

Ideal Vision and Mission Statements

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Abstract

The purpose of this brief paper is to share steps to the development of a thoughtful vision statement and a useful mission statement for a school library that is like the library media center at Hampton Elementary School in Baltimore County Public Schools. The combined vision and mission statement from Hampton Elementary School is a basis for the library media specialist to develop a school library program vision and mission statement. Examples of vision and mission statements are considered including the Baltimore County Public Schools vision and mission statements and the mission statement from the “ALA Outline of Guidelines from a larger work, *Empowering Learners: Guidelines for School Library Programs* (AASL, 2017). Standards provide guidelines including *The AASL standards for the 21st century learners* (American Association of School Librarians (AASL), 2017), the *ISTE Standards for Students* (International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE), 2016), and the *ISTE Standards for Teachers* (ISTE, 2008).

The library media specialist supports its young learners and readers, considers teachers as learners in need of support, and welcomes parents as team-builders and communicators who value involvement.

Ideal Vision and Mission Statements

The library media specialist seeks to work within the local vision and mission of the school when developing the school library program's vision and mission. The combined mission and vision statement of Hampton Elementary School in Baltimore County reads:

Believing that all students will succeed when educated in a positive, safe, and challenging learning environment, the staff and parents of Hampton Elementary School strive to meet the diverse needs of students in its community. We remain dedicated to teaching children to become successful learners who are caring, concerned citizens. Hampton will promote the skills necessary for lifelong learning through the implementation of effective teaching strategies, current technology, and parent involvement.

http://hamptones.bcps.org/vision_and_mission, 2017)

Vision

The vision statement describes what the organization wants to become while the mission statement defines its purpose. (Toor, R. & Weisburg, H.K., 2011, p.18).

Combined with the mission in the text above, some elements of vision and becoming glimpse the future. The school promises to “[teach] children to become successful learners who are caring, concerned citizens.” There is firm commitment that instruction will take place within “a positive, safe and challenging learning environment.”

With these elements in mind, the library media center's vision takes shape. Students are the primary users of the resources and services of the school library media

center. The library media program supports pedagogy, teacher best practice, and parent/first teacher continued involvement.

Providing a “learning commons” space with qualified staff enables courteous discussion and feedback and a safe place to exchange ideas. The organized and well-managed collection enables expeditious information retrieval from a diverse collection of relevant, enjoyable, and responsible media. Learners practice discussion and become caring and concerned citizens. The program allows students to participate in a positive, safe, and challenging learning environment.

With these considerations, the draft vision statement may include overused or less than exciting phrases: encourage all readers to explore and evaluate information; and use too many verbs: listen, critique, select, build, express. Ideally, a meeting with teachers, parent volunteers, the assistant principal, and other library staff help polish the vision to be memorable and remember-able:

The School Library Media Program supports teaching and learning as I provides resources for the information needs and reading interests of students, faculty, staff and families.

Mission

Elements of the Hampton Elementary School's mission can be found in the broader vision mission statement. The school will

1. "strive to meet the diverse needs of the students in the community" [and]
2. "promote skills necessary for lifelong learning" through "effective teaching strategies, current technology, and parent involvement."

The library seeks to encourage a joy of reading and to facilitate student skills to think critically about informational, persuasive, or entertaining print and nonprint media.

ISTE standards for students charges educators to see students as empowered learners, digital citizens, knowledge constructors, innovative designers, computational thinkers, creative communicators, and global collaborators (ISTE, 2016). The library program must prepare students how to select, evaluate, and use information. "Many students are finding it almost impossible to make meaningful connections between what they learn at school and what they need to know outside in the world." (Ontario School Library Association (OSLA), 2010, p.5). The school library program works to implement various forms of media literacy. "Colleges and universities want students to conduct research and apply that research ... across the content areas. Employers want higher education to prepare students for the workforce by modeling "real world situations..." (AASL & Achieve, 2013, p.2). The library media program's mission statement must address current technology and media literacy.

In consideration of diversity, lifelong learning, teaching and learning in the 21st century, and current technology literacy, the mission of the school library program should

support students and all those who teach them by providing the valid, current information to keep the knowledge building relevant and vital.

With this challenge in mind, the draft mission statement must also include phrases supporting the need for a well-managed space and expert guidance for readers and those who support their education. The space allows readers to find opportunities for critical information retrieval, open and diverse knowledge building, and responsible and creative communication and collaboration.

While readers explore resources in a variety of formats, and participate in academic conversations and literature circles, they are also compelled to select and build knowledge in responsible ways by giving credit. In additions they need to express thoughtful ideas in creative and responsible ways and evaluate their own learning products in positive and respectful ways.

Professionals are important to the success of the library media program. They will initiate the enabling, facilitating, managing, and the providing of resources, experience, and space. The school librarian and staff lead students by teaching them skills needed to gather, evaluate, and use information.

After discussion with administrators and staff and a review of the AASL's "Outline of Guidelines" from the publication *Empowering Learners: Guidelines for School Library Programs* and a review of the AASL 21st century standards (2007) the mission statement reads:

The mission of the School Library Program is to provide a welcoming space offering expert guidance and reliable, diverse perspectives where readers can extend classroom learning, uncover opportunities for knowledge seeking and building, express

thoughtful ideas in creative and responsible ways, develop fluency in a variety of media, and evaluate their own learning products in positive and respectful ways.

This library media specialist has tried to create a workable vision and mission statement for a school library in a school similar to Hampton Elementary School in Baltimore County. The vision embeds AASL standards for the 21st century so that students seek out and evaluate information, build new knowledge, participate with others, and continue their knowledge seeking outside of school (AASL, 2007). The mission enables students to be empowered learners, digital citizens, knowledge constructors, innovative designers, and creative communicators (ISTE, 2016). When teachers and the librarian collaborate for professional development or for planning, teachers will meet ISTE standards to “facilitate and inspire student learning,” allow “digital age learning experiences,” “model digital age work,” promote digital citizenship and “engage in professional growth and leadership” (ISTE, 2011).

References

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