

Creating a Shared Vision Facilitator’s Activity

Purpose	To help staff create a vision that is truly shared (i.e., committed to unanimously and understood in the same way).
Target Audience	District or school staff
Time	Approximately 3.5 to 5 hours
Materials	Chart pad paper, material for posting paper on the wall, markers (for each table), scissors, computer, projector, and vision worksheets, attached.
Number of Facilitators	Preferably 2

Overview To create a vision that is truly shared—committed to unanimously and understood in the same way—we must build on the values and beliefs of the school staff members to create core values and beliefs, a core purpose, and a mission for the school. With core values and beliefs, purpose and mission, a vision can be created for the school.

We must begin with the personal and move to the collective. Systems thinker, Peter Senge (*The Fifth Discipline*, 2006) sums up the rationale:

*Shared visions emerge from personal visions.
This is how they derive their energy and
how they foster commitment . . .
If people don’t have their own vision,
all they can do is “sign up” for someone else’s.
The result is compliance, never commitment.*

Peter Senge

Process Protocol To create a shared vision, gather all staff members together in a location with tables that seat 5 to 7 people. Organize seating arrangements to ensure a mixture (grade level/subjects taught) in the small groups and to ensure that time will be used effectively.

Prior to the session, organize seating arrangements to ensure a mixture (grade level/subjects taught) in the small groups and to ensure that time will be used effectively. Staff members should be well-versed in the literature about what works in schools like theirs.

The steps that follow describe the process in detail. Use the vision worksheet to assist with the documentation. Be sure to personalize the worksheet before copying it.

1. Review Ground Rules

- This is a safe room
- There is no rank in this room
- All ideas are valid
- Each person gets a chance to speak

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- Each person gets a chance to listen
- We are here to focus on the future
- Our purpose is improvement, not blame

2. Determine Core Values and Beliefs

Have the members of the group *individually* brainstorm and document their thoughts about: *What are the curriculum, instruction, assessment, and environmental factors that support effective learning for our students?* (10 minutes, or longer if needed)

Compare and merge ideas in *small groups*. Write the ideas on poster paper. It is okay to add or to agree to ideas that were not on an individual's original list. *Stick to the topic.* (15-20 minutes)

Reconvene as a *large group*. Someone from each group stands next to the group's posters to note duplicates and to report. Start on one end of the room, for example, and have the reporter for the first group read all of the group's ideas about curriculum. Other groups note duplications on their poster and when it is their turn, report what they have left. Start with a different group for each category and vary the direction so each group gets maximum exposure.

Come to agreement on core values and beliefs for the school. *Recorder types on a laptop so statements are displayed on the screen.* (30 minutes) (There is no limit to the number of core values and beliefs. However, after this day, with staff approval, the Leadership Team might merge some ideas if the list is very long and overlapping.)

3. Determine the Core Purpose

Have staff members *individually* brainstorm and document personal ideas about the purpose of the school—*do not worry about the wording at this point.* (5 minutes)

Share individual purposes in *small groups* and post a common purpose with which everyone in the small group can live. (10 minutes)

Look for commonalities across the small group purposes with the *large group*. Come to agreement on a core purpose for the school. *Recorder types the core purpose on the laptop.* (15-20 minutes)

PRINT THE CORE VALUES AND BELIEFS AND PURPOSE FOR EACH PARTICIPANT TO USE FOR THE NEXT STEP.

4. Revisit the Mission

Review the current mission statement. Either agree that the current mission is fine, or that a committee will craft the mission statement at a different time using the core values and beliefs and purpose, and bring it back to the whole staff. As long as the purpose is clear, the process can proceed without the mission statement completely written. It is the purpose that is most important. Determine who will write the mission. *Use the existing mission, update it quickly, or delegate the mission to be rewritten. Move on.* (5-10 minutes)

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5. Create a Vision

Still assembled in the large group, *individuals* brainstorm and document personal visions for the school in terms of what the school would *look like, sound like, feel like* if we were doing what we need to do for our children—if we were living our core values and beliefs, purpose, and mission. Identify curriculum, instruction, assessment, and environmental components. (*Note:* If the core values and beliefs are done well, the individuals will say “The vision should be our core values and beliefs,” which is what we would like to see happen.) (10 minutes)

Share personal visions in *small groups* and document commonalities. It is okay to add or to agree to ideas that were not on an individual's original list. Post ideas. (15 minutes—sometimes this step can be skipped if the note about values and beliefs holds true.)

Come to agreement on the commonalities with the *large group*. Come to agreement on the elements of the vision for the school. *Make sure everyone understands that these agreements become commitments for implementation.* (30 minutes)

6. Determine School Goals—The Outcomes of the Vision

There should only be two or three school goals. Again, have *individuals* take time to do their own thinking. (5 minutes)

Share individual ideas in *small groups* and document commonalities. (10 minutes)

Small groups share and merge ideas with the *large group*. (15 minutes)

7. Draft Vision Narrative

In addition to the specifics of the vision, it is important to write a narrative about what it would *look like, sound like, feel like* if the vision was being implemented in every classroom. Brainstorm ideas, at a minimum, if this piece must be delegated to the Leadership Team to finish because of time constraints.

Again, give *individuals* a chance to think. (5 minutes)

Have individuals compare and combine notes in their *small groups*. (15 minutes)

Compare and combine small group notes to *whole group*. (20 minutes)

8. Answer Questions

You might ask the staff to answer these questions if you have time after you finish the shared vision and school goals.

- What professional development is needed and when?
- What materials are needed to implement the vision?
- What other things need to be done to implement the vision?
- How will the implementation of the vision be supported?
- How can progress be measured?

THIS IS PROBABLY WHERE YOU WILL END AFTER ONE DAY. WHEREVER YOU ARE AT THE END OF THE DAY, THE FOLLOWING WILL HAVE TO BE COMPLETED AT A LATER TIME.

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Process Protocol 9. Document

Document the shared vision. Someone can be assigned this task, with review and agreement by the entire staff. Make sure every staff member has a copy of what has been done to this point.

Suggestion: Develop a rubric or assessment tool of some sort that would describe the logical evolution and implementation of the vision in the classroom and across classrooms. This will support the implementation later on.

10. Quality Plan

Determine a plan to implement the vision. Include the points that follow, especially the professional learning required to implement the vision, materials to purchase, and support mechanisms for implementation, such as peer coaching.

11. Curriculum and Instruction

Grade-level/subject-area teams adapt the vision into real terms for each teacher. Check across grade-level teams to ensure a continuum of learning that makes sense. (Determine a structure and time for grade-level meetings and across grade-level meetings.)

12. Leadership

Determine a leadership structure to implement and monitor the vision.

13. Professional Learning

Create time in the work week for teachers to collaborate to implement and maintain the vision. Provide professional learning so everyone understands her/his role in implementing the vision and has the support to do it.

14. Partnership Development

Determine how partnerships can help with the implementation of the vision and build them into the vision and the school plan.

15. Continuous Improvement and Evaluation

Determine an evaluation and monitoring system, specifically to gauge implementation and success.

Comments to the Facilitator

This is a very action-packed time period. If you keep within the time estimates, the task will go fast, be productive and, if you feel comfortable doing so, consider interspersing the time with continuous team building activities.