

Leading from the Middle: educational leadership for middle and senior leaders

COMPLETE SET OF CASE STUDY DESCRIPTIONS, TRANSCRIPTS AND REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Case study 1: Anne Coster – [Enhancing learning and teaching](#)

Description

Anne Coster describes how a student leadership project was the “logical conclusion” of several years of intensive curriculum implementation and review.

Exploration of the curriculum values, principles, and key competencies was followed up by a cross-curricular focus on pedagogy. Teachers worked across learning areas to observe different contexts and teaching styles.

This willingness to collaborate led to a culture of trust among the staff and a shift in the relationship between teachers and students. The staff realized their inquiry into practice would not be complete without the student voice.

Transcript

My project, really, was the logical conclusion of a journey that we’d been on for a number of years around that ongoing cycle of curriculum implementation and review. So we worked intensively with curriculum. We had engaged in review of our own learning areas, key insights that drove practice in those learning areas. We’d engaged really intensively with effective pedagogy and with vision and values. We’d examined the culture of our school, we’d looked at the things that we valued; principles that we based our interaction with each other on. And when I’m talking about interaction, I mean interaction with each other as staff, senior team with staff and interaction between teachers and students.

We moved on in 2009 to focus really specifically on deepening our understanding of the Key Competencies and looking at the multiple contexts in which the Key Competencies can be developed, over time, in a secondary school. And we’d examined current practice, the opportunities that we were creating within and alongside the classroom for meaningful development of the Key Competencies.

We started the year with a wonderful reading called “Students at Bat” which was examined to get those shadows out of the corner that might still be lurking there in terms of the teacher learner relationship, or that sense that we are all learners and therefore how do we interact with each other? Because what we are really interested in ultimately is examining this paradigm shift that has taken place between the teacher and the learners.

I love that image on the inside cover of the curriculum and the reference to the curriculum nautilus and the quotation from Oliver Wendell Holmes. What he says specifically is “One’s mind, once stretched by a new idea, never regains its original shape [sic]”, and that’s what we’ve been in the process of doing;

stretching thinking, stretching ideas and creating a new way of teaching and learning and interacting with each other – the teacher as learners, interacting with our students as learners.

We established cross-curricula learning groups. We worked from the assumption that you talk about learning and you talk about your practice within your discipline, within your department, but that there is a lot to learn from each other. So we set up cross-curricula learning groups which enabled teachers to differentiate their inquiry into different aspects of their practice, always with enhanced student outcomes at the centre of the inquiry.

Added onto that we've also built in Browse Week so that you can pop in and see other teachers at work, and perhaps teachers at work with students that you might teach but observe them in a different context and observe the interactions and style of learning that takes place across different disciplines. And we also run voluntary after-school sessions – Wine and Pedagogy sessions – where people can come and explore different aspects of practice or new ideas that people are talking about. We also embedded show and tell sessions because if you have teachers experimenting with new ways of doing things, things don't always go according to plan and that willingness to share good practice, share your experiments and also to share success stories and not quite success stories with the rest of the staff really creates that culture of trust. We have an understanding of what we're all working on together, and we're willing to share our stories with each other.

By the end of that year many of the learning group inquiries had shifted to thinking “well our inquiry is not complete unless we ask the students what they think.” We had this shift to saying, “We're not going to make big changes without seeing how the students feel about things.” So that coincided with me getting involved in the National Aspiring Principals' Programme – so my focus for the project was specifically on student voice and really embedding that as part of our school culture. So we had a well-embedded culture of staff learning and inquiry into practice. It was very much student centred, and not just centred on doing things for students, but inquiry and reflection that involved students as well and sought feedback. We had students actively involved in leading things in the wider life of the school and we were ready to move forward.

Reflective questions

- Anne Coster describes a number of “risky” strategies that she used to implement her programme. Some examples are: browse week which meant going in to each other's classrooms, voluntary after school meetings, and sharing experiments. Think about how you would work with your group of teachers and how you would prepare them to take these kinds of risks.
- How could you use student voices to develop your work and the work of other teachers in your school?
- Anne did not start from scratch, but used current school development initiatives to extend and shift staff thinking about learning and teaching. What is happening your school that could be built on and/or similarly enhanced?

Case study 2: Brian Filipo – [Leading change](#)

Description

Brian Filipo had a clear vision when he began as deputy principal at Brockville School. His background in ICT teaching and sales had given him the opportunity to see ICT in practice in a range of schools. He promptly began to implement a suite of new technology, including computers, interactive whiteboards, a new school website, a student management system, and a wireless connection.

On reflection, Brian thinks that he brought in the changes too quickly. The technical nature of ICT means that staff require in-depth support, and he now recognises the importance of ensuring that teachers understand the purpose of any change implementation.

Transcript

As DP in this school my responsibilities lie in ICT and I have a pastoral care role in the school, and I'm also co-leader, if you like, of our senior syndicate with another one of our senior teachers – so they're my responsibilities in this school.

Prior to coming to this school I was an ICT teacher at an intermediate and so I had exposure and quite a bit of experience around the use of ICT as a learning tool in schools. I was on sales and sold interactive whiteboards in Southland for a number of months as well as teaching. So I'd come to this school with a bit of vision myself on how I thought ICT could work within this school. The change came about through, when I initially came here, we just had some dated computers and units in the classrooms, we had a dated server. E-mail wasn't working particularly well, we didn't have a school website – so, together with Ben [principal] and the board, we had decided that needed to change that to benefit the pupils. We had some grant money come in as well which hugely benefitted our school.

We brought in new computers for all the classrooms, we got a pod of laptops in, we changed to wireless – we didn't have wireless, so now we're wireless. And all those things happened relatively quickly. I think that one of the negative things about that was, I don't think we supported, well, I think supporting staff through that change could have been done better. Because ICT is so technical, if you make too many changes too quickly, it just sort of gets lost in what we're trying to do. We had new computers, laptops, interactive whiteboards, wireless, website, all those things within sort of 13 / 14 months.

I would slow down, I think, to bring people along. So I think I'd definitely have a bit of a timeframe for these things because everyone learns at different rates I think. Getting runs on the board early, I think, would have meant, let's say in terms of our computers or our interactive whiteboards, introduce these, stagger the introduction of these things rather than, "These are the great things we can do, and I'm going to bring them all in, because I've seen this, and I've seen this..." Because that's too much change too quickly. But it's been a positive change, and I don't think we'd look... we wouldn't look back.

Another thing too is our student management system. We're we going through that process of moving away from having paper register, putting our assessments online, putting our assessments accessible to staff. So that was another change that we enacted about 18-months after I got here, was finding a good student management system that could carry our visions for where we wanted the school to be. Yeah.

Reflective questions

- For Brian Filipo timing was a key issue in the change management he attempted to implement. It reminds us that usually what we lead change in is a strength of ours. Think about the implications of that for how you act. What strategies would you put in place to ensure that the rest of your team can follow and implement changes that you suggest?
- Implementing ICT development is often just about the technology, but it should also be about how the technology supports learning. Do you have discussions in your school about how this happens? The annual Learning@School conference provides excellent opportunities to learn about using ICT effectively and many schools send groups of teachers so they learn together.

Case study 3: Iain McGilchrist – [Network learning communities](#)

Description

Iain McGilchrist is a member of a network learning community for secondary English middle leaders. The Dunedin-based community meets several times a year to discuss experiences and issues related to teaching English.

Iain finds that sharing his experiences with colleagues from other schools has meant he doesn't feel like he is reinventing the wheel. Participating in learning communities or presenting a paper at a conference provides personalised learning that directly improves his practice.

Transcript

So in Dunedin we have a network learning community, focused on English, where middle leaders, mostly HODs, but there are some less experienced teachers, we meet several times a year and we discuss many of the issues that do get discussed through English Online and other forums like that. We look at our programme planning - we look at ways of doing less, but doing it better, and working a bit more smartly. It was a very good way of rolling out principles, values, key competencies of the curriculum, and getting some really good dialogue, discussion and understanding going about that.

It was a very, very good way to avoid the trap that I fell into when I first saw the draft version of *The New Zealand Curriculum*. I got all excited and I turned to the back and I looked at the achievement objectives, and I thought 'How can I rule up my mark book?' I thought of all the pretty colours and all the pens I could use, where the columns would go, and that's not the point of it. Through that network learning community - I think the keyword there really is 'community' - it has been a very good way of, in some cases, arguing and sharing ideas, and critiquing other people's ideas. I think, certainly in my case, I felt a lot more confident in dealing with things - we don't feel so isolated and on our own, and we don't feel so vulnerable and under the microscope when we have things like department reviews or curriculum reviews or ERO.

Being part of the network learning community has been terrific for the way we have further developed things in English here. I think it's definitely given our department here the confidence to think about things before we rush into them... We don't rush into them any more. We think carefully. We

implement slowly. We keep monitoring how successful these changes are, rather than making enormous wide ranging changes and we don't really have a clear idea of how successful they are. I think it's really given us the confidence to take our time and do it right.

I think it's really useful for any head of department to look outside their own school, as well, and how they might share their own learning. There are many ways you can do that. You could, for example, offer to present a paper at a subject association conference or you may get involved with English Online or any other online community. I know that with English Online there are lots of people on there who just watch, they lurk and they read, and they could contribute because there are doing lots of great work, that I know, and I'd really recommend that people think about doing this because it improves your own teaching enormously. It improves the way you do your own planning, it gives you the confidence to try something new, it really does.

There are quite a few challenges in being involved with learning outside of my day-to-day job; of course, balancing the time is the biggest one. But I just find it so much more beneficial to get involved with smaller projects than to take a day off school and go and do an in-service course somewhere else. It really personalises the learning specifically for you.

My advice to other secondary middle leaders who are looking to extend themselves in this way is - try something. Start small, pick a little project. One really good example of that is a level 2 English class I taught last year. There were some very interesting characters in there who I knew from around the school. They were a wonderful class and I was just concerned that because they were all such diligent students, mostly, that they would do their utmost to give the correct answer. Out of that came the Maverick English project - some people might have heard of that from English Online. That started so small, like just a little one word - maverick - that we would use in the lesson. Then it became a way of thinking; then it became a way of planning; then I was asked to present a paper at conference about it.

Doing that one little thing, deciding that I'm not going to let my students write the predictable answers in an essay, I'll call them mavericks, and we'll encourage innovative thinking. That changed the way I planned my whole senior English course.

Reflective questions

- Iain McGilchrist talks about his success with taking small challenges and changes. With your department or leadership group agree to make a change with your own class, and monitor the improvement it brings. Share the results with your department or group who might be encouraged to do the same. As well as making changes build up trust with your teaching colleagues.
- Are you part of a network learning community like Iain? Could you become involved, or even start one, perhaps in a subject area across schools, a leadership group within your own school, or with colleagues in similar roles in other schools?

Case study 4: Carol Jarrett – [Leading pedagogical change](#)

Description

Carol Jarrett uses the teaching as inquiry approach in her department to investigate what she labels “problems of practice”.

Carol shares her experiences in the classroom with colleagues, encouraging an environment where teachers feel safe to talk about their practice. They reframe the conversation using the teaching as inquiry tool – describe the problem, identify possible solutions, make a change, evaluate.

Carol recognises that teachers need to take ownership of the process if the change is to be successful. She says it is important for participants to understand the change – what it is and why it is being prioritised.

Transcript

I think the really important thing with leading change is to actually talk about the change process. You need to be explicit. You need to talk about what the change is, why the change is being made, and why that change in practice, in system, why that’s being prioritised over all the other changes that could or should be made.

So when teachers have a clear understanding that change process becomes explicit, they’re more likely to take ownership of it, less likely to see it as something that’s being commanded from senior leaders or from external pressures outside of the school.

A really important part of understanding the change process came through a book called *Weaving Evidence, Inquiry and Standards to Build Better Schools*, which was edited by Judy Parr and Helen Timperley. There’s a chapter in that written by Deidre Le Fevre, which is called ‘Changing tack’, and in that Deidre explains that change process really clearly, and the processes that you need to go [through]. It’s kind of something that we do but I think it’s the explicitness, and I guess really naming and identifying all the different elements of change.

I think the teaching as inquiry model in the NZC is the best tool. It fits in with everything. The idea of inquiry being nestled, so it happens at a school level, it happens at a faculty level, department level, it happens in the classroom, and it’s part of the students’ processing as well. I think when we see that the same tool can be used for a range of different purposes then also the links between different change initiatives become clearer.

We think about our practice in terms of problems of practice. Not as a problem in a negative sense or a pejorative sense, but as a problem to be solved, a challenge. Then suddenly the conversation changes. So you’re moving away from ‘I’m failing, I’m not a particularly effective teacher’ into ‘Well this is quite interesting isn’t it? So how can we get around that?’

My approach to lead that change has been to model it. So I’m very open about problems of my own practice. So when I’m working with teachers either as a group or individually, when they’re coming to present problems of practice, we reframe that conversation - so what’s a problem of practice? What are some of the possible approaches we could take? Let’s give that a go and then let’s evaluate its

effectiveness. What change did you notice and let's come back to it again.

The benefits for teachers, when you look at problems of practice in a positive way, is that it actually then becomes safe to try things. It also surfaces what's going on for them in their practice. They don't have to hide things. They don't have to revert to practice that perhaps isn't effective. They can actually try things knowing that if it doesn't work out, that's OK, they're gonna have a safe conversation, it's gonna be about their learning, and then we look at solutions to how we move it forward.

I think the big challenge is balancing a sense of urgency. Every student, every cohort is incredibly important. So you want the best teaching and learning experiences for every single student, and you want them now! We don't have time to wait for us all to catch up. But change takes time and you have to be patient - it's not gonna happen overnight, it comes through trial and error. So that's a real tension. Students benefit because they can see their teachers actively seeking change. They can see that there is a response to what's going on for them.

So the students should be seeing teachers changing things, constantly looking for ways to improve their outcomes. We need to prioritise the change that's going to have the best outcome for students, so that teachers will see that there's a purpose in that change, and support them through the trial and error process, and encourage them to keep experimenting and to become better teachers.

Reflective questions

- The teaching as inquiry model used by Carol is promoted in the Ministry's BES on Teacher Professional Learning and Development. It identifies students' needs and teacher's own learning needs. As a school leader work with your group to identify what needs to be done and how to go about it in order to improve the learning of students.
- The key to Carol's approach is the willingness to identify the 'problems' and decide on priorities. If you have not tried this approach before, identify one 'problem' (something non-threatening to others) and invite participation by other staff to reach a solution. A successful resolution may start you on the process of dealing with real 'problems of practice'.

Case study 5: Hurae White – [Distributed leadership and manaakitanga](#)

Description

Hurae White describes the leadership structure at Nawton School as "distributed". Teachers from each syndicate are represented in the leadership team, creating a collaborative approach within the school.

Hurae identifies manaakitanga as a core value that, in practice, means the leadership team support each other and the rest of the teaching staff. Teachers are encouraged to take on leadership roles and responsibilities and are provided with appropriate support.

One teacher, with expertise in pāngarau, was nominated to lead a focused mathematics programme in the immersion class. She worked with an adviser and two other teachers to improve student outcomes

and also increase their own knowledge.

Transcript

The leadership structure that we have here at Nawton School is very much distributed leadership. We have leaders within our syndicates so immersion, reo rua and the mainstream. So we have five leaders that are represented there and that brings a really important dynamic to the leadership table here at Nawton School.

So we work very collaboratively and we value that input and work on the premise of the strengths of the team as a collective rather than individually. I very much believe in 'Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi' so the strength is not in the individual, it's in the collective.

So it's about, for me, building the capacity and providing the opportunities for my colleagues and my team to actually take on responsibilities and take a lead but with the appropriate supports. An example of that, this year, is the core focus for the immersion programme has been pāngarau.

The relationship with Te Poutama Tau and Ngā Whanaketanga provided an opportunity for one of my colleagues to actually for me to tap her on the shoulder (because she has expertise in pāngarau) tap her on the shoulder and say 'e hoa, koinei te wā' just to invite her to take a lead role and that's been wonderful. Wonderful for her and wonderful for the team.

It's also provided an opportunity for her to actually develop her leadership style and in relation with the pāngarau advisor, Leeana Herewini, she's really been able to, she's in her element. And she didn't go it alone. She tapped another two on the shoulder and said, 'You know, would you like to support?' and that's been fantastic for the team the growth in teacher knowledge has just been amazing. And it's reflected in the data.

I think one of the strengths that we have here is as a whānau at Nawton school is the way we interact with each other. The senior leadership team we're very open and supportive of each other and we've just got that really good whanaungatanga and it really does provide a really positive vibe here at the kura that I think has a positive influence on how we operate as a team.

Manaakitanga for us here at Nawton School is one of our core values and beliefs that together, through adversity, we are there for each other to support and having that connectedness to each other really does support the environment as a leadership team but also as a staff, as a collective we all take care of each other and make sure everyone has that support.

Reflective question

- One of the roles of senior and middle leaders is to encourage other teachers to take leadership. Hurae White demonstrates this. Select someone in your group who models good practice in their own classroom. How will you provide them with guidance and support (awhinatanga) to help them improve the classroom teaching of others?

Case study 6: Detroit Sterling – [Culture and relationships](#)

Description

Detroit Sterling is a learning advisor, at Unlimited Paenga Tawhiti in Christchurch. He has a pivotal role in supporting staff and students around Māori student achievement. In this story he talks about the importance of relationships in his work.

Transcript

Mauri ora, I'm Detroit Stirling and I'm a Learning Advisor here at Unlimited, Paenga Tawhiti. My iwi are Ngati Porou, Whānau Apanui and Kai Tahu, born and bred in Christchurch.

Unlimited is a student-directed school, in that the students direct their own learning. We have IEP plans once a term with them. I'm a learning advisor, not a teacher but a learning advisor, and I have a half an hour sit down one-to-one with each student in my home base, where I hear about their learning programme and it can also just be a "how are other things in your life going" because that relationship is key.

Once I develop that with the students then I can help in other areas. That's largely what we do differently; every five weeks the students are choosing a new schedule so there's lots of advising that goes on – just general support. With them choosing a schedule every five weeks they are in classes that they want to be in because they've chosen it; they are passionate about it, there are less behaviour issues, of course, because they're there - they want to be there.

With my subject area I know that, so when I'm teaching these students there's that buy-in from them and it just gels. We're all there because we want to be. My subjects here at Unlimited are Te Reo Māori and Physical Education. I teach those two subjects and I've always been passionate about the two.

From that I've also evolved into some leadership of students and staff; a team of staff to work with and a group of students to develop community and relationships. Largely we work a lot on building relationships here at Unlimited and that gets the best out of our students and staff of course and of recent I've been tasked with leading Māori and Pasifika student achievement, which has been quite rewarding.

So, at Unlimited I'm tasked with leading or improving Māori student achievement and what I do in that role is I think I work closely with my staff and supporting them to set goals to improve Māori student achievement in their own classes. There's all sorts of dimensions, whether it be just a conversation about how they relate with Māori students in the home base, in their form class that is, or their teaching subject. There's other sort of pastoral care things that I would have a conversation with colleagues about. I'm quite approachable as a person, so I'm always willing to chat about those sorts of things. I feel that my staff would come to me and say "I've got this dilemma – any advice?"

I'm a big believer that you've got to empower them to believe that they have the solution themselves, that the learning advisers can do it themselves. We have an amazing staff here and I do believe that, so for me, it's just giving them the self-belief that they have the answers, and they can relate with those students; whether it be to share some of their positive skills they have and remind them of what they

can, or are already doing, and how that might apply to a Māori family or a Māori student.

I guess it comes from within; that pono again. I've got a belief in something that I want to lead because I know, at the end, it's going to be an outcome I want everybody to be on board with. I'm a big fan that we're a school that's working on the same kaupapa, with the same direction, so I want to know when I'm leading staff that we're on board together, and when I'm out the front in a meeting they can sense the passion that I have and it's contagious; they can't help but see that in me and want to jump on board and follow the waka that I'm rowing.

To get other learning advisors on the waka with me, to get them on board with what we're doing, you've got to have a bit of data, a bit of evidence. You've got to be able to say to them "hey, this is the case and we want to improve student outcome here, so here's the evidence to say we need to work together on this". When you see that, it's like you're empowering them and they go through this sense of realisation. You can see it and it's quite rewarding to see them have that 'light-bulb' moment and then off they go and they do something even more amazing, some sort of initiative and you sit back and you go "why didn't I think of that", but you know that you've contributed to that.

We've taken our staff on Noho Marae for professional development because the amount of bonding you get in that environment is so strong, so for our staff occasionally after the earthquake we needed a sense of bonding before we could go forward with any school initiatives, so that marae is the perfect environment. Because I'm familiar with the marae I naturally fall into that leadership of the kaupapa and how we go on to the marae and those sorts of processes. When we get there, whatever our topic is, I make sure I'm on board and supporting our staff.

When I just started out at Unlimited one of our board chairs said that learning advisers are only meant to be at Unlimited for a couple of years; they're dynamic, amazing people and they'll be off doing different things around the world, following different passions, because here you're meant to demonstrate to the kids that, "hey, I'm passionate about this", be it sports or my Māoritanga, and that's sort of contagious and they pick up on that. The idea is that in a couple of years I'll be over this place and I'll be off following those passions, but of course this place has grown on me and I love it too much; it's dynamic enough for me. Eventually I do want to move into some mainstream leadership position; to take what I've learnt in this arena and put it in another school setting and share those views and be radical and challenge other structures. I think I'm quite proud of what we do here in Unlimited and I think it can work in all schools.

Reflective questions

- With both students and other learning advisors at Unlimited Paenga Tawhiti Detroit Stirling has concentrated his leadership around establishing positive and trusting relationships. Discuss the importance of relationships with your leadership team. How do you set them up and maintain them? What are the outcomes you can expect from them?
- Māori student achievement, both academic and in other areas, is important for all New Zealand schools. List the methods which Detroit uses to gain the support and develop the awareness of other staff at the school. What will work most effectively in your school and result in lifting

Māori achievement and motivation? How do you deal with any resistance to your plans?

- As a middle or senior leader you need to prepare yourself for the future and for further leadership. What plans do you have in place for that? For yourself? For others who want to be in leading positions in schools?

Case study 7: Middle and senior leadership at Homai Primary School

In these three videos two senior leaders, and one middle leader at Homai Primary School in Manurewa talk about their roles and their professional ambitions.

[Anuja Singh: Leading learning and leading change](#)

Description

As a deputy principal Anuja Singh has particular responsibility for maths. She works directly with the four maths mentors in the school who in turn work with classroom teachers.

Transcript

Kia ora, my name is Anuja Singh. I'm the DP at Homai Primary. At Homai we actually name DPs leaders of professional learning so my job at Homai at the moment is currently to lead the mathematics curriculum.

One of the ways we have done that is through the strategic goals, so the aim, or the purpose, behind my role is to develop or sustain capability for mathematics even after I leave the premises. So, one of the ways we have developed sustainability at Homai is we identify data, we look for trends in data, we identify needs for students and therefore identify personnel that would be the best fit to support development in that data – at Homai we call them mentors. What I do from there is support the mentors to address the data through the teachers they support, through the mentees. I often sit in the background, having feedback and feed-forward conversations with the mentors about their specific teachers, about their specific data needs, and about the next best steps with that group of learners. We identify both teachers and students as learners.

In that process I then become a learner too so I go through the enquiry myself. I talk to the principal often about, "This is what I think is the next way forward – is there another way that I should possibly look at that?" – so we do quite a lot of strategic change before I go ahead and make or suggest to my mentors another way forward.

The other thing I do is to lead by example so I tend to be in classrooms supporting, by modelling, by making that sure I'm visible as a learner, so I've taken on an MST group, where the teachers of that group of students and I constantly reflect on what I've noticed about those kids and how should I refine my practice in order to support that, and that dialogue is often heard by a lot of people so we try not to keep it private; there's a huge trust when we talk about sustainability.

One of the things I am doing is that we've identified out of the four mentors, somebody who is showing

quite a strength in mathematics and is quite passionate about it, so my role has been to intensify my lead role with hers so she understands how to lead that change with other staff and that would be through PD, so when I do workshops I try to get her trained up to do workshops so that she can then lead that, rather than always having the spotlight on me.

The other thing that we constantly do is we do timely, or in time reviews, which doesn't mean that you do the unit and at the end of the term we do it; we've got it so that every fortnight we have review meetings which are what we call IAT meetings ... inquiry meetings. In those inquiry meetings the mentors have a specific lens that they go in with. We've got protocols set up; we've got structures set up that support teachers to know what to expect in these meetings. This all goes back to, "What evidence are you using to make a difference for mathematics in your classroom?" and we've seen a flow-on effect, with this connected curriculum also, is having that flow-on effect with what we call CSI meetings ... curriculum scene investigation meetings, where we then start enquiring into – well, when I've done this in connected curriculum, this is the impact, this is what I want to do. When you're talking about change management you're talking about – if I plant this seed what's the next tree that will come out of it rather than just the tree that you've planted and seen that flourish. So, we're always thinking about – so if I plant this where else would it stem to, who else could we be able to influence with it, and how else can I help that influence get on?

I think one of the exciting parts about being a leader is that you're actually willing to learn and I've said that to my mentors as well as to the principal, that actually the lens that I've had in mathematics and the way that I look at mathematics is my way - help me understand another way of looking at it.

Middle management have to realise that you have to be very flexible with learners that you have; however your staff respond to that sort of learning you have to learn to evaluate and refine – if it works this time it might not work next time, so you always have to be critical. That's the biggest powerful message that any middle management can have; just always critique, refine, address those things you think haven't made the impact you wanted. And always have a measurable impact; what is that impact that I'm after? Is it to change that teacher's practice or is it to change that child's attitude towards mathematics, what are those critical impact points that you are really after for that particular moment?

Reflective questions

- Anuja identifies *trust* as a key factor working with children and teachers when she goes into their classrooms. *Leading from the Middle* also identifies establishing trust as a key factor affecting the success of middle and senior leaders. Initiate a discussion with other leaders about approaches to establishing trust with staff and students. What complexities might there be in doing this? How can these be overcome?
- This clip identifies that senior and middle leaders need to be learners as well. For example Anuja often works with her principal to develop this openness to learning. What opportunities do your teachers and school leaders have to develop their sense of themselves as professionals? How might this be established throughout the school? Develop a plan which you can discuss with the principal and other senior and middle leaders in the school.

[Louise Miller: Pedagogical leadership in maths](#)

Description

A key role for leaders who are subject specialists is the mentoring of other teachers. Maths specialist Louise Miller describes the process that Homai School has developed around teacher mentoring.

Transcript

Hi, my name's Louise Miller, I'm a Year 6 classroom teacher alongside being a specialist Maths teacher. I've been working in Homai Primary School for two years now, and during that time I've been provided with opportunities to develop in a leadership role.

I'm responsible for influencing the implementation of teaching as an inquiry in our school. I oversee two mentees and I help them with their pedagogical content knowledge as well as providing them with opportunities for them to develop as teachers in mathematics.

During our monitoring meetings we meet and we discuss each others .. we have an inquiry question, that's where my mentees develop a question to help them meet the needs of the students. They are continually reviewing whether they are able to answer this question through each part of the cycle – so whether they have provided the students with enough content knowledge, whether they have provided them with authentic learning activities, whether they maybe need to focus on more content knowledge for themselves as teachers, and from my intervention in that role it also helps my other mentee develop skills and knowledge that they had maybe never thought about before.

So as a leader in that role it helps me to direct both teachers into different areas that they might not have considered before, and it also helps me as a classroom teacher, as well, to practice .. to improve my practice in teaching, and it also helps me to consider other things that I had, maybe, never taken on board before.

I enjoy how I've grown as a teacher. I enjoy being part of a real strong foundation of this school. I'm enthusiastic about learning – and I think that enthusiasm and the support, and ambition that there is this school – and how Laurayne and Anuja drive that ambition has really encouraged me to go and be more focused, I suppose be more focused on a leadership role. I don't know if I would ever want to go into management – but I really enjoy what I do, and I enjoy the opportunities that I've had in my mentoring sessions with Anuja to look at other avenues – perhaps facilitation, but the essence for my learning at present is taking it back into my classroom and sharing that with my students. Trying new ideas, and being more developed in my practice and my content knowledge.

Reflective questions

- Being a curriculum leader has helped Louise develop as a teacher and as a leader. How has what you have done as a leader in the school contributed to your knowledge and experience in the classroom?

- Not everyone wants to be a school leader as *Learning from the Middle* suggests, and Louise herself. Many people fulfil very important leadership roles in schools without wanting to be the principal or a senior manager. What contributions do you make to the school as a leader, and how can you develop these contributions even further to fulfil a leadership function in the school?

[Melinda Bell: Awhinatanga](#)

Description

Melinda Bell has her view fixed on principalship. She is currently a senior leader in her school and has a wide range of leadership responsibilities. She wants to become a principal because she recognises how influential the role is.

Transcript

Hi my name's Melinda Bell. I work at Homai Primary School in Manurewa. Here at Homai I have several leadership roles: I'm a team leader, I'm a literacy and maths mentor, I'm a tutor teacher and also recently I've moved into learning about systems and organisation, SENCO and, just moving into the traditional DP kind of role.

Here at Homai the environment is an environment that grows leaders. It really values distributive leadership and really values giving staff the opportunity to move into leadership. My career goal at the moment is to become a principal. I've spoken to the principal here, Laurayne, about that and she has supported me in this by giving me lots of opportunities at school to develop the skills and dispositions that I need to become a principal.

Homai is a school that builds the capacity of their leaders, they really value growing good leaders, good strong leaders with strong pedagogical content knowledge, that they can then go and impart on other teachers or staff in the school. I'm not a leader who sees themselves as the person who knows everything. I'm a learner alongside the people that I'm leading. I lead by example.

I take every opportunity that is offered to me here. Laurayne, the principal, has given me several opportunities this year to develop my mentoring skills, to develop my leadership across the staff – with small groups, with the whole staff – one-on-one mentoring sessions. I've also had the opportunity to really dig in deep with a beginning teacher and help develop their professional capacity as a teacher, getting into their classroom, working alongside them, modelling, buddy teaching – all of that kind of thing.

The culture at Homai is one of high trust. For example, recently I've moved into a position where I'm learning about systems. I have a mentor who is the current DP at our school, and she is taking me step-by-step through the process of “well this is how I do it, but you might want to do it another way”, building my capacity so that I can then go on and build that with other teachers or staff in the school.

In terms of my own professional learning – I identify some things, maybe courses, university papers, Visible Learning workshops – things that I need to grow myself as a leader, and then something that is

going to be able to be imparted on the staff at school as well. If a staff member comes forward and they really need assistance or growth in a particular area in their classroom together we'll go and look for something that's going to support them in that role – that's going to help them develop the skills they need. We try to look within the expertise of the school before we go outside of the school – we want to make sure we're using what we have in the school, the great resource we have in the school.

Myself, as a leader, I'm always looking for that person who can take on a leadership role in something else as well. Looking at while I'm mentoring, who can I mentor to do this role again for themselves, looking at the skills that they have in the classroom – how can they take that on and give that to someone else on the staff, to just bring that leadership across the school, so it's not just the one person at the top. We're constantly looking for that opportunity to just grow other people into the role so that if someone leaves there's not a big gap. It's sustainable, it's going to continue, it's going to grow. It's all there.

For me at the moment in my career I feel like I've "done" the classroom thing and I've impacted on the students in my classroom. I have, maybe, 20 children in my classroom – so I'm influencing 20 children. Where I see myself moving into a principalship is because I want to have the influence on making change and developing teachers, developing students, developing practice, developing learning and achievement to a wider group of people.

I feel that I have a lot of knowledge and skill that I can impart, and bring and make change somewhere that needs me, that needs my skill. And I'm not someone to sit and say I know it all. If I got to a point in teaching or leadership and I said that's it I can't learn anything more, that's me, I shouldn't be in this profession any more, so I just, I want to move into being a principal so that I can impact on a greater group – and just continue to learn and grow myself as a teacher, as a leader, as a learner.

Reflective questions

- Melinda identifies growing leaders as a key factor at Homai School, and she has experienced it herself. How does your school develop leadership? In what ways can you as a middle or senior leader take or create opportunities the school has for you to develop your own leadership skills? What areas of your leadership could benefit from development in the school?
- What goals do you have for yourself in the future and who can you get advice or mentoring from about achieving those goals? What else can you do? For example, are there external opportunities you can take to achieve those goals?

Case study 8: Middle and senior leadership at Finlayson Park School

Finlayson Park is New Zealand's largest primary school, with over 900 students. The majority of its students are Māori and Pasifika, with students from a wide range of other ethnicities. It has no European students. In these two videos the deputy principal and one of the school's literacy leaders discuss their work.

Description

Deputy principal Nardi Leonard talks about her leadership journey in this video and why she relishes the challenge of working at Finlayson Park.

Transcript

Kia ora. My name is Nardi Leonard, from Finlayson Park School (FPS) in Clendon, Manurewa. Our school has over 850 students and our roll will grow to 900 by the end of the year. The main culture of our students is Maori and Pacifica. We are currently 80% Maori and Pacifica with 23 cultures making up the difference. We are very committed to the first language of our students as we believe that through the first language we will be able to meet the learning needs of all our students.

I'm currently the Deputy Principal and I sit in a second tier within our school leadership structure alongside our Associate Principal. I've been DP at FPS for five years now and I made a strategic move to this particular school, one, because I knew about their bilingual education and commitment to that, but also, I came from a small school and the challenge as a leader in a school of this size, I felt, would be very good for my growth personally. I also heard that the school promoted individual growth and the opportunities would be more available to me as a leader. So it was a strategic move to move here and work in a school of this particular size.

I never actually chose to be a DP. I was shoulder-tapped by another person who felt I had the qualities to fulfil that position, but it wasn't something I looked at myself and thought "Yes I am a deputy principal and I will be a principal". However, while being here at FPS it's a very nurturing style of leadership and our principal actively promotes us to move ahead and look forward; in fact it's said that you only leave this school if you're going on a promotion – you never go sideways or go backwards, so that's comforting to know.

I'm currently being supported in my pursuit to further my education through the school. Our BOT has committed financially to professional development for all leaders and encouraged us to pursue higher honours. So it's that self-belief that if our board and our principal supports us to go forward in our own education, then it makes me want to do it and actually believe that I'm possibly good enough to do it. It's extremely important here in the leadership qualities of our leadership.

The school has supported me personally and professionally to pursue leadership honours, or leadership positions and it's my role in the school to ensure that that filters down to the team leaders who I am responsible for within our school, so those conversations have to take place, whether they're formal or informal, that I plant a seed in the leaders that they too want to pursue, not just higher honours, but just where does their career want to go, where do they want to go in their leadership management. I need to be aware of what's on offer in the community or nationally, what's being offered for leadership opportunities and just to plant those seeds within the team leaders so that they too can have the opportunities that I have had. That is a culture within our school; our staff are continuously upskilling, continuously seeking or sorting out further PD studies and it is supported by our board, by our principal, financially, but also in time. If they need to have a day away in a conference, that's where the support

comes in from our school.

A key leadership practice at FPS is about the promotion of change and although there's a perception that change can be problematic, it's actually a culture in our school that change is a really good thing and that with change comes success and exciting new innovative teaching strategy. Quite often, regardless of whether you're in a leadership position or not, we promote change, we promote new ideas and we invite our leaders to challenge the things that we do in our school now, the practices that we have, and try and continuously look for new ways that we promote student achievement. My role is to help support team leaders with these ideas and ensure that I'm not trying to put a halt on what they do and actually encourage them to look outside the square – how can we make things happen?

I think, because we're encouraged as a group to be innovative, you're quite surprised that all of a sudden people from out of nowhere come up with ideas that at times, if you're an outlooker, sound really obscure and it's that ...dare to dream, and we want our leaders to dream and then it's my role and also our principal's role to try and make that dream happen.

Reflective questions

- Nardi talks about her role to promote other leadership capability in the school. This has emerged from her commitment to pono, self-belief. Who are the people in your school who you could encourage to pursue leadership opportunities? What is on offer in the school, community or nationally for them to take up?
- At Finlayson Park school the promotion of innovation is a key leadership practice. Nardi takes an active role in this with a support team. What practices need to change in your school? For example if you wanted to improve student achievement what would you encourage people to do to make that happen? What challenges would you face? How would you help people make that dream happen?

[Sumithra Naidoo: Pedagogical leadership in literacy](#)

Description

Sumithra Naidoo describes how she has grown in confidence in her role as a literacy leader. She works closely with beginning teachers and those new to Finlayson Park School.

Transcript

I am a teacher at Finlayson Park School and I've been here for several years. I have a strong interest in literacy because I see the value of literacy in and out of school as well. I am aware that students struggle with literacy so when I was approached to be the literacy leader I was a little bit scared and not certain of what the role entailed, but as I immersed myself in my position I sort of grew in confidence and now I see myself as a strong literacy leader owing to the fact that I'm engaged in study outside of school studies. My strength and my knowledge of literacy is through further studies. (My role as a literacy leader is to support beginning teachers and new teachers to Finlayson Park School. I have a very

nurturing approach towards new teachers because I was also a new teacher. I do a lot of in-class support for them; I monitor the programmes they run for their students. I support them within the classroom and outside as well. I run professional development; I show them how to do running records so I go right back to the beginning and I take them forward. (Our conversations are also based on data-analysis because my job is to look after schoolwide data, so I centre my discussions around what the data tells us and teachers find it very empowering because it's evidence-based; they can see where the kids are at and where they should take them.

We have lots of incidental discussions as well. I feel that I can, and I'm in a position, to show the teachers where students should go and how powerful they are to these students and what a difference they can make.

Reflective questions

- In order to take up literacy leadership at the school Sumithra participated in out of school study. Find out what out of school study would help you improve your curriculum leadership skills, and think about ways in which you and your school could support your development in that area. (
- Sumithra uses a range of methods to assist other teachers improve what happens in the classroom. For example she goes back to beginning where necessary to help them. She uses data-analysis, and she runs professional learning sessions with them. What do your teachers need to know to make more of a difference for their students? Plan a programme for them, using your skills, to improve classroom practice at your school.

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