



# Leading with Vision and Mission Priorities

By Robert H. Tennies

A vision begins with the realization that something needs to change. In *Visioneering*, Andy Stanley identifies vision as an imperative. But the mission is just as important—a vision will not become reality unless a mission guides the process.

Target, for instance, has a vision to become the #1 retailer in the world and a mission to save people money and make lives better. Coldwell Banker Realtors' mission is to provide great customer service, thus fulfilling a vision of security for families.

The vision of Christian schools is a generation of leaders who will bring glory to God. We accomplish this through our mission: Christ-centered education.

The mission and vision will be powerful tools for guiding spiritual formation, enhancing academic performance, and meeting the needs of the whole child. Leading with vision and mission priorities takes planning and discipline. We must honor core values; we must cultivate our culture. We must budget and fundraise to provide adequate resources, and reinvigorate the vision with annual themes.

## Discipline

A vision is not reached haphazardly. Leonardo da Vinci had a vision for his art, but the power of the vision was guided by his discipline: he drew 1,000 hands before committing to *The Last Supper*. An organization must be likewise disciplined in its mission, holding fast to the core values and maintaining high standards. Accreditation can help schools in this regard.

## Core Values

Core values give the path for a disciplined culture by defining what is really important; this shapes every decision, significant or trivial. Ignoring core values will derail the organization's journey. Volkswagen is an excellent example.

In advertisements, Volkswagen espoused performance, design, quality, environment, and safety as core values. Yet, in 2015, they designed a diesel car to run dirty, spewing out 35 times the permitted amount of nitrogen oxide. During emissions testing, they made the vehicle run clean in a deliberate attempt to cheat the standards.

When the scandal was found out, the Volkswagen CEO resigned, and their stock dropped 30%. They were willing to sacrifice a core value on their way to be #1 in the world, and it cost them terribly. Of course, the deeper values they sacrificed were integrity and trust.

## Sandbox: A Comprehensive Mission Statement

In *Leading from the Sandbox*, T. J. Addington provides a useful diagram for leaders to use in developing their missions. The sandbox has four boundaries: Mission (what needs to be accomplished), Guiding Principles (core values), Preferred Culture (what must be developed to reach your potential), and Central Ministry Focus (the most important day-in, day-out task). The sandbox for Boca Christian is shown on the following page.

## Spiritual Formation

Scripture presents a vision of what a child of God will look like if he or she is nurtured by the Word of God: a tree planted by streams of water. Psalm 1:2 (ESV) says, “His delight is in the law of the Lord, and on His law he meditates both day and night.” The vision is amplified as a tree that bears fruit in season and does not wither. The passage also gives a warning against being influenced by ungodly philosophies and principles. The child of God has a strong foundation to resist influences that would reduce the effect of God’s Word.

This vision came alive to me when my wife and I visited the giant sequoia trees in the Sierra Nevada in California. They can be found only at elevations of 5,000 to 7,000 feet and are the largest living things on earth—taller than the Statue of Liberty and often 30 feet in diameter. The sequoias can live up to 3,500 years; some that are alive today lived when Moses was leading the children of Israel out of Egypt. The bark is 30 inches thick, which prevents disease and allows the tree to survive fire without a problem. The sequoia prospers.

But why do the sequoias only grow 5,000–7,000 feet above sea level on the western side of the Sierra Nevada? At that elevation, clouds—pushed eastward by the warm air over the Pacific Ocean—rise, cool, and release their water. It is only there that the sequoias find their

nourishing streams. The Christian school needs to be like these mountains: a place for our children to be nourished and refreshed by God’s Word. A place where Scripture is integrated into the full course of study.

## Academic Progress

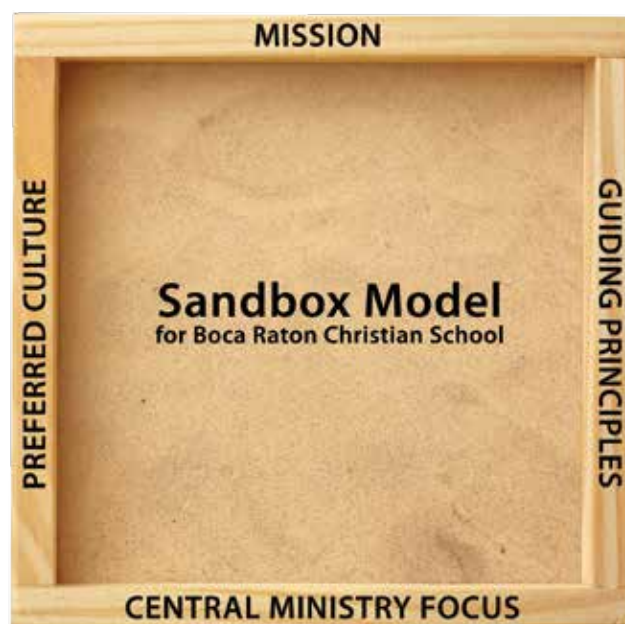
During the last five years, we have had a schoolwide focus on writing. We emphasized writing assessments for grades 3–12 at the beginning of the school year, and at the end of the year tracked writing improvement using the Six Traits of Writing as our rubric. The project includes ongoing professional development and an emphasis on writing across the curriculum. We developed a consistent vocabulary for identifying great writing. This effort produced our award-winning literary magazine, *Illuminate*, a compilation of the best writing in the school each year. As a result of that vision, we are much better at writing than we were five years ago. We are farther along in developing those leaders of influence for tomorrow.

## Budgetary Support

Vision needs to be tied to budget and fundraising. After feedback from stakeholders, our latest initiative is to improve our STEM program. We want to add additional well-equipped science rooms to our facility, enhance technology, and add robotics for our first and

To encourage students to know, love, and serve Jesus Christ  
and to provide for academic excellence.

- Integrity
- Mutual respect
- Healthy teachers
- Second mile spirit
- Matthew 18 principle
- Well-informed
- Spirit-led families
- Outreach focus
- Evangelistically compelled
- Zeal for lifelong learning
- Unity
- Personal spiritual formation
- Group devotions; sharing one another’s burdens



- Biblical foundation and Spirit-empowered
- Partnership with parents
- Whole child education
- Self-reflection
- Disciplined, caring, and challenging learning environment
- Meet high accreditation standards
- High-quality, research-based instruction
- Strong professional development certifications/credentials

Help students see the world from a biblical perspective  
“Bringing Knowledge to Light”

second graders, so we have a full robotics program from grades 1–12. We know that this STEM emphasis will be helpful in the workplace of tomorrow.

## Unity and Momentum

The annual theme is a tool to fuel our vision of developing the influential Christian leaders of tomorrow. We pray each year for the new theme and for the Scripture that will support it. We look for a theme relevant to the times.

**By shaping the next generation, we can reinvigorate our vision to nourish society with the Word of God, spread the gospel, and receive the blessings that will come.**

Our theme for 2015–2016 is “God is Greater; He is over all, through all, and in all.” This theme is based on Ephesians 4:6 and seeks to address one of the biggest issues of our time. The theme was selected in part because of our desire to push back on the Obergefell vs. Hodges Supreme Court decision, which redefined marriage for Americans and made same-sex marriage a constitutional right. Jesus clearly defined marriage in Matthew 19 (NIV): “At the beginning the Creator made them male and female, and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.’” An important point for future leaders to understand is that government may permit something in contradiction to God’s will. We need to develop discerning minds based on God’s Word. When the disciples in Acts 5 were told to not preach in the name of Jesus, their reply was, “We must obey God rather than men.”

The Supreme Court, though it has accomplished much good (such as seeking to eliminate racial segregation in schools and protecting religious liberties for organizations like Hobby Lobby), has also made a series of decisions reducing the influence of Scripture on our society. Whether they are just reflecting society or leading the charge is for you to decide.

SUPREME COURT		
DECISION	YEAR	SCRIPTURAL INFLUENCE REMOVED
<i>Engel v. Vitale</i>	1962	Prayer
<i>Abington School District v. Schempp</i>	1963	Bible reading
<i>Epperson v. Arkansas</i>	1968	Creation narrative
<i>Roe v. Wade</i>	1973	Protection of unborn life
<i>Stone v. Graham</i>	1980	Posting of Ten Commandments
<i>Obergefell v. Hodges</i>	2015	Biblical definition of marriage

## Conclusion

The authority of Scripture is being diminished in society. Christian churches and schools exist to counter this trend. We see the need; something must be done. We need to lead with vision and mission priorities. By shaping the next generation, we can reinvigorate our vision to nourish society with the Word of God, spread the gospel, and receive the blessings that will come.

God is greater; He is over all, through all, and in all. This is the message that brings us hope. This is the vision that leads our students and families to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

## References

- Addington, T. J. 2010. *Leading from the Sandbox: How to Develop, Empower, and Release High Impact Ministry Teams*. Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress.
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- Stanley, Andy. 1999. *Visioneering: God’s Blueprint for Developing and Maintaining Vision*. Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Books.

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You can find 30 years’ worth of themes and supporting Scriptures at [www.Bocachristian.org/themes](http://www.Bocachristian.org/themes). You have permission to use any of the themes.