

Why Should We Describe the School or District We Are Trying to Create?

“At both school and district levels, administrative tasks essential to teachers’ learning and learning communities include building a shared vision and common language about practice” (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006, p. 80).

“The very best leaders understand that their key task is inspiring a *shared* vision, not selling their own idiosyncratic view of the world” (Kouzes & Posner, 2006, p. 108).

“A vision builds trust, collaboration, interdependence, motivation, and mutual responsibility for success. Vision helps people make smart choices, because their decisions are made with the end result in mind. . . . Vision allows us to act from a proactive stance, moving toward what we want. . . . Vision empowers and excites us to reach for what we truly desire” (Blanchard, 2007, p. 22).

In order for a school to move forward its faculty needs to develop an understood and agreed-upon purpose and sense of direction. “If you don’t have a common, agreed-upon destination, then everyone is left to his or her own devices to imagine one—a scenario that results in unharnessed and unfocused efforts” (Gabriel & Farmer, 2009, p. 46).

A key responsibility of an educational leader is “developing and delivering a compelling picture of the school’s future that produces energy, passion, and action in yourself and others. . . . [A vision is] one of your most potent leadership tools for the development of coherent and sustainable actions” (Kanold, 2011, pp. 6–7).

In identifying five key functions of principals, the Wallace Foundation (2012) listed shaping a vision of academic success as the first of those functions. It concludes, “Effective principals are responsible for establishing a schoolwide vision of commitment to high standards and the success of all students” (p. 5).

“Shared vision emerges from a collaboratively defined understanding of what constitutes worthwhile student learning, with all members of the PLC working together on problems around that common vision” (Fulton & Britton, 2011, p. 14).

A powerful vision results in inspiration, aspiration, and perspiration. It inspires people to rally around a greater purpose. It challenges educators to articulate the school they aspire to create. It leads to action, beginning with building shared knowledge of what it will take to reduce the gap between the current reality of their school and the school described in the vision (Williams & Hierck, 2015).

“The better people can envision where they are going, the more they can focus on specific initiatives that will make that vision a reality” (Kotter International, 2015, p. 17).

Shared vision emerges when there is clarity of purpose and “continuous collaborative conversations that build shared language, knowledge, and expectations” (Fullan & Quinn, 2016, p. 29).

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