

Short Version of 2007 L.E.A.D.S. Leadership Paper¹

League of Educational Administrators, Directors, and Superintendents

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by

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“Leadership for excellence in education” succinctly describes what the League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents is all about. In order to “be” the kind of leaders and provide the necessary leadership for excellence in education there are an enduring set of core commitments which members of L.E.A.D.S. wholeheartedly affirm and work to embody in their various roles and contexts. The four key roles accommodate the complex, situated, and divergent roles across the L.E.A.D.S. membership: leader of leaders, servant of leaders, professional advocate, and steward of quality education.

The six fundamental commitments are: the L.E.A.D.S. member’s voice of personal conscience; professional convictions; professional constraints (including compliance to the L.E.A.D.S. Code of Ethics and due regard for the codes of other allied groups); common ethical principles; moral imagination; and relational reciprocity. Those exemplifying leadership for excellence in education not only *expressly affirm* these core commitments but *behave* accordingly in their daily work. L.E.A.D.S. members diligently seek to sustain their internal integrity (live and work in accord with the enduring core commitments) and external integrity (exercise their roles in a fashion consistent with the core commitments). Not only is integrity important but influence, intelligence and authenticity also provide the coherence and interconnections between core leadership values (enduring commitments) and the professional work within each of the role quadrants. L.E.A.D.S. members focus their collective attention on providing excellent and accountable professional educational leadership to the people of Saskatchewan.

Context for L.E.A.D.S. Leadership

In legal, political and moral terms, L.E.A.D.S. has a social contract between its members and the people of Saskatchewan to promote the cause of education, safeguard the interests and welfare of its colleague members, raise the status and developing the standards of educational administration, foster ethical behaviour and professional conduct, and influence the direction and quality of education.

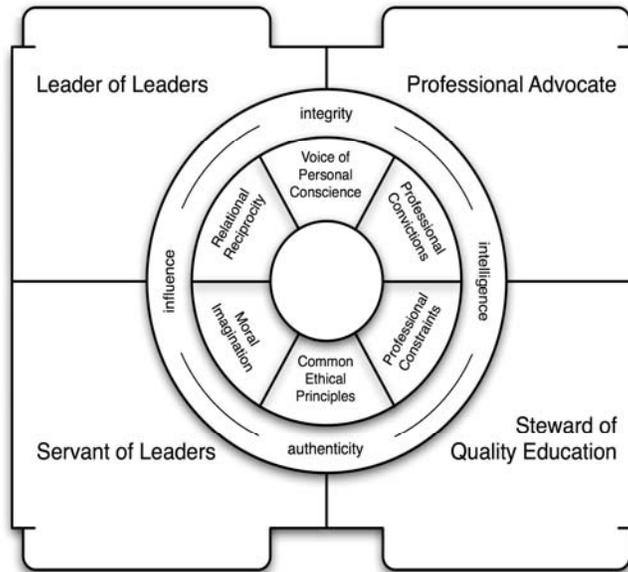
During the last two decades, there have been enormous changes in the Saskatchewan's educational environment. This environment has been described by two fundamental changes: the escalation of human problems and the increasing power and complexity of organizations. The challenges of adapting to external forces and the demands for internal integration and sense-making through reculturing educational systems have never been greater.

The expectations of constituents, the Provincial government, Boards, school communities, allied professionals, the needs of students and their parents, together with the demands of a knowledge economy have altered the nature of L.E.A.D.S. members' work and service. New forms of governance, socio-dynamics, competing interests, alternate means of resourcing education and the definition of educational investment and its performance metrics have and will continue to deeply impact members' work. The L.E.A.D.S. organization and its members demonstrate their leadership through their clarity of purpose, by the intensity of their passion, and for their promise to the people of Saskatchewan that their due diligence will provide leadership for excellence in education.

L.E.A.D.S. Leadership: An Overview

Educational leadership must effectively function to synergize means from across sectors, communities and systems such that the highest possible quality education is advocated, supported and delivered to the people of Saskatchewan. The function of educational leadership is most positively represented by those members whose practice is undergirded with a predetermined set of value commitments and integrated into their contextual roles as: leader of leaders, servant of leaders, professional advocate and steward of the educational resources.

The four role typologies are integrated with, and grounded in, these fundamental ideals of commitment. The glue that relates the roles to the core commitments may be described as *leadership integrity* and expressed through *influence* with *intelligence* and *authenticity*.



Four Contextual Roles of Educational Leadership

The four roles of educational leadership for excellence are co-equal in importance, interconnected, and relevant to all L.E.A.D.S. member work. These roles and accompanying expectations from constituents will often conflict.

Role as Leader of Leaders

Leader of leaders are persons who feel inwardly driven to take on the responsibilities of leadership not only because they believe they can, and that the goals are worthy, but other persons related to their circumstances also believe they are able to do so. This is not a role of exercising leadership over other leaders. The Roman concept of *primus inter pares*, or first among equals, more closely approximates what is in mind here. The first among equals place is earned by integrity, intelligence, influence, and authenticity, more than by formal position or posturing.

L.E.A.D.S. members are resilient lead learners with a deep sense of what personal and social learning has meant, and currently means, to them and their organization. They have a clear vision of what it takes of optimize learning for

themselves and others. Lead learners wear their enthusiasm for learning where ever they go – this is one of the first things that others see. They are committed to thinking about thinking. They read and listen. They ask questions. They initiate relationships with people who have different strengths than their own. L.E.A.D.S. members are diligent network and team builders. The capacity of leadership to overcome differences, build rapport, encourage teams of professionals to work together effectively are crucial. Effective team building is a major requirement for galvanizing the human resources in a school jurisdiction to accomplish its mission. The work of connecting through networks, communities of practice and teambuilding requires diligence. Diligent leaders of leaders are purposeful, wide-awake, imaginative, competent and fully engaged. Education leaders value and esteem their responsibilities and relationships.

L.E.A.D.S. members provide and foster tri-level and transorganizational leadership. Education is a particularly porous institution and so the boundaries of educational systems are difficult to define. On-purpose leadership refuses to spend too much time debating boundaries but, instead will invest energies in border-crossing and boundary-spanning. Leaders of leaders must reach beyond their own constituent groups and influence other non-educational and education sector jurisdictions. L.E.A.D.S. members need to be vigilant about connecting with schools while not neglecting division and provincial levels of leadership Leaders need to effectively interact with a *network-centric* view of systems of organizations.

L.E.A.D.S. members are entrepreneurial and *status quo* disturbing leaders who function to mediate cultural diversity, conflicts of interests and change through a visionary and professional comprehension and apprehension of educational purposes. Members have an entrepreneurial orientation that constantly looks for new opportunities and ways to challenge ineffectiveness and motivate others to move off status quo fixations, with adaptive confidence. Entrepreneurial leadership enlivens by breathing new life into organizations and communities.

Role of Servant of Leaders

Effective leaders support the renewal, reproduction and transformation of the people and serve as catalysts, animators, and servants to build high performing teams, of encouraged and enabled professionals. Servant leadership builds trust in

relationships. Servant-leaders seek to enable and they are pleased to see others honored. The most common test for servants of leaders asks: Do those I serve grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And what is the effect on the least privileged in society; will they benefit, or, at least, not be further deprived?

L.E.A.D.S. members are resonant leaders and agents of cultural change. They are persons attuned to the big picture, and sophisticated conceptual thinkers. Moral purpose, mindfulness, and coherence-making are three elements closely allied with the notion of resonant leadership. Members are persistent in the development of adaptive confidence in both themselves and other members of the professional learning community. Together with their *community of discernment to the politics and pulse of people*, the educational leader senses, apprehends, and feels how leadership needs to be carried out. L.E.A.D.S. members are agents of leaderful schools and are able at bringing leadership out of everyone. Servant leaders sponsor, model, coach, and mentor other leaders at various levels in their organization and professional settings. This succession work is performed by facilitating and cultivating relationships throughout the organization and embedding the best of succession practices into the culture of the system.

L.E.A.D.S. members are transformative coach-mentors know that they can not do what needs doing alone and so they invite partners to participate in efforts to get extraordinary things done. Transformative leadership builds teams with spirit and cohesion. Servants of leaders release power, trust their subordinates and are prepared to stand accountable for the attitudes, actions and achievements of their organization. L.E.A.D.S. members are cultivators of trust and co-constructors of learning communities. Members understand that people work best when they work in their *sweet spots*, enjoy their work, are offered time and space to develop themselves, innovate, master tasks and find *flow* in their good work. The servant of leaders makes every effort to cultivate self and group actualization because of the aggregate benefit to the organization mission and its constituents. Supportive, encouraging, constructive, generative, and transparent interactions with other leaders produce a satisfying, creative, high quality, positive, high energy and effective learning community.

Role as Professional Advocate

Educational leaders assume the role of professional advocates in four domains. L.E.A.D.S. members are best interest advocates who reaffirm, with passion, the view that each decision or policy made must be made in the well understood best interests of the child and of the children. Best interest leadership provides a consensual *plumb line* by which diverse educational interests can congregate and be aligned. L.E.A.D.S. members are purveyors of warranted hope because they know that the first and last task of a leader is to keep hope alive. Leaders encourage the hearts of their followers to keep on. The challenge to help define life, one grounded in reality, and to meet the abiding and deep needs of our students, and other members of the learning community, is complex. Educational professionals make every effort to hold together their learning communities. They help them hold on to that which is valued and to relinquish or jettison all else. Hope validates, enriches, and supports the present yet this hope is always forward-looking.

L.E.A.D.S. members are brokers of common good and statespersons for the higher ground. The provision of high quality education serves as a compelling common good – this fundamental good requires professional advocacy. Members seek to be statespersons for the difficult work of forging higher ground. To facilitate inclusion in the processes and at the same time ensure that action is directed to resolve the problems, leadership must be strong, sensitive and conciliatory. Significant wisdom is required to broker dreams. Fair processes and fair hearing are provided for the proponents of various and, sometimes, conflicting perspectives. Leadership is the activity of orchestrating conflicts and mobilizing people to tackle tough problems. L.E.A.D.S. members inspire community leadership by knitting together the values and interests of their multiple constituencies. They garner, articulate and share a vision of the ideals that constitute the best of education and of the unique place that education has in creating the future. Leadership envisions an uplifting and ennobling future. To inspire leadership is to breathe life into communities and to get conversations, dialogue, common purposes and relational participation going. Leadership barter for exchange of burdens and benefits; builds through the development of direction, making opportunity for community member need fulfillment; binds the community together to pull in a

common direction that has significance and meaning for all; and bonds people through relationships that become highly valued and habituated.

Role as Steward of Quality Education

The role of steward of quality education entails the management of educational services and resources such that the highest possible level of excellence is achieved with these means. This role is a role of entrustment and accountability.

L.E.A.D.S. members are entrusted public stewards who effectively manage resources and services in a fashion attuned to needs and aligned to whole-system values. Members to use the powers and resources of their public office to advance public interests rather than to obtain personal benefits or private interests. L.E.A.D.S. members are strategic resources managers who avoid unjust distribution of goods and services, correct past inequities, combat socio-racial and economic favoritism and who mediate special interest demands.

L.E.A.D.S. members are quality performance leaders who work to assure quality of outcomes against measures of efficiency (value for investment) and effectiveness (alignment of purpose and performance). They seek to balance external accountability (pressure) with capacity building (support) in a fashion that is wholeheartedly and unequivocally respectful, pedagogically sound and based on the integral practice of core commitments. They work to develop cultures of value-based commitments, metrics for and collective commitment to target goals and helping people to define reality, and face failure with new solutions. L.E.A.D.S. members are sustainability leaders who invest deeply and wholeheartedly in paradigmatic and moral purpose. They provide means for long term nourishment of the system and focus on production capacity (not just production).

The Enduring Core Commitments of Leadership

L.E.A.D.S. members affirm an approach to leadership that conceives of leadership as occupying multiple and situated roles but being grounded in a foundational set of six fundamental, principle-rooted commitments.

Commitment to the Voice of Personal Conscience

Conscience is a self-conscious, integrating of reason, emotion, and will concerning right and wrong, good and evil, proper and improper. It is the wide-awake

subtle governor and arbitrator of behaviours, attitudes, thoughts, feelings, and choices that can be the basis for authorizing leadership initiatives.

It is a commitment to an internal gyroscope or true-North compass that seeks to give moral bearings for navigation through unfamiliar and stormy waters. A commitment to conscience is an invitation to both restraint and action.

Commitment to Professional Convictions

Varieties of educational and experiential backgrounds mediate each education leader's construction of social, emotional, moral, spiritual, appreciative, and educational intelligence. The exercise of a commitment to professional convictions guides the leader to act in concert with the professional and pragmatic values developed through their education and experience. Excellence also stands with firm courage and adaptive confidence in defense and with articulate expression of well-considered professional convictions.

Commitment to Professional Constraints

Constraints define and sort fiduciary obligations, delimit authority and responsibility, and authorize the work of executives. The constraints of limited resources, circumscribed legal, political, and psychological mandates are well known to those exercising such leadership. The L.E.A.D.S. code of ethics (revised in March 1984) is not simply a matter of internal or self sustaining benefit but rather the code is derived from the self-imposed professional commitment of the L.E.A.D.S. organization to the public that they will for ensure that the standards indicated are met by its members.

This leadership commitment admits: respect for socio-ethical order (rejection of naïve relativism), the pathological nature of ego-centricity, the arrogance and futility of trying to acquire power over others to control, and the need for professional humility in the service of educational purposes.

Commitment to Common Ethical Principles

Leaders fail because they lack either vision or virtue, or both. Leadership virtues are developed through both volitional disposition and particular abilities (evaluative, creative and predictive). In simplest of terms, values are what are important to us. Authentic leadership emanates from those who live and work consistently with their

knowledge that administrative decisions can restructure or significantly alter a human life.

Common ethical principles provide hinges for the L.E.A.D.S. member decisions, attitudes and actions in their various role functions. These ethical principles express themselves in leaders who are: trustworthy (through honesty, integrity, promise-keeping and loyalty); honouring of each and all persons (through respect for all persons); responsible (through valuing of accountability, self-restraint and pursuit of excellence); fair (through embodying and ensuring that notions of justice, equity, due process, procedural fairness and impartiality, objectivity, openness and consistency in their and others' actions and attitudes); caring (through concern for the interests of others that transcends mere avoidance of harm to others and characterized by kind, compassionate and generous interactions with and on behalf of others); and stewardship (through acknowledgment of civic and professional duty to contribute to the overall public good through their community and social consciousness, and service).

Commitment to Moral Imagination

L.E.A.D.S. members give space in their leadership to affective and imaginative ways of being, knowing, doing and daring. Moral and prophet imagination is a vital resource to form visions of preferred futures, for resourceful problem-solving, for falsifying necessity of dysfunction, and for the realization of possibilities. Leadership sees the commitment to moral imagination as an instrument to release constituents from bondage to fictions and any sense that any particular deficit educational condition need be permanent.

Relational Reciprocity

It is often said that leadership is all about and only about relationships. Leadership practice occurs in the chemistry and interactions between people. The commitment to relational reciprocity obliges leadership to respect the inherent dignity of each person, as an Ends rather than Means. A person is a *Thou* rather than an *It*. The possibility of dehumanizing the services of leadership to crass servitude to person-less causes makes it more necessary for the triumph of compassion, caring, and the foundational view that people matter.

Integrity: The Conjunction of Leader Values and Action

Integrity is the consistent act of holding together and expressing through role behaviour the core commitments. With integrity there is no duplicity, divided mind, nor distinction between words and actions for a person with integrity. People with integrity have nothing to hide and nothing to fear, despite the enormous external environmental challenges and the complex constituent responsibilities. Integrity is a complex alliance of standards of morality and personally constructed ideals. Integrity can be described as the character of uncorrupted virtue. Educational leadership must be a profession which has a clear sense of what it professes. Educational leadership avoids being committed to everything or nothing. Leadership that demonstrates integrity holds in dynamic tension the challenges of constantly caring for people and being courageous with respect to forwarding the cause. This tightrope tension has been referred to as “a paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will.”²

Conclusion

L.E.A.D.S. members center their attentions on renewing and improving their educational leadership, not only because they are legally and ethically bound to do so, but because, through their increasingly able leadership, the aspiration of providing leadership for excellence for education is more likely to be fulfilled.

Leadership is ideally expressed as context dependent set of roles and activities rooted in seminal value-commitments. Educational leaders function to influence communities and systems such that the highest possible quality of education is advocated, supported and delivered to the people of Saskatchewan. Educational leadership takes the very best of educational intentions and translates these into reality. L.E.A.D.S. members provide exceptional educational leadership. Educational leaders require a pre-determined commitment to values, a clear understanding of how their various leadership roles fit into their day to day work lives, and perhaps most important, the courage to do what they know.

¹ The original paper, of which this is only a summary, consists of about 50 pages of references and footnotes. For sake of space the reader is referred to that document to view citations, references, attributions and bibliographic materials.

² Collins, 2001, p. 20.