



**ACES GOVERNING BOARD MINUTES
THURSDAY, February 9, 2023
SDA Building, 205 Skiff Street, Hamden, CT**

Governing Board: Anthony Perugini, Cheshire; Laura Harris, Derby; Kevin Shea, Hamden; Meriden; Ethel Grant, Naugatuck; Martin Rudnick, North Haven; Susan Riccio, Orange; Carol Oladele, RSD #5 Amity; Michael Yamin, RSD#16; Ray Ross, Wallingford; Thomas Van Stone, Waterbury; Roberta Leonard, Wolcott

ACES: Olga Simoes, Steven Cook, Timothy Howes, Thomas Danehy, William Rice, Steven Cook, Rebecca Cuevas, Dee Colson

Not Present: Ansonia, Bethany, Branford, East Haven, Meriden, Middletown, Milford, New Haven, North Branford, Oxford, RSD #13, RSD #16, Seymour, West Haven, Woodbridge

Guest: William Jacobs AEA

1. Welcome/Call to Order

Ms. Susan Riccio called the ACES Governing Board meeting to order at 12:01 pm after determining a quorum was present.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

Ms. Susan Riccio

3. Public Participation/Communications

In honor of Black History month, Ms. Ethel Grant shared a poem by Harriet Tubman. Dr. Danehy shared information that Magnet Schools of America recognized Wintergreen Interdistrict Magnet School as a school of distinction.

4. Approval of Minutes

Ms. Ethel Grant motioned to accept the minutes of the ACES Governing Board of January 12, 2023. Mr. Ray Ross seconded the motion.

All in favor: Motion Passed Unanimously
Opposed: None
Abstention: None

VOTE

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5. Executive Director’s Report - Dr. Thomas M. Danehy

Dr. Danehy presented the ACES 3.0 Design Plan, a copy of which is attached to these minutes, along with a PowerPoint presentation explaining the history behind the process, Team Process, Data Conclusions, Specifications, Bold Steps, proposed Organizational Structure, need for changes in Resource Allocation, Staffing Needs, Expected Outcomes, and Timeline for plan implementation. He also explained the terms of the Tentative Agreement between ACES and CSEA Employees. The tentative agreement covers 516 employees at ACES. The three-year contract cost is \$3.3M, roughly \$1.1M per year. The contract includes both step and wage increases. Later in the meeting, Mr. Rice explained the internal ACES School Calendars 2023-2024

6. Filing of the Fiscal Report (subject to audit) - Ms. Simoes/Ms. Harris

February projections reflect a surplus based on the projected revenues, encumbrances, and expenditures. The revenue and expenditure projections show slight fluctuation based on the special education school enrollment, program needs, and service contracts. We are diligently monitoring school and program expenditures to ensure a positive outcome. January billing has been completed and reflected in the billed-to-date column of the fiscal report along with the projected revenues, which presents a positive outlook for the year-end cash flow position.

Ms. Laura Harris motioned to accept the filing of the fiscal report.
Ms. Ethel Grant seconded the motion.

All in favor: Motion Passed Unanimously
Opposed: None
Abstention: None

VOTE

7. Approval of Human Resources Report - Mr. Cook

Mr. Cook presented the Human Resources Report and reported 31 new hires in various positions, 11 transfers/position changes, 0 retirements, 18 resignations, 11 leaves, and 11 terminations/position changes. ACES Second Annual Career fair will take place on March 8, 2023, at Leeder Hill Campus in Hamden. ACES is offering a recruitment incentive to fill many of our open positions.

Mr. Ray Ross motioned to accept the filing of the Human Resources Report.
Ms. Roberta Leonard seconded the motion.

All in favor: Motion Passed Unanimously
Opposed: None
Abstention: None

VOTE

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8. Curriculum & Instruction Report - Mr. Rice

Mr. Rice reported on the upcoming Magnet, Specialized Schools, and Programs. The ACES 2023-2024 School Calendars were presented to the Board. ACES is in full swing with Magnet School recruitment. Interviews for the 88 Bassett, CHASE, and WIMS projects took place in January. Wintergreen was identified as the 2023 Magnet School of Distinction by Magnet Schools of America.

9. Early Head Start Update – Ms. Rebecca Cuevas

Rebecca Cuevas requests the approval of the Early Head Start monthly reports and contract summaries.

Ms. Roberta Lenoard motioned to accept the filing of the Early Head Start report.

Ms. Laura Harris seconded the motion.

All in favor: Motion Passed Unanimously

Opposed: None

Abstention: None

VOTE

10. Possible Executive Session for the purpose of discussing terms and implications of a tentative agreement between the ACES Board and CSEA

No Executive Session was held.

11. New Business

1. Mr.Martin Rudnick made a motion, seconded by Ms.Ethel Grant, to approve a tentative agreement between Governing Board and CSEA for the period July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2025. The motion carried unanimously.
2. Ms.Ethel Grant made a motion, seconded by Mr.Martin Rudnick, to approve ACES Design Plan 3.0, Specifications, and Bold Steps, effective February 9, 2023. The motion carried unanimously.
3. Mr. Ray Ross made a motion, seconded by Ms.Laura Harris, to approve revisions to the ACES Organizational Chart effective February 9, 2023. The motion carried unanimously.
4. Mr. Martin Rudnick made a motion, seconded by Ms. Ethel Grant, to promote Emily Freel to Director of Core Knowledge and Andrew Skarzynski to Assistant Superintendent, effective February 10, 2023. The motion carried unanimously.
5. Mr. Ray Ross made a motion, seconded by Ms.Ethel Grant, to approve the position of Executive for External Services and to add a clerk of the works consultant for each construction project at ACES at Chase, 88 Bassett Road, and Wintergreen Interdistrict Magnet School, effective March 10, 2023. The motion carried unanimously.

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- 6. Ms. Ethel Grant made a motion, seconded by Ms. Laura Harris, to eliminate the following positions effective March 9, 2023, unless otherwise expressed in a contract or terms of employment: Director of Special Programs and Community Outreach, Director of ESSR grant, Director of Construction Services, Director of Extension Therapy Services, Coordinator of Behavior Services, Office Manager ETS, Secretary ETS, clerks ETS, Assistant Director of PDSI, and two teaching positions (one at Wintergreen and one at Mill Road for two retiring teachers the motion carried unanimously.
- 7. Ms. Ethel Grant made a motion, seconded by Mr. Ray Ross, to approve a resolution for fund sourcing of ACES Up electric vehicle support. The motion carried unanimously.
- 8. Ms. Ethel Grant made a motion, seconded by Ms. Carol Oladele, to approve ACES internal school calendars. The motion carried unanimously.
- 9. Mr. Ray Ross made a motion, seconded by Ms. Laura Harris, to name the facility at 88 Bassett Road ACES at 88 Bassett Road. The motion carried unanimously.

All in favor: Motion Passed Unanimously
 Opposed: None
 Abstention: None

VOTE

12. Adjournment:

A motion to adjourn was made by Ms. Susan Riccio, seconded by Mr. Ray Ross, and the motion was carried out at 1:53 pm.

13. Attachments

ACES Design Plan 3.0
 ACES Design Plan 3.0 PowerPoint Presentation

14. Other

- a. Finance Committee Meeting, March 9, 2023
- b. Regular Board Meeting, March 9, 2023

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ACES 3.0

A Design for the Future

Doreen Marvin & Sheila King

February 6, 2023



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ABOUT ACES

Area Cooperative Educational Services (ACES) has served southcentral Connecticut as one of six regional educational service agencies (RESA) in the state since 1972. RESAs are designed to provide quality, cost-effective education resources, programs, and services to the state's public schools. ACES embraces this charge fully to meet the diverse needs of its member districts, and this is reflected by its mission, vision and organizational beliefs.

Mission

Dedicated to enhancing and transforming lives through education, innovation, and leadership.

Vision

To create an equitable and socially just world, one life at a time.

Organizational Beliefs

- Each individual has inherent worth
- All individuals can learn
- High expectations and effort are essential for higher achievement
- Quality education provides the foundation for the success of the individual and the community
- Diversity strengthens an organization
- Individuals are accountable for their actions
- Everyone has a responsibility to each other and to contribute to the common good
- Honesty and respect are essential for building trusting relationships
- A positive attitude enhances performance
- Collaboration enhances productivity and generates creativity
- Families are essential partners in education
- The willingness to change is necessary for individuals to grow and organizations to thrive

According to the 2021-22 ACES Annual Report:

ACES' dedication to better serve its community and its commitment to equity and social justice is demonstrated by its wide array of services and programs. These services range from transportation, professional development and school improvement services, technology, translation, international, security, and occupational and physical therapy. ACES operates the Open and Magnet School Parent Choice programs for New Haven County, provides recruitment programs aimed at diversifying the educator workforce, has a federally funded Early Head Start Program and a vocational and life skills program for developmentally and physically disabled adults ages 21 and older.

In fiscal year 2022, ACES employed 1014 people and managed a budget of \$113 million. Those revenue sources include student tuition, fees for services, state and federal competitive funds, private sources, as well as community grants. To learn more about ACES, visit www.aces.org.

THE DESIGN PROCESS & THE ACES CONTEXT

ACES first engaged with a Strategic Design process in the late fall of 2015. In 2015, they contracted Dr. Susan Leddick of PKR, Inc., to lead a design process that would **engage** stakeholders inside and outside the agency, **envision** a bold Next Generation of the agency's development, and lay plans to **enact** the first steps toward that Next Generation. This plan served ACES very positively; the resulting bold steps and a subsequent design and bold steps created in the fall of 2018 also resulted in positive outcomes. As we know, in 2020 the world turned upside down with the pandemic of epic proportions. *ACES' design and bold steps, particularly about being a nimble organization, served them well.* While as challenged as all organizations were during that time, ACES was poised to be responsive and proactive. Why was that? ACES design work has been about influencing its preferred future, rather than predicting a future and trying to align to the predictions.

Design differs from traditional strategic planning in several important ways. First, design asks the question, "What would we have if we could have what we want?" Strategic planning asks, "How do we predict likely trends in the future and prepare ourselves for success?" Second, design assumes that planning begins from a clean sheet – as though the existing organization had been destroyed overnight – and seeks to replace the organization with an exciting vision that can succeed *in the present*. Strategic planning assumes that the current organization will change incrementally for success *in the predicted future*. Third, strategic planning is often a linear thinking and decision process while design relies on *iteration* or repeated cycles of putting ideas forth, reflecting on them, and returning to them repeatedly as the design process advances. Fourth, design emphasizes the need to integrate parts into a coherent whole, while strategic planning sometimes produces confusion about how different goals and actions fit together. The coherent whole aligns the **function** of the system with the **structure** of the system and the **processes** within the system. Finally, design stems from what people want, not what they want to be eliminated. *The design process gave ACES the license to lead and influence during and post-pandemic from a place of abundant thinking and creative solutions to a complex problem facing staff, customers, communities, schools, students, and entire families.*

The fall of 2022 had ACES re-evaluating their work “post-pandemic” and knew that the context for their shareholders had changed and that ACES has changed. So, what, now what? ACES again engaged in the design process, this time contracting with the Association of Education Service Agencies (AESAs) and two senior consultants who were mentored for many years by Dr. Susan Leddick. Leaders at ACES invited a diverse Design Team (listed in the padlet resource link) to guide the process. The Design Team met from October 2022 through February 2023. The external consultants from AESA, Doreen Marvin and Sheila King conducted interviews of internal and external shareholders to gather information for all components of the design - specifications, set of interacting challenges, solutions, and the context. The design team included the themes from these interviews and a plethora of data (compiled by ACES’ very competent staff) as they worked to develop this ACES 3.0 design. Furthermore, the design team met both in person and virtually. The facilitators met with the ACES’ Executive Leadership Team once virtually and with the Executive Director three times to further the robustness of the design plan.

It is important to understand that the design team learned about and focused their work on the parts and dimensions of a system as defined by system scientist Jamshid Gharajedaghi.¹ The design team looked at *function, structure, and processes* as mentioned previously, and they kept the *five dimensions* in the forefront of their work. The dimensions as revealed by Gharajedaghi are drawn from social systems science and provided structure for this design work.

- The **Power** dimension focuses attention on decision making and governance. It is marked by appropriate levels of responsibility and authority along with processes and structures that reinforce the exchange of information necessary for leaders to provide guidance and for staff to execute with confidence.
- The **Wealth** dimension is about throughput processes or how ACES creates value. *Value* also extends to include the utility of programs and services for clients and community and the resulting generation and distribution of resources.
- The **Beauty** dimension addresses membership and engagement, the degree to which individuals and organizations seek a relationship with ACES. The ability to convene diverse groups in

¹ Gharajedaghi, J. (2012) Systems thinking: Managing chaos and complexity: A platform for designing business architecture. Burlington, MA: Morgan Kaufmann Publishers.

collective work, serve both adult and young shareholders, and influence the policy of the state has long been a strategic resource at ACES.

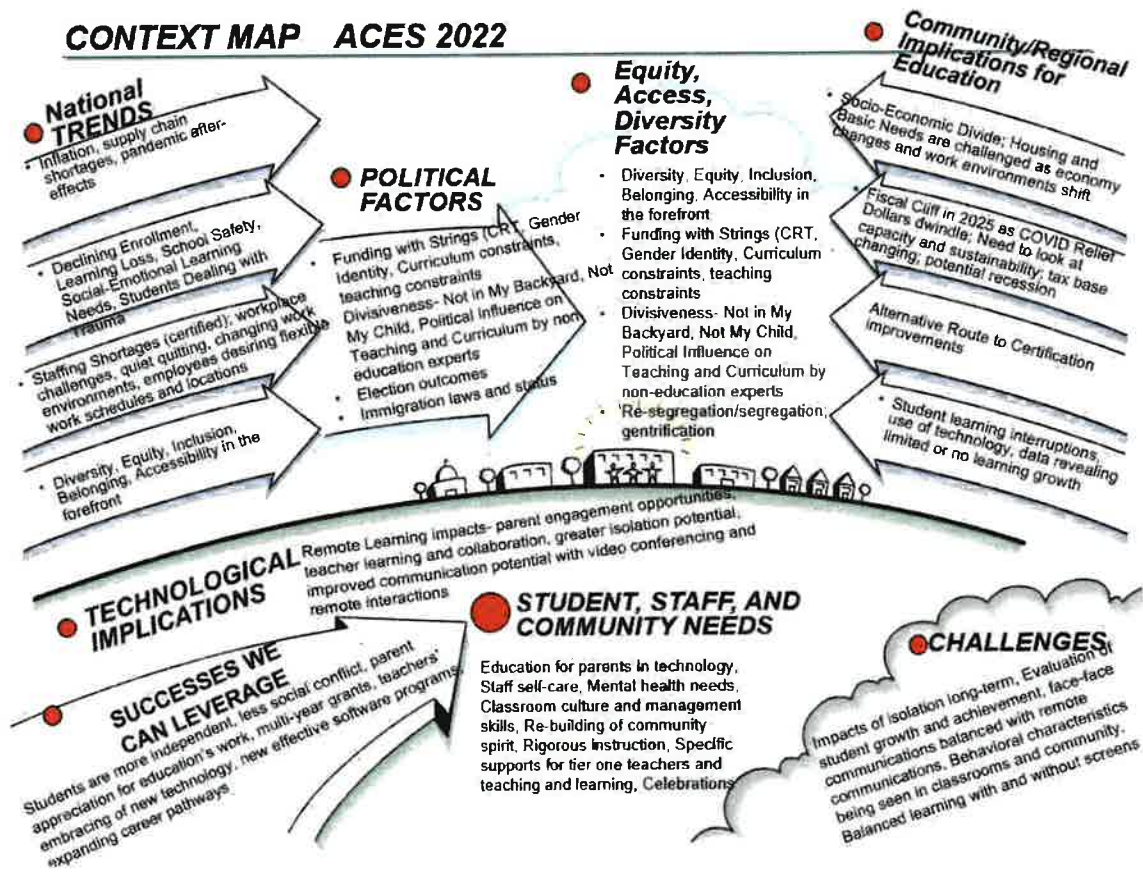
- The **Values** dimension (not to be confused with the use of the term *value* in item two above) involves processes for productive conflict management. Some degree of conflict over ends and means is essential to spur innovation and improvement, and it is important for leaders to encourage it. Destructive conflict, on the other hand, leads to stalemate and status quo—clearly an undesirable outcome to be avoided. Clear decision criteria, frequent meetings to address problems early, and explicit communication channels help ACES leaders to promote the right kind of conflict and avoid the wrong kind.
- The **Knowledge** dimension draws attention to ACES' practices and system for learning and control—particularly the organization's use of data to assure that conclusions and predictions are sound enough to guide future action. In addition, this dimension focuses on the continued development of strategic knowledge resources. Knowledge resources require action to be converted to products and services that are valuable to clients and communities.

ACES 3.0 addresses the current *context*, desired *functions* of the agency, preferred *structures*, and *processes* to begin moving the whole system. This 2023 design sets in motion a set of specifications, a structure to support the new processes, new learning, and new reality for their staff, members, and educational community. All their work will, again, serve ACES with a creative pathway to influence and invest in their shareholders for positive outcomes.

Designers bring empathy and creativity to social challenges.²

In our first Design Team meeting in October 2022, members of the team learned about the interviews conducted by the facilitators, and they dug into a binder of data. The learning and the subsequent dialogues resulted in a clearer understanding of the current context for ACES, which is represented in the following context map:

² *What is Design AIGA*. Available at: <http://www.aiga.org/why-design/> (Accessed: February 5, 2023).



Context Observations and Themes

As the team worked, they identified and discussed a diverse set of trends, factors, needs, challenges, and successes influencing the current context. Several themes emerged from this process:

- The pandemic has several after-effects impacting students, staff, and the community.
 - Learning loss and social-emotional learning needs for students are significant, requiring different approaches to instruction and student support.
 - Staff members have also experienced isolation and trauma, forcing the organization to evaluate how it provides a more diverse set of supports to staff members.
 - ACES and other employers are experiencing staffing shortages.
 - COVID relief funding provides both opportunities and challenges as a funding cliff looms.

- Multiple factors around equity, access, and diversity are in the forefront.
 - Socio-economic challenges continue to impact students and families, especially as the economy changes and inflation grows.
 - Curriculum and instructional practices are being impacted by non-educators and divisive politics.
 - Local, state, and national political landscapes are becoming more divisive.
- Technology changes have presented new opportunities for communication, instruction, and collaboration between and among students, parents, and teachers; however, some report technology has contributed to feeling of isolation and better skills are needed to effectively leverage technology across the board.

The themes begin to show how the organization is impacted by the variety of factors exerting influence on the system. This process helps Design Team members begin to address the design challenges facing them and the agency, and they are poised to explore them further as a set of interacting challenges they look to confront.

THE SET OF INTERACTING CHALLENGES

There are many times in our lives or as we are watching a television show or movie, where we can see how one event or interaction is going to impact every other thing for the foreseeable future. For example, if you are planning a long trip, decisions such as what to pack, when to leave, how to travel, and where to stay will impact your comfort, stress level, access to the environment, and overall experience. This experience, good, bad, or indifferent, will connect to and impact (intentionally and unintentionally; positively and negatively) many other aspects of your life (budget, family care, pet care, work responsibilities). These additional aspects also must be taken into consideration. We identify this as *a set of interactions* and *a set of challenges*. The word, *Challenges*, is not used negatively; rather it is used to convey the need to look at the entire set and recognize that they all have important merit to the success of the trip.

These challenges and the interaction among all elements create the vision of the ACES context. In design language, these have been identified as “wicked” problems in the world of organizational development since 1973. Wickedness is used to convey the inadequacy of traditional solutions to chip away at the challenges. John Cammilus, in *Harvard Business Review* noted that:

A wicked problem has innumerable causes, is tough to describe, and doesn't have a right answer.... Environmental degradation, terrorism, and poverty—these are classic examples of wicked problems. They're the opposite of hard but ordinary problems, which people can solve in a finite time period by applying standard techniques. Not only do conventional processes fail to tackle wicked problems, but they may exacerbate situations by generating undesirable consequences.³

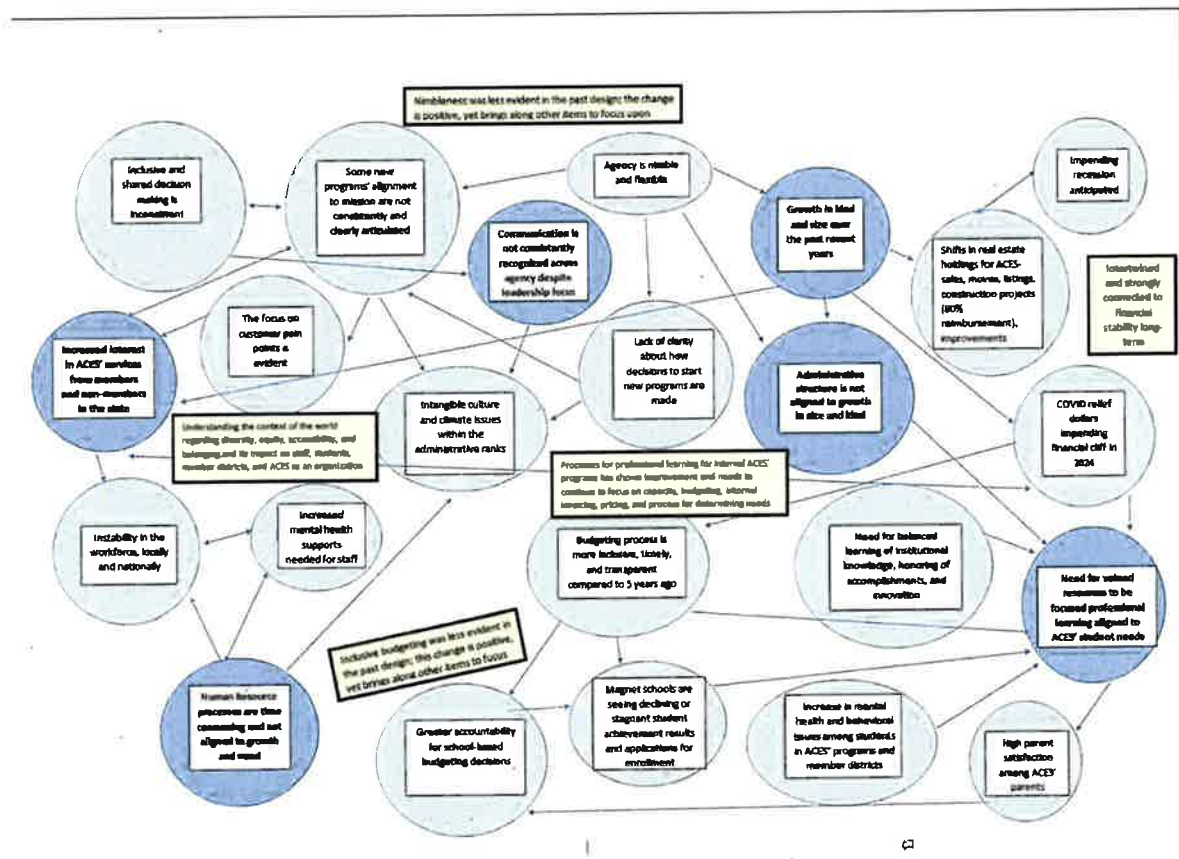
The set of challenges should be reviewed in the entirety as a set, with an eye for how one connects to another - adding to it or detracting from it. While tempting, do not think that making a list of these challenges will make the solutions more apparent, will ease the identity of the item, or make them easier to digest. Leave that temptation behind and keep your attention to the whole set and the interactions. This type of attention leads to greater creativity, innovation, and collaboration. In their previous design, ACES did not fall to this temptation and kept their attention to the whole identified set - this served them very well to date!

The design team also looked at the current ACES and the trajectory of progress over the past years. They created the chart below to show how the ACES of old was and how it is beginning to emerge in the new context, which brings new challenges and excitement toward ACES 3.0's solutions. One will, after understanding the entire desired design, see how this shift is evident in the specifications, structure, processes, and bold steps.

MOVING FROM WHAT	TOWARD WHAT
Less autonomy in classroom decisions	More autonomy with coordinated view of standards, curriculum, and assessment
Quick to being responsive and adding programs	Systemic and evaluative about new programs and work
Standard and stable workforce	Flexible and movable parts
Typical ways we recruit employees and develop work schedules	Innovative ways to meet agency needs and flexibility in the work environment
Agency who recognizes effectiveness of staff after long periods of time	Celebrates and develops staff "just in time"
Hiring staff	Investing in our people
Segmented in its fiscal and human resources process	Integrative approaches to our processes to streamline efficiencies

³ Camillus, C (2008) "Strategy as a wicked Problem," *Harvard Business Review*, May.

The set of challenges graphic below was developed and finalized with input from the design team, feedback from interviews with internal and external customers, and deep data analysis. The creative process of the design team revealed (and included in this graphic in light yellow) shifts and changes from previous sets of challenges. Additional shifts that are inherent in the set include an *investment by the organization and high use by the staff in an Employee Assistance Program, creative thinking, and action to shore up reactions to the pandemic impact on the workforce.* The darker blue items are significant in that they rise to a level of a significant push on the system- greater interest from customers for ACES services, professional learning for staff to support both ACES students and ACES districts, creating innovations in HR to support the workforce needs, and to dedicate focus to the administrative structure to develop the growth of the organization.



INFLUENCES, INVESTMENTS, IMPACTS

As the Design Team's work evolved, it was evident that the agency had four areas of high influence where strategic investments had the potential for making a significant impact for ACES 3.0. The four areas of influence fell into the following investment categories: Organizational, Student, Staff and Customer investments.

Organizational Investments

In the area of organizational investments, the focus is on the analysis of products, programs, and services. The design team identified these items as potential investments for ACES 3.0:

- Internal audits for key performance indicators
- Reviews from a historical perspective of serving the customer
- Identifying, developing, and implementing innovations and new customer opportunities
- Sunsetting things that no longer serve the customer or the organization
- Data cycles' culture- collection, analysis, and use
- Reviews of internal processes- what, how, why, clarity for users, obstacles to access, connections across the delivery platforms

Student Investments

Curriculum and assessment are at the core of the priority investments for students.

- Foundational expectations for standards-based instructional practices paired with autonomy at schools for learner-centered environments that offer a *unique* opportunity
- Implementation of the CT Reading instructional requirements
- Learner-centered assessments and mental health supports
- Focus on student experience that supports greater growth and achievement
- Communication of school-based goals for growth and achievement
- Relevance of innovative theme-based curriculum
- Focus on Individual student needs
- Data culture- acquisition, analysis, action, attitude

Staff Investments

Attracting and retaining highly engaged and effective staff is how the Design Team prioritized investments for staff.

- Internal career-connected professional learning based on staff pain points, innovation, and current research
- Dedicated orientations to the ACES function, structure, processes, and culture balanced with program-specific orientations, mentorship, fellowship, connectedness, and continued learning
- Clearly identified career advancement opportunities, professional learning, and celebrations to support innovation, growth, promotion, and accomplishments
- Connections to the data cycles and decision-making of the organization
- Budget prioritizes learning for staff

Customer Investments

Leaning into what we know about the Business Strategy Framework, the customer investments focus on how ACES creates, captures, and delivers value for customers (current and future)

- Understanding customer decision criterion and pain points
- Identifying, developing, and implementing innovations and new customer opportunities
- Sunsetting things that no longer serve the customer and/or the organization
- Data cycles' culture- collection, analysis, and use
- Specific processes for collecting data from external customer-facing staff regarding customer strategy, struggles, and successes

These high-influence investment areas also provide ACES leadership with a way to monitor the ongoing impact of their work using the following **reflective and strategically aligned questions**:

- Organizational Investments: How are we at ACES serving our customers (current and future; internal and external) with the right services and products at the right time, in the best manner?
- Student Investments: How are our students being served in high-growth environments that offer niche experiences based on premium expectations, and research-based instruction, and are centered on data-identified learner needs?
- Staff Investments: How are we supporting and incentivizing the career-connected growth of all staff at ACES?
- Customer Investments: How do we decide upon, experiment with, learn from, design, and implement new products and services to continue to grow our customers?

SPECIFICATIONS

For ACES to serve its students, families, customers, member school districts, and staff there are a group of required specifications.

For ACES to deliver on its Function, deliver on its promise to members, and to thrive in the 3.0 context, specifications related to all parts of the integrated system are imperative.

For ACES to intentionally grow in both kind and size the specifications must support the function and the processes, while creating a structure to allow for nimbleness, learning, and improvements.

Specifications are key for designers to envision and create the “pathway” to create the product or service. For example, car engineers use design specifications to design a new model of car. Consider how current car designers and engineers brought to the market the new electric and hybrid vehicles, particularly if they were key to the development of gasoline powered cars. BIG SHIFT! in thinking and working! This may prove to be true for ACES in the 3.0 version.

*Design what you want;
Implement what you can
when you can;
The future can be
influenced and
opportunities leveraged
toward the design.*

-Dr. Susan Leddick

The ACES design team used these specifications, derived from the interviews and data, to drive (*pun intended*) the structure and processes in the ACES 3.0 design. These specifications will support the future of ACES as an innovative and responsive education service center. *It is important to note that the specifications license the leadership to change the organizational structure, implement new procedures, and assess all potential and historical programs and services in a communicated and understandable manner.*

The **specifications should be read as a set** (not as a prioritized list) whose elements contain interacting, reinforcing, and connecting messages.

ACES will be an organization that has:

1. A structure aligned for efficiency, effectiveness, and clarity of roles and functions with flexible processes to support the agency's internal operations and external interactions.

2. Intentional research-based, data-driven, integrative, contextual, and evaluative processes regarding new and existing programs and services.
3. Efficient and responsive processes and services supporting talent management, staff recruitment, hiring, onboarding, advancement, retention, training, mentoring, support, and/or recognition strategies.
4. Contextualized professional learning and resources for all ACES staff and member districts that are grounded in data to identify and address evolving student and staff needs.
5. Alignment of all budgets to agency priorities, innovations, and future fiscal health while supporting leaders with robust processes for monitoring and evaluating revenue, expenditures, and short/long-range financial success of all agency programs and services.
6. Strategic, precise, focused, and transparent communication that results in trust, deserved brand reputation, and a clear understanding of the comprehensive set of high-quality schools and premium services designed to meet the needs of customers.
7. A commitment to developing, maintaining, and leveraging relationships and strategic partnerships to influence and serve our shareholders' needs.
8. Accountability to each student's right to a robust and rigorous learning environment supporting their growth and development (academic, social, behavioral, and emotional) for preparedness beyond their education.

THE SYSTEM OF ACES IN THE DESIGN 3.0

As previously mentioned, a system is made of elements and dimensions that support the *whole*. We know each system has four overarching elements:

- the context within the organization is operating,
- the function of the organization
- the structures that support the function to be effective
- the processes that support the efficiencies and work/product flow to be accomplished.

Up to this point, we have explained the design process, the dimensions, the context, the set of interacting challenges, and the resulting

*The design team
grappled with the
question: If you could
have what you want,
what would you have?*

specifications. Let's turn to how the design team journeyed through their work to address function, structure, and processes.

Function

One might see the function of the organization reflected in a description of the organization and the focus of the goals. For ACES the function is evident in its Mission, Vision, and Organizational Beliefs. As one of six Regional Education Service Centers, ACES very adeptly serves the greater New Haven, Middletown, Waterbury region of the state. This design both in process and product keeps the current Mission, Vision, and Beliefs in place; there was no apparent or communicated need to make revisions.

Structure

Since the design work mentioned previously, ACES has continued to be a successful organization. As such, the organization has grown in both size and kind. While some of the growth is contributed to the needs of its customers because of the pandemic, most of it is contributed to intentional decision-making to bring solutions to the pain points of their educational community locally and internationally. At the same time, this growth and the focus on being a nimbler organization had its positive and challenging aspects. This is true of other aspects of the organization such as communication and decision-making.

The growth has also brought to light a need to (as had been mentioned in previous designs) manage and leverage the knowledge within the organization. The pandemic certainly affected the needs of the ACES community. The current organizational structure does not address the need to balance growth, the new context of the region, state, nation, world. Furthermore, it does not address, in a comprehensive manner, the new knowledge growth and management that is needed.

Currently the Services Platform has programs and services that would be better served within a new platform focused on knowledge. The data regarding ACES student learning, particularly in the magnet schools, reveals flat or declining achievement on standard state tests. This is not to say that students are not having a positive learning experience; parent and student surveys are clear that they are highly satisfied with ACES schools. Yet, it speaks to the need to focus on curriculum, assessment, professional learning, and the entire relevant nature of the learning experience. Specifically, ACES magnet schools need to use data, research, and community context to assure that the themes and instructional models continue to attract a diverse student population and maintain a competitive edge.

Additionally, the ACES schools serving students with identified needs must rely on their long experiences and learn from new research to support student-centered instruction.

The information gathered from member districts also speaks to the need to support the forthcoming changes they will experience related to the overarching needs of the new context for students and families. ACES' role in supporting their member districts, customers beyond the region, the state, and their international customers also drives a need for a platform focused on knowledge management- gathering information, learning, building capacity, service content, assessment, evaluation, distribution of the knowledge, etc.

It is not enough to just have knowledge; it is critical to transfer that knowledge into programs and services that create value for the customers for whom they are designed. A very intentional interaction among staff learning, feedback from customers, technology changes, contextual data, advances in research, direction from the state and federal leadership, and ACES strategic resources leads to robust, successful development of programs and services for the educational community. One example of this process might be to learn from the direct services and professional learning consultants about what they are hearing and learning from their interactions with teachers. This can be critically important knowledge that can be garnered for innovation.

The facilitators worked with the Executive Leadership to identify a few potential shifts in the structure organization to support the functions of the organization while being positioned for new processes and the new context of an education service center and education as a whole. The Executive Director discussed these potential options with the administrative team. Upon further consideration, the Executive Director met with the facilitators and discussed a preferred structure, which aligned with the options shared. The Executive Director also shared ideas with the Board Chair.

In summary, the organization will add Core Knowledge and Operations functions within the Shared Services Platform. The current Special Programs platform activities will be assumed elsewhere in the structure and the platform will be eliminated. Additionally, there will be some shifting of programs and services to meet the need of ACES 3.0. The Core Knowledge function will support the specifications associated with comprehensive use of data, evaluating programs and services, career-connected professional learning, and grants. The Operations function will support activities related to construction, community engagement, marketing, and media relations. It is important to note that this proposed structure definitively supports the needs for efficiency while not compromising effectiveness. Savings in

the overall budget are expected, supervision will be more balanced, and the structure incentivizes collaboration across platforms. Two examples include:

- Core Knowledge will collaborate and advise the Schools Platform regarding student achievement by analyzing and reporting on student data connected to curriculum and instructional research.
- Human Capital function will cross over with Operations, Core Knowledge, and Finance for marketing to recruit new staff, developing career-connected professional learning and orientation, and budgeting for salaries and benefits.



Processes

Just as design itself calls for thinking of both the whole and the parts of the system together, one must look at ACES design the same way. As the design team identified the system for ACES, *Influence and Investment* continually came to the forefront. We have addressed the context, function, and structure for ACES 3.0; now we come to the other part of the system - Processes. The function tells us the “what and why”, the structure shows how the work could be divided to accomplish the function. The processes begin to demonstrate how all the parts will work together. The processes have the unique

ability to influence the design's results. While sometimes cumbersome, investing time and energy into the processes will assure a future ACES with effective programs and services that address internal and external constituencies.

For ACES the specifications speak to assuring *efficiencies without sacrificing effectiveness*. The staff are strongly asking for a shared understanding of decision-making for developing new programs. It will be important to tackle issues of using data to have efficient and effective human resources management, career-connected talent growth, internal purchase of professional learning, and sunseting programs and services. The human resources processes and guiding policies (effective minority staff recruitment, flexible work environment, and growth opportunities) given the current workforce context will be critical to ACES 3.0.

Action in the system keeps the specifications in motion. No action will result in the specifications just being a "pie-in-the-sky" dreamcatcher. No action will result in a perpetuation of the past.

The facilitators for this design from AESA set aside a time for the executive leadership team to engage in discussion about the "how" to decide if a program should be considered for exiting. Another AESA colleague, Andy Pechacek, supported this discussion. During this conversation, a few steps and critical questions to raise were explored.

- Annually, choose several programs or services to review
- Conduct a neutral data review to identify the status of each program or service
 - How is the program or service doing financially?
 - Is it meeting its original intent?
 - What has consumer use looked like over the past few years?
 - Should we keep the program as is, create a new business model, or pivot to another innovation within the program or service?
 - If we did not do this, who would? How critical is this to the members?
 - If others are doing this, why should we continue?
- How might we responsibly exit the program or service? If we are continuing, how do we manage communication and innovation to keep it relevant?

Bold Steps

The final aspect of the design process is the identification of bold steps to provide a strategy for the organization as it begins the journey toward ACES 3.0. The Design Team identified these bold steps thanks to their comprehensive and collective effort to understand their current context and the needs of internal and external stakeholders. In fact, the study and dialogue were so rich and insightful, we also have potential actions with each bold step that are aligned with the investments ACES wants to make for the Organization, Students, Staff, and Customers. This information gives ACES a head start on the development of action plans. Also, embedded in the bold steps are processes for decision-making, data review, program evaluation, and HR efficiencies. This will undoubtedly support their commitment to delivering on their mission and values, including the ongoing development of an inclusive environment. Implementation, like design, is an iterative process, and the Executive Leadership team will be responsible for managing how plans are designed and actions are implemented over time. The following summarizes the Bold Steps and potential actions:

A key to success will be clear and measured communication with intentional and opportunity driven implementation.

Bold Steps w/ Potential Actions

1. Prioritize the alignment of the agency's structure to support:
 - a. Knowledge management
 - b. Growth for the agency, staff, services, schools, and students
 - c. Communication
 - d. Process improvements and efficiencies (i.e.: human resources, tech support, budgeting)
 - e. Innovation
 - f. Intentional leadership reflection sessions using the ACES Learning Organization Questions twice annually
2. Develop clear processes for understanding customer pain points and decision-making for the development of new programs and initiatives are designed, experimented, and implemented
 - a. Implement learning from BSF, pricing and experimentation
 - b. Experiment with the design and implementation of new product lines.
 - c. Define data elements needed for evaluating new programs and services
 - d. Use partnerships strategically to support the implementation of product lines of service

3. Define intentional processes for scheduled monitoring, evaluating and decision-making of existing programs and services to ensure high quality, continued relevance, and effective use of resources.
 - a. Define data elements and establish benchmarks and indicators needed for evaluating programs, services, and schools.
 - b. Experiment with the redesign and/or sunseting of existing programs, services, and schools.
4. Establish a professional learning program to support career-connected growth pathways for all ACES staff and staff in ACES educational community
 - a. Develop and implement data driven internal career-connected professional learning plans designed to address student growth and achievement, staff pain points, current research, and innovation.
 - b. Orient all ACES staff to the organizational culture, expectations, and career advancement opportunities through program-specific orientations, mentorship, fellowship, connectedness, and celebrations.
5. Engage in strategic long and short-term financial planning
 - a. Align and communicate staff learning as a budget priority.
 - b. Improve and communicate the internal pricing formula /payment process for professional learning.
 - c. Consider ways to grow customer base beyond school districts through new markets; new products, programs and services; and new partners.
 - d. Prepare for end of COVID relief funds
6. Focus on growth and achievement of students enrolled in ACES schools and programs
 - a. Identify learner-centered achievement measures that support and recognize the continuum of individual ACES' learners, inclusive of IEP goals, state assessments, benchmarks, mastery and proficiency, and other tools
 - b. Continue to improve educational programming for all ACES' students through relevant curricular and instructional strategies

"The difficulty is not on coming up with new ideas, but to undo the old ones"

China Café Fortune Cookie, 1/20/2023

Planning for Implementation

As a planning method, design gives leaders a long view of the future they and other stakeholders want for the organization, not a future they are doomed to inherit. Excitement around the many possibilities propels the natural human desire to create something worthwhile, which energizes the organization and its members to keep the continuous improvement efforts alive.

This design alone will not move ACES forward, of course. That will take leadership, thoughtful planning, and hard work. That said, the design plan for ACES 3.0 should be utilized by ACES staff, leaders, and Board for planning for the next three to five years. At that point, proactive organizations need to repeat the design process to consider the ever-changing context and reflect on the organization's efforts toward continuous improvement. On an annual basis, through systematic and system evaluation processes, a new set of bold steps should be developed, with changes to strategic areas of focus areas as needed. With a clear design vision and iterative planning processes and implementation efforts aligned to that vision, ACES 3.0 will become a reality.

DESIGN TEAM RESOURCES

Padlet Contents

<https://padlet.com/doreen8/m4mca472e6p3w27m>

- *Design Team Members*
- *Meeting Agendas*
- *Meeting Slides*
- *Influences, Investments, Outcomes Slides*
- *ACES Themes Summary*
- *ACES Context Map*
- *ACES Mess Map: Set of Interacting Challenges*
- *ACES 3.0 Specifications*
- *ACES 3.0 Proposed Structure*
- *ACES 3.0 Bold Steps*

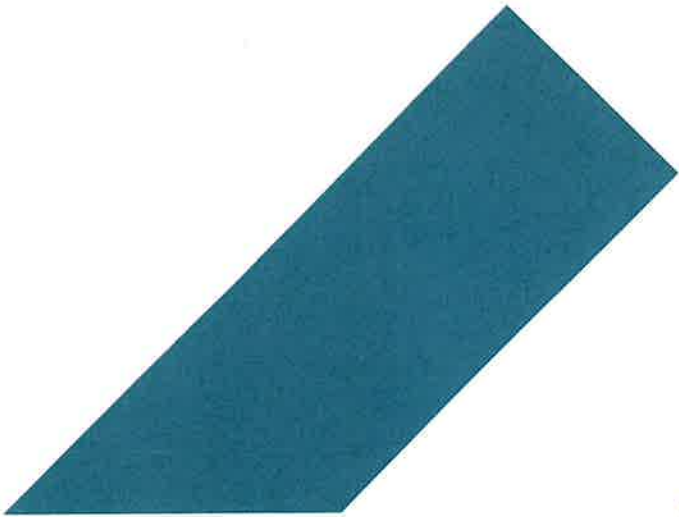
Additional Reading

Talent Acquisition & Management

- <https://www.spiceworks.com/hr/recruitment-onboarding/articles/what-is-talent-acquisition/>
- <https://www.spiceworks.com/hr/talent-management/articles/what-is-talent-management>

ACES Design Plan 3.0

February 9, 2023



Agenda

01. Introduction

ACES is a fee for service, not for profit regional education service center with no taxing authority but an annual budget of \$110M and 1100 employees. We need to maintain a plan at all times.

03. Data

Student achievement

Services growth

Employee needs

Customer needs

2 **Design Plan 3.0**

February 9, 2023

02. Options

1. Don't change a thing
2. Address needs, make decisions, carry out plan with goals
3. Start anew

04. Issues we face

Increasing management fees

High cost of services

Facing the services/program challenges

05. Solutions

Specification

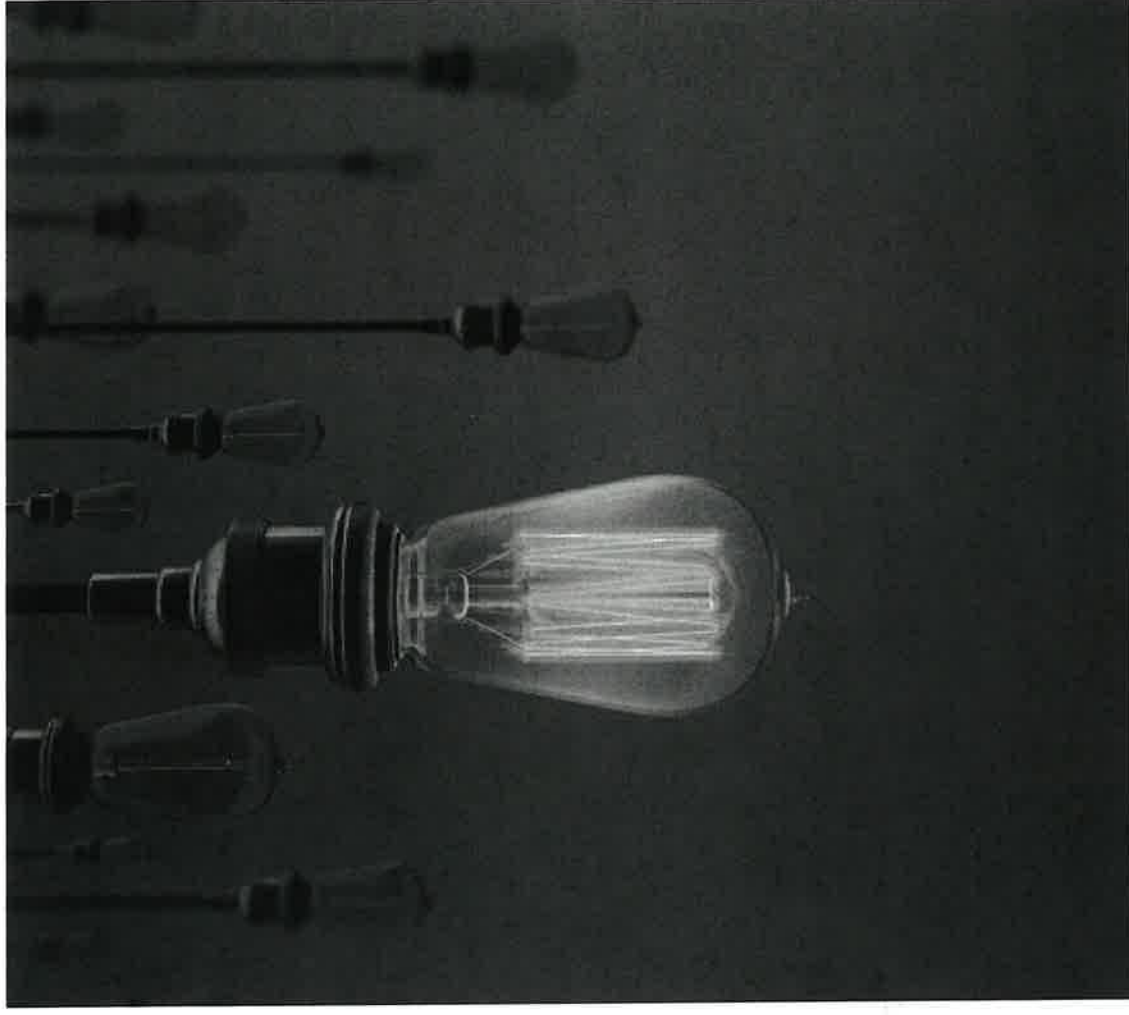
Bold Steps

Structure



Introduction

ACES is a fee-for-service, not-for-profit regional education service center with no taxing authority but an annual budget of \$110M and 1100 employees. We need to maintain a plan at all times.





THREE OPTIONS:

- 1. Keep doing what we do and don't address challenges**
- 2. Follow Design Plan 3.0 with changes to content, processes and structure.**
- 3. Start devising a new plan**

Data Points

Strengths	Challenges
<p>On-going surpluses</p> <p>Grant funding award increases</p>	<p>Staffing Shortages</p> <p>Escalating management fees</p>
<p>Customers satisfied in special education schools</p> <p>Parents and students happy with social emotional development in schools</p>	<p>Escalating service costs</p> <p>Flat student academic achievement</p>
<p>Growth in size and scope of services</p> <p>Safe in spaces – moved from renters to owners allowing ACES to determine its own destiny</p>	<p>Declining magnet enrollments</p> <p>Career ladder opportunities for staff needed</p>
	<p>Right sizing, alignment of resources, and analysis of how customer values our offerings</p>

Make Investments

Student Investments	District Investments	Staff and Organization Investments
Grow academic achievement	Offer valued services	Offer career opportunities
Provide safe learning environments	Check and tweak pricing and bundling opportunities	Offer flexible work settings
Provide appropriate learning environments where have opportunities to return to least restrictive environment	Respond to new needs before districts know they need them	Align resources to present needs
Maintain parent's and students' satisfaction in schools	Provide excellent services at fair prices	Assess business models in deficit areas to be clear about what benevolent work we want to do
Provide for choices in learning for parents and communities	Become the premier provider of services	Take advantage of grant opportunities

Work to mitigate increases in costs

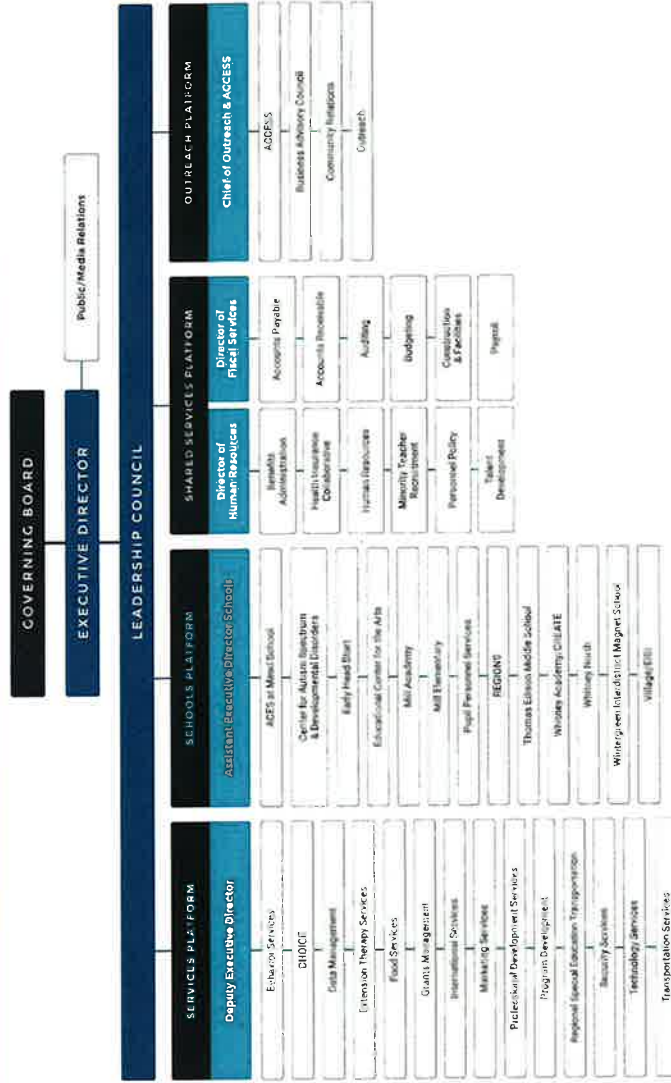
Specifications - five-year plan

ACES will be an organization that has	
A structure designed for efficiency, effectiveness and clarity of roles and functions	Aligned budgets to meet priorities and innovations and process to monitor and evaluate revenue and services
Research-based and data driven, evaluative processes	Strategic, transparent communication
Efficient and responsive processes supporting staff and managing talent	Commitment to develop, maintain and leverage relationships and partnerships
Professional learning for all staff to address student and district needs	Accountability to each student's right to robust rigorous learning

Bold Steps – two-year plan

1. Prioritize structure and alignment to specification areas
2. Develop process to understand customer pain points and decision-making for development of new programs
3. Define intentional processes to monitor, evaluate and decide on existing programs and services
4. Establish professional learning for all staff to support career-connected pathways
5. Engage in short and long-term financial planning
6. Focus on growth and academic achievement for students enrolled in ACES schools and programs

aces 2020 Organizational Chart



ACES Governing Board						
Executive Director						
			SHARED SERVICES			
Services	Operations	Core Knowledge	Human Capital Development	Fiscal Services	Schools	

ACES Governing Board									
Executive Director									
	SHARED SERVICES								
Services	Operations	Core Knowledge	Human Capital Development	Fiscal Services	Schools				
ACES Up Assistive Tech ETS	ACCESS Capital Improvements / Plant	Academic Achievement Curriculum DEI	Benefits Career ladder development	Fiscal Health Accounts payable Accounts Receivable	Bridges Chase ECA WIMS				
Back Office Support Behavior Services CT-SEDS EV Initiative	Community Engagement Construction Data privacy	Data Management Ed Tech Evaluation Supervision PDSI	Investigations Negotiations Time and Attendance	Audit Budgeting Construction Funding	Meade Mill North SAILS REGIONS				
Health Collaborative Innovation Marketing / Media	Early head Start Food Services Internal Auditing	Talent mgmt. PPS Internal RESC Alliance	Personnel Management and Policy	Financial Projections/Reporting Investments	Village/EIBI Whitney Academy				
International	Network Services		Recruitment	Invoicing	West Haven				

ACES Governing Board						
Executive Director						
	SHARED SERVICES					
Services	Operations	Core Knowledge	Human Capital Development	Fiscal Services	Schools	
Deputy Executive Director	Assistant Executive Director	Director of Core knowledge	Director of HCD	Director of Fiscal Services	Assistant Superintendent of Schools	

Rational for Changes

1. To meet Design Plan strategic bold steps
2. To align leadership to meet new focal areas
3. To reset management fee
4. To reduce costs and arrange for long-term fiscal health
5. To reduce or maintain cost of services (hourly rates) for districts

Director of ESSR	166,214								
Assistant Director of PDSI	151,178								
Coordinator of Behavior Services	169,894								
Director of Community Engagement	187,584								
Office Manager ETS	90,716								
Secretary ETS	50,972								
Clerks ETS	59,997								
Teacher WIMS retirement	115,241								
Teacher Mill retirement	115,241								
PPS Director - AT	32,188								
Efficiencies Through Budget Process	974,593								
	2,472,384								
Additions									
Assistant Superintendent of Schools		179,000							
Director of Core Knowledge		179,000							
Director of External Services		170,000							
		528,000							
Difference (Savings)		1,944,384							
12/5/2022							AESA 2022		14



Questions?

