



# Brainstorming your aspiration and goals

## INTRODUCTION

In order to drive reforms, it is important to be able to clearly and succinctly articulate your system's aspiration – that is, what you are trying to accomplish for your students. Your aspiration should be made up of measurable goals. In this exercise, participants brainstorm, reform, and prioritize potential goals.

The aim is to identify a manageable number of goals that can be clearly and widely communicated across the system and with external stakeholders.

The exercise is designed for a small group (5-10 people) and should ideally be completed by a system leadership team, which includes the system leader and his/her senior-most deputies.

## OBJECTIVES

- Identify potential goals for your system
- Assign goal leaders for each of your priority goals
- Identify metrics for each of your priority goals

## MATERIALS NEEDED

- Markers
- Recreate the template on page 4 and post on the wall. You can do this by printing a large version of page 4 and hanging that on the wall, or by recreating the template on a dry erase board, flip chart paper, EDI's signature "brown paper" or in a pinch projection of a computer screen. However you create this, it needs to be visible to the entire group and easy to change and add to.
- Rather than writing directly on the template you've created, you'll need to use small, repositionable cards. These cards can be just small pieces of paper, index cards or Post-Its, and there are a number of ways to make sure they are repositionable. If on a dry erase board, you could use magnets to hold cards in place, and on other surfaces, you could use sticky tack or spray-on adhesive – whatever won't damage your wall.

## TIME

- Preparation: 1 hour
- Exercise: 90 minutes

## PRE-WORK

Ahead of time, the facilitator should do a scan of existing aspirations and goals for the system, drawing from the following sources. Bring the results to inform the discussion or ask participants to review them in advance.

- Strategic plans and/or mission statements
- Legislative mandates
- Publicly known commitments made by the system leader or other leaders (e.g. governor, mayor)
- Commitments made to the "next" level up (e.g. school commitments to district, state system commitments to the Federal government)

**INSTRUCTIONS**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Facilitator notes</b>	<b>Materials</b>
25 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brainstorm the potential goals of the system, recording them on cards and placing them on the template</li> <li>Review the list of goals and make sure it is comprehensive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ask participants to think broadly and call out suggestions for system goals</li> <li>Capture suggestions on cards (one card each) and place cards on the wall for participants to see</li> <li>Ask participants to consider whether there is anything missing from the list, particularly considering:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is there a grade span or content area that is not as well covered as it should be?</li> <li>Do the goals reflect the system's existing priorities, including a focus on equity?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cards</li> <li>Markers</li> <li>Template</li> <li>Existing materials outlining goals (if applicable)</li> </ul>
25 minutes	Review the identified list and prioritize as necessary to reach an agreed-upon list of goals that is manageable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ask participants whether any goals are less important than others and could be de-emphasized or removed from the list</li> <li>Ask participants whether any goals could be combined with others</li> <li>If necessary, ask participants to prioritize the most important goals on the list; if there is not widespread agreement, you may choose to have them vote by raising hands, making tick marks near their preferred goals, or placing stickers near their preferred goals</li> <li>Draw upon the question: Which of these goals are <i>most important</i> for our students to achieve in the next several years?</li> <li>Remove any cards for goals that are not prioritized from the template</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cards</li> <li>Markers</li> <li>Template</li> </ul>



Time	Activity	Facilitator notes	Materials
15 minutes	Identify a goal leader for each of the agreed-upon goals, recording them on cards and placing them on the template	Walk through each of the agreed upon goals and ask the participants to consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Is there a leader who has already begun to address this goal?</li><li>■ Has the system leader already indicated the people he/she wants to be responsible for achieving the aspiration or the individual goals?</li><li>■ Whose "center of gravity" does the work of this goal fall under the most? In other words, does the focus of this goal fall well within anyone's job description? Is there someone who has influence over the people who will be working on this goal?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Cards</li><li>■ Markers</li><li>■ Template</li></ul>
25 minutes	Identify metrics for how you will measure success of each goal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ For each of the prioritized goals, identify one clear metric that can be used to measure success; record it on a card and place it next to the goal on the template</li><li>■ Note that you don't need to push the participants to set targets yet (e.g. 92% graduation rate by 2016); just make sure that goals are measurable (e.g. graduation rate)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Cards</li><li>■ Markers</li><li>■ Template</li></ul>



### TEMPLATE: BRAINSTORMING GOALS

Potential goals	Leader	Metrics