

# SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING RESOURCE MANUAL 2008-11

## *What's available on the Principals Portal?*

- This *School Improvement Planning (SIP) Resource Manual*, which will be periodically updated to address SMART goals, Alignment, and other resources to assist School Improvement Teams. Principals will receive an e-mail alerting them to changes or new resources available
- *SIP Flowchart*, which graphically shows the steps to completing a School Improvement Plan
- *SIP Task Checklist (chronological)* to be updated monthly by the principal and sent to the IIO until the Board approves the School Improvement Plan. This checklist is organized chronologically to show when portions of the plan will be completed, up to feedback on the final draft, voting by staff and submission to the Board of Education for approval.
- *SIP Format*, to be completed in draft form and sent to the IIO by **Sept. 1**.

## *What's Different about the 2008-11 process?*

The 2008-2011 School Improvement Planning process marks the beginning of a new three-year plan. After extensive benchmarking and dialogue with principals, parent representatives and administrators, the Academic Improvement division has adapted the school improvement format and process implemented in Iredell-Statesville Schools, which in turn was adapted from state-wide use in New Mexico and its origins in Colorado. We are excited about a number of features in this new planning process and format:

- A **“taking stock” self-assessment process** that recognizes that the shared dialogue, understanding, commitment, collaboration and continuous improvement processes at the school level are even more important than the written plan itself. The Division has adapted previous planning resources to guide school improvement teams in conducting these crucial conversations before setting improvement goals.
- A **limited number (3-5) of major three-year SMART goals**: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Results Oriented and Relevant, Time-Bound
- **Alignment of goals** with state priorities and district goals, which ensures that school plans support the achievement of district goals while enabling schools to focus on what their school needs to achieve that will support those goals
- **Highly focused and customized one year target goals** that focus the school's improvement efforts in a given year. These goals are revised annually.
- A **limited number of carefully chosen, research and data driven strategies**, developed in collaboration with district resources
- A **quarterly deployment (implementation) and review process**, which enables schools and the district to partner in planning, supporting and monitoring implementation, and revising strategies each quarter as needed to achieve the intended goals

- **Distinction of a highly focused, practical improvement plan from operational plans and other planning requirements**, such as Title I and Comprehensive School Reform,. District plans and other school documents can be referenced as required, to avoid the problem of cluttering the school improvement plan with so many other strategies and goals that it loses focus and becomes only a “plan on paper” rather than a living guide to implementation. As much as possible, other planning requirements can be incorporated into one ongoing plan that can be revised quarterly as needed to incorporate new learning and data. *These requirements will be included in an Alignment checklist to help School Improvement Teams ensure they have addressed all legal and programmatic planning requirements.*

*What’s the Same as the previous 2005-2008 planning process?*

- The Vision Statement and Self-Assessment are concise summaries that are similar to those required in previous plans. The difference is that schools are asked to put much more effort into their dialogue before writing these summaries.
- The Taking Stock Tools expand upon Dr. Victoria Bernhardt’s school improvement planning process, which was incorporated into the resources schools used in developing their previous plan.
- The planning process builds upon principals’ experience this year in utilizing the Data Wise planning process, as well as prior investments in STARS team training.
- The deployment (implementation) plan simply provides greater detail, as well as quarterly review, of the action plans schools have previously written to implement their plans.

*What’s Next?*

- Use the **SIP Task Checklist** for School Improvement Teams to communicate monthly progress-to-date in completing the new school improvement plan to IIOs and other stakeholders. Additional sections will be added to the SIP Resource Manual on the Principals Portal as they are completed to guide the work of the School Improvement Teams.

## THE STUDY STAGE OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING: TAKING STOCK



Are You Ready To Begin?



*The first stage of the school improvement process is to take stock of the school's situation, which includes examining the structures, processes and attitudes that are in place to support the heavy lifting of school improvement and using data to assess strengths, prioritize needs, and establish goals for improvement.*

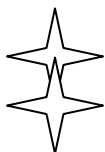
McREL, *The Success in Sight* improvement process

### ***In what order do you complete the steps to develop a school improvement plan?***

The order of the steps is somewhat arbitrary and *recursive*: you will find work on one step may cause you to go back and revisit your thoughts in a previous step. Some schools prefer to begin with revisiting their mission, vision, values, and beliefs. Others prefer to use the process of analyzing their data to lay the groundwork for reflecting on core beliefs and values. Still others will get to these steps by considering strategies and professional development they think will help address issues and opportunities for improvement.

Regardless of where you begin, the components of the School Improvement Process detailed in the previous **Task Checklist** are **inter-related**. Developing a shared commitment to your mission, vision, values, and beliefs is crucial for selecting what matters, the gaps between your espoused vision for the school and where the data tell you your school is in that journey. Analyzing data and considering possible strategies can help surface dialogue about what you believe in and what results are important to the “stockholders” of your school.

The step of **studying your data** will not only assist you in understanding your current results but also in charting your course for the future. Schools that analyze and use information about their school communities are in a position to make better decisions that lead to systemic change. Sustained school improvement requires that you become *data-driven* and *results-oriented*, ensuring that the School Improvement Plan becomes a living document. During this phase of school improvement, professional learning communities will validate the need for improvement by identifying the gaps in achievement and investigating possible root causes of these gaps. This step will help the school community see the need for improvement and develop the passion and sense of urgency to make improvements.



**Setting the Stage:  
Organizing for Results**



You set the stage for studying data by appointing a

**DATA TEAM**

**Who will be involved in organizing, analyzing, and interpreting the data?** Schools are strongly urged **to appoint a Data Team** to assist in selecting, analyzing and preparing data to engage your stockholders in understanding where you are and where you want to be. You will have the best results by involving staff members beyond those on the School Improvement Team. It is always a best practice to involve those closest to instruction since they are in the position of having the greatest impact. For example, some schools have decided to utilize their STARS team as a Data Team.

The responsibilities of the Data Team include planning how to present data to other stockholders to help them understand where the school has been successful, and where there are the greatest opportunities for improvement. See the chapter “Organizing for Results” in *Data Wise* for further ideas about how to organize the work of a Data Team.

An important task for the Data Team is to prepare clear and thought-provoking presentations of data. They are doing the “heavy lifting” of sorting through and drilling down through data to search for what is going on and why. The team does not and probably should not present reams and reams of tables and overwhelming data. Rather their work should be **how to present the data** in a way that provokes dialogue and a deeper understanding of the successes and challenges for the school. The presentation does not have to be made using perfect graphs and powerpoints designed on a computer. Encourage the team to use hand-drawn graphics and representations of data to get people to think about what the data are telling you about students, parents and staff.

Once stockholders including parents and staff members identify their current reality, they are also more likely to understand and be able to target possible root causes. Changes cannot occur unless these individuals understand the reasons for the current results and are a part of the solution for making improvements.

 **Data Selection** 

Achievement data must be the starting point because this type of data will ultimately determine your progress. You will use other forms of data to determine possible root causes of current achievement levels, to monitor your progress along the way, and to determine additional strategies.

As you are trying to determine which data to use, remember that **alignment** is the key. What are the most important goals and priorities of the NC Board of Education and the Guilford County Schools? What are we trying to achieve, and how can your school contribute to achieving those goals? Ask yourself the following questions:

- Which data/assessment information will help us determine where we are in relation to your current school's mission/goals?
- Which data/assessment will help us improve teaching and learning in our school?



## Analyzing Your Data: What Are the Gaps?



**IMPORTANT!! Before completing this step, consider re-visiting your Mission and Vision. Identifying the “gaps” contrasts your vision for the future with the current reality.**

After setting the stage and identifying available data, you are now ready to start working through the data. You can identify areas in which your students are performing well because it may be that you are using strategies with these subgroups that will want to use with other subgroups. However, it is important to remember that your **major goal is to find the discrepancies/GAPS that exist between your current vision, mission and goals and the results that you are getting.**



## A Process for Analyzing Student Data



The Division of Research and Accountability will provide the Data Team at each school a data disk to help the team address the following fundamental questions:

### 1. Are we making progress?

- If available, each school will receive annual data back to 2002 for reading and math by grade level (elementary and middle schools), by the “big 5” EOC results (middle and high school), and for graduation rate (high school only back to last year, 2006-7).
- Each Data Team will receive **two different types** of student achievement data: *percent proficient* and *state percentile*.
- *Percent proficient* data will enable the school team to determine progress in getting all students to the standard of proficient and beyond. It should be particularly helpful in planning to address AYP requirements.
- *State percentile* data will help measure the **growth** of all students over time, by comparing the school's average scale score to the statewide percentile that score represents. A percentile rank orders all the scores in the state. For example, if a school's average score is at the 60<sup>th</sup> percentile, 60% of schools scored lower than the school, while 40% scored higher.

- School Data Teams should analyze these two types of data to answer the question of whether their results have been improving, declining, fluctuating greatly or staying about the same over the last several years.
- In cases of great improvement, decline or instability, school Data Teams should ask questions and use other sources of data to determine if there were one or more *Special Causes* for the change. For example, a large turnover of staff or re-districting could be a special cause that affects scores for a given year.

## 2. How do we compare?

- Each level of school (elementary, middle, high) will receive a chart plotting their student achievement against the school's *Difficulty Index*.
- Schools can *benchmark* their results against other schools with a similar difficulty index, as well as the district average, to determine whether other schools with a similar difficulty of student population have performed relatively better, worse or about the same.

## 3. Are all our students learning?

- If available, each school will also receive student achievement data back to 2002 for each student subgroup in the building.
- Like the overall grade or course data, the disaggregated data for each subgroup will report both *percent proficient* and *state percentile*.
- Drilling down into subgroup data over time should help the team prioritize opportunities for improvement, not only in making AYP but in closing the achievement gap.

Listed below are additional questions that you will want to ask as you begin to analyze your data. These questions will help you determine discrepancies in the areas in which change is needed most.

- What strengths and weaknesses in student performance do the assessments/tests reveal?
- Did students meet expected growth? High growth? If not, which groups failed to meet growth expectation? **(BE SURE TO LOOK AT THE GROWTH OF LEVEL 3 AND LEVEL 4 STUDENTS.)**
- How are the different subgroups performing in each academic area? Which group is performing the best? Worst?
- Which groups did not meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)? Is there a group that met AYP but only by a slight margin?
- Is there evidence of improvement in student achievement over several years? Decline in student achievement over several years?

- Do you see any patterns or changes over time? Do you see changes in the performance of a cohort group?
- Are these results consistent with other achievement data?
- How do assessments/testing results compare to those of similar schools?
- Are there any surprises in the results?
- Is additional data needed in some areas?
- What skills do the assessments/tests require of the learner? Are these the same skills emphasized and assessed in classroom instruction?
- As a school, how is the student work evaluated? Do classroom assessments evaluate the same skills as the formal assessment?



## Using Other Types of Data



Schools committed to improving student achievement will not only look at testing data, but they will also collect and analyze other types of data that help provide a better understanding of the needs of the school community and particularly, student achievement. The perceptual data gathered through surveys of teachers (Teacher Working Conditions) and surveys of students and parents (district-provided, or through Mission Possible, Talent Development, Character Education, etc.) are an important source of analyzing the school culture and climate necessary for improved student achievement. Schools may also want to consider attendance (both student and teacher), discipline referral data, course taking patterns (who is taking what kind of courses, with what kind of consequences in the next level of schooling).

If other types of data are determined to be needed by your School Improvement Team, don't hesitate to incorporate them as needed in the data-gathering process. However, make sure that the data are pertinent to the mission of the school, and don't become overwhelmed with irrelevant data. In the beginning stage, the desire to gather more and more data unrelated to the mission can slow down the entire process. More is not always better. It is better to focus on the critical information and data related student achievement and follow through with root causes than to become overwhelmed with too much data.

**Don't get inundated by data  
Make sure that the data you use are  
pertinent and relevant to your mission and  
goals.**

  **Analyzing Perceptual Data:  
Who Are We?**  

This year for the first time, all schools in the district will have perceptual data from their key “stockholders:” students, parents, and staff, both certified and classified. The intent of collecting this perceptual data is to enable school improvement teams to analyze the conditions that are supporting or inhibiting their efforts to improve student outcomes. Using this data, the team can analyze the school culture and climate which will affect how successful improvement efforts will be. Knowing what is important and what is concerning these various groups can help the team anticipate and plan more effectively for implementing improvement efforts.

The data from students and parents can be helpful in determining “customer requirements:” what are the school outcomes and services that are most highly valued by the people who receive those services. Similarly, feedback from “internal customers,” the school staff, can also help in promoting conditions that enhance productivity and effectiveness.

Following are some questions for the team to considering in analyzing perceptual data:

What important points seem to “pop out?” What are some of the things that you are noticing?

What are some patterns, categories, or trends that seem to be emerging? Are these patterns the same or different for each stockholder group?

What seems to be surprising or unexpected?

What inferences, explanations, or conclusions might you draw from the data?

What additional data sources might you explore to verify your explanations?

Based on the data, what appear to be the strengths of your school? What data/evidence validate the strengths you identified?

Are there any areas that are likely to interfere with or slow down the implementation of improvement strategies you are planning? What might be done to address these concerns?

Based on the data, are there any additional action steps that need to be incorporated into the school improvement plan to achieve the results you desire for students?  
For other stockholders?

**By involving all instructional staff in studying available data, you will help create the understanding that the data belongs to everyone who shares the responsibility for student achievement. Ownership builds commitment to action.**  
**-Purposeful Communities-**

Consider a **DATA DAY**, allowing staff members to study available data. You may want to do this by grade level or department. A **DATA DAY** can easily be accomplished at a staff/department meeting or on an early release day.

## **ROOT CAUSE ANALYSIS**

### **How Do You Determine Root Causes?**

Once you have determined discrepancies in student achievement, you will now need to determine possible root causes. These are questions you will want to ask:

- What caused this discrepancy/gaps to happen? Did this area receive enough attention?
- Are resources focused in the areas where they are most needed?
- Are the programs in place still serving the needs of the students?
- To what degree did you successfully implement existing strategies designed to impact this area? (Adapted from Lezotte)

Answering these questions will be critical in determining the future direction of your School Improvement Plan. Investigating root causes will uncover problems that might otherwise remain invisible. They will also help you select strategies that are focused on the real cause of the problem rather than treating symptoms, and are therefore likely to have a greater impact.

The rules that guide this part of the process – determining the root cause – are simple and should be rigorously implemented.

- Stakeholders can present as many root causes for the noted discrepancies as they deem are necessary and valid.
- The data can be based on information that is already available or data that could be collected if the School Improvement Team forms a plan for its collection and analysis.
- All possible root causes will be taken seriously if they can be supported with data.

- Possible root causes are not valid if no supportive data exists or if no supportive data can be collected.



**It is extremely important to choose data  
that can be monitored over a period of  
time**



As you investigate possible root causes, consider how the areas listed below might have impacted the discrepancies you identified. (Your findings may also be beneficial in the next step – determining what you need to do differently)

- Schedules/Time on Task
- Resources Alignment
- Alignment of Instructional Materials
- Alignment of Taught and Tested Curriculum
- Interruptions During the Instructional Day
- Students Served in Remediation
- Focus on Remediation
- Focus of Staff Development
- School Practices
- Instructional Pacing Issues
- Lack of Knowledge in the Foundation Skills/Strategies
- Consistency Among Teachers
- Integration of Core Subjects
- Workplace Environment for Staff and Students
- Discipline Referrals
- Attendance/Tardies During School Day
- Support for New Teachers
- Stakeholders' Understanding of the Expectations
- Degree of Communication Among Teachers

The leader may also want to use brainstorming to create the list of possible root causes. In the beginning, allow team members to identify as many root causes as they feel are needed: however, your list may quickly become too lengthy to manage. At some point, the list may need to be narrowed. Try light voting or affinity diagrams to help narrow the list of possible root causes to those having the greatest impact on the discrepancies or gaps you have identified in your data. You will also want to narrow to those root causes that you can influence. The use of an Interrelationship Diagrams is useful in determining the area that has the most influence. (Training will be provided in use of these quality tools.)

**Remember to identify root causes that have the  
GREATEST impact on the discrepancies/gaps that you  
found in your data and which you can influence.**



## Example of Discrepancies and Possible Root Causes



Below, are examples of what the results of this process may look like.

### ELEMENTARY

Data Gaps/Discrepancies	Root Causes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 5<sup>th</sup> grade students did not make high growth in reading (has not been the case with this cohort group)</li> <li>▪ Level 4/Level 2 students did not meet expected growth</li> <li>▪ Level 3 students did not meet high growth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ ALP attendance 15% less for 5<sup>th</sup> grade students</li> <li>▪ Differentiated instruction inconsistent</li> <li>▪ Attendance at parent workshops explaining expectations less for 5<sup>th</sup> grade</li> <li>▪ Teachers identified differentiated instruction as topic for staff development</li> </ul>

### SECONDARY Middle School

Data Gaps/Discrepancies	Root Causes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 81% of students on free or reduced (F/R) lunch in 7<sup>th</sup> grade met expectations in math (9% gap)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Poor attendance at Saturday ALP and afterschool ALP.</li> <li>▪ Math teacher was not able to attend training related to new math textbook adoption</li> <li>▪ 2 out of 3 math teachers were ILTs</li> <li>▪ Discipline referrals in 7<sup>th</sup> grade were higher than 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup></li> </ul>

### HIGH SCHOOL

Data Gaps/Discrepancies	Root Causes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 15% less students demonstrated proficiency on 10<sup>th</sup> Grade Writing Test than previous year (Conventions – the lowest score.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Low scores on Eng. 1 (9<sup>th</sup> Grade EOC – Editing Section)</li> <li>▪ Low attendance of students in after-school remediation for grammar</li> <li>▪ More instructional emphasis on World Literature than writing</li> </ul>



# MISSION, VISION, VALUES and BELIEFS

“Successful school improvement is driven by **passion** that is grounded in the mission, vision, and values of the learning community” (Lezotte). Mission, vision and value statements serve as the foundation of a professional learning organization and provide the focus for continuous improvement.

The missions, vision, and values for your school should align with the district but should be individualized to reflect the specific needs of your school. Take this opportunity to evaluate what is currently in place in your school making sure it clearly matches the philosophy of your school and the district. It may be time to make adjustment and changes, or you may reaffirm what is already in place. Make sure you involve all stakeholders in this process, creating **shared passion** and a sense of mission.

Consider these reflection questions as you develop your mission, vision, and value statements:

- ❖ Do our mission, vision and values reflect the district’s thematic goals?
- ❖ Do our mission, vision and values clearly reflect the current reality in our school?
- ❖ Have all relevant stakeholders been involved in the development of our mission, vision, and values?
- ❖ Can our mission, vision, and values be easily articulated?



## Defining Mission



The **mission** statement is at the heart of why you do what you do and serves as the foundation of you Plan. A mission statement expresses the purpose of existence. Why are we here? What is the business of our business? The mission statement will not answer how we can do what we are doing better, but why we are here in the first place. It should not reflect current reality but instead should be a “reach statement”. Mission statements are usually confined to one and no more than two sentences enabling staff members, parents, and student to remember them easily.

- ❖ Does the mission give purpose? Does it add meaning to life within the system?  
Does the mission express why we exist?
- ❖ Does the mission describe results rather than behaviors? Could the mission be verified if the people responsible for it were not there?
- ❖ Does it touch the heart instead of the head?
- ❖ If this mission were accomplished, would it prevent another group within your school or district from accomplishing its mission?

- ❖ Do the actions of people working within the system determine whether the mission is accomplished?



## Defining Vision



The **vision** statement reflects a clear image of what the staff, parents, community, and students see as the ideal for their school. It is important to remember that vision is a “see” word, and writing about what you see may take one or two paragraphs. “What must we become in order to accomplish our fundamental purpose?” (Dufour, Dufour, Eaker, and Manly). The vision establishes direction and will motivate and energize people. The statement might include appearance, attitudes about the teaching/learning staff, staff/students, or parents/staff. The vision statement should provide a compelling, realistic picture of the school you are trying to create.



## Identifying Value Statements



**Value statements** should be about the behaviors that the parents, staff, community, and students are committed to act upon in the teaching/learning environment. “How must we behave to create the school that we will become?” (Dufour, Dufour, Eaker, Manly). Value statements define how key stakeholders act and interact with each other as the organization continuously moves forward in accomplishing the mission. Based on the unique needs of your school community, value statements define behaviors you believe are important for all stakeholders to demonstrate in order for the organization to accomplish the mission and vision.

The value statements should be direct and should focus on individuals within the learning organization. You may want to group your value statements under two or three categories. *Facilitative Leadership* defines the three dimensions of success as...

**Relationships** – quality of one’s experience in relating to colleagues and the organization

**Processes** – how the work gets done, how it is designed and managed, and how the work is monitored and evaluated

**Results** – the accomplishments of the task or achievement of the goal

These categories are interdependent and of equal value. Each supports the other two. These dimensions will help your school community remember your value statements.

**Successful school improvement is driven by passion that is grounded in the mission, vision, and values of the learning community. -Lezotte**

Revised 062608

Your school's value statements should be aligned to key processes and goals within your School Improvement Plan. Select those that you need in order to deploy your School Improvement Plan. Even though you want your list of values to present a picture of what your school community feels is important, limit the number, enabling stakeholders to remember them easily.

**High Schools: Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) requires that you address mission, vision, and value/beliefs. You will want to refer to the section in the NSSE booklet entitled "School Improvement: Focusing on Student Performance".**

Below are examples of mission, vision, and value statements.

### **Examples of Mission Statements:**

- ❖ The Department of Academic Improvement (DAI) is to work collaboratively with our customers to promote and support effective instruction for all students.
- ❖ The mission of the Facilities and Maintenance Department is to provide quality facilities and support services to ensure safe, healthy, inviting and optimal learning environments.
- ❖ The mission of our school is to design schoolwork for each student that will maximize his/her learning in an environment that is safe and supportive.

**The Mission Statement should be short enough for people to remember easily.**

### **Examples of Vision Statements:**

**The Vision Statement reflects a clear image of what you see as the ideal school.**

- ❖ Our school is a caring community in which each child thrives in an enriching learning environment that values diversity, fosters respect, and nurtures the gifts and talents of all.
- ❖ Our school community, including parents, staff members, and community members, will work together to provide safe, inviting environment in which students will develop a true love for learning. Through collaboration and a team approach, we will provide our students with challenging and enriching educational opportunities that advance their unique talents and meet individual needs.

### **Examples of Value Statements:**

- ❖ We will use current data as a performance measurement to focus on student learning.
- ❖ We will seek methods to involve parents and the community in the education of the children.
- ❖ We will provide learning opportunities to address the needs of diverse learners.

Value Statements should be direct and focus on behaviors within the learning organization.

**Involve all stakeholders in the development of Missions, Vision, and Value Statements to create a shared passion for school improvement.**

## **Sample Mission Statement Process:**

If you Google “mission statement,” “develop a vision,” or other similar terms, you will find a rich resource of definitions and processes used by a variety of organizations. The following example is from a [Sample Mission Statement process](#) used to develop an online “e-business” which can be adapted to developing a school mission statement.

### **e-Business Plan: Mission Statement**

Every business needs a purpose that says what it is and a vision that describes what it wants to be. This purpose and vision come together in the mission statement. A mission statement then becomes the starting point for the development of business goals, and goals are the basis for setting measurable project objectives and corresponding metrics. Since it all starts with a mission, this is obviously a critical part of creating your business.

The purpose of this lesson is to assist you in writing a mission statement for your e-business. The lesson describes a mission statement through a list of characteristics and examples and provides instructions to develop a mission statement for your e-business plan.

The lesson outline is:

What is a Mission Statement?

--Mission statement characteristics

--Mission statement examples

How to Write a Mission Statement

#### **What is a Mission Statement?**

Revised 062608

A mission statement is a declaration of what a business aspires to be. The statement is the business' reason for being, a proclamation of why it exists, a clarification of who it serves, and an expression of what it hopes to achieve in the future. A carefully crafted mission statement accurately describes the business and inspires the people who contribute to its success.

Just as important as the mission statement itself is the process of writing the statement. This process helps a new or established business clarify questions such as:

- What business are we really in?
- What type of business do we want to be?
- What is our target market?
- What inspires us?

The writing process and the statement itself both provide clarity of purpose and motivation for business success.

Mission statement characteristics: A mission statement has the following key characteristics:

- **Visionary:** Above all else a mission statement offers a vision of what a business aspires to be. A visionary mission statement helps people understand what the business is about and how they can contribute to the achievement of the vision. So mission statements frequently contain wording such as "to be the best", "the highest quality", and "in the world".
- **Broad:** A company cannot be all things to all people, but a mission statement should not limit a company's area of service or expertise too narrowly. Especially in the fast-paced world of electronic commerce, customer needs, and customers, can change rapidly. A mission statement should be broad enough to allow the company to meet those needs without annual revisions of the statement.

For example, the original mission of [classmates.com](http://classmates.com) was to reunite classmates in American high schools. However, the business quickly found a market in colleges and universities as well, and then the military and the workplace. Soon classmates.com found it was not in the classmates business, it was in the personal networking business. CEO Michael Schutzer acknowledges that he would choose another name, and a broader mission, had he started the business today. "Our business is more than high school reunions," he says. "It is a personal network for reconnecting people." ([Dot-com Content that Works?](#))

- **Realistic:** The broad vision needs to be tempered with realism, to be both practical and workable. Mission statements that include everything or over promise will not give a clear indication of what the business is about. A lofty, unrealistic mission statement will not have great credibility. Instead the best statements are direct and powerful.

For example, in October 2002 Microsoft changed its [mission statement](#) from "To empower people through great software -- any time, any place, and on any device" to "To enable people and businesses throughout the world to realize their

full potential". The new mission statement is certainly broad enough, but is it realistic? Does it overpromise? Does it give any indication what Microsoft is about? Most mission statement writers would think the new mission statement is a step backward, using the criteria listed here.

- **Motivational:** The statement should be written in such a way that it inspires commitment among employees, customers, partners, and funding agencies about what this company will do or produce. Some organizations emphasize the inspirational value of their mission statement above all else, using it to express the company's philosophy and values.
- **Short and concise:** The mission statement should be no longer than 25 words. Some consultants recommend that the mission statement be short enough that an employee can easily remember it and readily repeat it. Similarly, management guru Peter Drucker suggests it should be able to fit on a t-shirt.
- **Easily understood:** The statement should use plain language that is convincing and easy to understand. For example, a technology company's mission statement should not include jargon or technology concepts that are unfamiliar to people outside the area. Consider using the "grandmother test" on your mission statement -- would your grandmother understand what your company is about if she read your mission statement?

Most, if not all of these characteristics are reflected in Purma Top Gift's mission statement: "The mission of Purma Top Gifts is to be the world's premier retailer of top quality Purma-made gifts and souvenirs."

Mission statement examples: Sometimes the best way to understand what is a mission statement is to see what other companies have selected as their mission statement. Obviously you should not copy another company's mission statement because you lose the benefits the process provides, you will want to distinguish yourself in the marketplace, and you violate that company's copyright on its mission statement. However, exemplary mission statements can suggest wording or an approach that you may want to use.

Here are some mission statements from real companies and organizations:

- [McDonalds](#): "McDonald's vision is to be the world's best quick service restaurant experience. Being the best means providing outstanding quality, service, cleanliness, and value, so that we make every customer in every restaurant smile."
- [J. Sainsbury](#): "Our mission is to be the consumer's first choice for food, delivering products of outstanding quality and great service at a competitive cost through working faster, simpler, and together."
- [Success Networks](#): "Our mission is to inform, inspire, and empower people and organizations to be their best -- both personally and professionally."
- [Big Binoculars](#): "Our mission is simply to offer our customers the most binocular aperture, at the highest quality, for the lowest price."
- [Levi-Strauss](#): "We will market the most appealing and widely worn casual clothing in the world. We will clothe the world."
- [OHCHR](#): "The mission of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) is to protect and promote all human rights for all."

Revised 062608

Now that you know what a mission statement is, how do you develop one for your e-business?

## **How to Write a Mission Statement**

An existing, large, corporate organization needs a lengthy, highly consultative process to create or revise a mission statement, as described in [How to Develop a Mission Statement](#). A small business owner also needs to consult with employees and customers, in a process similar to one outlined in [Build the Perfect Mission](#). Really serious mission statement writers would benefit from [The Mission Statement Book](#) which includes over 300 exemplary mission statements and several chapters that offer guidance about how to write a mission statement. For the purposes of this lesson -- writing a mission statement for a new e-business -- the process described below will be more than satisfactory.

The place to begin is to realize that the process of writing a mission statement is an inclusive process. All members of the e-business team must be involved in the process. Even if someone thinks they are unable to contribute, essential buy-in to the concept will be insured if their opinion is solicited at every step.

A good place to start is with the vision part of the statement. In a brainstorming exercise, conduct the following exercises to clarify what you and others intend for the business to be:

- List 5-10 words or phrases that describe your business. Highlight the three most important.
- List 3-5 words or phrases that describe the company's ideal image from a customer's point-of-view.
- List 3-5 words or phrases that describe the company's ideal image from a management and employee point-of-view.

This vision must be tempered with a focus on the purpose of the business:

- List the market opportunities and/or customer needs that your company intends to address (e.g., the business' value proposition).
- Who are your customers? List the company's primary and secondary target markets (target markets are discussed in the Market Analysis lesson).
- With your customers in mind, list each service or product your business will provide.
- List 3-5 measures of your business' success.

These exercises will provide you with the raw material necessary to write a mission statement and other parts of the e-business plan, as the parenthetical comments suggest.

If you are working in a group, you may find actually writing the statement in a group exercise can be difficult. Instead each member of the group should write a draft statement which is shared with others in a meeting to decide on the mission statement. It is unlikely any individual's statement will meet with instant approval. Instead the team should, in an

Revised 062608

open and consensus-seeking discussion, look for the best parts in each nominated statement and craft them together into a statement most members can support.

Keep in mind that this is the first step in your business plan writing process. If you can't agree on a perfect statement now, then settle on an imperfect statement and come back to it later. However it is essential that a preliminary mission statement come out of this process as a guide in subsequent steps.

Another key point is that this process can produce more than a mission statement. Much of this work can be used in writing business goals next, and in other parts of the business plan in subsequent lessons. Also you may find that a nominated mission statement doesn't work as a mission statement, but would be a good motto, slogan, or advertising tagline. Companies also sometimes use this process to develop two mission statements -- one for external use to customers, suppliers, and others, and an internal mission statement that is posted prominently around the workplace for employees. For example, McDonalds has extracted the words "quality, service, cleanliness, and value" from their mission statement (listed above) and made them a key part of each employee's orientation.

You now have all you need to write a mission statement, as required in assignment 3 in the [Business Description lesson](#).



## **Self Assessment Summary**



After the School Based Leadership Team has reviewed their school's mission, vision and values and analyzed their data and root causes, the next step is to synthesize the aforementioned into a Self Assessment Summary. The summary begs the overriding question "who are you". The summary should be clear and concise and no more than 2-3 paragraphs. Please use the prompts below to guide the development of your summary.

- What are your strengths; what are you doing well?
- What are your potential opportunities for improvement?
- What are potential threats or barriers to the productivity of your school?
- What demographic or school community information should be considered as you plan for continuous improvement?

## Setting SMART Goals in The School Improvement Process

Seeking quality in education is a journey defined by the individual and the school team. What does quality mean to you? Have you defined quality in your school? How do you define it? What is your plan to obtain quality? Goal setting is the next step in the school improvement process to seek quality of instruction and determine results.

“The litmus test for a good school is not its innovations but rather the solid, purposeful, enduring results it tries to obtain for its students.”

- Carl Glickman

Research in the area of professional learning communities has revealed some remarkable common ground around the characteristics of schools that have significantly improved the quality of teaching and levels of student learning. *A focus on results as opposed to a focus on activities has emerged as one of the recurring themes.* Goals that are focused on results reference what we want to achieve and are defined in measurable outcomes. Schools often develop their outcome statements based on process goals. Process goals reference activities, programs, resources, or strategies. These are things we do, not the impact they will have. *An emphasis on results will lead us to write goals that measure academic achievement and behavioral indicators.*

A core process of quality and continuous improvement is **goal setting**. Goals provide direction and focus. Goals are something that you want to achieve in the future- or as Webster defines: "The purpose toward which an endeavor is directed; an objective." One way to set goals is to utilize the **S-M-A-R-T** goal format which stands for:

### **S: Specific**

A goal should be straightforward and emphasize what you want to happen. Specifics help us to focus our efforts and clearly define what we are going to do. Data analysis will reveal gaps between the school's current reality and where the school wants to be. Look for areas where the greatest gains can be made. A specific goal is concrete and able to show tangible evidence of improvement in eliminating these gaps.

Specific is the **What, Why, and How** of the SMART model.

**What** are you going to do? Use action words such as exceed, increase, improve, lead, develop, plan etc.

**Why** is this important to do at this time? What do you want to ultimately accomplish?

**How** are you going to do it? (By....)

Ensure goals are very clear with easy to understand the outcomes. For example, instead of setting a goal to lose weight or to be healthier, set a specific goal to lose 3 inches in the waistline or to walk 5 miles at an aerobically challenging pace.

### **M: Measurable**

A goal should establish concrete criteria for measuring progress toward the attainment of the goal. It should clearly state how you will know, in measurable terms, you have reached the goal. **If you can't measure it, you can't manage it.** If the goal is accomplished, the goal is a success. However, there are usually several short-term or small measurements that can be built into the goal.

Choose a goal with measurable progress, **so you can see the change occur.** How will you see it, when you reach your goal? Be specific! "I want to read 3 chapter books of 100 pages on my own before my birthday" shows the specific target to measure. "I want to be a good reader" is not as measurable.

**Concrete criteria for measuring progress** toward the attainment of each goal helps you stay on track, reach your target dates, and experience the exhilaration of achievement that spurs you on to the continued effort required to reach your goals.

### **A: Attainable/Aligned**

A goal should be within the school's control and influence. It should be a stretch but still feasible. Is the goal achievable with the available resources? Is the goal achievable within the timeframe outlined?

A goal should be aligned with requirements of the district and state. As schools look at their data, they should evaluate if they are helping the district achieve its goals or preventing the district from attaining high levels of success in pursuit of its goals.

***Remember, the district results in student achievement and other goals ARE a summary of the schools' goals across the district. There are no "district" results independent of what schools are accomplishing with their students. Each school needs to consider whether its results are contributing to or inhibiting achievement of district-wide goals. It is the school's achievement, or lack thereof, that determines whether the district is making progress in achieving top priority goals.***

### **R: Results-Oriented**

If the purpose of school improvement initiatives is to improve student learning then a goal should focus on learning outcomes rather than on deploying strategies to reach these outcomes. Does the goal address the most important results, those which the school has data showing that achieving this goal is crucial for the school to improve student achievement.

### **T: Time Bound**

A goal should have a clearly defined time-frame including a target date. Progress toward the goal should be trackable and allow for monitoring of progress.

Therefore, a SMART goal needs to include

- A date by which the goal will be achieved (Time Bound)
- A specific measure (Measureable, such as test results, percentage response to survey, etc.)
- Current results and desired results (Results-Oriented and Specific: from current data to goal data, so that it is clear how school will know if goal is achieved)

## **SMART GOALS EXAMPLES**

Revised 062608

By May 2011, the percentage of staff and students who report Sunshine High School is a safe place to learn will increase by 10 percentage points, from 75% to 85%.

By May 2011, Sunset Middle School will meet or exceed ABC growth expectations for reading and mathematics for all grades based on EOG and EOC tests.

By May 2011, Sunrise Elementary School students who demonstrate proficiency in writing will increase from 42% to 60 %.