Why Are We Here? : The Creation and Implementation of Guiding Statements in Schools
Why Are We Here?
The Creation and Implementation of Guiding Statements in Schools

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Education

in

Educational Leadership

by

Bryan Scott Brockett

Committee in charge:
California State University, San Marcos
Professor Jennifer Jeffries, Chair
Assistant Professor Carol VanVooren

University of California, San Diego
Professor Alan Daly

2014
The Dissertation of Bryan Scott Brockett is approved, and is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

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Chair

California State University, San Marcos

University of California, San Diego

2014
DEDICATION

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the study participants, who gave generously of their time and who showed tremendous insight and thoughtfulness on the topic, which benefitted me greatly in the pursuit of this study. Thanks to my Joint Doctoral Program Cohort colleagues who pushed me and also allowed me the space to share the many iterations of my thinking on this topic. Thanks in particular to Ebon Brown, Terrance Davis, and Kiki Bispo, whose valued friendship during the last three years provided two factors critical to the successful completion of this project: encouragement and comic relief.

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project. I am truly grateful to them for the sacrifices that they have made over the last three years that allowed me to pursue this goal.
“So long, in fact, as you remain in ignorance of what to aim at and what to avoid,
what is essential and what is superfluous, what is upright or honourable conduct and
what is not, it will not be travelling but drifting.”

-Seneca, 1st Century Stoic Philosopher
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<td>1997</td>
<td>Bachelor of Arts, Spanish Language</td>
<td>University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Master of Education, Cross-cultural Teaching</td>
<td>National University, La Jolla, CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999-2004</td>
<td>Teacher, Grades 7-8, Spanish</td>
<td>Rancho Santa Fe School District, Rancho Santa Fe, CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-2012</td>
<td>Teacher, Grades 9-12, Spanish</td>
<td>San Dieguito Union High School District, Encinitas, CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012-2014</td>
<td>Assistant Principal</td>
<td>Carlsbad Unified School District, Carlsbad, CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014-present</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>Carlsbad Unified School District, Carlsbad, CA</td>
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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Why Are We Here?

The Creation and Implementation of Guiding Statements in Schools

by

Bryan Scott Brockett

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

California State University, San Marcos, 2014
University of California, San Diego, 2014

Professor Jennifer Jeffries, Chair

School vision and mission statements – collectively known as guiding statements – define organizational purpose and should serve to guide the course of the school and the outcomes that it hopes to achieve. Though guiding statements have received much attention in the business literature, school vision has been subject to limited empirical review and school mission statements have been largely ignored in the school research literature. Although many schools have guiding statements, school leaders may not be well versed in the development and application of such an organizational management principle that has been developed and studied primarily in the business world. This paper presents the findings of a case study of one new
school’s experience developing and implementing a set of guiding statements. The development of the school’s statements of purpose, vision, and values provided the starting point for building a site-based leadership team and the guiding statements provided the backdrop to the planning work that was done prior to the school’s opening and throughout its first year of operation. Teachers, staff, and the principal reflected on these experiences and the role that the school guiding statements played in the development of the leadership team and in defining the identity of the school. The findings were consistent with the findings on guiding statements in the existing literature: regular communication of the guiding statements provided reinforcement of the concepts they contained, the guiding statements provided a reference point for the work that was done at the site, and alignment of action to the guiding statements was a factor in the perception of their value. The data analysis also revealed several factors perceived as important to the guiding statement development process. The study is grounded in a strengths-based approach to research and data analysis that centers on the aspects of the mutual learning model (Schwarz, 2013) that benefitted the guiding statement development and implementation process.
Chapter 1: Introduction

School leaders across the nation are tasked with improving student achievement amid a variety of external and internal pressures. Accountability measures such as No Child Left Behind place great focus on improving student academic performance. The adoption of Common Core State Standards presents a learning challenge at all levels of the K-12 school system. Maintaining internal staff morale amid an environment of seemingly ever-decreasing financial resources presents an equally daunting challenge. Combine those factors with the need to seek new ways of educating a diversifying student population, a need that often requires significant organizational learning to be effective, and school leaders are faced with a tremendous task.

Further increasing the pressure on the education system is the increased choice that students and parents have in educating their children. Private schools, charters, and other school choice options give families more freedom than ever to choose a school that they feel best meets their educational needs. This, in turn places the onus on schools to define themselves in ways that are appealing to parents, students, and other stakeholders. Yet this kind of definition of purpose and messaging may be foreign to educational leaders, many of whom lack the organizational management and leadership training that their counterparts in other sectors routinely receive. In order to meet these many demands, educational leaders may be well-served by turning to traditional management and leadership practices from outside the world of education.
Scholars of organizational development and effectiveness have long sought to uncover the key determinants of organizational success (e.g., Collins 2001; Collins & Porras, 1991, 1994; Drucker, 1974). While concerns have been raised over the difficulty of applying private sector models and practices to social sector organizations such as schools (Collins, 2005), it seems valuable to examine more closely some of the tools that can be borrowed by public educational leaders seeking to enhance their own organization’s effectiveness. A rich body of business literature, including Drucker (1974), Pearce (1982), Collins and Porras (1991, 1994), and Collins (2001, 2005), points to organizational vision and strategic planning as key elements of organizational success. Collins and Porras (1991) portray the mission statement as an outgrowth of the organizational values and vision, and Drucker (1974) and Pearce (1982) say that the mission statement is the starting point of the strategic planning process. Although organizational success from the business perspective is primarily defined in terms of financial performance, Collins (2005) defines performance relative to mission as the key determinant of success for organizations in the social sectors.

Organizations often attempt to define themselves through the development of guiding statements, commonly referred to under titles such as vision or mission statement. Guiding statements are ubiquitous, present in all types of organizations, both public and private. At their essence, guiding statements communicate the core purpose of an organization to both internal and external communities (Collins & Porras, 1991; Drucker, 1974; Pearce, 1982). Business literature is replete with studies on vision and mission statements, focusing on a variety of aspects including mission statement content (Pearce & David, 1987), processes for development (Collins &
Porras, 1991), alignment with organizational practices (Crotts, Dickson, & Ford, 2005), and financial impact of mission statements (Bart & Baetz, 1998). Often cited as benefits of mission statements are: 1) providing a definition of an organization’s purpose, 2) focusing the allocation of resources, 3) communicating values to stakeholders, and 4) influencing the behavior of stakeholders (Desmidt, Prinzie, & Decramer, 2011). Far fewer empirical studies have focused on mission statements in schools, although researchers have widely recognized a clear school mission as one of the traits of effective schools (Edmonds, 1979; Hallinger & Murphy, 1986; Kurland, Peretz, & Hertz-Lazarowitz, 2010; Lezotte, 1991).

The limited published empirical research on school mission and vision would suggest that the topic has been largely ignored in school settings. At the same time, regardless of where we look, the concept of a clear and shared vision is recognized as an important component of organizational excellence, whether in effective schools (Edmonds, 1979), organizational learning (Schwarz, 2013; Senge, 1990), distributed leadership (Collins & Porras, 1991; Harris, 2002), or as the building blocks of human and social capital (Bart, 2001; Leana & Pil, 2006). Although *mission* and *vision* are theoretically distinct constructs (Collins & Porras, 1991), in practical use the terms, as well as a variety of other titles, are often used synonymously (Cady, Wheeler, DeWolf, & Brodke, 2011). For the purpose of this paper I will defer to the individual authors, many of whom specifically use the term *mission* or *vision*. However, as I will discuss below, when it comes to such statements of purpose and direction semantics appear to be less important than content and organizational alignment to the goals or vision set forth. For that reason, when not referencing an author’s specific
terminology this paper will borrow from Allen (2001) and employ the term *guiding statements*.

Guiding statements, when used effectively, can serve to create meaning within an organization (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003) and to communicate values and direction to internal and external stakeholders (Fairhurst, Jordan, & Neuwirth, 1997). However, mission statements have not been consistently shown to impact organizational performance by themselves (Sidhu, 2003; Sufi & Lyons, 2003) and challenges related to measurement of the components and impact of vision have resulted in little quantifiable data pertaining to vision effectiveness (see Greenfield, Licata, & Johnson, 1992; Rahimnia, Moghadasian, & Mashreghi, 2011). Researchers, primarily studying business organizations, have reviewed the content of mission statements (David, 1989; Pearce & David, 1989), the effectiveness of mission statements (Bart & Baetz, 1998; Bart, Bontis, & Tagger, 2001; Sidhu, 2003), and the alignment of mission statements to organizational practices (Crotts et al., 2005) in order to better understand how mission statements influence organizational performance.

Research on the effectiveness of mission statements seems to indicate that accounting for a variety of environmental factors within the organization can lead to greater success in achieving the mission (Bart, 1997; Sidhu, 2003). The primary factor that appears to influence mission statement effectiveness is the way in which the alignment of organizational actions to the mission influences employee behavior (Bart, 1997; Crotts et al., 2005). Crotts et al. (2005) describe this idea best when they write, “Alignment is the idea of developing and making consistent the various practices, actions, policies, and procedures that managers use to communicate to employees
what is important and what is not, what has value to the organization and what does not, and what they should do and what they should not” (p. 55). The consideration of organizational alignment to the mission statement may have profound implications for research in many organizations, including schools. Given the aforementioned demands placed on school leaders, ensuring that stakeholders have a shared vision of the future and a shared mission may be a useful starting point for the work of educating children.

One of the primary ways in which schools publicly communicate their values and purpose is through the school vision and mission statements. These guiding statements are a standard component of education organizations at the national, state, regional, and local levels. School guiding statements are often required by school accrediting bodies (Accrediting Commission, 2013) and many schools develop guiding statements as a tool for defining organizational identity and direction (Stemler & Bebell, 2012). From an organizational development perspective, the articulation of a mission statement is the starting point for strategic planning and decision making (Drucker, 1974). Educational leaders may benefit from a deeper understanding of the utility of the mission statement, as well as the pitfalls associated with mission development and implementation.

The consideration of guiding statements may become particularly pertinent in the formation of a new school. Discussion around the vision and mission may, in fact, represent the organizational “starting point,” prior to any other action taken toward the opening of a school. There is little empirical work in the literature regarding the opening of new schools, but in the field of organizational development Gioia, Price,
Hamilton, and Thomas (2010) note that the time of formation of the organization offers some of the richest moments of insight into the formulation of identity, of what the organization will become. Relatively more attention in education has been paid to school reform efforts (Feldman & O’Dwyer, 2010; Malen, Croninger, Muncey, & Redmond-Jones, 2002) and the examination of processes involved in “inventing” a new school may provide useful insights for those interested in “reinventing” existing schools.

This case study was designed and conducted from the perspective of two complementary theoretical foundations: mutual learning (Schwarz, 2013) and appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2008; Mohr & Watkins, 2002). The model of mutual learning was developed by Schwarz (2013) to describe the way that effective working teams interact to create efficient and productive outcomes. The model is predicated on a change of mindset among team members, any of whom can take leadership roles within the group, where transparency, curiosity, informed choice, accountability, and compassion are valued above all else. The design context and structure of the team’s work is dependent upon all team members sharing those values and upon a shared mission, vision, and goals for the team. Although Schwarz (2013) makes no explicit claim to this effect, the mutual learning framework can be seen as a philosophical cousin to the wider field of positive organizational scholarship. The two approaches share a value for transparency, trust, compassion, and positive individual and group well-being that work in harmony. Further, the two approaches share a focus on maximizing the strengths inherent in an
organization, an approach to organizational studies that may hold great promise in school settings (Daly & Chrispeels, 2005).

When problems are large and pressures are great, it can limit the ability of individuals and organizations to find solutions to the problems (Weick, 1984). Researchers in the fields of positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) and positive organizational studies (Cameron et al., 2003; Daly & Chrispeels, 2005) point to the need to move away from traditional deficit-based inquiry and instead look to individual and organizational strengths in order to determine what is working well so that those qualities may be cultivated. Specifically in education it has been suggested that taking a strengths-based approach to problems of practice might enhance leaders’ efficacy (Daly & Chrispeels, 2005).

Daly and Chrispeels (2005) write that in order to tap the strength and potential that lies in the education system, educational leaders must commit themselves to a strengths-based approach to inquiry that allows them to “facilitate processes that examine the root causes of success that build the efficacy of all in the system, and create cultures of hope and limitless potential” (p. 20). The school vision is nothing if not a hope for some positive future outcome for the school and students. It thus creates an ideal entry point for using a strengths-based inquiry model. Positive traits, positive subjective experiences, and positive institutions are the three foundational components of positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) and to approach the inquiry into existential purpose (i.e. school mission) through the strengths based lens gives the participants, the researcher, and ultimately the audience a perspective that positive psychologists and positive organizational scholars would
suggest allows for deeper reflection and more useful outcomes. If one is familiar with the prevailing public discourse regarding the failings of public schools, then perhaps it becomes clear why a new approach to educational research is warranted.

Within this context, the chapters that follow present the background and the findings of a case study of the development and implementation of guiding statements in a new high school setting. The research questions that guide the study are:

1. What was the experience of the school staff during initial development of guiding statements in a new school?
2. In what ways did the work of developing guiding statements impact the organization once the initial development phase was complete?
3. What conditions for the development of guiding statements in a new organization do participants perceive as beneficial to the process?

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. In Chapter 2 the concept of guiding organizational statements – vision and mission – and the applications of such statements as described in the literature are discussed. Next, literature pertaining to guiding statements in schools is reviewed. The theoretical framework of *mutual learning* (Schwarz, 2013) and broader conceptual framework of organizational development are discussed, along with the theoretical frameworks of positive organizational studies appreciative inquiry. Chapter 3 describes the methodology employed in the case study whose findings are reported in Chapter 4. Chapter 4 provides data analysis pertaining to one new school’s development and implementation of guiding statements. In Chapter 5, the findings are discussed and
answers to the guiding research question are addressed. Additionally, a new perspective on how to view guiding statements within the organization is proposed. The paper closes with a discussion of the implications of the study for educational leadership and social justices, as well as potential future areas for research.
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Guiding statements have received a good deal of attention in the business literature and continue to be a popular tool for organizational management in the worlds of for-profit and not-for-profit organizations. Despite the presence of guiding statements in many schools, they have received considerably less attention in the educational literature. As will be discussed below, school vision has been described in terms of the part it plays in effective school leadership (Hallinger & Heck, 2002) and effective schooling generally (Edmonds, 1979; Lezotte, 1991). School mission statements have been the subject of limited empirical study, primarily focusing on mission as a definition of purpose (Stemler & Bebell, 2012) or the correlation between mission components and student outcomes (Weiss & Piderit, 1999).

This review of literature will begin with a discussion of guiding statements in general and mission and vision specifically. Building on that foundation, components of effective schools, organizational leadership, new schools and school reform will be briefly discussed, providing context for this study. Finally, the chapter will close with a discussion of the relevant conceptual and theoretical frames for the study and a summary of the literature review.

Guiding Organizational Statements: The Big Picture

Business and organizational development literature reflect the many titles that have been applied by organizations to describe their statements of purpose. These disparate titles include: mission statement, vision statement, creed statement, statement of purpose, statement of philosophy, statement of beliefs, statement of business principles, corporate statement, and responsibilities and obligations (David,
Regardless of the name, there is a general agreement in the literature as to the purpose of these statements. Mission statements describe the organization’s fundamental reason for being (Pearce, 1982; Pearce & David, 1987; David, 1989; Bart, 1997; Bart & Baetz, 1998) and vision statements represent the idea of a desired future state (Kantabutra, 2008). While some have ignored the title and looked for the content itself (Pearce & David, 1987; Stemler, Bebell, & Sonnabend, 2011), others have sought to focus solely on explicitly named “mission” statements (Desmidt et al., 2011) or to provide clarity around what constitutes a “mission” statement, as opposed to other statements or organizational vision or intent (Collins & Porras, 1991).

Though Collins and Porras (1991) sought to eliminate some of the “fuzziness” surrounding vision in organizations, they may not have achieved their desired level of clarity. The variety of titles used to describe similar statements of purpose that had been documented by researchers in the 1980s (David, 1989; Pearce and David, 1987) have not been consolidated. In a meta-analysis of mission statement research, Desmidt et al. (2011) noted a wide variety of names that describe similar statements of organizational mission. Vision statements, statements of purpose, value statements, and mission statements often describe the same concepts for an organization (Desmidt et al., 2011). In reviewing a preexisting data set of statements from approximately 300 American corporations, Cady et al. (2011) found 46 different titles among the 474 statements that they reviewed. However, the naming of these statements may be all together less important than their content and the processes for developing and implementing them.
An investigation into mission, vision, and other value statements seems destined to take one of two paths: strict adherence to titles or the inclusion of a variety of statements under a single umbrella. The former approach presents limitations in that many organizations, including schools, have more than one statement, often with different names. To focus exclusively on a mission statement and not examine the other stated vision or values that may influence the organization leads to a conceptual isolationism that makes it difficult to understand the impacts of any of the formal organizational statements. The latter approach risks oversimplifying or confusing the generally accepted components and purposes of the statements in an organization. That risk aside, it is the inclusionary approach that seems to offer the greatest possibility for understanding the conceptions of these statements in practice. Allen (2001) proposes the term “guiding statements” as the all-encompassing term for the variety of statements that exist in practice. The term “guiding” statements will be retained in this paper, and used synonymously with “vision,” “mission,” or “values” statements to refer to any statement of vision, mission, purpose, or values that is formally expressed and intended to describe or guide the work of the organization. Where other authors use a specific term for guiding statements, that term will be retained. The primary focus of the following sections will be vision and mission statements, which represent the two most prevalent terms in the literature and in practice.

**Vision Statements: What is our Preferred Future State?**

Despite its importance in the literature, there is not complete agreement on the meaning of vision in the literature (Kantabutra, 2012). Generally a vision considered
to be a picture of a desired future state (Kantabutra, 2008; Mumford & Strange, 2005). A vision may be held by one leader, or a vision may be shared across an organization. Interpretations of vision can vary throughout an organization. Fairhurst (1993) compares the vision to an echo in a canyon: the farther away one is from the source, the more likely one is to hear the reverberations of sound rather than the original production. In that echo the sound is changed in the same way that a vision, developed and held by a leader or group of leaders, may impact how the vision becomes reality.

Researchers’ focus on the vision construct has evolved from an early emphasis on singular charismatic leaders, to transformational leaders that were able to mobilize others to follow a vision, to the more recent recognition of shared vision within an organization (Hallinger & Heck, 2002; Kantabutra, 2008). Shared vision can come from a strong leader or can be leaderless, but in either case emphasis is placed on the connection of individuals’ values to the shared organizational future (Hallinger & Heck, 2002). As prescribed by Collins and Porras (1991), vision is an over-arching term that subsumes both a guiding philosophy and a tangible image of the future. Others (Baum, Locke, & Kirkpatrick, 1998; Kantabutra & Avery, 2010) avoid a hard definition of vision altogether, instead allowing for the term to be defined however their subjects viewed it themselves. Generally a vision is considered to be a picture of a desired future state (Licata & Harper, 2001). Kantabutra and Avery (2010) identified characteristics of an effective vision, including “conciseness, clarity, abstractness, challenge, future orientation, stability, and desirability or the ability to inspire” (p. 38). In the most complex analysis, vision is an overarching term that
encompasses purpose, mission, core values, and a rich image of the future (Collins & Porras, 1991). However it is defined, the term vision seems to be everywhere, and there is some agreement that those in the educational community would benefit from a common guiding vision (Allen, 2001; Pekarsky, 2007).

The examination of vision in organizational and educational literature is a relatively recent phenomenon (Kantabutra, 2008). Vision, however, has long been associated with charismatic leadership and has been a topic of interest in religious and political studies for many centuries (Kantabutra, 2008). Though the early conceptions of vision were often associated with one “visionary” leader, more recently an emphasis has been placed on the value of shared vision as a focal point in a networked or widely distributed organization (Kantabutra, 2008). Visionary leadership is often associated with a top-down vision, whereas in modern networked and distributed organizations a shared vision may be bottom-up. In his review of literature on vision, Kantabutra (2008) adopts the view of Mumford and Strange (2005) that vision is a cognitive construct or mental model that both frames the way in which a system is understood and guides actions within the system. Kantabutra chooses this conception of vision because it allows for an understanding of both the top-down and bottom-up conceptions of vision.

Kantabutra (2008) sought in part to understand how previously identified attributes of effective vision interplay with various vision orientations (positive/negative, top-down/bottom-up) to influence vision effectiveness. Baum et al. (1998) note seven shared attributes of vision that are articulated in vision theory: brevity, clarity, future orientation, stability, challenge, abstractness, and desirability or
ability to inspire. Senge (1990) further proposes a bipolar model of positive (change focused and aspirational) and negative (maintaining status quo) visions, a model within which the various attributes discovered by Kantabutra (2008) fit. Whereas mission statement content has received significant attention in the literature, research on vision content is relatively limited (Kantabutra, 2008). One possible reason for the limited empirical research on vision content is that content, as opposed to the vision attributes mentioned above, varies greatly from one field to the next (Kantabutra, 2008). Kantabutra (2005), for example, argues that vision content in public school settings should contain reference to student satisfaction, teacher satisfaction, and school efficiency. Such content would be unique to school settings.

An argument has been put forth that vision statements often represent nothing more than ineffective window dressing (Allen, 2001; Langeler, 1992). However, even those that offer critiques of the concept of organizational vision stop short of throwing out the concept completely. Instead, issues such as the make-up of the vision, stakeholder involvement in mission setting, and alignment to the vision are issues that are addressed in the literature. Langeler (1992) recounts his personal experience in vision development and evolution and concludes that a vision must be concrete, something that people can relate their actions to today. He cautions that, “the more abstract the vision, the less effective it is and the greater its potential for mischief” (p. 53). Allen (2001) similarly notes that one of the primary problems with vision statements is their generality and inability to link stakeholders to their daily work. Licata and Harper (2001) also caution against abstractions, insisting instead that
teachers must see how what they are asked to do connects to the vision and that it is possible to accomplish.

As with mission, the actualization of the vision depends on a variety of environmental factors (Kantabutra & Avery, 2010). These factors include communicating the vision, aligning organizational processes and systems to suit the vision, empowering others to achieve the vision, and motivating staff. Such findings are in line with the conclusions of other scholars regarding communication (Fairhurst, 1993; Fairhurst & Putnam, 2004), alignment (Collins, 2000; Crotts et al., 2005), empowerment and shared leadership (Senge, 1990), and creating meaning (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003). The common thread throughout the literature is that potentially positive outcomes related to vision are tied to the communication of the vision and the fidelity with which the organization acts on the vision.

**Mission Statements: Why Do We Exist?**

At its core, the mission statement should describe the purpose of the organization and what it wants to achieve (Bart et al., 2001; Collins & Porras, 1991; Desmidt et al., 2011). In 2010, mission and vision statements ranked as the third most popular management tool for executives worldwide and have consistently ranked as one of the top management tools over the last 20 years (Rigby & Bilodeau, 2011). Several reasons for having a mission statement have been articulated in the literature, including: defining organizational direction and purpose, focusing the allocation of resources, communicating with internal and external stakeholders, and describing the values of the organization in order to inspire organizational members (Bart & Tabone, 1997; Bartkus, Glassman, & McAfee, 2000; Desmidt et al., 2011; Klemm et al., 1991).
The content of mission statements in a variety of organizations has been one of the primary areas of study in the mission statement literature (Bart & Baetz, 1998; Cady et al., 2011; Pearce & David, 1987; Stemler & Bebell, 1999; Stemler et al., 2011; Weiss & Piderit, 1999). The analysis of mission statement content begins with a discussion of length and complexity. David and David (2003) noted the importance of having enough content to define purpose and to inspire effort, but cautioned against having a statement that is so long or detailed that it stifles creativity or alienates stakeholders. Likewise, Bartkus et al. (2000) caution that mission statements can create limitations on firms and that the mission statement should be nothing more than a reflection of where “the firm is and where it is likely to be headed” (p. 27).

In their quantitative study of mission statement content, Sufi and Lyons (2003) noted that mission statements may range from seven to 1,000 words, yet of the 30 mission statements they reviewed, the longest was 365 words. Still others argue in favor of being concise in defining mission; Starr (2012) proposes that the clarity of an eight word mission statement provides the focus that organizations need, without getting bogged down in excessive detail.

Bart and Baetz (1998) discuss ten distinct components of business mission statements that had been identified by earlier scholars. Their synthesis of the principles of mission statements that had been articulated in earlier literature led them to the conclusion that “‘purpose’ appears to be the most common dimension” (p. 824). Organizational purpose, however, encompasses a broad spectrum of ideas, which other researchers (Collins & Porras, 1991; David, 1989; Pearce, 1982) have sought to define.
There is an important distinction to be made between content and components of a mission statement. Sidhu (2003) noted that there was some disagreement among scholars as to the concept of mission, and that a weakness of previous research was that the identification of different mission content categories by researchers studying different industries made cross-study comparisons difficult. While noting that some of the differences were semantic, he distilled from the previous research four core components of mission statements that should be present regardless of the type of organization: vision, business domain, competencies, and values. According to Sidhu (2003), vision is what is aspired to in the future; the business domain is the competitive arena in which the vision is to be achieved; competencies are the unique strengths that will be employed to realize the vision in that domain; and the values are the fundamental organizational principles, ethics and behaviors. This framework of mission statement components may help to answer the questions posed by David (1989) regarding the comparison of homogenous groups. While the explicit concepts present in mission statements may vary from business to education, the components of an effective mission statement could presumably be the same.

A number of studies have sought to evaluate the quality of mission statements by determining whether certain concepts were present in statements or not (Cady et al., 2011; Pearce & David, 1987; Stemler et al. 2011; Weiss & Piderit, 1999). Pearce and David (1987) were the first to study mission statement content as it relates to corporate financial performance. They examined the mission statements of 61 Fortune 500 companies to determine which mission statement components most correlated with a firm’s financial performance. Findings suggest that corporate philosophy, self-
concept, and public image are important components of a corporate mission statement. Cady et al. (2011) looked at mission statements in business organizations with the purpose of examining the alignment of mission statements to practice in business settings. Using content analysis, they identified 122 distinct concepts present in the 474 mission statements that they examined. While some of the difference may be semantic, the disparity between Pearce and David’s (1987) eight components and Cady et al.’s 122 concepts is startling and perhaps signals the need for researchers to look at universally applicable components of mission statements, as proposed by Sidhu (2003).

**Application of Guiding Statements**

Early research on mission statements sought to define the concept of mission and did so through the lens of organizational strategic planning. Pearce (1982) described the development of the mission statement as a critical tool in the development and implementation of corporate strategy. In subsequent research, the mission statement was again presented as the first step in the strategic planning process (David, 1989; Pearce & David, 1987). The use of the mission statement as the cornerstone of the strategic planning process helps stakeholders to understand the values and priorities of the organization (Pearce, 1982), while minimizing conflict around organizational direction (David, 1989).

Collins and Porras (1991) were among the first to articulate a complete framework for defining an organization’s mission. Such a framework, they argue, begins with a guiding philosophy of core beliefs and values which can be translated into a statement of purpose, and in turn a mission statement (Collins & Porras, 1991).
Similarly, attempts have been made to clarify the differences between mission statements and strategic intent. Bart and Baetz (1998) argue that mission is a part of strategic intent, but not the whole thing. Strategic intent goes beyond the defining of purpose and outcomes and articulates how the organization is going to achieve its purpose (Bart & Baetz, 1998). In other words, mission statements are used to define the purpose of the organization and strategic intent is the roadmap for how to fulfill that purpose. The interplay between defining mission and strategic planning may be one of the important considerations in understanding the value of mission statements in organizational performance (Davis, Ruhe, Lee, & Rajadhyaksha, 2007).

In building upon his initial work Collins (2001, 2005) examined the characteristics of high performing organizations. In the best-selling business book *Good to Great* (2001), Collins and his research team identified the factors that they felt separated “good” companies from “great” companies. Great companies were defined on the basis of their ability to outperform the market by three times over a period of at least fifteen years. Although Collins did not specifically examine the utility of the mission statement, one of his primary findings was that the “great” companies operated based on what the team termed the *hedgehog concept*. The hedgehog, he explains, is a simple creature that understands how to protect itself in one way: by rolling into a ball. The fox, while cunning and capable of devising a variety of attacks on the hedgehog, is defeated every time by the hedgehog’s understanding of one basic strategy. Collins argues that companies work in much the same way; they are either foxes or hedgehogs. Collins writes that, “The good-to-great companies translated that understanding into a simple, crystalline concept that guided
all their efforts – hence the term *Hedgehog Concept*” (p. 95). Regardless of the name, this idea of organizational focus points to what has been termed by others to be the mission of the organization.

Collins (2005) further developed the *Good to Great* framework by looking away from for-profit enterprises and examining social sector organizations, including schools. The *hedgehog concept* was again deemed to be a critical component of a great organization. Additionally, Collins points out that it is performance relative to achieving the mission that defines the success of organizations in the social sectors. This is in contrast to business firms that define success in terms of financial performance. A recognition that social sector organizations should be evaluated on the basis of progress relative to their mission points to the utility of the mission statement in defining the organization’s core purpose.

**Effectiveness of Guiding Statements**

Although mission statement content has received a good deal of attention in the literature, the effectiveness of the mission statement may depend more on how an organization develops and operationalizes it than on the content itself. Researchers have examined the impact of the mission statement on organizations through a variety of lenses, including the creation of meaning (Fairhurst et al., 1997), the readability of mission statements (Sattari, Pitt, & Caruana, 2011), the building of human intellectual capital (Bart, 2001), organizational social capital (Leana & Pil, 2006), and employee engagement (Bart et al., 2001). Researchers have widely noted that merely having a mission statement does not lead to an increase in organizational performance (Bart & Baetz, 1998; Pearce, 1982; Sufi & Lyons, 2003). Primary among the concerns in the
business literature, however, is the relationship between the mission statement and a firm’s financial performance.

In a meta-analysis of 20 years of research on the value of mission statements, Desmidt et al. (2011) identified two primary subgroups of studies: static focus and process focus. Included in the static focus group of studies are those that looked at the presence of mission statement, mission statement components, and the quality of mission statement. Such static components may ignore the complex environment in which mission statements are employed. Process focus components include mission statement drivers, mission statement development process, attitude toward mission statement, and mission statement-organizational alignment (Desmidt et al., 2011). It is precisely these active components of the implementation of mission statements that may determine the success or failure of an organization relative to its stated mission.

In presenting what they pointed out was the first empirical study to look at the correlation between mission statement content and firm performance, Pearce and David (1987) argued that it was unrealistic to expect a direct correlation between mission statement content and firm performance. Instead, they pointed to the fact that the presence of a quality mission statement may be an indication of a more effective strategic planning process, which could be expected to lead to improved organizational performance. The researchers examined 61 mission statements from Fortune 500 companies and concluded that a more comprehensive mission statement, particularly one that addresses corporate philosophy, self-concept, and public image, was positively associated with a company’s financial performance. This would represent a static focus finding and both the authors note that further research needs to
be process focused in order to better understand the factors that impact the mission statement when it is operationalized.

A process focused understanding of organizational mission statements can be seen in the early mission statement literature (e.g., Drucker, 1974). The development or revision of a mission statement as the starting point of the strategic planning process may present an important perspective on the relationship between mission statements and organizational performance. Drucker (1974) stated that defining the mission and purpose of the organization is the only thing that allows the organization, “to set objectives, to develop strategies, to concentrate its resources, and to go to work” (p. 94). The mission statement-strategic planning link allows researchers to better understand how the mission statement is operationalized within the organization. For example, Fiegenbaum, Hart, and Schendel (1996) proposed the Strategic Reference Point (SRP) theory to explain the effect of articulating clear strategic points of reference relative to the achievement of organizational objectives. The SRP forms the point of reference and focus for organizational action. Fiegenbaum et al. (1996) theorize that consensus about and alignment to the SRP create more effective organizational performance and that, “The demands placed on the organization for improvement, change, or performance by the reference points will align, producing a mission and vision with integrity” (p. 230). This idea points to the dynamic interplay between mission, strategy, and action. Further, Fiegenbaum et al. (1996) argue that managers must regularly readjust organizational reference points in order to push the organization toward growth and learning. Similarly, Sidhu (2003) concluded that that the process of revisiting and revising the mission statement led to
increased benefits of the mission statement relative to organizational performance. The mission statement in this sense may be viewed as a powerful reference point for all the work of the organization.

Sidhu (2003) sought to account for the process of mission statement development and revision as well as content in his review of multimedia firms. While others had examined presence of mission statement components in order to judge the comprehensiveness of the statements (David & David, 2003; Pearce & David, 1987), Sidhu also accounted for process variables by giving firms additional credit if their statement had been reviewed more than the average number of times for all of the firms in the study. Sidhu (2003) found that greater comprehensiveness of the mission statement, when accounting for the process variable, did correlate with stronger organizational performance. Perhaps it is the consideration of process that led Sidhu to a conclusion that others (e.g., Sufi & Lyons, 2003) did not find with regard to the relationship between mission statements and performance.

Bart et al. (2001) found these various components of mission development and implementation to be so critical to the success of the mission that they developed a model to test the impact of mission statements on organizational performance. With the belief that mission impact on firm performance was more indirect than direct, a partial least squares (PLS) model was developed, which accounts not only for mission statement content, but also the intermediate outcomes of alignment, satisfaction, behavior, and commitment to the mission. A PLS model is a type of causal model that is designed to enable researchers and managers to examine the impact of these variables on organizational performance (Bart et al., 2001). Findings show the
importance of managing intermediate variables in order to get the maximum impact of mission on performance. Specifically, the commitment to the mission and the organizational alignment to the mission were shown to have the strongest correlation with employee behavior, the variable that has the most impact on organizational performance (Bart et al., 2001).

Although Bart et al. (2001) identified a number of intermediate variables that affect the impact of mission statements, organizational alignment with the mission statement is perhaps the most critical component to the accomplishment of the mission (Bart & Tabone, 1997; Collins, 2000, 2001; Crotts et al., 2005). Crotts et al. (2005) emphasized that misalignment creates confusion, while alignment gives members of the organization a clear path to success. Alignment is defined as, “the idea of developing and making consistent the various practices, actions, policies, and procedures that managers use to communicate to employees what is important and what is not, what has value to the organization and what does not and what they should do and what they should not” (Crotts et al., 2005, p. 55). In other words, mission alignment involves the focusing of the organization’s energies and actions around a common purpose to achieve a common goal. Additionally, this definition of alignment supports the finding that the degree to which a mission statement influences employee behavior may be the key link between mission and organizational performance (Bart & Baetz, 1998; Kurland et al., 2010).

Crotts and his colleagues proposed a mission alignment audit process as a means for ensuring alignment of organizational actions with mission. Specifically, policies practices, and procedures should be aligned with the mission in order to
maximize the potential for achieving the mission (Crotts et al., 2005). Like Collins and Porras (1991) before, Crotts encourages leaders in organizations to focus on “what the mission really means in terms of desired outcomes” (p. 58). For Collins and Porras, the focus on what the mission means is the vivid description of what the world will look like once the mission is accomplished. Measurements of those outcomes must be then put in place in order for the organization to know if it is achieving the mission (Crotts et al., 2005).

It has been noted that leaders often spend more time looking at mission than alignment, when they should be doing the opposite (Cady et al., 2011; Collins, 2000). The mission audit process proposed by Crotts et al. (2005) may help organizational leaders to shift their focus to alignment. Interviews with school principals indicated that they welcomed the opportunity for such a shift in focus and saw this as an important benefit of the mission revision process (Stemler et al., 2011). Since little empirical evidence exists demonstrating the direct connection between mission statements and organizational performance (Bart & Baetz, 1998), it may matter more how an organization aligns itself with the mission it has set forth. Put differently, actions may matter more than words.

The audience to whom the mission statement is directed is also a key consideration relating to the effectiveness of the mission. As noted, Bart et al. (2001) found that the degree to which the mission influenced the behavior of internal stakeholders had the most impact on performance. However, mission statements have been said to have two primary purposes: external messaging and internal motivation (Pearce, 1982; Klemm et al., 1991). Klemm et al. (1991) surveyed 59 large industrial
and financial firms in the United Kingdom to examine the question of audience and found that mission statements primarily served two functions, both internal to the organization. In examining survey results from top managers, the researchers concluded that mission statements were used to communicate to staff and to assert leadership. External communication was only a secondary concern (Klemm et al., 1991).

Like mission statements, vision statements are unlikely to have an impact on organizations without regular reinforcement and alignment of organizational actions to the statement (Allen, 2001; Jick, 2001). The alignment to a new vision requires “new processes, new measures, new behaviors, new mindsets, new deliverables of one kind or another” (Jick, 2001, p. 37). Leaders and other stakeholders invested in the mission must consistently “walk the talk” in such a situation, otherwise the former ways of acting and interacting within the organization will prevail. Collins (2000) notes that managers spend the majority of their time on articulation of the vision and only a portion on organizational alignment to that vision, when in fact they should do just the opposite. Organizational alignment to vision may prove to be difficult to measure, although Fairhurst (1993) offered one potential avenue.

The communications work by Fairhurst (1993) and Fairhurst et al. (1997) present interesting insights into how members within an organization communicate around and make meaning of mission and vision. Fairhurst (1993) paid particular attention to the communicative reinforcement surrounding a new vision implementation. In a study of the communicative patterns used along with the implementation of a Total Quality (TQ) vision, Fairhurst (1993) found that the frames
used to communicate the vision, both at high and low levels within the organization, made a significant impact on the effective adoption of the new vision. According to Fairhurst, it was particularly at the lower levels of the organization that the day-to-day culture of the organization was created, with or without the vision that leadership sought. She also found that the frames with which stakeholders communicate about vision impact the depth of adoption of the vision. Allen (2001) similarly advises that once the guiding statement is in place, schools must engage in regular dialogue to reinforce and deepen their meaning. Without reinforcement via action and regular communication, the guiding statements are more likely to be pushed aside and ignored (Allen, 2001; Collins, 2000; Fairhurst, 1993). Such findings demonstrate the need for leaders to attend to patterns and content of communication with regard to guiding statements.

In order to improve alignment and mission statement effectiveness, the mission statement and its meaning should be well-managed by organizational leaders. Fairhurst used the communicative frames identified in her 1993 study to develop the Management of Meaning Scale, a survey instrument that asks organizational members to reflect on the frequency with which they communicate about different aspects of the mission (Fairhurst et al., 1997). Primary among the findings was that a lack of communication about mission and in the terms of the mission is a key problem with mission implementation. The authors noted that “in the absence of frequent communication of mission, vision, and values, an organization’s identity cannot take hold” (p. 245). Emphasizing the point, they continued, “In the absence of a strong
organizational identity, the countervailing forces of the environment are likely to prevail” (p. 245).

Fairhurst et al. (1997) additionally note that a leadership orientation involves creating organizational focus. The focal points chosen and the rationale for their attainment become important to function of effective leadership (Fairhurst et al., 1997). The mission may play an important role in this process. Wright (2007) notes that while public sector employees are often motivated by an intrinsic connection to the importance of their work, such motivation should be nurtured and not taken for granted. One of the key components of this nurturing process is communication, through which leaders articulate how employee performance contributes to the achievement of the mission.

Wright (2007) developed and tested a theoretical model of mission impact on employee motivation in public sector organizations. The model shows that mission valence (the perceived importance of organizational goals) has an indirect effect on motivation by positively influencing perceptions of job importance. Given that employees in public sector jobs are more likely than their private sector counterparts to be motivated by the intrinsic reward of public service (Wright, 2007), communication of the mission helps to reinforce this motivation as employees are reminded of the purpose for which they are working.

Fairhurst et al. (1997) and Wright’s (2007) findings with regard to communication and reinforcement of mission are significant in terms of the ongoing impact of the mission over time. Their ideas intersect with findings in other fields and are particularly highlighted in the areas of attention (Macknik & Martinez-Conde,
Neuroscientists have sought for some time to understand the nature of human attention. Though a thorough understanding of the nature and processes of attention has proven allusive, scientists have begun to understand many of the features of human attention. For example, it is understood that humans have a “spotlight of attention.” This is to say that when one attends to something, there is a focus, like a spotlight, that, while illuminating some things, obscures others. What falls out of the stream of light cannot be seen clearly. Macknik and Martinez-Conde (2010) provide an entertaining account of the ways in which magicians exploit this fact to deceive audiences. Another characteristic of attention is that which is termed “joint attention.” Joint attention refers to the ability humans to be drawn to a mutual point of attention. A simple shift in gaze can bring the attention of two people together at some point. Likewise, the subtle physical gesture of a “head fake” as in soccer can, by exploiting the tendency toward joint attention, deceive a defender and create a goal scoring opportunity.

In organizational practice, guiding statements provide potential ways of focusing the spotlight of attention and creating joint attention points. Conversely, these two components of attention can be misused or even abused, diverting attention from the target, such as the magician moving the audience to focus on his right hand while pulling a prop from his pocket with the left, or the defender falling for the head fake that pulls him away from the goal, the true target. As Fiegenbaum et al. (1996) put it: “By signaling organizational priorities and overall direction, top managers, whether knowingly or not, focus the attention of organizational members on particular goal and objectives; in so doing, they define the strategic reference point for the firm”
(p. 220). The key phrase in the previous passage is “knowingly or not.” Often managers create a diversion from the truly important objectives of the organization, by acting in ways that draw organizational members’ attention away from the stated mission of the organization. This kind of distraction (or misalignment, as discussed above) is not uncommon, and has the same illusory effect on the organization that the magician creates for his audience; while the members’ attention is focused on the right hand, the left is doing what it pleases. Repeated communication in the specific terms of the guiding statements may help organizations avoid this shortcoming.

Fiegenbaum et al. (1996) argue that it is important for successful organizations to be deliberate in where they shine the spotlight, rather than passive and unaware. The spotlight should shine on what is termed the strategic reference point, which in turn should grow out of the organization’s stated mission. In this way, the joint attention of all of the organization’s members can be focused on the same goal.

Communication of mission in terms of its meaning to employees is the attention-creating tool that managers can use to increase employee commitment and motivation, and move the organization in the direction of the mission (Fairhurst et al., 1997; Wright, 2007). Without such communication the mission may be buried and forgotten. Worse yet, it can be left on the shelf to collect dust, a constant reminder of what the organization should be (but is not) doing.

**Guiding Statements in School Settings**

The study of guiding statements in school settings has generally presented itself in terms of the same dichotomies present in the business literature: mission and vision, static and process, prescriptive and empirical. As in the business literature the
focus of school-based literature is on mission and vision statements. The aforementioned naming issues highlighted in the works of Cady et al. (2011) and Desmidt et al. (2011) are not present in the educational literature. Like the business literature, there is in the educational literature a disproportionate number of static-focused works and recognition of the need for a more process-focused understanding of guiding statements. Finally, while research on mission statements in schools is limited, there exists a relatively larger body of work pertaining to vision in schools. Much of this work, however, is prescriptive in nature, and relatively few empirical studies can be found.

School vision is a concept that has its roots in the philosophy of education (Pekarsky, 1997). Pekarsky (1997), however, makes an important contribution to the discussion of school mission in his distinction between what he terms *existential* and *institutional* vision. In this conception, the *existential* vision refers to the kind of student that the school hopes to produce, whereas the *institutional* vision refers to the kind of organization that the school seeks to be. Of primary importance to Pekarsky is the *existential* vision and the qualities that a student is to possess as a result of the education received at the school. School leaders may also benefit from understanding this concept. The kind of vision that produces a desired organizational outcome may be quite different than that which produces a desired student outcome, though the two are probably not mutually exclusive.

Pekarsky (2000) further explains the role that a vision for the future has in creating meaning in the present. He writes that, “having in mind some desirable future, an end-in-view, is itself a means of making the present meaningful” (p. 22).
Such a philosophical view is echoed in the mission and vision literature (e.g., Bart, 1997; Collins & Porras, 1991; Pearce, 1982) with regard to the role of mission and vision in the organization. Guiding statements, it turns out, can be just that; they can give the organization guidance in understanding what the organization is, what it does best, how it does it, and where it is going in the future. This kind of meaning making may be critical to organizational success, and absent an explicit articulation of purpose and future direction organizational members may be left to figure out for themselves where they are going and how to get there (Crotts et al., 2005; Fairhurst et al., 1997).

Hallinger and Heck (2002) focus on the importance of vision, values, and goals in effective school leadership and school improvement efforts. Like others (e.g., Collins & Porras, 1991), they argue that the concepts are often confused in scholarship and practice. For Hallinger and Heck, the important characteristics of vision are its inspirational nature and its inability to be subjected to measurement. A personal vision, they write, “refers to the values that underlie a leader’s view of the world” (p. 9). The personal vision of the leader, if not translated into effective school- or organization-wide action, will not be sufficient for organizational success.

Kurland et al. (2010) studied leadership style and organizational learning through the lens of school vision. They found that transformational leaders that are able to clearly articulate a school vision are able to motivate staff to act in ways that lead to school improvement. This finding mirrors the finding of Bart et al. (2001) that a mission statement’s connection to changes in employee behavior was a key factor in organizational success. Components of effective vision include task-orientation, inspiration-orientation, and communication-orientation (Kurland et al., 2010).
Although semantically distinct, these components are not entirely different than what Collins and Porras (1991) articulated in their work. The point is that when these factors come together, a school will have a vision that leads to action.

Licata and Harper (2001) examined the relationship between organizational health and the relative strength of the school vision. The value of the vision in a healthy organization was found to be particularly strongly linked to strong academic emphasis and institutional integrity. The researchers describe what they term a “robust” vision as one that “dramatizes the discrepancy between the challenges facing the school in the present and a more desirable future” (p. 5). The authors note that teachers who share a robust school vision were more likely to act to achieve the mission and less likely to be derailed by some of the more tedious aspects of the job. These findings reinforce the views of others (Allen, 2001; Langeler, 1992) who believe that a mission must be concrete and attainable in order to be effective.

In the kindergarten to grade 12 (K-12) school setting, several studies have identified common content themes of school mission statements (Stemler & Bebell, 1999; Stemler et al., 2011; Weiss & Piderit, 1999). Weiss and Piderit (1999) examined the content of mission statements taken from a large sample of public schools in Michigan. Their research identified 11 common themes and used those themes as a basis to compare school performance based on standardized assessment measures. The most commonly found themes in the mission statements reviewed by Weiss and Piderit (1999) were academic learning, self-esteem; social skills, community involvement, and preparation for future life outcomes.
Stemler and his colleagues completed two separate content analyses of school mission statements. Stemler and Bebell (1999) studied 267 mission statements that they divided into four clusters according to educational level: elementary schools, middle schools, secondary schools, and post-secondary schools. They identified ten common themes and tracked the progression of emphasis in school mission statements as students aged. The four most common themes identified by Stemler and Bebell (1999) were emotional, academic, citizenship, and faculty concerns (i.e. working conditions or staff development). Their analysis indicated a greater emphasis on emotional development for young students and cognitive development for older students.

Using the same content analysis methodology that they had developed in their prior work, Stemler et al. (2011) focused on mission statements in K-12 schools in the United States. In their 2011 study they sought to identify common themes and examine regional differences in school missions, seeking to better understand the purpose of schooling in the United States. While Weiss and Piderit (1999) identified 11 common themes in school mission statements in two Michigan districts, Stemler et al. (2011) examined schools across a wider geographic spectrum. Although content and emphasis of mission statements varied somewhat across the 10 states sampled, the three most common themes in secondary school mission statements were strikingly similar to those found by Weiss and Piderit (1999): (a) civic development, (b) emotional development, and (c) cognitive development (Stemler et al., 2011). Stemler et al. (2011) noted that reforms in educational policy had increased the homogeneity of school mission statements, yet they still found essentially the same common themes
in mission statements that Weiss and Piderit (1999) found more than a decade earlier, prior to the adoption of No Child Left Behind. In fact, a greater number of the statements (87%) studied by Weiss and Piderit (1999) specified academic learning than did the statements (53%) studied by Stemler et al. (2011), an interesting fact considering the emphasis placed on standardized academic achievement in the current era of accountability.

There are noteworthy differences in the findings between business organizations and schools with regard to mission statement content. Collins and Porras (1991) argued that purpose (and thereby mission) is related to motivation, not differentiation from other organizations. In spite of this, businesses may find it necessary to differentiate themselves from competitors, leading to the large number of distinct themes identified by Cady et al. (2011). Conversely, schools may appear to have more common aims: the cognitive, social, and civic development of students. However, mission statements in schools are generally produced by local stakeholders who may, from region to region and school to school, have differing ideas of the purpose of the school (Stemler et al., 2011). Although there are far fewer common themes have been identified in public school mission statements compared to business mission statements, they can still be used to differentiate the purpose of the schools (Stemler & Bebell, 2012). Examining mission statements solely in terms of defining purpose, however, ignores the important question of effectiveness of mission statements relative to organizational performance.
Applications and Effectiveness in Schools

Stemler et al. (2011) provide some insight into the views of school principals with regard to mission revision and alignment. In the qualitative portion of their study, the researchers interviewed a random sample of 14 high school principals from the schools studied. While half of the principals cited the demands of accrediting agencies as the reason for revisiting and revising the mission statement, the remaining half claimed to use the revision process as a means to examine the alignment of vision and practice. Though this study represents a small sample of school principals, the findings indicated that some school leaders are concerned with mission alignment. In fact, a full 86% of principals interviewed felt as though there was alignment between vision and practice at their school (Stemler et al., 2011). This level of organizational alignment to mission would seem to be inconsistent with the findings of Crotts et al. (2005) and Fairhurst et al. (1997) and may present an area for further investigation in the school setting.

Mission statement effectiveness in the university setting has received some attention in the literature (e.g., Davis et al., 2007; Morphew & Hartley, 2006). In a study of mission statement content and interviews of senior business students from 16 religious and secular universities, Davis et al. (2007) found that mission statement content did correlate with institutional outcomes, specifically with regard to ethical components of mission statements. The authors found that graduates of religiously affiliated schools placed a higher emphasis on ethical components of their education, the same qualities that were more frequently emphasized in the mission statements of religious schools. This finding echoes Morphew and Hartley’s (2006) conclusion that
higher education mission content differs by institutional type (public vs. private).

Davis et al. (2007) question whether a stronger ethical orientation among students represents the development by the school of these ethical qualities in students or if students who have already developed these qualities are attracted to religious schools that emphasize the ethical component of education. This point may be irrelevant if the religious schools, in fact, are meeting their mission by graduating students who possess qualities that are in line with the guiding statements of the university (Davis et al., 2007). The question of alignment of action to the stated values of the organization is a key question in understanding the effectiveness of guiding statements.

The audit process may be the key to assessing mission alignment, as well as countering the primary arguments against mission statements. The most common argument against mission statements is that they appear to be inauthentic (Bart, 1997; Pearce, 1982). There is often a perceived disconnect between the stated purpose or values of the organization and what the organization actually does. Further, the lack of consistent, conclusive empirical evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of mission statements leads some to doubt their utility (Bart, 1997; Sufi & Lyons, 2003). Stemler et al., (2011) specifically sought to address the two primary criticisms against mission statements in schools. The first is that school mission statements do not actually say anything of value, and the second is that there is a lack of empirical data on how mission statements impact the day-to-day operation of schools. Stemler et al. (2011) tried the first criticism by using school mission statements to define the purpose of schooling, but noted that often only one component of school mission (cognitive development) is being measured. The researchers countered the second
argument about the impact of mission statements by interviewing principals and discovering that school leaders found mission statements to be a useful management tool.

Like Weiss and Piderit (1999), Stemler et al. (2011) attempted to tie mission statements to measurable outcomes in schools. For Stemler et al. (2011), it was the correlation between mission content and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). They found telling differences between mission statements in schools that met AYP and those that did not. Schools not meeting AYP tended to more often emphasize vocational preparation, community involvement, and creating a safe environment (Stemler et al., 2011). Whether this represents an issue of alignment of mission to practice is unknown, again largely because the evaluative measure – AYP – is an assessment of what the researchers termed cognitive development. Evaluation of the achievement of other components of the mission was either not available or not reported. The question of mission alignment in schools remains an open one.

In the K-12 school setting, the core mission statement literature points to an examination of the content of mission statements in order to gain insight into the purpose of the schooling (Stemler & Bebell, 1999, 2012; Stemler et al., 2011) or a correlation between mission statement content and school performance (Stemler et al., 2011; Weiss & Piderit, 1999). While these two lines of inquiry present interesting questions, they overlook the findings from the business literature described above (e.g., Bart & Baetz, 1998) with regard to how a mission statement is actually used within an organization. The questions of development process and implementation specific to mission statements in schools seem to have been largely ignored, with the
singular exception of the principal interviews conducted by Stemler et al. (2011). This is not to say, however, that educational research has ignored the concepts of mission and vision entirely in terms of the practice of school leadership.

**Effective Schools**

In the school setting, the idea of articulating a clear school mission first came from the Effective Schools movement. The Effective Schools movement was born in the 1970’s to address the debate over whether schools make any difference in children’s education. The Coleman Report (Coleman et al., 1966) and other research from the late 1960’s and early 1970’s (e.g., Jencks, 1972) had concluded that student background had a much greater impact on student outcomes than did schooling. Researchers such as Edmonds (1979), sought to uncover and highlight the value of schooling, particularly for poor students, through a search for schools that were effective in educating these students. Although the definitions and characteristics of effective schools vary, a universal component of effective schools is that they have a clear mission centered on the instruction of basic skills (Jansen, 1995).

Edmonds (1979) first identified the need to clearly articulate the school’s vision as a part of the effective schools framework. Specifically, Edmonds noted that effective schools, regardless of style, shared the characteristics of strong leadership, high expectations, and focus on the acquisition of basic skills. In other words, effective schools have a clear mission that is characterized by these three qualities. Effective schools know what their purpose is and align their work to that mission. Lezotte (1991) bridged the gap between what he terms the “first generation” and “second generation” correlates of effective schools. Not only do the correlates
themselves represent a vision for what a school should be, but the importance of a clear school mission is reinforced.

While Edmonds (1979) frames his discussion in terms of the societal imperative to achieve educational equity, his point speaks to the importance of a clearly defined mission for schools and alignment of procedures to that mission in any setting. Later research on effective schools made similar findings. Hallinger and Murphy (1986) examined the social context of effective schools, concluding that a clear academic mission and focus, combined with school practices around that mission created effective schools for all students. Regardless of the socioeconomic status of the schools, staff in effective schools cited academic achievement as the most important school goal and there was high consensus about school mission at these schools (Hallinger & Murphy, 1986). Just as Stemler et al. (2011) found differing foci in school missions, Hallinger and Murphy (1986) found strategic and operational differences in high-socioeconomic status (SES) and low-SES schools. One thing that did not change was the school focus and alignment with the mission that led to effective schooling.

Although not all school effectiveness factors have been found to be generalizable to all school settings, a common theme connected with school effectiveness throughout the literature is the definition of a clear school mission (Edmonds, 1979; Hallinger & Murphy, 1986; Kurland et al., 2010). Mission and vision statements help to create the focus around which effective schooling can take place. Hallinger and Murphy (1986) investigated seven factors of effective schools that were strongly influenced by social context. In a confirmation of what Edmonds
(1979) first pointed out several years earlier, it was found that a clear focus on instruction was a defining component of the mission of effective schools.

In spite of the emphasis of vision in the Effective Schools literature, there is a lack of empirical research specifically relating a school’s statement of mission or vision to student outcomes. Even the Effective Schools framework has come under attack due in part to the narrowness of its focus on basic skills and the lack of generalizability of findings (Jansen, 1995). The correlation that effective schools scholars have noted, namely that effective schools have a clearly articulated mission, does little to answer the many questions raised in the business literature regarding the development and operationalizing processes of mission statements in organizations. Stemler and Bebell (1999) and Stemler et al. (2011) have given scholars a starting point to examine the purpose of schools by way of mission statements, but they note that school effectiveness is often measured on only one component commonly found in school mission statements: cognitive development. Therefore, if, as Collins (2005) argues, a school’s success is measured relative to its mission, then further empirical research is needed to examine the potential link between mission statement and organizational effectiveness.

Organizational Leadership

The topic of guiding statements in organizations generally implies some degree of formal leadership, though it does not depend on a specific model of formal leadership. Even a leaderless organization requires rules and norms that are enforced by members distributed throughout the organization (Brafman & Beckstrom, 2006), creating a type of distributed leadership structure where the actions of those many
leaders take on great importance. However, those that have studied guiding statements generally do so within the context of formal organizational and leadership structures; the point is for leaders to use guiding statements in a way that motivates others to buy-in to the purpose and aims of the organization. Several components of organizational leadership related to the development and use of guiding statements will be discussed below.

**Purpose.** The development of a purpose statement or mission statement is intended to define why an organization exists (Bart et al., 2001; Collins & Porras, 1991; Desmidt et al., 2011). The mission statement is discussed in the literature as the basis for strategic planning (Drucker, 1974; Pearce, 1982), a communication tool (Bartkus et al., 2000), and a tool for creating meaning (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003). Sinek (2009a) describes the role that leadership plays in motivating action by defining *why* an organization does what it does rather than defining *what* an organization does. The distinction between *why* and *what* is critical to Sinek (2009a) because, “When an organization defines itself by WHAT it does, that’s all it will ever be able to do” (p. 45). In contrast, articulating why an organization exists inspires others to connect themselves to the aims of the organization. Why an organization does something is a reflection of its beliefs and its purpose. “We are drawn to leaders and organizations that are good at communicating what they believe. Their ability to make us feel like we belong...is part of what gives them the ability to inspire us” (Sinek, 2009a, p. 55). Sinek (2009a) advises that leaders start with articulating a clear purpose, from which questions of how and what actions are taken will flow.
Organizational learning. Scholars have frequently discussed the role that learning plays in creating effective organizations (Argyris & Schön, 1978; Heifetz, 1994; Senge, 1990). Heifetz (1994) conceptualizes the need for organizational learning in terms of technical or adaptive work. Technical work is that work for which there a solution exists that can be applied to solve a problem. The technical solution requires a certain known expertise and a trust in the solution being applied. In contrast, adaptive work is that work for which answers are unknown and new learning is required. Adaptive problems, according to Heifetz (1994), are those for which “no adequate response has yet been developed” (p. 72). He writes, “Adaptive work requires a change in values, beliefs, or behavior. The exposure and orchestration of the conflict...provide the leverage for mobilizing people to learn in new ways. In this view, getting people to clarify what matters most, in what balance, with what trade-offs, becomes a central task” (p. 22). Leaders may be able to use guiding statements as the vehicle to define and communicate what matters most and in turn provide a reference point for the ongoing trade-offs between competing demands.

In Heifetz’s (1994) view, exposing the situation and encouraging adaptive work to take place requires effective and responsive leadership. A part of that leadership is the creation of a holding environment within which adaptive work can take place. “A holding environment consists of any relationship in which one party has the power to hold the attention of another party and facilitate adaptive work” (Heifetz, 1994, pp.104-105). The holding environment can be viewed as the time and space within which the guiding statements are developed, revisited, and reflected upon. Attention and focus are limited resources and the ability of a leader to
effectively manage those resources has significant impacts on outcomes (Heifetz, 1994; Macknik & Martinez-Conde, 2010).

The ideas (technical vs. adaptive learning, underlying values, holding environment) described by Heifetz (1994) resemble those formulated by Argyris and Schön (1978), which were presented in terms of single-loop and double-loop learning processes. Single-loop learning is like problem solving; it involves improving the system as it exists. Double-loop learning involves questioning the underlying assumptions behind why the organization does what it does. Double loop learning requires a test of values and goals that involves a reexamination of the guiding principles of the organization (Argyris & Schön, 1978). Like adaptive work (Heifetz, 1994), double-loop learning requires space and time for it to take place.

Senge (1990) noted that there are challenges implicit in creating spaces reflective work similar to the holding environment (Heifetz, 1994). Primarily, there is a challenge of connecting reflection and action. Senge (1990) cites communication from a consultant at Intel, the computer hardware manufacturer, who discussed this disconnect between reflection and action. The consultant reported, “‘Reflection gets a bad rap in business because we don’t have the discipline to connect reflection and action...Reflection that [isn’t] connected to action is what [makes] people think they don’t have time for this’” (Senge, 1990, p. 288). This is the same challenge of leadership discussed by others (Heifetz, 1994; Pfeffer & Sutton, 2000). A gap between words and action is also one of the primary arguments against the value of guiding statements as a leadership tool (Allen, 2001; Bart 1997; Pearce, 1982).
Leadership and organizational development. Although the components of leaderless organizations have received recent attention (e.g., Brafman & Beckstrom, 2006), the focus on organizational development in the literature continues to be on the role of formal leadership. Schwarz (2013), who builds his mutual learning model around shared accountability, stresses the importance of leadership in the design and implementation of the structures that support such shared leadership. Schwarz (2013), like others before him (e.g., Senge, 1990, see p. 321), compares this work to the role of a ship’s architect:

I’d argue that the most influential role is the ship’s architect – the designer. How the architect designs the ship determines how fast and how far it can travel, how quickly it can turn, and how well it can protect its crew while withstanding rough seas. Of course, the talent of the crew and the way they work together determine how close they can get to reaching the limits of the design. But no matter how good the captain and crew are, they can’t perform better than the ship’s design allows. (p. 143)

The implication is that the role of the architect is played by the formal leader in designing a team. “It’s similar with your team. How you design – or redesign – your team determines the limits of its performance” (Schwarz, 2013, p. 144). Though leadership and accountability are shared in the actions of the organization, it is the formal leader that bears the responsibility for creating the structure upon which those actions are taken. Guiding statements provide a useful framework through which to design or redesign an organization. When used effectively, they may communicate a purpose that inspires stakeholders to act and a reference point upon which the organization can reflect and learn.
A key component of development in a new organization is development of organizational identity. Gioia et al. (2010) studied the founding of a new college to better understand the formation of organizational identity. They noted that the relationships between individual and group identity and insider and outsider negotiations of meaning influence the nascent organizational identity. These findings are similar to the individual–team mindset relationship in Schwarz’s (2013) team effectiveness model. Gioia et al. (2010) further noted that the beginning stages of organizational life provide a unique window into the process of identity formation, and in their grounded theory model the articulation of a vision marks the starting point of that identity formation.

Organizational Improvisation

One approach to the analysis of organizational development is through the lens of improvisation. Scholars have provided a variety of metaphors to situate their exploration of improvisation, such as Indian music, music therapy, role theory, and medical diagnosis (Kamoche, Cunha, & Cunha, 2003; Weick, 1998). The most widely explored metaphor for organizational improvisation is that of jazz improvisation (Barrett, 2002; Kamoche, Cunha, & Cunha, 2002; Kamoche et al., 2003; Weick, 1998). Weick (1998) cites the following definition of improvisation as the one that guides his study of the topic: “Improvisation involves reworking precomposed material and designs in relation to unanticipated ideas conceived, shaped, and transformed under the special conditions of performance, thereby adding unique features to every creation” (Berliner, 1994, p. 241).
As opposed to Crossan and Sorrenti (2002), who emphasize spontaneity and intuition in improvisation, Weick (1998) takes care to note that good improvisation is a departure from some preexisting structure. Citing Kernfeld (1995), he quotes the legendary jazz musician Charles Mingus who said, “you can’t improvise on nothing; you’ve gotta improvise on something” (cited in Weick, 1998, p. 546). In jazz music, the something upon which the improvisation is based is usually a melody (Barrett, 2002; Weick, 1998). “What is common to these melodies is form imposed by harmonic chords and a scheme of rhythm” (Weick, 1998, p. 546). It is upon that melody, or song structure, that there is agreement between the musicians that allows individuals to add their own novel embellishments (Barrett, 2002; Weick, 1998). In organizations, the melody may be a mission statement, vision, core values, credo, rules of engagement, or strategic intent (Barrett, 2002; Weick, 1998). These formulations are designed to provide agreements based upon which members of the organization will act.

The quality of melody, like the quality of organizational guiding statements, plays a part in how future action will play out. In comparing jazz melodies to organizational foundations Weick (1998) writes, “Melodies vary in the ease with which they evoke prior experience and trigger generative embellishments. Some melodies set up a greater number of interesting possibilities than do other melodies. The same holds true for organizational ‘melodies’ such as mission statements, which range from the banal to the ingenious and invite well-practiced or novel actions on their behalf” (p. 546). The best melodies provide players with the ability to elaborate “simple structures in complex ways” (Eisenberg, 1990, p. 154). Similarly, the best
guiding statements in a dynamic organizational environment would not constrain or restrict action, but rather encourage creativity and innovation in the face of a multitude of challenges.

The “New School” Context

Some empirical research has been conducted in new school settings; however it appears that none has focused specifically on the role of guiding statements in school start-ups. Recent studies of new school contexts appear to have primarily focused on new charter schools and other public school reform efforts (Feldman & O’Dwyer, 2010; Kelly & Loveless, 2012; Malen et al., 2002). Though these contexts may only loosely parallel the examination of public school start-ups, from an organizational development and school effectiveness perspective there may be much that can be learned from diverse new school experiences.

Kelly and Loveless (2012) examined what they term “new school effects,” namely what they report is the tendency of new schools, both traditional public and charter, to show an initial decline in student achievement measured by the school’s Academic Performance Index (API). Their inquiry is guided by Stinchcombe’s (1965) concept of the “liability of newness,” which is defined as the tendency of new firms to struggle in their first years of existence. Such organizational struggle is attributed to a variety of factors, both internal and external to the organization. Stichcombe (1965) cites two internal factors – the strain of learning new roles and tasks and the lack of social cohesiveness – as contributing factors to the “liability of newness.” Kelly and Loveless (2012) examine traditional public and charter school start-ups to determine whether one experiences greater “new school effects” than the other. Noting that
charter school start-ups often lack experienced leadership, experienced teaching, and the institutional memory required to manage the school site, Kelly and Loveless (2012) in part conclude that “there are likely to be important differences in the start-up process across the sectors, and policy makers and charter school proponents should learn from the way that new public schools set up shop” (p. 448). The authors point to the need to examine “quick-starting” schools from both sectors to better understand the processes that allow schools to get a running start. A consideration of guiding statements in this context may be beneficial.

Some school reform efforts may also be considered a type of new school context, in which a particular vision of school improvement drives the reinvention of an existing school as something new. One such model that has received some attention in the literature is the small schools movement. Feldman and O’Dwyer (2010) examined student perceptions of small schools in their initial years of existence, in the context of both small school start-ups and conversion schools. Small school start-ups are defined as new schools that open with the vision of maintaining a small school model. Conversion schools are those that transition from a traditional model to a small schools model. Feldman and O’Dwyer (2010) make a further, and seemingly important, distinction between schools that phase in such a start-up or transition (i.e. introduce one or two grade levels per year) and those that implement change wholesale. Noting Cotton’s (1996) assertion that successful small schools are “mission driven and flexible” and that “they use their resources to meet their vision and to most effectively serve the particular needs of their students” (Feldman & O’Dwyer, 2010, p. 314), Feldman and O’Dwyer examined student perceptions of
small schools in the context of institutional autonomy. While conversion schools seemed to “hit their stride” in the second year (once structural changes had been implemented and focus turned to classroom practices), small school start-ups experienced a drop in student perception ratings in year two (Feldman & O’Dwyer, 2010). The authors attribute this to the fact that with a gradual roll-out of one grade per year, the start-ups essentially double in size in year two and have large numbers of students and staff that are new to the organization (Feldman & O’Dwyer, 2010).

Again, examining the school start-up process through the lens of guiding statements may help to provide guidance to schools seeking to navigate this challenging situation. An extreme school reform model, reconstitution, may also be considered as a new school context. Reconstitution involves the district takeover of an existing, “low-performing” public school site and the replacement of most, if not all, of the school staff. Reconstitution involves the enactment of a particular vision of school reform, in which the key to school turnaround lies in “removing a schools incumbent administrators and teachers (or large percentages of them) and replacing them with educators who, presumably, are more capable and committed” (Malen, Croninger, Redmond, & Muncey, 1999, cited in Malen et al., 2002, p. 114). The reconstituted school becomes a new school of sorts and Malen et al. (2002) examine the relationship between “theory of action” behind school reconstitution and the observed practices and outcomes in such schools. The key finding of the study – that on all crucial components the practices at the schools ran counter to the major premises of the policy (Malen et al., 2002) – speaks to the issue of organizational alignment that is so strongly emphasized in the mission and vision literature. Malen et al. (2002) found
that by the second year of the reform many teachers had already become disillusioned with the reform effort, largely due to the gap between vision and practice in the schools.

**Theoretical Frameworks**

Two frameworks will be used to address the research questions. Positive Psychology and its organizational studies cousin, Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS), provides a strengths-based, future oriented perspective which is well suited to an exploration of guiding statements, the purpose of which is to articulate the preferred future of that organization. Specifically, an appreciative inquiry orientation to data collection and analysis allows a researcher to examine high functioning components of an organization and the factors that enable that high functioning. POS is paired with the *mutual learning* framework (Schwarz, 2013), which focuses on essential elements of effective teamwork, such as shared meaning, commitment, and alignment of words and actions. Together these frameworks will support the analysis of data and the shaping of answers to the research questions.

**Positive psychology and organizations.** Positive psychology formally emerged around the turn of the 21st century as a new frame through which to examine and promote positive human experience (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). The effort to move psychology in the direction of more valued subjective experiences, such as well-being, happiness, hope, and optimism, came as a response to the feeling that psychologists were often preoccupied with only repairing the worst conditions of life (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Researchers in fields outside of psychology soon took notice and further developed the tenets of the positive psychology
movement to enhance their own studies, notably in the field of organizational studies (Cameron et al., 2003). Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS) is the name given to a field of work that seeks to explore positive aspects of organizational life that combine to create peak individual and organizational performances (Cameron et al., 2003).

The field of positive psychology centers around three components: positive subjective experience, positive individual traits, and positive institutions (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). In passing on lessons learned while developing and promoting the new field, Peterson and Seligman (2003) recommend researchers, “find natural homes for research and application” (p. 25). Such a home was found in the workplace as the development of POS provided researchers with a venue through which to explore questions of positive psychology. Some attention has been given to such an approach to education research, and applying the framework of positive psychology and POS to schools may reap great rewards (Daly & Chrispeels, 2005).

The relatively new field of Positive Organizational Scholarship presents a promising entry point for educational research. While the value of positivity is widely recognized, it is also cautioned that researchers must be able to better describe the conditions that enable such positivity (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Peterson & Seligman, 2003). Such a proposition represents a great challenge to researchers, and there would appear to be no better way to test the validity of the propositions of positive psychology and positive organizational studies than to jump in and conduct research that, in inquiry and method, examines the components of the “positive sciences”.
Park and Peterson (2003) point to schools (as well as workplaces and entire societies) as the ideal setting for examining the ways in which organizations enable (or not) positive experiences and outcomes. In tying together the three tenets of positive psychology, the authors theorize that “positive institutions enable (or not) positive traits, which in turn enable (or not) positive subjective experiences” (p. 45). Park and Peterson (2003) offer advice to scholars of positive organizations in order to help them meet this challenge. Scholars of positive organizations, they suggest, must examine the ways in which organizations enable strength of character, moral excellence, and personal fulfillment. They further note that one of the features of “good” schools (so defined for their ability to encourage students to be engaged and enthusiastic learners) is an “articulated and shared vision of the school’s purpose: what it stands and strives for” (p. 43). Positive experiences and traits mirror what parents say that they want from schools (Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reivich, & Linkins, 2009) and perhaps examining schools’ guiding statements through the positive organizing perspective will place greater emphasis on the cultivation of positive traits and organizations.

Pekarsky (2000) discusses at length the Deweyan critique of schools using the present to prepare for the future. Rather than subjugating the present for some better future, argue the two authors, we must act in the present in a way that reflects the future that we envision (Dewey, 1944; Pekarsky, 2000). Pekarsky writes, “Dewey seems to believe that the vision of human well-being that guides the educator’s efforts must already live in some meaningful form, in the present; and if it does not, it is unlikely that this vision will ever be meaningfully embodied in the learner’s life” (Pekarsky, 2000, p. 26). In a like fashion, if we seek for schools to grow and prosper,
we must approach the development and study of education in a manner that reflects that positive future (Daly & Chrispeels, 2005). In order to do so, the framework of Positive Organizational Scholarship provides a fitting entry point into the study of schools. A deficit-based approach to educational research does little more than spotlight deficits; it often fails to give educators a positive alternative. Positive organizational studies allow researchers to frame inquiry in terms of what is possible for the future by studying what is positive in the present, and appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider et al., 2008; Reed, 2007) provides the tools for uncovering organizational strengths. Such an approach is not without precedent in educational studies. The Effective Schools studies (Edmonds, 1979; Lezotte, 1991) provide but one example of the application of strengths-based studies to the field of education.

**Mutual learning.** The *mutual learning* framework (Schwarz, 2013) highlights many of the strengths of the mission and vision literature: shared meaning, commitment, and alignment of words and actions. Additionally, the *mutual learning* framework focuses on a changing mindset, one of the primary concerns of guiding statement literature. One of the foremost criticisms of guiding statements is that they tend, like many leadership initiatives, to be introduced with much fanfare and then, due to a variety of factors, be left on a shelf to collect dust (Allen, 2001; Bart, 1997; Pearce, 1982). The question of whether the development and implementation of guiding statements contributes to a change in mindset among stakeholders may be one of the keys to understanding the effect of guiding statements on organizational performance. *Mutual learning’s* focus on mindset highlights this fact and allows for a window into understanding the effects of implementation.
The *mutual learning* mindset is composed of five core values: transparency, curiosity, informed choice, accountability, and compassion. These core values combine with corollary assumptions that form the *mutual learning* team mindset.

Through specific contexts, structures, and processes, Schwarz (2013) argues, this mindset leads to high quality team performance, positive working relationships, and individual well-being. Among the primary contextual and structural components, Schwarz (2013) identifies clear mission and shared vision as key to high-performing teams. Schwarz (2013) cites extensive observational data in the development of his *mutual learning* framework. An understanding of how the positive values and assumptions at play in this model contribute to the development of structural components such as guiding statements may further the understanding of the value that the team plays in developing a shared organizational mission and vision that the team is to enact.

Among the components of the *mutual learning* framework, the *team effectiveness* model (Figure 1) provides the best window to view the way in which the *mutual learning* mindset comes together in the various members of the team and combines with effective structures and process that lead to exceptional team performance. In the *team effectiveness* model the context, structure, and processes that the team engages in include having a clear mission, shared vision, supportive culture, motivating task, and effective problem solving, among other features.
Figure 1. The Team Effectiveness Model (Schwarz, 2013) shows a theoretical model of the interplay between values and assumptions shared by team members and the design of the team and work environments that lead to effective team performance.

The **mutual learning** framework can be situated clearly within the field of positive organizational scholarship, with its emphasis on transparency, curiosity, trusting relationships, and compassion. Such considerations, often outside the scope of traditional management literature, have important implications for understanding guiding statements in schools. First, the positive organizational studies approach to educational research is a much needed angle through which to examine schools (Daly & Chrispeels, 2005). Second, primary considerations in school mission statements are civic and emotional development (Stemler et al., 2011), components outside the common assessments of school and student performance. School performance is often measured exclusively through the realm of cognitive development, an approach which
ignores the value that stakeholders place in these other facets of schooling (Stemler et al., 2011). Finally, if the role of vision is to imagine a desired future state (Kantabutra, 2008; Mumford & Strange, 2005), few would argue that the characteristics transparency, compassion, and healthy relationships should be absent from any possible future state of schools. Examining guiding statements from the combined perspective of mutual learning and positive organizational studies may play some small part in moving the conversation about education in the direction of strengths inherent in the system of education and in the participants in the educational process. Such an approach to educational research surely has merit and deserves a place in the discourse of schooling.

**Summary of the Literature and Conclusions**

From their formal introduction in the business literature (Drucker, 1974) to their recent examination in education literature (Stemler & Bebell, 2012), guiding statements have held promise as a potentially valuable leadership tool for unifying organizational operations around a common purpose. Though not without critics (e.g., Sufi & Lyons, 2003), the overwhelming majority of the literature paints a positive view of guiding statements and their impact on organizational performance (Davis et al., 2007; Kantabutra, 2008). A good portion of this literature, however, is theoretical and a closer look at the empirical research on guiding statements reveals several key themes. First, simply having a guiding statement is of little consequence (Bart & Baetz, 1998; Pearce, 1982; Sufi & Lyons, 2003). Second, it appears that the development and implementation of the guiding statements is most effective when it is an inclusive process that involves a variety of stakeholders at multiple levels of the
organization (Desmidt et al., 2011). While guiding statements are useful managerial tools, it is the employees farther down the organizational chart that are primarily charged with enacting the vision or mission. A third and related conclusion is that one of the key determinants of the efficacy of guiding statements appears to be organizational alignment to the guiding statements (Collins, 2001; Crotts et al., 2005). Alignment to the guiding statement means that resource allocation, communication, action, and rewards all reflect the purposes articulated in the guiding statements. Crotts et al. (2005) argued that leaders in an organization communicate what is important in a variety of ways, often unintentional. Close attention to alignment appears to be critical for progress relative to guiding statements (Collins, 2001; Crotts et al., 2005; Fairhurst et al., 1997).

Though a rich body of empirical research on guiding statements can be found in the business literature, guiding statements have received little attention in the education literature. Vision in education has been discussed extensively, but the majority of this work is theoretical and prescriptive, with little empirical justification. Mission statements in educational settings have received barely a mention. Given that nearly all secondary schools have developed and publicize their guiding statements, there would appear to be a need to examine the processes by which schools develop guiding statements, use guiding statements, and to begin to understand whether or not these statements have any impact on student outcomes. The theoretical foundation of appreciative inquiry provides a promising entry point for such a study, as it allows for an appreciative reflection on work that has been done in schools and allows the researcher, participants, and reader to focus on the positive aspects of guiding
statements in schools that can be built upon in future applications. The mutual learning framework (Schwarz, 2013) also provides a relevant lens for the analysis of how effective teams develop and work in harmony with shared guiding statements. It addresses the interplay between individual and group mindsets and accountability of individuals pertaining to the shared mission and vision. In Chapter 3 the methodology for the present study is discussed.
Chapter 3: Methodology

Problem and Purpose

With few resources and many challenges, school leaders may benefit from finding ways to maximize the limited resources within their organizations. One possible means of doing so is to use guiding statements to focus the efforts of the organization around a common purpose or vision. The literature suggests that the development and faithful implementation of guiding statements has the potential to improve organizational performance through a more focused and efficient use of time, energy, and other resources (Crotts et al., 2005; Stemler et al., 2011). The literature also shows that simply having guiding statements is not enough (Jick, 2001; Sidhu, 2003). The process through which these statements are developed and implemented has significant implications for their effectiveness (Bart & Baetz, 1998; David, 1989; Davis et al., 2007; Fairhurst et al., 1997; Pearce 1982; Pearce & David, 1987; Sufi & Lyons, 2003). In spite of the fact that many, if not most, public schools communicate some form of guiding statement (Stemler et al., 2011), there is scant research examining the role or effectiveness of these statements in schools (e.g., Stemler et al., 2011; Weiss & Piderit, 1999). Further, for many organizations, including new schools, the mission and vision development process represents an important step in the “birthing” of the school (Gioia et al., 2010). This study begins to fill the void in the literature by examining the processes used for the development of guiding statements in a new school setting. The present study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What was the experience of the school staff during initial
development of guiding statements in a new school?

2. In what ways did the work of developing guiding statements impact the organization once the initial development phase was complete?

3. What conditions for the development of guiding statements in a new organization do participants perceive as beneficial to the process?

Case Study Methodology

Among the key characteristics of qualitative research, writes Creswell (2013), are data collection a natural setting, complex inductive and deductive reasoning, multiple methods, and emergent design. One such approach to the qualitative research is the case study. Stake (1995) notes that often in educational settings it is people or programs that are of interest to us as a case. In following the traditional definition of a case as a “bounded system,” Stake refers to the case as an “integrated system” (p. 2). As opposed to an intrinsic case study, where the researcher has some intrinsic interest in a particular case, the instrumental case study is one in which the researcher closely examines a particular case in order to illuminate some broader issue. This study seeks to accomplish the latter: to understand the guiding statement development and implementation in school settings through the close examination of one school’s experience.

This case study was bound in time from the start of the mission and vision development process through the completion of data collection, at the end of June 2014. The end time for data collection coincided with the end of the school’s first year of operation. Two interrelated components of the guiding statements –
development and implementation – were explored through interviews of the school’s founding principal, interviews of founding leadership team members, interviews with other teachers and staff that worked at the site during the data collection period, and a review of relevant documents. From an organizational development perspective, the formulation of guiding statements in a new organization may be viewed as the first act of the organization itself (Fairhurst & Putnam, 2004; Gioia et al., 2010). The opportunity to examine a school that was in the midst of its first year of implementation of its guiding statements provided a unique research setting for this topic.

**Site Selection and School Background**

The site selected for this study was located in Southern California. This school site was selected due the currency of the work done with guiding statements and the fact that the school was in the midst of its first year of operation. Creswell (2012) defines purposeful sampling as a method to “intentionally select individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon” (p. 206). A new school site that had just recently worked through the process of vision and mission development provided an opportunity to closely examine questions of development and implementation of guiding statements.

The school site where the study took place opened in the fall of 2013 with an entering 9th grade class of approximately 300 students and plans to grow by one grade level each of the next three years, becoming a comprehensive grade 9-12 high school in 2016-17. The school opened as the second high school in a suburban K-12 unified district, and the first new high school to open since the 1950s.
Initial planning for the new high school was done under the direction of a design team, which was in place for approximately one year, from June, 2011 to June, 2012, at which time it presented recommendations about the new school to the district superintendent. The design team included district administrators, teachers, and community members. The design team made key structural recommendations about the new school in the areas of curricular focus, school schedule, extracurricular offerings, and attendance criteria (see Appendix A). It was decided that the new school would be a school of choice, open to high school students district-wide who elected to attend, rather than tied to fixed geographical attendance boundaries.

The site principal was appointed in March of 2012 and worked throughout the 2012-2013 school year in preparation for the opening of the school in the fall of 2013. During that time the principal was charged with a variety of tasks related to the opening of the school, including construction monitoring, furniture ordering, technology acquisition, materials acquisition, classroom interior design, disseminating school information, and teacher and staff hiring. Due to the ongoing construction of the new school, the principal maintained an office at the district office building until March of 2013 when the school was ready to be occupied.

The first staff members to join the school team were the founding leadership team members. Founding leadership team members were selected via an internal recruitment process that was open to secondary (grades 6-12) teachers and counselors district-wide. Eight teachers and one counselor with middle or high school backgrounds were initially selected to join the founding leadership team, with each teacher representing a distinct curricular area. The founding leadership team members
continued their full time employment at other secondary school sites in the district for
the remainder of the 2012-2013 school year. The founding leadership team began
meeting weekly in the fall of 2012, with its initial task being the development of the
school’s mission and vision. The development of the mission and vision was the
primary focus of that group’s weekly meetings from October to December, 2012. A
consultant from outside the district was utilized to help facilitate this discussion and
the development of the guiding statements. The consultant had experience as a site
and district level school administrator, had assisted other new and existing schools
with mission and vision development, and was a professor at a local university during
the fall of 2012.

The founding leadership team developed the school’s statements of purpose,
vision, core values, and operating principles, collectively referred to here as the
guiding statements. The themes evident in these statements include team
development, interconnectedness of people and curriculum, individual striving to do
one’s best work, innovation, and personal and group responsibility. The founding
leadership team continued to meet at least one time per week throughout the spring
and summer of 2013 planning for the opening of the school. Additional teachers were
hired through internal and external recruitment throughout the spring and into the
summer of 2013. In late August, 2013 all teachers and staff began their work on
campus and the school year began. In June of 2014 the school year ended for the
inaugural class of 9th grade students and the school prepared for a 2014-2015 school
year that would see an additional class of students (9th and 10th grades offered) and a
corresponding increase in staffing (again through internal and external recruitment) to
support a more than doubling of the student population. Approximately 400 students elected to join the second incoming 9th grade class for the 2014-2015 school year.

**Participant selection.** Twenty-three of 38 staff members listed on the school’s staff list were invited to participate in the study. The 38 staff members consisted of 20 certificated employees (i.e. teachers, administrators, and counselors) and 18 classified employees (i.e. office staff, custodial, instructional aides, and other support staff). In order to be invited to participate, a staff member was required to be a full-time employee or equivalent at the school site, under the direct supervision of the site principal. Six of the 20 certificated staff members were excluded because they did not work at the site full time. One teacher that worked part time at the site and part time at another site was retained as a study participant due to her participation on the leadership team. Ten of the 18 classified staff members on the staff list were excluded, either because they did not work at the site full time or because they worked in food service or custodial services and were therefore not working under the direct supervision of the site principal.

Invitations to participate were delivered to the school in March, 2014. As a follow-up to the printed invitation, potential participants were sent an email that provided a brief summary of the study and directed recipients to refer to the print invitation for more details. Of the 14 certificated staff members that were invited, 10 formed the school’s founding leadership team that began work during the 2012-2013 school year, prior to the opening of the school. This group was tasked with developing the guiding statements, along with a variety of other tasks to prepare for the opening of the school. Given that only four qualifying certificated staff members
remained, combined with the emphasis on inclusiveness in the appreciative inquiry methodology (Reed, 2007), the decision was made to invite all 14 qualifying certificated staff members to participate.

None of the classified staff was directly involved in the development of the school’s guiding statements. Of the qualifying classified staff, none worked at the site during the period of development of the guiding statements and only one worked at the site for any significant period of time prior to the actual opening of the school. In spite of their lack of involvement in the actually formulation of the guiding statements, the perspectives offered by the classified staff members were deemed to be of importance in understanding how the guiding statements filtered throughout the organization. The impact and understood meaning of guiding statements as they spread throughout the organization may be of importance in managing the progress toward fulfilling the organization’s guiding statements (Fairhurst, 1993). Following the approach taken with certificated staff with regard to population size and inclusiveness (Reed, 2007) all eligible classified staff members were invited to participate.

A nominal incentive was offered for participation. At the time of the invitation, participants were informed that there would be minimal benefits for participation, primarily the benefit of an opportunity to reflect upon the individual and collective work that had been done at the school over the previous year and a half. After the completion of the interview, participants were sent a thank you note with a five dollar Starbucks gift card included.
Data Collection Methods

Data collection took place over a three month period, from late March, 2014 to late June 2014. All data gathered from participant resources was collected with explicit permission from the participants and in full compliance with Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines. All electronic files created from the data collection process were saved on a laptop computer that is password-protected. All paper files created were stored in a locked file cabinet in the researcher’s home.

Interviews. The primary data source for the study was interview data collected from the principal, teachers, and staff members at the school. Interviews took place between March and June, 2014. All interviews took place at the study site, in various locations of the participants’ choice. At the beginning of the interview session, participants were provided with a copy of the school guiding statements (see Appendix B) for their reference.

The interviews were structured based on the principles of Appreciative Inquiry (AI). AI is described as an entry point to participate in dialogues and share stories about strengths, achievements, and high-point experiences in order to uncover the positive core of the organization (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2008; Mohr & Watkins, 2002). In this case the focus was on uncovering the strengths and high-points in the development and implementation of guiding statements. Cooperrider et al. (2008) write the process of AI “creates energy and excitement and a desire to move toward a shared dream” (p. 3). This theoretical approach to the study provided a perfect complement to the topic of guiding statements, which themselves are intended to move the organization toward a shared dream.
There were two categories of teachers for the purposes of the study: teachers who participated in the development of guiding statements prior to the opening of the school (founding leadership team) and teachers who were working at the site at the time of the study but were not involved in the initial development of guiding statements. The term “teachers” is used to refer to all certificated, non-management personnel including classroom teachers and counselors. Classified staff members (office and campus support staff, instructional assistants) are referred to as “staff members.” Individual interviews were conducted based on the principles of AI discussed above and the interview protocols are included in Appendices F and G.

**Documents.** During the data collection process I had access to a variety of documents related to the school’s guiding statements. These documents included meeting agendas, meeting notes, presentations, and other relevant documentation. Some documents for the study were publicly available for review on the school website and others were obtained from participants in the course of the study. The documents were used to better contextualize the participants’ descriptions of their experiences and activities during the development of the guiding statements, planning for the school’s opening, and the school’s first year of operation.

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis involved the ongoing review of interview data and documents that served to inform the continuing data collection. It allowed the researcher to begin to form an understanding of the case through aggregation of data. Multiple sources of data allowed the researcher to develop *converging lines of inquiry*, a triangulation procedure that leads to more convincing and substantive conclusions (Yin, 2003).
Stake (1995) recommends that case study researchers reach new meanings about cases, “through direct interpretation of the individual instance and though aggregation of instances until something can be said about them as a class” (p. 74). He recommends that the case study researcher use both approaches in determining what are the key data gathered from the case. In this case the aggregation of data from multiple participants, reinforced by documentary evidence, allowed for the identification of key themes and conclusions from the case.

In outlining three general strategies to data analysis, Yin (2003) states a preference for relying on the researcher’s theoretical propositions to guide analysis and focus the researcher’s attention on the import of certain data over other data. Yin (2003) notes that such an approach helps to, “organize the entire case study and to define alternative explanations to be examined” (p. 112). This study was grounded in a theoretical foundation of strengths-based inquiry and positive team behaviors in terms of the mutual learning model (see Schwarz, 2013). Given this theoretical perspective, an analysis of data around the points of strength within the system being studied was appropriate and beneficial.

The intent was to organize the data in a way to provide insights into the issues addressed in the research questions. Creswell (2012) recommends a process for exploring qualitative data that begins with a preliminary exploratory analysis to get a general sense of the data followed by open coding of the data, and consolidating the codes into themes (see pp. 243-245). In addition to the interview data and documents gathered, the researcher maintained a reflective journal where notes and reflections were made throughout the data collection process. Booth, Colomb, and Williams
(2008) recommend reflective journaling by researchers in order to work out new ideas, connections, and problems in the data gathering and analysis that will inform and benefit the final written report.

**Theoretical Perspective**

Daly and Chrispeels (2005) describe a framework for strengths-based inquiry in educational settings that is built on the foundations of positive psychology, positive organizational scholarship, and the acknowledgment of the limiting nature of threat-rigid responses in the context of individual and collective stress. The focus of their paper is on encouraging a shift in perspective and inquiry from the traditional problem-deficit model to that of Strengths-Based Reflexive Inquiry. They conclude that the much needed paradigm shift from deficit to strengths-based approaches to educational inquiry will take intentional focus and that, “Leaders [and researchers] will need to facilitate processes that examine the root causes of success that build the efficacy of all in the system, and create cultures of hope and limitless potential” (Daly & Chrispeels, 2005, p. 20). The intent of this study was to create an opportunity to engage in a process that recognized and built upon the strengths in the school and brought to light the root causes of success within the school in a way that may be beneficial to the participants and the reader.

The fact that multiple interviews were conducted with the principal may also lead the reader to assume that there was a “top-down” perspective taken with regard to the development of guiding statements. Quite the opposite, there was an initial assumption, supported by the literature, that meaningful stakeholder involvement in the development of guiding statements will lead to more effective outcomes (Desmidt...
et al., 2011). For example, Cameron (2008) notes that the more organizational values reflect those of an individual stakeholder, the more meaningful those organizational values become to the individual (see also Pratt & Ashforth, 2003). Such meaningfulness is but one of the reasons that one might develop guiding statements.

The principal interviews were not intended as a reflection of “top-down” leadership, but rather it was assumed that no other individual had as much inside experience with the process of developing those statements. The principal that participated in the study was appointed to his position for the school year prior to the opening of the school. It is known that during that time a part of the work of each was to work with local stakeholders to develop guiding statements. His experiences may be quite instructive for other educational leaders seeking to do the same.

Specifically, the study began with the knowledge that formal guiding statements existed in the school, that they were developed under the leadership of the founding principal, and that it was not solely the responsibility of the principal to develop guiding statements. By taking a strengths-based approach the research can appreciate the experiences of staff at the schools as they developed an identity that led them up to and through the opening of the school. The aim, in other words, was not to critique, though some critique was inevitable, but to find the strengths at work in the systems in order to better understand the processes that led to organizational flourishing in terms of guiding statements.

The over-arching assumption was that there were strengths in the organization relative to the guiding statements that could be uncovered and examined. With that assumption, the bias toward positivity is in the open from the outset. While there were
certainly challenges that will be uncovered and comparative strengths between components of the school’s experience, the approach of positive organizational studies encourages both rigor and appreciation in a way that, it is hoped, ultimately benefitted the utility of the findings and the research participants (Peterson & Seligman, 2003).

The theoretical framework for data analysis is Schwarz’s (2013) mutual learning. Specifically, the Team Mindset and Design components of the team effectiveness model (Figure 2) were applied to the exploration of the data in order to provide a context for understanding the effective aspects of the development and implementation of the guiding statements. The mutual learning framework compliments the appreciative inquiry methodology in the way that it highlights the effective components of team mindset, assumptions, context, structure, and process. Shared mission and vision, a motivating task, and effective communication are but three of the key components of the team effectiveness model that apply directly to the case and connect the frame to the wider literature on guiding statements and organizational development.

Daly and Chrispeels (2005) conclude that “students deserve and await a strengths-based environment in every school” (p. 20). The same can be said of teachers, administrators, and other staff members, who work in the most scrutinized profession in the nation (Goldstein, 2014). An examination of the strengths of the development process and implementation of the guiding statements experienced in this case provide one starting point for understanding how to build that strengths-based environment in other schools. School leaders that hope to build such an environment
for students would be well served to understand the organizational structures studied here that may enable the development of that environment.

Figure 2. The Team Effectiveness Model (Schwarz, 2013) shows a theoretical model of the interplay between values and assumptions shared by team members and the design of the team and work environments that lead to effective team performance.

Limitations and Ethical Considerations

The study was limited in scope and limitations of generalizability and perspective are discussed below. Ethical considerations are also addressed.

Generalizability. As is characteristic of qualitative research, the goal of this study was not generalizability. This study was limited in its scope and the focus was on understanding the depth and richness of this case. However, even with that limitation, there may be some practical insights can be gleaned from the work that will be applicable to a variety of contexts (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Since very little, if any,
empirical work exists relating to the development of guiding statements in schools, there may be some benefit to school leaders from taking a deeper look inside the process undertaken at this site.

The generalizability of the findings in this study is further limited by the setting of the school in a new school environment. In the current climate of charter school expansion and school restructuring new schools are opening regularly and this study may provide more relevant insights to educational leaders in those settings. However, there are far more schools in which reestablishing guiding principles at the heart of organizational development and planning is needed. Although that situation is certainly far different that a new school start-up, the findings in this study will still provide a useful sounding board for the educational leader looking to put purpose and vision at the heart of the school’s focus.

**Perspective.** This study represents the views of 11 members of the school’s teacher and staff team. Although other stakeholders were involved in the development of the school’s guiding statements, the participants are deemed to provide a representative sample of the viewpoints present at the site. Teacher participants represented a complete cross section of academic departments and the classified staff members that participated worked in differing capacities. The principal and teachers had some reflection on others’ involvement, but the data collection and findings are drawn only from the perspectives of the principal, teachers, and staff that were eligible and elected to participate in the study.

**Ethical Considerations.** At the time of the study, I was employed as school site administrator in the same district as the site where the study took place. Pre-
existing relationships with some of the participants have inherent ethical implications; however, the theoretical grounding of the study in the tradition of positive organizational studies aids in minimizing some of the ethical problems associated with these relationships.

The concern of positionality – my professional role as a school administrator interviewing teachers and staff members in the same district – can also be mitigated through the theoretical frame of the study. Again, an explicitly strengths-based inquiry and analysis helps to reduce concerns over the unwillingness of teachers to share thoughts with me. The purpose of the study was quite explicitly to discover and build upon strengths in order to benefit the participants, the researcher, and, hopefully, an audience of educational practitioners.
Chapter 4: Data Analysis

“And we started developing the sense of group identity, shared experience...it just kind of started bringing things together” (Teacher 2, personal communication, April 21, 2014). As reflected in this quote, the process of developing the guiding documents for this new comprehensive high school provided the founding leadership team with an environment in which teamwork generated an integration of thought and perspective that helped lead to the final product of the guiding statements. These guiding statements, in turn, provided the basis for the development of the school and a focal point for the school’s stakeholders as they progressed through the school’s first year of operation.

In this chapter, the content of this process is described. The chapter begins with a description of the participants. From that point, the data is presented chronologically, in segments described as “the beginning”, “the middle”, and “looking forward”. The beginning phase covers the time from August, 2012 to December, 2012 the middle covers the period from January, 2013 to June, 2014 and looking ahead reflects the perspective of the participants from the spring of 2014 as they thought about the school’s future. This accounting is followed by additional insights gleaned from the experiences of the participants, including the role of time and space in the process, the role of leadership, and the role of the independent facilitator in the process.

Participants

Twenty-three eligible participants were invited to be interviewed based on criteria described in Chapter 3. Of those 23, 13 responded to email invitations and 11
eventually participated in individual interviews. The remaining two respondents were not interviewed due to scheduling conflicts. Eight of the 11 participants were certificated staff (teacher or counselor), two were classified staff members, and one was the school principal. The principal and six of the certificated staff interviewed were members of the school’s founding leadership team.

For the purpose of reporting data and maintaining confidentiality, certificated employees who participated in the study are referred to as teachers. A teacher title followed by a number (e.g., Teacher 1) refers to a teacher that was a member of the founding leadership team. A teacher title followed by a letter (e.g., Teacher A) refers to a teacher that worked at the site in its first year of operation but was not a member of the founding leadership team. Classified staff members are referred to as staff member, followed by a letter to distinguish between individuals (e.g., Staff Member A). The principal is referred to with as principal. A description of participants is provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Description of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Founding Leadership Team Member</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 2</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 4</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 5</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 6</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher A</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher B</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Member A</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Member B</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Analysis

Analysis of the data included coding of the interview transcripts. Initial open coding was condensed to three broad categories – Communication, Alignment, and Team Development – based on themes present in the existing literature. Those three broad categories were then expanded to seven themes based on the recurrence of those themes in the data. The seven themes – Who We Are, About the Team, Focus, Alignment, Time and Space, Leadership, Process – did not appear in a linear fashion in the course of the case study, but presented themselves and interacted to varying degrees throughout the time studied. Therefore, the data analysis presented below is presented in a chronological fashion, with the various themes present throughout, as they were reflected in the interview data and confirmed by the review of relevant documents.

The Beginning

At the conclusion of the design team recommendations, presented in June of 2013, the committee wrote, “It is imperative that the principal identify his teacher planning team for [the school] as soon as possible so that they may take ownership of the next phase of the implementation process” (Appendix A, p. 152). The principal began that next phase of the process by planning for the upcoming recruitment and hiring of teachers and classified staff. The principal developed a profile of the ideal leadership team candidate and developed interview questions around that profile (see Appendices E and F).

Selecting the leadership team: recruitment. The interview question forms included characteristic teacher interview questions regarding experience, student
achievement, and the use of technology in the classroom. There was also an additional layer of questions related to leadership, ability to collaborate, and contributions to the school community (see Appendix G for a sample). These documents provided the starting point for the focus on team building that continued to be a central theme in the development and application of the guiding statements. Teachers who joined the founding leadership team recognized the selection process as a critical component of the team’s development. One teacher commented, “He [the principal] did a stellar job of hiring staff who are all passionate about students and the curriculum and making this something really meaningful” (Teacher A, personal communication, April 24, 2014).

**Starting the process.** An interest and intent to build a productive team was communicated and recognized from the outset of the team’s work. The principal noted that, “We were very adamant of the team concept...we want to be very explicit” (personal communication, March 28, 2014). Other founding leadership team members recognized that intent. “It was just the tone was set from day one, we all agreed to it and then every meeting from there on out just built and built on that” (Teacher 5, personal communication, April 25, 2014). The intentional emphasis on team functioning early in the process benefitted the team’s efforts in developing the guiding statements. One participant noted, “Most of our Monday afternoons, I felt like we were very collaborative. What we discussed, it was intentional” (Teacher 6, personal communication, June 18, 2014).

**Coming together.** With regard to the period of time during which the work of the team primarily revolved around the development of guiding statements, the
participants recounted the positive impacts that the work had on team cohesion. One participant commented that, “It was a great opportunity for us to really get to know one another and bond in a common goal and to be able to articulate what brought us all there, see the commonalities” (Teacher 5, personal communication, April 25, 2014). Others shared similar sentiments, noting that, even among those team members who knew one another prior to joining the team, “They were just colleagues in other departments until then” (Teacher 2, personal communication, April 21, 2014). The task at hand created an opportunity for the founding leadership team members to become more. As the participants discussed what “intrigued us about the prospects of building a new school and what components we would dream of having that be built around,” and atmosphere was created in which they could, “vibe off of each other in terms of things that, you know, got us energized” (Teacher 2, personal communication, April 21, 2014). Expanding upon that idea, the principal stated, “It allowed us – all of us – to start to get to know each other and our professional ambitions as well as our personal capacities because of how we spoke about things” (personal communication, March 28, 2014).

Several participants vividly recounted specific instances in which the team came together around those ideas being discussed. One teacher commented on this effect by recalling, “Yeah, there are times just throughout we were like, somebody comes up with an idea and people latch on, and then it becomes something great” (Teacher 4, personal communication, April 15, 2014). Another participant commented about the team “buzzing all around” a guiding concept until, “several of us at the same time almost” came up with the acronym that became the final product
(Teacher 5, personal communication, April 25, 2014). Others cited specific contributions made by individual members of the team. The sentiment of team cohesion might be best summed up in the following passage from Teacher 2, a founding leadership team member:

There was, you know, there were a few components of this. The community. It stood out when [a teacher] broached the importance of being this interconnected learning community and emphasizing community that kind of took us off in a certain group direction and I think [the]...motto really got us enthused. You know, not so much that they’re so crucial or central or important, more important than anything else really. It was just – they got us jazzed, they got us energized and we could all kind of dig our hands into that...It got to be fun, I think, as a result of those two pieces...Just kind of cutey fun, you know, teambuilding, group building, things like that that develop cohesion. (personal communication, April 21, 2014)

“Hashing it out.” “Battle,” “hash it out,” “conflict,” “wrestling matches,” “hammer it out.” Each of these expressions was used to describe the work that was done by the leadership team during the process of development of the guiding statements. Although the terms above may indicate some difficulty in the process, the foregoing descriptions were regularly qualified as a part of what it was that made the process a beneficial time for team development. For example, Teacher 4 reflected, “...and then it became this very fun battle where we were throwing things out, and we really have a crew who is always very okay with saying, ‘you know, it’s not what we wanted,’ and we just kept on going like that” (personal communication, April 15, 2014). Another participant reflected this view by noting, “And those discussions would sometimes get a little intense or a little – nothing was ever taken personal, but it was more like trying to – how do you hammer that out” (Teacher 6, personal communication, June 18, 2014)?
Much of the “conflict” during that time revolved around the selection of terms to be included in the guiding statements as the team attempted to focus in on what it felt were the most important components to include in the statements. The intent of the guiding statements was to communicate the highest aspirations for the new school. In exploring the language to do so, there were moments when the team had to wrestle with single words. Recalling one key moment in searching for mutually acceptable language, the principal recalled, “There was a bit of a conflict because the word ‘great’ can be interpreted in so many different ways” (personal communication, March 28, 2014). He continued, “The wrestling matches were held with a passion of, ‘how do we convey what it is we’re trying to communicate,’ as opposed to, ‘I think my word is better than yours’” (personal communication, March 28, 2014). The principal later clarified that these interactions should not be connoted with the negative aspects of conflict. “The best description is ‘positive struggle’ or ‘genuine discussion’ in that the goal was to get identify [sic] the language that would best communicate our ambition. It definitely was not ‘conflict’ in a negative context” (personal communication, September 20, 2014).

**Positivity.** The term positivity refers to exchanges that are supportive, encouraging, and appreciative (Losada & Heaphy, 2004). The foundational work around guiding statements contributed to the early development of a team that displayed this type of positivity in its work together. One component of effective team development noted by the participants was the sense of shared contribution, responsibility, and leadership for developing guiding statement and ultimately
continuing work throughout the planning phase and the school year. Commenting on the principal’s leadership style, Teacher 1 recalled:

We knew how he likes all of us to be participatory in it and it wasn’t a top-down kind of mandate...I really value that kind of collaborative time and just where everybody felt like their opinions were valued and, you know, even if something was discarded it was for a good purpose. (personal communication, May 20, 2014)

The principal had a similar sentiment regarding the inclusiveness of the team. In discussing the role of the facilitator in the process he noted, “…to me that was a huge value is that I got to be a part of it [rather than facilitating the process myself]. I was side by side with the team” (personal communication, March 28, 2014).

The new school context also allowed leadership team members the capacity to open themselves to and contribute to the team in ways that they had not previously done. Referring to past experience, Teacher 3 commented:

I never had that opportunity and nor did I ever go for any opportunity like that. I just kind of stayed back and so for me it was the first time actually to have some sort of input on how I thought the school should be. (personal communication, April 17, 2014)

Another teacher echoed that sentiment, recalling that:

There was a clean slate and we could all just come together as colleagues and from the ground up kick around what it was that intrigued us about the prospects of building a new school and what components we would dream of having that built around. (Teacher 2, personal communication, April 21, 2014)

Teacher 2 continued that this process was energizing and for a number of participants it was this kind of energizing discussion that helped them begin to feel connected to their team and to the purpose that the team was setting forth.
The content of these discussions revealed the notion of positivity in several ways. First, the participants expressed an appreciation for the views of others and for the process itself. The participants also expressed that the environment within which the work was done was a supportive, encouraging environment, where they were encouraged to be engaged and make a contribution to the group’s effort.

**The guiding statements.** By December of 2012, the founding leadership team had completed the work of developing the guiding statements. The group settled on four primary components: purpose, vision, core values, and operating principles. The guiding statements developed by the founding leadership team were:

**Our Purpose**
The [School Name] Team* exists to intentionally create an interconnected learning community that prepares students to thrive as responsible citizens in an ever-changing world.

*The [School Name] Team includes students, parents, staff, and teachers.*

**Our Vision**
The [School Name] Team is committed to innovation, academic rigor, and application. The Team strives for excellence in preparing students for college and career success. The [School Name] experience challenges its members to “dare to be great”.

**Core Values**
Be your “B.E.S.T."
Establish Community
Show Respect
Take Responsibility

**Operating Principles**
We are intentional and organized in all that we do.
We embrace creativity, innovation, and the pioneering spirit.
We engage in ongoing growth in order to evolve as life-long learners.
We create community to promote a sense of belonging for all.
We collaborate as a team with high levels of trust to reach defined outcomes.
We clearly state our expectations and consistently model and follow through with them.
We seek and carry out opportunities for interdisciplinary connections.
We own our actions and accept responsibility for their outcomes.

In December 2012, at the culmination of the guiding statement development phase, a founding leadership team that had no prior experience working together in that context had coalesced around its work of identifying a purpose, vision, core values, and operating principles for its new endeavor. The team had accomplished no small task, but what lay ahead was still more challenging: creating a school that reflected the ambition of the guiding statements and that put them into action.

The Middle

As the 2013 calendar year began, the team shifted its discussion from a primary focus on guiding statements to a focus on the nuts and bolts work of opening a new school. Throughout the spring of 2013, the founding leadership team continued to revisit the guiding statements. At early points they continued to clarify such aspects as the operating principles, but the guiding statements also helped to focus the work that the team was undertaking. The team meeting agendas from this time showed that the team moved in and out of direct discussion of the guiding principles throughout the spring. As the school prepared to open in August of 2013, guiding statements again became central to the development of a strong team, a team that now included and expanded group of teachers, staff, students, and parents.

Expanding and integrating the team. Through the spring and summer of 2013, the founding leadership team was joined at the school site by nine additional certificated staff members and ten classified staff members that worked under the
supervision of the principal. The first day that the entire school staff assembled to meet was August 26, 2013. That day’s activities were focused around two primary components: the guiding statements and team building. Meeting notes from that day (see Appendix H) indicated both a focus on building and strengthening the teacher team, with its new members joining the initial leadership team, as well as planning for the first day of school and the development of strong team cohesion among and between teachers and students.

The intentional team building focus was evident both in the guiding statements and the feeling that the newly arrived non-leadership team teachers felt. One such teacher reflected, “From day one I felt like we were on the same page. No one ever even said, ‘Well, I was here in the initial team, and you’re coming on later’” (Teacher B, personal communication, May 21, 2014). The team building that began with the hiring process continued through that time.

The relatively small size of the school upon opening – 309 students, 14 full-time credentialed teachers, eight full-time classified staff, and the principal – contributed to the feeling of teamwork and connectedness that was cited by many of the teachers and staff. Said one staff member, “It’s easier as a small staff I think to build that community, to have that sense of community when there is just a few of us because – it’s just easier” (Staff Member B, personal communication, April 24, 2014). Although the team building may have been somewhat easier in the context of the school’s small size, the principal was intentional in his effort to create such an atmosphere in ways beyond an association with the number of students and staff. He recalled reaching out to the school’s grounds crew (a district crew that works at
multiple school sites) and telling them, “We do luncheons here on Fridays for birthdays. What I need you to know is that you’re invited to join us, you’re invited to eat and you’re more than welcome to join in on whatever is happening” (personal communication, March 28, 2014). That sentiment was noticed by others. Teacher A stated, “It’s not just teachers...Like our campus assistants have a big role in decisions and input and I think that is – and I don’t think it’s just because we’re a small staff. I think it’s because everyone’s voice really matters” (personal communication, April 24, 2014).

The interconnectedness of the teacher team extended into the classroom, where teachers worked to make cross curricular connections, visit colleague’s classrooms, and as one teacher phrased it, “Sharing experiences of teaching and learning together” (Teacher 2, personal communication, April 21, 2014). Teachers saw such actions as important for the development of the staff, but also as important behaviors to model for students as they sought to reinforce the concept of the “interconnected learning community” promoted in the purpose statement. This focus on team connectedness was reflected in interactions with students as well. In noting differences between that school year and others, Staff Member B shared that she never heard statements such as, “You know, I’m the math teacher, I’m sorry your English isn’t going right.” Instead, she continued, “It’s like, what can we do to make that better? This is what I am trying, maybe – how can we support each other” (personal communication, April 24, 2014)? Teacher 5 summed up that feeling in commenting on “the camaraderie and the effort that we have made collectively” (personal communication, April 25, 2014), during the year. Though noting that it was certainly a stressful environment given all
the components of opening a new school, Teacher A said of the teacher team, “And so, there’s been great collaboration and...a congenial environment” (personal communication, April 24, 2014).

Such intentional team building was not accomplished without challenges. The “positive struggle” that happened early in the team building process that was centered on the guiding statements themselves may have helped to strengthen the team. The team had a specific unified task that needed to be completed and it needed to find a way to work through the conflicts and continue on. But as the school year was in full swing, other demands challenged the continued team building efforts. Teacher 6 stated, “I think the community building piece is probably the most important piece. But when you’re dealing with teachers [who “all have their own stuff going on”] and how busy our lives are” (personal communication, June 18, 2014), there was a challenge in maintaining and growing that strong team. Though meeting agendas showed that leadership team meetings took place consistently on a monthly basis throughout the year, there appeared to have been a feeling by some that the team building time that was valued early in the guiding statement development process was breaking down. One founding leadership team member commented that there were a few months where they did not meet at all:

We stopped meeting altogether as a leadership team for quite a while in there because we just had to tend for the first several months of school, first half of the year of just putting out fires and taking care of the top things on the priority list and coming back to the mission and vision wasn’t one of those. (Teacher 2, personal communication, April 21, 2014)
Again, meeting notes show that there were consistent meetings throughout the year, but the tension between time, focus, and team building may be evident in this one teacher’s perception of the situation.

**Focus.** The analysis of the data revealed a body of evidence related to how the guiding statements influenced the oral and written communication in the organization. The degree to which the guiding statements create focus largely has to do with repeated communication in terms of those statements. The focus provided by the guiding statements in the school studied fell into two categories. First, the guiding statements provided an identity for the school – “who we are.” Second, they provided parameters for the work that came after their development – “this is how we do things.” Both categories will be discussed below in the context of their applications from the initial mission and vision development process through the first year of the school’s existence. The discussion begins with a description of the process which initiated the leadership team’s exploration of “who we are” and “how we do things.”

**Process.** When the leadership team first assembled in the fall of 2012, it could have taken two courses. It could have jumped right in to the daunting work of preparing all of the practical aspects of opening a new high school, or taken the time to discuss why it was there and how they were going to go about doing all of those things. This team, under the leadership of the principal and with the guidance of the facilitator, chose the latter. The work that it undertook in developing the guiding statements provided a focus for the collective group as well as individual members of the group that lasted throughout the school year.
There appeared to be a shared sense of the value of setting a solid foundation for the work that would follow by setting forth a clear vision. One founding leadership team member stated, “If you don’t start off with that solid foundation, forget it” (Teacher 6, personal communication, June 18, 2014). Teacher 1 concurred, recounting the value of “...having a strong culture at the beginning and having it set” (personal communication, May 20, 2014). The principal expressed the view that, “There are no such things as accidents; the outcome that you get started somewhere, so plan well” (personal communication, March 28, 2014). The focused and collective planning served both to develop the team that came together, as discussed above, but also to give context to the work that lay ahead:

It was a great opportunity for all of us to really get to know one another and bond in a common goal and to be able to articulate what brought us all there, see the commonalities, air our own views, and not always agree, but it was okay, and then come to a consensus of what it is that we wanted and by focusing so much on that being the mission and vision, our core values and whatnot, we really had a sense of why we were here and as [the principal] put it, you know that we always come back, that’s our touch stone. (Teacher 5, personal communication, April 25, 2014)

**Who we are.** The idea that the guiding statements were a “touch stone” and provided a focal point for the work ahead showed to be true in the variety of ways that participants noted that the guiding statements were communicated after their initial development. By “touch stone” it is meant that the guiding statements were a point of reference that the team would return to in their work together and with other stakeholders. There was an overarching sense that the school was developing an identity that was a direct reflection of the guiding statements. One founding leadership team member commented that it was important to, “Just right from the get
go try to set the tone of this is our culture, this is who we are” (Teacher 5, personal communication, April 25, 2014). The development of this identity started with the initial leadership team work and continued throughout first year that the school was open.

From the opening of the school year in August of 2013, the sense that the guiding statements were the focal point of the team’s work was evident. Staff Member B recalled the first day’s work and the impact that it had:

Well, prior to the beginning of the school year we had an inservice where we all got together as a team for the first time, both classified and certificated and this was discussed. I mean our purpose, and our vision, and our core values are pretty much something we discuss constantly. I mean, everything we do kind of goes back to that. So yeah, that was kind of one of the most – like this is the 4th school I’ve worked at, and I would say probably one of the most memorable days of my teaching experience, the first day here. (personal communication, April 24, 2014)

The slogan “Be your best”, which formed the foundation of the school’s core values, was frequently used with and among teachers and students alike. Whether it was the principal challenging the teachers to be their best in a staff meeting, or the reminders to students, asking them, “Was that your best?” the core values provided a touch stone and an easily communicated terminology for the expectations of what the expectations were at the school. The effort to inculcate the guiding statements into the minds and hearts of the staff is reflected in how the principal communicated the guiding statements through school-wide morning announcements, phone and email communications, signage and displays around campus, meeting agendas, and letterhead.
Teachers followed suit, with explicit references in the classroom through posters and conversations with students. The school’s Associate Student Body (ASB) student leadership group communicated and promoted the school’s guiding statements explicitly in signage and communications, and in the way that they planned events, such as a concert to benefit a student from another school who was diagnosed with cancer. Because it was unusual to undertake such an event for a student from another school, the conversation about planning the concert returned specifically to the guiding statements of the school and the interconnected community aspect. Referring to that instance, Teacher 6 recalled, “We did talk about connecting to the community, helping out, no, she’s not ours but she needs us and we do have that responsibility...we are doing the right thing and sticking to our purpose” (personal communication, June 18, 2014). Said Staff Member B, “Every pep rally, at every gathering that we get together these things are presented intentionally. I mean sometimes they’re just an underlying statement, but for the most part they are – it’s pretty direct as to what our expectations are” (personal communication, April 24, 2014).

The theme of intentionality, highlighted in the school’s operating principles, was referenced frequently. Teachers referenced it in the context of meetings and events and the principal stated, in reference to one specific event, “…it goes back to where the very first thing [in the vision statement] we are intentional and organized in all that we do” (personal communication, March 28, 2014). As challenges arose, the principal commented that the guiding principles provided the touch stone that the team needed to stay on course. “It is so easy to return to that mission, vision, and core values, and operating principles,” he said, adding that it depersonalized the issue and
allowed both parties to focus on the principles that had been set out and communicated for the team rather than on personal preferences or current circumstances. “Everybody comes in with their thing, but when you have these overarching principles and guiding posts, if you will, it starts to diminish [conflict]” (personal communication, June 30, 2014).

The principal emphasized the importance of the guiding statements in communicating a definition of what the school was. “The very first thing you [department chairs] need to be able to do is frame up what is [the school] about and that descriptor comes from our mission, vision, core values, and operating principles” (personal communication, June 30, 2014). Teacher 3 reflected that the amount of communication in terms of the guiding principles was different than experienced elsewhere, noting, “Maybe I didn’t pay attention enough at the other places, but it’s hard not to pay attention to it here” (personal communication, April 17, 2014). While the communication in terms of the guiding statements appeared to be frequent, there was a feeling by some that more was necessary. Teacher 4 recalled, “Well, first off, in my eyes it’s not enough. It’s not happening enough, but it is happening a lot, it’s happening more than I’ve ever seen before, it’s not happening enough” (personal communication, April 15, 2014).

Teacher A referred to the repeated references to the guiding statements in terms of classroom teaching:

> It’s all over our website, I think every single meeting agenda handout has our purpose and our vision on it, [the principal] has come back to it, and...what’s the word, when you loop back in curriculum, when you spiral curriculum. (personal communication, April 24, 2014)
The principal supported this observation as he reflected on his view of the role of guiding statements in focusing the team’s efforts: “You’ve got to have predefined destinations. You’ve got to have measuring sticks as far as having the back drop of what it is we’re trying to accomplish” (personal communication, March 28, 2014). Evidence showed that the guiding statements were used to define those destinations and to focus the communication of purpose and expectations throughout the year.

With the help of communicative reinforcement of the guiding statements, the staff and teachers over time appeared to develop a sense of who they were as a school and what kinds of things they did at the school to reflect those guiding statements. The school-wide guiding statements provided the foundation for each academic department to develop its own mission statements (for samples see Appendix I). “One of our exercises as department leaders...is that we needed to build our own mission statements and so our mission statements needed to relate back to this [the school’s] mission statement,” recalled Teacher 5 (personal communication, April 25, 2014). The process of developing individual department mission statements allowed teachers to relate the specific work that they do back to the overall vision and mission of the school. Explaining this connection, Teacher 5 continued:

What is my vision of what [this subject] is going to do here and how does it relate to the mission and vision that we have here, so it was very much structured that way for us and we agree to all of that, just to say when you start to build what you’re doing in your departments, you’re going to directly reference back to this [the school guiding statements]. (personal communication, April 25, 2014)
The focus provided by the guiding statements extended beyond the principal and leadership team. It allowed the various organizations affiliated with the school to focus their work around the common vision for the school. The principal stated:

The only thing that distinguishes between these organizations, ASB, PTSA, Foundation, and [the school] is the mission, but the reason is because they’re doing a little bit different kind of work, but their mission has to jive into what we’re doing as a campus. (personal communication, March 28, 2014)

Expanding on this point, and referring to the parent group (PTSA) in particular, the principal noted, “...again [the vision] really just helps and simplifies things so they’re not running things or doing things that fit their own personal agendas, but help us get to [the vision]” (personal communication, March 28, 2014).

While the guiding statements served to create a shared identity that was communicated in the ways discussed above, the data revealed that participants identified with unique aspects of that identity. Just as founding leadership team members had contributed distinct ideas during their development, the meanings that participants took away from the guiding statements varied based on personal perception and experience. The guiding statements provided focus for the participants’ work, but that focus was not uniform. Evidence of these differing points of focus is discussed in the following section.

**Whose focus?** While the work purpose of guiding statements in part is to provide a degree of collective organizational focus, individual actors within an organization can be expected to bring their own experiences, perspectives and interpretations to the guiding statements. Conversations with participants revealed that teachers and staff members tended to attach their own meaning to the guiding
statements and to focus on particular aspects of the guiding statements in executing their work.

Part of the challenge of crafting the guiding statements was in focusing the team in on a succinct set of guiding statements. As one founding leadership team member recalled of the process, “I think it was more of trying to get it down to a concise one-liner when we had this big vision” (personal communication, April 25, 2014). The principal talked as well about narrowing the focus:

It was creating a one to two sentence caption of what the [school name] experience is intended to be like, to feel like and that as well as the vision it is then, that started to define, okay, so what are will the programs to get us there. So it really, it started to create anchors, anchors for again what I’ll call the [school name] experience. (personal communication, March 28, 2014)

In reference to the leadership team’s efforts at building the guiding statements, Teacher 6 recalled, “When we came up with the [school’s] purpose, that’s all of us coming together, and everybody has words in that...and everybody has something that they believe strongly in about that” (personal communication, June 18, 2014). In fact, among the founding leadership team members, a variety of key themes emerged that teachers and the principal focused on in their work. Academic rigor, curricular interconnection, community interconnection, innovation, application, core values, and ability to change were mentioned as areas for focus by the founding leadership team members. Each has its place in the guiding statements and each may have a different meaning in a particular context.

The staff and teachers who were not involved in the development of the guiding statements similarly offered a diverse range of feedback as to their areas of
focus. Innovation, core values, community interconnection, academic rigor, and college and career readiness were areas that they reported focusing on. One of these teachers expressed that, “What I really get out of it is building or growing a community that is not just focused on school, but that’s also going to make them into world learners and citizens of the world really. That’s how I always interpret this mission and vision, and so coming into a school that really firmly believes in that helped me to develop my curriculum” (Teacher B, personal communication, May 21, 2014). Another of these teachers commented, “The innovative part, I remember hearing that this is a place that we’re going to set out to be different, we’re going to try new things” (Teacher A, personal communication, April 24, 2014). While the team collaborated to develop the guiding statements that provided a unified focus, Teacher 6’s comment that “everybody has something that they believe strongly in,” seems to ring true in the comments of the participants.

The analysis of the data revealed that there was no single point of focus that the guiding statements provided. The interview data revealed that, while the statements were a reflection of the collective agreement among the founding leadership team, each individual teacher, administrator, and staff member “owns” the statements in ways specific to their roles, responsibilities, and experience.

Alignment. Focus is related to talk in the organization. The degree to which the guiding statements create focus largely has to do with repeated communication in terms of those statements. Alignment, on the other hand, is about action. Regardless of how much the guiding statements are talked about, the organization will take actions that are either in line with the guiding statements or not. Crotts et al. (2012)
described what they called an alignment gap as such: “There is a gap between what the mission says and what people in the organization believe is management’s real message. This gap is a result of the lack of alignment among the managerial tools of policies, procedures, and practices with the mission” (p. 54). Once decisions start to be made and actions taken within the organization, questions of alignment may arise. The following discussion centers on the data that relates to questions of alignment and examples of alignment during the first year of the school’s existence.

**Questions of Alignment.** While the school’s guiding statements did receive and provide a good deal of communicative focus as described above, questions of alignment still emerged as some participants questioned the degree to which the team had and needed to continue to monitor the alignment of its work to the guiding statements. Teachers, from both the founding leadership team and those hired later, noted the need to continue to use the guiding statements in the decision-making process. “I think that in the long term, having that as all of us are making decisions, that will help maintain just understanding of the initial goal,” proposed Teacher A (personal communication, April 24, 2014). Teacher 5 furthered that thought by stating, “And any decision making we do, anything we think about as we continue to grow as a new school, we come back to, ‘Does it fit why we are here’” (personal communication, April 25, 2014)?

However, there were also those who questioned the degree to which alignment to the guiding statements was maintained in the first year. There was an understanding of the challenges of alignment to guiding statements, both in the actions
taken by the teacher team and in the outcomes seen in the classroom. In reference to classroom outcomes, one teacher noted:

Absolutely, our honors kids are going to represent exactly what we are. But are all of the other students? And they are our students just as much as the honors students are. And so I think we need to figure out how to make mission and vision true for those kids. (Teacher A, personal communication, April 24, 2014)

One founding leadership team member noted that there was still a question of what good the guiding statements would be in practice, stating, “You know, unfortunately, we still don’t know what good our mission actually is” (Teacher 4, personal communication, April 15, 2014). Teacher 4 continued:

I think there’s just huge understandable fear that it’s not going to mean anything anyway, it was, you know, we’re going to go back into the school and it will last a little bit, and a mission statement really doesn’t mean anything. (personal communication, April 15, 2014)

Sharing that concern, another founding leadership team member observed that while the guiding statements reflect “what it is that one will see going on around campus” (Teacher 2, personal communication, April 21, 2014), there was still a need for greater emphasis and alignment:

I think with their emphasis and focus it could be even more of what we see going on around campus. So there is not so much peripheral stuff and [things] that kind of doesn’t really matter...And why are you guys doing that? I thought you’re all about this? (Teacher 2, personal communication, April 21, 2014)

Despite that skepticism, Teacher 2 continued to show a belief in the value of both the process of development for the guiding statements, as well as working as a team to align the school’s actions to them. Teacher 2 offered the following solution to combat potential misalignment:
At the same time I think we need to revisit the guiding principles as a whole school each year that we have our new people. And agree or disagree with how they’ve been developed so far and really make some changes to them...for the need to change itself as well as the need to engage the buy in of all members of the staff in the future. (personal communication, April 21, 2014)

While questions of alignment and how to address it may linger among some team members, others recounted that guiding statements were used in the decision-making process from the early stages of the team’s work throughout the school year.

According to Teacher 3:

Any decisions that we need to make, someone in the leadership meeting will always go, ‘Okay...is that part of [the mission or vision]? Is [what we decided]...in accordance with our mission statement or our vision? (personal communication, April 17, 2014)

Another founding leadership team member also recalled the guiding statements as a central component of the decision-making process:

I like that we would come back to it, we would table things and rather than feel like we have to hammer it out and – it was great, you know, the reminders, let’s go back and does that fit with our purpose, does that fit with the mission? It was good that it was something that we would come back to so frequently. (Teacher 1, personal communication, May 20, 2014)

The concept of “mission drift” a term used in the literature to describe incremental misalignment between mission and action was raised by one founding leadership team member. “I think that already with such a small staff and such a small student population, we are already drifting away from our mission-vision, so I think it’s a very difficult thing, but we do constantly come back; even though we drift we come back” (Teacher 4, personal communication, April 15, 2014). Teacher 4 continued, “I think it’s inevitable, you’re obviously going to drift, you want to drift,
you want to expand, but then you just want to bring it back” (personal communication, April 15, 2014). Teacher 2 offered a solution to the potential of drift and a way to address alignment issues:

I would think that in any meeting and with any decision we would be really coming back to them [the guiding statements]...by comparing the ideas we’ve kicked around to our mission, vision, and operating principles and choosing things based on what fit and what doesn’t fit. (personal communication, April 21, 2014)

Even if there were some questions of alignment, the guiding statements were seen as foundational to the school’s developing culture as the year progressed. Staff Member B noted:

It’s kind of hard to put into words because a lot of it is just implied with the attitude and the overall expectation that’s here on campus. Like our core values are referred to on a daily basis around here. (personal communication, April 24, 2014)

The principal emphasized the importance of alignment with the guiding statements, beginning with the hiring process. One teacher hired after the crafting of the guiding statements recalled, “Right off the bat [he] is very clear like, this is important to us; what we say on the internet or what we say on our website is really what we mean” (Teacher A, personal communication, April 24, 2014). That emphasis continued as the school developed its culture and sense of community. The principal observed, “I think alignment needs to happen from who we say we are and what we are trying to accomplish and the behaviors we exhibit. To me that is campus culture” (personal communication, March 28, 2014).
**Examples of Alignment.** Participants were asked to provide examples of how they saw the guiding statements reflected in their work and the work of others. Examples abounded including budgeting, scheduling, advisory periods, campus expectations, collaboration, team building, interconnectedness of curriculum and of stakeholders, student support programs, curriculum, hiring, teacher and student relationships, student activities, student attitudes and behaviors, and parent groups.

When asked for the greatest reflection of the guiding statements at the school, participants most often cited the Associated Student Body (ASB) and its director, who as one teacher reflected:

> We’ve got ASB [and the ASB director] doing an outstanding job really bringing that piece of community to life. Service learning opportunities, assemblies for different motivational speakers, and such and that ASB and the pep rallies really working to bring everybody together. I think they have done a really phenomenal job. (Teacher 2, personal communication, April 21, 2014)

A number of others shared an appreciation for the ASB’s role in embedding the guiding principles into school activities. Another teacher added the following appreciation:

> I mean there’s plenty of examples but definitely one staff member that comes to mind is our ASB coordinator...and she’s constantly, not only preaching the mission vision, but she lives it, and so that idea of teaching your students to take responsibility...she’s constantly bringing them back to the mission vision as she does it. (Teacher 4, personal communication, April 15, 2014)

Others saw reflections of the guiding statements in a variety of campus activities. Teacher 5 commented that he frequently saw the guiding statements coming to life through the students:
Whenever you see our students come together, if you were at one of our basketball games, if you’ve been at any of our pep assemblies, if you see them at lunch, if you see them in class, it’s like we’ve got these kids that just kind of interweave...There really is truly this interconnected learning community. (personal communication, April 25, 2014)

Teacher 1 saw the guiding statements reflected in the response of students to a peer conflict that had taken place on campus:

And I literally heard a kid say when some of the things had gone down, ‘That doesn’t happen in our school.’ I mean every school’s going to have things come up but the fact that a kid could actually verbalize that blew me away. I’m like, ‘Yeah, the kids know it too, not just the teachers.’ (personal communication, May 20, 2014)

The ideals set forth in the guiding statements were not seen manifested in just the staff and students. Participants also recognized ways in which parent groups supported activities which aligned to the guiding statements. The PTSA group, according to Teacher 1, provided career panels that connected students to the school’s vision of career preparedness (personal communication, May 20, 2014). Teacher B commented that the guiding statements had been instrumental in planning instruction. “So it really helped me to focus my lesson plans, my website, my classroom, and everything” (personal communication, May 21, 2014). Teacher B also noted the way in which the school fundraising foundation committed itself to promoting connections to the world beyond the school:

For next year the foundation is giving each department funds to actually use for things that are outside of the classroom...Even for next year they already have plans for us to keep growing to interconnect our community, to take our students and think outside the classroom. (personal communication, May 21, 2014)
The interconnectedness of staff and practices of working together were also highlighted as manifestations of the values that were set forth in the guiding statements. Teacher 6 noted that she observed groups of colleagues, all members of the founding leadership team, who collaborated on an ongoing basis. “The way that they work together and they’re very forward thinkers and thinking about the students and how to make everything work” (personal communication, June 18, 2014).

The alignment of action to the guiding statements was present in the classroom, where teachers reflected on the ways in which they felt them come to life in curriculum, teaching, and learning. In the school’s curriculum, Teacher 3 identified the ways in which an emphasis on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) course pathways reflected the intention of the guiding statements:

If you look at our vision it’s committed to innovation, academic rigor, application. Those [STEM] pathways really focus on career, college, success, I think, and the fact that we have them here is big deal and the kind of in a way defines our school that like makes us different from [other schools]. (personal communication, April 17, 2014).

 Teachers also saw the influence of the guiding statements in their classroom practices, which directly impacted the students’ learning experiences as well. Teacher A referred to the professed commitment to innovation in the school’s vision statement and how that impacted her approach to her work with technology in the classroom:

Well, I am into using technology in the classroom but I’ve always been very reticent [to do so]....And I’ve felt this freedom that I haven’t felt before to just say, “Okay, I’m going to try it.... And if it fails, it’s a class period that didn’t go as well as I wanted it to.” And that was really hard for me. (personal communication, April 24, 2014)

Teacher A was not the only one who felt the influence of the guiding statements on her work. Another teacher expressed the way in which the school’s purpose statement
references to an interconnected learning community and world citizenship influenced teaching and learning in the classroom. Noting her interpretation of those components of the purpose statement she reflected, “Coming into a school that really firmly believes in that helped me to develop my curriculum and helped me to really add some of the things that maybe before I was not adding to my lessons, things like more culture” (Teacher B, personal communication, May 21, 2014).

The participants saw the guiding statements coming to life in a variety of ways as the first year progressed. Data analysis revealed that the guiding statements were recognized coming to life in teaching, curriculum, team work, and extracurricular activities at the site. The initial aim of developing, building upon, and communicating a shared purpose, vision, and core values had been achieved. However, in the new school setting growth and change were a part of the transition to year two and the staff turned to maintaining and expanding upon what had been designed and implemented starting with the first founding leadership team meetings.

**Looking Ahead**

The second year of the school’s existence, 2014-2015, promised to be a year of significant change. The student body was anticipated to more than double, with a proportionate increase in staff size. In anticipation of these changes, the recruitment of new teachers and classified staff, as well as plans to welcome these new colleagues, began in spring, 2014. For the purposes of this study, all participants were asked to look ahead to the 2014-2015 school year. In the discussion below, participants recounted their involvement in recruitment and selection processes and made recommendations for how to reinforce and deepen the school’s connection to its
guiding statements. Responses to the question again centered on team building, with both recruitment and team connectedness reflected strongly. Whether it was the size of the staff, the time dedicated to discussions of purpose and other guiding principles, or the thrill of creating a new school, there was largely a feeling that, “None of us want to lose what we have here” (Teacher 5, personal communication, April 25, 2014). Noting that things would change, Teacher 5 continued, “But we don’t want it to leave the tone, the vibe, that we’ve set for the 14 or whatever of us that are here [since the beginning]” (personal communication, April 25, 2014).

**Expanding the team.** As with the initial hiring that was done at the school, there continued to be a realization of the importance of team building through the recruitment and hiring process. The school faced the potential of having its first involuntary transfers to the site, a prospect that alarmed a number of the participants. Staff Member A recalled a conversation with other district classified staff members during a meeting at the district office:

> And they were talking about possibly being forced to transfer here. And it was a very frank conversation and I was so glad that it was brought up, because I said, whoever comes here, whether you choose to come here or you are forced to come here, you have to change your attitude; if you come here and you have baggage with you, or you are not open to being the best you can be, and being happy at your job, and doing the best you can for these kids, and being the best possibly in every way, at your job, and being a team player, then we really don’t want you around here and you are not going to be happy and we aren’t either. So basically that’s the truth of it, and we try to get that across to people but it’s true if staff members, teachers want to come over here we asked them to read that [the guiding statements]. And then if they want to, if they are still interested, then they do meet with [the principal]. (Staff Member A, personal communication, April 17, 2014)
The approach of having interested applicants become familiar with the guiding statements prior to talking to the principal about a potential move to the site applied to both classified and certificated employees. The principal took steps earlier in the spring to ensure that potential teacher candidates understood what was expected at the school site. “My directive to our department chairs to say there is no choice, you need to not only know this [the guiding statements], you need to communicate this to any potential staff member so they understand what it means to work here” (personal communication, March 28, 2014). Staff Member A continued the thought, “We say, look at the website, look at our program, see what it’s like, read our vision, read our purpose, know that you are coming on board to a place where we want people that are going to be on board” (personal communication, April 17, 2014). In preparation for the upcoming expansion of the teaching staff, the principal met with the individual department chairs to communicate expectations and provide support for integrating the new staff into the existing team (Principal, personal communication, June 30, 2014).

**Enculturation.** Enculturation of new staff members was seen as an important first step in the team building process. The principal noted that directly addressing the guiding statement would be the starting point for the expanded year two team. Commenting on how he planned to set the tone for the second year he said, “I know that it will start with how to refresh and then with our new team members, integrate those key concepts [the guiding statements]” (personal communication, June 30, 2014). Referencing the coming growth of the staff, Teacher 3 shared:

That’s scary and I don’t know what’s going to happen then, but I feel like right now, the people who are here, we will try to establish the, you know, help new members coming on, see the way, see the light –
sounds so cultish. It’s not a cult. It does sound cultish, though.
(personal communication, April 17, 2014)

Though it sounded odd to the teacher when it was said, the “cultish” nature of staff recruitment and indoctrination was echoed by others. Another teacher commented, “So we’re already going to be looking for people who are a good fit for what we are about,” and that the first step for the coming year should be, “to enculturate the people who are joining us” (Teacher 5, personal communication, April 25, 2014).

Various participants shared perspectives on how such an enculturation process should take place. “So you know we just right from the get go try to set the tone of this is our culture, this is who we are...One way we know is through the interview process just like [the principal] did when he first was interviewing all of us” (Teacher 5, personal communication, April 25, 2014). Staff Member B explained, “Oh, I definitely think that we should continue to explicitly explain it. You know, just for the incoming freshmen and incoming staff. For them to understand what we’ve come to understand that this means, you know” (personal communication, April, 24, 2014).

The principal saw the need to reinforce the school wide guiding statements, as well as the department guiding statements that were developed (see Appendix I). “I picture an activity where I challenge our department chairs...where they, with their new team members, have to define their mission and vision” (Principal, personal communication, June 30, 2015).

Another teacher proposed a teacher mentoring system, so that existing teachers could communicate with new colleagues “and just kind of show them like the ways,
like how business is done here” (Teacher 3, personal communication, April 17, 2014).

Finally, another returned to the concept of intentional team building exercises:

I think that I would definitely look at team building first. So I guess I
would do the baby steps, and...start asking those questions....I think
where I worry about us falling apart is we don’t do enough team
building...and I think if we don’t have that team building to get all
teachers on board, and all the teachers believing in what we’re
doing...you’re not going to have everyone believing in this [the guiding
statements]. (Teacher 6, personal communication, June 18, 2014)

The importance of teamwork and team building was explicit from the initial
work of the leadership team in designing the school’s guiding statements through the
end of the 2013-14 school year. The fear existed that as the school grew, some of the
strength of the team that was developed will be weakened. Staff Member B noted the
concern that, “As we grow [we] not separate into like our English and our Math
department. You know, take that time for our leadership team to sit down and to meet
and to make sure that everybody is on the same page” (personal communication, April
24, 2014). Teacher B shared a similar view of the future:

I think if we keep our core values, if we keep the principles that guide
us this year, if we keep them – like I want to say enforcing them and
having them guide us, then it’ll keep everybody, not just the first year
teachers, but the new teachers, they’ll know what they’re coming into.
(personal communication, April 24, 2014)

Another teacher offered more nuanced assessment of the prospect for
continued team development in the context of school-wide growth in the coming
years:

At the same time I think we need to revisit the guiding principles as a
whole each year that we have our new people. And agree or disagree
with how they’ve been developed so far and really make some changes
to them, for the need of change itself as well as the need to engage the
buy-in of all members of the staff in the future. (Teacher 2, personal communication, April 21, 2014)

The feeling was that such a reevaluation of the guiding statements with all staff on a continuing basis will help cultivate the benefits recognized by the initial leadership team in the early meetings developing the guiding statements. It would provide a venue and a task for the team to build around. Referring to the positive outcomes resulting from such exercises, one founding leadership team member said:

What is everybody’s contribution so that we can celebrate each person’s strength to that community, because I think everybody brings something unique, and we have to find a way to pull them in, to make sure they know that they’re needed where they’re at and they’re wanted. (Teacher 6, personal communication, June 18, 2014)

That kind of team building, enshrined in the guiding statements and emphasized in practice appeared to have had positive impacts during the school’s first year and had the potential to benefit the school in the future. As one teacher summarized the thought:

So, anyway, so I just think that was a big part, is just the staff. That’s not often quantified when you – I mean, it’s not. It’s not quantified on AYP scores or API or whatever. But it’s going to permeate all those things because we enjoy coming to work. (Teacher A, personal communication, April 24, 2014)

Many participants recognized the importance of continuing to revisit the guiding statements in order to keep them relevant to the school’s work. As important as that process seemed for the teachers and staff members that were on board for the first year, it was equally important leading into the second year. As the school’s first year of operation came to an end in June, 2014, the team had the ideas discussed above to guide them in the enculturation of new members, but only time would tell
how newly added teachers and staff, some of whom may have been forced to transfer to the site, would take ownership of the guiding statements in their work.

**Advice from the Leadership Team**

The members of the founding leadership team who developed the guiding statements offered advice for others involved in such an endeavor. Their comments consistently addressed time and space, leadership, and the development process. In the following sections, this advice from the leadership team is discussed.

**Time.** One frequent response centered on the idea of allowing enough time for the process to take place. Though participants felt a tension between a sense of too much time and too little time to do the work, the time invested seemed to provide a number of benefits. Ample time allowed for the founding leadership team to connect, for ideas to fully develop, and for the team to feel invested in the outcome of their time together.

The repeated theme of time expressed itself in a number of ways. Teacher 5 explained, “It does take a bit of timing. You have to be patient with it but it pays off in the end because you do have that really coming together that everybody is saying, ‘Yeah, I buy in’” (personal communication, April 25, 2014). Teacher 2 similarly noted, “I would say also make sure that you carve out enough time to get together often and regularly and consistently for the duration” (personal communication, April 21, 2014). Teacher 1, who recalled having been through a similar process before, offered the following advice:

I would say definitely take time, take your time, sleep on it, don’t feel like you have to power through it all in one meeting or one week or
whatever, just come let it kind of sink in, and think about it, and come back to it. (personal communication, May 20, 2014)

Finally, one leadership team member simply stated, “There needs to be a little more time” (Teacher 3, personal communication, April 17, 2014).

Teacher 5 best expressed the tension between time for discussion of the guiding statements and the desire to move on to other important work related to the school’s opening:

We spent a lot of time on our mission and, I can just speak for myself, it just felt like at some point it was like, ‘Come on...there’s so much we got to do. We got to get with this and it wasn’t because what we were saying and doing and thinking about was unproductive, but at some point I just had in the back of my head is this is important but, boy, we’ve got a lot of other important things to get through, too. (personal communication, April 25, 2014)

The principal recognized the frustration in the time taken for the process:

This mission and vision stuff is difficult. It’s complex because it is easy to check out from the conversation, it is easy to say, “Oh, you know what, these are going to be words and put it together – let’s go on and let’s get to the real work.” (personal communication, March 28, 2014)

There was no indication that anyone did “check out” of the conversation, as even Teacher 5, who wanted to move on, concluded by saying, “So I think if I were to say anything is the process needs to have its time” (personal communication, April 25, 2014).

The reflection on time relative to guiding statements was not limited to the initial development phase. Participants noted the need to allow time for the guiding statements to be infused in their work both during the school year and looking ahead. The challenge of allowing time for discussion of purpose and values was noted by one
founding leadership team member. “Ultimately, I think that’s so much of what our woes come down to is limitations of resources, of both time and money” (Teacher 2, personal communication, April 21, 2014). As the business of the school year engulfed the staff, Teacher 2 reflected that the team was, “…taking care of the top things on the priority list and coming back to the mission and vision wasn’t one of those” (personal communication, April 21, 2014). The limitation of time during the year did, however, have a silver lining for Teacher 2, who finished the point by saying, “There’s not enough time to maintain the aspirations I think of the lofty ideals and things like coming back to the mission and vision, especially when they are embedded in what we’re doing to the degree that they are” (personal communication, April 21, 2014).

Looking ahead, others cautioned of the need to make time for continued team building, in particular, given the context of a growing staff and the emphasis of the guiding statements on the team concept. Thinking about a return to school in the fall of year two, one founding leadership team member suggested the need to, “Have time for conversation, because if you don’t really know someone, how do you work with them” (Teacher 6, personal communication, June 18, 2014)? Aligning actions with the guiding statements takes time as well, and taking time to collaborate as a leadership team and with the wider staff were seen by others as ways that the school could continue to fulfill its guiding statements.

Leadership. Although participants were not explicitly asked any questions regarding leadership, they made frequent reference to the importance of leadership in the context of promoting the guiding statements. The observations about leadership were primarily about the role that the principal played and the most common theme
that emerged from these leadership reflections was that there needed to be a push to focus on the value of the development process and the value of the guiding statements generally. The principal himself felt that he played a central role in instilling in the team a sense of the importance of the work. He noted that “What absolutely needs to be avoided is this concept of we’re going to do a task because every organization does it” (personal communication, March 28, 2014), without regard for using the guiding statements to ground the work done within the school.

The principal commented that he was guided by his personal study of leadership and organizational development. “What I anchored our work on was Simon Sinek [and his book, Start with Why]; it was just very to the point, very clean and for me this work has always been something I am very passionate about” (personal communication, March 28, 2014). At the beginning of the guiding statement development process the principal showed the founding leadership team Sinek’s (2009b) video, which explains his theory on the importance of placing purpose at the center of organizational dialogue. This decision was intended to set a frame for the conversation that the founding leadership team was to have.

The principal, further explaining the value of leadership in the development of guiding statements commented, “Whoever is going to facilitate the conversation, they themselves have to believe that there is a value in having a mission-vision, core values, and operating principles. The [sic] absolutely, they have to be able to articulate and emotionally connect people to the work that’s before them” (personal communication, March 28, 2014). He further reflected the leader’s responsibility to include others in the process, saying:
[You have to] not give people the way out, to say “No, no, you are important. What you say does matter and what we’re doing is going to be beneficial.” And, I think also, me personally having a very strong belief that that work matters. (personal communication, June 30, 2014)

Others recognized this, such as the teacher who remembered her first interaction with the principal saying, “So it was in the first interaction and I remember that was one of the components that was – that struck me as that somebody takes seriously what they set out to do” (Teacher A, personal communication, April 24, 2014). The principal repeatedly expressed a sense of positivity about the process that seemed to help inspire others. One teacher commented that, “[The principal] played a huge role in kind of just getting us pumped up, so because of that enthusiasm we felt like it’s worth it...” (Teacher 4, personal communication, April 15, 2014). At the same time, it was repeatedly noted by others that the leadership should not come from the principal alone.

A sense of the value of the process of developing guiding statements was shared by other staff members. In commenting on the productiveness of the early meetings themselves, Teacher 6 commented, “Like, we would have our agendas, but I think we all came in there believing in – I think believing in [the process]” (personal communication, June 18, 2014). Absent a sense of the importance, there existed the potential to discount the work being done to develop the guiding statements. Teacher 4 recalled feeling that, “There’s people on the other side of it, they’re going, this crap doesn’t matter...it is a waste of time” (personal communication, April 15, 2014). The founding leadership team appeared to take its cue, however, from the guidance of the principal as described above. Recalled Teacher 5, “It was just the tone was set from
day one, we all agreed to it and then every meeting from there on out just built and built on that” (personal communication, April 25, 2014).

Putting the guiding statements into practice also required buy-in from more than just the principal. “Look, it’s not just [the principal] who’s bringing them up. People come back to them. Sometimes it is, ‘We need to come back to our mission and vision’” (Teacher A, personal communication, April 24, 2014). When asked about the role of the principal as a catalyst in pushing forward the guiding statements, Teacher 6 commented, “Oh, [the principal] can’t do it” (personal communication, June 18, 2014). The teacher’s view was that the principal could not be alone in pushing the school’s vision. Teacher 6 expressed summarized the sentiment of the importance all members of the team of the team pushing the school’s vision saying, “It shouldn’t be left to one person...I need everybody to take ownership” (personal communication, June 18, 2014). The principal clearly recognized the futility of working alone. He noted the need for the leadership team to continue to take on the role of promoting the guiding principles with new colleagues and students. “It’s about getting people to connect to a bigger picture that kind of sparks their inner drive that says, ‘You know what, I’m committed and I’m fired up to contribute to that’” (Principal, personal communication, June 30, 2014).

**Process of development.** The process of working to develop the school’s guiding statements was designed around and complimented team building. It provided time for the team to grow and provided focus for the work that was ahead of the team as the school prepared to open and continued through its first year. In addition to the components of the process that are discussed above, several participants commented
on the role of the facilitator in helping the process. “Where I felt [she] was phenomenal was facilitating, extracting, words or phrases that were thrown out – ‘Did you mean this? Or do you mean this, or is this really a vision or is this a mission’” (Principal, personal communication, March 28, 2014)? Others agreed that the facilitator served a valuable role in the process. Teacher 5, when asked to explain why the facilitator was helpful to the process, said:

[The facilitator] brought two things as I recall. One was the experience of having helped other schools do this in the past, so she could kind of say, hey, I have a sense of what you’re going through and this is kind of where you might be and here’s some things that can help you kind of work your way through. (personal communication, April 25, 2014)

For the principal, the facilitator served a valuable leadership role in the process that helped to change the dynamic in the team for those sessions. “What it gave me the opportunity to do was to be a part of the team and not be a facilitator and not filter out people’s ability just to communicate, just to communicate freely” (personal communication, March 28, 2014). This point was not missed by teachers, including one who said, “Probably the biggest thing it did is that it let...our principal just be involved in the conversation” (Teacher 4, personal communication, April 15, 2014).

Conclusion

The school’s guiding statements undoubtedly provided the starting point for the development of a new school foundation and for all of the activities related to bringing that school into existence and through its first year. They provided a focus around which the founding leadership team began its work. They provided a focus for integrating new team members and planning the work of various aspects of the school’s operations. As the school prepared for its second year of operation, the
guiding statements again provided a touchstone for expanding the teacher and staff team and enculturating new members of the school community. However, all of that work could have and would have been done in the absence of these guiding statements, leading one to wonder what impact the guiding statements had on developing the organization? That question, along with lessons learned from the experience of the study participants will be discussed in Chapter 5.
Chapter 5: Discussion and Findings

At the end of more than a year and a half of planning, preparation, and implementation, one of the school’s founding leadership team members pondered, “There’s this lingering question out there in my mind of why. Why do we have this mission and vision” (Teacher 2, personal communication, April 21, 2014)? That is surely a question that has been asked by leaders and organizational members many times before. Administrators, teachers, and staff looked to find value in those statements that were intended to reflect the kind of school that they would build. Organizational stakeholders attach meaning and value to the guiding statements by the way in which their actions and the actions of others play out in their work. In those experiences they see, to varying degrees, reflections of the guiding statements.

An emphasis on individual “meaning making” in the first year of any organization is to be expected (Gioia et al., 2010). The individual’s experience is contrasted with the still forming organizational identity and the two influence each other over time. The mutual learning model (Schwarz, 2013) is likewise grounded in the way that an individual’s experience interacts with that of the group. The key to developing an effective group mindset is in changing the way the individuals in that group perceive their roles, responsibilities, and the task at hand. A framework such as the mutual learning model provides a group with foundational approach upon which to organize that effective group culture. The team effectiveness model (see Figure 3) begins with individual values and assumptions that in turn influence and are influenced by the team design. Fairhurst and Putnam (2004) note the role that this kind of group interaction plays in organizing. They write that the “unfolding details of
organizing influence and are influenced by a reflexive immersion in the whole setting and ongoing stream of experience at a particular time and place” (Fairhurst & Putnam, 2004, p. 16). In other words, organization involves interplay between the individual and group, which is a part of an ongoing process of development.

Figure 3. The Team Effectiveness Model (Schwarz, 2013) shows a theoretical model of the interplay between values and assumptions shared by team members and the design of the team and work environments that lead to effective team performance.

Considering this phenomenon, understanding the perspectives of individual participants in the process is central to this study. Guiding statements played a critical role in the process of team and organizational development in this case study, as they provided the foundational work around which the team created its context, structure, and processes. The guiding statements provided a focal point for the founding leadership team as they developed an effective team culture, and then provided a
“touch stone” for the continuing work that was done after their development. With that perspective in mind, I will return to the research questions that guided the study:

1. What was the experience of the school staff during initial development of guiding statements in a new school?

2. In what ways did the work of developing guiding statements impact the organization once the initial development phase was complete?

3. What conditions for the development of guiding statements in a new organization do participants perceive as beneficial to the process?

In the following sections, answers to these research questions will be addressed and a new perspective for viewing the role of guiding statements in schools is proposed. The chapter will close with a discussion of the implications of these findings for educational leadership and social justice and potential areas for future research on guiding statements in schools.

**Research Question #1: The Experience of Development**

The experience of development of the guiding statements was the first shared experience of the founding leadership team. For the formation of group and organizational identity, this is no insignificant fact. Gioia et al. (2010) observed that the beginning stages of organizational life offer a key window into understanding the development of identity. Although organizational members will arrive with distinct individual experiences, how those individual experiences manifest in relation to the organization will not yet have been established. The formation of group identity is an inevitable outcome that will happen with or without the presence of formal guiding
statements. Fairhurst et al. (1997) warned that “in the absence of a strong organizational identity, the countervailing forces of the environment are likely to prevail” (p. 245). The role of effective leadership is in creating the focus on the formation of identity around the guiding statements. For the leader or group focused on building a strong collective identity, this initial period of coming together is a crucial time.

Schwarz’s (2013) mutual learning model posits that the mindset of organizational members is critical to high functioning teams in organizations and that one of the foundational components of this high functioning is that the team works from the same guiding ideas. He writes, “When the entire team has a shared understanding of and commitment to a common purpose and values, then the purpose and values themselves become guides by which team members can assess their own performances” (Schwarz, 2013, p. 12). There were two components of this shared purpose that played out in this development phase of this case.

First, the members of the founding leadership team joined that team with a shared commitment to founding a new school. Interview data revealed that participants felt an excitement about opening a new school that they had a part in designing. They had made an informed choice to be involved in the process, an important component of the effective team mindset outlined in the team effectiveness model. The interview questions that were developed by the principal were direct in their communication of the mindset for and expectations of joining that team. As was reported in Chapter 4, many of the participants recognized the effective work that was done by the principal in building a team that was well suited for the work.
The people that are brought together on a team can play a critical factor in the ability of the team to function effectively together (Collins, 2001; Schwarz, 2013; Sinek, 2009a). For Collins (2001), this means having the “right people on the bus” and for Sinek (2009a), the key is not in hiring people with relevant skills, but rather people who are motivated by the same purpose. The initial purpose for joining the founding leadership team was to open a new school. While the more focused direction that the school would take was not yet clearly defined when the participants joined the leadership team, it is clear that those who came to the leadership team shared a common excitement for building a new school. The initial work that they did together focused that general concept into a clear statement of purpose and vision upon which that new school would be built.

The second component of shared purpose during the development phase was the leadership focus around developing the guiding statements themselves. The participants in the present study had a range of experiences, including grade level and subject matter expertise, years in education, and size of school. They came together to form a new group identity. In that process, the excitement and commitment of the individuals regarding the opening of a new school was focused into jointly composed guiding statements. The reflections of participants on the conflicts that took place in the development process also clearly demonstrated three key components of Schwarz’s (2013) team mindset: each of us sees things others don’t; people may disagree with me and still have pure motives; differences are opportunities for learning. The disagreements over the right word, phrase, or sentiment were taken as opportunities to grow and reflect on what others were contributing to the process.
Further, the work that the team did together in developing the guiding statements laid the foundation for a mindset within the organization that highlighted and valued the role of the team in decision-making, an emphasis on the shared vision and purpose, information sharing, effective problem solving, and an effective group culture. As noted in the direct quotes reported in Chapter 4, appreciative reflections of the founding leadership team members on the value of the guiding statement development process clearly demonstrated these qualities. Even the challenges cited by founding leadership team members ultimately were seen as interactions that benefitted information sharing, effective problem solving, and the development of an effective group culture. Each of these represents a component of the team mindset and organizational design that Schwarz (2013) presents as the *team effectiveness* model.

Among the key findings in Desmidt’s et al. (2011) literature review of 20 years of mission statement research was that the development of guiding statements should be an inclusive process that invites the participation of a variety of stakeholders. In the case of a new school with the capacity to bring together a leadership team prior to the school’s opening, the process can be said to be inclusive to the point that all of the immediate internal stakeholders were involved. However, this case demonstrates the importance of something beyond stakeholder involvement on a basic level. When viewed through the framework of the *team effectiveness model* discussed above, this case demonstrates that an effective process is not just generally inclusive, but is specifically inclusive of stakeholders that possess the right mindset to effectively engage in the work at hand. The interview data showed that participants felt widespread appreciation for the process and the contributions of their colleagues to the
process. Certainly the mindset that these members possessed prior to joining the founding leadership team contributed to the effectiveness of the team’s work together.

Since the school team was subject to an expansion in the immediate aftermath of the guiding statement development phase, the founding leadership team perceived as important to establish context, structures, and processes that reflected the guiding statements. These design components would create an environment so that newcomers could learn to act in accordance with the founding leadership team. Again, as Fairhurst et al. (1997) warned, the absence of a strong shared identity invites other forces to fill the identity void. This reality may be even more salient in a new organization, where the organizational identity is in its formative stage. The process undertaken at the school provided for the involvement of the stakeholders that would ultimately take on formal leadership roles on the site, and who were expected to properly enculturate others. Schwarz’s (2013) components of effective teamwork, such as team structure, appropriate membership, clearly defined roles, and group norms, were again evident in this aspect of the school’s development.

The process of developing the guiding statements was effective and meaningful for the participants. That positive experience was equal parts a result of the mindset of the individuals that came together to participate in the work, the context of the work itself, and the process undertaken. In part, the impact of the guiding statements was found in the development process itself because of the way that the founding leadership team worked together and established their team identity. Once the guiding statements were completed, however, much work was left to be done and
there were many questions to be answered about the impact of the guiding statements on the wider school team as it designed and opened a new school.

**Research Question #2: Impact of the Guiding Statements**

Much of the ambivalence in the literature about mission and vision statements stems from the fact that guiding statements tend to have little impact once implemented (Allen, 2001; Bart 1997; Pearce, 1982). Organizations are dynamic entities that are difficult to boil down into a few sentences that are reflected in the guiding statements. That tension was evident in the reflections of the founding leadership team members highlighted in Chapter 4, as they considered the challenges of the development process. The tension between finding the right word, the right sentence, the right idea in order to convey a clear message of “who we are” while maintaining a sense of possibility beyond the words was resolved by the participants acknowledging the tension and still being willing to move ahead with a mutually agreed upon expression through the statements.

**Who we are.** Schwarz (2013) writes, “When the entire team has a shared understanding of and commitment to a common purpose and values, then the purpose and values themselves become guides by which team members can each assess their own performances” (p. 12). The principal took steps to deepen the connection that the members of the founding leadership team would have with the guiding statements. With the work of school wide guiding statement development behind them, the founding leadership team members were asked to articulate guiding statements for their specific departments and were asked to play a large role in the communication of the school’s guiding statements to incoming staff and students. This is an example of
the kind of shared accountability that Schwarz (2013) asks for when he says, “In effect, every team member can lead using the purpose and values as guides. They can also explain to the formal leader and other team members how their intent and actions contribute to achieving the purpose in line with the values” (Schwarz, 2013, p. 12). By directing the founding leadership team members to develop guiding statements for their respective departments and later to articulate the guiding statements to potential team members, the principal provided the framework for distributed leadership and shared accountability around the guiding statements.

As reported in the interview data in Chapter 4, the development of the guiding statements set the stage for introducing and embedding the guiding statements into the minds and hearts of the second generation of faculty and staff in anticipation of the opening of the new school. The principal asked potential applicants to read the guiding statements on the school’s website prior to applying for a position at the school. The feeling of the need to “sell” the culture of the school as represented in the guiding statements was felt by the principal, teachers, and staff members. Multiple teachers commented on the need to provide clear communication to staff and students about the kind of school community that they would be joining – to “see the light” as one participant put it. The strongest manifestation of this phenomenon was in the data reported in Chapter 4 of the staff member who told colleagues that if they did not have the right mindset for joining the team, “then we really don’t want you around here and you are not going to be happy and we aren’t either.”

This data recognizes the reality of Gioia’s et al. (2010) claim that “organizational identity formation is likely to be a complex process subject to multiple
influences and infused with ambiguity and one in which organizational identity is not defined solely by founders and leaders but negotiated by both insiders and outsiders” (p. 4). The formation of organizational identity is open to repeated negotiations between the group and the individual from its inception through the lifespan of the organization. Participants in the study showed an understanding of the dynamic of this negotiation of identity and sought to provide a clear insider definition of that identity, by way of the guiding statements.

The impact of the guiding statements is in the way they affect individuals within the organization (Crotts et al., 2005; Pratt & Ashforth, 2003; Schwarz, 2013). “Ultimately mission and vision are personal. For team members to commit to them, the mission and vision need to speak to them directly” (Schwarz, 2013, p. 154). The founding leadership team collaborated in what proved to be an effective process. Others joined the team in part because the guiding statements resonated with them. Each of the participants reflected on ways which the guiding statements manifested in their work. For those that elected to take part in the study, the guiding statements did have an impact on their experience, due to the personal connection they made to the guiding statements. The degree to which those same connections were made by others who did not participate in the study, or by the second generation of teachers and staff joining the school in year two, is an open question.

**Touchstone.** Participants reported that there was ample communication in terms of the guiding statements. Research on guiding statements has consistently led to the conclusion that communication in terms of the guiding statements further reinforces their meaning (Allen, 2001; Collins, 2000; Fairhurst, 1993; Fairhurst et al.,
In this case, participants noted multiple ways in which the school’s guiding statements were communicated to stakeholders. The repeated encouragement by teachers to students to “Be your best,” the efforts by the principal to emphasize the guiding statements, and the repeated exposure on letterhead, in classrooms, and other visuals around the campus provided communicative reinforcement of the guiding statements. The guiding statements provided focus for the teachers and staff for what kind of school this was setting out to be. They provided expectations for behavior by staff and students through the inclusion of core values. They provided a touchstone for individual departments and affiliated parent groups to connect their unique missions with the overall intent of the school. As discussed above, the impact of the guiding statements is ultimately an individual phenomenon, but the communicative frames that are used on an organizational level play an important role in infusing the guiding statements into the individual and collective conscience of the stakeholders (Fairhurst et al., 1997).

Alignment. Primary among the findings regarding organizational mission is that alignment to the mission statement is critical to its attainment (Bart, Bontis, & Taggar, 2001; Bart & Tabone, 1997; Collins, 2000; Crotts, Dickson, & Ford, 2005; Jick, 2001; Malen, Croninger, Muncey, & Redmond-Jones, 2002). In the same way that the data reported in Chapter 4 revealed that focus is in the eye of the beholder, alignment is to some extent also in the eye of the beholder. The school, even in its infancy, is a complex organization where a number of actors bring their own perspectives to the evaluation of organizational alignment. What may seem like
alignment of processes, policies, measures, behaviors, and mindsets to one, may seem out of sync to someone who views the factors differently.

Schwarz’s (2013) *team effectiveness* model provides for a design structure that is both grounded in the shared mission and vision and provides checks on alignment through transparency, communication, and accountability. The founding leadership team shared the mindset and that would allow for these checks on alignment to take place. As reported in Chapter 4, participants noted that a part of the leadership team’s ongoing dialogue was the way in which decisions did or did not align to the guiding statements. A team culture that allows for and encourages that kind of dialogue as the school expands beyond its founding leadership team and year one staff. Continuing alignment to the guiding statements will require looping back to the meaning and intent of the statements as they were developed, along with the new perspective the present context.

Teacher 2 saw the need to “revisit the guiding principles each year...and agree or disagree with how they’ve been developed so far...for the need of change itself as well as the need to engage the buy-in of all members of the staff in the future” (personal communication, April 21, 2014). This comment represents the kind of organizational learning process that others (e.g., Argyris & Schön, 1978; Heifetz, 1994; Senge, 1990) have espoused, and that is also provided for in the feedback loop of Schwarz’s (2013) *team effectiveness model* (see Figure 3). A regular examination of relationship between actions, results, and design, in the vein of the above quotation, is likely the answer to future misalignment. However, more time may be needed to evaluate that component of the effectiveness of the guiding statements in this case.
Research Question #3: Conditions Beneficial to the Process

Interview data revealed three primary conditions that participants felt benefitted the process of guiding statement development. Time to engage in the process, leadership of the school, and leadership of the process were the key themes that emerged from the founding leadership team members. Consideration of how each of these dimensions may be valuable to practitioners will be discussed below.

Time. Every member of the founding leadership team reflected in some way on the time that was given to the process. All recognized the value of that time, even when they felt the tension of needing to move ahead. Time allotted to the development process was seen as important. The pressures on educators are many and time is limited, but proceeding without clearly articulated guiding statements opens the door to competing interests, uncertain decision-making, and inconsistent action. In developing effective and efficient systems, it is often important to go slowly early in the process in order to be more efficient in the implementation (Senge, 1990; Schwarz, 2013). Schwarz (2013) writes that focusing on action without the underpinnings of the team effectiveness model “is like a pilot announcing to the passengers, ‘We’re lost, but we’re making great time’” (p. 38).

Components of the team effectiveness model (Schwarz, 2013), such as effective problem solving, appropriate decision making, and balanced communication, necessarily require time. This is particularly true in the context of a team building a shared identity as in the case reported here. Heifetz (1994) describes the holding environment as the power to focus attention on an examination of the underlying values of the organization. The principal provided the time to focus that energy that
led to what participants noted was a fruitful development process. Just as surely, the time invested in the beginning will pay dividends with a shared understanding of the purpose, vision, values, and operating principles as they are put into practice. The appreciation that participants expressed for the time dedicated to the development of the guiding statements, even in the face of all of the other work that needed to be done to open the school, would indicate that there was a benefit in the way that they perceived the impact on team effectiveness. Pressures on time and challenges with enacting effective team processes may be present in any organization, but will be highlighted when there are no foundational guiding statements upon which to act. Time spent building that foundation is necessary to provide opportunities for organizational flourishing in the future.

**Organizational leadership.** Though the role of formal leadership was not directly addressed in the research or interview questions, it surfaced in the data as a key component of a successful guiding statement development and implementation process at the school. The leadership provided by the principal was seen as central to the focus that was created on the development process as well as the continuing emphasis on the guiding statements in action. As evidenced by the choice that he made to start his team’s work around the development of statements of purpose, vision, core values, and guiding principles, the principal demonstrated a belief in the importance of the process. He explicitly stated that belief and modeled it for the members of the founding leadership team. He saw the role that leadership played as critical in giving the team the drive to engage in the process:
Whoever is going to facilitate the conversation, they themselves have to believe that there is a value in having a mission-vision core values and operating principles. They absolutely... have to be able to articulate and emotionally connect people to the work that’s before them. (Principal, personal communication, March 28, 2014)

Although he shared the responsibility of facilitation of the process, he modeled the kind of emotional connection that he hoped to instill in others. The principal framed the process with the work of Sinek (2009b) and communicated the belief to the founding leadership team that the work that they were investing this time in was critical to where they would go as a team. As he looked ahead to the second year of operation, he planned to lead a reaffirmation of the school’s guiding statements with new and returning staff “in a way where people know it’s not lip service but rather...[with] the passion, [so that] they clearly understand what we’re about in this campus” (personal communication, June 30, 2014).

As discussed above, the role that the principal played in the design of the team was also a key factor in the experience of the process that was reported by participants. Schwarz (2013) writes, “How you design – or redesign – your team determines the limits of its performance” (p. 144). The leadership provided by the principal that emphasized the team mindset in hiring and from the outset of the team’s work together set the stage for the work that was to come.

**Process leadership.** The opening words to the principal’s quote above, “Whoever is going to facilitate the conversation,” point to an additional consideration in the development process. Who should facilitate the conversation around guiding statements is an important question. If inclusiveness in the process is a goal, then breaking out of the existing leadership structure may be beneficial. In this case, the
presence of the outside facilitator allowed the principal to be a part of the team, rather than the director of the process. The principal and the founding leadership team members found this situation to be beneficial. Both he and the founding leadership team members indicated that the change leadership dynamic was a positive part of the process. So too was the perception that the facilitator was an effective director of the process.

The inclusion of an outside facilitator to the process may not always be a feasible option. Schwarz (2013) offers a perspective on moving from positional leadership model to shared leadership on an effective team that may be applicable in this situation:

In teams using mutual learning, team member roles are more fluid. Members may rotate chairing meetings, taking responsibility for coordinating agendas, and identifying next steps. More important, leadership isn’t confined to the formal leader. It’s a shared role and responsibility...each member is accountable for ensuring that the team is functioning well. (p. 156)

In Schwarz’s mutual learning model, this arrangement represents a shift from the unilateral control model to a more effective team environment. While such an approach to shared leadership certainly presents its own challenges, it is possible to envision its effectiveness within the framework of the team effectiveness model and in a process – developing guiding statements – that requires a high degree of input and buy-in from a team of stakeholders.

**How to View the Guiding Statements?**

The value of the guiding statements in an organization ultimately reveals itself in the role that those statements play as the backdrop to the negotiation of priorities,
actions taken, and interactions among stakeholders in the organization. This is a complex formula, which presents challenges both in practice and in study. Analysis of the data gathered in this case suggested agreements with the literature about the role that the guiding statements played in developing the organization, and when viewed through the framework of the team effectiveness model, it is clear that the process of developing the guiding statements provided a foundation for their effective implementation.

However, the situation of this case within the context of the mission and vision literature generally and the school setting specifically, suggests that there may be benefit in exploring how these statements are viewed within the organization. Given the ubiquitous nature of guiding statements in schools, along with data reflecting divergent thinking about focus and alignment once the school was operating, an examination of how we think about guiding statements may be in order.

Traditional thinking about guiding statements seems to hold that they are something that an organization aspires toward, or a narrow path to walk. The guiding statements somehow limit options and focus in on the few things that an organization does best. Figure 4 (below) represents this kind of thinking by showing how a wide array of organizational possibility is narrowed toward the guiding statements. The role of the guiding statements is to provide that narrow focal point for action. This is the premise behind the “hedgehog effect” (Collins, 2001). The use of guiding statements as a control mechanism has the effect of limiting adaptability and innovation (Bartkus et al., 2000). Participants in this study also discussed alignment
to the guiding statements in terms of staying “on track,” an important choice of words that implies an either-or mindset of organizational alignment.

Figure 4. Traditional Conception of the Role of Organizational Guiding Statements. This conception of the role guiding statements reflects the attempt to focus organizational life toward the guiding statements.

Rather than viewing the guiding statements as a set of narrow constraints, I would instead propose looking at them, at least in the school setting, from a different perspective. As opposed to a single point to aspire toward or a single track to stay upon, the guiding statements should be the foundation upon which the organization can go a variety of directions and do a variety of things, while still maintaining the essence of the guiding statements as the underpinning of everything that is done.

Figure 5 (below) represents this way of thinking about guiding statements. In this model, the guiding statements – mission, vision, and core values – provide the framework within which organizational members act. Rather than providing a narrow focus, the guiding statements provide broader parameters within which creative and innovative action can take place while still maintaining a common organizational playing field.
Figure 5. Guiding Statements as a Structure for Organizational Life. In this conception of the role of guiding statements (i.e., Mission, Vision, Core Values), organizational life, as represented by the arrows, is varied and multidirectional, allowing for creativity and innovation while the guiding statements provide the framework within which that life happens.

**The improvisation metaphor.** Metaphors provide a powerful way of thinking about organizations (Morgan, 2006). Argyris and Schön (1978) reflected on the power of metaphor in organizational thinking, writing, “Such metaphors are more than decorative figures of speech; they are actually generative of the ways in which situations are framed, phenomena are modeled, and options for action are described” (p. 317). As it pertains to the proposition made above in Figures 4 and 5, a well-developed metaphor in the organizational development literature is the jazz improvisation metaphor (Kamoche et al., 2002; Weick, 1998). Music generally provides a useful metaphor for organization due to its shared movements through time and building and release of tension in action (Mantere et al., 2007). Jazz improvisation, in particular, provides an effective lens through which to understand this new way of viewing guiding statements due to the way in which group members make novel contributions to the performance that build upon a basic song structure.
that must be understood by all (Weick, 1998). Rather than a preplanned destination, the song structure provides a minimal structure that allows skilled performers to thrive while also maintaining group coherence (Barrett, 2002; Weick, 1998).

Among the critiques of guiding statements in the literature is that guiding statements bring with them limitations in scope of work and prescriptive directions for action and problem solving (Bartkus et al., 2000). The same critique can be seen in the interview data from the school site. Implicit in Teacher 2’s critique (discussed in Chapter 4) on the way that the school aligned to its guiding statements is an idea that the guiding statements are narrowly aspirational. A mission can limit the available options to a narrow path aimed toward that one clear purpose. A vision describes a better future state, but perhaps runs the risk of describing one specific better future state of many possible variations. This way of thinking about guiding statements is represented in Figure 4 (see p. 137). Perhaps such approaches to organizational guiding statements fit better in companies that produce goods than in schools that produce young people who are prepared to be participants in a dynamic society.

A visit back to the foundational literature on mission and vision statements in organizations provides insight into perhaps a more appropriate perspective on the role that guiding statements can play in organizations. The mission, or purpose, statement was seen as the foundation upon which strategic planning and implementation was built (Drucker, 1974; Pearce, 1982). The mission statement allowed the organization “to set objectives, to develop strategies, to concentrate its resources, and to go to work” (Drucker, 1974, p. 94). It was a starting point, not an ending point, and as such was sufficiently broad so as to allow for a number of directions of action. Expanding
upon this conception, the vision statement should provide an image of the future, but not necessarily only one possible future. Core values and operating principles should provide the kind of “touch stones” that participants noted, not end points. They are not a prescriptive recipe of what is to be done, but rather a group of ingredients that can be used to make a variety of meals.

In jazz improvisation, a group of musicians must have a strong shared understanding of the foundation upon which they are going to improvise. Improvisation itself is not entirely unstructured, but is built upon and expands upon the foundation. The members of the group are able to work together in heading off in different directions with their improvisations, but must always be able to find their way back to the shared melody of the song. Such a process takes skill by all members, give and take, listening to other members of the group, and responsiveness to changes in the group. It is not static; it is a dynamic and ongoing process of invention, reinvention, and exploration that always shares the solid shared foundation of the group.

Rather than looking at guiding statements in organizations as a point to aspire to, we may be better served to look at them as a framework upon which so much can be built and that allows for a multitude of appropriate variations on the work and direction of the organization. Fairhurst (1993) noted that the further one travels from the board room, the more the vision becomes an echo of the original production. It is certainly true that in complex organizations like schools there are a variety of intermediaries that can create demands, limitations, and varied interpretations of meaning. But underneath all of that should be a recognizable structure, just as the
shared melody provides the foundation for a jazz performance. Figure 5 (see p. 138) can be interpreted as a visual representation this approach to thinking about guiding statements. The framework provided by the mission, vision, and core values is like the melodic structure of a song. So long as the players share an understanding of that structure and do not violate that structure, a multitude of improvisational possibility (represented by the arrows) is possible.

Piazza (2005) points out that in music there is no such thing as pure improvisation or purely preplanned music. All musical performance falls on a spectrum between the two. If organizations are considered in the same way, one can imagine a point on the spectrum that would be an ideal balancing point between structure and improvisation. This point may vary depending on the ability of the players, desired outcomes, and context; the orchestra director interprets, but does not improvise upon Beethoven’s Symphony No. 5, while jazz fails to reach its fullest form when played mechanically. The quality of the melody impacts performance as well. As Weick (1998) writes, “Some melodies set up a greater number of interesting possibilities than do other melodies” (p. 546). The point is that if we view organizational guiding statements through the frame of this jazz metaphor, we must develop and treat them as the minimal structures upon which an infinite variety of actions can be taken, even as the guiding statements can be recognized at the heart of each of those actions.

Looking at the guiding statements in such a way does not solve all of a school’s problems, nor should guiding statements be expected to be the magic bullet in organizational development. They are but a piece in a large and complex puzzle of
organizing. Schools can still not be all things to all people (Pekarsky, 2007; Powell et al., 1985). Resources are still limited. Leaders still face multiple demands on time and focus. But absent the steady melody that guiding statements provide, on what basis are educational leaders and stakeholders to base their decisions, parcel out their limited resources and focus? If not through guiding statements that reflect the intent of stakeholders and the realities of the environment in which they are enacted, what direction do schools have? The notion of a shared melody is one that has the potential to provide the foundation and the flexibility to make guiding statements meaningful for organizations and individuals.

Conclusion

More than a year after the composition of the guiding statements at this school, one of the school’s leadership team members asked, “Did we really develop this so that we could follow this” (Teacher 2, personal communication, April 21, 2014)? This was, undoubtedly, a question that has been raised countless times in countless organizations, and in the end it may lead to the most essential questions of all. Why do we develop guiding statements? What role do those statements play in helping the organization? And, what should we expect to be the benefits of developing and using guiding statements within an organization? The answers to these questions are not simple, but the school case studied here provides some important insights that may help educational leaders better understand guiding statements within the context of the school environment and perhaps provide a clearer understanding of how these issues play out in a wider variety of organizations. In spite of the questions that remain about
the ongoing impact of the guiding statements, it would be hard to argue that the school studied here is less well-off for the work that was done.

Although there is much in the literature to be said about the importance of guiding statements, there is little empirical evidence to support this presumed value (Licata & Harper, 2001). As described in the review of literature, a body of empirical study of guiding statement effectiveness and impact does exist in the realm of non-educational organizations. In schools, the body of published mission statement research has focused primarily on content analysis (Stemler & Bebell, 1999; Stemler et al., 2011; Weiss & Piderit, 2011), with the exception of the qualitative interviews conducted by Stemler et al. (2011) which were aimed at better understanding the principals’ perspectives on the development and use of the mission statement in their schools. School vision, particularly in the context of visionary or transformational leadership, has received extensive attention in the literature, yet only a portion of this work has been empirical. Vision in schools has received substantial attention with regard to prescriptive pieces that espouse the value of shared vision or visionary leadership. However, little empirical research can be found specific to vision. This may in part be due to the difficulty of measuring vision, although some work has been done in that area (e.g., Greenfield et al., 1992). It appears that very little published research (e.g., Mumford & Strange, 2005) has addressed in detail the processes by which schools develop guiding statements or the ongoing impact of those statements through the eyes of stakeholders on school campuses.

For nearly four decades, management literature has shown great interest in the mission statement concept as the foundation of strategic action and organizational
effectiveness. The interest in mission statements for organizations of all kinds is evidenced in the fact that nearly all schools have one (Stemler & Bebell, 2012). Yet questions remain about the impact of mission statements on organizational performance, particularly due to multitude of intermediate variables that affect the path from mission statement to mission achievement. Bart et al. (2001), Collins (2000), and Crotts et al. (2005) all point to the need to consider the alignment of organizational action to mission in order to gain insight into the true impact of mission on organizational effectiveness. While this consideration has been made in management literature, school leaders may benefit from continued empirical study of the mission statement process in the school setting.

We find ourselves still facing great challenges in education, more than 30 years after Edmonds (1979) first asserted that, “There has never been a time in the life of the American public school when we have not known all we needed to in order to teach all those whom we choose to teach” (p. 16). Edmonds wrote specifically about the urban poor, and concluded that all that we lacked was the political will to make education for these children a priority. Thirty years later, the same can still be said for children of low socioeconomic status throughout the country who consistently find themselves on the bottom end of an achievement gap separating them from their more affluent peers (Willingham, 2012). Edmonds (1979) defined school effectiveness as the elimination of “the relationship between school performance and family background” (p. 21). One of the primary factors that he identified in the effective schools that he studied was a clear mission that motivated all school personnel to be effective for all students. Perhaps it is time for our schools to reexamine their mission
with this idea in mind. A focus on the effective employment of guiding statements may help schools to better define their purpose, focus their efforts, and give them a “touch stone” that all stakeholders can look to as the *raison d’être* of the school.

Given the multitude of challenges that many schools face, it would seem that a little attention in this area may go a long way.

**Implications for Educational Leadership**

An organization that lacks a clearly articulated mission raises many questions: What are we doing here? How do we know if we are doing the right things? How do we focus our efforts around what really needs to be done? These are questions that too few schools seem to be asking. Schools are under great pressure to improve student academic performance, eliminate achievement gaps, prepare students for post-secondary educational and career opportunities, as well as develop citizenship in students. Yet questions remain about what the true purpose of schools is and how best to bring schools to examine these questions (Pekarsky, 2007). Even those who found little evidence of the positive impact of mission statements on organizational performance have emphasized their potential as a management tool when developed and communicated effectively (David & David, 2003; Sufi & Lyons, 2003). School leaders may be interested in acquiring a better understanding of the facets of mission statement content and process from a multidisciplinary perspective in order to help them determine the best road to improving school performance.

This study adds to the limited body of research specifically addressing guiding statements in schools by providing a window into the experiences of internal stakeholders who were intimately involved in the development and implementation of
guiding statements in a new school. For educational leaders interested in guiding statements in their schools or organizations, the appreciative nature of the study – the focus on what functioned well and what factors enabled that functioning – provides meaningful perspectives to employ in their own work. No two situations will be the same and certainly the new school setting studied here is less common than an existing school working to define or redefine its guiding statements. However, the experiences reported and the frameworks for organizational development discussed (Argyris & Schön, 1978; Heifetz, 1994; Schwarz, 2013) provide leaders with a variety of tools with which to evaluate their organizational needs and formulate a plan that meets their needs.

Additionally, the discussion of the jazz improvisation metaphor may provide a useful lens for practitioners as they frame the work of guiding statement development and implementation in their specific setting. In spite of the widespread presence of guiding statements in all types of organizations (Rigby & Bilodeau, 2011; Stemler et al., 2011), their effectiveness has been brought into question, including in schools (Allen, 2001). Reframing the discussion about the role of guiding statements in schools may help improve their effectiveness as a management tool.

As mentioned at the outset of the paper, educational leaders often lack formal training in the area of organizational development. Educators interested in taking on formal or informal leadership roles may be well-versed in curriculum and instruction, and those who pursue formal educational leadership training are generally exposed to organizational development principles in the course of that training. However, a greater focus on the principals of organizational development and leadership may be
needed in both beginning and ongoing training for educational leaders in order to allow them to operate most effectively in leadership roles. An understanding of the role of guiding statements in organizational development and leadership would seem to be a valuable part of that training.

**Implications for Social Justice**

Three years after Edmonds (1979) so eloquently argued that a failure to educate all of the nation’s children is a political choice that is made in schools across the nation and that a clear vision for the school is one of the essential tenets of effective schooling, Pearce (1982) published “The Company Mission as a Strategic Tool.” In that work, Pearce states that, “The firm’s ability to survive in a dynamic and highly competitive environment would be severely limited if it did not understand the impact that it has or could have on the environment, and vice versa” (p. 21). From these seemingly disparate sources comes the unifying idea behind the organizational guiding statement: defining the organizational purpose with an understanding of the core values and environmental factors that impact the organization and its effectiveness.

Given that 35 years later schools across the country continue to fail to meet the educational needs of too many students, and that many of those students are children of color, are socioeconomically disadvantaged, or have special needs, schools need to better examine the impact that they make on their environment and vice versa. Schools have a clear opportunity to make a positive impact on their students, their community, and society and although they have that impact on a daily basis for many students, more is needed. Schools can have that impact on student groups that have
been ill served over the decades by developing a shared understanding of their purpose in the context of their specific internal and external cultural realities, articulating a clear mission rooted in an equity mindset, consistently communicating that mission, and aligning their actions to the achievement of that mission. By pursuing a meaningful guiding statement development and implementation process, schools may be better able to meet their specific environmental demands and provide for all students in ways that they have heretofore been unable to do.

Examining a school’s specific needs in the context of its internal and external cultural realities will require a clear understanding of the purpose and vision by all stakeholders. Around those reference points, a school’s stakeholders can engage in a meaningful discussion of how its actions align with that purpose and how the purpose aligns with the existential needs of the students, parents, and staff. All schools, no matter the demographic or socioeconomic makeup of the student body, have the opportunity to be agents for social justice. However, absent meaningful and transparent dialogue about a school’s purpose in a societal context, schools will not consistently be able to fulfill a role in promoting equity on campus or in the community.

**Areas for Future Research**

While this study provides a window into the process of developing and utilizing guiding statements in schools, it only scratches the surface of potential future areas of study. Given the extensive discussion of the value of guiding statements in the literature and the relative lack of empirical research that examines processes and outcomes related to guiding statements, there is still much work to be done. Building
upon this research, longitudinal studies of organizational alignment and the factors that contribute to alignment or “drift” over time would assist educational leaders in understanding the factors that contribute the attainment of the futures and goals articulated in guiding statements.

Further research on school mission statements should address the realities of operationalizing mission statements in the dynamic school environment. Additional qualitative study may include interviews similar to those of Stemler et al. (2011), but should also be expanded to gain a better understanding of the degree to which mission statements are understood by stakeholders beyond the front office. Such research may also include social network analysis that highlights the way in which mission statement meaning is communicated within a school community or case study to examine the process of mission statement development or revision in schools. Given the evidence from the business literature that alignment of mission and practice may lead to improved organizational performance (Bart et al., 2001; Crotts et al., 2005), school leaders would also benefit from a better understanding of how to apply this principle to their work in schools.

Weiss and Piderit (1999), Stemler and Bebell (1999) and Stemler et al. (2011) have laid the foundation for using mission statements as way to study the purpose of schooling and to investigate the correlation between the components of mission statements and educational outcomes as measured by standardized test scores. Such research, however, has ignored the measurement of mission statement content not assessed by standardized testing. More importantly, the prior research on mission statements in public K-12 schools has failed to address the type of process focus
studies that have been conducted in business organizations (e.g., Bart & Baetz, 1998; Bart et al., 2001; Crots et al., 2005). This study begins to fill that void but future study on guiding statement development processes in schools would paint a more complete picture of the phenomenon.

Pratt and Ashforth (2003) point to an intriguing area for future study of guiding statements in schools. The authors discuss the distinction between meaningfulness in work (i.e., teaching as a rewarding profession) versus meaningfulness at work (i.e., meaning embedded in belonging to an organization). This distinction raises the question of what role a school’s guiding statements can play in increasing meaningfulness for both staff and students in schools. The authors point out that “one finds meaning not in what one does, but in whom one surrounds oneself with as a part of organizational membership, and/or in the goals, values, and beliefs that the organization espouses” (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003, p. 314). The authors suggest that organizations can facilitate the creation of meaningfulness and future study should focus on how this is supported by shared guiding statements in schools.

The setting of this study in a new school environment also raises questions for future inquiry. Findings related to “new school effects” show that new schools often suffer a decline in student performance in their first year (Kelly & Loveless, 2012). Future study may determine whether an effective guiding statement development and implementation process would help to offset this phenomenon. Conversely, Kelly and Loveless (2012) recommend that a study of the factors that influence “quick starting” schools would be beneficial to those charged with opening new schools. An
understanding of the role that shared purpose and vision play in that process would be valuable for researchers and educational leaders.
APPENDIX A: Design Team Recommendations

DESIGN TEAM

Preliminary Program Recommendation/Rationale

The Design Team recommends adding a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) program focus to the comprehensive K-12 curriculum that will be required of all students beginning with the graduating class of 2017. This recommendation is not made lightly; it is only made after gathering a significant amount of research, listening to numerous presentations and “expert” guest speakers, and participating in multiple school site visits. This information gathering process has spanned more than ten months during which time our team wrestled with questions such as, “Why STEM?” and “What exactly is a STEM-focused school?”

First, we’ll attempt to address the first question, “Why STEM?” from two different points of view. From a global perspective, the U.S. has been overtaken in developing STEM expertise, ranking 29th of 199 countries in percentage of 24-year-olds with a mathematics or science degree. Until recently, U.S. industry has been able to make up for this shortfall in STEM degree holders by hiring scientists and engineers from overseas, but this is no longer tenable, sustainable, or desirable! On a more personal level, in the last decade, growth in STEM jobs was three times greater than non-STEM jobs. Additionally, it is projected that STEM jobs will grow about two times faster than other jobs in the next ten years. In recent studies, about 66% of students cite intellectual challenge, good salaries, and job potential as reasons for choosing to enter a STEM related field. Parents, in the same study, cited US economic competitiveness and more innovation as reasons to support their students’ interest in the aforementioned areas. Finally, in this light, it is our belief that a STEM program focus has the potential of creating a larger number of students who are truly STEM-qualified and who ultimately end up pursuing STEM majors and careers. We also believe that we can change the “identity” of who does STEM. By providing STEM opportunity structures, not just “coursework” but mentoring, support structures, real world experience, and opportunities for priority or guaranteed college admissions, we can aspire towards more STEM confidence, interest, and success.

Next, we’ll try to paint a picture of what we think an inclusive STEM-focused school should look like. Throughout our research, it has become clear that there is no one, common definition but can be summed up as:

“...an interdisciplinary approach to learning where rigorous academic concepts are coupled with real-world lessons as students apply science, technology, engineering, and mathematics in contexts that make connections between school, community, work, and the global enterprise enabling the development of STEM literacy and with it the ability to compete in the new economy” (Tsipros, Kohler, & Hallinen, 2009).

Ideally, it would be a place where curriculum is designed around collaborative learning environments and the project-based learning model – implementing the practice of integrating projects across grade levels and subject areas. For example all students’ science courses might be sequenced such that they are co-enrolled in an interdisciplinary Physics/Algebra II program.
simultaneously. Furthermore, teachers in the core curricular areas may collaborate to coordinate several units around STEM-based themes and interdisciplinary projects.

Technology would be integrated with a 1 to 1 student:device ratio with the capacity to embed online learning opportunities. Industry-school partnerships designed to provide critical career awareness and professional skills to high school students would be an integral part of the curriculum. On-going professional development focused on project-based learning and a schedule that would allow for weekly collaboration would be essential to the success of the program.

After much deliberation and research into several programs, we believe Project Lead the Way (PLTW) is the elective pathway program of choice that will enable us to create this type of learning environment. PLTW has proven successful in transforming instructional practices to supplement, but not supplant, the core curriculum, while generating more integration among the core subject areas and providing “real world” applications of key concepts, particularly in STEM-related subjects.

In several national studies, PLTW students showed significantly higher achievement in mathematics on national assessments when compared to their peers. This outcome is also true for PLTW students in reading and science as well. Further, PLTW students were significantly more likely to complete four years of mathematics.

PLTW offers two high school curricular programs: Pathway to Engineering and Biomedical Sciences. It is our recommendation that the initial focus be on the Biomedical Sciences with the intent of expanding to include a pre-engineering program shortly thereafter. Towards this end, we also recommend the inclusion of a robotics program.

_Founding Classes_

The group deliberated over the benefits of opening with freshmen only or with freshmen, sophomores, and juniors together. The final recommendation from the Design Team is for ___ to open with a freshman and sophomore class. This would afford the opportunity to build the core course offerings over time. The freshman class would be larger than the sophomore class the first year. Enrollment would be limited based on capacity within a four-year plan.

_Extra & Co-Curricular Offerings_

The Design team believes ___ should offer a full array of electives. These will combine traditional elective offerings with new and unique opportunities (classes that are not currently offered at ___) as this will be a “selling point” for the school. Electives should be offered in the following categories: World Languages, Visual and Performing Arts, Media, Science and Technology, Social Science, and Career Education. In addition, the team believes a strong effort should be made to develop STEM internships and externships in the community.

Recognizing that world language will become a graduation requirement in 2013-14, the team recommends offering at least three languages: Mandarin, Spanish, and Sign Language. Additionally, courses should be offered in fine arts, dance, and music composition. We also believe theater arts, orchestra, and/or band should be made available at ___.
As enrollment grows, the Design team believes it would be beneficial to expand elective opportunities into the areas of web programming, app design, and computer game programming. AVID was identified as a "must have" elective.

The recommendation is to derive the clubs with a thematic focus centered with seven core sections: service, fine arts, cultural, science/tech, associated student body (ASB/ASG), yearbook, and activities (physical). Time to establish these clubs is needed as students and teacher sponsors get acclimated to the new school.

In the area of sports, the team recognizes that athletics will grow as the school population grows. It would not be wise or prudent to expect to compete at all levels, in all sports, immediately. Instead we believe the initial offerings should parallel the founding classes. Therefore, we recommend opening with freshmen and JV CIF teams, covering a variety of boys' and girls' sports, which may include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Season</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>Cross Country*</td>
<td>Cross Country*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Football*</td>
<td>Field Hockey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Water Polo*</td>
<td>Golf</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tennis*</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Volleyball*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter</td>
<td>Basketball*</td>
<td>Basketball*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Soccer*</td>
<td>Soccer*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Surfing*</td>
<td>Surfing*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wrestling</td>
<td>Water Polo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>Baseball*</td>
<td>Softball*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Golf</td>
<td>Gymnastics*</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lacrosse*</td>
<td>Lacrosse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Swim/Dive</td>
<td>Swim/Dive*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tennis</td>
<td>Track &amp; Field*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Track &amp; Field*</td>
<td>Volleyball</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*a top three choice as indicated by the student survey

As the student population expands to include grades 9-12, the expectation is that there would be a full offering of all CIF sports based on student demand and interest.

Bell Schedule
The general consensus was for the trimester, modified with a release (early release or late start) one day/week. The Design Team feels the trimester provides greater opportunities for a STEM-based program. Components of a trimester are as follows:

- Students would have five periods a day for approximately 70 minutes each
- Teachers would teach four periods a day
• Allows students to take additional electives, including seminar courses during the 3rd trimester to prepare for CST/AP tests
• Builds in credit recovery opportunities for students that need it
• Stable schedule allows for student internships and community college courses
• Less expensive than a 4x4 schedule
• Release could coincide with [redacted] to allow for professional development opportunities, especially with the lack of funds for District-wide articulation meetings

Lottery Language
Based on the Board’s decision to declare both high schools “choice,” eighth grade students will have the opportunity, each spring, to declare their high school of choice. The students would be making a minimum of a one-year commitment to attend the school they selected. However, once enrolled, the student would remain at their school of choice until which time they elect to submit an application to change schools during any subsequent open enrollment period.

In the event that student requests for either high school exceed capacity (predetermined), a fair and impartial lottery system would need to be implemented according to Board adopted policy. The Design Team’s recommendation is that preference be given for multiples (twins, triplets, etc.) and siblings of currently enrolled students.

Conclusion
As with any new program, time is of the essence. It takes time to plan, train, and develop the capacity and culture that will give the best chance of yielding the desired results. This will not happen overnight. Therefore it is the opinion of this [redacted] Design Team that it is imperative that the principal identify his teacher planning team for [redacted] High School as soon as possible so that they may take ownership of the next phase of the implementation process, taking ideas and turning them into reality — recognizably, an enormous task. These teachers will drive additional curricular choices as they develop the climate and culture of this comprehensive, project-based learning focused school.
APPENDIX B: School Guiding Statements

High School

**OUR PURPOSE**

The [ ] Team exists to intentionally create an interconnected learning community that prepares students to thrive as responsible citizens in an ever-changing world.

* The [ ] Team includes students, parents, staff, and teachers.

**OUR VISION**

The [ ] Team is committed to innovation, academic rigor, and application. The Team strives for excellence in preparing students for college and career success. The [ ] experience challenges its members to "dare to be great".

**CORE VALUES**

Be your “B.E.S.T.”
Establish Community
Show Respect
Take Responsibility

**OPERATING PRINCIPLES**

- We are intentional and organized in all that we do.
- We embrace creativity, innovation, and the pioneering spirit.
- We engage in ongoing growth in order to evolve as life-long learners.
- We create community to promote a sense of belonging for all.
- We collaborate as a team with high levels of trust to reach defined outcomes.
- We clearly state our expectations and consistently model and follow through with them.
- We seek and carry out opportunities for interdisciplinary connections.
- We own our actions and accept responsibility for their outcomes.
APPENDIX C: Interview Protocol – Principal and Founding Leadership

Interview Protocol – School Principal and Founding Leadership

Time of Interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Position of Interviewee:

Introduction to the interview: The purpose of this study is to understand how the school developed its guiding principles and what role those principles play in the work being done at the school. I am interviewing the principal, teachers, and other staff members, as well as examining relevant documents to better understand this topic. The location of the study and all participants will be made anonymous in the writing of the report and all data collected, including this interview, will be maintained in a locked file and in password protected computer files. This interview will take approximately 60 minutes.

[Have the interviewee read and sign the consent form]

[Turn on and test recording device]

Research/Interview Questions

1) Thank you for spending time with me today to talk about the guiding statements - the vision and mission - of [blank]. Here is a copy of the statements.

[Provide participant with 1-page copy of [blank] guiding statements]

2) What do you value about the experience of having worked with the leadership team during the process of development of the guiding statements?
3) When you think back on the time that you spent working with the team developing the guiding statements, can you tell me about a time when the work was particularly hard?

Again thinking back on your time working with the team to develop the guiding statements, can you tell me about a time when the team particularly coalesced, or came together, around the work that you were doing?

4) If you were asked for advice from another team, what would be one thing that you would tell them about the development process to make it most effective?

[Follow-up on whether this was present in the team’s work or if it is something that should have been done differently]
5) The term “guiding statements” implies that these statements in some way guide what is done within the school? In what ways would you say that these statements guide what you do?

6) Tell me about a specific time when you made a difficult decision or took important action based on your understanding of the guiding statements.

7) Tell me about a time when you saw someone else use the guiding statements in their work.

[If the response is about the principal, ask follow up question specifically addressing a teacher or other staff member.]
8) In what ways are the school's guiding statements communicated to students, parents, other stakeholders?

9) In what ways do you communicate the guiding statements (or the values inherent in the guiding statements) to others?

10) As you look ahead to year two at the school, what would be some ideas that you feel could be put in place to further the vision and mission of the school or reinforce the guiding statements?

[Ask follow-up on whether those aspects mentioned are evident in the current context or are purely future-focused]
11) When think about the vision and mission statements, what aspects of do you think are the greatest expression of the mission and/or vision statement?

12) Is there anything else that you want to tell me that I haven’t asked or that you haven’t had a chance to share?

Wrap-up

- Thank you for the time
- Follow-up email will be coming
- Will have the opportunity to review transcript of today’s conversation and provide feedback
APPENDIX D: Interview Protocol – Teachers and Staff

Interview Protocol – Staff (Non-Leadership Team Teachers and Classified Employees)

Time of Interview:
Date:
Place:
Interviewer:
Interviewee:

Position of Interviewee:

Introduction to the interview: The purpose of this study is to understand how the school developed its guiding principles and what role those principles play in the work being done at the school. I am interviewing the principal, teachers, and other staff members, as well as examining relevant documents to better understand this topic. The location of the study and all participants will be made anonymous in the writing of the report and all data collected, including this interview, will be maintained in a locked file and in password protected computer files.

This interview will take approximately 30-60 minutes.

[Have the interviewee read and sign the consent form]

[Turn on and test recording device]

Research/Interview Questions

1) Prior to the opening of [ ], the Leadership Team developed two guiding statements. A guiding statement describes such things as the mission, vision, philosophy and core values of an organization. Here are those statements.

[Give participant 1-page handout of guiding statements]

Tell me about the first time you became aware of the mission and vision of [ ]?

Follow up: In what way, if any, did the vision and mission statements play a part in you coming to [ ] as a founding faculty or staff member?
2) The term “guiding” statements implies that these statements in some way guide what is done within the school? In what ways would you say that these statements guide what you do?

3) Tell me about a specific time when you made a difficult decision or took important action based on your understanding of the guiding statements.

4) Tell me about a time when you saw someone else use the guiding statements in their work.

[If the response is about the principal, ask follow up question specifically addressing a teacher or other staff member.]

5) In what ways are the school’s guiding statements communicated to students, parents, other stakeholders?
6) In what ways do you communicate the guiding statements (or the values inherent in the guiding statements) to others?

7) As you look ahead to year two at the school, what would be some ideas that you feel could be put in place to further the mission of the school or reinforce the guiding statements?

[Ask follow-up on whether those aspects mentioned are evident in the current context or are purely future-focused]

8) When think about the vision and mission statements, what aspects of ___ do you think are the greatest expression of the mission and/or vision statement?

9) Is there anything else that you want to tell me that I haven’t asked or that you haven’t had a chance to share?

Wrap-up
• Thank you for the time
• Follow-up email will be coming
• Will have the opportunity to review transcript of today’s conversation and provide feedback
APPENDIX E: Ideal Candidate Profile

Leadership Team

- Student-Centered
- Tech-Skills
- Command a High School Classroom
- Content Knowledge
- Facilitate & Influence
- Community Ambassador
**APPENDIX F: Leadership Team Interview Question Outline**

**Disclaimer at the beginning of each interview:**
The selection of High School’s Site Leadership Team (SLT) is 1 of the 4 staffing cycles that will occur over the next four years. Selected team members will earn a Group 4 Stipend for the additional work and responsibilities that they undertake and complete after school hours. It should be noted that meetings will traditionally take place from 3-5 p.m. with some Saturday meetings, and possible Sub days—depending on the task at hand.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Task(s) at hand</th>
<th>Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Background information</td>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>Please give us a brief, but specific, summary of your background and experience qualifying you to teach (will plug in subject matter) to high school students and contribute as part of the Site Leadership Team?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Leadership</td>
<td>Ability to collaborate</td>
<td>The Sage Creek Leadership Team needs individuals who can thrive and contribute to an academic environment with high levels of trust and clearly defined goals. Provide the panel with one or two examples of projects you have been a part of that demonstrate your ability to collaborate with colleagues effectively?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Background information</td>
<td>Character of the individual</td>
<td>What are your non-negotiables as they relate to your role as a teacher and/or teacher-leader?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Curriculum &amp; instruction</td>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>What support systems do you put in place for your students who are struggling academically?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Leadership</td>
<td>Ability to lead</td>
<td>Leaders require various skills and abilities in order to facilitate change, manage teams, organize resources, and among other things, bring out the best in others. What has prepared you to take on the role of Department Chair in your specific curricular area?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 6. Curriculum & instruction    | The use and purpose of technology        | Technology:  
   1. How have you incorporated technology in your efforts to support high levels of academic achievement?  
   2. With regards to the use of technology, please describe your areas of strength and weaknesses. |
| 7. Leadership                   | Leading in times of high levels of        | The team will reach a point of high levels of achievement and success. As a leader, what will you do and how will you behave to assure complacency does not penetrate our ambition for continuous progress? |
|                                 | high levels of achievement and success   |                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 8. Background information      | Flexibility / Contributing               | Opening a school with only two grade levels may require team members to contribute in activities beyond their classroom. Tell us about the extra-curricular activities you have led or are willing to lead? |
| 9. Curriculum & instruction    | Instruction Delivery                     | What Instructional elements/strategies do you incorporate into delivering a lesson in order to make the student experience meaningful, engaging, and an increasing the likelihood of attainment? |
APPENDIX G: Sample Leadership Team Interview Questions

**LEADERSHIP TEAM**

"Imagine the difference you will make ......."

1. Please give us a brief, but specific, summary of your background and experience qualifying you to be an English teacher to high school students and contribute as part of the Site Leadership Team?

2. Please describe what you think is the role and responsibility of the Leadership Team and why you are interested in being a contributing member. Also provide the panel with one or two examples of projects you have been a part of that demonstrate your ability to collaborate with colleagues effectively.

3. Describe the process that you will undertake when facing the following challenge: Teacher A is a vocal team member of your department and has expressed her concerns about not attaining the additional funds and materials necessary to run the classroom activities she feels are important. Teacher A used your department’s last department meeting to make her case and has convinced others on your team that this is not right. How do you proceed?

4. Leaders require various skills and abilities in order to facilitate change, manage teams, organize resources, and among other things, bring out the best in others. What has prepared you to take on the role of Department Chair in your specific curricular area?

5. Technology:
   - With regards to the use of technology, please describe your areas of strength and weaknesses.
   - How have you incorporated technology in your efforts to support high levels of academic achievement?

6. The team will reach a point of high levels of achievement and success. As a leader, what will you do and how will you behave to assure complacency does not penetrate our ambition for continuous progress?

7. What knowledge and implementation experiment do you have with English Common Core?

8. Opening a school with only one grade level may require team members to contribute in activities beyond their classroom. Tell us about the extra-curricular activities you have led or are willing to lead? Be sure to include how you will maintain balance in your life.

Candidate Name ____________________________ Position ____________________________
Panelist Name ________________________________
HIGH SCHOOL

Team Meeting
8-26-2013

7:30 a.m. – 7:45 a.m.

Please...
* Create a “ringed” packet of the handouts on the back table
* Meet, greet, eat, and drink.
Our goals for this morning...

- Get to know our TEAM members
- Understand who we are and what we are seeking to accomplish as a TEAM
- Define and practice our Day One activities

Who is this guy anyway?

- Background
  - Husband / Father
  - Teacher / Coach: My goal is to challenge individuals, teams, and organizations to be their best: focused on intentional outcomes and positive relationships.
- My motto
  - Good work is not good enough when you seek great results.
- My non-negotiables:
  - We are here to ensure the education and safety of each of our students.
  - We are on the same team in different but equally important roles.
  - We will exchange in respectful and professional communication.
  - We will be intentional and organized in all that we do.
  - We celebrate diversity.
Who are we...

Our Mission:
The Team exists to intentionally create an interconnected learning community that prepares students to thrive as responsible citizens in an ever-changing world.

Our Vision:
The Team is committed to innovation, academic rigor, and application. The Team strives for excellence in preparing students for college and career success. The experience challenges its members to "dare to be great".

How do we do business...

Core Values:
- Be your B.E.S.T.
- Establish Community
- Show Respect
- Take Responsibility

Operating Principles:
- We are intentional and organized in all that we do.
- We embrace creativity, innovation, and the pioneering spirit.
- We engage in ongoing growth in order to evolve as life-long learners.
- We create community to promote a sense of belonging for all.
- We collaborate as a team with high levels of trust to reach defined outcomes.
- We clearly state our expectations and consistently model and follow through with them.
- We seek and carry out opportunities for interdisciplinary connections.
- We own our actions and accept responsibility for their outcomes.
How do we do business...

TEAM MEETING NORMS

• Detailed agendas are provided for each meeting 48 hours in advance: time frames, topics, and logistics. They also include a time keeper, and recorder.

    

All team members will:

• Arrive on time.
• Engage in courteous, respectful, active, and non-judgmental communication.
• Be prepared, open-minded and on task.

Now, who are you...

• Leave your things in place but clean up your area as you will be going to a different location after our next activity.

• Please make your way to the [ ] and form a circle.

The [ ] Team exists to intentionally create an interconnected learning community that prepares students to thrive as responsible citizens in an ever-changing world.
The First Day of School

Our Vision for Day One:
"High School is the B.E.S.T. place for me, I can't wait to come back tomorrow."

The Challenge:
How do we balance a fun, community building day and still highlight a few campus expectations?
APPENDIX I: Sample Departmental Guiding Statements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Operating Principles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Aligned Structure &amp; Culture</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annual Targets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Goals that are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time Specific (S.M.A.R.T.)</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*Priorities (new strategies or focus areas) that may require additional resources: funds, time, and/or energy.<em><strong>Too many priorities = no priorities</strong></em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Operational Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Team members work interdependently on a defined game plan with the primary ambition being the success of the organization.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The school counselors, in coordination with teachers, administrators, parents or guardians and the community, will provide a comprehensive counseling program that supports all students in developing the academic, career and personal and social competencies needed to thrive as responsible citizens in an ever-changing world.

- Be your best
- Establish community
- Show respect
- Take Responsibility

The comprehensive counseling program is an integral part of the total educational process for all students. The program helps create a positive, inclusive community in which our students are supported and challenged to "dare to be great." It supports students' active participation in and benefit from an innovative, rigorous and applied curriculum and quality core-curricular opportunities for self-directed personal growth. As a result, our students are engaged, life-long learners and responsible citizens who graduate college and career ready, well prepared for the challenges of the future.

We are international and organized in all that we do.
We embrace creativity, innovation, and the pioneering spirit.
We engage in ongoing growth in order to evolve as life-long learners.
We create community to promote a sense of belonging for all.
We collaborate as a team with high levels of trust to reach defined outcomes.
We clearly state our expectations and consistently model and follow through with them.
We seek and carry out opportunities for interdisciplinary connections.
We own our actions and accept responsibility for their outcome.

1. By Nov. 1, 2013, all students and parents will know how to log on and begin to create an Individual Success Plan.
2. By March 1, 2013, all students and parents will have attended an Individualized success planning meeting with the counselor.
3. By March 1, 2013, update course catalog and 9th grade CRF and create 10th grade CRF
4. Trained to use Aeries Portal to input course requests
   1. By Nov. 1, 2013, all students and parents will know how to log on and begin to create an Individual Success Plan through Aries.
   2. By March 1, 2014, all students and parents will have attended an Individualized success planning meeting with the counselor.
   3. By March 1, 2014, update course catalog and 9th grade CRF and create 10th grade CRF
   4. By March 15, 2014, all students and parents will be trained to use Aeries Portal to enter course requests and check student data to input course requests.
The VAPA Team exists to intentionally create significant arts experiences for all students. The VAPA experience will prepare VAPA students for success as artists and will prepare all students to appreciate and value the arts.

- Be your best
- Establish community
- Show respect
- Take Responsibility

The VAPA Team is committed to creativity, cultural and curricular connections.

The VAPA Team strives for excellence in preparing students for college and career success in the arts and other fields. The VAPA experience provides VAPA students and the Community with a variety of inspiring arts experiences via cross curricular units.

We are intentional and organized in all that we do.
We embrace creativity, innovation, and the pioneering spirit.
We engage in ongoing growth in order to evolve as life-long learners.
We create community to promote a sense of belonging for all.
We collaborate as a team with high levels of trust to reach defined outcomes.
We clearly state our expectations and consistently model and follow through with them.
We seek and carry out opportunities for interdisciplinary connections.
We own our actions and accept responsibility for their outcomes.

Upon full implementation, the VAPA curriculum will consist of:
1. Subject-centered arts instruction in dance, music, theatre, and the visual arts
2. Instruction connecting the arts disciplines
3. Instruction connecting the arts and other core subjects
4. School-wide appreciation of the Visual and Performing Arts

The VAPA Team

*Our mission, it defines why our organization exists and offers our social environment*

*Behaviors and expectations clearly communicate what is acceptable on our campus*

*Our vision serves as a guide and defines where and what our organization will be in 3-5 years*

*Aligned Structure & Culture*

*Goals that are Specific Measurable Attainable Realistic and Time Specific (S.M.A.R.T.)*

*Priorities (new strategies or focus areas) that may require additional resources: funds, time, and/or energy. ***Too many priorities = no priorities***

*Team members work interdependently on a defined game plan with the primary ambition being the success of the organization.*
REFERENCES


