

Developing Vision and Mission Statements in a Multiple Pathways School¹

Vision and mission statements provide schools with an overview of where they want to go and what they want to be. Vision and mission statements establish clear expectations and standards for the whole school community, and help the school reach common goals.

- A vision statement is a collective expression of the school's aspirations. A vision is concise and easy to recall.
- A mission statement provides an overview of the steps to achieve that future vision. A mission is lengthier and is the "how-to" statements that help schools achieve their vision.

Setting the stage for designing vision and mission statements at a Multiple Pathways school--before getting started:

- Identify a vision & mission design team--there should at least one representative from each pathway, department, and other program (e.g. counselors, Special Education, English Language Learner program, parents).
- If the school and/or pathways at the site already have existing vision and mission statements, bring those to the table when (re)creating the school-wide vision and mission statements.
- Mission and vision design team should review school data that identifies areas that need improvement. These data might include: demographic data, attendance data, student achievement data, etc.
- Devise a plan to involve all staff in providing feedback for the revision of the vision and mission statements.

Steps to Creating a Vision Statement in a Multiple Pathway School:

Step 1. Before embarking on the vision and mission creation, engage the design team in a conversation or activity in order to explore the team's pedagogical beliefs and core educational beliefs. See an example of such an activity [here](#).

¹ This protocol is an adaptation of from Oakland's Measure N Planning Template and the book "How to Help Your School Thrive Without Breaking the Bank," (Chapter 2 Developing a Mission and Vision).

Step 2. Clarify the function of vision and mission statements by review existing vision / mission statements from the school's pathways, or from other schools that have similar demographics. Ask the design team to articulate the purpose of a vision statement versus mission statement, using the examples. This will help the design team better understand how the vision statement informs the mission statement. See an examples of school's vision and mission statements: [Porterville Unified School District](#) - [Antioch Unified School District](#).

Step 3. The design team should break into groups of 3-4 to discuss what it is they truly want from their students and school.

Small groups discuss the following questions:

- What kind of school do we hope to be?
- What should be reflected in our vision statement?
- What do we need to do differently to achieve this vision?
- How are we different from other schools? What unique opportunities or pathways do we offer?

The design team will regroup to brainstorm and record a list of words or phrases (aspirations, pedagogical values or beliefs) that will help them come up with an inspirational, compelling vision. Examples of phrases that might surface: *All students should have the opportunity to succeed, regardless of their life circumstances.* or *All students deserve a high-quality, relevant, and rigorous education that prepares them for success in college, career, and life.*

Step 4. Review the school's existing vision statement and other documents that describe the school's vision, any individual pathways' vision statements that exist, and the district's strategic plan. The design team should discuss their impression as an entire team. A few questions to generate dialogue are:

- What patterns do you see in the existing vision statements and strategic plans?
- What pedagogical beliefs or values from the list in step 3 are reflected in these documents?
- Are there any pedagogical beliefs or values that need to be added to the brainstorm list in step 3?
- Is there any language from the documents that the group would like to incorporate into the vision statement?

Step 5. It is now time for the vision design team to draft a vision statement. The vision design team should break into groups of 2-3, with one person serving as a scribe who will record responses, ideas, and key terms and phrases. It is not necessary for the

groups to develop full sentences or statements at this point. When the small groups reconvene and report out, a scribe makes a master list and facilitates wordsmithing of the key concepts and phrases into a vision statement—a one to three-sentence statement that captures the faculty's vision of the future. Using Google Documents can be a helpful tool for this activity.

Steps to Creating a Mission Statement in a Multiple Pathway School:

Step 1. Review purpose of a mission statement: this is how the school will work together to achieve the vision. Next, discuss the essential practices that the school staff will prioritize in working toward their vision. Some practices to consider are:

- College AND career preparation for all students
- Explicit attention to equity
- Teacher collaboration
- School-wide instructional strategies (e.g., project-based learning, scaffolding and differentiation, practical real world applications, performance-based assessment)
- Personalized student support
- Inclusive decision-making structures
- Teacher-led professional development
- Interdisciplinary teaming in pathways
- Integration of initiatives (e.g., mainstreaming, common core implementation, and pathway development)

Step 2. Examine the school's previous mission statement, as well as any that may exist from the school's pathways. If more examples are needed, look [HERE](#). Other documents to guide this work might be the district's strategic plan and graduate student profile, if one exists. Pose and discuss the following questions, while a designated scribe captures the suggestions.

- Is there language in the example mission statements that articulates how the school can reach its vision?
- Is there language that clarifies how staff will work together to achieve the vision?
- Review notes from step 1 to identify what else needs to be included in the mission statement?

Step 3. It is now time for the the design team to draft a mission statement. Post the vision statement and review the relationship of the mission and vision statements. Then, the design team should break into groups of 2-3, with one person serving as a scribe. Groups should draft sentence-length statements that could be incorporated into a mission statement. When the small groups reconvene and report out, a scribe makes a master draft and facilitates wordsmithing of the mission statement. Using Google Documents can be a helpful tool for this activity. The final statement should be between three and five sentences. It may need further wordsmithing by a smaller team before it is ready to share with the entire staff for feedback.

Step 4. This step is critical to teacher leadership development. Department, program, and pathway leads need to be prepared to bring the group's draft vision and mission statements back to their pathway teams for feedback, and they need structures to help them organize the feedback productively. The discussions they lead with their pathway teams are a crucial step in uniting the whole staff behind a common vision and mission.

Step 5. Preparing the design team leaders to present the draft mission and vision statements: A first step in any pathway team conversation about vision and mission should include conversations about pedagogical beliefs, values, and teaching and learning. The teaching and learning activity suggested above (and available [HERE](#)) is a useful tool. Once pathway teams have discussed what they value and believe about how schools should serve students, they can look at the vision teacher leaders developed for the future of their school.

- Small groups discuss the following questions:
 - What kind of school do we hope to be?
 - How are we different from other schools? What unique opportunities do we offer students?
 - What do we need to do differently in order to reach all students?
- Explain the inclusive, collaborative process by which the design team created the vision and mission statements. Explain the relationship between the vision and mission statement.
- Present the vision statement. Clarify that the feedback will go back to the design team for redrafting (no wordsmithing!)
 - What is strong about the statement?
 - How might this statement be strengthened?

- Review the purpose of a mission statement: to describe how staff will work together to achieve the vision. Present the practices that were discussed in developing the mission, such as those listed below. This will also provide an opening for teachers to discuss how developing vision and mission statements will affect their work together.
 - College AND career preparation for all students
 - Explicit attention to equity
 - Teacher collaboration
 - School-wide instructional strategies (e.g., project-based learning, scaffolding and differentiation, practical real world applications, performance-based assessment)
 - Personalized student support
 - Inclusive decision-making structures
 - Teacher-led professional development
 - Interdisciplinary teaming in pathways
 - Integration of initiatives (e.g., mainstreaming, common core implementation, and pathway development)
- Present the mission statement: What is strong about the statement?
 - How might this statement be strengthened?
- Be sure to have the representative record all feedback on a common note-taking template or google documents.

Step 6 - Pathway leads bring the feedback and questions back to whole school-wide design team, analyze the feedback, and adjust the vision and mission statement as necessary.

Step 7 (Optional next step) - The design team may wish to make the “unveiling” of the vision and mission statement celebratory in nature by inviting multimedia, technology, or art Pathway students to design posters displaying the statements. Soliciting students’ assistance in this way makes the vision and mission a meaningful part of students' experience. The vision and mission

should be sent home in newsletters and posted in prominent places throughout the school—classrooms, teacher mailboxes, the copy room, and so on—to keep it at the forefront of people's minds.

Step 8 (Optional next step) - Some pathways and department may choose to adjust or reword their student learning outcomes in order to create alignment with the school's vision and mission statement.

Listening to and validating Pathway teachers' input will strengthen quality and implementation of the vision and mission statement. Some questions that the vision / mission design team might pose include:

- What is the need for a new vision?
- What will the new vision expect of me?
- How will our work change as a result?
- Do we believe in this new vision?
- Do we believe in the school's ability to achieve this vision?

References, bibliography

How to Help Your School Thrive Without Breaking the Bank (Chapter
by John G. Gabriel and Paul C. Farmer
Table of Content Chapter 2. Developing a Vision and a Mission

OUSD's Measure N Planning Document, available [here](#).

