



Professional Practices

For the 21st Century Leader

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Baldanza's Model of 21st Century Instructional Leadership

About the Author



Marcia Baldanza, the author of *Professional Practices* and a Just ASK Senior Consultant, lives in Arlington, Virginia. Until recently she worked for the School District of Palm Beach County, Florida, where she was an Area Director for School Reform and Accountability; prior to that she was Director of Federal and State Programs.

For some time, I have been developing a workable model of instructional leadership - one that is grounded in research and theory yet practical and approachable. This issue focuses on my theory of action and the components of the model I call, *Baldanza's Model of 21st Century Instructional Leadership*. This model considers the aspects of school leadership I have practiced and observed in my tenure as a school principal, district director, instructional superintendent, and university professor that move the needle on student achievement. I started with a broad-based theory of action around four big ideas: Strong Advocacy and Leadership, Adult Professional Culture, Continuous Improvement of Teaching Expertise, and Results-Oriented Teams. Next, I took a deep dive into each component to create four targeted theories of action. Finally, I put all of the thinking into a Venn Diagram as shown on the next page. I'd love to hear what you think.

Email me at marcia_baldanza@justaskpublications.com with feedback!

Broad Theory of Action

If schools and districts model, foster, and insist upon strong advocacy for each student and leadership is used as a catalyst for improved teaching and learning;

- with an adult professional culture where everyone knows their purpose and goals, and treats others with respect due to full partners;
 - with continuous improvement of teaching expertise based on student academic, social, physical, and moral needs; and
 - with a deliberate focus on results and teamwork where collaborative problem solving is the established norm;
- then schools and districts will be forward leaning, responsive, productive, purposeful places where learning flourishes in and for each student.

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Theory of Action #1: Strong Advocacy and Leadership

If we develop, advocate, and enact a shared school mission, vision, and core values focused on each student; and

- we strive for equity and cultural responsiveness while managing resources toward goals and improved outcomes;
- we lead a learning community with an understanding of change management; and
- we foster productive and trusting relationships among and between stakeholders; and
- we have our own personal learning network and mentor;

then our advocacy and leadership will be a strong catalyst for improved teaching and learning for all.

Theory of Action #2: Adult Professional Culture

If we act ethically and according to agreed-upon professional norms and insist that others do the same; and

- we cultivate a caring and inclusive culture based on ethical practice keeping students front and center; and
- we apply adult learning theory to develop capacity in others and support professional learning; and
- we provide opportunities for collaboration and job-embedded learning; and
- we coach and mentor others to support modeling, questioning, and observing practice;

then everyone knows their purpose, roles and responsibilities and is a full partner in the life of the school.

Theory of Action #3: Continuous Improvement of Teaching Expertise

If we develop and support rigorous curriculum, instruction, and assessment and accept no excuses for inaction and failure; and

- we refocus teaching after assessing and redesign priorities around instructional needs; and
- we embrace and incorporate digital tools to enhance collaboration and communication; and
- we visit classrooms frequently and deliver meaningful feedback to students and teachers; and
- we foster curricular coherence and innovation that links goals, learning tasks, and assessments around the mission, vision, and core values;

then we have established a forward-thinking culture focused on the current and future needs of each student.

Theory of Action #4: Results-Oriented Teams

If we engage a professional learning community, including varied stakeholders, in meaningful work; and

- we monitor and support high quality, standards-aligned curriculum, instruction, and assessment; and
- we design acceleration, not remediation, models of support for students and teachers; and
- we collect and analyze performance data to make instructional and support decisions; and
- we identify and develop teacher leaders including models for induction and mentoring;

then our teams can be high functioning problem solvers with accountability and authority to make shifts and decisions that support each student.

Let's have some fun with this model to help understand its potential. I separated the verbs and the concepts from the theories of action. It makes an impressive list of attitudes, skills (verbs), and knowledge (concepts) the 21st century educational leader must have to analyze, enhance, and increase staff and student performance!

Verbs		Concepts	
Model	Support	Strong advocacy	Caring and inclusive culture
Foster	Provide	Leadership	Ethical practice
Insist	Mentor	Catalyst	Adult learning theory
Know	Practice	Adult professional culture	Capacity
Focus	Model	Purpose	Job-embedded
Respect	Question	Goals	professional learning
Forward leaning	Observe	Partnerships	Full partners
Respond	Accept	Continuous improvement	Rigorous curriculum, instruction, assessment, and leadership
Produce	Refocus	Current and future needs	Digital tools
Learn	Embrace	Social, emotional, physical, moral needs	Communication
Flourish	Communicate	Teamwork	Collaboration
Develop	Assess	Results	Classrooms
Advocate	Incorporate	Collaborative problem-solving	Meaningful feedback
Enact	Enhance	Norms	Curricular coherence
Strive	Visit	Each student	Innovation
Manage	Deliver	Shared mission, vision, core values	High-quality, standards aligned curriculum
Lead	Accelerate	Every teacher	Acceleration
Improve	Link	Equity	Performance data
Understand	Establish	Cultural responsiveness	Teacher leaders
Act	Engage	Resources	Accountability
Trust	Monitor	Outcomes	Authority
Change	Design	Change management/agent	Shared decisions
Innovate	Collect	Learning community	
Prioritize	Analyze	Trusting relationships	
Cultivate	Identify	Personal learning network	
Apply	Include		
	Shift		

To demonstrate the overlap and connectivity of this model, take a verb from the first column and pair it with each concept from the concept section. Do that with the second verb, third verb, and so on. Every verb can be used with every concept and slightly shifts the meaning to become an equally important or more important idea. Examples are:

- **Model** strong advocacy. Model leadership. Model being a catalyst. Model an adult professional culture. Model purpose. Model goals. Model partnerships. Model continuous improvement. Model teamwork....Model shared decisions.

- **Foster** strong advocacy. Foster leadership. Foster being a catalyst. Foster an adult professional culture. Foster purpose. Foster goals. Foster partnerships. Foster continuous improvement. Foster teamwork....Foster shared decisions.
- **Embrace** teamwork. Embrace equity. Embrace learning communities. Embrace digital tools. Embrace collaboration. Embrace strong advocacy. Embrace leadership. Embrace ethical practice. Embrace innovation... Embrace shared decisions.

Experts Who Have Influenced My Thinking and Actions

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Theory of Action #4 Results-Oriented Teams

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