

British Columbia School Superintendents' Association

DIMENSIONS OF PRACTICE

for

SUPERINTENDENTS,

ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENTS &

DIRECTORS OF INSTRUCTION OR EQUIVALENT

Adapted from Professional Standards for the Superintendency, American Association of School Administrators

1998

DIMENSIONS OF PRACTICE FOR SUPERINTENDENTS, ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENTS AND DIRECTORS OF INSTRUCTION OR EQUIVALENT

Overview

School district leadership requires bold, creative, energetic and visionary school leaders. They must be able to respond quickly to a myriad of issues, from dealing with social changes, diverse student populations, and demands for equity, to improving school quality for every child and making effective use of new technologies.

Recent research on district leadership makes one point amply clear. Top-down bureaucratic management is being replaced by bottom-up executive leadership that encourages shared decision-making among school staff, community, business, and other stakeholders. BCSSA members must be skilled collaborators who can rally all available resources to support better education for all children living in our multicultural society.

Preparation & Training

In spite of major variances in their leadership roles and responsibilities, most BCSSA members were prepared in similar ways. Until recently, there was little specific coursework in graduate programs at Canadian universities focusing on the skills, attitudes and knowledge needed by these future leaders. There are still no formal internship opportunities for district-based leadership and, for the most part, job survival skills are learned in an “ad hoc”, “sink or swim” environment.

New Windows of Opportunity

The opportunities to become a Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent or Director of Instruction will

increase over the next few years as more of BCSSA’s members retire. At present there is no succession plan in place for the education and preparation of aspirants to these positions. Clearly, aspirants need to be better prepared to assume these roles than they have been in the past. They must, after all, be ready to be effective leaders for school districts moving into the 21st century.

Reform efforts for preparing these leaders have led to greater emphasis on team building, shared leadership, collaboration, problem-based learning and instructional improvements. Universities have re-focused their programs on examinations of critical theory, chaos theory, feminist critique, and other current scientific and social issues influencing organizational development and educational thought. Problem-based and field-based learning have been identified as key components in any future preparation programs for senior leadership experiences.

Why have Professional Dimensions of Practice?

A clear statement of dimensions of practice will be a foundation for forming and continuously improving professional development programs for district leaders. These dimensions of practice will change as the realities of the world of public education change affecting the roles of district leaders. The dimensions should be considered an operational benchmark for the preparation and appraisal of district leaders by institutions, professional associations and universities.

THE PROFESSIONAL DIMENSIONS

Effective BCSSA members should meet and be able to demonstrate identified competencies and skills related to each of the eight dimensions. Grounded in current practice, these dimensions have been validated through extensive research and collaboration with BCSSA member practitioners, professors of educational administration, researchers, and other educational professionals. The knowledge and skill areas of each dimension lend themselves to performance data that can be gathered from seminars, simulations, case studies, and other classroom or field-based learning methods.

These dimensions are intended to provide a focus for personal and professional growth planning as individuals evolve in their district leadership roles. These dimensions are *not* intended to prescribe a uniform model for school district leadership. Rather, recognition of, and the inherent value in, individual styles of leadership are recognized. So is the need for diversity in the execution of BCSSA member leadership roles.

The professional dimensions are intended to be used as a focus for both individual and group development, in maintaining and enhancing the best possible practices in educational leadership.

Dimension 1 : Leadership and District Culture

BCSSA members will know and be able to develop a collective district vision; shape school culture and climate; provide purpose and direction for individuals and groups; demonstrate an understanding of international issues affecting education; formulate strategic plans, goals and change efforts with staff and community; set priorities in the context of community, student and staff needs; serve as an articulate spokesperson for the welfare of all students in a multicultural context of public education.

Dimension 2 : Policy and Governance

BCSSA members will be able to develop procedures for working with the board of trustees that define mutual expectations, working relationships and strategies for formulating district policy for external and internal programs; adjust local policy to provincial requirements and recognize and apply standards involving accountability across the system.

Dimension 3 : Communications and Community Relations

BCSSA members will be able to articulate district purpose and priorities to the community and mass media, request and respond to community feedback, and demonstrate consensus-building and conflict mediation.

They will be able to identify, track, and deal with issues; formulate and carry out plans for internal and external communications; exhibit an understanding of school districts as political systems; apply communication skills to strengthen community support, align constituencies in support of district priorities; build coalitions to gain financial and programmatic support; develop and implement related political initiatives for the wellness of children.

Dimension 4 : Organizational Management

BCSSA members will be able to exhibit an understanding of the school district as a system by defining processes for gathering, analyzing, and using data for decision-making.

Further, they will manage the data flow; frame and solve problems; frame and develop priorities, to formulate solutions; assist others to form reasoned opinions; reach logical conclusions and make quality decisions to meet internal and external customer expectations; plan and schedule personal and organization work; establish procedures to regulate activities and projects; delegate and empower at appropriate organizational levels; secure and allocate human and material resources; develop and manage the district budget; and maintain accurate fiscal records.

Dimension 5 : Curriculum Planning and Development

BCSSA members will demonstrate leadership in the design of curriculum and a strategic plan that enhances teaching and learning in multiple contexts. They will provide planning and future methods to anticipate occupational trends and their educational implications; identify taxonomies of instructional objectives and validation procedures for curricular units, using theories of cognitive development; align and sequence curriculum; use valid and reliable performance

indicators and testing procedures to measure performance outcomes; and describe the proper use of computers and other learning and information technologies.

Dimension 6 : Instructional Management and District Accountability

BCSSA members will be able to exhibit knowledge of instructional management by implementing a system that includes research findings on learning and instructional strategies, instructional time, advanced electronic technologies, and resources to maximize student outcomes. They will be able to describe and apply research and best practices to integrating curriculum and resources for multicultural sensitivity, and to assessment strategies for helping all students achieve high levels.

Dimension 7 : Human Resources Management

BCSSA members will be able to develop a staff evaluation and development system to improve the performance of all staff members. They will be able to select appropriate models for supervision based on adult motivation research. They will be able to understand and be able to lead in a unionized environment.

Dimension 8 : Values and Ethics of Leadership

BCSSA members will be able to understand and model appropriate value systems, ethics, and moral leadership. They will know the role of education in a democratic society; exhibit multicultural and ethnic understanding and related behavior; adapt educational programming to the needs of diverse constituencies; balance complex community demands in the best interest of the student; scan and monitor the environment for opportunities for staff and students; respond in an ethical and skilled way to the electronic and printed media; and coordinate social agencies and human services to help each student grow and develop as a caring, informed citizen.

IMPLEMENTATION AND ONGOING REVIEW

Professional Development Activities will be designed to assist members with professional growth planning consistent with the above Dimensions of Practice. Professional Development Goals will provide opportunities for members to learn and discuss, in more depth, each dimension within a problem-solving practical context. Suggested goals for each dimension are noted below.

Clearly, BCSSA members enter their leadership roles having demonstrated considerable mastery of these areas of practice. However, new trends in research and practice will continue to emerge, becoming the focus of further professional growth activities. In addition, these goals will provide a focus for Association programs designed to assist with the educational development of individuals aspiring to district leadership positions in the future.

Professional Development Goals are noted in brief here. Once this motion has been approved by the membership in principle, the BCSSA Professional Development Committee, along with the BCSSA Executive, will be asked to develop a more specific Strategic Plan for implementation and ongoing review.

THE GOALS

Dimension 1 : Leadership and District Culture

Professional Development Goals will provide opportunities to:

- formulate a written vision statement of future direction for the district
- promote academic rigor and excellence for staff and students
- maintain personal, physical and emotional wellness
- empower others to reach high levels of performance
- build self-esteem in staff and students
- exhibit creative problem-solving
- promote and model risk-taking
- respect and encourage diversity among people and programs

- manage time effectively
- facilitate comparative planning between constituencies
- conduct district school climate assessments
- exhibit multicultural and ethnic understanding, and
- promote the value of understanding and celebrating school/community cultures

Dimension 2 : Policy and Governance

Professional Development Goals will provide opportunities to:

- describe the system of public school governance in our democracy
- describe and implement for superintendent-board processes effective working relationships
- formulate a district policy for external and internal programs
- relate local policy to provincial regulations and requirements, and
- understand and be able to work effectively in a unionized environment

Dimension 3 : Communications and Community Relations

Professional Development Goals will provide opportunities to:

- articulate the district vision, mission and priorities to the community
- implement an understanding of political theory and skills needed to build community support for district goals and priorities
- understand and be able to communicate with all cultural groups in the community
- develop formal and informal means to gain external perception of the district by means of surveys, advisory groups, and personal contact
- communicate and project an articulate position for education
- write and speak clearly and forcefully
- utilize formal and informal listening skills

- identify the political forces in the community
- identify the political context of the community environment
- persuade the community to adopt an initiative for the welfare of students
- understand theories of conflict resolution and be able to use these skills in practice
- understand theories of consensus building and be able to use these skills in practice
- be able to develop and initiate programs that enhance school/community relations, school/business partnerships, and related public service activities
- identify, track, and deal with issues, and
- develop and carry out internal and external communications plans

Dimension 4 : Organizational Management

Professional Development Goals will provide opportunities to:

- define processes for gathering, analyzing, and using data for informed decision-making
- utilize problem-framing processes in decision-making when appropriate
- define the major components of quality management
- develop, implement, and monitor change processes to build capacities to serve clients
- discuss legal concepts, regulations, and codes for school operations
- develop a process for maintaining accurate fiscal reporting
- acquire, allocate, and manage human, material, and financial resources to effectively and accountably ensure successful student learning
- use technological applications to enhance administration of business and support systems
- understand and be able to use financial forecasting, planning, and fiscal management systems, and
- perform budget planning, management, account auditing, and monitoring

Dimension 5 : Curriculum Planning and Development

Professional Development Goals will provide opportunities to:

- develop core curriculum design and delivery systems for diverse school communities
- describe curriculum planning/future methods to anticipate occupational trends and their educational implications for lifelong learners
- describe and implement an understanding of instructional taxonomies, goals, objectives, and processes
- describe cognitive development and learning theories and their importance to the sequencing of instruction
- describe a process to create developmentally appropriate curriculum and instructional practices for all children and adolescents
- develop the effective use of a plan for technology in educational programming
- conduct assessments of present, and future student learning needs
- develop a process for faculty input in continued and systematic renewal of the curriculum to ensure appropriate scope, sequence, and context, and
- model an understanding of curricular alignment to ensure improved student performance and higher-order thinking

Dimension 6 : Instructional Management and District Accountability

Professional Development Goals will provide opportunities to:

- develop, implement, and monitor change processes to improve student learning, adult development, and climates for learning
- know and be able to implement an understanding of motivation in the instructional process
- describe cognitive development and learning theories and their importance to the sequencing of instruction
- describe how to interpret and use testing/assessment results to improve education
- encourage the knowledge of research findings in the use of a variety of instructional strategies
- describe and know how to develop a student achievement monitoring and reporting system

Dimension 7 : Human Resources Management

Professional Development Goals will provide opportunities to:

- develop a plan to assess system and staff needs to identify areas for concentrated staff development
- encourage knowledge of adult learning theory and motivation in education practice
- evaluate the effectiveness of comprehensive staff development programming to determine its effect on professional performance
- provide for the use of system and staff evaluation data for personnel policy and decision-making
- diagnose and improve organizational health/morale
- implement personnel management strategies
- understand the skills needed to be able to work in a unionized environment
- assess individual and institutional sources of stress and develop methods for reducing stress (e.g. counseling, exercise programs and diet), and
- demonstrate knowledge of pupil personnel services and special programs

Dimension 8 : Values And Ethics of Leadership

Professional Development Goals will provide opportunities to:

- exhibit multicultural and ethnic understanding and sensitivity
- describe the role of schooling in a democratic society
- demonstrate ethical and personal integrity
- model accepted moral and ethical standards in all interactions
- describe a strategy to promote moral and ethical practices being established and practiced in each classroom and school
- describe how public education undergirds a free and democratic society
- describe a strategy to ensure that diversity of religion, ethnicity, and way of life in the district are not violated, and
- formulate a plan to coordinate integrated services for social, health, and other community agencies to support each child in the district