

Creating a Learning Mission

Recall the two fundamental assumptions undergirding a school's mission to provide high levels of learning for all students: 1) Educators believe that all students are capable of high levels of learning, and 2) they assume the responsibility to make this outcome a reality for every child. This exercise offers a process to create a common mission of learning.

Step 1: Create Individual Mission Statements

Have staff members sit in teams. Ask each person to write a response in 8 to 12 words to the question, "What is the fundamental purpose (mission) of our school? In other words, why does our school exist?"

Step 2: Share Individual Mission Statements

Ask each person to share his or her answer and ask a team member to chart the responses. Once all team members have shared, have each team discuss how the responses are similar and how they are different. Then inquire, "How can we work collaboratively to help our students if we have different missions for our school?"

Step 3: Create Team Mission Statements

Have each team create a collective mission statement in 8 to 12 words. The purpose is not to combine all the ideas into a comprehensive "laundry list," but rather to find consensus on your school's single most important purpose.

Step 4: Share Team Mission Statements

Ask each team to share its mission statement with the entire group and chart the answers. Ask, "How are our responses similar? How are they different?"

Step 5: Create a School Mission Statement

Using the team statements as a resource, create a collective mission statement of 8 to 12 words for your school. Again, reach consensus on the single most important purpose of your school and do not combine all the ideas or make a laundry list.

Step 6: Check Alignment

In a PLC, the fundamental purpose of a school must be learning. It is not a school's mission to ensure that all students are taught, but rather that all students learn. To this end, ask, "Does our final school mission embrace learning?"

