


# The Voices of BC: Leadership Modules

## Module 4: Aligning Structures with Vision for Learning

Video Introduction (9:56): District Leaders recognize that systems and structures have inherent knowledge, practice, and capabilities. Leaders have the **wisdom** to identify, connect, and alter systems and structures to focus efforts and resources where it is most needed. Keen observers, careful communicators, leaders are points of connection and active constructors of systems that align and support.

Effective leadership continually works to ensure that there is a central focus for the District. This intentional focus requires and continual examination of the structures, systems and processes that are in place to support the District's vision for learning. Strong leaders are able not only to articulate and facilitate bold visions for learning, but also to align systems such that all the interlocking communities that make up a district support those visions.

Aligning Structures with Vision for Learning  YouTube

Aligning Structures with Vision for Learning is about how leaders continually step back and assess how distinct elements of the District are aligning to achieve a common purpose.

## Aligning Structures with Vision for Learning

*Guided by an inspiring vision of learning for all children to explicit strategies that intentionally address the needs as identified through a robust reflection on evidence of learning, alignment across and through the system is critical for success. From strong governance from Boards of Education through to the financial and human resources to support the direction of the district, systems must continually work to avoid fragmentation so that our always finite time, resources, and energy can focus on those things that are most important and that is learning for all children.*

## Questions to consider as you read the Big Idea of Aligning Structures with Vision for Learning

- How does your District's Vision for Learning provide both inspiration and clarity about what is important?
- In what ways are the professional learning opportunities provided in your District aligned so that there is common language and focus?

- How are the meetings with school principals and vice-principals designed in a manner that is most productive and engaging for people?
- What steps do you take to ensure that your Human Resource and financial priorities align with and support your vision for learning?
- How are you looking “around the corner” to ensure that you are well situated to either take advantage of coming initiatives and narratives that strengthen your direction, or to buffer against distractions that lead you away from the main goals you have established?

## Indigenous Perspectives and Considerations

- Connect learning systems based on Indigenous ways of being and social justice, free from bias and privilege with Indigenous partners.
- Activate collective voice across the system with specific attention to Indigenous voice.
- Practice reflective and reflexive approaches.
- Respect cultural practices and protocols.

### Questions to consider on Indigenous Perspectives:

- How do your structures consider Indigenous ways of being and social justice?
- How do you continue to ensure that your structures, systems and practices are free from bias and privilege?
- What structures and processes do you have in place to pay specific attention to Indigenous voices?
- Where do you create time and space for reflective and reflexive approaches?
- How do you actively work to learn about, and to demonstrate and model a respect for cultural practices and protocols?

## The Voices of BC: Video Module

In this video, three main 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. How do you align systems, structures and practices so that you are not always chasing the next shiny thing?
  - Leaders emphasize the importance of having a clear vision and working to ensure that all your efforts were intended to focus on key priorities

- Those interviewed spoke about the importance of articulating that teaching was about more than the curriculum and they continually strive to consider learning within and beyond the curriculum.

#### Coaching/Reflective Questions to Consider

- How do you harness collective input in your design and support of the District's vision for learning?
- In what ways do you inspire district-wide action in support of your priorities and vision?
- How have you helped build and nurture a culture of learning across the district?

### 2. How do you intentionally work to identify and dismantle barriers?

- Leaders have an awareness of the barriers that exist and continually strive to challenge or dismantle existing structures and practices that can get in the way.
- People spoke about how these barriers were sometime internal (our own mindsets) or external where long standing traditions, and practices were not in the best interest of all students.
- Those interviewed also spoke about recognizing that the system does not always work for all children and bringing forward the voices of a wide range of people, including honouring student voice, was an important step in identifying and removing barriers.

#### Coaching/Reflective Questions to Consider

- How do you (both individually and as a team) continually work to not only identify, but to actively remove barriers or practices and processes that are mis-aligned with the District's core purpose?
- What evidence do you seek that would inform how practices, systems and structures in the District are aligned with your priorities?
- How do you invite voices into, and create space for the difficult and essential conversation about aligning scarce financial and human resources?

### 3. Working to align your work, and the work of the system to achieve success

- Those interviewed spoke of the importance of a compelling why and challenging ourselves to consider if we are "doing good enough" for all children.
- People spoke about the importance of setting aside time with school leaders for deep and meaningful conversations about the vision, the focus, and ensuring that systems are aligned for success.

- Leaders bring compassion and support so that everyone can bring their “best selves” to the work.
- There was also a recognition of the power of small districts as both nimble but also personal and living in communities with generational commitment to their schools.

#### Coaching/Reflective Questions to Consider

- What steps are taken to intentionally set aside time with Principals and Vice-Principals so that there is a deep and clear understanding not only of the Vision for Learning in the District, but of the why behind that vision?
- In places big and small, how are you nimble so that you can adjust to new and emerging priorities as they appear on the horizon?
- When do you create time and space to talk about a “preferred future” for the District?
- How do you ensure that all leaders demonstrate a careful balance of compassion and support?

These themes and the subsequent questions are intended to engage participants in a meaningful discussion about these leadership topics all under the umbrella of Aligning Systems with Vision for Learning. The intention is to use the materials as a means of reflecting on how to apply these insights, and others you will generate, 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.