Atlantic Provinces Standards *of* Practice *for* School-based Administrators

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The opportunity to recast the role of the principal should not be missed. Although it is true that a prime quality of today's principal will be the ability to handle ambiguity, I can guarantee that the new role will be engaging, achievable, and ultimately more clear and fulfilling. Best of all it is learnable and brings with it deep satisfaction of maximizing learning for scores of students who are not now being served by the school system. The principal as lead change agent could become one of the most prized educational roles around.[1]

According to education policy makers in Atlantic Canada, the quality of teaching and learning in each school is most affected by the quality of the staff and educational leadership. Thus, the promotion of excellence and the commitment to supporting educational leadership has never been stronger.

The demands on school-based administrators are dramatically different from that of 2010 when this project was initiated and a first version of this document was introduced. The complex needs in schools have changed, fueled by dynamic demographics, transformation efforts, evolving instructional strategies, and the impact of technology on teaching and learning. Additionally, the impact of a global economy and the transforming workplace in the 21st century profoundly affect how schools prepare students for the future. All this change brings with it increasing demands and challenges as well as new opportunities for school-based administrators.

As a result, the departments responsible for public education and early childhood development in Atlantic Canada, through the CAMET Board of Directors, have mandated their respective departments to develop an updated set of standards of practices for school-based administrators. This document, as part of this project undertaken in collaboration with officials of each department, describes the standards school-based administrators should strive for in their practice. These standards reflect the highest ideals to be attained by the current and future leaders in our system.

"The profession of educational leadership has developed significantly. Educators have a better understanding of how and in what ways effective leadership contributes to student achievement. An expanding base of knowledge from research and practice shows that educational leaders exert influence on student achievement by creating challenging but also caring and supportive conditions conducive to each student's learning. They relentlessly develop and support teachers, create positive working conditions, effectively allocate resources, construct appropriate organizational policies and systems, and engage in other deep and meaningful work outside of the classroom that has a powerful impact on what happens inside it. Given this growing knowledge—and the changing demands of the job—educational leaders need new standards to guide their practice in directions that will be the most productive and beneficial to students."[2]

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1   The Principal: Three Keys to Maximizing Impact, Michael Fullan page 12, 2018
2   Professional Standards for Educational Leaders National Policy Board for Educational Administration, National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA), 2015

The standards described in this document are grounded in a shared belief in the value of collective efficacy, in the capacity of collaborative efforts to affect growth and improvement and in the desire to support change leaders within our systems.

> *"Principals, who are the formal leaders closest to the classroom, are most effective when they see themselves as working collaboratively towards clear, common goals with district personnel, other principals, and teachers. These leaders are more confident in their leadership and are experiencing greater efficacy. In addition, district support for shared leadership at the school level enhances the sense of efficacy among principals.*
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> *When principals and teachers share leadership, teachers' working relationships with one another are stronger and student achievement is higher. District support for shared leadership fosters the development of professional communities. Where teachers feel attached to a professional community, they are more likely to use instructional practices that are linked to improved student learning."*[3]

School leadership matters. It matters to everyone directly and indirectly connected to schools. The impact strong school leadership can have in schools is paramount after teacher effectiveness. This document is meant to support and grow our current educators and leaders through relevant, personalized, and job-embedded professional learning that allows them to support high quality teaching through collaborative professionalism, all for the shared goal of student achievement and well-being. Finally, it will help in developing personalized learning and reflection tools for school-based administrators to improve practice.

> *Passion matters but must be earned through actually getting better at leading change—the latter achieved through a process of learning that does depend on some degree of trial and error. ... You only feel passion emotionally when you are skilled at the work and are actually experiencing success. Passion without skill is dangerous.*[4]

3   Learning From Leadership: Investigating the Links to Improved Student Learning, Karen Seashore Louis, Kenneth Leithwood, Kyla L. Wahlstrom, Stephen E. Anderson et al. 2010
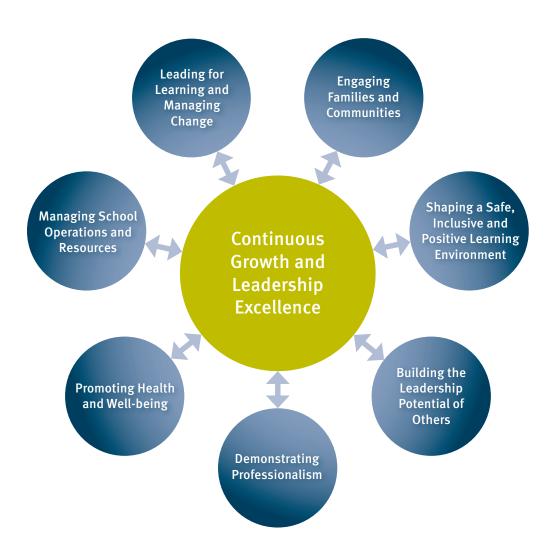4   The Principalship, Michael Fullan, p. 125, 2014

a) **Co-construct / Co-create** means a collaborative or partnership process.

b) **Community** means the various individuals, groups, businesses, and institutions that are invested in the welfare and vitality of a public school and the neighborhoods and municipalities served by the school.

c) **Diversity** means the characteristics as defined in the Human Rights legislation for each provincial jurisdiction.

d) **Education authority** includes the body accountable for the delivery of education such as school boards, school districts, and regional centres for education.

e) **Evidence-based practice** means effective educational strategies supported by evidence and scientifically based research to the extent practicable.

f) **Inclusion/Inclusive education** means a commitment to ensuring a high-quality, culturally, and linguistically responsive and equitable education to support the well-being and achievement of every student. It also means a philosophy that promotes a welcoming school culture where all members of the school community feel they belong, realize their potential, and contribute to the life of the school.

g) **Indicators** means actions and behaviours that are purposeful, observable, and measurable and consistent with the achievement of a standard.

h) **School-based administrator** means principals and vice-principals/assistant-principals.

i) **School environment** means the facilities, classrooms, school-based health supports, context, cultures, policies and practices that affect students.

j) **Staff** means all certified and non-certified persons under the supervision of the school-based administrator whose role in the school is to provide academic, behavioural, social, emotional instructional and support services.

k) **Stakeholders** means anyone who is invested in or believes they are influenced by the welfare and success of a school and its students, including administrators, teachers, staff members, students, families, community members, local business leaders, and elected officials such as school board members, and municipal and provincial representatives.

These standards of practice and their indicators are a growth model that describes the knowledge, skills, competencies, and values that reflect the highest ideals to be attained by current and future school-based administrators.

The standards should guide professional learning provided by educational authorities to support the ongoing personalized learning of school-based administrators. School-based administrators demonstrate continuous growth in leadership excellence in the following eight standards of practice:

Standard: Leading for Learning and Managing Change

Managing change involves building the vision by and through consensus, through the shared, collaborative creation of purpose and direction of the school with all stakeholders. It also means a commitment to plan for continuous improvement.

The school-based administrator is the leader of the instructional team. Together, with that team, they share responsibility for student learning. The school-based administrator makes it possible for the staff to maintain a thorough understanding of current pedagogy and methodology, of what constitutes exemplary teaching, and for an outcome-based curriculum that defines the learning goals of education in the province.

Indicators - School-based administrators:

a) clearly express, in written and verbal communications, shared co-constructed goals and vision with respect to learning and well being.
b) systematically support, monitor, adjust and promote progress toward co-constructed goals.
c) facilitate procedures and practices which lead to continuous improvement.
d) involve the school community in the development of improvement plans and include stakeholders in the implementation as appropriate.
e) collect and use a variety of data and evidence to plan, implement, and monitor continuous improvement for student achievement and well-being and to support the development, implementation and revision of the vision, mission, and objectives.
f) establish consistent opportunities for gathering input and communication among stakeholders
g) assess readiness among team to successfully engage in change and establish a plan for transitions
h) engage in ongoing and targeted conversations and build collective synergy in support of student learning, well-being, and achievement.
i) coach and provide ongoing feedback about instructional practices and the expectations of teacher performance.
j) celebrate progress and successes in change efforts
k) ensure that the learning environment responds to diverse learning needs and preferences and advocates for varied interventions and supports designed to meet the individual needs of students.
l) develop and lead coherent systems of academic and social supports, services, extracurricular activities, and accommodations to meet the range of learning needs of each student.
m) ensure the use of evidence-based practice to build effective learning environments that promote and develop critical thinking, and problem solving and inspire both independent and collaborative learning within the school community.
n) understand and promote the role of current and emerging information technologies to support teaching and learning.
o) foster and help sustain a professional collaborative learning culture.
p) ensure that the instruction, assessment, and evaluation methods used in schools are situation-appropriate, responsive to student learning and can be used to demonstrate improvement.

q) differentiate change management strategies that are required to achieve improvement goals.
r) improve self-practice based on multiple sources of feedback and understand and reflect upon self-management and self-awareness.

Standard: Engaging Families and Communities

School-based administrators are a main contact through which students, staff, families, professional groups, and community partners interact and build their relationship within the context of the school community. The ability to develop trust and positive, stable working relationships with those partners is paramount to effective and welcoming communication as well as engagement with families and community members.

Indicators - School-based administrators:

a) establish positive and productive relationships and processes with families, service providers and community partners and gather feedback when appropriate.
b) support two-way communications with families, ensuring they are informed about and empowered as essential decision makers for their child's learning and development.
c) collaborate with the school community while recognizing and responding to its diverse needs to influence education decisions at both district and provincial levels.
d) build positive and supportive working relationships with colleagues and teaching professionals both inside and outside their school community.
e) create a culture of positive and collaborative learning among students, staff, and the community.
f) recognize, understand, and include the unique characteristics of the school community.

Standard: Shaping a Safe, Inclusive and Positive Learning Environment

Schools are welcoming and inclusive learning communities where all forms of diversity are valued and promoted. This presents for school-based administrators, the opportunity to encourage a climate of trust ensuring that each individual feels included and safe within the school community. School-based administrators model and promote the core values of equality, equity, fairness, diversity, and inclusion in all aspects of their practice.

Indicators - School-based administrators:

a) foster a culture of high expectations and implement procedures that contribute to a safe, inclusive, caring, and healthy environment.
b) collaborate with colleagues and support professionals in order to encourage and support the academic, behavioural, physical, emotional and social development of all students in the school.
c) uphold the principles of fairness, dignity, integrity, empathy and respect.

d) create an environment that is inclusive of the diversity of race, culture, ethnicity, religion, language, gender and sexual orientation.

e) Be aware of and uphold school, education authority, and provincial regulations and policies related to privacy rules, human rights, and other relevant legislation and communicate them to stakeholders when appropriate.

f) celebrate and acknowledge the achievements of students and staff.

g) integrate the cultures and languages of the community into the learning environment and recognize how they contribute to the student's and school's identity.

h) implement student policies and address student behaviour in a positive, fair, progressive, collaborative, engaging, restorative and culturally responsive manner.

Standard: Building the Leadership Potential of Others

Leadership is a distributed act, not simply an act of dividing tasks among groups, but of the practice of leadership wherein every individual is recognized as having strengths. Individual teacher strengths are encouraged and called upon to build teacher leadership capacity. School-based administrators also collaborate with post-secondary institutions to induct new staff, and with colleagues to retain and grow effective educators.

Indicators - School-based administrators:

a) foster the individual and collective strengths of staff in their school community.

b) engage appropriate staff and students in school decision-making and involve families, and others concerned in the decision-making process whenever appropriate.

c) call upon others to take on leadership roles.

d) understand and demonstrate standards of practice for school-based administrators and coach those seeking leadership positions on the standards.

e) recognize the shared nature of leadership, support collaborative professionalism, and empower others to act as effective leaders.

f) support collective efficacy by promoting working together for greater impact.

g) model professional learning and serve as an example to other school leaders, through continuous reflection on and analysis of their work.

Standard: Demonstrating Professionalism

School-based administrators act ethically, equitably, and confidentially in personal conduct, behaviour, and all aspects of school leadership according to professional standards. They serve as role models accepting responsibility for using their position constructively to promote inclusion and student and teacher success and well-being.

Indicators - School-based administrators:

a) act according to and promote the professional traits of integrity, fairness, transparency, trust, collaboration, perseverance, learning, and continuous improvement.
b) place the needs of students at the center of all educational decision making and foster each student's academic, social, and emotional success.
c) promote the values of democracy, individual freedom and responsibility, equity, social justice, community, and diversity.
d) lead with culturally responsive interpersonal and communication skills and social-emotional insight.
e) demonstrate professional conduct in all settings, including schools, communities, digital sites, and social media.

Standard: Promoting Health and Well-being

School-based administrators cultivate a caring, supportive, and safe school community that promotes the academic success and the social, behavioural and emotional well-being of each student. They also promote the personal and professional health, well-being, and work-life balance of staff.

Indicators - School-based administrators:

a) co-create and maintain a safe, caring, and healthy school environment that responds to the academic, behavioural, social, emotional, and physical needs of each student and staff.
b) enlist staff, system stakeholders, and community members to identify, address, and/or resolve any identified safety issues and concerns in a timely manner.
c) co-create and sustain a school environment in which students and staff are known, valued, trusted, cared for, and encouraged to be an active and responsible member of the school community.
d) cultivate and reinforce student engagement, leadership, and positive student behavior.
e) promote the personal and professional health, well-being, and work-life balance of the staff.
f) Tend to their own learning and effectiveness through reflection, study, and improvement, while maintaining a healthy work-life balance.

Standard: Managing School Operations and Resources

School-based administrators manage school facilities, operations, and financial and human resources to provide a safe, and inclusive learning environment for students and staff. They use a range of systems and technologies efficiently to manage the school.

Indicators - School-based Administrators:

a) strategically manage staff resources, assigning and scheduling educators and staff to roles and responsibilities that optimize their professional capacity to address each student's learning needs.
b) ensure effective staff communications within the school environment.
c) Manage staff with respect, use appropriate conflict resolution mechanisms and use best practices when having difficult conversations.
d) manage financial resources, the physical environment, and other resources to support curriculum, instruction and assessment, student learning, professional capacity, and family and community engagement.
e) follow established practices that ensure that physical facilities comply with provincial health and safety regulations.
f) act responsibly and in a professional manner with the education authority's and school's monetary and non-monetary resources, and engage in effective budgeting, spending and accounting practices.
g) protect teachers' and other staff members' work and learning from disruption.
h) employ systems to improve the quality and efficiency of operations and management.
i) create relationships with feeder and connecting schools for enrollment management, curricula, and successful transition planning.
j) use and maintain student information data and communication systems.
k) know and comply with local, provincial, and federal laws, rights, policies, and regulations to promote student learning.
l) develop and administer systems for fair and equitable management of communication among students, staff, leaders, families, and community.
m) manage processes and internal and external partnerships to achieve the school's mission and vision.