From Deputy Principal to Learning Leader: The changing role of senior management

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Purpose

One of the crucial roles of principalship is the responsibility to develop effective leaders from within our organisations. However, the role of principal itself has changed radically in recent times. How then do we prepare the future leaders of our schools for this rapidly changing role?

At Papatoetoe Intermediate School, from the start of 2010, we began trialling a significant structural change to our management team. This entailed the disestablishment of the role of Deputy Principals and the creation of a Learning Leaders Team. This initiative was initially based on the work of the *BES Evidence Synthesis: School leadership and student outcomes*.

The purpose of this report therefore, is twofold. Firstly, to review this initiative in the light of current educational leadership research and secondly to highlight the new learnings we have gained by undertaking this structural change within our organisation.

Introduction

The extensive body of educational research on leadership is littered with a vast array of leadership terms modified by adjectives. Modified terms such as heroic leadership, hierarchical leadership, transformational leadership, instructional leadership, and educational leadership are just a few of the many concepts discussed by researchers in this field. However, as Michael Fullan (2010) suggests principals tend not to be researchers, rather they become avid consumers of research to assist them in their day to day work. The release of the *BES Evidence Synthesis; School Leadership and student outcomes* in late 2009 had a significant impact on providing a rich research base for instructional leadership in a New Zealand context. Supported, as it was with the *Kiwi Leadership for Principals* Ministry of Education discussion document, the concept of instructional leadership has tended to overshadow previous models of educational leadership since late 2009.

One of the purposes of this paper is to outline the adoption of the concept of instructional leadership in one intermediate school during 2010 and the first half of 2011.

Instructional leadership is a construct where the role of principal as leader of an educational organisation is concerned with a focus on the teaching and learning that is occurring within the organisation. More so than may have been the case in other leadership models. Researchers (Robinson, 2009; Robertson, 2011 etc) suggest this requires a return to the core business of schools; with the focus of leadership on instruction in its broadest sense. The BES Evidence outlines five dimensions of instructional leadership; Establishing goals and expectations, promoting and participating in teacher learning, planning, co-ordinating and evaluating teaching and the curriculum, ensuring an orderly and supportive environment and resourcing strategically. This report is structured around these five dimensions.

The Kiwi Leadership for Principals (KLP) (Ministry of Education, 2008) discussion document however goes further to suggest that, "educational leaders lead learning to...develop others as leaders" (KLP: 12) among a range of responsibilities leaders have. The focus of the development of the Learning Leaders initiative introduced at Papatoetoe Intermediate School from the beginning of 2010 was on how to bring about a series of structural changes that would create a leadership team focussed on instructional leadership outcomes for student learning. Furthermore, would this development then provide a new way of describing the work of leaders within large schools, alternate to the existing hierarchical construct of Deputy Principal positions?

Methodology

This review of our development of a Learning Leadership Team, outlined in the following report, adopts a case study approach. Key stages of the leadership team development are highlighted through an explanation of the approach that we took. These are recorded as specific case notes of the change process. Then, each aspect of our specific experience is reflected within the context of current leadership research.

Specifically the instructional leadership model outlined in the *BES Evidence synthesis: School Leadership and student outcomes* and two of the capabilities outlined in the KLP discussion document provide the framework on which this report is structured.

School specific context

One of the first aspects to consider when discussing the development of the practice of instructional leadership is to recognise that,

> Leadership practices must be adapted to the nature and needs of a school's specific context: there is no "one size fits all" model available for quick dissemination and implementation. (Robertson et.al: 74)

Prior to 2010 the management team of Papatoetoe Intermediate School was organised along the lines of a traditional, large intermediate school. Some 850 students were taught in 28 classrooms organised into eight syndicates; four syndicates of year seven classes and four of year eight classes. The management structure of the school consisted of one principal, one deputy principal, responsible for the day to day management of the school, and two associate principals, each a dean of one year level. This structure provided an effective hierarchical managerial approach to the management of a large educational organisation.

However, as identified in discussions with the principal's appraiser during 2009, this structure hindered the development of an instructional leadership approach for ongoing improvement in student outcomes. The time and context within the school was right to bring about a significant shift in school culture. With the introduction of National Standards during the same period of time, the Ministry of Education's imperative to refocus on student achievement and addressing the tail of underachieving students, supported the need for organisational change.

As the KLP outlined our challenge as a school was, "to distribute pedagogical leadership capacity and capability through every level of the school to improve student social and educational outcomes and reduce within school variance" (Ministry of Education, 2008 : 11)).

Although the principal is in a crucial position to lead change, they are not able to do this alone. The change that we were seeking was not a superficial change, but one which would impact significantly on student achievement. As Fullan comments, "Leadership is not about making clever decisions,..it is about energising other people to make good decisions and do better things" (Fullan, 2006 : 12). This required the agreement of the Board of Trustees and the existing management team to move, "from the view of leaders as the product of individual characteristics to seeing leadership as collective, shared potential in the organisation" (West-Burnham: 2). The existing model of hierarchical leadership within our organisation was to be replaced by one based on distributed leadership principles.

As Morrison states, the task of organisational reform is too monumental for the principal alone and, "distributed leadership is essential for sustained change" (Morrison, et.al,: 112).The move to a distributed leadership model provided the opportunity for our school to move beyond the status quo of ongoing principal professional development to a model where we could, "create teams that do not mimic the leader but provide different and equally important strengths for the organisation" (Reeves: 23). The creation of a complementary leadership team during early 2010, therefore, required the restructuring of our existing management team. The move to a distributed leadership model was an important first step as our team developed the skills of becoming instructional leaders in our organisation.

During the Christmas holidays of early 2010 the management team met with the support of both the principals' appraiser and a leadership facilitator from Team Solutions. During these initial discussions it was agreed that we also adopt an instructional leadership model, which was for us to become lead learners. While the position of Deputy Principal remained, the term management team was to be replaced by Learning Leaders and leadership team. The two deans were joined by two additional staff members, and these four members held the new title of Learning Leaders.

For the first term of 2010 the leadership team consisted of the principal, the executive officer, the deputy principal and four fully released Learning Leaders. By the middle of 2010 this had been modified into a leadership team of principal, executive officer and six learning leaders with the resignation of the Deputy Principal and the addition of two further staff members. All members of the leadership team, from the beginning of 2011, took on the title and role of Learning Leaders.

This expansion of the leadership team during 2010, created the opportunity to develop a team with complementary strengths. In a large organisation the strength of the leadership team is its ability to be representative of the views of a widely diverse staff. One of the purposes of the enlargement of the leadership team was to actively move away from the existing hierarchical model of leadership within the school, to one where school leadership was seen to be, "a democratic process rather than the creation of an elite" (West-Burnham : 2).

In creating a collaborative culture within a new and enlarged leadership team the opportunity existed to harness the team's ability to be, "collectively effective at solving problems and [therefore] make progress on an ongoing basis," as well as, "generating a pipeline of leaders" (Fullan; 2010: 14).

Much of 2010 and early 2011 has been focussed on the creation of this collaborative team approach to leadership. The creation of a leadership team has required the development of a new set of skills to define the ways that we work together. As Gostick and Elton (2011) suggest, this required the development of leaders who understand, "their function as facilitators, helping to set the team's vision, removing obstacles, securing resources, and encouraging celebrations" (Gostick, et.al: 170). Furthermore, each member of the team is an instructional leader and therefore, are accountable to the five dimensions outlined in the BES Evidence Synthesis.

However, this structural change has proven to be more extensive than a shift to a model of distributed leadership. It has led to the creation of a "team leadership" model, a concept that combines the two theories; of distributed leadership and of leadership as a team process. The purpose of this development was to develop a co-ordinated form of leadership distribution described by some researchers as "planned alignment". Day (2010) suggests, "Planned alignment involved members of a leadership group planning their actions together, periodically reviewing the impact of these actions, and revising them accordingly." The outcome of these actions is to create a climate of academic optimism within an organisation. Academic optimism "is a composite of teacher trust, teacher efficacy and organisational good citizenship, all of which are associated with student achievement" (Day, et.al: 17).

To bring about this cultural shift in the way the school was organised required all members of the Leadership team to become professional learners themselves. As the KLP outlines, one of the four capabilities of educational leaders is their personal commitment to Ako; Being a learner. From our practice we contend that foundational to the five dimensions of instructional leadership are the two capabilities of; Ako and Building relational trust. To develop a leadership team focussed on providing instructional leadership required a commitment to personal learning, reflection and growth.

AKO: Being a learner

Much of our initial discussions during 2010, centred on creating a collaborative understanding of what we meant by the term, "Learning Leaders". Each of us were undertaking a process of learning about ourselves, about our relationships with others within the team, and about the various challenges that faced our learning organisation. Our regular Monday morning meetings adopted a new agenda format based on three levels. Level three concerned the least important, management focussed issues. Level two consisted of issues to do with developing leadership skills, and this was given the second largest allocation of time. The first level however, concerned student achievement and desired outcomes, and was given the greatest allocation of time during each meeting.

In addition each Learning Leader was required to allocate a time each week for personal professional reading. By early 2011 five of the seven learning leaders were also involved in personal professional development of some form at a tertiary level. Furthermore, the leadership team committed to a professional development day in each holiday break where we were able to work with external providers such as the leadership facilitator to assist us with developing our approach.

Ako is a concept concerned with the process of building collaborative learning and teaching partnerships within a school. (Ministry of Education, 2008: 23). At the most fundamental level principals "are first and foremost learners whose intellectual curiosity and pursuit of personal mastery is lifelong" (Morrison et. al: 106). However, it is insufficient to be personally curious. Research suggests that, "teachers and students benefit when principals function as learning leaders rather than instructional leaders" (DuFour: 14). To be a learning leader is more than merely being an instructional leader. This requires engagement as visible lead learners, for example,

> [modelling] the habits of inquiry reflection and dialogue that enhance learning, demonstrate pedagogical knowledge in depth; scaffold, challenge and debate, and coach and mentor others (Morrison et. al: 106).

If the work of an instructional leader is too much for a principal to undertake alone, as stated in the research above, then the same applies to being a learning leader. In developing a Learning Leadership team the expectation developed that each member of the team demonstrated the characteristics of being a lead learner. This required on-the-job learning for all members of the Learning Leaders' team. The expectation developed that we were all learners and, "that we all learn from our work: the workplace is our learning workshop" (Southworth, in Robertson et.al : 79).

As the 2009 ERO report commented, it is important that all leaders are involved in the learning process. Not only as leaders of the learning itself, when that is appropriate, but also, "not always seen as leading the PLD but were present and active as learners" (ERO: 27). This reciprocal concept of "tukana taina", both leading the learning and learning from others, was crucial to our Learning Leaders model. Therefore, this organisational shift in the role and function of the school leadership team had a direct impact on the culture of the whole organisation.

Building Relational Trust

The *BES Evidence: School leadership and student outcomes* outline a second key disposition for effective learning leadership as the development of building relational trust across the organisation. Developing a significant change initiative, such as that involved with developing a Learning Leadership team focussed on providing instructional leadership, "requires an understanding of and respect for the different meanings and interpretations people bring to (any) educational initiative" (Edwards: 11). Understanding that the various individuals within the school came to these discussions with their own set of understandings and beliefs required the development of at least three crucial levels of trust. These levels included: between the board of trustees and the leadership team, within the leadership team itself, and between the leadership team and the whole staff.

A further important aspect of developing a concept of Learning Leaders was, "the certain knowledge that no single leader possesses the knowledge, skills and talents to lead an organisation" (Reeves: 28). Having established this precept then distributed leadership builds

on the resulting trust, trust among the members of the leadership team, and between them and the staff they are learning alongside. This led us to realise that,

> Leadership cannot be taught, it has to be learnt. The most powerful means of developing leadership is to create an organisational culture, which values the sorts of learning most likely to enhance the capacity of individuals to lead (West-Burnham: 5).

At the first three staff-only-days of 2010 the focus of all professional discussions was on the development of the new Learning Leaders' model. Each of the leaders undertook the delivery of some aspect of the development so that all staff could experience the participation and commitment of members of the leadership team to the new initiative. At each of the various staff meetings held during 2010 aspects of the development were discussed in these various forums. At syndicate leader's meetings discussion frequently centred around their role in the new model and the rewriting of their job description.

Opportunities were taken to gather staff feelings, opinions and input whenever available. The school took part in 2010 and in 2011 in the Principals' Educational Leaders National on line Questionnaire. Over the same period of time two whole staff review meetings resulting in PMI review reports were undertaken. Both the principal's appraiser, who in 2010 undertook the appraisal of almost all of the Learning Leaders and the leadership facilitator, gathered their own feedback from staff. These, as well as less formal discussions between Learning Leaders and staff, attempted to model to staff that this initiative was itself a learning opportunity for the organisation and that their feedback would lead to change within the model.

Similarly with the Board of Trustees as many opportunities as possible were taken to inform and seek feedback from the Board. This culminated in the ERO visit to the school in term one, 2011 where the board asked for feedback from the ERO team on the effectiveness of this initiative. The development of relational trust between the members of the Learning Leaders team has been an ongoing process. It began with the frequency of meetings held; both weekly on a Monday morning and for one day in each holiday. It developed through the work of the leadership facilitator holding one-on-one and group discussions and reinforced with the work of having a single collective appraiser. This trust has deepened in 2011 with the Learning Leaders now holding a second meeting each week where they share the work that they are doing with their syndicates with each other.

In a learning organisation ultimately leadership becomes a learned activity, learnt in the workshop of leading learning. The aim of our initiative was to create a meaningful culture of collaboration where colleagues share similar and different challenges and issues, as participants in a deep and professional dialogue. This ideally would lead our team to, "a movement out of their comfort zone and beyond the known- to a place of new learning and potentially new leadership" (Robertson et.al: 220). The practice of distributed leadership implies a greater ownership in decision making than the more traditional approach of

delegation would have achieved. Distributed leadership requires the development of a culture where robust discussion can take place around the core activity of improving outcomes for students. As Gostick and Elton relate, "the ability to disagree, without causing offence, is essential to robust communication" (Gostick,et.al:81). Within the context of the *BES Evidence: School leadership and student outcomes* this ability is referred to as facilitating "an open to learning" conversation. (Robinson, et.al: 47).

Two of the foundational capabilities of our change process have been the development of the concept of Ako as it applied to us personally, and as part of the actions of the leadership team when working with staff and the need to develop relationships of trust at each level of our organisation. Having placed due importance on the foundations of this change initiative attention will now be focussed on the five dimensions of instructional leadership outlined in the *BES Evidence: School leadership and student outcomes*. The first of these dimensions is establishing goals and expectations.

Establishing Goals and Expectations

Organisational change is often motivated by changing external factors. The release in late 2009 of the National Standards policy highlighted to our then management team the need for us to engage meaningfully in gathering, analysing and interpreting student achievement data. Over the previous five years or so the school had moved towards a greater evidential base, particularly in interpreting numeracy and attendance data. This new external motivator however, provided the school with the opportunity to engage with our local professional development provider, Team Solutions in preparing for the implementation of National Standards.

Through the process of; applying for this support, undertaking the self-review activities provided by the Ministry of Education, and engaging with the professional development facilitators, we were drawn into developing a greater understanding of what was required to establish meaningful goals and expectations across the whole school. As Day's research found, "highly effective and improving schools tend to reduce within-school variation by building common goals and being consistent in their approach" (Day, et.al: 10).

The introduction of National Standards policy provided the school with the opportunity to seek the involvement of Team Solutions facilitators. Over the course of the first eighteen months of this initiative this included; a leadership facilitator, two literacy facilitators and two English Language Learners facilitators. These facilitators attended regular Monday morning meetings, meetings of the Learning Leaders' team during holiday periods, and provided their own individual and staff development support as negotiated.

External advisors provided the team with a wide range of support including;

- *A continued focus on the development of Learning Leaders*
- *Advice and support on developing goals and expectations based on improving student outcomes*
- *Personal professional development and curriculum support*
- *New ideas and expertise as team members themselves were learning new skills*
- *Access to ideas, readings and practices of other schools*

To be able to develop effective teacher and student learning goals and achieve a high degree of consistency in a large and diverse intermediate school required the involvement of a wide variety of external developers who, "bring fresh perspectives and approaches which stimulate and challenge thinking" (Morrison, et.al: 117). These facilitators assisted both in developing the Learning Leader model and in working with each member of the team to develop their instructional leadership capabilities.

During 2010 the focus of the Learning Leadership Team centred on developing a responsibility to inquire into achievement and progress at every level of the school. For the first six months of this development Learning Leaders frequently referred to investigating various assumptions they held about teaching and learning across the school. Assumptions concerning; the most effective teachers and teaching practices, the demographics of which students were and weren't achieving, the validity of assessment data, the validity of different assessment instruments and school wide ICT supports were all questioned. This intense period of questioning and review of all aspects of teaching and learning practice was one of the most powerful activities that the team undertook in the initial stages of this development.

The team were aware of the ERO finding that, "successful leaders...were involved in establishing, communicating and monitoring clear expectations of achievement and progress for children" (ERO: 27). However, we first needed to create a baseline understanding ourselves of the current state of instructional practice within our school. Once this was established, by late 2010, the team were in a position to begin creating their set of clear expectations and how these were going to be monitored.

From the beginning of 2010 the appraisal of the leadership team was undertaken by the principal's appraiser. One of his early findings was that the team required a means by which to develop a consistent approach to planning, monitoring and implementing change. He introduced the team to SMART Planning, a strategic planning approach regularly used in business. This approach became widely adopted by the Learning Leadership team and influenced the means by which all resulting interventions and initiatives were planned and disseminated to staff. As Reeves comments, "improving the quality of planning, monitoring and implementation is strongly associated with improvements in student achievement" (Reeves: 69).

SMART Goals are those that are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely. Beginning with these five headings a planning and review template was created with these five terms as column headings. This approach was adopted by the Board of Trustees for their Annual Strategic Plan, and from this annual plan the Principal's Annual Development Plan follows the same structure. Progress on achieving the goals of these two plans are then reported to the board at each monthly meeting.

In turn each Learning Leader has developed their own aligned SMART strategic annual plan, which is reviewed weekly in a one-on-one meeting with the Principal. Each development area of the school (for example, ICT) also has its own SMART strategic annual plan. All these plans are collated in one place and each has its own specific review schedule.

A number of researchers (Fullan, Gostick etc.) have cautioned against too rigid an adherence to SMART planning; and Fullan further cautions that SMART planning has no proven link to raising student achievement. However, both support the idea that an organisation requires a planning system and that the advantage of SMART planning is that it makes the development process transparent and accessible to all stakeholders. Gostick and Elton go on to comment, "Nothing else- not even bonuses or other perks- motivates like the opportunity to define and unite behind a common purpose" (Gostick, et.al: 24).

From the review of assumptions undertaken during the first six months of this initiative and the work of the three sets of facilitators in the school the attention of the Learning Leaders shifted to the issue of promoting and participating in teacher learning and development. By mid-2010 this second dimension of effective instructional leadership became the imperative of the Learning Leader Team.

Promoting and participating in teacher learning and development

During 2009 the principal, who had since 2006 been involved in working individually with teachers in an attempt to change classroom practice, began to question this use of his time. As DuFour comments, "Principals [need to]..shift their emphasis from helping individual teachers improve instruction to helping teams of teachers ensure that students achieve the intended outcomes of their schooling" (DuFour:13). This fundamental shift, from individual teacher professional development to team accountability for student achievement, fitted well with the new Learning Leader approach. One of the roles of leadership is to bring about systemic change. As the Learning Leaders team began to define the magnitude of the change required in teaching and learning practice all aspects of staff professional development were placed under scrutiny.

The *BES Evidence: School Leadership and student outcomes* outlines the practices involved in this instructional leadership dimension as, "including participation in, as well as promotion of, formal and informal opportunities for teacher learning and development" (Robinson et.al: 42). Within this dimension leaders participate in professional learning as leaders or as learners or as both. (Robinson et.al: 42).

For Learning Leaders to initiate this cultural shift of teacher expectations of professional development has required a good deal of transparent management. Initially this culture change occurred within the Learning Leaders' team itself. As Morrison comments, "Leaders of learning put learning at the centre of everything they do; students' learning first, then everyone else's learning in support of it" (Morrison, et.al:110). Once the team had undertaken extensive learning, particularly on areas such as SMART planning and data analysis, they then took this learning to their teams.

Since the beginning of 2011 each Learning Leader has selected either one or two syndicates with which they work. Each syndicate is then required to develop an inquiry approach to raising student achievement within their syndicate. For most syndicates this inquiry has begun with the area of literacy. With the support of the Team Solutions facilitators, and their Learning Leader, each syndicate collects and analyses their student achievement data. Target students are identified from this process.

Professional readings and strategies are shared among the team. Professional development opportunities are provided at whole staff meetings as well as opportunities for individual observations. These observations tend to be triatic in nature. The classroom teacher is provided with the opportunity to observe one of the facilitators working with students in the school. Then the teacher is observed by the facilitator and their Learning Leader undertaking a similar teaching experience.

Following on from this observed lesson the teacher and their Learning Leader develop a learning plan which is then developed over time as a learning partnership between the Learning Leader and the teacher with a clear focus on improving outcomes for students.

The process the Learning Leaders selected to use as a school wide approach was one based on Teaching as Inquiry from the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007). The Learning Leaders, with the assistance of the Team Solution facilitators began the process of, "developing a culture of school-wide inquiry, giving time for collegial discussion to critique whether intended improvements were brought about and assist teachers to build their professional understanding of progressions children need to succeed" (ERO: 27).

The outcome of a whole school focus on developing an inquiry approach to teaching, based on the evidence of student learning, has led to a significant shift in the way professional development is perceived. The thinking among many staff is now in terms of a more intentional, systematic process of professional learning. As Timperley suggests, "the active involvement of leaders in the promotion and participation in teachers' learning," has led to "the development of systematic evidence-informed inquiry into the effectiveness of practice and the building of pedagogical content knowledge" (Timperley, in Robertson et.al: 119).

To be able to begin to make this shift in teacher thinking and school culture has required an allocation of time. As Morrison comments, " If time is allocated during the school day rather than after school hours the activity is likely to be perceived by teachers as a valued school priority" (Morrison, et.al: 117). Therefore, each syndicate of teachers received from the beginning of 2011 an additional one and half hour block of time per fortnight to undertake the work required around developing a Teaching as Inquiry approach.

Also the focus of staff meetings has changed. Where we used to hold once a week staff meetings for a wide variety of purposes, since 2010 these are now held fortnightly and are focussed on professional learning. This time together as a whole staff, "provide teachers with

opportunities to explore their pedagogical thinking" (Morrison, et.al,: 110). While this has required the narrowing of the number of topics that can be covered in a year, " the yield in student achievement is significantly greater than when professional developers yield to the "flavour of the month" approach in which fads replace effectiveness" (Reeves: 79).

The next step for the Learning Leader team, as suggested by current leadership research, is to develop learning plans for their team members. During the second half of 2011 the school's annual plan requires a review of our approach to attestation and appraisal. Timperley suggests that, "leaders need a learning plan for their teachers that systematically builds important knowledge and skills with a focus on depth rather than breadth" (Timperley, in Robertson et.al: 127). The aim of this work is to ensure that there is quality teaching and learning occurring in every classroom and to reduce the in-school variance in student achievement.

Planning, coordinating and evaluating teaching and the curriculum

The aim of the initiative to create Learning Leaders, as articulated earlier, has been two fold. The first has been to create a learning organisation that establishes a culture based on learning and secondly to create a leadership team able to respond to a rapidly changing educational world. DuFour sums up this first intention thusly,

> When learning becomes the preoccupation of the school, when all the school's educators examine the efforts and initiatives of the school through the lens of their impact on learning, the structure and culture of the school begin to change in substantive ways. (DuFour: 12)

However, such a shift is not easily achieved and in participating in leading this shift each of the Learning Leaders has developed particularly relevant leadership skills. As Morrison comments, "teachers do not automatically embrace change initiatives and it requires considerable determination and resilience on the [leader's] part to effect cultural change" (Morrison, et.al:115). This instructional leadership dimension is specifically concerned with the, "leaders' emphasis on improving the quality of teaching and the curriculum" (Robinson, et.al: 41).

With a focus firmly on student learning teaching practice is much more open to scrutiny. Initially this scrutiny was on the student achievement data from each classroom. Close analysis of student achievement data creates a range of questions and issues which were discussed during syndicate meetings and at Learning Leader team meetings. However, as Southworth relates analysis of student data also involves, "visiting classrooms, observing teachers at work and providing them with feedback" (Southworth, in Robertson et.al:76). These visits and observations are required to be carried out in a high trust environment based on new learnings for both partners as the desired outcome.

Furthermore, Southworth suggests, "to make these processes as educative and developmental as possible for all concerned" (Southworth, ibid: 76). When these visits work well and effective learning occurs the dialogue is based on, "encouragement, feedback and questioning about teaching." (Southworth, ibid: 78). Southworth writes of

the construction of learning both for students and for teachers. Constructing their learning for students and adults is a process, "of constructing meanings and understandings, rather than transmitting knowledge from one to another." (Southworth, ibid: 78). It is in the recognition of this point that the core of new leadership capabilities is encapsulated. To manage the rapidity of change required, leaders of learning organisations need to develop the skills and capabilities of engaging with staff in such meaningful constructive dialogue.

It is these skills and capabilities that we are attempting to develop through our Learning Leader model. At the same time we must be aware that "senior managers [leaders], were prepared to address maters of poor performance in the interests of maintaining high quality student outcomes" (ERO:34). Courageous conversations are powerful change agents that provide for both parties to be involved in reflective practice; the teachers of their learning environment and the Learning Leaders of the school culture that creates opportunity for dialogue to grow and develop.

It is within the context of courageous conversations that an orderly and supportive learning environment can evolve. As the BES School Leadership outlines, "Leadership can facilitate the achievement of important academic and social goals by creating an environment that is conducive to success" (Robinson, et.al:42).

Ensuring an orderly and supportive environment

A further fundamental change that resulted from our shift to developing a learning culture was the shift that occurred concerning emphasis on student behaviour. Under the older hierarchical model, our school had created a strong pastoral care approach to student behaviour. This was based on the traditional hierarchy of classroom teacher, syndicate leader, dean and then deputy principal. The concept of the behavioural child, being not one of the class, was reinforced by their removal up a chain of command. This model would be all too familiar to most educational observers. However, the BES Evidence supports that one of the key dimensions of leadership is the ability to provide a safe and orderly environment. The Learning Leaders were required to grapple with this issue from almost the first week of this new initiative.

> *At the first planning meeting of the management team during Christmas 2009/2010 the issue of working with behavioural students was raised. The team decided that it was timely to relook at behavioural issues in the light of being a learning organisation. What was the student attempting to demonstrate when displaying poor choices? Equally what new learning needed to occur for the teacher, their class and / or syndicate when faced with a behavioural challenge?*
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> *The Learning Leaders created a new approach to student time out of class. Where traditionally challenging students were "sent to the deans" this opportunity was removed. Literally removed as the role of dean no longer existed and physically, as one of the deans removed the ability for a student to remain with him, as he had removed the seats from outside his office.*

> *Instead each Learning Leader agreed to respond to a call from one of their classes by providing the teacher with a fifteen minute cover if an issue arose. They would take the teacher's class while the teacher worked with the student. This permitted the "locus of control" to remain with the teacher. It also provided an opportunity for the Learning Leader to observe the culture of the classroom. The Learning Leaders also agreed to follow up the same afternoon with the teacher to find out what other support the teacher might require, and to ensure that the teacher had been able to engage with the student's family.*
>
> *This was part of a much wider school wide shift in behaviour management towards seeing all aspects of the students' life at school through the lens of being a learning organisation.*

The sense of providing an orderly and supportive school environment developed out of the Learning Leaders commitment to create a learning environment for staff and students. As West-Burnham suggests, "organisations that are focussed on the learning of children should have structures that reflect learning relationships" (West-Burnham:2). It is important that leaders see "pupil achievement as having behavioural, personal, social and emotional dimensions" (Day, et.al:7) Therefore the best curriculum and best pedagogy recognises the importance of giving the teachers the time to address the wide variety of differing student needs.

> *A further development was the creation of our agreed Papatoetoe Intermediate School Curriculum. This living document describes the student as part of a triangle that involves themselves as learners, with their parents as their first teacher, and their current teacher. Within this triangle of support rests the three inter related circles of learning; Social, academic and success as learners. Each of these three require equal time and emphasis from the teacher and the learner for the student to be successful.*
>
> *Teachers are now supported with a school curriculum, time and the support of the Learning Leaders to create inclusive learning cultures in each of their classrooms.*

This significant shift in school culture, from a deficit theory of student behaviour to one of a learning culture, supported the work of the highly effective teachers in the school. As Leithwood found in his research,

> Pedagogically high-performing teachers placed greater emphasis on leaders supporting their collaborative work and the involvement of parents in student learning; whereas pedagogically low-performing teachers placed greater value on principal's helping with student discipline and accessing instructional resources. (Leithwood:51)

As we set out to redefine leadership within our organisation and create opportunities to develop leaders for the rapidly changing educational environment of the twenty-first century we found that all aspects of the school tend to be closely inter-related.

The challenge then was for us to set about aligning all aspects of our school to support this development of a team of highly effective Learning Leaders. As the *BES Evidence: School Leadership and student outcomes* suggests the fifth dimension of effective instructional leadership is to resource strategically.

Resourcing Strategically

Within the context of this report a key aspect of resourcing is the amount of time and budget expenditure that is spent on providing professional development opportunities. As with most large intermediate schools, our school had prided itself on the extensive professional development budget the board annually provided for staff. Prior to the move to Learning Leaders this budget had been managed by one of the Deputy Principals and there was a perception among staff that almost no request for professional development was turned down. As early as 2008 one of the Board of Trustees members had started to question the effectiveness of outcomes compared to expenditure on professional development.

> *With the development of the Learning Leaders team, one chose to be responsible for the professional development budget. During 2010 she realigned the board policies supporting professional development to the developing learning culture of the school.*
>
> *From the beginning of 2011 staff access to professional development support is through their own educational plan. Those aspects of their teaching and personal professional career development, as discussed with their learning leader now trigger their access to the type and style of development provided.*
>
> *While access to one day opportunities has significantly reduced the involvement of staff in in-depth professional development has increased. For example eleven staff have opted to pursue a post graduate paper in literacy being delivered on the school site.*

Therefore, while the school had a culture of professional development support did this, "encourage teachers to be... innovative in classroom design, familiar with digital environments, and capable of using pedagogies that meet students' learning needs?" (Ministry of Education, 2008: 8). The short answer to this question was only occasionally.

Our new model of professional development access through individual staff educational plans align our resourcing more strategically with the intention of creating a culture of continuous learning within our school. As the 2009 ERO synthesis on effective schools commented, "successful leaders..established their own data monitoring, analysis and reflection cycles and used these to decide on, or recommend, necessary changes to professional learning and development" (ERO: 27).

Conclusion

In the recent past the development of leaders for our schools had been relatively unproblematic. Teachers aspiring to leadership positions either moved to small rural communities as first time principals or they moved through a hierarchy of positions in larger schools. Increasingly, for a wide variety of reasons, neither of these options meet the current needs of our schools. As West-Burnham comments, "there is a fundamental tension between the creation of a structure that facilities the career of an individual and the most appropriate design of an organisation focussed on learning" (West-Burnham: 2)

Increasingly, the changes in educational policy of the twenty first century are refocusing the energies of leaders back on the purpose of schools, "to recognise, foster and build on each student's unique potential and prepare them for contributing purposefully to their world" (Bendall: 117). This leads to the imperative to improve student achievement outcomes. As Leithwood comments, "there is a connection between increased distribution of leadership roles and responsibilities and improvement of pupil outcomes" (Day, et.al: 16).

Relatedly, the more leadership is distributed, "the more leadership development moves from being an option to an obligation the school and senior leaders in it have to honour" (Southworth, ibid: 82). The challenge for the principal in this, "is to provide the support to teacher leaders and to give them the authority to act as leaders of learning" (Wildey, in Robertson et.al: 148)

Over the last eighteen months at Papatoetoe Intermediate School we have addressed the challenge of leadership development by first, understanding the dimensions of effective instructional leadership and then secondly by moving a step further forward into creating what Gostick and Elton refer to as a "Breakthrough" team of leaders prepared with the necessary skills and capabilities to lead complex twenty-first century educational organisations.

The ultimate expression of the team leadership we have developed over the last eighteen months has been the opportunity for me to undertake this Ministry of Education/ NZEI One Term Sabbatical. I have left school for the term in the more than capable hands of six Learning Leaders. This team is running a highly effective, large intermediate school in South Auckland.

I believe that there is little greater proof of the success of our trial than this. To them I express my greatest admiration for what they have achieved for the students of our school over these last eighteen months.

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