



## Article 1

### New Principalships

Throughout 2017 there will be new Principal appointments at schools across Australia. Some of the Principals will have had previous Principal experience, others will have not. Some will be appointed from within the school, whilst others will come from another school. Suffice to say the previous experiences of each of these Principals will be quite different; and the circumstances of the school will be even more variable. It's a combination of being a daunting and exciting time; nevertheless, it's most certainly a time of opportunity and a time for optimism.

What might be some key steps to maximise the likelihood of a successful Principalship? In this and subsequent Principals Talk articles we will provide some insights into progressing your Principalship.

To be fair the variability amongst school types from large (1000 + students) to very small schools with no Assistant/Deputy Principals and minimal educational support staff makes it difficult to be all encompassing in each article – but we'll try!

#### A Vision

Having a clear vision of what needs to be achieved from a School Improvement perspective is critical to how you go about your leadership, even at this early stage. It is multi-dimensional. Hopefully you have a clear sense of this before you start. However, for most of us there is a period of adjustment over the first few months as you really get the "inside" understandings of how and why the school is what it is, and the potential you see in it. Initially you might choose not to be too detailed about your vision, but my advice is to ensure you have documented it well so you can return to it many times throughout your term of Principalship.

In effect, I am talking about the inherent culture of a school. You need to consider what you understand about the school, where the community wants it to go or more importantly where and how you think it needs to go?

#### The Narrative

History tells us that the most successful transformations are supported by a narrative that weaves its way over time through the improvement journey, telling a meaningful story. This is so often overlooked. You must begin by starting the story; set the scene by giving context – local, system, global. And whilst the script might vary, tell all staff the story; tell the School Council or Board; tell the students, and tell the community – This takes COURAGE but it will be repaid many times over as you achieve what you set out to do. Then over time regularly link the progress, achievements, efforts and adjustments to direction with this starting point (KEEP THE NARRATIVE ALIVE!!!)

Your vision should capture the essence of the school you wish it to be; it should be aspirational, it needn't be critical or judgemental of the current situation in your school and it should reflect what you stand for – remember you were appointed because the selection panel, including the President of School Council/Board, saw you as the "person" to lead them forward.

This vision might be very different from school to school. However, there is much common ground.

It should reflect your understanding of the elements that underpin high performing schools

- consistency in expectations for high level student learning
- consistency in practice across classrooms and grade levels
- cross-talk amongst teachers and school leaders about problems of teaching and learning (reciprocal responsibility)
- collaborative planning and problem solving around instructional practice
- level of agreement (and explicit statements) among individuals about norms, values, and instructional practice
- agreement about what high-level student work looks like
- processes and structures for making common problems common
- collective ownership (responsibility & accountability) of student learning

And most importantly of all, a Model of Personal Behaviour

***Underpinning any desire to be a high performing school is the quality of human interaction  
– the quality of personal and professional relationships***

Each of these elements can and should be espoused at every opportunity across teacher, school council, parent and student communities.

In subsequent articles, we will focus on (a) Principal Class Teams and School Leadership Teams, (b) Capacity Building, (c) Mentoring and Induction, and (d) Engaging the community.

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Principals Talk