

Fostering a Culture of Curiosity and Inquiry: School Leadership

Introduction

Fostering a culture of curiosity and inquiry is a hallmark of strong school leadership. For principals and vice-principals, it means creating a learning environment where questions are as valued as answers, and where exploration, reflection, and evidence-based thinking drive growth for students and staff alike.

In the school context, inquiry is curiosity in action—a daily practice of listening deeply, asking meaningful questions, and remaining open to learning from diverse perspectives. It requires leaders to model humility, embrace uncertainty, and be willing to change their own thinking when new insights emerge.

This competency is strengthened when leaders honour Indigenous knowledge systems, embrace multiple ways of knowing, and create inclusive spaces for students, staff, and families to engage in shared problem-solving. By fostering curiosity and inquiry, leaders cultivate a school community where innovation thrives, equity is advanced, and learning is a collective journey.

Self

As leaders of curiosity and inquiry, school principals and vice-principals:

- Model Curiosity: Demonstrate an openness to learning by questioning assumptions, reflecting on personal biases, and seeking feedback to refine their practice.
- Embrace Risk and Change: Take thoughtful risks in pursuit of better learning outcomes, showing that mistakes are opportunities for growth.
- Reflect Critically: Use diverse forms of evidence—data, stories, and lived experiences—to inform decisions and guide improvement.
- Lead with Humility: Accept that they do not have all the answers and remain open to learning from students, staff, and the community.

Community

As community leaders, principals and vice-principals:

- Create Safe Spaces for Inquiry: Build a school culture where students and staff feel safe to question, explore, and test new ideas without fear of judgment.
- Encourage Collaborative Learning: Facilitate opportunities for staff, students, and families to engage in shared inquiry, ensuring that diverse voices inform school decisions.
- Promote Equity Through Inquiry: Use inquiry processes to identify and address inequities in student experience, ensuring all learners have opportunities to thrive.

- Share Learning Transparently: Establish routines for communicating findings, celebrating successes, and making course corrections openly with the school community.

Reflective Questions for School Leaders and Teams

1. How do we make curiosity and inquiry visible in our school's daily practices?
2. In what ways do we integrate both evidence and lived experience into our decision-making?
3. How are we ensuring historically marginalized voices are included in our school's inquiries?
4. How do we ensure our inquiries result in meaningful change for all learners?
5. What routines and structures help us share learning openly and act on what we discover?
6. How do you translate these aspirational statements to a practical professional growth plan goal?