

School mission statements and school performance: a mixed research investigation

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Abstract:

Background: Schools in K-12 have generated mission statements as ways of focusing their efforts and energies in specific areas. These mission statements vary by institutional setting as a function of the stakeholders and constituent groups who facilitate their development. To date, no studies were located in which the mission statements of elementary schools were examined.

Aims: To determine the themes that were present in the mission statements of 100 elementary schools in the State of Texas. Following the identification of themes, a second aim was to ascertain the extent to which the mission statements of high performing elementary schools differed from the mission statements of low performing elementary schools.

Sample: The mission statements of 100 elementary schools in the State of Texas were downloaded from their websites. Of these 100 schools, 50 schools were designated as high performing and 50 schools were designed as low performing. Though not the only criteria, high and low performing schools primarily differed in their students' academic achievement scores.

Method: A mixed research analysis was conducted in which themes were generated from these 100 schools' mission statements (qualitative) and then converted into numbers (quantitative) for statistical analysis. As such, this method is properly termed a sequential qualitative-quantitative equal status mixed research study.

Results: Qualitative data analysis yielded 15 themes: Academic Success, Caring Environment, Challenge, Citizenship, Collaborative, Commitment, Empower, Life-Long Learning, Opportunity, Partnership, Physical Development, Productive, Responsible, Safe Environment, and Social Development. Following transformation of qualitative themes into quantitative data, statistical analyses yielded statistically significant differences between high and low performing elementary schools. The mission statements of high performing schools were more likely to include the themes of Academic Success, Challenge, Citizenship, Empower, Partnership, and Social Development than were the mission statements of low performing schools.

Conclusion: The most important difference, however, was that the mission statements of high performing schools had missions that focused on providing a challenging environment that focused on academic success. Indeed, academic success was included in the mission statements of only 18% of the low performing schools and only 4% included having a challenging environment. Readers are presented with an example of a multi-stage mixed analysis investigation. Implications of these findings are discussed.

Keywords: mixed analysis; high performing schools; elementary school

學校之使命宗旨與學校表現：一個混和研究調查

摘要

背景：在美國，幼稚園至12年級的學校都擬定了學校的使命，以此作為學校專注在某些特殊領域投注精力的指引。這些使命宗旨因著學校機構投資參與者與促成學校發展的監管團體而有所不同。截至今日，還沒有學者針對中小學校使命進行研究。

目標：本研究第一個目標在找到美國德克薩斯州100間小學的使命宗旨之共通主題。第二個目標在決定表現優良與表現差的學校之使命間的差異。

樣本：研究者從美國德克薩斯州100間小學的網站上找到他們的使命。100間學校中有50間是學生學業成績表現優良的小學，另外50間為學生學業成績表現較差的學校。雖然學業成績不應是唯一的判別標準，本研究主要以學業成就做為學校表現優良與表現差的判別標準。

方法論：本研究使用混合研究分析，首先，使用質性研究找到100間小學的使命之共通主題(themes)，然後將這些共通主題量化以利統計分析。因此，本研究之方法論為質性-量性順序化之混合研究。

結果：經過質性資料分析後，形成15個共通主題：分別為學業成就，溫馨的環境，挑戰，公民身份，合作，投入，賦權，終生學習，機會，夥伴關係，體能發展，成效卓越，負責，安全的環境，和社交發展。之後，再將質性的資料加以量化分析，發現表現好與表現差的小學使命間的差異是顯著有效的差異。相較於表現較差的學校，表現優良的學校之使命強調學業成就，挑戰，公民權，賦權，夥伴關係，和社交發展。

結論：本研究發現最重要的差異是表現優良的學校特別教強調提供學生一個在學業成就上富挑戰性的學習環境。在學業成就表現較差的學校中只有18%的學校在使命宗旨中包含學業成就，而只有4%包含「提供學生一個富挑戰性的學習環境。」讀者在本研究中可見到一個多層次之混合分析研究的範例。如何應用發現結果也在本文中有討論。

鑰字：混合分析；表現優良的學校；小學

School performance is a hot topic in education, with many educational reforms being implemented in an effort to enhance student learning. One means that institutions are using to focus these reform efforts is the development of mission statements (Bafile, 2005, 2006). Many school districts and individual schools create unique mission statements to guide policies and procedures and to create opportunities for all students. School success requires a written mission statement which all professional staff incorporate into their daily curricular activities. A recent study of colleges and universities with effective educational programs showed that all of these institutions were mission

driven with clearly stated educational purposes that strongly influenced how things occurred (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt, & Associates, 2005).

From an organizational standpoint, a mission is the specific purpose for the existence of an institution. Theorists and researchers in organizational psychology believe that organizational missions have a profound effect on the health of organizations by helping them adapt to change (Malott, 2003). The mission acts as a compass to keep the organization on course in a constantly changing environment and, thus, avoid the “activity trap” (Odiorne, 1974). The

activity trap involves committing an organization to engaging in specific activities rather than to produce specific results. This allows organizational members to believe they are accomplishing the mission regardless of how well the organization is actually performing. In education, the activity trap typically involves putting students through a system of courses and the assigning of grades without adequate concern for the quality of the educational experiences received in those courses or the actual academic achievements represented by those grades.

A mission statement is a description of the mission that is intended to help leaders run the institution and to guide organizational change (Malott, 2003). For a mission statement to be effective, it must clearly specify both the constituency that the organization serves and how this constituency benefits from the activities of the organization (Carver, 2000; Malott, 2003). Descriptions of the constituencies might include geographic parameters, or delineate important groups such as employees and stakeholders (Graham & Havlick, 1994). Additional desirable characteristics for mission statements include being clear and sharply focused, providing direction (e.g., describing available opportunities), matching the organization's competence, and inspiring personnel. Finally, mission statements must avoid the activity trap (Carver). That is, the mission statement must commit the organization to specific results rather than only to engaging in specific activities.

Although a mission statement should specify the results constituents should expect, it is not the same as a goal statement. Goal statements are much more specific and provide measurable benchmarks. For example, the mission statement of a senior high

school might include preparing students for post-secondary education. A related goal statement would specify criteria such as a percentage of graduates enrolling in college or earning ACT scores above a certain level. Thus, mission statements lay out the general parameters of organizational success but do not establish the specific criteria for determining success.

A good mission statement helps an organization accomplish its mission through processes related to rule governance (Hayes, 1989). First, a clear mission statement acts as a set of discriminative stimuli that guides the behavior of organizational members. This helps prevent organizational myopia (Malott, 2003) in which an organization fails because it loses sight of its mission. Second, a clear mission statement also functions as a motivating operation (Laraway, Snyckerski, Michael, & Poling, 2003). That is, the specific outcomes specified in the mission statement are established as reinforcers for organizational behavior so that organizational members are motivated to obtain these outcomes and are not satisfied unless these outcomes are produced. In addition, the mission statement helps establish the psychological contract between the organization and new members, by indicating what behaviors the organization has a legitimate right to expect from its members (Schein, 1980). This facilitates socialization of new members into the organizational culture and prevents mission creep.

Given the importance of mission statements for institutional leadership and change (Malott, 2003), a reasonable hypothesis is that high performing and low performing public schools differ with regard to their mission statements. Although support for this

hypothesis has already been found in higher education (Kuh et al., 2005), the present study was designed to test this hypothesis for elementary schools using a sample of elementary schools in Texas. The following research questions were addressed: (a) What themes characterize the mission statements of elementary schools? (b) What are the similarities and dissimilarities in these themes between the mission statements of high and low performing elementary schools?

Methods

Sample

Individual information for 7,908 schools was obtained through the Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) available on the Texas Education System's website (<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/>). All of the schools in this database were regular public schools attended by students within the geographic confines of the local school district. No private, charter, or alternative schools were included in the database.

The database included school type (elementary vs. secondary) and current performance rating by the Texas Education Agency. Data were imported into an Excel file and sorted by school type to select all the elementary schools. Next the elementary school data were sorted by performance rating. Then 50 schools each were randomly selected from those designated Exemplary and those designated Academically Unacceptable. Given the exploratory nature of this study, only schools from the extremes of the scale were selected. This prevented classification errors at the boundaries of the classes that would have made differences more difficult to detect. Next, an Internet

search was conducted to obtain each of the selected school's mission statement. Some schools initially selected in the performance category of Academically Unacceptable did not have mission statements posted on the school website. These schools were randomly replaced from the remaining schools until a total sample of 50 Exemplary elementary schools and 50 Academically Unacceptable elementary schools was obtained.

Procedure

A mixed methods design was employed. This type of design involves "conducting a quantitative mini-study and a qualitative mini-study in one overall research study" (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p.20). This approach was chosen because a qualitative analysis was best suited to allowing the elementary schools to voice the themes that were important to local constituencies. On the other hand, a quantitative analysis was best suited to identifying differences in these themes based upon the performance classifications.

Qualitative analysis. An inductive analysis (Merriam, 1998) of the data was conducted. The purpose for this analysis was to provide a rich, thick portrait of the missions of elementary schools. Each researcher read the mission statements and coded key words and phrases for themes. A constant comparison method (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) was used in which these key words and phrases were compared to each other and grouped into categories representing common themes. Trustworthiness of the themes was established by having a consensus reached by all investigators for all of the individual school mission statements (Lincoln & Guba).

Quantitative analysis. Following Onwuegbuzie and Teddlie's (2003) conceptualization of the data analysis process, once the mission statements were reduced to the 15 themes in the qualitative phase, these data were "quantitized" by assigning numerical codes for statistical analysis. This process has been termed a conversion mixed design (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2006) because the data are converted from qualitative data to quantitative data for the purpose of data analysis.

Numerical codes were assigned by creating an Excel file in which each of the 100 elementary schools included in the study was represented by a separate row. The first column was used to identify each school with a unique numerical code. The second column was used to code whether a school was identified as Exemplary or as Academically Unacceptable. The next 15 columns were used to code whether or not each of the 15 previously identified themes was included in the mission statement of the school. Themes were coded with either a zero (i.e., theme absent) or a one (i.e., theme present). The Excel file was then converted to an SPSS file for data analysis.

Chi-square tests were used to determine if differences were present between schools designated as Exemplary and those designated as Academically Unacceptable. Because this was an exploratory study, all tests were evaluated for statistical significance at the .05 level. Although this lack of correction for running multiple tests increases the risk of Type I errors, we considered this risk to be acceptable. Because this study is an initial investigation of elementary school mission statements, any findings will require independent replication. Unfortunately,

when statistical significance is not obtained, researchers often lose interest in examining a phenomenon (Johnston & Pennypacker, 1993). Thus, we considered the risk of Type II errors to be even greater than the risk of Type I errors. In addition, a discriminant analysis (described below) was conducted which helped confirm the results of the chi-square tests.

Results

Qualitative findings

The qualitative analysis revealed that the mission statements could be characterized by 15 themes.

Theme 1: Academic Success. The theme *Academic Success* was coded when the keywords "academic success" or "academic excellence" were used in a mission statement. Representative examples include: (a) the school "will provide an exceptional academic program" (Highland Park Elementary), and (b) that the school equips each student "to [reach] his/her greatest academic potential" (Austin Elementary).

Theme 2: Caring Environment. The theme *Caring Environment* was coded when the keywords "caring environment" or "nurture" were used in a mission statement. Representative examples include, "to provide a quality education in a caring environment for the trailblazers of tomorrow" (Northeast Elementary), and "staff, parents and community will nurture and promote productive students in a safe and secure learning environment" (Barbara Jordan Elementary).

Theme 3: Challenge: The theme *Challenge* was coded when the keywords "challenge," "challenging,"

or a synonym for these words were used in a mission statement. Representative examples included “to provide a dedicated and competent staff that is teaching a challenging curriculum” (Seymour Elementary), and to “be an educational institution that continuously challenges and stimulates its students” (Austin Elementary).

Theme 4 Citizenship: The theme *Citizenship* was coded when the keywords “citizenship” or “citizens” were used in a mission statement. Representative examples included “to develop [students] to their full potential intellectually, physically, and socially in order to be productive citizens and contributing members of society” (Lawhon Elementary), and “to empower by inspiring and motivating students to become extraordinary ‘Star’ citizens” (Silverlake Elementary).

Theme 5 Collaborative: The theme *Collaborative* was coded when the keywords “collaborative” or “collaborating” were used in a mission statement. Representative examples included “promotes collaboration and develops mutual respect” (University Park Elementary), and that “the education provided to all children be a collaborative partnership between the staff, parents, community, and the child” (Walker Station Elementary).

Theme 6 Commitment: The theme *Commitment* was coded when the keyword “commitment” was used in a mission statement. Representative examples included “an unyielding commitment to excellence” (Hyer Elementary), and high standards “takes an integrated commitment among community members, parents, students, and staff” (Luling Primary School).

Theme 7 Empower: The theme *Empower* was coded when the keywords “empower” or “empowerment” were used in a mission statement. Representative examples included “students will be surrounded by enthusiastic educators and parents who empower by inspiring and motivating to become extraordinary” (Rustic Oak Elementary), and “empower each student to become an eager lifelong learner” (Hyer Elementary).

Theme 8 Life-Long Learning: The theme *Life-Long Learning* was coded when the keyword “life-long learning” or phrases related to learning throughout life were used in a mission statement. Representative examples included “inspire students to become life-long learners” (University Park School), and “development of learning as a life-long process” (Pinkerton Elementary School).

Theme 9 Opportunity: The theme *Opportunity* was coded when the keyword “opportunity” was used in a mission statement. Representative examples included “develop child-centered opportunities so each student can experience ongoing success and progress toward academic excellence” (Lawhon Elementary), and “to provide opportunities for community involvement” (Sam Houston Elementary).

Theme 10 Partnership: The theme *Partnership* was coded when the keyword “partnership” or phrases related to combined effort were used in a mission statement. Representative examples included “it is essential that the education provided to all children be a collaborative partnership between staff, parents, community and the child” (Walker Station Elementary), and “this is a combined effort among community members, parents, students and staff” (Leonard Shanklin Elementary).

Theme 11 Physical Development: The theme *Physical Development* was coded when the keywords “physical or physically” were used in a mission statement. Representative examples included “nurturing the intellectual, emotional, social and physical growth of all children” (Huntington Elementary School), and “enable them [students] to develop to their full potential intellectually, physically, and socially” (Lawhon Elementary).

Theme 12 Productive: The theme *Productive* was coded when the keywords “productive” or “productivity” were used in a mission statement. Representative examples included “in order for each individual child to become a happy, productive, well-balanced person” (West End Elementary), and “to empower our students to lead, to participate, to become productive members of a diverse society” (Walcott School).

Theme 13 Responsible: The theme *Responsible* was coded when the keywords “responsible” or “responsibility” were used in a mission statement. Representative examples included “students have the responsibility of working to achieve success” (O’Bryant Primary School), and “intended to produce responsible people of high moral character” (Ennis Independent School District).

Theme 14 Safe Environment: The theme *Safe Environment* was coded when the keyword “safe environment” was used in a mission statement. A representative example was “teaching a challenging curriculum surrounded in a safe environment” (Seymour Elementary School).

Theme 15 Social Development: The theme *Social Development* was coded when the keywords

“socially” or “social development” were used in a mission statement. Representative examples included to “promote...mental and social development” (West End Elementary), and “where students learn to overcome all obstacles in order to develop intellectually, emotionally, and socially” (Rustic Oak Elementary).

Quantitative analyses

Overall frequencies of themes. A frequency count was made for the 15 themes to determine the extent to which each theme was present in the mission statements. These counts are presented in Table 1 in alphabetic order. Only one theme, Academic Success, appeared in more than half of the mission statements (n = 54). Only two other themes appeared in at least one-third of the mission statements, that is, Social Development (n = 35) and Citizenship (n = 33). Conversely, there were eight themes that appeared in fewer than 20% of the mission statements. The least mentioned theme was Physical Development (n = 8) followed by Commitment and Opportunity (both ns = 11).

Table 1
Themes identified in mission statements

Theme	Number of Schools With	
	Theme Present	Theme Not Present
<i>Academic Success</i>	54	46
<i>Caring Environment</i>	17	83
<i>Challenge</i>	23	77
<i>Citizenship</i>	33	67
<i>Collaborative</i>	20	80
<i>Commitment</i>	11	89
<i>Empower</i>	13	87
<i>Life-Long Learning</i>	27	73
<i>Opportunity</i>	11	89
<i>Partnership</i>	16	84
<i>Physical Development</i>	8	92
<i>Productive</i>	26	74
<i>Responsible</i>	19	81
<i>Safe Environment</i>	16	84
<i>Social Development</i>	35	65

Exemplary schools' themes versus Academically Unacceptable schools' themes. Next, chi-square tests were conducted to examine differences in mission statement themes between Exemplary versus Academically Unacceptable schools as designated by the AEIS. Then frequencies were calculated to determine the extent to which each theme was present in the mission statements for each of the two groups. The number of times a theme was mentioned in the mission statements of schools of each type, along with the results of chi-square analyses, are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Number of exemplary and academically unacceptable schools including each theme in its mission statement

Theme	Exemplary	Academically Unacceptable	X ² (1)
<i>Academic Success</i>	36	18	13.04**
<i>Caring Environment</i>	10	7	0.63
<i>Challenge</i>	19	4	12.70**
<i>Citizenship</i>	21	12	3.66*
<i>Collaborative</i>	12	8	1.00
<i>Commitment</i>	7	4	0.91
<i>Empower</i>	10	3	4.33*
<i>Life-Long Learning</i>	17	10	2.48
<i>Opportunity</i>	8	3	2.55
<i>Partnership</i>	12	4	4.76*
<i>Physical Development</i>	6	2	2.17
<i>Productive</i>	17	9	3.32
<i>Responsible</i>	11	8	0.58
<i>Safe Environment</i>	8	8	0.00
<i>Social Development</i>	23	12	5.31*

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .0001$

Six statistically significant differences were present between Exemplary and Academically Unacceptable schools. In all six of these differences the theme was more likely to be mentioned by Exemplary schools than by Academically Unacceptable schools. Two of the differences had moderate effect sizes (Cohen, 1988). The theme of Academic Success was mentioned by twice as many Exemplary schools

(72.0%) as did Academically Unacceptable schools (36.0%) with an effect size of .36. The Challenging theme was mentioned by four and a half times as many Exemplary schools (38.0%) as did Academically Unacceptable schools (8%) with an effect size of .36.

The remaining four differences had small effect sizes. The theme of Citizenship was mentioned by almost twice as many Exemplary schools (42.0%) as did Academically Unacceptable schools (24.0%) with an effect size of .19. Empower was mentioned by three times as many Exemplary schools (20.0%) as did Academically Unacceptable schools (6.0%) with an effect size of .21. In addition, Partnership was mentioned by three times as many Exemplary schools (24.0%) as did Academically Unacceptable schools (8.0%) with an effect size of .22. Finally, almost twice as many Exemplary schools (46.0%) mentioned Social Development as did Academically Unacceptable (24.0%) with an effect size of .23.

Discriminant analysis. To determine the ability of the 15 mission statement themes to discriminate between Exemplary and Academically Unacceptable schools, an All Possible Subsets (APS) discriminant analysis was conducted with the 15 themes as the discriminating variables. The resulting discriminant function was statistically significant, Wilks' Lambda = .68, X²(16) = 34.36, $p = .005$, with a canonical correlation of .56. The structure matrix revealed five themes with pooled within-groups correlations over .30, all of which were associated with greater inclusion in the mission statement of Exemplary schools. The strongest associations were for Academic Success (.57) and Challenge (.56). The remaining three predictors were Social Development (.35), Partnership (.33), and Empower (.31). Thus, the five predictors matched the results of the previous chi-square analyses. Classification analysis indicated that the APS discriminant function accurately classified 74% of schools as either Exemplary or Academically Unacceptable.

Discussion

One of the major purposes of a mission statement is to help leaders run the institution and to guide organizational change (Malott, 2003). Thus, the characteristics of a school's mission statement should be one indicator of the overall quality of the school. The present study provided empirical evidence consistent with this hypothesis.

Mission statement themes

Qualitative analysis identified 15 themes in the mission statements of 100 elementary schools in Texas. This number of themes is a clear indication of the multifaceted nature of contemporary elementary schools in the United States. Given that schools are primarily intended to be educational institutions, the inclusion of *Academic Success* in school mission statements is not surprising. What is surprising is that only 54% of the schools in the sample included this theme in their mission statement. This finding may be an indication that the mission of schools is becoming too diffuse and that the academic mission of schools is becoming diluted. Although some schools addressed learning under the broader theme of *Lifelong Learning*, 18 of the 27 schools whose mission statements mentioned this theme also mentioned Academic Success. Thus, when both of these themes are considered only 63% of the schools directly addressed learning in either form in their mission statements.

The second most frequently mentioned theme was *Social Development*, followed closely by *Citizenship*. Both of these themes were included in the mission statements of roughly one-third of the schools. These themes reflect school leaders' awareness of a broader mission to prepare students as members of society. Less frequently mentioned themes such as Productive and *Responsible* also reflect this broader mission through the development of more specific personal attributes in students.

The next most frequently mentioned themes were related to the school climate. The most frequently mentioned of these themes was to provide Challenge. Challenge was mentioned in relation to supporting the academic mission of the school. The theme of *Commitment* was used in a similar way. Providing a *Caring Environment* and a *Safe Environment* were mentioned about equally. Providing this type of nurturing and secure environment has been shown to be important for students' academic success (Damico & Roth, 1993; Hoy & Tarter, 1992). Thus, a variety of ways were present in which these elementary schools addressed school climate in their mission statements indicating the multifaceted nature of this climate.

Recognition of the schools' relationship to the larger society context was acknowledged by the themes of *Collaborative*, which was mentioned in one out of five mission statements, and Partnership, which was mentioned by roughly one in six schools. Thus, defining the school constituency in terms of the broader society was relatively rare in these mission statements.

Enabling students to have better lives were represented by the themes of *Empower* and *Opportunity* which were mentioned by slightly more than 1 in 10 schools each. The least frequently mentioned theme was *Physical Development* which was mentioned by fewer than 1 in 10 schools. This theme may have been mentioned so infrequently in comparison to students' academic and social growth because elementary school students are between the major growth periods of early childhood and adolescence, making this aspect of students' development less salient during the elementary school years.

High performing versus low performing schools

Exemplary schools were distinguishable from Academically Unacceptable schools in important

ways. First, Exemplary schools were more likely to stress students' social development, empowering students, and partnership with other constituencies. The most important difference, however, was that the mission statements of Exemplary schools had missions that focused on providing a challenging environment that focused on academic success. Indeed, academic success was included in the mission statements of only 18% of the Academically Unacceptable schools and only 4% included having a challenging environment. This result is consistent with findings from higher education in which universities with highly successful undergraduate programs have missions that focus on students' education (Kuh et al., 2005). The combination of challenge, combined with support, has also been shown to be necessary within the higher education context (Sanford, 1967). That is, neither challenge nor support will lead to success without the other. Inclusion of academic success is probably very important for schools because this theme focuses on the primary mission of schools in a way that avoids the activity trap (Carver, 2000). That is, academic success focuses attention on a specific outcome rather than on the activities of teachers and administrators. Goals developed to assess accomplishment of this aspect of a school's mission will need to be linked to measurable aspects of student academic achievement. Utilization of such measures should lead to data-based decision-making by school leaders.

Limitations

Readers are cautioned that these findings are based on the mission statements of a small number of elementary schools in Texas. More important, the quantitative data are correlational. Although the content of mission statements was strongly associated with academic quality, cause and effect conclusions are not warranted. Thus, even though having an

appropriately worded mission statement may, as hypothesized, guide schools to more successful practice, both may be attributable to a common factor such as high quality administration.

Unfortunately, experimental manipulation of the mission statements of schools is neither practical nor ethical. Nevertheless, the current study lends support to strong theoretical and empirical reasons to believe that a properly worded mission statement can contribute the success of a school. Of course, merely having a well-designed mission statement does not insure success. The mission must be lived by its members to be effective (Kuh et al., 2005). But without such a mission statement to cue and motivate behavior, organizational myopia and the activity trap are more likely to undermine organizational outcomes. In addition, without a clear mission statement, turnover among organizational members is more likely to lead to mission creep.

Finally, the sample included only schools in the most and least successful categories according to the criteria used by the Texas Department of Education. Thus, nothing can be said about the mission statements of schools in-between these extremes.

Conclusion

In spite of the acknowledged limitations, we believe that schools should examine the characteristics of their mission statements. A clear focus should be placed on students' academic performance so that an evaluation of school success will avoid both dilution of the schools' primary mission and the activity trap. The statement should also incorporate a commitment to the challenge and support necessary for high levels of academic success. Students' social development must also play an important part in the school's mission as both academic and social skills are needed to empower students to lead better lives in the future.

Finally, the mission statement should explicitly acknowledge the need for the school to work in partnership with parents and other constituencies in the broader society to accomplish the overall mission. Once written, the mission statement must become a living document that informs all day-to-day practices of the administration, teachers, and students. Too often mission statements exist only on paper rather than being a lived philosophy and commitment to the on-going development of an effective educational institution.

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