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PATHWAYS TO LEADERSHIP
Insights from research and practice.

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What do we know about **PATHWAYS AND JOURNEYS TO LEADERSHIP?**
CAREER TRAJECTORIES

1. From an isolated classroom to teacher leader

2. Through the “sphere of influence” as a middle leader

3. At the crossroads as a Deputy Principal

4. Aspiring and preparing to be a Principal

5. Developing as a Principal.
Developing as a Teacher
THE “NUDGE FACTOR”
Questions with your shoulder buddy....

1. Who “nudged” you in the classroom, and what was the outcome?

2. How willing are the school leaders with whom you work to encourage and support teachers by providing opportunities to demonstrate professional leadership in and among schools?
Take Home Message

School leaders, regardless of whether they are school-based, systemic or jurisdictional, have highly important roles to play in establishing cultures where:

- the identification and acknowledgement of excellence in teaching in its many forms is the norm, and
- teachers have opportunities to be recognised for and celebrate their work, and influence the learning of others.
Middle Leaders and their “Sphere of Influence”
DEFINING MIDDLE LEADERS

Middle leaders are the group of people between senior leadership (such as principals and deputy principals) and teachers/non-teachers with or without formal positions as well as, in some contexts, junior or emergent leadership...

subject, department or faculty heads, leaders of cohorts, such as year coordinators or heads of house, senior teachers and teachers with special responsibility (such as HATs) and some curriculum directors depending on scope of responsibility...

(De Nobile, 2017)
Middle Leadership in Schools (MLiS) Model. (De Nobile, 2017)
Six Middle Leader Roles

**Student-focused**
Dealing directly with students and their issues

**Administrative**
Dealing with procedures, systems, regulations...

**Organisational**
Dealing with the organisation of people: rosters, program planning...

**Supervisory**
Monitoring the performance of other staff, classroom observations, program supervision

**Staff development**
Supporting teachers with direct assistance

**Strategic**
More recent demands to set goals for their area of responsibility, motivate staff...
Questions with your shoulder buddy....

Considering the list of “Six Middle Leader Roles”...

1. As a middle leader, how do you spend most of your time?
2. What is your main focus?
3. What is at the top of your list?
4. What is at the bottom?

Six Middle Leader Roles

- Student-focused
  Dealing directly with students and their issues

- Administrative
  Dealing with procedures, systems, regulations...

- Organisational
  Dealing with the organisation of people: rosters, program planning...

- Supervisory
  Monitoring the performance of other staff, classroom observations, program supervision

- Staff development
  Supporting teachers with direct assistance

- Strategic
  More recent demands to set goals for their area of responsibility, motivate staff
Questions with your shoulder buddy....

5. Where would you like to spend most of your time?
Some Observations

Managers do things right.

Leaders do the right thing.
Some Observations

Middle leaders do different things from senior leaders. They are not principals or deputy principals, and the reach of their authority is limited.

Dinham (2016) reminds us that middle leaders still need to be good managers. However, middle leaders are increasingly being asked to do far-reaching things that can have significant impacts on schools and students.
But...

Tying the concept of middle leadership to formal positions of responsibility is potentially problematic.

Middle leadership is not just about positions of authority or hierarchy, but the influences people have in the space between senior leadership at one end and teachers and other staff (including junior or emergent leaders) at the other.
Outputs- An under-researched area?

**Teacher Quality**

The research literature here is about the potential of the role. Further investigation is needed of impact.

**Teacher Attitudes**

Some evidence of the impact on job satisfaction, commitment, occupational stress and burnout. Again, further research is needed.

**Student Outcomes**

A by-product of the other two. Further research is needed.
Implications for Professional Practice

Questions worth asking:

• What sustains middle leaders and helps them to succeed in the role?

• What factors constrain the work of middle leaders?
Organising whole-school professional development programs:
• Ethos and values
• Vertical and horizontal learning
• Career stage learning
DEPUTY PRINCIPALS
Questions with your shoulder buddy....

1.
How did you prepare for the deputy’s role?
OR
How do you see yourself preparing?
The young police constable entered my office gingerly, showing some discomfort when invited to sit opposite me at my deputy principal’s desk. Glancing around he observed, ‘The last time I was in the deputy’s office I was at high school and I was in big trouble. When you saw the deputy, you knew you were in big trouble...

- Snitch (2017)
Wanda Snitch (2017) investigated the career progression and leadership work of deputy principals in NSW Government secondary schools with the support of the Department and the Deputy Principals’ Association.
Key Findings

1. These secondary deputy principals experienced only an ad hoc preparation for their role, requiring no specific formal learning.

2. Only about half aspired to the principalship.

3. Participants’ perceptions of educational leadership were not fully aligned with current literature, and their leadership efforts were largely directed to activities which the research suggests have limited direct impact on student learning.
Recommendations

*Deputy Principals.*

Consider engaging in some *sustained, formalised learning* about leadership, whether or not they aspire to the principalship.

Actively engage in DP networks for collegial support and professional learning.
Recommendations

*Principals.*

Principals give further attention to how roles are shared among senior management team members.

Care should be taken that this does not result in mere delegation of administrative tasks, and that all members, over time, have opportunities to engage in high impact educational leadership activities as well as important responsibilities such as financial management.
Recommendations

*Principals and DPs.*

Both principals and DPs are urged to take into account the long term implications of *appointing individuals to relieving positions, giving consideration to leadership potential* as well as short-term school needs.
TRANSITIONING TO THE PRINCIPALSHIP
IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL
PREPARING TO BE A PRINCIPAL

Questions with your shoulder buddy....

1.
What are your expectations of preparing for the principalship?
PREPARING TO BE A PRINCIPAL

The literature is clear:

• There are no shortcuts
• Preparation is multi-faceted.
Australian Professional Standard for Principals.

Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership
The Association of Independent Schools of NSW Flagship Program
SCHOOL GOVERNANCE: BUILDING INSTITUTIONAL TRUST
Five key pillars of local school governance

1. School Vision - Alignment and Ownership
2. Accountability
3. Leadership
4. Strategy and Implementation
5. Trust
Developing the Experienced Principal

The power of networks
Beyond the Principalship: Staying On?
Bringing it all together

TRUST
Recent research shows that countries that have the most highly ranked education systems also seem to have the best ‘trust relationships’ between schools, education authorities and the wider community, and within the schools themselves.
Trust Scale (Fink, 2013)

Paranoid | Low trust | Conditional | High trust | Blind

INTRUSIVE | VERIFICATION | LIGHT
Trust and Verify looks at trust and distrust in educational settings.

It argues that nations with higher degrees of trust in their professional educators achieve superior results for all students.

Not blind trust, however, which if unchecked by some kind of verification system can prove as unproductive for individuals and organizations as intrusive, coercive and time consuming verification strategies. Both sides of this equation are important, hence the title.

Balancing trust and verification is the real key to school improvement.
Trust:

Confident positive expectations regarding another's conduct,

Distrust:

Confident negative expectations regarding another's conduct

1. INSTITUTIONAL TRUST

The trust that exists between the school and the broader jurisdiction it serves.
2. RELATIONAL

The extent of relational trust is manifest in staff members’ willingness to commit time and energy beyond their contractual obligations, being part of professional learning communities, helping students, coaching, mentoring, coaching teams, liaising with parents, organising student events and concerts and the like...

Of great significance, feelings of relational trust are directly related to a teacher’s sense of moral purpose, resilience and professional identity.
3. SELF-TRUST

The development of individual and collective self-efficacy among teachers.
Adjectival leadership:

- Autocratic leadership
- Democratic leadership
- Laissez-faire leadership
- Charismatic leadership
- Heroic leadership
- Cultural leadership
- Symbolic leadership
- Ethical leadership
- Emotional intelligence leadership
- Sustainable leadership
- Transformational leadership
- Distributed leadership
- Instructional leadership
- Authoritative leadership
Agreed attributes which build trust
(Bryk & Schneider, 2009)

1. **Respect**: professional and respectful social discourse

2. **Competence**: incompetence or negligence is not accepted

3. **Personal Regard**: going beyond formal requirements

4. **Personal Integrity**: our moral and ethical compass
TRUST AND VERIFY

• Too much trust leaves policy makers vulnerable politically and professionally, but

• Too much verification strips policy implementers of their autonomy and stifles creativity and innovation which in turn undermines the sustainability of their shared organization.
Trust and Verify showed clearly in the jurisdictions that were studied that:

• In most (with Finland an exception) there was a general level of distrust between the school leaders and the governing bodies they served (Institutional Trust)

• The role of the school leader as well as his or her capacity to act as “gatekeeper” was central to positive relationship building in the school and school community (Relational Trust), and

• School culture was pivotal to teacher wellbeing and the extent to which self-trust and self-efficacy characterised teachers’ work (Self Trust).
Another great read from Dean Fink and his colleagues as they examine the ins and outs of trust, mistrust, verification and system change. The short case studies of seven countries are a special treat as we see local context, but generalizable insights. In the final analysis, this book gives us a new handle on school and system improvement, but you have to work smartly in your own context.

- Michael Fullan, Professor Emeritus, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto.
References

QUALITY TEACHING, TEACHER LEADERS AND CAREER PATH TRAJECTORIES


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MIDDLE MANAGEMENT

DEPUTY PRINCIPALS
PRINCIPAL PREPARATION

AND PROGRESSION


SCHOOL GOVERNANCE


TRUST


THANK YOU