

Sample Language for Written Materials (Columns, articles, letters, etc.)

Understanding Educators' and Parents' Shared Values and Vision for Public Schools

Based on Research by the Learning First Alliance

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- There's an old expression among school people: If you don't have a grip on life, it will definitely get a grip on you. And let's face it; getting grip these days in education isn't always that easy. Educators and parents find themselves in the same boat, besieged by outside experts pointing out what we are supposedly doing wrong, while the experts blow hot and cold regarding what exactly it is that we should be doing. Meanwhile, educators and parents must sail on—doing the best we can do with what we know to stay on course during the long, tough journey of educating our children.
- What do we know? Actually, more than you might think. Recent research by the Learning First Alliance and other organizations shows there is a fundamental agreement among educators, parents, and the public on the all-important question of what constitutes a quality public school.
- This is excellent news, because a shared vision can carry us a long way. A shared vision generates hope—and in education, hope is the yeast that makes student achievement rise.
- First and foremost, we agree that a quality public school is one in which the students are happy and eager to learn. That's right, happy and eager to learn.
- A quality public school is also one in which the teachers are dedicated and trained, parental involvement in their children's education is strong, discipline is sound, information about student achievement is readily available, and class sizes are reasonable.

- We know that this shared vision of a quality public school is rooted in our core American values. Americans believe in hard work and taking responsibility for oneself—and that's precisely what we want our schools to teach the students. We know that every child is capable of ambitious learning; however, we also know that learning is not attained by chance, but through diligent and disciplined effort.
- Do you believe a person's success in life depends upon forces outside his or her control—or do you believe that a person's individual efforts determine his or her success? If you agree it's the latter, then you are in the majority. It's called the American Dream, and Americans believe fervently in it. Moreover, Americans see a strong link between achieving the American Dream and having access to a quality public education.
- Whenever we talk with the public or with policymakers about education, we should use our shared vision and values to frame our suggestions. After all, it's parents and educators who instill in students the work habits and teach them the skills and knowledge they will need to become responsible and productive adults.
- When we speak up for public schools and children, our shared vision and values happen to be our greatest assets.