

Resource 1.3 Characteristics of a good vision statement

1. Brevity

A good vision statement is succinct, which makes it easy for leaders to communicate and stakeholders to remember. Vision statements are less effective when they are too short (such as a one-sentence vision statement) or too long (such as a two- or three-page vision statement). But exactly how long should it be? The average vision statement is about 35 words, or two to three sentences. This length seems to be about right for effectively communicating the vision statement to stakeholders. It is long enough to clearly describe the vision but not so long as to be difficult to remember. An example of a vision statement of typical length is the following:

All educators will have the sustained, intensive, classroom-focused, data-driven, job-embedded, curriculum-based professional learning they require to ensure all educators and students meet and exceed high standards of performance.

2. Clarity

A vision should unite the organization and provide an aspirational and inspirational goal. The vision limits use of jargon and buzzwords and uses understandable terminology. Writing concise sentences is another way of clarifying a vision statement.

3. Inspiration and challenge

An effective vision statement sets a conceptual yet challenging goal. The goal should not be stated too concretely (e.g. “to increase student achievement”) but rather at a higher level of aspiration (e.g. “to prepare all students for success in life”). This allows it to be relevant to all stakeholders, thus permitting it to guide their daily actions and decisions. Inspirational also provides for flexibility. The following vision statement does a good job at communicating an inspirational, challenging goal in a manner that is both clear and succinct:

Our vision is to support educators through valuable, carefully designed, and efficient professional learning on selecting and using high-quality instructional materials, thereby providing support for effective teaching and an enriched quality of life for all students.

4. Purpose

A vision signals why the organization exists and limits overly general statements such as to “create opportunities for learning” or “to be the best.” An effective vision statement describes what the organization intends to achieve.

5. Future-focus

Good vision statements are long term, describing the organization's desired end-state well into the future. Effective vision statements often describe ongoing actions in which the organization will engage. The following is an example of a combined future-oriented vision and goal statement:

Our goal is to achieve 100% high school graduation with more than 75% of the graduates pursuing postsecondary education. We will be relentless in the pursuit of that goal and will never vary from the principles of successful education: Excellent teachers; equity for all students; and readiness for college, careers, and citizenship.

6. Desirable goals

A good vision statement inspires followers. It may emphasize fundamental values, a collective identity, organizational uniqueness, and employees' worth and efficacy.

Fundamental values. We will nurture the aspirations of all students and address their needs in a culture of trust, open communications, integrity, and professionalism.

A collective identity. We will strive to be the professional team equipped to provide high-quality learning for all students, offering quality instruction using evidence-based practices focused on student success. We will work together within our budget to develop well-prepared students at each grade level who exceed their own and their parents' or caregivers' expectations.

Organizational uniqueness. We will be known for dedicated, caring, and effective teachers who will shape the future through their students.

Employees' worth and efficacy. We are determined to become a district whose people take pride in their accomplishments and their future potential.