

ICP Magazine

Preparing the next generation

August 2023 Edition



INTERNATIONAL
Confederation of Principals

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New Leaders New Futures



Newly Appointed Principals and Emerging Leaders Conference

Keynote Speaker



OECD Project Leader

ANNA

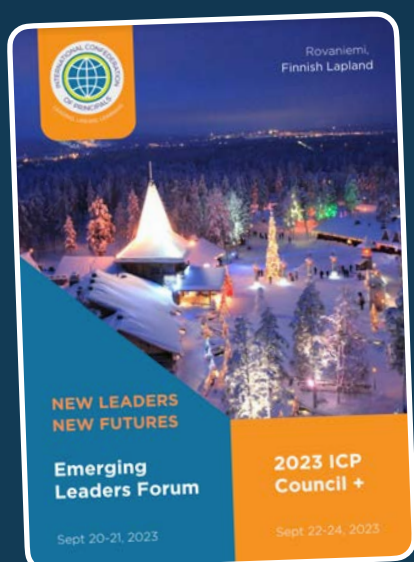
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designed to **inspire**
the next generation
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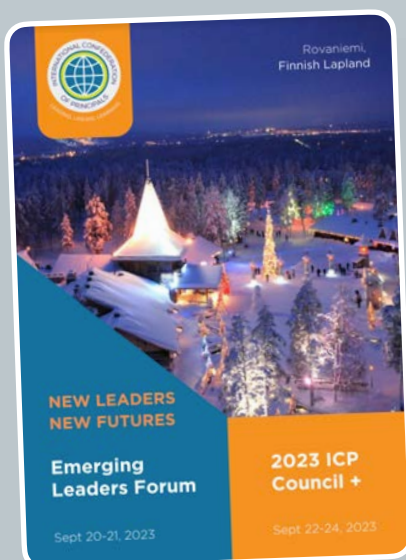
**PETER
KENT**

“...an opportunity for leaders across the world to **share ideas** and experiences”

2023 ICP Council+

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Walking in Another Person's Shoes

Professor Peter Kent - ICP President

The theme of **preparing the next generation** is one that runs through all of our work as school leaders. Many of us were promoted to our current roles because of our expertise at working with young people and in helping them prepare for the next stage of their lives.

However, once we become a Principal, we soon discover that this is just the start of all that our job entails. I remember realising, early in my time as a headteacher in England, that my job now was to focus not just on the students in my care, but also the adults.

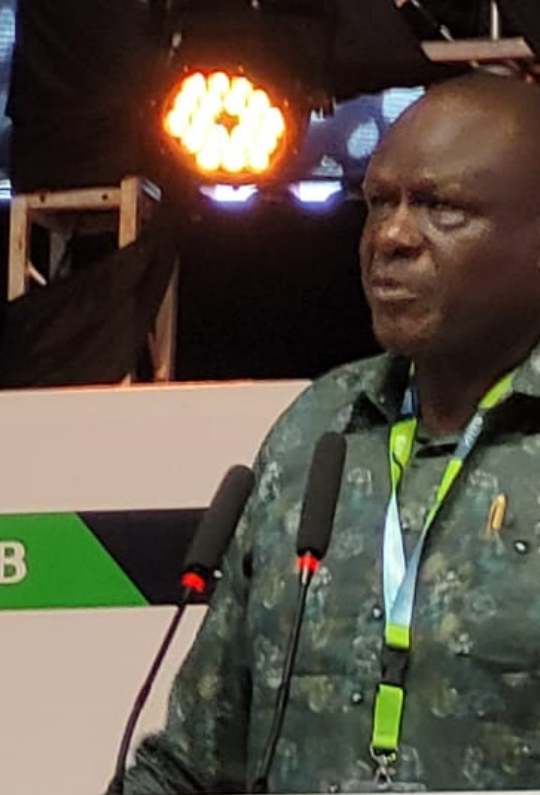
I must admit that over the years I took particular pride in seeing colleagues grow and develop during the time that I worked with them. Often they would then move on to various forms of promotion, including becoming head and

deputy headteachers themselves. Perhaps most challenging of all, I reached a point after 23 years as a Principal, when I realised that my outstanding deputy was better placed than me to take the school to the next stage of its development. It was a difficult decision to retire from headship after so many years in the role, but I did of course have the honour and privilege of being able to focus instead upon being President of ICP.

When Council met in Singapore last year, I was struck by how strong their concern for the next generation of leaders was. A variety of factors, ranging from the impact of the Pandemic, a questioning of life priorities and the

pressures of the job seemed to mean that in almost every jurisdiction, the next generation of leaders were questioning whether they wished to step into the role of school Principal. The desire to address this issue lay at the heart of our decision to start our September meeting in Rovaniemi, Finland with an Emerging Leaders Forum, designed to both **mentor** and **inspire** that next generation of leaders.

"Perhaps most challenging of all, I reached a point after 23 years as a Principal, when I realised that my outstanding deputy was better placed than me to take the school to the next stage of its development."



Preparing the next generation is a process that many of us have also experienced in our own leadership associations.

My account of the tremendously successful 46th conference of the Kenyan Secondary School Headteachers Association can be found on the ICP website at <https://icponline.org/postcard-from-kenya/>.

At the end of the conference, Indimuli Kahi, who is also ICP's Africa representative, explained that he would soon be retiring and encouraged delegates to support the next generation who stood ready to take on leadership roles within the association. I felt honoured to be there to see the depth of affection and gratitude that KESSHA members felt towards their outgoing Chair, as speaker after speaker acknowledged all that Indimuli had done for the association. Equally, it was impressive to see the positive way in which the association had sought to prepare the next generation, **so that they were ready to step into Indimuli's shoes.**

One of the things that long standing leaders in KESSHA were preparing to do was to act as mentors to those who were taking on new roles within the association. Recruitment and retention of leaders is a challenge wherever we find ourselves in the world and I have seen all sorts of sophisticated policy initiatives put forward by central governments and researchers. However, in my experience, the process of one generation of leaders walking alongside the next as they take on new challenges, is still the most effective.

In my favourite novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the hero of the book, Atticus Finch, tells his children that you never really know a person until you stand in their shoes and walk around in them. There is great truth in this and the process of mentoring enables new leaders to walk around in the shoes of established Principals and to understand both the challenges and opportunities of the job from the perspective of an experienced colleague.

One of the articles that made a particular impression upon me in this edition came from one of our new members, based in Argentina. Gabriel Rshaid provides a detailed look at the role of Artificial Intelligence and the ways in which it can be harnessed as a powerful tool to help the education of our students. In many ways it sums up all that we are discussing in our magazine. Ultimately school leadership involves us in managing a continual process of change, ranging from new approaches to learning to preparing a new generation of teachers and leaders. It is what makes our job so demanding, but also so rewarding.



2023



Respect and Shoulder Tapping

Dr Karen Edge



Introduction

How can we prepare the leaders of the future?

As a leadership-focused academic at [UCL Institute of Education \(London, UK\)](#), the power and potential of education leaders is never far from my heart and mind. However, after a quick email chat with ICP President Peter Kent, this question has been playing - on repeat - in my thoughts. As I take my role as an ICP superfan seriously, I've tossed aside my holiday plans for the afternoon to reflect on Peter's question and share a few thoughts and resources that may be helpful. Consider this a light touch primer, only a few references and two quick strategies that may help us collectively support our future leaders. Happy to share more detail when our school year starts up again in October 2023.

Departure points

In the Northern Hemisphere, most schools are closed for summer holiday. After too many years away, my 12-year-old and I have travelled to Canada to see our family. As I write, I'm sitting on the deck of our log cabin

on [Wolfe Lake, Ontario](#) surrounded by forest and some rather exuberant birds! I am thankful to be spending time with my family, by the lake and playing way too many hours of [UNO](#) (a very repetitive card game) with my 7 and 9-year-old nephews. However, my view of the peaceful, clean lake will soon be replaced by some rather enthusiastic swimmers requiring my lifeguarding skills! I will write quickly!

For these few weeks, we are surrounded by those who have known us forever and love us unconditionally. I feel incredibly thankful and privileged for this space, time and care. Simultaneously, I am acutely aware that our peaceful setting is juxtaposed with very different experiences for our global friends, students and colleagues who continue contending with the long tail of the pandemic, national financial and leadership crises and climate change-induced catastrophes. From here, my reflections are in support of those on holiday, working in schools and continuing to fight the good fight for our students and communities throughout.

Returning to Peter's question: How can we prepare leaders of the future?

In almost every educational jurisdiction, the state of global affairs is creating challenges in talent spotting, nurturing and preparing tomorrow's leaders. Currently serving leaders' fatigue, combined with the chronic educational underfunding mean that recruiting and preparing future leaders requires effective, efficient and inexpensive solutions! **My word limit and pending lifeguard duties are forcing me to pick two: future leader spotting and prioritising respect.** I will give the others some thought and share in a future issue!

Future leader spotting

1

Throughout [our work](#), leaders share how their potential was identified and encouraged – most often – by someone in their own school. For many, a principal/headteacher encouraged them to step up and test their skills and pursue promotion. For others, a peer encouraged them to expand their sphere of influence. Less often, but perhaps most importantly, leaders from minoritized groups often share how they **did not** receive any shoulder tapping or encouragement but constructed their own leadership pathways.

Reflection

I believe serving school leaders is one of the most powerful forces in recruiting leaders of the future. How we lead, the messages we send and the fairness of our talent spotting will determine – in part – the composition of our future leadership cohorts. When our serving leaders are overworked, exhausted and under pressure, is there time to look up and around to spot future leaders and invest the time required to support their development?

“...leaders from minoritized groups often share how they did not receive any shoulder tapping or encouragement but constructed their own leadership pathways.”

Often, no! This is not for lack of skill or will but lack of energy and time.

Quick consideration

Can you create a list of individuals you have talent spotted or shoulder tapped into leadership roles? We often use [age/generation](#), gender, race as a quick proxy and have a tool we can share in future issues if interested. Patterns to note: are they similar? are they like you? are there leaders missing in your tapping practice that may make brilliant contributions to the field but have been overlooked because they don't [fit 'in'](#)? Could you challenge the patterns in your tapping to create a wider pool of potential leaders?

2

Prioritising respect

Over the last few months, I have been thinking about [care](#) and respect. I reread an article by [Christine Porath in the Harvard Business Review](#) reporting on employee respect. The article highlighted how feeling respected is more important than other forms of recognition and reward.

Feeling respected also increases health and wellbeing (50%+), satisfaction with work (85%+) and focus and productivity (90%+). Shockingly, even in 2014, over 50% of employees didn't feel respected.



More [recent research](#) echoed these findings [[podcast available here](#)].

Reflection

As cases of incivility rise and the cost of disharmonious relationship becomes clearer, leaders' ability to [prioritise respect becomes even more important](#). Feeling respected may predicate an educator's decision to remain in the profession or school. I believe finding ways to embed and reprioritise practices and cultures of respect may be one contribution to our retention challenges.

Quick consideration

For the fortunate few, feeling respected at work has been their consistent experience. However, for many, instances of incivility and disrespect can be counted beyond one hand. From either experience, taking some clear steps to elevate the importance of respect may be key. When our term starts again, I will be asking my teams these questions and tweaking my own leadership and collaborations. I plan to start with: What does respect look like for you? How do you need to be treated to feel respected? How well do you know if others in your teams feel respected and what they need to feel respected?

Final thoughts

The possibility of broadening talent spotting and embedding respectful practices will be influenced and experienced differently across schools, districts, provinces/states and countries. However, I believe that the power of an individual leaders' adoption of one of both of the ideas above may create the potential for effective, quick and positive change. I will test both in my own leadership practice to prepare our future leaders. I look forward to hearing from you if they are helpful for yours! Feel free to reach out k.edge@ucl.ac.uk

PS. Don't tell my family but it has been quite a treat to retreat and reflect and consider how I will approach my own work when our term restarts in September.

Have a great term for those at work and a wonderful remaining few weeks for those on leave. Stay safe and be kind. Lifeguard duty calls: back to the lake!



Generative AI in Education - Not an End, a New Beginning

Gabriel Rshaid

Like no technological innovation ever before, the advent of Chat GPT and a family of related generative AI applications took almost everybody by surprise, and, in the space of a few weeks, disrupted and challenged our conceptions of learning and what education should be.

Even though it may prove to be the long-awaited catalyst for a badly needed profound transformation in education, the implications, challenges and opportunities are so unfathomable that we educators find ourselves, once more, trying to make sense of a maelstrom of revolutionary change.

“...we educators find ourselves, once more, trying to make sense of a maelstrom of **revolutionary change.”**

Unlike other previous technology breakthroughs like the Internet, social media or smart phones, whose fast but gradual adoption gave us the time that lulled us into a false sense of confidence that education

systems would change, this time we need to deal with generative AI urgently, since these applications are available now to all of our students.

In this unsettling, and yet promising context, even if we have more questions than answers, our roles as educational leaders are very clearly laid out. The following paragraphs outline some principles towards an AI in education roadmap:

Avoid the Black Box effect.

Starting with ourselves and incorporating it into our respective curriculums, it is essential that we and our students learn, in as much detail as possible, how these generative AI systems were developed, how they work, their limitations and underlying architecture. For many years, we used Google as a sort of black box that provided us with access to all accumulated human knowledge without knowing how a search engine was developed and if there were any limitations and constraints to its use.

Generative AI systems are several orders of magnitude more powerful than any search engine and it is absolutely essential that we understand how they arrive at these amazing results and what their limitations are.

Utilize AI in schools

Generative AI applications are here to stay, and, if anything, they will become more ubiquitous and powerful in the months and years to come, so negating their existence and trying to create artificial AI-free environments at school is not only a futile pursuit but also one that deprives all learners in the system from some remarkable improvements in the teaching and learning process.

A judicious use of generative AI applications can result in a positively transformed learning environment and more effective leadership, as well as providing us with a first-hand experience that can help us to identify challenges and opportunities in the school setting.

Address the risks

Beyond the many doomsday scenarios that are being opportunistically presented in the media by disgruntled AI experts and other modern day Internet gurus, there are, indeed, risks that range from the inhibition of cognitive abilities to the possibility of mistakes that are intrinsic to how these systems are built.

Like with many of the previous sections, ignorance is not an option for educational leaders, and we need to dig deep into the possibility that the indiscriminate use of these generative AI applications may stifle the cognitive process, especially at a formative age.

Focus on the benefits

Chat GPT and some of the other applications have a tremendous potential for revolutionising the way we learn, and **it is imperative that we lead the way in implementing, straight away, these impactful applications**. An initial list of them includes using generative AI applications in the following ways:

- A personalised tutor that can break down and explain to any level of detail and for every grade level any topic whatsoever.
- A reading assistant, including helping in reading comprehension, rewriting, simplifying, explaining and expanding any written text.
- A learning coach, to suit every learning style, with the possibility of generating summaries, mind maps, and any other learning aid.
- A writing assistant, helping to improve texts, edit, modify, make suggestions, provide guidance and prompts, helping in developing floats and alternative endings.
- To assist with interactive first-person learning, impersonating any historical figure or famous character, with whom students can chat and learn in the most engaging manner.
- Adapting learning materials for students with special needs or learning difficulties.
- Generating practice problems, exercises, and any other assessment instruments that can help students become proficient about a topic and a particular form of assessment.
- Simulating experiments and hypothetical scenarios that would be inaccessible to schools, such as expensive equipment science, planetary exploration, and so on.
- Interactive foreign language learning, providing conversation, reading lists, topical texts, and anything that we need to learn a foreign language to whatever level we are at, as well as helping us by correcting our answers.
- Generating case studies, real-life problems, stories and any other assessment instrument that can help raise students' interests by combining multiple disciplines and giving them real life examples.

“The possibilities are endless and the list above merely scratches the surface of what these applications can do...”

The possibilities are endless and the list above merely scratches the surface of what these applications can do, but the message is clear that **we need to get early wins in the classroom context**.

Avoid a double standard

As soon as ChatGPT emerged, immediate concerns were voiced regarding academic integrity. However, the real issue is not whether students use these generative AI applications to cheat but how they can be positively used for learning.

Many teachers and principals are already making extensive use of ChatGPT for some of the less glamorous aspects that have to do with their profession, such as reading long documents, generating emails and other communications, creating rubrics and assessment instruments, developing resourceful lesson plans and even grading.

While it may be argued that we adults are learning experts and can discern the more mechanical uses of these tools from those that constitute our personal added value, we must be careful not to incur in a double standard in terms of what students are allowed to do, how they use the tool, and what is professionally accepted for adults.

Explicitly discuss ethical and social implications

Finally, perhaps the most important issue of all is that these generative AI applications will have a profound impact on the lives of our students, the job market, and how they find a sense of purpose. Albeit not having any definitive answers, and, being a topic in constant flux, schools must host discussions, reflections, and analysis of how AI will transform our world and how we can all strive to retain our humanity.

Too many voices have been raised decrying the possible end of humanity and other pessimistic scenarios, in the usual negative narrative, fuelled by legitimate concerns but also, in many cases, by those who feel threatened by technological progress.

It is our ethical imperative to remain hopeful and optimistic in the face of change, and to treat the advent and generalisation of generative AI not as an end, but as a possible beginning.

These advanced AI applications can truly improve and enhance our schools, and we cannot wait for the market to provide us with a clear path ahead or to wait for tried and tested pedagogies to that effect. Like never before, but as it always should have been, we need to lead by example, become early adopters, and learn as we want our students to learn.



Preparing The Next Generation

Sonia Wadhwa - Head: Salwan Junior School, New Delhi, India



In this fast-changing world where technology and AI are driving many of our day-to-day needs and jobs, we can't really predict what jobs will be available for the next generation.

What we can predict are certain skills that will be relevant no matter how much intervention Technology and AI make in our lives.

A few of these crucial skills are – **Creativity**, **Critical Thinking**, and **Communication**. With the availability of the huge amount of information available at the disposal of everyone, at the click of a button or just by giving a voice command, learners will be required to critically process that information and present it creatively to prove their point or to innovate something.

Furthermore, no AI can beat the natural convincing ability and power of effective communication gifted to a human being. Also, the ethical dilemmas in the AI-driven world would be resolved through collaboration and communication.

Preparing the Next Generation will require parents, guardians, and teachers to stay relevant all the time, and to be relevant and relatable, they all need to practise “lifelong learning”- where lifelong learning doesn't mean adding more degrees to one's feather but rather **being aware**

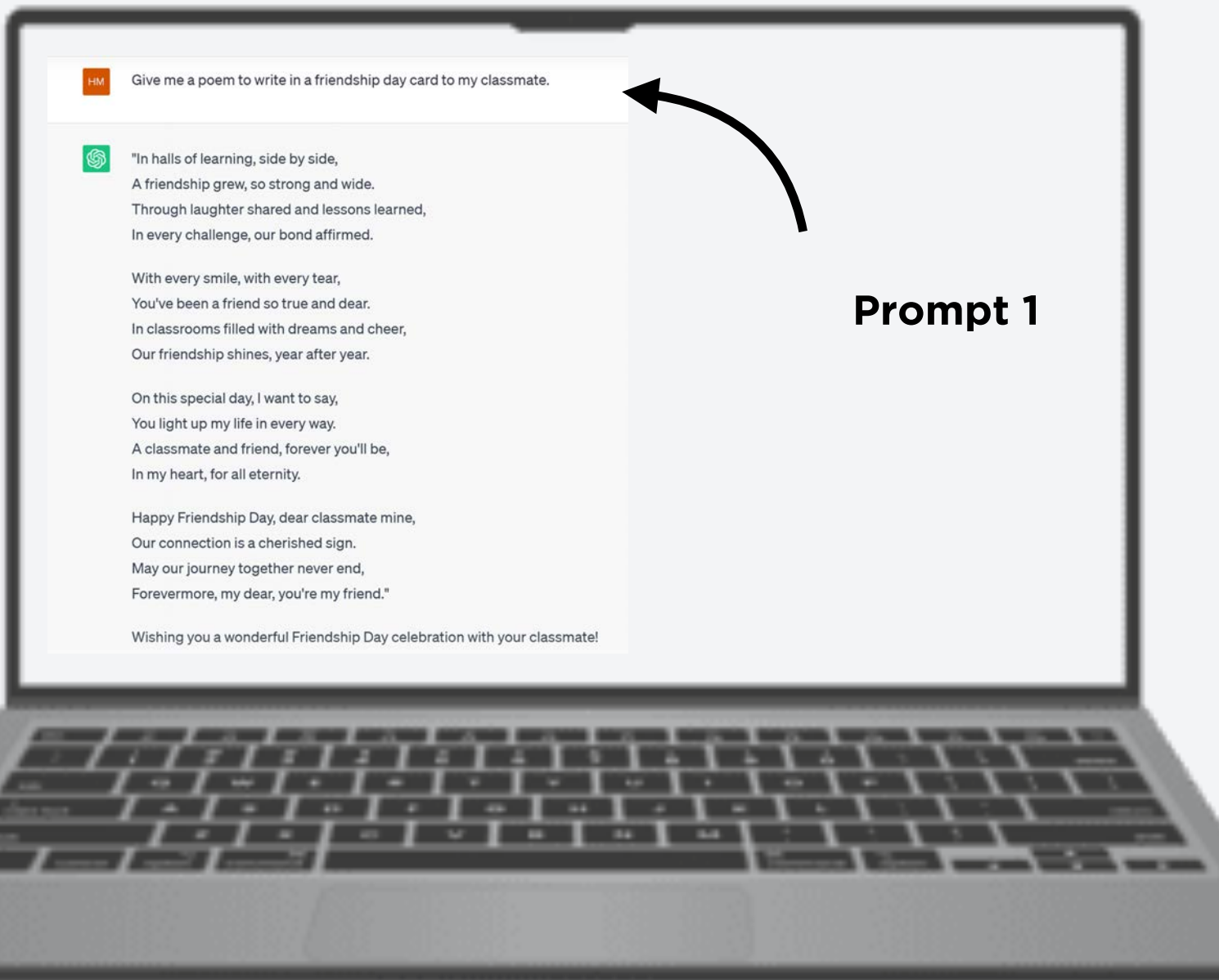
“What we can predict are certain skills that will be relevant no matter how much intervention Technology and AI make in our lives.”

of the changing trends, working environments, and the situations in which the next generation is going to live.

For example, there was a time when it was crucial to learn to make good presentations to work in any professional setting, use spreadsheets for data analysis, to be able to type in any regional language but now with AI-powered tools like Slide GPT, Chat GPT, NLP engines, and translators, one needs to be aware that tools like these are available at our disposal to quickly perform these simple tasks for us.

Another interesting aspect of making the next generation ready is an emphasis on nurturing original and creative thinking because in the times to come, AI will be a buddy to this generation of students, quick guide for every little thing and the efficacy of output generated by an AI will depend on the way they will give input to the AI.

Consider the two prompts given below to an AI for a specific context and observe the difference in the instruction style and the outcome. Here comes the power of having original and creative thinking even in leveraging an AI to get your work done.



HM

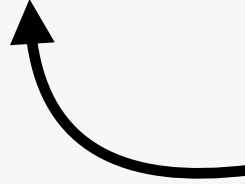
I am a 14-year boy. Give me a 10 lines poem to write in a friendship day card which I want to give to my classmate and friend Elina. She is gem of a person who supports me in all ups and downs. I can share anything with her. She never gets irritated with my endless stories. She likes the subjects which I hate but still we make a great team.



To Elina, my friend so true,
In every moment, I cherish you.
Through highs and lows, you've stood by me,
A gem of a person, a friend so free.

With endless stories and laughs we share,
You're always patient, you truly care.
Though subjects differ, our spirits unite,
In teamwork and friendship, shining so bright.

In you, I've found a friend so rare,
A bond so strong, beyond compare.
On this Friendship Day, I send my love,
For you, Elina, fit like a glove.



Prompt 2

“...we must train students to be adaptive and resilient.”

Finally, we must train students to be adaptive and resilient. They must quickly adapt themselves to new environments, challenges, and situations. For example: If a student after spending two days learning a specific language to code for a solution, comes to know that there is an AI co-pilot available to code for him in that language and there was no need for him to spend the past two days struggling on his own, then rather than feeling disappointed, he must see how he can use the knowledge he gained in the learning process and the availability to co-pilot to

solve a bigger problem in an effective way.

The **value system of individuals** will also play a vital role in guiding decision-making and reacting to situations in a responsible and compassionate manner. The world is becoming a global village due to this fast, impactful change. At one end we have opportunities to collaborate, learn from global best practices, and solve bigger problems together and on the other hand, the competition in the workplace will also increase manifold for the coming generations. Hence parents and teachers must highlight the importance of physical, mental, and emotional well-being through healthy habits, stress management techniques, and self-care practices.

Student Voice from Around the Globe

Update



Student Leaders Forum Update

Maria Doyle - ICP Executive (Europe)



In Singapore 2022, ICP showcased a Student Voice session as part of the Council + programme for the first time.

The reaction to the session and subsequent responses from delegates was extremely positive and it was evident that the session was not only informative but impactful.

Students from the four ICP regions recorded pieces based on prescribed questions which were viewed and discussed by delegates attending Council+. We were also fortunate to have students from Singapore who were present 'live' at the session and their contributions were immense. Since then, we have established a Student Voice Forum comprising of those students

who originally contributed in Singapore. The group has met virtually via **ZOOM** to discuss a way forward to keep the momentum going!

“

We have established a Student Voice Forum comprising of those students who originally contributed in Singapore

Lately we have established a Student Voice Forum WhatsApp group as this is an easy way to communicate. This platform allows for prompts about emails from the facilitator posing questions to the group for more in depth responses.

It also facilitates the sharing of updates and more informal interaction between students. The group held another virtual ZOOM session in early July.

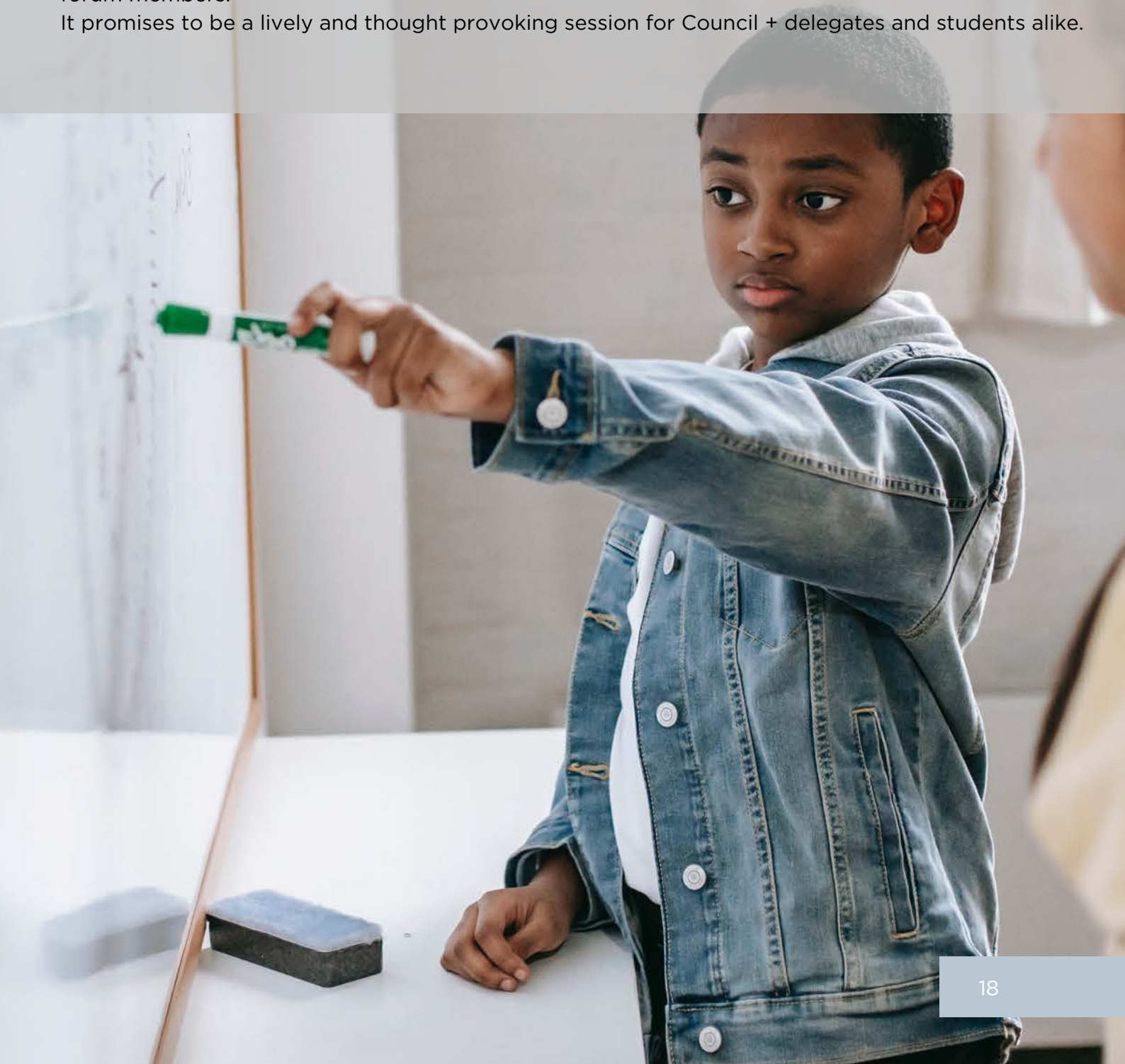
The aims of this group are:

- To listen to and learn from what our students are telling us
- To showcase the impact the inclusion of student voice can have on our schools and the way in which they operate
- To formalise the valuable contributions students can make to their learning pedagogy and environment
- To establish a practice of including student voices in the decision making processes in our education systems
- To work as partners with students to make their learning experience a positive and impactful one

ICP will include a student voice session once again in Finland at Council+ in September where we hope to expand upon the work started in Singapore.

We will have live input from high school students in Rovaniemi along with virtual participation from forum members.

It promises to be a lively and thought provoking session for Council + delegates and students alike.





Growing the Capacity for Student Voice Initiatives Through Intergenerational Collaboration

Siobhan Marie - Policy Coordinator | Executive Council | OSTA-AECO



As I reflect on my various experiences in student governance, I recognize that intergenerational collaboration has had significant impacts on my school community.

My experiences in working alongside and learning from people of all ages in educational settings demonstrate how intergenerational collaboration empowers students to lead, promotes a welcoming school environment, and allows people of all ages to learn from one another. My reflections on my experiences in multi-generational partnerships in educational settings exemplify the capacity intergenerational collaboration has to transform student leadership initiatives.

“...intergenerational collaboration empowers students to lead, promotes a welcoming school environment, and allows people of all ages to learn from one another.”

My journey in student governance began in Grade 2, when I became a representative of my grade on my elementary school's student council. Throughout the seven years that I held a position on the student council, I grew to understand the significance of student voice and the responsibilities that I held in ensuring students felt supported, represented, and that their needs were met.

By organizing school dances, voicing the needs of my grade, and promoting school fundraisers around the school, my time on my elementary student council allowed me to develop and practise transferable leadership skills.

In high school, I served for two consecutive years as a grade representative, and in grade eleven



and twelve, as the Junior and Senior Student Trustee for the Peterborough, Victoria, Northumberland, Clarington Catholic District School Board.

As a Student Trustee, I have had the privilege of learning from and working alongside my school board's learning consultants, superintendents, and Director of Education to advocate for and represent the student population. In these positions, intergenerational collaboration has been present in numerous ways. For example, as a Student Trustee, I engage in dialogue with municipally elected trustees of various ages to determine the best solutions to issues that arise. My experiences in student governance at the secondary level have been particularly transformative to my understanding of the power of student voice and the potential students have in making positive changes by engaging in leadership initiatives.

In these experiences, I have witnessed firsthand the positive impacts that intergenerational collaboration has on student voice initiatives. It allows young people to work alongside adult allies, such as teachers, principals, and community leaders, to advocate

for their needs and make their voices heard. My school has been blessed with educators who consistently engage in and organize initiatives to promote student voice.

Whether it be through organizing and participating in leadership retreats or engaging in hallway conversations to ensure that we feel supported in our roles, staff make an active effort to support the leadership and learning of students.

Involving educators in student voice initiatives provides guidance, support, and resources to students that can empower them to make a profound impact on their school community.

Furthermore, **intergenerational collaboration** can help promote a sense of community and belongingness among the staff and student body. When students and staff work together

towards a common goal, they develop a sense of purpose and connection.

Rather than delegating student voice initiatives to specific groups of students, extending opportunities to staff and students across the school community to collaborate on projects will **foster a sense of community** and belonging within the school.

By collaborating with individuals from different age groups, students can also build connections with people they might not have otherwise interacted with. **This can help combat feelings of isolation and loneliness** that can be common among students, especially as we encounter the long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Intergenerational collaboration in student voice initiatives is critical because it brings together people of different ages and lived experiences, which leads to a more comprehensive understanding of issues at hand. By involving both younger and older individuals, it is possible to **create a more welcoming environment** that fosters learning, growth, and development among staff and students alike.

Lastly, intergenerational collaboration in student voice initiatives opens spaces up to people with a broad range of experiences, serving as an **opportunity for staff and students to learn from one another.**

This helps to bridge generational disconnect, promote mutual understanding, and foster respect. The older generation has valuable knowledge, skills, and experiences that can benefit the younger generation, while the younger generation brings fresh ideas, perspectives, and energy to the table. For students, intergenerational collaboration promotes leadership development. When they work alongside adults, they learn essential skills such as communication, collaboration, and

problem-solving, which are critical for their personal and professional growth. As they gain confidence and experience, they can take on more significant roles in their communities and become effective leaders. Regarding educators, intergenerational collaboration helps them gain valuable insights and perspectives from students that they may not have considered before. This can lead to a more well-rounded and holistic understanding of the student voice initiative they are promoting.

In conclusion, intergenerational collaboration is an essential tool for promoting student voice initiatives. When people from different age groups work together towards a common goal, youth are confident in their leadership, it promotes a welcoming environment and fosters a sense of belonging, and it serves as an opportunity for everyone involved to learn from one another.

Student voice is a catalyst for positive change, and involving adult allies in student voice initiatives can strengthen the impact that students can make. As such, educators should prioritize intergenerational collaboration in their efforts to foster student leadership, which will subsequently create

positive change in their communities. By providing guidance, support, and leadership to students, principals can help them develop their leadership skills, achieve their goals, build relationships and connections, make a positive impact, and pay forward to their peers what they have learned. As such, it is important for students and staff to support each other to grow the capacity for student voice initiatives through intergenerational collaboration.



Student voice is a catalyst for positive change, and involving adult allies in student voice initiatives can strengthen the impacts that students can make.



Talks with Alex Oo, Leader: Assessment for Complex Learners Project

Matthew Johnson - ICP General Representative



About the Assessment for Complex Learners project

There is a major gap worldwide in how to assess learning for students with complex learning needs and disability.

In Australia, the New South Wales Department of Education's [Disability Strategy](#) describes this key gap and our commitment to filling this gap in the following ways:

- “There is not enough information about what works well for students with disability”.
- There is a need for “better understanding of how all students are progressing”.
- “We are committed to building a more inclusive education system, one where all students feel welcomed and are learning to their fullest capability”.

The Assessment for Complex Learners (AfCL) project aims to understand and describe what learning looks like for students with complex learning needs and disability through researching and trialling new assessment tools.

The project is part of the NSW Disability Strategy initiative to improve the educational outcomes of children and young people with disability. We seek to improve educational outcomes by providing educators with clear guidelines to assess, support and scaffold learning for students with complex learning needs and disabilities.

The AfCL project has now successfully developed the world's first fully inclusive measures of learning in the form of innovative, new assessment tools. These tools were developed by educators and then refined, trialled and scaled with support from the broader department. The tools have been developed into digital applications that educators can use to assess their learners and monitor progress over time. The detailed assessment tools provide educators with the ability to use assessment data to inform and design teaching and learning programs for their students.

Introducing the team

The AfCL team is a cross-disciplinary team made up of researchers, educators, designers and software developers. Key to the AfCL project has been a close collaboration with schools across New South Wales, with over 350 schools participating to either co-design or trial and refine the assessment tools over the last 5 years. This close relationship with schools has been crucial to ensuring that innovation happening in schools could not only be identified but also validated by hundreds of other schools across the state.

Q&A

Hi Alex, thank you for speaking with me today about the **Assessment for Complex Learners project**. I've loved watching the progress of the project over the years as a close collaborator whose schools have also participated in the project. My understanding is that the trial phase is now complete. I'd love to hear where your team is up to with this work and about your findings. But first,



Q: What is the Assessment for Complex Learners project all about?



A: Thanks for allowing us to share this work, Matt. This project is all about what does learning look like for our most complex learners, those needing support to establish a strong first language.

For many students with complex learning needs and disability, mainstream assessment tools don't do a good enough job of describing where our students are at and where to go next in their learning.

We looked widely across education systems and the research literature and found that existing assessment tools were not suitable as they tended to focus on a student's disability and not their ability. There was a tendency towards deficit framing of students with disability, and less about what has the student been able to learn and achieve so far. We wanted to turn that framing on its head and really provide opportunities to celebrate student learning by better assessing the current skills and progress of all students.



Q: What kind of students are we talking about?



A: Some of the students using our assessment tools may be non-verbal, have language skills below those expected for their age, or they may have less awareness of people and objects than neurotypical students.



Neurodiverse students may therefore have prolonged periods, or different ways, of learning key knowledge or skills, compared with neurotypical students.



In particular, they may need support to develop their language skills. But they may also be in the early stages of developing social, emotional, receptive, expressive or cognitive skills.

There is a lack of assessment tools across the world for these kinds of students.



Q: Ok, I'm getting a picture of the type of student. Now tell me about the assessment tools.



A: So far we have refined and trialled 2 assessment tools developed by NSW schools: the Literacy and Numeracy Precursor Indicators (L&N Precursors) and the Passport for learning (the Passport). We have also been researching a third tool, Students with Additional Needs (SWANs), developed by the University of Melbourne.



Q: Tell us about the L&N Precursors, what is that?

A: The L&N Precursors are a set of indicators that are intended to be precursors to the National Literacy and Numeracy Learning Progressions (the Progressions).



These indicators describe the skills students may need to establish a strong first language and access the later literacy and numeracy skills described in the Progressions. The L&N Precursors combined with the Progressions span the full spectrum of students and their literacy and numeracy skills, meaning that any student can be assessed using these tools.

Q: What about the Passport, what is that and how is it different from the L&N Precursors?

A: The Passport is a holistic formative assessment approach for students with moderate to severe intellectual disability. It was developed by 2 NSW schools to ensure learning is scaffolded for all students, especially those needing support to establish a strong first language. The Passport tool assesses learning in four domains, namely cognitive, receptive, expressive and social skills.

Q: And how about SWANs?

A: SWANs is a suite of validated assessments developed by the University of Melbourne and used widely across Australia in special education. The SWANs assessment, reporting, and planning materials are designed to support inclusive educational practices in a flexible manner.



Q: Wow, these assessment tools are really powerful! What have you seen as the main benefits of them in

your trials so far?



A: The tools have been a significant value add to educators in 5 main areas. Second, the tools foster collaboration and sharing through a common language. Once educators understand the tools, it becomes very quick and easy for educators to communicate with their colleagues, other support staff

“First, the tools support educators with their workload and stress by removing the need for the educator to constantly reinvent the wheel and come up with a new assessment tool for the great variety of learners they have in their class.”

in schools and even families on where their students are at. This works on a day-to-day basis such as supporting a student to emotionally regulate in a given moment, or in the long-term such as setting goals for personalised learning and support plans.

Third, the tools have made students visible in that no matter what level of ability the students may have, their successes can be identified, shared and celebrated, no matter the skill level or how slight the progress may be.



Fourth, the tools improve teacher practice through making high-quality data available for them to use in assessment, reporting and teacher planning, both at individual and school levels.



Finally, the tools promote greater coherence and connection between mainstream and specialist settings. They recognise the value of special education, while also supporting mainstream educators to better understand the complexities and the skills of students with disability.



Q: That sounds like excellent feedback from the educators who have used the tools. Where can people interested in this work get more information?



A: We plan to release more information publicly later this year.

So keep a look out for upcoming publications and news. We are also happy to talk, you can contact us on our email AssessmentforComplexLearners@det.nsw.edu.au to learn more about the project.



“With political influence reduced and education systems functional, we could offer a much brighter future to the next generation.”



Preparing The Next Generation

Liz Hawes - Executive Officer and Publications Manager (NZPF)



Why is it that school educators face repeated challenges, and as Governments come and go, face repeated restructures, reviews, and reforms to ‘fix’ the problems for the next generation, only to find the same problems turn up again and again?

What are the real barriers to making progress? I suggest, they sit with education systems and politics.

In Aotearoa New Zealand our performance in literacy, numeracy and science has taken a dip and become a ‘problem to fix’. Consistently, there is a substantial academic performance gap between non-Māori and Māori and Pacific Island students. Our principals and teachers have scarce support or professional learning and development options that are systemically funded.

The Curriculum Advisory, that once operated very effectively, through expert subject specific practitioners giving excellent advice to schools, is now close to non-existent. Currently we are experiencing a teacher shortage.

Teachers and principals consistently report their workloads are becoming intolerable. **The training of our teachers largely takes place in universities where practical subjects like dance, drama, art and sports and ‘how’ to teach, are inadequately addressed.**

We have insufficient counsellors, specialists, and learning support for the growing number of students presenting with mental health, learning disorders and behavioural issues. What services do exist are inequitably distributed and there is a high level of inequity both in society and between schools. Aotearoa New Zealand does not have exclusivity over these issues. These are problems experienced world-wide.



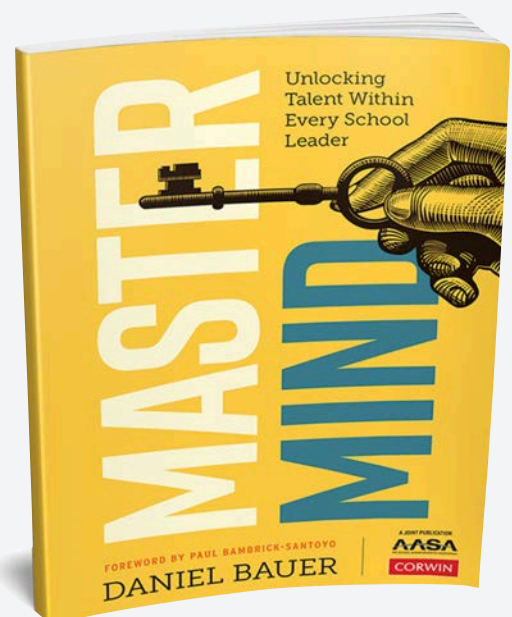
Mastermind: A Different Approach to Leadership Development

Sofia Hughes - ICP Executive Secretary

Imagine taking on a position as Principal with the knowledge that you have a supportive team that has got your back and is willing to help you find solutions to your challenges at all times. As you go about the daily business of running a school, with all the complexities the task entails, you know that once a week you have a safe place to discuss ideas, work through problems of practice, get suggestions to approach difficult conversations, plan for change and innovation, or simply have a place where you are always welcome, where you can be yourself and where you can find peers in similar leadership positions who are available to learn with you and think with you on an ongoing basis.

Does that sound ideal? Can you imagine having a network like that, whether you are an experienced leader, a newly appointed leader or an emerging leader? Let me tell you about how I discovered **Daniel Bauer** of

Better Leaders Better Schools (BLBS) and his structured coaching program that promotes lifelong learning for participants: **The Ruckus Maker Mastermind™**



It was May of 2020 and the pandemic was hitting society full force. For educators, the pandemic was perhaps one of the most difficult times to get through in the recent past. Like many other school leaders, I was struggling to figure out how to keep everyone afloat: my students, my staff, myself and the work we did at the IB bilingual school I was at in Argentina.

Despite it being my fourth year as Head of Secondary and knowing I had the full support of my staff, May of 2020 found me overwhelmed by the task of leading a school and a community through the pandemic. Like many other school leaders I rummaged through the internet in search of answers and took any PD webinar I could find in an attempt to figure out how to navigate the uncertainty and instability of the context. **Jokingly we used to say that we had gone from Class II to Class VI rapids overnight, and that two months later the level of difficulty had not eased.** I realized I needed more. I needed to think with others in my same position, beyond my school, I needed to find experts that could guide me to overcome the new demands on my leadership. That is when I found the Mastermind, the best PD tool I ever engaged in over my 20 years as a school leader. 3 years later, I am still hooked.

I first found Danny Bauer, Chief Ruckus Maker at Better Leaders Better Schools (BLBS), through his website and his blogs and profited from the many great ideas he shared. He was provocative, a no-nonsense kind of writer and resonated deeply with my own concerns. I then subscribed to his podcast, the most influential podcast available for educational leaders with over two million downloads. But the most transformative thing I did was join one of his Masterminds.

The Ruckus Maker Mastermind™ groups started in 2016 when Danny Bauer decided to change how professional development was offered to school leaders. He believes that **Principals need to take control of their own development, in a collaborative environment, and that is exactly what the structure of a Mastermind can offer.** Instead of attending conferences and jumping from one session to another, in a rushed experience of collecting ideas and solutions,



“Principals need to take control of their own development, in a collaborative environment...”

the Mastermind offers a regular space for professional development that is fully embedded in the reality of school and the actual need of each Principal. Danny describes the mastermind experience this way: **Relevant, Responsive, and Results-Oriented Professional Development™**.

The method is quite simple.

A group of school leaders comes together on a regular basis, in a structured collaborative coaching practice, to address challenges that all principals face at one point or another.

As leaders we have all felt that we are the only ones facing a particular problem, when in reality, that's not the case. As school leaders, we all have to navigate tough conversations, manage difficult parents, teachers or students, have a clear vision of what we want for our schools, plan the implementation of change and innovation, hire and fire staff, make decisions that will impact teaching, learning and assessment, manage all kinds of crises, and many other similar situations. How do you shift from a leadership style that favours independent, autonomous leadership to one that favours a collaborative approach to leadership?

Masterminds are based on the ABCs of Powerful Professional Development ®: **Authenticity, Belonging and Challenge.**

They are places where you can be your true self while you become better, where you are fully accepted and experience belonging, and where you learn with others, grow together and challenge each other. **Most school leaders receive little or no training as they start their roles.** Some leaders are lucky enough to have mentors or coaches assigned to them as they get started. Few leaders

find that the many leadership meetings they attend focus on how they can become better at what they do. In the Mastermind, while you learn these things for your own levelling-up, you also learn how to create a culture that will enable the development of those in your teams.

In a typical Mastermind session facilitation rotates. This creates an opportunity for everyone to have a chance to show themselves as leaders and also to experience different styles of leadership. The shared responsibility of leading the group signals the equality of members and the respect we all have in our peers' abilities.

The meeting begins with a warm-up activity to check-in and a good practice tip that other leaders can take back to their schools. It continues with a discussion of the book being read at the time, which is usually a book from outside the world of education. At this moment we are reading **Reboot: Leadership and the Art of Growing Up by Jerry Colonna.** We have read books on racism, disability, leadership, giving feedback, decision-making, tough conversations, setting objectives, and many more relating to skills that are essential to our work as school leaders but are often not included in the training we receive. In our discussions we consider how to apply and make the ideas relevant to our schools. Finally, on a rotating basis, one person is on the “hot seat”.

The person on the hot seat will discuss a problem, project, question, challenge that they are dealing with and then receives feedback and questions from the rest of the group.

When you are on the hot seat you get immediate answers, suggestions or next steps for the actual situation you need to address in your work. We then close each meeting with a family photo that captures a moment from that session.

In addition to the Mastermind sessions, Better Leaders Better Schools (BLBS) offers many other resources for the professional development of school leaders. There's a toolkit of leadership tools, webinars, on-site workshops, live events, Deep Work Days™, individual coaching and other support to help school leaders develop the skills they need to become effective school leaders.

At a time when the attraction and retention of school leaders is in crisis, we need to tap into models of professional development that are working to keep leaders feeling fulfilled in their jobs. We need to create more spaces where authenticity, belonging and challenge happen. We need to help aspiring, newly appointed and experienced leaders to stay motivated and inspired, stay connected to that inner fire that led them to choose this profession, and this role, in the first place.

I am reminded of the statement by Steve Jobs made in 1997 for the iconic Think Different commercial that says: "Here's to the crazy ones, the misfits, the rebels, the troublemakers, the round pegs in the square holes ... the ones who see things differently ... You can quote them, disagree with them, glorify or vilify them, but the only thing you can't do is ignore them because they change things ... they push the human race forward, and while some may see them as the crazy ones, we see genius, because the ones who are crazy enough to think that they can change the world, are the ones who do."

To all the Principals out there, school leadership is a tough job. And you are not crazy to have chosen it. But you need to be supported. School leadership is a place of great isolation and it is also a place filled with great promise. Build your network. Find your Mastermind. Lean into it and stay crazy enough in the belief that you can change the world. Because with the right conditions, you can.

