

## The Alberta Professional Practice Competencies for School Leaders (rev. June 6/11)

### Background

The *Alberta Professional Practice Competencies for School Leaders (Competencies)* are one of three elements contained in the Alberta School Leadership Framework (Framework) that has been developed by an advisory committee of Alberta's education sector stakeholder organizations and post-secondary institutions(stakeholders). The other two Framework elements are:

- Indicators of Quality for School Leader Development Programs
- Education Stakeholder Roles and Responsibilities for Framework Implementation.

The Framework vision is that “all Alberta schools are served by suitable, highly competent educational leaders who create learning cultures that that each student has an opportunity to engage in quality learning experiences that lead to achievement of the goals of education and address the student's learning and developmental needs.”

The Framework elements are intended to promote innovative, transformative leadership models that reflect local priorities. Consistent and sustained implementation of the Framework by school leaders and stakeholders will improve school leadership in Alberta, contribute to the resolution of school leadership workforce issues and achieve the Framework vision.

The Framework fosters these outcomes of effective school leadership practice:

- a. School leaders ensure that the learning needs and well-being of students are the basis of decision-making and programming.
- b. School leaders positively influence the teaching and learning conditions in the school and thereby contribute to the quality of instruction provided by teachers.
- c. School leaders foster teachers' instructional efficacy by promoting their professional learning and reflective practice and through the on-going supervision of their practices.
- b. Aspiring and practicing school leaders have opportunities to acquire and refine the *Competencies* throughout their careers.
- c. School leaders strike a fair and optimal balance in the time and effort devoted to fulfilling their responsibilities and in meeting competing demands.
- d. The school community actively supports and understands the challenges faced by school leaders and accepts new models of school leadership.
- e. The school community is assured that Alberta's school leaders have the knowledge, skills and attributes to fulfill their responsibilities and to address community expectations.
- f. Education stakeholders have a foundation and a common language for policy development and programs to ensure sustained quality school leadership across the province.
- g. School authorities' workforce succession plans are effective in identifying, nurturing and recruiting future school leaders.

- h. Stakeholders use the *Competencies* as a focus of the content of their school leader preparation, induction and career-long professional learning programs and policies.

School leaders have significant responsibility for ensuring quality student learning, teacher practice efficacy and an effective learning culture. The development and career-long demonstration of the *Competencies* by school leaders lead to the fulfillment of this responsibility. The *Competencies* extend the Ministry's 2009 *Principal Quality Practice Guideline* to apply to all school leaders; i.e., principals as well as assistant, associate and vice principals. As provincial requirements, the *Competencies* will validate the role of Alberta school leaders and ensure province-wide consistency and alignment in the initiatives related to school leaders' preparation, induction, professional development, supervision and evaluation.

The Procedures included in the *Competencies* will ensure that all new and experienced school leaders have the opportunity to develop the related knowledge, skills and attributes throughout their careers, are actively supported in their daily practice and are successful in demonstrating the *Competencies*, in meeting their mandated responsibilities and in addressing school community expectations. As a consequence, the successful implementation of the *Competencies* will be instrumental in stakeholder efforts to attract more teachers to the ranks of school leaders. The *Competencies* acknowledge and promote the professional status of school leaders who should be provided opportunities for meaningful input into the school authority policies and processes related to school leadership. The *Competencies* make school leaders responsible for the results of their practice while empowering them to be successful through a robust practice supervision process.

## **Preamble**

The essential purpose of educational leadership is to ensure that each student has an opportunity to engage in quality learning experiences that lead to achievement of the goals of education and that address his or her learning and developmental needs. In this context, student engagement refers to three dimensions of the learning experience – social, emotional and intellectual—resulting in students' becoming engaged thinkers and ethical citizens, and their development of an entrepreneurial spirit. Quality learning experiences refer to school-sponsored activities that foster students' capacity to think critically; be resilient, adaptable and confident in their abilities; take personal responsibility for life-long learning and collaborate to achieve a common purpose.

Every school leader must be an accomplished teacher and is responsible for fulfilling the essential purpose of educational leadership.

## **Objectives**

The objectives of this document are to:

- a. identify the basic competencies for effective school leadership, applicable in all Alberta school contexts;

- b. frame a school leader's career-long responsibility to fulfill the essential purpose of educational leadership; and
- c. facilitate province-wide consistency in school authority policies and processes for school leader professional growth, supervision and evaluation.

## Definitions

In the context of this document,

**“Competencies”** refers to the provincial requirements for the practice of school leadership for which Alberta school leaders are accountable throughout their careers.

**“Notice of Remediation”** refers to the written statement issued to a school leader by the individual undertaking the evaluation process if he or she concludes that the school leader does not demonstrate one or more of the applicable *Alberta Professional Practice Competencies for School Leaders* and/or does not fulfill one or more of applicable provincial and school authority requirements.

**“Principal”** refers to an individual who holds a valid Alberta teaching certificate, is designated by a school authority and is responsible for the provision of educational leadership as set out in provincial legislation.

**“School authority”** refers to a school board, a person or society that operates a charter school or an accredited private school.

**“School community”** refers to students, teachers and other staff, parents, school council and others who have an interest in the school.

**“School leader”** refers to a principal as set out in provincial legislation and to an assistant principal, associate principal or vice principal subject to the responsibilities assigned to the designation by the school authority.

**“School leader evaluation”** refers to the formal process of gathering and recording information and evidence over a period of time and the application of reasoned professional judgment in determining whether or not a school leader demonstrates the applicable *Alberta Professional Practice Competencies for School Leaders*.

**“School leader professional growth”** refers to a career-long learning process whereby a school leader develops and refines the knowledge, skills, and attributes related to the *Alberta Professional Practice Competencies for School Leaders*.

**“School leader professional growth plan”** refers to the document that each school leader annually develops, implements and reports on, in accordance with the school authority's policy and processes.

“**School leader supervision**” refers to the ongoing process by which the individual assigned to undertake this responsibility by a school authority supports, guides and directs school leaders in demonstrating the applicable *Alberta Professional Practice Competencies for School Leaders*.

## **School Leader Competencies**

Every school leader is expected to:

- a. fulfill the applicable provincial requirements
- b. demonstrate the applicable *Alberta Professional Practice Competencies for School Leaders (Competencies)*
- c. meet the school authority’s requirements for school leaders.

The *Competencies* are provincial requirements for the practice of school leadership. They are interrelated and are not presented in rank order. The *Indicators* that accompany each competency describe how it is demonstrated. School authorities may interpret, refine and add to the *Indicators* to reflect the local context.

Principals are accountable for the demonstration of all the *Competencies* throughout their careers. Assistant principals, associate principals and vice principals are accountable for the demonstration of those *Competencies* that are directly related to their assigned role and leadership designation.

Reasoned, evidence-based, professional judgment must be used to determine whether the applicable *Competencies* are demonstrated by a school leader.

### **Professional Practice Competency #1 - Fostering Effective Relationships**

A school leader must build trust and foster positive working relationships within the school community on the basis of appropriate values and ethical foundations.

#### ***Indicators***

A school leader:

- a. acts with fairness, dignity and integrity;
- b. demonstrates a sensitivity to and genuine caring for others and cultivates a climate of mutual respect;
- c. promotes an inclusive, safe school culture that respects and honours diversity;
- d. demonstrates responsibility for all students and acts in their best interests;
- e. models and promotes open and collaborative dialogue;
- f. uses effective communication, facilitation, and problem-solving skills;
- g. supports processes for improving relationships and dealing with conflict within the school community; and

h. adheres to applicable professional standards of conduct.

### **Professional Practice Competency #2 - Embodying Visionary Leadership**

A school leader must involve the school community in creating and sustaining shared vision, mission, values, principles and goals.

#### ***Indicators***

A school leader:

- a. communicates and is guided by an educational philosophy based upon sound research, personal experience and reflection;
- b. provides leadership that leads to achievement of the school's vision and mission;
- c. meaningfully engages the school community in identifying and addressing areas for school improvement;
- d. ensures that planning, decision-making, and implementation strategies are based on a vision shared by the school community and an understanding of the school culture;
- e. facilitates change and promotes innovation consistent with current and anticipated school community needs;
- f. analyzes a wide range of data to determine progress towards achieving school goals; and
- g. communicates and celebrates school accomplishments.

### **Professional Practice Competency #3 - Leading a Learning Community**

A school leader must nurture and sustain a school culture that values and supports learning.

#### ***Indicators***

A school leader:

- a. engages the school community to promote the success and development of all students as a shared responsibility;
- b. promotes and models life-long learning for students, teachers and other staff;
- c. fosters a culture of high expectations for students, teachers and other staff;
- d. fosters and sustains an inclusive school environment where diversity is celebrated, students are encouraged to take risks in learning, and each student is equally valued as a contributing member of the school community;
- e. promotes and facilitates meaningful, collaborative professional learning for teachers and other staff;

- f. ensures that parents are informed and have opportunities for meaningful input into how their children’s learning and developmental needs will be addressed; and
- g. fosters the use of local community resources and agencies to enhance student learning and development.

**Professional Practice Competency #4 - Providing Instructional Leadership**

A school leader must ensure that each student has access to quality teaching and the opportunity to engage in quality learning experiences.

**Indicators**

A school leader:

- a. implements supervision and evaluation processes to ensure that all teachers consistently achieve the *Teaching Quality Standard Applicable to the Provision of Basic Education in Alberta* and/or other provincial requirements;
- b. demonstrates a sound understanding of effective pedagogy and curriculum;
- c. ensures that teachers use appropriate pedagogy to respond to various dimensions of student diversity;
- d. ensures that students have access to appropriate programming based on their individual learning needs;
- e. implements strategies for meeting the standards of student achievement;
- f. ensures that student assessment and evaluation practices throughout the school are fair, appropriate and balanced;
- g. recognizes the potential of new and emerging technologies and enables their appropriate integration in support of teaching, learning and reporting; and
- h. ensures that teachers and other staff effectively communicate and collaborate with parents, and when appropriate local community agencies, to support student learning and development.

**Professional Practice Competency #5 - Developing and Facilitating Leadership**

A school leader must promote the development of leadership capacity within the school community for the overall benefit of the school community and education system.

**Indicators**

A school leader:

- a. demonstrates informed decision-making through open dialogue and consideration of multiple perspectives;

- b. promotes team-building and shared leadership among members of the school community;
- c. facilitates meaningful involvement of the school community in the school's operation, where appropriate, using collaborative and consultative decision-making strategies; and
- d. identifies and mentors teachers with the potential for educational leadership roles.

**Professional Practice Competency #6 - Managing School Operations and Resources**

A school leader must manage school operations and resources to ensure a safe, caring, and effective learning environment.

***Indicators***

A school leader:

- a. effectively plans, organizes and manages the human, physical and financial resources of the school and identifies areas of need;
- b. ensures that school operations align with provincial legislation, regulations, and policies as well as the school authority's policies and processes; and
- c. applies principles of effective teaching, learning and student development as well as ethical leadership to management decisions.

**Professional Practice Competency #7 - Understanding and Responding to the Larger Societal Context**

A school leader must understand and appropriately respond to the political, social, economic, legal and cultural contexts impacting the school.

***Indicators***

A school leader:

- a. advocates for the needs and interests of children and youth;
- b. demonstrates a knowledge of local, provincial, national, and global issues and trends related to education;
- c. assesses and responds to the community context in fulfilling the school's vision and mission; and
- d. advocates for community support of education at the school, system and provincial levels.

## **Procedures for School Leader Professional Growth, Supervision and Evaluation**

These *Procedures* promote a school leader's career-long development and demonstration of the *Competencies* and constitute provincial requirements for a school leader's professional growth, supervision and evaluation.

These *Procedures* do not restrict the superintendent or the governing body of an accredited private school from taking disciplinary or other action, as appropriate, where there are reasonable grounds to believe that the behaviours or practices of a school leader endanger the safety of students, constitute a neglect of duty, a breach of trust, or a refusal to obey a lawful order of the school authority.

### ***School Authority Policy and Processes***

1. School authorities must establish and make public the policies and processes for school leader professional growth, supervision and evaluation. These policies and processes must align with the *Competencies, Indicators, and Procedures* as well as other applicable provincial legislation, regulations and policies.
2. School authorities must establish and make public the qualifications and eligibility requirements for school leaders.

### ***School Leader Professional Growth***

3. Each school leader must annually develop and complete a professional growth plan, in accordance with the school authority's policies and processes.
4. A school leader's professional growth plan must include professional goals that:
  - a. are based on a self-assessment of his or her learning needs;
  - b. consider feedback from the school community and the individual assigned to supervise the school leader's practice;
  - c. show a demonstrable relationship to the *Competencies*; and
  - d. consider the education plans of the school, the school authority and the province.
5. Unless the school leader agrees, the content of his or her professional growth plan must not be part of the evaluation process.

### ***School Leader Supervision***

6. A fundamental component must be ongoing supervision, including:
  - a. providing support and guidance;
  - b. observing and receiving information from any source; and
  - c. identifying the behaviours or competencies of the school leader that for any reason may require an evaluation.
7. The school leader supervision process must be applied to each school leader; consider his or her designated duties, career-stage and school context; and focus on the applicable *Competencies*.

8. The individual assigned by the school authority to undertake the school leader supervision process must initiate a school leader evaluation process if there is reason to believe that a school leader may not demonstrate the applicable *Competencies* and fulfill the applicable provincial and school authority requirements.

### ***School Leader Evaluation***

9. The evaluation process must be conducted:
  - a. upon the written request of the school leader;
  - b. for purposes of gathering information related to a specific employment decision;
  - c. when the superintendent or the governing body of an accredited private school has reason to believe, on the basis of information received through the school leader supervision process, that a principal's leadership practice may not demonstrate the *Competencies* or fulfill the applicable provincial and school authority requirements; or
  - d. when the principal, on the basis of information received through the school leader supervision process, has reason to believe that the assistant principal, associate principal or vice principal's leadership practice may not demonstrate the applicable *Competencies* or fulfill the applicable provincial and school authority requirements.
10. On initiating the evaluation process, the individual undertaking it must communicate in writing to the school leader the:
  - a. reasons for and purposes of the evaluation,
  - b. process and criteria to be used,
  - c. timelines to be applied; and
  - d. possible outcomes of the evaluation process.
11. The evaluation process for a principal must be undertaken by the superintendent or senior school system personnel to whom this duty has been assigned, or an individual assigned to fulfill this role by the governing body of an accredited private school, in accordance with the school authority's policy and processes.
12. The evaluation process for an assistant principal, associate principal or vice principal must be undertaken by the individual to whom this duty has been assigned in accordance with the school authority's policy and processes.
13. The individual assigned to undertake the evaluation process must consider the school leader's designated duties, career-stage and school context in exercising reasoned professional judgment to issue a finding as to whether the school leader demonstrates the applicable *Competencies* and fulfills the applicable provincial and school authority requirements.
14. The individual assigned to undertake the evaluation process must complete an Evaluation Report at the conclusion of the evaluation process. The Evaluation Report must:
  - a. include a finding on whether or not the school leader demonstrates the applicable *Competencies* and fulfills the applicable provincial and school authority requirements;
  - b. outline the evidence on which the finding is based; and

- c. be provided in writing to the school leader and if applicable the superintendent or the governing body of an accredited private school.
15. If the Evaluation Report includes a finding that the school leader does not demonstrate the applicable *Competencies* and/or fulfill the applicable provincial and school authority requirements, the individual undertaking the evaluation process must issue a Notice of Remediation. The Notice of Remediation must:
- a. identify the *Competencies* that have not been demonstrated and/or the provincial and the school authority's requirements that have not been fulfilled;
  - b. describe the required changes in the school leader's leadership practice and the timeline for their implementation;
  - c. outline the supports that will be provided to the school leader to implement the required changes in the school leader's leadership practice; and
  - d. articulate the consequences of not achieving the required changes in the school leader's leadership practice including, but not limited to, the termination of the school leader's administrative designation.
16. A Notice of Remediation may stipulate:
- a. the remedies to be implemented by the school leader, and/or
  - b. that the school leader's efforts to implement the required changes in leadership practice will replace the school leader's obligation to develop and implement a Professional Growth Plan for that year.
17. In accordance with the timeline stipulated in the Notice of Remediation, the individual assigned to undertake the evaluation process must issue a second finding as to whether the school leader has been successful in demonstrating the *Competencies* and provincial and school authority requirements, and in making the changes in his or her leadership practice, identified in the Notice of Remediation; this finding must be included in the Evaluation Report.
18. The school leader has the right to appeal the findings contained in the Evaluation Report, in accordance with the school authority's policy and related provincial legislation.