

A guide to Vision and Mission Statements

"A school's mission, or vision, statement is a living document. A school's mission or vision seems to say, 'This is who we are. This is what we do. This is what we value.' But if one believes, as I do, that most schools need to improve, such a statement merely affirms what the school is rather than what it should be."

Hayes Mizell | Director of the Program for Student Achievement, The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation

A school's mission statement acts as a guide to educators, students, families and the community of what the school values, believes, does and aspires to be. A strong vision based on collective values provides the foundation for staff commitment, student success, and sustained school growth (Huffman, 2001). A shared vision and clearly stated mission identifies the kind of learning to be achieved, and helps keep the school and the efforts of the full school community on target.

The vision and mission serve as a compass for the cycle of improvement. A living document is created as it is translated into action in the daily actions of the school community. It is continually communicated to all members of the school community. This powerful statement provides the impetus to ask ourselves:

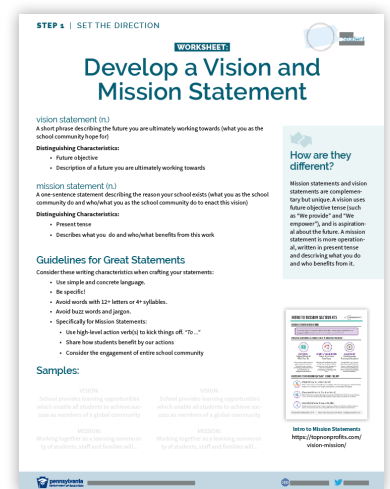
Are we doing what we say we are doing?

Leading a discussion with an LEA/school's current Mission/Vision Statement

- Request and review the statement prior to the meeting (check if posted on the school's website before asking for it).
 - What is my understanding of what this school values, beliefs about students, and the plan to achieve that vision?

vision statement (n.)
A short phrase describing the future you are ultimately working towards (what you as the school community hope for)











mission statement (n.)
A one-sentence statement describing the reason your school exists (what you as the school community do and who/what you as the school community do to enact this vision)



No mission or vision statement for the school/LEA?
Develop them with the **Mission/Vision Worksheet**

- Is there a statement of goals for students' success, based on core values and goals?
- Is it specific, clear, succinct, plausible, attainable, and inspirational?
- If not, consider additional questions to discuss with the team.

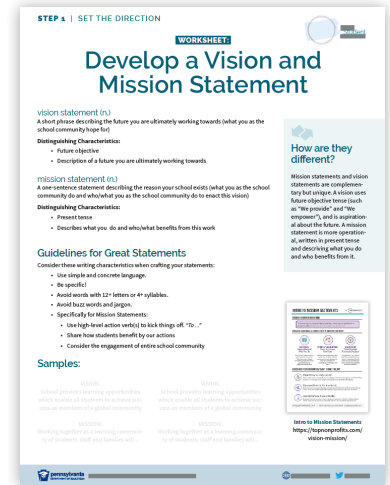
At the meeting with the School Community Steering Committee, ask:

-  How long has it been since this document has been revisited?
-  Is it still relevant?
-  How does it reflect our community of learners, students, staff and families?
-  How does it express the kind of school we aspire to be?
-  How does it reflect the uniqueness our school?
-  Is it specific, clear, succinct, plausible, attainable, and inspirational?
-  What examples can we share of how we are currently enacting our vision?
-  Are any updates /tweaks needed to reflect the future direction for our school?
-  From which members of the school community might we want to invite input?
-  How do we ensure that our vision is shared by and with the broader school community?

Complete the [Mission/Vision Template](#) and ask participants to sign it (which you might present at the next meeting of the School Community Steering Committee).

Resources:

- Gabriel, John G.& Farmer, Paul C. (2017) *How to Help Your School Thrive Without Breaking the Bank*. Alexandria, VA.:ASCD. **More:** http://bit.ly/pdesi_gabrielascdthrive
- Huffman, Jane. *The Role of Shared Values and Vision in Creating Professional Learning Communities*. Southwest Educational Development Lab., Austin, TX. Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC. 2001-00-00. Accessed from <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/ERIC-ED466028/pdf/ERIC-ED466028.pdf>



**Companion Tool:
Mission/Vision Worksheet**

WORKSHEET:

Develop a Vision and Mission Statement

vision statement (n.)

A short phrase describing the future you are ultimately working towards (what you as the school community hope for)

Distinguishing Characteristics:

- Future objective
- Description of a future you are ultimately working towards

mission statement (n.)

A one-sentence statement describing the reason your school exists (what you as the school community do and who/what you as the school community do to enact this vision)

Distinguishing Characteristics:

- Present tense
- Describes what you do and who/what benefits from this work

Guidelines for Effective Statements

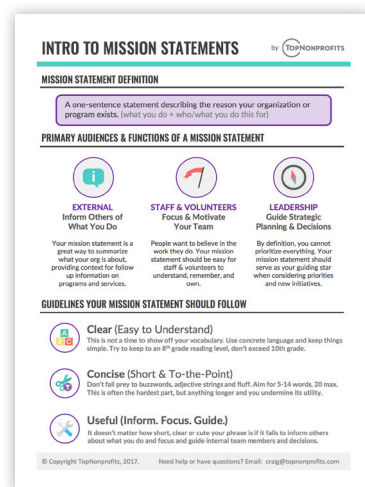
Consider these writing characteristics when crafting your statements:

- Use simple and concrete language.
- Be specific!
- Avoid words with 12+ letters or 4+ syllables.
- Avoid buzz words and jargon.
- Specifically for Mission Statements:
 - Use high-level action verb(s) to kick things off. “To ...”
 - Share how students benefit by our actions.
 - Consider the engagement of entire school community.



How are they different?

Mission statements and vision statements are complementary but unique. A vision uses future objective tense (such as “We provide” and “We empower”), and is aspirational about the future. A mission statement is more operational, written in present tense and describing what you do and who benefits from it.



INTRO TO MISSION STATEMENTS by TOPNONPROFITS

MISSION STATEMENT DEFINITION
A one-sentence statement describing the reason your organization or program exists. (what you do + who/what you do this for)

PRIMARY AUDIENCES & FUNCTIONS OF A MISSION STATEMENT

EXTERNAL Inform Others of What You Do	STAFF & VOLUNTEERS Focus & Motivate Your Team	LEADERSHIP Guide Strategic Planning & Decisions
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GUIDELINES YOUR MISSION STATEMENT SHOULD FOLLOW

- Clear (Easy to Understand)**
This is not a time to show off your vocabulary. Use concrete language and keep things simple. Try to keep to an 8th grade reading level, don't exceed 10th grade.
- Concise (Short & To-the-Point)**
Don't fall prey to buzzwords, adjective strings and fluff. Aim for 5-14 words, 20 max. This is often the hardest part, but anything longer and you undermine its utility.
- Useful (Inform, Focus, Guide)**
It doesn't matter how short, clear or cool your phrase is if it fails to inform others about what you do and focus and guide internal team members and decisions.

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Intro to Mission Statements
<https://topnonprofits.com/mission-vision-statements/>

Samples:

SCHOOL A

VISION: Wilcox High School will be a nurturing, safe and professional environment that supports the educational success and social, emotional, and physical development of all students. Courses will be academic, engaging, and standards-based, with a focus on the learner. All school staff will be highly qualified and caring instructors who are attentive to the educational, cultural and physical needs of students and the Wilcox community. Parents will be positive, supporting members of the school community. Students will be respectful, self-disciplined, productive citizens who think critically, make informed decisions and act ethically.

MISSION: The purpose of Wilcox High School is to educate, empower, and enable all students to become caring, contributing citizens who can succeed in an ever-changing world. Wilcox High School is committed to focusing on high expectations and individual academic success and to creating a community of respect and responsibility.

SCHOOL B

MISSION: The mission of Mountain Gap Middle School is to provide each student a diverse education in a safe, supportive environment that promotes self-discipline, motivation, and excellence in learning. The Mountain Gap team joins the parents and community to assist the students in developing skills to become independent and self-sufficient adults who will succeed and contribute responsibly in a global community.

SCHOOL C

MISSION: Our mission, in Spartanburg School District Three, is to provide experiences and teach world class skills and values which empower all children to achieve their fullest potential.

PURPOSE Every student Future Ready: Prepared for college, career and personal success.

VALUES In collaboration with our families and community we value:

- Children, first and foremost;
- Safety and security;
- Uniqueness and diversity;
- High expectations;
- Learning as a lifelong process;
- Equal access to a quality education;
- All needs of every child.

SCHOOL D





MISSION: At Battlefield Senior High School, we believe that student learning is the chief priority and all students can learn to their fullest potential. Students will develop their individual talents, critical thinking, and technology skills by being actively engaged in the learning process. Continuous commitment to improvement ensures that our students are well-rounded, self-directed, lifelong learners. By maintaining a safe and optimum learning environment, we provide the opportunity for students to be successful. Promoting high standards and expectations, teachers, administrators, parents, and the community share the responsibility for advancing the school's mission.

Facilitating Development of a Vision/Mission Statement *(if needed)*







Three main components:

- Shared values
- Beliefs about students
- How the school will work to achieve that vision

Gather responses to these questions:

-  WHAT is going to be done?
-  WHY it is done?
-  WHO is going to be served?
-  HOW this will be accomplished?

Facilitate a process to enable the School Community Steering Committee to brainstorm. Invite input from as many members of the school community as possible (staff, students, families, community partners), asking:

-  What kind of learning environment do we want our school to be?
-  What is unique about our school? Why are those things unique?
-  What should we value?
-  What should we believe about our students?
-  What do we picture our students achieving when they leave us?
-  What are the most important things we need to do at our school?

Collate the data and seek patterns.

Build consensus on the key words and phrases that represent the shared values, beliefs, and actions.

Invite a smaller group of Steering Committee members to write a draft.

Share the draft with the Steering Committee and make adjustments.

Suggest vehicles to communicate the Mission Statement with all members of the school community.

Resources:

- Gabriel, John G.& Farmer, Paul C. (2017) *How to Help Your School Thrive Without Breaking the Bank*. Alexandria, VA.:ASCD. **More information >**
- Huffman, Jane. *The Role of Shared Values and Vision in Creating Professional Learning Communities*. Southwest Educational Development Lab., Austin, TX. Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC. 2001-00-00. Accessed from <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/ERIC-ED466028/pdf/ERIC-ED466028.pdf>
- <https://topnonprofits.com/mission-vision-statements/>