

Learnings from the Leadership Connections Session

In preparation for the publication of the progress report on the Sustainable Leadership project, we issued a member survey to which over 1,500 school leaders responded. Your responses to that survey indicated that you are doing some very positive things in your schools with regard to the effective sharing of leadership. The Leadership Connections session at this year's Deputy Principals' conference was an opportunity for attendees to talk and hear about the things that are working for others so that the wisdom of the collective can shape and enhance our own individual leadership practice.

Through a process of guided discussion and engagement, attendees considered the following question

- **How can my principal and I lead our school most effectively together?**

Having considered this question, each attendee was asked to identify something valuable that they had learned, heard or that they now thought. The following is a synopsis of those learnings.

Some of the reflections may resonate with you and others may not. At the very least, they may remind us of some important messages that we already know but that we may occasionally lose sight of in the busy-ness of the daily routine. We are sincerely grateful to the hundreds of school leaders who participated in the session and who so generously shared their wisdom and insights.

How can my principal and I lead our school most effectively together?

- by scheduling discrete time to meet and plan with the principal
- by having that discrete time through release days or another mechanism to facilitate meaningful collaboration
- by remembering to proactively foster and cultivate the relationship
- by ensuring there is good, honest and open communication between us
- by ensuring that we are on the same page re. our vision and ambitions for the school
- by recognising the central importance of trust
 - building an environment that is open, inclusive and respectful of differing opinions
 - trusting the capacity of others to lead and manage with responsibility
 - creating a culture of shared responsibility and accountability
- by reflecting on what is working and what has been achieved as well as acknowledging what the challenges are
- by acknowledging that deputy principals lead in their own right
- by achieving greater clarity around role and responsibilities
- by recognising that the challenges are not exclusive or unique to our school
- by challenging our own assumptions about the leadership and management team's willingness and capacity to co-lead
- by respecting the competence and expertise of others

- by using the school's organizational routines (timetabling) to find creative ways to facilitate collaboration and building capacity among the wider staff
- by recognising the value of participating in networks and learning from colleagues in other schools via local support groups
- by availing of professional development opportunities
- by availing of opportunities to learn together – Forbairt, team coaching
- by remembering in times of challenge that 'this too will pass'
- by not being so hard on or demanding of ourselves – we are doing our best and guilt is not a productive emotion
- by running your own race and not overthinking things
- by being confident about and comfortable focusing on the priorities you have established together for your school
- by remembering that it is a marathon and not a sprint and that not everything has to be done and it certainly doesn't have to be all done today
- by prioritising self-care and personal wellbeing
- by setting boundaries
- by recognising that there may be other and better ways of doing things – change is good
- by ensuring meetings are planned and structured to facilitate engagement and participation
- by remembering that empowering others builds not only capacity but also confidence
- by remembering to acknowledge and celebrate achievement/progress/success.