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A SHORT TRIP IN THE CANOE

Leadership Competencies for BC Principals and Vice-Principals

OCTOBER 2024

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This document speaks to the competencies of the School Leader. The Leadership Competencies aren't a checklist, and they don't describe a single form of excellence. They are key components of a journey that is different for each of us. The way in which we paddle will vary depending on where we find ourselves, and who is sitting with us on the trip. Use these Competencies as conversation starters, organizers for professional development, and prompts to encourage you to find new ways to connect, consider, and challenge yourself.

The Leadership Competencies are inspired by, and connected to, the BC School Superintendents Association (BCSSA) Spirit of Leadership, but they take a different route. The Leadership Competencies focus your leadership development around your current context, and how you guide your school community towards shared goals.

This document, **A Short Trip in the Canoe**, is a quick start appropriate to an afternoon professional development event.

For the full version, see the unabridged document **BCPVPA Leadership Competencies: Being in the Canoe**.

We give thanks and acknowledge that our BCPVPA office is located on the unceded traditional territories of the x^wməθk^wəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (Squamish), and səilwətał (Tseil-Waututh) Nations.

Stewardship for the future of all children

School leaders are stewards of the future. They must genuinely value each individual student for who they are and must be humble about the human experiences they don't yet understand.

First Peoples Principles of Learning inspiration:

(1) *"Learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, the family, the community, the land, the spirits, and the ancestors."*

1. **Supports the child in becoming themselves:**

The School Leader learns from student experiences.

The School Community connects to those experiences and values them.

2. **Ensures that each child values diversity and justice:**

The School Leader models the school's values and supports others in doing the same.

The School Community empowers its members to take action.

3. **Reduces our impact on the environment:**

The School Leader thoughtfully minimizes their environmental impact.

The School Community minimizes its environmental impact and students lead the way.

Fostering a culture of curiosity and inquiry

School leaders must be humble about what they know but also about the ways they came to know it.

First Peoples Principles of Learning inspiration:

(2) *“Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational...”*

1. **Creates and maintains a culture of trust, innovation, and curiosity:**

The School Leader investigates critical questions about their school, pedagogy, curriculum, and policy, and emphasizes marginalized perspectives.

The School Community values new and challenging perspectives and innovation.

2. **Models and encourages evidence-informed decision making:**

The School Leader employs diverse evidence and makes transparent decisions about teaching, learning, and school operations.

The School Community has both evidence-based discussions, and discussions about evidence.

3. **Uses inquiry to transform educational outcomes and life opportunities:**

The School Leader uses critical inquiry to impact student educational outcomes.

The School Community inquires critically about its impact and reflects many modes of critical inquiry.

4. **Effectively shares evidence:**

The School Leader cites, shows, and discusses evidence in decision making.

The School Community makes data available and values discussion of it.

5. **Fosters inquiry on the links between strategic priorities, actions, and outcomes:**

The School Leader measures and monitors school priorities and outcomes.

The School Community holds itself critically accountable for student outcomes.

Growing the capacity of self and others

School leaders practice **humility** in their leadership by, in part, pursuing their own growth opportunities and through hearing, with **genuine** appreciation, feedback about opportunities they might not see.

First Peoples Principles of Learning inspiration:

(8) *“Learning requires exploration of one’s own identity.”*

1. **Supports and empowers persons and groups:**

The School Leader guides professional development, shares leadership, and supports leadership growth.

The School Community distributes leadership between persons and groups.

2. **Models and informs change leadership and management:**

The School Leader connects and articulates plans.

The School Community aligns its goals with action and leadership.

3. **Models and supports professional learning:**

The School Leader seeks out challenging learning and experiences it with humility.

The School Community draws on and supports a wide range of learning opportunities in support of high quality teaching and learning.

Contextual literacy and agency

A defining feature of school leadership is the diversity of contexts in which it is practiced – both professional and cultural. A school leader needs to not only understand the complex language and practices of a variety of professional domains – including finance, human resources, pedagogy, and education politics – but must also understand the diverse communities with which the school interacts in a way sufficiently meaningful to allow them to genuinely hear and value what they are told by these communities.

First Peoples Principles of Learning inspiration:

(9) *“Learning recognizes the role of Indigenous knowledge.”*

1. **Engages effectively with internal systems and groups:**

The School Leader works effectively not only in pedagogical contexts, but in the many cultural and professional contexts of a school community.

The School Community builds consensus through open discussion between the many cultural and professional groups within the school.

2. **Engages effectively with external systems and groups:**

The School Leader builds relationships with district leadership, key outside communities, and First Nations.

The School Community builds mutually supportive relationships with external groups.

Bridging policy and practice

School leaders sit between the complexity of the school system and the on-the-ground reality of the classroom. They need to ensure the two sides learn from each other and coordinate their efforts.

First Peoples Principles of Learning inspiration:

(3) *“Learning involves recognizing the consequences of one’s actions.”*

1. **Models the values of the education system:**

The School Leader is an ambassador of the education system’s values to the school.

The School Community discusses and supports the goals of the education system.

2. **Aligns resources to strategic priorities:**

The School Leader localizes and empowers the goals of the education system.

The School Community connects its activities to the goals of the education system.

3. **Anticipates future challenges:**

The School Leader sees the school changing and leads conversation and action about its future.

The School Community changes its service to the community as the needs of the community changes.

4. **Sustains policy-practice dialogue:**

The School Leader is an ambassador of the school’s practice to the education system.

The School Community draws critically on insight from both practice and policy.

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visit www.bcpvpa.org/professional-learning

Contact pldinfo@bcpvpa.bc.ca

