

The BCPVPA Leadership Competencies

*Honouring the Values, Beliefs, Stories,
and Identities of BC's Educational Leaders*

“The importance of story as pedagogy...

Stories grow from the communities and contexts in which we work...

The Competencies cannot be static, as engaging voices create renewal...”

by

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As one of the BCPVPA's Professional Learning and Development Directors, I work regularly with large groups of our members. Over the past few years, I have noticed that traditional images of leadership are being complemented by diverse expressions of what it means to be a leader. As our membership becomes more diverse, we see leaders grounding themselves in their values, beliefs, stories, and identities to redefine a personalized image of leadership.

The BCPVPA Equity Theory of Change (ETOC) emphasizes the need for genuineness and humility, encouraging leaders to honour their true selves and remain open to learning from others. This theme highlights the necessity for leaders to be adaptable, humble, and committed to continuous learning. It recognizes that effective leadership involves collaboration, shared responsibility, and a deep understanding of diverse community needs.

The shift from traditional leadership standards to a competency-based approach aligns with the evolving landscape of educational leadership. The BCPVPA's move towards a competency-based environment focuses on practical, applicable skills that leaders can use in real-world situations. This approach ensures that leadership actions are grounded in core values, beliefs, and system goals. In following this approach, leaders can effectively manage both operational and organizational tasks while staying committed to equity and maintaining high-expectation relationships. This alignment helps create a cohesive strategy where leadership competencies directly support the dynamic and inclusive models of leadership that are now essential in education.

Educational leaders are not only responsible for promoting these values but also for encouraging others to do the same. This emphasizes a commitment to stewardship for the future of all children, focusing on fostering life opportunities for students and preparing them to take care of themselves, each other, and their environment.

The Journey

In 2020, together with our members, the BC Principals' & Vice-Principals' Association began the process of revising our foundational documents through the lens of equity.

The journey so far has been rich, and has offered a new perspective on professional growth and our role and responsibility as an organization committed to reconciliation, equity, diversity, and inclusion. We developed our Equity Theory of Change which has outlined core values that form the foundation of our work: Recognition, Right Relations, Responsibility, Humility, Distributed Power, and Collaboration. The development of our Leadership Competencies was a welcome and natural progression.

We have ensured that our Leadership Competencies align with the BC School Superintendents Association (BCSSA) Spirit of Leadership: Leadership Competencies for System Leaders, so that we can know that while our roles and paths may differ, we are all paddling in the same direction.

The spirit of the First Peoples Principles of Learning lend wisdom to the Leadership Competencies, and the voices, stories, and values of our members are deeply woven within their relational connections. Leadership evolves, and what we have written today will grow to meet the needs of the generations of leaders to come.



**“We see these
Competencies not as a
checklist, but as a series
of themes in a story of
evolving leadership.”**

Leadership is responsive to the community it serves. It is contextually different to lead in a high school in a large city, with a culturally diverse student population of 2,000 students and a staff of 71 with three Vice-Principals, than to lead on a small island with a student population of 25 from K-7, where you are a teaching Principal with six staff. The Leadership Competencies are deeply connected to the context in which they are applied, as skills and relationships developed in one school may not directly transfer to another. Leaders draw on the unique stories and experiences of their communities. This approach fosters continuous renewal and adaptation, ensuring that leadership practices remain relevant and effective.

Educational leaders model curiosity and rigorous inquiry to ensure that the best services are provided to students. Engaging in critical inquiry involves identifying needs, critically looking at systems and structures, and creating evidence-informed, value-based decisions toward shared goals. This competency involves allocating resources, teacher time, and additional spaces to support student learning. By knowing their students well, leaders can better plan for learning and align school goals with student needs.

Educational leaders make many decisions in a day and perform a variety of roles, so they become fluent in various “languages”, from finance to human resources to community engagement. In one moment, a leader may be providing first aid to a kindergarten child, then ten minutes later running a fire drill, and then returning from the drill to a school-based team meeting, before sitting down to balance the budget and make learning resources purchases. Leaders make informed decisions while navigating different contexts and adapting to the shifting and often complex demands of their roles.

A unique aspect of the BCPVPA's competencies is the addition of “Bridging Policy and Practice”. This competency emphasizes the importance of

Stewardship for
the future of
all children

Fostering a
culture of
curiosity and
inquiry

Growing the
capacity of self
and others

Contextual literacy
and agency

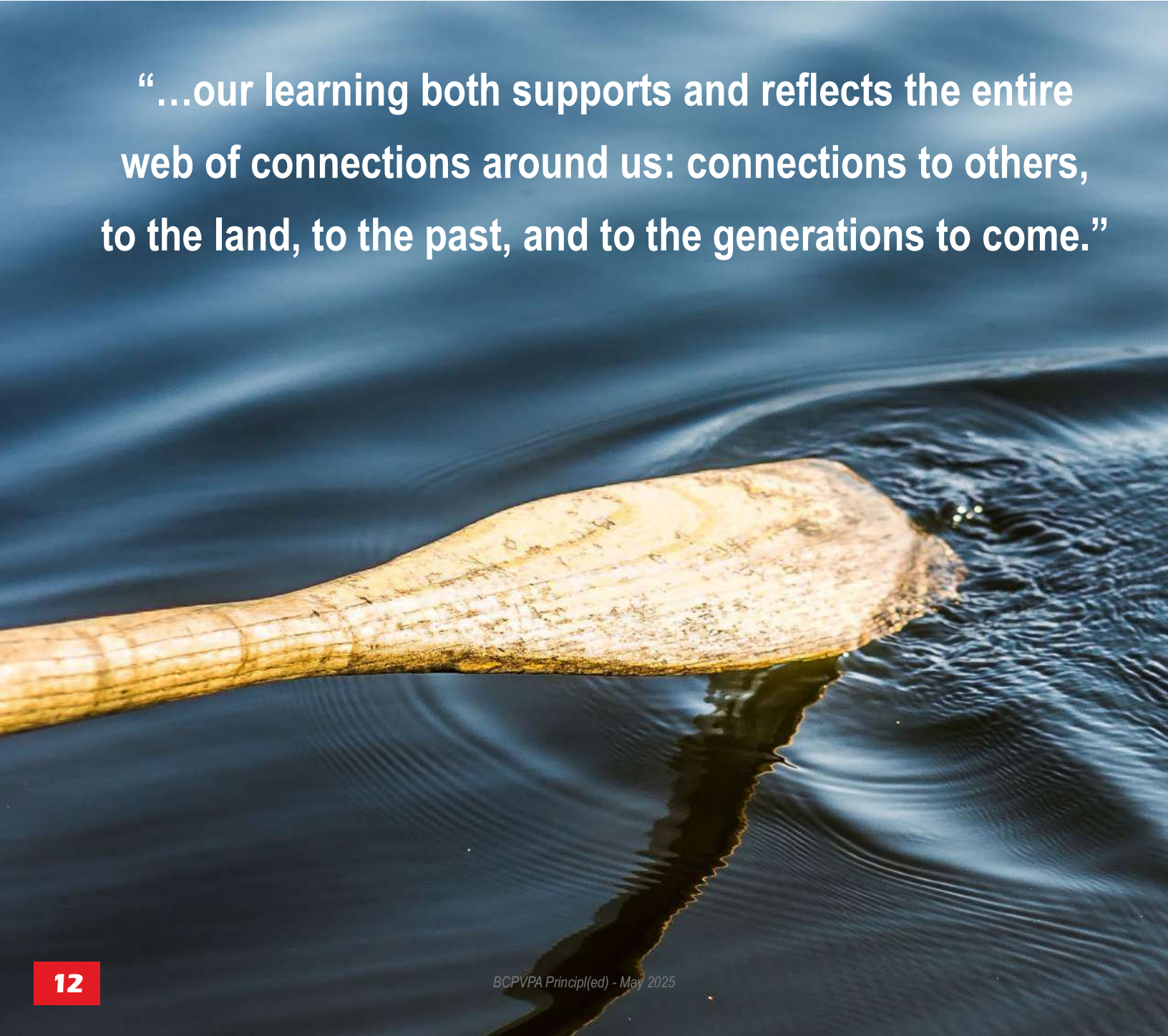
Bridging policy
and practice

coupling policy with practice, ensuring that the vision set by system leaders is effectively enacted by school leaders. Principals and Vice-Principals, who are “in the canoe” with students, staff, parents, and communities, play a crucial role in effectively implementing these policies with a high standard of care. The strength of the educational system depends on how well educational leaders effectively translate these policies into practice at the school level.

For systematic values and priorities to have real meaning in schools, educational leaders must be

genuine in their role modeling. The competencies are not a checklist but a series of themes in the evolving story of leadership. Leaders skillfully navigate different contexts to ensure that their actions align with the values and priorities of the educational system.

The Leadership Competencies: Being in the Canoe represent a significant step forward for the BCPVPA. By focusing on equity, continuous adaptation, and community connection, these competencies aim to foster a more inclusive and effective educational environment for all.

A close-up photograph of a wooden paddle floating on dark, rippling water. The paddle is light-colored wood with visible grain and some wear. It is positioned diagonally across the frame, with its head pointing towards the upper right. The water is dark blue/black, and the ripples create a textured, wavy surface. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of the wood and the movement of the water.

“...our learning both supports and reflects the entire web of connections around us: connections to others, to the land, to the past, and to the generations to come.”