

Staff Professional Learning Module 2: Positive Leadership

JCSH School Well-being Toolkit



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Module Overview

This professional learning module provides an overview of positive leadership practices in schools. The content and activities encompass school-based positive leadership assumptions and strategies, guidelines for applying positive communication practices, and an introduction to emotional intelligence and associated benefits for building a positive school environment. The objectives of this module are:

- To recognize and apply positive leadership strategies that support engagement and performance
- To gain an understanding of key aspects of positive communication in the school workplace
- To examine ways in which school leaders can enhance their capacity to manage emotions and build positive relationships with others

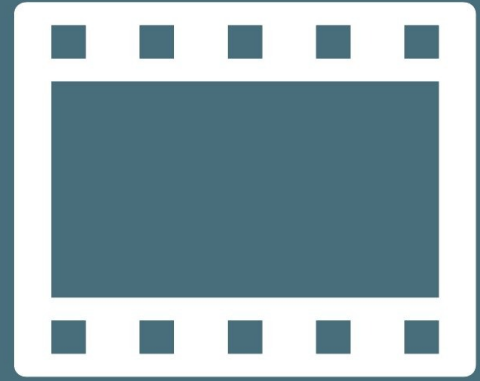
Part I.

Principles of Positive Leadership

Leaders set the tone for the rest of their teams. Positive leaders:

- Model the practices they would like to see their school teams emulate
- Play a critical role in communicating the rationale and nature of planned changes to school practices and policies
- Empower school team members to inform directions for meeting goals

Leading by example is an effective means for transforming team culture.



Watch the video
for an introduction
to the Principles of
Positive
Leadership

Assumptions

Positive leadership intentionally engages, influences and promotes positive emotions among team members. Positive leaders are committed to the well-being and engagement of team members and their engagement, recognize the strength inherent in shared school goals and values, and demonstrate high self-awareness, optimism and humility.

The following assumptions ground approaches to positive leadership:

- People have inner strengths and gifts that support their capacity to initiate, direct and sustain positive work and life directions.
- Engagement and empowerment are critical considerations for facilitating positive development or change.
- Social contexts and networks provide important resources and influences that have the capacity to contribute to and enhance psychological well-being.
- Relationships with others that contribute to well-being are characterized by interactions that convey genuineness, empathy, unconditional caring and affirmation.

Positive Leadership Strategies

This section provides an overview of five key positive leadership strategies: *Leadership Virtues in Action*; *Energizing Skills*; *Positive Communication*; *Motivational Knowledge and Skills*; and *Operational Tasks*. Each strategy is accompanied by detailed descriptions of ways to build skills in these strategic areas.

Leadership Virtues in Action

Energizing Skills

Positive Communication Skills

Motivational Knowledge and Skills

Operational Tasks



Leadership Virtues in Action refers to the capacity for a leader to show, **compassion**, **forgiveness** and **gratitude** to employees.

Compassion in Action

Kanov and colleagues (2004) identified three key actionable processes that enable organizational compassion:

- *Collective noticing*: Tightly knit communities and groups that share a common value system tend to notice one another, keep track of one another, and detect one another's difficulties.
 - *Collective feeling*: Employees are encouraged to express concern and care for one another both with respect to work and personal challenges people are experiencing.
 - *Collective responding*: Employee teams are encouraged to care for one another and to take compassionate and caring actions when members are in need or encounter overwhelming circumstances.
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Forgiveness in Action

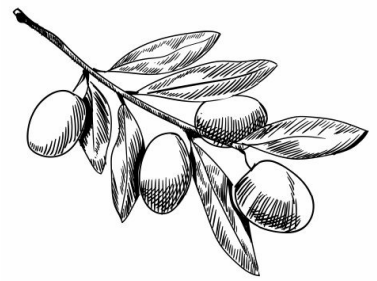
- Acknowledge areas of challenge, mishaps and mistakes, and even injustices.
- Encourage mutual opportunities for restoration at all levels beginning with in-person dialogue and professional responsibility for forgiving and being forgiven.
- Frame difficult events as potential starting points for more positive goals and future.
- Provide support to individuals by communicating that human development and welfare are important organizational priorities.

Gratitude in Action

Emmons (2003) found that expressions of gratitude by one person tended to motivate others to express gratitude.

The following actions have been shown in empirical investigations to produce important impacts on organizational climate (Seligman, Steen, Park & Peterson, 2005).

- Engaging in gratitude visits to express thankfulness or appreciation
- Keeping gratitude journals (e.g., writing down three things daily for which you are grateful)
- Distributing daily gratitude cards (e.g., handing out five written expressions of appreciation to coworkers each day)



Individuals can be identified as 'positive energizers' or 'negative energizers', and the difference has important implications.

Positive energizers create and support vitality in others. They uplift and boost people.

Interacting with positive energizers leaves others feeling lively and motivated - They build energy in people.

Positive Energizers...

- Connect with others, smile and like people
- Make time to listen and give full attention to others
- Are fully engaged in conversations
- See beyond roadblocks and suspend immediate judgment
- Problem-solve and work around challenges with flexibility
- Create opportunities for others to grow and develop
- Value others and promote their accomplishments
- Follow through on commitments and keep their word

Download
Energizing Skills
Checklist





Positive Communication

Positive communication occurs in schools when supportive and affirmative language replaces negative and critical language.

As discovered by Fredrickson and Losada (2005), a ratio of between 3 and approximately 8 positive statements to every 1 negative statement is predictive of the highest levels of workplace performance.

Leaders enable positive communication by using positive talk themselves.

Supportive Communication

Supportive communication seeks to preserve, support and enhance a positive relationship while still addressing areas of concern or challenge, or areas of needed development.

Supportive communication is....

- Honest and congruent
- Descriptive
- Specific
- Reflective

Download Positive
Communication
Checklist



Motivational Knowledge and Skills

Motivational knowledge refers to leaders' awareness of their teams' strengths and interests.

Motivational skills refers to the capacity of leaders to engage team strengths and interests within daily routines and activities.

When team members are personally engaged, they experience a greater sense of well-being within the workplace environment.

Applying motivational knowledge and skills can lead to a sense of "flow" among team members, even when involved in challenging tasks. Flow occurs most frequently when tasks are closely aligned with employee goals.

Leaders who apply motivational knowledge and skills promote a shared vision and encourage a personal investment on the part of team members.

Download
Motivational
Knowledge & Skills
Checklist



Operational Tasks

Operational tasks refers to the ability of the leader to keep team members feeling engaged by holding regular meetings and offering clarity of roles. Role clarity provides a needed foundation for supporting the use of positive leadership strategies.

One-on-One Sessions

Regular one-on-one meetings between leaders and their team members provide a forum to reinforce and practice positive leadership strategies. One time role negotiation sessions with each team member can clarify goals, expectations, important school or team considerations, and areas of responsibility.

Team Building and Professional Learning

Positive leadership strategies impact workplace culture when they are applied by all team members.

Collective learning sessions provide a forum for moving positive leadership strategies from pre-contemplation to contemplation to action within and across school teams.

Download
Operational Tasks
Checklist



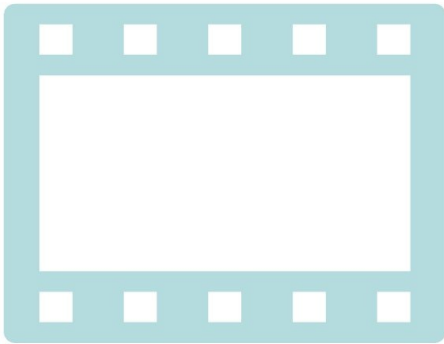
Activity 1 : Assessing Positive Leadership Capacities

1. Download and complete Activity 1: The Positive Leadership Inventory.
 2. Following the self-scoring instructions, calculate your outcomes for each of the Positive Leadership Capacities
 3. Share with a colleague your results, and discuss which Positive Leadership Capacities you use most in your current workplace routines and relationships.
 4. Take time to reflect on the Positive Leadership Capacities you would like to further develop in the future.
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Download
Activity 1
Handout



Part 2. Positive Communication



Watch the video for an introduction to Positive Communication

What is Positive Communication?

Positive communication is a communication style that avoids negative language and criticisms. It allows you to convey your message with **empathy, understanding** and **openness**.

There are many reasons we might use positive communication to speak with co-workers, colleagues, employees and leaders.

Adopting a positive communication style not only produces beneficial results in our workplace relationships, but also has a positive impact on our overall well-being, both within and beyond the workplace.

Positive Communication Practices

Positive communication involves:

Thoughtful Responses

Take time to reflect before you speak or take action. Choose how and when you will communicate with the intent of helping and bringing out the best in others.

Enhanced Understanding

Use active listening skills to understand the perspectives of others and to seek their input. Ask open-ended questions, seek clarification and summarize what has been heard as a means for checking for understanding.

Close Attention to Verbal and Nonverbal Behaviours

Pay attention to your tone of voice and nonverbal communication. Be focused, open and positive in your approach.

Openness to Feedback

Be open to feedback from others. Even when words may seem hard, find opportunities to move ahead in a constructive way.

Encouragement of Others

Take opportunities to encourage others by listening, pointing out a positive or expressing gratitude. Such encouragement evokes positive feelings and a sense of well-being in others.

Positive Phrasing and Language

Use positive phrasing and language that promotes what can be done, what alternatives and choices may be available, what may be helpful or beneficial, and what positive actions or consequences could be realized.

Focus on Solutions

Build solutions that promote mutual benefits for all involved in solving areas of concern. Being solution-focused helps us to avoid becoming mired in problems or challenges.

Mutual Respect

Ensure that all communication is carried out respectfully. This means interacting with others in the ways that we would like to be treated.

Speaking Well of Others

Refuse to gossip or to discuss the shortcomings of others. Always speak well of others when they are not present.

Commitment to a Positive Workplace Environment

Positive communication reflects a commitment to building a positive workplace environment. This entails seeing the positives in people and their potential to be successful members of the workplace team.

Communication Tips for Team Meetings

Encourage team members to:

1. Give everyone an opportunity to speak on the issue before arriving at a decision.
2. Allow team members to finish their thoughts without interruption.
3. Use active listening to ensure that you clearly understand the contributions of others.
4. Ask for clarification as needed.
5. Provide alternative points of view by sharing new perspectives, adding information or asking questions.
6. Do not engage in the use of harsh or contemptuous conversation directed toward a team member.
7. Refrain from side conversations during team meetings.
8. Work toward a common understanding of key issues and goals, and build consensus on actions to be implemented.
9. Maintain confidentiality on meeting discussions unless agreed upon by team members.



Tips for Giving Feedback

A positive feedback approach works best when there is civility (polite, reasonable and respectful behaviours and actions) and inclusion (feeling welcomed, valued and supported) in the workplace.

Be positive

- Give feedback related to positive outcomes, as well as areas of concern.
- Believe the best about others and their potential to problem-solve and grow.

Be immediate

- Provide feedback in a timely fashion. For example, if something happens in a meeting, consider touching base immediately afterward to address the issue.
- At the same time, consider the timing of feedback - especially if someone is experiencing a difficult situation or day at work.

Be specific and descriptive, not judgmental

- Describe what you observed without being evaluative or making generalizations (use “I” statements).
- Listen to others and their viewpoint of what has been described.

Be constructive and restorative

- Focus on finding common goals and benefits for addressing areas of concern.
- Move beyond defining problems to building solutions.
- Follow up and provide feedback on positive steps and troubleshoot challenges.



Activity 2: Guidelines for Positive Communication Practices

1. Download and complete Activity 2: Strategies for Enhancing Positive Communication.
 2. Discuss with a colleague or members of your team the practices highlighted under each strategy for positive communication. There are ten strategies, each with corresponding practices. For each practice, indicate whether the action is:
 - Often Used
 - Sometimes Used
 - Could be Further Developed
-

Download
Activity 2
Handout



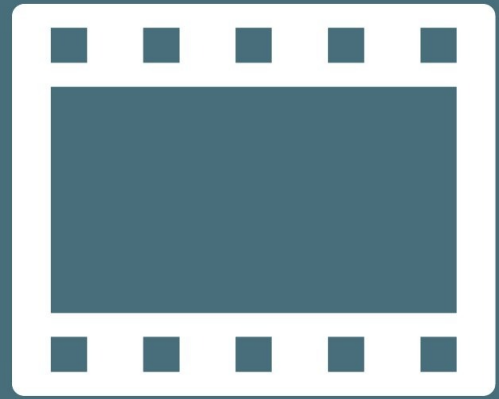
Part 3: Emotional Intelligence

In the early 1990's, psychologists Peter Salovey and Jack Mayer were the first to theorize that people vary in terms of their capacities to perceive, understand and use their emotions. They named this capacity emotional intelligence.

Emotional Intelligence in the Workplace

The idea of applying emotional intelligence in the workplace was conceptualized by Daniel Goleman in his books *Emotional Intelligence* and *Working with Emotional Intelligence*.

Goleman was interested in understanding the Emotional Intelligence (EI) competencies that link with enhanced work performance.



Watch the video for an introduction to Emotional Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence Defined

Emotional intelligence is defined as the capacity to:

- Recognize and manage our own emotions and to respond effectively to those of others
- Understand why people feel the things they do
- Express emotion in a way that is productive to the conversation
- Apply our knowledge of emotions (self and others) as a motivation tool and a guide to building relationships

E.I. Competencies

Goleman identifies 5 competencies or skill areas related to Emotional Intelligence.

The first three components are self-management skills. The last two involve a person's ability to effectively manage relationships with others.

1. Self-awareness—knowing one's strengths, challenges, drives, values, and impact on others
2. Self-regulation—controlling or redirecting disruptive impulses and moods
3. Motivation—pursuing achievement with unusual internal energy and determination
4. Empathy—having sensitivity to and expressing understanding of people's perspectives and emotions
5. Social Influence (social skill)—building rapport with, engaging and inspiring others

The following pages highlight strategies for building EI competencies in each of the five components.

Strategies for Increasing Self Awareness

Monitor your feelings of well-being

Ask yourself, *How do I feel today?* Begin by rating your overall sense of well-being on a scale of 0 to 10, and write the scores down in a daily log book. If your feelings seem extreme one day, take a minute or two to think about any ideas or associations that seem to be connected with the feeling.

Put feelings and thoughts in perspective

When you experience stressful emotions, it may be beneficial to ask: *What do I think about that?* Our emotions often reflect our thoughts or beliefs about specific situations. Jumping to conclusions or making generalizations about situations without sufficient information can increase our feelings of stress or concern. Asking others for feedback regarding our thoughts or beliefs about a situation may be helpful for putting our thoughts in perspective, and for reducing feelings of stress or concern.

Recognize your daily strengths

Create a list of all the activities you complete over the course of a given day in the home, community or workplace setting. What strengths are used to complete these tasks? List these strengths beside each of the activities. Look for patterns of strength that are reflected in your daily activities.

Strategies for Increasing Self Regulation

Identify emotional triggers

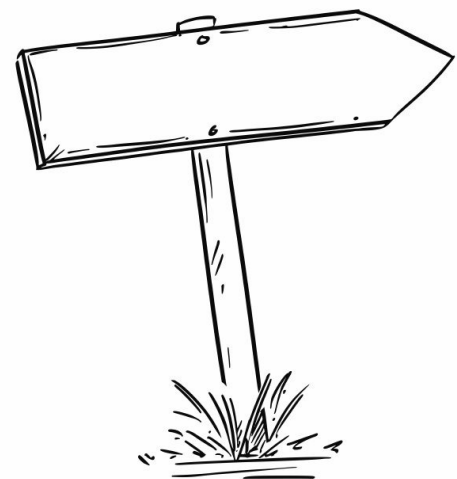
An important part of being self-regulated is recognizing our emotional triggers and what situations or events are particularly stressful. For example, feeling overloaded at work or having back-to-back meetings may set us up for experiencing more stressful emotions. When we are aware of such triggers, we can take positive action such as spreading the times of our meetings out or breaking what seem to be overwhelming tasks into smaller chunks or steps.

Focus on finding the positive

Another strategy is to focus on finding something positive in a stressful situation. This small shift in perspective can transform our thinking and make us feel more optimistic about the future.

Apply calming strategies

Relaxation techniques such as deep breathing can calm us during stressful events. They help interrupt negative thoughts and help us to move forward in a calm and more positive way. Breathe in slowly for five seconds and then breathe out for five. Focus on your breathing, and repeat this at least five times.



Strategies for Increasing Motivation

Understand what motivates you

It is essential to understand what motivates you because this is the driving force that moves you toward your goals. Think about the times you were most energized or passionate about your work. What was happening? Make a list of the specific things or activities that were most motivating for you and that increased your energy.

Learn new skills from others

Enhance your skills by working with a mentor or by having someone coach you on a new task or competency. A mentor can offer new insights and perspectives on enhancing skills and setting directions for further growth or development.

Be solution focused

When faced with challenges or obstacles, take a solution-focused approach. Decide upon the next steps for moving forward in lieu of redefining problems or assigning blame for current challenges.

Strategies for Increasing Empathy

Demonstrate sincere interest

Demonstrate that you have a sincere interest in people and that you want to know about the things that are important to them. Ask them questions about their hobbies, their families and their aspirations.

Be sensitive to nonverbal cues

Listen carefully to hear and observe the emotions that people are communicating when they speak to you. Be attentive to their tone of voice, pace of speech, facial expressions and gestures. Emotion expressed nonverbally may communicate even more than the words that people use.

Listen actively

Take a colleague for coffee and practice being an active listener. Demonstrate key skills for active listening, such as focusing, asking open-ended questions, and paraphrasing what is heard. When something is not understood, active listeners ask for clarification.



Strategies for Increasing Social Influence

Access professional forums

Being part of professional associations and having a presence on appropriate online forums assists in the development of meaningful contacts related to work and professional development activities. Contacts made through these venues may provide important networking opportunities.

Inspire a unified team vision

When leaders demonstrate passion and energy about the organization, its goals and the work itself, they motivate others on their teams to do the same. Similarly, when leaders create a clear picture of future goals, team members can be engaged in conversations about the relevance of their roles in fulfilling such a vision.

Build a sense of team

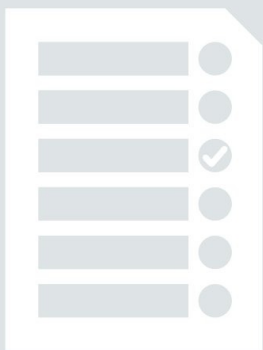
Carrying out team-building activities with members of the workplace community is critical for fostering mutual understanding of personal preferences, and for appreciating individual differences. Such activities contribute to the cohesion of the team and to greater ease in working as a collective.

Activity 3:

Examining Emotional Intelligence Skills

Download and complete the *Emotional Intelligence Skills Inventory* and follow the scoring instructions to achieve a score for each of the EI competency areas.

Once you have scored your results, consider the following questions and points for reflection:



- What specific EI competencies are the highest? How do you currently use these competencies in your school?
- What EI scores are lower? How might you further develop these competencies?
- On the Emotional Skills Inventory, there are specific strategies for developing each of the EI competencies. Consider applying some of these strategies as you continue to develop your EI capacity!

Download
Activity 3
Handout



Digging Deeper

Leadership Competencies for System Leaders
BC School Superintendents Association



Principal's Perceived Relationship Between E.L.,
Resilience, and Resonant Leadership
Turk & Wolfe, 2019



The Principal Effect: The Role of School Leaders in
Thriving Schools
EdCan

