

Leadership & Management

POLICY • LEADERSHIP • MANAGEMENT • GOVERNANCE

for South African Schools

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School Management & Leadership Makeover

Like the leadership teams of our readers and subscribers, we are beginning to formulate our plans for the new year and to put in place the structures needed to ensure that we provide you with a better and more valuable product. The first step in this process has been to establish SM&L as a separate business entity called Ednews (SM&L was previously published by Eduskills). In line with our commitment to providing our readers with a better product, we are planning to increase the extent of SM&L from 12 to 16 pages. This will make it possible for us to provide greater coverage of issues of interest to school leaders and to include not only issues of leadership, management and policy but also those related to governance for which we perceive there to be a clear need. The increased extent will also make it possible for us to include some school-specific advertising which is necessary to SM&L sustainable in the long term.

To celebrate our independence we have dressed SM&L up in a new livery. Some of our readers will no doubt recognise the design similarity to Managing Editor Alan Clarke's recently-published book, *The Handbook of School Management*. This is deliberate and is done with the permission and support of Kate McCallum, the publisher of the book, who sees SM&L as a complementary publication to *The Handbook of School Management* and a means of keeping school leaders abreast of new and changing developments in education.

SM&L obtains its information from a wide range of sources. Some of it comes from the network of contacts that we have developed through our subscribers and the personal networks that Managing Editor Alan Clarke and Educational Consultant Clive Roos have built up over their many years of involvement in education. We also scan the DoE and PED websites on a regular basis, as well as the websites of the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSAP), the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESSP), The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), the National College of School Leadership (NCSL), and Behaviour4Learning to ensure that we remain at the cutting edge of what is happening in education and are able to provide our readers with the latest and most useful education-related material. Other sources of information include material sourced from international foundations with a focus on education such as the International Confederation of Principals (ICP), the Wallace Foundation and the Specialist School Trust. Edulis, the excellent WCED-funded Education library in Bellville which subscribes to wide selection of local and international educational-related journals is another excellent resource. The Edulis staff normally dispatch those journals with a focus on issues of management and leadership on a circuit which takes them through the offices of most of the senior officials of the WCED. As a result, it is nearly a year after their cover date that these journals become available to those who use the library. We have managed to persuade the librarians to call us as soon as the new journals are received by the library. This makes it possible for us to scan through the content lists and pages for material that may be of interest to readers. The journals include: *Educational Leadership*, *Managing Schools Today*, *Principal Leadership*, *Educational Research*,

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is published 10 times per year by Ednews. It is editorially and financially independent and it not affiliated to any organisation. It seeks to provide the leaders of South African schools with current and relevant information on issues of policy, leadership, management and governance.

Leadership Lessons from Jake White & the Springbok team



Alan Clarke

In the aftermath of our wonderful victory in the Rugby World Cup and the euphoria that has followed it, it is interesting to reflect on Jake White's leadership qualities and the leadership strategies he used in developing his cup-winning team. How well do Jake White and his successful Springbok team match the profile of the good-to-great companies that Jim Collins identifies in his book "Good to Great"?

Is Jake a Level 5 leader in terms of the criteria that Collins uses to define Level 5 leadership?

Collins identifies two key paradoxical attributes of level 5 leaders:

Personal modesty

Level 5 leaders are typically modest, they avoid personal adulation and are not boastful about their achievements. As leaders, they rely more on quiet determination and inspiring standards than charisma to motivate people. They measure their success by the achievements of the organisation they lead rather than by their own achievements and they establish a platform that will promote the future success of the organisation after they have departed. Level 5 leaders take personal responsibility for poor results and never blame others or external factors for under-performance.

Professional will

Level 5 leaders are characterised by their ability to produce superb results and can be identified as catalysts in turning good organisations into great organisations. More than anything else, they are unwavering in their determination to do what needs to be done to produce the best long-term results and to ensure that the organisation they lead endures and remains world class for its type. They prefer to give credit to others for the



Jake White: Level 5 Leadership - Personal Modesty and Professional Will

success of the organisation rather than claiming it for themselves.

There are those that may suggest that Jake White enjoys the limelight and courts controversy but this writer is not convinced that this is true. On the many occasions when he has featured in the news during his nearly four years as Springbok Coach it has been for reasons of controversy. By and large, however, these controversies have not been of his making and have arisen because of issues relating to the transformation of rugby rather than to his coaching duties. He is certainly not a charismatic leader; rather he has inspired his team through his long-term vision of what he believed could be achieved. An example of this is the story of how the squad that he gathered together initially nearly four years ago smiled nervously and rather sheepishly when he suggested that they were the nucleus of the team that would win the World Cup in 2007. Yet it was this vision that was to sustain him and the team through the many difficult challenges that they faced in the years that followed. He certainly showed a great deal of professional will and an unwavering determination to do what needed to be done to achieve that goal. He knew which players he wanted, including his captain, and backed his decisions and his players through thick and thin. He had a clear idea of the levels of fitness and skill that he required of each player and set about putting in place the structures and programmes that were needed to achieve these. When South Africa lost 16 - 32 to England in their 2004 tour to the UK, he is famously quoted as saying, "It looked like men against boys at times". By the time the World Cup arrived, Jake's boys had grown up - as the English found to their cost.

Collins identifies 6 strategies used by these leaders to deliver greatness:

Jim Collins

Writers of this newsletter have used the writing of Jim Collins in the past. He operates a management research laboratory in Boulder, Colorado and is co-author of "Good to Great: Why some companies make the leap ... and others don't" (HarperBusiness 2001) and co-author with Jerry I. Porras of "Built to Last: Successful habits of visionary companies" (HarperBusiness 2002). Both books are worth reading if you are interested in issues of leadership and management. Most of the material for this article was based on "Level 5 Leadership: The Triumph of Humility and Fierce Resolve" published in Harvard Business Review: OnPoint. (The Best of HBR 2001, product 5831).



Os du Randt: "Built to Last"

First who

The first thing that good-to-great leaders do is to get the right people on the bus, move the wrong people off the bus and make sure that they have got the right people in the right seats. They then decide where they are going.

From the start of his appointment as Bok coach, Jake was quite clear whom he wanted in his team. There was a core group of players with whom he had worked when he coached the U21 side which had won the U21 World Cup in 2002. This group included John Smit, whom he immediately appointed captain despite the fact that many pundits suggested that there were better hookers in the country. He fetched Os du Randt out of retirement, and brought Percy Montgomery and van der Westhuizen home from the overseas clubs they had joined, as he began to build the foundations of his fledgling team. Over the next four years the players who constituted the squad became increasingly stable. Unlike some of his predecessors, he did not simply replace players when they had an off-period or when they were injured, even for quite prolonged stretches of time - think of people like Ashwin Willemse, Schalk Burger, Jean de Villiers and André Pretorius.

Stockdale paradox

The Stockdale paradox is about having the ability to confront the brutal facts about your current reality while maintaining absolute faith that you will prevail in the end.

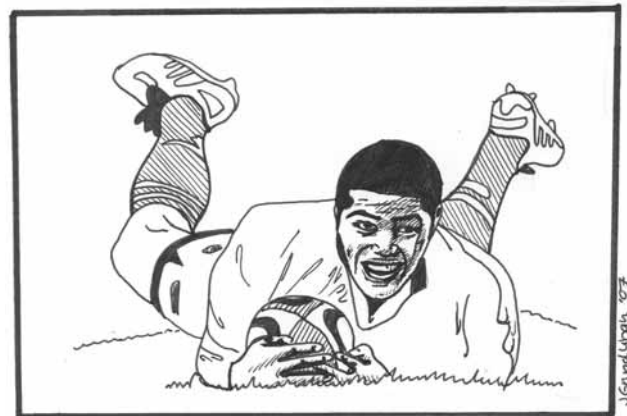
Jake had to do this often enough during his period of coach. One needs only to think about the Luke Watson affair, the threat to cancel the team's passports by Butana Komphela, and the insistence that he accept Zola Yeye as team manager although Yeye was not his first choice for the job, the guffaw of derision when he brought Montgomery back, his decision to rest the majority of his core players for the away leg of the 2007 Tri-Nations competition, and the constant spats with the unstable and strife-ridden General Council of SARU. It is to his great credit and a measure of his leadership ability that through

this entire period he remained committed to his dream of World-Cup glory.

Buildup-breakthrough flywheel

The buildup-breakthrough flywheel is about relentlessly pursuing your purpose. It is about driving in one direction, building up momentum until you reach a breakthrough point and emerge with a level of energy and performance which is beyond what others have been able to achieve.

After the initial excitement in Jake's first year as coach, when South Africa won the 2004 Tri-Nations competition, there was a flat period. Everyone expected the Springboks to beat all opposition (they always do!). It was in this period that Jake's selection policy was most tested yet he stuck to his guns. This was when the momentum first began to build within the squad and also when many of the other unseen structures began to be put in place and their efforts were consolidated. All the while the momentum was building. The first signs of the impending breakthrough came with the start of the 2007 Super 14 when for the first time the South African teams began to look as if they could reach the final and even win the competition. By the time the World Cup, started, South Africa was beginning to be seen as the only team that could have a serious chance of taming the rampant All Blacks. Then as the World Cup proceeded it became increasingly apparent that the momentum was with South Africa.....



Bryan Habana: "Good to Great"

The Hedgehog concept

According to a parable by philosopher and scholar Isaiah Berlin there are two approaches to life. There are foxes that are complex and know a little about many things and there are hedgehogs that are simple and know a lot about one thing. Successful organisations are like hedgehogs with a simple understanding about three important things: what the organisation can be best in the world at; how the organisation works best; and what

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Schools making a difference

St James Roman Catholic Primary School

Between 2004 and 2006, St James has managed to improve the Literacy levels of their Grade 3 pupils from 42,4% to 80,5% and their Numeracy levels from 48,5% to 58,5%. This how they did it.

St James Roman Catholic Primary School in Kalk Bay is the oldest existing school on the False Bay coast. Originally established in 1874 as a school for local children by the Catholic church of St James, which gave the seaside suburb on Cape Town's False Bay its name, the school was moved in 1947 to current site overlooking the small harbour of Kalk Bay. The portion of land – just 500m², the size of an average suburban plot - on which it is situated is church land but St James Primary is a public school. What is remarkable about this school is that it has managed to bring about a dramatic improvement in the literacy levels of its pupils.

For some years now, the Western Cape Education Department has been testing the literacy and numeracy levels of virtually all pupils enrolled in Grade 3 and Grade 6 in its public schools. The tests are conducted every alternate year (Grade 3s were tested in 2002, 2004 and 2006 and Grade 6s in 2003, 2005 and 2007). The WCED is to be commended on this initiative because the results of these tests provide the WCED and the general public with a benchmark measure for literacy and numeracy of public schooling in the province. The purpose of an exercise of this type is not merely to measure performance; it is also to measure the extent to which intervention strategies put in place to improve performance are achieving their goals. Sadly, at a provincial level, the gains since the Grade 3s were first tested in 2002 have been modest. In a WCED media release of 18 May 2007 which made public the results of the 2006 study the following figures were provided:

- 82 879 pupils at 1 086 schools took part in the Grade 3 study
- Literacy improved from 39,5% in 2004 to 47,7% in 2006, an increase of 8,2%
- Numeracy declined from 37,3% in 2004 to 31,0% in 2006, a decline of 6.5%

The percentages given above represent the percent of pupils in Grade 3 who achieved 50% or more in a test that was based on the Grade 3 NCS (Learning Outcomes 3, 5 and 6) assessment standards. In other words 47,7% of Grade 3s in the Western Cape scored 50% or more in a test which measured the extent to which they met the Learning Outcomes set out in the grade 3 NCS.

The results of the pupils at St James were remarkably different from this as can be seen from the table on the right.



Greg Gordon in his small office which overlooks Kalk Bay harbour

St James is not a well-to-do ex-model C school, its resources and facilities are modest, and the “extras” that it does have are almost exclusively a consequence of its own efforts and determination. What the school does have, what differentiates it from many of the other schools in this country is a principal and staff with commitment, with ambition for the children they teach and who are innovative and resourceful about finding solutions to the problems they face.

There are 260 pupils enrolled at the school with one class group in each of Grade 1 to 7. There is also an independently operating pre-school of 30 pupils linked to the school. Pupils are drawn from the local community (mostly fisher-folk from Kalk Bay), but also from the township of Ocean View near Simon's Town, the informal settlement of Masiphumelele, and from Muizenberg, Retreat and Steenberg. It is a school for the working-class and unemployed and school fees are a very modest R650.00 per year. The school owns three buses (not mini-bus taxis) which are used to provide pupils from Ocean View and Masiphumelele and those who live on the bus route to and from these townships with subsidised

St James's Grade 3 Results

Year	2002	2004	2006	% change 2004/ 2006
Numeracy %	35.0	48.5	58.6	10.1
Literacy %	38.0	42.4	80.5	38.1

transport to and from school each day. Between 130 and 150 pupils are also provided with a meal each day.

It is in hearing principal Greg Gordon tell the story behind the meals and the buses, and the school library in a container, and the reading/counselling room in a converted “Wendy house” that one begins to understand what it is that this school has done to produce the remarkable improvement in the literacy and numeracy results of its Grade 3s. These improvements are not a consequence of one lucky break or a single bit of innovation. They have been achieved through persistent hard work and a commitment, over time, to two simple ideas:

- That the children they teach can succeed
- That they, the principal and staff, have a duty to create the means to make this happen.

As Greg puts it “the staff and I believe in the dream that we will get what we set our minds to do”.

As Greg tells the story of how he and his staff set about improving their literacy results he provides a number of anecdotes which demonstrate just how successful he and his staff have been at getting the things that they have set their minds to.

The need to provide meals for the children who came to school hungry was borne from Greg’s belief that “you can’t teach a hungry child and you can’t teach a traumatised child”. To solve the food problem he approached the parents and community members for volunteers who would be willing to make sandwiches for those children who arrived at school hungry and soon found an a community volunteer, called “aunty” by the pupils, who was willing to do the work and who is paid by for her services from school funds. Food and funds for these meals are mostly provided by Peninsula School Feeding Association (an NGO), the diocese of St James and funds provided for this purpose by the Governing Body. The Haven, a local night-shelter for the homeless, which is situated not far from the school, donates bread rolls and fruit to the school when it receives donations of these that are in excess of its needs. In addition to providing meals for pupils, the school provides 30 to 50 food parcels each quarter for their most indigent families as part of a pastoral programme which aims, as Greg puts it, to teach children that “what we receive, we must also give”. The goodies for these food parcels are sourced through donations from the community and from fund-raising activities.

Dealing with children with trauma was not as easy a problem to crack as providing food because counselling requires specialist knowledge and skills which are very different from those required for making sandwiches. But in time, and as an offshoot of the school’s literacy improvement strategy, the school has been able to provide pupils who may have suffered the trauma of the loss of a



St James RC Primary with its 3 school buses. The container library is on the left in the foreground

parent or from family violence, with the support, security and space that they need to start to come to terms with their trauma. More about how the school has set about providing appropriate professional support for pupils in need of trauma counselling will be published in future editions of *SM&L*.

The decision to purchase a bus- and later buses for the school, is a similar story. Because the majority of families that attend St James do not have their own transport, and because some pupils travelled relatively long distances to school, there was a problem with late-coming and absenteeism, particularly when the weather was inclement. To solve this problem and to reduce the transport costs for their families, Greg, his staff and Governors decided they needed to fund-raise for a proper bus. To ensure that there was a level of buy-in from his staff Greg invited the whole staff to join him for a pre-purchase inspection of the bus, once he thought he had found one that would meet the school’s needs and which was affordable. Greg was the driver of that first bus, transporting children twice a day between their homes and the school. The school now has 3 buses with drivers who are paid for their services by the school.

An important element in the ongoing success of St James relates to the ability of Greg and his staff to identify and make the most of opportunities that come their way.

Good examples of their ability to utilise opportunities are included in their successful literacy improvement strategy. Their initial plan was to improve pupil literacy levels by making St James a “reading school” and their first step in the process was to encourage reading by including a regular reading period in the school day for all classes. It seemed simple enough - except for the problem of readers. Where was the school to find a sufficient stock of books to make it possible for every child to have a book to read? But as they say, opportunity knocks for those who will listen and out of the blue came a knock on Greg’s door. There stood the recently retired head of the Cape Education Department Library Service



Inside the container library with its neatly stacked shelves of books

with an offer to help run the school library. Greg, as is his wont, grabbed the opportunity with both hands.

The St James's Library at that time consisted of a few shelves of books in a back passage. John van Huyssteen, their new librarian, went to work with vigour; he sorted the books and threw out those that were not appropriate or relevant for the pupils of the school. Book loans were secured from the local municipal library and the Education Department library and naturally there were requests for funds, particular at the times of the book sales. John used his experience and contact to make sure that he got the best deals possible for the school. There were also fund-raising and requests for donations from the community and through social networks. Plans were made for a "proper" library, a room where books could be organised on shelves in a way that made it possible for pupils to easily find those that may be of interest to them and which were appropriate for their age and reading level. The first "proper" library was a converted container. This has now grown to two containers, linked to form an L-shaped room.



There is just enough space for a small desk for the part-time librarian, an equally small issuing desk and a filing cabinet. Only about 5 pupils can use the library at a time because space is so limited so they are dispatched there in groups of this size during class reading

periods to select their next read. All the books in the library are colour-coded by reading level and age appropriateness to assist the librarian in directing pupils to books which best suit their needs. The librarian is helped by the fact that all pupils are now tested annually to determine their reading level (the school uses the Schonell test) and the librarian has access to their scores. So successful has the drive to improve the school's book stock been, that there are now class sets in every classroom including multiple copies of some books so that these can be used for group reading. John finally retired as school librarian earlier this year after 10 years of service to the school but not before he had trained a successor, a member of the community who is now paid by the school for her services.

Outside the library, a steel and canvas gazebo, won by the school in a competition, shades a large table with fixed bench seats. Each break a box of library books which are slightly damaged and are getting to the stage where they will be removed from stock and disposed of, are put out on the table. Pupils are free to browse through these books while they eat their lunch. The books are also available for loan if pupils wish to read them at home.

Despite an increase in and enthusiasm for reading, Greg and his teachers remained dissatisfied with the literacy levels of their pupils. So when Greg heard about the research work that Shelley O'Carroll was conducting into the effectiveness of literacy improvement strategies in disadvantaged communities, he invited her to make St James part of her pilot study. The pilot study, conducted over a six-week period during the third term of 2004, involved testing the reading and spelling ability of all pupils in Grade 1, 2 and 3 and using these tests to identify the 6 pupils from each class who were most in need of additional support. These pupils were then taken out of class for a period of one hour each week and given intensive coaching by community volunteers who were trained for this task by Shelley and the members of her team. Part of the purpose of the work that Shelley was doing was to determine whether community volunteers could be successfully used in this way. The pilot project was so successful that it has now been extended to a number of other schools and the NGO *Wordworks* has been born. We will provide more information on *Wordworks* and the specifics of the *Wordworks* programme in the next edition of *SM&L*.

Although the contribution of *Wordworks* has been critical element in the improvement of St James's literacy results, it is certainly not the only critical element. What Greg and his staff at St James have provided is a community school where there is a sense of belonging and sense of ownership. The school has no boundary fences or security gates: you simply walk up the stairs from the street to the front entrance and a child, noticing that you are a stranger, will guide you to the staffroom which also serves as the staff kitchen or to Greg's tiny

St James achievements since 1994

Added two new classrooms (2001 and 2006)

The first was built with funds provided by the school, the Archdiocese of Cape Town and the WCED. The second with funds provided as a grant in aid by the Japanese Embassy.

Acquisition of three school buses (1997, 2003 and 2007)

The first was bought using school funds and the other two with loans provided by Mission Aid.

Container Library (1997)

Funding for both containers was provided by way of donations from Breadline Africa and the use of the school's own funds.

Reading Centre (2005)

This was a "Wendy house" and was donated by Bay Primary School. The erection and repair was undertaken by parents of St James.

Computer Room

1997 First computer laboratory was a donation from Shell. I & J provided funding to network the computers.

2002 Used computers purchased from St Mary's School

2006 New computers provided by the Khanya project. The setup costs were funded by the school.

The school has been running "Computers for Kids" programmes since 2003

Pre-school

The school took over the management of Kalk Bay Toddlers in 1999

Governing Body-funded posts

The school funds the following governing body posts from school fees:

- 2 drivers
- 2 teachers
- 2 Learnerships
- 1 cleaner
- 1 Librarian/administrator/ counsellor

office overlooking Kalk Bay harbour. There is no graffiti or signs of vandalism at St James and Greg is not embarrassed to stoop and pick up the few bits of litter outside in the street and drop them in the bin, as I take my leave. St James is a true community school and a wonderful example of what can be done if principals and teachers care enough.



The reading and counselling room is a refurbished "Wendy house". It stands on Municipal land because there was no space for it on the school site.



Community volunteer working with pupils to improve their literacy as part of the Wordworks programme.

Wordworks

Wordworks is a non-profit organisation that aims to support the early literacy and language development of children from disadvantaged communities. In addition to working directly with children, they work with parents to empower them to support their children's early learning in the home environment. They also run programmes for Grade R children and their teachers. Wordworks has recently been awarded a tender by the WCED to develop a manual for Xhosa-speaking teachers teaching English as a second language.

We will provide more information about Wordworks and the work that they do in coming issues of SM&L. Readers can also go to their website www.wordworks.org.za

The National College of School Leadership (NCSL)

In the last issue of *SM&L* we published an article on successful school leadership based on research conducted by the National College of School Leadership (NCSL). This college, situated in the city of Nottingham in England, has acquired an international reputation for the quality of its teaching and research since its establishment in 2000. In this article based on material published in *Educational Leadership*¹, we look at the work of the College and some of the lessons that have been learned about the training of school leaders since its founding.

The College is a government initiative driven by the perceived need to provide a national focus for school leadership development and research and a desire to provide world-class school leaders and to promote excellence and innovation in education. Interestingly, the NCSL does not focus simply on principals and/or aspirant principals because it aims to serve the needs of all school leaders irrespective of their context and roles. It offers five core programmes with 17 000 participants each year. These programmes are based on the leadership development framework of the college which recognises five stages of leadership:

- Middle-level leaders: these are teachers who occupy leadership positions such as subject heads and Heads of Department. They include people who may or may not be aspirant principals
- Emergent leaders: these are people who have begun to take on leadership roles and who aspire to become principals
- Leaders preparing for their first headship
- Advanced leaders: these are current experienced principals who wish to develop their leadership styles and competencies
- Consultant leaders: principals who wish to become involved in mentoring and coaching of their less experienced peers.

All of the programmes involve a “blended-learning” approach that is purposefully linked to the participants’ schools. There is also a strong focus on leadership strategies which improve schools and raise pupil achievement.

Core Programmes

The five core programmes offered by the college are:

Leading from the middle

This is the programme for middle-level leaders and aims to develop the effectiveness of teachers who occupy middle-level management positions in school. The focus is on raising student achievement and creating effective teams. Support is provided by an in-school coach who would usually be a deputy-principal.

National Professional Qualification for Headship:

This qualification has now become a requirement for appointment as a principal in schools in England. Three options are offered - a beginning, an intermediate and an advanced – the choice of option being determined by the expertise of the aspirant head in relation to the National Standard for Head teachers. The programme focus is on bringing about school improvement.

Advance Leadership:

As its name implies, this programme is for experienced principals and is aimed at developing their leadership styles and in helping them to develop their peer coaching skills.

Consultant Leadership:

The idea of this programme is to promote system leadership and it involves experienced school leaders working as mentors and coaches to develop other school leaders.

Six Lessons Learned

Geoff Southworth and Jane Doughty, the authors of the article, list 6 lessons which the staff and “College partners” have learned since the College was established. These lessons, with a brief summary of each are listed below.

1 The Importance of Context

Research by Leithwood et al², has shown that sensitivity to the context in which a school operates is one of the key qualities of successful school leaders. On the basis of these findings and the demands of the course participants in this regard, the courses seek to address the specific needs of a diverse range of educational contexts. Courses thus aim to meet the needs of rural and urban, small and large, underperforming and high-performing, public and independent / faith-based schools

and in doing so to provide training and support that is tailored to the specific needs of school leaders.

2 Leaders and Managers

Good leadership and good management are equally important in schools and management training is part of the leadership development which is provided by the College. Management training includes time, communication, performance, project, resources, and budget management skills, because these are all part of the responsibilities of principals and senior staff at schools in England.

3 The Value of Coaching

The College uses a range of learning strategies including on-the-job training, face-to-face instruction, off-site training, online learning, school and classroom visits, and a wide variety of problem-based activities. Increasing use has been made of coaching which has been found to be most effective, not only in providing professional support to those involved in the “Leading from the Middle programme” but also in raising student achievement.

4 Emphasising the Practical

College courses focus not only on increasing participant’s knowledge of themselves as leaders but also on the practical craft of leadership – the things that work – so that participants learn to understand themselves and what drives them.

5 Keeping Up with Best Practice

To ensure that the College stays abreast of best practice world wide, it regularly assembles think tanks of international figures and thought leaders who are able to offer insights into leadership development practices around the world.

6 Sticking to the Knitting

In the early days of its establishment the College, to an extent, became distracted from its core business of school leadership, largely as a result of approaches by individuals and groups wishing to work with the College. Having become aware of the problems associated with too wide a focus there has, in recent times, been a move back to its core business.

References

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² Leithwood, K. Jantzi, D. & Steinbach, R. Changing Leadership for changing times. Open University Press Buckingham, UK (1999)

National College of School Leadership website: <http://www.ncsl.org.uk/index.cfm>

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School Management & Leadership Makeover

Teaching and Learning, Principal, The Reading Teacher and Phi Delta Kappa amongst others. Our commitment always is to bring our readers the best and the latest material on issues of policy, leadership, management and governance.

We are the first to admit that our website www.ednews.co.za has been a disappointment and we are currently busy planning a complete overhaul of its structure and content to make it more user-friendly and useful. The upgrade should be complete before the end of the year. Meanwhile we hope you will have patience with this component of *SM&L*.

We have one appeal to our subscribers and that is that you will help us grow our subscriber numbers by encouraging your peers, your governors and your partners in education to subscribe.

Alan Clarke
Managing Editor

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Reviewing the School Year

(you will need to work with a number of smaller groups if you have a large staff) or with certain sub-groups within the staff. The difference between using a SWOT analysis and the first two approaches is that a SWOT analysis relates to the kinds of problems that may be identified. A SWOT analysis is likely to identify broader and less specific problems and areas of concern and the proposed solutions are likely to be more about long-term goals, restructuring and the strategies to achieve these goals than about improving the schools daily operational effectiveness.

We will provide more about the use of a SWOT analyses and strategic planning in the next issue of *SM&L*.

Leadership:

Is it time you talked to the man in the mirror?

For frank and honest feedback about your performance it is often best to talk to the man in the mirror. The trick is to ask the right questions!

One of the most difficult things for leaders to obtain is honest and constructive feedback about their performance from the people that matter most, the staff that fall under their direct authority. And the more senior your position, the thinner and more muted whatever feedback that you can glean becomes.

In their rise up the ranks of the profession, principals should, at least at some stages of their careers, have been supervised and/or mentored by more senior colleagues. In better managed schools and in good organisations, this would have been part of a formal process but in others may have simply taken the form of informal support from a more senior colleague who shared your area of speciality or who may have had interests that were similar to yours – a kind of critical friend. Both kinds of support are invaluable as we grow and develop our leadership skills. They force us to reflect on our strengths and weaknesses and to review our behaviours and actions, not only when we achieve success but also when we fail.

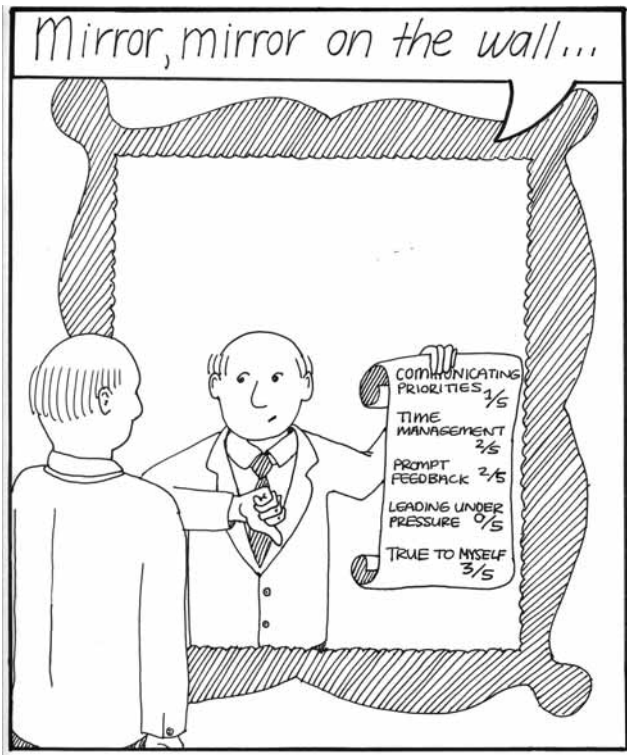
So what can a principal do, to get good honest feedback about his or her performance? Robert Kaplan, in an article in the *Harvard Business Review*¹, proposes that you talk to the person that you see in the mirror. As Kaplan puts it: "There comes a time in your career when the best way to figure out how you're doing is to step back and ask yourself a few questions". He goes on to note that "Having all the answers is less important than knowing what to ask."

All leaders, no matter how good, have a time in their career when they struggle and perhaps lose focus. These are usually the times when they are most in need of help but are also the times when the staff and colleagues are least likely to provide the kind of frank feedback that is needed. This is because almost inevitably these will be times of stress for the leader, for his staff and for the school or organisation. It is at these times that you need to go to your mirror for a candid and thorough interrogation of your performance. Kaplan recommends that leaders question their performance in the following seven areas:

Vision and priorities

Questions you might ask yourself include:

- How successful have I been at communicating my vision for the school to the staff, parents and pupils? (The question assumes that the vision that you wish to communicate represents not only your own personal vision for the school but a vision that



has been embraced by the wider school community).

- Do staff members know the key priority areas they must focus on in order to achieve this vision?
- Could all staff, if asked, identify and articulate the school's vision and priorities?

Managing time

- Does the way in which I use my time match my priorities?
- Are staff members focusing their time and effort on the identified priorities?

Feedback

- Do I provide staff, particularly those with whom I work most closely, with direct feedback in a way that will help them improve their performance?
- Is my relationship with those with whom I work most closely such that they will tell me the things that I need to hear but which I may not like to hear?

Succession planning

- Have I worked at developing the knowledge and skills of the most senior member(s) of my

management team to the extent that they can act on my behalf and/or succeed me?

- Are members of staff, particularly members of the Senior Management Team, provided with assignments (management responsibilities) which are sufficiently challenging to provide them with the scope they need to grow and develop their leadership and management skills?
- Do I delegate sufficiently or have I become a decision-making bottleneck?

Evaluation and alignment

- Have I and my school kept sufficiently abreast of local, national and international developments in education?
- If I could re-organise the school from scratch, but with the same constraints as it faces at present, how would I organise it differently?
- Should I set up a sub-committee of more junior members of staff to make recommendations to me on how things could be done differently?

Leading under pressure

- What types of events create pressure/ stress for me?
- How do I behave under pressure?
- What signals do my responses to pressure send to my staff?
- Do these signals help or hinder the effective running of the school?

* Staying true to myself

- Am I comfortable with my leadership style and does it reflect the real me?
- Am I sufficiently assertive?
- Am I too politically correct when it may not be in the best interests of my school?
- Do I refrain from speaking my mind about school/ education-related issues in circumstances where I feel this may jeopardise my future career prospects and/or employment benefits?

These represent just a sample of the kinds of questions that one should ask oneself from time to time as a principal. The value of these questions is that they encourage honest reflection and that they make you sit back and take a more global view of your performance and the performance of your school. The answers are not always nice to hear but it is the answers that make you most uncomfortable that are probably the most useful - because it is from them that you learn greater self-awareness and with self-awareness comes the ability to

manage your behaviour, your priorities and your performance.

Talking to the man in the mirror is not something that needs to be done every week or even every month. It would certainly be helpful to do it once a term, while once a year would seem to be the minimum requirement. Make it something to reflect on as you begin your planning for the year ahead.

References

¹ Kaplan, R.S. *What to Ask the Person in the Mirror*. Harvard Business Review On Point: Habits of Highly Effective Managers, 2nd Edition. Product 1728.

Robert Kaplan is the Thomas S. Murphy Senior Lecturer of Business Administration at Harvard Business School in Boston and former vice chairman of the Goldman Sachs Group.

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Leadership lessons

ignites the passion of its people. What else can you say? He got it right for each of the three focus areas.

Technology accelerators

Good-to-great organisations look at new and innovative ways of using technology to enhance performance. One thing stands out here, the use of Dr Sherylle Calder a “visual awareness specialist”. It is her work apparently that helped players like Bryan Habana and Fourie du Preez see gaps and steal intercepts that lead to tries. Can we count the appointment of Eddy Jones as a technological innovation?

A culture of discipline

These best organisations consistently demonstrate discipline in three areas: disciplined people, disciplined thought and disciplined action. Establishing this level of discipline provides the space for individuals to flourish and demonstrate their creative flair without the need for excessive controls. Can you remember there was a time when the yellow carding of players like Schalk Burger and Butch James was a regular feature of their play and when Springboks lost games through penalties conceded as a result of ill-discipline on defence in their own half? It did not happen in this world cup. Our defence was impeccable, not only because it was so tight, but because it was so disciplined.

Management

Reviewing the school year

Begin your planning for 2008 by reviewing the year that is past. Use this as an opportunity for you and your management team to learn from both your successes and your failures.

Before one starts planning for the new school year it is always a good idea to undertake a thorough review of the current year to see what one can learn from it. This is the classic systems approach of learning organisations. The idea is that you identify obstacles or problem areas, thoroughly review and analyse the causes of the problems, and based on your analysis, devise alternative strategies which will clear the obstacle and/or fix the problems. It is the process that good organisations and well-managed schools use all the time to ensure that their operational systems and processes are constantly improving. This kind of a review should also be undertaken after every major event, particularly where there have been obvious shortcomings or dysfunctions.

Because schools are such people-intensive organisations, virtually every operational process will include significant human input. The challenge that this creates - and it is perhaps the biggest challenge to the ultimate success of any review of the school's operational effectiveness - is that in identifying problems areas you will inevitably link individuals and groups to those functions. This has the potential of making these individuals defensive and resentful, something that needs to be avoided if problem areas are to be addressed, unless the process is handled sensitively. The key is to focus on the problem and process and not on the people. If the problem is a behavioural one, then the focus must be on the specifics of the behaviour and not on the personality of the person involved.

There are a number of ways in which you can approach a review of the school year. Perhaps the simplest and most obvious way is to draw up a list of all the events/processes of the year and for the principal and his/her senior management team to systematically work through this looking at alternatives and solutions.

A more thorough and inclusive approach is to distribute a similar list to all member of staff with the request that they identify those items that were problematic and suggest ways in which the problems they have identified can be resolved. An example of this kind of a list is provided on the adjacent page. The key to the success of this process is the insistence that a constructive solution be proposed for every item that is identified as being problematic. The advantage of a model of this kind is that it provides three kinds of useful information:

1 A list of items that the staff considers to be problematic.

2 A quantifiable measure of the extent to which the staff as a whole perceived these items to be problematic.

The number of staff members who have identified a specific item can be counted. The principal or SMT may consider a specific item to be trivial or of little consequence to the operational effectiveness of the school; but if all staff have identified it as being problematic then it is worth fixing just for the goodwill that this may generate. If only one person identifies an item as being problematic then the problem may well lie with that individual or his or her understanding of the item. In all instances it is worth talking to the individual concerned, even if for no other reason than to show that you have noted his or her concern.

3 A list of potential solutions.

Forcing people to provide solutions to problems helps cut out the whinge factor. It also makes them think more carefully about the reason they have identified the problem and the factors and events that may have created it. Solving the problem by incorporating the solutions provided by staff members will also increase the extent to which staff will buy in to any solution that is proposed.

There is one important caution about this approach: Do not include items on your list that you are unwilling to change. As an example, if you are not prepared to change the time when the mid-year examinations are written do not include this as an item on your list as by doing so you will simply be cutting a rod to beat your own back. It is also important to decide from the start how the lists will be completed. If you are trying to gather information from the entire staff, it is best that they complete the list individually without consulting one another. The idea is to avoid creating lobby groups that press for changes to things that disenchant them.

Alternatively, you can prepare lists of items which are of relevance for specific groups within the school - groups such as subject heads, subject teams or sports coaches. In this case it may be of use to have the group identify the problem areas that affect them in their specific area of responsibility and to suggest solutions to these. The caution remains, however, that expectations for change should not be raised if you are not prepared to implement the suggestions and recommendations that may be provided.

When the lists are returned you need to do the following:

- Collate the responses into a single list which includes all the items that have been identified as being problematic and for which solutions have been provided. Do not count any item which has been marked as being problematic if a solution or workable alternative has not been provided.
- Quantify the responses. I.e. count the number of times each item has been identified as being problematic
- Sort the list in terms of the number of times each item as been identified. The item at the top of the list should therefore be the one which has been identified most frequently. It is a good idea at this point to publish the list on the staffroom noticeboard so that staff is aware of which items have been identified, and as confirmation that you are serious about dealing with their responses.
- Establish the processes needed to provide appropriate and acceptable solutions to the problems. One option is simply to list the 10 most commonly identified problems on the agenda of the Senior Management Team and to work through them one by one until suitable solutions and/or alternative strategies have been devised for each.

Another is to delegate the task of developing solutions to task teams set up especially for this purpose. This allows you to deploy people to these tasks teams who have a special interest in the problem and/or who may have special skills or knowledge which may be of relevance to dealing with the problem. As an example, a problem related to the collation of marks or the storage of portfolios could be handled by a team headed by the school's academic head and which includes some or all subject heads. A problem of pupil truancy or misbehaviour could be headed by the HOD responsible for pupil pastoral care, assisted by a deputy and three post level 1 teachers nominated by the staff and/ or the teacher counsellor if the school has such a person. If you choose to go the task team route it is important that the scope of its responsibilities be very clearly defined and that these prescriptions be given to the team leader in writing. What you do not want to happen is for a task team to produce an elaborate model for change which is then widely discussed in the staffroom, something that can happen very easily, before the principal and Senior Management Team have had a chance to interrogate its implications. If this happens there is a very real chance that the principal and Senior Management Team may find themselves at odds with their staff when they try to reject what their experience tells them are unworkable solutions to identified problems.

A third but more time-consuming approach is to undertake a SWOT analysis either with the entire staff

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Management and organisational review of the year

Listed below are the main activities of the school year. Please place an x in the box of any which you experienced as being problematic and in the space provided indicate the practical steps that could be taken next year to remedy the situation.

Programmes of events

- Programme for the first day of the school year (teachers)
- Programme for the second day of the school year (teachers)
- Programme for the first day of the school year (pupils)
- Programme for the first week of the school year (pupils)

Pupil records

- Class lists
- Grade lists
- Pupil personal record cards
- Subject mark lists
- Pupil absentee records

Printing and photocopying

- Availability of photocopying for short runs (between 1 and 10 copies)
- Availability of photocopying and printing for longer runs (11 to 100 copies)
- Printing and photocopying of tests and examinations

Communication

- Use of the staffroom noticeboard
- Communication about coming events
- Communication at staff meetings
- Communication about meeting dates and times

Pupil pastoral and disciplinary issues

- Pupil late-coming at the start of the school day
- Pupil late-coming to lessons
- Pupil truancy
- Pupil absenteeism

Staff issues

- Staff access to computers
- Staffroom tidiness and cleanliness
- Staff late-coming

Preparing for the NSC in 2008

Questionnaire for schools

With the approach of the first National Senior Certificate examinations in 2008 *SM&L* would like to provide secondary schools with an opportunity to share the strategies they are using and/or plan to use in 2008 to make sure that their pupils are well prepared for these important external examinations.

To help us in this task we are asking principals and subject heads to complete this questionnaire and to return it to *SM&L* before the close of the school year. We will then collate and summarise this information and publish it in the first 2008 edition of *SM&L*.

We hope that our readers will support this initiative and believe that this co-operative can have significant benefits for schools as they prepare this initial Grade 12 group for the first National Senior Certificate examinations in 2008. All participating schools will be acknowledged. We would particularly like to thank Westerford High, Bergvliet High and Alexander Road High for their valuable feedback on the initial draft of the questionnaire. Alexander Road was especially helpful and has already provided *SM&L* with a comprehensive response to it.

Please provide the following information in addition to the responses to the questions listed.

The Name of the school:

Name of principal:

Projected number of Gr 12s in 2008:

Projected number of Gr 12 class groups in 2008:

To be completed by the principal or academic head

School-wide challenges related to the introduction of the Curriculum in 2006

1 List the most significant challenges/ problems faced by the school since the introduction of the NCS in Gr. 10 in 2006 under the following headings:

- 1.1 Administrative/logistic challenges:
- 1.2 Staffing challenges:
- 1.3 Resource challenges (e.g. textbooks and other learning and teaching resource materials) challenges:
- 1.4 Curriculum/ assessment challenges:

2 Steps that the school has taken to address these challenges:

List any steps that the school has taken to address these challenges and prepare for the NSC in 2008. Include, where applicable, staff professional development activities that your staff may have been involved in and indicate whether these have been in-house activities or have been organised by the DoE, PED or outside agencies.

To be completed by Subject Heads

Please provide the name of the Subject and of the Subject Head in each instance.

Subject specific challenges related to the introduction of the NCS in 2006

1 List the most significant challenges/ problems faced by you and your subject team since the introduction of the NCS in Gr. 10 in 2006 under the following headings:

- 1.1 Administrative/logistic challenges:
- 1.2 Staff challenges (those things that you and members of you subject team have found to be problematic in terms of your classroom teaching):
- 1.3 Resource challenges (e.g. textbooks and other learning and teaching resource materials) challenges:
- 1.4 Curriculum challenges:
- 1.5 Assessment challenges:

2. Steps that you and your subject team have taken to address these challenges:

List any steps that you and your subject team have taken to address these challenges. Include, where applicable, professional development activities such as workshops and seminars that you and members of you subject team have attended and indicate whether these have been in-house activities or have been organised by the DoE, PED or outside agencies.

3 What do you see as the biggest challenges facing you and your subject team in preparing your 2008 Gr 12 class for the National Senior Certificate examinations?

4 How do you and your subject team plan to address these challenges? Please list these under the following headings:

- 4.1 Planning strategies (Steps you are taking to manage the teaching and assessment of the Gr 12 curriculum):
- 4.2 Professional development strategies (Steps you are taking to make sure that you and the members of you subject team have the necessary knowledge and skills to teach the curriculum)
- 4.3 Other (Any other steps that you and members of your subject team may be taking to ensure that you do the best for your Gr 12 pupils.)

5 Any other comments and/or suggestions related to the preparation of Gr 12 pupils in your subject in 2008.

Thank you

Managing Editor



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National President Edie Jacobs with one of the delegates



SM&L Managing Editor Alan Clarke with Nkhangweni Nemuddzivhadi, Principal of Thengwe Secondary School

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