

Pedagogical Leadership for Early Learning Educators

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CLAUDIA SASSE



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Meet the Author

CLAUDIA SASSE

Meet the Author



Claudia Sasse is an Instructor at Red Deer Polytechnic (RPD) in the city of Red Deer in Alberta, Canada. She instructs courses in the Early Childhood and Child Care (ELCC) field within the Education Department. She completed a Bachelor of Education in Brazil – her home country. Claudia completed her Master of Education at the University of Alberta (U of A) in Canada.

Claudia is currently a doctoral student at Gonzaga University in Spokane, WA, USA, where she is working on a Leadership in Education research project. Claudia has over 30 years of experience in the field of education. She has worked in many K-12 schools, and in post-secondary institutions in Canada and abroad.

Claudia's research interests are in early learning, international education, students success, cultural diversity and educational leadership.

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PART I

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT



Red Deer Polytechnic recognizes that our campus is situated on Treaty 7 land, the traditional territory of the Blackfoot, Tsuu T'ina and Stoney Nakoda peoples, and that the central Alberta region we serve falls under Treaty 6, traditional Métis, Cree and Saulteaux territory. We honour the First Peoples who have lived here since time immemorial, and we give thanks for the land where RDP sits. This is where we will strive to honour and transform our relationships with one another.

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PART I

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project would not have been possible without the continued support and expertise of our Red Deer Polytechnic's librarian, **Sona Macnaughton**.

Sona, my sincere gratitude for your help and countless hours of advising, meetings, and editing. Your time and knowledge were truly appreciated.

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A huge thank you also goes to **Red Deer Polytechnic (RDP)** for providing me with the opportunity to put this book together and for believing in me, I am truly grateful!

PART I

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Pedagogical Leadership for Early Childhood Educators. This book is to supplement part of the content for ECEL 3008 course which is part of the ELCC Leadership Certificate Program taught at Red Deer Polytechnic.

The aim of this book is to present current and significant content that will bring forward the Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs) developed for the ECEL 3008 course. The ECEL 3008 course has ten CLOs intended to be achieved within the classroom and workplace settings.

Here are the ECEL 3008 CLOs:

CLO 1 – Identify one's own pedagogical leadership style

CLO 2 – Identify and assess assumptions that influence decisions and actions within one's pedagogical leadership role

CLO 3 – Facilitate pedagogical changes in order to stimulate educator growth and maintain currency within the Early Learning and Child Care setting

CLO 4 – Apply the concepts of reflective practice in one's pedagogical work as a leader

CLO 5 – Influence commitment to the organization's curricular philosophy

CLO 6 – Collect and use data to evaluate the effectiveness of the chosen learning programs

CLO 7 – Promote inclusive practices respecting individuality, diversity, and cultural contexts

CLO 8 – Apply pedagogical leadership theories and practice to your decision-making in order to support a community of practice

CLO 9 – Receive and integrate feedback on decision-making practices, conflict resolution skills, and teamwork behaviours

CLO 10 – Lead and implement the pedagogical planning within an Early Learning and Child Care setting

You will notice that most of the CLOs are intertwined, and they complement each other providing a deeper understanding of the pedagogical leadership subject matter. The content selected for this book will support your learning, growth, and development regarding your pedagogical leadership style.

I hope you find this book useful for your leadership journey in ELCC and I wish you all the best in your current and future practices in this beautiful field called: **Early Learning and Child Care**.

Yours truly,

Claudia Sasse

“Leadership is a way of thinking, a way of acting and, most importantly, a way of communicating.” – Simon Sinek

PART I
CHAPTERS

I. Chapter I: What is Leadership? Identifying your Leadership Style

Learning Objectives

- Understand the concept of Leadership
- Identify and assess assumptions that influence decisions and actions within one's pedagogical leadership role
- Identify one's own pedagogical leadership style

What is Leadership?

How do you define leadership? Two important steps towards becoming a leader could be achieved through understanding what leadership is and identifying one's own leadership style. These two important elements alongside with identifying and assessing one's own assumptions around being a leader in their workplace will influence and guide the person's decisions and actions within a pedagogical leadership role.

The role of educational leaders has been undergoing many changes in the era of globalization due to diverse needs and expectations of the stakeholders of education. This increases the

need for professional development of educational leaders to fulfill their roles. Educational leaders have high impact on shaping school culture, school improvement, student learning, and achievement, so that their professional development is critical to their continued success as leaders. Educational leaders who participate in professional development programs update and extend their knowledge and improve their performance on the job by applying new knowledge and skills to implement the best educational practices in schools.

There has been a great interest in leadership not only in education but also in many sectors such as business, health, and technology. Leadership as a process of social influence can maximize the efforts of others for the achievement of a goal. In educational settings, leaders are appointed to positions formally or informally, influencing their colleagues by providing direction to them. Main core of educational leadership, used as school leadership exchangeable, is achieving better student success in schools. That is why all scholars and school staff work hard to find ways to obtain better school outcomes. In this sense, scholars put forward different classifications of school leadership and tried to explain the roles and responsibilities of school leaders.

School leaders have clearly stated responsibilities set by Ministry of Education, government in different countries. Responsibilities of the school leaders may show similarities but also may show differences according to size, type, region of the school, school year and country. In all successful schools, the principals have high expectations for all students and have multiple responsibilities such as supporting curriculum and instruction, fostering a positive and caring culture, recruiting, and retaining school staff, engaging parents and community resources, keeping up with the paperwork, e-mails, parent calls, evaluating teachers, attending school meetings, and community events.

Decisions and Actions Within One's Pedagogical Leadership Role

New and experienced school leaders have different needs to fulfill their responsibilities because they have different levels of management, communication, technological skills, and understanding of curriculum. Also, schools have different specific needs due to their demographical structure, academic Educational Leadership 6 achievement level of students, experience of teachers, and parental involvement. In the light of the literature, all we need as educational leaders is:

- Clear recruitment criteria not only based on the teaching experience
- Clear stated roles and responsibilities
- Determination of training needs of new and experienced school leaders every year regularly. Because the needs change according to rapid changes in technology, communication, and culture during globalization
- Effective and fast determination of training needs of educational leaders ○ by interviews with school leaders ○ by conducting surveys ○ by using observations ○ by administration of school leader evaluation surveys to school community including students, teachers, and parents as part of the school-self-evaluation ○ by reports of external inspectors of the schools
- Sustainable training programs in collaboration with universities, professional associations, or governmental agencies
- Personalized training programs with careful consideration of content, duration, mode and place of instruction, experience, and career stage of participant school leaders
- Updating training programs according to requirements of the era to meet the expectations of all stakeholders of education

- Encouragement of educational leaders to participate in professional development programs (i.e., giving certificates of attendance, certificates of successful completion, increment in salary, and advancement in career)
- Monitoring and evaluation of quality and efficiency of professional development programs
- Affordable professional development programs for all educational leaders (especially leaders in poor countries)
- Free, intensive networking between educational leaders for communication at national and international level (i.e., supported by pioneers of social media and social networking service companies)
- Free access of educational leaders to literature in education (i.e., supported by universities)
- Financial investments and funds by the governments, national and international associations, unions, foundations, agents to develop and implement up to date, and high-quality professional development programs.

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Pedagogical Leadership Styles

Let's begin by examining four popular leadership styles:

1. Trait-based leadership (the “hero” leader)
2. Situational leadership (the “chameleon” leader)
3. Transformational leadership (the “visionary” leader)
4. Servant leadership (the “servant” leader)

We have very briefly discussed several leadership styles in this first part of the course, but there are more out there. There is, for example, a large research line on ineffective (and often perceived as immoral) leadership styles, such as **Machiavellianism**.

There are numerous textbooks, management books, (scientific) articles and blogs about leadership styles. This literature presents us with a variety of styles, well beyond the ones presented in this course.

Look at the chart below for further information on each type of leadership.

Style:	Trait-based leadership
--------	------------------------

Name:	Hero leader
-------	-------------

Example Video:	Full Screen
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Characteristics of each leadership style:

Hero leader:

- Impact is made by the individual leader alone.
- The personal characteristics and behavior of the leader make the difference rather than the context in which the leader operates.
- One can become a great leader by emulating the personal characteristics and behavior of great leaders.

Chameleon leader:

- Leadership is situation-specific and adapts as the world and people change.
- Leaders adopt different styles based on the maturity of the people they are leading.
- Can be developed by enabling individuals to understand the context and to adapt their behavior accordingly.

Visionary leader:

- The role of the leader is to be a role model, to create a shared vision, and to build a team's trust and capacity to work together.
- Leaders create an environment in which individuals transcend their individual goals to achieve the higher mission of the organization.
- Leaders create desirable outcomes in organizations and have

to be able to transform the context rather than simply react to it.

Servant leader:

- Role of leadership is one of service, not just to customers but to employees as well.
- Primary focus is on people and not the organization.
- People are treated fairly and humanely and supported in their personal growth.
- Leaders can be trusted to serve the needs of the many rather than the few.
- Teamwork, community, values, service, and caring behavior are important principles.
- The ideal is self-giving without self-glory.
- Leaders enhance dialogue and understand social dynamics.

Issues that may occur within each leadership style:

Hero leader:

- The mindless application of heroic traits may lead to inauthentic behavior, which undermines trust.
- Top-down.
- Assumption that “one size fits all.”

Chameleon leader:

- Difficult to determine the correct behavior in a given context.
- Losing oneself in the context and lacking authenticity.
- Merely externally oriented, without a strong internal sense of purpose.

Visionary leader:

- Not all leaders have visionary personalities, and these may be hard to develop.
- All attention goes to the visionary leader instead of the issues that s/he is trying to address
- High risk as the reputation of the organization is determined largely by the visionary leader.
- Dependence of the organization on the visionary leader, potentially a lack of empowerment of leaders at lower levels within the organization.

Servant leader:

- They can be viewed as too “soft.”
- Failing to establish their authority.
- May struggle with giving commands or being in charge.

Activity Time

Now reflect on leadership styles within your own organization (or in your community). You can either draw on the ones we have already mentioned or explore other leadership styles.

Look for a leadership style that occurs frequently in the environment you work. You do not have to restrict yourself to styles that are effective, it might also be an *ineffective* style, as long as you can motivate its frequent occurrence in your environment.

After you have chosen a style, I invite you to write a short (500 words) introduction on this style. Please share the following ingredients:

- The label and definition of the leadership style,
- an example of the existence of this style in your environment and
- a reflection on why you think that this particular style occurs in your environment. This reflection might be linked to the specific type of work you do, the area you live in or the culture of your organization.
- Finally, you have to refer to at least one source (books, articles, videos etc) in total to provide evidence or an example of this style. For

instance, if you pick a style that we have already covered, find a video that shows a different example of a leader with this style. If it is a style we haven't mentioned, link to an article or website that explains this style in greater detail.

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<https://learning.edx.org/course/course-v1:DelftX+LEfE2x+3T2021/home>



2. Chapter 2: Pedagogical Leadership in an Early Childhood Setting – What does that look like?

Learning Objectives

- Receive and integrate feedback on decision-making practices, conflict resolution skills, and teamwork behaviors
- Lead and implement the pedagogical planning within an Early Learning and Child Care setting
- Facilitate pedagogical changes in order to stimulate educator growth and maintain currency within the Early Learning and Child Care setting

Being a Leader in Early Childhood Education Settings

In order to become a leader in the Early Childhood Education setting there are a few things that the educator needs to be aware of, such as knowing about their center, the

children, their families, and the staff they work with. You need to develop a good relationship with all of these members of your ECE Community.

In this chapter we will focus on – establishing long-lasting relationships to foster leadership support.

Sustaining Effective Practice

One key to building relationships is taking the time to reflect on our work with families. When we look at what's working and what's not, we can make changes that strengthen our relationships with families. Individual and shared reflective practice helps us work more effectively with families and contributes to better outcomes for children and families.

Reflective Practice

Taking the time to reflect—to stop and think about what has happened, what is happening, and what should happen next—is essential to creating and maintaining Positive Goal-Oriented Relationships.

Reflection on our work with families allows us to:

- Understand how our own experiences and beliefs influence our work
- Sharpen our observation and communication skills with children and families
- Improve our skills in building mutually respectful partnerships with families
- Enhance our ability to communicate and build relationships with peers and community partners

Reflective Strategies: Self-Reflection

Self-Reflection Reflection is an important part of our own continuous improvement process to understand why and how we make the choices we do. Taking the time to look at ourselves and our work gives us the opportunity to acknowledge strengths and challenges to improve our skills.

In this section, we will explore reflective practice strategies to support our work in building relationships with families.

- **Observe and remember what happens with children, families, and staff:**

We see and experience so much with children and families every day. It can be hard to keep track of every moment. You can record children's progress, staff-parent interactions, and the information shared among staff. This creates an opportunity for staff to understand what does and does not work. Remembering and reflecting on our observations is useful for improving what we do. Recording our reflections in a confidential notebook can be a valuable learning activity.

- **Think about how your own experiences affect you and your work:**

Each of us has personal and professional experiences that shape who we are. We often act in ways that are familiar and comfortable. It can be difficult to question what we already know, and think is right. Through self-reflection, we allow ourselves to understand our personal reaction (how a professional situation makes us feel) and our professional action (how we choose to respond professionally) as two separate things. Because caring for children and families is so important, and at times very emotional, we need to be aware of how our personal perspectives influence our work. This strategy is aligned with the

relationship-based practice of “reflect on Your Own Perspective.”

- **Think about the perspectives of others:**

Each family in our program is unique. Take the time to wonder about how the experiences of families may influence how they behave or respond in certain circumstances. However, keep in mind that sometimes wondering about others can be similar to making assumptions about them. We tend to rely on what we have learned and experienced in the past. Acknowledge that you may not know what is motivating someone to think or act in a certain way.

When there are opportunities to respectfully communicate about these circumstances with families, it can open us up to a greater understanding of others and of ourselves. Reflecting on the perspectives of families helps us make better sense of where they are coming from. This gives us insights about what strategies might be most effective for engaging them. This strategy is aligned with the relationship-based practice “Reflect on the family’s perspective.”

- **Identify stressors:**

Working with children and families can be highly demanding. Professionals may experience high levels of stress when working with families who face hardships such as poverty, community violence, social spending cuts, and a shortage of jobs and affordable housing. This can lead to increased risk of job dissatisfaction and professional “burnout.”

Programs can create opportunities for staff to get the support they need and help them feel valued for the work they do every day. Leadership can prioritize regular times for individual, paired, or group reflection. Promoting self-care among staff in this way can have a positive effect on their skill and productivity.

Reflective Strategies:

Reflective Supervision

Like the relationship between a professional and a family, the relationship between a staff member and supervisor can offer qualities of mutual care and respect. Reflective supervision is an opportunity for leadership to use the strategies of reflection to foster growth, reinforce strengths, and encourage resilience. In addition to giving staff the encouragement and guidance they need; it also keeps leadership in touch with the real issues that programs face.

Structured supervision ensures that there will be times when staff may not know what to do, but that there is someone—and a time and place—dedicated to helping them express their feelings, problem solve, and strategize. If staff feel judged and constantly evaluated, then everyone misses out on opportunities for reflection, creative discussion, and meaningful growth.

Confidentiality is essential for effective supervision. It's important for supervisors to help staff feel safe enough to take risks within the relationship. An effective strategy for establishing safety is using messages like those we use with our families, such as “You have strengths,” “Let’s talk about what you need to be successful,” and “Take care of yourself.” These messages can build resilience among staff and let them know that they are valued partners in the program.

As the supervisory relationship develops over time, supervisors and staff can share the responsibility for the quality and content of the relationship. You can discuss questions such as: How does the relationship feel? How is the time used? What topics require more attention? Shared responsibility begins with scheduling regular time for supervision. Time spent building teams and brainstorming

about how to develop the work is important to everyone's efforts. That time should be valued, built into schedules, and prioritized.

When we provide supervision, we also have the opportunity to model effective strategies to build relationships with families. It is a parallel process. How we behave with staff models how we want staff to interact with families. The Strengths-based Attitudes and Relationship-based Practices for working with families can also be adapted to build relationships with staff.

Strengths-based Attitudes for Effective Supervision

- Staff deserve the same support and respect we are asking them to give families.
- Staff are our partners with a critical role in achieving outcomes.
- Staff have expertise about their own fields of practice.
- Staff's contributions are valuable and important.

Relationship-based Practices for Effective Supervision

1. **Reflect on your program staff's perspective**

Have an ongoing dialogue with your staff that allows them to have input about the structure, content, process, timing, and tone of supervision. This offers an opportunity for staff to reflect on what type of supervisory relationship they would like to have and how to negotiate goals and needs together. Ask staff to consider with you how you can work together to respond to complex situations.

This can provide staff with an opportunity to consider different viewpoints within a system and reinforce teamwork.

2. Support your program staff's competence

Accentuate the positives among staff members and in the work that they do. Staff need to be reassured about their knowledge and expertise. Strengths-based supervision helps staff feel that they are valuable members of a team. Staff may feel encouraged to reflect on their own professional competencies and goals, recognize their contributions, and feel safe to explore their challenges.

3. Focus on the family-staff relationship

Work with staff to learn new skills for building partnerships with families. Use strategies that help you look at what's working and what's not and how they can use what they discovered to determine next steps with the family.

4. Value your program staff's passion

Listen to what the staff is experiencing without judging. This may include how different situations affect their mood, concentration, motivation, ability to connect with others, and what they need from you. By creating a safe and professional space where staff can talk about their real emotions, you help each other to better understand the roots of problems and strategize about how to address them.

5. Make time for your own reflection

Make time to reflect on your own experiences, goals, and challenges. As a supervisor, you often put your staff's needs before your own. Reflection allows us to consider our reactions, responses, and options. Reflection on a past situation can help us prepare for similar events in the future. This is emotional work, and self-care is essential for you and your staff. You will need to take time for

yourself to rejuvenate, reflect, and focus on your own professional development. Explore what helps you feel refreshed and inspired to learn and grow. What role can your supervisor play in your growth? How can your supervisor give you the best chance at success?

One of the joys of working with families of young children is that it creates an opportunity for everyone's growth: the child, the parent, the provider, team members, and program leadership. Reflective supervision is one way in which programs can attend to the growth of staff. The shared experience of supervisor and staff ensures that no one is alone in doing this very important work. Just as staff feel that their work is meaningful when families grow, supervisors can find satisfaction in knowing that staff are expanding their skills and finding meaning in their work.

In order to become leaders that lead and implement the pedagogical planning in the Early Learning and Child Care setting we need to develop and strength our attitudes toward building goal-oriented relationships.

We strive to develop and build partnerships with the families and the staff at the childcare centers.

Below are some examples of the goals that an ECE leader should have in mind:

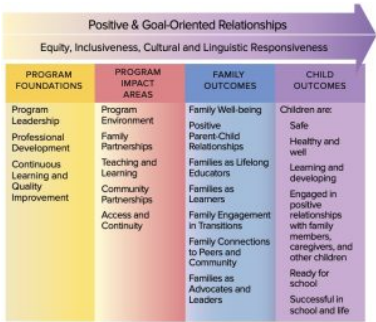
Strengths-based Attitudes for Building Positive Goal-Oriented Relationships:

- Families are the first and most important teachers of their children.
- Families are our partners with a critical role in their family's development.
- Families have expertise about their child and their family.
- Families' contributions are important and valuable.

Relationship-based Practices for Family Engagement

- Observe and describe the child’s behavior.
- Reflect on the family’s perspective.
- Support competence.
- Focus on the family-child relationship.
- Value a family’s passion.
- Reflect on your own perspective.

Here are some areas that an ECE leader should focus on when leading in Childcare and Early Childhood settings:



Activity Time

Using the table below as a sample, reflect on your perspective within a child-family relationship and answer the following questions:

1- Reflect on a time when you used this practice with a family. What did you say or do?

2- Reflect on a time when this practice would have helped you build a relationship with a family. What would you have said or done?

Please, write your reflection on a word document. You can use between 500-700 words to answer each of the 2 questions above.

Reflect on Your Own Perspective	
<p>Description</p> <p>Both the family's perspectives and the staff's perspectives shape the conversation between families and staff. Our own perspectives include many elements—what we have been trained to do, what our program wants from us, our feelings about working with children and families, and, most importantly, the personal beliefs and values gained from our own cultural upbringing. All of these elements, both conscious and unconscious, affect our relationships.</p> <p>It's important to consider our own views when working with families. Although we often are told to just aside our feelings in our work, the reality is that we bring our own beliefs and values into everything we do. Rather than put them aside, we can increase our awareness of them so we are more effective in our relationships with families.</p> <p>This practice encourages us to reflect on our interactions with families, so that we can choose what we say and do to promote positive family and child outcomes. Such decision effects the success of our partnerships and the positive impact we can have.</p>	<p>Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be aware of your own biases, judgments, and negative assumptions. Identify how biases, judgments, and assumptions may affect your interactions with families. Choose to approach families by holding aside biases, judgments, and assumptions. Adopt one of the strength-based attitudes to guide you. Identify common perspectives and work together to understand differences. Ask for help from co-workers and supervisors if you need help doing things differently. Make time to reflect on your perspective and how it is affecting your work and your attitudes toward families. Before sharing your views, ask the family to share their perspectives. Share your own when it can help you both come to a common understanding.
<p>Examples</p> <p>"Benjamin's family says it's our job to teach him better recognition and they don't have time to do extra at home. They want him to read by the time he is four and that's just unrealistic. I want to partner with them and to enjoy they won't work with us. Can you help me think about how to approach that?"</p> <p>"The excited for Julia to learn English and Spanish, her family's home language. Her family is concerned that learning Spanish will affect her English negatively. I'd like to find a way to share my passion for multiple language learning and the positive effects it has on brain development and still honor their concerns."</p> <p>"I'm so frustrated with Rebecca's family. They tell me all the time they are going to follow through on the referrals I give them, and then they always have excuses. It feels like a waste of time to be working with them on this. I don't understand what they want from me."</p> <p>"David had a really hard drop-off again this morning. If his room would just get here earlier and read with him that I suggested, the transition wouldn't be so difficult. She is always running late, and it just makes it harder for him and for us. I don't know what to do."</p>	

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3. Chapter 3: Pedagogical Leadership Theories – How do we situate these theories into our practices?

Learning Objectives

- Influence commitment to the organization's curricular philosophy
- Apply pedagogical leadership theories and practice to your decision-making in order to support a community of practice

Reflections on Leadership

In order to understand and apply the pedagogical theories we need to reflect on the term leadership for a while...

Leadership is a term used often – and often means different things to different people. There are so many approaches to leadership, so it's important to examine our own ideas around and experience of leadership. Before we move too far ahead in this module, spend a bit of time reflecting on what leadership means to

you. Also, consider what goals you have – or would like to set – for developing your own leadership skills.

For Reflection

How would you personally define leadership?

- Have you had an opportunity to lead others? If so, what were some positive aspects of the experience?
- What were some opportunities for growth that you would like to develop in the future?
- Think of someone you know, who you believe to be a good leader. What are some qualities and characteristics that you think makes them a good leader?
- How did interactions with this leader make you feel about yourself and your own skills and abilities?
- Think about someone you know who is or has been in a leadership role but who you believe doesn't have good leadership skills. Why do you feel like they aren't a good leader?
- How did interactions with this leader make you feel about yourself and your own skills and abilities?
- What are some things you have learned from these people that you can apply to your own growth as a leader? What are your own leadership

goals?

- Do you feel that leadership skills have application outside of managing people in a work setting? If so, what are those applications?

Exercises in Developing Your Leadership Skills

“Great Leaders Create More Leaders Good leaders have vision and inspire others to help them turn vision into reality. Great leaders create more leaders, not followers. Great leaders have vision, share vision, and inspire others to create their own.” ~Roy T. Bennett

This next section of the module is here for you to consider and explore your own leadership skill development. Consider some personal goals you might have as you work through this section of the module.

Developing Your Vision: A Personal Goal and Vision Planning Exercise

“You’ve got to think about big things while you’re doing small things so that all the small things go in the right direction.” ~ Alvin Toffler

Discovering Your Purpose

What gets you out of bed in the morning? What excites or moves you? What are your hopes and dreams for the future? What are some ideas that you hold close to your heart?

Feeling fulfilled often starts with asking big, deep questions. Your WHY is the bigger vision for what you want your life to be like, and how you want to feel.

At its best, exploring your why taps into uncovering the vision you have for your life. If you struggle in this process, that's okay. When you keep your why in mind, you will at the very least choose some goals that are a little richer and more aligned with where you feel you want to go.

If the idea of finding your why is new or hard for you, we invite you to explore some bigger thoughts. Think of some foundational experiences in your life that made you who you are. What has motivated you to take this training? What are some things that inspire hope in you? What gives you a little spark of purpose?

You are the hero of your own life

Even though it might not feel like you're a hero, you are! Think of a real-life hero, or even a favourite movie character or comic book character. All heroes have an origin story; most of the time we have some awareness of our hero's origin story – the compelling and often difficult journey that shaped them.

Who did you think of? Why did you pick that person/character as a hero? What about their strengths, or character appeals to you? Do you see some of yourself in them?

Consider your own origin story

- You have been through some hard things. You've had some ah ha moments. Let's tap into that.
- Can you think of a defining moment that made you decide to take this training?
- What are bits of your story that make you, YOU? (They can be good, or difficult experiences.) • What was the hardest thing you had to overcome?
- Who supported you? Who are your allies and mentors? • What are your superpowers (we all have superpowers/strengths)?
- How do you see all of this supporting your WHY?
- Spend some time over these next few weeks thinking about these things, and how all of them are connected to your WHY, or your sense of purpose. **Stay curious!**

Identifying Your Strengths

In general, most people struggle with identifying personal strengths. Outside of a job interview when we are asked to identify our strengths, it can feel braggy, narcissistic or immodest.

But identifying personal strengths is essential to creating the life we want. We all have strengths, whether we see them or not. Discovering what they are and then building on them supports us to grow our character and our resiliency. Strengths aren't static; they can shift and change, especially when we are intentional about developing them.

Owning our personal core strengths supports community and interconnection. When each of us are clear on what strengths we bring to the table, we can work together to be a stronger whole.

In the book *Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and*

Classification (Peterson, Seligman, 2004), the authors identify the following 24 character strengths:

- Integrity
- Enthusiasm
- Social Intelligence
- Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence
- Gratitude
- Optimism
- Humour
- Purpose
- Self-Control
- Prudence
- Humility
- Forgiveness
- Leadership
- Fairness
- Teamwork
- Perspective
- Love of Learning
- Open-mindedness
- Curiosity
- Creativity
- Bravery
- Perseverance

All of us have most of these character strengths, but some will be stronger or more developed in us than others.

- What are some strengths that you feel are missing from this list?
- What would you say are your top 3 strengths?

The Positivity Project website article Character Strengths (n.d.) states:

Character strengths aren't about ignoring the negative. Instead, they help us overcome life's inevitable adversities. For example, you can't be brave without first feeling fear; you can't show perseverance without first wanting to quit; you can't show self-control without first being tempted to do something you know you shouldn't.

Skills Inventory

Strengths are not the same as skills. People often use these terms interchangeably, but they are two different things.

Strengths = who you are.

Skills = what you can do.

Strengths are associated with character (e.g. focused, humorous, open-minded, kind), while skills are associated with our abilities. Some examples of skills include: cooking/culinary, carpentry, car repair and restoration, drawing, accounting, web design, etc.).

We can all build our skillset; we can learn to cook, rock climb, play guitar, or draw, and we can improve on those skillsets through practice. So many people discover new skill sets even later in life. Skill building is one of the key points within self-determination theory.

When goal or vision planning it is useful to be clear on your skills, knowing that you can and will continue to learn. Learning new skills is part of the magic of life. Skills are ever growing, and everyone starts off rough in the journey of learning to do something new. Skill development requires practice, attention, and time.

Food for thought...

- **What are some of your skills?**
- **What are some skills you would like to develop?**

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Cusick, J. (2022). Post-secondary peer support training curriculum. BCcampus. <https://opentextbc.ca/peersupport/>

Apply pedagogical leadership theories and practice to your decision-making in order to support a community of practice

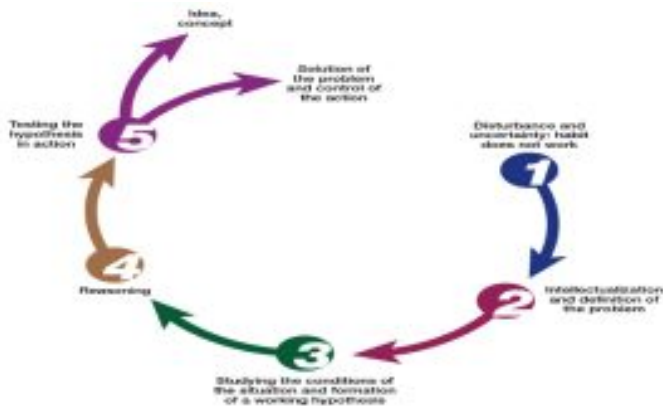
After you have reflected on your leadership and on your own leadership skills and strengths is time to dive deep into the theories that will guide a community of practice at your center.

John Dewey Model

“We do not learn from experience. We learn from reflecting on experience.” – John Dewey (1933)

The fundamental theories and models of reflection and reflective practice were born initially from the work of Dewey and Schön. A

century ago, John Dewey emphasized the importance of involving the learner in reflection. He believed that our experiences shape us, and when reflective practice is part of learning, meaning and relevancy is created, which initiates growth and change (Dewey, 1933).



Schön Model

Schön (1983) based his work on that of Dewey and is most widely known for his theory of reflecting in and reflecting on one's practice. His theory was grounded in reflection from a professional knowledge and learning perspective (Bolton, 2014.p.6). In simple terms this is described as reflecting as the experience is occurring or reflecting on the experience after it has occurred. Reflecting in action refers to situations such as: thinking on your feet, acting straight away, and thinking about what to do next. Reflecting on action means you are thinking about what you would do differently next time, taking time to process (Bolton, 2014.p.6).



Image by Said Nasser Al-Amrani (2021) used under fair dealing for educational purposes.

Sources

Al-Amrani, S. N. (2021). Developing a framework for reviewing and designing courses in higher education: A case study of a post-graduate course at Sohar University. SSRN Electronic Journal.

https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3811202

Bolton, G. (2014). Reflective Practice: Writing and Professional Development (4th ed.). Los Angeles: SAGE.

Schön, D. A. (1983). The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action. New York: Basic Books.

Kolb's Model

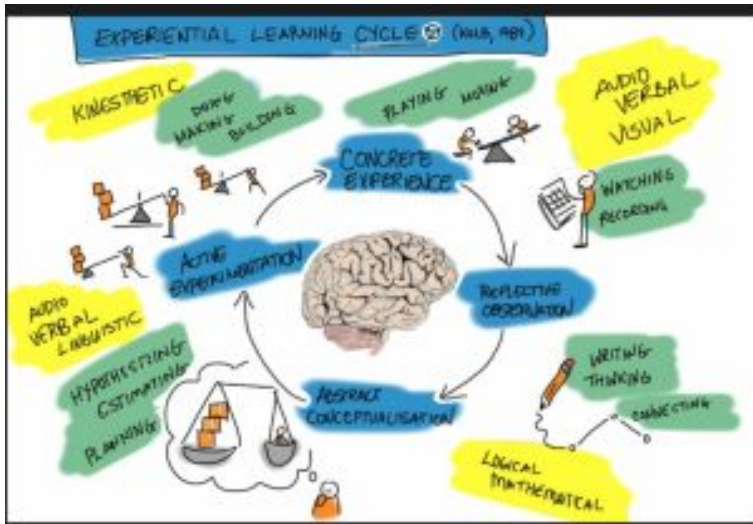
Kolb's model (1984) is based on theories about how people learn, this model centers on the concept of developing understanding through actual experiences and contains four key stages:

1. Concrete experience
2. Reflective observation
3. Abstract conceptualization
4. Active experimentation

The model argues that we start with an experience – either a repeat of something that has happened before or something completely new to us. The next stage involves us reflecting on the experience and noting anything about it which we haven't come across before. We then start to develop new ideas as a result, for example when something unexpected has happened we try to work out why this might be. The final stage involves us applying our new ideas to different situations. This demonstrates learning as a direct result of our experiences and reflections. This model is similar to one used by small children when learning basic concepts such as hot and cold. They may touch something hot, be burned and be more cautious about touching something which could potentially hurt them in the future.

Sources

Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.



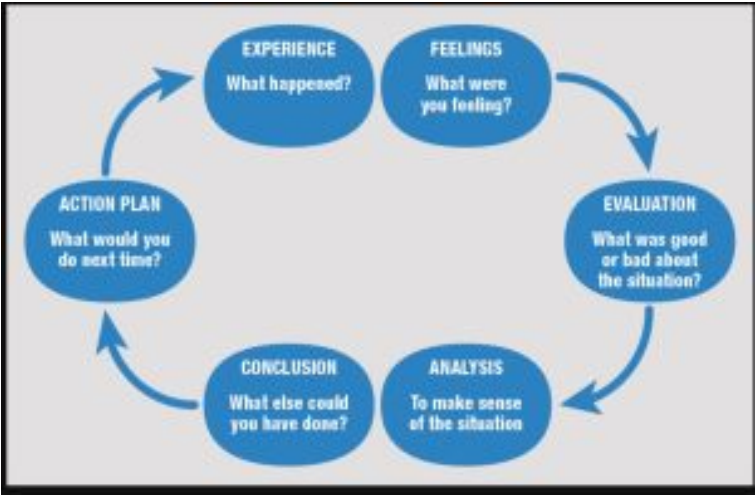
“Kolb’s Experiential Learning CYCLE” by Giulia Forsythe is licensed under CC0 1.0

Gibbs Model

This model builds on the others and adds more stages. It is one of the more complex models of reflection, but it may be that you find having multiple stages of the process to guide you reassuring. Gibb’s cycle (1998) contains six stages:

1. Experience
2. Feelings
3. Evaluation
4. Analysis
5. Conclusion
6. Action plan

As with other models, Gibb's begins with an outline of the experience being reflected on. It then encourages us to focus on our feelings about the experience, both during it and after. The next step involves evaluating the experience – what was good or bad about it from our point of view? We can then use this evaluation to analyze the situation and try to make sense of it. This analysis will result in a conclusion about what other actions (if any) we could have taken to reach a different outcome. The final stage involves building an action plan of steps which we can take the next time we find ourselves in a similar situation.



Learning by Doing: A Guide to Teaching and Learning Methods by
Fanshawe College CC-BY-NC-SA

Sources

Gibbs, G. (1988). Learning by Doing: A Guide to Teaching and Learning Methods. London: Further Education Unit.

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Activity Time

After reviewing the theories and models, consider which one speaks to you. Complete a piece of writing using one theory or model process and explain if it helped or hindered your writing or reflective thinking.

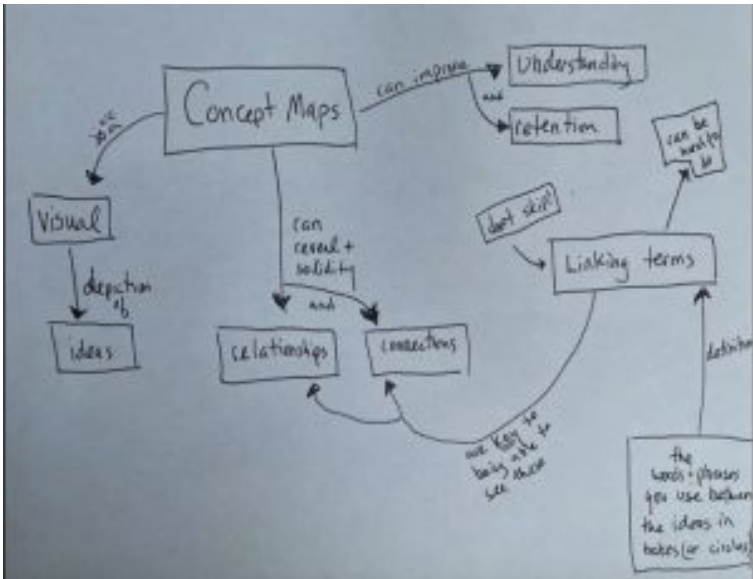
Please, also add a concept map or a mind map to illustrate your thoughts.

Please, write your reflection on a word document. You can use between 500-1000 words.

Samples of a conceptual maps:

Sample # 1:

Chapter 3: Pedagogical Leadership Theories – How do we situate these theories into our practices? | 43



Source: <https://lsc.cornell.edu/how-to-study/concept-maps/>

Sample # 2:



Source: Design chosen with: <https://www.canva.com/design/DAFFAV6VBAI/t1YQNXXkHQsRaFSCtjh6G1A/edit>

4. Chapter 4: Promoting Inclusive Practices in Early Childhood Settings

Learning Objectives

- Promote inclusive practices respecting individuality, diversity, and cultural contexts
- Apply the concepts of reflective practice in one's pedagogical work as a leader
- Receive and integrate feedback on decision-making practices, conflict resolution skills, and teamwork behaviours

LET'S NOT DANCE AROUND IT

In the field of early childhood, issues of prejudice have long been important to research, and in this country, Head Start was developed more than 50 years ago with an eye toward dismantling disparity based on ethnicity or skin color (among other things). However, research shows that this gap has not closed. Particularly striking, in recent years, is research addressing perceptions of the behavior of children of color and the numbers of children who are asked to leave programs.

In fact, studies of expulsion from preschool showed that black children were twice as likely to be expelled as white preschoolers, and 3.6 times as likely to receive one or more suspensions. This is deeply concerning in and of itself, but the fact that preschool expulsion is predictive of later difficulties is even more so:

Starting as young as infancy and toddlerhood, children of color are at highest risk for being expelled from early childhood care and education programs. Early expulsions and suspensions lead to greater gaps in access to resources for young children and thus create increasing gaps in later achievement and well-being... Research indicates that early expulsions and suspensions predict later expulsions and suspensions, academic failure, school dropout, and an increased likelihood of later incarceration.

Why does this happen? It's complicated. Studies on the K-12 system show that some of the reasons include:

- uneven or biased implementation of disciplinary policies
- discriminatory discipline practices
- school racial climate
- under resourced programs
- inadequate education and training for teachers on bias

In other words, educators need more support and help in reflecting on their own practices, but there are also policies and systems in place that contribute to unfair treatment of some groups of children.

It is not possible to simultaneously “respect the dignity, worth, and uniqueness of every individual” and watch a significant number of students from a particular group be expelled from their early learning experience, realizing this may frequently be a first step in a process of punishment by loss of opportunity.

How Will I Ever Learn the Steps?

Woah—how do I respond to something so big and so complex and so sensitive to so many different groups of people?

As someone drawn to early childhood care and education, you probably bring certain gifts and abilities to this work.

- You probably already feel compassion for every child and want every child to have opportunities to grow into happy, responsible adults who achieve their goals. Remember the statement above about respecting the dignity and worth of every individual? That in itself is a huge start to becoming a leader working as an advocate for social justice.
- You may have been to trainings that focus on anti-bias and being culturally responsive.
- You may have some great activities to promote respect for diversity and be actively looking for more.
- You may be very intentional about including materials that reflect people with different racial identities, genders, family structures.
- You may make sure that each family is supported in their home language and that multilingualism is valued in your program.
- You may even have spent some time diving into your own internalized biases.

This list could become very long! These are extremely important aspects of addressing injustice in early education which you can do to alter your individual practice with children.

As a leader in the field, you are called to think beyond your own practice. As a leader you have the opportunity—the responsibility!—to look beyond your own practices and become an advocate for change. Two important recommendations (of many) from the NAEYC Advancing Equity in Early Childhood Education Position Statement, another important tool:

Speak out against unfair policies or practices and challenge

biased perspectives. Work to embed fair and equitable approaches in all aspects of early childhood program delivery, including standards, assessments, curriculum, and personnel practices.

Look for ways to work collectively with others who are committed to equity. Consider it a professional responsibility to help challenge and change policies, laws, systems, and institutional practices that keep social inequities in place.

One take away I want you to grab from those last sentences: **You are not alone.** This work can be, and must be, collective.

As a leader, your sphere of influence is bigger than just you. You can influence the practices of others in your program and outside of it. You can influence policies, rules, choices about the tools you use, and ultimately, you can even challenge laws that are not fair to every child.

Who's on your team? I want you to think for a moment about the people who help you in times where you are facing change. These are the people you can turn to for an honest conversation, where you can show your confusion and fear, and they will be supportive and think alongside you. This might include your friends, your partner, some or all of your coworkers, a former teacher of your own, a counselor, a pastor. Make a quick list of people you can turn to when you need to do some deep digging and ground yourself in your values.

And now, your workplace team: who are your fellow advocates in your workplace? Who can you reach out to when you realize something might need to change within your program?

Wonderful. You've got other people to lean on in times of change. More can be accomplished together than alone. Let's consider what you can do:

What is your sphere of influence? What are some small ways you can create room for growth within your sphere of influence? What about that workplace team? Do their spheres of influence add to your own?

Try drawing your sphere of influence: Draw yourself in the middle of the page, and put another circle around yourself, another circle around that, and another around that. Fill your circles in:

- Consider the first circle your personal sphere. Brainstorm family and friends who you can talk to about issues that are part of your professional life. You can put down their names, draw them, or otherwise indicate who they might be!
- Next, those you influence in your daily work, such as the children in your care, their families, maybe your co-workers land here.
- Next, those who make decisions about the system you are in—maybe this is your director or board.
- Next, think about the early childhood care and education community you work within. What kind of influence could you have on this community? Do you have friends who work at other programs you can have important conversations with to spread ideas? Are you part of the AECEA – The **Association of Early Childhood Educators of Alberta**? Could you speak to the organizers of a local conference about including certain topics for sessions?

for sessions?

- And finally, how about provincial (and even national) policies? Check out laws and bills that impact childcare. Do you know your local representatives? Could you write a letter to your MP? Maybe you have been frustrated with the slow reimbursement and low rates for Employment Related Day Care subsidies and can find a place to share your story. It's probably a lot farther than you think!

BREAK IT DOWN: SYSTEMIC RACISM

When you think about injustice and the kind of change you want to make, there's an important distinction to understand in the ways injustice happens in education (or anywhere else). First, there's

personal bias and racism, and of course it's crucial as an educator to examine ourselves and our practices and responses. We all have bias and addressing it is an act of courage that you can model for your colleagues.

In addition, there's another kind of bias and racism, and it doesn't live inside of individual people, but inside of the systems we have built. Systemic racism exists in the structures and processes that have come into place over time, which allow one group of people a greater chance of succeeding than other specific groups of people.

Systemic racism is also called institutional racism because it exists – sometimes unquestioned – within institutions themselves.

In early childhood care and education, there are many elements that were built with middle class white children in mind. Many of our standardized tests were made with middle class white children in mind. The curriculum we use, the assessments we use, the standards of behavior we have been taught; they may have all been developed with middle class white children in mind.

Therefore, it is important to consider whether they adequately and fairly work for all of the children in your program community. Do they have relevance to all children's lived experience, development, and abilities? Who is being left out?

Imagine a vocabulary assessment in which children are shown common household items including a lawn mower...common if you live in a house; they might well be unfamiliar to a three-year-old who lives in an apartment building, however. The child may end up receiving a lower score, though their vocabulary could be rich, full of words that do reflect the objects in their lived experience.

The test is at fault, not the child's experience. Yet the results of that test can impact the way educators, parents, and the child see their ability and likelihood to succeed.

Leaders in early childhood care and education have an ethical obligation to value every child's unique experiences, family, and community. In order to make sure your program values every child, you must make choices that ensure that each child, especially those

who are part of groups that have not had as many resources, receive what they need in order to reach outcomes.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO INVENT THE STEPS: USING AN EQUITY LENS

There's a wonderful graphic of children looking over a fence at a baseball game. In one frame, each child stands at the fence; one is tall enough to see over the top; another stands tiptoe, straining to see; and another is simply too short. This is equality—everyone has the same chance, but not everyone is equally prepared. In the frame titled equity, each child stands on a stool just high enough so that they may all see over the fence. The stools are the supports they need to have an equitable outcome—being able to experience the same thing as their friend.

Seeking equity means considering who might not be able to see over the fence and figuring out how to build them a stool so that they have the same opportunity.

An equity lens, then, is a tool to help you look at decisions through a framework of equity. It's a series of questions to ask yourself when making decisions. An equity lens is a process of asking a series of questions to better help you understand if something (a project, a curriculum, a parent meeting, a set of behavioural guidelines) is unfair to specific individuals or groups whose needs have been overlooked in the past. This lens might help you to identify the impact of your decisions on students of color, and you can also use the lens to consider the impact on students experiencing poverty, students in nontraditional families, students with differing abilities, students who are geographically isolated, students whose home language is other than English, etc.) The lens then helps you determine how to move past this unfairness by overcoming barriers and providing equitable opportunities to all children.

Some states have adopted a version of the equity lens for use in their early learning systems.

Questions that are part of an equity lens might include:

- What decision is being made, and what kind of values or assumptions are affecting how we make the decision?
- Who is helping make the decision? Are there representatives of the affected group who get to have a voice in the process?
- Does the new activity, rule, etc. have the potential to make disparities worse? For instance, could it mean that families who don't have a car miss out on a family night? Or will it make those disparities better?
- Who might be left out? How can we make sure they are included?
- Are there any potential unforeseen consequences of the decision that will impact specific groups? How can we try to make sure the impact will be positive?

You can use this lens for all kinds of decisions, in formal settings, like staff meetings, and you can also work to make them part of your everyday thinking. I have a sticky note on my desk that asks, “Who am I leaving out”? This is an especially important question if the answer points to children who people of color are, or another group that is historically disadvantaged. If that's the answer, you don't have to scrap your idea entirely. Celebrate your awareness, and brainstorm about how you can do better for everyone—and then do it!

Racism and other forms of injustice can be built into the systems we work within—even if each individual is working hard not to recognize and root out their individual biases. As a leader, you can do work that will impact the system and undo these unjust practices or structures!

Embracing our Bruised Knees: Accepting Discomfort as We Grow

Inspirational author Brene Brown, who writes books, among other things, about being an ethical leader, said something that really walloped me: if we avoid the hard work of addressing unfairness (like talking about skin color at a time when our country is divided over it) we are prioritizing our discomfort over the pain of others.

Imagine a parent who doesn't think it's appropriate to talk about skin color with young children, who tells you so with some anger in their voice. That's uncomfortable, maybe even a little scary. But as you prioritize upholding the dignity, worth, and uniqueness of every individual, you can see that this is more important than trying to avoid discomfort. Changing your practice to avoid conflict with this parent means prioritizing your own momentary discomfort over the pain children of color in your program may experience over time.

We might feel vulnerable when we think about skin color, and we don't want to have to have the difficult conversation. But if keeping ourselves safe from discomfort means that we might not be keeping children safe from very real and life-impacting racial disparity, we're not making a choice that is based in our values.



Can you think of a time that you prioritized your comfort over someone else's pain? I can! I've avoided uncomfortable conversations about disparity lots of times, for instance (though I also try really hard to be courageous and open when faced with these moments, and think I am doing better). Once you've thought of your example, take yourself back to the moment when you were deciding what to do, and say to yourself: I will not prioritize my own discomfort over the pain of others! Now grant yourself a do-over. Imagine what you would have done instead. How does it feel? Is the discomfort manageable? Does it go away? What other feelings do you experience?

Change is uncomfortable. It leaves us feeling vulnerable as we reexamine the ideas, strategies, even the deeply held beliefs that have served us so far. But as a leader, and with the call to support every child as they deserve, we can develop a sort of superpower vision, where we can look unflinchingly around us and understand the hidden impacts of the structures we work within.

Even our big ideas, the really important ones that underlie our

philosophies, can't be assumed to be a universal truth, because they are affected by our beliefs and values. As leaders, we are called upon to be extra courageous and extra thoughtful in examining these beliefs and making sure they are a firm ground for every unique child to stand on.

You, Dancing With Courage

So... As a leader in early childhood, you will be called upon to be nimble, to make new decisions and reframe your practice when current events or new understanding disrupt your plans. When this happens, professional tools are available to you to help you make choices based on your ethical commitment to children.

Change makes us feel uncomfortable, but we can embrace it to do the best by the children and families we work with. We can learn to develop our critical thinking skills so that we can examine our own beliefs and assumptions, both as individuals and as a leader.

Remember that person dancing on the shifting carpet? That child in the middle of the parachute? They might be a little dizzy, but with possibility. They might lose their footing, but in that uncertainty, in the middle of the billowing parachute, there is the sensation that the very instability provides the possibility of rising up like the fabric. And besides—there are hands to hold if they lose their balance—or if you do! And so can you rise when you allow yourself to accept change and adapt to all the new possibility of growth that it opens up!

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Activity Time

So, make yourself a plan. Look back at this chapter and write a few sentences, or more if you are inspired, on what you can do to move yourself forward, as a resourced member of a team and a powerful advocate for children!

When you are done, take a step, then another, and another. And then, yes, you are walking the walk, dancing the dance (or maybe not The Dance, but some other, new, even more inspiring dance!)

You are courageously living your beliefs, and your actions are rooted in respect of the dignity, worth, and uniqueness of each individual your professional life touches!

You can add photographs, drawings, or any other illustration to represent your plan. Share your plan with a colleague, director, or any other person you trust to provide you with feedback on your plan and ideas. Add

their comments/feedback to your paper. Make sure if have a section separated for the peer's feedback.

You can choose how to present this project. It can be done on Canvas, PPT, Word Doc., video, etc. You can be creative when developing this assignment. Remember, it is your own plan, so it will be unique to you, to your setting and reality!

I am looking forward to looking at your projects! Have fun ?

5. Chapter 5: Putting It All Together – Your work as a Leader in Early Childhood Education

Learning Objectives

- Lead and implement the pedagogical planning within an Early Learning and Child Care setting
- Collect and use data to evaluate the effectiveness of the chosen learning programs
- Promote inclusive practices respecting individuality, diversity, and cultural contexts
- Apply the concepts of reflective practice in one's pedagogical work as a leader

Reflective Practice & Professional Development

Reflective practice and professional development go hand in hand! Reflective practices are when you think back on how a particular project, action, task, or day went and you identify what went well

and what you might want to do differently in the future. Reflective actions can include:

- Taking time each day to reflect on something that worked really well or not so well.
- Sharing your experiences with others in the field.
- Keeping a journal or log of best practices in your classroom as well as challenges.
- Determining what you could have done differently.
- Seeking out a mentor or coach to help you sort through your reflections and identify areas for continued growth.



Reflect on something that is going well for you right now. What evidence supports your thought that it is going well? How is this having a positive impact? What steps can you take to act with intention to continue success?

Responsibility for Learning

No matter how long you have worked in ECE or what your role may be in the classroom or program, as a professional you have a responsibility to ensure that you have the education needed to

perform your job in the best way possible. This means participating in professional development that prepares you for the position you are or will be in. Engaging in ongoing professional development continues your education about topics relevant to your work with children and families.

Ongoing Professional Development

- Ensures you stay current with the latest research.
- Provides you with opportunities to create awareness about what you don't know.
- Assists you in achieving your career goals.
- Engages you with others in the field.
- Provides you with opportunities to learn and explore diverse topics, perspectives, and contexts.

Professional Development of Others

Your leadership role may involve supporting the professional development of someone else. From creating individual professional development plans to providing professional development for groups, there are different methods for supporting others' ongoing professional development.

The following are the most common forms of professional development:

Training is a learning experience specific to a topic and related set of skills or dispositions, delivered by a subject matter expert with adult learning knowledge and skills.

Technical Assistance (TA) is the targeted and customized support by a subject matter expert to develop or strengthen processes,

knowledge application, or implementation of services by professionals.

Mentoring is a relationship-based process between people in similar professional roles, the mentor, provides guidance and example to the less-experienced mentee. Mentoring is intended to increase an individual's professional capacity, resulting in greater effectiveness.

Coaching is a relationship-based process led by an expert with specialized and adult learning knowledge and skills. Coaching is designed to build capacity for specific professional skills and is focused on goal setting and achievement for an individual or group.

Professional Development Advising) is a process through which an advisor offers information, guidance, and advice about professional growth, career options, and pathways.

Peer-to-Peer TA fosters the development of relationship-based learning and support communities among individuals, often in like roles. Peers have developed tools and strategies that can be shared with their colleagues.

Job-Embedded Professional Development (JEPD) refers to educator learning that is grounded in day-to-day teaching practice and is designed to enhance teachers' content-specific instructional practices with the intent of improving student learning.

Reflective Supervision is the regular collaboration between staff member and supervisor where the thoughts, feelings and experiences of the staff member are the focus of improving skills and competencies.

As a leader, you will need to evaluate these factors to determine the best method for delivering learning for individual staff members as well as the team as a whole. While ongoing professional development hours are often a requirement for licensure or quality standards, they are not the only method for increasing knowledge and competency of staff.

Remember, the best methods for ensuring staff increase their skills/competencies through professional development is to work collaboratively for a mix of modalities that allow for knowledge

transfer, practice, feedback, and behavior change. Learning needs to be supported on a regular basis and should become a regular part of your organization's culture. As a professional, it is up to you to continue your professional growth and development as you move through the stages of your career. Learning can be an ongoing journey full of joy and discovery that invigorates and increases the quality of your daily practice.

In conclusion, you can see there is a wide range of professional development delivery methods. Each method provides the learner with specific supports and opportunities based on a number of factors including career stage of the learner, career stage of the leader, resources, context, and type of desired outcome.

Motivation and Teamwork

Have you ever wondered how to convince someone to assist you with a project? Wondered how to work better with a coworker? Or considered ways you could create better relationships with your team members?

As a leader you will have many opportunities to support others in their work as well as contribute to your team as an equal or a manager. To do this well you will need to understand the foundations of motivation and what you can and cannot influence or change. This concept is key! Most leaders think that they can motivate others through gifts and rewards. Much like the “treasure box” for motivating children's behavior these strategies only work for short periods of time and teach us to only care about the actions that will get rewarded and remember—everyone values different types of rewards.



What types of “rewards” have you received in your work life? What worked for you? What didn’t? How did your co-workers respond to the rewards? Make a list.

Let’s start with a bit of theory about what people need to feel safe and effective in doing their job. Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs theory is that individuals cannot achieve their full potential until their basic and psychological needs are met. For example, it is very difficult to have a meaningful relationship if you don’t feel safe or have no place to rest.

Maslow’s Theory can also be applied to staff and team members. Consider this Hierarchy of Needs:



Self-Actualization – achieving your full potential working with children and families. Mentoring, coaching and/or leading others.

Esteem – Feeling like you are positively contributing to the development of each child and/or family you work with. Being recognized by your peers for your contributions.

Belongingness – Creating and maintaining strong bonds with co-workers, contributing to a team, feeling supported and trusted.

Safety – Feeling secure in your job, understanding safety requirements and how to seek assistance if needed, feeling safe and free from harassment or bullying.

Physiological – Getting breaks as needed and according to employment laws, having the resources needed to perform at your best, having basic employment practices in place to protect you.



Think about your current or most recent job. Where would you rank yourself on the hierarchy of needs? What examples come to mind? Now reflect on your staff/team members. Where would you rank them on the hierarchy of needs? Why? Ok, we've got you thinking about the levels of job satisfaction and what kinds of rewards work and don't work. Let's take a quick look at what actually motivates people.

Here are some basic principles of motivation:

1. We all have needs that aren't met, and it is these unmet needs that motivate us.
2. We will strive to fulfill our needs by acting in ways that we believe will lead to the outcome we want.
3. A person's greatest ability to have an effect on another's motivation is at the levels of security, the sense of belonging and self-esteem.
4. The ways in which we express or try to fulfill our needs can vary widely based on our cultural perspective.

Remember – most of the time employers don't intentionally set out to create a negative culture for their employees. If your reflection leads to a result that feels negative—think about why and write down your thoughts.

LET'S UNPACK THESE!

An unsatisfied need doesn't have to be something negative! You could be a team member who is looking to grow into a new position or someone who feels disconnected and wants to improve your peer relationships. Whatever the unsatisfied need, it is important to identify what it is so you can get/offer the support needed.

Most of us will go to great lengths to ensure our unmet need is met. Sometimes that can mean frustrated or angry behaviours. Unfortunately, if we only respond to the team member who gets upset all the time, then that is how some team members will behave. Remember adults are far more skilled at behaviours than children and often don't hesitate to use the behavior that works, regardless of its impact on those around them. Not because they are bad people, but because it is very difficult to understand our own unmet needs and admit them.

As a leader your greatest impact is at those hierarchy of needs levels of psychological, safety, and belonging. You can support others through coaching or mentoring. You can make sure that processes are in place and that they are aware of them. You can ensure that others feel welcome and appreciated. Remember though, everyone has different values and beliefs and what works for one team member may not work for another!



How do you think culture, values, and belief system influence what we need? Or how do you think our personal biases play a role in how we view what we think or need? For example, if you have one team member who speaks to you regularly about what they need and why and you have another team member whose values and belief system includes not challenging an authority figure how can you make sure to meet both their needs?

It is important to recognize and understand the influence that values and beliefs have on motivation. So, what are the differences between values and beliefs?

- Values help define and prioritize what is important.
- Values are established typically by adolescence.
- Values are unlikely to be changed from outside influence.

What does this mean for leaders? It means your values and another team member's values are not likely to change. It also means that

you will most likely have shared values that you and others can build a collective understanding on. For example, you probably all value the positive development of children. You may all value supporting families, continuing your education, and quality learning environments. The difference is that some of you will value one of those over another...and that is ok! The point is that you will not likely be able to change someone's values through influence as a leader.

Beliefs, on the other hand, can and do change as we grow and experience new things. We emerge from our teenage years with a set of beliefs about the world and who we are in it. As we age and grow these beliefs will change as we take in and understand new information and experiences. Beliefs can also be influenced by others such as trusted family or friends, community members, co-workers, or cultural leaders. Think about when you were younger and what you believed vs. what you believe today.

As a leader, you can influence the beliefs of others. Let's take the case of a new team member joining your team. This new team member believes that the best way to teach a child how to get to sleep during nap time is to let them "figure it out-or cry it out". As a leader in ECE, you know that children need to be guided and some children need support from trusting adults to go to sleep. You can support the new team member's change in beliefs by educating them on developmentally appropriate practice, modelling, and coaching.



How have your beliefs about working with children and families grown or changed? What has led you to a different understanding? Education? Experience? A good leader?

People are successfully or unsuccessfully rewarded through a variety of strategies in the workplace. Everyone has unmet needs that can be complicated and even unclear to us. The motivator that works most effectively and leads to further growth is the ability to assist others to feel secure, esteemed, and that they belong. The tricky piece is in sorting out what we and others value and believe in order to correctly identify unmet needs and address them. As we will now explore, effective leaders have a clear understanding of what is within their scope of control and what they cannot control when it comes to motivating other people.

MOTIVATION AND LEADERSHIP

There are a few things to consider when you look at motivation and leadership. It is not just the leader's responsibility to motivate others. Remember, motivation comes from within and is different for each team member. Leaders CAN influence the working

environment, resources that are available, and how others spend their time. Effective leaders focus on the factors that are within their control and work to reduce negative influences on the team's motivation.

Example: As a lead teacher in a classroom, you are responsible for your assistant teacher and their success. You can support their success by providing them with feedback about how they are doing or saying thank you for their hard work. You can also support their success by stepping in when they are struggling with a child's behavior and modelling how to handle the situation. This shows them not only that you care about their success but that you are willing to provide support when needed. This has a positive impact on their motivation to want to learn and grow in their position.

You have an ethical responsibility to treat all team members in a fair manner that meets team needs as well as supporting individuals. This can be one of the most difficult parts of being a leader, balancing the needs of the many against the needs of 1 or 2.

Some things to remember are:

- Sometimes there is not a clear answer to a problem.
- Sometimes the choices that you have for supporting others can be in direct conflict with each other.
- Sometimes you know what you should do but are reluctant to do it.
- There is a fine line between motivating someone and manipulating them. Manipulation is not an ethical action for any leader.

You also need to consider that culture plays an important role in motivation. Many cultures have a collectivist view where the team members and leader are responsible to each other, and the power

is in the connectedness of the team. American culture values independence and the rights of each team member. These differences in values can create opportunities for growth and reflection for all team members as well as potential conflict.

- Independent team members may value rewards, kudos, and recognition.
- Collectivist team members may value positive outcomes, long term goals, and team recognition.

MOTIVATION STRATEGIES

There are many strategies you can use to motivate your team members! Let's look at some for each level.

Self- Actualization (doing work that uses your talents) – Providing opportunities to coach others, opportunities to lead team meetings or work on special projects.

Esteem – Recognizing staff for their contributions in a sincere way that highlights their impact on children and families. Providing opportunities for staff to be “experts” on topics and sending other staff to them for advice.

Belongingness – Creating and maintaining team agreements, providing opportunities for teams to meet and celebrate their differences and contributions, holding team members accountable.

Safety – Creating policies and processes that ensure a safe and harassment-free work environment. Having reporting policies and processes in place to support staff when needed. Providing training and resources.

Physiological – Providing predictable schedules, keeping teachers in the same class, establishing routines and rhythms for

the program. Just like children, we need to have routines and predictability so we are comfortable to learn and grow.

TEAMWORK

Great teams start with great leaders—and that is not always the person that is in charge. Effective teams rely on both a leader and the rest of the team to work together to achieve their goals. Early Childhood Education has many opportunities for working in teams: from classroom teams to functional teams (everyone doing the same job such as home visitors), to program teams. In fact, you will most likely work in at least three different teams as a staff member in ECE. That is a lot of teamwork!

Why should you care about teamwork? Because good teams make high quality decisions, manage complexity, and get things done! They are highly motivating and build bonds that can weather the storms of working with children and families.

Let's start with the basics. **A team is...**

- A group of individuals who have a common goal.
- Constructed, created.
- Something substantial.
- Takes time to develop and goes through stages.



What different types of teams have you been a part of? Were they positive or negative experiences? Why?

Every team has **5 essential elements**:

1. Common Goals
2. Shared Consequences
3. Trust and Respect Amongst Team Members
4. Clear Roles
5. Effective Leadership

Now let's break each of these down!

Common goals are important for every team. An effective leader clarifies and states the goals and keeps those goals in front of everyone, so the team knows what it is working towards. These goals can be set with the team or sometimes they are set for the team. In both cases, it is important for each team member to understand the goal so they can do the work needed to meet that goal.

Shared consequences provide each team member with an understanding of how their work impacts the shared goal. Consequences can be positive—everyone is recognized for their efforts when the goal is met. OR Consequences can be negative—a non-performing team member is asked to leave the team or goals are not met. Regardless if they are positive or negative

consequences, each team member needs to feel that the consequences are shared equally with all team members.

Trust and respect are crucial for well-functioning teams. Team members need to be able to trust that they can express their views and opinions and that their fellow team members will respect them. They need to feel confident that discussing differing views and opinions is part of the process of working towards goals and that they can make mistakes and learn from those mistakes. They need to trust the leader is there to support and guide them.

Clear roles and responsibilities are also important. Great team leaders carefully consider what each team member can do to support the goals and then the leader effectively communicates what the role and responsibilities are. This can also be an opportunity for team members to weigh in and build a collective understanding of each role on the team.

Finally, **effective team leadership** is all of these things and more! As a team leader, you set the vision for the work and provide the tools and resources needed to perform the work. You are there to provide support and guidance when things go wrong.



Recall an instance that you were on a team that was unsuccessful or that struggled.? Why do you think that is?

There are 4 stages that teams go through, and these can have many different labels.

We are going to refer to these stages as...

- Testing the Waters
- Team Control
- Getting Organized
- The Effective Team

Testing the waters includes understanding the vision, goals, and structure of the team. People understand their roles and responsibilities and learn how the team works. On the surface things seem to be going well. But the team has not hit any major obstacles yet.

Team control is when the official and unofficial leaders are recognized. Teams may have someone who convenes them and dictates the work they are to do. They will also, most likely, have a team member who leads the task or day to day actions needed. Other unofficial leaders may be someone with specific skills set, expertise, or point of view.

Getting organized. For this stage, the questions a team must answer—and many of the things we have already learned about in this module—come into practice. Teams decide on things such as communication, timelines, responsibilities, and consequences. Team members feel they know each other well and can navigate this stage fairly easily in most cases.

The Effective Team is the team that seems to magically get things done. They understand their roles and how they contribute and seek feedback from each other. They trust and respect the other team members and there is a sense of support and understanding.



Have you experienced any or all of these team stages? How did that go for you? Is there one stage you think is more important than the others? Why?

What Leaders Can Do in Each Stage:

1. **Testing the waters:** leaders can support team members by casting the vision and working collaboratively to establish the goals, roles, and responsibilities. Leaders can conduct get-to-know-you activities so team members learn about each other's preferences, strengths, and contributions. This is a great opportunity to model the behaviours you wish to see in your team members!
2. **Team control:** establish who is leading what as well as who team members can go to for advice and supports if the team leader is not available. If you are mentoring another as they explore an opportunity to learn leadership skills, you will want to monitor things closely and provide support as needed.
3. **Getting organized:** provide guidance and a framework of expectations for communication and "how" the work will get accomplished. While most team members will contribute their ideas at this stage, it is the job of the leader to make sure the

strategies align with the vision and goals and that the work will be accomplished.

4. **Effective team:** it can be tempting for leaders to move on to other tasks or fires that need to be put out. It can be hazardous to ignore a well-functioning team because they can begin to feel under-appreciated. Or worse, there could be some issue that comes up and if not handled quickly turns into one of those fires that needs to be put out! Effective teams need to be continually cultivated and nurtured.

A **key to remember** is that teams can **cycle through these stages numerous times** as new team members are added or new projects are started.

A Note About Team Building

While there are many different resources available to give you team-building ideas and exercises, it is important to note that team-building activities are most effective when they align with the culture of the organization and are supported afterwards with meaningful interactions in the workplace. Weekend retreats with games and activities can be fun but they alone do not create dynamic and amazing teams. Creating moments and activities that connect to the philosophy and values of the organization build teams that understand and are connected to the important work of supporting children and families. Team building should always be thoughtful and intentional and provide team members with opportunities to get to know their fellow team members in a meaningful way.

Examples:

1. A curriculum planning meeting where each team member shares what their hobbies and interests are and brainstorms ideas for curriculum activities.
2. A team meeting where baby pictures are posted, and team members get to guess who is who. This can then carry over to a discussion about favourite childhood memories and how our values were shaped as we grow up.
3. Problem solving team meeting where team members share a challenge, or an issue and the group members collectively work together to offer solutions and support. The team members then follow up to offer support if needed.

As you can see from these examples, being a good team member and having an effective team is more than just a weekend retreat. It is about caring and nurturing relationships and meaningful opportunities to connect and learn more about each other. When we feel that our team is invested in our success we become more invested in our team. This creates interconnectedness and belonging which are powerful motivators that can support and sustain a team through issues, challenges, and successes.

CITATION:

McLeod. (2020). Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Simply Psychology.
<https://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html>

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Activity Time

During this final week you will try to answer a couple of essential questions with your team. You will be a researcher in your center... You will ask your peers and observe situations within your center in order to respond the 5 questions below:

- 1- How do we work through our problems? Do we bring them to the team leader? Do we try to solve them first on our own? Do we talk about them in team meetings?
- 2- What do we need from each other as team members to be successful? Do we need opportunities to practice our skills? Time to learn and grow? Do we want feedback and if so, how often and what does feedback look like to each person?
- 3- How do we handle it when a team member is not fulfilling their responsibilities? Do we bring it to our team leader? Do we offer advice and help?
- 4- How do we communicate? Do we keep a program logbook for notes? Do we send emails and texts? Do we schedule regular meetings?
- 5- Are we taking opportunities to engage in continuous professional development?

The answers to these questions can be different for many reasons—including an individual's culture and values.

Remember, we can't change a person's values, but we can influence their behaviours. It is important to set an expectation of inclusiveness and the value of diverse views can have on positive outcomes. If everyone is in agreement all of the time you may miss out on important pieces that could make the team's goals even better!

Please, write a paper 2-4-page document with your findings, please, do not write any names or attribute the responses to any individual in particular. Your peers' answers should be embedded in your paper in an anonymized fashion. APA guidelines are required to complete this assignment.

Conclusion

As an early childhood care and education professional, you are in a unique and powerful position in influencing the lives of children and families. The work you do each day supports children in becoming healthy and happy adults. The way you speak to and speak about children can change the way families understand and support their children.

You are also in a unique and powerful position in understanding the issues that affect many families and children. You see the day-to-day struggles that families face, the barriers that keep children from succeeding to their full potential, and the missteps of policy creation that hold families back. You are an expert on these issues.

Embracing your role as both a “little a” advocate and a “Big A” advocate is an important part of the work you do with children and families. Hopefully, this module has provided you with tools, support, and motivation to continue and expand on this work. You do not have to do this alone. Partner with other ECE professionals in your program or center, connect with associations that support children and families, and find ways in which you can listen to the perspectives of the children and families in your care and invite them to get involved.

Most importantly, remember that your thoughts, experiences, and ideas are valuable, and your voice needs to be heard.

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Final Considerations

My Dear Students,

I hope that you found this book and its activities useful for your learning and growth as an ECE leader. My aspiration is that this book will serve as a companion for our ECEL 3008 – Pedagogical Leadership Course.

There are a lot more out there for you to explore in terms of leadership in ECEs settings. This compilation, which I have put together, is just an introduction to this wonderful world of possibilities when leading early childhood educators.

Compiling an Open Educational Resource (OER) has so many benefits, you as a student, get to enjoy a Zero Textbook Cost (ZTC) while myself, as an instructor get the opportunity to experience the joys of creating a book!

I truly hope that you enjoyed my first textbook! I learned a lot through the work of some amazing educators in the ECE field.

Wishing you well in your pedagogical leadership journey!

Claudia Sasse

“I did then what I knew how to do. Now that I know better, I do better.”

(Maya Angelou)