

## Mission, Vision, and School Culture

### *New Schools Guide*

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### Pillars of School Culture

In *The Shaping School Culture Fieldbook Second Edition* by Peterson and Deal (2009), they identify the following pillars of school culture: vision and values, rituals and ceremonies, history and stories, people and relationships, and the visual scene. Throughout this workbook, we will explore define each pillar and reflect on applying the pillar to your school

#### 1. Vision and Values

##### **What is a mission statement?**

A mission statement, or simply a mission, is a public declaration that schools or other educational organizations use to describe their founding purpose and major organizational commitments—i.e., what they do and why they do it. A mission statement may describe a school’s day-to-day operational objectives, its instructional values, or its public commitments to its students and community.

##### **What is a vision statement?**

A vision statement, or simply a vision, is a public declaration that schools or other educational organizations use to describe their high-level goals for the future—what they hope to achieve if they successfully fulfill their organizational purpose or mission. A vision statement may describe a school’s loftiest ideas, its core organizational values, its long-term objectives, or what it hopes its students will learn or be capable of doing after graduating.

#### *Key Idea:*

Examining values, beliefs, and mission statements helps you look deeply at your school’s culture.

Imagine that your school is open and you have a prospective family visiting to see if it is a good fit for them. Imagine, then, that you get to be a fly on the wall at the end of the day and hear what they have to say about your school- what is it that you'd hope to hear? What was their experience in the classrooms, the lunchroom, the hallways and the gym? What were their observations of the work being done in the classroom or interactions on the playground? What did they say about the staff or how it *felt* in the school? This is the *culture* of the school; it is inextricably tied to your mission, vision and core values (sometimes called belief statements, statements of principle, etc.). To the visitor the culture should be a *felt* experience, but for the school leadership it should be thoughtful, planned and measurable.

School's mission:

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Summarize the school's vision and philosophy:

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List your school's statements of principle or core values (these are commitments or statements that clarify and define the mission and vision)?

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How does the education program support the mission?

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## **2. Rituals and Ceremonies**

Rituals: processes or daily routines that are infused with deep meaning. They help transform common experiences to uncommon events.

Traditions: significant events that have a special history and meaning and occur year in and year out. They are part of the history of the school and tie people to its cultural roots.

Ceremonies: elaborate, culturally sanctioned events that bind people together and shape unwritten cultural values. Celebrations are a type of ceremony.

Use this table to start thinking about the rituals you want to create at your school.

<i>Key Idea:</i>
Positive, regular, and meaningful rituals, traditions, ceremonies, and celebrations nurture and sustain the culture of a school.

Leadership/Grade Level/Department Team Rituals	Staff Rituals	Student Rituals

**Map Your Traditions and Ceremonies**

Divide a piece of paper into the months of the year. Map out the traditions and ceremonies your school observes throughout the year.

**3. History and Stories**

As you are developing and opening your school, consider how you are going to maintain the history of your school and capture stories. Ideas include video recording the founders’ stories, creating a visual history with images, creating a platform for student, parent, and staff storytelling, and so on. Maintain a record of major changes throughout your school’s life and share this history with new staff and families.

<i>Key Idea:</i>
History and stories are key parts of a school culture that must be understood to support the positive and change the negative.

#### 4. People and Relationships

It is the informal network of people that:

Will move the school along in a positive direction

Maintains adequate flow of ideas, information, and social motivation.

When negative, can seriously damage the progress of a school.

*Key Idea:*

Working effectively with both positive and negative types of informal networks is necessary to create and sustain a positive culture.

How will norms and expectations (of both students and staff) be clearly articulated, will there be proper time devoted to orientation?

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How will you get “buy in” on cultural norms across all stakeholders?

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How will the mission influence the staff selection and development?

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How will you measure the school's culture/climate?

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Describe the school's discipline approach and how it reflects the mission and further promotes the culture of the school?

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## **5. The visual scene**

Your visual scene:

Sends messages about what is important (ex: state-of-the-art football stadium vs. crumbling library)

Reinforces a sense of community (ex: artwork reflecting diversity of community)

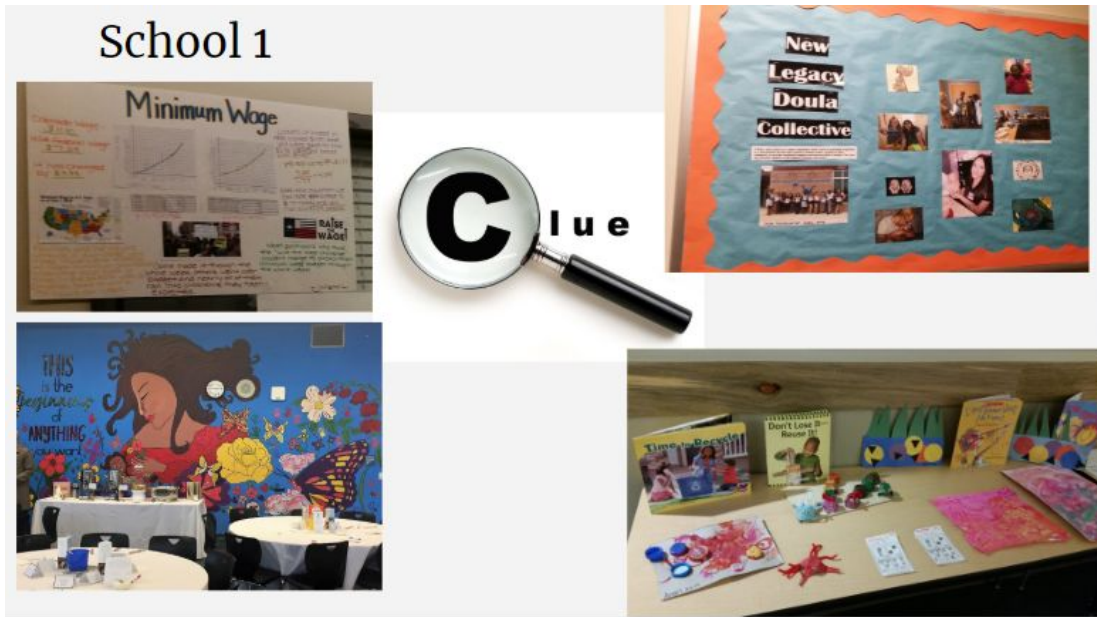
Communicates core mission and values (ex: large spaces for learning and play)

Motivates hard work and pride (ex: display of staff and student accomplishments)

### *Key Idea:*

Architecture, artifacts, and symbols can convey bright messages of possibility and purpose or represent negativity, pulling a school culture down.

**Mission and Vision Matching Game:** When stakeholders walk through your school, they should be able to identify your mission and vision by what they see in the environment. In this exercise, see if you can match the images with the school's mission and vision.





# School 3

Core Virtues In Action  
Presents: Joy Challenge!

April 8-19

Washing Clean with  
a PIZZA PARTY

Core Virtues In Action Presents:  
**Imagine Charter School at Firestone Joy Challenge!**

As a proud partner of NEGU, we would love for you to participate in our fundraiser to raise awareness for children fighting cancer through a Joy Challenge (collecting quarters in a mini JoyJar!)

Fill mini JoyJars® with quarters and help us bring JOY to kids fighting cancer by supporting our JoyChallenge and joining the JoySquad!

- Donate quarters to fill this mini JoyJar!
- Once filled, it will equal \$240, bringing JoyJars to children fighting cancer once a month for an entire year!

Any coins left in there? The more quarters you collect the more JoyJars we'll get to kids fighting cancer!

One JoyJar = \$25 donation

**DONATE TODAY AT: [NEGU.ORG/DONATE](http://NEGU.ORG/DONATE)**



# School 4



School A: School # \_\_\_\_\_

Mission: School A will provide a supportive and challenging, personalized, bilingual, and multicultural education for students in kindergarten through eighth grade. Our students will demonstrate pride, self-confidence, and mutual respect and acquire an academic foundation necessary to become successful leaders.

Vision: School A will be a school that ensures all students will have a safe, caring, and challenging academic environment. We believe that all students benefit from a bilingual education, and that children deserve an education that is personalized to meet their individual needs.

**School B: School # \_\_\_\_\_**

Mission: The mission of School B is to offer young parents a rigorous, relevant, and engaging education so they are empowered with the skills needed to raise healthy children and graduate prepared for success in college and careers.

Vision: Young families creating a legacy of education leading to a compelling career, financial independence, and positive parenting.

**School C: School # \_\_\_\_\_**

Mission: The mission of School C is to positively shape the hearts and minds of our students by providing them with a classical, core knowledge curriculum that is academically rigorous and content rich, a safe environment in which character is modeled and promoted, and a community in which to build trusting relationships with others.

Vision: Students at School C develop a foundation of wisdom prepared to be life-long learners, positive role models, and virtuous citizens.

**School D: School # \_\_\_\_\_**

Mission: Building a foundation of skills, knowledge, and character, School D educates every K-5 scholar for a four year college degree and a life of opportunity.

Values: EDUCATE OUR SCHOLARS- Achievement of our scholars comes first. SERVE OUR FAMILIES - Deliver on our college going promise to our families. SERVE THE TEAM - Always be a team player. WALK THE WALK - Live the School D values. MY CHILD - Treat every scholar as if they were your own child.

How will the mission be demonstrated and observable throughout the school?

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