

Part 2: Domain A (Purpose and direction)

Introduction

How the community understands the school's guiding statements is key to successful school improvement processes. These statements reflect the set of core values or beliefs of the school community, which have evolved since the inception of the school. They establish the school's direction, define its purpose, and set the school's educational goals. The school's approach to teaching and learning, the school's planning and decision-making processes, its policies, and its operational systems should reflect the values and beliefs expressed in these guiding statements. The following definitions may be helpful to evaluators assigned to Domain A.

- **guiding statements:** the main statements that define the school and its reasons for existence (e.g. philosophy, core values, mission, vision, charter, goals, objectives, etc.)
- **philosophy:** an interconnected set of core values and/or beliefs under which the school operates
- **vision:** what the school aims to be in the future; the desired direction the school will take
- **mission statement:** a statement of the school's purpose, including the nature of the student body it is designed to serve; the mission statement is aligned with the vision statement
- **goals/aims:** future expected outcomes that provide direction and that focus on the ends rather than means
- **objectives:** statements of actionable steps or short-term accomplishments that are measurable, specific and time-constrained and assist the school in reaching its goals

Although these definitions may differ based on regional/cultural understandings of these terms, the school must use them consistently in guiding all aspects of the school.

What to keep in mind:

As a general guide, an effective set of guiding statements commonly contain many of the following:

- reasons for the school's existence, including the nature of the student body it is designed to serve
- the role of the school in the community it serves
- beliefs about effective educational practices
- the collective vision for the school in providing educational opportunities for all students
- the intellectual, personal, social, physical, and emotional characteristics to be nurtured in students
- the roles and relationships expected of students, parents, faculty and support staff, school leaders and the governing body in the educational process of the school
- the value placed upon student well-being
- a commitment to promote intercultural and global citizenship experiences for students

These statements must be developed and reviewed on a regular basis by a broad cross-section of the school community to ensure understanding and ownership. A strong consensus about the school's purpose and direction will nurture a collaborative approach toward the attainment of school goals. A school's educational goals should:

- flow from the mission and vision statements,
- be practical and measurable in nature, and
- be written a way that any school division or academic area can derive its own specific objectives from the general school-wide list of goals.

School policies and procedures must be extensions of the guiding statements, indicating the way the school intends to pursue its vision and achieve goals and objectives.

Within this domain, the school examines the quality and effectiveness of its guiding statements. The school will also examine the how effective they are in achieving their mission and educational goals, pursuing their vision, and exemplifying their core values and beliefs. It will describe the tools used to measure the level of success the school has had in implementing its guiding statements.

A commitment to global citizenship and intercultural understanding is fundamental. Domain A places particular emphasis on these concepts. Within this domain, the school also has to consider how their guiding statements are aligned to the CIS Code of Ethics and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In order to complete their assignment, team members assigned to this domain will review the school's evidence, observe the school in operation, and meet with individuals and groups to learn:

- how the guiding statements promulgate the core values of the school and its intent to integrate them into its culture;
- how the school developed a consensus that reflects the needs, abilities, and interests of the entire school community;
- how procedures determine the school's degree of success in carrying out the guiding statements;
- how and where the school publicises the statements throughout the entire school community;
- how the school's admissions practices, policies, and promotional materials promote and reflect the guiding statements;
- the extent to which the guiding statements conform to the CIS Code of Ethics;
- the extent to which the school is committed to the values inherent in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; and
- how the school instils global citizenship and intercultural understanding into the school community.

Use the attached document to help you take notes during your meeting with various stakeholder groups.

Self-study committee responsible for Domain A

1. Have the guiding statements changed in any significant ways since the self-study report was submitted?
2. Did the revision process allow sufficient input from the school community?
3. Do you feel the guiding statements are displayed enough to ensure familiarity with the school's mission, vision, philosophy, etc.?
4. Does the school community understand and accept the guiding statements? How do you know?
5. Do the guiding statements apply to the range of students the school seeks to educate?
6. Do the guiding statements adequately identify a commitment to student well-being?
7. How do the guiding statements promote global citizenship and intercultural learning to its students?
8. What plans has the school made to review/revise the guiding statements on a regular basis?
9. Is the school accurately reflected in promotional materials?
10. How are admissions policies and procedures examined to ensure that the school serves the students and the full range of students' needs?

The Board

1. How was the Board involved in developing the guiding statements?
2. How do the guiding statements influence school activities and decision-making?
3. How do the guiding statements direct policy-setting regarding admissions?
4. How do the guiding statements promote child protection and safeguarding?
5. How are the guiding statements used to assess the success of the school?
6. How does the Board support the provision of global citizenship and intercultural learning?

School proprietors

1. How were proprietors involved in developing the guiding statements?
2. Who from the school community was involved in developing the guiding statements?
3. How do groups in the school community help develop school programmes?
4. Has any outside consultation been sought in relation to school operations?
5. How do proprietors represent the guiding statements in their decisions about the school?
6. How do proprietors support the provision of global citizenship and intercultural learning?

School leadership team

1. How was the leadership team involved in developing the current guiding statements?
2. How do the guiding statements influence school activities?
3. How do the guiding statements guide you in your daily work?
4. How does the school publicise the guiding statements throughout the school year?
5. How are the guiding statements used to measure students' progress?

Teachers

1. How were teachers involved in the development of the guiding statements?
2. How do the guiding statements influence your work?
3. How are the guiding statements considered when the school plans curriculum revisions?
4. How would a teacher provide input into admissions practices?
5. How do the guiding statements set expectations for teaching and learning programmes?
6. To what extent do admissions practices result in a good match between enrolled students and the school's offerings?
7. To what extent do the guiding statements give clear direction on child protection practices?
8. How have you promoted global citizenship and intercultural learning in your teaching?

Students

1. Do you remember the school's vision and mission being discussed?
2. Where have you seen the vision and mission displayed in your school? Do you understand how the statements affect what happens in your school?
3. How were students involved in writing the vision, mission, and values?
4. Have you talked about the school's vision, mission, and values with your classmates?
5. Do you feel that you are learning enough about other countries and their cultures?
6. Is there anything in the vision, mission, and values that helped you and your family decide that this was the best school for you to attend?

Admissions team

1. Are school publications and admissions materials consistent with the school's guiding statements? Do they reflect the school accurately?
2. Do successful candidates for admission reflect the range of students noted in the guiding statements?
3. Are students provided the academic programmes necessary to be successful in future schooling?
4. Does the school assist unsuccessful students in finding more appropriate schooling?
5. Does the information sought on candidates enable the school to provide appropriate learning programmes?

Alumni and parents

1. How would you describe this school's guiding statements?
2. How do the guiding statements reflect students' needs?
3. Describe ways that the school is attempting to provide an appropriate education.
4. How were your opinions considered when the guiding statements were developed or last revised?
5. How does the school keep you aware of your child's progress and skill development?