the strategic planning process.

BUILD A COMMUNICATION PLAN

Open communication is essential to bring all stakeholders on board during strategic planning and implementation. Hence, the district should create a communications plan to inform stakeholders at all phases of the strategic planning. The following figure lists best practices to develop a communication plan that connects communications with stakeholders at all stages of the strategic planning process.

Best Practices to Create a Communication Plan for Strategic Planning

Create a communications plan and timeline of key messaging for all stakeholders

Identify key messages for each phase of the strategic planning

Establish the timeline for communicating key messages

Identify stakeholders who need to be informed

Create key messages to be delivered.

Source: Texas Education Agency²

TOOLS TO COMMUNICATE STRATEGIC PLANNING

Following best practices, districts should start by informing stakeholders of their decision to engage in strategic planning. Districts should provide stakeholders with a brief overview of the process, including the rationale behind the district's decision to undertake the strategic planning and a timeline to show simplified visual of events in the strategic process to help shareholders visualizing milestones.³ Stakeholders should be able to see the flow of the strategic planning process from top to bottom and help them understand the bigger picture and where they fit in.⁴ An infographic is an excellent way to present this information. District leadership can use the [Strategic Planning Communications Infographic Template](#) to create an infographic that will inform its community about the strategic planning process.

Throughout the strategic planning process, districts should develop key messages tailored to different audiences. To do so, district leaders need to consider what pieces of information are relevant to each stakeholder group. District leaders can use the [Tailoring Messages to Different Audiences Worksheet](#) to reflect on teachers, parents, and community members' information needs and build tailored key messages across the strategic planning process.

TOOLS TO COMMUNICATE MISSION AND VISION

Districts should make vision and mission statements visible through a variety of channels. Once the district's strategic planning team has set and agreed upon a vision and mission statements, the district should promote them to internal and external stakeholders to get them onboard.⁵ Districts should communicate vision, mission, and values through as many channels as possible to reach all stakeholders.⁶ District leaders can use the [Vision and Mission Statements Communication Matrix](#) to identify suitable communication channels to reach out to each stakeholder group.

Districts should also identify a district representative to respond to stakeholder questions when asked. Districts should assign a district representative that will act as the main point of contact to answer questions when asked about the district new mission and vision statements and the overall strategic process.⁷ District leadership can use the [Prepare to Answer Stakeholder Questions Worksheet](#) to reflect and develop messaging to answer potential questions from stakeholders.

TOOLS TO COMMUNICATE STRATEGIC GOALS

After defining strategic goals and objectives, school leaders need to communicate them to the school community. When doing so, school leaders should ensure that the community members understand these goals to enable them to contribute to achieving the district mission.⁸ District leaders can use the [Strategic Goals Communications Template](#) to create messaging to communicate the strategic goals to the community.

TOOLS TO COMMUNICATE ACTION PLAN

After defining the action plan, districts should inform stakeholders how the district plans to achieve its mission, vision, and strategic goals. Informing stakeholders about the district's Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) helps them understand how the district plans to achieve and measure progress towards goals. District leaders can use the [Communicating KPIs Worksheet](#) to reflect and build messaging to communicate KPIs to stakeholders.



STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMUNICATION INFOGRAPHIC TEMPLATE

Directions: Use this template to develop an infographic that reflects your message, summarizing the district's strategic planning process and its reasoning.

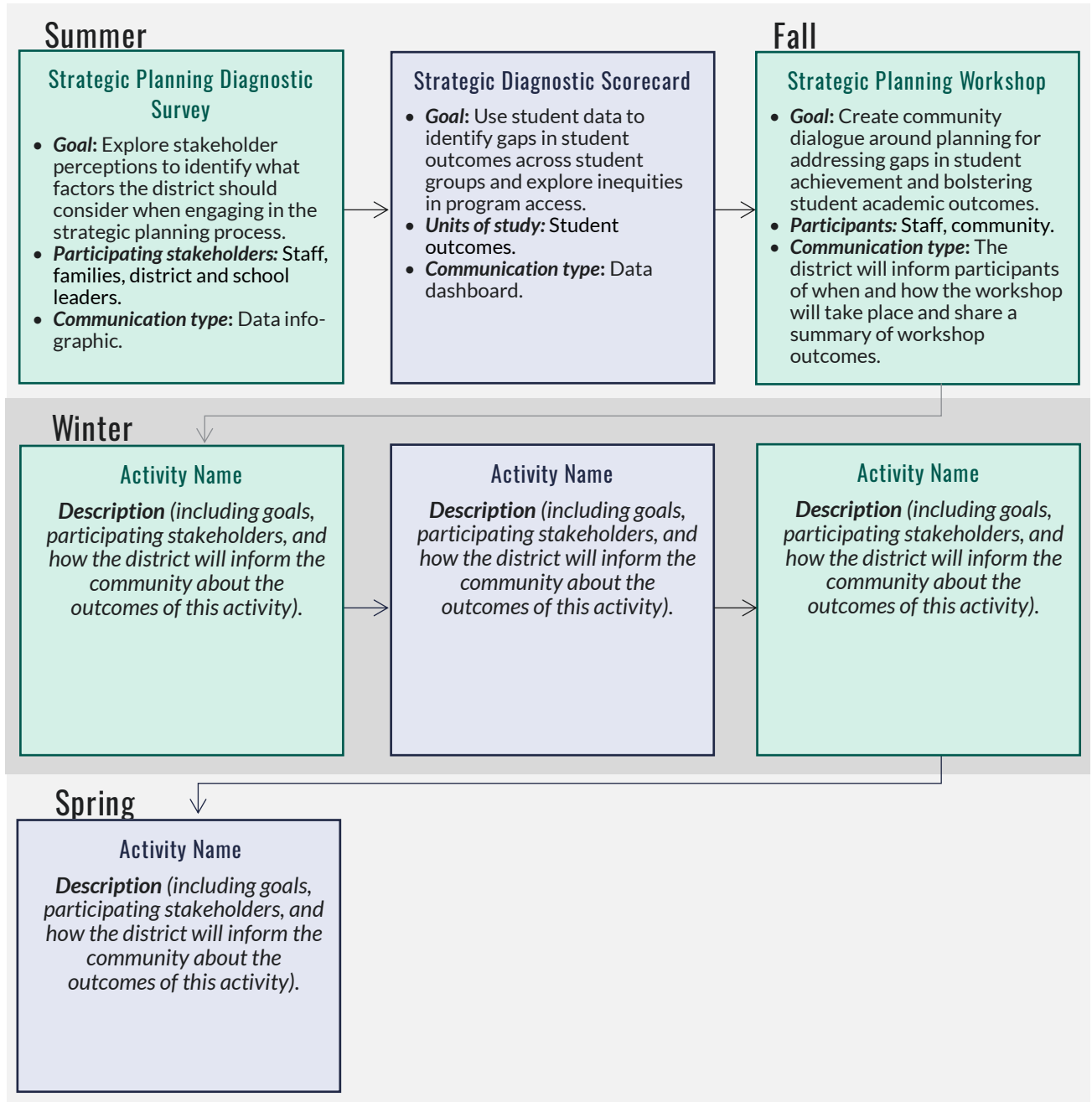
WHY IS THE DISTRICT PURSUING A STRATEGIC PLANNING?

Include here data and visuals that support the strategic planning reasoning to identify current needs and strategic goals (i.e., student achievement data, behavioral data, organizational data, etc.)

HOW IS THE DISTRICT PURSUING A STRATEGIC PLANNING?

Include here the activities the strategic planning team will develop as part of the planning and execution process. Use color coding to identify activities that involve internal analysis to inform decision-making processes and those that require stakeholder participation. Examples are provided in some boxes below based on what districts have typically done in terms of research projects. Other boxes are left blank to fill in as activities are developed.

Expected Timeline





TAILORING MESSAGES TO DIFFERENT AUDIENCES WORKSHEET

Directions: Use this worksheet to create messaging tailored to different stakeholders by answering the guiding questions.

GUIDING QUESTION	MESSAGE
Communicating with Teachers	
<p>How does strategic planning support student outcomes?</p>	
<p>How can strategic planning goals be tailored to different types of classrooms?</p>	
<p>How can teachers play a “messenger” role throughout the strategic planning process?</p>	
<p>What tools and resources has the district made available for teachers to contribute to strategic planning?</p>	
<p>How does the district acknowledge teachers’ contribution to the district’s vision, mission, and goals?</p>	
Communicating with Parents	
<p>How does the strategic plan acknowledge and contribute to each student’s unique needs?</p>	

PREPARING FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING

GUIDING QUESTION	MESSAGE
<p>How does the strategic plan contribute to each student's success?</p>	
<p>How does the strategic plan provide data-driven proven solutions to students' needs?</p>	
<p>How is school district staff committed to the strategic plan and student success?</p>	
<p>How are parents critical partners for the success of strategic planning?</p>	
<p>Communicating with Community Members</p>	
<p>How is strategic planning responsive to local needs and contexts?</p>	
<p>How do the entire community benefit from student success?</p>	
<p>Who is involved, and how do they contribute to the strategic planning success?</p>	

Source: Hattaway Communications⁹



VISION AND MISSION STATEMENTS COMMUNICATION MATRIX

Directions: Use this matrix to identify all available channels at the district to communicate the district’s brand-new vision and mission statements to each stakeholder group using the following notation:

- ✓ Currently Implemented
- * Not necessary
- Need to Implement

COMMUNICATION CHANNEL	STAFF	STUDENTS	DISTRICT OFFICE	PARENTS	COMMUNITY GROUPS	BUSINESS COMMUNITY	LOCAL ELECTED OFFICIALS
Parents events							
Staff meetings							
Assemblies							
Townhall meetings							
School council meetings							
One-on-one meetings							
Newsletter							
School website							
Social media pages							
Printed media							
Staff handbook							
Job descriptions							
Promotional material for incoming students							

Source: Multiple¹⁰



PREPARING TO ANSWER STAKEHOLDER QUESTIONS WORKSHEET

Directions: Use this worksheet to draft messaging to answer the following potential questions from stakeholders.

Why does the district need a new strategic plan?

Why does the district have a new vision and mission statement?

Who has been involved in the strategic planning process to date? Why?

How was this team chosen?

How long is the strategic planning process going to take?

What does the new vision and mission statement mean for me? What is my role in achieving this vision? (*Draft messaging tailored to each stakeholder*)

- Staff:

- Students:

- **Parents:**
- **District Office:**
- **Community groups:**
- **Business community:**
- **Local elected officials:**

Source: IRIS Center Peabody College Vanderbilt University¹¹



STRATEGIC GOALS COMMUNICATIONS TEMPLATE

Directions: Use this worksheet to reflect and draft messaging to communicate strategic goals to stakeholders.

HOW DID THE DISTRICT SET STRATEGIC GOALS?

Use this space to briefly describe how the strategic planning team prioritized and set strategic goals.

WHAT ARE THE DISTRICT'S STRATEGIC GOALS?

Use the following table to list the district's strategic goals, the data the strategic planning team used to develop each goal, and why it matters to its vision and mission.

STRATEGIC GOAL	DATA SUPPORTING THIS GOAL	WHY DOES THIS STRATEGIC GOAL MATTER?

Source: MIT Sloan Management Review¹²



COMMUNICATING KPIs WORKSHEET

Directions: Use this worksheet to reflect and draft messaging to communicate the district’s KPIs to stakeholders.

1. How does the district KPIs align to the overall district vision, mission, and objectives?

2. Use the following table to list the KPIs resulted from the strategic planning process. For each KPI, provide data definitions, the sources of the data, and year-on-year performance.

KPIs	DATA DEFINITION AND SOURCES	PROGRESS		
		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3

Source: Pricewaterhouse Coopers¹³

Endnotes

- ¹ “Creating the Future: Strategic Planning for Schools.” ECRA Group. <https://pdf4pro.com/cdn/creating-the-future-strategic-planning-for-schools-7fe08.pdf> [2] Kim, J.J.-H. and K. Parashar. “Strategic Planning for Today’s Challenges.” District Management Group. https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/3412255/Strategic%20Planning%20Campaign%20Fall%202017/WHITEPAPER-Strategic-Planning-For-Today's-Challenges.pdf?_hstc=193717042.844e8f704c392fa6b13818412b69f126.1633541075405.1633541075405.1633541075405.1&_hssc=193717042.1.1633541075406&_hsfp=2203065653&hsCtaTracking=e6851b52-5c01-4414-a1ba-171e49c1c3ba%7C6243e2f5-aa75-4ebd-a57c-b0ed6754df7c
- ² Figure content adapted and quoted nearly verbatim from: “Communicate Plan to Stakeholders.” Texas Education Agency, 2020. p. 2. https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/covid/3.3_Communicate_Plan_to_Stakeholders.pdf
- ³ “How to Communicate Strategy To Your Team Effectively.” Venngage, September 2, 2020. <https://venngage.com/blog/communicate-strategy/>
- ⁴ “Communicating a Strategic Plan - 5 Key Factors to Consider.” Cascade. <https://www.cascade.app/blog/communicating-a-strategic-plan>
- ⁵ “5 Tips on Communicating Your Vision and Values.” Ambition Institute. <https://www.ambition.org.uk/blog/5-tips-communicating-your-vision-and-values/>
- ⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷ Pauley, G. and M. Flores. “Family Engagement Guidance and Toolkit.” Washington Office of Superintendent Public Instruction. p. 18. <https://www.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/public/communications/FamilyEngagement.pdf>
- ⁸ Salleh, M.J. “Best Practice of Framing and Communicating School Goals by Principals of Cluster Secondary Schools Malaysia.” 2:2, 2013. pp. 34–35.
- ⁹ Worksheet content adapted from: “Communicating a Shared Vision for Students and Education.” Hattaway Communications. pp. 10–16. <https://hewlett.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Education-Message-Manual.pdf>
- ¹⁰ Checklist content adapted from: “How to Embed Your School’s Vision.” The Key for School Governors. <https://schoolgovernors.thekeysupport.com/school-improvement-and-strategy/strategic-planning/values-ethos/embedding-your-schools-vision/> [2] “Page 8: Communicate the Vision.” IRIS Center Peabody College Vanderbilt University. <https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/inc/cresource/q4/p08/#content>
- ¹¹ Worksheet content adapted from: “Page 8: Communicate the Vision,” Op. cit.
- ¹² Worksheet content adapted from: Sull, D.S., Stefano Turconi, and Charles. “Six Steps to Communicating Strategic Priorities Effectively.” MIT Sloan Management Review. <https://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/six-steps-to-communicating-strategic-priorities-effectively/>
- ¹³ Worksheet content adapted from: “Guide to Key Performance Indicators. Communicating the Measures That Matter.” Pricewaterhouse Coopers. pp. 8–16. https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/audit-services/corporate-reporting/assets/pdfs/uk_kpi_guide.pdf