North Carolina Standards for Superintendents

As Approved by the State Board of Education
September 6, 2007

A 21st Century Vision of School Leadership

Public education's changed mission dictates the need for a new type of school leader – an executive instead of an administrator. Like their executive colleagues in business, government, or health and human services, superintendents must create school districts as organizations that can learn and change quickly if they are to improve performance. School systems need chief executive officers, supported by local boards of education, who are adept at creating systems for change and at building powerful relationships with and across all staff that tap into the collective knowledge and insight they possess and stir their passions for their work for children. Out of these relationships the superintendent must create a common shared understanding of the purpose of the work of the schools and school district and commitment to and ownership of a set of beliefs and goals that focus everyone's decision making. The staff's common understanding of the district's identity empowers them to seek and build powerful alliances and partnerships with students, parents, and community stakeholders in order to enhance their ability to produce improved student achievement. The successful work of the new executive will only be realized in the creation of a culture in which leadership is distributed and encouraged with teachers and others; communication is honest and open; there is focus on the use of data, teamwork, and research-based best practices; and modern tools are used to drive ethical, principled, and goal-oriented action. This culture of disciplined thought is rooted in the ability of the superintendent to build a trusting, transparent environment for all stakeholders.

Philosophical Foundations of the Standards

The standards are predicated on the following beliefs:

⌘ Today's schools must have proactive leaders who possess a great sense of urgency to ensure that every student graduates from high school prepared for life in the 21st Century.

⌘ The primary goal of school district leadership is to transform schools so that large-scale, sustainable continuous improvement is built into their most basic modes of thinking and doing.

⌘ The moral purpose of school district leadership is to create schools in which all students learn, where the gaps between high and low performance are greatly diminished, and where what students learn prepares them for success in their futures.

⌘ Leadership is neither a position nor a person. It is a collection of practices that must be embedded in all job roles at all levels of schools and the school district.

⌘ The work of school district leadership is with, for, and through people. Leadership is a social act, in which people are the medium of change.

⌘ School district leadership does not require doing all tasks by oneself, but it does require creating systems and processes where all tasks can be accomplished at high levels of proficiency.

⌘ School district leadership depends on the superintendent's ability to select and develop a senior-level executive staff whose complementary strengths promote excellence in all seven standards for executive leadership described in this document.

⌘ Leadership is extremely complex and systemic in nature. Isolating parts misses the power of holistic thinking. Leadership requires not only knowing what to do, but knowing why to do it, how to do it, and when to do it as well.

⌘ Within a school district, there are nested leadership systems (e.g., local boards of education, central office, schools, classrooms, etc.). To be successful, the superintendent must ensure these systems are aligned and are mutually supportive of one another.

⌘ Superintendents bring themselves to the practices of executive leadership. Matching the context of school district leadership with the leadership character of the superintendent is important to the mutual success of both.

Intended Purposes of the Standards

The North Carolina Standards for Superintendents have been developed as a guide for superintendents and other senior-level school district executives as they continually reflect on and improve their effectiveness in whatever executive roles they assume in their professional careers. Although there are many influences on a superintendent's development, these standards can serve as a tool to aid in the improvement of school district leadership for 21st Century schools. Taken as a whole, these standards, practices, and competencies can be overwhelming. One might ask, "How can one person possess all of these?" The answer is: One person cannot. Therefore, it is critical that the superintendent build an executive team that has complementary knowledge, skills, and experiences. The more authentic diversity on the team, the more probable the team can deal with the complexities of leading educational systems in the challenges of the 21st century.

In addition, these standards will serve other audiences and purposes. These standards will:

⌘ Inform higher education programs in developing the content and requirements of degree programs leading to licensure as a school superintendent;

⌘ Focus the goals and objectives of local boards of education as they support, monitor, and evaluate the performances of their senior executives;

⌘ Guide the professional development and continuing professional improvement for superintendents and other senior-level executives;

⌘ Serve as a tool in developing executive coaching and mentoring programs for senior-level executives.

Organization of the Standards

Each standard is formatted as follows:

⌘ **Standard:** The standard is the broad category of the executive's knowledge and skills.

⌘ **Summary:** The summary more fully describes the content and rationale of each Standard.

⌘ **Practices:** The practices are statements of what one would see an effective executive doing in each Standard. The lists of practices are not meant to be exhaustive.

⌘ **Artifacts:** The artifacts are examples of evidence of the quality of the executive's work or places where evidence can be found in each Standard. Collectively they could be the components of a performance portfolio. The lists of artifacts are not meant to be exhaustive.

⌘ **Competencies:** Although not articulated, there are many obvious competencies inherent in the practices of each critical leadership function. This document concludes with a list of those competencies which may not be obvious but that support practice in multiple leadership functions.

The Seven Standards of Executive Leadership and Their Connection

The seven critical standards used as a framework for the North Carolina Superintendent Standards are aligned with the seven standards for school executives adopted by the NC State Board of Education in 2006. The school executive standards are adapted from a Wallace Foundation study, *Making Sense of Leading Schools: A Study of the School Principalship* (2004). Additionally, the seven standards for superintendents reflect the 2006 work of McREL (Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning), *School District Leadership that Works: The Effect of Superintendent Leadership on Student Achievement*.

North Carolina's Standards for Superintendents are interrelated and connect in the practices of superintendents and other senior-level executives. They are not intended to isolate competencies or practices. Superintendents' abilities in meeting the demands in any given standard impact their abilities to perform effectively in other challenges articulated in other standards. For example, a superintendent's effectiveness in developing and evaluating staff directly impacts the organization's ability to reach its goals and also impacts the development of cultural norms in the district. While superintendents may not actually have to do all of the work contained in all seven standards, they are responsible for ensuring that all areas have effective leadership.

Professional Learning Communities

As used throughout this document, the term professional learning communities (PLCs) describes a collegial group of administrators and school staff who are united in their commitment to student learning and who work in an environment characterized by mutual cooperation, personal growth, and a synergy of efforts. In PLCs, school and district administrators share power and authority by inviting staff input in decision making and by a sustained commitment to learning among staff about solutions to address students' needs.

Standard 1: Strategic Leadership

Summary: Superintendents create conditions that result in strategically re-imaging the district's vision, mission, and goals to ensure that every student graduates from high school, globally competitive for work and postsecondary education and prepared for life in the 21st Century. They create a climate of inquiry that challenges the community to continually re-purpose itself by building on the district's core values and beliefs about the preferred future and then developing a pathway to reach it.

Practices: The superintendent practices effective strategic leadership when he or she:

- ⌘ Creates a working relationship with the local board of education that results in a shared vision for the district of the changing world in the 21st century that schools are preparing children to enter;
- ⌘ Systematically challenges the status quo by leading change with potentially beneficial outcomes;
- ⌘ Systematically considers new ways of accomplishing tasks and is comfortable with major changes in how processes are implemented;
- ⌘ Models and reinforces the culture and vision of the district by having open discussion sessions with teachers, school executives, staff, board members, and other stakeholders regarding the strategic direction of the district and encouraging their feedback on how to better attain the district's vision, mission, and goals;
- ⌘ Is a driving force behind major initiatives that help students acquire 21st Century skills;
- ⌘ Creates processes that provide for the development, periodic review, and revision of the district's vision, mission, and strategic goals by all stakeholders;
- ⌘ Creates processes to ensure the district's identity (vision, mission, values, beliefs and goals) actually drives decisions and reflects the culture of the district;
- ⌘ Facilitates the collaborative development of annual school improvement plans to realize strategic goals and objectives, adhering to statutory requirements;
- ⌘ Facilitates the development and implementation of a district strategic plan, aligned to the mission and goals set by the State Board of Education and local priorities, using multiple sources of data (e.g., student performance data, data from the NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey), in concert with the local board of education;
- ⌘ Determines financial priorities, in concert with the local board of education, based on the strategic plan;
- ⌘ Facilitates the implementation of state education policy;
- ⌘ Facilitates the setting of high, concrete goals and the expectations that all students meet them;

- ⌘ Monitors progress in meeting district goals;
- ⌘ Communicates strong professional beliefs about schools, learning, and teaching that reflect latest research and best practice in preparing students for success in college or in work;
- ⌘ Creates processes to distribute leadership throughout the district.

> **Artifacts:**
> - ⌘ District strategic plan
> - ⌘ School Improvement Plans are implemented, assessed and modified
> - ⌘ Effectively functioning, elected School Improvement Teams
> - ⌘ Superintendent's performance plan aligned with state and local strategic priorities and objectives
> - ⌘ Staff can articulate the district's direction and focus
> - ⌘ Student performance data

Standard 2: Instructional Leadership

Summary: Superintendents set high standards for the professional practice of 21st century instruction and assessment that result in an accountable environment. They create professional learning communities resulting in highly engaging instruction and improved student learning. They set specific achievement targets for schools and students and then ensure the consistent use of research-based instructional strategies in all classrooms to reach the targets.

Practices: The superintendent practices effective instructional leadership when he or she:

- ⌘ Leads with a clear, high-profile focus on learning and teaching oriented towards high expectations and concrete goals;
- ⌘ Challenges staff to reflect deeply on and define the knowledge, skills, and concepts essential for ensuring that every public school student graduates from high school, globally competitive for work and postsecondary education and prepared for life in the 21st Century;
- ⌘ Establishes effectively functioning professional learning communities;
- ⌘ Ensures collaborative goal setting resulting in non-negotiable goals (i.e., goals that all staff members must act upon) for student achievement and classroom instruction;
- ⌘ Ensures that there is an appropriate and logical alignment between the district's curriculum, 21st Century instruction and assessment, and the state accountability program;
- ⌘ Establishes clear priorities among the district's instructional goals and objectives;
- ⌘ Creates processes for using student test data and formative data from other sources for the improvement of instruction;

- Utilizes an instructional evaluation program that accurately monitors implementation of the district's instructional program;
- Creates processes for identifying, implementing, and monitoring use of 21st Century instructional tools and best practices for meeting diverse student needs;
- Creates processes that ensure the strategic allocation and use of resources to meet instructional goals and support teacher needs;
- Creates processes to provide formal feedback to school executives concerning the effectiveness of their instructional leadership;
- Monitors student achievement through feedback from the instructional evaluation program;
- Ensures that instructional time is valued and protected;
- Provides professional development for school executives in the area of instructional leadership.

Artifacts:
- District strategic plans
- School Improvement Plans
- Professional development plans based on data (e.g., student performance, results of the NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey)
- Student performance goals
- Student performance data
- Use of formative assessment to impact instruction
- District instructional evaluation program

Standard 3: Cultural Leadership

Summary: Superintendents understand and act on the important role a system's culture has in the exemplary performance of all schools. They understand the people in the district and community, how they came to their current state, and how to connect with their traditions in order to move them forward to support the district's efforts to achieve individual and collective goals. While supporting and valuing the history, traditions, and norms of the district and community, a superintendent must be able to "reculture" the district, if needed, to align with the district's goals of improving student and adult learning and to infuse the work of the adults and students with passion, meaning and purpose.

Practices: The superintendent practices effective cultural leadership when he or she:

- Communicates strong ideals and beliefs about schooling, teaching, and professional learning communities with all stakeholders and then operates from those beliefs;
- Builds community understanding of what is required to ensure that every public school student graduates from high school, globally competitive for work and postsecondary education and prepared for life in the 21st Century;

- Creates a school system (and not a "system of schools") in which shared vision and equitable practices are the norm;
- Builds trust and promotes a sense of well-being between and among staff, students, parents, and the community at large;
- Systematically and fairly acknowledges failures and celebrates accomplishments of the district;
- Visibly supports and actively engages in the positive, culturally-responsive traditions of the community;
- Creates opportunities for both staff involvement in the community and community involvement in the schools;
- Creates an environment in which diversity is valued and is promoted.

Artifacts:
- Climate Survey Data
- NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey results
- Teacher retention data
- Student performance data
- Awards structures developed by the district and schools
- Community support of the district

Standard 4: Human Resource Leadership

Summary: Superintendents ensure that the district is a professional learning community with processes and systems in place that result in the recruitment, induction, support, evaluation, development and retention of a high-performing, diverse staff. Superintendents use distributed leadership to support learning and teaching, plan professional development, and engage in district leadership succession planning.

Practices: The superintendent practices effective human resource leadership when he or she

- Ensures that necessary resources, including time and personnel, are allocated to achieve the district's goals for achievement and instruction;
- Provides for the development of effective professional learning communities aligned with the district strategic plan, focused on results, and characterized by collective responsibility for 21st century student learning;
- Participates in consistent, sustained, and open communication with school executives particularly about how policies and practices relate to the district mission and vision;
- Models the importance of continued adult learning by engaging in activities to develop professional knowledge and skill;
- Communicates a positive attitude about the ability of personnel to accomplish substantial outcomes;
- Creates processes for educators to assume leadership and decision-making roles;

- Ensures processes for hiring, inducting and mentoring new teachers, new school executives, and other staff that result in the recruitment and retention of highly qualified and diverse personnel;
- Uses data, including the results of the Teacher Working Conditions Survey, to create and maintain a positive work environment;
- Ensures that all staff are evaluated in a fair and equitable manner and that the results of evaluations are used to improve performance;
- Provides for results-oriented professional development that is aligned with identified 21st century curricular, instructional, and assessment needs, is connected to district improvement goals, and is differentiated based on staff needs;
- Continuously searches for the best placement and utilization of staff to fully develop and benefit from their strengths;
- Identifies strategic positions in the district and has a succession plan for each key position.

Artifacts:
- Student performance data
- District strategic plan
- NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey results
- Number of teachers with National Board Certification and graduate/advanced level licensure
- Teacher, school executive, and staff diversity, recruitment, and retention data
- Record of professional development provided staff and an assessment of the impact of professional development on student learning
- Leadership development plan
- Copies of professional growth plans for school executives
- District plan or policy defining the role of teachers in making or participating in making resource allocation decisions, such as the use of time, budgets and other resources, to meet the individual needs of each student
- District leadership succession plan

Standard 5: Managerial Leadership

Summary: Superintendents ensure that the district has processes and systems in place for budgeting, staffing, problem solving, communicating expectations, and scheduling that organize the work of the district and give priority to student learning and safety. The superintendent must solicit resources (both operating and capital), monitor their use, and assure the inclusion of all stakeholders in decisions about resources so as to meet the 21st century needs of the district.

Practices: The superintendent practices effective managerial leadership when he or she

- Applies and assesses current technologies for management, business procedures, and scheduling;

- Creates collaborative budget processes to align resources with the district vision and strategic plan through proactive financial leadership using a value-added assessment process;
- Identifies and plans for facility needs;
- Assesses and reassesses programs and resource allocation and use for relevancy and impact as the organization changes;
- Collaboratively develops and enforces clear expectations, structures, rules and procedures for effective and efficient operations;
- Creates processes to build consensus, communicate, and resolve conflicts in a fair and democratic way;
- Assures a system of communication that provides for the timely and responsible exchange of information among school and district staff and stakeholder groups;
- Assures scheduling processes and protocols that maximize staff input, address diverse student learning needs, and provide individual and on-going collaborative planning time for every teacher;
- Creates processes for the storage, security, privacy, and integrity of data;
- Collaboratively develops and enforces clear expectations, structures, rules and procedures for ensuring the safety of students and staff;
- Develops, implements, and monitors emergency plans in collaboration with appropriate local, state, and federal officials.

Artifacts:
- District strategic plan
- External reviews and audits (e.g., budget, child nutrition, transportation)
- Copies of district procedures and publications (e.g., student handbooks, discipline policies, safety procedures)
- Communication of safety procedures and behavioral expectations throughout the school community
- NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey results
- District and school safety and crisis plans
- Community Emergency Response Plan

Standard 6: External Development Leadership

Summary: A superintendent, in concert with the local board of education, designs structures and processes that result in broad community engagement with, support for, and ownership of the district vision. Acknowledging that strong schools build strong communities, the superintendent proactively creates, with school and district staff, opportunities for parents, community members, government leaders, and business representatives to participate with their investments of resources, assistance, and good will.

Practices: The superintendent practices effective external development leadership when he or she:

- ⌘ Develops collaborative partnerships with the greater community to support the 21st Century learning priorities of the school district and its schools;
- ⌘ Implements processes that engage stakeholders in shaping and then supporting significant (non-negotiable) achievement and instructional goals for the district and its schools;
- ⌘ Creates systems that engage the local board, county commissioners, and all community stakeholders in a shared responsibility for aligning their support for district goals for student and school success;
- ⌘ Designs protocols and processes that ensure compliance with federal, state and district mandates;
- ⌘ Develops and implements proactive partnerships with community colleges, universities, professional associations, and other key professional development organizations to provide effective training and development opportunities for school district employees;
- ⌘ Develops and implements proactive partnerships with community colleges and universities to ensure all students have access to college courses while in high school and that barriers to enrollment in the courses are eliminated;
- ⌘ Communicates the schools' and district's status and needs to the local board, county commissioners, and public media to garner additional support for meeting district goals;
- ⌘ Builds relationships with individuals and groups to support the district's learning-teaching agenda and its potential for individual school and school district improvement.

Artifacts:
- ⌘ District strategic plan
- ⌘ Minutes from school board meetings
- ⌘ Survey results from parents and other community leaders
- ⌘ Business partnerships and projects involving business partners
- ⌘ Visible support for district goals and priorities from community leaders, such as educational foundation activities, civic club scholarships, etc.
- ⌘ Partnership agreements and other documents to support collaborative effort for achieving school district goals and priorities
- ⌘ Accounts of school and district accomplishments in various forms of public media
- ⌘ Newsletters and other public engagement documents designed to strengthen connections to the community
- ⌘ Membership and participation with community organizations
- ⌘ Community college/university partnerships, collaborative projects, and professional development initiatives;
- ⌘ Student enrollment data for community college and university courses

Summary: The superintendent promotes the success of learning and teaching by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, ethical, and cultural context. From this knowledge, the superintendent works with the board of education to define mutual expectations, policies, and goals to ensure the academic success of all students.

Practices: The superintendent practices effective micropolitical leadership when he or she:

- ⌘ Provides leadership in defining superintendent and board roles and mutual expectations that result in an effective superintendent-board working relationship;
- ⌘ Defines and understands the internal and external political systems and their impact on the educational organization;
- ⌘ Defines, understands, and communicates the impact of legal issues affecting public education;
- ⌘ Surveys and understands the political, economic, and social aspects/needs of groups in the community, and those of the community at large, for effective and responsive decision-making;
- ⌘ Prepares and recommends district policies to improve student learning and district performance in compliance with local, state and federal requirements;
- ⌘ Applies laws, policies and procedures fairly, wisely, and considerately;
- ⌘ Utilizes legal systems to protect the rights of students and staff and to improve learning opportunities;
- ⌘ Accesses local, state and national political systems to provide input on critical educational issues.

Artifacts:
- ⌘ Parent, community and staff survey data
- ⌘ Teacher, School Executive, and Staff retention data
- ⌘ Ability to confront conflict and build consensus
- ⌘ Shared decision-making
- ⌘ Outreach efforts
- ⌘ School Board policies
- ⌘ Minutes and reports
- ⌘ Superintendent's Performance Goals

Competencies

A competency is a combination of knowledge (factual and experiential) and skills that one needs to effectively implement the practices. Factual knowledge is simply "knowing" content; experiential knowledge is the knowledge one gains from understanding – it is recognizing the when and why. Skills bring structure to experiential knowledge. It is when one can put their

accumulated knowledge into a series of steps that, if followed, will lead to practice.

There are many competencies that are obviously inherent in the successful performance of all of the practices listed under each of the seven critical functions of leadership. The superintendent may or may not personally possess all of these competencies but must ensure that a team is in place that not only possesses them but also can effectively and efficiently execute them. Although the superintendent may not personally possess them all, he or she is still responsible for their effective use in the various leadership practices.

The competencies listed below are not so obvious in the practices, can be applied to multiple practices and are absolutely essential for all superintendents to possess to ensure their success. For example, the competency "*conflict management*" is important in Micropolitical Leadership, Strategic Planning, Cultural Leadership, and perhaps one could argue that this competency is necessary in all seven Standards. These competencies are listed here to emphasize their importance and to make sure they are incorporated into the development of superintendents.

- **Communication** – Effectively listens to others; clearly and effectively presents and understands information orally and in writing; acquires, organizes, analyzes, interprets, maintains information needed to achieve district objectives.
- **Change Management** – Effectively engages staff and community in the change process in a manner that ensures their support of the change and its successful implementation.
- **Conflict Management** – Anticipates or seeks to resolve confrontations, disagreements, or complaints in a constructive manner.
- **Creative Thinking** – Engages in and fosters an environment for others to engage in innovative thinking.
- **Customer Focus** – Understands the stakeholders as customers of the work of schooling and the servant nature of leadership and acts accordingly.
- **Delegation –** Effectively assigns work tasks to others in ways that provide learning experiences for them and in ways that ensure the efficient operation of the district.
- **Dialogue/Inquiry** – Is skilled in creating a risk-free environment for engaging people in conversations that explore issues, challenges or bad relationships for the purpose of obtaining system goals.
- **Emotional Intelligence –** Is able to manage oneself through self-awareness and self-management and is able to manage relationships through empathy, social awareness and relationship management. This competency is critical to building strong, transparent, trusting relationships throughout the district's communities.

- **Environmental Awareness** – Becomes aware and remains informed of external and internal trends, interests and issues with potential impacts on school policies, practices, procedures and positions.
- **Global Perspective** – Understands the competitive nature of the new global economy and is clear about the knowledge and skills students need to be successful in this economy.
- **Judgment –** Effectively reaches logical conclusions and makes high quality decisions based on available information. Giving priority and caution to significant issues. Analyzing and interpreting complex information.
- **Organizational Ability –** Effectively plans and schedules one's own and the work of others so that resources are used appropriately, such as scheduling the flow of activities and establishing procedures to monitor projects.
- **Personal Ethics and Values** – Consistently exhibits high standards in the areas of honesty, integrity, fairness, stewardship, trust, respect, and confidentiality.
- **Personal Responsibility for Performance –** Proactively and continuously improves performance by focusing on needed areas of improvement and enhancement of strengths; actively seeks and effectively applies feedback from others; takes full responsibility for one's own achievements.
- **Responsiveness**--Does not leave issues, inquiries or requirements for information go unattended. Creates a clearly delineated structure for responding to requests/situations in an expedient manner.
- **Results Orientation –** Effectively assumes responsibility. Recognizes when a decision is required. Takes prompt action as issues emerge. Resolves short-term issues while balancing them against long-term goals.
- **Sensitivity –** Effectively perceives the needs and concerns of others. Deals tactfully with others in emotionally stressful situations or in conflict. Knows what information to communicate and to whom. Relates to people of varying ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds.
- **Systems Thinking** – Understands the interrelationships and impacts of school and district influences, systems and external stakeholders, and applies that understanding to advancing the achievement of the district.
- **Technology** – Effectively utilizes the latest technologies to continuously improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the district.
- **Time Management** – Effectively uses available time to complete work tasks and activities that lead to the achievement of desired work or goals. Runs effective meetings.
- **Visionary** – Encourages imagineering by creating an environment and structure to capture stakeholder dreams of what the school could become for all the students.

NC public schools will produce globally competitive students.

- Every student excels in rigorous and relevant core curriculum that reflects what students need to know and demonstrate a global 21st Century environment, including a mastery of languages, an appreciation of the arts, and competencies in the use of technology.
- Every student's achievement is measured with an assessment system that informs instruction and evaluates knowledge, skills, performance, and dispositions needed in the 21st Century.
- Every student will be enrolled in a course of study designed to prepare them to stay ahead of international competition.
- Every student uses technology to access and demonstrate new knowledge and skills that will be needed as a life-long learner to be competitive in a constantly changing international environment.
- Every student has the opportunity to graduate from high school with an Associates Degree or college transfer credit.

NC public schools will be led by 21st Century professionals.

- Every teacher will have the skills to deliver 21st Century content in a 21st Century context with 21st Century tools and technology that guarantees student learning.
- Every teacher and administrator will use a 21st Century assessment system to inform instruction and measure 21st Century knowledge, skills, performance, and dispositions.
- Every education professional will receive preparation in the interconnectedness of the world with knowledge and skills, including language study.
- Every education professional will have 21st Century preparation and access to ongoing high quality professional development aligned with State Board of Education priorities.
- Every educational professional uses data to inform decision.

NC public school students will be healthy and responsible.

- Every learning environment will be inviting, respectful, supportive, inclusive, and flexible for student success.

- Every school provides an environment in which each child has positive, nurturing relationships with caring adults.
- Every school promotes a healthy, active lifestyle where students are encouraged to make responsible choices.
- Every school focuses on developing strong student character, personal responsibility, and community/world involvement.
- Every school reflects a culture of learning that empowers and prepares students to be life-long learners.

Leadership will guide innovation in NC public schools.

- School professionals will collaborate with national and international partners to discover innovative transformational strategies that will facilitate change, remove barriers for 21st Century learning, and understand global connections.
- School leaders will create a culture that embraces change and promotes dynamic continuous improvement.
- Educational professionals will make decisions in collaboration with parents, students, businesses, education institutions, and faith-based and other community and civic organizations to impact student success.
- The public school professionals will collaborate with community colleges and public and private universities and colleges to provide enhanced educational opportunities for students

NC public schools will be governed and supported by 21st Century systems.

- Processes are in place for financial planning and budgeting that focuses on resource attainment and alignment with priorities to maximize student achievement.
- Twenty-first century technology and learning tools are available and are supported by school facilities that have the capacity for 21st Century learning.
- Information and fiscal accountability systems are capable of collecting relevant data and reporting strategic and operational results.
- Procedures are in place to support and sanction schools that are not meeting state standards for student achievement.