

Leadership and the School Vision

Shawn M. Weisser

Longwood University

PEDU-504

Dr. Maurice Carter

Evaluation of the Mission and Vision Statements

The school vision statement “embodies the values of the community and is the foundation for actions that will lead to school improvement.” (*Clear vision statement*, 2017) The statement provides stakeholders with a snapshot of the school’s hope for the future. It is where we want our students to be when they leave us. The mission statement provides the steps to get there.

Huguenot Vision Statement

At Huguenot, all students are groomed, through an environment of reinforcement and tenacity within a culture of autonomy, to successfully complete college or excel in a trade to ultimately flourish in a 21st-century society.

Huguenot Mission Statement

The mission of Huguenot High School is to provide a high-quality education that prepares, ensures, and empowers all students to achieve their full intellectual and social potential in order to become lifelong learners and productive members within a global society.

The mission statement was easy to find as it was on the school About Us webpage. I did not find the vision statement on the webpage, which I found strange as it is one of the most essential tools in setting a school’s culture and climate. It is in the teacher handbook and I placed it on the webpage with the mission statement.

Strengths of the Vision and Mission Statements

Both the vision and mission statements are succinct, which is necessary to keep the reader engaged. The vision and mission statements feel dated as if they were written for students ten years ago and modified to add “21st-century.” Our students are changing and we need to address

those changes by modifying the vision and mission statements of our school. The vision and mission statements do not align with the current students and teachers of Huguenot High School.

To make changes to the current vision and mission statements an evaluation of how they are written and whether they relate to our current community needs to take place and reported back to the principal. Once the principal is made aware of the results he should create a committee of stakeholders to review the statements and suggest changes. The stakeholders should include administration, staff members, parents, and other community members.

The committee members should be given the direction to research vision and mission statements from schools they admire as well as impart their own beliefs about education and teaching students at the high school level. When the committee has finished their evaluations and made suggested changes, and it has passed the scrutiny of the school board, the statements need to be posted on all social media, websites, letters that are mailed to parents and community members and attached to every email going out of the school. It should also be posted in every corner of the school building, inside and out to reinforce the statement amongst the staff and students.

Needs Assessment and Data Collection and Analysis

As I have been unable to obtain a copy of the school's Needs Assessment report I will use the most recent School Improvement Plan (SIP) to discuss our current needs as a school. (*HHS SIP, 2018*) In the most recent three-year SIP the team indicated three of the four core content areas needed improvement, as indicated by SOL scores, chronic absenteeism, dropout rates, ESSA participation, and graduation rates needing to be addressed. Since the district closed schools in March of 2020 there is no 2019-2020 data to use for comparison. I have asked the

principal to provide me with information regarding how the SIP will be used in the virtual school semester and how we will obtain data.

According to the SIP, graduation rates of Huguenot High School fall below federal averages, and Chronic Absenteeism and Dropout rates exceed the state norms. I believe the three of these are interrelated. The goals and the means of rectifying the specific areas of need will be addressed separately here. First, the issue of Chronic Absenteeism. Huguenot's reported rate of 22% in the 2017-2018 school year was estimated using data from 2016-2017. (*HHS SIP, 2018*) The actual number at the end of the year was 15.6% and in 2018-2019 the rate increased slightly to 16.2%. (Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Education, 2002) Both are below the amount on the SIP. Since the district closed schools on March 13, 2020, the 2019-2020 rate was calculated with the data collected between September and March to predict the percentage; however, student membership and days in the session were not included for the number of days schools were closed up to March 31st and the state's School Quality Profile webpage does not have data for 2019-2020 available as of yet.

According to the SIP, the school's action plans to alleviate the problem of Chronic Absenteeism will include the following steps, the attendance team will:

1. collect historic data to determine which students fall into the category by creating a list of at-risk students with prior year attendance report from ASPEN (attendance software),
2. meet with the families and students who have a pattern of Chronic Absenteeism to develop preventative strategies, survey data from meetings (student attendance

team, ASPEN report, notes and any plan previously created) and create a meeting contract,

3. conduct a bi-weekly check-in schedule with at-risk students, create a meeting schedule, and a renewed contract.

The district decided to open virtually for the first semester of 2020-2021 and the rules of attendance from the state have not been very clear since the beginning of the school year.

According to conversations had at the beginning of the year by the administrative staff to the teachers, if the student submits their homework on-time, even if absent from 'class,' it is possible for teachers to change the attendance record from absent to present. Face-to-face education is scheduled to begin in February of 2021; however, after watching and listening to the school board meetings it is fair to state that many students will not be in attendance due to reasons regarding the Coronavirus-19. According to the state attendance policy, school leaders are allowed to "excuse absences for a reason acceptable to the school administration."

(Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Education, 2020) Divisions are also allowed to define what reasons are "acceptable." I am sure the data from last year and this year will be impacted as a result of the school closure.

According to the state's school quality profile page, Huguenot's Chronic Absenteeism rate is highest amongst our Hispanic students. (Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Education, 2020) In discussions with the English as a Secondary Language (ESL) teachers and the building chair, I am told that many Hispanic students leave school at age 18 to work, put more emphasis on making money to support the family, and due to their coming from a country or area without access to education many students struggle with the concept of education. The district has

implemented a program called Secondary Success to address this issue. It is a night school program that allows students who have left school early to stay in the system while finishing their diplomas. This program began last spring semester and although the regular school session was terminated the after-school program continued. Students were able to complete their courses using Edgenuity and some graduated in June. This will affect our dropout rate as students will be able to move laterally into night school.

The school's SIP plan to address dropout rates includes using a "homeroom program to bridge the communication gaps for students in relation to staying in school and create close adult mentors and reaching out to current dropouts to assist them with barriers to getting a General Education Diploma or recovery school admission" The Secondary Success program that the district created is addressing these issues as a whole but we are not allowed to promote the program amongst students currently in jeopardy of dropping out. The night school option keeps the students in school and provides them with the tools they need to graduate.

The action plan focusing on graduation is two-fold. First, provide an accurate graduation plan for each student and have both the parent or guardian and the student sign off on it. Second, monitor the progress of all students in the graduating class of 2021 and create a monthly update via a sign off log and documentation to the student when his or her status changes from on target to graduate to at-risk. This is anemic at best. Students, especially those at high risk such as our Hispanic students, need more incentive to stay. There need to be sessions on how and why an education is important to their future and how a diploma can make their money-earning potential greater. We have to show them and their families the value of an education and how they can obtain that education in a format that does not put the family at risk.

Taking the aforementioned data into consideration, the plans for remediating the problem of absenteeism on the school's part appears to be weak and ineffective. When the majority of students listed as chronically absent come from families who do not view education in the manner in which the American culture does, even if a meeting takes place, the patterns of absenteeism continue. The plan to address dropout and graduation will correct some of the minor absenteeism problems. The use of night school as an alternative and, possibly, online education when students can do their work asynchronously may be the strategies needed to decrease those rates and increase our over-all graduation rates.

Three goals we have are to reduce absenteeism, reduce the dropout rate, and increase graduation. To address the issues stated above, the school needs to proactively utilize the virtual education platform we are using, Google Classroom, to reach out to our Hispanic population. They are struggling because everything is in English and we do not have enough interpreters to get them over the hump of using the technology provided or to obtain the necessary technology from school. One way in which we can address the problem is to have a day, or more, per week to address all of the Hispanic student's needs with our bilingual staff and teachers, bilingual liaison officer, bilingual guidance counselor, and others who can meet with parents and students and quickly assess their needs and find solutions. This type of across the board collaboration is the key to success.

The goal of reducing the dropout rate can be addressed by promoting the Secondary Success program to those students who may drop out because they have to work or take care of children during the day. Allow them to switch to night school so they can continue to work toward graduation and we can count them on our rosters until graduation. The Secondary

Success program tutors students on the General Education Diploma (GED) test if they have already dropped and have aged out of the school. Allow teachers and guidance counselors to work toward graduation success by enlarging and promoting the Secondary Success virtual program will allow more students to stay in school.

Another goal concerning absenteeism is to reduce the number of suspensions. The school demographics indicate that black students comprise 61.4% of the population and Hispanics comprise 30.1%. Students in both categories are suspended at rates that nearly equal their population. Suspensions are not addressed in the SIP but it should be. We need a goal and action plan in place to lower the number of students being suspended as it also impacts our absenteeism and dropout rates. If the penalty was not suspension but a move to a virtual classroom where they would continue to learn from home, the rates would drop.

Communication of the Assessment's Relation to the School Vision

The vision of the school is to groom students so they can *“successfully complete college or excel in a trade to ultimately flourish in a 21st-century society” “through an environment of reinforcement and tenacity within a culture of autonomy.”* Our goals are to keep kids in school and get them to graduation so they can embark on a successful life, whatever that may be, and to become productive members of society.

The portion of the statement, “through an environment of reinforcement and tenacity” seems very severe. This does not encourage students to come to school, stay at school, and graduate. The part that states we are providing them with a “culture of autonomy” really means we are trying to get them to make the right decisions on their own but that is a tall order when

they are not given opportunities to mature and are allowed to place the blame anywhere but on their shoulders. Our goals do not reflect our vision statement.

Teachers, staff, administration, and officers have jumped in to support the efforts of our school and system to feed families, provide technical support, educational support, and emotional support. The district has instituted a community circle for homeroom each morning and the teachers have enjoyed getting to know their students in a much more empathetic way than they have in the past. Many students and their parents are dedicated to obtaining the best education possible. We have community involvement from Chick-fil-A, Bob Air Baptist Church, and others who step up to provide support.

The needs assessment team met and discussed what the needs were, the data, and how to address the remediation. The data is presented in a five-minute 'here we are' session attached to another professional development meeting. Last year a share drive was created to place all of this documentation for committee members to view and bring to the table when we met.

Currently, the school vision statement does not completely embody "the values of the community and is the foundation for actions that will lead to school improvement." I hope that we use this time to complete and reassess some of our goals in light of the pandemic and make plans to move forward to meet our students' needs. Re-imagining what education can look like is the new mindset of Richmond Public Schools and I hope we can set the standard by addressing the needs of our most vulnerable.

Bibliography

Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Education. (2002). *School Quality Profiles*.

**Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Education. Retrieved October 19, 2020,
from**

<https://schoolquality.virginia.gov/schools/huguenot-high#fndtn-desktopTabs-climate>

Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Education. (2020). *School Closure Frequently Asked Questions*. Commonwealth of Virginia.

***Huguenot High School School Improvement Plan* (Huguenot High School, Compiler).
(2018).**

***The importance of having a clear vision for your school*. (2017). Open Learn Create.**

Retrieved October 16, 2017, from

<https://www.open.edu/openlearncreate/mod/oucontent/view.php?id=57508§ion=3>

“I have neither given nor received help on this work, nor am I aware of any infraction of the Honor Code.”