Mission/Vision Project

Washington State University, Tri-Cities

Ed Ad 589: Leadership Development Seminar

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Mission/Vision Project Part A: Analysis of Current Mission and Vision

a. What is included explicitly in the current mission and vision?

The mission of ▮▮▮▮ High School (PHS) is "All Belong. All Learn. All In!" and the vision is "All PHS graduates will be employable, financially literate, exceptional communicators, problem solvers, and critical thinkers equipped with the skills to thrive in a diverse, ever-changing global community" (▮▮▮ High School, 2023, Our Mission and Vision section). "All" is stated explicitly in the mission and vision of ▮▮▮ High School. There is a focus on learning and belonging in the mission statement that is outright named. The qualifier of "all" names that the fundamental purpose (DuFour et al., 2016) is to include every person at ▮▮▮ High School. Then, in the vision statement, the things named explicitly are knowledge and skills that every graduate from ▮▮▮ High School will possess, a result of learning that occurs through living the mission statement. The types of knowledge named are financial literacy, how to communicate effectively, and how to be a problem solver and critical thinker. Specific skills named are skills for employability and skills for exceptional communication. The vision statement describes what ▮▮▮ High hopes to become for each graduate because of focusing on belonging and learning for all, which is named in the mission statement (DuFour et al., 2016).

b. What is included or understood implicitly?

Within the mission and vision of ▮▮▮ High school, there are some pieces understood implicitly, that have now begun to be used explicitly. For example, the use of the word "all" creates an underlying assumption that everyone—staff and students—are included in pursuing belonging and learning. This is now used outright to remind staff that part of what we do is work to ensure belonging and learning for our *staff* members, which in turn positively affects

belonging and learning for our students. Another thing understood implicitly in the mission statement is that there is a reason why belonging is named first, before learning, because for people to learn, they must feel belonging. The idea of "All In!" (███ High School, 2023, Our Mission and Vision section) is something not defined explicitly in the mission statement, so an understanding of what it means must be built, felt, or described in person between stakeholders. The vision statement includes all graduates, with an implicit understanding that every student will be a PHS graduate at some point.

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

Something vague in the mission statement is the idea behind what "All In!" means. Does it mean everyone is engaged in something outside of the classroom, but within the school community, like a club, extracurricular activity, or sport? Does it mean we would do anything and everything to ensure belonging and learning for all? Those questions are not answered in the current mission statement, which creates ambiguity around what it means to be "All In!"

Something vague in the vision statement is what employability means for each ███ High graduate. The other area not explicitly articulated in the vision is "the skills to thrive in a diverse, ever-changing global community" because it does not describe specific skills one needs in order to thrive in our world (███ High School, 2023, Our Mission and Vision section). There is no mention of universal skills or knowledge that employable graduates may need to have to be able to thrive, nor is there a qualifier that every graduate knows the skills they need for their specific career or job goals. Perhaps employability is something that depends on the pathway a graduate is choosing or perhaps it is an area that needs to be defined further to give

direction to our work in order to ensure it comes to fruition for PHS graduates. The skills may be named before that part of the vision statement, but it is not explicitly stated those are the skills needed for success in our world. These aspects of employability need to be explored and defined further so there are actionable specifics of employability the school can focus on developing in students (Baldoni, 2006). Defining and measuring employability is something our Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) Site Team and Career and Technical Education (CTE) Department are starting to explore this year, with a goal of having some universal employability behaviors and mindsets defined and measurable by the end of this school year.

d. How was the vision and/or mission written?

The current ████ High School mission and vision were created at two different times. ████ High School started exploring what true collaboration in a Professional Learning Community (PLC) looks like in the 2018-2019 school year. Throughout that year, the leaders within the building (through different positions like department chairs, PLC team facilitators, instructional coaches, or leaders through modeling leadership behavior) continued to deepen their understanding through studying DuFour et al.'s *Learning by Doing: A Handbook for Professional Learning Communities at Work* (2016). The importance of shared purpose is highlighted as foundational to being able to positively affect student learning (DuFour et al., 2016). As a result, a short-term team of staff leaders in the building, along with our school principal and a district office employee, came together to facilitate the creation of a mission and vision. Feedback was gathered from staff and students, which was then compiled into themes. From there, the themes were shared at an evening event that included a group of

about 100 staff, students, future students, family members, and community members, all from a wide range of backgrounds. During that evening time together, themes from the various voices already collected, as well as ideas from other schools' missions and visions, were brought together with the voices in the room. We started in small groups and created bigger groups, gathering ideas. We ended with two large groups that each created a draft mission and vision. The two groups were then brought together, and consensus was built through participation (Fullan, 2007) of the entire group as a whole for a school mission and vision statement. The decision-making process was not complete there. The proposed mission and vision were then taken to the entire school staff and voted on.

The vision statement created in 2018 was revised during the 2022-2023 school year through the work of a newly created AVID Site Team. During an analysis of the current leadership indicators present in the school, the AVID Site Team realized our vision statement did not fit the needs of our school and was not being collectively or actively pursued through purposeful action or goals, which is an important aspect of a vision guiding school improvement (Murphy & Torre, 2015). The vision was rewritten in a way similar to previous creation of the mission and vision, which was very participative and built ownership in the members of the school community. A key difference included using our school's "Principal's Council," which is a group of peer-elected students in a cohort class that creates a way to gather and provide feedback between our very large student body and the administration team. Using the "Principal's Council" allowed student leaders to gather feedback from their peers about what skills and knowledge they deemed important for them to have upon graduation. Then, "Principal's Council" representatives took it back to the administrators and AVID Site Team to

compress into common themes. Another key difference was staff voice was utilized more in the creation of the new vision statement. Staff took time on at least three instances during the school year to collaborate around the knowledge and skills staff believe are important for students to acquire to be successful graduates and even look at the student identified themes from "Principal's Council" feedback. There was an evening where multiple types of stakeholders were invited to participate in identifying the skills and knowledge they believe are imperative to successful graduates. Finally, all stakeholder feedback, from students, staff, and others, was brought together by the AVID Site Team, where a draft of an updated vision statement was created and taken to the staff and students at the end of the school year.

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

There were many staff (classified and certificated), students, families, and community members who were part of the crafting of the mission and vision of ▮▮▮ High School. When the current mission statement was crafted, along with the previous vision statement, the efforts were facilitated by the mission and vision team at ▮▮▮ High. One of the things done included asking all teachers to write their "why" on a half sheet, which was used as feedback to look for themes. This allowed all staff an opportunity to share and have input. The students were surveyed through a digital form, where every student had the opportunity to provide feedback. Student voice was so important to the process that there was a day set aside where some class time was used so students could provide feedback. The process of creating the mission and previous vision culminated during an evening event where our PLC facilitators, other building leaders, students from many backgrounds, families, eighth grade students

(future ██ students), and community members came together to spend a few hours working to craft our mission and vision.

In the creation of our current vision statement, which was revised during the 2022-2023 school year, the process included all the same voices, but at a deeper level in some ways. First, the use of "Principal's Council" to gather student feedback created deeper understanding for students (and staff who helped facilitate getting the feedback in their classrooms) about what a vision statement is and allowed them to provide greater, more thoughtful input. Second, staff now had five years of a current mission, which was very well communicated and used to guide the school's work, to use as background. Five years of using our mission statement allowed staff to build a personal connection to the current mission statement, which provided them with a common lens to look through in revising our vision statement. A way voice could have been better included this time would be to include some upcoming students and some recent graduates of ██ High. It would allow the upcoming students an opportunity to share their needs as future graduates and allow past students the opportunity to share where we have missed the mark for them being prepared to thrive in our community and world.

f. 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.

After our mission statement was created in 2018, there was a celebration for having a clear and common purpose for our work. From there, every action the school collectively takes has been framed around how it fits within our mission "All Belong. All Learn. All In!" (██ High School, 2023, Our Mission and Vision section). Every task force, team, group of staff members, and even extracurricular groups are enabled to collaborate as a team around the common

understanding that we actively live our mission (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). If there is a gap in belonging or learning, we collaborate to set goals, take action, and reflect on progress as a team; the epitome of team leadership (Northouse, 2022).

Because our vision statement has been recently revised, right now the school is learning how the actions we take as adults are contributing to being able to reach our vision for all PHS graduates. To support the learning, teams within the school actively help staff and students see how actions in belonging and learning connect to the vision statement. For example, in the principal's welcome back to school letter, our new vision statement was communicated to families along with an emphasis in how the AVID Schoolwide framework supports us ensuring our vision for graduates is realized (████ High School, 2023, Principal's Message section).

Communication has played an important role in students and staff taking ownership and being committed to living out our mission and vision. Because our school mission statement says "All" multiple times, it is continually communicated to staff that their belonging and learning is important to the success of students' belonging and learning. There is an emphasis on ensuring that staff participates in making decisions to ensure we align school actions with our mission in pursuit of our vision, which is an example of Inclusive Leadership in action (Northouse, 2022).

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

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Please note: Our school mission was created five years ago, is very visible in our school and communication, and serves as a filter for any decisions we make. Our school vision was revised during the 2022-2023 school year. I do not think we should revise our current school mission and vision. However, our school district is opening two new high schools in the 2025-2026

school year—a large comprehensive high school and a small innovative, career and college academy—and those schools will need to co-create a mission and vision within school stakeholder groups. I imagined I may be part of a school mission and vision creation/revision/recommitment in the future because of those large changes in our district over the next few years and I wrote Part B from this perspective.

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

To review and revise the mission and vision, there are a few important pieces that need to be present. The imperative pieces are time, voices of stakeholders within the school and community in a trusting, collaborative environment, and an understanding of why the mission and vision will be revised—a commitment to the revision process amongst the stakeholder groups. Within and throughout the entire process of revising the mission and vision, I'd like to build the collaborative environment even more and have our school leadership team engage in The Hill Model for Team Leadership (Northouse, 2022) to take on the task together.

To be able to effectively review and revise the school mission and vision, the first thing needed is time. Part of a leader's responsibility is to allocate resources. The resource of time is something that will need to be prioritized to make the revision process meaningful. The process of revising the mission and vision should take time to effectively gather the important voice, input, and feedback from stakeholders, as well as the time after a new mission and vision is unveiled, for continued commitment to both.

Once time has been set aside throughout a school year to work on revising the mission and vision, there needs to be a clear reason for revision. We would start with our school staff and students to have everyone think about and revisit their personal values and goals, engage

in conversation about them, and connect them with our current school mission and vision. Not only will this give us an opportunity to know what staff and students need, which is part of inspiring a shared vision (Kouzes & Posner, 2007), but it also helps to inform "what people at all levels of the organization see as its desired visionary goal" (Bowen, 2018, p. 2). Gaps in the values and desired vision of staff and students and the current mission and vision can build the "why" of needing to revise the mission and vision. Another thing that will help build the "why" is to use student data to identify gaps in learning, belonging, or outcomes of our current mission and vision. For example, if the mission and vision do not adequately create an urgency in our work based on what student data tells us, then it will help staff and students understand why we will edit the mission and vision.

Finally, creating a culture of decision making that is participative will be reinforced by ensuring that including stakeholder voices, building relationships between stakeholders, and building consensus is part of the mission and vision revision. Through utilizing a Team Leadership structure, the revision of the mission and vision will create a sense of "team spirit" (Northouse, 2022, p. 468) that Murphy and Torre (2015) explain is part of how school leaders ensure the vision is kept vibrant through trust, so the vision becomes operationalized. My suggestion is by utilizing Team Leadership, we will deepen the commitment to our vision.

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

One of the biggest ideas I will draw from is the idea of creating a shared commitment, while honoring the value each voice brings to the process of revising the mission and vision, which draws upon both Inclusive Leadership and Team Leadership (Northouse, 2022). The

importance of collaboratively co-creating/co-revising our mission and vision helps ensure commitment for all stakeholders after consensus has been built around the mission and vision. Another idea I will draw from has come from class discussion and Bush's idea of each leadership model being insufficient alone in leadership practices (2005). Many theories and practices must be utilized to meet the needs of stakeholders to be able to live out a co-created mission and vision.

c. What concepts would you bring into your process?

In the revision of our school mission and vision, there are a couple concepts that will be explicitly utilized in the process. First, it will be seen as an exercise in building trust between stakeholders. Any time voice is used to create a collective commitment through consensus building, trust and relationships must come into play. The success of the revised mission and vision is dependent upon the relationships intentionally built through the process (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). Trust also supports a shared commitment to our mission and vision (Tschannen-Moran, 2007) and supports the success of the school.

Communication will play a role because once our mission and vision has been revised, communication of our new mission and vision must reach "the far corners of the organization" (Baldoni, 2009, p. 4) and be personally owned by stakeholders. Starting the process of revising the mission and vision through gathering stakeholder voice around what is important and valued is a great start, but it must go further than that to build continued commitment to the mission and vision. One way we will do that is supporting the sharing of stakeholder stories (Baldoni, 2009).

d. What are the leadership frameworks you will draw from?

Team Leadership, Adaptive Leadership, Inclusive Leadership, Transformational Leadership, and Servant Leadership are all frameworks I will pull from.

The Hill Model for Team Leadership will be utilized as the leadership team at our school will collectively take on this "Internal Leadership Action" in the tasks of "Structuring for Results" (Northouse, 2022, p. 476), which helps to look toward and focus actions on the future we'd like for our students.

The parts of the Model of Adaptive Leadership that will be drawn from are the ideas of engaging a holding environment where the work is given to the people to empower them to use their voice in the revision process (Northouse, 2022). It allows for protection of all voices, regardless of role or status (Northouse, 2022).

The aspect of the Full Range of Leadership Model used from Transformational Leadership is specifically the aspect of inspirational motivation (Northouse, 2022). Through a participative process of revising the mission and vision and my positive, consistent communication of my belief in all stakeholders as bringing important ideas and voice to the process of revising the mission and vision, it will support commitment to our mission and vision (Northouse, 2022).

Within the model of Servant Leadership, the aspects addressed by utilizing a process of revision that is led by the leadership team and involves participation and voice of as many stakeholders as possible are empowering followers and helping others grow (Northouse, 2022). This fits my leadership values of learning for all and an asset-based orientation because using time to include stakeholder voice will build their efficacy and agency to believe in their purpose

and take action to pursue it. It will also build from the things they already bring to the table (asset orientation) to co-revise our mission and vision. Valuing what stakeholders already possess is an Inclusive Leadership behavior, which is important to the process for revision that will be employed (Northouse, 2022).

e. What barriers might you face?

Time is always a barrier mentioned in any school setting. I believe that barrier can be overcome by taking about a year to revise the mission and vision while unveiling a revision or recommitment to the mission and vision at the end of the year. Then, taking the following school year to commit to communication about the mission and vision as well as the actions taken because of the mission and vision, will help build deep commitment and a culture where we enable continued learning and support each other to act in ways that align with the school mission and vision (Kouzes & Posner, 2007).

Another barrier that will come into play is what is referred to as the "implementation dip" (Fullan, 2007, p. 175) and it can destroy confidence and school performance if not addressed. This is where I will employ aspects of Adaptive Leadership within a team setting to problem solve collaboratively whether the challenge is technical and/or adaptive (Northouse, 2022). Simply being able to identify the type of challenge within a team setting will support being able to collaboratively employ task, relational, or environmental actions that can move us past the implementation dip (Northouse, 2022). Utilizing these ideas will support continued belief in each person's abilities with enthusiasm and confidence to live our mission and vision after it has been revised.

f. How will you build organizational capacity?

There are two spaces where organizational capacity will be built. First, capacity will be built throughout the mission and vision revision process. In the process of revising the mission and vision, organizational capacity is built by having stakeholders examine what is important to *them* to include in the mission and vision. This examination helps all stakeholders identify their core values and connect to the mission and vision; thus, creating a commitment to the mission and vision.

Second, capacity will be built to enable those within the school to *live toward* the mission and vision and develop themselves as leaders (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). Because a participative process will be used to revise the mission and vision, we will continue to involve stakeholders for shared efforts toward school improvement. Andreoli et al. (2019) describe how to continuously build capacity by involving teachers and staff in making instructional decisions for improvement, which will support ownership for reaching our vision for students. A focus on continuous learning in pursuit of our vision will be able to be operationalized through a structured process, such as a Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycle through continued participative practice beyond the revision of the mission and vision.

g. Who would you include in the planning and why?

Including our school Leadership Team, which is comprised of teachers, counselors, classified staff, and our admin team, would be important to planning the revision of the mission and vision. The main reason why is because the school Leadership Team has committed to using our mission and vision as the filter for all work that we do as a Leadership Team. The team also represents many voices—it is diverse in its membership based on years of

experience, ethnicity, and role within the school. Because of the diversity of the team, everyone on the team will be able to ensure we include as many voices as possible in the revision process throughout the school year.

h. How would you ensure equitable representation of diverse voices and perspectives in your school community?

Pulling from the Inclusive Leadership framework (Northouse, 2022), part of how I will ensure equitable representation of diverse voices is in my and other leadership team member's behaviors. One of the things we will do is "proactively invite" (Northouse, 2022, p.331) all voices into the process of the mission and vision revision. As a leader who believes in aligning my mission and vision with that of the school/district I lead, knowing others' stories and motivation helps me be an inclusive leader who values the strengths of others (Northouse, 2022) and allows us to find our common ground and build collective commitment from there. Taking time within the revision process to hear others' stories around their *why* will help me see what they value—what is important to them. This also ties to reflections I have about myself as an adaptive leader and giving time and value to all voices (Northouse, 2022).

i. How might you assess your process through an equity lens?

An action we will do as a leadership team is come into the revision process and conscientiously ask ourselves throughout the process, "Who benefits from_____?" when considering how we gather student, staff, and stakeholder input as well as *what* we include in our mission and vision (Newcomer & Cowin, 2018). This will help ensure the people we want to benefit from our mission and vision—students—are represented equitably.

Part C: Student Mission and Vision

a. Imagine you have all the resources and control, what would be the best vision and mission for your school or district?

Imagining I have all the resources (time, money, and people) and control, I would still want to co-create the mission and vision in a process like what my school has already done and has been explained in previous parts. I have my own personal values, my own mission, and my own vision, but it would not align with who I am as an inclusive team leader to thrust my mission and vision upon the school without "real input" from stakeholders (Bown, 2018, p. 6).

Sharing my values of learning for all, collaboration, asset-based orientation, and optimism will be important to sharing about myself as an inclusive, adaptive, transformational and team leader in the early stages of creating a mission and vision (Northouse, 2022). Due to my values of collaboration and the idea that everyone brings valuable experiences into our creation of the mission and vision, I would not only share my values and stories about why those are important, but I would hear others' stories and values as we co-create/revise and live our mission and vision (Baldoni, 2015).

b. Write a mission and vision that you believe would be motivating and inspirational for a school or school district.

The mission and vision we currently have at ▮▮▮ High School is motivating and inspirational because it was co-created through collaboration and consensus building. We also have recently revised our vision statement and had a high turnover of our administrator team, so creating a new mission and vision would not be as motivating as a recommitment or clarification of *how* we collectively live our mission and vision. With all the resources and

control, something I *would* do is invest the resource of time to alignment of every action and decision we make that impacts students to our current mission and vision. This would help create cohesiveness for our staff, families, students, and all stakeholders for the actions we take as a school. A question I continually ask within teams I am part of is, "How do we help staff see connections between our actions, so our students benefit?" The idea is that every action we take as a school should align to our mission and vision. If we can't make that connection, it shouldn't be a priority. It also helps our staff see the actions we take as a school as cohesive, instead of a bunch of separate "things" that must get done.

Motivating and inspiring students will come from helping students make intentional connection to our mission and vision. "How do *I* belong? How do *I* learn? How am *I* all in?" Also, if I graduate with the skills and knowledge in our mission and vision, what does that look like? Empowering staff and students to define, together, what our vision truly looks, sounds, and feels like within our school will motivate and inspire.

c. 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.

Because I have been part of the creation of our mission and revision of our vision, I already feel connected to our mission and vision. What I would want is to build that connection for *all* staff, students, families, and community members to our *shared* school mission and vision (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). First, our schools' communication of our mission and vision is important so all stakeholder groups get a common message around what we are about at ██ High School. Our communication is in the written, spoken, and displayed words we use around
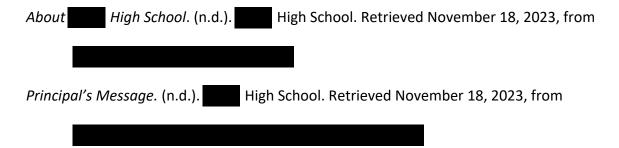
our school mission and vision. It is also in the unspoken—the actions we take that align with the mission and vision. To truly operationalize our school's mission and vision, we must make every decision based on the alignment.

A couple specific examples of operationalizing our mission include a focus on belonging within our staff—through intentional relationship building and building common understanding of what belonging is—to really work toward "All Belong" (███ High School, 2023, Our Mission and Vision section). Creating common understanding around belonging for staff first allows us to build belonging for each student more easily than just telling people to belong. Part of our mission, "All Learn" is operationalized in how we approach the idea that learning is for all—staff and students—within ███ High school and in our Professional Learning Community (PLC) practices (███ High School, 2023, Our Mission and Vision section). Finally, "All In" is the transformational piece of our mission statement because it encourages the belief within oneself that we can do more than what is expected because we first work on belonging and learning, and that allows us to go above and beyond just those two things (Northouse, 2022). Our vision statement, while new, is working toward operationalizing through constant connection to what we do and how it supports every graduate getting the skills we want them to have. Through our consistent commitment and communication to our mission and vision, each person will find their own connection, feel belonging in our school community, and will be able to build upon the strengths they already bring to become even more.

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