Partnership Development
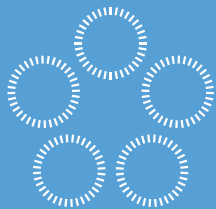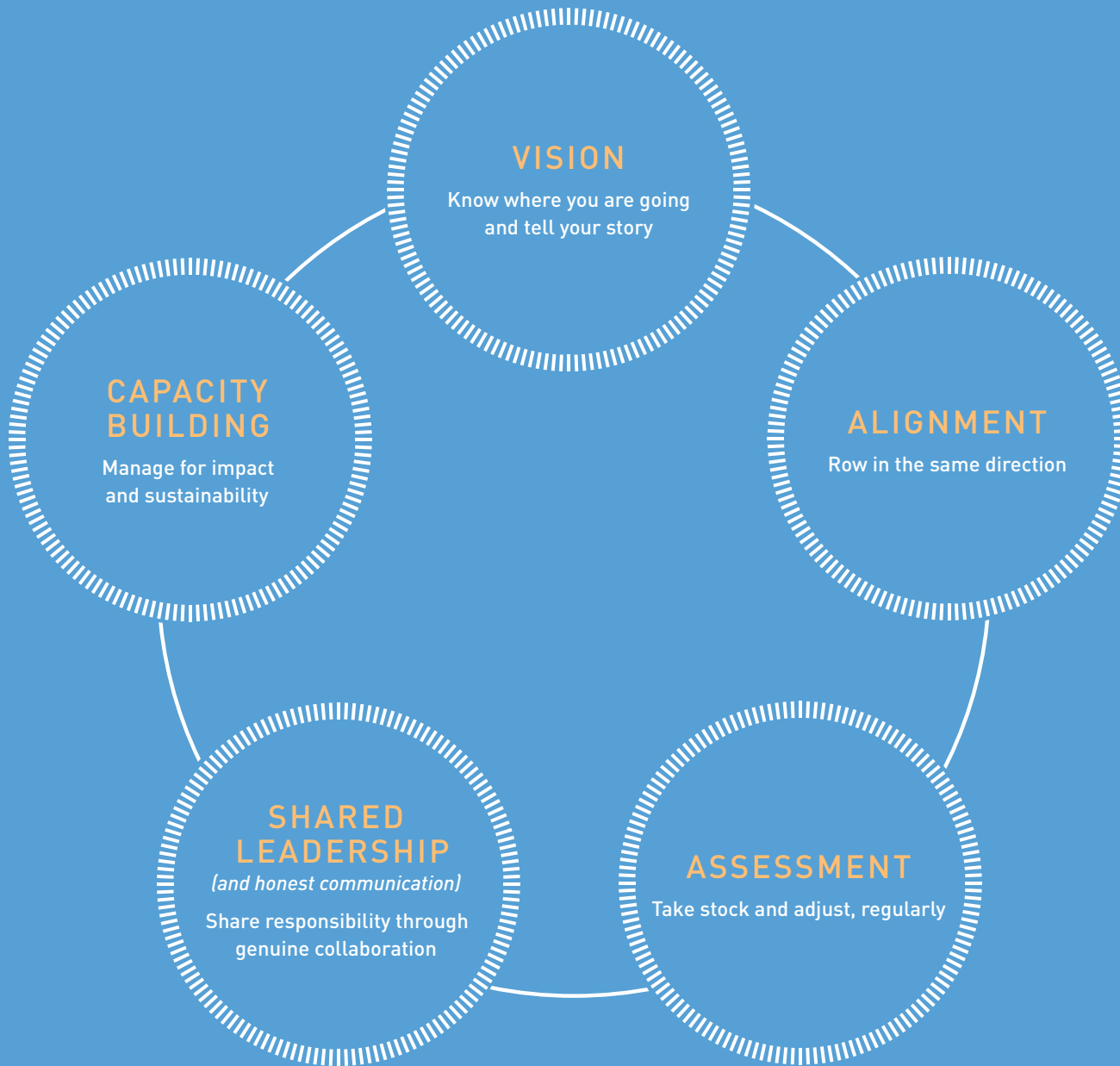
A Strategy and Support Tool for Principals
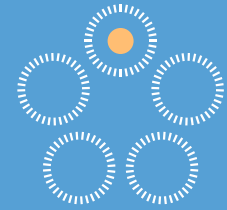
This draft tool has been developed for Boston Public Schools (BPS) Principals and Administrators by Teachers21 and Community Matters with financial support from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The guidance provided is drawn from an examination of current leadership standards, research on Boston partnerships, interviews with BPS principals and partners, and literature that examines partnership dynamics across the nation.

community
matters

TEACHERS21

VISION

Know where you are going and tell your story

ALIGNMENT

Row in the same direction

ASSESSMENT

Take stock and adjust, regularly

SHARED LEADERSHIP
(and honest communication)

Share responsibility through genuine collaboration

CAPACITY BUILDING

Manage for impact and sustainability

Vision

» What does your school stand for, and what role can partnerships play in implementing your vision?

Vision Know Where You are Going and Tell Your Story

The principal regularly articulates, with clarity and specificity, the shared vision for the school's direction and development; all educators and partners share ownership of the vision; everyone in the school can articulate the vision.
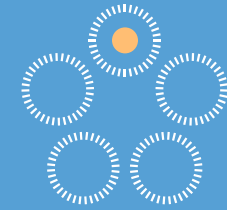
GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR PRINCIPALS

1. What is your dream* for improving education for your students and moving your school forward?

2. What data and needs shape this dream?

3. To what degree do your major stakeholders share in this dream?

4. What is your evidence for your response to #3?

5. How are your school mission and vision visible around the school and present in school-level conversations?

we are using dream and vision synonymously

LOOK FOR'S *These are meant to illustrate ways to "see and hear" sustainability in action and not as a checklist*

» Principal engages the voice of the school community through conversations, surveys, and meetings to formulate the vision and develop the strategic plan of the school.

» Principal models a sense of pride in the school that staff, students and parents share and want to communicate to the broader community.

» The principal is persuasive and clear in his/her communication about the strategy and its connection to the overarching vision and goals (dream).

» Footprints of the school, student progress, and support of families can be seen throughout the community.

» Partnerships between the school and community are embraced by teachers, parents and partners, and are seen as helping to deliver the "dream."

» All school stakeholders-teachers, parents, community partners, and students (where developmentally appropriate) are able to talk about the vision of the school; they own it, and feel accountable to achieve the goals that are part of the school improvement plan.

SUGGESTED PRACTICES

» Use Root cause (5 Whys) analysis with leadership team to understand what is at the foundation of school needs.

» Use SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) with Leadership Team to develop an understanding of needs and strengths-a building block to develop an effective strategy.

» Practice communicating the "dream" in one sentence, one paragraph, and one page.

» Solicit feedback from a representative sample of stakeholders to vet the "dream."

» Check for understanding — Ask teachers, parents, partners what they think the focus of the school is. Does what they say capture the "dream" that has been communicated?

*Alignment*

» On which two or three levers for change are you placing your bets? What outcomes can your partners achieve to support your strategic priorities?

Alignment Row in the Same Direction

Principal works with school leaders and partners to ensure that each partnership's goals and programming align strategically to school goals and vision; principal and partners negotiate and resolve differences.
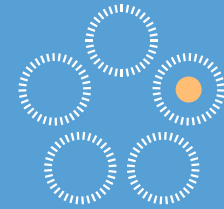
GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR PRINCIPALS

1. What are the key levers, strategies, and priority areas you have chosen to improve student performance?

2. What are the school's internal capacities to achieve its strategic goals? What data might you examine to make this choice?

3. What process could you use to engage faculty and other stakeholders in developing this strategy?

4. In what areas would the school benefit from partnering with an external organization(s) to achieve its goals?

5. Which of the partnerships currently in place align with our shared vision of the school and its priority strategies? For partnerships not aligned to the strategic priorities, is there clarity about the purpose and priorities these partnerships address?

LOOK FOR'S *These are meant to illustrate ways to "see and hear" sustainability in action and not as a checklist*

» Principal leads the collaborative development of the Quality School Plan (QSP) that outlines data, includes a root cause analysis, goals, and milestones and is clearly aligned to a plan of action.

» The QSP includes the development of external resources aligned to strategic planning.

» Principal and school leaders develop and guide partnership selection and formation to ensure that the goals and strategies of partnerships are well aligned with the QSP.

» Principal and school leaders develop partnerships that reflect the school's vision and address its strategic goals.

SUGGESTED PRACTICES

» Confer with leadership team to document all initiatives impacting school work. Identify those that link to strategic work, and those that are "outside" strategic work.

» Conduct a school-wide Needs Assessment to identify unmet needs that could be met through existing or new partnerships. Seek input from families and share information with families about school partnerships.

» Use a Partnership Mapping Tool to chart and categorize existing partnerships with the school.

Assessment
BIG QUESTIONS

» Are we achieving the outcomes we desire through the programming and services being offered?

Assessment Take Stock and Adjust, Regularly

Principal works with school leaders and partners to continually assess the work of partnerships to ensure that school-wide and student-centered strategic priorities are achieved; principal regularly seeks adjustments in partnership strategies and programming, based on outcomes.
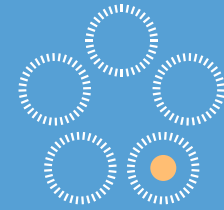
GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR PRINCIPALS

1. How confident are you that your partners are contributing to the growth of your students?

2. What is your evidence for your response to #1?

3. How do you decide which partners to select, continue with, or seek out?

4. How do you decide how much access your partners have to pertinent school data?

5. How is your school going to look different at the end of the year as a result of this partnership?

6. What would the teachers say?

7. What would the parents say?

8. What would the students say?

9. What would the partner say?

LOOK FOR'S *These are meant to illustrate ways to "see and hear" sustainability in action and not as a checklist*

» Principal and school leaders consistently seek out ways to engage faculty in assessing the alignment and impact of partnerships on student, educator and school goals.

» Relevant partners participate in Instructional Leadership Team (ILT), Student Support Team and other faculty forums to review student level data, discuss instructional/programmatic implications, and understand how to support partners in meeting student needs.

» Principal and school leaders have up-to-date data about levels of service, dosage, and progress toward outcomes for each partnership, and use this data to assess progress and adjust partnership implementation strategies as needed.

» Principal and school leaders work with stakeholders to create cycles of action research, where data is used to test hypotheses, discover new strategies, and reduce achievement gaps.

» Poor-performing partners are immediately held accountable through thoughtful, fair, transparent processes for support and performance management decision-making.

» High performing partners are recognized for their contributions.

» Principal acknowledges contributions by partners to achieving desired outcomes.

SUGGESTED PRACTICES

» Assemble student data that links to partnership work on a regular basis.

» Identify data and benchmarks to measure academic achievement and growth and student well-being.

MA ADMINISTRATIVE STANDARDS

Standard I: Instructional Leadership
Indicator I-C. *Assessment*

I-C-2. Adjustment to Practice
Provides planning time and effective support for teams to review assessment data and identify appropriate interventions and adjustments to practice.

Monitors educators' efforts and successes in this area.

Indicator D. *Evaluation*

I-D-4. Alignment Review
Consistently reviews alignment between judgment about practice and student learning data and makes informed decisions about educator support and evaluation based upon this review.

TOOLS

Survey or observation rubric for teachers to provide feedback on partnership services

Student and Parent surveys to gather feedback on services provided by partners

ACT (Achieving, Connecting, Thriving) Framework

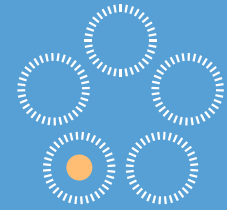Individual Partner Outcomes Chart

SUPPORTS AND RESOURCES

The Data Coach's Guide to Improving Learning for All Students by Katherine E. Stiles, Susan E. Mundry, Kathryn DiRanna and Nancy Love

Got Data? Now What?
by Laura Lipton and Bruce Wellman

Shared Leadership
BIG QUESTIONS

» How are we (principal to partner/partner to principal) doing? What do we need to do to be more effective?

Shared Leadership Share Responsibility through Genuine Collaboration

Principal works with school leaders and partners to share responsibility for the success of partnerships, engage in ongoing honest communication, and work together to solve problems as they arise.
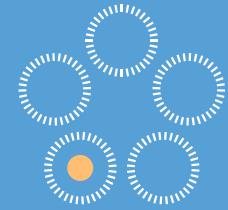
GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR PRINCIPALS

1. How do you address challenges and obstacles when they arise with your partners?

2. How do partners provide you (and staff) with feedback about their experiences and observations working in your school?

3. What is this partnership requiring of me/our school?

4. What is it that my students and/or staff get out of this partnership?

5. How healthy is our relationship? Can we talk openly and honestly?

6. What is the relationship among and between the partnerships?

LOOK FOR'S *These are meant to illustrate ways to "see and hear" sustainability in action and not as a checklist*

» Principal and school leaders hold regular meetings with core partners, and maintain open communication channels between partners and school personnel.

» Relevant partners participate in Instructional Leadership Team (ILT), Student Support Team and other faculty forums to review student level data, discuss instructional/ programmatic implications, and understand how to support partners in meeting student needs.

» Stakeholders feel safe having difficult conversations and openly provide feedback to one another and the principal about the degree to which partnerships are working or not working.

» Principal, school leader and partner communication regarding decisions is transparent and proactive.

» Principal, school leaders and partners co-create systems for teachers and partners to provide feedback to one another and to discuss their strengths and areas of growth with one another.

» Feedback is specific, based on data, and aimed at promoting growth, improvement and/or acknowledging success.

SUGGESTED PRACTICES

» Develop ground rules to guide meetings and teamwork.

» Learn how to respond to criticism with curiosity.

» Practice acknowledging the feelings of others and being aware how one's own feelings impacts communication.

» Gain coaching feedback from an outside observer who observes meeting with partners.

MA ADMINISTRATIVE STANDARDS

Standard III: Family and Community Engagement.
Indicator IIIA. *Engagement*

III-A-2. *Community and Business Engagement*
Establishes ongoing relationships with community organizations, community members, and businesses. Engages them to increase their involvement to maximize community contributions for school effectiveness.

Indicator III-B. *Sharing Responsibility*

III-B-1.*Student Support*
Supports educators to identify each student's academic, social, emotional, and behavioral needs, including students with disabilities and English learners. Collaborates with families to address student needs, *utilizing resources within and outside of the school.*

Standard IV-Professional Culture
IV-F. *Managing Conflict*

IV-F-2. *Conflict Resolution*
Consistently employs a variety of strategies to resolve conflicts in a constructive and respectful manner.

IV-F-3. *Consensus Building*
Builds consensus within the school community around critical school decisions, employing a variety of strategies.

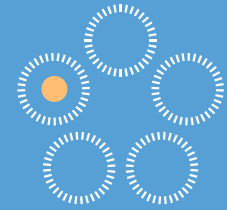### SUPPORTS AND RESOURCES
Difficult Conversations
by Stone, Patton, and Heen

Teaming by Amy Edmondson

Organizational Learning by Vivenne Collinson

Capacity Building
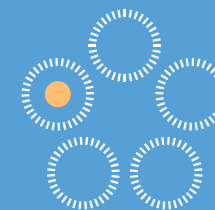### BIG QUESTIONS

» How long will the partnership last?

» What will we do when the funding goes away?

» What can we learn from our partner before the opportunity ends?

Capacity Building Manage for Impact and Sustainability

Principal works with school leaders and partners to build the long-term capacity of the school, and prioritizes the use of funding, time and personnel on partnerships that contribute most to achieving the vision.

GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR PRINCIPALS

1. Which partnerships are short-term and/or time limited?

2. Which partnerships will require the school to develop the internal capacity to deliver the services once the partnership and the resources to support it have diminished and/or ceased?

3. Which partnerships will require ongoing, annual financial support?

4. Which partnerships are needed over the long-term, because they provide direct services to students or families, or because the school cannot offer such resources on its own?

5. What plans are in place to ensure sustainability during periods of transition of school and partner leaders and/or transitions among the faculty and partner's staff?

6. Which partnerships are of such core importance to your vision that you would prioritize them in times of leaner funding?

7. How do I sunset a partnership that is no longer needed or is not working?

LOOK FOR'S *These are meant to illustrate ways to "see and hear" sustainability in action and not as a checklist*

» Principal and school leaders hold regular meetings with core partners, and maintain open communication channels between partners and school personnel.

» Up-to-date Partnership Agreements are in place for each partnership.

» Principal meets with partner at the end of the school year to assess progress and future planning.

» Staff and partners show initiative in recommending and leading new ways to improve outcomes.

» Responsibility for partnership coordination is distributed beyond the principal. Partners and educators share leadership functions in the school.

» Teacher leaders and other faculty have clearly defined roles around learning about partner contributions and skill sets in order to help embed these skills within staff as appropriate.

» Principal and partner(s) identify and plan for continued financial support as appropriate, including funding in school budget, continued funding from current public and private sources, and new joint fundraising.

SUGGESTED PRACTICES

» Develop plan with partners to craft a "train the trainer" model for faculty to embed the skills and programming provided by partners.

» Solicit feedback from staff, students, families and partners.

» Identify funding needs and develop a collaborative plan for sustainability.