School Leadership and Student Outcomes: Identifying What Works and Why

Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration [BES]

Viviane Robinson, Margie Hohepa, and Claire Lloyd
The University of Auckland

Chapter 8
This report is one of a series of best evidence synthesis iterations (BESs) commissioned by the Ministry of Education. The Iterative Best Evidence Synthesis Programme is seeking to support collaborative knowledge building and use across policy, research, and practice in education. This series of syntheses draws together bodies of research evidence to explain what works and why to improve valued education outcomes and to make a bigger difference for the education of all our children and young people. Each synthesis celebrates the work of educators and the inquiry processes that enable educators and researchers to bring about sustainable improvements in education. Each is part of an iterative process that anticipates future research and development informing educational practice.

Earlier BESs have focused on effective teaching and professional learning in schools and on the impact of family and community influences on educational outcomes. This School Leadership and Student Outcomes BES will prove a crucial support for school leaders as they address our shared challenge of preparing all our children for the future.

The International Academy of Education has commissioned summaries of the recent BESs developed by the Ministry of Education. While the full reports provide the explanations and vignettes that are needed to support educational change, these short summaries will also be a convenient help for leaders. They will be available on the International Academy of Education website www.iaoed.org and on the UNESCO website http://unesdoc.unesco.org. The first of these summaries to be published is:


Further information is available at www.educationcounts.govt.nz/goto/BES, and feedback is welcome at best.evidence@minedu.govt.nz

Published by the Ministry of Education, Box 1666, Wellington, New Zealand 6140
www.minedu.govt.nz

Copyright © Crown 2009

Redacted Version 2015

All rights reserved. Enquiries should be made to the publisher.

New Zealand educators and educational leaders can order a hard copy of this publication from orders@thechair.minedu.govt.nz

While recognising that the development of a best evidence synthesis is a collaborative undertaking based on scoping and national guidelines developed by the New Zealand Ministry of Education and incorporating contributions from many others with relevant expertise, Viviane Robinson, Margie Hohepa, and Claire Lloyd assert their moral right to be recognised as the authors of this work.

Dewey number 371.2
ISBN 978 0 7903 3265 9
Item number 33265
PDF ISBN 978 0 7903 3266 6
8. The knowledge, skills, and dispositions involved in effective educational leadership

The purpose of this chapter is to identify the leadership knowledge, skills, and dispositions (KSDs) that make a difference to student outcomes in both Māori- and English-medium classrooms and schools.

There are two possible evidence-based approaches to identifying the KSDs that underpin effective leadership, where effectiveness is measured in terms of impact on students. The first is to search for studies that have directly tested the relationship between selected KSDs and student outcomes. This is the familiar, forward mapping strategy. As we were able to find very few studies relating leadership practices to student outcomes, it was predictable that the evidence base on the relationship between KSDs and student outcomes would be even smaller. The second approach is to extend the backward mapping strategy by asking what knowledge, skills, and dispositions leadership needs to engage in the practices associated with the dimensions summarised in Figure 27. This second approach enables us to draw on studies that link particular leadership capabilities with one or more of the dimensions, even if the studies concerned do not include student outcome data. In this way, we can make tentative links between leadership knowledge, skills, and dispositions and student outcomes. We have used both forward and backward mapping approaches in this chapter, though the latter has supplied the majority of our evidence.

8.1 Theoretical explanations of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions

Lists of leadership knowledge, skills, and dispositions are helpful only if accompanied by discussion of the theory that helps explain why and how each is important. Take problem solving, for example. When we describe research that suggests problem-solving skills are important, we need to explain what we mean by problem solving and why this skill is important for effective school leadership. In short, our aim is not only to identify which skills, knowledge, and dispositions are important but also to provide the theory that explains how they work. Recent evidence shows that it is this combination of practical insight (what works) and underpinning theory (why it works) that changes professional practice in ways that make a difference for students.

This approach to theory is very different from that traditionally found in courses in educational leadership and administration. These typically present learners with a range of leadership theories and then ask them to apply them to particular contexts. Instead, we start with sets of powerful leadership practices (dimensions) and then explicate the theory and principles that support both a deep understanding of those practices and the ability to adapt them to a range of contexts.

In our discussion of the dimensions in chapters 5, 6, and 7, we provide general guidance about the types of leadership activity that are most likely to deliver improved student outcomes; that is, what leaders should focus on. In this chapter, we address the how question that is implicit in the dimensions. As explained in section 3.3, Taking account of context (page 71), we cannot

---

424 We use the term 'educational leadership' rather than 'educational leaders' because our concern is to identify effective educational leadership practices rather than effective educational leaders.

provide detailed, situation-specific answers to this question. Rather, we focus on the KSDs, which enable leaders to figure out how to apply the different dimensions in their own schools.

## 8.2 Diverse skill sets and knowledge bases underpin each dimension

We introduce our approach to the identification of leadership KSDs by discussing Table 15, which summarises our analysis of the KSDs that underpin Dimension 1: Establishing goals and expectations. While not exhaustive, this analysis nevertheless indicates the range of knowledge and skills involved in just one leadership dimension:

(i) Leaders need to be able to explain to staff why they want to set goals and how they believe obstacles can be overcome. This requires some knowledge of goal-setting theory and the empirical evidence for the value of goal setting (see Dimension A: Setting educational goals, page 106).

(ii) Social psychological theory and research on goal setting tells leaders how to set goals but says nothing about which goals to set. The knowledge needed to answer this question is educational; it relates to national curricula and overarching philosophies, learners, how disciplines are structured, and pedagogical content knowledge. Since the New Zealand curriculum requires community input into school curriculum design, it is also important to know what the community values and why.

(iii) The evidence on goal setting showed that teachers in high-performing schools reported greater clarity and consensus concerning school goals than those in otherwise similar, low-performing schools. This suggests that the ability to prioritise, resolve conflicts, and settle on clear, specific goals is very important for the purposes of gaining commitment to goals.

### Table 15. The knowledge, skills, and dispositions embedded in the goal-setting dimension

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension name</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Establishing goals and expectations</td>
<td>Forward mapping dimension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Setting educational goals</td>
<td>Backward mapping dimension</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge, skills, and dispositions required for effective goal setting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i) How to set goals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


(ii) What to set as a goal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ability to make decisions about the relative importance of various learning outcomes; that is, what students will learn, in the light of:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• knowledge of what is valued in the national curriculum and in relevant overarching philosophies (for example, the special character of integrated schools, the philosophy of kura kaupapa Māori operating in accordance with Te Aho Matua);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• knowledge of what is valued by the local community;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• knowledge of what your students currently know in relation to a set of valued learning outcomes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ability to envisage and expect achievement of more challenging goals:

| • knowledge of how to sequence learning outcomes (social and academic learning progressions); |
| • knowledge of the conceptual structure of the relevant disciplines/competencies so that learning outcomes can be framed in ways that induct students into those disciplines or competencies (for example, mathematics, critical thinking). |

(iii) How to gain goal commitment

| Explain/demonstrate how the alternative, more challenging, learning outcomes are credible and attainable. |
| Identify/listen to barriers to goal attainment and strategise how to overcome them. |
| Gain sufficient agreement about goals to ensure a coordinated teaching approach. |
| Clearly communicate the agreed goals and provide non-defensive explanations for their prioritisation. |
| Lead the teacher learning that is necessary to help teachers meet the goals. |

This brief analysis of the KSDs for goal setting is indicative of the scope, depth, and diversity of the knowledge bases and skill sets needed for effective school leadership. If we now multiply it by the remaining dimensions, we have a powerful argument for focusing on distributed rather than positional leadership, because the reality is that the required expertise is far greater than could be acquired by any one head of faculty or department, assistant or deputy principal, or principal. It is crucial, therefore, that this chapter is not read as a statement of the competencies required by any one person. Rather, it is a statement of the total leadership capacity that needs to be available to every New Zealand school. The challenge is to make this breadth and depth of expertise available to all schools—in the form of smart tools and knowledgeable people, sourced from within or outside the school. This is a particular concern for teaching principals, who may have limited access to the range of expertise implied by the leadership dimensions we have identified.

Appendix 8.1 comprises an analysis of the KSDs for all eight dimensions. It reveals considerable overlap. For example, pedagogical content knowledge and relationship skills are associated with nearly every dimension. These overlaps have made it possible for us to organise the remainder of the chapter around the common KSDs instead of repeating material under multiple dimensions. The appendix can be used to cross reference the KSDs against the various dimensions.

It is important to restate the fact that the KSDs listed in Appendix 8.1 are, on the whole, derived from a logical analysis of the leadership dimensions. They are not derived from empirical research showing that leaders with more of a particular knowledge, skill, or disposition are more likely to engage in the practices described by the dimensions. Smylie and Bennett, writing about the state of research on leadership training, say:

We contend that knowledge of effective leadership practices is not the same thing as knowledge of the capacities required for enactment. Our understanding of effective school
leadership practice has grown tremendously in recent years ... However, our understanding of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required for school leaders to be effective is much less well developed428.

8.3 An introduction to four sets of knowledge, skills, and dispositions

Figure 27 provides an overview of this chapter, showing the KSDs (centre) that are the focus of the remaining sections and the dimensions to which they relate.

The following four sections on pedagogically informed decision making, problem solving, relational trust, and open-to-learning conversations are all based on our earlier analysis of the dimensions of effective leadership. In order to maintain a holistic, practice-based perspective, we have avoided trying to draw firm distinctions between what counts as knowledge, skills, or dispositions. Instead, we have tried to capture the complex, overlapping, and embedded nature of each of the four KSDs—each requires seamless integration of knowledge, skills, and dispositions.

It is likely that additional KSDs may also be important for school leadership. But the four that we have named do have an evidence base, and they are broad enough to subsume many of the qualities that are generally believed to be important for successful school leadership. We refrain from stating which are most important, because the task-embedded nature of leadership means that different emphases are required for different tasks.

8.3.1 Ensure administrative decisions are informed by knowledge about effective pedagogy

The evidence reviewed so far shows how important it is that school leaders get directly involved with their staff in improving teaching and learning, and in the teacher learning on which the achieving of agreed goals depends. But what do leaders need to know to get productively involved? First, they need a working knowledge of how students learn and of the research evidence on quality teaching, where quality is judged by impact on student outcomes. Second (and even more importantly), they need to know how to use this knowledge to make administrative decisions that both support and require effective teaching and learning. In short, leaders need not only to be knowledgeable about pedagogy, curriculum, and assessment, but also to be skilled in using this knowledge to make pedagogically sound administrative decisions in areas such as student grouping, reporting to parents, teacher appraisal, and homework.

One of the goals of the BES Programme is to make evidence about effective pedagogy accessible to practitioners. In Appendix 8.2, we provide a summary of the main findings from the Quality Teaching for Diverse Students in Schooling BES and subsequent BESs. This appendix should prove a useful resource for school leaders wanting to update their pedagogical knowledge so that it can better inform their administrative decision making. It could also be used for teacher professional development and discussion.

In Chapter 5, we discussed a study (page 101) that showed that principals in high-achieving primary schools were more likely to be nominated by their staff as sources of advice about teaching than the principals in otherwise similar, lower-achieving schools. The authors suggest that pedagogical knowledge can be an important source of principal influence on teachers. Box 21 illustrates knowledge-based influence at work in a New Zealand school.

Box 21. Decision making based on sound knowledge wins respect

The principal of a South Auckland primary school serving a mainly Pasifika community did a thorough investigation of the effectiveness of a parent reading programme before deciding with her senior management team to trial it in the school. She researched the programme, its suitability for the school community, and its alignment with the school’s current reading programme before discussing it with her associate and deputy principals. Knowing that she did not make decisions ‘on a whim’ gave these colleagues great confidence in their principal:

“Liz wouldn’t waste our time … that is the trust we have … we know she would have researched things … She would have thought about it … seen the value.”

Most school leaders sincerely believe that they make administrative decisions that are in the best interests of students. But in this section, we offer a detailed, research-based account that reveals the depth of pedagogical understanding that may be required to discriminate between pedagogically sound and unsound administrative decisions. In addition, we explain how different pedagogical goals require different types of pedagogical knowledge. For example, what leaders need to know to help teachers lift the computational fluency of students is very different from what they need to know if the goal is greater understanding of maths concepts.

---

429 The Iterative Best Evidence Synthesis Programme provides a number of resources that draw together the evidence on quality teaching from New Zealand and international studies. www.educationcounts.govt.nz/goto/BES


expressed as improved problem solving. As we will see, different pedagogical purposes also require different types of administrative practice.

The evidence on which this discussion draws comes from a US research and development programme in which primary and secondary principals from schools engaged in a national mathematics improvement project attended workshops designed to enhance their pedagogical leadership. The research programme addressed the question, “What should school administrators know and be able to do to develop maths instruction where children become skilled in mathematical reasoning in addition to mathematical computation and procedures?”

The researchers conducted a series of school-based observations of the five participating principals, documenting how their knowledge of mathematics and the way it was learned shaped their classroom observations. All were committed to a constructivist approach to the learning and teaching of mathematics and were in various stages of determining what this meant for their administrative practice. Table 16 summarises how the leaders’ understandings shaped what they observed and what they discussed with the teacher. While this research focused on principals, its findings are equally applicable to maths curriculum leaders and heads of department.

Table 16. The relationship between leaders’ understanding of maths pedagogy and their conduct of classroom observations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of leader’s pedagogical understanding</th>
<th>Implications for leader’s conduct of classroom observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Behaviourist pedagogy</td>
<td>Leader focuses on the observable features of the lesson; for example, notes that the teacher begins with a short review and gives clear and detailed instructions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constructivist pedagogy—knowledge of surface features only</td>
<td>Leader notices and gives teacher feedback on the observable aspects of constructivist pedagogy; for example, does teacher ask sufficient open-ended questions? Do they check for a variety of answers? Leader is not able to engage with teacher concerning the intellectual content of lesson; for example, the validity and sophistication of students’ mathematical thinking and how the teacher is promoting that thinking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constructivist pedagogy—knowledge of deeper features</td>
<td>Leader observes and evaluates how well the teacher is extending the students’ mathematical reasoning. This requires attending to and recording the whole teacher–student exchange to judge how well the teacher’s questions connect with the students’ reasoning. To make such judgments, the leader observer must think through the relevant mathematical ideas.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first row describes a principal who, although committed to a constructivist view of how students learn to reason mathematically, did not understand it well enough to judge how the teacher supported such learning. His classroom observations were restricted to the teacher’s behaviours and did not focus on the mathematical understandings of either the student or the teacher.


433 ibid.

434 The authors define constructivism as “the idea that children actively construct mathematical knowledge ... through interaction with the social and physical environment and through the extension and reorganisation of their own mental constructs.” ibid., p. 32. For an excellent, accessible, evidence-based, New Zealand resource on a constructivist view of student learning, see Nuthall, G. (2007). *The hidden lives of learners.* Wellington: NZCER.
The second row describes a principal who, having progressed to a surface-level understanding of constructivist pedagogy, focused on the observable aspects of constructivist teaching. This leader did not have enough mathematical knowledge to engage with teachers about how they were promoting the mathematical reasoning and conceptual understanding of their students.

The third row describes a principal whose deeper knowledge of constructivist pedagogy and mathematics enabled her to evaluate the extent to which the teacher’s questions were linked to and extended the students’ mathematical understandings. Her feedback went beyond generic teaching activity and into discussion of the mathematical understandings of teacher and students. Her knowledge of constructivist pedagogy also led her to change her observation method. She recognised that, by using a checklist of teacher behaviours, she could inadvertently be encouraging unresponsive teaching because she was not attending to how the teacher was responding to student thinking. Using a more narrative form of recording, she found that she could focus better on how the teacher’s activity was linked to her students’ understandings and misunderstandings.

Nelson and Sassi discuss several other ways in which shifts in what they call ‘leadership content knowledge’ lead to changed administrative practice. As one principal learned more about maths and maths pedagogy, he changed the process by which textbooks were selected. Pragmatic considerations (such as cost, coverage of content, ease of use for teachers, and attractiveness to students) gave way to one overriding consideration: ‘What kinds of mathematical thinkers are produced by this text?’ This key consideration meant that those involved in selecting a new textbook had to discuss the mathematical ideas in prospective texts. The principal’s mathematical and pedagogical content knowledge enabled him to make text selection a mathematical as well as an administrative decision; write a series of questions to ensure that the selection committee considered the mathematics being promoted in the various alternatives; and notice when the committee was lending too much weight to practical, rather than mathematical, considerations.

Another example of leadership content knowledge shaping administrative practice concerns a series of staff meetings in which teachers discussed how students should be grouped for mathematics. The principal in this situation had a growing knowledge of mathematics and mathematical pedagogy and a strong commitment to equity. As a result, he was able to lead his staff to think seriously about grouping in terms of its implications for pedagogy and equity. This decision-making process is the subject of Case 3.

Nelson and Sassi describe how some of the principals involved in their research began to see connections between the development of mathematical reasoning and the wider intellectual culture of their schools: if students develop the capacity to reason mathematically by engaging with alternative solution paths, then they and their teachers need to listen deeply to one another. Probing each others’ ideas takes time. This has implications for the pace of classroom dialogue and the time devoted to developing key concepts. Norms of intellectual risk taking also need to be established so that the classroom becomes a place where students expose their own ideas to scrutiny and engage with the ideas of others.

In summary, Nelson and Sassi have shown how leaders with a conceptual understanding of (i) mathematics and (ii) how students become mathematical thinkers were able to talk directly with teachers about their approaches to maths teaching and the mathematical understandings of their students. The same knowledge enabled them to talk more confidently with parents about how their children learned mathematics and what teachers were doing to support that learning. Leaders who had strong pedagogical content knowledge were able to recognise that teaching involved more than didactic skills or general facilitation of student discussion. They could use their pedagogical knowledge to evaluate and discuss a teacher’s attempt to deepen a

---

435 Nelson & Sassi (2005), op. cit.
child’s mathematical understanding. Some used their growing knowledge of mathematics and maths pedagogy, together with what they already knew about creating professional community and strengthening intellectual culture, to change their schools in ways that supported the improvement project’s overarching goal of deeper mathematical reasoning and understanding. With such knowledge, leaders were no longer restricted to managing the organisational processes around teaching—they could work directly with teachers to improve it.

This innovative research and development programme raises a number of questions about the scope and depth of curriculum and pedagogical knowledge needed to lead pedagogical improvement across the curriculum. Can leaders whose mathematical content knowledge is weak not lead pedagogical improvement in maths? What are the implications for principals of large schools, who delegate improvement of maths teaching to a head of department or faculty? Is it realistic to expect a principal to be an expert across several curriculum areas?

There are few research-based answers to these important questions. Stein and Nelson, however, offer some tentative advice. First, they argue that principals need in-depth and up-to-date knowledge of at least one curriculum area. By in-depth knowledge they mean (i) knowledge of the subject matter (including understanding of the rules of evidence, modes of inquiry, and key concepts) and (ii) pedagogical content knowledge (comprising a detailed understanding of how students develop knowledge of the subject and how to present content in ways that promote their learning). If principals have depth of knowledge in one curriculum area, they will appreciate the depth of knowledge required to lead improvement of teaching and learning in the others.

Second, Stein and Nelson argue for developing and recruiting staff to grow the fund of pedagogical expertise available to the school. The knowledge base concerning effective teaching for diverse learners is now so extensive and complex, it cannot possibly be mastered by one person. Much of the leadership and expertise described in the New Zealand research reviewed for this synthesis has come not from principals, but from external facilitators working in partnership with school curriculum leaders. We have already recognised the importance of recruiting expertise from outside the school (see page 112–113), but this raises another question: how much knowledge does a principal need to recruit appropriate expertise and evaluate the work of those who share responsibility for leading pedagogical improvement?

Stein and Nelson propose that principals who have in-depth knowledge of at least one curriculum area are in a much better position (than those without such knowledge) to recruit, support, and evaluate pedagogical leadership in their non-specialist areas. Their specialist knowledge, while often not directly transferable to other learning areas, will indicate the kinds of expertise to look for and the kinds of evidence that will help them recognise it.

Leaders need opportunities to deepen and update their knowledge of teaching and learning and to discuss the shifts in school culture and teaching culture that will support the achievement of valued outcomes. As Spillane and Seashore Louis note:

> Without an understanding of the knowledge necessary for teachers to teach well—content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, content-specific pedagogical knowledge, curricular knowledge and knowledge of learners—school leaders will be unable to perform essential school improvement functions such as monitoring instruction and supporting teacher development (p. 97).

Principals and heads of curriculum areas who do not understand constructivism, for example, may inadvertently create administrative procedures (such as classroom observation checklists) that are in conflict with the kinds of teaching needed to achieve valued outcomes.
There is evidence from a US study\textsuperscript{440} of primary schools involved in whole-school reform initiatives that professional development that focuses on instructional leadership can increase the levels of such leadership in schools. The correlation was particularly strong where the professional development challenged leaders to reflect upon their current practice. Also, leaders whose university studies had included more courses on literacy and numeracy engaged in more pedagogical leadership than those who had taken fewer such courses\textsuperscript{441}. The suggestion is, therefore, that pedagogical leadership can be strengthened by professional development courses and qualifications that specifically teach the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that underpin it.

The findings of chapters 4–7 all pointed to the fact that the more pedagogically focused leadership is, the stronger will be its indirect impact on valued student outcomes. This section on pedagogically informed administrative decision making has revealed just a little of what is involved in increasing this type of leadership. Quantity and quality are both issues. Increased pedagogical leadership that involves, for example, more classroom observations that merely evaluate teachers' conformity to a behavioural checklist will do nothing to create the conditions that they need to help their students develop such competencies as critical thinking or problem solving. The challenge is to ensure that increased pedagogical leadership is informed by sound pedagogical thinking.

8.3.2 Analyse and solve complex problems

Appendix 8.1 lists many of the skills, types of knowledge, and dispositions that are relevant to effective school leadership. Yet there is at least one respect in which it is incomplete. Take, for example, the task ‘Understands and uses student data to collaboratively diagnose and resolve teaching problems and to set future goals’ (see page 266, under Dimension 3: Planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching and the curriculum). Leaders who have mastered the knowledge and skills required for collaborative, evidence-based teaching improvement may still be unprepared to lead such work in their own schools because they are unable to overcome the challenges that their own particular contexts present.

These challenges might include lack of a good infrastructure for collecting and recording student data and staff concern about how assessment information will be used. In such situations, the question is how to strengthen evidence-based assessment practices in conditions that are not altogether favourable for the achievement of this goal. For each task listed in Appendix 8.1, the same is true: it must be accomplished in a manner that takes local conditions fully into account. This will involve a problem-solving process, which is why we view problem solving as central to all leadership dimensions.

The most important part of problem solving is specifying the problem’s constraints—the things that must to be taken into account when coming up with an adequate solution. The more clearly the constraints are specified, the easier it is to identify the best possible solution. Constraints come in many guises. These include values and beliefs, regulatory requirements, material conditions (such as the financial and human resources available), and school practices with which any proposed solution must articulate. By specifying the constraints, one is interpreting or formulating the problem.

For an illustration, we return to the task of developing collaborative, evidence-based teaching practice. Imagine that a principal has led a discussion on the need to strengthen the collaborative use and reporting of assessment information. The left-hand column of Table 17 is a summary of issues raised by staff in preliminary discussions on the type of collective assessment practice they wish to develop. The right-hand column lists the constraints that are implied by their


\textsuperscript{441} This variable was defined as the number of post-secondary courses the leader reports having taken in English or a related language arts field, methods of teaching literacy, mathematics, and methods of teaching mathematics. \textit{ibid.}, p. 371.
comments. For example, the comment ‘In this political climate the information will be used to further bash teachers’ implies that to be acceptable, a solution must protect teachers from misuse of test information. Those who feel this to be a genuine constraint may not accept any form of collective assessment practice if they believe the risk of misuse cannot be reduced to an acceptable level. As the list of constraints shows, there is much more to solving this problem than mastering the knowledge and skills associated with collective interpretation and use of assessment data.

Table 17. A hypothetical staff discusses constraints on collective assessment practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff comments</th>
<th>Implied constraints</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘The Board will misinterpret the information.’</td>
<td>Accuracy of interpretation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘It must be useful for my teaching.’</td>
<td>Usefulness to classroom teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘As director of curriculum, I need to know whether our programmes are effective.’</td>
<td>Usefulness for programme evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘We are legally required to inform the Board and the government.’</td>
<td>Accountability to external stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘In this political climate the information will be used to further bash teachers.’</td>
<td>Need to protect teachers from misuse of information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘It must be computerised to be manageable.’</td>
<td>Efficiency</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Problems are solved by discovering or designing practices that adequately take account of the constraints. For our hypothetical scenario, this will involve developing procedures that provide reliable information, have utility for both classroom teaching and programme evaluation, satisfy external accountabilities, protect teachers from possible misuse of information, and are efficient. It is obvious that there is tension between the different constraints. Indeed, it could be argued that they are irreconcilable. Achievement data that can be easily aggregated and reported to external stakeholders may tell teachers that improvement is needed but provide little diagnostic information about student difficulties. If more detailed diagnostic data are collected, this will address the constraint that data must be useful for classroom teachers but may unacceptably violate the requirement for efficiency. While this example may seem extreme, it is precisely this kind of tension between competing constraints that makes so many educational problems intractable and subject to repeated reform attempts.

Successful problem solving involves discerning the constraints that impinge on the focus problem and understanding them in sufficient depth to craft a solution that takes them into account. Put another way, leaders need to be able and willing to take on board all the factors relevant to a problem and to make decisions that balance all relevant considerations (rather than privilege one or two). To do this, they must have the ability to understand the interests of different stakeholders without being captured by any one of them, to see the big picture, and to put students’ interests first. We consider these attributes in greater depth in our discussion of relational trust (see page 182).

While the above approach has been widely used for professional inquiry and problem solving in New Zealand schools, there has been no systematic study of the problem-solving practices of New Zealand school leaders. For empirical evidence about its usefulness, we rely on a Canadian research programme conducted by Leithwood and Steinbach.

---


Empirical research on the problem solving of educational leaders

Leithwood and Steinbach’s research was based on comparisons between expert and typical principals. Ideally, the two groups would be classified, at least in part, on the basis of measures of the value that their schools had added to valued student outcomes. As is often the case, such data were not available, so the groups were selected on the basis of measures of reputation and their scores on a test of leadership. Of the 10 or so studies generated by this research programme, we focus on one that involved principals addressing a real problem in a staff meeting situation. Four expert and five typical principals were interviewed prior to the staff meeting. The meeting was then recorded on tape, and the principals were interviewed a second time to discover the thinking that had guided their leadership of the meeting.

Differences in the problem solving of the two groups of principals are summarised in the following table.

Table 18. The problem solving of expert and typical principals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expert principals</th>
<th>Typical principals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>are more likely to</em></td>
<td><em>are more likely to</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**A. Problem interpretation and formulation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expert principals</th>
<th>Typical principals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>explicitly check their own assumptions about the problem</td>
<td>assume others share the same assumptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>actively seek the interpretations of others</td>
<td>not seek others’ interpretations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>relate the problem to the wider mission of the school</td>
<td>treat the problem in isolation from other problems and goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>give a clear statement of their own interpretation of the problem, with reasons</td>
<td>have difficulty explaining their view to staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>be concerned to develop goals that are widely shared</td>
<td>be concerned with meeting own goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>make value statements, especially those concerned with participation</td>
<td>make fewer value statements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anticipate obstacles and how they could be overcome</td>
<td>anticipate fewer obstacles and see them as major impediments</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**B. Problem-solving process**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expert principals</th>
<th>Typical principals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>carefully plan a collaborative problem-solving process</td>
<td>do less planning of the process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>openly disclose their own view without foreclosing or restraining other views</td>
<td>do not disclose their own view, or disclose it in a controlling manner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>overtly manage the meeting process (for example, summarising and synthesising views)</td>
<td>less actively manage the meeting process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>experience and express little or no negative emotion and frustration</td>
<td>experience unexpressed negative emotion and frustration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The findings summarised in Table 18 can readily be interpreted in terms of the account of problem solving given in the prior section. What Leithwood and Steinbach call ‘problem interpretation’ corresponds to what we have referred to as specifying the constraints. The expert principals were more open to alternative formulations of the problem: they checked their own assumptions and sought out the interpretations of others. Instead of treating problems in isolation, they linked them to wider school goals and important values.

445 ibid. The study referred to is in Chapter 5.
The second part of the table shows that the expert principals were more active in their facilitation of discussion and concerned to reach a shared solution (rather than manipulating discussion to try to get the staff to accept a preconceived solution). Although these findings are derived from a very limited study, their similarity to those that have emerged from a rich research tradition on expert problem solving supports their credibility.

In a related study, Leithwood examined the cognitive flexibility of groups of expert and typical primary principals. He found that the expert group avoided such errors as giving too much weight to particularly vivid or dramatic examples, over-generalising from small or biased samples of events or people, and missing opportunities to interpret problems in terms of important goals and values.

What accounts for the difference between the problem-solving practices of expert and typical principals? Experts bring a richer, task-specific knowledge to problems. By better understanding constraints and the principles behind them, they are better positioned to see possibilities for integrating them. Readers will recall from our earlier assessment discussion that we argued that whether school-wide assessment practices can inform classroom teaching, serve management purposes, and still be efficient depends on the subtle detail of their design. Staff who have a superficial (rather than detailed) knowledge of assessment are unlikely to recognise or be able to design practices that can satisfy all three requirements. Discussing the process of constraint integration, Robinson notes that:

> Competing tendencies, or constraints, are fulfilled, not by crass compromise or trade-offs between them, but by understanding their underlying principles and values so that more possibilities are revealed about how they may be satisfied. Inseparable from this knowledge is an attitude of commitment to the whole problem, which motivates problem-solvers to search for solutions that as far as possible satisfy the whole constraint set rather than maximize those they initially favoured. Such integrative contributions are more likely to be made by those who are skilled at recognising and creating common ground than by those who more readily perceive conflict and opposition.

Oppositional and binary thinking—for example, believing that assessment can never serve both formative and summative purposes—is particularly inimical to constraint integration.

There is probably also a creative element involved in constraint integration. In his recent article on educational leadership, Sternberg includes creativity, along with wisdom and intelligence, as a key component of his model. One of the manifestations of creative leadership is an ability to generate ideas that solve problems. Writes Sternberg, “Creative leaders do not hit their heads against the wall when they cannot solve problems. Rather, they redefine and reformulate problems they cannot solve” (p. 348). This is akin to skill in constraint integration.

Sternberg reminds us of the interdependence of leadership knowledge, skills, and dispositions when he states that creative skills are domain-specific and that experts are at an advantage in creative thinking because of the greater size and scope of their knowledge base. He warns, however, that leaders may fail to recognise the limits of their expertise and, as a result, incorrectly assume that a current problem is the same as one they have previously encountered.

### 8.3.3 Build relational trust

There are few studies that empirically examine the links between leaders’ relationship skills and the social and academic outcomes of their students. One exception is a research programme conducted in urban Chicago elementary schools in the 1990s. These schools were part of

---

446 ibid., Chapter 9.
a radical reform programme that devolved school governance to local school councils, whose members were mostly parents. Like New Zealand’s boards of trustees, these governing councils were responsible for appointing and appraising principals. For seven years, the outcomes of the reforms were tracked in more than 400 Chicago elementary schools, through assessments of students’ reading and mathematics. The accumulated data, supplemented by extensive field work in a selected sample of schools, provided the basis for an examination of how ‘relational trust’ in the school community impacts on school improvement (as measured by gains in student achievement).

Trust is critical in contexts where the success of one person’s efforts is dependent on the contribution of others. In the context of a school, gaining significant shifts in student achievement and well-being requires the collective efforts of many teachers, and each one’s success will be partly dependent on the effort and skills of others. This interdependence creates risk and vulnerability. Teachers can ask themselves, ‘If I go the extra mile, will others do the same?’ Relational trust involves a willingness to be vulnerable because one has confidence that others will play their part. It should not be mistaken for feelings of warmth or affection.450

Trust is needed for all school relationships, including those between teacher and principal, teacher and parent, and teacher and teacher. Parent–teacher trust is diminished when a parent considers that a teacher has treated their child unfairly or when a teacher believes parents are failing in their obligation to send their child to school. Trust between parents and school trustees is diminished when the latter are thought to be acting in the interest of their own children instead of in the interest of all children in the school. Trust is also relevant to adult–student relationships, but these were not included in the Chicago research.

The authors tested the proposition that relational trust was a key resource for school improvement by examining, over a four-year period, the correlation between changes in relational trust and gains in student learning. This study compared changes in the levels of trust in the 100 schools showing the most improvement in reading and math scores with the changes in the 100 schools showing the least improvement.451 The authors found a strong statistical link between trust and student improvement. All 200 schools began with similar baseline levels of trust, but three years later, levels were trending upwards in improving schools while they were stationary or declining in non-improving schools. This divergence was not explained by differences in school context, student composition, or teacher background.

**How relational trust works in schools**

Given this evidence about the impact of relational trust on student achievement, it is important to understand how trust works in schools. Figure 28 summarises the leadership qualities that build relational trust and shows how increasing levels of trust between the adults in a school change student outcomes via shifts in culture and organisation.

What qualities or behaviours engender trust? Respect for others, personal regard for others, competence in role, and personal integrity are all factors. Of these, the most basic is respect. The minimum condition for a functioning school community is that members maintain a modicum of civil regard for each other. Respect involves recognising the importance of each person’s role and that each person must depend on their colleagues to play their parts.

---


451 To measure gains in student learning, achievement data for each student was recorded at entry to a grade and at exit; the difference between the scores was then calculated. Students who shifted schools during the year were dropped from the sample for that grade so that gains could be attributed to a particular school. The average gains in test scores for each school at each grade level over a six-year period were plotted and improvement trends calculated. These trends were adjusted to account for any changes in school factors that might otherwise have invalidated the effectiveness determinations. Further adjustments were made so that schools that started in the same place and experienced the same input trends over time were compared with one another (pp. 103–104). This final, composite school productivity figure was used to identify the top 100 improving schools and the bottom 100 non-improving schools.
most elementary way of demonstrating respect is to listen to people’s ideas as if they have value. Parents have increased respect for teachers when they have genuine opportunities to influence their work; teachers have increased respect for their leaders when they feel their workplace concerns are heard and taken into account. “In each case the process of genuine listening fosters a sense of personal esteem for participants and cements their affiliation with each other and the larger institution.”

Leaders who demonstrate personal regard are likely to be thought trustworthy. Personal regard involves caring about others—in both their professional and their personal capacities. For example, a head of department who meets with a teacher for career planning and professional development purposes is likely to grow that colleague’s trust. Knowing that others care reduces a teacher’s sense of vulnerability, strengthens social affiliation, and invites reciprocal regard. Teachers need personal support as much as anyone else.

Box 22. The significance for kaiako learning of personal regard and support

A case study of four kaiako from three different kura kaupapa Māori with wharekura programmes suggests how important it is for leadership to provide encouragement and personal support in situations where staff are taking what one kaiako described as “a step into the unknown”. The study explored the impact of teacher collaboration to improve reading and writing in te reo Māori. The teachers concerned were learning to systematically assess and analyse student learning in relation to NCEA requirements. For the kaiako, who had had no previous experience of preparing students for NCEA qualifications, the task seemed enormous. They variously described the business of learning to manage teaching, learning, and assessment within an NCEA framework as “horrendous and exciting at the same time”, “nerve wracking”, and “[sometimes] planning blind”.

Throughout the process, however, they were supported and encouraged by tumuaki, who affirmed the role they were playing—along with the students and their families—in the regeneration of te reo Māori. They talked with their tumuaki on a regular, if not daily, basis. The tumuaki “communicated a shared vision and philosophy of high expectations for students” and helped ensure that kaiako “worked in a climate of trust and openness” as

---

452 Bryk & Schneider (2002), op. cit., p. 23.
they developed the knowledge and skills to effectively address the NCEA requirements of the students and the kura.

Assessment data collected during the study revealed an upward trend in the results for pânui; for tuhituhi, the upward movement was less obvious. It may be that the NCEA grading system was not sufficiently sensitive to pick up a trend that was apparent upon closer analysis453.

When determining whether a leader is trustworthy, the competence they demonstrate in their role is an important criterion for staff. Teachers must be able to count on others, particularly their leaders, if they are to succeed in their work, so they care about their competence. In education, it is unfortunately true that it is often easier to discern incompetence than competence. It is hard to judge which leaders or teachers are adding value in terms of student learning or which person’s reading programme is better than another. But the evidence of incompetence is often unambiguous, public, and widely communicated. For example, “negative judgments about principal incompetence are quick to form when buildings are not orderly and safe, and when individuals interact in a disrespectful manner”454.

Allowed to persist, gross incompetence corrodes trust and undermines collective improvement endeavours. This may help explain why a study found that teachers’ perceptions of their principal’s ability to identify and deal with conflict were strongly correlated with student achievement455. Leaders who are conflict avoiders or conflict escalators are unlikely to deal with competence issues in a timely and effective manner. Since school improvement requires sustained, collective endeavour, teachers become demoralised and reduce the level of their commitment if they discern that their leaders cannot deal with those who (wittingly or unwittingly) undermine their efforts.

Integrity, a fourth criterion used to judge leader trustworthiness, is about consistency between what a leader says and does. In Māori, the term is ‘he tangata ki tahi’: ‘person of a single word’. But integrity is also about values. Teachers want to know whether moral and ethical principles underpin their leaders’ actions and how such principles are used to decide the many conflicts of interest that arise in schools. Bryk and Schneider write, “integrity demands resolutions that reaffirm the primary principles of the institution. In the context of schooling when all is said and done actions must be understood as advancing the best interests of children” (p. 26). To be considered a person of integrity, a leader also needs to keep their word.

Increased relational trust leads to changes in school culture and organisation that are of benefit to students (see Figure 28). In the Chicago study456, teachers in schools where trust had increased over the three-year period reported a greater willingness to try new things; a greater sense of responsibility for their students; more outreach to parents; and a stronger professional community (more shared work, more conversations about teaching and learning, and a stronger collective focus on student learning). Increased trust led to better coordinated, mutually supportive, and more effective efforts to engage students in learning.

As mentioned earlier, the authors of this same study found a strong correlation between levels of trust and gains in maths and reading achievement. This relationship was apparent even with rigorous control of student and community background variables. A second, related study of relational trust found that social outcomes were also more positive in high-trust schools, with students reporting that they felt safer, more cared for by their teachers, and more academically challenged.

454 ibid., p. 24.
456 Bryk & Schneider (2002), op. cit.
**Contextual influences on relational trust**

A number of contextual factors can make it easier or harder to build relational trust. These fall into two categories: those that are open to the influence of school leaders and those that are not. We discuss a number of these factors before giving some guidance in the next section about developing relational trust.

**Community diversity**

Developing trust is more difficult in diverse communities because people find it easiest to trust people who seem similar to themselves\(^{457}\). This is not cause for guilt or blame, simply a reflection of the way social perception works. But it does mean that developing relational trust is a particularly complex task when a community is of mixed race and class, because the similarities of race, ethnicity, and class that provide an initial basis for trust are not there. For this reason, school leaders in culturally heterogeneous contexts need to actively take the initiative in overcoming mistrust. When the teachers are relatively much better off than parents, or when the board is Māori but the principal and staff mostly Pākehā, growing trust will take greater effort. This will mean working to strengthen the four determinants of relational trust (see Figure 28) and taking care to avoid leniency bias—the tendency to be too trusting of people who belong to one’s own social group.

**School size**

The Chicago study\(^{458}\) found that trust was more likely to develop in smaller schools (those with rolls of fewer than 350 students). In smaller schools, much communication and coordination can be managed face to face. People tend to know more about each other and to have greater opportunity to work together and develop social affiliation. While it is true that low trust can also develop and fester in small communities, it is easier to address. In larger schools, teachers’ primary affiliation may be with a subgroup of staff rather than with the school as a whole, and individuals have fewer opportunities to revise negative opinions about the trustworthiness of others.

**Roll stability**

Trust building requires repeated social exchanges in which people meet or exceed one another’s expectations. Such exchanges are disrupted when families and staff leave a school community. This may explain why stability had an independent, positive effect on teacher–parent trust in the Chicago study.

Building positive relationships with a constantly shifting parent community is hard work: staff and parents may never get to know each other well enough to forge an educational partnership. Families that are new to a community can find themselves isolated and without access to the informal parent networks that could reassure them concerning the trustworthiness of the teachers. Occasional acts of disrespect are unlikely to be repaired if parents and teachers see relationships as temporary.

It is usually assumed that residential mobility drives school mobility. A study of mobility in Chicago elementary schools, however, found that while 60% of school changes were due to residential factors, 40% were due to school-related factors. The majority of the latter “were exit moves associated with safety concerns or conflict at the school. Rather than resolving such issues with the school, families chose to transfer. Consequently the opportunity to build social trust for students and parents must begin again in a new context.”\(^{459}\) Similar figures were

---


\(^{458}\) Bryk & Schneider (2002), op. cit.

obtained in a study of mobility in Californian high schools, which found that as many as 40% of school changes were not due to residential factors. These studies found that mobility had an independent effect on achievement and that this effect could be explained by the disruption of children’s peer relationships and the social networks that bind teachers and parents together in a common educational endeavour.

**Voluntary association**

Relational trust in a school is greater when both staff and students feel they have some choice in the matter. When parents and students are able to choose a school based on what they value, this choice provides an initial basis for goodwill and commitment. Similarly, when staff have chosen to work at their school, they are likely to commit to it and subscribe to its shared values. Voluntary association provides a much firmer foundation for relational trust than the suspicion and wariness that can accompany the forced assignment of either students or staff.

In Chapter 5 (see page 98), we mentioned that a study involving 20 US high schools found a moderately positive correlation between the proportion of staff appointed by the current principal and student achievement. While this suggests that it is important for principals to be able to hire their own staff, the same study found that such discretion works for students only when exercised by principals who give priority to academic goals. In schools where there was little emphasis on academic achievement, greater discretion to appoint staff was actually associated with lower achievement.

**Capacity to deal with incompetence**

We have explained how relational trust develops as people discern, in repeated interactions, that others are ably fulfilling the expectations and obligations associated with their roles. In the highly interdependent environment of a school, any serious shortfall in meeting these expectations and obligations (through failure to show respect, personal regard, competence, or integrity) creates mistrust and vulnerability. People who feel vulnerable adopt self-protective strategies such as reducing their commitment to the collective effort, lowering expectations, and narrowing their sphere of influence. In an environment of reduced relational trust, staff cease to put in the energy and effort required to sustain a programme of school-wide improvement. It is critical, therefore, that leaders address any staff incompetence in a timely, fair, and effective manner. New Zealand principals have the power to remove incompetent staff, but the process is involved and risky. Some limited evidence on how principals exercise this power is discussed in the next section (Engage in open-to-learning conversations, page 190).

**Imbalances of power**

Since schools are hierarchical in nature, power is necessarily unevenly distributed. Teachers can feel vulnerable to their principal’s decisions, including, for example, those that relate to class allocation and supervisory duties. Such decisions have psychological as well as instrumental consequences. Whether a teacher is assigned to a relocatable classroom or one in the new teaching block can affect their perceptions of status and self-esteem—as well as determining how far they have to walk in wet weather. Opportunities for staff to influence decision making on such matters and to hear the reasons for decisions can reduce feelings of vulnerability and increase trust.

Power imbalances are particularly salient for parents in lower-socio-economic communities. Such parents can feel alienated from schools and need considerable encouragement before they will risk meeting teachers, who they fear may well view them or their children as inadequate. Box 23 describes how the principal of an integrated school in Auckland, serving a largely Pasifika community, built relational trust by addressing parents’ feelings of inferiority and

---

powerlessness when inviting them to join a programme in which they would learn how to support their children’s reading461.

**Box 23. A principal builds relational trust by attending to imbalances of power**

When interviewed by an independent researcher, the principal, the two teachers who led the ‘Reading Together’ workshop, and the developer of the programme gave similar, independent accounts of the sensitivity with which parents had been invited to participate.

The developer recalled how she was invited to the school by the principal to discuss how it might work. She explained, “We discussed the importance of reassuring parents that they will not have to read or write anything by themselves, that it doesn’t matter if they can’t read and write very well, etc. The emphasis was on partnership. There was also a discussion about the ways in which ‘stigmatising’ of children is avoided throughout the whole process—e.g. when contacting parents there is no mention of ‘reading difficulties’, etc.”

When the principal herself approached parents, she indicated her respect for them as parents and “… tried to make it as personal as possible … I talked to them about the programme … (made them aware) that I was asking them because I know they were interested in their children.”

The sensitivity to imbalances of power was also evident in how the workshops were run. The two teacher leaders described the reasons for avoiding a school-like approach. “We were conscious not to make it too schooly … we didn’t want OHPs and teacher jargon. I’m sitting down … together … we don’t know what sort of experiences they had at school … we didn’t want to bring back those old emotions.”

**How leaders develop relational trust**

Having discussed the interpersonal and contextual conditions that shape relational trust, we now turn to a brief discussion of some practical steps that school and departmental leaders can take to build relational trust in their school communities.

First, it is important to acknowledge the interdependence, and therefore the vulnerability, of the members of the school community and to recognise how important trust is for building commitment and cohesiveness. Without it, leaders have to rely far more heavily on costly bureaucratic rules and external accountabilities to achieve their goals.

School leaders build trust by modelling and expecting the four qualities on which it is based. Such modelling is critical. While team building and relationship training may help, trust grows primarily through daily encounters in which expectations are validated in action. People feel treated with respect when their concerns gain a genuine hearing and when they are given opportunities to influence school decisions.

Modelling by school leadership is, however, insufficient to build trust. Leaders need to follow through on their expectations for others by confronting social disregard, uncivil acts, and incompetence. This can be very challenging, especially in contexts where such actions have seldom been called to account or where there is a litigious culture.

Integrity is demonstrated by walking the talk and by actions that say the interests of students are paramount. A whakatauki referred to by Sharples expresses the idea of giving priority to the needs of children:

> He kai poutaka me kinikini atu, he kai poutaka me horehore atu. Má te tamaiti te iho. Pinch off a little bit of the potted bird, peel off a little bit of the potted bird, but give the best part to the child462.


Integrity is critical when the interests of staff and students appear to be in conflict:

The key task for school leadership involves getting the balance right. This entails a constant moderation between demonstrating a personal regard for faculty while steadfastly advancing the primary mission of the school... Ultimately adult behavior must be understood as directed toward the betterment of children.\(^{463}\)

There are particular challenges to be faced in building trust in low-trust, dysfunctional school communities. On the basis of their cases, Bryk and Schneider warn that “one does not build relational trust in a troubled school community simply by assuming its existence.”\(^{464}\) A new principal may need to make significant use of his or her positional authority to challenge dysfunctional social relationships, address incompetence, and require collective responsibility and accountability. Box 24 describes how a new principal strongly challenged his staff to either join him in radically changing the school or leave.

**Box 24. A principal uses positional authority to confront a dysfunctional staff culture**

In 1998, Chris Sarra became the first Aboriginal principal of Cherbourg School in south-east Queensland. The school, described by authorities as a disaster area, had major problems of absenteeism, bullying, drug abuse, and staff incompetence. In an ABC interview, he recounted how, very early on, he confronted staff about their attitudes and low expectations:

“And when I asked the staff that I’d inherited, you know, why is it that I’m seeing such dramatic underachievement in our school? Why is this school such an awful place? Their response was, oh, well, the Department doesn’t support us, or, there’s many social complexities. And I sat in this room here a long time ago and said, look, what I believe, what the elders in our community believe, is that our children can leave here with academic outcomes that are just as good as any other school in Queensland. And that they can leave here with a very strong and very positive sense of what it means to be Aboriginal. And if you don’t believe it, then it’s time for you to go. And half the teaching staff got up and left.”\(^{465}\)

Principals may need to use their position to reshape the composition of the staff before trust will grow, by counselling out those not committed to the hard work of improvement and by recruiting people who are committed to serving the families in that particular school community.

Principals can take specific steps to increase parental trust and stabilise the student population. They can acknowledge the dependence of parents on teachers and give teachers the resources and the support they need to build relationships that will provide a foundation for pedagogical partnership. Training and support for this relationship-building role is particularly important in communities where there is a wide social and ethnic divide between parents and teachers. Relationship building cannot be left to specially appointed home–school liaison persons, however useful they may be. It is the parents’ trust of their child’s teacher (not the community or liaison worker) that is predictive of his or her educational progress. Bryk and Schneider conclude that teachers should be expected to develop the skills and dispositions required to engage parents effectively—and that they should be supported to do so. They conclude:

Such capacities should be formally acknowledged in teachers’ role responsibilities and included in annual personnel evaluation procedures. Professional development supports need to be provided as well, through both preservice and continuing education programs so that teachers can acquire the necessary skills and dispositions. In our view, these needs are too important and too central for school improvement to be left to chance.\(^{466}\)

---


\(^{464}\) ibid., p. 137

\(^{465}\) The vignette is based on the transcript of an interview with Chris Sarra on *Australian Story*, ABC October 4, 2004. Downloaded August 27, 2007 from http://www.abc.net.au/austory/content/2004/s1212733.htm

\(^{466}\) Bryk & Schneider (2002), op. cit., p. 139.
School leaders can begin to address mobility issues by providing quality opportunities for parents to address concerns before they consider taking their child away. Procedures for gaining and responding to both informal and formal feedback from parents are critical to winning parent–teacher trust. Leaders can also educate parents about the negative social and academic consequences of frequent changes of school.

To conclude this section, we summarise in Table 19 some of the do’s and don’ts of increasing relational trust.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Involves</th>
<th>Does not involve</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Integrating the needs of adults with advancing the best interests of students</td>
<td>Meeting the needs of adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Putting the needs of students first when their needs and the needs of staff are in conflict</td>
<td>Putting the needs of staff before those of students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making critical decisions collectively on the basis of a unifying focus on what is best for students</td>
<td>Staff doing their own thing with mutual indifference or tolerance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving transparent explanations of reasons for differential treatment of staff</td>
<td>Giving similar affirmation and voice to staff, regardless of their commitment or breaches of trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explaining respectfully what is and is not acceptable and why</td>
<td>Tolerance of and collusion with a negative status quo (for example, high rates of staff or student absence)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 8.3.4 Engage in open-to-learning conversations

We have stressed throughout this synthesis that interpersonal skills and values are critical to every leadership dimension identified in both the New Zealand and international research. (An analysis of Appendix 8.1 will reinforce their importance.) Leaders need to be able to disclose their views and the reasons for them, listen to others’ views and be open to reciprocal influence, give and receive tough messages, and detect and challenge their own and others’ problematic assumptions. These skills and values are crucial to the development of relational trust; the ability to initiate and engage in constructive problem talk; and the capacity to reveal, evaluate, and revise theories of action. We use the ‘open-to-learning’ model of interpersonal effectiveness, based on the work of Argyris, as a framework for our discussion of the evidence relating to these skills and values. At the heart of the model is openness—the key to improving the quality of the information and reasoning that guide practice. We use this particular model because, in its various incarnations, it has been the predominant model of interpersonal effectiveness used in New Zealand research and development relating to school leadership.

There is limited evidence about how New Zealand school leaders utilise these interpersonal skills. We have some evidence about the difficulties of exercising them in certain contexts and about what happens when things go wrong. We also have some useful New Zealand examples of professional development that has successfully developed the skills of engaging in open-to-learning conversations. But this evidence seldom includes evaluations of actual change in leaders’ on-the-job practice.

First, we discuss some evidence concerning what New Zealand school leaders say about ‘people problems’. We go on to outline the dilemmas involved in tackling such problems and follow this with a discussion of how these dilemmas can be reduced through the use of the open-to-learning model. We complete the section with a more detailed look at some New Zealand reports of sustained professional development in open-to-learning conversations.

---

467 See footnote 476
468 See footnote 476 for an explanation.
Evidence of people problems

When New Zealand school leaders were asked in a recent study\textsuperscript{469} to identify the issues that challenged them, they nearly always indicated people problems. The author divided the issues into three categories: “firstly managing people issues; secondly, managing resources for people issues; and thirdly, managing personal issues.” Leaders indicated that many of their people problems were longstanding, difficult to resolve, and had negative consequences that spilled over into other areas of school life.

Dealing with dilemmas

In our earlier discussion of problem solving (page 179), we discussed how it involves finding solutions that sufficiently satisfy all the relevant constraints. Tough problems are those where there is considerable tension, if not incompatibility, between the constraints. Performance management problems often seem to be in this basket. Leaders typically want to address performance issues but believe they cannot do so without unduly risking increased stress and conflict: they feel caught between addressing staff performance and taking care of relationships\textsuperscript{470}.

In a pioneering study of how school leaders address such dilemmas, Bridges surveyed the ways in which Californian administrators dealt with cases of teacher incompetence\textsuperscript{471}. He found that the most common response was to tolerate, protect, and avoid direct confrontation. When principals or district administrators did intervene, they generally took an ‘easing-in’ approach, in which the issues were understated or distorted. For example, their reports would include highly generalised, positive comments about teachers’ performance (a strategy that Bridges calls ‘ceremonial congratulations’) and double-talk (criticisms couched as suggestions for change). Teacher ratings were inflated to the extent that even those who were eventually induced to resign were initially rated ‘satisfactory’. When such softly-softly strategies proved ineffective and administrators found themselves under pressure to take further action, they would then move into a more direct, ‘salvage’ phase.

During this phase, administrators abandoned their previous strategies. They no longer sprinkled their observation reports with glowing generalities, dressed their criticisms up as constructive suggestions, or generally inflated evaluations. Straight talk replaced double-talk. In some cases, teachers had experienced years of double-talk and ceremonial congratulation. Not surprisingly, they reacted defensively to this ‘out-of-the-blue’, negative feedback\textsuperscript{472}.

More recent US research\textsuperscript{473} suggests that this pattern may have changed little. Both teachers and administrators believe that the number of teachers receiving unsatisfactory evaluations is far less than the number of unsatisfactory teachers.

According to Cardno’s research, dilemma management in New Zealand schools is not so very different. The evidence shows that, while leaders are aware of the need to take a direct approach with staff implicated in a dilemma, only a very small proportion suggest this option. Most of the responses obtained by Cardno were consistent with what is already known about how leaders typically face up to complex problems: they ponder them at length, they may seek advice, they may provide support—but, for whatever reason, they delay action or avoid it altogether\textsuperscript{474}.

\textsuperscript{470} ibid.
\textsuperscript{472} ibid., pp. 48–49.
\textsuperscript{474} Cardno, C. (2007), op. cit., p. 41.
Before offering some research-based guidance on how to effectively address dilemmas, we need to explore why there is often conflict between the task-related and people-related aspects of an issue. Figure 29 provides some clues.

### Figure 29. Two ineffective strategies for dealing with performance problems

Both the soft-sell and the hard-sell strategies are based on the same conclusion: the reading programme is terrible. Using the soft-sell strategy, the leader withholds her evaluation, expects the teacher to disclose her own, and offers ‘ceremonial congratulations’ (about student enjoyment). This strategy addresses the person–task dilemma by giving greater weight to the emotional risk facing the adults than the educational risk facing the students. Using the hard-sell strategy, the leader is more forthright; she makes it clear that she expects her views to be accepted and her recommendations followed. Taking this approach, the adult relationship is risked in the interests of addressing the educational concern. Undoubtedly the hard-sell strategy is more likely to result in the teacher getting the message, but it is also likely to provoke defensiveness and resentment. If this is the case, there may be little progress on the task issue.

The tension between concern for the person and concern for the issue cannot be resolved by either approach, because neither allows for co-constructed evaluation of the reading programme—co-construction was a central tenet of the theory-engagement change strategy discussed in Chapter 6 (see Engaging teachers’ theories of action, page 128). In the example, the leader has made up her mind and discourages any debate of her views. Using the soft-sell strategy, she does this by failing to disclose her own evaluation. Using the hard-sell strategy, she assumes that her evaluation is valid and, therefore, beyond discussion: all that remains is for the teacher to carry out her directives. Neither strategy will lead to the kind of dialogue that will discover whether change in the teacher’s theory of action is warranted and, if so, what that change should be.

When leaders seek to impose their views, they face the dilemma of how to do so without creating negative emotional reactions. Hiding their own views and hoping that the other party will express them is not a solution. This soft-sell strategy is just as controlling as the hard-sell strategy because the goal is the same: to have one’s own views accepted without question. The alternative to imposition is to change the thinking that produced the dilemma in the first place. This means changing the thinking that presumes the validity of one’s own point of view.
Open-to-learning conversations: the model

We now turn to theory and practice that can help change the thinking that creates the dilemmas that so often confront leaders when they try to deal with performance issues. The theory that we draw on is based on the work of Argyris, a social and organisational psychologist who has done extensive research on the interpersonal effectiveness of leaders in actual, on-the-job situations. Argyris’s work has formed the theoretical and practical foundation for several research and professional development approaches used with New Zealand school leaders.

Table 20. The guiding values and key strategies of an open-to-learning conversation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guiding values</th>
<th>Key strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase the validity of information.</td>
<td>Disclose the reasoning that leads to your views.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Information includes: thoughts, opinions, reasoning, inferences, and feelings.)</td>
<td>Provide examples and illustrations of your views.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use the ladder of inference.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Treat your own views as hypotheses rather than taken-for-granted truths.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seek feedback and disconfirmation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase respect.</td>
<td>Listen deeply, especially when views differ from your own.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treat others as well-intentioned, interested in learning, and capable of contributing to your own learning.</td>
<td>Expect high standards and constantly check to see how you are helping others reach them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Share control of the conversation, including the management of emotions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase commitment.</td>
<td>Share the problems and the problem-solving process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster ownership of decisions through transparent and shared processes.</td>
<td>Require accountability for collective decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foster public monitoring and review of decisions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The three guiding values in Table 20 are widely espoused but hard to put into practice in conversations that involve giving and receiving tough messages. We call conversations in which they are put into practice ‘open-to-learning’ conversations because, in them, each party gets to express their views openly (rather than defensively), increasing the chance that faulty assumptions—about each other, the problem or task, or what to do—will be detected and corrected.

---


Validity is especially critical for school leaders, because their decisions have important implications for others' lives. Leaders have an ethical obligation to base their decisions on quality information and quality thinking. Only by showing respect for others can they build the relational trust needed to get good feedback about their thinking and build the sense of collective responsibility and commitment needed for improving teaching and learning. With valid information and with processes in place that allow them to be heard and exercise influence, staff are more likely to feel personally committed to and accountable for decisions.

We now return to our task–person dilemma (Figure 29) and see how, by initiating an open-to-learning conversation, a leader is able to address the performance issue while minimising negative emotions. The principal in this case unwittingly created the dilemma by being highly judgmental about the teacher’s performance (‘her reading programme is terrible’). Convinced of the validity of her views, she is left with only two unsatisfactory choices—be diplomatic (soft sell) or brutally frank (hard sell). Table 21 presents a third, more effective approach that allows both parties to share the problem and co-construct a solution.

Table 21. An effective strategy for communicating performance concerns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leader's thoughts</th>
<th>Leader's words</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When I came into the class, I was shocked to see the book levels being used. I suspect the students are well behind where they should be. I must talk to Joanne about how to check this.</td>
<td>“When I came into your class the other day, I got the impression from the book levels being used that many of your students were well behind where I would expect them to be. So I thought I should tell you that and check it against your understanding of their current and expected levels…”</td>
<td>The leader’s concerns are disclosed. The grounds for the concern are disclosed. The leader indicates that the concern needs to be checked rather than assumed to be valid.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this third approach, the leader avoids the hard sell by disclosing her concerns without presuming their validity. She also avoids the soft sell by putting the issue on the table and inviting the teacher to give her point of view. Provided that the principal continues to disclose, check, listen, and co-construct the evaluation of the programme and any requisite revisions, the outcome should be a teacher who feels challenged yet respected. By thinking in this way, the leader does not have to choose between tackling an educational issue and damaging a relationship.

Examples of open-to-learning conversations

In this section, we discuss three examples of open-to-learning conversations. All three are drawn from studies of New Zealand interventions in which school leaders have had intensive on-the-job training in open-to-learning conversations.

Clear and open disclosure

Our first example illustrates the importance of clear and open disclosure of one’s point of view. The context is a literacy leader working with her colleagues to examine the reading progress of their year 1 students479.

Box 25. From tentative to confident communication of expectations

The literacy leader in a Mangere primary school participating in the Early Childhood Primary Link Intervention programme regularly convenes her fellow year 1 teachers to review the reading achievement of their students. In a quest to discover the qualities of professional learning communities associated with greater student progress, the formative evaluators transcribed meeting excerpts. Part A presents this author’s analysis of an excerpt from the leader’s introduction to a meeting that took place in the third year of the intervention. The literacy leader's words are in the right-hand column; the analysis is in the left-hand column. Part B presents the author’s analysis of an excerpt from the same leader one year later after the formative evaluators had discussed their report with her. These discussions made her realise what an impact the serious examination of data could have on student achievement.

Part A: Literacy leader’s meeting introduction prior to training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language is tentative</th>
<th>“I just wanted to just …”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This may not deserve much time</td>
<td>“… very quickly go through the latest bit of data”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious engagement with the data is voluntary</td>
<td>“If you don’t want it, just give it back to me.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The data represent yet another piece of paper</td>
<td>“I know it’s a paper war …”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work on your part is not required</td>
<td>“You don’t have to file it or anything like that at this stage … it’s just handwritten.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part B: Literacy leader’s meeting introduction after training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>This is important</th>
<th>“This is a valuable time …”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It involves work for teachers, but it is crucial work</td>
<td>“Although it is a pain getting it ready for me, it is the only way we are going to make a difference.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides direction about what to do</td>
<td>“I will give it out to you in a minute and you can have a look and see in your class who is below and who is above …”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes personal connection with teacher—the data is about and has implications for you</td>
<td>“You can see in your class …”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You may need to do something differently</td>
<td>“and you look especially at the ‘just below’ ones and think, ‘What am I going to do to make sure that they are not just below next time?’”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In part A, the leader acts as if she has not yet accepted that she is the leader and that it falls to her to provide direction. Her tentativeness may reflect a concern that the others in the group will not accept her leadership. In part B, after discussing the findings with the formative evaluators, the leader discloses her expectations much more clearly. Subsequent interviews with the teachers showed that they appreciated the clearer focus of the meetings and the help they received in deciding what to do next to help the target children.

Explicit checking and requests for feedback

The vignette in Box 26 is sourced from a year-long intervention involving a secondary school principal who was seeking greater staff ownership of and commitment to appraisal and professional development policies.480

---

Box 26. A principal seeks to change staff perceptions by seeking explicit feedback

The context is a meeting of the principal and her heads of departments at which the draft of a new appraisal policy is being discussed. The principal begins by reading out a summary of staff feedback and suggesting a next step.

Principal: The question is, where do we go from here? After asking the question, what I've tried to do is to present a possible answer.

The principal clearly identifies her answer as a possibility, not as the answer. She then discloses her hope that, by involving numerous staff in the development of a new policy, she can change their perception that the programme belongs to her rather than to the staff as a whole.

Principal: I would like to believe that staff’s assumptions that PDC [Professional Development Consultation] and appraisal structures being my ideas and initiatives alone have changed to some extent. That really is the assumption I’d like to check, so please help by letting us have some feedback and I’m going to welcome that in a very open and honest way. If people are still feeling that if they approach me with something difficult I’m being difficult about accepting or hearing what you’re trying to say, I need to know that.

The principal seeks feedback here on two levels. On one level, she wants to know whether staff see the programme as ‘hers’; on the other, she acknowledges that past patterns of interaction may be making it difficult for them to give her honest feedback and asks if this is the case. She has disclosed her wishes for the task in hand—and her concern about how staff perceive her. After a second request for feedback, two heads of department say what they think.

HOD 1: From my point of view, it doesn’t matter to me very much where the statement comes from initially. I mean, if you’ve written it that’s fine, that doesn’t concern me at all, what only concerns me is two things: first of all what’s in it, and secondly what sort of influence we can have upon it if necessary. I think those are the key questions for me. So the fact that you may or may not have written it, that’s not an issue for me personally.

Principal: Can I then check, picking up from what John has said, how do people feel about the influence that they may have on the processes?

HOD 2: I think the process is such that I can contribute to it by just coming and discussing it with you, and whatever views I was concerned about, I could explain to you knowing that either they would be answered or they would be taken further.

Principal: Right.

HOD 2: I feel that I have been consulted.

The exchange in Box 26 illustrates how valid information is sought through a combination of open disclosure and explicit requests for feedback. In this case, the explicitness was necessary to disrupt possible residual conceptions about the principal’s openness to influence. The case from which this vignette was extracted goes on to discuss how openness and consultation need to go hand-in-hand with a challenge to staff views that, accepted without question, might undermine the educational purpose of the policy under debate. Again, the problem solving involves integration of multiple constraints: the goal is not just increased staff ownership and commitment, but commitment to a policy that meets its educational objectives.

Detecting and checking assumptions

In Chapter 6, we wrote at length about the importance of probing people’s theories of action to detect and check taken-for-granted assumptions. If leaders are to consistently value valid information and respect, they need to involve others in this checking because it is very difficult...
to detect and correct one’s own mistaken assumptions and faulty reasoning. Due to the limitations of our information-processing capacities, we tend to interpret the world in the light of existing assumptions rather than engage in the more demanding process of seeking out information that might disprove them. We frequently act, therefore, as cognitive misers—biased towards whatever confirms our prior conceptions.

This built-in bias explains why it can be so difficult to be open with family or longstanding staff—our preconceptions about them and their behaviour shape how we select and interpret information relating to them, and those interpretations further strengthen our preconceptions. We notice the things that confirm our preconceptions and are blind or deaf to those that challenge them, unless trained or cued to do otherwise. The vignette in Box 27 illustrates how preconceptions can obstruct problem solving.

**Box 27. The power of assumptions**

The senior management team of an Auckland secondary school took part in a series of workshops designed to help them better integrate the values of valid information, interpersonal respect, and accountability in the context of teacher appraisal discussions. At one of the workshops, the deputy principal (Roger) practised communicating with a teacher (played by Jan) who he believed was not taking sufficient responsibility for behaviour problems arising in her classroom. He was frustrated by her expectation that she could send misbehaving students to him to deal with. In the role play, Jan has left her class to see Roger about such a student.

Jan:  Tom here, was um—ust chucking bits of paper up at me as I turned around to write on the whiteboard. Now this has happened time and time again as you are well aware of. Um, I sent him out of class last time he had science and this time he’s doing it all over again. I just don’t know what to do next. And I want him—I want you to deal with him. Um, and maybe to have a word with him and talk to him about the dangers, you know the dangerous aspect of his behaviour in the classroom.

Roger: He’s outside now is he?

Jan: Yes he’s just waiting outside your door.

Roger: Mmm. You don’t want to bring him in now and um, go over what’s happened with him and me?

Jan: Well I don’t have time, (Roger: Mmm). I’ve got a class, and they’re waiting for me now, so I’d better go back before (Roger: Mmm, you better get back to your class) before something happens.

Roger: Mmm. Well, I’ll certainly get him in and um, hear from him. He’s a bit of an evasive character. We might have to get together later and together go over what’s happened with him, just to get him to own it.

Jan: Well, I’ve written lots of things in the um—in the Form Book about him. I don’t know—you know I’m really at the end of my tether as to what strategies to use for him. And it’s just not him in the class; it’s the rest of the class as well. The boys in particular.

Roger: Mmm. So um, Frank’s been involved—the dean—Frank’s been involved with—working with this student as well. Yeah I’ll—maybe I need to talk with Frank. Um, yeah. OK, I’ll certainly, yeah, talk with him and um, talk with Frank and come back to you so that we can decide what should be done.

---

Jan: OK.
Roger: Is that all right?

The extract includes information that both confirms and disconfirms Roger’s view of Jan. She confirms his expectations by once again hauling a disruptive student out of her lesson and asking him to deal with the problem. But she acts contrary to his expectations by admitting that she was ‘at the end of her tether’ and having difficulties with the ‘rest of the class as well’—admissions that suggest that she saw herself as part of the problem, even if she had little idea of how to contribute to a solution.

In reviewing the videotape, Roger asked himself whether his preconceptions about the teacher had led him to ignore, or even not hear, her admissions.

Roger: Mmm, yeah. It’s just this phenomenon of having almost a cued, self-cued, low-key response. In other words, she’s—I tend to categorise her along the lines of someone who will refer students too readily. I have a predisposition—I’m predisposed—might be thinking that this is ah—yeah I’ve categorised her. I’ve labelled her. I might be thinking now this is something you should be dealing with yourself. This is something—not that I actually was thinking that during the interview—but I have a predisposition that way.

Instead of noticing the information that would disconfirm his preconceptions, Roger selectively attended in ways that strengthened them. By doing so, he was contributing to the problem. There is nothing unusual about this—his actions are easily explained in terms of confirmation bias. As we have seen, the outside researcher was able to help him see how his preconceptions were effectively undermining his goal of getting Jan to take more responsibility for the behaviour of the students in her class.

While assumptions can be tested through teacher research, it is also important that teachers develop the skill of detecting and correcting assumptions ‘on the run’ through the use of open-to-learning conversations. The most effective training for this skill consists of analysing recordings of conversations, assisted by someone who does not share your preconceptions. The aim of the analysis is to compare what one thinks has happened (or will happen) with what actually happened.

In important situations, leaders need to be aware of what they expect and then—because it is so much easier to spot confirmatory data—deliberately look for disconfirmatory data. It is easiest to do this with a trusted partner who has less at stake in the outcome. The leader should write down what they expect to happen and why. During the subsequent postmortem, the way the situation played out is compared with the prior expectation. In this way, the leader uncovers expectations that then become available for future monitoring. The leader then reformulates expectations, practices this reformulation, and repeats the testing. The postmortem should also explore how leader expectations might have predestined the outcome; in other words, the leader tries to spot any self-fulfilling prophecies.

**Emotionality and learning conversations**

The earlier sections on constructive problem talk (page 128), engaging teachers’ theories of action (page 128), and the power of assumptions (Box 27) should help explain why we have dwelled so much on the detection and analysis of errors and problems. We need to acknowledge, however, that such learning poses very personal challenges; it is natural that we find examination of our errors, problems, and failures threatening and embarrassing. This is likely to be particularly true for successful senior leaders, who, precisely because they are successful, may have limited experience of reflecting with colleagues on their own contribution to problems. To effectively

---

leads learning—their own as well as others’—leaders require the emotional maturity to handle the anxieties that learning can occasion.

Emotionally mature leaders are willing and able to enter anxiety-arousing situations in the interest of the learning to be had, instead of escaping from them as quickly as possible. Such leaders are also able to withstand the impulse to act before sufficient data are available or before colleagues are open to the contemplated action.  

How do leaders develop emotional maturity? This is a question with no easy answers. In the opinion of Hackman and Wageman:

[Emotional maturity may be better viewed as a long-term developmental task than as something that can be systematically taught. Emotional learning cannot take place in the abstract or by analysing a case of someone else’s failure. Instead, it involves working on real problems in safe environments with the explicit support of others. Only to the extent that leader development programmes take on the considerable challenge of providing such settings are they likely to be helpful to leaders both in developing their own learning habits and in providing models for those they lead to pursue their own continuous learning.]

Given the power of leaders’ theories and assumptions, the critical question for leadership development is not what should be taught in leadership courses but what learning processes do current and aspiring leaders need if they are to discover, evaluate, and revise their theories of action, drawing on the help of skilled facilitators and quality, evidence-based resource materials?

8.4 Summary

In this chapter, we discussed four broad areas of expertise that underpin the dimensions of effective leadership identified earlier in the synthesis:

**Ensure administrative decisions are informed by knowledge about effective pedagogy**

Effective leaders have a practical understanding of teaching and learning that informs their administrative problem solving in such areas as student grouping, teacher appraisal, resource selection, and teacher supervision. We explained how the depth and breadth of a leader’s pedagogical content knowledge influences their administrative decision making and how administrative decisions (about, for example, the kind of template to be used for classroom observations) can support or inhibit quality teaching.

**Analyse and solve complex problems**

To improve quality teaching and learning, effective leaders not only need relevant pedagogical content knowledge, they need to be able to use it within the constraints of a given school context. In applying their knowledge, expert leaders uncover and understand all the requirements relating to the task in hand and then integrate them to identify an adequate solution.

**Build relational trust**

No matter how good a leader’s pedagogical knowledge and problem-solving ability may be, their impact will be limited if relations within the school are characterised by lack of trust. Relational trust influences the effort, risk taking, and collective commitment that staff bring to the complex task of increasing student achievement and well-being. We discussed the interpersonal and contextual factors that shape relational trust and used this information to identify practical steps that leaders can take to develop trust relationships in their communities.


483 ibid., p. 47.
These include establishing the following as norms: respect for others, personal regard for others, competence in role, and personal integrity. This is done by modelling appropriate behaviour, following through when expectations are not met, ensuring that talk and action are consistent with each other, and challenging dysfunctional attitudes and behaviours.

**Engage in open-to-learning conversations**

The skills and values that underpin open-to-learning conversations are crucial determinants of relational trust; indeed, they are crucial to all the leadership dimensions identified in chapters 5, 6, and 7. The ‘open-to-learning conversations’ model of interpersonal effectiveness provides the theoretical framework for strategies that leaders can use to effectively deal with difficult issues. Using examples that involve New Zealand school leaders, we illustrated the importance of three key aspects of open-to-learning conversations: clear and open disclosure of one’s point of view, explicit checking and requests for feedback, and detecting and checking assumptions.

In Appendix 8.1, we list some of the skills, knowledge, and dispositions that underpin the leadership dimensions we have identified. We recognise that this is not an exhaustive listing of the qualities of effective leadership but argue that we have captured skill sets that are critical to engaging in the kinds of leadership that make a positive difference for students.
Appendix 8.1 The knowledge, skills, and dispositions implied by and embedded in the leadership dimensions

1. Establishing goals and expectations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Establishing goals and expectations</th>
<th>Forward mapping dimension</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting educational goals</td>
<td>Backward mapping dimension</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Knowledge, skills, and dispositions

How to set goals

Knowledge of goal-setting theory, including: why goal setting is important, the conditions under which it works, and how to overcome potential pitfalls.

What to set as a goal

Ability to make decisions about the relative importance of various learning outcomes; that is, asking what will students learn in the light of:

- knowledge of what is valued in the national curriculum and in relevant overarching philosophies (for example, the special character of integrated schools, the philosophy of kura kaupapa Māori operating in accordance with Te Aho Matua);
- knowledge of what is valued by the local community;
- knowledge of what your students currently know in relation to a set of valued learning outcomes.

Ability to envisage and expect achievement of more challenging goals:

- knowledge of how to sequence learning outcomes (social and academic learning progressions);
- knowledge of the conceptual structure of the relevant disciplines/competencies, so that learning outcomes can be framed in ways that induct students into those disciplines or competencies (for example, mathematics, critical thinking).

How to gain goal commitment

- Explain/demonstrate how the alternative, more challenging, learning outcomes are credible and attainable.
- Identify/listen to barriers to goal attainment and strategise how to overcome them.
- Gain sufficient agreement about goals to ensure a coordinated teaching approach.
- Clearly communicate the agreed goals and provide non-defensive explanations for their prioritisation.
- Lead the teacher learning that is necessary to help teachers meet the goals – see dimension 4.

2. Resourcing strategically

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resourcing strategically</th>
<th>Forward mapping dimension</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Obtaining and allocating resources aligned to pedagogical goals</td>
<td>Backward mapping dimension</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Knowledge, skills, and dispositions

Why alignment is important

Uses the principle of strategic alignment of resources (human, financial, and material) to prioritise/rationalise procurement and allocation of resources.
### Alignment of staffing resources

Can determine the type of expertise required to achieve particular goals. For example, if the goal is to sustain effective home/community partnerships, can identify appropriate personnel with requisite educational/cultural/community knowledge to facilitate and sustain effective partnerships/relationships with families/whānau/communities.

Can transparently and fairly recruit such expertise from within or outside the school and openly explain the choices made.

Develops relationships with community, universities, professional developers, and other schools that widen the networks of strategic expertise available to the school.

### Alignment of teaching resources

Evaluates the effectiveness of alternative teaching/programme resources in terms of intended learning outcomes for students.

Develops the school timetable in such a way that it reflects pedagogical priorities.

Develops, or advocates for the development of, resources essential to the achievement of school goals.

Ignores or defers funding opportunities that overload teachers and detract from priority goals.

Recruits and inducts staff into school/department/syndicate-wide assessment and pedagogical procedures.

### 3. Planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching and the curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching and the curriculum</th>
<th>Forward mapping dimension</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge, skills, and dispositions</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-management</strong></td>
<td>Prioritises own time to ensure oversight of teaching and learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge of how students learn</strong></td>
<td>Has a research-based understanding of how students learn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge of effective teaching</strong></td>
<td>Has a sound understanding of effective teaching and of the necessity for situated inquiry into the relationship between what is taught and what students have learned. Rejects style-based concepts of teaching effectiveness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses impact on students as the touchstone for administrative decision making. For example, teacher appraisal, professional development choices, student grouping, homework policy, and reporting to parents.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge of how to evaluate teaching effectiveness</strong></td>
<td>Understands and uses student data to collaboratively diagnose and resolve teaching problems and to set future goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge of how to improve teaching effectiveness</strong></td>
<td>Uses, or oversees others using, pedagogical knowledge to assist staff to improve their teaching.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishes procedures for ensuring staff regularly use evidence to review students’ progress.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has the confidence to observe in classrooms and initiate informal discussion with staff about teaching and learning.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4. Promoting and participating in teacher learning and development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Promoting and participating in teacher learning and development</th>
<th>Forward mapping dimension</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creating a community that learns how to improve student success</td>
<td>Backward mapping dimension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge, skills, and dispositions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Use of data** | Ensures systems are in place for ongoing monitoring, reporting, and improving of student outcomes.  
                            Ensures teachers develop the skills they need to interpret data. |
| **Pedagogical content knowledge** | Uses own knowledge of teaching and learning to help staff solve teaching problems. |
| **Knowledge of effective professional development** | Uses evidence on effective teacher development to design and evaluate professional development opportunities.  
                            Positions self as a public learner with staff in areas where they have gaps in own knowledge and skill. |
| **Understands collective responsibility and accountability and how to foster it** | Expects staff groups (for example, departments) to promote member learning about how to improve student achievement and well-being.  
                            Models and monitors the type of teacher talk that fosters teacher learning and caring about student achievement and well-being.  
                            Challenges and changes the culture of staff groups that are not focused or are negatively focused on the teaching–achievement relationship (for example, groups that have low expectations of or blame others, students, or parents). |

5. Ensuring an orderly and supportive environment

**Ensuring an orderly and supportive environment**  
Forward mapping dimension

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge, skills, and dispositions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Is alert to issues that may impact on student well-being and learning and acts on them promptly** | Identifies and addresses issues of competence early.  
                            Identifies and addresses conflict early.  
                            Creates multiple opportunities for students to provide feedback about the quality of their classroom and school experience.  
                            Acts on feedback to improve the intellectual and emotional engagement of students in important learning. |

6. Creating educationally powerful connections

**Creating educationally powerful connections**  
Backward mapping dimension supplemented by meta-analysis in Chapter 7.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge, skills, and dispositions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Embed partnership activities with families/whānau and community in a strength-based perspective.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Understands the importance of school–home connections</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Continuity of student identity and school practices** | Uses up-to-date knowledge of how diverse learners experience the school and the classroom for purposes of improving teaching and learning and school culture.  
                            Approaches the school’s diverse communities from a respectful, strength-based perspective (not a deficit-based perspective).  
                            Leads the school in making changes to its own culture so that it can work more effectively with diverse families/whānau and communities to improve student outcomes.  
                            Ensures that the teaching programme incorporates relevant community/family funds of knowledge. |
Continuity of teaching and guidance between school and home

Provides the parents of primary school students with sufficient knowledge about the teaching programme for them to be able to support their children’s school learning.

Provides the parents of secondary school students with sufficient knowledge about qualification and employment pathways for them to be able to help their children make appropriate choices.

Continuity between educators

Engages openly with educators serving students prior to and after enrolment, sharing data and collaborating on transition arrangements, etc.

Establishes relationships with parents/whānau that are respectful and trusting and that acknowledge and draw on their knowledge/values/commitments in the interests of students’ education.

Establishes relationships with local schools and early childhood centres that are focused on school learning and improvement.

Establishes a relationship with local education officials that is productive and will benefit students.

Listens to diverse perspectives on school–community links and integrates them into effective provision for students.

7. Engaging in constructive problem talk

Engaging in constructive problem talk

Backward mapping dimension

Knowledge, skills, and dispositions

Understands the need to build trusting relationships and how these might be effectively fostered

Makes the effort required to grow trust in culturally diverse contexts.

Gives and receives tough messages with respect and openness

Names problematic situations in a manner that invites ownership and commitment rather than blame and defensiveness.

Creates a reinforcing and supportive environment for open discussion, problem naming, and co-construction of possible solutions.

Engagement with theories of action

Able to openly inquire into how their own and others’ theories of practice may be contributing to a problem situation.

Works collaboratively to develop and test an alternative theory of practice.

Provides quality opportunities to learn the alternative theory of action. (See dimension 4.)

Feedback skills

Able to provide specific, knowledgeable, supportive feedback and critique in ways that help families/whānau and staff recognise and accept what needs to change.

8. Selecting, developing, and using smart tools

Selecting, developing, and using smart tools

Backward mapping dimension

Knowledge, skills, and dispositions

Can evaluate tools

Identifies the theory that is implicit or explicit in a tool.

Seeks a critical evaluation of the theory that is implicit or explicit in a tool and rejects tools that incorporate theories with low validity.

Understands tool design and use as a powerful source of leadership influence.

Commits school resources and seeks commitment of state agencies to the development of smart tools.
## Appendix 8.2 Summary of evidence about quality teaching

Below is a summary of evidence relating to teaching approaches that have been found to improve student achievement and a comparison with approaches that are unlikely to benefit students. It is drawn from the best evidence synthesis on quality teaching.\(^{529}\)

1. **Quality teaching is focused on achieving high levels of success for heterogeneous groups of students on a range of valued student outcomes.**

   This involves teachers:

   - having high expectations of students, plus the conviction that they can make a difference regardless of prior achievement;
   - understanding student ability as learned rather than endowed and having, therefore, a sense of agency;
   - focusing on achievement by continually inquiring into the teaching–learning relationship and taking consequential action to improve;
   - skillfully probing student thinking.

   This does not involve teachers:

   - adopting new approaches without regard to their impact on student outcomes;
   - using untested assumptions about what works for certain students (for example, ‘Māori students are “kinaesthetic” learners’) to justify teaching approaches.

2. **Pedagogical practices enable classes and other learning groupings to work as caring, inclusive, and cohesive learning communities.**

   This involves teachers:

   - nurturing student dispositions that support their learning (for example, persistence, identity as learners);
   - teaching students how to support one another’s learning (for example, by giving elaborated explanations);
   - being seen by their students as caring about their learning (this is more specific than caring about them or simply liking them);
   - demonstrating a caring pedagogy that values and honours diversity (for example, awhina, whanaungatanga);
   - supporting student participation while engaging critically with students’ views/ideas/understandings;
   - using debate rather than assertion to resolve intellectual conflict;
   - organising the environment (for example, determining groups and designing tasks) to develop inclusive learning communities.

   This does not involve teachers:

   - assigning tasks to groups without giving them training in skills that promote peer learning;
   - tolerating even low levels of verbal or physical bullying/abuse (as it inhibits the learning of both bully and victim);
   - promoting a ‘culture of niceness’ in which all students’ answers are accepted uncritically, inhibiting intellectual engagement and the development of academic norms;
   - using language that inadvertently excludes some students (for example, by talking about ‘we’ when referring to Europeans in a lesson on pioneers);
   - interpreting ‘inclusion’ as incorporating ‘others’ into ‘mainstream’.

---

3. **Links that facilitate learning are created between school and other cultural contexts in which students are socialised.**

This involves teachers:

- recognising that school practice is a cultural construction that may be a mismatch with some home and community cultural practices;
- soliciting and using student resources in order to create a bridge between how learning works at home and how it works in school;
- using bridging as a key pedagogical strategy for all students, rather than as an add-on for minority students;
- designing homework carefully and ensuring that students receive feedback.

This does not involve teachers:

- being given packaged information (about certain cultural groups) that will only serve to reinforce stereotypes and not show them how they can use the home culture as a resource for instructional purposes;
- accepting and reinforcing aspects of home culture that inhibit school learning (instead of building a bridge and transforming those aspects);
- inadvertently forcing students to choose between the home and school culture.

4. **Quality teaching promotes student engagement with the instructional focus.**

This involves teachers:

- having a coherent curriculum of powerful ideas: a curriculum that promotes understanding, recall, and application;
- being knowledgeable about research on how students learn and remember;
- being knowledgeable about the typical developmental sequence by which students learn a curriculum area;
- being skilled in diagnosing students’ prior understandings of ideas that are the focus of instruction;
- representing new ideas linguistically and non-linguistically in ways that connect with students’ prior understandings;
- linking new ideas to students’ prior understandings and helping them resolve discrepancies with the new information;
- scaffolding learning to help students engage with material that they could not otherwise understand;
- promoting cognitive engagement by selecting content that is inclusive of diversity (rather than ‘tacking on’ such content).

This does not involve teachers:

- treating behavioural engagement as equivalent to cognitive engagement;
- relying solely on whole-class teaching when teaching groups with very different prior understandings;
- assuming that students have equal out-of-class access to the resources they need for their learning;
- encouraging the rote learning of unconnected bits of information.
5. **Quality teaching provides students with sufficient, high-quality opportunities to engage with instruction.**

This involves teachers:

- ensuring that students are given enough opportunities to learn, as this is strongly related to student outcomes;
- recognising that ‘opportunities to learn’ refers to those times in which students are cognitively engaged with the instructional focus;
- sequencing instruction and, within a few days, scheduling multiple and diverse opportunities for students to learn (a new idea/concept);
- providing quality practice opportunities when the instructional focus is a new skill;
- organising classroom routines to maximise instructional time;
- approaching classroom management as a means to an effective learning environment rather than a means to tight discipline and control.

This does not involve teachers:

- treating opportunities to learn as the same as time on the timetable;
- equating ‘opportunities to learn’ with ‘on task’;
- assuming that an active, busy classroom is providing adequate opportunities to learn;
- rushing to ‘cover the curriculum’, because full coverage will preclude in-depth understanding for at least some learners;
- using content that alienates or excludes particular groups;
- using an inappropriate concept of ‘readiness’ to delay instruction.

6. **Quality teaching supports learning through a variety of instructional approaches.**

This involves teachers:

- using different instructional approaches within the same instructional sequence (for example, individual preparation followed by peer-group exercise followed by teacher-led whole-class discussion);
- being aware of and applying evidence on how to make particular learning approaches effective (for example, cooperative learning);
- providing opportunities for students to hear teacher-led discussion of student ideas;
- designing cooperative group tasks well;
- exposing students to, and teaching them to resolve, academic disagreements.

This does not involve teachers:

- overusing, and ideologically committing to, a particular instructional approach (for example, cooperative learning);
- using cooperative and peer learning approaches without ensuring that peer interaction and student tasks will support academic engagement.

7. **Quality teaching aligns curriculum goals, resources (including ICT), task design, and instructional strategies at both classroom and whole-school level.**

This involves teachers:

- minimising between-class standards by means of a whole-school focus on educational achievement;
- committing to a school-wide focus on establishing an inclusive, academic student culture;
- understanding and promoting connections between core curriculum goals, students’ lives, and societal values;
- aligning activities and resources with instructional objectives.

This does not involve teachers:

- having social norms that vary from class to class;
- using instructional and assessment strategies that are inconsistent from class to class;
- using instructional strategies (for example, a ‘tourist curriculum’ approach in social studies) that are not aligned to curriculum goals.

This involves teachers:
- explaining what students are meant to be learning and why;
- enabling students to monitor their own progress and assist fellow students to achieve their goals, too;
- enabling metacognitive instruction that is linked to curriculum content and goals (for example, problem solving in science);
- asking questions in ways that prompt deeper, more critical thinking (rather than ‘the right answer’).

This does not involve teachers:
- engaging students through the use of extrinsic reinforcement that will inhibit a transition to self-regulated, intrinsic motivation.


This involves teachers:
- having sufficient knowledge about curriculum content, pedagogy, and learners to be able to provide constructive formative assessment;
- providing students with regular, task-related, constructive feedback;
- participating with students in the setting of clear learning goals;
- scaffolding students’ learning so that they have a high probability of success;
- using feedback gained from student assessment as a basis for adapting their own teaching.

This does not involve teachers:
- rarely being able to detect and correct student misconceptions and difficulties because of the limitations of their own content knowledge;
- using assessments that focus only on checking for right answers (and, in this way, undermining in-depth thinking);
- using assessment practices that induce a sense of alienation and a fear of failure in low-achieving students.
Appendix 8.3 Quality teaching in specific curriculum areas

Since we compiled the summary in Appendix 8.2, the mathematics/pāngarau and social sciences/tikanga ā iwi best evidence syntheses have been published. These syntheses also report pedagogical approaches that have been shown to enhance outcomes for diverse learners. There is little (if any) conflict between the findings of these different syntheses.

The Effective Pedagogy in Mathematics/Pāngarau BES outlines key principles that underpin effective teaching in mathematics, discusses the characteristics of successful mathematical communities of practice, and describes the features of effective mathematical tasks, activities, and tools.

The Effective Pedagogy in Social Sciences/Tikanga ā Iwi BES outlines four mechanisms that explain learning in the social sciences: connection, alignment, community, and interest. These mechanisms are supported by advice about approaches that are likely to promote student achievement, and the reasons they do so.

These two learning-area-specific syntheses provide a valuable evidence base that school leaders can use to inform their pedagogical leadership.

The evidence reported in the quality teaching synthesis and in the mathematics and social sciences syntheses signals the importance of teachers attending simultaneously to the social, cognitive, cultural, and metacognitive dimensions of teaching/learning in ways that support effective learning for diverse students. The figure below represents these interconnected dimensions and some of the major themes that emerge in research that is relevant to each of them:

Figure 31. The four dimensions of teaching/learning, with related themes

---


Another important theme—teacher inquiry—is common to all three pedagogical BESs. It relates not to how teachers work with their students but to how they think about their work with students.

By using outcomes-linked evidence to inform their teaching, teachers increase the likelihood that the decisions they make will enhance student learning. It nevertheless remains true that the effectiveness of any particular strategy will vary from context to context. For this reason, an inquiry approach to pedagogical practice is vital.

See Figure 32 (figure 9 in the social sciences BES) for a model of what this involves.532

---

532 ibid.

---

Figure 32. A model of inquiry-based teaching


School Leadership and Student Outcomes: Identifying What Works and Why: Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration 281


## Glossary of Māori terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ako</th>
<th>Teaching and learning, understood as a single, reciprocal process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hapū</td>
<td>Sub-tribe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hui</td>
<td>Meeting, gathering, usually with a specific kaupapa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iwi</td>
<td>People, nation, tribe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaiko</td>
<td>Teacher, instructor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanohi ki te kanohi</td>
<td>Face to face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaumātua</td>
<td>Elder, old man or woman, adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaupapa</td>
<td>Purpose, agenda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koro</td>
<td>Male elder, old man, grandfather</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuia</td>
<td>Female elder, old woman, grandmother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kura</td>
<td>School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kura kaupapa Māori</td>
<td>Māori-medium school with an identifiable philosophical base</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e.g., Te Aho Matua)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kura whānau</td>
<td>The support network of families and extended families associated with a school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngàti</td>
<td>Prefix denoting tribe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pàkehà</td>
<td>New Zealand-born non-Māori, especially those of European descent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pàngarau</td>
<td>Mathematics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pànui</td>
<td>Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Powhiri</td>
<td>Formal welcome or opening ceremony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taonga</td>
<td>Prized possession, treasure, inheritance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Te Aho Matua</td>
<td>Literally, the central thread; the philosophical statement that guides the operations of many kura</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Te reo Māori</td>
<td>The Māori language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Te reo Māori me āna tikanga</td>
<td>Māori language and customs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tikanga</td>
<td>The usual and accepted procedure or way of doing things; protocol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuhitahi</td>
<td>Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tumuaiki</td>
<td>Principal, head teacher, leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whakapapa</td>
<td>Ancestry, genealogy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whānau</td>
<td>Family, to be understood in a much more encompassing sense than the nuclear family; network of mutual supports and obligations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whanaungatanga</td>
<td>Sense of kinship, family, belonging</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mo ngā tamariki, kia rua ngā reo. Ko te reo o ngā mátua tipuna tuatahi, ko te reo o tauiwi tuarua. Kia őrite te pakari o ia reo, kia tu tangata ai ngā tamariki i roto i te ao Māori, i roto hoki i te ao o tauiwi. I runga i tēnei whakaaro, kia tere pakari ai te reo o ngā tamariki, me whakahaere ngā mahi katoa o te kura i roto i te reo Māori. Tae atu ki te hunga kuhu mai ki roto i te kura, me kōrero Māori katoa, i ngā wā katoa.

Kura kaupapa Māori, therefore:
* respect all languages;  
* expect full competency in Māori and English for the children of the kura;  
* affirm that total immersion most rapidly develops language competence and assert that the language of the kura be, for the most part, exclusively Māori.

*Te Aho Matua o ngā Kura Kaupapa Māori.*  
English interpretation by Dr Kāterina Te Heikōkō Mataira