

Strangely Hopeful

A game for 3 to 8 people · about 15 minutes · defend, listen, and ask better questions

Six real news items. One bold statement that starts “**The signal...**” Everyone picks the signal they think fits it best, then **defends it for one minute while everyone else simply listens**. In silence, each person writes a **new question** worth exploring. The group chooses its **three must-explore questions**, then talks about what made them feel strangely hopeful about their role as a leader.

You need

- The cut-out cards: 6 signals and 12 statements
- Sticky notes or scrap paper, a pen each, a phone timer, and the record sheet

Set up (1 minute)

- Lay the **signal cards** face up. Everyone reads them.
- Shuffle the **statement cards** face down.
- Choose a **Keeper** to keep time and fill in the record sheet.
- **3 players:** play two rounds. **4 to 8 players:** play one round.

Choose (2 minutes)

- Put all the question notes in the middle and number them.
- Everyone makes **three ticks** on the questions they most want to explore, not their own.
- The three with the most ticks are your **must-explore questions**. If there’s a tie, talk it through.

Reflect (3 minutes)

“How did this conversation make you feel strangely hopeful about your role as a leader?”

- Go around once, then open it up.

Each round

1 Match

0:40

Flip a statement card and read it aloud. (If it has a blank, the reader fills it in.) Without talking, everyone chooses the signal **they** think fits best. On “Ready, set, go!” everyone holds up that many fingers. The Keeper notes the picks.

2 Defend

1:00 each

One at a time, **rarest pick first**. Each person defends their pick for one minute (45 seconds in groups of 7–8). **Nobody responds**. No questions, no rebuttals. Everyone else just listens.

3 Draft

1:00

In silence, everyone writes **one new question** to explore on a sticky note, ideally built on something they heard. On “Ready, set, go!” everyone reveals their note.

What would it take for...? · What if our school...? · Who decides...? · How might we...?

For everyone

- The minute is yours. You can stop early, and a pause is fine.
- A pick is just a number. Say it, show it, or write it.
- Any language is fine for thinking and writing questions.

1 Regional movement



Africa, 2025

31 African countries now offer e-Visas to African travellers. In 2016, only 9 did.

An e-Visa is permission to visit that you can get online, before you travel.

Source: Africa Visa Openness Index
visaopenness.org/

2 An old alphabet returns



Mongolia, January 2025

Government offices must now use the traditional Mongolian script as well as Cyrillic (the alphabet used since the 1940s).

The old script had mostly been taught as history. Now it is back in everyday official use.

Source: bne IntelliNews
intellinews.com/mongolia-revives-traditional-ghengis-khan-script-bichig-361596/

3 A robot in a religious ceremony



South Korea, May 2026

A humanoid robot named Gabi took part in a Buddhist ceremony in Seoul and was named an honorary monk.

Honorary means the title was given as a special recognition.

Source: The Guardian
theguardian.com/world/2026/may/08/jogyesa-temple-south-korea-humanoid-ai-robot-gabi

4 Live translation



Worldwide, March 2026

Everyday devices, like headphones and glasses, can now translate speech as people talk.

Two people can speak different languages and understand each other in real time.

Source: Google
blog.google/products-and-platforms/products/translate/live-translate-with-headphones/

5 Learning about the ocean



Brazil, April 2025

Brazil became the first country to commit to teaching ocean literacy in every school, with UNESCO's support.

Ocean literacy means understanding how the ocean affects us, and how we affect it.

Source: UNESCO Ocean Literacy
oceanliteracy.unesco.org/news/brazil-becomes-the-first-country-in-the-world-to-commit-to-a-national-school-curriculum-on-ocean-literacy

6 School for older adults



China, 2023 to 2026

China is building more learning for older people. One kindergarten with no more children reopened as a school for about 100 retired people.

There is now also a national university for seniors.

Source: Xinhua
english.news.cn/20260427/b57657fe01fe458481c7ca1818dbad02/c.html

The signal that will require the biggest change in the way we assess learning.

Understanding

The signal that we absolutely cannot underestimate.

Understanding

The signal that makes today's leadership playbook obsolete.

Rethinking leadership

The signal a head of school should worry about first.

Rethinking leadership

The signal that will shift the work a board does.

Governance

The signal that will least disrupt the questions asked when hiring a new Director.

Pick the one you think a hiring panel can safely ignore. Then defend it.

Governance

The signal that our parent community will be the most optimistic about.

Connection

The signal that connects people, and could divide them too.

Connection

The signal that our physical campus is already preparing for.

Stewardship

The signal that makes me feel certain I need to be leading right now.

Stewardship

The signal that's secretly a story about ____.

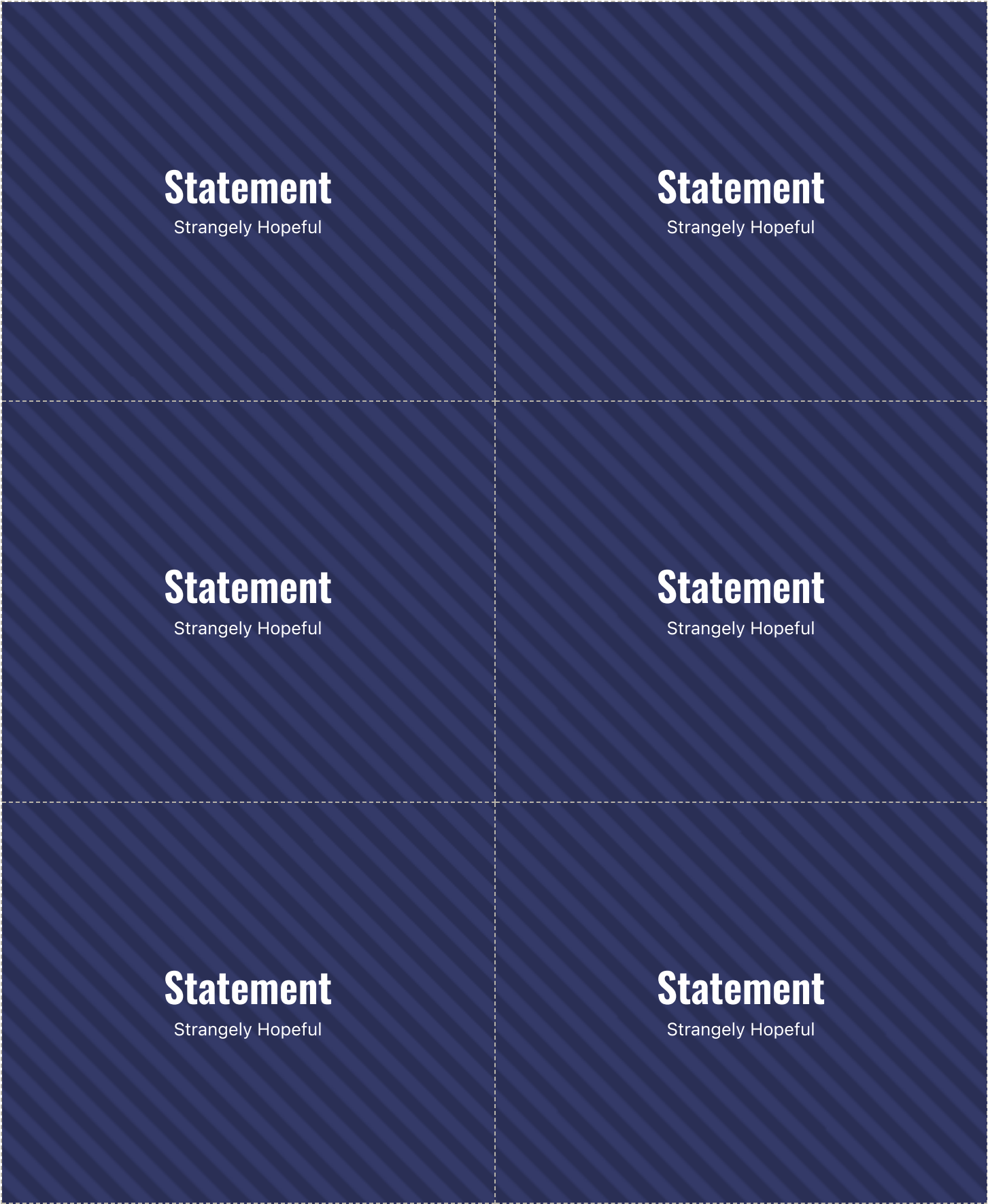
The reader fills the blank with an idea: power, grief, trust...

Wild card

The signal that best proves ____.

The reader fills the blank with a claim: "schools will get smaller," "expertise is shifting"...

Wild card



Record sheet

The Keeper fills this in

Round 1

Statement: _____

Picks: _____ **Spread:** _____

Round 2 (groups of 3 only)

Statement: _____

Picks: _____ **Spread:** _____

Questions drafted

- | | |
|----------|---------------------|
| 1. _____ | Ticks: _____ |
| 2. _____ | Ticks: _____ |
| 3. _____ | Ticks: _____ |
| 4. _____ | Ticks: _____ |
| 5. _____ | Ticks: _____ |
| 6. _____ | Ticks: _____ |
| 7. _____ | Ticks: _____ |
| 8. _____ | Ticks: _____ |

Our three must-explore questions

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

“How did this conversation make you feel strangely hopeful about your role as a leader?”

What we heard: _____
