

SREB's Powerful Leadership Practices



Powerful Leadership Practices

Overview and Intended Use

SREB's Powerful Leadership Practices (PLPs) describe what effective school leadership looks like in action: what educators, students, families, and community members would see and experience when strong leadership is in place. Organized into six interrelated practices, the PLPs provide a clear, evidence-informed picture of how leaders create schools where teaching and learning thrive, culture is positive and collaborative, and systems are aligned to support student success.

Each Powerful Leadership Practice is presented in a common format that mirrors SREB's Powerful Instructional Practices tools. A brief header statement offers an overall description of the practice: This is what an effective leader consistently does in that domain and the kinds of experiences it creates in the school community. Beneath each header, descriptors in the table serve as "look-fors": These are specific, observable behaviors, actions and school conditions that indicate the practice is present and growing stronger over time. These descriptors help users move from general ideas about leadership to concrete evidence they can notice, discuss and deliberately develop.

PLP tables are flexible reflection tools rather than evaluation rubrics. Users can scan for descriptors that feel "most true" or "not yet evident" in their current context, then use those insights to identify areas of strength and opportunities for refinement. This structure supports honest conversation, goal-setting and growth for individual leaders and leadership teams.

The Powerful Leadership Practices are intended for use across a leader's career, not only during the first years of administration. District and school leaders can use the PLPs for self-reflection and goal-setting, as part of ongoing professional learning communities or in collaboration with supervisors, mentors and SREB leadership coaches. The practices also complement SREB's targeted Leadership Module professional development sessions by connecting learning directly to real-world leadership behaviors.

The PLPs are closely connected to SREB's [School Leader Induction Framework](#), which describes the tiered supports and professional learning systems that states, districts, educator preparation providers and regions can put in place to help novice principals and assistant principals transition successfully into these roles. While the Induction Framework focuses on what systems provide, such as mentoring, coaching, leadership networks and job-embedded learning, the PLPs focus on what leaders actually do and what others experience as a result. Together, the two tools offer a coherent picture: the Induction Framework outlines how to support leaders in developing their practice, and the Powerful Leadership Practices outline the leadership outcomes toward which that support is aimed.



Figure 1.
The Powerful Leadership Practices Framework.
Instructional Leadership and Continuous Improvement are the core drivers of student outcomes, supported by four enabling conditions, Capacity Building, School Operations, Professionalism and Culture & Climate, that together create the conditions for effective leadership.

1. Continuous Improvement (How We Improve): *Engages the whole school community in a disciplined, evidence-based improvement process that uses multiple measures of data to identify problems of practice, guide action planning and monitor progress toward bold goals for student learning.*

LEADER BEHAVIORS	FACULTY AND STAFF BEHAVIORS	ARTIFACTS
<p>1 Work with faculty and staff to develop, communicate and sustain a shared vision and mission focused on improving student achievement and experiences.</p>	<p>→ Engage in collaborative vision-building activities and align their work to the shared vision, communicating the instructional focus to students and families.</p>	<p>→ Vision and mission statements and staff communications that reflect shared improvement priorities.</p>
<p>2 Employ a distributed leadership approach that engages formal leadership teams, focus teams, or professional learning communities (PLCs) in using SREB’s problem-solving process (e.g., Plan–Do–Check–Act).</p>	<p>→ Participate on teams that engage in ongoing Plan–Do–Check–Act improvement cycles and share progress and challenges in PLCs.</p>	<p>→ Team or PLC agendas and notes documenting the use of a disciplined improvement process (e.g., Plan–Do–Check–Act).</p>
<p>3 Use multiple measures of school, classroom and process data to identify problems of practice, make effective decisions and monitor progress toward bold goals for student achievement and school improvement.</p>	<p>→ Participate in data reviews and goal setting, using evidence to monitor progress and highlight student successes and needs.</p>	<p>→ Clearly articulated problems of practice supported by multiple measures of data and progress monitoring evidence.</p>
<p>4 Understand the change process and guide adults from planning to action during improvement efforts.</p>	<p>→ Contribute to strategic planning and reflection cycles and collaborate to problem-solve barriers to improvement.</p>	<p>→ Action plans showing timelines, responsible parties and documented adjustments based on reflection and evidence.</p>
<p>5 Collaborate with leadership teams to develop action plans, monitor progress, adjust strategies and hold themselves and others accountable for sustaining improvement.</p>	<p>→ Act on feedback from improvement monitoring and take responsibility for implementing agreed-upon action steps.</p>	<p>→ School improvement plans or progress reports that track implementation and hold teams accountable over time.</p>
<p>6 Support instructional planning and monitor instruction and program effectiveness through regular classroom presence and review of evidence to inform improvement decisions.</p>	<p>→ Participate openly in observation and feedback processes and apply feedback to future planning and improvement efforts.</p>	<p>→ Calendars and planning structures that prioritize classroom presence and team interactions in support of continuous improvement.</p>

2. Instructional Leadership (What Quality Looks Like): *Effective leaders improve teaching and learning by ensuring instruction is aligned to grade-level standards, coherent across classrooms and pathways, and intentionally designed to provide rigorous, engaging learning experiences for all students.*

LEADER BEHAVIORS	FACULTY AND STAFF BEHAVIORS	ARTIFACTS
<p>➊ Define and reinforce a clear instructional vision that sets high expectations for all students.</p>	<p>➔ Establish classroom policies, procedures and instructional practices that reflect high expectations for student learning and performance.</p>	<p>➔ Consistent use of learning targets and success criteria across classrooms, with student work reflecting shared expectations for rigor and quality.</p>
<p>➋ Ensure instruction uses high-quality, standards-aligned materials that connect new learning to prior knowledge, related content areas and real-world or career applications.</p>	<p>➔ Design and deliver standards-aligned lessons using high-quality instructional materials that intentionally connect new learning to prior knowledge, related content and real-world applications.</p>	<p>➔ Lesson plans and student work showing intentional cross-disciplinary and real-world connections using high-quality, standards-aligned materials.</p>
<p>➌ Regularly visit classrooms to observe instruction and provide actionable feedback, and recognize, reinforce and scale effective instructional practices that improve student achievement.</p>	<p>➔ Implement agreed-upon instructional strategies and technology and refine instructional practices based on evidence of student learning and the needs of the student population.</p>	<p>➔ Student tasks and work samples showing consistent use of agreed-upon instructional strategies and technology to meet diverse learner needs.</p>
<p>➍ Design and sustain collaborative systems, including PLCs, grade-level teams and leader-facilitated classroom visits that support instructional planning, feedback and coherent use of strategies to improve student learning and mastery.</p>	<p>➔ Engage actively in collaborative planning, peer observation and feedback cycles to improve instruction and align strategies to student learning goals.</p>	<p>➔ PLC or team documentation demonstrating instructional planning, feedback and adjustment of strategies based on student learning evidence.</p>
<p>➎ Use data to design instructional groupings, schedules and programs of study that ensure students experience appropriate challenge and are prepared to succeed at the next level, including postsecondary and career pathways.</p>	<p>➔ Use multiple data sources to inform instructional, intervention and enrichment decisions, ensuring students experience appropriate challenge.</p>	<p>➔ Evidence that instructional groupings, supports and enrichment are intentionally designed using data to provide appropriate challenge for students.</p>
<p>➏ Ensure students receive ongoing guidance and advisement that helps them understand their learning options, progress and next steps toward future academic and career goals.</p>	<p>➔ Collaborate with counselors, partners and parents to support students' understanding of their learning pathways, progress and next steps toward future academic and career goals.</p>	<p>➔ Documentation or evidence that students can articulate their learning pathway, progress and next steps toward future academic and career goals.</p>

3. Capacity Building (How Adults Learn and Grow): *Effective leaders intentionally develop the skills, knowledge and leadership capacity of educators and staff through sustained, job-embedded professional learning, mentoring and collaboration to strengthen practice and improve student outcomes.*

LEADER BEHAVIORS	FACULTY AND STAFF BEHAVIORS	ARTIFACTS
<p>➊ Design and lead sustained professional learning grounded in how adults learn and with a focus on improving instruction and student outcomes.</p>	<p>➔ Describe how professional learning has influenced their instructional decisions and apply new learning to improve classroom practice and student outcomes.</p>	<p>➔ A multi-month professional learning plan (e.g., calendar, agendas and follow-up expectations) that reflects adult learning principles and is explicitly connected to instructional or organizational priorities.</p>
<p>➋ Continuously engage in professional learning and leverage research, networks and proven practices to inform schoolwide improvement.</p>	<p>➔ Explain how coaching, feedback and professional learning have helped them refine instructional or classroom management strategies to better meet student needs.</p>	<p>➔ Documentation of leader and staff participation in conferences, networks or advanced learning, including plans for sharing learning and integrating resources into school practice.</p>
<p>➌ Align professional learning, coaching and support to school improvement priorities, teacher evaluation data and identified instructional needs.</p>	<p>➔ Use feedback, evidence and professional learning to identify areas for growth and make intentional adjustments to professional practice.</p>	<p>➔ Professional growth or coaching plans that show alignment among school priorities, feedback and targeted support over time.</p>
<p>➍ Establish structured systems to onboard, mentor and support teachers, including induction and ongoing collaboration for new and experienced staff.</p>	<p>➔ Engage in mentoring relationships as mentors or mentees by modeling effective practices, seeking feedback and applying shared learning in the classroom.</p>	<p>➔ A defined onboarding and mentoring system, including mentor selection criteria, training materials, timelines and documentation of mentor-mentee engagement.</p>
<p>➎ Create and protect time and structures for collaborative planning, curriculum development and shared problem-solving.</p>	<p>➔ Collaborate in teams or PLCs to plan instruction, model strategies, analyze challenges and co-develop solutions to shared problems of practice.</p>	<p>➔ School schedules, PLC structures and team products that demonstrate protected time for collaboration and shared problem-solving.</p>
<p>➏ Develop teacher leadership and distributive structures that strengthen PLCs, collaboration and continuous improvement efforts.</p>	<p>➔ Assume leadership roles by facilitating learning, modeling instructional strategies, supporting peers and contributing to a culture of shared responsibility and improvement.</p>	<p>➔ Documentation of distributed leadership roles and responsibilities, including facilitated PLCs, educator-led learning sessions or shared improvement efforts.</p>

4. Culture and Climate (How It Feels to Work and Learn Here): *Effective leaders cultivate a school environment where shared beliefs, relationships and supportive systems foster belonging, safety, respect, well-being and shared responsibility for student success and future opportunities.*

LEADER BEHAVIORS	FACULTY AND STAFF BEHAVIORS	ARTIFACTS
<p>1 Establish and model a school culture where every student and staff member is treated with respect, experiences a safe environment and is held to high expectations.</p>	<p>→ Establish classroom norms and interactions that demonstrate respect, safety and high regard for all students and colleagues.</p>	<p>→ Schoolwide norms, codes of conduct or climate survey summaries demonstrating respectful, safe interactions and shared expectations across classrooms and common spaces.</p>
<p>2 Ensure that each student is known, supported and connected to a caring adult who monitors their progress and well-being.</p>	<p>→ Build meaningful relationships with students and intentionally monitor their well-being, ensuring each student is known, supported and connected to appropriate adults.</p>	<p>→ Advisory or student-connection structures (e.g., rosters, check-in systems, mentoring assignments) that demonstrate each student is connected to a designated adult.</p>
<p>3 Implement coordinated systems of academic, behavioral and wraparound supports that proactively identify and address barriers to student success and student safety.</p>	<p>→ Actively participate in structured, collaborative student support processes (e.g., multi-tiered systems of support), engaging in candid discussions, documenting interventions and coordinating with specialists, families and support providers to ensure student success.</p>	<p>→ MTSS or student support team agendas and case management documentation demonstrating coordinated academic, behavioral and wraparound supports for students.</p>
<p>4 Build authentic partnerships with families, community organizations and business and industry partners to strengthen trust, engagement and shared responsibility for student success and future opportunities.</p>	<p>→ Engage families and external partners through consistent communication, shared problem-solving and active connection of students to relevant resources and future opportunities.</p>	<p>→ Communication logs, partnership agreements, event participation records or documented initiatives showing sustained engagement with families, community organizations and business and industry partners.</p>
<p>5 Promote a positive and affirming environment by recognizing accomplishments and reinforcing contributions of students and staff.</p>	<p>→ Regularly acknowledge and celebrate student growth and colleague contributions through classroom practices and schoolwide communication systems.</p>	<p>→ Visible systems for celebrating student and staff accomplishments, including public recognition platforms, communication channels or community showcases.</p>
<p>6 Foster a healthy and supportive work environment that prioritizes staff well-being and sustainability.</p>	<p>→ Engage in collaborative problem-solving, support colleagues and utilize available wellness and professional support systems to sustain a healthy and productive work environment.</p>	<p>→ Staff support structures such as wellness initiatives, retention trend summaries, documented workload planning structures or systems designed to promote sustainable work conditions.</p>

5. Professionalism (How Adults Are Expected to Show Up): *Effective leaders model and uphold ethical conduct, reliability, respectful communication and responsible decision-making that establish clear expectations for adult behavior across the school community.*

LEADER BEHAVIORS	FACULTY AND STAFF BEHAVIORS	ARTIFACTS
<p>1 Uphold and model ethical, legal and professional standards in all decisions and interactions.</p>	<p>→ Handle information and decisions with discretion and sound judgment.</p>	<p>→ Documented professional conduct expectations and evidence of consistent application (e.g., confidentiality procedures, grievance processes, resolution documentation).</p>
<p>2 Demonstrate accountability, reliability and follow-through, ensuring actions align with stated expectations and commitments.</p>	<p>→ Show reliability in daily practice by being prepared, punctual and consistent in meeting responsibilities and commitments.</p>	<p>→ Meeting agendas and action logs showing clear assignments, deadlines and documented follow-through on commitments.</p>
<p>3 Model respectful, fair and empathetic interactions that establish clear norms for adult conduct.</p>	<p>→ Communicate openly and professionally, even when asking questions, raising concerns or offering differing perspectives.</p>	<p>→ Communication protocols and representative communication samples (e.g., newsletters, emails, feedback summaries) that reflect a professional tone and timely responsiveness.</p>
<p>4 Establish and maintain open, transparent communication that encourages dialogue and provides timely, constructive feedback.</p>	<p>→ Use established channels to address concerns and contribute to solutions rather than fueling conflict or avoidance.</p>	<p>→ Documented procedures for raising and resolving concerns and evidence that issues are addressed through established channels (e.g., meeting notes, resolution summaries).</p>
<p>5 Create a professional environment where concerns can be raised and addressed constructively, and where adult behavior reflects shared responsibility.</p>	<p>→ Contribute to a professional work environment by supporting colleagues, honoring commitments and maintaining respectful interactions with students, families and peers.</p>	<p>→ Professional norms, documents and evidence of recognition for professional excellence or adherence to shared standards.</p>

6. School Operations (How Systems and Resources Enable the Work): *Effective leaders strategically align personnel, time, fiscal resources and operational systems to school priorities and district goals to ensure educators and students have the safe, well-organized structures and support necessary to succeed.*

LEADER BEHAVIORS	FACULTY AND STAFF BEHAVIORS	ARTIFACTS
<p>➊ Align time, budget and resources to clearly defined school priorities and identified needs.</p>	<p>➔ Follow established processes for requesting and using materials, technology and other resources.</p>	<p>➔ Budget documents, resource allocation plans or spending summaries that demonstrate alignment to stated school priorities and goals.</p>
<p>➋ Establish clear processes for evaluating, acquiring and monitoring the use of instructional materials, technology and other resources in alignment with district, state and federal requirements.</p>	<p>➔ Communicate needs early and clearly to support effective planning and budgeting.</p>	<p>➔ Documented procedures for requesting, acquiring and tracking materials and technology (e.g., procurement systems, inventory logs, resource request forms).</p>
<p>➌ Structure schedules, staffing and operational systems to maximize instructional time and minimize disruptions.</p>	<p>➔ Adhere to schedules, procedures and operational expectations that protect instructional time.</p>	<p>➔ Master schedules, operational calendars and duty assignments that reflect protected instructional time and efficient use of staffing.</p>
<p>➍ Establish and monitor comprehensive safety and supervision systems that promote clear procedures, proactive planning and consistent implementation, ensuring that every student and staff member learns and works in a physically secure, well-supervised environment.</p>	<p>➔ Implement safety procedures and supervision protocols consistently, following established plans, reporting processes and training expectations.</p>	<p>➔ Documented safety plans, supervision schedules, training records and drill documentation demonstrating clear procedures and consistent implementation across the school.</p>
<p>➎ Evaluate and determine course offerings and programs of study based on student data, workforce demand and district priorities.</p>	<p>➔ Support coherent implementation of programs of study by communicating course pathways, prerequisites, credential opportunities and advancement options to students and families.</p>	<p>➔ Published and annually updated program of study documents that clearly outline academic and technical course sequences, prerequisites, credential-earning opportunities, work-based learning expectations and advancement pathways.</p>
<p>➏ Secure and coordinate support from district offices and external partners to advance school priorities.</p>	<p>➔ Provide accurate information about program implementation and resource use to support responsible decision-making.</p>	<p>➔ Documentation of coordinated support from district offices or external partners (e.g., service agreements, grant documentation, partnership support plans).</p>
<p>➐ Ensure teachers and staff have timely access to the materials, information and administrative support needed to perform their roles effectively.</p>	<p>➔ Implement new procedures and operational changes consistently to ensure smooth transitions and continuity.</p>	<p>➔ Evidence of timely fulfillment of resource requests and communication systems for operational updates (e.g., help desk logs, fulfillment timelines, internal communication dashboards).</p>