Strategic Systems
Design Principles for Transformation and Essential Resource Questions

STRATEGIC DESIGN PRINCIPLE	WHAT WE WOULD SEE	ESSENTIAL RESOURCE QUESTION
1. Allocate resources to schools strategically		
Allocate resources equitably across schools, adjusting for student and school needs.	Students with similar needs receive the same level and quality of resources regardless of which school they attend. Students with greater learning challenges receive additional resources.	• How much does the district spend per pupil compared to similar districts? • Do students with greater learning challenges receive the same higher level of resources regardless of which school they attend? • How much does the district spend per pupil on small schools compared to large schools?
Create transparency and predictability that builds trust and allows school leaders to organize resources to fit school and student needs.	School budgets clear and understandable to principals, teachers and parents. School budgets remain stable from year to year and early projections allow effective planning.	• Can school leaders and the public access and understand school level budgets? • Can school leaders and the public compare budgets across schools that explain the reasons for differences? • When actual enrollment is lower than projections, are schools protected from program altering cuts in that year?
Ensure that school leaders have the flexibility to organize people, time and money to fit school and student needs.	Union contracts, district allocation and staffing practices that enable district leaders to organize staff and schedule student and teacher work day to fit school and student needs.	• Can school leaders select teachers who have the expertise they need independent of seniority and district transfer rules? • Can school leaders modify the school schedule without a full faculty vote? • Can school leaders trade in staff for other resources? • Can school leaders hire part-time or untraditional staff to fit school specific needs?

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2. Support schools to organize people, time and money to maximize student learning		
Design the portfolio of school sizes and program offerings to optimize resources in the context of existing facilities and projected enrollment.	School sizes and configurations planned strategically to reduce subscale operations and enable schools to concentrate expertise to serve special needs and programs effectively while balancing advantages of smaller, neighborhood schools and student access needs.	• How much does the district spend per pupil in small schools (<500 <350) as compared to larger schools? • Does the district have a clear plan for how to staff small and under-filled schools to ensure cost effectiveness and full provision of services for all students? • Does the district strategically manage the assignment of students with special learning needs to ensure access to high quality, cost-effective programs? • Do all students have access to high quality program offerings regardless of neighborhood?
Provide schools with strategic designs that organize resources to invest in teaching quality, provide individual attention and maximize academic time.	The district allocates school resources to support a menu of school designs. These designs define class sizes by grade and subject, leadership and teaming structures, intervention support strategies, student and teacher schedules, school support staff to maximize strategic use of resources in the context of state, local and contractual requirements.	• How does the length of school day for students compare to the national average of 6.5? • Can schools choose from a menu of school designs that balance trade-offs to fit the school's size, priorities and instructional designs? • Are class sizes, group sizes and teacher loads lower for core subjects, transition grades and students with greater learning challenges? • Could class sizes be raised strategically to fund more prioritized investment in teacher quality or priority subjects? • How much time do students spend by subject? • Do students not meeting expectations receive extra time and small group attention as needed?
Ensure school leaders have the capacity and information to use resources to match instructional design and student needs.	Principals make ongoing changes to their organization of people, time and dollars to reflect emerging student and teacher needs.	• Do principals work with central office leaders to make changes to assigned staff and other resources to fit their specific needs? • Do principals have access to useful information that compares their resource use to similar schools?

DESIGN PRINCIPLE	WHAT WE WOULD SEE	ESSENTIAL RESOURCE QUESTION
3. Ensure efficient provision of school services and operations		
Ensure efficient provision of school operations and services in a way that maximizes resources devoted to instruction.	Regular review of spending levels compared to benchmarks along with service delivery indicators including customer satisfaction.	• How does district spending on business services, operations and maintenance, central office and school leadership & administration compare to similar districts? • Does the district measure and report performance against service delivery targets? • If enrollment is declining in the district, have central services scaled back proportionately?
4. Create human capital systems that build capacity for instruction and leadership		
Hire and facilitate assignment of talented individuals who bring the right set of skills as fully developed as possible, for each school.	The district and schools can choose from a pool of highly qualified leaders and teachers who fit their unique skill and scheduling needs. Seniority does not outweigh qualifications and fit in selection process.	• Can schools select teachers who have the expertise they need independent of seniority and district transfer rules? • Do some schools have unfilled teaching positions in June for the next year? By August? • Does the distribution of novice, certified and highly rated teachers vary significantly across schools? • Are the best principals responsible for hiring the most new teachers?
Ensure access to coaching and expert support that matches the school's instructional design and responds to student and teacher learning needs.	Teachers have time and expert leadership to collaborate around improving instruction using assessment data aligned with state standards. Schools with limited capacity have access to support customized to meet their needs.	• How much does the district invest to provide expert support to teaching teams to improve instruction either through teacher leaders or coaches? • Do teachers have at least 90 minutes each week scheduled for collaborative work? • Does the district provide instruction-free time scheduled throughout the school year for whole school professional development and collaboration? (PD days)

Structure individual professional development, career opportunities, evaluation and compensation to encourage individual professional growth and retain the most effective teachers and leaders.	Clear professional standards for teachers and leaders integrate with a career structure, salary incentives and evaluation processes that encourage and reward individual growth. The system invests to provide professional development at career transition points: entry, remediation, retraining and promotion.	• Does the district define standards for teacher and principal proficiency and performance that guide evaluation and compensation? • Does the district actively manage out the lowest performing teachers? • How much does the district spend on support and induction for each new teacher and principal? • Does the district measure teacher and principal retention rates and track reasons for leaving? • Has the district structured the job of teacher so that the best teachers can exercise leadership opportunities while remaining in the classroom? • Can teachers with the greatest expertise and responsibility earn as much or more as they would in surrounding districts?

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5. Ensure access to aligned instructional systems that include standards for student learning		
Provide access to curriculum that aligns with performance standards.	Schools have access to curriculum defined at the grade and subject level that aligns with state and local standards.	• Does the district publish the learning standards, topics of study and approved curriculum materials for each grade level mapped to state and local standards? • How much does the district spend to provide and evaluate curriculum?
Provide access to assessments that align with standards and include timely feedback about student progress on standards.	Schools have access to assessment tools in ELA and Math at each grade that provide timely feedback in sufficient detail to inform instruction.	• Does the district offer or broker access to formative and summative assessment tools mapped to each subject and grade?
6. Create joint accountability with schools and school leaders for results		
Measure school performance and progress in ways that guide support and evaluation.	The district evaluates and measures school progress level using student outcomes and clearly defined standards for excellent school practice that are incorporated as part of school planning process and summarized for community and public accountability.	• Are there clearly stated measures and targets for excellent school practice and student performance that all district and school personnel understand and feel ownership over? • Are these measures and targets for excellent school practice and student performance embedded in the evaluations and walkthroughs that take place in the district? • Do district and school leaders share consequences of successfully completed or missed targets?
Organize central roles, timelines and processes to provide ongoing support to schools and extra assistance to low performers.	School supervisors and central office support providers review school plans and budgets and work together with schools to ensure professional development and provide other school support. Lower performing schools receive more support and less flexibility.	• Do school supervisors and central office support providers collaborate to review integrated budgets and strategic school plans with school leaders to ensure budget meets needs and priorities of each school? • Do schools receive differentiated support and guidance based upon level of performance and principal capacity? • Do those responsible for school support and supervision have workable caseloads given district strategy and school performance?