

Envision: Exploring Our Vision, Values, and Aspirations

Facilitator Guidance Document

Why It's Important

- Schools and districts are best positioned for continuous improvement when guided by a shared set of values and principles that shape both long-term vision and daily operations.
- Schools are dynamic systems in constant change. A foundation built on shared values and aspirations helps align actions, resources, and energy toward a clear purpose.
- While teams may have experience crafting vision statements, it's important to move beyond wording to deeply explore the core values and principles that will anchor future efforts. Team members must reflect on the school's purpose, values, and guiding principles to shape its future.

How the Envision Activity Fits into the SCEP Development Process

- The **optional** Envision Activity is designed to occur before the **Five-Part SCEP Needs Assessment Process**.
- Establishing a common set of values and aspirations fosters collaboration, helps align future efforts, and grounds discussions in a shared vision. Schools revisiting this process annually can refresh their direction, particularly if new team members are involved.

Facilitator Guidance

Customization and Adaptability

The process of exploring a school's vision, values, and aspirations may differ depending on the school's context. It's essential for the team to adapt the process to what makes sense for their school community. Facilitators are encouraged to integrate their own approach to fit the needs of their school.

Before facilitating, it may help to review resources on visioning, like the *School Reform Initiative "Back to the Future"* protocol, as an alternative method for vision exploration. NYSED's [Sample Facilitated Envisioning Activity](#) is also available for use, customization, or adaptation.

Sample Facilitated Activity Planning Notes

Schools using the [Sample Facilitated Envisioning Activity](#) should have at least 12 pieces of chart paper and three colored markers. For virtual meetings, consider using a technology platform to facilitate group collaboration. Facilitators should review the activity beforehand to ensure a smooth virtual adaptation.

Considerations to Promote Equity and Inclusion

As the team explores its vision and values, discussions should reflect the needs of all students and consider barriers to inclusivity and belonging. Reflective questions for consideration include:

- How do equity and inclusion fit into the school's vision and aspirations?
- What does it look like for all members of the school community to feel valued?

Teams may also find the Department's resources on [Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Practices](#) useful in exploring this topic further.

Sample Facilitated Envisioning Activity (Approximately 90 minutes total)

Step 1: Explore the Current Reality of the School (Approximately 25 minutes)

This activity engages participants in developing an accurate description of the school as it now exists.

1. **Group Setup:** Divide participants into three groups, each focused on one of the three levers of continuous improvement:
 - [Organizing Adults](#)
 - [Centering Students](#)
 - [Linking Teaching and Learning](#)Allow team members to choose their group based on interest, if possible.
2. **Chart Paper:** Place chart paper around the room for each group to record ideas—one section for each lever.
3. **Assign Roles:** In each group, assign the following roles:
 - Facilitator
 - Recorder
 - Timekeeper
 - Equity and Inclusion Advocate (to ensure all student needs are considered)
4. **Discussion:** Distribute one-page prompts for group discussion. Groups will record key ideas on their chart paper, keeping the list to no more than two items per piece of paper.

Step 2: Video (10 minutes)

This activity provides space for the team to transition from the details of current realities, to provide some tangible examples of notable schools, and to prepare to begin the process of envisioning the school they aspire to become.

1. Share that the video is an example, not a prescription, of a school with a compelling vision.
2. Play the "[School of the Future Tour](#)" video.
3. Afterward, ask: "What common beliefs, principles, and values at the school influence teaching and learning and how the school is organized?"

Step 3: Envision a New Reality for the School (25 minutes)

This activity engages the team in articulating their vision, values, and aspirations.

1. Inform participants that they will now envision the school's future, based on their shared values and aspirations.
2. Return to small groups to discuss the prompts and narrow the ideas down to four key ideas per group, focusing on what the group can truly support.

Step 4: Gallery Walk and Whole Group Contribution (25 minutes)

This activity ensures all team members have had opportunities to provide input on all three categories of school improvement.

1. Distribute different colored markers to each group's recorder.
2. Instruct the groups to conduct two rounds of the Gallery Walk:
 - The first Gallery Walk is designed to allow the opportunity to become familiar with the perspectives of each group (5 minutes).
 - The second Gallery Walk is a timed rotation where all groups get up and rotate once clockwise, spending 8 minutes at the first station, then rotate again to spend another 8 minutes at the second station.
 - While at their stations for the second Gallery Walk, each small group will consider the same envisioning prompts used to generate the chart they are observing (i.e., "If we begin to imagine our school with the _____ we aspire to, what would that look like?").

- Each small group will identify up to four of their own envisioning ideas to add to the chart paper. The recorder from each group will add these ideas using their group's colored marker.
- If one of the ideas already written on the chart paper resonates with the small group, the recorder can put a large star next to the idea using the group's colored marker. This can happen up to four times – the total number of stars plus the total number of ideas added should not exceed four per small group.

Step 5: Wrap Up (5 minutes)

1. Bring everyone together and inform them that chart responses will be photographed for future reference.
2. Share that while some of the vision, values, and aspirations shared may be too ambitious to achieve in the immediate future, these ideas do provide a foundation for us to consider and ultimately work toward as we begin to explore the school through the next several activities.

Sample Envisioning Prompts

Step 1 Sample Prompts: Explore the Current Reality of the School

Small Group: Organizing Adults

1. What are the best examples of professional collaboration within the school?
2. Where can professional collaboration be strengthened?
3. What are the best examples of communication between school leaders, teachers, and families?
4. What barriers to collaboration do we face?

Small Group: Centering Students

1. What factors contribute to a positive environment where students want to be?
2. Where could we improve in ensuring a positive environment?
3. How is our school student-centered?
4. What barriers affect student connectedness to the school?

Small Group: Linking Teaching and Learning

1. What instructional practices are most effective schoolwide?
2. What practices need improvement?
3. What are the best examples of learning occurring in our school?
4. What barriers affect student learning?

Step 3 Sample Prompts: Envision a New Reality (done after watching the video)

Small Group: Organizing Adults

- If we envision our school with the adult collaboration we aspire to, what would that look like? List up to four ideas.

Small Group: Centering Students

- If we envision our school as a student-centered, inclusive environment where all students feel connected, what would that look like? List up to four ideas.

Small Group: Linking Teaching and Learning

- If we envision our school with the teaching and learning quality we aspire to, what would that look like? List up to four ideas.