

Creating a Student-Centered Vision of Instructional Excellence

Nevada Early Childhood Leadership Series

Session 1



Respond to the following questions:

1. Why is it important to have a clear vision of instructional excellence for your center or school?
2. How can a vision support improving instructional quality?

Session Objectives

- Understand the important role a vision of excellent instruction plays in ensuring high quality ECE centers
- Draft an initial vision of excellent instruction for your center or school that is student-focused
- Practice articulating your vision in a clear and compelling way
- Generate strategies for investing teachers in your vision

Agenda

What is a Vision?

Setting a Clear Vision for Student Success

Communicating a Vision to Key Stakeholders

Closing

KEY IDEA

As a leader, you should have a clearly-articulated vision that is **student-centered** and **aligned to a high bar for excellent instruction**.

A clear vision ensures that you, your teachers and other stakeholders are all **working toward the same goal**. And, having a strong instructional vision is essential for **attracting and retaining effective teachers**.

Your vision is only half the story; how you communicate it and invest others in it is just as important.

Strong instructional cultures foster great teaching...and great learning

Transformational
leaders



Effective
teachers



Children learn
and achieve

ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS & CENTERS

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



Articulate a
CLEAR VISION of success

Are the **expectations** for effective teaching clearly defined at my center?

Ensure that vision is
SHARED by all teachers

Do teachers at my center share a **common vision** of what effective teaching looks like in practice?

SUPPORT teachers
in realizing that vision

How is the **leader committed** to improving teachers' instructional practice?



VISION

When your center/school achieves its ideal state, what will it look like?

MISSION

What is the purpose of your center/school – who are you, what do you do, and for whom do you do it?

VALUES

What beliefs and core values about children, teachers, and the purpose of education do you hold?

 **As a transformational center leader or school principal, you should have a clearly-articulated vision aligned to your values.**

A vision for student success defines what your center/school is working toward.

Handouts, Page 17

A vision is “a picture of the future with some implicit or explicit commentary on why people should strive to create that future.”

AN EFFECTIVE VISION IS...

All-encompassing

Applies to all children you serve

Clear

Easy to picture when you read it or hear it

Shared

Stakeholders, including children, parents, teachers and community, answer consistently when asked what success looks like for students

Audacious

Bold, inspired, inspiring to people inside and outside the system

Read the vision statements on the next few slides, from companies that are outside of the education sphere. As you read, take notes on the following question:

- Though these are not education-specific visions, what makes these sample visions compelling?

Vision Statement #1: Warby Parker

Warby Parker was founded with a rebellious spirit and a lofty objective: to offer designer eyewear at a revolutionary price, while leading the way for socially conscious businesses.

Vision Statement #2: Life is Good

We see it when we believe it. Each one of us has a choice: to focus our energy on obstacles or opportunities. To fixate on our problems, or focus on solutions. We can harp on what's wrong with the world (see most news media), or we can cultivate what's right with the world. What we focus on grows.

That's why the Life is Good community shares one simple, unifying mission: to spread the power of optimism. Optimism is not irrational cheerfulness or "blind" positivity. It's a pragmatic strategy for approaching life. Optimism empowers us to explore the world with open arms and an eye toward solutions, progress, and growth. It also makes life a hell of a lot more fun.

Vision Statement #3: IKEA

At IKEA our vision is to create a better everyday life for the many people. Our business idea supports this vision by offering a wide range of well-designed, functional home furnishing products at prices so low that as many people as possible will be able to afford them.

Turn and Talk: Though these are not education-specific visions, what makes these sample visions compelling?

Now, read the vision statements from various schools on the next few slides. As you review them, jot notes on the following questions:

- What commonalities do you see between the non-education and education-specific visions?
- How do these visions meet our criteria of being all-encompassing, clear, shared, and audacious?

Vision Statement #1: PLUS School

The mission of the PLUS School is to provide a rigorous and individualized education that prepares all students to be 21st century thinkers. Our students receive a standards-based school experience that promotes academic success and also provides strong structures to support and educate the whole student. Curriculum is individualized for students to meet diverse needs and address personal talents, strengths, and preferences. Students explore and learn in a culture of high expectations where teachers, administrators, parents and community partners collaborate to ensure the success of each individual student.

Vision Statement #2: Oak Park

We are founded upon the belief that ALL STUDENTS, regardless of their background or circumstances, can achieve at the highest academic levels and erase the achievement gap within our community. Our unwavering belief in the power and potential of our students means that Oak Park's stakeholders are exceptional in who we are and how we act.

Vision Statement #3: Leadership Series Cohort I Participant

In our ECE classrooms, we strive to support students in building on their individual strengths to nurture children's curiosity and inquisitiveness, develop problem-solvers and decision makers, and prepare children with the skills and academic foundation to achieve success, not only in school, but in life. Our teachers actively engage children in our ECE settings through intentional teaching practices that guide each child's social-emotional, physical, and cognitive development, creating a joyful classroom environment that fosters cooperation and a sense of community.

Turn and Talk: What commonalities do you see between the non-education and education-specific visions? How do these visions meet our criteria of being all-encompassing, clear, shared, and audacious?

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Consider...



When your center or school achieves its ideal state,
what will it look like?

What do we want for the students in our centers and
schools?

What do our classrooms look like when students are on a
path to Kindergarten readiness?

-  Write: In three years, when your vision is being realized, what does your center/school look like? Describe in the present tense the *sights, sounds, behaviors, and feelings of teachers, students and other stakeholders*. Do not describe the *how*, only *what* will exist in your center/school. You may want to refer to the sample visions to get you started.
-  *My center is a place of continuous learning. When I walk into classrooms, I see students who are happy to be learning and who are actively engaged in the work they're doing. There's no "sage on the stage" – teachers are supporting students' learning but not doing the thinking for them. The community is an asset to our center and families are partners in our work.*
-  Remember: describe your center/school as though *this is the present*.

- ➔ Each person will have 5 minutes to share their vision and 3 minutes for their partner to ask probing and clarifying questions and give feedback. Then roles will switch.
- ➔ Remember: describe your center/school as though *this is the present*.
- ➔ Leaders: Push each other to be clear and compelling. Ask tough questions and provide critical feedback. Take on the responsibility of helping your cohort members refine their work. Refer to the guidance on an effective vision to help you provide feedback.

In a minute, you'll return to your draft vision and begin to think more specifically:




What are ten specific observations you would want a visitor to your center/school to make about teaching and learning?

Push beyond general observations such as

- *Students are engaged.*
- *Teachers create print-rich classrooms.*

Instead be specific:

- *Students use a developmentally appropriate combination of dictating, writing, and drawing about complex texts, using evidence from the text to answer text-based questions.*
- *Teachers create a language-rich classroom with multiple opportunities for students to build language skills and purposeful vocabulary through narration, conversation, and engaging with texts.*

-  Each person will have 5 minutes to revise their vision based on the feedback they received.
-  Each partner will then have 3 minutes to share their vision. Their partner will have 2 minutes to provide feedback on the revised vision in the form of questions or statements.
-  Leaders: Push each other to be clear and compelling. Ask tough questions and provide critical feedback. Take on the responsibility of helping your cohort members refine their work.



Take a few minutes to reflect individually about the following questions:

- How has your thinking about “excellence” at your own center/school evolved over the course of this exercise?
- How can you use your new/revised vision to drive student and teacher success at your center or school?

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The vision is only half the story - how you message it is as important.



Handouts, Pages 23-24



What does Chancellor Henderson do to communicate her vision effectively?

Tips for Communicating Your Vision

- Consider including an anecdote, story, or quote
- Connect to your mission as a center and/or your student achievement goals
- Articulate and emphasize the key tenets (words or phrases of your vision) and explain each:
 - What does it look like? How will you all know if you are successful?
- Describe the system: What will you do? What will staff do? What will students do? What is the intended outcome?
- Be concise
- Use “we” instead of “I” or “you”
- Manage expectations by articulating how you will keep your vision front of mind moving forward and what teachers can expect
- Smile

-  Articulating your vision is only the first step in investing stakeholders in it and making the vision a driving force in your center or school.
-  In table groups, brainstorm other strategies for investing your teachers in the vision, e.g. eliciting feedback on it, using the vision to drive staff development, having teachers think about how the vision looks in their only classrooms, etc.

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What are you excited about in terms of creating and communicating a vision of excellence?

What do you think will be challenging?

What are your next steps to turn your vision into reality at your center or school?