

Creating a Character-Based Shared Vision Professional Development Activity

GOAL: All staff members will feel that they are an essential part of the school and will know that character and social development must be a central focus of everything that happens within the school.

1. During an in-service day, faculty meeting, or other occasion when the entire staff is present, indicate that they are to **visualize their ideal school**.
2. Have everyone brainstorm ideas for the questions on the list below, and encourage everyone to respond. [Note: The answers should be recorded, using appropriate software or chart paper.]
 - a. What reputation would your ideal school have?
 - b. What contributions would it make?
 - c. What values would it embody?
 - d. How would people work together?
 - e. How would people handle good times? Bad times?
 - f. What would its physical environment look like?
 - g. How would the learners and parents describe the school?
 - h. How would the various elements of the infrastructure interact?
 - i. What would sustain our school community?
3. Prepare a handout containing the responses to the questions, and distribute it at the next meeting of the group.
4. Share research that supports a school which embodies these ideals (e.g., *This We Believe*, National Middle Schools Association, 1995).
5. Discuss the connection between these ideals and character and social development.
6. In small groups or as one group, brainstorm the strengths of your school that are building toward the shared ideal.
7. In the same manner, brainstorm areas of concern.
8. Solicit possible solutions, programs, and/or policies that will address the areas of concern.
9. Establish a goal for a few chosen areas of concern. Formulate an action plan for the school year.

Revisit this exercise every few years. It helps you stay true to your basic beliefs and character-driven goals.

SOURCE: Rosa International Middle School