

The Voices of BC: Leadership Modules

Module 5: Fostering a Culture of Curiosity and Inquiry

Video Introduction (10:43): Inquiry is curiosity in action and is a lived daily practice and mindset. The ongoing development of collaborative processes that focus on designing engaging learning environments and participating in reflective practice are at the heart of our work. Inquiry is about demonstrating **honesty** in reflection and unearthing **truth** about what we know.

In the original BCSSA Video Series that was created in support of The Spirit of Leadership, [Louise Stoll](#) who was a central contributor to the competencies, spoke often about inquiry being all about action. Curiosity was seen as one of the central quality of effective and inspirational leaders who were continually seeking to improve the learning for all children.

Fostering a Culture of Curiosity and Inquiry



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A culture of inquiry is curious, transparent, and active. It encourages all members of a community to ask questions, develop plans, and to link inquiry with better life chances for the students we serve. A culture of curiosity and inquiry is lived both through the daily practices of individual persons and through the systems that support shared and collaborative systemic inquiry. Healthy cultures are leadership in action.

Questions to consider as you read the Big Ideas of Fostering Cultures of Curiosity and Inquiry

- What distinct steps do you take to create and maintain a culture of trust, innovation, and curiosity in your schools and in your district team?
- How are you remaining curious and continually working to transform life opportunities for all learners?
- How do you collect, share, and collaborate with a wide range of evidence to help you answer the question “what do we know about where our learners are in their learning?”
- What are you doing to continually examine the links between strategic priorities, actions, outcomes, and results?

Indigenous Perspectives and Considerations

- Engage in ongoing learning to challenge your values, beliefs, blind spots and privileges.
- Value Indigenous voice in shared systemic decision making.
- Honour diverse stories, learning experiences, and narratives of Indigenous peoples.
- Value and nurture Indigenous knowledge(s) and worldviews that honour diverse ways of knowing

Questions to consider on Indigenous Perspectives:

- Where do you have dialogue that challenges your values, beliefs, blind spots and privileges?
- How are you demonstrating that you value Indigenous voices in shared decision making?
- What stories, learning experiences and narratives of Indigenous people are helping shape your leadership?
- Where do you show that you value and nurture Indigenous knowledge and worldviews?

The Voices of BC: Video Module

In this video, participants were asked three questions related to the competency. The questions and the themes that emerged from those interviewed are presented below along with coaching/reflective questions for individuals and teams to consider.

What are your beliefs about “curiosity in action” – what does that mean to you as a quality of effective leaders?

- **Openness and Listening:** Leaders emphasized that curiosity involves openness to diverse voices within the organization, particularly those from different roles and backgrounds. This aligns with the competency's focus on collaborative processes and reflective practice.
- **Bias Awareness:** Curiosity was described as approaching situations without preconceived conclusions and being aware of personal biases, even if it's impossible to eliminate them entirely. This supports the competency's idea of honesty in reflection and unearthing truths.
- **Relationships and Trust:** Caring for people, building relationships, and ensuring staff feel supported were highlighted as key to fostering curiosity and encouraging deeper engagement in learning. Trust-building is central to the competency, particularly in creating an environment where inquiry thrives.
- **Inclusion of All Voices:** Trust was seen as essential, particularly in engaging all members of the community and giving them space to lead, regardless of their

position within the system. This reflects the competency's call for ongoing collaborative processes.

Coaching/Reflective Questions to Consider

- How are you remaining open to diverse voices within and beyond the organization particularly from those with different backgrounds?
- How are you “checking your bias at the door” to the greatest extent possible and remaining open to possibilities?
- What do you notice about your assumptions of the truth?
- What actions do you take that demonstrate trust in others?
- In what ways do you observe how collaboration builds trust particularly in the creation of safe spaces?

How do you believe that our ongoing examination of evidence can help us unearth truths about what we know?

- **Listening to Indigenous Voices:** Curiosity led to meaningful engagement with Indigenous communities, revealing truths that had long been ignored, such as the discomfort with the district’s name due to its settler origins. This aligns with the competency’s emphasis on reflective practice and unearthing truth.
- **Historical Awareness:** Insights from residential school survivors highlighted the deep impact of historical injustices and the need for continuous openness to difficult truths. This is tied to the competency’s value of honesty in reflection.
- **Data Analysis with Empathy:** Leaders stressed the importance of staying curious about data, not just as numbers but as stories of students, families, and communities. This reinforces the competency’s call for reflective practice and evidence-based inquiry.

Coaching/Reflective Questions to Consider

- Where do you identify practices that show meaningful engagement with Indigenous communities and how are these practices unearthing truths that may have been long ignored?
- What steps do you and your teams take to check your own assumptions of truths and the potential for differing perspectives and knowledge?
- When you examine evidence, what actions and processes do you engage in that unearth the stories behind the numbers and trends?
- How does the evidence you seek tell a story of families and your communities?

Once we know the truth, how do leaders summon the courage to act?

- **Courage Through Connection:** Personal stories and consistent feedback from students and communities provided leaders with the courage to act, as these voices made the issues real and urgent. This echoes the competency's focus on taking action based on unearthed truths.
- **Continuous Dialogue:** Maintaining ongoing conversations about difficult truths was seen as essential for driving change, particularly when the truths resonate with leaders' own experiences. This supports the competency's emphasis on continuous inquiry and reflective practice.
- **Action from Evidence:** Leaders highlighted that presenting clear evidence makes it harder for others to ignore the need for change, and seeing positive outcomes from initial actions encourages further courage and systemic improvements. This ties directly to the competency's notion of using inquiry to inform and drive action.

Coaching/Reflective Questions to Consider

- When you hear personal stories that consistently inform you about the experiences of others in your district, how do these stories provide you with the courage to act?
- What actions do you take when you encounter compelling stories that are inconsistent with your own views of how things are in your district?
- Where are you demonstrating that you are using difficult truths to shape change within your district and schools?
- When you gather evidence, how do you use this evidence as a catalyst for necessary change – particularly for populations that are historically underserved?

These themes and the subsequent questions are intended to engage participants in a meaningful discussion about these leadership topics all under the umbrella of Fostering a Culture of Curiosity and Inquiry. 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.