

Vision Retreat Participant Handout

Vision Retreat Purpose

The Vision Retreat provides an opportunity for the strategic plan team to develop a shared understanding of the current mission, vision, core values and strategic themes and build upon those ideas to move the district forward in answering the question, *“Where do we want to be five years from now that is different than where we are today?”*

The Vision Retreat offers an opportunity for the plan team to review the components of a continuous improvement framework based on research best practices and benchmark where the district is in relationship to those practices.

The outcome of the day is for the plan team to describe a clear vision for the future through a product known as a Preferred Future Statement.

Common Vocabulary

Core Values	The district’s beliefs and principles that articulate the culture of the organization. These are the standards that describe how employees and the organization are expected to behave internally and externally. They serve as the basis for decision-making and influence actions in everyday situations.
Mission	The district’s purpose described in the language of the business, including who is served and what products, programs and services are provided to customers and stakeholders.
Strategic Theme	Three or four strategic focus areas that build on the customer value proposition to define the organization’s high-level business strategy; breaks down the vision and mission into action and focuses energy on desired strategic results.
Vision	A vivid, emotionally inspiring, time-specific picture of a future to which the organization aspires. A description of how the district will look, sound and feel differently than it is today.
Vision Result	An achievable stretch target identified in order to measure the success of an organization’s vision statement. Sometimes this is referred to as a Preferred Future Statement

Strategic Foundation or Preferred Future

When we complete our work today, we will have the concepts to produce a Strategic Foundation or Preferred Future Statement. We will share this product with those we represent and seek their feedback between the Vision Retreat and the Setting Direction Retreat.

Mission Statement- Our Core Purpose <i>Why do we exist?</i>	Vision Statement- Our Future <i>Where we are headed?</i>
Core Values - How we act and behave <i>What we stand for?</i>	Vision Description <i>What it will look like?</i>

Activity One: Feedback Review of Data Retreat SWOT from Stakeholders: Identify the top ten strengths, top ten weaknesses, top ten opportunities and top ten threats by examining the SWOT analysis from the Data Retreat and any feedback from stakeholders.

River Forest District 90 DRAFT SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS: What are we most proud of? What do we consider to be the results of our best work? What advantages do we have? What do others say about us in positive ways?

- High student academic achievement
- Dedicated and talented faculty and staff
- History of fiscal responsibility and stewardship
- Central Office visionary and shared leadership
- Commitment to continuous improvement
- Family value for public education
- Investment in technological tools and strategies
- Extra- and co-curricular activities for students
- Subject area opportunities beyond core instruction that develop the "Whole Child."
- Commitment to equity and inclusiveness.

WEAKNESSES: What do we consider to be our weaknesses? What are we most criticized for or receive the most complaints about? What do we seem to have a hard time doing well?

- Achievement disparities and gaps among student subgroup populations
- Clarity for students and families of readiness expectations both academic and non-academic performance
- inequities among all students, classrooms, and schools
- Staff collaboration, articulation, and communication
- Early learning programs and services- serving more students birth to age 6 to better prepare all students for start of school
- Support for increased student and staff social, emotional, and health needs
- Challenging all students with rigor and relevance in instruction
- Student agency- engagement, voice, choice, innovation, goal setting, progress monitoring
- Reporting of student, classroom, and school performance
- Innovative instructional practices including technology integration- profession development, follow up support, and coaching
- Aging facilities impacting learning environment- upgrades, maintenance, safety, environmental

OPPORTUNITIES: What opportunities for improvement do we know about, but have not addressed? Where with a little work could we change a weakness into a strength? What are we not doing currently that might be the opportunity for us to improve?

- Community outreach to address birth to five educational programs and services
- Broader communication and engagement with the community
- Family education and engagement opportunities
- Make better use of time and space
- Improve engagement, satisfaction, and collaboration at the middle school level.

THREATS: Who or what threatens us the most? What challenges are coming that we must respond to? What might block our progress? What do we have little control over that might impact our resources?

- Address a mindset that is resistance to change
- Develop and execute a financial strategy to address financial projections
- Address the impact of social media on District culture
- Address the impact of teacher and substitute shortages
- Ensure a collaborative and successful teacher contract development that enhances District mission, vision, values and goals

Characteristics of a Preferred Future Statement

Future Focused: Provides the “Big Picture” and clearly describes what your district will be like in several years

Direction: Serves as a guide to district goals and strategies

Specific: Clear and focused enough to shape decision-making

Relevant and Purpose Driven: Reflects the district’s response to the challenges of the day

Values-Based: Implies the set of values that are required to support the district

Challenging: Inspires employees of the district to do great things and achieve a higher level of standards

Unique and Memorable: Highlights what makes the district difference and why it matters

Inspiring: Appealing and engages stakeholders to commit to a cause and mindset

Why is a Preferred Future Statement a necessary component of a district’s strategic plan? How might the district use mission, vision, and core values during the implementation of the strategic plan?

Identify key words, phrases, and takeaways from your homework assignment.

Reflect on articles read and the school sites visited to identify key words, phrases, and takeaways from your homework assignment that might assist our team its work to develop a Preferred Future Statement.

Article	3-5 Key Ideas
10 Principles of Modern Learning	<div>1</div> <div>2</div> <div>3</div> <div>4</div> <div>5</div>
A Transformational Vision for Education in the United States	<div>1</div> <div>2</div> <div>3</div> <div>4</div> <div>5</div>
Foundations for Young Adult Success	<div>1</div> <div>2</div> <div>3</div> <div>4</div> <div>5</div>

ELECTRONIC SCHOOL INVESTIGATION	3-5 Key Ideas
Design 39 Campus	<div>1</div> <div>2</div> <div>3</div> <div>4</div> <div>5</div>
Stonefields School	<div>1</div> <div>2</div> <div>3</div> <div>4</div> <div>5</div>
Springfield Renaissance School	<div>1</div> <div>2</div> <div>3</div> <div>4</div> <div>5</div>

BUILDING ON OUR CURRENT MISSION AND VISION STATEMENT

MISSION: The mission pillar asked the question, “WHY?” More specifically, it asks “Why do we Exist?” The intent of this question is to help reach agreement regarding the fundamental purpose of the organization. This clarity of purpose can help establish priorities and becomes an important factor to guide decisions.” Your mission statement is the best vehicle to get the word out about the “why” and the “wow” behind your district. In truth, your mission statement is no less important than your business plan. It needs to explain — eloquently, succinctly, and passionately — the core reasons for your existence. Your mission statement should inspire others to want to know more about your ideas, helping to position your district in the marketplace and to fuel growth. (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, and Many, *Learning By Doing*, Second Edition: Solution-Tree, 2010)

A mission:

- Tells a story, in a few words that defines why the organization exists.
- Describes the core purpose of the organization that is persistent over time.
- Answers the following questions: Why does this organization serve and how are the served? What is the organizational purpose?
- Incorporates features of the organization that highlight its uniqueness and define its purpose.
- Helps define why the organization exists.
- Focuses on satisfying customer needs.
- Take the form of: “Our mission is to provide (what) to (whom) in order to (provide what benefit) while (maintaining what values).

Criteria for evaluating a mission statement:

- ✓ Is it clear and understandable?
- ✓ Is it brief enough for most people to remember and say in one breath?
- ✓ Does it clearly specify the school’s fundamental purpose?
- ✓ Does it have a primary focus on a single strategic thrust (such as learning)?
- ✓ Does it reflect the distinctive competence and culture of this school?
- ✓ Is it broad enough to allow flexibility in implementation, but not so broad as to create lack of focus?
- ✓ Will it help school personnel, parents, and community members make decisions?
- ✓ Is it energizing and compelling? Does it motivate and inspire employee commitment?
- ✓ Does it say what you want your district to be remembered for?

VISION: The vision pillar asks “What?”—that is, “What must we become in order to accomplish our fundamental purpose?” In pursuing this question, the district attempts to create a compelling, attractive, realistic future that describes what they hope their district will become. Vision provides a sense of direction and a basis for assessing both the currently reality of the district and potential strategies, programs, and procedures to improve upon that reality. There is no more powerful engine driving an organization toward excellence and long-range success than an attractive, worthwhile and achievable vision of the future that is widely shared. (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, and Many, *Learning By Doing*, Second Edition: Solution-Tree, 2010)

A vision:

- Describes where the organization wants to be, typically three to five year in the future. Focuses on the district's "North Star."
- Vividly captures the organization's "picture of the future".
- Is brief and easy to understand and communicates a message that is emotionally inspiring, to create a passion to contribute to the organization's future success.
- It is audacious and takes you way beyond where you are to the "mountain top."
- It builds on core competencies. It gives employees a larger sense of purpose so they see themselves as building a cathedral instead of laying stones.
- The vision takes the form of "Our vision is to become (achieve, improve, etc.) by (date)."

Criteria for evaluating a vision statement:

- ✓ Does it manifest our mission?
- ✓ Is it concise and compelling?
- ✓ Is it inspirational?
- ✓ Does it communicate promise?
- ✓ Does it create an image of something that cannot be seen today, but is possible tomorrow?
- ✓ Does it focus on ends not means?
- ✓ Does it manifest the mission and values?

CURRENT MISSION AND VISION	DRAFT OF PREFERRED FUTURE MISSION AND VISION
<p>MISSION: To inspire a love of learning and ensure educational excellence for every child.</p> <p>VISION: A thriving and inclusive learning community will enable our students to become:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Critical and creative thinkers and problem solvers• Socially and emotionally competent, ready to live purposeful lives• Self-aware, curious and persistent learners, eager to pursue their passions• Skilled communicators and collaborators	

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-sufficient, responsible and resilient | |
|--|--|

WRITING GREAT CORE VALUES/ COMMITMENT STATEMENTS

Aligning Beliefs/Values/Collective Commitments to Mission and Vision

While creating a vision can be a helpful step in the improvement process, it is not sufficient. The board of education, administrators, and staff must tackle the collective values and commitments they must make and honor in order to achieve the shared vision for their district. Core values are the fundamental beliefs of an organization.

They are the district's beliefs and principles that articulate the culture of the organization. They are the standards that describe how employees and the organization are expected to behave internally and externally. They serve as the basis for decision-making and influence actions in everyday situations.

CORE VALUES: The third pillar of the foundation, the values pillar identifies our beliefs and then clarifies those beliefs through collective commitments. It asks, "How must we behave to create the district that will achieve our purpose?" In answering the question, educators shift from offering philosophical musings on mission or the shared hopes for the district of the future to making commitments to act in certain ways. Clarity guides the individual work of each member and outlines how each person can contribute to the improvement initiative. Policy manuals and directives are replaced by commitments and covenants. Clarifying collective commitments is one of the most important strategies in building a PLC. (adapted from DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, and Many, *Learning By Doing*, Second Edition: Solution-Tree, 2010)

Core Values:

- Describe what the organization stands for in the context of its mission and vision.
- Guiding principles, defining the code of conduct and behavior that is expected of all employees.
- Provide ethical guidelines for decision-making and daily conduct.
- Are aligned with organization vision, mission and culture.
- Should be described in vivid behavioral terms.
- Are represented in a phrase but not a sentence or paragraph.
- Should not include more than 5-7 so they can be memorable.
- Supports mission and vision.

Criteria for evaluating a core value or belief:

- ✓ Does it manifest our mission and vision?
- ✓ Is it compelling and based on a belief we would not compromise?
- ✓ Is it a guiding principle that guides behaviors and actions?
- ✓ Is it clear and easy to understand?

- ✓ Does it create an unwavering and unchanging guide?
- ✓ Is it something we will hold each other responsible and accountable for our actions?
- ✓ Is it something we would want future staff members to support?
- ✓ Does it have a commitment to describe what we would do to move the belief to action?

VALUE AND COMMITMENT STATEMENTS	
CORE VALUES/	COMMITMENTS
<p>We believe in the enduring value of providing for the development of the whole child. We will focus on providing a multi-faceted educational program that is rich, rigorous and relevant in an environment that nurtures each child's uniqueness.</p> <p>We believe successful learners are critical thinkers and problem solvers. We will prepare all students for college and careers by providing a differentiated learning experience that meets the needs of students preparing for the future.</p> <p>We believe that when students are self-reliant and take responsibility for their own learning they achieve higher academic, social and emotional success. We will guide students toward self-sufficiency and responsibility for setting goals, monitoring progress, and being able to report their results.</p> <p>We believe that social and emotional competencies foster a positive and healthy school/district culture. We will identify and promote behaviors and</p>	

actions that contribute to a culture and climate that is healthy, positive and promotes self-confidence.

We believe that an engaging and innovative learning environment is critical to the learning success of all students. We will enrich and enhance instruction through the use of technology, and prepare our students for digital citizenship.

We believe in equity and inclusivity for all. We will ensure that every student feels empowered to achieve to his or her full potential, commit to provide equitable opportunities for all learners, grow an inclusive school community, and demonstrate we value diversity.

We believe in ensuring a sustainable future for and with our students. We will model sustainable practices for our students and community, and we will provide opportunities to learn about and engage in sustainable practices.

We believe in setting and meeting high academic expectations. We will provide a stimulating academic environment through excellent teaching.

We believe that two-way communication and collaboration between home, school and district leads to improved performance of both students and staff. We will build strong relationships and connections with our families and communities to partner in ensuring that each student grows and achieves.

We believe that continuous improvement moves an individual, team, school and district to a higher level of performance. We will develop strategic action plans that are aligned with our goals and hold us responsible for our results. We will be accountable for these results through regular and timely monitoring and reporting.

We believe that access to timely data and clear information accelerates both teaching and learning. We will use valid student learning data and information to guide instruction and to plan and implement enrichment, acceleration, and intervention.

We believe that, to improve continuously, District 90 must have adequate and aligned resources of people, money and time. We will utilize our resources responsibly to ensure trust, respect, pride, and the satisfaction of our community

--	--

NEXT MEETING SETTING DIRECTION RETREAT. FEBRUARY 13

The strategic plan team will receive the Vision Retreat Findings and a draft of the Preferred Future Statement within a few days of the Vision Retreat. We will ask for review of the Statement by each school. The team will begin its next meeting finalizing that draft. We will seek feedback from all stakeholders on the Preferred Future Statement when we share a draft of the plan following the Setting Direction Retreat.

The SETTING DIRECTION RETREAT ANSWERS THE QUESTION, “*How do we great from where we are to where we want to be?*”

Long-range Goals: Indicators, Measures and Targets

Strategies: Gaps that must be addressed during the span of this strategic plan to achieve the mission, vision and goals of the district.