

# Simple Program Development Guide

## Congratulations!

You have taken the biggest step towards school transformation. You have envisioned a program that helps align with your values as an educator.

This booklet is meant to serve as a preliminary guide for developing your program. It is **merely a starting point**. *But...* It will encourage you to ask the right questions. It will provide you with concrete deliverables that will help you turn your ambitious vision into a reality.

Take it in part and parcel.

Take it one step at a time. Starting a new program does take a lot of work, but it starts with a single step. Commit to working through a small portion of the guide daily. Before you know it, you will have a cohesive plan.

Remember, **I am here to help**.

The ambitious program I helped start was the brainchild of several collaborators. We consulted with program leaders at some of the world's most innovative schools. We enlisted help from technology specialists and innovation experts who work with top Fortune 500 companies.

Find out more about that [here](#).

We are just a phone call or email away. **Tell us about your vision** and we will work with you to develop a more comprehensive and strategic plan **to help you get there**.

Finally, thank you for your commitment to transforming student learning. With no further ado...

## Step One: Envision the End, Plan Backwards

You have to start with a crystal clear vision for your program. Your vision statement should be two sentences maximum and answer these four key questions:

*What will your program do?*

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*How will you do it?*

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*Whom will you do it for?*

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*What value are you bringing to your students?*

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**Sample Vision Statement:**

Futures Academy is an innovative community that uses integrated project-based learning to help empower students to thrive in a changing global society.

**What is it?**

**How will you do it?**

**What will it do?  
For whom?**

**What value are you bringing?**

**Your Program's Vision Statement:** (Write your concise vision statement below)

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## You rock!

Vision statement complete. Check that off your list. This will drive everything you do in the next sections. Put this somewhere visible. As you make decisions for your program including its communication plan, scheduling, unit development, and teaming structures, make sure it aligns with your vision.

## The Culminating Experience

Now that you have a crystal clear vision, envision a culminating experience that will demonstrate what students know and are able to do. This “capstone” experience should ask students to integrate all the skills and dispositions they have developed in your program.

In order to envision this experience, start by answering these four questions:



1. How will the ideal graduate **think**?
2. How will the ideal graduate **act**?
3. What will the ideal graduate be **able to do**?
4. What will the ideal graduate **know**?

## **Culminating Experience Ideas:**

- Creation of a non- profit
- Develop a viable business plan for a new viable business
- Exhibition of learning
- Development of new product to meet a need
- Ted Talk
- Internship for local company and presentation of learning
- Write and publish a book professionally
- Create a short documentary on a topic of interest and present at film festival
- Long term scientific impact study to determine environmental impact of changes to a local habitat

## Step Two: Hire The Right Team

Great work! You have already created a crystal clear vision for your program and envisioned the ideal graduate. This has allowed you to create a culminating experience that allows students to demonstrate what they have learned. From here, you will be able to develop the plan to help get them there.

As important as it is to envision the ideal graduate, it is equally important to envision the **ideal educator**. Unfortunately, unlike the ideal graduate, educators must already embody many of the traits of the ‘ideal teacher.’ With a program as ambitious as yours, while there will be lots of ‘on the job training’ for teachers, in order for your program to be well received, you will have to hire the right team from the start.

Here’s how.

Create a list of key characteristics your teachers must possess. In addition, put together a list of experiences they must have had in the past.

### **Key Characteristics:**

### **Key Experiences:**

### **Educator Profile**

Once you have determined key characteristics and experiences for the staff you hope to hire, put together an educator profile. This one page profile should be engaging and speak **specifically** to the educators you are looking to acquire.

Use phrases like:

*Are you the type of person...*

*Would you like...*

*Imagine a school...*

### **Where to find teachers?**

You are **not** looking for the same kind of teacher that you hire for a classroom position. You need a teacher who has experience collaborating with colleagues; managing and navigating change; pursuing their own self- improvement through PD; and facilitating diverse groups of students. These are not the types of teachers you find through typical job searches.

Since these teachers are very hard to find, you have to get creative with your recruiting. Seek out the most innovative schools that mirror what you want to do with your program, and ask if they have recommendations for teachers who might be a good fit for yours.

### **Next Steps:**

Once you have screened candidates based on the preliminary educator profile, you will have the opportunity to interview them. Make sure, rather than asking questions about experiences, you give them real scenarios of situations they might encounter, and inquire how they would respond.

Start with a preliminary Skype call screening and then bring them on site to engage in these kind of experiences in a real classroom. Provide them and other candidates with a task and ask them to work together to complete it.



**Do not run this interview process the same way you would when hiring a classroom teacher. The only way to gage how well they work on with a team is to observe them working with a team. Give candidates the task of creating the first unit together, and watch how they interact. Chances are you will know right away which teachers would be the best fit for your program.**

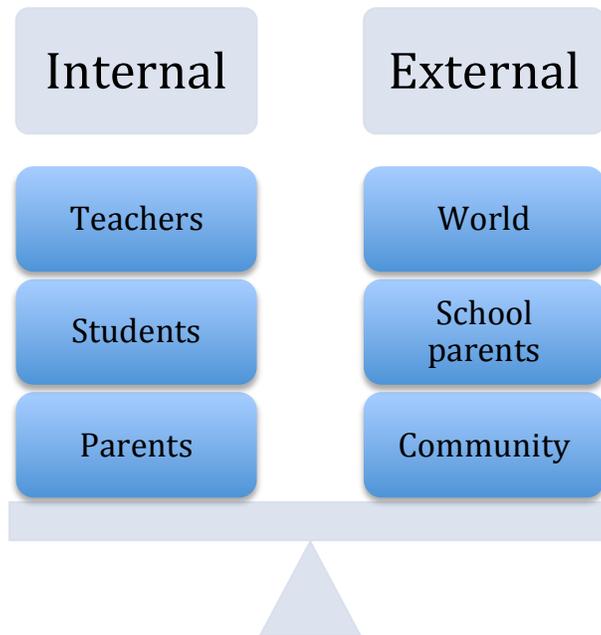
### **Hire the complete team:**

Finally, understand that more likely than not, a candidate might not embody **all** the characteristics you are looking for. That's ok. Team members should compliment each other nicely. If you have a very flexible person who serves as the "idea guy," they are complimented perfectly by the meticulous planner.

## **Step Three: Create a Communication Plan**

Now that you have hired your team and created a crystal clear vision for your program, it's time to create a communication plan. As a leader, you understand the importance of developing positive communication. Your communication can make or break your program. The program might experience incredible success, but unless this is communicated to key stakeholders, there is a tendency for them to develop their own impression.

The first step to creating a successful communication plan is to identify your key stakeholders in the success of your program. We will call these your “communication buckets.” I have included these below:



### How you communicate:

Oftentimes, as school leaders, we communicate in the same way that we like to receive information ourselves. If we are avid bloggers, we appreciate a good blog post that introduces us to latest innovations. If we check our mail daily, we appreciate a physical newsletter that provides updates.

The problem is, not everyone thinks like us.

To start developing positive communication for our programs, we have to start by empathizing with your various audiences.

You probably already have a pretty good gauge on how some of your stakeholders like to receive information. Your board is going to want high- level communication that communicates strategic goals including retention of students, your marketing plan to recruit more, and high level data that communicates results.

Your parents on the other hand are going to want a more thorough description of learning in the program. Their #1 concern is whether or not their child is learning and growing.

I recommend developing a communication plan by starting with a survey. Here’s a sample of a survey you might generate: **(see below)**

## Sample Survey

### Improving our communication

Dear \_\_\_\_\_, We are very excited with the launch of our new program \_\_\_\_\_, whose vision is to \_\_\_\_\_, As \_\_\_\_\_, you are crucial to our program's success. In order to keep you up to date with our progress, we have a few questions we hope you can answer. These answers will help us develop the most positive communication with you and ensure you are always "in the know" with the program's development. Thanks again for your continual support.

\* Required

Please indicate your most preferred methods of communication:

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- E-mail
- Phone
- School Newsletter
- Blog posts
- Other:

How often would you like us to communicate? \*

- Once a week
- Twice a week
- Once a month
- Twice monthly
- Other :

Indicate the information you would you like us to communicate?

\*

- Upcoming events
- Ways you can get involved
- Examples of student work
- Current Units of Study
- Other:

How long have you been at the school?

- 1 year
- 2 years
- 3 years
- 4 years or more

**SUBMIT**

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.

## **Face- to- Face Communication:**

While we do live in the digital age, where information is available at the click of a mouse, never underestimate the power of face- to- face communication. With digital communication, we are often left wondering how many of our stakeholders actually received the message we hoped to impart. Some never open the message, and some are confused by its content.

In face- to- face communication, you are able to answer questions, engage in a discussion, and more thoroughly explain the message you are trying to communicate. Here are some ideas for increasing face- to- face communication in your program:

- ✓ **Parent Coffees:** A coffee once a month to explain programmatic developments and answer questions
- ✓ **Networking Events:** A planned event around current program goals/ units of study and how stakeholders can get more involved
- ✓ **Student-Led Conferences:** A conference for students to present learning in the program to their parents, with you available to answer follow- up questions
- ✓ **Speed Dating Rounds:** Structured periods of time for key stakeholders to see you in short increments of time

## **Be proactive, not reactive:**

I cannot overstate the importance of proactive communication. At each of the events listed above, try and predict the questions and/ or concerns parents might have regarding the program. If you are vigilant in collecting data through your timely surveys, you will know exactly what they are.

These questions/ concerns will guide you in creating presentations/ schedules for each of these events.

If you've done your homework, then at the end of the scheduled face- to- face event, when you ask, "Any questions?" People will have none.

**Step four: Develop units**

**Step five: Develop norms for collaboration**

**Step six: Develop flexible schedules and space**

**Congratulations!**

You are three steps closer to turning your vision into a reality. Want to know the other three steps? Start your collaboration today. I am ready to help you work through the development of your program to ensure it is successful and transforms student learning at your school. Contact me through one of the methods below:



**E-mail:** [kwagner@transformschool.com](mailto:kwagner@transformschool.com)

**Phone:** (619) 733-4450

**Skype:** kwagassd3