



Implementing a Continuum of Supports and Services

A Resource Guide for School
and School Authority Leaders

Implementing a Continuum of Supports and Services: A Resource Guide for School and School Leaders

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Introduction

In this guide *learner* refers to both a child in an early childhood services (ECS) program and a student in grades 1 through 12.

Alberta Education is committed to continued learning and improvement to ensure each learner develops the knowledge, skills and attitudes to form the foundations for a successful and fulfilling life. Through an inclusive education system, schools play a vital role in preparing learners to participate fully in a democratic and civil society.

Schools and classrooms in Alberta continue to reflect the growing diversity of their communities. In addition to increased opportunities for choice in education, there is also increased understanding among educational leaders in how quality instruction and high expectations affect achievement for each learner. Driving this shift in understanding is the recognition that with the right instructional supports and opportunities, each learner can be successful and leave high school prepared for their future. This has resulted in a shared vision of an inclusive education system that enables and empowers each learner to achieve success.

Alberta's inclusive education system is built on a principle based approach. Inclusion is understood as a way of thinking and acting that demonstrates universal acceptance, and belonging and embraces diversity and differences to promote equitable opportunities for each learner. Inclusive education considers how we develop and design our schools, classrooms, programs and instruction so that each learner has the opportunities and supports needed to learn, contribute and participate in all aspects of schooling. The goal of inclusive education is to ensure access to high quality education for all learners by effectively meeting their diverse needs in an engaging learning environment and in a way that is responsive, accepting, respectful and supportive.

Guided by policy and legislation in Alberta, and grounded in current and emerging research and best practice, *Implementing a Continuum of Supports and Services: A Resource Guide for School and School Authority Leaders*, is designed to provide context and support for this important work of an inclusive education system that enables all learners to achieve success. It moves educational leaders from policy to practice, and, in turn, from practice to policy.

Legislation and policy

- **Education Act:** Requires school boards to provide a continuum of supports and services to students that are consistent with the principles of inclusive education [Section 33(1)(e)].
- **Professional Practice Standards:** Describes the competencies expected of teachers, leaders and superintendents, including requiring them to establish, promote and sustain inclusive learning environments where diversity is embraced and every student is welcomed, cared for, respected and safe.
- **Ministerial Order on Student Learning:** Outlines the vision for student learning, including that students will gain the knowledge and skills to form the foundations for successful and fulfilling lives, and make meaningful contributions to their communities and the world.
- **Inclusive Education Policy:** Alberta Education’s mission to continue providing inclusive learning opportunities is evidenced in the Inclusive Education Policy in the *Guide to Education: ECS to Grade 12*.
- **Funding Manual for School Authorities – Assurance Framework:** Identifies required provincial measures and reporting requirements. A required local component within the Learning Supports Domain is that programs, services, strategies and local measures/data are used to demonstrate that all students have access to a continuum of supports and services, including specialized supports and services, consistent with the principles of inclusive education.

Inclusion

An attitude and approach that demonstrates universal acceptance and belonging, and embraces diversity and differences to promote equitable opportunities for all learners. Inclusion affirms that diversity is an essential part of the human condition and needs to be respected and valued.

The principles of inclusive education

Six interrelated principles are the foundation of inclusive education in Alberta. These principles can guide and inform value-based and learner-centred decisions related to policies, practices and actions, supporting an inclusive education system.

Anticipate, value and support diversity and learner differences.

Welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environments create a sense of belonging for all learners, their families and communities.



Set high expectations for all learners.

Creating a culture of high expectations begins with the programs of study and meaningful and relevant learning experiences. Educators, families and caregivers presume competence of the learner and act on the belief that, with the appropriate instructional supports, every learner can be successful.



Understand learners' strengths and needs.

Robust and meaningful data is gathered and shared at all levels of the system—by teachers, families, schools, school authorities and the ministry—to understand and respond to the strengths and needs of learners.



Remove barriers within learning environments.

All educators work together to remove barriers within the learning environment so that all learners are successful and can participate in the school community.



Build capacity.

Government, school and system leaders, teachers, education professionals, families and community partners develop, strengthen and renew their understanding, skills and abilities to create and support flexible and responsive learning environments. Capacity building takes place at the individual, school, system and provincial levels.



Collaborate for success.

All education partners, including learners, school and system staff, parents, community members, post-secondary institutions, teacher preparation programs and government are committed to collaboration to support the success of all learners.



Purpose of this resource

Implementing a Continuum of Supports and Services: A Resource Guide for School and School Authority Leaders, is intended as a resource for all schools and school authorities in Alberta.

The guide is written for:

- school leaders (i.e., principals, vice-principals and other formal or informal school leaders); and
- school authority leaders.

This resource is intended to:

- support implementation of the *Education Act*¹ and Professional Practice Standards²;
- develop a shared understanding of principles and conditions in a continuum of supports and services that support the success and well-being of each learner (ECS children and grades 1–12 students);
- highlight the knowledge, skills and understandings school and school authority leaders demonstrate to create the conditions for staff success in supporting each learner; and
- outline the roles and responsibilities of educational leaders in the implementation of a continuum of supports and services.

¹ Alberta Education (2022). *Education Act*.

² Alberta Education (2020). Professional Practice Standards.

Being-knowing-doing

Approach

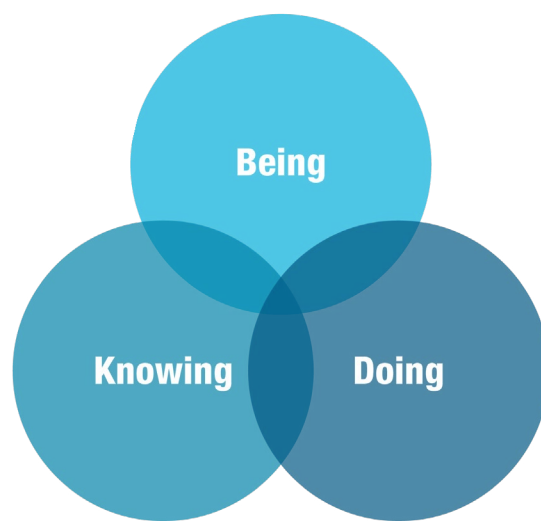
Continuum of Supports and Services: An intentionally designed set of actions, strategies, supports and services designed to maximize the academic success, well-being and sense of belonging of each learner. A continuum is flexible and responsive to learner needs.

Educational leaders are responsible for providing a continuum of supports and services consistent with the principles of inclusive education.³ A holistic approach known as *being-knowing-doing* can assist educational leaders design and implement a continuum of supports and services. This approach moves inclusive values and beliefs into action by supporting change at the three levels of belief, intellect and behaviour. The *being-knowing-doing* approach calls for more than just the application of structures and systems; it calls for leaders to address these challenges through changes in people's priorities, beliefs and habits, necessary when addressing adaptive challenges.⁴

The approach encourages leaders to demonstrate balance by developing and respecting the value of each element. The power of this approach exists when it is actualized as a whole. *Being-knowing-doing* are not mutually exclusive, but instead interdependent. The approach also encourages leaders to respect the relationships that exist between *being*, *knowing* and *doing*, recognizing how each impacts the others, and how changing one element in turn impacts them all.

Being, *knowing* and *doing* reflects an evolving, cyclical and holistic way of ensuring continued learning and growth in making certain the success of each learner in Alberta.

This approach is not a checklist; nor is it about prescription. What works in one school or school authority is not guaranteed to work in another. Each school authority and each school within will have a unique continuum of supports and services reflective of their context. In tackling the complex challenge of inclusion, the *being-knowing-doing* approach is dependent upon leadership. It requires leaders at all levels to take the time to engage with context and learning conversations around the approach, creating the conditions for collective ownership of the solution.

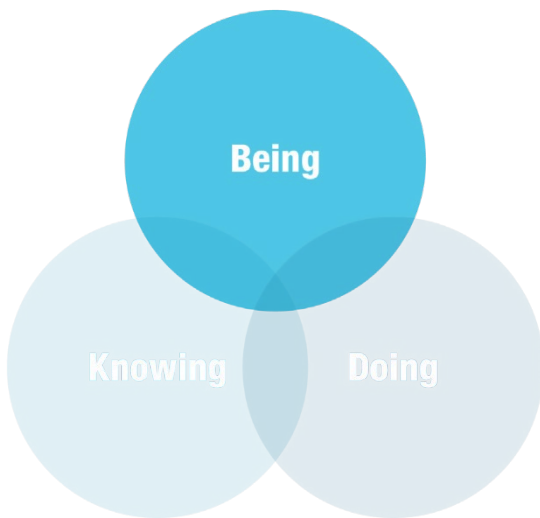


³ Alberta Education (2022). *Education Act*.

⁴ Heifetz, R., Grashow A., & Linksy, M. (2009). *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership*. Boston, MA: Harvard ReviewBusiness Press.

Being:

Know thyself



“Whereas the success of all members of the school community requires inclusive environments in which diversity is respected and members of the school community are welcomed, cared for, respected, and safe.”⁵

How we show up each day matters. *Being* underlies how our personal character, identity and beliefs are authentically immersed in our day-to-day interactions. It is the *being* that connects teachers with their learners and leaders with their school community.

In *being*, the role of the teacher becomes more than a distributor of information and a builder of skills. *Being* sees learners, not just for their circumstances but for who they are – each unique and each holding tremendous value. Authentically *being* creates a culture that says to each learner, “You belong here. I may not always know what to do, but I accept you for who you are. Come on in and we’ll figure this out together.”⁶ Educational leaders empower and celebrate this.

Educational leaders embracing the principle of *being* listen to everyone with the same care and attention, seeking and respecting the diverse perspectives various members of the school community bring. Educational leaders who demonstrate *being* provide the foundational need for belonging, a key principle of inclusive education in Alberta.

⁵ Alberta Education (2020). *Leadership Quality Standard*.

⁶ College of Alberta School Superintendents (2019). Professional Learning Module: Leading for Inclusion.

Educational leaders recognize *being* as foundational to a strong continuum of supports and services, and ensure it permeates the entire educational organization and system. *Being* includes demonstrating respect and compassion for the change process and associated loss, disruption and insecurity that may result. As a leader, it is also having the courage and compassion to have critical conversations when day-to-day actions are not aligned with professed beliefs.

A continuum of supports and services must be underpinned by a whole system commitment to this imperative, holding *being* in the same regard as pedagogy and expertise. In doing so, educational leaders create the conditions where each learner belongs and has the opportunity to experience the richness diversity brings.

Being, is demonstrated through the Professional Practice Standards⁷ including, but not limited to:

- Establishing Inclusive Learning Environments: communicating a philosophy of education affirming that every student can learn and be successful.
- Fostering Effective Relationships: demonstrating empathy and a genuine concern for others.
- Embodying Visionary Leadership: communicating a philosophy of education that is student-centred, demonstrating an appreciation for diversity.
- Leading a Learning Community: creating an inclusive learning environment in which diversity is embraced, a sense of belonging is emphasized, and all students and staff are welcomed, cared for, respected and safe.

Example of *being* can be found on [CASS Modules: Leading for Inclusion](#).



Being: Pause and reflect

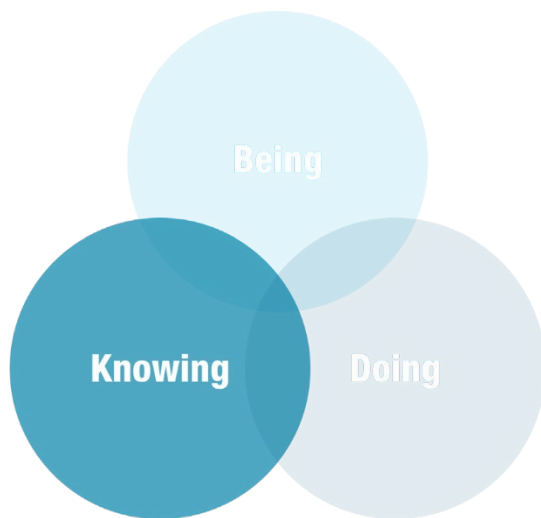
In what ways do you demonstrate universal acceptance and belonging for all?

In what ways do you demonstrate *being* as a necessary foundation in a strong continuum of supports and services?

⁷ Alberta Education (2020). Professional Practice Standards.

Knowing:

A continuum of supports and services



Quality leadership occurs when the leader's ongoing analysis of the context, and decisions about what leadership knowledge and abilities to apply, result in quality teaching and optimum learning for all school learners.

Leadership Quality Standard

While *being* inclusive is essential, the development of a continuum of supports and services requires professional expertise and knowledge about inclusive education.

Educational leaders in Alberta, also recognize *knowing* is deeply intertwined with *being* and *doing*. Deep understanding and expertise of a continuum of supports and services only comes from the learning experienced through implementation and ongoing critical reflection.

What is a continuum of supports and services?

An intentionally-designed set of actions, strategies, supports and services designed to maximize the academic success, well-being and sense of belonging of each learner. A continuum is flexible and responsive to learner needs.

One way educational leaders conceptualize supports and services is in tiers, each becoming increasingly individualized to the learner. These leaders ensure there is a range from universal, to targeted, to more intensive individualized supports and services. Educational leaders recognize that when strong and effective universal supports are in place, they will support the majority of learners and fewer will require targeted or intensive supports. Since a continuum is multidirectional, educational leaders also recognize that in some circumstances targeted and individualized supports may be effective for all.

It is important to make the distinction that it is the supports and services that are tiered, not the learners.

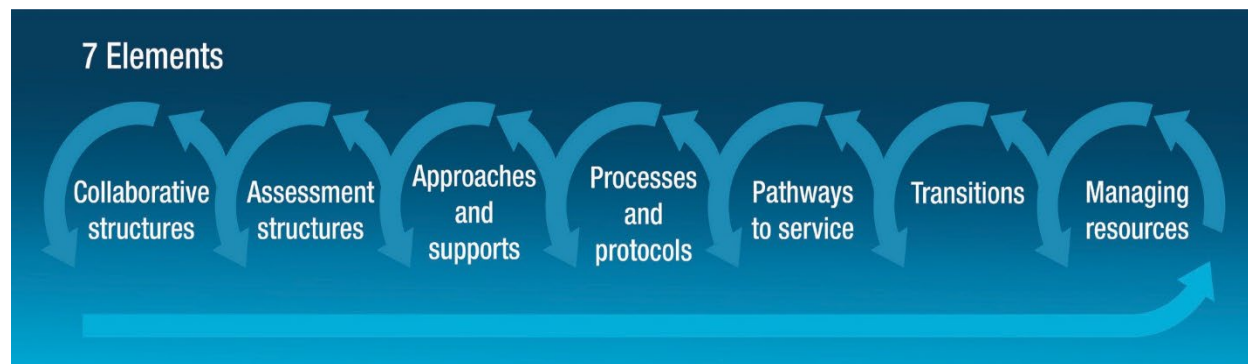
Universal	Targeted	Individualized
<p>Supports and services incorporated into the inclusive learning environment for all learners, including but not limited to quality instruction and providing welcoming, caring, safe and respectful learning environments.</p> <p>High quality approaches are available to, and benefit each learner.</p> <p>There is not a separate pedagogy for inclusion; good teaching is good teaching for all. Universal supports, therefore, are applied throughout the continuum. Learners receiving targeted and/or individualized supports also receive universal supports.</p>	<p>Supports and services designed for groups of learners who require additional supports or interventions to be successful with their learning. These are designed to build specific skills and/or reduce barriers that interfere with learning or social-emotional well-being.</p> <p>Targeted supports are for some learners who are identified through an early identification or assessment process as requiring something more beyond universal supports. Targeted supports are often more unique to the specific learners than universal supports.</p>	<p>Supports and services designed for individual learners to address specific areas for growth, barriers and/or personal circumstances that may be impacting the ability of individual learners to participate in and/or benefit from learning opportunities.</p> <p>They are intended for fewer individuals with more severe or pervasive challenges that require changes to supports and services beyond the universal and targeted supports provided.</p> <p>Individualized supports are more intense and may require comprehensive wraparound plans that include access to specialized supports and service providers, partners or training.</p>

In designing these supports and services educational leaders ensure they are:

- **Learner-centered:** Each learner has unique backgrounds, cultures, talents, interests, passions, abilities, challenges and aspirations. An equitable continuum begins by knowing the learner(s).
- **Strength-based:** Utilizing a strengths-based approach ensures the needs and challenges are addressed through the strengths of the learner and community.
- **Flexible and responsive:** In the ongoing analysis of the local context, the strategies, supports and services are responsive and reflect learner needs and realities. There is fluid movement between the tiers with supports and services faded in or out as a learner's needs change over time.
- **Cumulative:** Learners who are receiving intensive individualized supports also have access to universal and targeted supports. Targeted and individualized supports and services are drawn from strong universal supports, pulling universal supports through the continuum.
- **Accessible:** Accessing supports and services is barrier-free.
- **Visible:** A continuum of supports and services is an effective tool that facilitates more transparent communication to internal and external school community partners regarding the supports and services available and being provided.
- **Integrated:** An integrated continuum of supports and services emphasizes careful integration of evidence based practices across domains of academics and well-being.

Elements within a continuum of supports and services

A robust continuum of supports and services comprises of seven key elements. These elements are reflective of key indicators showing progress in providing a continuum of supports and services. Reflecting on these elements with an iterative lens, educational leaders ensure a flexible and dynamic continuum of supports and services responsive to their learner's needs.



Additional resources for enriching each of the above elements can be found in [Appendix A](#).

Collaborative structures

Leaders in Alberta are required to be responsive to the current and evolving needs of each learner, requiring collaborative problem solving and collective responsibility for their success. Educational leaders thereby engage the entire school community in developing and mobilizing a continuum of supports and services. Leaders have an important role in fostering collaboration, engagement and empowerment of all partners in the school community to enable each learner to achieve their potential.⁸ Educational leaders pay great attention to the development of collaborative structures at the universal, targeted and individualized points of the continuum. They intentionally engage the entire school community at different points according to the needs of their learners and the supports and services available.

- **Learners:** Educational leaders involve learners in the collaborative process where they can create and share their own ideas, leading to engagement. Educational leaders, recognizing solutions are found in the minds of the people with the problem, ensure learner voice is central in better understanding the root cause and potential solutions.⁹
- **School staff:** Educational leaders provide the conditions for school staff to come together to solve problems of practice, building personal and collective capacity and commitment in addressing learner needs. Structures need to be in place to support staff to engage in career long learning, an essential competency for teachers in Alberta.¹⁰
- **Parents:** A parent, as a partner in education, has the prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be provided to their child.¹¹ Parents have a right and a responsibility to make informed decisions respecting education of their children. Authentically engaging parents in a true partnership with the

⁸ Alberta Education (2020). *Leadership Quality Standard*.

⁹ Fullan, M. & Gallagher, M. J. (2020). *The Devil is in the Details: System Solutions for Equity, Excellence, and Learner Well-Being*. Thousand Oaks: CA. Corwin.

¹⁰ Alberta Education (2020). *Teacher Quality Standard*.

¹¹ Alberta Education (2022). *Education Act*.

school team goes beyond shared goal setting, choosing interventions and helping parents stay informed about their children. Effective leaders see parents as part of the solution in supporting the learner holistically, and genuinely pursue a relationship based on two-way capacity building for learner success. This includes providing the opportunity, information and support needed for parents to contribute their expertise and insights and to make informed educational decisions that focus on the strengths and areas for growth of their child.

- **Community:** Educational leaders are intentional in developing collaborative structures and relationships beyond the walls of the schools, viewing the community as a key resource. A wealth of knowledge, expertise and creativity exists in local communities. The complex and multidimensional nature of learners' education and well-being requires breaking down silos and reinforcing key partnerships with other sectors, professionals, Elders, natural supports and/or community members who offer a range of different perspectives, expertise and access to resources.
- **School authority:** Educational leaders foster the conditions for continued learning by designing structures for school leaders and school authority leaders to collaborate in the development and implementation of a continuum of supports and services. The result is an inclusive system that supports each learner's success.

Assessment structures

School authorities are required to develop, document, keep current and implement learner assessment policies and procedures for conducting continuous assessments in improving learner achievement.¹² As the primary purpose of assessment is to improve learning, this includes assessment for learning, used by teachers to ensure early identification of learners requiring further supports, and informing subsequent teaching. This further provides learners with the information that will guide their next steps in learning.

In implementing a continuum of supports and services that is responsive, leaders are attentive to a continuous improvement cycle and provide the structures for gathering ongoing evidence, to inform teaching and learning, in a variety of ways to inform next steps. In supporting each learner, assessment structures are designed through a continuum.

- **Teacher-based formative:** Teacher-based formative assessment, developed through teacher collaboratives, promises large potential gains in learner achievement.¹³ As noted in the Leadership Quality Standard, it is imperative for educational leaders to create the conditions to ensure this assessment practice is in place for each learner at the universal point of the continuum. This type of assessment is part of instruction and reveals to learners what is expected of them.¹⁴ Teacher-based formative assessment also provides clear direction for learners in achieving their goal. Opportunities created by educational leaders to develop common formative assessments support a culture of transparency and collective responsibility. In doing so, teachers come to recognize they are not alone in supporting learners. While common formative assessments reduce within-school teacher variability, it still remains a significant barrier to learner achievement.¹⁵

¹² Alberta Education (2021). *Guide to Education: ECS to Grade 12*.

¹³ Wiliam, D. & Leahy, S. (2014). *Sustaining Formative Assessment with Teacher Learning Communities*. LearningSciences International. Dylan Wiliam Center. April, 2021. <https://www.dylanwiliamcenter.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2020/10/DW02-01-Chapter-X-TLC-Paper-03-05-17-Digital.pdf>

¹⁴ Alberta Education (2021). *Guide to Education: ECS to Grade 12*.

¹⁵ Hattie, J. (2015). *What Works Best in Education: The Politics of Collaborative Expertise*. London, UK: Pearson.

- **Screening assessments:** Teacher administered screening assessments can help to reduce teacher variability. They are administered to evaluate learners' knowledge and skills relative to longer-term learning (i.e., literacy and numeracy) and/or social-emotional goals. Screening assessments can inform policy and planning at the classroom, school and school authority levels. Screening assessments can be extremely effective in providing a common language, ensuring early identification of learners who may require further supports, and have been shown to mobilize teachers into action. It is imperative, however, that leaders fully understand the purpose and proper uses of these assessments.

Screening assessments are intended, to “flag” learners for targeted interventions and possible further diagnostic assessment. They are not designed to provide detailed information on why a learner may be struggling, but to produce immediate, actionable data. Educational leaders ensure screening assessments are not used as a sole determinant in the reporting of a learner’s progress. It is critical that screening assessments do not substitute for teacher-based formative assessments – they supplement them.

In making decisions, leaders may want to consider the following in choosing the right screening assessment:¹⁶

- **Validity:** Having a clear understanding of the purpose of the assessment supports the validity. For example, a screening assessment which has as its purpose to screen reading proficiency may flag a learner’s challenges, but it is not the tool to identify the root cause or identify why the learner is struggling with reading.
- **Alignment:** Having a clear connection to the goals of the school or school authority.
- **Reliability:** Screening assessments that have high reliability provide reassurance that if the learner was assessed again, there would be stable and consistent results. Also, strong screening assessments provide detailed instructions, ensuring fidelity around administration and hence strong inter-rater reliability.
- **Free from bias:** A fair assessment is accessible and is free from elements that would interfere with the ability of learners to show what they know.
- **Measures growth:** The assessment is administered over multiple years to measure growth in knowledge and skill from year to year, as opposed to only measuring where a learner stands in relation to their peers.
- **Administration:** There is efficient administration, keeping in mind the purpose is to flag or screen learners who may be experiencing difficulty.

Although teacher professional judgement is absolutely critical and highly valued, it can not be the sole determinant in a school’s systematic response model or continuum to determine which learners are being addressed and how we are addressing their needs.

Hewson, K., Hewson, L. & Parsons, J.

¹⁶ Herman, J.L., Osmundson, E., & Dietel, R. (2010). *Benchmark Assessments for Improved Learning (AACC Policy Brief)*. Los Angeles, CA: University of California.

- **Diagnostic:** Successful interventions require teachers to address the cause of the learner’s difficulties, not just the symptoms, and target interventions to those needs. Once learners are flagged by teacher formative and/or screening assessments, one moves along the continuum where diagnostic assessments help identify why the learner is having difficulties. Having a solid understanding of prerequisite skills required to assess ensures interventions are not provided through ability grouping, a recognized low yield strategy.¹⁷ Diagnostic assessments typically begin with Level A assessments provided by the classroom teacher. If further information is required to better understand why a learner may be struggling, a Level B assessment might be considered.
- **Specialized assessments:** Diagnostic assessments by specialists may be required when further information as to the cause of the challenge is needed for programming. Specialized assessments provide individualized measurement across one or more domains (e.g., physical and sensory, cognitive, intellectual, social-emotional, behavioural, language and communication, adaptive behaviour) and are completed by a qualified professional or a multi-disciplinary team of qualified professionals who provide an interpretive report of the results.
- The *being-knowing-doing* approach respects the role of leadership in assessment. It is a delicate balance in ensuring schools and school authorities do not become assessment heavy, leaving little room for instruction, while at the same time creating the conditions that support teachers in making informed programming decisions. This is the doing of leadership. In using assessment for learning, the being reminds leaders of the importance of creating a culture of transparency and trust around assessment for their staff. It also reminds leaders to ensure assessment demonstrates acceptance of each learner, regardless of where they are at, and the resolve to support continued learning and improvement in ensuring each learner’s success.

Approaches and supports

School staff providing approaches and supports, such as interventions and accommodations, through a collaborative iterative process, ensure continued learning and improvement.

Universal approaches have strong supporting evidence that shows a substantial impact on learning. In an inclusive environment, leaders ensure approaches such as Universal Design for Learning, differentiated instruction, formative assessment and positive behaviour supports are strongly embedded universally in each classroom. As there is not a separate pedagogy for inclusion, effective universal instructional approaches also benefit learners who require more targeted or individualized supports. While proactive and accessible design of inclusive learning environments removes barriers from the onset, some learners may still require further interventions and supports.

Educational leaders in an inclusive system provide appropriate interventions at the earliest possible stages. Interventions are supports and services designed to close the gap. Interventions, to be effective, begin first and foremost, with the learner’s teacher who is in the best

School authorities must ensure that all children and students (Kindergarten to Grade 12), regardless of race, religious belief, colour, gender, gender identity, gender expression, physical disability, mental disability, family status or sexual orientation, or any other factor(s), have access to meaningful and relevant learning experiences that include appropriate instructional supports.

Inclusive Education Policy, Guide to Education: ECS to Grande 12

¹⁷ Hattie, J. (2015). *What Works Best in Education: The Politics of Collaborative Expertise*. London, UK: Pearson.

position to make the biggest impact on learning. Interventions are most effective when they are provided in a timely fashion, focused on the cause of a learner's challenges, administered by a trained professional such as a teacher, and are part of a system that guarantees access to the interventions for each learner regardless of which teacher a learner is assigned to.¹⁸

Efficacy further increases when teachers know how to draw upon supports and services, not just within their classroom but school-wide as well. In developing school wide structures and systems that maximize and ensure the effective use of resources, educational leaders mobilize their school team in the ongoing analysis of their context. They provide opportunities for problem solving and innovative practices in what school-wide supports might be designed. Educational leaders further ensure school-wide structures and systems consider parents and the local community as strong resources for support. Involving all members of the school community is more likely to create positive and sustainable change than supports that limit involvement to only one classroom, grade-level or a select group of teachers.

While interventions are essential, supports may also be required to reduce barriers, inherent in the environment, that could not be addressed by design alone and may be interfering with learning and/or social-emotional development. Supports to these barriers do not change what is being learned; they change how the learner is learning, ensuring accessibility to the program of studies. Examples of these supports may include augmentative alternative communication devices, providing a change in the learning environment, braille or assessing small chunks of learning at a time.

Procedures and protocols

In an inclusive environment, procedures and protocols build the confidence, capacity and efficacy of school staff in knowing what to look for and how to respond, particularly to situations that require specialized knowledge or circumstances that might be unfamiliar to them. Protocols and procedures that include screening assessments, interventions, referral processes and roles and responsibilities can be important. In the development of these protocols, consideration given to local context ensures they are operationally feasible for school staff to carry out.¹⁹

Examples of protocols that support both an appropriate and timely response may include supporting positive attendance, suicide risk and non-suicidal self-injury protocol, violent threat risk protocol and reporting suspected child abuse protocols. Even when there are “experts” in a school authority, procedures and/or protocols are necessary to ensure the school staff can identify and know what to do when they encounter situations where they may have little or no expertise or previous experience. Additional resources that can support the development of these protocols can be found in [Appendix A](#).

Pathways to, through and from services

A strong pathway to services provides a seamless link between learners and the supports and services they may need. Pathways to, through, and from services ensures there is fluid and multidirectional movement of universal, targeted and individualized supports and services.

¹⁸ Buffum, A., Mattos, M., & Weber, C. (2009). *Pyramid Response to Intervention*. Bloomington: IN. Solution Tree Press.

¹⁹ Bali, A.S., Capano, G. & Ramesh, M., (2019). *Anticipating and Designing for Policy Effectiveness*. Policy and Society 38-1, 1-13, DOI: 10.1080/14494035.2019.1579502

An integrated pathway to services includes processes for co-ordination and collaboration between schools and their communities (e.g., families, healthcare providers, community service providers and policy makers).²⁰ It requires a shared understanding of the route to, through and from supports and services in their community which enhances partners' abilities to collaborate and ensure learners who need supports receive them in timely, sustainable and culturally appropriate ways. In making this pathway visible and barrier-free the following may be considered:

- a shared understanding of strong universal supports and services;
- assessment processes that support early identification when a learner is requiring something more than universal supports;
- processes around what supports and services will be provided, and by whom, within the school when a learner is identified as needing more;
- processes around evaluating and communicating the impact of supports and services;
- highlighting when, and to whom, referrals are required beyond the school; and
- support for recovery within the school.

Educational leaders are responsible for collaborating with municipalities, other boards and community-based service agencies in order to effectively address the needs of all learners and manage the use of public resources. As each community is unique, identifying and removing barriers and bringing clarity to pathways to service is a shared responsibility, one that requires the establishment of relationships and sharing of information between service providers.

It is helpful for leaders in Alberta to be mindful of supports and services beyond the scope of education and to anchor work being done in the field to a broader provincial, and sometimes national context. A summary of some of the provincial legislation and policies and supporting documents focused on supporting children and youth, found in [Appendix A](#), may provide an overview of the current landscape and a foundation on which local pathways can be developed.

Transitions

As a continuum identifies and addresses systematic barriers, educational leaders ensure uninterrupted access to supports and services during transitions. While some transition planning is required due to pathways to, through or from services, transition strategies also help learners successfully move:

- from home-to-school;
- between schools and grade levels;
- to or from a health facility;
- from one family to another (i.e., learners in care);
- from within or outside the country; and
- from high school to post-secondary education or employment.

²⁰ Alberta Education (2017). *Working Together to Support Mental Health in Alberta Schools*.

Transition planning is multi-faceted and is required for events that result in changes to relationships, routines, expectations or roles. In order for transitions to be successful, educational leaders ensure they are carefully and deliberately planned, recognizing the uniqueness of each learner and their circumstances. The probability of a successful transition is significantly increased when school staff, parents, learners, service providers, communities and/or post-secondary institutions are collaboratively involved in transition planning, implementation and evaluation, and share joint accountability for outcomes and processes. Educational leaders are intentional in creating the conditions for successful transition planning with parents as partners.

Educational leaders ensure relationships are built on trust and open two-way communication, and decisions take into account various factors, including cultural traditions, values and beliefs, the language proficiency of parents/learners, important adults in the learner's life and supports that may be required. To assist with transition planning, information is gathered that reflects the learners' specific strengths, needs and challenges in family, physical, social/emotional, cultural, behavioural and cognitive domains.

As with the other elements in a robust continuum of supports and services, educational leaders ensure planning for transition occurs throughout the continuum. For example, some online tools may support each learner investigating and developing a portfolio about their interests, skills and passions, in supporting planning, and decision making for next steps. For learners that may require individualized supports, transition planning may also involve a planning process that assist teams of adults and the learner, to creatively dream, plan and produce successful plans to support successful transitions.²¹

Planning for successful transitions for each learner should:

- meet learner's basic needs;
- encourage and maintain positive relationships and a sense of community;
- provide learners with required supports and resources in each new environment and share information among all in the school community;
- promote learner self-advocacy;
- help learners develop their identities; and
- ensure continuity and consistency within and between environments.²²

Managing resources

In enhancing public assurance to demonstrate the achievement of learner outcomes, school authorities allocate funding equitably in a manner that achieves equality.

Managing school operations and resources

Allocating resources equitably is the responsibility of school and school authority leaders as noted in the Leadership Quality Standard, Competency 8: Managing School Operations and Resources.

Public assurance occurs when the public has trust and confidence that resources are managed effectively in establishing learning environments where local and societal context is recognized, diversity is embraced, a sense of belonging is emphasized and all learners are welcomed, cared for, respected and safe.

Funding Manual for School Authorities and Leadership Quality Standard

²¹ McGill Action Planning System (MAPS) is an example of this structured system.

²² Alberta Education (2009). *Managing School Transitions*.

It is important to recognize that each school, school authority and community has its own unique needs and resources. Human resources, laid out on a continuum of supports and services can identify duplication of services as well as provide visibility of gaps. This can inform where resources or specialized expertise may need to be placed or shifted. Whether it be teachers, educational assistants or other support staff, it is essential that all educational professionals have access to the expertise and resources needed to respond to the diverse needs of all students.

In strategic resourcing, educational leaders also recognize and identify opportunities that exist to build and support both formal and informal leaders in building the capacity of all educational professionals. This might take the form of educational leaders designating current staff as “leads” in a specific area, developing their expertise in order to build further capacity. Providing and encouraging opportunities for distributed leadership develops the internal expertise and capacity required within a school and school authority. By mobilizing peers, leaders boost efficacy, visibility of social norms and establish conditions for sustainability. Educational leaders ensure education professionals have access to the expertise and resources needed to respond to the diverse needs of all learners.

A board, as a partner in education, has a responsibility to collaborate with municipalities, other boards and community-based service agencies in order to effectively address the needs of all students and manage the use of public resources.

Education Act

While building internal expertise is essential, school authority leaders are responsible for providing specialized supports and services if a board determines a learner is in need. Based on behavioural, intellectual, learning, communication or physical characteristics, or a combination of them, these leaders allocate resources accordingly for specialized supports such as speech-language therapists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, deaf/hard of hearing specialists, audiologists, vision consultants and psychologists.

A strong continuum of supports and services also considers strategic resource allocation beyond funding. Expertise or skills sets from individuals such as learners, parents, community members, Elders, Knowledge Keepers or specialists in the community also contribute to, and enrich, schools’ or school authorities’ continuum of supports and services.



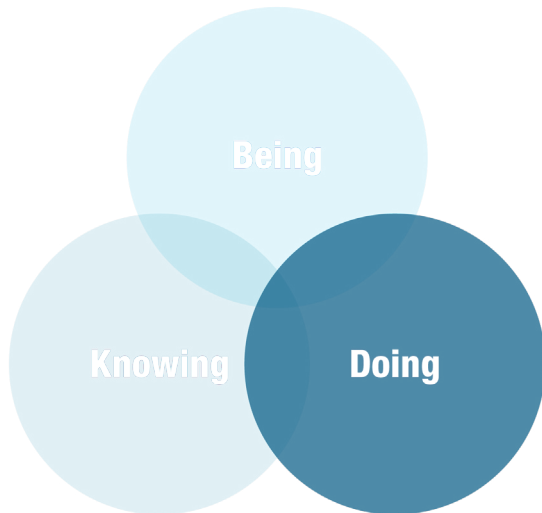
Knowing: Pause and reflect

Reflecting on your current context, what elements are present within your continuum of supports and services? What’s missing? What areas could be improved upon for next steps? What do you need to help you move forward?

As noted in the Leadership Quality Standard, a leader engages in career-long professional learning and ongoing critical reflection. What do you want to know more about? A tool to support critical reflection can be found in [Appendix B](#).

Doing:

An iterative cycle



Knowing creates possibilities, while *doing* actualizes them.

Implementing a continuum of supports and services is an adaptive challenge.²³ As solutions are not necessarily currently known, meeting the needs of all learners is a learning problem requiring a culture of participation of those closest to the challenge.²⁴ Educational leaders create the conditions by supporting the belief that by working together, there can be continued learning and progress towards overcoming challenges.

In addressing this adaptive challenge, no two schools or school communities are the same. A continuum of supports and services for one school or school authority cannot be overlaid at another. Rather, educational leaders who mobilize an agile learning process employ continual action and reflection, ensuring an inclusive learning environment reflective of their context. They understand and recognize the power of an iterative process to impact culture and deep learning.

Whether it is collaborative inquiry, design thinking or agile thinking, an iterative approach holds great promise in supporting continued learning and improvement. The iterative process of *explore*, *develop*, *take action* and *evaluate*, has been shown to be an effective means of professional learning that results in long standing changes of thinking and behaviour and ultimately to enhanced learning.

Alberta Education (2022). Funding Manual for School Authorities 2022/23 School Year.

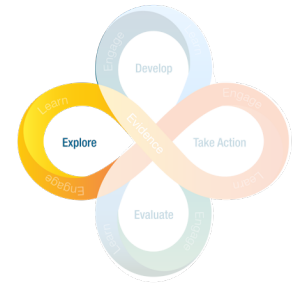
²³ Heifetz, R., Grashow A., & Linksy, M. (2009). *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press.

²⁴ Fullan, M. (2020). *Leading in a Culture of Change*. Hokoken, NJ. Jossey-Bass.

Explore

“Explore involves accessing, analyzing and interpreting accurate and relevant data and identifying and understanding a problem of practice.”²⁵

A problem of practice exists when vision, values and goals are not entirely or only partially met, resulting in a gap between the current state and preferred future. In identifying a problem of practice, “explore” supports a meaningful focus, coordinating the work of the school community.



A problem of practice focuses on the instructional core, is directly observable, is actionable and connects to a broader strategy of improvement.

Elmore, R.

Problems of practice are identified through reflection on practice, focused dialogue with the school community and looking at the quantitative and qualitative evidence on the topic.²⁶ Educational leaders do not identify the problem of practice alone: they also engage their staff in system evaluation, embodying key visionary and instructional leadership competencies.²⁷

While identifying a problem of practice is a strong first step, adaptive challenges are multi-faceted and are extremely difficult to accurately identify. Educational leaders use the iterative cycle to ensure “explore” is continually revisited in better understanding the problem.

Educational leaders, therefore, continually engage school staff in digging deeper into the root cause of the problem of practice in their day-to-day practice and within their collaborative structures. Doing this iterative process cycles back to “explore” as school staff continually collect and reflect on learner evidence around the problem of practice, providing a deeper understanding as to why the challenge exists.

Develop

“Develop” involves identifying strategies to address the problem of practice and to create an action plan.²⁸ It includes knowing what needs to be improved within a continuum of supports and services and considering how to do it.

In the “develop” stage, it is advised not to lead with change as the sole strategy.²⁹ As educational leaders consider the need to adapt to a rapidly changing environment they also respectfully consider current values, competencies and backgrounds of the staff. Leaders incorporating being recognize the value of taking a strengths-based approach in the “develop” stage, taking inventory of what supports and services already exist and are being provided. In this way, educational leaders support a culture of trust and safety by:



²⁵ Alberta Education (2022). *Funding Manual for School Authorities 2022/23 School Year*.

²⁶ City, E.A., Elmore, R.F., Fiarman, S.E., & Teitel, L. (2009). *Instructional Rounds in Education: A Network Approach to Improving Teaching and Learning*, Harvard Education Press.

²⁷ Alberta Education (2020). *Professional Practice Standards*.

²⁸ Alberta Education (2022). *Funding Manual for School Authorities 2022/23 School Year*.

²⁹ Heifetz, R. A. & Linsky, M. (2017). *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading*. Harvard Business Review Press.

- ensuring a shared understanding of the elements that comprise a robust continuum of supports and services;
- providing the conditions that will allow school staff to share their evidence-informed practices already occurring that are addressing the problem of practice; and
- considering where on the continuum those supports and services might best be represented.

A leader nurtures and sustains a culture that supports evidence-informed teaching and learning.

Leadership Quality Standard

This practice develops collective efficacy, which is positioned at the top of the list of factors that influence learner achievement.³⁰ As current practices are laid out, gaps within the continuum or areas for growth can become clearer. Problems of practice can be also identified where the way forward to improvement is currently unknown. During the “develop” stage, therefore, teachers also work together to identify and develop new knowledge, competencies, structures and/or systems for the improvement of their continuum of supports and services. As decisions are made, choosing evidence-based supports and services in developing a plan of action is critical to ensuring that time, energy and financial resources are not spent on supports without investigation into their efficacy and appropriateness in the local context.

Take action

“*Take action*” involves moving the plan to action. It also requires, ongoing learning as the plan is implemented and making adjustments through formative assessment.³¹ It involves revisiting both “explore” and “develop” in an iterative way. Educational leaders set the conditions for this through creating the conditions for frequent action and reflection.



As teachers “take action,” collecting evidence at this stage is significantly different than what was described in the initial “explore” stage. While this information was important in determining the problem of practice, evidence at the “take action” stage is focused on the impact new supports and services are having on learners. Done frequently, teachers can continually implement, reflect on impact, better understand their problem of practice and then refine.

During the “take action” stage, educational leaders ensure teachers engage in joint problem solving, further deepening their knowledge. In order to be agile enough to respond to the ever-changing needs of our learners, pairing evidence-informed approaches with opportunities for innovation and building capacity for a problem-solving approach is essential in the learning and improvement cycle in supporting all learners.

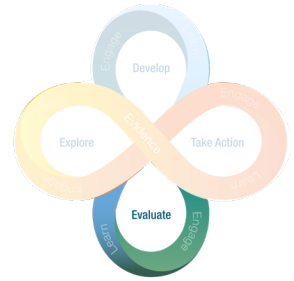
Educational leaders support teachers in collecting and reflecting on evidence of impact, and continually refining their practice. In doing so, educational leaders recognize knowing is deepened and a responsive continuum of supports and services is further supported.

³⁰ Hattie, J. (2015). *What Works Best in Education: The Politics of Collaborative Expertise*. London, UK. Pearson.

³¹ Alberta Education (2022). *Funding Manual for School Authorities 2022/23 School Year*.

Evaluate

“Evaluate” involves evaluating the impact of the plan to determine if the strategies had the desired outcome and what next steps might be. Prior to this stage, the team evaluates their daily practices, reflecting on the evidence that demonstrates the impact of their work with each learner. During the “evaluate” stage the team goes back to evaluating the broader problem of practice. There is systematic evidence gathering where teams celebrate their learnings and successes, and those of the learners, and identify additional learning needs or gaps that inform next steps. System and school leaders who clearly communicate to parents, community partners and other education partners on how they will deliver the continuum of supports and services to their students further support their responsibility to provide a continuum of supports and services.³²



Assurance is provided in this evaluation stage when strong processes are in place for the first three stages of this iterative cycle (explore, develop, take action). Assurance is fostered when school staff rely on the ongoing analysis of context, where transparent evidence of impact informs decisions on what knowledge and abilities are necessary to apply further. In “evaluate”, a visible continuum of supports and services supports the required local component within the “Learning Supports” domain of the Alberta Education’s Assurance Framework. Schools and school authorities that demonstrate that all students have access to a continuum of supports and services, including specialized supports and services, actualize the principles of inclusive education.



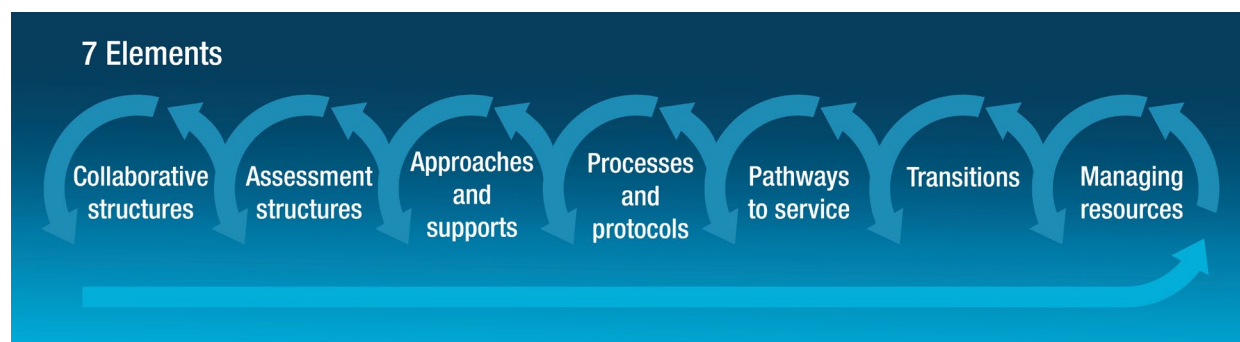
Doing: Pause and reflect

What evidence do you see that demonstrates learners have access to a continuum of supports and services that is meeting their needs?

How are you making your continuum of supports and services visible to your school community?

³² Alberta Education (2022). *Education Act*.

Appendix A: Additional resources



Elements within a continuum of supports and services	Government of Alberta additional resources
Collaborative structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Learning Hub: Parent resources • Collaborating to support students • Working Together: Collaborative Practices and Partnership Toolkit: Supporting Alberta Learners • Walking Together: First Nation, Métis and Inuit Perspectives in Curriculum
Assessment structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating Welcoming, Caring, Respectful and Safe Learning Environments: The Walk Around A School Leader's Observation Guide • Indicators of Inclusive Schools: Continuing the Conversation • Early years assessments
Approaches and supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • new LearnAlberta • A Mental Health and Well-being Continuum of Supports and Services • K to 12 instructional supports • Making Sense of Universal Design for Learning and conversation guide • Making a Difference: Meeting diverse learning needs with differentiated instruction • Learning Technologies: Information for Teachers • Positive behaviour supports • Inclusive education • Guidelines for Best Practices: Creating Learning Environments that Respect Diverse Sexual Orientations, Gender Identities and Gender Expressions

Elements within a continuum of supports and services	Government of Alberta additional resources
Protocols and processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MORE: School-based Suicidal Ideation (SI) Response Protocol • Youth Suicide Prevention: A Resource Guide for Schools • Pathways to Hope: Best Practices in Suicide Prevention for Alberta Schools • MORE: School-based Non-Suicidal Self Injury (NSSI) Response Protocol • Standards for Seclusion and Physical Restraint in Alberta Schools • Guidelines for Time-out in Alberta Schools
Transitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing school transitions: promising practices for Alberta's schools: a support resource • Transition Planning Guide: A Career and Education Planning Guide for Students with Disabilities • Success in School for children and youth in care • Supporting English Language Learners: Tools, Strategies and Resources • ALIS • High school completion • Family Supports for Learners with Disabilities • Teaching refugees with limited formal schooling
Pathways to, through and from service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working Together to Support Mental Health in Alberta Schools • Every Child Matters: Jordan's Principle Enhanced Service Coordination • Information sharing education and resources • Family Resource Networks <p>Other provincial legislation and policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alberta Human Rights Act • Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act • Children First Act • Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPP) • Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA) • Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act

Appendix B: A reflection tool

“A leader engages in career-long professional learning and ongoing critical reflection to identify opportunities for improving leadership, teaching and learning.”³³ Using the iceberg analogy, while reflection on external context is essential, very often the problems we see in the environment are reflected much deeper in the unseen waters of beliefs, identity and purpose. Reflection in these deep waters is essential, as what is not exposed or realized cannot be addressed.



The Dilts Model, as highlighted in the Leadership Certification In-Service Program³⁴ serves as a powerful tool highlighting the link between what we think, what we do and the results we get. It raises awareness around barriers in human behaviour and learning in addressing problems of practice, bringing reflection beyond what one sees.

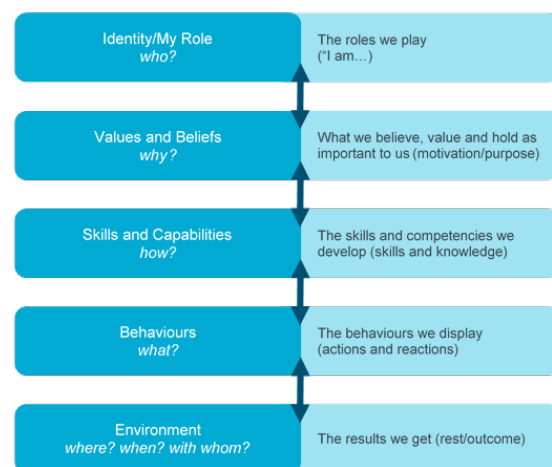
The Dilts Model is visualized as a hierarchy, with the understanding that each level directly impacts those lower in the hierarchy. Higher levels such as beliefs and purpose generally have a greater effect on lower levels such as knowledge and behaviours than vice versa. At the same time, ineffective implementation of desired behaviours does not always reflect the outright rejection of the values professed: for example, the barrier may lie in a lack of knowledge or skill. Regardless of where the barrier may be, the model operates under the premise that problems cannot be solved at the level they are created.

The following elements of the Dilts Model contains an explanation of each level as well as questions that may support leaders in the ongoing analysis of context and self.

Environment: Environment refers to everything outside of oneself and beyond. It includes reflection on what one sees and hears in the external context of the school, community, province and world. This reflection will not be about the person but will be focused on what they hear and see. This is the most concrete level of our experiences. This level supports leaders in meeting people where they are at, so that they can move them forward.

- What are you responding to?
- What people are involved? What are their roles?
- What results are you getting? Are they the ones you want?
- What would you like to change? What outcome/environment do you want?

DILTS MODEL – LOGICAL LEVELS OF CHANGE



Source: <https://www.discoveryinaction.com/au/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/DIModels-Logical-Levels-of-Change-Dilts.pdf>

³³ Alberta Education (2020). *Leadership Quality Standard*.

³⁴ AISCA, ATA, CASS (2020). *Leadership In-Service Program Participant Guide*.

- What are your learners' and staff's strengths and needs?
- What evidence do you see that there is continued learning and improvement?
- What do you see, hear, feel that would describe the culture and climate of your school or school authority?
- What external influences affect you?

Behaviour: The level of behaviour refers to all externally observed actions and reactions of a person: their words, their gestures and their movement. This level describes what is directly observable about one's own behaviour. This is where self-reflection moves from the external context to oneself.

- What are you *doing* in developing and refining a continuum of supports and services?
- What actions, behaviours or habits do you see yourself demonstrating at work? How are they influencing the environment around you?
- How are these behaviours aligned with *being* inclusive?
- What impact do these behaviours have on your staff? Learners? Parents?
- What are you already doing well?
- What do you need to do to advance this work?

Capabilities: Capabilities reflect the knowledge, skills and understandings that a person holds making a certain behaviour possible. It also includes awareness of these abilities. Capabilities are not visible to others. The question at this level is how might one achieve the task at hand.

- What knowledge and skills do you possess that contribute to an inclusive system?
- What competencies do you need to draw from/build on to bring about change?
- What knowledge do you possess that contributes to *knowing* what is reflected in the elements of, and how to build, a continuum of supports and services? Is it enough to move forward? If not, what might the gaps be?
- How would you compare those skills and abilities to those you see in leaders you admire?
- What challenges you in this role? What leadership competency from the Professional Practice Standards might you focus on as an area of growth?

Beliefs: The next level are the beliefs that underlie the actions. Beliefs guide and influence thinking and behaviour. People are more likely to use existing abilities if they align with their beliefs. Beliefs can either reinforce or hinder capabilities. Beliefs impact our level of motivation. Beliefs are often formed from current and previous experiences.

- Why are you a leader/teacher? What is your drive to continue?
- What do you believe about or value in this work?
- What do you believe or value as a leader?
- Which beliefs are supporting and which might be hindering you in reaching your purpose?
- Are you open to changing your beliefs as you learn more about others? How have they changed?

Identity: Identity is one's self-image, the ideas a person constructs about themselves. Identity is a sense of self. It includes personal, social, cultural and religious identifications. This reflection brings clarity to one's identity and uncovers the values and beliefs that support the thinking and the behaviors of leaders.³⁵ Identity is central to the expression of an individual's overall personality.³⁶

- What is most important to you as people define you as a leader?
- How would you describe yourself as a leader?
- What role do you play in this context?
- What type of leader do you want to be? What do you need to change to become this?
- For what greater purpose are you doing this?

³⁵ Cornu, A. L. (2009). *Meaning, internalization and externalization: Toward a fuller understanding of the process of reflection and its role in the construction of the self*. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 59(4), 279-297

³⁶ Thomas, A. (2013). Anil Thomas: Master NLP Practitioner and Gestalt Therapist. April, 2021. <https://www.anilthomasnlp.com/faq-nlp/what-are-the-different-neurological-levels%3F->

Appendix C: Glossary

In the context of this document:

- a) **"continuum of supports and services"** means an intentionally-designed set of actions, strategies, supports and services designed to maximize the academic success, well-being and sense of belonging of all students. A continuum is flexible and responsive to learner needs;
- b) **"diversity"** means that each learner is unique and has individual differences. These can include, but are not limited to, dimensions of ethnicity and culture, language, gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, disabilities, abilities, life circumstances and family values;
- c) **"educational leader"** means superintendents, assistant superintendents, central office leaders, principals, assistant principals and lead teachers;
- d) **"evidence-informed practice"** means to bring together local experience and expertise with the best available evidence from research, systematic data gathering, best practice, cultural and linguistic knowledge and traditional practices. It means using evidence from a range of relevant and credible sources to identify the potential benefits, limits and essential components of any strategy or intervention while acknowledging that what works in one context may not necessarily be appropriate nor effective in another;
- e) **"equality"** means that every individual has an equal opportunity. Specific protected grounds are identified within the Alberta Human Rights Act;
- f) **"equity"** means a condition or state of fair, inclusive and respectful treatment of all individuals. Equity does not mean treating people the same without regard for individual differences;
- g) **"inclusion"** means an attitude and approach that demonstrates universal acceptance and belonging, and embraces diversity and differences to promote equitable opportunities for all learners. Inclusion affirms that diversity is an essential part of the human condition and needs to be respected and valued;
- h) **"inclusive education"** is how we develop and design our schools, classrooms and activities so that all ECS children and students have the opportunities and supports needed to learn, contribute and participate in all aspects of schooling. The goal of inclusive education is to ensure access to high quality education for all learners by effectively meeting their diverse needs in an engaging learning environment and in a way that is responsive, accepting, respectful and supportive;
- i) **"inclusive education system"** refers to a structure or organization that mobilizes all educational partners including: learners, parents, school authorities, government and community members to commit to addressing and removing barriers to enable all learners to achieve success through the transformation of culture, policy and practice;
- j) **"inclusive learning environment"** means a classroom, school, online learning environment or other educational setting structured to anticipate, value and respond to the diverse strengths and needs of all learners. Inclusive learning environments bring together same-age peers from different backgrounds and with different abilities to learn together. Inclusive learning environments includes supports to reduce and remove barriers to learning that lead to exclusion;

- k) **“individualized supports and services”** means those strategies and supports designed to address specific areas for growth, barriers and/or personal circumstances that may be impacting the ability of individual learners to participate in and/or benefit from learning opportunities;
- l) **“learner”** refers to both a child in an ECS program and a learner in Grades 1 through 12;
- m) **“level A”** assessment means assessments which can be administered, scored and interpreted with the aid of a manual and a familiarity with the student population. They include tests such as the Castles and Colheart Test (CC3);
- n) **“level B”** assessment means assessments that require specific training for administration, scoring and interpretation. They include tests such as the Woodcock Johnson IV Tests of Achievement;
- o) **“parent”** as defined in the Education Act, unless otherwise specified, means, in respect of a learner or a child enrolled in an early childhood services program, the relevant individual referred to in Section 1, Subsection (2);
- p) **“school authority leaders”** means superintendents, assistant superintendents and central office leaders such as directors, managers and supervisors;
- q) **“school community”** means learners, school staff members, parents/guardians, school council members and members of the community who support the school;
- r) **“school leader”** means principals, assistant principals and lead teachers, such as learning coaches, department heads and curriculum co-ordinators;
- s) **“school staff”** means all individuals employed by the school authority or school who interact with learners, including but not limited to principals, assistant principals, teachers, counsellors, Elders, school resource officers, educational assistants and multi-disciplinary team members;
- t) **“specialized assessment”** means individualized measurement in English or French, where possible, across one or more domains (e.g., physical and sensory, cognitive, intellectual, social-emotional, behavioural, language and communication, adaptive behaviour), completed by a qualified professional or a multi-disciplinary team of qualified professionals who provide an interpretive report of the results;
- u) **“specialized supports and services”** means those supports and services delivered by individuals, with the specialized training and expertise to assist individual learners to be successful learners. Specialized supports and services may include direct consultation to teachers and other school staff. If a learner’s behavioural, intellectual, learning, communication or physical characteristics, or a combination of any of them, impair the learner’s ability and opportunity to learn, a board may determine that the learner is in need of specialized supports and services;
- v) **“targeted supports”** means those strategies and interventions designed for a learner or groups of learners who require additional supports or interventions to be successful with their learning. These types of supports are designed to build specific academic skills and/or reduce behaviours that interfere with learning or social-emotional well-being by focusing on building personal resilience and preventing future difficulties;
- w) **“teacher”** means a person who holds a certificate of qualification as a teacher issued under the Education Act;
- x) **“universal supports”** means those instructional strategies and supports that are incorporated into the inclusive learning environment for all learners including, but not limited to, quality instruction and providing safe and supportive relationships and environments.

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