

DIMENSIONS OF POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IN THE SUPERINTENDENCY

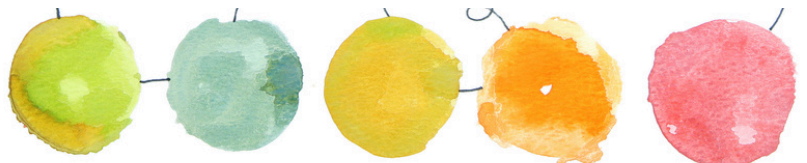
MICRO (Self)



MESO (School District & Local Community)



MACRO (National & State)



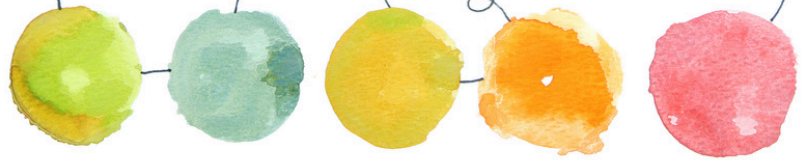


FRAMEWORK FOR POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IN THE SUPERINTENDENCY: KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND DISPOSITIONS

Each dimension requires a specific set of knowledge, skills and dispositions essential for superintendents to navigate politics successfully. In the chart that follows, we highlight key examples.

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 awareness	Visioning & communicating Political mapping Movement building & 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

* These skills represent the “core” of political leadership in education.



MICRO (Self)

A superintendent critically examines self as a leader.

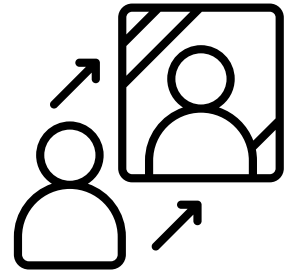
Identity

Critical Examination

Groundedness

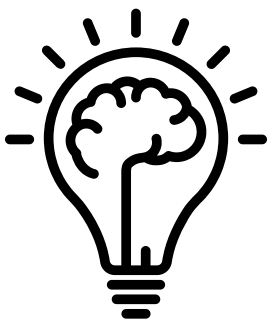
The superintendent as a political leader reflects on the influence of their identity (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, political affiliation), stays grounded in their personal values, and consistently strives to make principled decisions that support a school system to ensure all children thrive in school.

Superintendents must start by **reflecting on who they are, their own political views** on a variety of issues, and **how it influences their leadership** in relation to the context in which they lead. **That is because while our identities influence our value systems, they can also produce political blind spots.**



Sometimes, **drawing on our personal experiences can give us the courage to lead for justice.** Other times, our identities, or rather, our egos, **work against us and can lead to defensive postures, dodging of responsibilities, and avoidance of criticism.** **Self-work is the work of political leadership.** It requires **emotional intelligence** and **cultural responsiveness.**

Dispositions such as humility, self-care, and a growth mindset support superintendents to anticipate, embrace, and navigate political situations. **Humility** provides a space for bridging political divides since it “helps people let go of defensiveness, take in information that challenges their political views, and see the humanity in people on the other side of the political spectrum.” Leaders need to be aware of fixed mindsets when facing challenges.



Superintendents must be mindful of one’s own political biases and commit to **understanding multiple perspectives** with persistence in learning. **Resilience** is the “ability to adapt to life’s misfortunes and setbacks.” **Building inner strength and wellbeing rituals support superintendents in proactive and responsive ways.**



MESO (School District & Local Community)

A superintendent leads a school district by working across differences.

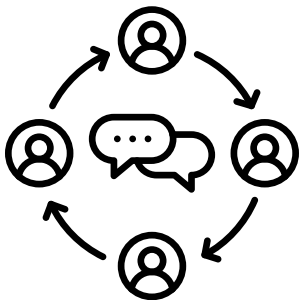
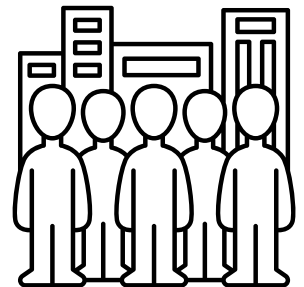
Constituent Group Awareness

Proactive Leadership

Presence

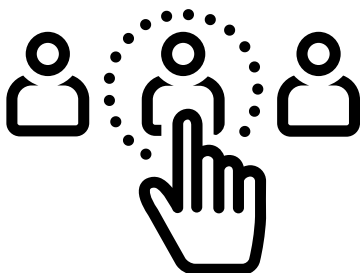
The superintendent as a political leader models how to work across differences through shared visioning, co-construction of strategies, consistent communication, and authentic engagement with students, families, educators, labor partners, school boards, and community partners. The superintendent influences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

Superintendents must have **deep knowledge** of the typical **local constituent groups** (school board, union, media, and parent organizations), **how they work, and how to engage them productively. Superintendents need to...**

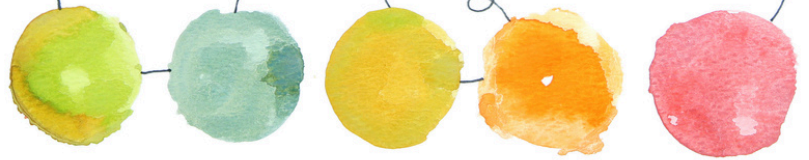


- **Visioning: Develop affirmative visions** for public education that **focus on the well-being of all children** that speak to a broader swath of constituents.
- **Communications:** Learn how to **use more descriptive, unifying language** and **provide access** to the real work that is happening in schools through data, information, stories, and examples.

- **Discernment: Identify which political issues to take up** and **which need to be deflected or avoided.** They also can be more thoughtful about **transparency** of district decision-making.
- **Support and Partnership:** Consider **how to support, guide and protect students, teachers and principals** and how to create **strong partnerships** with parents, community organizations, and other institutional leaders.



- **Political Mapping and Movement building: Practice political empathy, understand power** and how to **map it and leverage it**, and learn about **community organizing.**



MACRO (National & State)

A superintendent understands the national and state political landscape.

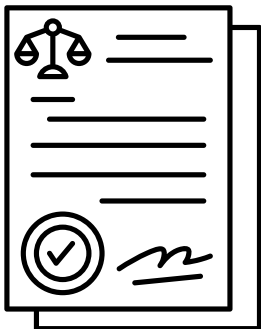
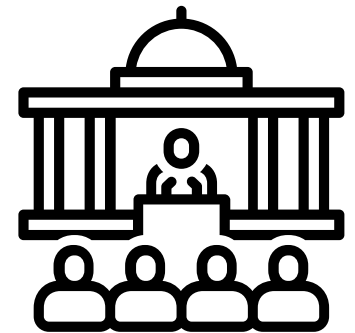
Major Education Issues

Sense-making

Cognizance

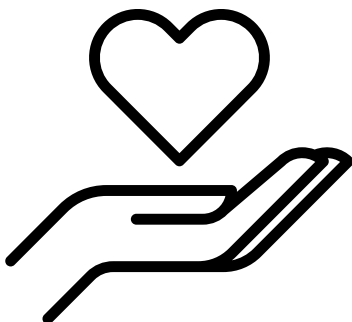
A superintendent understands the national and state political landscape. The superintendent as a political leader understands the laws and policies that protect children, interrogates the opinions of advocacy groups that threaten those protections, and considers the impact of current events on the wellbeing of students, families and staff and acts accordingly.

it is crucial that superintendents simultaneously deepen their **understanding of local**, as well as **state and national politics**.



Superintendent must **know what laws and policies exist**, be **informed about the history** of those laws and policies and their **intent**, so that they can successfully **advocate for or against** them, **interpret** them with the support of legal counsel (without over-interpreting them), and **implement** them.

It is especially important that superintendents have a **deep understanding of laws that protect children**, like Title IX and IDEA, while **analyzing new laws that might threaten those rights**.



The role of superintendent in politics requires **exhibiting leadership** based on **authentic core-values**, in both words and actions, that may move beyond one's local community but carry to surrounding communities within and across state lines.