



# Professional Practices

For the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Leader

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## Make a Difference Messages

### 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.

I am looking forward to a great new school year ahead! I hope that you are as well. Like you, I'm always looking for ways to get our year started off right—something that will uplift my teachers and students and help me communicate our mission, vision, and core values. This year, I have **Five Make a Difference Messages** that I know will inspire, motivate, and energize. Use mine or make up your own and be ready for a great year.

### Make a Difference Messages

1. **I trust you. I believe in you. I know you can do this!**
2. **We are all leaders and learners.**
3. **You can count on me to stand by (and with) you.**
4. **We are family and you are important.**
5. **We always choose the hard right over the easy wrong.**

In this issue of *Professional Practices*, I examine collective efficacy, relational trust, and collaboration to support the sometimes heavy lifting we do in schools. I share some resources to help you think more deeply about leading and learning; the Common Principles poster is a new favorite for this. Inspired by singer songwriters Bruno Mars and Ben E. King, I unpack instructional scaffolding. I also describe an amazing alternative secondary school in Alaska that functions as a family; the student testimonials will really move you. We should all take a field trip there together! I remind us that celebrations matter and are important in the life of the school and give some highlights from a text I use with my graduate students at Virginia Tech. I wrap up with a call to action to realize our moral imperative to provide equity and culturally responsive opportunities for all students. Embedded within each message are the aligned **PSEL** standards.

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## I trust you. I believe in you. I know you can do this!

### Collective Efficacy

When teams of educators believe they have the ability to make a difference, exciting things can happen in a school.

In the 1970s (Yes, that's a long time ago, but it is still relevant.), Albert Bandura, a psychologist at Stanford University, uncovered an interesting pattern in work-group dynamics. He observed that a group's confidence in its abilities seemed to be associated with greater success; the assurance a person places in his or her team affects the team's overall performance. Further, when a team of individuals share the belief that through their unified efforts they can overcome challenges and produce intended results, groups are more effective; and when educators believe in their combined ability to influence student outcomes, there are significantly higher levels of academic achievement (Bandura, 1993).

Models for collective efficacy in schools have been tested and refined, with researchers finding that as successes and support strengthen teachers' confidence in their teams, student achievement increases as well (Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2004; Adams & Forsyth, 2006).

### John Hattie's Effect Size Research

This average summarizes the typical effect of all possible influences on education.

Note: The average effect size is 0.40

Influence	Effect Size
Collective Teacher Efficacy	1.57
Prior achievement	0.65
Socioeconomic status	0.52
Home environment	0.52
Parental involvement	0.49
Motivation	0.48
Concentration/persistence/engagement	0.48
Homework	0.29

### Collaboration

To create a collaborative learning community, we need to think and operate systemically. How would our collaboration be different, even better, if we based our interactions on relationships, networks, quality, interdependence, cooperation and partnership and not on individualism, hierarchy, quantity, independence, competition, and domination.

We cannot change curriculum from fact-based to concept-based without changing teaching and learning strategies and assessment procedures; we cannot change decision-making from district-based to site-based without changing roles and relationships throughout the system; we cannot move to a block schedule from a 7-period day without changing how teachers teach. Let's connect with these principles and be purposeful about our intentions and our collaboration, like my colleague below.

Like many large school districts, Fairfax County Public Schools in northern Virginia created regions to assist leaders with management and support, as well as to enhance collaboration among schools. Terry Dade leads Region 3 and was recently a doctoral student of mine at Virginia Tech. In one class, Mr. (soon to be Dr.) Dade shared Region 3's approach to creating a collaborative culture among its schools with the idea to engage all 45 principals in authentic,

informal networks of professional practice. Terry adapted the following from the American Medical Association by changing only one word - patient to student. I found this to be motivating, inspiring, and compelling. What if all of our schools lived by these words?

### Fairfax County Public Schools Region 3 Collaboration

The needs of the student come first.  
We will meet student needs through unsurpassed collaboration.  
No one is big enough to work independently of others.  
The combined wisdom of one's peers is greater than any individual.  
We will use a teamwork approach, share our insights, and take continuous interest in each other's growth.

### Relational Trust

Relational trust refers to the interpersonal social exchanges that take place in a group setting. Research found it to have a particularly strong impact on student achievement in school communities. EL Education has a useful set of resources on this topic and others. Watch the video <https://youtu.be/flqXh-8oak4> and use the resources to meet these learning targets for your staff:

- Describe the role of relational trust in a school community.
- Explain why relational trust is critical for promoting a culture of trust and a growth mindset.
- Explain structures and practices that promote a culture of trust and a growth mindset.

How about writing a goal around trust for your new school improvement plan?

2015 PSEL Connect: 1a, 2e, 3b, 4a, 5d, 6d, 7a, 7b

### We Are All Leaders and Learners

#### Leadership is not a position; it is a disposition

In his provocative book, *You Don't Need a Title to be a Leader*, Mark Sanborn reminds us that through our everyday actions we influence the lives around us. As all leaders know, titled or not, leadership is power *with* people not *over* people.

#### Managers vs. Leaders

Managers have employees	Leaders win followers
Managers react to change	Leaders create change
Managers have good ideas	Leaders implement them
Managers communicate	Leaders persuade

### Learner-Centered Instruction

In my inbox this morning, I found Matthew Lynch's 10 Characteristics of an Innovative Classroom. It is easy to see how this list can apply to the school house and district offices as well.

- **Reflection-** Innovative classrooms are constantly evolving and changing. Students push themselves and ask, "what if?"

- **Constant Learning-** Every event is seen as a teachable moment and the classroom is fast-paced.
- **Creativity-** Students come up with unique solutions to everyday problems and are future and forward leaning.
- **Connection-** Teachers know students well and keep up with emerging trends.
- **Principles and Routines-** Strong values and routines are incorporated into each day and serve as guidelines for how the day is run.
- **Problem-Finding-** Learners actively seek out problems in the classroom, in their learning, and in the world.
- **Collaboration-** Students work and discuss with each other.
- **Variation-** Teaching strategies evolve as learning needs change.
- **Goal Setting-** Innovative learners set goals for themselves and crush them. The goals are large and small and guide them towards innovation.
- **Opportunities for Revision-** Innovative learners recognize that nothing is ever perfect. They are resilient and push ahead while improving and adapting.

Additionally, blogger and educator, Bill Ferriter separates the idea of engagement and empowerment nicely. He states, “Engaging students means getting kids excited about our content, interests, curriculum.” Empowering students “means giving kids the knowledge and skills to pursue their passions, interests, and future.” This doesn’t mean that empowerment happens instead of engagement. In reality, people do not truly feel empowered without being engaged. But if engagement is the bar we hope to reach, we’re missing the point. <http://blog.williamferriter.com/2014/01/28/should-we-be-engaging-or-empowering-learners/>

Finally, take a look at the Coalition for Essential Schools Common Principles <http://essentialschools.org/> The ideas here are powerful and important in any educational setting.

## The Coalition of Essential Schools: Common Principles



<p><b>Learning to use one's mind well</b></p> <p>The school should focus on helping young people learn to use their minds well. Schools should not be “comprehensive” if such a claim is made at the expense of the school’s essential educational purposes.</p>	<p><b>Less is more: depth over coverage</b></p> <p>The school’s goals should be simple. Each student should acquire a limited number of essential skills and areas of knowledge. While these skills and areas will, by varying degrees, reflect the traditional academic disciplines, the program’s design should be shaped by the intellectual and cognitive power and capacities that the students need, rather than by “subject” as conventionally defined. The approach “less is more” should dominate; curricular decisions should be guided by the aim of thorough student mastery and achievement rather than by an effort to merely cover content.</p>	<p><b>Goals apply to all students</b></p> <p>The school’s goals should apply to all students, while the means to those goals will vary with those students themselves vary. School practices should be tailored made to meet the needs of every group or class of students.</p>
	<p><b>Personalization</b></p> <p>Teaching and learning should be personalized to the maximum feasible degree. Efforts should be directed toward a goal that no teacher have direct responsibility for more than 20 students in the high school and middle school and no more than 20 in the elementary school. To optimize this personalization, decisions about the details of the course of study, the use of students, and teachers’ time need the checks of teaching materials and specific pedagogues must be consciously placed in the hands of the principal and staff.</p>	<p><b>Student-as-worker, teacher-as-coach</b></p> <p>The governing practical metaphor of the school should be “student-as-worker” rather than the more familiar metaphor of “teacher as deliverer of instructional content.” Accordingly, a primary pedagogical aim is coaching students to learn how to learn and thus to teach themselves.</p>
<p><b>Demonstration of mastery</b></p> <p>Learning is not complete until students demonstrate mastery based on student performance of real tasks. Students not only at appropriate levels of competence should be provided intensive support &amp; resources to assist them readily to meet these demands. Multiple forms of evidence, ranging from ongoing observation of the learner to completion of specific projects, should be used to better understand the learner’s strengths &amp; needs, &amp; to plan for further assistance. Students should have opportunities to submit their reports to their family &amp; community. The diploma should be awarded upon successful final demonstration of mastery for graduation – an “Oathbook” as the diploma is awarded when earned. The school’s program proceeds with no strict age grading &amp; with no program of “credits earned” by “time spent” in class.</p>	<p><b>A tone of decency and trust</b></p> <p>On how the school should explicitly and self-consciously stress values of unambiguous expectations, of trust, and of decency, fairness, generosity, and tolerance. However appropriate to the school’s particular students and teachers should be emphasized. Family should be key collaborators and vital members of the school community.</p>	<p><b>Commitment to the entire school</b></p> <p>The principal and teaching staff should be committed as generalists first, teachers and scholars in general, and specialists second, especially in their own particular disciplines. Staff should expect multiple obligations: these include oversight and development of a sense of commitment to the entire school.</p>
<p><b>Resources dedicated to teaching and learning</b></p> <p>Ultimate administrative and budgetary decisions should include student needs that promote personalization, substantive time for the collection, planning, and execution of complex projects for staff, and an absolute no-impact cost not exceed that of a traditional school. To ensure that 10 percent. To accomplish this, administrative plans may have to show the present reduction or elimination of some services now provided to students in many schools.</p>		<p><b>Democracy and equity</b></p> <p>The school should demonstrate non-discriminatory and inclusive policies, practices, and pedagogues. It should make every effort to ensure that all students who are directly affected by the school. The school should have clearly articulated policies on the subject of its curriculum, disciplinary, and equity, challenging all forms of inequity.</p>

Download the CES: Common Principles Poster at <http://essentialschools.org/common-principles/>

2015 PSEL Connect: 3f, 4c, 4d, 6g, 7g, 10j



## You Can Count on Me to Stand by (and with) You

“Count on Me” by Bruno Mars (2010) and “Stand by Me” by Ben E. King (1961) are two of my favorite songs and they both support this message with a swing. Take a listen!

### Asking the Hard Questions

When I was a principal, I always had an open door. I found people would come in for all kinds of reasons, but when they came with a problem or were upset, I learned to ask, “Are you sharing this because you want me to take action, problem solve with you, or simply listen?” This question works well at home too!

Recently, my son had a friend over who asked me a question to which I responded with my usual, “What do you think?” My son said to his friend that I answer questions with questions then added with a smile...it makes me think for myself. This mom was happy!

Some of my favorite question starters are:

“Given that...”

“Now what?”

“How do you know?”

“What will you do when?”

My son participated in Montessori programs from the age of 18 months until third grade. A major underpinning of the philosophy and program design is to not do for a child what he can do for himself. Doing so, robs him of the opportunity to learn independence. I find myself repeating this often, usually in my mind to myself. When younger, this meant not removing the cap from the toothpaste for him. Now, it is not packing his backpack for him. Mornings take a little longer, but I know it will be worth it in the end! Usually, his questions are answered with a question that helps him get to solid ground. Sometimes a bit of scaffolding is necessary.

### Instructional Support AKA Scaffolding

I bolded key words/ideas from *Wikipedia’s* definition for scaffolding that apply or should apply to our work in schools: “Scaffolding, also called scaffold or staging, is a **temporary structure used to support** a work crew and materials to aid in the construction, maintenance and repair of buildings, bridges and all other manmade structures. Scaffolds are widely used on site to get **access to heights and areas that would be otherwise hard to get to**. Unsafe scaffolding has the potential to result in death or serious injury. Scaffolding is also **used in adapted forms** for formwork and shoring, grandstand seating, concert stages, access/viewing towers, exhibition stands, ski ramps, half pipes and art projects.”

The bolded words above give us a concrete educational definition. Instructional scaffolding is an adapted and temporary structure used to support learners to access new learning and concepts that otherwise might not be reached. **The operative word is temporary.**

2015 PSEL Connect: 2c, 2d, 3g, 3h, 6e, 7c, 7d, 10a, 10i

## We Are Family and You’re Important

Steller Secondary School in the Anchorage Alaska School District and offers an alternative to standard (large school) education. The primary emphasis is on responsibility to self and to the Steller community. Students, parents, and staff participate in the democratic process of setting school policy and procedures.

- Among the “Great Reasons to Choose Steller” student voice and choice are common, clear, and connected, [www.stellerschool712.org/main/great-reasons-to-choose-steller/](http://www.stellerschool712.org/main/great-reasons-to-choose-steller/) .
- Even more impressive is the “What Our Students Say About Steller” page, [www.stellerschool712.org/main/prospective-students/what-our-students-say-about-steller/](http://www.stellerschool712.org/main/prospective-students/what-our-students-say-about-steller/)



This school is a family where everyone is important! Here are just a few student testimonials:

- “Steller is a trusting community that promotes the experience of responsible freedom.” – Jaisa, 11th Grade
- “Steller combines student responsibility, respect, and a feeling of a community. Every student here has a voice and every student has a choice in how they want their education to be.” – Mallory R., 9th Grade
- “Steller is like PJ’s. It comforts you.” – Talon, 7th grade
- “I go to Steller because no matter how you are doing with grades, knowledge, and personal issues, you always have someone there to help and listen.” – Ariel, 8th Grade
- “I like that I’m an individual, not just a face in the crowd.” – Aaron, 10th Grade
- “Steller gives me room to be unique.” – Sam, 11th Grade
- “I feel comfortable being my true self.” – Chandler, 12th Grade

What would your students say about your school family?

### **Celebrations Matter**

Celebrations are energizing and life affirming (Farina and Koch 2014). There is a rhythm to the school year with its predictable peaks and valleys. Farina and Koch remind us of how important celebrations are. Here are my highlights.

- Positioning celebrations throughout the year provides energy and keeps morale and inspiration high.
- Principals who spend time creating a culture of celebrations are more likely to retain staff.
- Honoring milestones in the lives of your faculty shows your knowledge of them as people and the value you place on their personal contributions.
- Teachers who are celebrated are more likely to share their practices with colleagues.
- A school with a celebratory culture is more inviting to parents, teachers, and students.
- Celebrations make your vision visible, spotlight steps along the way, and leave a legacy of affirmation.
- What you choose to celebrate says as much as what you choose to not celebrate.

**2015 PSEL Connect: 5a, 5b, 5c, 5f, 6f, 6h, 7e, 8b, 8c**

### **We Always Choose the Hard Right Over the Easy Wrong**

We must confront inequity and remove barriers that limit opportunity. It is unacceptable to know a student (or teacher or principal) is failing and do nothing about it. We must ensure that all students really means all students and not just some students. Sometimes, that can be hard, but it’s always right!

In Stephen Sawchuk’s *EdWeek* blog titled “The State of Common-Core Reading and Writing in 5 Charts” he illustrates the results from a nationally representative survey of 1,200 ELA teachers in grades 4-6, 6-8, and 9-10. The results suggest that teachers have shifted their practices on vocabulary development in context and increased their use of nonfiction. However, the most notable struggle is having students of all reading abilities grapple with grade-level text. This is where we must choose the “hard right” of all students being taught with grade level material. It is not acceptable to keep students sheltered from the complex text they will see on high stakes testing (that, in some states forces a retention and assignment to intensive reading classes). It is our moral responsibility and our job to teach all students to read at or beyond grade-level mastery. This begins in our primary grades PK-2. I make a case for strengthening the lower grades literacy models, reducing the class size, holding guided reading groups where strategic reading is taught and learned. I put the bulk of my resources (staff, funds, materials) there to support our mission. When students are not reading on grade level by third grade and take a standardized test that they have had no exposure to because we’ve allowed them to always read chosen books at their independent reading level and they fail, we retain them. Research on retention is clear that students who are retained are less likely to graduate. Opportunities are limited and prospects are poor. It is not the 7-year old’s fault he or she can’t read—it is ours. Shame on us for not choosing the hard right of teaching all kids to read on grade level by third grade over the easy wrong of letting students linger in below grade level text too long!

See full report here:

<http://edex.s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/publication/pdfs/%2807.19%29%20Reading%20and%20Writing%20Instruction%20in%20America%27s%20Schools.pdf>

### **The Moral Imperative Realized Is a Call to Action**

Michael Fullan makes it clear that the most pious mission statement held with passionate conviction will not improve schools unless educators take strategic actions to bring that mission to life. This recording <https://youtu.be/jyHTdqdcY2o> is a must-see conversation with Fullan that will jump start your call to action.

### **Equity and Cultural Responsiveness**

Culturally responsive teaching is a method to improve engagement and equity. The key is helping students relate lesson content to their own backgrounds. Educators should consider the following approaches multiple researchers have found representative of culturally responsive education:

- Match classroom instruction to cultural norms for social interaction to enhance students' social skills development and problem-solving ability.
- When asking questions or giving directions, adjust Wait Time for students from different cultures to enhance classroom participation and the development of critical thinking skills.
- Be sensitive to the cultural shifts that immigrant students, or other students with minority family and community cultures, must make as they move between school and home.
- Help parents gain cultural capital, that is, the skills to negotiate the education system and knowledge of the norms of behavior that govern schools.
- Use culturally responsive and respectful approaches in character education and social skill instruction.

**2015 PSEL Connect: 1c, 1g, 2a, 2b, 3c, 3d, 3e, 9k**

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