

Middle schools Mission statements across Connecticut

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Research Question

How do middle school mission statements reflect commitments to disability, cultural awareness, and cultural inclusion?

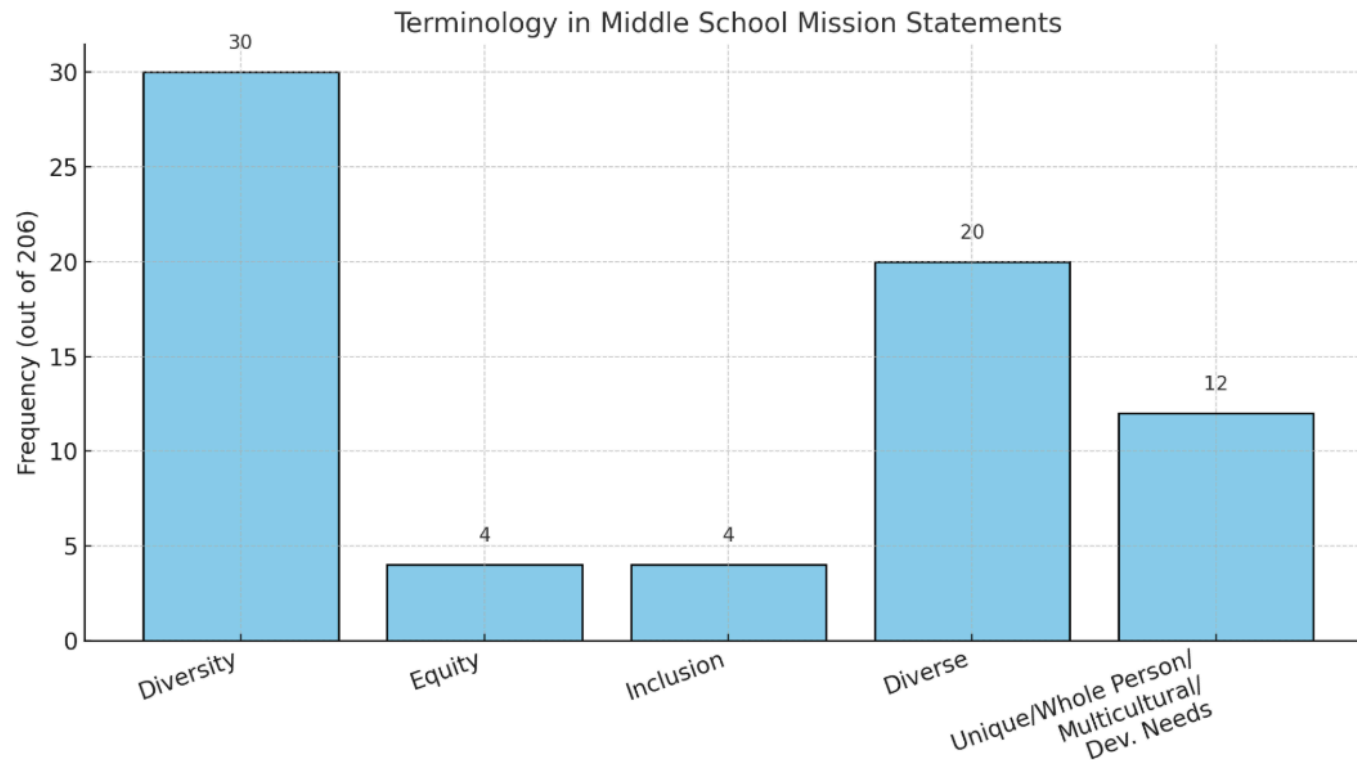
Mission Statements

- A mission grounds the school in its core responsibility: educating and supporting students in their academic and personal growth.
- It creates a shared understanding of the school's goals, helping everyone work toward a common vision for student success.
- A strong mission shapes what is taught, how it's taught, and the values that define the school environment (SHRM, 2024).

Methodology

1. Reviewing all 206 middle schools' official websites, looking for specific terminology in their mission statement
2. Identify and categorize keywords related to disability, cultural awareness, and cultural inclusion
3. Analyze the frequency and context of these keywords in the mission statements
4. Summarize patterns, identify gaps, and suggest improvements

Overall Findings of my Research



Themes in CT Mission Statements

- Emphasis on rigorous educational experiences.
- Cultivation of critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills.
- Strong partnership between school, families, and the broader community.
- Collective responsibility for student growth.
- Safe, respectful, and inclusive learning environments.
- Commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).

Examples of Effective Mission Statements

- Newtown, CT
- Groton, CT

Examples of Ineffective Mission Statements

- Illing Middle School
- Sherman Middle school

Limitation

- District wide vs. middle school
- Mission statements may not always reflect actual daily practices
- Limited publicly available data on how missions are operationalized

Implication

- Implementing DEI practices in K-12 education has been associated with improved academic performance, better social and emotional skills, and increased student engagement(Hurix Digital, 2024.)
- Embedding DEI into daily practices prepares students to succeed in a diverse, global society(IES Staff, 2020).
- Strengthening the alignment between mission and practice can drive long-term educational equity and student success (Lau, 2022)

Cultural and Disability Awareness are Interconnected

- Effective mission statements acknowledge intersectionality—recognizing that students with disabilities also navigate cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic identities (Harry & Klingner, 2014).

Disability-Inclusive Language is Rare but Vital

- Many middle school mission statements lack explicit references to disability, suggesting a gap in inclusive vision-setting
- Inclusion should be reflected in the language to affirm the value of all learners.

Inclusive Mission Statements Promote Belonging

- When mission statements include disability-specific terms and values (e.g., “accessibility,” “universal design,” or “all abilities”), they contribute to a sense of belonging and set a tone for inclusive practices (Kurth & Morningstar, 2012).

Conclusion

- Mission statements are powerful tools that reflect a school's priorities when they explicitly include disability and cultural inclusion, they foster a more equitable and welcoming school environment for all students.
- Intentional language matters, schools must move beyond generic statements and adopt inclusive, specific missions that guide practice, promote access, and reflect the diversity of their student populations.

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