

Strategic Planning

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Summary of Library

Princess Anne Elementary School library is located in Virginia Beach, Virginia. The school accommodates students grades PreK through 5th. Out of the 615 students enrolled, about 70% of the children at Princess Anne identify as white, 4% as black, 11% as hispanic, 6% as Asian and 8% as multiple races. 7% of the students are eligible for free and reduced lunch according to the Virginia Department of Education's School Quality Profile, which is consistent with the city's statistics on poverty. 14% of the students at Princess Anne Elementary are students with disabilities. 1% of the students are wheelchair bound.

Library Mission

The mission of the Princess Anne Elementary School library is to promote information literacy throughout the school community, to support teachers in their pursuit of information literacy and reading instruction, and to create a lifelong love of reading throughout that school community (Allman, L. personal communication, February 22, 2022).

Library Vision

The library will continue to be a multi-use space that would welcome and make possible an array of learning experiences, but that it would always continue to be a place where students find the books that will turn them into lifelong readers (Allman, L. personal communication, February 22, 2022).

Part I

According to Moran and Morner, “the mission statement is a short, succinct statement focusing on the purpose of the organization, its reason for existence, and what it hopes to accomplish” (2017, p. 91). While Princess Anne Elementary library’s mission statement is focused on its purpose, the sentiment is outdated and non inclusive in nature. The statement comes off as focused on the school community rather than the students that it serves. As a teacher, I can rationalize that the library is there to serve both children and adults, however I would prefer that the mission was student centered. I appreciate the simplicity of the mission and the easy to understand language that is used. However, seeing as how this library serves elementary aged students, I wonder if it would be best put in even simpler terms so that children as young as age 5 could understand it as well. It is important for students to truly understand the reason for the library and the many different ways to take advantage of it.

The library’s vision statement is one that I am completely on board with. However, the mission and the vision seem disjointed as the mission statement said nothing of a multi-use space, further proving my point that it seems outdated. Moran and Morner state that “to be truly strategic in actions, some ambiguity must be tolerated; meaning that some uncertainty becomes acceptable” (2017, p. 81). This is certainly true of this vision statement. Because it is ambiguous in nature, it leaves a lot of wiggle room for interpretation. One might wonder what is considered a multi-use space and who is it intended for? Is the space focused on children of different abilities? Students of different ages? The emphasis on inclusivity is imperative in this day and age. “Universal design (UD) means that rather than designing your facility and services for the average user, you design them for people with a broad range of abilities, disabilities, and other characteristics—such as age, reading ability, learning style, language, culture, and

others” (Burgstahler, 2018). I would love to see a vision with more inclusivity. I do appreciate that the vision seems more student focused although I think the language could be more specific.

As a teacher at this school, I adhere to the ideals behind both of these statements. However, I could not find the mission or the vision statement on any website, poster or even handout. I feel that these important statements should be displayed in some way or easy to find. As Moran and Morner mention, in order for your vision to be successful, at the very least people have to know what it is. In addition, neither the mission statement or the vision seem rooted in any type of data driven by the specific needs of the school or the students it serves. This would help make both statements updated and built on facts, not general ideals.

Part II

My strategic plan for Princess Anne Elementary’s library is to create a butterfly garden in the courtyard that connects the Functional Academic Foundation (FAF) classes and the library. This would enhance the multi-space vision that the library has in place. It would also aid the library to have a more universal design that meets the needs of all abilities. The library would no longer be a space for an “average user” as Burgstahler states, but for a broader range of users. With 14% of the students identified as having disabilities and 1% of the school’s population wheelchair bound (VDOE, 2021), the butterfly garden would benefit ALL.

The North American Butterfly Association (NABA) is allowing libraries to certify gardens of any size to be an official garden with qualifications like planting 3 native plants that host butterflies and 3 plants that serve as nectar sources. Libraries like the Fletcher Memorial Library in Connecticut say that not only has this opened up their

usable space, but it was particularly helpful during the pandemic. “In this time of pandemic-when many libraries are forced to limit their indoor services-outdoor services became even more vital” (Udell, 2021). Having an outdoor space would ensure that the library’s services would not be in danger of shutting down.

Fortunately, there is an unused courtyard that connects the side door of the library and the doors to the FAF classrooms. All students could take advantage of this space and it would be highly accessible for the FAF classes. Ramps on both doors provide a safe way for anyone to access this garden.

The library’s vision states that it “would continue to be a multi-use space that would welcome and make possible an array of learning experiences” (Allman, L. personal communication, February 22, 2022). Having a NABA certified butterfly garden would not only serve the vision as a multi-use space, but also help to make possible that the learning experiences of the library were diverse. Activities about climate change, pollinators, and soil conservation are just a few of the lessons that would be enhanced if students were to have a space to observe and explore.

In order to make this a successful program, getting the school community involved is key. “The entire organization should be informed of the process and buy into its success, with all participants being kept informed both in the planning stage and the implementation of the plan” (Moran and Morner, 2017, p. 83). This is an important element that the library is currently lacking. Stakeholders and even employees are unaware of the mission and vision of the library, making it an island. If the school community can get involved, the library would greatly benefit. The garden has the potential to increase the regularity that the multi-use space is accessed, “support teachers in their pursuit of...reading instruction, and create a lifelong love of reading

throughout that school community” (Allman, L. personal communication, February 22, 2022).

I believe that creating a NABA certified butterfly garden at Princess Anne Elementary School’s library would enhance both the vision and the mission of the library.

References

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