



## **School Leadership – You, Your Assistant Principal(s), Your Leadership Team**

Developing and sustaining high performing Principalship is much easier said than done. It starts with your own vision for your school and your vision for leadership. In the first article on “New Principalships”, you were reminded of the importance of being able to communicate this vision, starting with “a narrative that weaves its way over time through the improvement journey, telling a meaningful story.”

But what of your vision for School Leadership? Where might you start? How does this marry with your projected journey? Where does it fit in the narrative?

In many of our schools there is one or more Assistant Principals and, in nearly all, there are Leading Teachers. Therefore, a starting point would be with your Principal Class Team and then your Leadership Team – do you have a high performing Principal and/or Leadership Team? What might it look like? How might you develop such a team?

Our first article finished with a prompt regarding modelling personal behaviour – “***Underpinning any desire to be a high performing school is the quality of human interaction – the quality of personal and professional relationships***”.

If we see ourselves or aspire to be outstanding in our Principalship, it stands to reason we would see the value in establishing high performing Principal Class and Leadership Teams in our quest for school improvement.

This begs the question as to how in school leadership does or should a Principal behave. How do you ensure the pressures and expectations inherent in any improvement processes are embraced through the quality of our personal and professional relationships?

As leaders, we have a responsibility to ensure the collective effort of our School Leaders and teachers is to maximise learning outcomes for all students and for us to be a Modeller, Influencer, Coach and Leader in this process.

It would be invaluable for each of us to identify and document our values and the related behaviour that exemplifies these values. This provides a key launching pad to share, discuss, debate and subsequently reach agreement on a Principal/Leadership Team set of Principles and Protocols around which, as a collective, you will lead your school. This approach can be adopted by a new or experienced Principal. It is never too early or too late in the cycle of Principalship to adjust course!

The endpoint of such consultation could look like this –

### ***“We will display behaviour that fosters trust and respect by***

- *Modelling positive language and behaviour.*
- *Being active listeners.*
- *Having empathy for colleagues and respect their point of view.*
- *Affirming people’s efforts to build self-esteem.*
- *Using language and tone that is inclusive and promotes connectedness.*
- *Focussing on issues and behaviour not the person(s).*

***We will have high expectations and be accountable to each other, our team and the school***

- *We will unite to support all decisions of our leadership group.*
- *We will define roles and responsibilities.*
- *We agree to take collective responsibility for establishing and meeting time lines.*
- *We will work collaboratively to ensure that successful outcomes are achieved.*
- *We will make time for personal reflection.*

***We are committed to the development of clear goals and shared values***

- *We believe improving student outcomes is our core business.*
- *We will be aspirational and will promote excellence through deeds and symbols.*
- *We will have collective agreement of team and school goals.*
- *We are prepared to articulate goals in all forums.*
- *We share responsibility for achieving team goals.*

***We are committed to developing open and effective communication***

- *We will encourage team members to contribute thoughts, and listen to others' ideas and challenge each other to gain deep and meaningful understanding of issues.*
- *We will discuss issues and find solutions together.*
- *Our meetings will include a focus on what different members are doing, their progress and seeking others' assistance if necessary (look for creative ways to improve communications!).*
- *We will be fully informed about each other's work so that we can actively seek ways to support each other*
- *We are committed to regular formal meetings with protocols.*
- *We will involve more team members in planning and running meetings, and establishing the change agenda and take risks.*

***We will develop support structures to increase the capacity of the team and others***

- *We will model excellent teaching and learning practices.*
- *We will be reflective learners.*
- *We will do peer observation to support our improvement.*
- *We will mentor each other through sharing skills and knowledge.*
- *We will model the processes of effective teams and commit to active participation in team meetings.*
- *We will reflect on outcomes, celebrate successes and learn from mistakes.*
- *We will strive to create opportunities for professional learning and collaboration".*

In simple terms, it provides a framework for everybody to be on the same page, and allows us to maintain high levels of reciprocal accountability and responsibility. Over time it enables you to influence and coach your leaders to genuinely buy into high performing school leadership and school improvement. It provides you an opportunity to be able to identify the strengths and areas for improvement of each of your leaders - again an opportunity for their development.

As you can see it focusses on both development and empowerment - What a powerful motive for your leaders to engage with you!

A disappointing reality may be that some of your team, regardless of your support, coaching, and encouragement, may not have sufficient capacity to deliver on your agreed expectations of either behaviour and/or roles. And through a balanced and respectful use of processes for both Performance and Development, and complementary Managing Unsatisfactory Performance, it may be necessary for personnel changes.

That said, if you are true to your values and behaviour, those of your leadership team, and those extolled and lived out school wide, you can be comforted that any such decisions are just and necessary.

In conclusion, the intended message is that outstanding leadership is well planned and never accidental; it is collaborative – “It takes a Village to raise a Child”; it has clearly understood expectations. It requires vision, ethical behaviour, and courage to stay the course. And it has a moral imperative - It demands of self and others an ongoing commitment to improve the outcomes for all.

In the next article, we will link this to how you might extend this concept of high performing Principalship to capacity building across your school.

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