

Human Leadership Development (Report Summary)

1. Name:

2. School:

3. Project Title: *Being There: Developing Presence and Equality of Voice with in a Leadership Team*

4. Overall Project Aim:

The aim of this project was to develop and improve the relationships and working protocols of the XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX Leadership Team. This involved the development of a team environment where equality of voice, mutual respect, effective listening and leader presence drives the operation of the team.

5. Background and Rationale (evidence of need)

Re Self: I was a member of a high performing Leadership Team at XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX Secondary College which had a professional development / leadership capacity building focus. This experience demonstrated to me the power of effective teams and helped develop personal leadership skills. I wanted to share this experience with other leaders and help create a leadership team which places value on the presence of all members.

Re Others: Last year, Leadership Team members requested the development of team protocols designed to develop trust and allow for equality of voice within the team. An opportunity presented itself this year where our previous Principal had been promoted to a new school and the new Principal was yet to be appointed, that allowed us time to reflect on Team operation.

6. Anticipated and Specific Professional Learning Outcomes

1. The development of Team protocols that respect the right of all members to be heard
2. The development of a shared team vision for school improvement that acknowledges the contribution of all team members
3. A shared understanding of professional literature relating to team building and the development of leadership presence.

7. Project Approach and Models

1. Seek feedback from Leadership Team members regarding presence in meetings
2. Consider theoretical frameworks dealing the development of effective teams
3. Developing and implementing a team operation model that responds to the goals of this project.

8. Implementation Considerations

Available Resources (time and funding)

No funding was available for the specific team building work. However, an investment of \$5,000 was made in relation to four Leadership Team members completing the Harvard University Data Wise course. This study included a specific focus on team building and protocol/norm development for team operation.

The project took place largely over one term between the period of the permanent Principal leaving and the new Principal commencing. During Term Four, further work has been done in relation to protocol/norm setting and relating this to meeting purpose. The focus on data has helped us consider the way in which the Leadership Team will measure its effectiveness in relation to school improvement.

Number of people involved

This work has involved the College Leadership Team. The Data Wise team comes from the Leadership Team. In total, the project involved 16 staff members including Principal class members.

Time Frame

The project commenced at the beginning of Term 3 in 2008 and we continued to work on the thrust of building Leadership Team capacity and operation, with a focus on equality of voice and presence for the remainder of the year.

Action to enable school-level and leadership support

The initial discussions about the need to review the way in which the Leadership Team operated commenced in May 2007 and in the following 12 months, team members reflected on and discussed the benefits of a new model for team operation. The acting Principal was supportive in having Leadership Team members involved in ongoing discussions that might work towards the improvement of the operation of the team. The new Principal had chaired a regional leadership team that had created protocols and norms designed to develop a high performing team and was thus supportive of the work of the team.

Action to align with school priorities

Strategic Plan/Annual Implementation Plan priority: Establish collaborative practices that support, encourage and value ongoing professional learning and reflective practices (strong emphasis on team building and developing higher levels of professional trust using elements of the Performance and Development Culture as a guide) Linked with Student Learning

Detail of my leadership role

Lead discussions within the Leadership Team in relation to equality of voice and presence at the Leadership Team level and lead a team to complete the Data Wise

course to support the development of team building and protocol/norm setting for the team.

Possible constraints and ways to respond to these

The initial constraint was to have the protocols and norms that were agreed upon by the group accepted by the Principal team, of which I am a member. There was a view that we do all of the right things anyway and that we don't need to write down a series of rules to improve the operation of the team. Whether we do or do not formalize the work done in relation to team operation in the months ahead, the discussion has clarified the roles and rights of all team members and improved the richness of discussion within the group.

A change over in Principal has made any formal agreements difficult in relation to the Leadership Team this year. However, the operation of the team is well and truly on the table for discussion and previously quiet members are now more prepared to express their point of view in an environment where all ideas are respected and placed on the table for consideration.

Actions put in place to sustain Project

Leading up to and during the process we discussed and developed the following protocols:

1. all members to be given an equal opportunity to speak
2. formal language register (as per Ruby Payne) to be used during meetings
3. judgements to be suspended until all opinions have been tabled
4. allow and give no putdowns
5. listen respectfully to the ideas of others

We also agreed that would build a collegiate leadership team through the establishment of a form that develops:

1. equality of voice
2. respect for different ideas
3. shared responsibility and ownership of team values and decisions
4. effective teamwork
5. innovative systems thinking
6. consensus decision making
7. respect for the contributions of all members
8. cooperation in good faith
9. trust
10. the ability to share ethically
11. open discussion within a confidential environment
12. different leadership perspectives and challenges

(unclear of the sources for some of these ideas ó in the context of this team, the professional reading informed some of these suggestions)

Over the past two months a subteam of the Leadership Team, including myself, has been completing an on-line course with Harvard University titled "Data Wise". A component of this work has been the importance of developing Protocols within meetings. This is currently informing our development of not only the Leadership Team but all team work. The issues that we are looking at through the two texts, "Data Wise: a Step-by-Step Guide to Using Assessment Results to Improve Teaching and Learning" (Boudett, City, Murnane ó 2005) and "The Power of Protocols" include the following:

1. Plans for Meetings
2. Schedules for Collaborative Work
3. The establishment of group norms
4. Facilitation of Meetings

9. Summary of Project Implementation Process

What did you and others do, learn, experience? (in brief)

The process of considering "presence" and "protocols/norms" for team work has been a rewarding one for the team. In the book "Data Wise: A Step-by-Step Guide to Using Assessment Results to Improve Teaching and Learning" the following observation sums up the drive for this project:

"While some people initially dislike both the "touchy-feely" and rule-bound aspects of protocols, in our experience most educators ultimately embrace them once they see how protocols can make groups function more smoothly." (p25)

The authors go on to write:

"In our experience, the most effective meetings are as carefully planned as any good classroom lesson."

Through this process of discussion and reflection in relation to team operation, I believe that the setting up of formal processes and protocols for meetings can protect individual team members voice in discussion and help create an environment with purpose. This improves productivity, the quality of contributions from team members and group focus on important issues ó improving the "presence" of all members. If a meeting is designed to respect the contributions of all team members, then the personal investment in the work of the team by these people could be expected to improved.

10. Evaluation – what indicators are there of new learning, change and improvement?

1. Leadership Team members are now tabling more personal viewpoints in meetings, where in the past these viewpoints may have been only been expressed outside of meetings.
2. In the past there was an agreement that meetings would not go longer than one hour. Some staff members would get up at 4.30 and leave.

During these discussions and following on from them, staff no longer leave at 4.30 and often stay beyond 5.00pm.

3. Symbolically, the Leadership Team is setting up norms for the kind of teams that value equality of voice and presence of staff members present. This has impacted on the operation of other teams that are chaired by members of the Leadership Team.
4. Team members, through the development of protocols that value individual contributions, have been given permission to be wrong. By allowing team members to table all ideas before trying to solve problems, unspoken opinions can now be teased out and responded to in an open and respectful manner.
5. Teams that have more members actively engaged in discussion, with specific purposes set out in an agreed upon framework, may enable us to meet the goals of our strategic plan more effectively and more honestly. It will hopefully result in decisions that are owned by more people and represent a broader community commitment to improvement.

Boudett, K.P. City, E.A. Murnane, R.J. (2005) *Data Wise: A Step-by-Step Guide to Improving Assessment Results to Improve Teaching and Learning* Harvard University Press, USA

McDonald, J.P. Mohr, N. Dichter, A. McDonald, E.C. (2007) *The Power of Protocols: An Educator's Guide to Better Practice, Second Edition* Teachers College Press, USA