

The Spirit of Leadership: Guiding Values and Beliefs

To support the work of BCSSA and The Spirit of Leadership, five “Concept Papers” have been created, one for each competency. The intention of that work is to tease out discussion and to provide further impetus to continue the conversation about the nuances, celebrations and challenges of leadership. To support that dialogue, this paper has also been created with the intention of getting at the values and beliefs that guided the creation of The Spirit of Leadership.

Leadership as a Living System

In *The Spirit of Leadership*, leadership is defined not by hierarchy but by moral responsibility and relationship. It is a living, evolving practice rooted in care for children, communities, and the land. Strong school districts emerge from courageous leaders who act with integrity, clarity, and love.

The five competencies of this framework are interconnected and mutually reinforcing:

1. **Stewardship for the Future of All Children**

The moral foundation of leadership. Stewardship centers our responsibility to create inclusive, just, and sustainable futures for all learners. It anchors every action in care, equity, and purpose.

2. **Fostering a Culture of Curiosity and Inquiry**

The leadership mindset. Inquiry is curiosity in action. It enables adaptation, reflective practice, and the pursuit of truth. Leaders foster environments where learning is ongoing and questions are valued.

3. **Growing the Capacity of Self and Others**

The practice of empowerment. Leadership is a shared responsibility. Leaders support ongoing professional learning, distribute leadership, and cultivate the strengths of all members of the system.

4. **Contextual Literacy**

The lens of wisdom. Leaders “read the land” by understanding their systems, histories, and relationships. They align local realities with broader educational, political, and cultural dynamics.

5. **Aligning Structures with Vision for Learning**

The strategic backbone. Leaders ensure that governance, operations, and resources are in harmony with district learning goals. Alignment transforms vision into reality.

Interconnected Leadership Practice

These competencies form leadership connections and interconnections, not a checklist or hierarchy. The competencies weave continuously through reflection, action, and adaptation:

- **Stewardship** grounds leadership in moral purpose.
- **Inquiry** propels reflection and learning.
- **Capacity building** scales impact.
- **Contextual literacy** ensures relevance and responsiveness.
- **Alignment** turns ideas into systems.

Together, they build ethical, relational, and systemic leadership practices that are dynamic and resilient.

Guiding Beliefs Embedded in the Model

- **We lead for all children.** Our decisions must benefit every learner, especially those who are most vulnerable.
- **We lead through learning.** Curiosity and inquiry are continuous, not episodic.
- **We lead with humility.** We grow ourselves as we grow others.
- **We lead in context.** Our leadership must reflect the histories, cultures, and communities we serve.
- **We lead for coherence.** Vision and systems must be aligned to sustain meaningful change.

Final Consideration: Leadership as a Sacred Responsibility

Leadership in public education is a sacred trust. The Spirit of Leadership provides not just a set of competencies but a way of being. When practiced together, these five dimensions create a coherent, courageous, and caring approach to leadership that serves all children and strengthens our collective future.