

Measure Mission Achievement

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Use the “Close the Gap” Framework

Here’s a four-part framework for closing the gap between the rhetoric of the mission and the reality of the classroom:

1. Define your mission.
2. Define mission achievement.
3. Determine the current level of mission achievement.
4. Define and implement schoolwide improvement plans to close the gap between current and targeted mission achievement levels.

This article addresses part 3.

If you were coaching basketball and your team was ahead 66–63, and you knew that you were taking the ball inbounds under your basket with four seconds remaining, how would this knowledge affect what you would tell your players in your final time-out?

If you knew that your goal was to have 90 percent of your students score at or above standard in an essay presenting a biblical perspective of course content, that overall on the last assessment 78 percent scored at or above standard, and that on the last assessment 46 percent scored below standard on citing supporting Bible passages, how would this knowledge affect how you would prepare your students for the upcoming essay?

If you knew your current level of mission achievement, how would that knowledge have an impact on your planning for next year regarding the following?

- Professional development
- Instructional supervision
- School environment
- School improvement plans
- Content, assessment, and instruction
- Support services
- Parent involvement
- Resource management and planning

If knowing your current level of mission achievement is important to you, read on. I will outline three types of data you can use to determine mission achievement, moving from the simple to the complex. The types of data are indicator data, survey data, and standards-based assessment data.



As teachers, we rally in crisis. This is good.

- A sixth grader has chicken pox. As her teachers, we work together to create a list of assignments (making modifications as necessary), send appropriate materials home, and invite the student and her parents to check in. And the student keeps up and makes a reasonably smooth transition back into class.
- A ninth grader is struggling. As his teachers, we review assessment data and talk together, talk to the student and his parents, and collaborate to develop a support plan that includes tutoring sessions before school. And his performance improves.
- Exams are five days away, and a senior has to attend her grandmother's funeral in another country. The senior was close to her grandmother, is disturbed by her death, and is concerned about finishing the year. We as her teachers, in collaboration with the principal and a counselor, develop an effective plan that provides time for grieving and for taking exams. The student attends the funeral,

completes the exams, and heads off to summer vacation knowing that we care for her.

In crisis, we rally, we focus, and we collaborate at a high level toward a common goal. And while we don't live in constant crisis and wouldn't want to, we do want to collaborate at a high level toward a common goal—on a regular basis.

What can we do? Define a rallying point. Ask for God's help in identifying what He would have our school do (mission), define mission achievement, and work collaboratively to achieve the mission—daily.

God wants our best, both in and out of crisis. Our students need our best, both in and out of crisis. Most of life is not a crisis, and collaboratively focusing on achieving our mission is an effective way to rally, to achieve great things for God, and to serve students at a high level.

From the May 26, 2006, entry on Michael Essenburg's blog:
<http://michalessenburg.blogspot.com>.

Remember, to measure current mission achievement, you must first define the achievement of your mission. At Christian Academy in Japan, we have defined mission achievement in terms of student learning, accreditation standards, and core values:

- Student learning: Each of our fifteen student objectives (also known as overarching curriculum standards and schoolwide learning outcomes) will have an achievement rating of 90 percent of high school students at or above standard, with scores based on end-of-course assessments.
- Accreditation standards: Each of our fourteen accreditation standards will have an achievement rating of "above standard," with scores based on rubric ratings.
- Core values: Each of our Christ-centered values will have an achievement rating of "above standard," with scores based on rubric ratings.

I use this definition of mission achievement in this article. To learn more about defining mission achievement, please visit my website, <http://classes.caj.or.jp/messenburg>, and download "Define_Mission_Achievement." You

can also see blog entries for June 18, 20, and 22 of 2005 at <http://michalessenburg.blogspot.com>.

Level one: Use indicator data to measure current mission achievement.

An indicator is an example of achievement. Brainstorm examples of how your student objectives (also known as schoolwide learning outcomes), accreditation standards, and core values are being achieved. For example, if your student objective is to organize information to support conclusions, you could list examples of students doing this, including making graphs and charts, completing Venn diagrams, writing essays and lab reports, and providing supporting points in a debate.

If your accreditation standard for the instruction is that teachers use their professional experience, research-based knowledge about teaching and learning, and student performance data to select instructional strategies, you could list examples of when teachers used professional experience to select instructional strategies:

- Art teachers used professional experience to select teaching skills by demonstrating and then having students practice the skills.
- Math teachers used professional experience to select direct instruction when students were learning new material.
- PE teachers used professional experience to select direct instruction, demonstration, and practice.

If your core value is caring, you could list examples of caring:

- Students care for students (prayer, second grade/fifth grade buddies, fifth graders helping in kindergarten, older students looking out for younger students, attendance at cocurricular activities) and for staff (providing snacks for meetings).
- Staff care for students (prayer, attendance at cocurricular activities, student support team), staff (prayer, sending bereavement cards, new staff orientation), and parents (tuition assistance program).
- Parents care for students (prayer, attendance at cocurricular activities), staff (providing snacks and meals), and parents (PTA new families buddy program).

Level two: Use survey data to measure current mission achievement.

Analyze data from a survey that uses a set scale and that provides data on achievement levels for your student objectives, accreditation standards, and core values. The following are examples:

If your student objective is to understand a biblical perspective, ask for responses to the following statements:

- Students: "I understand a biblical perspective of each subject I study."
- Parents: "My child understands a biblical perspective of each subject he or she studies."
- Teachers: "My students understand a biblical perspective of the subject(s) I teach."

If your accreditation standard about content is that each student studies challenging, coherent, and relevant content, ask for responses to the following statements:

- Students: "I feel that what I am learning in my classes is important to my life both now and in the future."

Christian teachers and Christian school accreditation agencies, target mission achievement.

What are you going to tell them?

You're coaching a game. You're not sure of the score (because there's no scoreboard). You don't have game stats. And you don't have a handle on how well your players should be performing, given the team you're playing. Meanwhile, you're pleased that the crowd is cheering. You call for a time-out. You have sixty seconds to talk with your players.

What will you tell them? What will you tell them to do to reach success? Remember, you don't know the score, the stats, or how well your team should be doing.

Well, what are you going to tell them? Your players are waiting.

Not a good situation. And it is one that may play out in life more often than we think. For example, to what extent is it similar to what happens in Christian schools?

You're leading a Christian school. You're not sure how well you're doing because you have not defined mission achievement or measured the current level of mission achievement. You don't have disaggregated student assessment data. Meanwhile, you're pleased that the parents are happy with the education their children receive.

You schedule a staff meeting. You have sixty minutes to talk with your staff. What will you tell them? What will you tell them to do to achieve the mission? Remember, you have not defined mission achievement or measured the current level of mission achievement.

Well, what are you going to tell them? Your staff is waiting.

From the May 24, 2006, entry on Michael Essenburg's blog: <http://michalessenburg.blogspot.com>.

- Parents: "I feel that what my child is learning in class is important to his or her life both now and in the future."
- Teachers: "I feel that what my students are learning in my class(es) is important to their lives both now and in the future."

If your core value is collaboration, ask for responses to the following statements:

- Students: "My teachers collaborate with me."
- Parents: "Teachers collaborate with my child."
- Teachers: "I collaborate with my students."

Level three: Use standards-based assessment data to measure current mission achievement.

Use standards-based assessment results regarding student work, accreditation standards, and core values to establish achievement ratings. For example, if your student objective is to communicate through writing, speaking, reading, listening, graphs and charts, and the arts, use a standards-based rubric to assess student writing and, consequently, to determine how many students are below, at, and above standard on this student objective. If your student objective is to solve problems, use math scores from standardized tests to assess student achievement.

If your accreditation standard for assessment is using assessment results as the basis for

regular evaluation and improvement of content, assessment, and instruction, have a committee review appropriate indicator data and survey data, as well as appropriate documentation, and then use a standards-based rubric to determine your achievement rating. (At standard: Assessment results usually are the basis for teacher evaluation and improvement of content, assessment, and instruction.)

If your core value is caring, have a committee review appropriate indicator data and survey data, as well as appropriate documentation, and then use a standards-based rubric to determine your achievement rating. (Above standard: Stakeholders care for others and are cared for by others.)

To learn more, please visit my website, <http://classes.caj.or.jp/messenburg>, and download "Ready_Go_Set" or "Accreditation_Standards_Rubrics."

How will you apply what you have just read? Measuring current mission achievement has helped us toward mission achievement. Would measuring current mission achievement help your school? If so, what step will you take this week?

Here are five options:

1. Talk for fifteen minutes with a colleague about this article.
2. Talk with the school administration about measuring your current mission achievement.

Christian school accreditation agencies, please help.

Measuring current mission achievement is both challenging and worthwhile. If Christian school accreditation agencies were to provide the following two tools, the task would be easier and schools could spend less energy on measuring current mission achievement and more energy on achieving the mission:

1. A password-protected, customizable, online survey (a paper version would also be available)
 - a) That has survey items that are aligned with accreditation standards
 - b) That tabulates, disaggregates, and graphs the data

2. A password-protected online database (complete with templates and data analysis tools)
 - a) That can be used to monitor task completion
 - b) Into which report narrative can be inputted by standard and benchmark
 - c) Into which documented evidence can be submitted
 - d) From which the current level of mission achievement can be determined
 - e) From which a scoreboard of the current level of mission achievement and a self-study report can be published online, as a PDF, or on paper

From the May 31, 2006, entry on Michael Essenburg's blog: <http://michalessenburg.blogspot.com>.

3. Meet with colleagues to brainstorm indicators for one or more of your student objectives.
4. Check out a sample survey that provides data on student objectives, accreditation standards, and values. Please go to <http://caj.or.jp/surveyresults/results.php>.
5. Learn more about assessing student learning to determine current mission achievement.

Christian teachers, your mission is to equip students to make an impact on the world for Christ. To achieve your mission, you need to increase your students' understanding and use of a biblical perspective of course content. For that reason, you need to do the following:

1. Identify the content that students are to learn.
2. Design an assessment, and make sure that it requires your students to connect course content, their lives, and a biblical perspective.
3. Provide engaging instruction, including using models of student work, explaining rubrics, and giving direct instruction on vocabulary.
4. Provide effective tools that your students can use to prepare for the assessment, including templates and websites.
5. Use a rubric to assess each student's work, and provide each student with specific feedback designed to increase performance as described on the rubric.
6. Give your students repeated practice in using a biblical perspective of course content.

Christian school accreditation agencies, your mission is to equip Christian schools to achieve their missions. For that reason, you need to do the following:

1. Identify the content that schools are to learn:
 - a) The definition of mission achievement (in terms of student learning, accreditation standards, and core values)
 - b) The current level of mission achievement
 - c) The strategic steps needed to close the gap between targeted and current levels of mission achievement
2. Design an assessment that requires schools to demonstrate the identified content (see number 1).
3. Provide instructional support:
 - a) Including sample documents (that come with standards-based rubric ratings), rubrics for accreditation standards and benchmarks, and vocabulary lists

- b) Through workshops, conventions, teleclasses, videoconferences, coaching, and online interactive tutorials
4. Provide effective tools for schools to use to prepare for the assessment, including an online survey and an online database. (See "Christian school accreditation agencies, please help.")
5. Use a rubric to assess each school's work, and provide each school with specific feedback designed to increase performance as described on the rubric.
6. Give your schools repeated practice by requiring them to use the online database (see number 4) to update current levels of mission achievement on a semestral or annual basis.

To achieve the mission, teachers and accreditation agencies must target mission achievement. Using the six-step process can help.



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