Mission & Vision

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Part A: Analysis of Current Mission and Vision

What is included explicitly in the current mission and vision?

At the district level, there are two places in which the mission and vision of the district is stated. The easiest place to find the vision and mission of the district stated is on the board of directors tab of the ██████ School District's website. The website states the district vision: "ensuring the future by inspiring excellence" (Board of Directors). The board of director's page also states the mission:

> ██████ *Schools will provide excellent educational opportunities for all*
>
> *students, maintaining a steadfast commitment to quality instruction, high*
>
> *expectations, and positive relationships. This work will be carried out in a safe*
>
> *and respectful environment, rooted in family and community values, and focused*
>
> *on inspiring students to excel in a changing world (Board of Directors).*

The alternate location of the district mission and vision is stated in the Superintendent's Message, which is a letter written by superintendent Travis Hanson to the community and families of ██████ School District. To find this letter, one has to click a couple more times. Travis points out that ██████ School District emphasizes: collaborative practices, closing achievement gaps, technology, facilities/safety and security, and success for all (Superintendent's Message).

The Superintendent's Message details each of these emphases in more detail. For example, the collaborative practices emphasis states: "our ongoing focus on improvements in teaching, learning, and assessment have been fueled by our ongoing commitment to collaborative

practices – teams of teachers work together every Wednesday morning to ensure that instructional experiences and materials are aligned to standards and assessed regularly. Continued refinement of instruction and improvement of supporting materials allows for meaningful, practical, and rigorous learning opportunities for our students" (Superintendent's Message). Each one of these emphases is rooted in the mission statement by the board of directors, as well as the school improvement plan for the middle school.

The ███████ middle school improvement plan states 3 goals: "Provide instruction in core academic areas (ELA, Math, Science) that prepares students for success on Smarter Balanced assessments. Success will be measured by achieving pass rates that exceed the state average on all assessments in grades 6th, 7th, and 8th grade," "███████ administrators will work with PLC teams and all individual teachers to write high-quality student growth goals for their departments and classrooms," and "███████ staff will research, collaborate, practice and reflect on effective teaching strategies that are trauma informed, inclusive and research based."

What is included or understood implicitly?

I directly asked my superintendent this question and he responded: "Hmm...not sure there's much to be understood implicitly. Seems to me that a good vision and mission should be very explicit and direct, rather than asking the person reading to infer meaning." I think because of the length of all of these mission and vision statements there is not much left for the imagination. Each mission is direct and to the point of its intended purpose so that the mission can be understood by all who read and look to achieve it.

I think that Travis's words here are wise. However, I feel like you can say a lot with a little. Having too many words can be a deterrent and usually raises points of contention. Or, rather, gives points that can be read and understood differently by different people. Therefore, I believe that mission and vision statements need to be thoroughly reviewed, revised, and rewritten in a way that is the most descriptive way to the intended meaning in the fewest words possible.

What's missing, vague, or needs to be explicitly articulated in the current mission and vision?

The admin meeting that I was able to participate in today gave me some good insight into some data that districts and OSPI will look at to analyze the success of a district. The document the district was using to decide on what data they need to collect is called the "███████ School District- Key Performance Indicators" as seen in figure 1. It is interesting that with the emphasis on FAFSA completion and advancement to 2-year, 4-year, and trade institutions is a main indicator of performance, yet none of the mission and vision statements in the district have any goals, mission, or vision to see to that success. The same could be said about attendance (which is a major issue ███ is facing) and the percentage of free and reduced students who are not at grade level.

Figure 1: ███ Key Performance Indicators

I find this interesting because these performance standards are how the district is measuring their success. So, I find it fascinating that their goals do not all align with these. It seems like either the performance standards or the mission and vision need to change so that they align better. If they aren't aligned, then how can the district measure the success of their mission and vision statements?

How was the vision and/or mission written?

In my interview with our current superintendent, Travis Hanson, he detailed how the vision and mission were written. He detailed that about 13 years ago the previous superintendent hired Skip Bonucelli as a consultant to facilitate five meetings about mission and vision. The first 3 meetings were

Figure 2: ███ Framework

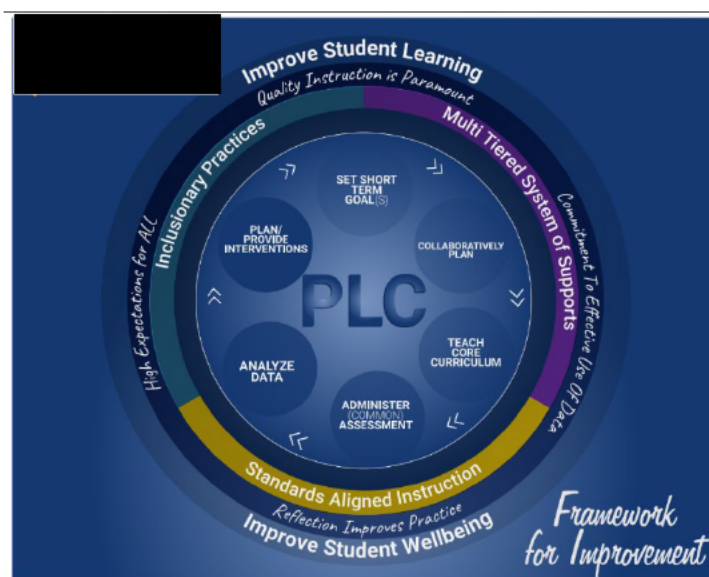"stakeholder" meetings in which administrators, teachers, parents, and patrons were invited to detail their values. The next two meetings were the district staff and board members working to compile the information into the current core values, mission, and vision. Over the other 13 years, under the new leadership, only small revisions were made until recently in which the district model in figure 2 was created.

Whose voice was included in the crafting of this mission and vision? (Alternatively, whose voice or perspective wasn't included?)

As mentioned before, the board's mission and vision were developed by administration, key stakeholders, community members, and outside help. The Superintendent's message was written solely by Travis Hanson. Both of these did not involve students in the decision-making process. The process of making the district mission and vision was very community driven. Similarly, the ███ SIP was written by the administration with no student input. However, on top of that, it is common practice at ███ for the SIP to be written by the principal and vice principal to be shared with upper administration, but never shared vertically. Therefore, the SIP is written only for administration and no staff, community, or students are involved in that process and decision making.

Tell the story about what your school or district vision and mission has and doesn't have, what it says or doesn't say, and what the mission or vision was intended to do.

███████ School District has mission and vision statements coming out of the wazoo. Some of the mission and vision statements share common themes such as: staff collaboration and teaching practices, PLC practices, student growth goals, technology, safety, and relationships. However, there are many differences between each of the statements. The disconnect between the board, the super, and the building level is further shown in the way that districts are analyzed for their performance. In essence, it almost seems like there is a smorgasbord of "hot" words and topics thrown out to appease everyone. The mission and vision statements at ███ seem to be meant as a blanket to encompass all things rather than focusing on a few that truly matter to the district.

Part B: Plan for Review and Revision of Mission and Vision

What would you need to do in order to get this work done?

If I were a building leader or part of the leadership team and required to move forward with a review and revision of the current mission and vision, my first steps would be to schedule two to four meetings for collecting information, designing, and reviewing a mission and vision statement. The goal of this meeting is to produce a mission and vision that defined my building, fit with the mission and vision at the district, fit with the community and students who are at the building, and was a statement to all others who viewed it.

The first two meetings would be an open forum in which staff, students, board members, district administration, community members, or anyone else interested in the development of our building's mission and vision would be invited. At this point, the job of my leadership team and I would be to just listen and collect information. To find out what are the wants and needs of the stakeholders of our building. In the first meeting, the leadership team will finalize a schedule of events: future meetings, due dates, etc. Finally, the last part of our data collection period would involve surveys sent out to the community and staff of the building to make sure that as much voice of the people that we are serving are heard. To be as inclusive as possible, these surveys should be offered in the top 3 languages of my building.

Once the initial meetings are finalized, I find it wise to bring in outside help in the form of a hired consultant. Someone who has experience in the collection and analyzing of data to form a mission and vision. On a separate, but equal note, partnering or interviewing schools in similar

areas or of similar make-ups may help us identify words or phrases that work well, or might not work well.

Once the research has been completed, the leadership team and I can now identify what matters to the district, to me, the community, and the students. From this, we can work on our drafts of multiple mission and vision statements in which we can present to the same participants of our original meetings. By gathering feedback on the different options, we can fully understand the voices of our community. Lastly, our team will select the revised mission and statement to present to the board and the superintendent before a vote for adoption.

What ideas from leadership theory, organization theories, decision making and problem solving, school improvement and change would you draw from?

The basis for the collection of the voices of all stakeholders and listening to needs to empathize and create a plan of action is firmly rooted in the leadership theory of servant leadership. Peter Northouse (2022) states: "servant leaders place the good of followers over their own self-interests and emphasize follower development" (p. 254). We, as school administrators and educators, serve the children that enter our building. At the end of the day, our mission and vision has to be with them in mind and for their growth as learners and as the future our social construct as a nation. Northouse emphasizes 10 characteristics of servant leadership in his book. Listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of the people, and building community (2022, pp. 255-257). The previously mentioned steps to the development of the mission and vision statement

includes a lot of listening, awareness, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, community building, and commitment to the growth of the people.

By collecting as much data as possible, both quantitative and qualitative, we are also making sure that we are using the organizational theory of data-driven decision making. By analyzing the data given, we are taking personal opinions out of the decision-making process as much as possible and building a mission and vision statement that is rooted in data of what the stakeholders truly wish to see happen.

By involving the community, staff, and students in this process, my hope is to build relationships and culture early and quickly with this change of mission and vision. Tony Hseih, the CEO of Zippos once pointed out: "if you get the culture right, most of the other stuff will just take care of itself." Staff involvement in projects such as this has been shown to increase staff buy-in. Increasing the amount of staff buy-in makes transforming thinking, the main job of a transformational leader, much easier to happen and for that learning to stick in the long term.

Much of culture, staff buy-in, and building the mission and vision under an equity lens is derived from the transformational leadership framework. Northouse (2022) describes a transformational leader as one who identifies the needs of the followers and derives a plan of action to motivate and teach each follower to reach their maximum potential. This leadership paradigm is rooted in morality and belief in the fulfillment of the follower's needs (pp. 186-187).

What concepts would you bring into your process?

The development of the mission and vision statements need to be rooted in the mission, vision, and goals of the district. For ████████, the administration office is currently looking at reviewing their main criterions of success for each of their buildings. Their current criteria were created over ten years ago and aligned with the original OSPI documents and data analysis of building and district success at the time. Figure 1 shows Launch NW's Pathway to Post-High School Success. This document details important steps in which a student must achieve to have a statistically higher chance to see post-high school success.
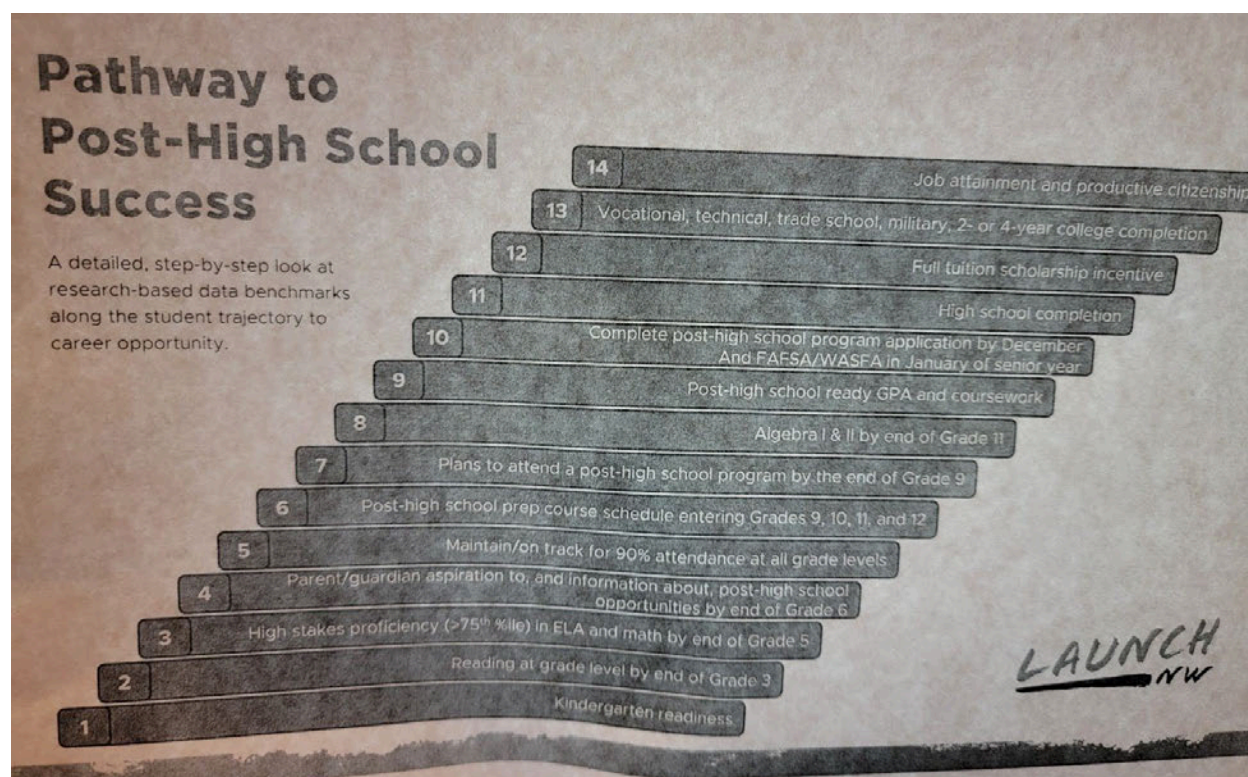

Figure 1: Launch NW Pathway to Post-High School Success

Using the district themes and visions as a guide, my hope is to instill the virtues, wants, and desires that the community, staff, and students want to see. I would also like to integrate some

of my personal beliefs into the mission and vision. In my mind, students going through my

building should leave my building with the following achieved, in no particular order:

- with strong relationships with students, staff, and community

- have developed academically, socially, and as future citizens

- leave with a sense of safety and belonging

- have a plan for the future, not just the 2-4 year school options

What barriers might you face?

I would expect the most common barrier would be the influx of different stakeholder views.

Because we are collecting data from so many different stakeholders, there is bound to be a

varying amount of views of what the school should be doing for the mission and vision. Very

similarly, yet different, is the fact that equity must be maintained in both the processes of

collection of data, formation of teams, development of the mission and vision, and the final

revision and voting of the mission and vision. Because these two problems can conflict with

each other, drawing a firm line on data and aligning that data with my and the district's mission

and vision must be a priority. My team and I will have to make sure there are checks and

balances in place so that we maintain equity while also trying to actively hear and engage as

many stakeholders as possible. This is a very fine line, because if I stray too far from my

community and stakeholder's wishes, I could create a scenario where there is a lack of

stakeholder buy-in, thus putting more conflict on my horizon as the building leader.

A second barrier I can see is a lack of resources. As mentioned before, I would like to hire a

consultant, hold separate meetings in different locations and times, and send out surveys in

multiple formats. Because this will take cash and manpower, I have to be considerate in my planning of what is actually possible with the materials and resources available to me.

How might you assess your process through an equity lens? How would you ensure equitable representation of diverse voices and perspectives in your school community?

Rick Mintrop (2018) states that the transformational leader for equity in education will face three connected yet different problems:

- How to make their organization more effective so that scarce available resources are used to benefit students;

- How to enable their organization to facilitate complex learning so that all students are exposed to learning opportunities that treat them as intellectually and morally capable persons;

- How to insure that all adult members of their organization value students equally so that differences in ethnicity, race, gender, class, sexual orientation, language, immigrant status, or special needs designation do not result in value judgements detrimental to students' dignity, competence, and well-being (p. 2).

Knowing that these problems will be faced and need to be conquered in order to make true equitable change is a huge step towards developing a lens in which to view the development and implementation of the new mission and vision. To address these barriers, we must be determined to offer all our meetings and materials in the most inclusive way possible. This could be providing materials in multiple languages, having multiple locations and times of meetings, and many different formats of data collection.

By hearing the voices of all stakeholders, including those of the underrepresented groups, we will ensure that all voices are heard and are included in the process of developing the new mission and vision for the building. Students are often overlooked in the process, and I want to make sure that the student body or at the minimum the student leadership body are present and actively engaged in this activity. We want to make sure all groups, individuals, and anyone else are adequately represented both in the process and the resulting mission and statement that is adopted.

One last way to check our processes and outcomes of the mission and vision will be the hiring of the consultant that I have previously mentioned. Even if the consultant is not hired, having advocates of equity checking over our work, or even the use of the various available equity assessments for the building are all useful tools to test the effectiveness of equity in our process and outcomes.

Part C: Student Mission and Vision

Imagine you have all the resources and control, what should be included in a vision and mission for your school or district?

The mission and vision is the life force of an organization. There is an old Japanese proverb that states "vision without action is a daydream. Action without vision is a nightmare." Without a unified vision that is actionable, an organization can flounder. In rewriting the mission and vision for my middle level school, I will make sure the vision is an actionable piece, the mission is achievable, and at the heart of both, will be the children who come to learn in my building.

The Association for Middle Level Education (2010) states that the education of middle level youth must be: developmentally responsive, challenging, empowering, and equitable (p. 13). Foreman, Stoisich, & Bocala (2018) also believe that vision should be rooted in the instructional core, a triangle of interaction between the student, teacher, and the content (pp. 59-84). In other words, the mission and vision must be rooted in the tangibles rather than the hypothetical. I also believe that my core values are that every student should feel safe both physically and mentally, every student can achieve, all staff are of equal value, and all students should not just grow academically, but also as citizens of the world we live in.

The Vision

Commitment to providing a safe, equitable, challenging, and meaningful educational experience to strengthen the citizenship of all students that can be felt outside our school grounds.

The Mission

Our school will provide, in partnership with our staff, community, and families, a student-centered safe space where students can explore a modern, and high quality curriculum where all students can succeed. Each individual student will feel like they belong in a community that challenges the way they think to grow, inspire, and empower them to make positive changes to the community and the world around them.

Describe in detail why you have included specific words and phrases, what they mean to you, and how you believe these will be operationalized in the practices of your school or district.

Jethro Jones (2022) believes: "once you have a purpose, you can start to paint a picture of you living up to your purpose every single day, and everyone else in the building doing the same" (p. 71). This is vision work at the core. I use commitment in the vision because of the importance of the following words. As a parent, when I send my child to school, the first thing I expect is not the high education of my child, but their safety, which is why "safe" is listed first. Equitable, challenging, and meaningful education are all parts of the 2010 AMLE's Essential Attributes and Characteristics and are core values that my building will hold. Lastly, I end my vision with the strengthening of citizenship to make an impact outside of the school. This is one of my core beliefs and my main "why." I want every child that enters my building to succeed in their own way. They should be growing academically, emotionally, mentally, physically, and interdependently so that they leave my building as a better human being as a whole.

The mission is an extension of the vision. The vision stated the values and the mission statement is the "what specifically am I going to accomplish" (Jones, 2022, p.76)? In my mission statement, the student is the center of all the decision making that the staff will make. Therefore, I made sure to include "student centered" in my mission. Closely related to this, equity and success for all, has to be a priority for the staff. Instilling the belief that all can succeed and removing deficit thinking is the first step in building a culture of equity and high performance in students. Continuing on the student focus, I included a piece in which students will feel like a community. Students, staff, and the community should all have strong relationships and build a feeling of belonging.

Outside of individualized student aspects of the mission, I wanted to make sure that the

community, staff, and students are working in partnership with each other, which is why there

is an emphasis for such at the beginning of the mission statement. Because of the

interconnectedness of the community and the building, there are many opportunities to have

cooperation with the community and the students so that an impact can be made outside of

the school. This could be volunteer work, job shadowing, and so much more! In all, I want to

use the resources that are available to us to grow each student and their interests to put them

in a position to have the most success as possible in a post-school setting. Community

resources are one of the easiest ways to ensure this happens.

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