

Leadership

Karen Cornelius

Teacher Solutions

Authored 2015-11-26

Posted to Leadership



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We asked for some words of advice, from terrific leaders connected to Teacher Solutions, for our readers. Their challenge was to say it in under 100 words.

This is what they had to say:

Enable talk

I think a key leadership action to support professional learning is valuing and supporting teachers to have time to talk to each other. Great learning happens when teachers are able to share their practice with other teachers and bounce ideas off each other. If we are going to invest time and money into professional learning activities such as conferences and workshops, we really need to be investing just as much time into supporting teachers to have professional dialogue, share new strategies and approaches they have tried and give and receive feedback. Professional learning should transfer into improved practice and collaboration between teachers supports this.

Mandi Dimitriadis, Director of Learning Improvement, Makers Empire

Top 3 Tips

1. Clearly align your professional learning with your site improvement priorities. Don't just grab the next initiative that comes along if it doesn't progress your improvement agenda.
2. State your purpose – the what and why of professional learning always needs to link back to improving outcomes for kids: “We need to do (what) because ...(why) so that(link to outcomes for kids). The way you do it can be negotiated with teachers so that it is differentiated and meets their individual needs – thus modelling how you want teachers to operate in classrooms.
3. Change takes time - Don't try to do too much too soon!

Marlene Henschke, Principal on Assignment: Results Plus, Learning Improvement Division, Office for Education and Early Childhood

Design your pedagogic leadership

1. What are your learners saying about their learning? How do they describe their learning experiences, their belief in themselves as learners and the work of their teachers? How will you find out and use this to inform the required pedagogic shifts?
2. Use an appreciative lens to find out what people bring - experiences, expertise, questions, challenges, passion, dispositions. How will you unearth the effective teaching and learning practices that currently exist and how will they be shared?
3. Interrogate and understand the story of your data and how this connects with the feedback from students and

the teaching practices, dispositions, and mindsets. Create opportunities for teachers to talk with each other about this to see relationships and uncover questions.

4. Learn alongside your teachers. Model being a lead learner; think out loud, make connections and take a risk. Work out how and when you will make the most of every opportunity to do this.

5. Align your resources, your language, your behaviours and your reference points. All roads should lead to Rome.

Deb Merrett, Co-Director, Pedagogy and Leadership, Learning Improvement Division, Office for Education and Early Childhood

Building a learning community with a growth mindset

Easier said than done! As a staff, you must come to an agreement about what 'having a growth mindset' is, as this leads to everyone being clear about what it takes to continuously grow and develop as professionals. Leaders then, should support teachers; coordinating time for professional conversation, injecting evidence based classroom research stimulation and supporting self reflection practices. Leaders should enable teachers to refine their craft, in a safe environment, where they have choice over their own growth and are empowered, because their growth is directly linked to the progress of the learners in their class.

Helen Munoz, Deputy Principal, British International School, Phuket

And my tips:

I wrote '[Advice for New Leaders](#)' on this blog 2 months ago, and since then it has been shared with tens of thousands of educators across the world. Exciting (and a wee bit intimidating) to have one's words get out so far! Thank you for reading it.

So, to discipline myself to under 100(ish) words of advice for this post, I'd prioritise:

Assumption of positive intent

I think one of our biggest leadership challenges is being authentic and genuine, all of the time. Most of us can manage to keep it together face to face with people. It's what we say about others and do, when we're not in front of them, that really counts though. If I hear that my leader joined in when others were criticising me, what happens to my trust levels?

A strategy I find most useful in 'keeping it real' is to always assume positive intent. If there is negativity, I can avoid being sucked in by adopting a headset of 'trying to understand', asking questions and posing possible motivations for the actions/attitudes under fire.

How leaders respond to 'problems' will be the mark of our leadership. Respectful listening, questions, gathering data, thoughtful and appreciative interventions will build trust and loyalty.

Assume others are positively motivated and have good intent, until proven wrong. It builds trust and positive cultures!

Karen Cornelius, Director, Teacher Solutions

Want to add your advice? Email karen@teachersolutions.com.au

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