Vision and Mission Statements

Schools sometimes write **vision** and **mission** statements to help guide their work. Larry Lezotte in his book *Assembly Required: A Continuous School Improvement System* (2002), says, "... there is a world of difference between having a mission statement and having a *sense of mission*." The same could be said of vision statements.

- A definition of mission is purpose or reason for existing.
    - A mission statement, if it is truly a **sense of mission**, along with the core beliefs, and core values provide the boundaries in which staff and other stakeholders have agreed to work to achieve a shared vision.
- A dictionary definition of vision might be: An image of the future we seek to create.
    - A vision statement describes in clear, compelling, graphic, sensory terms the preferred future reality of what the school must become to help all students learn.
    - A vision statement, if it is truly a **shared vision**, along with goals, gives focus to and guides the direction of the work that all stakeholders have committed to collectively.

Educators sometimes confuse mission and vision. The vision provides direction through a description of a preferred future of excellence. A mission describes how that future will be achieved.

Mission beliefs and values go hand in hand. To make a mission statement effective, it needs to be aligned with the culture of the school.

An effective vision statement should include elements that are:

- Clear, not ambiguous, a vivid picture
- Descriptive of a hopeful and achievable future
- Expressive, memorable and engaging
- Oriented toward evidence based results
- Aimed at a specific point in time

To become really effective a vision must become a part of the everyday life and culture of the school. If the vision is a part of the culture of the school the stakeholders of the school all know the desired future of the school and it has become part of the vocabulary and conversations of people; the expectations for learning whatever is necessary to achieve the vision is occurring; and processes and procedures are in place to monitor implementation of new practices and measure and evaluate results.