

MMG ✦ Education

Principals'/Heads' Feedback on Learnings & Emerging Challenges

May 2014

Introduction

In late 2013, MMG Education approached a number of Principals/Heads of Schools from a cross section of our client base seeking their interest, support and agreement in sharing their views on two areas considered to be of interest to all.

The objective was to be able to share these views with Heads from all our client schools and in a small way provide a value added service leveraging from this wealth of experience that exists.

The two questions asked of Principals/Heads were:

1. What are the most important learnings that have contributed to leadership of your school?
2. What are the greatest challenges Principal/Heads see emerging over the next few years?

A total of 15 Principals/Heads kindly contributed to this initiative and we greatly thank those who took the time and were prepared to share their views on these important areas.

MMG have now collated these views and as advised are forwarding a copy of this to all Principals/Heads who agreed to participate in this project.

We hope these will be of interest and that they may in some way be beneficial for the future of your school, the effectiveness of your leadership and the challenges ahead.

Principals/Heads of School Who Participated in Initiative

MMG Education are most grateful to the following Principals/Heads for their support and for taking the time to contribute to this service project. MMG are greatly appreciative for this.

Principals and Heads of School who Contributed	
Principal/Head	School
Gareth Leechman	Arndell Anglican College
Brian Kennelly	Kinross Wolaroi School
John Weeks	Knox Grammar School
Denice Scala	MLC School, Sydney
Garry Brown	Mosman Church of England Preparatory School
Vicki Waters	Pymble Ladies' College, Sydney
Julie Caldwell	Sacred Heart MonaVale
Jenny Williams	Samuel Marsden Collegiate School, NZ
Alec O'Connell	Scotch College, W.A.
Polly Flanagan	Shelford Girls' Grammar, VIC
John Collier	St Andrew's Cathedral School
Helen Sinclair	Stuartholme School
Murray Guest	The Armidale School
Tim Hawkes	The King's School
Briony Scott	Wenona School

Important learnings that Principals/Heads noted as being most helpful in providing high quality education cont.

The following slides provide extracts from Principals/Heads about learnings that have assisted them in driving continual improvement in their schools and in building a high quality experience for all school stakeholders. Detailed below are insights from MMG regarding the major themes from these learnings (not in any order of priority).

- Placing high importance on school vision and values and goals as core drivers of strategies and actions school wide
- Effective dissemination and communication of the school vision and values and the implementation and monitoring of aligned strategies
- Principal/Head support via coaching, mentoring, 360 degree feedback, handling stress, time management and identifying the importance of health and welfare and home life
- Selection, retention and management of top quality staff
- Effective change management techniques and methodologies and engagement with school executive
- Maintaining effective, proactive, visible and regular engagement and contact with parents and students
- Correct executive structure and competencies
- Avoiding complacency through research based performance review
- Change management competencies
- High visibility with stakeholders – build and nurture relationships
- Collaboration with executive and staff

Important learnings that Principals/Heads noted as being most helpful in providing high quality education cont.

School	Principal's/Head's Learning
School 1	Rethinking learners and teachers roles as the conception of knowledge in the 21st century changes to being seen as something that does things - a verb rather than a noun
	The positive education movement - emergence of the importance of teaching positive education to children
	Asia - the rise of China and the importance of preparing students for an Asia focussed future
	The centrality of technology and expectations - how do we use this to enhance learning not just entertain
	Relationships are at the heart of all we do - student achievement is directly related to the relationships they have with their teachers
School 2	Refining the culture of the school to the current needs of stakeholders
	Establishing clear vision on what is wanted and then driving this through Council
	Clearly communicate a vision to all stakeholders
	Restructuring top appointments to fully align with vision and goals
	Establishing measures of performance and enrolment growth
	Aligning student expectations with the goals of the school and creating clear boundaries of performance
	Establishing staff drivers and KPA's to deliver school vision
	Establishing stronger student ownership regarding input to school matters
	Avoiding complacency through research based performance reviews

Important learnings that Principals/Heads noted as being most helpful in providing high quality education cont.

School	Principal's/Head's Learning
School 3	Implementation of a monthly management report analysing data, linked to tracking strategic objectives
	Principal's 360` Review
	Ongoing wide reading of international research from a variety of fields
	A Leadership coach
	Personal feedback to me from Chair of Council after in-camera council sessions
School 4	Training in how to conduct difficult conversations
	Regular school law updates (attending the University seminars)
	Financial literacy
	Positive education training (through the University of Pennsylvania)
	Training in strategic planning processes
School 5	Change management processes - including knowledge of principles of adult learning for staff
	Conflict resolution principles
	C21st Pedagogy - engaging students
	Team building/empowering - the importance of distributive leadership
	Synergy of high quality teaching and splendid pastoral care

Important learnings that Principals/Heads noted as being most helpful in providing high quality education cont.

School	Principal's/Head's Learning
School 6	Clearly articulate the School's values and ensure that they are lived
	Never lose sight of the core business - quality teaching and learning
	Encourage and support students and teachers to be the best they can be
	Value staff and ensure that they know they are valued
	Be visible, get out of the office and build and nurture relationships
School 7	The importance of Leading schools leading! In other words, making a significant contribution to educational and social debate
	Nothing, absolutely nothing is more important to the quality of a school than its teachers
	It's less about teaching and more about learning and the empowerment of students
	Accountability reporting (MySchool, HSC, League Tables etc.) are a very limited description of the value of a school
	Teaching life-skills is very important
School 8	The significance of 'trust' as a core element in effective leadership/management
	The importance of an Executive Coach for the Principal & members of Executive Team
	The development of Staff Evening circles to promote high level peer dialogue and action research
	Professional sharing opportunities to promote best practice
	The significance of 'space' as the physical context for learning

Important learnings that Principals/Heads noted as being most helpful in providing high quality education cont.

School	Principal's/Head's Learning
School 9	Cross disciplinary approach - I am learning about education from other organisational segments at the moment
	People/staff and parents - as expertise diversifies, relying more of staff to be exceptional professionals; ask parents for advice about their area of expertise
	Sub communities e.g. the influence of twitter on broadening perspectives - flat structure, not hierarchal
	Multi-facets of education are a big influence too e.g. architecture/technology - big forces
	Wisdom of mentors - good souls. Relying on concept of coaching/supervision etc.
School 10	When a school has clear goals and purpose (e.g. mission, learning, values) which have been developed in collaboration with all stakeholders then many of the other decisions, large and small, are easier to address.
	Goals setting at all levels of the school is a useful tool to assist change. Creating Strategic Plans, annual school goals (school improvement plans), professional learning goals, teacher goals and goals for students based on input from the community and data keeps all a school community on track and assists in transparency.
	Good communication is essential. All members of the community should know and have access to information and be able to access the personnel required to assist them.
	The importance of good quality professional learning based on the needs of the teachers and students that is also in line with the school goals.
	The reprivatisation of the classroom. Opening Classrooms and sharing data to create a learning community (of teachers) that is focused on the needs of students.

Important learnings that Principals/Heads noted as being most helpful in providing high quality education cont.

School	Principal's/Head's Learning
School 11	Positive interactions and demonstration of care for students
	Establishing quality learning environments and quality relationships
	Providing appropriate feedback in the form of comments to enhance learning
	Establishing collaborative processes and opportunities for professional learning
	Empowering students to take a role in the learning and assessment process
School 12	Rely on delegation
	Keep balance in your personal life - work on it, it's hard! Health, well-being, time commitments
	Focus on effort as much as achievement and personal motivation of students
	Know your students as a mantra - it helps with individualising / personalising education
	Focus on culture and direction rather than organisation and management
School 13	Be consultative
	Work with your executive to ensure they understand their role in leading
	Help them to understand the vision and adapt it to their area of responsibility
	Find time to have conversation with community members don't have to know the whole journey now

Important learnings that Principals/Heads noted as being most helpful in providing high quality education cont.

School	Principal's/Head's Learning
School 14	Classroom visits - regular drop-in to see teachers in action
	The importance of having a 5 year + financial plan for the school
	Appraisal of staff - introduced a meaningful system making staff more accountable
	Provide "regular" Professional Development for staff
	Develop social responsibility in students - thinking of others
School 15	Managing change in a conservative traditional context
	Data must be used if you are to improve learning outcomes for all students
	Holding people to account for delivery of key projects
	Execution of strategy is critical, not just formulating a strategic plan
	Staff want to be led, decisiveness is critical

Greatest challenges facing schools that Principals/Heads see emerging over the next three years

The following slides provide extracts from Principals/Heads about what they perceive to be the greatest challenges emerging for schools over the next few years.

Detailed below are insights/summary from MMG regarding these challenges (not in any order of priority).

- 24/7 pressure on Heads, complexity of managing schools, time pressures to adequately engage with stakeholders, impact on welfare and declining interest to take on role
- Increased compliance and risk management pressure and need to adequately manage these areas
- Government interference in education, funding, accountability, changing political landscape
- Parent affordability and implications on enrolments, school culture, socio demographic environment and potential impact on school values
- Managing increasing parent expectations in the education of their child eg personalised attention, academic results
- Finding, recruiting and retaining quality staff (Science & Maths in particular)
- Declining standards in quality of teacher graduates
- Management, funding and integration of IT in all aspects of teaching and learning
- Enabling staff to adapt to modern, best practice teaching models

Greatest challenges facing schools that Principals/Heads see emerging over the next three years

School	Principal's/Head's – Emerging Challenges
School 1	Paradigm shift in how Headship is addressed. Related to this is the proposed accreditation processes
	New modes of delivery of learning leading to new models of schooling i.e. anywhere, anytime learning
	Government roles in educational funding/accountability
	Role of philanthropy in financial/business viability
	Role of partnerships both within educational sector and outside the sector
School 2	Affordability - implications of rising fees and fee levels on the culture and ethos of the school
	Ensuring appropriate governance in relation to risk and compliance
	Continuing to recruit and maintain quality staff who are intrinsic to school vision (Gen Y) and values
	Staffing terms of employment and remuneration - matching expectations
	Developing leadership talent for the future and growing heads of departments school base
	Implications from national curriculum and government interference
School 3	Technological innovations - and the pace of change
	Changing demography - high level of staff retirement
	Broadening curriculum - the question as to whether uniformity should go unchallenged
	Dealing with constant change directed at students
	Community fragmentation - schools need to build social capital

Greatest challenges facing schools that Principals/Heads see emerging over the next three years

School	Principal's/Head's – Emerging Challenges
School 4	Management of ICT. Implications for teaching and learning. Flipped classrooms. Adverse effects - gaming, porn, shorter attention span etc.
	Increased litigation. Schools as lucrative legal targets. Reputational loss. Suing mentality.
	Poor parenting. Over-protected and under protected children. Inadequate role modelling
	Increasing competition, enrolments, market, finding points of differentiation
	Declining social skills in students, poor resilience, bullying (especially cyber bullying), premature sexualisation, depression, feeling of entitlement etc.
School 5	Balancing affordability with the increasing cost of independent education
	Preparing students for an unpredictable 21st century world and the life skills they will need to thrive
	Ensuring that students are comfortable with rapid change
	Ensuring our students are wise consumers of rapidly changing social media - the good the bad and the very ugly
	Coping with ever increasing regulation and compliance demands
School 6	Management of staff, in particular the ageing demographic, H.R. in general
	Relevance of senior school (Y11 + Y12) in an ever evolving technology environment
	Impact of decisions, universities might make regarding their selection processes
	Costs - buildings, upkeep of facilities and justification of the physical environment of "school" financial sustainability and independent education
	Burden of compliance

Greatest challenges facing schools that Principals/Heads see emerging over the next three years

School	Principal's/Head's – Emerging Challenges
School 7	Financial - keeping fee increases to a minimum
	ICT and the impact on learning and traditional classrooms
	Minimum cost increases in schools by a 'smarter' approach
	Attracting quality teachers to replace those who are retiring
School 8	Transient nature of younger staff
	Meeting the ever increasing expectation of staff and parents. Competing priorities
	Increasing continuance commitment of staff (staying because of good conditions and other extrinsic drivers) versus affective commitment (staying and doing more for cultural and personal satisfaction - intrinsic based rewards)
	Ongoing poor image of the teaching profession and education in the public forum
	Decreased interest in taking on the complexity of running a large school
School 9	The complexity of the role of Principal with multiple areas of expertise required
	Being an agile organisation that can re-align in a rapidly changing world
	Transforming classroom action from teacher delivered to student driven
	Defining point of difference in the independent sector
	Remaining affordable will be innovative

Greatest challenges facing schools that Principals/Heads see emerging over the next three years

School	Principal's/Head's – Emerging Challenges
School 10	Uncertainty of government funding
	Continued building of the compliance burden - training and other requirements for WH&S, child protection, equal opportunity, reporting to statutory bodies
	Recruitment of skilled and experienced teaching staff, particularly in the areas of Science and Mathematics
	Declining standards of new teaching graduates - indicated by the very low average ATAR of pre-service teachers in some universities
	Social, financial and training requirements related to new technologies
School 11	Deciding what future learning will look like
	Enabling staff to adapt current teaching models to fit with future learning and the 21st century conception of knowledge
	Finding quality staff - as the teaching profession ages
	Dealing with the increasing expectation of parents for personalised learning - more choice for students
School 12	Increased complexity of communities/families who rely on schools for support
	Pressure on Heads of 24/7 performance and engagement
	Unrealistic expectations - need to manage expectations
	Education agenda driven by non-experts such as politicians (short term agendas)
	Isolation of the role

Greatest challenges facing schools that Principals/Heads see emerging over the next three years

School	Principal's/Head's – Emerging Challenges
School 13	The changing political landscape whereby school funding and political agendas are increasing the workload and changing the focus of schools to micromanagement and accountability
	Schools increasingly are community (and church) for families. Having the resources to support this growth and support families in need
	Mental health and well being issues are increasingly impacting on schools. Having the resources to promote good mental health is becoming an increasing priority
	Having appropriate professional standards for teacher training institutions. Making sure we have quality graduates
	The declining call to leadership within schools
School 14	'The price of privileges' - lack of emotional well-being and maturity in those who have it all
	The pressures and demands of administration eating into leadership
	Keeping abreast of trends, research particularly in the science of learning
	Health and well-being personally
	School Councils interfering in leadership and blurring roles of Head/Council
School 15	Runaway expectations of parents
	Staff workload/burnout/renewal
	Crushing layers of compliance and risk management
	Volatile and highly competitive educational marketplace - worsened by fragile economic outlook
	Developing C21st paradigms which overcome inertia. Vested interests which are affordable

END OF REPORT