Sample Instructional Vision Statements

An instructional vision articulates what teaching and learning should look like in a particular content area. While standards name the specifics of what students should know and be able to do and the instructional shifts within the standards describe the types of instruction the standards call for, an instructional vision is a district's articulation of what students should experience daily and the overall goals for student learning. Having a clear vision for instruction will guide the adoption process and serve as a critical lens through which all potential materials are viewed.

What is this resource?

The real-life examples provided here show how some districts articulate their vision for instruction for specific content areas (ELA, math, and science). The examples range from high level to more specific. Notice how the vision statements are focused on what students are experiencing. This frame allows educators to direct all instructional resources toward a common goal.

How should this resource be used?

Use these examples as you develop your own instructional vision before you begin your search for new materials. Gather ideas from various stakeholders within the district to ensure your vision of instruction represents priorities across your system. Once you have a draft statement, take time to socialize the statement with stakeholders to gather feedback and develop a final draft. Note that your vision may shift a little every year as your educators learn more about students and the subject. Revisiting and confirming instructional visions is in itself a powerful activity.

The examples below show how some districts articulate their vision for instruction. The examples range from high level to more specific.

English Language Arts Instructional Vision Statements

1. **[District]** students are effective communicators who purposefully read, write, and speak across multiple disciplines. Students express ideas and knowledge through a variety of modalities. Students engage with high-quality texts and digital media to develop comprehension, active listening, and discussion skills. Students are critical thinkers who identify problems, find solutions, and analyze outcomes in service of becoming productive citizens.

2. **[District]** students will develop the necessary skills in reading, writing, speaking, and listening that are the foundations for creative and purposeful expression in language. Students will engage with high-quality, complex text and participate in writing and discussions anchored in evidence from the text to promote comprehension. Students apply these skills while reading independently and see themselves as readers and writers who persevere in the face of challenging work.

3. **TNTP sample**: In our literacy classrooms, we strive to build readers, writers, and communicators prepared to meet the demands of college and career and to engage as productive citizens of the world. In our classrooms:

- **Students read worthwhile texts**. By reading rich, challenging texts that build our students' understanding of the world, we empower them with the understanding that reading is their pathway to knowledge. We put meaningful, complex texts at the heart of nearly every lesson and set students up to do lots of reading on their own so that all of our students, regardless of their reading level, build their knowledge of the world, gain confidence with challenging texts, and develop the critical thinking skills and vocabulary necessary for long-term success.

- **Students ground daily writing and discussion in evidence**. Our students need daily practice discussing and writing about informational and literary text and other media in order to be successful in college and their careers. We give our students the support they need to read texts closely, then challenge them to speak and write about what they have read or viewed using evidence to back up their positions. Supporting our students' ability to read critically, build

arguments, cite evidence, and communicate ideas today prepares them to be better citizens tomorrow.

- Students do the thinking. We know how to read, write, speak, and think about our content, and we also know that our students won't gain these skills if we do the work for them. We check the ratio of teacher work to student work in each and every lesson and ensure that our students get many opportunities to be critical thinkers, readers, writers and speakers, offering our support and feedback to help them find success.

Mathematics Instructional Vision Statements

1. In [district], we strive to build mathematically proficient students prepared to meet the demands of college and career and apply mathematics in the real world. In our classrooms:

- Students do the thinking. They engage in productive struggle and work to persevere through real-world problems. Students see themselves as problem-finders and problem-solvers and have multiple opportunities to grow as mathematicians.

- Students do the bulk of the work (both thinking and talking) and actively participate in mathematics conversations. As a result, students know how to think and communicate like a mathematician, taking risks and challenging misconceptions.

- Students learn the hows and whys of math and are engaged in deep learning that builds on what they already know, and how that applies to the world around them.

2. In [district] we believe effective teaching is grounded in best practices and is the most important factor in student learning. We believe that effective mathematics instruction is based upon teachers engaging in effective mathematics teaching practices (National Council Teachers Mathematics) and students engaging in the standards for mathematical practice:

- Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them.
- Reason abstractly and quantitatively.
- Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others.
- Model with mathematics.
- Use appropriate tools strategically.
- Attend to precision.
- Look for and make use of structure.
- Look for and express regularity in repeated reasoning.

As a result, student understanding of mathematics deepens. Students develop number sense and mathematical thinking through the progression of concrete,

representational, and abstract modeling. Students use multiple strategies to engage in rich tasks that facilitate exploration, critical thinking, and discourse to deepen conceptual understanding. A variety of formative assessment is used to respond to student needs. Student agency is promoted through personalization and self-reflection on mathematical learning. Competent students effectively solve problems connected to real world contexts to demonstrate mastery.

3. Sample from TNTP: In our mathematics classrooms, we strive to build mathematically proficient students prepared to meet the demands of college and career and apply mathematics in the real world. In our classrooms:

- Students focus on the most important content. Rather than racing to cover as many topics as possible, we slow down and go into depth on the most important math concepts on students' path to college and career readiness. Doing so will gives our students the time and space they need to build an enduring understanding of the content we cover.

- Students build on what they already know. We maximize the time we have with our students by building on what they learned in past units and previous grades. By treating new concepts as extensions of what our students have learned before, we help our students develop a conceptual understanding of key mathematical concepts, including how topics are connected and how they can apply multiple skills to the problems they tackle in class and in the real world.

- Students learn the hows and whys of math—and apply that knowledge to the world around them. We give our students opportunities to discover both how to solve problems and why those procedures work, and reinforce these deeper understandings with lots of practice so that important skills, like multiplying integers or setting up an equation, become second nature. We show our students the power of the math they have learned by giving them challenging, real-world problems that require them to apply their understandings in a meaningful way.

- Students do the thinking. We already know how to think and communicate like a mathematician, and we also know that our students won't gain these skills if we do the work for them. We check the ratio of teacher work to student work in each and every lesson and ensure that our students get many more opportunities than we do to grow as mathematicians. Our students do

computations, persevere through challenging questions, and reason abstractly and quantitatively. We set students up to communicate their ideas, critique others' reasoning, and reflect on their approach to problems. We give students ownership for identifying patterns, structures, and repetition in order to find efficient pathways to solutions and make connections between ideas, and we help students see themselves as problem-finders and problem-solvers capable of posing meaningful questions, making productive inquiries, using the tools that their disposal and modeling real-world situations with math.

Science Instructional Vision Statements

1. In **[district]** science classrooms, our teachers intentionally design experiences that allow students to facilitate their own learning. This leads to students who are actively engaged in explaining phenomena through discourse, collaboration, and asking questions in order to build critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

2. In **[district]**, every K-12 student will engage at high levels in the practices of science and engineering in order to:

- Make sense of relevant scientific phenomena/occurrences in the world around them.
- Develop deep understandings.
- Make connections across disciplines and grade levels to enhance their thinking and learning.

So that upon graduation, students are:

- Socially and emotionally positioned to have a deeper understanding of self and their ability to make a difference.
- Caring, empathetic STEM-literate citizenship.
- Prepared for STEM careers and opportunities.

3. **Sample from TNTP**: In our science classrooms, we strive to build scientifically proficient students prepared to meet the demands of college and career and to engage as productive citizens of the world. This means:

- **Students regularly "do" science in a hands-on way.** Science as a discipline is much more than just a body of knowledge to be committed to memory. Students should consistently engage with content as scientists by exploring concepts and phenomena by touching, feeling, building, experimenting, observing, etc.

- **Science courses are focused and coherent.** Science classrooms are focused on the most important content, and that content focus is coherently deepened from

grade to grade (or course to course). We create opportunities for students to engage with disciplinary core ideas, crosscutting concepts and the most critical scientific and engineering practices (rather than racing to cover as many topics as possible and/or pushing rote, procedural recall of scientific facts).

- **Students learn the most critical content in science.** Courses and lessons are centered around certain disciplinary core ideas in physical sciences, life sciences, earth and space science and engineering, technology, and applications of science.

- **Students demonstrate critical science and engineering practices.** The study of science is not passive, and we therefore encourage our students to engage with and apply the materials, behaviors, and practices that prepare them for the demands of science in college and careers. The scientific and engineering practices represent the "doing" aspect of science, which we know is an essential complement to the "knowing" of content.

- **Students use crosscutting concepts to make meaning of science.** We ensure that students are explicitly exposed to certain crosscutting concepts that have application across all domains of science, and that they are supported in using these concepts as an organizational schema for making meaning of the scientific content and practices they learn across grade-levels.

- **Students apply strong literacy skills to learning and communicating about science.** Literacy in science is non-negotiable and serves many purposes. Students who are ready for college and career interact with and produce content in a manner that is evidence-based, coherent, and compelling.