

Locally Rooted and Globally Informed Visions of Student Success

Every decision we make about supporting students and educators—from what student outcomes we pursue to how we teach them to how we redesign schools—should be informed by a collectively developed vision of student success.

What is the purpose of education, and who decides it? Too often, visions of student success are imposed on students, families, and communities rather than co-constructed with them. Our studies of strong classrooms and communities reveal the power of vision—a collective and ongoing conversation that should be true for students when they leave school. **Consider these reflections** from strong teachers on the role of vision in their classroom—and where that vision is coming from.

What is a Vision?

A vision is what a community wants to be true for its children in the future and should be:

- **Collectively created:** **co-constructed and evolved** in genuine partnership among educators, students, families, and communities.
- **Locally rooted:** **grounded in the history, culture, and values** of a particular community.
- **Globally informed:** **reflecting global aspirations**, what has worked in other places, and economic trends and environmental changes that affect us all.

Why is a Vision Important?

Schools and classrooms should be purposefully designed to pursue collective visions of student success. And yet, most children today are served by education systems not built for their contexts, futures, and needs. Often those systems are actually perpetuating divides among different groups of people.

Not only does that evolving vision help align individual and collective actions, but it also guides answers to many of the most challenging questions for improving schools and classrooms. Developing collective visions of student success ensures that students, families, and communities have all of the information they need to determine education's purpose.


How Do We Develop a Vision?

The power of a “vision statement” is actually in the conversation that creates it. That vision-development process requires:

- **Being open, humble, receptive, empathetic, and self-aware** in ways that foster genuine human partnership.
- **Studying** and examining *local history, assets, challenges, and values*, as well as *global* trends and possibilities.
- **Facilitating** rituals and systems that **foster collective engagement.**

SOURCES OF OUR LEARNING

In the last several years, vision of student success has been one of the fastest evolving frontiers of learning across our network. Among the most influential sources for this work have been partner organizations in the Teach For All network that are engaging alongside students, families, and communities to determine the purpose of education, especially organizations like **Anseye Pou Ayiti (Haiti)** and **Teach For Nepal**. We're also learning from students and educators like **Elijah** and **Wisdom** in the United States and **Kusum** and **Prathik** in India. Please add your own experience, perspective, and critical friendship to this learning by joining the Global Learning Lab's collaborative learning experiences, or reaching out directly to Jude Heaton at jude.heaton@teachforall.org.



When you work with local people to create shared understanding of the type of change that you want to see in the community... where our own idea and idea of community can come together to create a shared vision, then that allows you to become more effective in implementing that vision... that vision becomes the vision of the community you are serving.

Shisir Khanal, CEO | Teach For Nepal

Actionable Implications

The most important design decisions we face in education should be informed by a collective vision of student success. For example:

- **Relationships with Students, Families, and Communities.** Educators, school leaders, policy makers, and others should focus more on building **genuine connections and relationships** with the people experiencing schools and systems than with the people running them.
Incoming Teach For Nepal teachers live in the communities where their students live, often with families of the students they will teach.
- **Rituals to Question and Clarify Purpose.** Program designers should host regular **rituals through which students, families, and others reflect** on alignments and misalignments between daily actions and vision—to assess program progress toward the vision and to further evolve the vision.
Empieza por Educar in Spain brought together students, families, and educators to reflect on how their classrooms were and were not aligned to the collectively developed vision. Not only did educators report the ritual helped them make adjustments in classrooms, but student and family input challenged and changed the vision of success, empowering them to feel ownership of the education process.
- **Broad “Student Leadership” Outcomes.** A locally rooted and globally informed vision of success informs what student outcomes should be measured to indicate progress to that vision. In fact, vision is the key to moving beyond rote, standardized learning toward schools and classrooms that grow students’ proficiencies, agency, dispositions, and awareness.
When the Teach For Armenia team explored education’s purpose with members of the community, a vision emerged of students growing as entrepreneurial problem solvers who will build a new Armenia. Coaches and educators realized immediately the vision would require an adoption of broader student outcomes (including critical thinking, for example) rather than the rote knowledge traditionally valued in the Armenian system.
- **Diversifying the Backgrounds and Perspectives of Teachers and Staff.** Collective visions of student success must be **shaped by students, families, and community members** for whom schools were not traditionally designed. Programs should make extra effort to recruit and select teachers from the communities where they will be placing the teachers.
After Teach For America made significant changes to its recruiting and selection strategies, the numbers of incoming teachers who share the racial, ethnic and/or socio-economic background of their students has grown dramatically, to nearly half of the corps.

Teach For All Global Learning Lab

Teach For All’s Global Learning Lab supports learning among classrooms and communities that are helping students grow as leaders of a better future for themselves, and all of us.