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UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY CONTINUING EDUCATION

The Alberta Education Superintendent Leadership Certification

*(Also known as The Alberta Education Superintendent Leadership Quality Standard
Certification Program)*

**CAUCE Program Award Application: Non-credit
programming under 48 hours**

February 25, 2021

Submitted by: University of Calgary Continuing Education

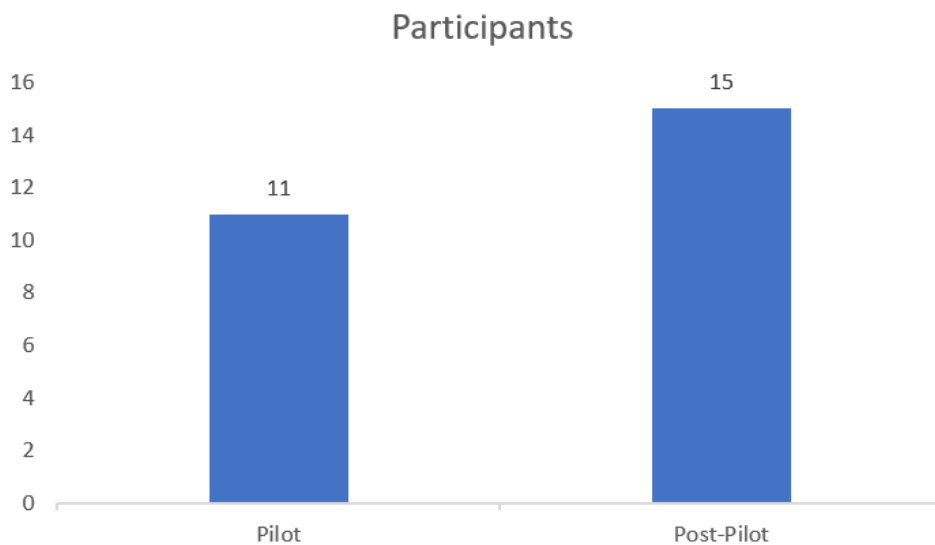
Abstract

The Alberta Education Superintendent Leadership Certification Program provides certification to individuals who are seeking to meet the education requirements for the Alberta Education Leadership Quality Standard (LQS) for Principals. The Leadership Quality Standard applies to all superintendents employed in an Alberta school authority.

University of Calgary Continuing Education has been approved to deliver the courses that meet the requirements for the Superintendent Leadership Quality Standard (SLQS) certification. This program has been designed for Alberta certified teachers who aspire to be school superintendents in the Alberta education system.

Participants who successfully complete the 40-hour course meet the Superintendent Leadership Quality Standard Certification requirements as outlined by the Alberta Ministry of Education and are also awarded a University of Calgary Continuing Education certificate of completion.

University of Calgary Continuing Education launched a pilot of this program in winter 2020 with 11 students. Currently, there is one (1) additional cohort running with an additional 15 students set to complete the program and meet the requirements for the Leadership Quality Standard certification.



Selected Student Feedback

- This course requires learning together through collaboration. It was good that many of the assignments could be completed as a group. Even though I was not in the same city as my group, I was able to attend our study sessions in person or to face time with the group.
- The blanket exercise (Indigenous unit) was very powerful. Best example I have participated in.
- The lecturers were very effective. I really appreciated the firsthand knowledge and examples they brought to enhance the topics.
- The activities were relevant, practical, and meaningful. There was an opportunity to network with fellow colleagues. The best instruction I have received in my professional life was from Scott Morrison. I have really grown from his instruction. And I have very high standards for teachers, pedagogy, and adult learning.
- The Professional Learning Contract is a great assignment to help participants to conceptualize their own next steps in their leadership journey. The practical nature of some of the assignments - Board Policy Monitoring Report and Designing a Professional Learning Initiative will be very useful in my work. There will be a direct application to the job as a system leader regarding board policy monitoring, learning contract, school closure process, building relationships, etc.

Program Description

Background

The University of Calgary Continuing Education (herein, Continuing Education) is a responsive educational unit that has been developing and delivering high quality professional development and personal interest programming for more than fifty years. Continuing Education offers programs that combine experiential learning, industry expertise, leading-edge research, and practical application to empower learners to achieve sustained success. Continuing Education has the ability to create dynamic programming in a variety of delivery modalities.

This program was developed in response to a call for proposals from the Alberta Ministry of Education for a program intended to train school leaders and principals for additional leadership opportunities as superintendents in Alberta schools. During the development of this program, engagement with stakeholders such as the Ministry of Education and an advisory committee was utilized to ensure critical components were included in the design and delivery.

Description

This program is designed to help principals and other educational practitioners meet the requirements for becoming a superintendent in the province of Alberta. To be issued the superintendent leadership certification from Alberta Education, an individual needs to hold a permanent professional teaching certificate in Alberta, and have completed the Leadership Quality Standards; therefore, the project team designed the course with the intent that the students had previous knowledge of the Alberta Education system, and some formal leadership experience. The Alberta Education Superintendent Leadership Certification consists of a 40-hour course comprised of learning outcomes that prepare students for success in school district leadership at the school superintendent level.

Audience

The Alberta Education Superintendent Leadership Certification's target audience is K-12 principals in the Alberta school system who hold a master's degree (M.Ed., M.A, etc.), and are looking to secure provincial certification. Principal means, for the purposes of this standard, principal as defined in the School Act, assistant principal, associate principal, or vice principal. The target audience are professionals looking to practice leadership through a continuing education stream with practical (skill building) competency development and not a research-intensive approach.

Program Objectives

The Alberta Education Superintendent Leadership Certification's primary objective is to provide certification pathways to school leaders and principals in the Alberta school system who wish to move into school district leadership positions. Alberta Education defines seven (7) SLQS competencies: 1. Building Effective Relationships, 2. Modeling Commitment to Professional Learning, 3. Visionary Leadership, 4. Leading Learning, 5. Ensuring First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education for All Students, 6. School Authority Operations and Resources, 7. Supporting Effective Governance.

Stakeholders Involved in the Project

The Alberta Ministry of Education	Program Sponsor. Provided funding to develop the course and covered costs for the pilot. Had a representative in the advisory committee.
University of Calgary Continuing Education	Owner of the Program.
University of Calgary Werklund School/Faculty of Education	Participated in the curriculum development and advisory committee. Also provided feedback regarding alignment between credit and non-credit version.
Alberta Teachers Association (ATA)	Had a representative in the advisory committee.
College of Alberta School Superintendents (CASS)	Had a representative in the advisory committee.
Association of Independent schools and colleges in Alberta (AISCA)	Had a representative in the advisory committee.

Program Design

The project team used a three-phase approach to develop the program. Phase one consisted of preliminary curriculum and course development. Phase two comprised pilot program launch and evaluation. Phase three consists of program implementation and ongoing maintenance.

	Phase 1 – Curriculum and Course Development	Phase 2 – Pilot Program Launch and Evaluation	Phase 3 – Program Implementation and Maintenance
Timeline	2018 (Nov) – 2019 (Jul)	2020 (Jan) – 2020 (Mar)	2020 (Mar) - Present
Description	Consisted of creating the course outline, learning outcomes and program structure/architecture.	Consisted of pilot course delivery and reporting.	Consists of offering the program to the public and continuous improvement.
Outcome	Advisory committee and designed curriculum.	Delivery of pilot program, evaluation and lessons learned.	Successful implementation of the public facing program.
Noteworthy	Across all phases, the primary objective of the student experience is to ensure a high level of interactivity amongst peers, instructors and with course content. For example, real-life situations and examples from the students were used to create case studies and leveraged for facilitated discussions online and in-person.		

Student Evaluation and Stakeholder Feedback

The feedback from the pilot program was overwhelmingly positive, with 100% of students indicating that their overall course experience was positive and that they would recommend the program to a colleague or friend.

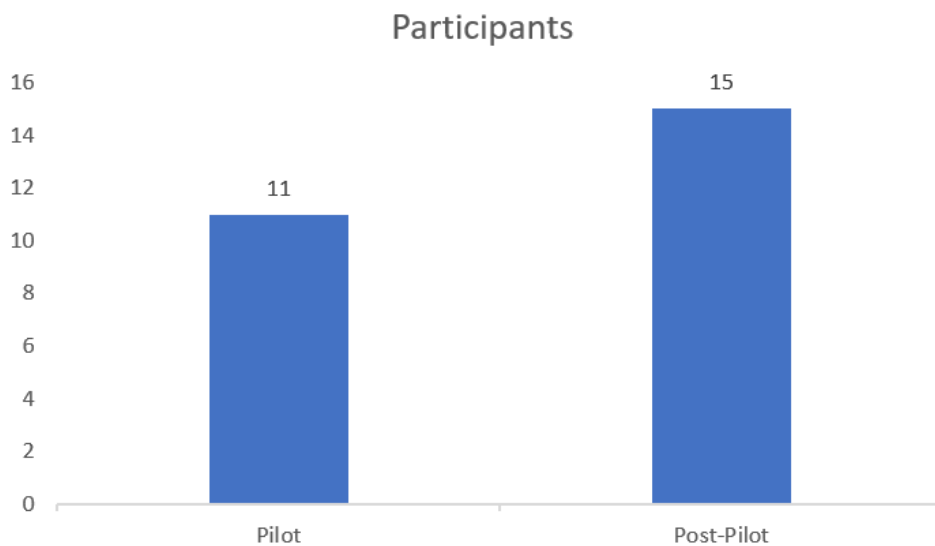


Key stakeholders were also very impressed with the program. The Alberta Ministry of Education indicated that this program achieved its primary objective; graduates of the program have met the requirements of the Superintendent Leadership Quality Standard and are adequately prepared to take on a school superintendent position. The Alberta Ministry of Education have added the program to their list of approved programs to meet this requirement. Some students highlighted the value and importance of the content on Indigenous relations and reconciliation. The Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA) has acknowledged the quality and value of the program.

Lessons Learned

- Collaborating with Faculty of Education was important in developing this educational leadership certification.
- The popularity of the online offerings, especially after the COVID lockdown, was higher than expected. We have adjusted our scheduling strategy to accommodate this preference in learning modality.
- The online offerings were suitable for principals in smaller municipalities across the province who could not travel to major cities like Calgary and Edmonton for in-class sessions.
- The programming teams needs to pay attention to any changes in the requirements from the Alberta Ministry of Education. This was the first time the Ministry implemented a leadership certification requirement for superintendents in the province. As a result, the requirements may have seemed like a moving target occasionally.
- Recruitment of instructors in this space is challenging. Especially recruitment of an instructor to teach First Nations and Indigenous related content.
- The pilot was run for 40 hours, but based on student feedback, we have increased the total course hours for future sessions to 49 hours.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the winter 2021 section was moved online. There has been growth in the program since the pilot.



Statement:

The Alberta Education Superintendent Leadership Certification Program provides a certification pathway for individuals who are seeking to meet the superintendent leadership requirements set out by The Alberta Ministry of Education. The Superintendent Leadership Quality Standard (SLQS) for school superintendents, applies to all aspiring school superintendents in the province.

The Superintendent Leadership Quality Standard outlines the professional expectations that superintendents and school district leaders must demonstrate to create the conditions under which principals and teachers can do their best work. Having superintendents meet the standard is an important part of Alberta Education's overall strategy of creating safe and caring schools and making life better by investing in education.

Value and Service

The value that this program brings to students, the University of Calgary, The Alberta Ministry of Education, and the community at large is immense and details about the program are included below.

- The Alberta Education Superintendent Leadership Certification Program provides enormous value to students because it provides them with a non-degree, certificate path to meeting the Superintendent Leadership Qualification Standard (SLQS) set out by The Alberta Ministry of Education. Additionally, the program provides many opportunities for learning from their colleagues and peers across the province.
- The instructor team and guest speakers have a wealth of experience to share with the students. These items are consistently noted in student course evaluations. With increased outreach, especially through the online course delivery modality, this program opens opportunities to meet the SLQS requirement and further their careers to principals and school leaders across Alberta, including in small municipalities where training like this was previously difficult or impossible to get.
- **Improving Indigenous relations:** Feedback from the students who have completed this program has shown that the unit on strategies to improve Indigenous relations has been one of the most valuable in the entire program. This is of great value considering the broader (national and provincial) conversation around Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion.

Complexity

This program was developed in response to a call for proposals from the Alberta Ministry of Education for a program intended to train principals and school leaders for additional leadership opportunities in Alberta schools. Development of the program required the engagement of multiple stakeholders including the Alberta Ministry of Education, an advisory committee, instructional designers, subject matter experts and faculty experts at the University of Calgary. The project team comprised Continuing Education professionals, including program management, coordination, and student services representation. The program was rolled out using a staged delivery model including initial development, pilot delivery, and implementation and ongoing maintenance.

The project team used a backwards design model to develop the program and curriculum. Backwards design is a method of designing curriculum by first establishing the learning outcomes and working from these outcomes to develop curriculum. Another key factor in the program is having a strong instructor team of 4-5 instructors per course, plus guest speakers. For each course, we arrange a guest presentation from Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA) that is very popular with the students. The intention behind having multiple instructors and guest speakers is to expose students to diverse ideas that they can apply to their own unique context.

Upon completion of the pilot program, Alberta Education, with the support of the Continuing Education project team, conducted a fulsome evaluation and The University of Calgary submitted two bi-annual reports to the Ministry of Education including a progress report and a plan for sustainment of the program after the pilot. The sustainment plan is currently being implemented with the results identified above (see student feedback section and the graph with enrolment numbers). The results of the evaluation were overwhelmingly positive.

Ingenuity and Innovation

The Alberta Education Superintendent Leadership Certification Program is innovative because it is the first of its kind in the province. This was the first time that the province established a requirement for educational leadership standards to become a school principal. The program was the first non-credit version of the certification to be launched. Presently, there are only two non-credit offerings across the province. This non-credit approach offers a practical approach that is targeted directly towards meeting the SLQS requirements. The program is for professionals looking to practice leadership through a continuing education stream with hands-on skill building competency development and not a research-intensive approach.

Providing a framework including detailed competencies, and a program to help people meet those competencies, represents an innovative approach to superintendent leadership in the province. Using adult learning techniques and professional tools like case-studies, our program helps move the province's school leaders towards a vision where the superintendent's ongoing analysis of the context, and the superintendent's decisions about what leadership knowledge and abilities to apply, result in quality school leadership, quality teaching and optimum learning for all students in the school authority.

During the program curriculum development and consultation process, stakeholders emphasized the importance of capturing the differences across the province with regards to superintendent leadership in rural and urban areas. As a result, the focus during development was to ensure that classes had the right balance of theory and practice with real-life situations embedded in the classroom and online delivery.

Additionally, the diverse delivery modalities including classroom, blended, and online, provide multiple avenues for the participants to access and engage with the SLQS. Providing high-quality educational opportunities to lifelong learners, in a variety of accessible modalities, is part of The University of Calgary Continuing Education's mission and guiding philosophy.

Innovation in Delivery

The program can be delivered in multiple modalities: online, in-person and blended. This became useful during the COVID-19 lockdown. Moving students online was seamless. The program was designed to ensure a high level of interaction between students and the SLQS competencies. In the online course, this interaction is achieved using several strategies. One example of an innovative approach to teaching leadership competencies online is the use of multiple guest speakers from high profile leaders working in the Alberta school system throughout the course. One of the popular guest presentations is delivered by the Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA). These guest speakers present the students with diverse viewpoints related to the competencies. During their group work, assessments, and discussion board activities, students are expected to collaborate with other students and learn from their experiences as well as from the instructors.

Another instance of applied leadership competency being taught online, is the case study assessment that the students complete. They respond to several case studies using some of their learning from the course. They receive feedback and discussion on their response from the instructors and other students. This kind of assessment fosters robust discussions about leadership philosophy and competencies in the online environment.

The program also places high importance on self-reflection. In addition to the high level of interactivity, students' self-reflections and course work are assessed on a pass/fail basis, rather than traditional grading. Student feedback indicates that the reflective activity has been important in their superintendent leadership development journey. It has pushed them to be more creative, to understand their strengths, and reflect on their areas of improvement.

Profile of Continuing Education

Prior to The Alberta Education Superintendent Leadership Certification Program, The Alberta Ministry of Education and Continuing Education had not collaborated on the development, implementation and delivery of any educational programming.

This program enabled Continuing Education to build a positive reputation with The Alberta Ministry of Education. The Alberta Ministry of Education is now committed to a continued partnership with Continuing Education in the delivery of The Alberta Education Superintendent Leadership Certification Program, which enhances Continuing Education's profile within The University of Calgary.

The program enables The University of Calgary, and specifically Continuing Education, to be a partner in providing opportunities back to society in the areas of school leadership and K-12 education. Students gain exposure to the SLQS competencies and are provided with opportunities to collaborate closely with their peers.

Through the guest speakers and online interactive activities, students experience how superintendents in their field respond to the unique challenges they face in leading school districts in Alberta. Future iterations of the program will continue community involvement by building on the pilot and early program's success and reputation.

Conclusion

This program has far-reaching benefits. The program so far has resulted in 11 students meeting the Superintendent Leadership Quality Standard, with 15 more students set to complete the program by the end of March 2021. The program offers a non-credit, practical approach that is targeted directly towards meeting the SLQS requirements without going through a research-intensive graduate level program.

The pilot program was an overwhelming success, and because of its high level of success, the program is transitioning into regular programming, to be offered 4-6 times per year.

Program Publicity

University of Calgary Continuing Education Program Guide: <https://online.pubhtml5.com/ogaa/vcqv/#p=1>

University Courses and Programs Leadership Certification and Superintendent Leadership Certification: <https://www.alberta.ca/assets/documents/ed-university-courses-and-programs-guide.pdf>

College of Alberta School Superintendents: <https://cassalberta.ca/conferences-workshops/in-service-certification/>

Promotional Material

Email Bulletin Feature:



School Leadership Quality Standard Program

Meet the Alberta Education Leadership Quality Standard with this 80-hour course. Explore the nine competencies and indicators required of all school leaders. The next offering starts October 6, online.

For superintendents, the **Superintendent Leadership Quality Standard Program** is also starting in February.

[Learn more](#)

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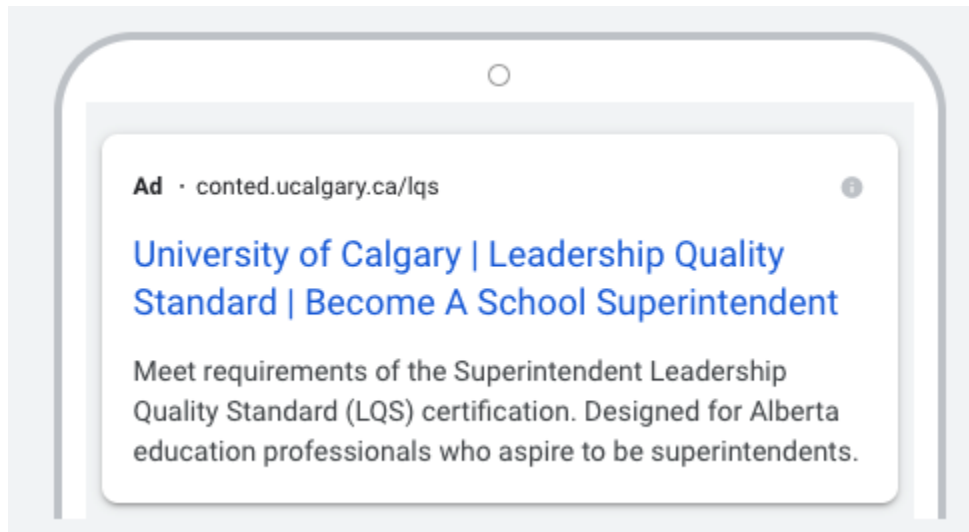
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