

## A Synopsis

# Optimum Learning for All Students: Implementing Alberta's Professional Practice Standards Research Study

The intent of a CASS Learning Guide is to apply research, deepen understanding and enhance professional practice within the Alberta context. With a focus on optimum learning for all students, a Learning Guide provides an opportunity to grow system leader knowledge, resulting in quality school leadership and quality teaching throughout Alberta.

## Summary

On February, 2018, a [Ministerial Order established three professional practice standards](#), *Superintendent Leadership Quality Standard*, (SLQS), *Leadership Quality Standard* (LQS) and *Teacher Quality Standard* (TQS). The creation of the three standards created a unified framework representing practice for teachers, principals, and superintendents. These standards emphasize that professional practice should be informed by contextual understanding and the application of knowledge and skills, aiming for optimal learning outcomes for all students.

In 2019, Alberta Education initiated a comprehensive four-year research study employing a combination of methods to assess, deepen, and expand the implementation process of three professional practice standards: TQS, LQS, and the SLQS.

A research team comprised of representatives from four universities annually shared the study's findings with Alberta Education, participants, and stakeholders. The [final report](#) was released in June 2023.



The final report identified conclusions, merged findings and recommendations, and provides an understanding of the first four years of implementation of the Professional Practice Standards in Alberta. This learning guide contains selected *merged findings*, and *recommendations* pertinent to school authorities. Selected conclusion statements from the final report are in bold and include the reports merged findings and recommendations for school authorities, verbatim from

the final report. Page numbers are provided to direct readers to the direct quotes.

### Conclusions

#### **Enabling Successful Implementation of the Professional Practice Standards**

*Merged Finding #4:* The implementation of the standards is influenced by a culture of learning, growth expectations, and visionary leadership. These factors contribute to the advancement of implementation and the establishment of a common vocabulary that fosters collaborative professional dialogue and a culture of shared understandings.

*Merged Finding #5:* The professional practice standards play a multifaceted role, serving as a framework for professional learning initiatives, supporting administrative policies and procedures, and forming the basis for hiring, supervision, and evaluation.

*Recommendation #5:* For school authorities: Facilitate cross-disciplinary collaboration among educators to foster a deeper understanding of the correlations between competencies within TQS, LQS, and SLQS enabling them to integrate and reinforce these competencies in their teaching and leadership practices. (pp. 5-6)

*Merged Finding #7:* The steadfast commitment to student learning and unifying vision provided by the professional practice standards are crucial for advancing implementation; however, system leaders in non-superintendent roles experienced difficulty locating their various aspects of practice in the *Leadership Quality Standard*.

### Acknowledgements

This guide was developed by CASS, drawing on content represented in the post-secondary research reports, and verified by Dr. Sharon Friesen, Principal Investigator, Werklund School of Education, University of Calgary.

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*Recommendation #7:* Foster a culture of resilience and adaptability among teachers and leaders, emphasizing the importance of embracing challenges as opportunities for growth and continuous improvement in the implementation process.

*Recommendation #8:* Maintain and reinforce the steadfast commitment to student learning and the unifying vision provided by the professional practice standards to sustain progress in the implementation process. (pp.6-7)

### **Cultivating a Culture of Continuous Professional Learning and Improvement**

*Merged Finding #8:* Establishing and maintaining a culture of learning requires the collective and intentional focus on professional learning and growth that explicitly integrates the professional practice standards, consistently revisits the expectations for continuous improvement, and ensures alignment between practice and standards.

*Recommendation #9:* For school authorities and professional learning providers: Foster a collective and intentional focus on professional learning and growth aligned with the professional practice standards to establish and maintain a culture of continuous learning within the system.

*Recommendation #10:* Assist teachers and leaders make the necessary shift to understand their practice as an important site for their continuous professional learning. (p. 8)

*Merged Finding #9:* Cultivating a culture of professional learning and growth is crucial for successful implementation of the professional practice standards, as evidenced by the utilization of various professional learning formats.

*Merged Finding #10:* Sustaining a culture of continuous professional learning and improvement involves ongoing supervision, evaluation, and enhancement of the impact of school-based professional learning of teachers; addressing the changing nature of leaders' participation in professional learning networks; and providing additional targeted professional learning support in identified areas.

*Recommendation #11:* For school authorities: Review school based professional learning to ensure it is positively impacting teaching practice and address the

decline in leaders' participation in professional learning networks. (p. 8)

### **Enhancing First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Knowledge**

*Merged Finding #11:* While there were incremental gains over the four years in teachers', leaders', and superintendents' confidence and competence, additional professional learning is required to enhance educators' proficiency with the meaningful implementation of Competency 5.

*Recommendation #13:* For school authorities and professional learning providers: Develop and implement focused professional learning initiatives specifically tailored to enhance educators' confidence and proficiency with Competency 5, providing additional support and resources to ensure a comprehensive understanding of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit knowledge, as well as ways that these may impact practice. (p. 9)

### **Using an Evidence informed Approach to Guide Practice**

*Merged Finding #12:* Educators are becoming more proficient with applying numerous sources of evidence to confirm they have successfully embedded many of the competencies into their everyday practice.

*Merged Finding #13:* The professional practice standards served as a unifying vision, guiding the development of new processes for collecting and analyzing data and evidence; enabling informed decision-making; and promoting coherence within the system to enhance and deepen their understanding of optimum student learning.

*Recommendation #14:* For school authorities: Encourage and support the utilization of the professional practice standards as a unifying vision for developing robust processes for data collection, analysis, evidence-based decision-making, and promoting coherence within the educational system to deepen the understanding of optimum student learning. (p. 10)

A concluding comment from the 4-year research study gives reason to why a continued focus on the professional practice standards will support optimum learning for all students.

The standards for teachers, leaders, and superintendents are consistent with the literature for

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high performing systems. A review of the literature indicated that high performing systems implement standards for teachers, leaders, and superintendents to positively impact student learning and success (Adams & Allan, 2019). Further, professional standards for teaching can be implemented to guide teacher professional growth and ensure competence, to credential and evaluate teachers, and to uphold the social standing of the teaching profession (Adams & Allan, 2019). Professional standards for school leaders can be implemented to support students' well-being, to guide and facilitate continuous professional learning, and to evaluate the performance of leaders (Adams & Allan, 2019). With the unique introduction of leadership standards for superintendents in Alberta, our study served to advance the conversation about the impact of the implementation of standards for system leaders (Stelmach & O'Connor, 2019). (p. 29)

Friesen, S. et al. (2023). *Optimum learning for all students: A research study of teaching quality standard, leadership quality standard, and superintendent leader quality standard*. University of Calgary. <https://dx.doi.org/10.11575/PRISM/41645>



## Research to Practice

1. In what ways are system professional learning plans coherent with professional practice standards and school authority goals, all with a focus on enhancing student learning outcomes?
2. To what extent are professional learning plans for teachers, leaders, and system education leaders' growth having an impact on Indigenous student growth?
3. In what ways, and to what extent, do you intentionally plan to support implementation of the professional practice standards?
4. What impacts are evident from the implementation of the professional practice standards? How will you know?

## Additional Supports for System Leadership Capacity

- [Optimum Learning for All Students: A Research Study of Teaching Quality Standard, Leadership Quality Standard, and Superintendent Quality Standard Implementation and Enactment in Alberta. Final Report](#)

### CASS Learning Guides

- [Purpose, Trust, and Team Foothills School Division](#)
- [It's Really All About Learning Battle River School Division](#)
- [IMAGINE: Seeing the Possibility! Northland School Division](#)
- [Northland School Division](#)
- [Rutherford College Society](#)
- [Grande Prairie Public School Division](#)

- ✓ Building Effective Relationships
- ✓ Modeling Commitment to Professional Learning
- ✓ Visionary Leadership
- ✓ Leading Learning
- ✓ Ensuring First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education for All Students
- ✓ School Authority Operations and Resources
- ✓ Supporting Effective Governance

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