

Being in the Canoe: Leadership Competencies for Principals and Vice-Principals

In July 2025, the BC Principals' & Vice-Principals' Association (BCPVPA) soft-launched a new framework of Leadership Competencies, the culmination of 2.5 years of collaborative design led by Dr. Andrea McComb and Peter Johnston. Developed through extensive consultation, research, and field-testing, the Competencies offer both a philosophical shift and practical tools for school leadership development.

Grounded in the First Peoples Principles of Learning and the BCPVPA's Equity Theory of Change, the Competencies are not a checklist but a narrative framework we call Being in the Canoe. The metaphor reflects how school leaders paddle together with staff, students, and communities, navigating shifting currents while maintaining authenticity, humility, and shared direction.

The Competencies emphasize five interwoven domains:

- Stewardship For The Future of All Children
- Fostering a Culture of Curiosity and Inquiry
- Growing The Capacity of Self and Others
- Contextual Literacy and Agency
- Bridging Policy and Practice

In this highly interactive session, participants will engage in a carousel-style workshop. Small groups will rotate through each of the five Competencies, exploring them in depth through guided activities, reflective prompts, and facilitated dialogue. At each station, participants will make direct connections between the Competencies and their own school leadership contexts, ensuring the framework is not only understood but meaningfully applied.

This session shares how the Competencies were co-designed with members, Indigenous advisors, and international scholars. Participants will also have space to shape their own leadership stories. By the end, attendees will have both a conceptual understanding of Being in the Canoe and a set of practical, personalized connections to take back to their schools and systems.

Our goal is to inspire dialogue across cultures and oceans, aligning with the conference theme Ngā Hau e Whā – The Four Winds: seeds of leadership scattered, carried, and connected worldwide.

References: Dr. Andrea McComb and Peter Johnston, as Directors of Professional Learning & Development, facilitate weekly in-person and online workshops for Principals and Vice Principals around the province. Click [here](#) and select the Professional Development tab at the top to view all the professional learning offerings facilitated by Andrea & Peter. Please feel free to contact; Scott Robinson at scott@bcpvpa.bc.ca, Magdalena Kassis at magdalena@bcpvpa.bc.ca or Sid Jawanda at sjawanda@sd57.bc.ca for references.