An Ideal Future State for our District and our Schools begins with Belief & Mission . . .

- are expectations, aspirations, and hopes – dreams for the future.
- reflect the goals we hold for ourselves and those others hold for us.
- guide our everyday thoughts and actions, consciously and unconsciously.
- are critical determinants in our students’ successes in life.

Belief & Mission are important components of School and District Improvement Plans.

Consistent with TSIP, beliefs should be easily understood by all stakeholders. Belief statements should address learning, instruction, assessment, and decision making. Mission should also be easily understood by all stakeholders. It should state what students will be able to do at the next education level. Beliefs and missions should be developed in ways that motivate people to make a commitment to developing long range solutions to important problems (Bellon & Bellon, 1993, p.2). They should communicate deeply held values and provide focus, priorities, and a sense of purpose.

Belief & Mission should energize individuals and organizations to higher levels of commitment and performance.

When the desires and hopes of all members of the school community are identified and articulated, they become the basis for expectations for the school’s future and for long range plans to achieve the expectations.

When schools and school systems that have a clear sense of purpose are undoubtedly more successful than others working without clear direction and focus.

Educators in schools and systems that have clear and compelling mission will be more purposeful in their day-to-day actions. They will reach for greater heights, individually and collectively.

Beliefs also have a direct impact on student success.

The research clearly indicates—teachers’ beliefs about students and their expectations for their performance affect the way they structure learning experiences and respond to students. There is also evidence to support a tendency for parents to act on their expectations in similar ways with their children. When teachers and parents hold high expectations for students, they challenge and provide the support and encouragement needed to succeed. Without high expectations from teachers or parents, the impetus for students to work hard is reduced. It is critical, however, that educators or parents avoid expecting more than is mentally or physically possible. A child who is struggleing and unable to attain the expectation is likely to develop feelings of inadequacy and failure. Every child should be supported to attain his/her highest “personal best.”
When high, but attainable expectations prevail, extraordinarily positive results can occur.

Children are stimulated to assume responsibilities and undertake challenges they might not have thought they could handle successfully. They rise to the occasion, work hard, and succeed at whatever they do--partly do to their own efforts and partly because of the support system that is structured to promote their success.

When developed in a truly collaborative way with widespread involvement and input of all important stakeholders, expectations can be the catalyst to achieve numerous results.

Developing beliefs and missions help people see themselves and their organizations in different ways. Participants see themselves as significant contributors to the important work of the school and the school system and realize that their efforts can produce a more effective and satisfying organizations. The energy that is created can also stimulate and promote cooperative and meaningful relationships that may significantly alter the culture within the school community. People can be invigorated with renewed energy and optimism in bringing about their expectations for the future. In many settings, expectations have been the catalyst that increased the commitment of all stakeholders to act in ways that will make their expectations come true.

Establishing beliefs and missions is both a top-down and bottom-up process.

A reciprocal relationship exists in schools and systems when they are guided by expectations. Individual schools may be in a school system that has established clear expectations that may in turn influence the thinking at the individual school site. This reflects a top-down process. It is also important for expectations to be developed from the bottom up incorporating the hopes and dreams of those at the school. Integrating both is what will make the expectations unique and inspiring.

Do our System’s and Schools’ beliefs and missions . . .

Have meaning and relevance to each participant?

Communicate clearly to others what our expectations and values are?

Generate commitment and enthusiasm?

Did our process for establishing beliefs and missions . . .

Include input from representative from all groups within the school community?

Encourage participants to be thoughtful and reflective?

Promote discussion, dialogue, and shared perspectives?

Help develop positive relationships among the participants?