

PRINCIPAL'S SABBATICAL REPORT

(JULY –SEPTEMBER 2012)

YOLANDA JULIES

WAIKIRIKIRI SCHOOL

**E tipu e rea mo nga ra o tou ao
Ko to ringa ki nga rakau a te Pakeha
Hei ara mo to tinana;**

**Ko to ngakau ki nga taonga a o tipuna Maori
Hei tikitiki mo tou mahuna;
A, ko to wairua ki to Atua
Nana nei nga mea katoa.**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

I would like to thank the BOT and Whanau of Waikirikiri School, MOE and NZEI for the opportunity to undertake Sabbatical leave. I would also like to acknowledge and thank the Principals and their staff who have allowed me to visit their schools; question them and their staff and also shadow them in their respective roles.

STATUS OF THIS REPORT

This report is not intended to be an academic report. It is simply a summary of conversations and readings undertaken for the purpose of reporting the information gathered from schools to answer the questions posed for my report.

PURPOSE

- to undertake research into 'critical success factors for effective school management and leadership';
- to gain fresh insight and stimulation;
- to identify and explore tools needed to take my leadership practice to the next level;
- to take time out for refreshment, reflection and refocus.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report attempts to answer the question **“What are the critical success factors and or qualities for effective school leadership”**

KEY QUESTIONS I WOULD LIKE TO INVESTIGATE DURING MY RESEARCH

- To be successful in this career, you need emotional and intellectual intelligence, combined with energy and a sense of purpose. What do these skills look like in practice? How do I develop these skills? What do other principals do?
- What does effective educational leadership look like for learning, leading and developing others (staff, parents, wider community) in other schools?
- How does effective feedback enhance leadership capacity? How do other principals do this?
- What key skills or tools are needed to build the leadership capacity of a school
- What skills are needed by the leadership team to raise student achievement within diverse groups?
- How do principals and leaders know that their systems processes, procedures and practices are working and are sustainable? What evidence do they use and what questions do they ask?
- What does effective strategic planning look like in other schools and how does this affect leadership
- What does self-review look like in other schools and how does this support effective leadership practice?

METHODOLOGY

- Desktop Research (Literature Review, Professional Reading, etc.)
- Visiting other schools
- Interviewing professional leaders and lead teams
- Attending a relevant conference
- Reading and reviewing school documentation
- Reflection on recent leadership experiences and feedback
- Writing a report on findings

FINDINGS

Introduction:

Effective leadership is essential to an organization's success, but the qualities of a great leader are often difficult to define. From my school visits and conversations to principals it became clear that principals are most effective within the contexts of their own schools and deal with situations as they arise differently at times because each of them understand their whanau and know the culture of their school. Situational leadership skills are often used, as it is imperative for leaders to have a thorough understanding of their school, their people and themselves.

I have therefore come to the understanding that Effective leadership requires focus and strength in three areas:

1. Understanding the school's systems (both internal and external)
2. Connecting with people
3. Understanding and developing oneself

Understanding the schools systems:

Schools are comprised of many "systems" that affect and influence each other and therefore the progress of the school.

There are existing ways of doing things, policies and procedures, work environment, school culture, priorities, external requirements and constraints as well as individual actions and behaviours.

Effective leaders recognize the need to understand the systems within their respective schools and consider the interrelatedness between the structure of the different systems and the external forces or individuals that may influence those systems in order to effect positive outcomes.

Leaders establish the measures to hold teachers and students accountable for delivering teaching and learning and to measure the resulting student achievement outcomes.

Leaders therefore keep the focus on important initiatives and culture characteristics that have impact on student learning.

They have consistent high expectations are very ambitious for the success of their students and focus relentless on systems, procedures and effective PLD that will improve teaching and learning to strengthen the system.

Effective leaders have the ability to balance strategic and operational roles and have a clear understanding and ability to manage change and develop systems that will sustain the change.

They are robust and rigorous in terms of self-review and data analysis with clear strategies for improvement. They understand that to strengthen the system; teamwork and collective decision-making among teachers and staff, providing opportunities for teacher-leadership and ensuring capacity building; are essential.

Connecting with people:

Leading by moral purpose is what drives most leaders. Building trusting relationships based on respect for others, personal regard for others, competency in the leadership role and personal integrity by “walking the talk” through actions that uphold the interests of students is paramount and distinguish effective leaders from others.

Effective leaders encourage trust and loyalty by being highly skilled (know their stuff), highly responsive (care about people and have empathy) and aligning their actions and words. If leader’s words do not stick, then a leader truly hasn’t spoken. Although listening is an essential leadership skill, communication must be clear honest and truthful.

Leaders therefore build supportive and trusting relationships and establish cultures in which courageous conversations and feedback are seen as necessary for improvement. They commit time to ensure that these relationships are effective in developing the shared vision and valued student outcomes. They cultivate a range of partnerships particularly with parents, the community, hapu and iwi to support student learning and progress.

They are highly inclusive, having complete regard for the progress and personal development of every child.

Effective leaders build strong school cultures that are based on shared norms and values; reflective dialogue and practices and collaboration in which adults feel a sense of collective responsibility for student’s outcomes.

They have a high level of social intelligence which enable them to motivate others towards the continuous expected improvement outcomes and by valuing individuals and their contributions. They develop high-performing teams by establishing a spirit of co-operation and cohesion for achieving goals.

Good leaders provide performance feedback, coaching and career development to teams and individuals to maximize their probability of success.

Self-leadership

“This above all: to thine own self be true”- William Shakespeare

Effective leaders are authentic. They lead from their experiences and strengths and capitalize on what’s unique about themselves. In order to lead others you have to know yourself.

To do this and have self-knowledge; leaders schedule in time for reflection, make personal inventories, write reflective journals and do leadership inquiries. By doing this leaders say that this inner knowledge and awareness builds trust in one’s instincts and intuition.

Effective leaders therefore take action even before a problem arises and are aware of the perspectives they bring to both people and situations.

They also have an awareness of their own emotions as well as an awareness and consideration of the emotions and reactions of others. Effective leaders therefore need to have a high level of emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills if they want to persuade and influence others rather than to direct. Being self-aware when you’re in a leadership position also means having a clear picture of your own strength and weaknesses.

Leaders who self-regulate effectively; rarely verbally attack others, make rushed or emotional decisions, stereotype people, or compromise their own values. They are flexible, self-motivated and have a commitment to personal accountability. Emotional intelligence therefore has an enormous impact in the workplace.

IMPLICATIONS:

School improvement are at risk if the leader do not possess the leadership qualities needed relevant to the school context in which they are placed.

The question that comes to mind is which of these factors do we place higher value on to see within a leader: “high academic intelligence “.social intelligence “or “emotional intelligence”.

The question I then asked myself is whether it is reasonable to expect to find all these diverse or multitude of factors/qualities in one person and whether the increasingly onerous requirements of the job are off-putting.

The implication here is the risk of not attracting quality leaders who are eminently suitable to lead our schools.

CONCLUSIONS:

The most effective way to lead is to model the expected leadership behaviour. Effective leadership is truly a balancing act. An effective leader has to be able to pull together a variety of approaches to respond to diverse situations and stakeholders without compromising their own beliefs and values.

Developing a collaborative learning culture is a process rather than a destination, and one that requires knowledge, skill and persistence.

Relationships are the real work for school improvement –without the people and relationships who will principals lead and how far will their followers follow.

In conclusion I think great leaders inquire, they make decisions, they act and they transform.

Leaders who are most successful are deliberate in their actions and know when to celebrate success.

RELEVANT LITERATURE READ AND REVIEWED/REFERENCES

- Ka Hikitia –Managing for Success (the Maori Education Strategy 2008-2012)
- Best Evidence Synthesis (school leadership and student outcomes –identifying what works and why)
- Ideas into action- from research policy to effective practice(for schools and system leaders)
- Article: Emotional Intelligences sets leaders apart
- Emotional Intelligence In leadership (leadership skills from mind tools.com)
- Principals identify top ten leadership traits(education World)
- Key leadership competencies-Canadian Government publication
- Leadership competency model –(Big dog and Little dog's performance Juxtaposition)