

*We need a metamorphosis of
education - from the cocoon, a
butterfly should emerge.*

*Improvement does not give us a
butterfly, only a faster caterpillar.*

Learning to Learn

Mount Compass Area School
2002



*Exploring
Staff Culture*

Background

One of our foci for Learning to Learn inquiry this year was

- **transformative leadership**

what do we as a learning community mean by leadership? how do appointed leaders foster and sustain creativity, energy and innovation? how do we tap the leadership potential of our students, teachers, parents and community?

As part of this our leadership team held an extended meeting to learn more about transformative leadership. Attached to the agenda was an article.

Everyone has a different one - can you read this and be prepared to speak for a maximum of five minutes about it - what its point is, what your opinion of its ideas is, what it made you think about. If you think it is a useful one, you may want to bring copies of all or part of it for everyone.

These articles were located by doing a web search on “transformative leadership”. We began the meeting with this sharing from our reading.

Our agenda was a series of questions:

- What do we mean by ‘leadership’?
- What is our understanding of authentic change processes?
- How do we foster authentic change processes? - already? what else/more/instead should we do?
- How do we sustain creativity, energy and innovation? in ourselves - individually and as a group? in others?
- How can our understandings about quality leadership expand to embrace the leadership potential of our students, teachers, parents and community members?

However, the reading stimulated so much discussion that we got away from this agenda.

One of the key points that we kept returning to was the difficulty of sustaining a transformative leadership focus when those whom we are appointed to lead appear to expect a transactional or even a paternalistic leadership style. From there we began to talk about staff culture. Workshops arose from this as an attempt to have an explicit discussion about our culture and the need for it to be an enabling one, one which supports and embraces transformation.

The following are samples of resources used and developed as part of this process.

Being our best together

Staff working effectively together at Mount Compass Area School

As colleagues at Mount Compass Area School we strive to

communicate

have a word, lend an ear

so we each commit to

- being honest
- maintaining a high level of verbal communication
- communicating the same message in a variety of ways
- dealing with our own conflict
- accepting conflict/disagreement is part of humanity - sometimes you have to agree to disagree
- working things out before situation escalates
- **communicating in a way that supports trust**
- not avoiding conflict when it is a problem
- not "muttering" about others' behaviour
- not ignoring the need to have the difficult conversations
- not gossiping/having negative conversations that lack respect for other
- acting professionally in conversations
- dealing with problems with the people concerned
- passing on information quickly
- working for further improvement by
 - working out communication processes to reduce written info overload
 - having a regular review of communication at a whole staff meeting and a community meeting regularly
 - providing more creative options for displaying information in the staff room

have fun

a well oiled machine needs lubrication

so we each commit to

- having social activities like Happy Hour
- putting pictures in the toilet but change them regularly
- "declumping" the staffroom tables
- sitting at a different table once a week
- being positive and maintaining our sense of humour
- encouraging social interaction/"friendliness"

work as a team

lend a hand share the load

so we each commit to

- backing each other up
- not expecting some people to do it all
- not waiting to be asked
- volunteering own skills

work within routine systems

don't go nuts and bolt, do the nuts and bolts

so we each commit to

- **recycling**
- supporting each other by meeting deadlines & pulling our weight with shared responsibilities
- not leaving things to the last minute - eg excursions
- being proactive
- using a consistent approach
- putting headings on bulletin items
- using the term planner
- following the discipline processes

support school directions

keep your eye on the prize

so we each commit to

- maintaining a sense of R-12ness
- being willing to take on new ideas
- knowing more about other parts of the school

view ourselves and others professionally

walk the walk

so we each commit to

- valuing each others' skills
- encouraging people by giving them responsibilities in their area of interest.
- not making assumptions about people
- not blaming others for problems with kids
- not accepting colleagues' negative behaviours which harm/undermine our work
- valuing the contribution of each person
- being sensitive to the situation of eg contract staff

Our Culture?

Hard to define - "I know what you mean"

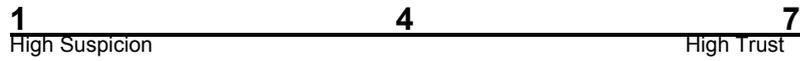
"...people in an organisational setting and is characterised by behaviour - what people say and do; relationships - **how they work with and through each other**; attitudes and values - how assumptions, beliefs and prejudices affect the workings of the organisation" *South African and Canadian Education training pack*

"This unique quality of each school, the school culture, affects **the way people act, how they dress, what they talk about or never speak of, and whether or not they seek out colleagues for help**" *Petersen*

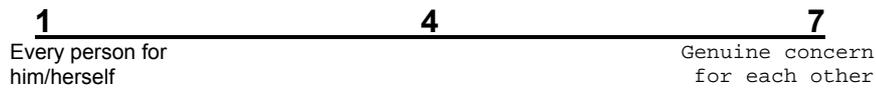
"Your organisation's culture is not the espoused list of values These are ideals. What you strive to be as an organisation and what values you hope to endorse, may be different from the values, **beliefs and norms expressed in your actual practices and behaviour....**" *Hagberg and Heifetz*

On a post-it write the word in bold capitals and then your rating

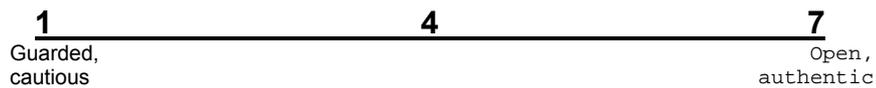
Degree of mutual **TRUST**



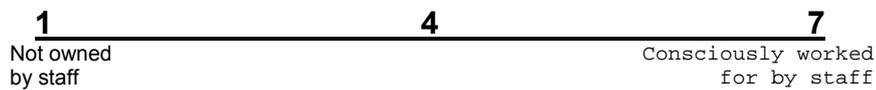
Degree of mutual **SUPPORT**



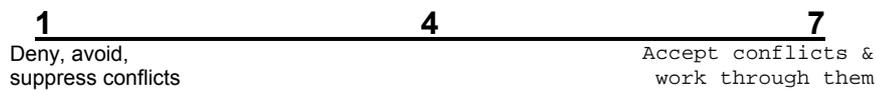
COMMUNICATION



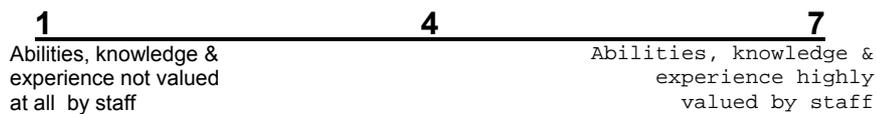
School goals and **PRIORITIES**



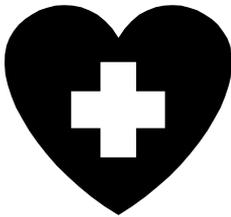
Handling **CONFLICT**



RECOGNITION of member resources



***This workshop has three goals:
Allow us as a staff to reflect on the strengths
of our “culture” and on ways to
make it even more positive for us
as individuals, as a group and
for our shared task of delivering
the best possible learning for our
students***

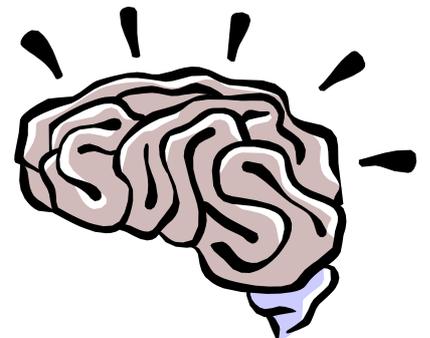


***Through this to support the
strengthening of a
psychologically healthy
environment. OHS&W describes
the seven key areas of
psychological health as:***

- *Management, team and individual commitment*
 - *Congruence between values and behaviour*
 - *Exemplary leadership*
 - *Effective communication and consultation*
- *Adequate skills and knowledge for effective performance*
- *Effective management of complex interpersonal situations*
 - *Effective safety nets*

This activity supports the second of these

***Practice a range of strategies
which promote effective
thinking and can be used in our
classrooms to support this.***



Brainstorming

LACE - Pohl *Teaching Complex Thinking*

Lots of ideas wanted
(so piggybacking on ideas is okay)

All responses recorded
(ideas are evaluated later)

Criticism is not allowed
(of people or ideas)

Encourage way-out ideas
(it might produce a better solution in the end)

DOVE *The Thinking Platform*

Defer judgment -
accept all contributions and evaluate later

Opt for original ideas -
left field ideas may stretch thinking

Vast numbers of ideas are best -
narrow concepts down later

Expand by association -
help an idea grow and take life