



CASB ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2025

Colorado Association of School Boards

SUMMIT SCHOOL DISTRICT

District Coherence

From the Boardroom to the Classroom

Presented by

Consuelo Redhorse, Board President

Vanessa Agee, Board Member

Dr. Tony Byrd, Superintendent

Laura Cotsapas, Chief Transformation Officer

What You'll Take Away

SESSION OUTCOMES

- 1 A common understanding of Summit School District's coherence journey
- 2 Opportunity to reflect on coherence in your own system

"This isn't about having all the answers—it's about learning together by sharing our process and lessons learned."

IN THIS SESSION

Why "more communication" isn't the answer—and why getting into the weeds doesn't equal outcomes

The hidden gap between planning and execution

The difference between activity and true execution

How to track progress without micromanaging

What is Coherence?

"The shared depth of understanding about the purpose and nature of the work."

— Fullan & Quinn, *Coherence* (2016)

WHAT COHERENCE IS NOT

- ✗ Just alignment of goals, resources, and structures
- ✗ A slick strategic plan that sits on a shelf
- ✗ More initiatives, programs, or communication

The test: Can everyone in the system articulate the key ideas and actions that define the work?

THE COHERENCE FRAMEWORK

1

Focusing Direction

Building collective purpose and clarity

2

Cultivating Collaborative Cultures

Clarifying individual and team roles

3

Deepening Learning

Building new knowledge and pedagogical practices

4

Securing Accountability

Internal accountability that drives external results

These four components must be addressed simultaneously and continuously.

OPENING ACTIVITY

Coherence Temperature Check

On a scale of 1-10, how aligned do you feel your district is from boardroom vision to classroom practice?

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Write your number on a sticky note
- 2 Post on the spectrum wall chart
- 3 Pair-share with a neighbor:

"What's one factor affecting your rating?"



5 minutes

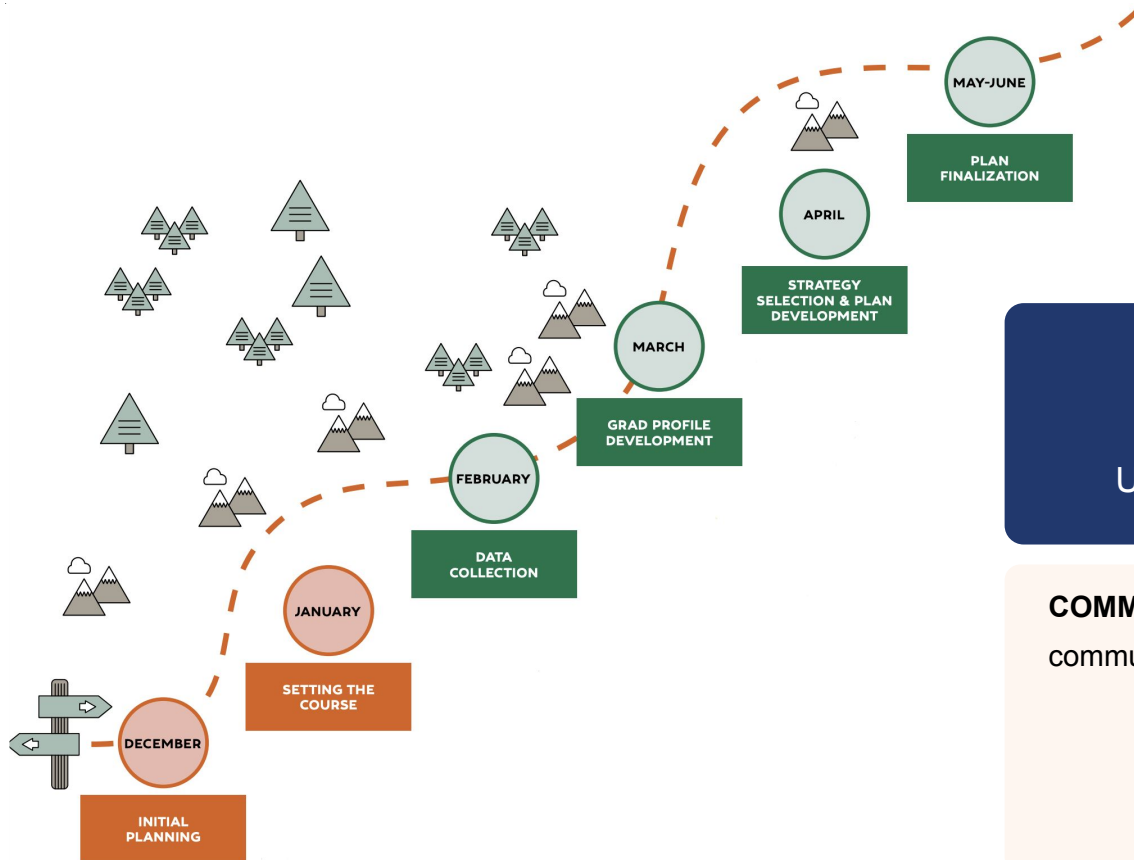
PART ONE

The Summit Journey



2020-2021

Building Our Strategic Plan & Graduate Profile



Graduate Profile
3 Strategic Plan Focus Areas
Updated Vision, Mission, Core Values

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: Students, parents, community partners, district staff, and board members

14

Listening Sessions

172

Participants

Our Strategic Plan & Graduate Profile



FOCUS AREA ONE:
**ACADEMIC AND
PERSONAL SUCCESS
FOR EVERY STUDENT**



FOCUS AREA TWO:
**EQUITY SEEKING
SYSTEM**



FOCUS AREA THREE:
**FAMILY AND
COMMUNITY
PARTNERSHIP**

The Graduate Profile is the "why" behind everything we do.

Clarifying Direction: Policy Governance

BEFORE POLICY GOVERNANCE

- Agendas without a clear endgame
- No measures of how we were performing
- Missing documentation and planning forward
- Strategic snapshots without continuity

WHY WE MADE THE SHIFT

We needed a framework that would keep us focused on outcomes rather than operations—one that connects board vision to daily classroom work.

HOW POLICY GOVERNANCE HELPS

- ✓ **Ends statements** bring everything together—they define what success looks like
- ✓ Staff understand their work through the **Graduate Profile lens**
- ✓ **Board sets direction**; superintendent executes
- ✓ Strategic conversations about **where we want to go**

"The Graduate Profile is the practical expression of our global ends."

Developing Ends Statements

The purpose of Ends policies is “to ensure that the organization produces economically justifiable, properly chosen, well-targeted results.”

Global Ends Statement:

Every student will achieve academic and personal success to belong, thrive, and foster civic engagement and socioeconomic agility in an ever-changing global community.

ENDS 1: ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Every student will demonstrate annual academic growth and achievement that meets or exceeds grade-level expectations.

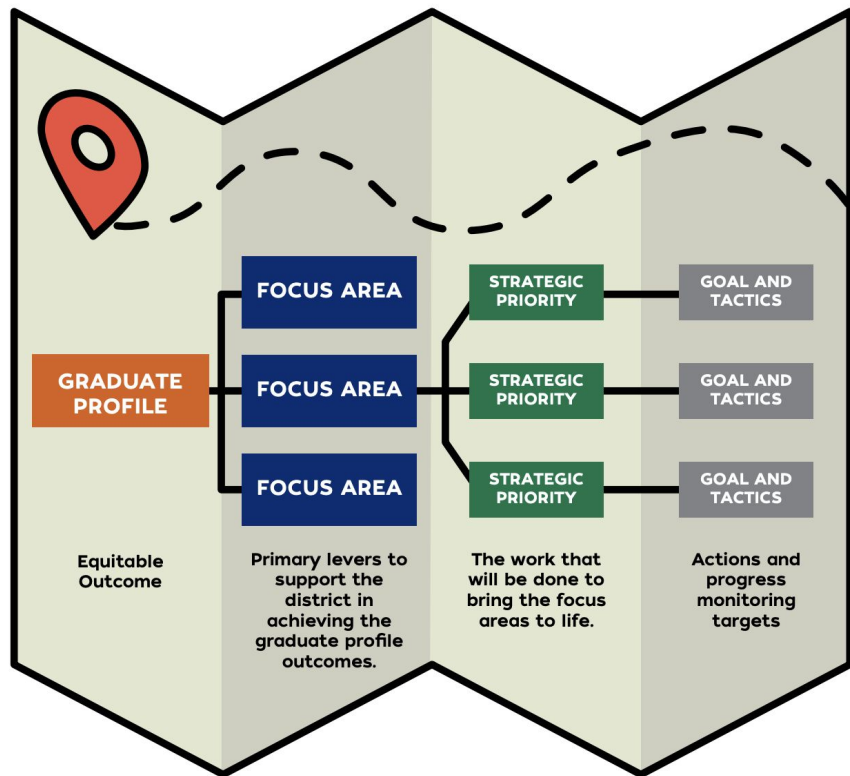
ENDS 2: PERSONAL SUCCESS

Every student will be prepared, growth-oriented, curious, courageous, and globally aware.

ENDS 3: ECONOMIC SUCCESS

Every student will demonstrate achievement predictive of post-secondary readiness and socioeconomic agility.

Now What?



THE CHALLENGE

Beautiful plan, but how do we operationalize it?

We had vague goals with outcomes that wouldn't move student achievement. The gap between vision and classroom reality was real.

Clarifying our Goals



**STRATEGIC PRIORITY:
HIGH QUALITY INSTRUCTION**

Summit School District will provide high quality classroom instruction by ensuring systems and structures are in place for each and every student to be successful.

Goal: 100% of students will experience a year of academic growth in a year's time. Academic instruction and a structured system of support will make this possible.

GOALS	
Goal 1	Goal 2
<p>Increase student achievement for both Math and Literacy so that by 2026:</p> <p>➤ 70% of students will meet or exceed Literacy expectations as measured by CMAS and P/SAT</p> <p>➤ 55% of students will meet or exceed Math expectations as measured by CMAS and P/SAT</p>	<p>Accelerate student growth in both Math and Literacy so that by 2026 gaps in student achievement between white students and other subpopulation (Hispanic Students, Multilingual Learners, Free and Reduced Lunch Eligible, Students with IEPs, and Gifted and Talented Students) on CMAS and P/SAT are significantly reduced.</p> <p>➤ Subpopulation student achievement for each student group will be 50% or more of white student achievement by Spring 2026. (Current gaps are as large as populations scoring 1% of the achievement of white students.)</p> <p>➤ Subpopulation student growth for each student group will be 60% or higher annually.</p>

2023-2024

From Strategy to Action: The Operational Plan

Updating our strategic plan with concrete goals, benchmarks, and deliverables

THE GAP

No benchmarks or metrics to measure progress

Strategic plan existed but lacked actionable measures



CREATING KPIS

Key Performance Indicators tied to student outcomes

Measurable indicators that track real progress



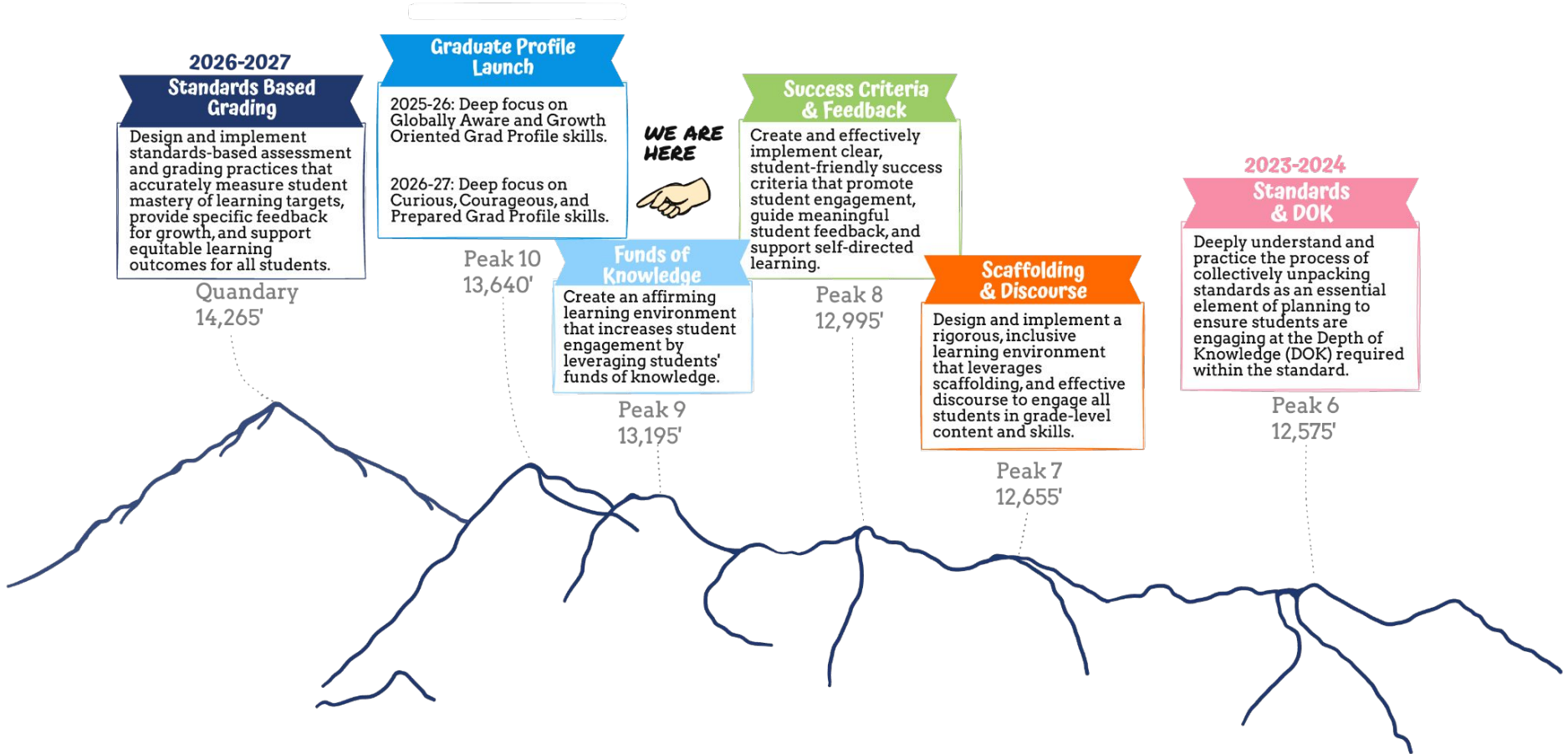
THE RESULT

Concrete goals with clear deliverables

Everyone knows what success looks like

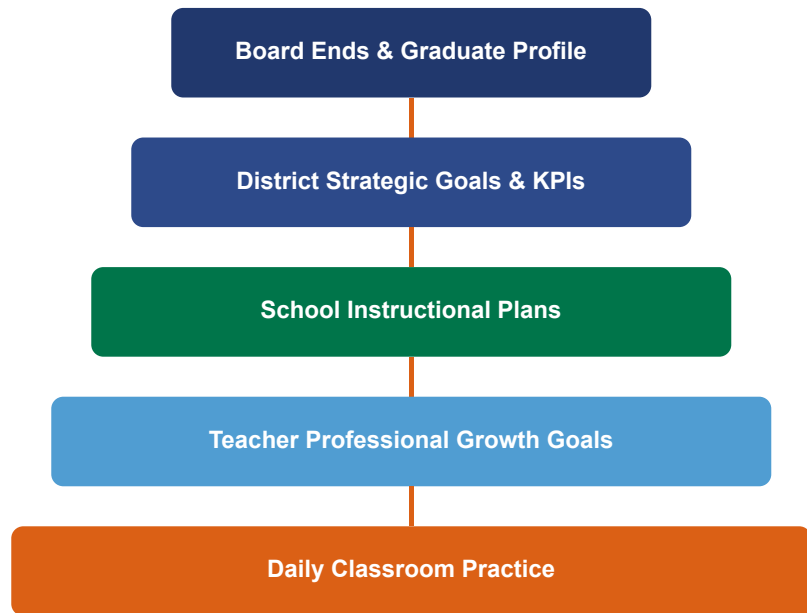
Key Insight: KPIs for organizational health help us track progress without micromanaging—we focus on outcomes, not activities.

A Multi-Year Learning Plan



Coherence Without Compliance

When staff and teachers understand the plan, all learning and classroom observations align.



THE POWER OF CLARITY

- Teachers know what's expected
- Principals align observations to goals
- Professional learning connects to strategy
- Resources flow to priorities

District Professional Learning & Instructional Rounds

The System in Action

Board Ends: Academic Success



District Priority: Accelerate Literacy Growth for MLLs



School Plan Priority: Strengthen Language Scaffolding in All Content Areas



Teacher Professional Goal: Implement oral language scaffolds to support MLL students



Monthly PLC Collaboration: Teachers with similar focus share strategies and analyze student work



Classroom Implementation: Teacher tries new language scaffolds



Student Impact: Increased numbers of MLL students access grade level standards through language scaffolds



Demonstration of Learning: Teacher shares journey and evidence with PLC colleagues

Keeping a Tight Focus

THE CRITICAL QUESTION

Is IB meeting the expectations of our Ends?

This question led us to one of our most significant decisions—sunsetting IB programs that weren't serving all students equitably.

THE REALITY CHECK

IB programs (PYP and MYP) weren't serving all students equitably. Data showed achievement gaps persisting.

Having clear goals, outcomes, and deliverables allowed us to maintain focus and make hard decisions.

THE BOLD MOVE

- Sunset IB Primary Years and Middle Years Programmes
- Maintain IB Diploma Programme at high school
- Ground in our own instructional framework centered on the Graduate Profile

HOW WE STAY FOCUSED

Ends statements keep the board from being reactive

A more specific strategic plan gives us criteria for everyday decisions

KPIs tell us if we're making progress

Our Impact: Early Wins

Coherence is a journey, not a destination. Here's where we're seeing progress.

ALIGNMENT

Shared Language

Staff across all 9 schools can articulate the Graduate Profile and connect their work to it

GOVERNANCE

Clear Roles

Board sets direction; superintendent executes—with accountability built in

FOCUS

Strategic Decisions

Made hard calls (like sunseting IB) based on evidence and ends alignment

TRANSPARENCY

Measurable Progress

KPIs give everyone visibility into what's working and what needs attention

The Work Continues: We're still learning, iterating, and improving. Coherence requires ongoing commitment.

Our Impact: The Data So Far

Math Surge: District-wide CMAS math achievement climbed nearly **14 percentage points** from the prior year.

ELA Success: Elementary English Language Arts scores have improved annually and now surpass the state average.

Graduation Rates: The four-year graduation rate stands strong at 90.3%, outperforming the state average of 84.2%.

Combating Absenteeism: SSD successfully decreased chronic absenteeism by 6.4 percentage points.



What Coherence Requires

Lessons from Summit's journey that may apply to your context

1

Start with Clear Ends

Define what success looks like before deciding how to get there. Policy governance provides a framework for this.

2

Measure What Matters

KPIs should track outcomes, not just activities. This allows oversight without micromanagement.

3

Be Willing to Pivot

When programs don't serve your ends, have the courage to make changes—even when they're difficult.

Remember: Coherence isn't about more communication—it's about aligned action from boardroom to classroom.

LET'S DISCUSS

Questions & Discussion

We'd love to hear your thoughts, questions, and experiences with building coherence
in your own districts.

SUMMIT SCHOOL DISTRICT

Thank You

We hope our journey provides useful insights for your own coherence work.

CONNECT WITH US

- **Consuelo Redhorse** — Board President
- **Vanessa Agee** — Board Vice President
- **Dr. Tony Byrd** — Superintendent
- **Laura Cotsapas** — Chief Transformation Officer

Summit School District

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