



Introduction

This workbook focuses on the **proactive political leadership skills** necessary to make positive change in our local communities with attention to micro, meso, and macro political environments.

The **MICRO** political environment requires that superintendents consider how their identities influence their own attitudes and opinions. The **MESO** political environment requires that superintendents continually deepen their understanding of the needs and desires of local constituent groups, and the **MACRO** political environment requires that superintendents continually come to understand the influence of the larger state and national context.

Our hope is that you can use this tool for planning purposes in the future.



Proactive Political Leadership Skills

- **Visioning** → creating visions for success that speak to the largest possible swath of constituents
- **Communicating** → listening and speaking in ways that touch on values and avoid common pitfalls
- **Political Mapping** → knowing your community well (internal and external), especially their hopes and fears
- **Mobilizing** → using that knowledge to both mobilize support for positive change and to protect the most vulnerable in our communities
- **Relationship Building** → continually building trust, especially across lines of difference

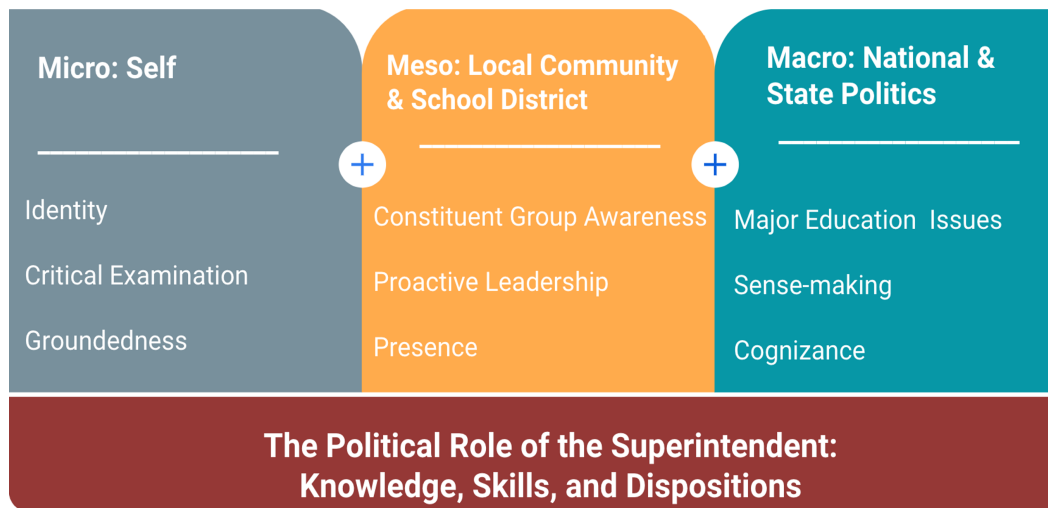


Issue/Initiative:

Visioning What does the Superintendent/Board team need to do to create a compelling vision for success?	Communicating What does the Superintendent/Board team need to do to communicate about the vision and strategy?	Political Mapping What does the Superintendent/Board team need to do to understand who is for, against, and why?	Mobilizing What does the Superintendent/Board team need to do to mobilize support? And what kind of support?	Relationship Building What does the Superintendent/Board team need to do to build trusting relationships across lines of difference?



Political Leadership Requires Key Knowledge, Skills and Dispositions



	MICRO (Self)	MESO (School District & Local Community)	MACRO (National & State)
KNOWLEDGE	Identity + Typical local constituent groups + Major educational issues		
	Understanding of how identity and values influence leadership	Awareness of typical constituent groups and how they work Including school board, local government, union, local news media, student groups, parent organizations, and advocacy groups	Understanding of federal and state education policies, laws, and school finance Awareness of education issues in national and global media
SKILLS	Critical examination + Proactive leadership + Sense making		
	Examining self as leader Exhibiting emotional intelligence Practicing cultural responsiveness	Visioning and Communicating Political mapping Movement building and mobilizing Ongoing relationship building	Influencing, interpreting and implementing education laws and policies Learning across communities
DISPOSITIONS	Grounded + Present + Cognizant		
	Resilient Curious Centered	Transparent Courageous Visible	Informed Active Connected

Micro Political Leadership:

An effective civic leader regularly examines the influence of their identity (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and political affiliation), stays grounded in their personal values, and consistently strives to make principled decisions that support a school system to ensure all children thrive in school.

This first exercise is designed to help you surface **who you are** and how it influences your leadership.

Exercise 1: Story Telling

Be ready to share a **story about a political challenge** you have faced in the last year. What was the challenge? Who are you in relation to the challenge? How did you approach it? What was the result? What did you learn? What do you want to learn? Jot down notes and be ready to share a 5-minute version of your story with the colleagues in your small group.

Meso Political Leadership:

An effective civic leader models how to work across differences through shared visioning, co-construction of strategies, consistent communication, and authentic engagement with students, families, educators, labor partners, school board members, and community partners. The leader influences the school community to stand firm in their commitment to the wellbeing of all children.

This exercise is designed to you clarify what you are **trying to accomplish** in your community and why.

Exercise 2: High Leverage Goal/Strategy

Name **one goal/strategy** that you are focused on to make a positive impact on student outcomes this year, especially those positioned furthest from opportunity, and **why**. What you choose should 1) Aim at **improving the conditions necessary for excellent teaching and learning**, 2) Require **navigating complexity** and 3) **Implicate you**, meaning, it can't be done without your leadership.

My high leverage goal/strategy is...

This is how it will positively impact student learning, if achieved:

Macro Political Leadership:

An effective civic leader continually strives to understand the state and national political landscape. The leader is aware of hot-button issues, understands the laws and policies that protect children, interrogates the opinions of advocacy groups that threaten those protections, and considers the impact of current events on the wellbeing of students, families and staff and acts accordingly.

This exercise is meant to further contextualize what it is you are trying to accomplish, including how your work is **situated in the larger national context**.

Exercise 3: Context

Describe the context which makes this complex.

Micro: Who are you in relation to the goal or strategy? What are your own views on the problem the strategy is aimed at addressing? How does this influence how you view the work? (consider both special insight and blind spots) Are your views shared?	Meso: What is the history of this goal/strategy? Have others tried to address it? To what extent were they successful or not? Why? To what extent have your stakeholders been involved in defining the goal/strategy?	Macro: What is happening at the state or national level in relation to the goal or strategy? What are the enabling conditions? What are the constraints? What are the threats?

Proactive Practice: Visioning

A district's vision articulates the aspirations of a community by explicitly defining what **excellence** in education looks like for every child and outlining the **values** that guide decision-making. The vision must be grounded in learning and instruction, and should reflect best practices in culturally responsive pedagogy and social-emotional learning. A clear, consistent, and student-centered vision will help build community trust and confidence, enabling the district to move forward in its pursuit of educational excellence for all students. A vision anchors a district's theory of change and guides strategy development, especially when addressing issues of equity.

This exercise is designed to help you craft a **clear vision for success**.

Exercise 4: Vision for Success

Consider your goal/strategy. What does success look like in relation to this specific goal? In other words, what would be true for kids, teachers, or your community?

If we are successful at...then...

Proactive Practice: Communicating

We know that words matter. But effective communication goes beyond simply sharing information. By uplifting student stories and using **unifying language** that is grounded in data, superintendents can combat disinformation, strengthen trust, and make connections between the use of district resources and outcomes. District communication and messaging should always remain student-centered to build community **confidence** in the district's efforts to foster positive change.

This next two exercises are designed to help you **communicate your vision** in a way that resonates with the largest possible swatch of community members.

Exercise 5a: Core Values

What are the core values that guide **your school district in decision making**? Which of these values may need to be activated (or tested) when working toward this goal/strategy?

The core values I want to activate are...

Exercise 5b: Vision for Success

Re-write your vision for success in **the way you would talk about it publicly**, drawing on your community's shared values without compromising your own.

If we are successful at...then...

Proactive Practice: Political Mapping

Superintendents need to work effectively across many constituent groups - teachers' unions, parent groups, business leaders, and community advocates, just to name a few. Understanding each group's **interests and concerns** allows a leader to tailor their strategies, form effective partnerships, and engage stakeholders in a way that ensures progress toward district goals. By political mapping, superintendents can also understand the relationships and power dynamics among key stakeholders in their community. Doing so can help them better understand power and influence and how to leverage it.

The following exercises will help you begin to **map those constituents** with a focus on understanding where they stand, why, and to what extent there may be opportunities to increase support. This will also help you understand how to leverage those with the most power and influence.

Exercise 6a: Map the Landscape

Who do you need to work with to reach your **goal or implement your strategy** successfully? Feel free to **duplicate this slide** if you need more space.

Name of key person or group , starting with decision makers, then influencers	Where do they stand on your goal/strategy– are they for, against, or undecided? Highlight major supporters or opponents.	Why are they supportive? Why are they concerned? Why are they undecided?	Consider your vision and core values. Where do you see alignment or opportunity to increase support?

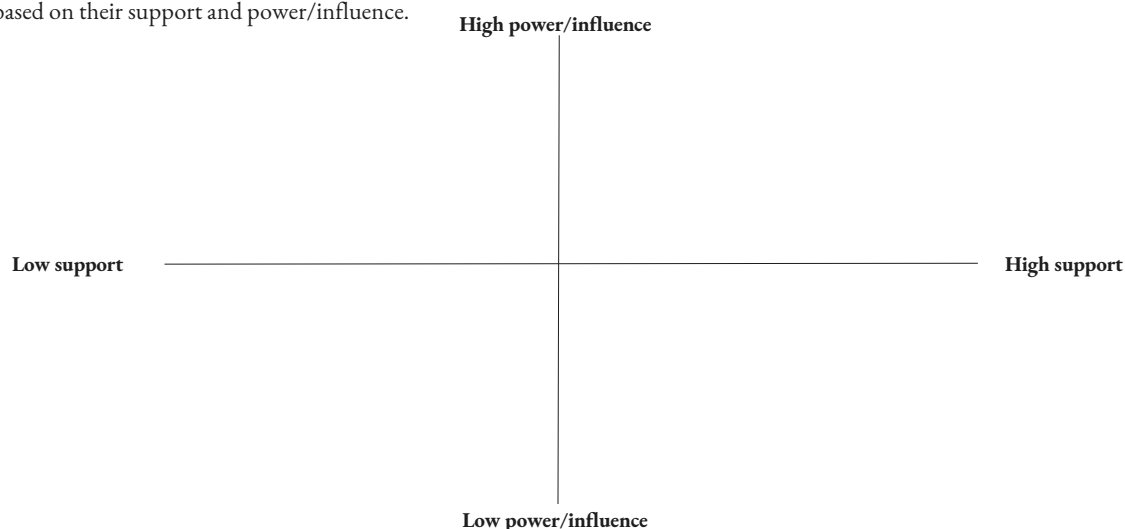


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Exercise 6b: Consider Power

Use initials (or some other symbol) to map each of the constituents with a focus on power, placing them on the matrix based on their support and power/influence.



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Proactive Practice: Mobilizing

It is vital to enlist the support of allies to mobilize support and build momentum for equitable change. As a superintendent, your relationships with community leaders, educators, and other stakeholders enables you to unite around shared goals and draw on the collective expertise and authorities of these partners. Doing so can demonstrate community solidarity on key issues, strengthen the district’s credibility, and counter misinformation.

This exercise will help you consider who can **support you** in enacting your goal/strategy and how.

Exercise 7: Mobilizing

Who do you need to work with to reach your **goal or implement your strategy** successfully? Feel free to **duplicate this slide** if you need more space.

Name of key person or group with a focus on those with the most influence and support .	What role can they play (e.g. trusted authority, communicator, advisor, partner)	How will you engage them?

Proactive Practice: Relationship Building

Relationships are at the foundation of effective civic leadership for superintendents. Superintendents must develop a network of strong and trusting relationships. This requires working **across lines of difference** in an effort to find common ground. Building relationships across lines of difference requires a high level of emotional intelligence and cultural and racial awareness.

This exercise will help you consider where you need to **strengthen relationships** and how.

Exercise 8: Relationship Building

Name of key person or group with a focus on those with the most influence but lack of support	How do you currently meet with them? How often? In what settings? Using what conversational tools and strategies?	What are the strengths and challenges of your approach?	What else might you try? What aspects of emotional intelligence might you draw upon? (e.g. self awareness, empathy, social skill, self regulation)