



Professional Practices

For the 21st Century Leader

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Making PSEL Come Alive! What's on Your Mind?

About the Author



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The focus for this month's *Professional Practices for the 21st Century Leader* is **Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL), Standard 5: Community of Care and Support for Students**. My 25 years of experience as a teacher, principal, director, and mother have reinforced the belief that the vast majority of us in the field of educational leadership are passionately interested in improving the lives of all students in our care. These standards compel education leaders to approach every decision based on what is best for the students in our care. At the end of each day I reflect on two essential questions:

- Did I make a difference today for our students?
- Did I focus on what matters most for their learning and their well-being?

Improving student learning takes a holistic view of leadership. In all realms of their work, educational leaders must focus on how we are promoting the learning, achievement, development, and well-being of each student.

As I write this issue of *Professional Practices for the 21st Century Leader*, I have a lot on my mind... a lot about how we're implementing the **PSEL**, a lot about how we create and maintain classrooms that support all learners, a lot about how we create collaborative cultures, and a whole lot about how we keep joy in our schools. With Standard 5 as my focus this month, I challenge you to keep working at creating a culture that inspires and delights—one that resonates inclusivity, scaffolds support, and has a relentless focus on student achievement.

Getting PSEL into Districts and Schools

First, let me say that having a comprehensive set of leadership or teaching standards is a great thing for our districts and schools. I am struck by the number of times I return to the original publication for clarity in the defining attributes of the **Professional Standards for Educational Leaders**. The **PSEL** are increasingly relevant and purposefully rigorous. Here are four attributes that spoke to me for this issue.

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- The **PSEL** provides guideposts and are grounded in current research and the real-life experiences of educational leaders.
- They articulate the leadership that our schools need and our students deserve.
- They are student-centric, outlining foundational principles of leadership to guide the practice of educational leaders so they can move the needle on student learning and achieve more equitable outcomes.
- They are designed to ensure that educational leaders are ready to effectively meet the challenges and opportunities of the job today and in the future as education and society continue to transform.

While these guideposts are important, they do not matter nearly as much as what happens in the schoolhouse and classroom—that’s where the rubber meets the road!

So, I wonder why haven’t more states moved to adopt them. Are we that slow to change? Do we not have the urgency for each student’s academic success and well-being? Do we not believe that the **Professional Standards for Educational Leaders** are important and related to our work every day?

Having a set of standards can align improvement efforts, focus on the future, expand and enrich the lives of those in our schools (students, teachers, and families). Aside from education politics, school choice, budget cuts, and testing consider these recent headlines:

- “How Google Took Over the Classroom” (Natasha Singer, 5/13/17, *NY Times*)
- “Makers Movement Changes Educational Landscape” (Gaby Galvin, 5/22/17 *US News*)

- “Education Chief Wants More Well-Rounded Learning” (Associated Press, 4/15/17, *NBC News*)
- “Black Girls are Twice as Likely to be Suspended, in Every State” (Lauren Camera, 5/9/17, *US News*)
- “How to Talk to Children about Terrorism” (Katherine Selgren, 5/23/17 day after bombing at Ariana Grande concert in Manchester, *BBC News*)
- “Isolated Poorer Students More Likely to Drop Out” (James Doward, 5/20/17, *The Guardian*)
- “Gifted Education, Race & Poverty — How Do We Join Forces to Close America’s Excellence Gap?” (Jonathan A. Pluker, 5/22/17, *The 74*)
- “How Differences in Parent’s Income Plays Out in Schools” (Mike Bock, 5/22/17, *EdWeek*)
- “School Stats: The Number of Emergency Teachers in Washington Classrooms has Doubled” (Dahlia Bazzaz, 5/17/17, *Seattle Times*)
- “Teacher Placed on Leave Over Snapchat Complaint About Prom Expenses” (Associated Press, 5/19/17, *Fox News*)

These headlines reveal that the world schools operate in today is very different from the one of just a few years ago; all signs point to more change ahead. Technologies are advancing faster than ever. The conditions and characteristics of children, in terms of demographics, family structures, and more, are changing.

Without question, such changes are creating challenges for educational leaders. At the same time they present rich and exciting opportunities for leaders to innovate and inspire staff to pursue new, creative approaches for improving schools and promoting student learning. The **PSEL** helps us get there! Our schools and students cannot wait for us to move - so, get to it!

Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL)

- Mission, Vision, and Core Values
- Ethics and Professional Norms
- Equity and Cultural Responsiveness
- Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
- Community of Care and Support for Students
Effective educational leaders cultivate an inclusive, caring, and supportive school community that promotes the academic success and well-being of each student.
- Professional Capacity of School Personnel
- Professional Community for Teachers and Staff
- Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community
- Operations and Management
- School Improvement



Self-Assessment
2015 Professional Standards for Educational Leaders
Standard 5: Community of Care and Support for Students

Effective educational leaders cultivate an inclusive, caring, and supportive school community that promotes the academic success and well-being of *each* student.

1. Build and maintain a safe, caring, and healthy learning environment that meets the academic, social, emotional, and physical needs of each student.		My Priority
Degree to which I do this... 1 (low)...2.....3.....4.....5 (high)	Degree to which I want to know and do this better... 1 (low)...2.....3.....4.....5 (high)	

Goals, thoughts, and comments:

2. Create and sustain a learning environment in which each student is known, accepted and valued, trusted and respected, cared for, and encouraged to be an active and responsible member of the school community.		My Priority
Degree to which I do this... 1 (low)...2.....3.....4.....5 (high)	Degree to which I want to know and do this better... 1 (low)...2.....3.....4.....5 (high)	

Goals, thoughts, and comments:

3. Provide coherent systems of academic and social supports, services, extracurricular activities, and accommodations to meet the range of learning needs of each student.		My Priority
Degree to which I do this... 1 (low)...2.....3.....4.....5 (high)	Degree to which I want to know and do this better... 1 (low)...2.....3.....4.....5 (high)	

Goals, thoughts, and comments:

4. Promote adult-student, student-peer, and school-community relationships that value and support academic learning and positive social and emotional development.		My Priority
Degree to which I do this... 1 (low)...2.....3.....4.....5 (high)	Degree to which I want to know and do this better... 1 (low)...2.....3.....4.....5 (high)	

Goals, thoughts, and comments:

5. Cultivate and reinforce student engagement and positive student conduct.		My Priority
Degree to which I do this... 1 (low)...2.....3.....4.....5 (high)	Degree to which I want to know and do this better... 1 (low)...2.....3.....4.....5 (high)	

Goals, thoughts, and comments:

6. Infuse the learning environment with the cultures and languages of the community.		My Priority
Degree to which I do this... 1 (low)...2.....3.....4.....5 (high)	Degree to which I want to know and do this better... 1 (low)...2.....3.....4.....5 (high)	

Goals, thoughts, and comments:



Strategy Alert

Complete the self-assessment and use the results to set some priorities and goals for the 2017-2018 school year. You could even encourage your teachers to take it when they return in the fall and set some goals for cultivating a more inclusive, caring, and supportive classroom.

Prepare six pieces of chart paper by placing one of the six indicators of **Standard 5: Community of Care and Support for Students** as the heading on each chart. Draw a **See/Hear Chart** on each. Post the charts around the room and do a **Carousel Brainstorming** with small groups of faculty members moving from chart to chart to add their comments about what each indicator looks like and sounds like at your school. (It might be interesting to have students complete this same exercise. They might provide useful and perhaps even important information that can guide your future actions.)

Focus on the Second Indicator of Standard Five

2. Create and sustain a learning environment in which each student is known, accepted and valued, trusted and respected, cared for, and encouraged to be an active and responsible member of the school community.

Knowing Student's Names

If people don't know each other's names, it's hard to call a group a community. Learning and remembering everyone's name is a demonstrable sign of respect. Taking time to discover who we are in a group always pays off. The more we know about each other, the more comfortable and confident we feel working with each other. Here are a few ways my colleagues and I have worked to know each student.

- Greet every student every morning with a handshake and a greeting that includes their name. Challenge yourself to know them all within two weeks. Fred Chandler
- Use the current class photos to study faces with names. Practice while in classrooms to get every student right. Geoff McKee
- Find ways that you have to call students by name and look at them as you do (loading buses, in cafeteria, assemblies, etc.). Marissa Murphy
- At the start of the school year, have students say their first names every time they speak. This ensures you get the pronunciation correct. Kattie Lee
- Link a word that begins with the same consonant as the student's first name to each student, any word that describes something positive about that student (Graceful Grace, Eager Elliott, Positive Pavitt). Marcia Baldanza

Inspiring Students to be Active Members of the School Community

In their book *Inspiring Active Learning*, Merrill Harmin and Melanie Toth set out to define what makes a classroom inspiring to students. This book paired with Paula Rutherford's *Active Learning and Engagement Strategies* would make a powerful study group for the coming year!

Harmin and Toth assert that all students have an "inherent ability to live with **dignity**, to engage tasks with **energy**, to be appropriately **self-managing**, to work in **community** with at least some others, and to be **aware** of what is going on around them. Collectively, these **DESCA** abilities point to the heart of students' best, most productive selves." Here's a quick break down of the **DESCA** model excerpted from the text with some of resources from my repertoire.

D is for Dignity. Students want to live and work with dignity. They do not want to feel diminished, unimportant or unworthy. Don't we all? Our task, if we want to inspire students to be fully active learners, is to run our classrooms in a way that establishes and promotes such dignity. We might, for example, take care to:

- Avoid embarrassing students by temporarily backing off when some feel blocked or are otherwise unable to learn what we are asking them to learn or find a private moment to discuss potential support options.
- Use only those discipline procedures that communicate care and high respect for students.
- Find practical ways to give students credit whenever they do the best they can, even when that falls far short of mastery.
- Announce high expectations without raising unproductive.

E Is for Energy. Students also have a natural ability and desire to engage life energetically. They agonize when they must sit still or stand around for too long with nothing much to do. We do well to nurture that ability to live energetically. We certainly do not want students handling schoolwork apathetically or slumping in class listlessly. Nor do we want them running wildly out of control. Rather, we want students to engage schoolwork with a comfortable, steady flow of energy. To build on and draw out students' ability to do that, we might, for example:

- Use small groups, preferably pairs, to reduce chances that some students will be left uninvolved in group work.
- Adopt instructional procedures that allow students to occasionally move about so they can vent any built-up restlessness. Check out my favorite Just ASK publication, *Active Learning and Engagement Strategies* for more than 120 awesome strategies and exemplars.
- **Free Resource:** The *Just for the ASKing!* “Closing the Engagement Gap” seeks to investigate the concept of engagement from different perspectives with the outcome being that teachers can add new ways of thinking to the development of their plans and the execution of their lessons. www.justaskpublications.com/just-ask-resource-center/e-newsletters/just-for-the-asking/closing-the-engagement-gap/

S Is for Self-Management. All humans have the ability to self-manage, and we would do well to develop this in our students. We do not want students asking us every question that comes to mind. Instead, we want them to think for themselves and manage themselves as intelligently as they can. This is what they, too, want. They do not want to be bossed. Nor do they want to fly about out of control. To nurture students' self-managing ability, we might:

- Include choices in each homework assignment; for example, give options on how many questions to answer or on how to handle a topic.
- Allow students to select their own work partners, chairs in the room, or focus for a small-group discussion.
- **Free Resource:** This Student Engagement Self-Assessment is a powerful way for getting usable information from your students about their level of engagement. Give it a try! www.justaskpublications.com/just-ask-resource-center/mentoring-resources/StudentEngagement_SelfAssessment_1.

C Is for Community. Students have an ability to get along and relate comfortably with at least some others, and they want to do so. They do not want to be rejected or isolated. Who does? Rather, they want to be in community with at least some others. If, then, we want to elicit students' more cooperative and generous abilities, we might:

- Structure lessons so students can work together and support one another.
- Encourage talkative students to create enough space for all students to be able to speak out. Know who are your introverts and extroverts and plan instruction accordingly for all to interact.
- Set up support groups in which students learn to support one another over an extended time period.
- **Free Resource:** Just ASK's “Non-Negotiables for Creating a Culture for Learning” can be a forward-thinking element for your opening of school faculty meeting. Bruce Oliver's take on those non-negotiables can be accessed at www.justaskpublications.com/just-ask-resource-center/e-newsletters/just-for-the-asking/non-negotiables-for-creating-a-culture-for-learning/.

A Is for Awareness. Finally, all students are aware beings. They have the ability to be alert, wakeful, observant, attentive. They are not meant to be bored. Indeed, it is their very nature to avoid boredom which sometimes leads to problematic behaviors. And we, of course, want students to stay alert and aware. To do so, we might:

- Find a way to help slower learners without boring faster learners.
- Change whatever we are doing whenever we notice student attention sliding, as by changing topics or procedures.
- Avoid having quick thinkers answering all our questions, as by having all students jot an answer on scrap paper or share answers in pairs before we discuss correct answers.

- Include activities students are highly interested in completing by asking students to construct a model of an idea, teach a concept to a younger student, or solve a real problem showing up in school.
- **Free Resource:** My **Just ASK** colleague, Heather Clayton wrote, “Mirror, Mirror on the Wall: Promoting Student Reflection.” In this newsletter, Heather articulates “The true act of learning requires our students to reflect often and to make it a habit to think about what they have learned and how those ideas link to their previous experiences and what they already know. Building in time for reflection enhances the meaning of new content, promotes students’ growth, and builds insight.” Check out her newsletter at www.justaskpublications.com/just-ask-resource-center/e-newsletters/msca/mirror-mirror-on-the-wall-promoting-student-reflection/

Take a look back at the Harmin and Toth’s **DESCA** model and replace exchange the word “student” with “teacher” and adjust some of the vocabulary. These constructs are relevant to our faculties also, especially our novice teachers. I assert that all teachers have an “inherent ability to live with **dignity**, to **engage** tasks with **energy**, to be appropriately self-managing, to work in **community** with at least some others, and to be aware of what is going on around them. Collectively, these **DESCA** abilities point to the heart of teachers’ best, most productive selves. It works!

Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) Update

Many states across the country are working to align their leadership standards to the PSEL. West Virginia and Iowa are ones to watch.

- **West Virginia:** In 2016, the West Virginia Department of Education completed an alignment of its requirements for principals - the **West Virginia Standards of Professional Practice for School Principals (PPSP)** - with the **PSEL** to determine where there might be gaps. After developing a crosswalk of the two sets of leadership standards, the department convened a group of principals, superintendents, and other stakeholders to make recommendations for revising West Virginia’s current expectations for principals, so that they better align with the **PSEL**.
- **Iowa:** Iowa Department of Education (IDE) has been implementing a multiyear plan to expand the scope of professional development for education leaders beyond evaluator training to all skills, knowledge, and dispositions that effective leaders need to improve classroom instruction and student learning. To guide the work, IDE requested assistance from the **Midwest Comprehensive Center (MWCC)** to collaboratively conduct an alignment study between the **Iowa Standards for School Leaders** and **PSEL**.



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