

The Voices of BC: Leadership Modules

Module 7: Overcoming Barriers: Stewardship for the Future of All Children

This video (7:17) is a supplement to Module 6 where participants explored Stewardship for the Future of All Children and how district leaders strive to create places of belonging and care not only for self, and others, but for all students, staff, and members of the community.

In this second part of Stewardship for the Future, the focus is on the courage to act and overcoming barriers that prevent us from accomplishing all we want.

Stewardship for the Future of All Children: Barriers to Action  **YouTube**

Stewardship for the Future of All Children

System leaders have a responsibility for a quality education for all children and for the future that education empowers. A quality education, and educational systems that nurture powerful learning, must foster a future in which children feel confident and secure not only in their identity, but in their relationships with others and with the environment. The district should, in other words, both teach about and help enact a more just and sustainable society.

Indigenous Perspectives and Considerations

- Respect for all things; teachings come from the interconnectedness of self, land, sea, and sky.
- Be intentional with your actions, words, and thoughts; heart and spirit energy effects all things.
- Reach back to connect to the teachings of the ancestors and embody them and to share them with those who are still to come.
- Care for self and others by lifting each other up.

The Voices of BC: Video Module

The competency Stewardship for the Future of all Children contains this statement in the preamble of the document:

Our eternal purpose is to embrace the challenges ahead and to have the courage to create a future that is inclusive, just, and sustainable.

In creating the video vignettes, leaders were asked the following question:

What gets in the way of us creating an inclusive, just, and sustainable future for all children?

Leaders spoke to the following themes:

- **Self-Imposed Barriers and Ego:** Leaders often impose unrealistic expectations on themselves to be perfect and all-knowing. Dropping the ego and embracing authenticity in leadership fosters stronger relationships and builds trust.
- **Bureaucratic Challenges:** While policies and procedures are essential, bureaucratic delays hinder timely changes that students need. While student voice is sought, students often feel frustrated when proposed changes take too long to implement, sometimes beyond their time in school.
- **Mindset Limitations:** A constrained mindset that focuses on limitations rather than opportunities restricts progress. Leaders need to adopt a mindset of curiosity and control, recognizing that they can influence change within their roles.
- **Traditional Practices:** The phrase “this is the way we’ve always done it” acts as a significant barrier. Relying on historical, colonial and patriarchal practices prevents genuine progress and leads to superficial changes or initiatives rather than meaningful and lasting shifts.
- **Community Pressures and Undefined Roles:** Supporting community needs, such as food distribution and mental health, is necessary but can stretch educational resources. There is often a lack of clarity on how these responsibilities are managed and integrated within the education system, making it difficult to balance educational goals with broader community support.
- **Systemic Fragmentation:** The lack of strategic clarity and comprehensive collaboration across ministries (such as health, child services, and education) creates barriers. Coordinating various mandates and ensuring all stakeholders work together cohesively is a challenge yet is essential if we are to tackle societal challenges together.

Coaching/Reflective Questions to Consider

- How do you lead in ways that demonstrate humility and not from a position of power or with ego at the heart?

- How do you show your own vulnerability with what you know, and do not know, as a means to strengthen collaboration and to build trust?
- When you seek out student voice, how do you demonstrate change based on that voice within a timeframe that is visible to senior students?
- What policies, procedures, and practices, can you identify that prevent you from taking the actions that you need? If you have identified policies or practices, how have you worked to actively change or dismantle them?
- How do you remain open, curious, and focus on listening as an initial step in influencing change in your system?
- What traditions have you identified that are inconsistent with the inclusive cultures we want today in our districts and how have you worked to reshape, redefine, or eliminate them? What new traditions are you creating that model the values and beliefs that we want today and how are you working to ensure that they are sustainable?
- When there are new initiatives or mandates, how are you working, not only within your own team, but within schools and communities to provide clarity on your changing roles and responsibilities?
- How do you accept and work within new mandates and expectations in a way that does not distract you from your key existing priorities and initiatives?

These themes and the subsequent questions are intended to engage participants in a meaningful discussion about these leadership topics all under the umbrella of Stewardship for the Future of All Children. 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.