



PRACTICING VISIONARY LEADERSHIP TOOLKIT

Toolkit 1 in the Utah Educational Leadership Toolkit Series

Prepared for Utah Leading through Effective, Actionable, and Dynamic (ULEAD) Education

April 2019

In this toolkit, Hanover Research and ULEAD explore strategies and resources that current and aspiring school principals can utilize to meet the criteria outlined in Standard 1: Visionary Leadership of Utah's Educational Leadership Standards.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

This toolkit provides guidance and resources to support current and aspiring school principals in developing their personal capacity for leadership and meeting the criteria outlined in the **Utah State Standards for Educational Leadership** (located [here](#)). Specifically, this toolkit is designed to develop current and aspiring principals' skills and knowledge related to **Strand 1: Visionary Leadership**.

Utah's Educational Leadership Standard 1: Visionary Leadership



Effective educational leaders facilitate the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a shared vision that promotes each student's academic success and well-being.

Standard 1.1: Collaborate with faculty, staff, parents, and the school community to develop and implement a shared vision, mission, and values.

Standard 1.2: Collect, analyze, and use data to identify goals, assess organizational effectiveness, and promote organizational learning.

Standard 1.3: Create and implement plans to achieve short- and long-term goals.

Standard 1.4: Develop a shared understanding of and commitment to mission, vision, and values within the school and community to promote continuous and sustainable improvement.

Standard 1.5: Monitor and evaluate progress and revise plans to achieve desired outcomes.

Source: Utah State Board of Education¹

Research shows that—aside from teachers—**school principals are the most influential school-based factor in promoting student achievement.**² Specifically, research finds that principals account for a quarter—on average—of their school's overall impacts on student achievement outcomes. Likewise, research observes that differences in student achievement up to 20 percentage points may occur when a school has an "above-average principal" rather than an "average principal."³

Effective principals are integral to their school's success.⁴ Research shows that effective principals positively impact the mission and vision of their schools and student and staff outcomes.⁵ In particular, effective principals are more likely to retain qualified and effective teachers, which helps drive student achievement.⁶ More broadly, research shows that "it takes multiple in-school factors coming together to significantly improve student achievement on a larger scale" and "that principals are in a unique position to bring those factors together."⁷ The impact of having an effective principal is greater in schools facing more challenges. Researchers find "no documented instances[...]where troubled schools are turned around if they do not have a talented leader."⁸

Indeed, it is accurately and "widely believed that a good principal is the key to a successful school" given the many roles they fill: instructional leader, staff evaluator, lead disciplinarian, overseer of daily operations, school representative to families and the community, and more.⁹ Principals are

integral to all aspects of their school's operations, from the quality of the teachers to the instructional strategies used with students to the overall school climate.¹⁰

As such, principals require an array of knowledge and skills to act as effective change agents, instructional leaders, and personnel managers.¹¹ This **Practicing Visionary Leadership Toolkit**—and the five accompanying toolkits in the *Utah Educational Leadership Toolkit Series*—support Utah's current and aspiring principals in meeting the demands of Utah's Educational Leadership Standards to successfully:¹²

- Shape a vision of academic success for all students, one based on high standards;
- Create a climate hospitable to education in order that safety, a cooperative spirit, and other foundations of fruitful interaction prevail;
- Cultivate leadership in others so that teachers and other adults assume their part in realizing the school vision;
- Improve instruction so teachers can teach at their best and students can learn at their utmost; and
- Manage people, data and processes to foster school improvement.

Why Utah's Schools Need Strong and Effective Principals

“Everyone remembers a teacher that inspired them. How many people remember their principals? Principals ensure that schools are open, that teachers are receiving the support they need, and that classrooms are environments that will help all students learn.

The strongest model for schools is one in which principals are creative, innovative instructional leaders. They find opportunities for teachers to lead. They support teachers in their growth and create a safe space for adults to take risks in their learning. As educators look at what builds a great school, they need to look at the principal. Who is at the helm? What vision have they set for their communities? How have they developed an environment that fosters learning and creativity?

Students need great teachers, and teachers need great leaders. One can't exist without the other. Principals bring in opportunities for their communities. They find resources where there weren't any before. They connect families. They find places for children to thrive both in and outside of the classroom.

”

Source: U.S. Department of Education¹³

OVERVIEW

This toolkit:

- ✓ Describes protocols principals may use to **examine existing contexts** within their school, district, and community to identify areas of strength and in need of development;
- ✓ Reviews strategies to foster collaboration between principals and stakeholders to **establish a shared vision, mission, and goals** to guide school operations; and
- ✓ Explores practices that **build and sustain an organizational commitment** to the values and goals outlined in the school vision and mission.

AUDIENCE

This toolkit is designed to support current and aspiring school principals across the state of Utah in meeting the criteria outlined in Utah's Educational Leadership Standards, particularly **Standard 1: Visionary Leadership**.

EXAMINE EXISTING CONTEXTS

LEVERAGE AVAILABLE DATA TO MAKE DECISIONS

It is essential that principals examine and analyze available data for their school and district to make the most impactful decisions about their building's operations.¹⁴ When principals "are knowledgeable about data use, they can more effectively review their existing capacities, identify weaknesses, and better chart plans for improvement."¹⁵ Consequently, principals—in conjunction with other school leaders and staff (e.g., assistant principals, department chairs)—must sift through the vast array of data available via modern data warehousing practices (e.g., attendance, behavior, academics) to determine where school resources should be directed.¹⁶ Furthermore, principals and their team should collect and analyze data longitudinally—preferably for the preceding three to five years, if available—to identify trends in performance that will ultimately shape the school vision, mission, and goals.¹⁷

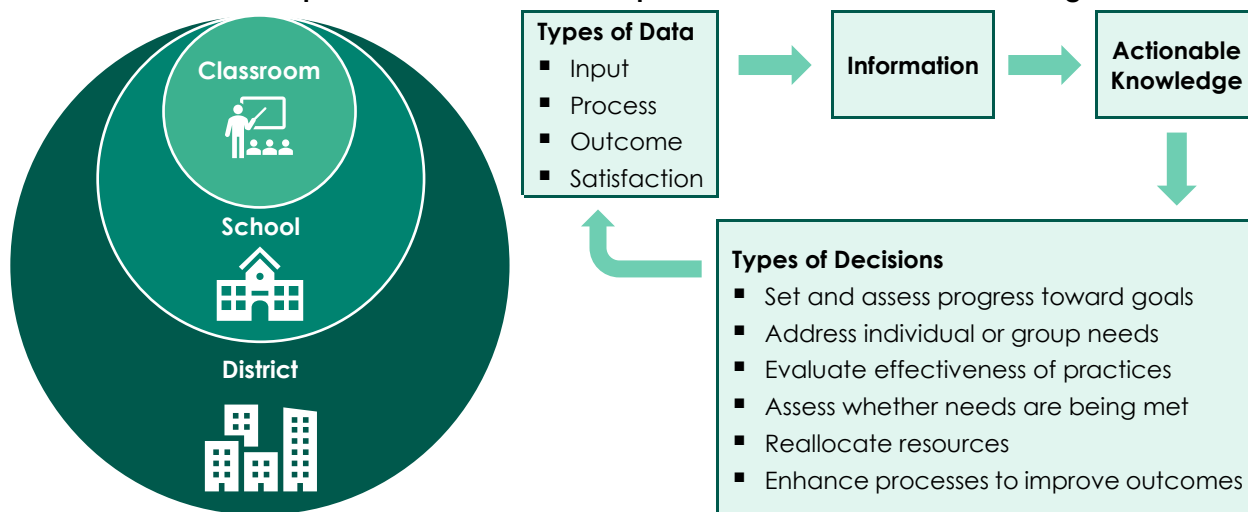
Data Categories Commonly Available to School Principals

Student Assessment Scores	Behavior and Discipline	Grades	Participation in Special Programming
Student and Staff Demographics	Classroom Observations	Stakeholder Survey Responses	Course Enrollment
Student Attendance	Budget Information	Program Evaluation	Professional Development

Source: ACT and Scholar-Practitioner Quarterly¹⁸

Through data-based decision-making, principals can quantify and justify their decisions about instructional and administrative practices while also increasing transparency and building their personal credibility as school leaders.¹⁹ A principal's commitment to data-based decision-making can drive improvements in all aspects of the school culture, from academic instruction to family engagement to staff retention.²⁰ In addition, principals practicing data-based decision-making and action-planning serve as a model for their staff and students on how to identify and address areas of need.²¹

A Conceptual Framework for Principals' Data-Based Decision-Making



Source: RAND Corporation²²

On the following page, the **Discussion Guide for Data Analysis and Data-Based Decision-Making** lists a series of questions—categorized by data type—that principals can use to conduct self-guided analysis of data and to lead larger discussions around data. With these questions and by engaging in the broader process of data-based decision-making, principals will develop an understanding of "key aspects of the school that might figure into a shared vision" and thereby build a firm foundation from which to launch further discussions about their school's vision, mission, and goals relative to district and community priorities.²³ Through this process, principals become equipped to define the purpose and objectives of their school building and instructional teams.²⁴

IDENTIFY DISTRICT-LEVEL PRIORITIES TO ENSURE ALIGNMENT

While principals have their own vision and objectives for how they intend to manage their building, **they must ensure that their work aligns with the priority areas and system-level goals outlined in their district's strategic plan.**²⁵ Successful execution of a district strategic plan requires collaboration and coordination between district administrators, school leaders, and all other personnel. As such, principals should outline a direction for their school that complements the district's broader goals.²⁶ Indeed, districts should be able to "develop and articulate both a vision and a set of practices that send a clear message of what schools are to be about," while school principals should act with "a broader range of autonomy to make decisions within the boundaries of a [district's] strategic framework."²⁷

To avoid divergence from the district strategic plan and sustain momentum for systemwide efforts, principals should examine any available strategic planning documentation and coordinate with district administrators to identify school-level priorities.²⁸ In addition, principals should work with district staff to ensure compliance with federal and state mandates and policy guidance, especially in regards to those educational elements they are exploring for inclusion in the school vision, mission, and goals.²⁹ By ensuring frequent and intimate collaboration with district-level personnel, school principals can:³⁰

- Articulate their school's unique needs, vision, mission, and goals in the context of the larger district strategic plan;
- Communicate solutions to address problems at their school, which may also apply in a similar context at other district campuses;
- Facilitate ongoing dialogue and coordination with district and community leaders; and
- Establish an environment of mutual understanding, respect, and ownership.

Coordinating School and District Vision, Mission, and Goals

“ Defining autonomy for principals is not a one-size-fits-all approach. Veteran principals in high-achieving schools may confidently handle more autonomy or degrees of freedom, while novice principals or principals at struggling schools may need more guidance and direction from district administrators.

Defined autonomy for school leaders is probably best described as a balancing act, with districts being directive in some areas, such as establishing goals and expectations for achievement, setting a general course for continuous improvement, and defining high standards of performance for all personnel.

At the same time, effective district leaders recognize that some actions are best left up to principals, such as evaluating personnel based on district-approved criteria, developing or removing staff as necessary to meet performance standards, and developing cultures of high expectations within their own schools.

Source: American Association of School Administrators³¹



Discussion Guide for Data Analysis and Data-Based Decision-Making

Directions: Using the questions listed below, principals can examine key data points about students' academic performance, attendance, and behavior, as well as school operations and stakeholder perceptions, to determine areas of strength and development. By answering these questions, principals can acquire insight into what the school community cares about, what the school does well, and what the school needs to do better.

Academic Performance Data

- What data are available that indicate how well students are achieving the conceptual understandings and developing the target skills outlined in content-area standards?
- What data show which students meet or exceed expectations and which do not?
- What academic areas prove problematic for students? What are the characteristics of students struggling in these areas?
- What academic areas are strengths for students? What are the characteristics of students performing well in these areas?
- What trends are observable in student performance over time?
- Why are students performing in the ways that they are? What school-based or out-of-school factors may be impacting student performance?
- How are the school and district aligning resources to support students equitably?

Attendance and Behavioral Data

- What is the overall attendance rate of the school? What percentage of students are chronically absent?
- What are the reasons that students are absent from school?
- Do any student sub-groups have significantly better or worse attendance relative to peers?
- What are the rate and volume of disciplinary instances occurring at the school?
- Are disciplinary incidents more prevalent among certain student sub-populations?
- Are consequences for disciplinary instances consistent between offenders from different student sub-groups?

Operations Data

- What is the current enrollment of the school?
- How many students are enrolled in specialized academic programming (e.g., special education, English learner, gifted and talented)?
- What is the teacher-to-student ratio? How many support personnel does the school employ?
- What resources—financial and other—are available to the school?
- How frequently does the school communicate with families and community members? Using what mechanisms?

Perceptions Data

- How do school community members feel about the school and district?
- How satisfied are school community members with the school's educational programs?
- What do school community members perceive to be the strengths and needs of the school?
- What do school community members think about the skills of current students and graduates?

Source: Multiple³²

CONVENE WITH STAKEHOLDERS TO CLARIFY ADDITIONAL NEEDS

Principals should engage with and solicit feedback from community stakeholders to understand their priorities and goals for the school. For example, a principal should speak with their teachers to understand what curricular and instructional supports they require to be successful. They should also engage with students and their parents or guardians to determine what kinds of programming they prefer (e.g., extracurricular opportunities, specific academic experiences).³³ Principals should communicate with as many stakeholder groups as possible to determine what their particular "stakes" are in school operations.³⁴




Key Stakeholder Groups and Their "Stake" in School and District Operations

INTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS		EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS	
GROUP	STAKE	GROUP	STAKE
Students	Personal success throughout school; future opportunities	Families	Student success; safety; pride in schools children attend
School and District Staff	Professional efficacy; job satisfaction	Taxpayers	Getting a good return on their tax investment in schools
School and District Leaders	Fulfilling mission; media coverage; accountability	Business Community	Ability to hire skilled graduates; economics
School Board	Fulfilling mission; media coverage; accountability	Community Members	Community pride; livability; real estate values

Source: RMC Research Corporation and U.S. Department of Education³⁵

Because stakeholders have a vested interest in the success of their local school, principals must recognize that they also have a perspective on what the school's vision, mission, and goals should be and what actions should be taken to achieve them.³⁶ Furthermore, stakeholders—both internal and external—can provide context around the issues currently facing the school and the community, organizational, and human dynamics that drive those issues.³⁷ As such, principals should be strategic and methodical in the methods they use to solicit feedback from stakeholders, as well as the content and context of the communications around those methods.³⁸ **This means that principals must use the right methods with the right stakeholder groups to acquire the kinds of feedback data they seek and that they should only collect feedback data if they intend to actively consider it in plotting their school's vision, mission, and goals.**³⁹

Methods to Gather Qualitative Feedback from Stakeholders

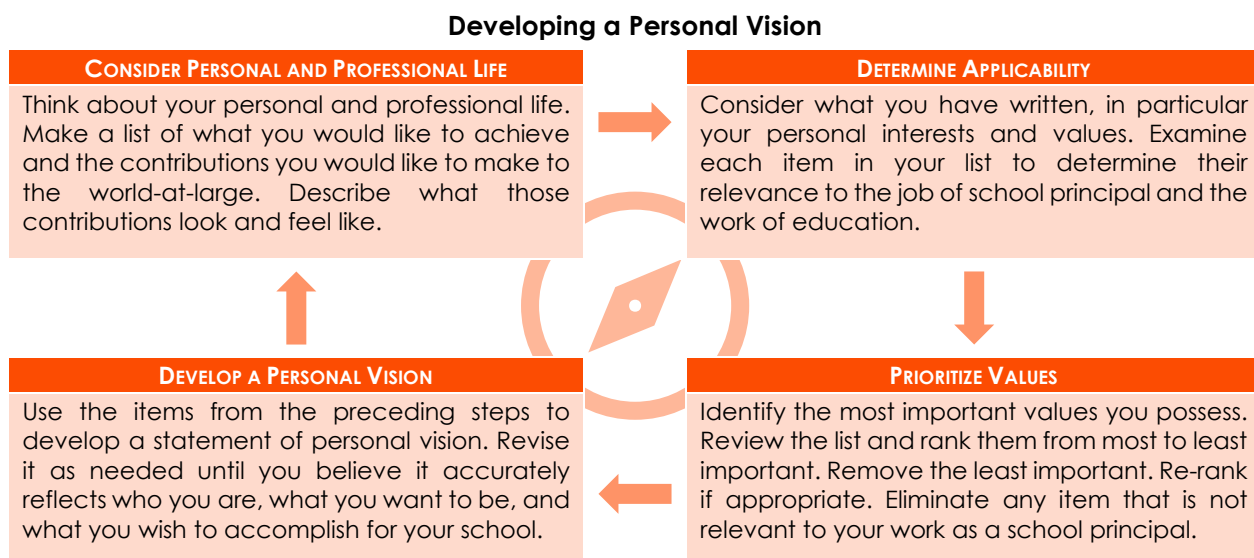
 SURVEYS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collect information regarding attitudes, beliefs, experiences, values, needs, demographic information, and perceptions Facilitate relatively quick conclusions regarding the perceptions of a target population Can reach a large number of people in a short amount of time Anonymity in responses may allow for greater honesty
 INTERVIEWS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allow for direct, in-depth questioning of individual stakeholder respondents Provide opportunities to ask clarifying questions of stakeholders and to follow-up on prior survey findings
 FORUMS/FOCUS GROUPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote group discussion to bring out insights that would not be ascertained through individual interviews or survey items Help gather a lot of information from a group of stakeholders sharing common attributes during a short period of time

Source: Vanderbilt University and The Denver Foundation's Inclusiveness Project⁴⁰

CREATE A SHARED VISION, MISSION, AND GOALS

CONSIDER ONE'S PERSONAL VISION AND GOALS

As a first step to establishing a shared vision, mission, and goals for their schools, **principals should reflect on their own personal views about education, the values and experiences that guide their professional work with students, staff, families, and the community, and the beliefs that shape their personal character and goals.**⁴¹ By considering their own personal and professional vision, mission, and goals, principals can establish a baseline understanding of what they seek to accomplish as a school leader and what they are willing to do to accomplish it.⁴² In addition, having a clear comprehension of their own vision, mission, and goals allows principals to serve as a model for their staff and, more importantly, to lead their staff effectively.⁴³



Source: Education Partnerships, Inc.⁴⁴

Research on educational leadership finds that effective principals help establish and sustain a commitment to rigorous learning standards, high expectations of students and staff, and accountability for student success.⁴⁵ As such, to be an effective leader, current and aspiring school principals must have tangible answers to the following questions:⁴⁶

- ✓ What should schools teach students? How should schools teach students?
- ✓ What are the attributes of a good school?
- ✓ What does it take to have a successful classroom?
- ✓ What are the attributes of an effective school leader?
- ✓ What are the attributes of an effective school staff member?
- ✓ What are the characteristics of a successful student, one that is college and career ready?

KNOW THE PURPOSE OF VISION, MISSION, AND GOAL STATEMENTS

In order to create shared vision, mission, and goal statements, principals and their collaborators must understand the distinctions and relationships between these items. A **vision statement** describes the perfectly ideal, or "dream," status of a school and its students' outcomes. In contrast,

LEARN MORE

- "Mission and Vision Statements" - Mind Tools
- "Wallace Research to Practice Shaping a Vision of Academic Success" - National Association of Elementary School Principals
- "School Leadership: Setting Goals for School Improvement" - College of Education, University of Illinois at Chicago

a **mission statement** explains more concretely what a school intends to accomplish, its broad strategy for accomplishing it, and occasionally, why it wishes to accomplish something. **Goal statements** are precise descriptions of measurable objectives that a school seeks to achieve in order to fulfill its outlined vision and mission. All three items will inform daily operations and short- and long-term planning by school and district leaders.⁴⁷ Likewise, vision, mission, and goal statements should both direct and motivate school staff to complete the necessary actions to achieve school objectives.⁴⁸

Distinguishing Between Vision and Mission Statements

“ A mission statement is a public declaration that schools or other educational organizations use to describe their founding purpose and major organizational commitments (i.e., what they do and why they do it). A mission statement may describe a school's day-to-day operational objectives, its instructional values, or its public commitments to its students and community.

A vision statement is a public declaration that schools or other educational organizations use to describe their high-level goals for the future—what they hope to achieve if they successfully fulfill their organizational purpose or mission. A vision statement may describe a school's loftiest ideals, its core organizational values, its long-term objectives, or what it hopes its students will learn or be capable of doing after graduating.

Generally speaking, **a vision statement expresses a hoped-for future reality, while a mission statement declares the practical commitments and actions that a school believes are needed to achieve its vision.** A vision statement describes the end goal (i.e., the change sought by a school), but a mission statement may describe a school's broad academic and operational assurances, as well as its commitment to its students and community. ”

Source: *The Glossary of Education Reform* | Great Schools Partnership⁴⁹

Indeed, outlining a vision and mission, as well as accompanying goals, builds a foundation from which schools serve students and collaborate with families, the larger district, and community members to achieve success.⁵⁰ By reading any of these statements, internal and external stakeholders should easily comprehend what a school's goals are and how it intends to achieve them.⁵¹ Consequently, the school vision should broadly appeal to the school community, aspire to a better future, and articulate the core values of the school.⁵² Comparatively, the school mission should be clear, concise, and informative. Principals should invite input from stakeholders in crafting the vision and mission and be open to altering both statements in response to stakeholder feedback and changing realities in the school and district community.⁵³

Differences Between Vision and Mission Statements

DIFFERENCE	VISION STATEMENT	MISSION STATEMENT
Detail	Outlines where a school wants to be; communicates both purpose and values	Talks about how a school will get to where it wants to be; defines purpose and objectives
Answer	Answers the question 'Where do we aim to be?'	Answers the questions 'What do we do?' and 'What makes us different?'
Time	Talks about the future	Talks about the present leading to the future
Function	Lists where the school sees itself in future years; inspires and shapes direction	Lists the broad goals for which the school exists; defines key measures of success

Source: *The Open University, UK Aid Direct, and TESS India*⁵⁴

Sample Vision and Mission Statements

VISION STATEMENT	MISSION STATEMENT
Battlefield High School, Prince William County Public Schools, Virginia	
Every Battlefield High School student will achieve personal success and become a responsible and productive citizen.	At Battlefield 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.
John T. Baker Middle School, Montgomery County Public Schools, Maryland	
Our vision, as a community, is to inspire a passion for learning.	John T. Baker Middle School seeks to be an exemplary learning community school. We build the foundation of this community through meaningful relationships, relevant and engaging learning, and effective communication. We challenge ourselves to be better than we think we can be and advocate for the greater good of our multidimensional community. Our success in this mission will build lifelong, confident learners, who have the tools necessary for success in a changing world.
Potomac Senior High School, Prince William County Public Schools, Virginia	
All Potomac Senior High School students will achieve personal success in their learning and become responsible and productive citizens.	Our mission is to empower all students to apply their acquired skills and knowledge, to rely upon their personal attributes to lead productive lives, and to become contributing members of the global community.

Source: *Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development*⁵⁵

Concrete goals should accompany the vision and mission to both create urgency for stakeholders in working toward both statements and in plotting specific criteria that students, staff, families, and community members can aim to fulfill.⁵⁶ Likewise, goal statements outline more tangible strategies and action steps that a school community can use to meet target objectives.⁵⁷ Goal statements serve as an outline or plan that the school can follow to achieve its vision and mission.⁵⁸

In order to successfully drive school operations toward the vision and mission, goal statements should adhere to the S.M.A.R.T.+C criteria:⁵⁹

- **Specific:** Goal statements should articulate a *specific performance threshold* (e.g., 10% of students) of *what* is to be achieved (e.g., what behavior of whom or what outcome) by *when* (e.g., by 2025)?

- **Measurable:** Goal statements articulate outcomes for which corresponding data can be collected, detected, or obtained.
- **Achievable:** Goal statements are feasible to achieve given available resources.
- **Relevant:** Goal statements correspond to the school mission and communicate a clear understanding of how they fit in with the overall vision and mission of the school.
- **Timed:** Goal statements have a timeline by which their target outcomes will be achieved.
- **Challenging:** Goal statements stretch the school community to aim for significant improvements that are important to stakeholders.

DRAFT VISION, MISSION, AND GOAL STATEMENTS

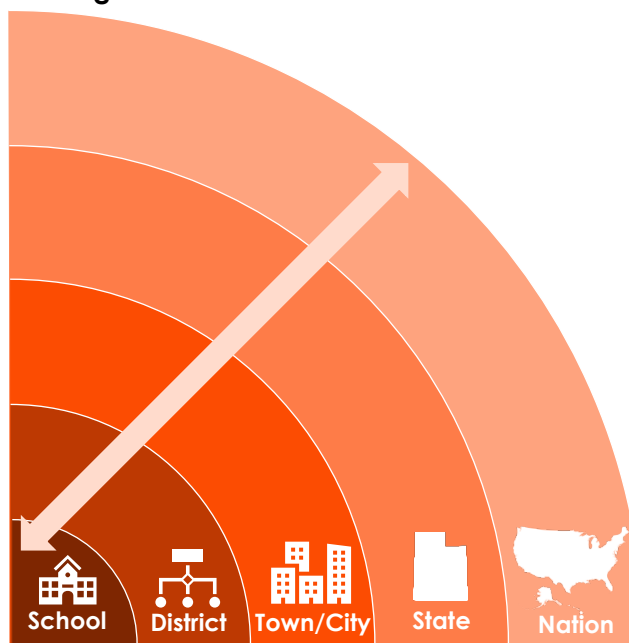
During the drafting process for a school's vision, mission, and goal statements, principals should emphasize two primary considerations. First, **these statements must describe what success looks like for the school in the present and the short- and long-term futures.**⁶⁰ Vision, mission, and goal statements also need to address the unique position of a school within all of the larger contexts it is part of: district, local community, state, and national.⁶¹

In writing such statements, school principals and any collaborating personnel must recognize that the tone and specificity of each statement are important. For example, a school's vision and mission statements should be written in a tone that reflects organizational values and appeals to stakeholders on an emotional level to inspire and sustain commitment.⁶² Comparatively, goal statements will be more tangible and logical by referring to specific and measurable results.⁶³

Second, **principals should involve stakeholders in exploratory discussions and the actual composition of the vision, mission, and goal statements.** While collaboration may require additional time, a principal who works with their staff, students, families, and other district personnel to develop these statements will foster the perception of a shared vision, mission, and goals. Indeed, vision, mission, and goal statements that result from collaboration will encompass a greater diversity of perspectives, drive wider organizational commitment, and promote shared ownership over school success.⁶⁵ Consensus will ultimately increase the chances of success and diminish the proliferation of resistance and challenges to executing action steps to achieve the school's stated vision, mission, and goals.⁶⁶

Principals should make sure that their school's vision, mission, and objectives are both "written for all" and "developed by all."⁶⁷ The issues that a school confronts on a daily basis affect multiple constituencies in different ways. Allowing for broader input from stakeholders "allows the

Putting a School's Vision and Mission in Context



Source: The Open University, UK Aid Direct, and TESS India⁶⁴






development of solutions that meet more peoples' needs more completely than decisions that are made" unilaterally by one or two school leaders.⁶⁸ Likewise, composing shared vision, mission, and goal statements helps clarify responsibilities, delegates power over change-driven action between the principal and other stakeholders, and strengthens the bonds of the school.⁶⁹

On the following page, the **Suggested Procedures to Develop Vision, Mission, and Goal Statements** lists a series of steps principals can use to guide their school's work around vision, mission, and goal statements. By following these steps, principals and their collaborating stakeholders can form statements driven by consensus and a refined awareness of the needs and perceptions of all constituencies.



Suggested Procedures to Develop Vision, Mission, and Goal Statements

Directions: Using the processes outlined below, principals can lead discussions with collaborating stakeholders around the composition of a school's vision, mission, and goal statements. These procedures can be repeated for each statement type and will guide principals and collaborating stakeholders through the entire writing process, from initial investigations and explorations to final composition of the target statement.

PROCESS STEP	DESCRIPTION
 Consider One's Own Values and Beliefs	Principals should form a clear understanding of what they hope to achieve and what they hope their school will achieve during their tenure and beyond. Principals must identify their core beliefs, determine what actions and objectives they are willing and able to commit to, and find how their values overlap with school needs.
 Form a Team of Stakeholder Leaders	Principals should thoughtfully consider which stakeholder groups should be involved in the process of developing vision, mission, and goal statements. After determining which stakeholder groups need to be heard, the principal should invite key leaders or chosen representatives of those groups to participate in a committee.
 Review Organizational Values and Needs	Principals and the committee should examine available data to identify areas of strength and development for the school-at-large. At the same time, they should also conduct outreach to their fellow stakeholders to identify potential areas of focus and review district and state policies to ensure alignment.
 Establish Consensus Values and Goals	Principals and the committee should debate which needs and potential focus areas to prioritize given the available data, school community perceptions, and contextual factors with which the school must contend. This process will involve compromise, as not every need or focus can be encapsulated in the vision, mission, or goals. It is important, however, to find ways to use this process to build a shared commitment to those areas that are prioritized.
 Share Drafts with the School Community	After creating initial drafts of any statement, the principal and committee should share drafts more broadly with the school community. Specifically, they should facilitate dialogue or host public forums by which stakeholders can ask questions and provide feedback. This feedback should then inform revisions.
 Commit and Communicate	At this stage, the principal and committee should make any final revisions to the vision, mission, or goal statements. They should then publicize the final statement and make concerted efforts to raise awareness and build commitment with all stakeholder constituencies.

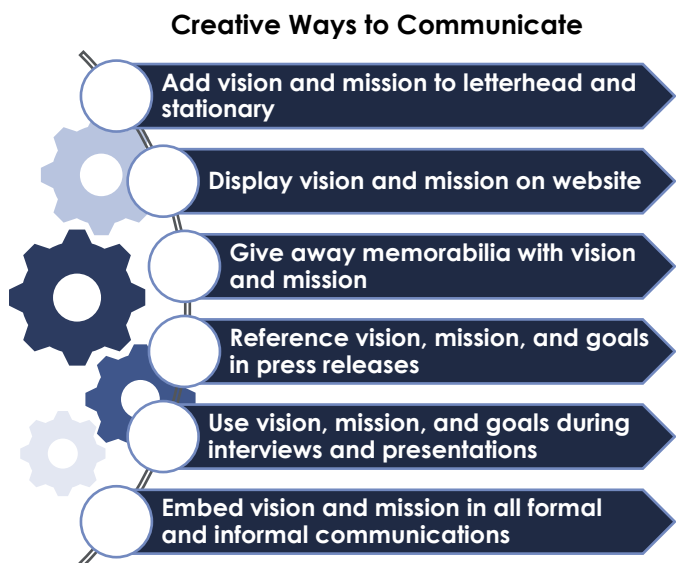
Source: Multiple⁷⁰

SUSTAIN ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

COMMUNICATE CLEARLY AND CONSISTENTLY

No matter how well-composed or thought-out vision, mission, or goal statements are, they will have limited value and utility unless school stakeholders are aware of and committed to them.⁷¹ Consequently, **principals must work with other school and stakeholder leaders to promote awareness of the statements and attach clear value to them.** Principals need the ability to take vision, mission, and goal statements from merely being "words on a page" to core principles that "embody the actions of every stakeholder who belongs to the [school] learning community."⁷²

To drive such movement, principals will need to work with others to find creative ways to give life to vision, mission, and goal statements. Principals should work to develop a larger narrative of hope and excitement around their school's work in their efforts to build stakeholder buy-in.⁷³ This means that principals themselves should "model [their] school's beliefs, values, and collective commitments while demonstrating enthusiasm for what will come next."⁷⁴



Source: *Community Tool Box | University of Kansas*⁷⁸

Principals and their collaborators can communicate their school's vision, mission, and goal statements using a variety of techniques, many of which reflect general best practices for staff, family, and community engagement. For example, a principal may designate select personnel—such as the individuals involved in drafting the statements—to serve as ambassadors to those constituencies with which they have the greatest influence.⁷⁵ Similarly, principals may leverage school-focused social media accounts or a school-hosted blog to publish content directly related to the school's vision or mission or about progress related to a specific goal.⁷⁶ Perhaps most importantly, principals should align all of their actions and communications with the values outlined in the school vision, mission, and goals.⁷⁷

MONITOR IMPLEMENTATION AND REASSESS

Principals are the main overseers of their school's work toward attaining the outlined vision, mission, and goals. As such, **principals must monitor stakeholder actions to ensure that they improve school outcomes and correspond with the school's established vision, mission, and target goals.**⁷⁹ In particular, principals should direct stakeholder actions around the vision, mission, and goals to prevent complacency and ensure continued commitment on the part of stakeholders.⁸⁰

While vision and mission statements may not have linked performance measures, principals can track activities and progress using formal and informal mechanisms (e.g., process analysis and observation, outcomes measurement).⁸¹ Similarly, principals can leverage data related to specified performance outcomes for each school goal statement to gauge progress and identify areas of ongoing need.⁸² Such performance thresholds serve as benchmarks that principals can use to determine whether to intensify actions in specific areas or to divert resources elsewhere.⁸³

Depending on the results of the ongoing implementation monitoring, **principals may need to revisit the school vision, mission, or goals**, especially as state and district policies change, student needs evolve, or stakeholders prioritize new areas of concern.⁸⁴ Should a principal—in concert with other key school leaders—determine the need to update the school's vision, mission, or goals, they should once again complete the steps used to create the original statements (e.g., considering personal values, convening a working group) so that the school's vision, mission, and goals remain aligned to stakeholder priorities and drive meaningful work by staff and the larger school community.⁸⁵

On the following page, the **Progress Monitoring Checklist for Vision, Mission, and Goal Attainment** lists several evaluative criteria that principals can use to guide progress monitoring to ensure consistent and ongoing alignment of school stakeholders' work with the school's vision, mission, and goal statements. By considering these criteria, principals will remain aware of how their school's daily activities (e.g., governance, operations, instructional programming, volunteer work) reflect the broader values that the school community strives toward.⁸⁶



Progress Monitoring Checklist for Vision, Mission, and Goal Attainment

Directions: Using the checklist below, principals can monitor their school's activities related to attaining the outlined vision, mission, and goals. This checklist is meant to guide principals and their collaborators in asking important questions about school activities and ensuring alignment between those activities and what the school community intends to accomplish.

EVALUATION CRITERIA	YES	NO
Are school activities adhering to the parameters and values set forth in the school's vision, mission, and goal statements?		
Are school activities having an observable effect on stakeholder (e.g., students, staff, families) outcomes?		
Is the school on-track to achieve outlined goals based on available data?		
<i>If the school is not on-track to achieve outlined goals, did you underestimate the challenges involved in making progress on a particular issue?</i>		
<i>If the school is not on-track to achieve outlined goals, have staff and resources been allocated correctly to address a particular issue?</i>		
<i>If the school is not on-track to achieve outlined goals, were certain initiatives deprioritized in favor of unexpected and more immediate concerns?</i>		
Are any <u>internal</u> organizational changes impacting the school's ability to achieve the outcomes of its vision, mission, and goal statements?		
Are any <u>external</u> community changes impacting the school's ability to achieve the outcomes of its vision, mission, and goal statements?		
Are target outcomes realistically achievable given current levels of progress?		

Notes:

Source: The Bridgespan Group and DIY Committee Guide | Developing Governance Group⁸⁷

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