

Foundation Documents

Describing your school's preferred future

What will you learn from this module?



- What the Foundation Documents are.
- How to create or revise your school's Mission Statement.
- How to create or revise your school's Beliefs and Core Values.
- How to create or revise your school's Profile of Graduates.
- Understand how the Foundation Documents are the basis of the accreditation process.

Developing the Foundation Documents

Foundation Documents = Mission + Beliefs + Profile of Graduates

The Foundation Documents should be created or revised with a diverse group of stakeholders who reach consensus on:

- What is our vision for a better future for the children of our school? (Mission).
- What core values will guide our journey? (Beliefs)
- What will our students have to know, be able to do, and to demonstrate for us to achieve our Mission? (Profile of Graduates).

What is a Mission Statement?

Definition: A broad description, in visionary terms, of what the school is striving to become.

Defining the Mission

- **Does your school have a Mission?**
 - If not, you will need to develop a Mission.
 - Examples are available on the MSA website under the Members tab – Accreditation Resources – Foundation Documents.
- **If you have a Mission:**
 - Is it an expression of the community of stakeholders' desires for the school and its students?
 - Is it known and supported by our community of stakeholders?
 - **If not, you will need to revise the Mission.**

Suggested Format

The Mission Statement should include:

- The school's *audience* (whom it currently serves or should serve in the future).
- Its *action* (what it currently does or should do in the future).
- Its *aim* (the current purpose for which it exists or what the school's purpose should be in the future).
- Its *means/function* (how, in broad terms, the school will do it).
- Its *identity* (what makes the school unique).

Best Practices

- A well written Mission captures the hopes and aspirations that the school and its community have identified as important.
- The school's mission should reflect what the school community is striving to become.
- A mission should inspire the school's stakeholders to achieve a better future.

What are Belief Statements?

Definition: Statements of fundamental beliefs, values, and expressions of convictions and commitments that drive the day to day operation of the school.

These may also be called “Core Values.”

Defining Belief Statements

- **Does your school have belief statements?**
 - If not, you need to develop belief statements.
 - Examples are available on the MSA website under the Members tab – Accreditation Resources – Foundation Documents.
- **If you have belief statements:**
 - Are the statements an expression of the values and ethics of the school and its community of stakeholders?
 - Are the statements known and supported by your community of stakeholders?
 - Do the statements drive the day to day operation of the school?
 - **If not, you need to revise the belief statements.**

Suggested Format

Belief Statements should include:

- Precise and succinct language, simply formatted and easily understood, void of clichés and jargon.
- Declarations of universal human values as held by the people who make up the school's community of stakeholders.
- Practicality in application.
- "We believe that..."

Best Practices

- Belief Statements and the school's core values are the formal expression of the school's fundamental values and serve as its ethical code.
- Belief Statements and the school's core values serve as the foundation of a strong school improvement plan.
- Beliefs identify the "line in the sand" and should be used as a lens for examining the school's day to day decisions or future actions.

What is a Profile of Graduates?

Definition: Statements defining what students are expected to know, to be able to do, and the qualities or characteristics they should demonstrate upon completion of the program or graduation.

Defining the Profile of Graduates

- **Does your school have a Profile of Graduates?**
 - If not, you need to develop a Profile.
 - Examples are available on the MSA website under the Members tab – Accreditation Resources – Foundation Documents.
- **If you have a Profile:**
 - Is it an expression of the community of stakeholders' desires for the school and its students?
 - Is it known and supported by our community of stakeholders?
 - **If not, you need to revise the Profile.**

Suggested Format

A Profile of Graduates should:

- Describe the students at the point of exit from the school or program.
- State the values, achievement, and readiness that each student will manifest upon graduation or completion of the program.
- Should be considered both as a Bill of Rights and set of corresponding responsibilities for students, faculty, staff, administration, and the school.
- Define the outcomes each and every student will attain if the school's mission is operative and appropriately translated into programs and services.

Best Practices

The Profile of Graduates:

- Gives expression to what the mission means in the operational life of the school.
- Translates the identity, vision, and values expressed in the beliefs and mission into statements that describe student outcomes.
- Defines what each student is expected to grow into regardless of specific courses taken or post-graduation plans.
- Is a concrete reference point for the school's stakeholders when evaluating or designing programs and services.

How are the Foundation Documents related to the Accreditation Process?

The Foundation Documents will be evaluated by the Visiting Team to determine:

- If the Foundation Documents reflect the vision the school's stakeholders have for the school.
- If the school's stakeholders are familiar with and support the Foundation Documents.
- If the School Improvement Plan will lead the school closer to the preferred future described by the Foundation Documents.



- Build commitment by involving the school community in the development of the Foundation Documents.
- Sustain your improvement effort by publicizing your Foundation Documents throughout the community.
- Aligning the Foundation Documents with the School Improvement Plan increases your probability of success.

Summary

The purpose of this module was to explain how to develop or revise the Foundation Documents for your school and to describe their role in the Accreditation Process.

At this point you should be ready to:

- Develop or revise your Mission Statement.
- Develop or revise your Belief Statements.
- Develop or revise your Profile of Graduates.

Remember:

The Foundation Documents serve as the basis of the Accreditation Process and School Improvement Planning.

**The full sequence of training modules are available at
www.msa-cess.org**

Starting the Accreditation Process

Steps to Accreditation

Selection of Protocol

Getting Started

Foundation Documents

Self Assessment of Standards

Self Assessment of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessments

Improvement Planning – Objectives

Improvement Planning – Action Plans

Preparing and Hosting a Visiting Team

After the Visit