MANAGING UP: Using the DEC Recommended Practices for Leadership as Beginning Practitioners

Principles of Leadership

“Leadership is the process of influencing change in order to achieve a goal.” — Anne Douglass

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<tr>
<th>Principle of Effective Leadership</th>
<th>What it looks like in practice</th>
<th>Ways to implement this skill</th>
<th>Related DEC Recommended Practice(s)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Communicating Effectively</td>
<td>A two-way process that respects the needs of all those involved</td>
<td>• Practice active listening by working to understand the complete message being communicated not just the words</td>
<td>L1, L3, L7, L12, L13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identifying Opportunities for Growth</td>
<td>Finding opportunities for individuals, groups, and the organization to improve and/or expand to meet a need</td>
<td>• Encourage leadership to conduct a program evaluation and identify ways you might help address one or more findings</td>
<td>L3, L5, L7, L12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Developing Positive Working Relationships</td>
<td>Relationships founded on mutual trust and respect</td>
<td>• Schedule time to build relationships with other people in your program even if it’s just 10 minutes a week to check-in</td>
<td>L1, L3</td>
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<td>Setting a Positive Example</td>
<td>Leading by example by using your actions to model what you hope to achieve</td>
<td>• Looking for a change in how things are done? Show what a change would look like by embodying it in your own work</td>
<td>L1, L2, L4, L7, L10, L12, L13, L14</td>
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<td>Making an Impact</td>
<td>Ensuring that the work you do leads to meaningful change</td>
<td>• Be open to change, even when it is not your idea, and identify ways to support the change</td>
<td>L4, L5, L8, L12</td>
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<td>Leading with Honesty, Integrity, and Consistency</td>
<td>Presenting your authentic self in all aspects of your work</td>
<td>• Own up to your mistakes and be open to feedback</td>
<td>L1, L2, L10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supporting Leadership in Others</td>
<td>Encouraging others to take on leadership roles by sharing power and operating from a place of mutual respect</td>
<td>• Be willing to provide constructive, honest, and caring feedback to others when requested</td>
<td>L1, L3, L6, L9, L11</td>
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Principles of Leadership vs. Management

- Leadership is the process of leading change. It is founded on integrity, and honesty. Leading with example is essential.
- Management is not leadership, and leadership is not a job title! You can be a leader without being a manager.

Leadership skills:
- Ability to stay organized and on track
- Communication
- Time management
- Ability to take criticism
- Self-reflection
- Working with a team
- Hard skills
- Language proficiency
- Degrees & certificates
- Content knowledge
- Computer program proficiency
- Ability to stay organized and on track
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YOU ARE A LEADER

We often think of leaders as someone else who is in a position of power or who has a certain title. However, regardless of your role or title, you are most likely already acting as a leader. You are a leader if you are:

- Leading or coordinating IFSP or IEP teams
- Engaging with your team to discuss a new approach or requirement
- Solving problems or looking for innovative solutions for a child and/or their family
- Working with your program’s director or supervisor to assess the effectiveness of your program
- Sharing your ideas for improvement
- Meeting with your supervisor to reflect on your practices

WHAT CAN YOU DO RIGHT NOW TO DEVELOP YOUR LEADERSHIP SKILLS?

- Focus on what you are most passionate about & where your unique strengths lie
- Consider underlying motivations behind your work & responsibilities you welcome joyfully
- Understand how you perform best
  - How you learn
  - What situations you thrive best in
  - What your values are
  - How you communicate
  - How you maintain relationships
- Reflect on your strengths and weaknesses
  - Soft skills:
    - Communication
    - Time management
    - Ability to take criticism
    - Self-reflection
    - Working with a team
  - Hard skills
  - Language proficiency
  - Degrees & certificates
  - Content knowledge
  - Computer program proficiency
  - Ability to stay organized and on track
• Managing up is the process of optimizing your relationship with your boss so that you can work purposefully with your boss to obtain the best possible results for you, your boss, and the organization.

• Strategies for managing up:
  - Assess your professional personality & work style preferences
  - Set ground rules or shared expectations
  - Continually build upon your understanding of your boss’s professional personality & work style preferences
  - Build on your boss’s strengths rather than try to remedy their limitations
  - Regularly communicate with your boss

• Solving common challenges through managing up:
  - Challenge: Competing priorities with limited time
    - Try this: Share your responsibilities with your supervisor and ask them for help prioritizing what you are assigned in the available time.
  - Challenge: Differing perspectives
    - Try this: Talk to your boss about the challenging issue and ask open-ended questions about their perspective and share your view. You don’t have to leave on the same page, but a shared understanding can make things work more smoothly.
  - Challenge: Requests that are inconsistent with your strengths
    - Try this: Teach your manager how to best use your talents by sharing your strengths and preferences for work. Help them identify how best to leverage your skills and how you can complement their unique strengths. Identify ways to complete the request even when it is outside of your area of strength.

ESSENTIAL SKILLS & PRACTICES FOR MANAGING UP

APPLYING THE DEC RECOMMENDED PRACTICES FOR LEADERSHIP IN YOUR ROLE

1. Leaders create a culture and a climate in which practitioners feel a sense of belonging and want to support the organization’s mission and goals.
   - Start Here: Reflect on the culture and climate of your current organization. What is working well? What might need to change?
   - Build this Skill: Assume positive interaction with each person they meet as a way to try their best.

2. Leaders promote adherence to and model the DEC Code of Ethics, DEC Position Statements and Papers, and the DEC Recommended Practices.
   - Start Here: Find and read the DEC Code of Ethics, DEC Position Statements and Papers, and the DEC Recommended Practices (www.dec-sped.org)
   - Build this Skill: Select one area of the practices and reflect on how you implement them. Think of ways you can improve your practice.
   - Be a Leader! Support others in decision-making with their colleagues and families.

3. Leaders develop and implement policies, structures, and practices that promote shared decision-making with practitioners and families.
   - Start Here: Listen to and consider the diverse perspectives of the members of your organization and the families you serve.
   - Build this Skill: Familiarize yourself with your program’s policies and procedures and learn how to explain them to new team members and families in different ways.
   - Be a Leader! Provide mentorship to your program’s partners.

4. Leaders belong to professional associations and engage in ongoing evidence-based professional development.
   - Start Here: Review one or more DEC Position Statements or Paper and talk to your program coordinator or supervisor about how they see the DEC guidance reflected in your program.
   - Build this Skill: Attend local cross-agency meetings or professional development to meet others from different agencies and programs.
   - Be a Leader! Schedule a time to meet with other programs in your community to learn more about their service delivery approach.

5. Leaders advocate for policies and resources that promote the implementation of the DEC Position Statements and Papers and the DEC Recommended Practices.
   - Start Here: Review the laws and regulations related to your program. Talk to your supervisor or director about how they are reflected in your program and ask questions about them.
   - Build this Skill: Review the laws and regulations related to your program. Ask your supervisor or director about how they are reflected in your program and ask questions about them.
   - Be a Leader! Share standards with others in your program.

6. Leaders establish partnerships across levels (state to local) and with their counterparts from other systems and agencies to create coordinated and inclusive systems of services and supports.
   - Start Here: Schedule a time to meet with other programs in your community to learn more about their service delivery approach.
   - Build this Skill: Engage other staff in conversations about your program’s culture and climate if there are improvements to be made, identify next steps you can lead.

7. Leaders develop, refine, and implement policies and procedures that create the conditions for practitioners to implement the DEC Recommended Practices.
   - Start Here: Notice when your interaction with families and teams, that policies and procedures seem well aligned with DEC guidance, and times when they are not.
   - Build this Skill: Review your program’s policies in light of the guidance from DEC and make recommendations for improvements.
   - Be a Leader! Review your program’s policies and procedures to ensure they are well aligned with DEC guidance.

8. Leaders address work across levels and sectors to secure fiscal and human resources.
   - Start Here: Talk to your supervisor or director about how your program is currently funded.
   - Build this Skill: Learn about the elements of budgeting and how they are reflected in your program.
   - Be a Leader! Ask your program’s director or other staff about the cost drivers.

9. Leaders develop and implement an evidence-based professional development system or approach that provides practitioners a variety of supports to ensure they have the knowledge and skills needed to implement the DEC Recommended Practices.
   - Start Here: Reflect on your current learning needs. What PD opportunities are available to address them? What other supports might you need?
   - Build this Skill: Research possible PD options available from your program, community, state, and federal resources. What strengths might you have? What drawbacks of each?
   - Be a Leader! Practice systems thinking by considering the PD needs of your program’s community and the interconnections among those who collaborate with you. Talk to others and present your findings to those that plan PD.

10. Leaders ensure practitioners know and follow professional standards and all applicable laws and regulations governing service provision.
    - Start Here: Review the laws and regulations related to your program. Ask your supervisor about how they are reflected in your program and ask questions about them.
    - Build this Skill: Develop an understanding of at least one set of early childhood professional standards. How do they relate to your current role?
    - Be a Leader! Share your understanding of how to apply to your current practice.

11. Leaders collaborate with higher education, state licensing and certification agencies, practitioners, professional associations, and other stakeholders to develop or revise state competencies that align with DEC Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) and other national professional standards.
    - Start Here: Review state competency standards if available. What information is supplied? If your state doesn’t have competency standards, are there other standards in place and review them.
    - Build this Skill: Develop your collaboration skills by volunteering for an opportunity or activity that will require you to work closely with others.
    - Be a Leader! Learn more about how your local colleges and universities use state and national standards to support your practice.

12. Leaders collaborate with stakeholders to collect and use data for program management and continuous program improvement and to examine the effectiveness of services and supports in improving child and family outcomes.
    - Start Here: Create a list of the data you use to inform your practice. What decisions do you or can you make with the data? What do you know from this data? What other data is available to you that might be helpful?
    - Build this Skill: Build your data literacy by reviewing resources that help you understand interpretations. Ask yourself these questions when you are planning day-to-day work and for longer-term planning.
    - Be a Leader! Engage your team in data-driven discussions and help others to address these gaps.

13. Leaders promote efficient and coordinated service delivery for children and families by creating the conditions for practitioners from multiple disciplines and the family to work together as a team.
    - Start Here: Create a list of the data you use to inform your practice. What decisions do you or can you make with the data? What do you know from this data? What other data is available to you that might be helpful?
    - Build this Skill: Build your data literacy by reviewing resources that help you understand interpretations. Ask yourself these questions when you are planning day-to-day work and for longer-term planning.
    - Be a Leader! Be a Leader! Be a Leader!

14. Leaders collaborate with other agencies and programs to develop and implement ongoing community-wide screening procedures to identify and refer children who may need additional evaluation and services.
    - Start Here: Learn about the ways in which children are screened in your community. Where do families go for information? What information is readily available?
    - Build this Skill: Develop an understanding of the legal requirements for screening and the process for identifying and referring children who may need additional evaluation.
    - Be a Leader!

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