

# Co-Creating the Future

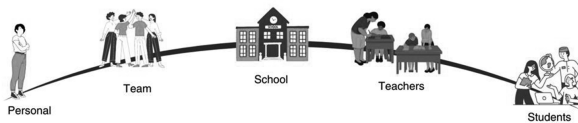
## Using the Horizon Map for Collective Visioning

The **Horizon Map** is a particularly effective tool for facilitating this collective sensemaking. To use it, invite your team to answer a guiding question, such as, “*What do we hope our school becomes in the next 5 years?*”—on sticky notes. Group those ideas into clusters, label emerging themes, and use those insights to inform a mission and vision that reflect shared aspirations. The result is a future your school community believes in—and is willing to work toward together.

### Horizon Map

*Create a Big Picture of Your Concerns*

#### ASPIRATIONS



#### CHALLENGES

To use a Horizon Map, start by drawing it on a large flip chart or whiteboard with space for participants to add sticky notes. Ask a thoughtful question to get people thinking—for example, “What do we hope for once our students leave for their next school?” Participants then write their responses on sticky notes using complete phrases (such as “Support every student’s emotional well-being”) and place them on the map. Once everyone has added their ideas, the group silently organizes the notes into clusters of similar ideas.

When two or more notes repeat a theme, stack them. These clusters represent common hopes or challenges. Give each cluster a title that captures its central idea—these are your school’s emerging themes. You can now use these themes to guide the creation of a mission and vision that everyone helped create. This process fosters deep reflection and shared understanding, ensuring that your school’s mission and vision are grounded in what your community truly values.

### STEP 1: PREPARE THE SPACE

Use a large whiteboard, poster paper, or chart paper.

Draw a wide “horizon” line across the top, labeled with a guiding question:

*“What do we hope our school becomes in the next 5 years?”*

or

*“What do we want for our students in the years ahead?”*

### STEP 2: FRAME THE ACTIVITY

Briefly explain the purpose: *“This is a chance for us to name our shared hopes for the future of our school and students. Your ideas will directly inform our mission and vision.”*

Emphasize psychological safety: all voices matter, and divergent views are welcome.

### STEP 3: INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION AND INPUT

Distribute sticky notes and markers to participants.

Ask each person to write one idea per sticky note, using **complete phrases** (e.g., *“Ensure every student reads on grade level by third grade”* or *“Support each learner’s emotional well-being”*).

Encourage quiet, individual thinking for 5–7 minutes. Each person should aim to contribute at least 3–5 sticky notes.

### STEP 4: ORGANIZE THE MAP

Invite participants to place their sticky notes on the map.

Once all ideas are posted, the group reviews them silently.

Facilitate silent grouping: participants cluster sticky notes that express similar themes. Encourage stacking notes when the same idea emerges more than once.

Once clustering is complete, read the grouped notes aloud and ask the group to **name each cluster** with a theme title (e.g., “*Equity and Access*,” “*Whole Child Supports*,” “*Instructional Excellence*”).

### **STEP 5: DEBRIEF AND REFLECT**

Facilitate a short discussion:

*What do these themes tell us about what we value as a school community?*

*How might these themes shape our mission and vision?*

Take a photo of the final Horizon Map or transcribe it for future planning.

### **STEP 6: MOVE TOWARD DRAFTING VISION AND MISSION**

Use the named themes to begin drafting a vision (an aspirational future) and a mission (present purpose and strategies).

Ensure that all themes are considered and the language remains grounded in what participants shared.

### **WHY IT WORKS**

This process builds shared ownership and coherence. It taps into the collective hopes of the school community, fosters psychological safety, and ensures that the school’s mission and vision are not top-down statements but co-created commitments.