

The Voices of BC: Leadership Modules

Module 2: Growing the Capacity of Self and Others

Video Introduction (8:59): As District leaders work to grow the capacity of not only themselves to serve as a leader, they also work to support and extend the abilities of those around them. In this video, leaders will discuss how they assess the needs of the system and how they work with others to grow the capacity not only of themselves and the district, but of those at all levels.

Growing the Capacity of Self and Others



Growing the Capacity of Self and Others is about how leaders bring integrity and humility to their work. Strong leaders recognize that the work is not solely about your own leadership, but it is about how many leaders are shaped by your work and the legacy of leadership that is left behind. As leaders intentionally commit to their own learning, they also continually work to support the leadership of those at all levels.

Growing the Capacity of Self and Others

A system is only as strong as the people within. Across the organization, people need to be supported and nurtured not only as individuals but as leaders who influence, affirm and nurture those around them. Processes must exist to strengthen and sustain schools and their supporting networks and structures as learning organizations. In these organizations, the collaborative and action-oriented processes of inquiry are part of an intentional professional learning plan that builds on the existing strengths of all and, in addition, provides ongoing job embedded professional learning to nurture and sustain their own growth and leadership journey whether in the classroom, or at the system level.

Questions to consider as you read the Big Idea of Growing the Capacity of Self and Others:

- How are you intentional not only about your own leadership development, but in the ways you support those with whom you work?
- In what ways is professional learning embedded in the culture of your District and schools?

- How are people inquiring about their own leadership and what opportunities exist for job-embedded professional learning?
- What opportunities exist for shared leadership and learning where healthy and purposeful collaboration is part of the District's inquiry into students learning?
- How are the schools within the District, and the District itself, growing as learning organizations?

Indigenous Perspectives and Considerations

- Create space for reciprocal relationships with Indigenous Peoples.
- Instill collective responsibility for Indigenous Education across the system. Practice Cultural Humility.
- Create and sustain reciprocal relationships.
- Foster high expectations.

Questions to consider on Indigenous Perspectives:

- How do you create space for respectful and reciprocal relationships with Indigenous Peoples?
- In what ways is the collective responsibility for Indigenous Education demonstrated across your District and in your schools?
- Where would you highlight examples of the high expectations that schools and the District has for all learners and specifically for Indigenous learners?

The Voices of BC: Video Module

In this video, several themes emerge and are presented below. Following up on those themes, and while listening to the video, please consider the suggested questions to explore. Not all questions need to be considered, choose the questions that best fit the context in which the leadership work unfolds in your district, schools and communities.

1. Relevance and Connection

- Leaders emphasize the importance of maintaining a connection to their previous roles, particularly as principals. They strive to stay relevant and connected to the daily experiences of teachers and students.
- The challenge of feeling relevant in district roles requires an ongoing commitment to direct school and classroom involvement. Leaders have to be intentional about remaining current on the realities of life in schools.

Coaching/Reflective Questions to Consider

- How do you stay relevant and connected to the leadership realities and challenges at the school level?

- How are you (and other leaders around you) ensuring that the time is made to spend time in schools, and in classrooms?
- How do you connect directly with teachers and not just principals and vice-principals?

2. Culture and Climate

- Leaders have a strong focus on understanding and assessing the culture of schools and the district. Leaders must understand the importance of having a shared understanding of the current reality to effectively implement changes.
- Differentiating between climate (immediate feelings and environment) and culture (underlying values and practices) is important for effective leadership and must be acknowledged as part of the leadership work. Strategies unfold within cultures and will need to be adapted to different contexts.

Coaching/Reflective Questions to Consider

- In your school and classroom visits, how do you engage in conversations to fully understand the priorities of classrooms and schools today? What questions do you use to make any visit much more than a “how are you” or “I’m just saying hi” visit?
- In what ways do you intentionally seek to understand both the climate (tone, feeling) and the culture (values, beliefs and practices) of schools and the District?
- How do you work to build and support healthy climates and cultures of the partner groups that work with the District and with schools?

3. Building Relationships

- Building strong, respectful relationships with teachers, staff, and the community is essential for effective leadership.
- Listening, showing interest, and empowering others are seen as key components of relationship building.

Coaching/Reflective Questions to Consider

- What steps do you take, and what strategies and structures do you use to create strong and respectful relationships across the District and with all partners and Rightsholders?
- How do you intentionally support the goals and strategies of those with whom you collaborate?

4. Challenges in Education

- Leaders mention various challenges, such as high rates of sick leave, recruitment difficulties, and the need for a more unified approach among different stakeholders (management, union, parents). As leaders are supported and developed, they must pay attention to the changing dynamics and adjust their leadership accordingly.
- The complexity of modern classrooms and the slow pace of educational change are noted as significant barriers. These barriers can be overcome by a common understanding, vision, and true collaboration in service of all children.

Coaching/Reflective Questions to Consider

- What pressures are you witnessing and experiencing in your District and in schools and how are you collaborating with others to identify and address these challenges?
- How are you working to identify and remove barriers to change?
- In your leadership series or structures to build leadership capacity within the district, how are these barriers to change being identified, named, and how are solutions to these challenges being woven into leadership programs and initiatives?

5. Collaboration and Inclusion

- Leaders understand the importance of and emphasize the need for collaboration and inclusion in decision-making processes. These processes must include principals, vice-principals, and teachers if there is to be significant and lasting change. A clear sense of the “why” behind change and ongoing targeted communications is a key part of supporting effective collaboration.

Coaching/Reflective Questions to Consider

- How do you empower colleagues and partners to share in district leadership with genuine agency?
- How do you work to identify potential leaders and groups that may not currently exercise leadership but who can be empowered to act with influence and purpose?

6. Patience and Persistence

- Change in education takes time and requires a patient, deliberate approach. The quote "you have to go slow to go fast" reflects this sentiment and also recognizes the importance of transparent and inclusive decision-making processes.
- Navigating the politics, governance and leadership structures, and union dynamics within the education system requires careful and sustained effort. Solid relationships are built through intentional respect and inclusion.

Coaching/Reflective Questions to Consider

- How do you ensure that you monitor and adjust the pace of change to the needs and desires of your schools/communities?
- What structures and practices do you use to ensure that there is transparency in the communications about both the need for change, and the structures and inclusive practices you are using to address the need?
- How do you work to include "political astuteness" in the processes of leadership development and specifically the importance of respectful and inclusive partnerships with unions, the ministry and parents?

These themes and the subsequent questions are intended to engage participants in a meaningful discussion about these leadership topics all under the umbrella of Growing the Capacity of Self and Others. The intention is to use the materials as a means of reflecting on how to apply these insights to improve leadership practices in districts.

There are many possible uses for the BCSSA Modules. Suggested uses include:

- Personally, for development of your own professional learning;
- Locally in district with either district/senior teams or principals and vice-principals;
- In Chapter meetings to facilitate table conversations and introductions to professional learning;
- In District to reflect upon the structures, strategies and practices that leadership teams should be considering; and
- Both in Chapters and locally to consider how you are structuring your district leadership opportunities to create both alignment and coherence.

We hope that you enjoy these materials, and we also welcome your feedback for other leadership modules to be considered, or for additional uses and explorations. For more information, please contact us through the BCSSA where our Leadership Competency Advisory Group will continue to refine and create additional learning opportunities and materials.