

## Statement of Philosophy and Beliefs

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#### Guiding Principles

*“Service is the rent we pay for the privilege of living on this earth.”*  
- **N. Eldon Tanner**

The work of anyone associated with schools should be guided by two key principles: improving student learning and fulfilling the school’s mission. With this basis, it is essential to work towards ensuring students receive the best education possible. To achieve the goal of guaranteeing an effective learning environment, we must require that students come first within the framework of a common vision, meaningful relationships, shared leadership, and commitment to continuous improvement. Our work towards realizing these ideals is within the context of the privilege and honor of serving students and communities in our roles, not only as educators, but also as leaders and learners.

#### Students Come First

*“The things that matter most must never be at the mercy of things that matter least.”*  
- **Goethe**

A school community’s decisions and actions must always be in the best interest of students. The advancement of policies and procedures, curriculum and assessment changes, professional development, and decision-making processes are to be in support of student learning. Schools must be safe environments where curiosity is fostered, calculated risk-taking is encouraged, and learning from mistakes is fundamental to the development process. Personalized learning opportunities, that approach learning from a whole child perspective, support students towards achieving their potential.

#### Mission and Vision

*“[Those who have] a why to live can bear almost any how.”*  
- **Friedrich Nietzsche**

A school community is guided by its mission, vision, values, and beliefs. It is with a shared sense of purpose that a community most effectively works steadfastly towards achieving ever greater levels of excellence. Given the complexities associated with schools and the learning process, a school’s core documents are paramount to ensuring common alignment.

#### Relationships

*“Now join your hands, and with your hands your hearts.”*  
- **Shakespeare, Henry VI**

Schools are essentially a relationship-based enterprise. The best schools are centered on relationships and partnerships among students, teachers, families, and the greater community. Relationships represent the common factor affecting every facet of a school. The development of meaningful, supportive, and principled relationships encourages a culture of open and honest communication. The resulting outcome is the fostering of a school ethos that supports risk-taking, innovation, change, and collaboration, which ultimately empowers students and those supporting their learning to perform at their highest levels.

#### Shared Leadership & School Culture

*“Leading is a shared endeavor, the foundation for the democratization of schools.”*  
- **Linda Lambert**

A school’s professional staff is its greatest strength. The realization of the ideals associated with any school can only be achieved if the right people with the right dispositions are members of the educational team. Given the deep levels of talent and experience present in a school, it is essential to engage the community in decision-making processes that promote collaboration, empowerment, and accountability. The development of leadership potential will further enable a professional and committed community to collectively work towards fulfilling the school’s mission.

*“We are what we do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.”*

- Aristotle

*“We must not cease from exploration and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we began and to know the place for the first time.”*

- T. S. Eliot

*“To facilitate learning, the instructional leader also makes sure that the classroom lights are working.”*

- Pam Robbins,  
Harvey Alvy

*“The world has changed. Knowledge is everywhere. Teachers must become master learners instead of master knowers.”*

- Will Richardson

*“Learners inspiring learners to be inquisitive in life, principled in character, and bold in vision.”*

- School Mission

## **Balance, Reflection, and Renewal**

School communities that continually work towards excellence and reject mediocrity are those that both establish goals and prioritize time for reflection and renewal. Reflection ensures that our schools are learning organizations and renewal, through personal and professional growth opportunities, ensures creativity, innovation, and a desire for excellence.

## **Leading Through Learning**

Effective educators and leaders are lifelong learners who search for new knowledge and experiences, seek feedback, and learn from others in addition to their own practices. For a school to be a true learning community, faculty and staff must be continuously engaged in personal and professional growth. The principal discourse on what constitutes good teaching is made meaningful through a focus on collaborative learning structures, purposeful dialogue, and reflection. While teaching is not for the faint of heart, educators must also approach teaching with a degree of humility and a sense of awe and respect deserving of the profession.

## **Leading Through Organizational Management & Governance**

Effective management and governance are critical to the success of any school. A key responsibility of school leadership is to strategically ensure the necessary infrastructures, financial reserves, legal compliances, facilities, and resources, among other factors, are secured such that teachers are able to focus on the art of teaching. Using Maslow’s hierarchy of needs framework as a reference, the physiological and safety needs of schools must be addressed before students are fully enabled to develop towards self-actualization.

## **Future of Learning**

Schools are responsible for ensuring that learning is relevant and meaningful for all students. To realize this ideal, schools must embrace a growth mindset that fosters an educational program that is effective, flexible, and adaptable. The ongoing development of a school’s program must have correspondence with societal changes or risk becoming irrelevant. While educators may not have all the answers, it is essential to continue participating in and reflecting on the global discourse concerning the future of education. We owe it to our students and their future. As one student stated, “teach me for my future, not your past.”

## **A Mission for Learning**

This past year, I was tasked with leading a process to establish a new mission statement at the school I currently have the privilege of serving. While the new mission, shared to the left of this text, is a reflection of a community-wide belief, it also provides a useful framework for my own philosophy. The following assertions highlight a mission for learning using the four elements of the mission in conjunction with my own belief statements.

- *Learners Inspiring Learners*: We are all life long learners, learning together and from each other, regardless of age, experience, or title.
- *Inquisitive in Life*: Effective schools foster in students an intrinsic, lifelong love for learning and a naturally inquisitive nature to understand the world we live in.
- *Principled in Character*: Student development is enriched when learning is made relevant in the context of the factors associated with character, ethics, beliefs, and values.
- *Bold in Vision*: Students benefit from an open-ended premise that challenges all of us to use our collective learning and character development to generate a vision that will require creative and innovative measures to make a real and positive difference in the world.