



SALEM
PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Where belonging leads to opportunity.

Innovation & Futures Thinking Overview

Background on the approach being used by
the Salem Innovation Advisory Committee

March 2026

Our Charge

- Collaborate on a **10-year vision and agenda for innovation** for the Salem Public Schools that will position our students for 2035 and beyond
- Develop a new 3-year **strategic plan** that will plant the seeds to get us there



What does innovation mean to you?

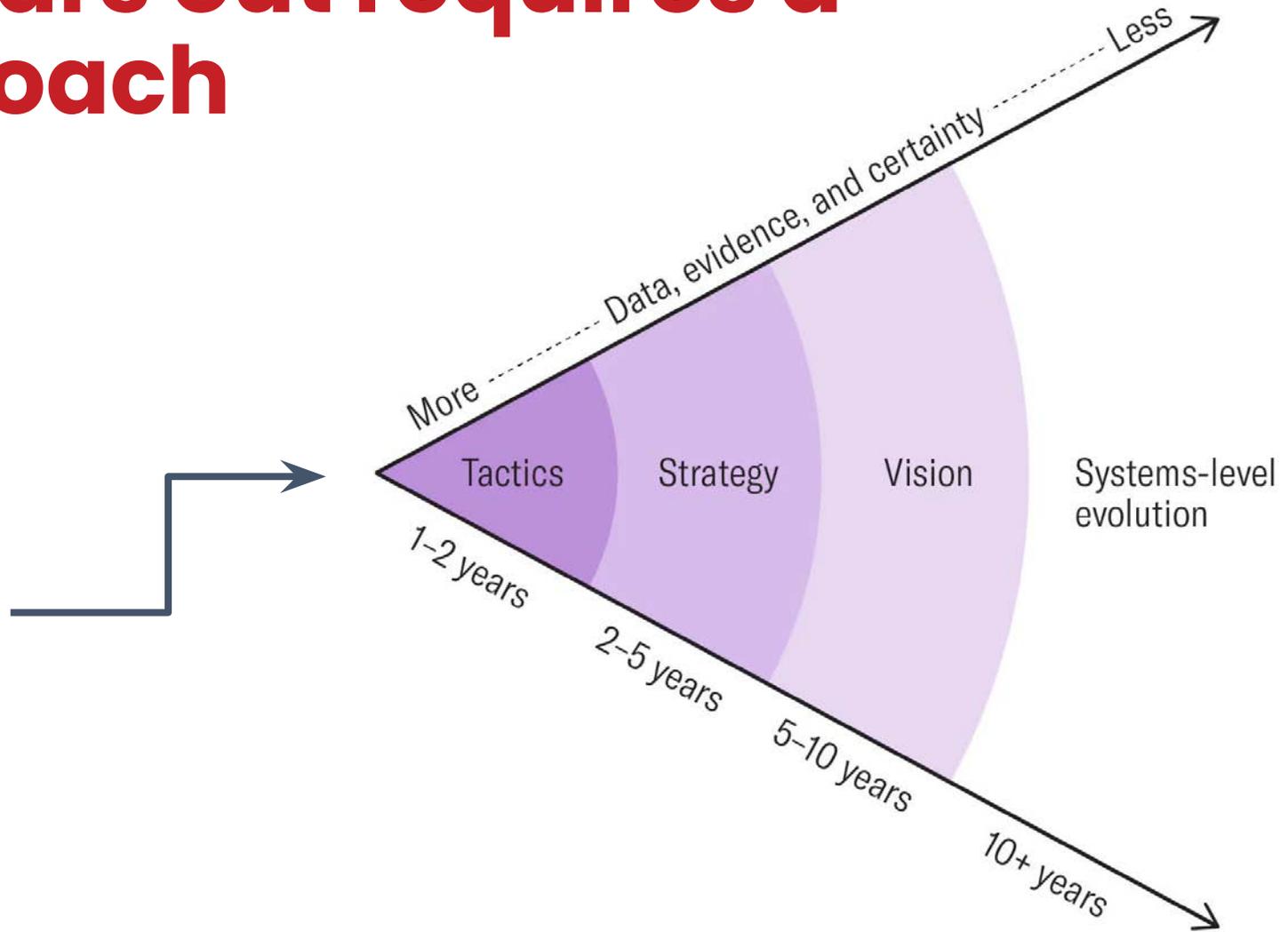
- What's an example of something you see as **innovative**?
- How does it show up in your life?

Email cbanks@salemk12.org with your response!

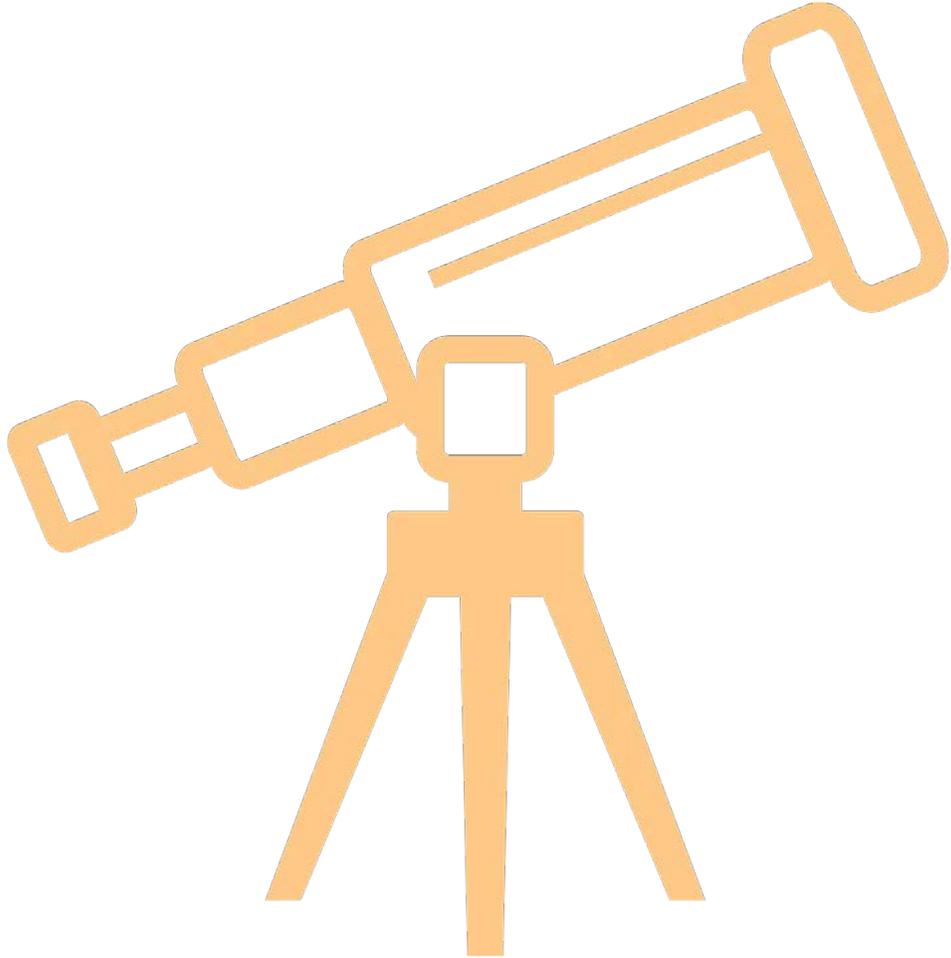


Thinking 10 years out requires a different approach

A Time Cone allows us to create a **flexible vision** for learning in the future and then categorize actions into tactics, strategy, vision, and systems-level evolution to achieve it



Why “Futures” Thinking for Innovation?



Extending to a **10+ year time horizon** helps us to shift mindsets by creating the wider aperture necessary for transformational change.

How might we think out into the future about where the world is going (known and unknown) and build a plan that helps us shape that future, instead of the future happening to us?

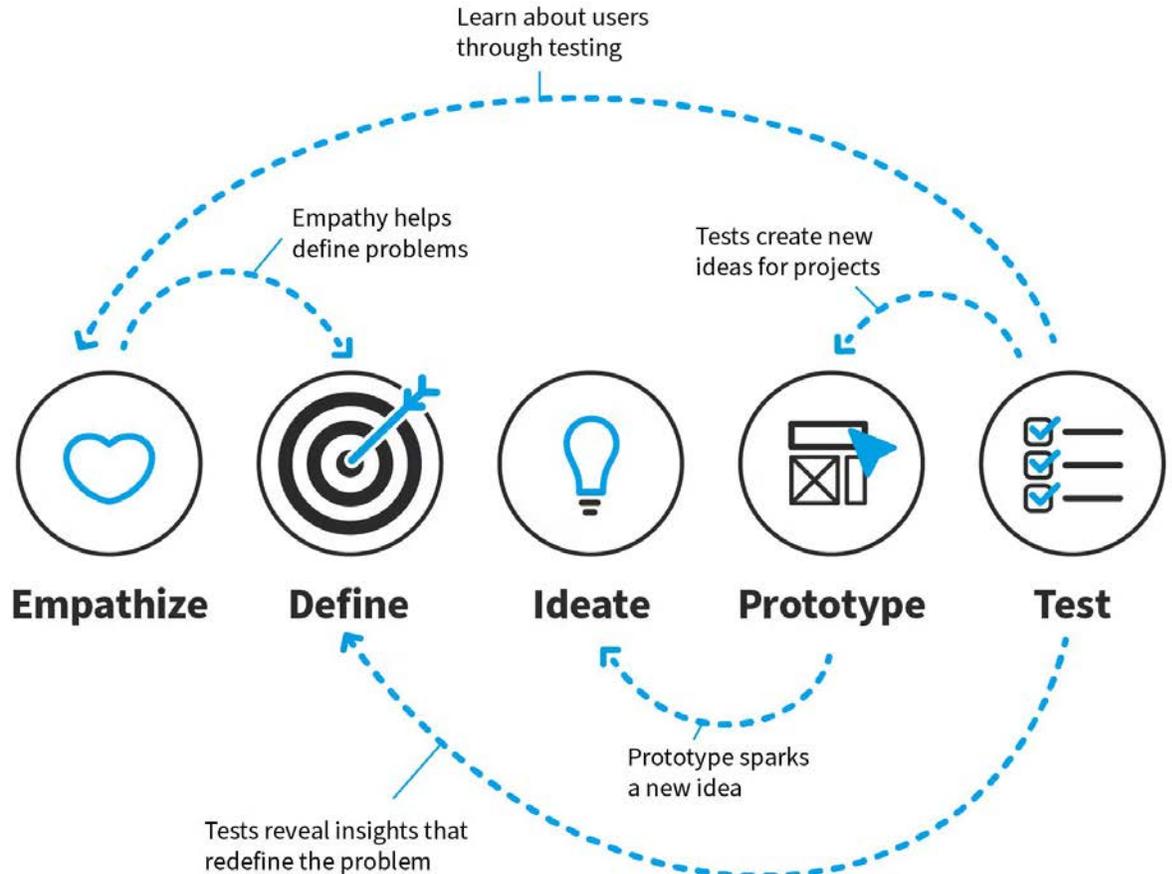


Overview: Design Thinking

- Design thinking emphasizes understanding the “problem” we are trying to solve
 - Instead of a “problem” - we are thinking about this as **defining the future we hope to build**
- The **more perspectives & ideas** we have, test, and get feedback on in the process, the stronger the process will be



Design Thinking: a Non-Linear Process



Key Inputs: Portrait of a Graduate

- Critical Thinking
- Creative Problem Solving
- Collaboration
- Communication
- Self-Awareness
- Cultural Competence

Source:

<https://spssalemhs.salemk12.org/about/salem-high-school-portrait-of-a-graduate/>



Salem Public Schools



SALEM
PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Where belonging leads to opportunity.

PORTRAIT OF A GRADUATE

CRITICAL THINKING

Our graduates research, identify, collect and analyze relevant information in order to make sound judgments and decisions based on effective reasoning. They apply systems-thinking processes to examine real-world issues and essential questions.

CREATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING

Our graduates are resilient and flexible innovators who identify and solve problems.

COLLABORATION

Our graduates are empathetic listeners who embrace multiple perspectives and are able to effectively work with a team.

COMMUNICATION

Our graduates confidently express their thoughts and ideas to diverse audiences. They know how to professionally and effectively advocate for themselves and others.

SELF-AWARENESS

Our graduates know themselves and have the drive and the skills to develop and follow an action plan in pursuit of their personal and professional goals.

CULTURAL COMPETENCE

Our graduates value, embrace, and honor diversity. They promote acceptance and inclusion as they engage with all members of the community with dignity.

Key Inputs: 2023-26 Strategic Plan

- Elevate Learning
- Empower Educators
- Center Belonging
- Strengthen Our Foundation

Source: <https://salemk12.org/about/strategic-plan/>



Salem Public Schools

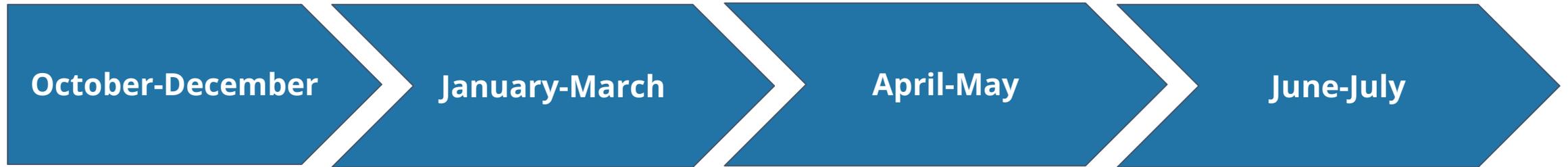


Salem Public Schools
Strategic Plan
2023-2026

Where belonging leads to opportunity.



Our Timeline



Innovation Cabinet

- Recruitment and Committee launch
- Shared learning
- Executive Team and leadership team meetings
- Generate ideas to inform innovation vision

Stakeholder Engagement

- Design Day (3/14)
- Stakeholder surveys
- Focus groups
- Executive Team and leadership team meetings

Plan Development

- Continued engagement
- Feedback Analysis
- Develop Vision
- Draft strategic plan
- Develop metrics

Finalize & Launch

- Develop narrative
- Finalize and design plan
- Create visuals
- Comms planning

The IAC will meet monthly from November 2025–June 2026





SALEM
PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Where belonging leads to opportunity.

Tell us what you think!

cbanks@salemk12.org

heidi@edlabstrategies.com