

# LEADERSHIP UPDATE

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## Alberta Leadership Competencies for School Leaders and Leadership.11

Alberta has earned an international reputation for excellence in education. The contributions of principals in fostering commitment, collaboration and cooperation among community members are key factors in this achievement. This was reinforced in the McKinsey research study that Alberta administrators, one of eight world-leading education systems invited to participate in an international research project, participated in during June 2010. The results of the research are captured in *Capturing the Leadership Premium: How the World's Top School Systems are Building Leadership Capacity for the Future*. The complete research report can be found on the McKinsey & Company website at [www.mckinsey.com/client-service/Social\\_Sector/our\\_practices/Education/Knowledge\\_Highlights/Capturing%20the%20leadership%20premium.aspx](http://www.mckinsey.com/client-service/Social_Sector/our_practices/Education/Knowledge_Highlights/Capturing%20the%20leadership%20premium.aspx) or <http://tinyurl.com/3kzcyyjd>.

The initiative to examine the state of school leadership in Alberta and the inherent current and future challenges emanates from three Alberta Education undertakings: the 2003 Alberta Commission on Learning Report; the 2008 School Leadership Symposium Report; and the Education Sector Workforce Planning Framework for Action. Alberta's Commission on Learning concluded that teachers designated as principals require a broad repertoire of competencies to successfully fulfill their complex and critical roles within the education system. The commission recommended that a principal quality practice standard be developed with clearly stated requirements for the knowledge, skills and attributes to be a successful principal. Alberta Education worked with two ministry committees related to this undertaking: the

School Leadership Framework Committee and the Alberta Commission on Learning Recommendation 76 Stakeholder Advisory Committee in creating the framework and the leadership competencies.

From June 2005 to December 2008, a stakeholder advisory committee, through a process of roundtable discussion and consensus building, developed a draft Principal Quality Practice document outlining the dimensions and relevant descriptors of a principal's role. In the spring of 2009, the ministry issued the Principal Quality Practice Guideline for voluntary implementation by education stakeholders. At a School Leadership Symposium, delegates from the education community and representatives from the public at large focused on the expectations, roles and challenges of Alberta's school leaders. Delegates identified twenty suggestions, which were grouped into five key themes:

1. The attraction, recruitment and retention of school leaders
2. The evolving role of school leaders
3. Accessible quality school leadership preparation programs
4. Ongoing professional development of school leaders
5. A new vision for school leadership in the 21st century

Among their suggestions were the development of a school leadership framework to guide school leadership programs and policies, and the establishment of a provincial body to undertake research and foster support for and collaboration on school leadership.

The School Leadership Framework Committee (SLF Committee), consisting of

**We gain strength, and courage, and confidence by each experience in which we really stop to look fear in the face ... we must do that which we think we cannot.**

**— Eleanor Roosevelt**



representatives from Alberta's key education stakeholder organizations/institutions, began meeting in December 2008 to develop the school leadership framework. The framework is intended to ensure that all Alberta schools are served by highly qualified educational leaders whose work focuses on the provision of opportunities for the optimum learning and development of all students in the school. Further, the framework is designed to guide school leader preparation, professional growth, supervision and evaluation and provides a pathway for education stakeholders to support the development of quality school leadership in Alberta. Finally, the framework aims to enhance the public's confidence in and support of school leadership in Alberta.

In recent years, the duties and expectations of the principal have expanded and become increasingly complex. As a consequence, all school leaders need to acquire sophisticated knowledge and develop the skills that research and experience have concluded are necessary for effective practice. The competencies for school leaders take into account the leadership responsibilities and expectations that principals face today and will face for the foreseeable future. Principals are accountable for the demonstration of all the competencies throughout their careers. Assistant principals, associate principals and vice-principals are accountable for the demonstration of those competencies that are directly related to their assigned role and leadership designation. Reasoned, evidence-based, professional judgment must be used to determine whether the applicable competencies are demonstrated by a school leader.

The framework presumes that every school leader fulfills the applicable provincial requirements, demonstrates

the applicable Alberta Professional Practice Competencies for School Leaders and meets the school authority's requirements for school leaders. The competencies are provincial requirements for the practice of school leadership. They are interrelated and are not presented in rank order. The indicators that accompany each competency describe how it is demonstrated. School authorities may interpret, refine and add to the Indicators to reflect the local context.

#### **Professional Practice Competency #1 —Fostering Effective Relationships**

A school leader must build trust and foster positive working relationships within the school community on the basis of appropriate values and ethical foundations.

#### **Professional Practice Competency #2 —Embodying Visionary Leadership**

A school leader must involve the school community in creating and sustaining shared vision, mission, values, principles and goals.

#### **Professional Practice Competency #3 —Leading a Learning Community**

A school leader must nurture and sustain a school culture that values and supports learning.

#### **Professional Practice Competency #4 —Providing Instructional Leadership**

A school leader must ensure that each student has access to quality teaching and the opportunity to engage in quality learning experiences.

#### **Professional Practice Competency #5 —Developing and Facilitating Leadership**

A school leader must promote the development of leadership capacity within the school community for the overall benefit of the school community and education system.

#### **Professional Practice Competency #6 —Managing School Operations and Resources**

A school leader must manage school operations and resources to ensure a safe, caring, and effective learning environment.

#### **Professional Practice Competency #7 —Understanding and Responding to the Larger Societal Context**

A school leader must understand and appropriately respond to the political, social, economic, legal and cultural contexts impacting the school.

### **Leadership.11 (Western Canadian Educational Administrators Conference 2011)**

A unique learning opportunity is being organized to provide an opportunity this fall for district and school-based leaders to engage in a discussion of the elements of leadership that are foundational to the creation of excellent learning ecosystems for students. The Leadership.11 conference (Western Canadian Educational Administrators conference) will take place at the Fantasyland Hotel in Edmonton from October 19 to 21. A highlight of Leadership.11 will be an international symposium that will focus on the findings of the McKinsey study, with speakers from multiple jurisdictions presenting their leadership stories. The conference will be the first significant opportunity for district and school-based leaders to discuss in detail the new Alberta Professional Practice Competencies for School Leaders. Leadership.11 will feature a variety of highly regarded keynote speakers who will stimulate the ongoing discussion of the leadership ingredients that make up a recipe for school success. Sir Ken Robinson will be just one of the many speakers at this groundbreaking event. This year's conference will sell out quickly! To find out more, visit [www.wceac.org](http://www.wceac.org).

# Canadian Association of Principals Gives Governments a Failing Grade

Joycelyn Fournier-Gawryluk, President, CAP

The Canadian Association of Principals (CAP) held its annual general meeting at the Delta Prince Edward Hotel in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, prior to its 29th annual conference (CAP 2011), hosted by the Prince Edward Island Association of School Administrators.

Representatives from across the country met to discuss items of relevance to principals and school communities. Financial restrictions imposed in many provinces are adversely affecting schools and student learning. Principals are expected to lead A+ schools on C- budgets. CAP believes that education should be the number-one priority of governments. The budgets in many jurisdictions are underfunding education, creating negative effects on the students that educators strive to support.

Secondly, CAP was pleased to announce its new initiative of a pan-Canadian research study on the role of the principal. Focus groups are

scheduled to gather information beginning in the fall of 2011.

The role of the principal has long been established as an integral and pivotal leadership position in the Alberta education system. It is a position that is able to influence and impact the social fabric of our society through excellence in student outcomes and community engagement.

—Alberta Teachers' Association 2009.

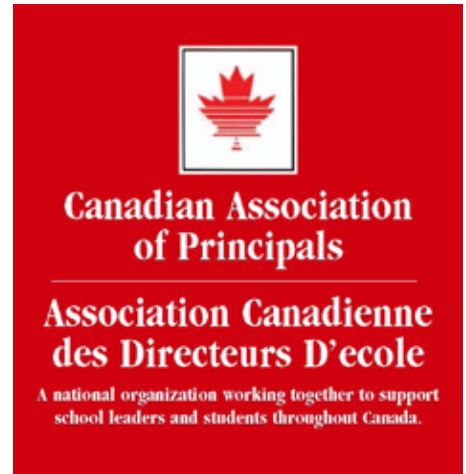
The Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) will take the lead role in a national partnership with the Canadian Association of Principals (CAP) to identify the trends and influences that will shape the work of the principal as school leaders in the next twenty years. The purpose of the study will be to examine the current conditions of practice that both limit and enable the aspirational leadership roles of principals in the context of the future forces that will shape public

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education in Canada over the next twenty years.

The proposed study will be based on the design framework of a recently completed ATA research project, *The Future of Teaching in Alberta*, which was undertaken in collaboration with researchers from the University of Calgary. This study also contributed to a national research effort undertaken by the Canadian Teachers' Federation on the quality of teaching.

The *Future of Teaching in Alberta* project also included collaboration with Andy Hargreaves and Dennis Shirley, coauthors of *The Fourth Way*. This research partnership provided a broader global perspective to the analysis of the trends shaping teaching and learning in Alberta schools. To support the same international perspective in this proposed study, Ben Levin, professor and Canada Research Chair in Education Leadership and Policy at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, has agreed to act as a critical friend to *The Future of the Principalship* project.

As *The Future of Teaching* project concluded, the current forces that will shape teaching in the next two decades

(eg, the increasing complexity of the classroom, the growth of digital technologies, broadening conceptions of what constitutes learning) will also have profound impacts on the work of school principals. In this context, a particular focus of the study will be to examine the conflicting demands placed on administrators that currently limit their capacity to be instructional leaders in their schools. The influences of globalization and the effects of emerging technologies will be a particular focus.

The design of the questions and protocols for the cross-Canada focus groups will be undertaken in collaboration with the national advisory group. The initial schedule of the focus groups, to be confirmed by the member organizations of CAP, is October 1, 2011 to April 1, 2012. While the focus groups will be facilitated and sponsored by individual member organizations, a lead researcher-facilitator will provide inservice to ensure consistency across the country.

More information will follow as the research study unfolds.

## References

- Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA). 2009. *Leadership for Learning: The Experience of Administrators in Alberta Schools*. Edmonton, Alta: ATA.
- Hargreaves, A, and D Shirley. 2009. *The Fourth Way: The Inspiring Future for Educational Change*. Thousand Oaks, Calif: Corwin.

### An Administrator's Tool Kit: Supporting Teachers in Social Studies Implementation,

developed by Southern Alberta Professional Development Consortium (SAPDC), can be found at [www.learning-network.org/resources/AdminToolKit.pdf](http://www.learning-network.org/resources/AdminToolKit.pdf).

This resource has been developed to help school-based administrators support ongoing teacher professional growth as it relates to curriculum implementation. Specifically, this document is focused on the implementation of the new social studies program of studies. Its purpose is to

- support administrators in their role as instructional leaders,
- provide a vision of what the new social studies program of studies will look like when fully implemented,
- provide background information and professional development materials to facilitate effective social studies implementation and
- provide a framework for assessment of school progress in implementing and refining the social studies program over time.



**Q & A**  
GORDON THOMAS  
Executive Secretary

**Q:** Recent budget constraints have two of us on staff considering reducing to part time so that a colleague remains employed. What advice does ATA give on this?

**A:** Reducing to part time (any FTE less than full time), jeopardizes your full-time contract status and has implications for salary, pension and benefits that may affect your security over a long term. Some implications include arbitrary adjustments of your time in future years by the school board, denial of access to benefits or benefit contributions, pension reduction for the rest of your life, and expectations of supervision duties and volunteer time commensurate with your former full-time position.

To jeopardize your own status to protect a colleague's position only increases the number of teachers harmed by the cuts. Reduction in your FTE for other reasons should be done only after direct consultation with an Association staff officer who will assist in protecting your future.

To find archived issues of *Leadership Update* go to [www.teachers.ab.ca](http://www.teachers.ab.ca) and click on Resources for School-Based Administrators.

Feedback is welcome. Please contact Konni deGoeij, associate coordinator, administrator assistance, Member Services, at [konni.degoeij@ata.ab.ca](mailto:konni.degoeij@ata.ab.ca).