

Principal Sabbatical Report

**DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP CAPABILITIES OF
STUDENTS AND STAFF**

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My Investigation

To inquire into the ways schools develop, sustain and improve leadership capabilities of students and staff.

Acknowledgements

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- Thankyou also to Allan Thomas and REAP for your flexibility with my role.

Background

Principalship in a New Zealand school is a complex and multi faceted role involving leading and managing constant change. Leadership in the school setting has a large impact on student success, wellbeing and achievement.

Growing student and staff leaders who can make a difference in our school provided the motivation for this investigation. I wanted to find opportunities to enhance the skills and competencies of both our student and staff leaders and to consider models other than the traditional hierarchy.

While we are still very much a small rural school, over recent years we have doubled in size. We now have a bigger staff team and more students and therefore we can now consider alternatives and options that were not possible in past years. We also now have a Deputy Principal position and management units to use across the school.

Through my role as Marlborough Adviser to Schools I have the privilege to spend time in many Marlborough and Kaikoura Schools and the opportunity to learn more about new initiatives that schools are implementing as well as customs and traditions that have stood the test of time.

Methodology

This study began with preliminary reading of relevant literature with a focus of gaining a understanding of current thinking about the development and sustainability of effective leadership and how leadership influences change within schools.

This was followed up with visits to schools and discussions and interviews with key personnel including students, teachers and staff in management and leadership positions.

The following questions formed the basis of my inquiry:

Key Inquiry Questions

- *What are the formal and informal ways that schools develop student leadership?*
- *What are the formal and informal ways that schools develop staff leadership?*
- *What are the necessary conditions in a school to allow student and staff leadership to flourish?*
- *What are the ways in which schools include and value student voice?*
- *How do schools encourage and acknowledge student and staff leadership?*

Findings

Discussions with students, teachers and staff in management positions were a valuable and thought provoking exercise. While each school has a unique context, several common themes and challenges emerged during this study:

Common Themes

- The importance of professional learning and development
- The importance of coaching
- DP/middle managers networks
- Curriculum leadership roles
- The importance of regular leadership conversations with principal
- Open to learning conversations

Challenges

- Removal of the National Aspiring Principals Programme
- Balancing distributed leadership and individual workloads in a way that ensures staff experience work life satisfaction

Leadership work is complex in nature but vital in our schools. Effective leadership is a major change agent. We need to lead change innovatively in order that we improve educational and social outcomes for students. Leadership is second only to quality teaching in impacting on achievement.

What are the formal and informal ways that schools develop student leadership?

- School ambassador
- Student portfolios/ministerial positions
- Eco warriors/enviro leaders
- Awards programmes
- Student council
- Peer mediation
- Senior buddies
- Librarians
- Engaging in student inquiry and deep learning opportunities
- Collaborating with students from their class, other classes and other schools
- Asking for student input and opinion on a regular basis

- Out of class activities
- Leadership camps

What are the formal and informal ways that schools develop staff leadership?

- Formal positions e.g. DP, team leader
- Curriculum leadership
- Leading school strategic inquiry
- Leading curriculum review
- Leading an area of passion
- Leading an inquiry team
- COL positions
- Appraisal of staff
- Leading pedagogical change

What are the necessary conditions in a school to allow student and staff leadership to flourish?

Micheal Fullan states that the likelihood of effectiveness is increased when:

- A team is a real team rather than a team in name only
- A team has a compelling direction for its work
- A team has an enabling structure that facilitates rather than impedes teamwork
- A team operates within a supportive organisational context
- A team has ample expert coaching in teamwork

Other necessary conditions include:

- Negotiated job descriptions
- Sound planning and resourcing of leadership roles and activities
- Opportunities for leaders to engage in professional development and learning
- School use of research evidence
- Actively engaging in the development and implementation of shared goals and vision
- Leading and creating opportunities to celebrate the progress and success of students and staff
- Leaders being learners

Qualities needed to grow and sustain effective school leadership;

- Interpersonal skills
- Ability to get people on board
- Coaching and encouraging
- Delegation

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR GROVETOWN SCHOOL?

How might we grow the leaders in our school?

- Continue to develop and enhance student led inquiry

- Embed deep learning and the 6C's across the school
- Review staffing to ensure opportunities for staff leadership in areas of passion and expertise
- Review staffing to ensure more student led initiatives are able to followed through
- Ongoing conversations with the Board of Trustees
- Continue to encourage student involvement in leadership opportunities such as MAD (Making a Difference) Team, Community Recycling, Chickens and Bees, Librarians
- Reintroduce big brother and big sister programme
- Continue with cluster leadership development
- Embed Spirals of Inquiry across the school
- Review curriculum leadership and responsibilities and Implement staff change teams
- Ensure wellbeing of staff and students is a focus
- Investigate use of triples
- Professional development for staff team – Open to learning conversations

References

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