# LEADING LITERACY LEARNING:
## A Guide for Principals

The guide provides a means for Principals to check on important leadership actions known to connect their work and the work of teachers to improved literacy learning.

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**The PALL\* Leadership for Learning Framework** rests on research findings that particular leadership actions are closely linked to improved literacy learning and student achievement. It is important therefore that practices relating to the Leadership for Learning Framework are embedded in the culture of the school. In the following instrument, called a guide in this case, actions taken directly from the framework are shown as bold headings, highlighting each of the eight dimensions. Actions taken from the leadership research which elaborate each dimension are then listed below these headings. These are actions which research findings tell us should be evident in the school. Other logical actions, though unsubstantiated in the research that may provide additional information about what is occurring in the school are marked with an asterisk.

There are a number of ways to use the guide: by ticking to indicate whether an action has not been observed, whether there is some evidence of the action in practice or whether there is ample evidence of the action in practice in the school.

For example:    (i)    Principals could complete all sections or selected sections of the instrument themselves.
(ii)    Leadership Teams could complete all sections or selected sections.
(iii)    Teachers could complete all or selected sections.
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Once responses have been gathered, Principals could analyse their own results against those of teachers, results from the combined leadership team could be compared with teachers' results findings from different sections of the school could be compared and so on. Where consonance occurs or gaps or differences in the findings are identified, discussions employing the techniques of Disciplined Dialogue can be arranged using the following questions:

What are we seeing here?
Why do we think this is so?
What, if anything, do we need to do about it?

An example of the kind of discussion envisaged related to simulated findings is included at the end of this document.

This **Leading Literacy Learning Guide for Principals** has been developed by Sandra Easey and Pam Pearson to support principals and schools. It is based on the research outcomes from which the leadership for Learning Framework was developed.

*\* The PALL Pilot Project is managed by the Australian Primary principals' Association (APPA) as part of the Federal Government's Literacy and Numeracy Pilots in Low SES Environments. The leadership for Learning Framework is based on leadership concepts synthesised from recent research literature by Neil Dempster from Griffith University.*

# Leading Learning – A Framework

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Participating actively in professional development

LEADERSHIP

Sharing leadership and organising accordingly

STRONG EVIDENCE BASE

DISCIPLINED

Developing a shared Moral Purpose*

DIALOGUE

STRONG EVIDENCE BASE

CONDITIONS FOR LEARNING

Enhancing the conditions for learning – the physical, social and emotional environment

Connecting with support from parents and the wider community

PARENT and COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Planning and coordinating the curriculum and teaching across the school

CURRICULUM and TEACHING

* Improving student learning and performance

| | | Not Observed | Some Evidence | Ample Evidence |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| DEVELOPING A SHARED MORAL PURPOSE | **The moral purpose of the school is the enhancement of students' lives through improvement in learning and achievement in literacy.** | | | |
| | The school vision and directions have been developed collaboratively. | | | |
| | High expectations are set, understood and communicated. | | | |
| | Goals are embedded in classroom routines. | | | |
| | *Learning and achievement goals are clear and are articulated in school programs. | | | |
| | *The belief that 'all students can learn' is evident in school practices. | | | |
| | Comments: | | | |

| | | Not Observed | Some Evidence | Ample Evidence |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| A STRONG EVIDENCE BASE | **The gathering and analysis of sound qualitative and quantitative data about student's literacy learning and achievement forms the basis for 'disciplined dialogue.'** | | | |
| | An assessment schedule covering all aspects of literacy has been developed collaboratively. | | | |
| | A range of data that informs learning as well as achievement is gathered, including school and system data. | | | |
| | Qualitative as well as quantitative data are collected and analysed | | | |
| | The monitoring of learning is regular, comprehensive and generates useful data. | | | |
| | Accountability for classroom, school and system data collection and analysis is shared with teachers. | | | |
| | Planning for learning is based on data. | | | |
| | Comments | | | |

| DISCIPLINED DIALOGUE | **The professional conversations principals lead with their staff at school are disciplined in two senses: they are disciplined by the moral purpose of the school and are disciplined because they are stimulated by the use of a strong evidence base.** | Not Observed | Some Evidence | Ample Evidence |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | A shared moral purpose provides the focus for dialogue. | | | |
| | Discussions are scaffolded on qualitative and quantitative data. | | | |
| | The search for improvement strategies across all dimensions of the Leadership for Learning Framework is understood to be the outcome of disciplined dialogue. | | | |
| | The following questions provide the basis for disciplined dialogue:<br><br>What do we see in these data?<br>Why do we think this is so?<br>What, if anything, should we be doing about it? | | | |
| | The above questions are used as probes to develop deep understanding. | | | |
| | Comments: | | | |

| PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT | **The active participation of principals in professional development with their staff is one of the most significant factors in school improvement.** | Not Observed | Some Evidence | Ample Evidence |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | The Principal plays an active ' hands on' role in professional development. | | | |
| | The Principal participates as a 'leading learner' with teachers in professional development. | | | |
| | Strategies are in place to support, evaluate and develop teacher quality. | | | |
| | The development of deep knowledge about literacy key areas is seen as a priority | | | |
| | Teachers and paraprofessionals are engaged in extended professional learning about literacy priority areas | | | |
| | Professional development promotes teachers' skills in data analysis and interpretation | | | |
| | *A comprehensive induction program is in place for staff new to the school | | | |
| | *A culture of modelling, coaching and mentoring has been established and maintained | | | |
| | Comments: | | | |

| CONDITIONS FOR LEARNING | **The physical, social and emotional environment of the school comprises the conditions for learning.** | Not Observed | Some Evidence | Ample Evidence |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Resources are managed strategically. | | | |
| | Resources are applied to the conditions for learning. | | | |
| | Funds are aligned with learning priorities. | | | |
| | A safe and pleasant physical environment has been established. | | | |
| | Social and emotional support for learners is part of the school culture. | | | |
| | Difference is understood and respected. | | | |
| | Staff and student successes are celebrated. | | | |
| | *An 'add- on' rather than a deficit approach is adopted by all staff. | | | |
| | Comments: | | | |

| | | Not Observed | Some Evidence | Ample Evidence |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **CURRICULUM AND TEACHING** | **Specific aspects of literacy across years P-2, 3-4 and 5-7 are elaborated in pages to follow. This focus is on the 'big picture'** | | | |
| | The Principal participates actively in curriculum decision making | | | |
| | The Principal is actively involved in coordinating, managing and overseeing the teaching and learning program. | | | |
| | A commitment to curriculum priorities is maintained. | | | |
| | The Principal displays a keen interest in teachers' and students' work and achievements. | | | |
| | The Principal observes teachers in action and provides feedback. | | | |
| | The Principal actively oversees the school's overall curriculum in literacy by:  *Ensuring that school English programs are developed and implemented  *Ensuring that continuity of content is articulated explicitly in a scope and sequence across year levels  *Ensuring that all teachers view themselves as teachers of literacy | | | |
| | The Principal ensures that year level collaboration occurs. | | | |
| | Systematic monitoring of student learning and progress is in place. | | | |
| | Comments: | | | |
| | | | | |

| | | Not Observed | Some Evidence | Ample evidence |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **PARENT AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT** | **Building positive relationships with parents is integral to the school's learning program. Schools need to be active in their local and professional communities.** | | | |
| | Parents are seen as integral to the school's learning programs | | | |
| | *A wide range of opportunities is available for parents to become involved with the school. | | | |
| | Wider community support is sought to improve learning. | | | |
| | The school is active in the local and professional communities. | | | |
| | The school has a positive profile in the local community and participates in community events | | | |
| | School personnel network with other schools and teachers on good practice | | | |
| | The input of professionals beyond the school is sought and valued | | | |
| | The school website is interesting, informative and up to date. | | | |
| | Comments: | | | |

| | | Not Observed | Some Evidence | Ample Evidence |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **SHARED LEADERSHIP** | **Organising structures support shared leadership and build a collaborative work culture.** | | | |
| | School organisation structures support improved learning. | | | |
| | Collaborative work cultures are established and supported. | | | |
| | Team work among teachers is encouraged and evident. | | | |
| | Leadership roles and accountabilities are shared with teachers | | | |
| | *Accountability for data collection and analysis is shared with teachers | | | |
| | *Staff talents are recognised, supported and celebrated | | | |
| | Comments: | | | |

**Simulated Data and possible Disciplined Dialogue Discussions.**

The following example shows the collation of simulated data for one school. Respondents comprised the Principal, two associate administrators and 22 teachers. Only aggregated data are shown. This aggregation provides an overview of the extent to which leadership actions are observed within the school. No comparative data are included; gaps and differences in perceptions are not shown and there is no information included to identify year levels. In the simulation, one example only of one dimension is given, namely Curriculum and Teaching. It is assumed that the instrument was completed by all staff on the same day.

| | | Not observed | Some evidence | Ample evidence |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Collation of evidence from Curriculum and Teaching checklists.**<br><br>Respondents: 3 administrators (including principal) 22 teachers**.**<br><br>**Date:** 23/03/10 | | | | |
| **CURRICULUM AND TEACHING** | **Specific aspects of literacy across years P-2, 3-4 and 5-7 are elaborated in pages to follow. This focus is on the 'big picture.'** | | | |
| | The Principal participates actively in curriculum decision making | 15 | 10 | |
| | The Principal is actively involved in coordinating, managing and overseeing the teaching and learning program. | 20 | 2 | 3 |
| | A commitment to curriculum priorities is maintained. | 0 | 4 | 21 |
| | The Principal displays a keen interest in teachers' and students' work and achievements. | 0 | 17 | 8 |
| | The Principal observes teachers in action and provides specific feedback. | 13 | 10 | 2 |
| | The Principal actively oversees the school's overall curriculum in literacy by:<br><br>*Ensuring that school English programs are developed and implemented<br>*Ensuring that continuity of content is articulated explicitly in a scope and sequence across year levels<br>*Ensuring that all teachers view themselves as teachers of literacy. | 2 | 20 | 3 |
| | The Principal ensures that year level collaboration occurs. | | 15 | 8 |
| | Systematic monitoring of student learning and progress is in place. | | 4 | 21 |

COMMENTS:
*The Deputy Principal is the person who drives the curriculum. (9)*
*The Principal is rarely seen in classes. ( 7)*
*I've only had feedback when someone has made a complaint.*
*School assemblies are used to praise students but what about staff?*
*Curriculum priorities talked about all the time but need to be supported with PD and resources. ( 4)*
*More PD is needed.*
*All school programs and resources need to be put on the school's intranet.*

Sample disciplined dialogue questions and responses are provided as a stimulus to demonstrate how data such as that above can be used.
When using the guide it is suggested that all those who complete it bring their data to a staff meeting or cohort meeting for collation and discussion, perhaps one or two dimensions at a time. In this way all dimensions could be explored within a school term.

**Follow- Up Discussion**

*What evidence are we seeing in these checklists?*
- Curriculum priorities are a focus.
- Systematic monitoring of student learning and progress is in place
- Year level collaboration is occurring.
- The Principal shows interest in the work and achievements of students and staff.
- The staff does not perceive the Principal to be a curriculum leader; this role is ascribed to the DP.
- Staff perceptions are that feedback on teaching is rarely given by the Principal.

*Why do we think this is so?*

- Perhaps the staff is not aware of the 'behind the scenes' work done by the principal in the area of curriculum management. Do staff members know that a strategic plan for curriculum development is developed annually by the principal and submitted to district office as part of the school's annual operational plan?
- Is the staff aware that discussions around curriculum development involving key personnel are led by the principal and the priorities set are factored into the school budget?
- The role of the principal in curriculum leadership may be unclear because of lack of communication.
- School programs have been accessed from other schools and have been adapted by the deputy principal, in consultation with teachers, to meet the needs of the school.
- The Curriculum Committee meets on a 'needs only' basis. This committee is attended by the principal but is chaired by another staff member. Committee outcomes are posted on the school's intranet. A significant number of staff members do not access this regularly.
- Each member of the school administration team has delegated responsibilities for particular year levels. The principal is responsible for years Prep and 7. Informal visits to these classrooms are frequently made by the principal.
- The principal has attempted to establish a schedule of classroom visits but this gets highjacked by issues needing immediate attention.
- There is an understanding that the literacy block is a time when no interruptions occur. This eliminates two hours teaching time each day for classroom visits.
- The deputy principal is responsible for managing the school's induction program. It is the DPs role to provide feedback on teaching to teachers new to the school.
- Through negotiation, areas of responsibility have been allocated to each member of the administration team. The principal becomes involved in giving feedback on teaching in years 1-6 when a potential problem has been identified by another administrator or some other source.

*What, if anything, do we need to do about it?*

- Discuss regularly at forums such as staff meeting, cohort meetings the processes and procedures used to make decisions about 'big picture' curriculum issues.
- Share with staff the areas of responsibility allocated to each member of the administration team and ask for feedback re these. Remind staff that the principal is happy to be approached on any subject.
- Outline with staff the features of the school intranet and provide training for those who are insecure about using it. Emphasise the importance of the intranet as a means of communication within the school. Establish protocols for adding materials to the site and for flagging important items.
- The principal could attempt to set aside 30 minutes a day as an appointment-free time so that classroom visits can be made.
- Clarify what is meant by 'interruptions're the literacy block. This should not pertain to classroom visits by school administrators.
- Allow staff to contribute to the staff meeting agenda and include a '*why is it so?*' segment to allow for issues to be discussed.