A Shared Vision of Outstanding School Leadership

Wheatsheaf School Division No. 99

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Mission:

To foster excellence in student learning and personal development through outstanding leadership, exemplary instructional practice, and safe, caring, respectful and orderly school environments.

One of our goals in Wheatsheaf School Division No. 99 is to develop and sustain a strong, identifiable culture of outstanding school leadership, exemplary teaching and excellence in student learning. We have defined this culture as “the beliefs, knowledge, skills and attributes relative to high-performance school leadership, teaching and learning that are consistently, expertly and creatively put into practice by the entire staff of a school division, relative to respective roles, thereby creating opportunities for each student to achieve optimal learning”.

We believe school leaders “become what they aspire to” and are not content to set our sights on a minimal or “acceptable” performance standard. We also recognize the cause-effect relationship between outstanding school leadership, exemplary teaching and excellence in learning. For those reasons, we have developed the following Shared vision of Outstanding School Leadership for our school division. We define outstanding school leadership as “the expert, consistent and creative application of the fundamentals of school leadership practice, thereby creating opportunities for every student to have ongoing access to exemplary teaching and opportunities to achieve optimal learning”. The Shared Vision of Outstanding School Leadership complements the Division’s Shared Vision of Exemplary Teaching.

The Shared Vision of Outstanding School Leadership describes our core beliefs about school leadership practice, and the fundamental actions we undertake that are consistent with our beliefs. We have expressed the fundamental actions in the form of affirmations that show the type of school leaders we are becoming on a consistent basis. The affirmations are specific, observable commitments that we are making to our school communities. They are also a powerful description of the influences school leaders have on instructional practice and student learning. It is to be noted that each set of affirmations has been cross-referenced to Alberta Education’s Principal Quality Practice Guideline.

What follows is our commitment to making outstanding school leadership, exemplary teaching and excellence in learning the norm in Wheatsheaf School Division No. 99. We commit to applying the expressed core beliefs and fundamental actions consistently, expertly and creatively so that all students have the best possible opportunities to learn.
OUR SHARED VISION AS PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL LEADERS:

1. We believe students and their learning come first within the context and application of Alberta Education’s Program of Studies and Inspiring Education document, and we believe the most important factors affecting student learning are the quality of teaching and school leadership.

Affirmations

As outstanding student-centered and learning-focused school leaders:

- We know there is a distinct cause-effect relationship between school leadership, classroom teaching, and student learning. We are therefore committed to developing and sustaining a culture of outstanding school leadership, exemplary teaching and excellence in student learning and personal development.

- Our compelling sense of purpose is excellence in learning and personal development for all students. We therefore continually advocate for the best interests of our students and are committed to a holistic approach to their life-long learning.

Principal Quality Practice Guideline

- The principal nurtures and sustains a school culture that values and supports learning.

2. We believe outstanding school leaders work collaboratively to develop a culture characterized by shared values and beliefs, and a collective vision that focuses on creating powerful learning environments.

Affirmations

As outstanding visionary and collaborative school leaders:

- We promote a shared vision of a high-performing school that incorporates the following cultural attributes:
  
  i. a collective commitment to a clearly articulated mission statement that provides overall purpose, meaning, and direction for the day-to-day schooling effort;
  
  ii. a strong sense of individual and collective staff efficacy and responsibility with regard to student learning;
  
  iii. commitment to outstanding school leadership, exemplary teaching, and excellence in student learning and personal development;
  
  iv. commitment to interdependent relationships whereby all members of the school community continually learn with and from each other;
  
  v. a safe, caring, inclusive, orderly, and respectful school environment that openly conveys hope, dignity and purpose;
  
  vi. a vibrant student activities program that provides opportunities for participants to explore and/or advance their skills and interests beyond the classroom; and
vii. meaningful involvement of the school community in the school’s operation using collaborative and consultative decision-making strategies.

- We embrace, promote and model the Shared Vision of Exemplary Teaching (aligned with the Teaching Quality Standard) and Shared Vision of Outstanding School Leadership (aligned with the Principal Quality Practice Guideline).
- We effectively involve the school community in identifying and addressing areas for school improvement, and ensure the use of a wide range of data and information during planning activities and determining progress toward school goals.
- We ensure the celebration of our accomplishments.

Principal Quality Practice Guideline

The principal collaboratively involves the school community in creating and sustaining shared school values, vision, mission and goals.

3. We believe outstanding school leaders use a strategic, systematic, deliberate, collaborative, creative, and research-informed approach to provide instructional leadership and build leadership capacity.

Affirmations

As outstanding instructional leaders:

- We know the most important factors affecting student learning are the quality of teaching and school leadership within the school. We therefore foster a strong sense of individual and collective staff efficacy in our schools.

- We hold and maintain high standards of performance for all.

- We continually strive to have every teacher consistently, expertly and creatively utilize the professional practices identified in the Shared Vision of Exemplary Teaching.

- We contribute to the recruitment, selection, and retention of highly effective instructional staff. In so doing, we are guided by:
  i. the Shared Vision of Exemplary Teaching;
  ii. the needs and best interests of students; and
  iii. Division and school goals and needs.

- We provide appropriate support to our new school staff.

- We demonstrate a sound understanding of the Program of Studies and effective pedagogy (i.e. planning; lesson design and implementation; classroom leadership and management; assessment of student learning).
• We build and sustain a culture of individual and collaborative career-long learning with regard to the improvement of professional practice. This includes:
  i. fostering individual and collective responsibility for student learning;
  ii. ensuring all school staff members have appropriate opportunities to share their practice and engage in collective inquiry and reflection about teaching and learning;
  iii. responding in a timely manner to the needs of school staff members as indicated through their inquiry and reflection;
  iv. fostering trusting, interdependent relationships;
  v. developing coaching and mentoring relationships;
  vi. promoting a strong research and literature orientation in our professional development and practice;
  vii. using action research to inform instructional decision-making;
  viii. advocating, modeling, facilitating, supporting and sustaining exemplary instructional practices as described in the Shared Vision of Exemplary Teaching; and
  ix. ensuring alignment of staff development programs with provincial, division and school education plans, and the Shared Vision of Exemplary Teaching.

• We are committed to implementing Alberta’s Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy, and the division’s Administrative Procedures, to ensure each teacher’s professional practice supports optimum student learning. We therefore facilitate teacher growth by monitoring and reviewing—at least twice each year—each teacher’s Professional Growth Plan (PGP). In so doing, we ensure that each PGP:
  i. demonstrates clear expectations, processes, and timelines;
  ii. reflects goals and objectives based on an assessment of learning needs by the individual teacher;
  iii. shows a demonstrable relationship to the Teaching Quality Standard;
  iv. takes into consideration the Shared Vision of Exemplary Teaching;
  v. takes into consideration the education plans for the school, jurisdiction, and Alberta Education; and
  vi. is modified through ongoing reflection and discussion, and is supplemented and supported by instructional supervision (see the following two affirmations).

• We are committed to implementing Alberta’s Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy, and the division’s Administrative Procedures, to ensure each teacher’s professional practice supports optimum student learning. We therefore implement a varied approach to instructional supervision to ensure each teacher’s professional practice meets the expectations in the Teaching Quality Standard. This includes:
  i. building trusting, collegial and supportive relationships;
  ii. promoting continuous growth in the ability of each teacher to enhance student learning;
  iii. regularly observing each teacher’s professional practice in the classroom and school-wide setting;
  iv. using observation data to provide constructive feedback regarding the impact of the teacher’s professional practice on student learning;
  v. assisting teachers to reflect critically on their professional practice;
vi. generating and discussing alternative teaching practices to enhance student learning;

vii. encouraging teachers to take reasonable risks to improve professional practice; and

viii. differentiating instructional supervision based on each teacher’s needs.

• We are committed to implementing Alberta’s **Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy**, and the division’s Administrative Procedures, to ensure each teacher’s professional practice supports optimum student learning. This involves **addressing all professional practice that does not appear to meet the Teaching Quality Standard, Code of Professional Conduct, and/or conditions of employment**. The process for doing so includes:

  i. considering information from multiple sources, including supervision, to determine the need to provide a teacher with a Notice of Evaluation;

  ii. developing and implementing an evaluation plan to gather information over a period of time and applying reasoned judgment in determining whether one or more aspects of a teacher’s performance exceeds, meets or does not meet the Teaching Quality Standard;

  iii. providing a teacher with a Notice of Remediation and implementing an improvement plan when the evaluation process shows the teacher does not meet the Teaching Quality Standard;

  iv. providing the teacher with reasonable time to improve; and

  v. recommending termination of the teacher’s contract of employment when remediation follow-up and further evaluation shows the teacher’s performance does not meet the Teaching Quality Standard.

• We promote and provide opportunities for distributed leadership among members of the school community.

• **We model personal career-long learning by continually striving to improve our professional leadership practice.** This includes:

  i. developing and implementing an annual professional growth plan that takes into consideration the Shared Vision of Outstanding School Leadership;

  ii. active involvement, where appropriate, as a co-learner in staff development activities; and

  iii. demonstrating current knowledge of local, national and global issues and trends related to education.

**Principal Quality Practice Guideline**

The principal ensures that all students have ongoing access to quality teaching and learning opportunities to meet the provincial goals of education.

The principal promotes the development of leadership capacity within the school community – students, teachers and other staff, parents, and the school council for the overall benefit of the school community and education system.
4. We believe outstanding school leaders build and sustain effective relationships and trust within the school community, including students, teachers and other school staff, parents/guardians, school council, Division Education Centre staff, Board of Trustees, outside agencies, and the community-at-large.

Affirmations

As outstanding relationship-builders:

- We develop effective communications, supported by current technologies, within the school community.
- We foster and model open communication that is respectful of differing opinions.
- We foster and acknowledge the value and significance of each individual within the school community.
- We demonstrate genuine caring, respect and empathy in our interpersonal relations.
- We provide timely responses to concerns and requests.
- We are skilled in collaborative and consultative decision-making, team-building, consensus-building, problem-solving and conflict resolution, using a solution-focused growth model.
- We build effective partnerships within the school community to advance student learning.
- We ensure parents/guardians are meaningfully involved in their child’s learning and development.
- We ensure parents/guardians receive regular, timely and meaningful information about their child’s learning and development.
- We successfully balance division-wide and school-based perspectives. This includes:
  i. responding to, and advocating for, the needs and interests of our school communities;
  ii. supporting and promoting school division improvement initiatives;
  iii. leading our schools within a school system perspective; and
  iv. advocating for the school community’s support of the school and school division.
- We adhere to professional standards of conduct.

Principal Quality Practice Guideline

The principal builds trust and fosters positive working relationships, on the basis of appropriate values and ethical foundations, within the school community – students, teachers and other staff, parents, school council and others who have an interest in the school.
The principal understands and responds appropriately to the political, social, economic, legal and cultural contexts impacting the school.

5. **We believe outstanding school leaders manage the operations and resources of the school for a safe, caring, efficient and effective teaching-learning environment.**

**Affirmations**

**As outstanding school managers:**

- *We ensure organizational structures and operational plans provide clear direction for all activities within the school;*

- *We effectively plan, organize and manage the human, physical and financial resources of the school and identify areas of need.*

- *We promote and support ethical citizenship in our schools;*

- *We ensure compliance with all provincial statutory and regulatory requirements and timelines; and*

- *We ensure compliance with all Division policies, administrative procedures, manuals and timelines.*

**Principal Quality Practice Guideline**

The principal manages school operations and resources to ensure a safe and caring, and effective learning environment.

The principal understands and responds appropriately to the political, social, economic, legal and cultural contexts impacting the school.

**Resources**

1. *Shared Vision of Exemplary Teaching for Wheatsheaf School Division No. 99*
2. *Administrative Procedure 415: Wheatsheaf School Division No. 99*
3. *Teaching and Learning Scan for Wheatsheaf School Division No. 99*
4. *The Alberta School Act*
5. *The Principal Quality Practice Guideline: Promoting Successful School Leadership in Alberta*
6. *The Teaching Quality Standard for the Province of Alberta*
7. *Alberta Education’s Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy*
8. *Alberta Education’s Program of Studies*
9. *Alberta Teachers’ Association Members’ Handbook*