CASS FALL LEARNING CONFERENCE 2026

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# Beyond Individual Resilience

## How Leadership Practices Can Support Teacher Well-Being and Career Sustainability

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**ALIGNED PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE STANDARDS**

SLQS • Building Effective Relationships | Modelling Commitment to Professional Learning

LQS • Fostering Effective Relationships | Developing Leadership Capacity

# Land Acknowledgement

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## Relationship, place, and responsibility

The University of Calgary, located in the heart of Southern Alberta, both acknowledges and pays tribute to the traditional territories of the peoples of Treaty 7, which include the Blackfoot Confederacy (comprised of the Siksika, the Piikani, and the Kainai First Nations), the Tsuut'ina First Nation, and the Stoney Nakoda (including Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Goodstoney First Nations). The city of Calgary is also home to the Métis Nation within Alberta (including Nose Hill Métis District 5 and Elbow Métis District 6).



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# Why we are here

- Well-being is a relational practice that is individually enacted and systemically supported (Kapoyannis, 2026).
- Educators have agency, voice and responsibility. At the same time, leadership choices and decisions across nested systems shape the conditions in which well-being can be sustained.
- Our focus: *How can leadership practices support teacher well-being and career sustainability?*

# Professional practice standards

## SLQS

Superintendent Leadership Quality Standard

### Building Effective Relationships

### Modelling Commitment to Professional Learning

## LQS

Leadership Quality Standard

### Fostering Effective Relationships

### Developing Leadership Capacity

# Three key outcomes

01

## Why lifelong well-being as a relational practice?

Explore the relationship between individual experiences, relationships and nested systems.

02

## Leadership practices and flourishing

Consider how teachers and leaders create the conditions for people to flourish.

03

## From intention to practice

Lifelong well-being is individually enacted and systemically supported.

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# Our 75-minute session

Research-informed ideas, a short movement invitation, table discussion, and practical leadership takeaways.

| 07 | 13 | 10 | 20 | 15 | 10 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| MIN | MIN | MIN | MIN | MIN | MIN |
| **Welcome** | **Context** | **Research** | **Movement Break & Discuss** | **Apply** | **Close** |
| Standards & purpose | Why now? | Study & leadership | 5-min reset + 15-min table talk | Leadership Practices | Questions & reflections |

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# Why this conversation now?

Workload, administrative demands and classroom complexity challenge well-being and career sustainability.

**42%**

**of Alberta lower-secondary teachers reported experiencing work-related stress “a lot”**

**19%** **OECD average**

**+15 percentage points**

Increase in Alberta teachers reporting high work-related stress, 2018–2024.

Major stressors: marking (52%); students’ social and emotional well-being (51%); discipline (48%).

*Source: OECD (2025), TALIS 2024 Alberta.*

# Beyond Alberta

A worldwide issue with distinct local pressures

Across education systems, teachers face greater workload pressures, growing role complexity and concerns about sustaining their careers.

Individual well-being tools and resources alone have limited impact when working conditions do not support them.

**OUR SSHRC QUESTION**

## How do multi-level leadership practices influence teacher well-being and career sustainability?

Sources: OECD (2025); Fleming (2024); Kapoyannis (2026).

# From intention to sustainable practice

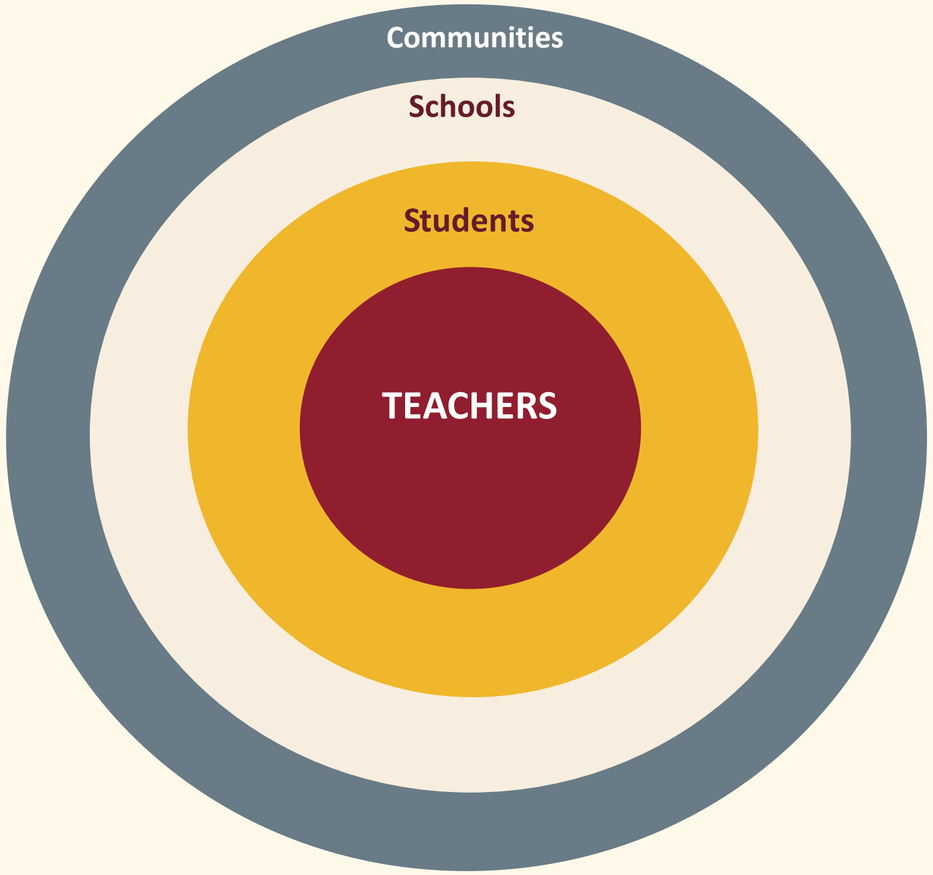
Why individual efforts and workplace conditions must work together

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 01 | **Individual effort matters** | Personal agency, reflection and self-care have genuine value. |
| 02 | **Conditions shape feasibility** | Standalone wellness interventions may have limited benefit when everyday work demands remain unchanged. |
| 03 | **Coherence makes practice possible** | Meaningful routines can be sustained when people, relationships and systems support one another. |

**SSHRC focus: Understanding the experience of teachers and principals and the influence of multi- level leadership practices on teacher wellbeing and career sustainability**

Sources: Fleming (2024); Kapoyannis (2026); SSHRC application.

# When teachers struggle, the effects ripple outward




## Well-being reaches across...

01 Individual experiences

02 School culture and relationships

03 Families and communities

04 Career decisions and continuity

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# Leadership practices operate across nested systems

Leadership and support move in both directions—from individual experience to policy and back.

## 01

### Individual

Self-awareness, authenticity, agency and daily well-being practices

## 02

### Classroom

Professional autonomy, competence and relationships

## 03

### School

Psychological safety, culture, mentorship and staff voice

## 04

### District

Resources, priorities, workload and professional learning

## 05

### Provincial

Teacher Voice in Policy expectations and accountability context

Coherence asks where these five levels reinforce one another—and where teachers experience friction.

# Theoretical Lenses Informing Lifelong Well-Being and Career Sustainability

Self-Determination Theory identifies three basic psychological needs that support well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

01

## Autonomy

Meaningful voice, choice and agency in how to proceed.

02

## Competence

Growth through goals, scaffolding, feedback and professional learning.

03

## Relatedness

Feeling connected to, supported by and valued by others.

How do we design with these three human needs for flourishing?
How do we move from positive intentions to sustained well-being practice?
How so we strengthen teacher voice in policymaking?

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# Lifelong well-being as a relational practice

Inner experience and outer nested systems are connected through relational practice.

## What do we mean by lifelong well-being?

An ongoing, context-embedded process of learning and living well, where personal intentions connect with relationships and systems.

**INNER · Self-awareness and lived experience**

**OUTER · Family, organizations, community and policy conditions**

**BRIDGE · Purpose, kindness and connection**




Figure 1, Kapoyannis (2026), Frontiers in Education

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# Sense of coherence

More than aligned plans: a felt sense of harmony between individual well-being and systemic support.

## COHERENCE AS LIFE HARMONY

A felt alignment between our inner experience and the relationships, routines and nested systems around us.

Individual intentions, relationships, everyday practices and organizational supports work together in ways educators can feel and sustain

**PAUSE • When you imagine coherence, what comes to mind?**

**Reflect, doodle or draw. Think: peace, energy, connection.**



Conceptual synthesis informed by Fullan & Quinn (2016), Hargreaves & O'Connor (2018) and Kapoyannis (2026).

## At the centre of this work is the primary research question...

# How do K–12 teachers and school principals make meaning of the influence of multi-level leadership practices on teacher well-being and career sustainability within current systemic challenges in Alberta?

SSHRC Insight Development Grant research question

# What we want to understand




What leaders hope a decision will accomplish

How the decision changes working conditions

How the change is experienced and interpreted

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# The Study: Planned Research Design

A qualitative approach centering how educators interpret their experiences.

**15**

**classroom teachers**

**10**

**school principals**

**3–5**

**public school boards**

**Semi-structured interviews + school/district document analysis + constant comparative analysis**

# Leadership Practices: From intentions to sustainable practice

Individual agency matters; shared leadership conditions help it last

## Individual agency & effort

- Personal well-being practices and reflection
- Professional judgment and healthy boundaries
- Feasible choices within real constraints

## Collective leadership conditions

- Human-centered and distributed leadership
- Relational trust and psychological safety (safe to speak up, admit a set-back and try a small change)
- Strengths-based practice and teacher voice
- Co-Design Systemic Scaffolds: using structural tools such as boundaries, shared agreements, sequences and collective cueing
- Shared agreements, predictable routines and cues

**KEY QUESTION • What conditions make well-being practices possible to sustain?**

# Purpose • Kindness • Connection

Three orienting principles that bridge inner signals and outer nested systems

## PURPOSE

What matters most?

Orient decisions toward meaning, priorities and contribution.

## KINDNESS

What is manageable now?

Make room for care, current capacity and small adjustments.

## CONNECTION

Who and what supports us?

Attend to relationships, belonging, context and shared conditions.

**From internal signals (energy, attention, values) to supportive collective conditions.**

Kapoyannis (2026); Ryff (1989), conceptual connection discussed in the article.

# Reflect → Transform → Flourish

A culture of invitation: notice, design one feasible step, learn and refine

## 01 REFLECT

Notice inner and outer signals.
What brings energy? Where is the friction?

## 02 TRANSFORM

Pair one micro-practice with one or two supportive conditions.

## 03 FLOURISH

Review feasibility and how it supports coherence.
What should we keep or adjust?

## COLLECTIVE STRUCTURES THAT HELP PRACTICE LAST

### BOUNDARIES

Agreed communication windows

### SEQUENCES

Protected work blocks

### AGREEMENTS

Predictable meeting norms

### COLLECTIVE CUES

Shared reminders or prompts

# Cultivating a culture of invitation

A short reset before we move into our table conversations

## MOVEMENT BREAK

# Leader Table Talk Invitations: choose your invitation

Take 15 minutes. Choose one or two of the five invitations; explore a third if time allows.

## 01

### Choose a question

Start with the prompt that matters most to your table. Draw on the experiences of people in the room.

## 02

### Listen for coherence

Where do individual experience, workplace conditions and leadership intent reinforce or contradict one another?

## 03

### Imagine practical use

How might you use one of these invitations within an existing leadership meeting or learning conversation?

# What are we learning together?

01

## What feels aligned?

An example of values and daily experience reinforcing one another. another.

02

## Where is the friction?

A practice, schedule or expectation that makes well-being harder to harder to sustain.

03

## What could be refined?

A small organizational change shaped by the people who will experience it.

# From fragmented efforts to coherent support

| When practices are fragmented | | When leadership practices connect |
|---|---|---|
| Competing initiatives and timelines | → | Priorities, resources and time considered together |
| Consultation with unclear follow-through | → | Feedback and feasibility visibly informs decisions |
| One-size-fits-all learning | → | Context-responsive professional learning |
| Responsibility left to the individual | → | Well-being treated as collective work |

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# Where could you use these invitations?

Think about an existing leadership conversation where one prompt might deepen understanding.

## OUR SETTING

A staff meeting, leadership team conversation or professional learning community

## OUR INVITATION

A question(s) that could help people name what is working and what needs attention

## OUR LEARNING

How will you capture what is heard and revisit it with the people involved?

DISCUSSION

# What might you carry back to your community?

Q&A

## What ideas resonated with you to share with your communities?

We welcome a few reflections, questions, or different perspectives from the from the room.

# References & research context


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# Thank you!

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