



Leadership for Strategic Initiatives: From concept to process to alignment to the role of the Principal

Introduction

The evolution of a great idea into a program that actually works on the ground is worth mapping. How is it that some schools are able to engage so well with their communities on projects of importance and meaning? What are the critical factors that can help your school succeed in instituting a significant and sustainable initiative? How can you build a culture of enterprise that will support, protect and encourage those who are involved? And how should the role of the Principal play out?

At CIRCLE – The Centre for Innovation, Research, Creativity and Leadership in Education, we work with over 500 schools and other organizations to build cultures of excellence in leadership and learning. CIRCLE's work draws on nearly 30 years of consultancy, review, research, publication, training and development. Our experience has enabled us to synthesise the experience of schooling and the leadership processes that best serve it into a set of frameworks that can be used across and within schools to evaluate the performance of schools, programs and individuals with this aim of improvement in mind.

We believe that what defines your success in implementing a program is the extent to which the school community embraces the concept and makes it happen. This means the alignment of the initiative to the broader strategic intent and ethos of the community. It's the team members who are going to do the work that enables the idea to flourish and take roots. They need to understand it, own it and exercise the capacity that they have in the moment to make it real, within realistic resource and energy constraints. They need to accept and be able to contribute to the rationale for and methodology of the process.

In other words, it's the people in your team who will ensure the success or failure of initiatives. Their capacity will be directly influenced by:

- The way in which you grow them as leaders
- The culture of enterprise in which they operate

The following document is supported by the CIRCLE School Framework and scaffolds CIRCLE's process for assisting school leaders to plan for, implement and evaluate initiatives in their schools. It. We hope that it will act as a useful tool to help you to improve outcomes for learners in your community.

Dr Philip SA Cummins
Managing Director
phil@circle.org.au
July 2012

1. Growing your leadership of initiatives in schools

What do we mean by leadership in schools?

If we aspire to be an authentic leader, we must always be willing to:

Stand alone, live fearlessly, act heroically, want to be free and true more than anything else, take unconditional responsibility for oneself, face everything and avoid nothing, at all times see things impersonally, live for a higher purpose.

Andrew Cohen

We define leadership as the art of motivating, directing and influencing people so that they work together willingly to achieve the goals of the team or the broader organisation to which the team belongs. Leaders build relationships within teams. Leaders help teams to define identities. Leaders help teams to achieve tasks. All members of a community should be capable of exercising leadership in different contexts and the more that leadership is encouraged, the more it flourishes. CIRCLE believes in building authentic leadership in teams through values and relationships, transformation, sustainability and servanthood.

Values and relationships focused leadership: Leadership should place your values at the core of what it is that you do. Your values are your fundamental beliefs, those principles, standards and qualities that you consider to be worthwhile and desirable. They should be the context for and the justification of all of your actions and relationships. They should derive from, be driven by and nurture the relationships within your community.

Authentic leadership: Leadership for real should be underpinned by a commitment to the truth. Your actions must have genuineness and integrity – you must be honest in your relationships with others and, more importantly, be true to yourself. You must be inspired by and match your values as best you can to achieve this difficult challenge.

Transformational leadership: Leadership for change should bring about necessary change in people's lives, moving them from a position that enables them to meet their current needs and those of their school's culture to one where they can adapt to the future needs and the changing context of their community. This means ensuring that a futures orientation is integral to their perspectives, as well as a respect for the honourable and successful traditions of their past.

Sustainable leadership: Leadership for life should bring about change that enables your people and the organization to which you belong to continue to grow. This requires principles, policies and processes that specifically aim to pursue change at a rate and level of resources that your team can manage.

Service-oriented leadership: Leadership for others should acknowledge the necessity for serving the needs of others before your own needs. This connects you to your team and the tasks which it must achieve and helps you to articulate a genuine culture of servanthood.

This articulates into a framework of leadership outcomes that also correlates to national standards for principal leadership as follows:

- **Achievement:** knowledge and understanding, leading teaching and learning, leading improvement, innovation and change leadership in action, leadership style
- **Relationships:** personal qualities - social and interpersonal skills, developing self and others, team culture, conflict resolution
- **Communications:** personal qualities - social and interpersonal skills, engaging and working with the community, communication and vision
- **Initiatives:** vision and values, leading improvement, innovation and change, understanding and managing change, problem-solving and decision making
- **Reputation:** personal qualities - social and interpersonal skills, developing self and others, team culture, discipline

In this document, we will focus on this fourth domain: Initiatives.

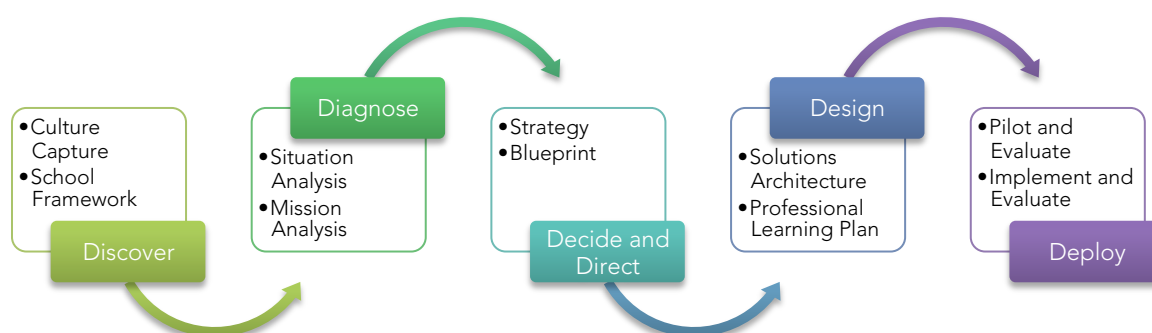
How do I lead school initiatives successfully?

Leadership of initiatives means planning for, implementing and achieving strategic programs and projects well. In leading initiatives, we draw on content that is related to vision and values, leading improvement, innovation and change, understanding and managing change, problem-solving and decision making. Your starting point is the overall process that you use. A successful strategic initiative meets a strategic need of the school by taking an idea and making it concrete. It flows from a disposition to think in a certain way:

Seeing ahead, seeing behind, seeing above, seeing below, seeing beside, seeing beyond,
seeing it through

H Mintzberg

Consider the following solutions architecture as a way of helping you to use your strategic thinking and convert it into a successful program:



With your solutions architecture in place, you can then map your own role to this process:

Leadership Criteria	Leadership Standards for School Initiatives Goal-setting and planning Functional leadership – the team, the task, the individual Problem-solving and decision-making Managing change Building a culture of enterprise
Outcomes	I am aligned with and contribute to the successful completion of a school's strategic intent and operational goals
Do I achieve what I set out to achieve?	<i>I put concepts and plans into action and achieve goals</i>
Processes	I develop, implement, review and refine key programs and initiatives via an operational plan that puts the School's strategic goals into practice
Do I use the best processes available to me?	<i>I measure and analyse critical data that makes a difference in achieving team goals</i>
Community Engagement	I employ team members appropriately in making decisions, avoid groupthink in the process and successfully manage the stress and risk associated with the decision
Do I engage with and satisfy our community's expectations?	I employ effective change management processes and strategies to overcome resistance and maintain team cohesiveness <i>I make timely decisions on behalf of the team and take action on these decisions appropriately</i>
Ethos	I introduce and manage desired changes in an intentional, goal-oriented and purposeful way, leading to a successful change process
Do I enhance our School's ethos and support its values?	<i>I improve our organisational knowledge through personal research and experimentation</i>
Strategic Intent	I employ a range of appropriate decision-making models that result in timely personal decisions that meet the desired object
Am I aligned with and contribute to our strategic intent?	<i>I encourage and teach others how to learn through action-orientation, experimentation and action-research by coaching team members and by building mentoring relationships</i>

Reflection 1: My leadership of initiatives

In reflecting on your own leadership of initiatives, ask yourself the following questions:

Leadership Knowledge and Understanding:

- Do I know how to set goals and plan for their achievement?
- Do I understand the principles of functional leadership – the team, the task, the individual?
- Do I understand effective problem-solving and decision-making processes?
- Do I recognise and understand change-management processes?
- Do I know how to build a culture of enterprise within my team?

Leadership Outcomes:

With respect to this knowledge and understanding about school and program initiatives:

- Do I achieve what I set out to achieve?
- Do I use the best process available to me?
- Do I engage with and satisfy our community's expectations?
- Do I enhance our School's ethos and support its values?
- Am I aligned with and do I contribute to our strategic intent?

Leadership in Action:

- Do I plan for, implement and achieve programs and initiatives well?
- Does my team plan for, implement and achieve programs and initiatives well?

2. Building a culture of enterprise in your school

A model for building a culture of enterprise in your school

Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbour. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover.

Mark Twain

Building change through enterprise means the way in which your school community encourages its members to explore new possibilities and ways of improving itself. The following model can help:

1. Build your enterprise
2. Lead for enterprise
3. Find your champions
4. Know your enemy
5. Learn from other schools
6. Learn from business
7. Evaluate your enterprise

Building your enterprise

Your strategic aim in building a culture of enterprise is to foster a spirit of excitement, adventure and initiative in your community. In other words, once you have defined "the box", you need to begin a process where you help your team to step out of it successfully and safely.

The creative act thrives in an environment of mutual stimulation, feedback and constructive criticism – in a community of creativity.

William T Brady

Don't try to get your wild geese to fly in formation.

Thomas J Watson, founder of IBM

Innovation has a lot to do with your ability to recognize surprising and unusual phenomena.
Herbert Simon, Nobel laureate in economics

What's the secret of entrepreneurial success? It's knowing how to use OPB (other people's brains) and OPM (Other people's money).

JB Furqua, Chairman, Furqua Industries

Today, you and your business are competing on the basis of emotion and imagination. Your task is to capture the energy and imagination of the people inside and around your business and move this energy forward to create wealth in the fullest sense of the word. It takes real emotional strength to lead. While becoming an emotional capitalist isn't easy, being intelligent about your emotions is critical to your success as a leader. Your personal level of emotional capitalism will determine your capacity to inspire or demoralise others.

Martyn Newman

What makes a school great today will not necessarily be replicable in the future as the needs of its community change. When change is successfully embedded and attention to the detail of this change is functioning at a high level, schools must take care to ensure that they continue to grow and evolve. This also helps you to build a culture of critical evaluation where review is welcomed as a tool for personal and group development. Ultimately, a school with a strong and rigorous spirit of enterprise is one to which people just want to belong.

Reflection 2: Building Enterprise

1. What does enterprise look like?
2. What does enterprise feel like?
3. Who are the entrepreneurs?
4. Who and what support entrepreneurial thinking and creativity in schools?
5. What can you do to support enterprise in your school?
6. How will you know when it's working?

Leading for enterprise – a values-based approach



Leadership that motivates, influences and directs others to achieve the team's goals willingly:

- **Authenticity:** acknowledging truth
 - "For real"
- **Transformation:** enabling change
 - "For change"
- **Sustainability:** nurturing the team and protecting resources
 - "For life"
- **Service:** serving others first
 - "For others"

For real: school improvement and reform in transformative schools:

These are schools where innovation is pursued on the back of high levels of consistency and agreement among the staff. School leaders adopt a disciplined approach to innovation, which ensures that any proposed new initiative is based on relevant research and/or successful practice in other schools, is documented and trialed, and then can be shared with other staff so that the lessons can be spread ... When the system is weak and lacks capacity, then priority should fall to consistency, with innovation coming on stream later down the path.

Vic Zbar

For change: five characteristics of leadership for creativity and innovation:

- A willingness to accept risk
- An ability to work with half-baked ideas
- A willingness to bend rules
- An ability to respond quickly
- Personal enthusiasm

John Adair

For life: qualities of sustainable leadership in education include:

- **Depth:** delivering leadership for the fundamental moral purpose of deep and broad learning while caring for and among others
- **Length:** meeting the challenges of leadership succession, of leading across and beyond individual leadership over time
- **Breadth:** distributed leadership that encompasses what leadership might deliberately become
- **Justice:** socially just leadership that shares knowledge and resources with the community
- **Diversity:** promoting cohesive diversity and networking among the community's varied components
- **Resourcefulness:** prudent and resourceful leadership that both recognises talent early and wastes neither people nor money
- **Conservation:** steadfast preservation of long-standing purposes and honourable traditions

Andy Hargreaves and Dean Fink

For others: servant leadership capability in schools

- **Core leadership tasks:** building vision and setting directions; understanding and developing people; redesigning the organisation; managing the teaching and learning program.
- **Key personal traits:** open-mindedness and willingness to learn from others; flexible (not dogmatic) thinking; strong moral compass within a system of core values including persistence and resilience; optimism and a positive disposition

Geoff Southworth

Reflection 3: Leading for enterprise – a values-based approach

1. How do you feel about these ideas?
2. How would your colleagues rate your leadership skills and traits? In what ways can your leadership skills and traits help or hinder the development of a culture of enterprise?
3. Which of the principles of school reform, creative leadership and sustainable leadership sit most comfortably with you? Which of them will require the most development on your part?
4. How might you apply this contemporary leadership practice in your school?

Finding Your Champions

Nurturing creative thinkers requires an understanding of the way in which they think

– iconoclasts' brains work differently to 97% of the population in 3 key ways:

1. **Perception:** they see and connect data differently
2. **Fear:** they ask 'what if' and see opportunity where most cannot overcome inherent fear of the unknown, fear of failure and fear of embarrassment
3. **Social intelligence:** most are not socially adept and require social connectors to link them and their ideas to the mainstream

Gregory Berns

Finding your champions also involves dispelling myths about creativity and its origins in organisations:

Myth	Reality
1.The smarter you are, the more creative you are	1.There is no correlation between creativity and intelligence above IQ 120
2.The young are more creative than the old	2.Minds either shaped by deep expertise or freed from conventional thinking can both lead to creativity
3.Creativity is for flamboyant risk-takers	3.Successful innovation is more likely to result from calculated risk-taking.
4.Creativity is a solitary act.	4.Collaboration results in innovation as much as individualism.
5.You can't manage creativity.	5.Managers can create the conditions in which creativity is more likely to occur.

Harvard Business Essentials, Innovator's Toolkit

Consider the commitment required to nurture your champions and the need to create a specialised environment in which creative thinkers can flourish – your own knowledge laboratory:

Acting as a sponsor for an untried project is no picnic. Most sponsors, I believe, tend to bet on people rather than on products. We have a saying at 3M that, 'The captains bite their tongues until they bleed.' The first virtue of a sponsor is faith. The second is patience. And the third is understanding the differences between temporary setback and terminal problem.

Louis Lehr, CEO of 3M

Epochal historical events have determined that the laboratory, not the monastery, will continue to dominate the life of learning. Other late-twentieth century trends, like the democratization and commercialization of knowledge, are now pressuring existing institutions to meet the demands of a knowledge society. Above all, the ascendancy of the laboratory is reshaping the basic mission of other institutions, pushing some towards obsolescence, giving others a new lease on life.

Ian F McNeely with Lisa Wolverton

Reflection 4: Finding your champions

1. Do you see yourself as a creative thinker? How would your colleagues answer this question?
2. What examples have you seen from your careers of creative thinkers in education?
3. How might you encourage the nurturing of creative thinkers in your school?
4. How can you support the connection of their thinking with the reality of practice in your school?
5. How can you support the development of knowledge and systems to foster the reality of creative practice in your school?
6. In particular, what can you do to create space and resources for a "laboratory" for research and development in your school?

Knowing Your Enemy

Lessons from the London LEAs in the 2000s – eight significant teacher-identified obstacles to professional growth:

- Lack of trust in teachers
- Lack of confidence/knowledge
- League tables and inspection
- Lack of time
- Overload and lack of confidence
- Fostered dependency
- Poor leadership
- Loss of what has been gained

Michael Fullan

Overcoming immunity to change – seven critical attributes of an organization that is a home for the continual transformation of talent:

- It recognizes that, like adolescence, adulthood must be a time for ongoing growth and development
- It honours the distinction between technical and adaptive learning agendas
- It recognizes and cultivates the individual's intrinsic motivation to grow
- It assumes that a change in mindset takes time and is not evenly paced
- It recognizes that mindsets shape thinking and feeling, so changing mindsets needs to involve the head and the heart
- It recognizes that neither change in mindset nor change in behaviour alone leads to transformation, but that each must be employed to bring about the other
- It provides safety for people to take the kinds of risks inherent in changing minds

Robert Kagan & Lisa Laskow

Appreciating the difference between risk-aversion and courage:

It is not the critic who counts, not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly ... who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, who spends himself in a worthy cause, who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who have never known neither victory nor defeat.

Theodore Roosevelt

Reflection 5: Knowing Your Enemy

1. How do you feel about these ideas?
2. What examples of barriers to school improvement have you seen in your careers?
3. What can you do to discourage them in your school?
4. Which do you feel more comfortable with – the head or the heart?
5. How well do you deal with the need for patience?
6. How well do you manage (as opposed to avoid) risk
7. What can you do to diminish a culture of immunity to change in your school?

Learning from Other Schools

The Chicago Schools in the 1990s – five lessons for sustaining growth and change:

- Create policies, goals and procedures that support school development in the face of external expectations
- Build local capacity by enhancing the knowledge and skills of staff to work cooperatively and coherently and to engage parents and the community more effectively
- Introduce systems of rigorous accountability
- Spawn innovation and diffuse knowledge of effective improvement efforts
- Build external partnerships – universities, learning networks, profit and not-for-profit organisations

Michael Fullan

West Des Moines in the 2000s – five key factors in creating a genuine learning community:

1. Invite engagement through larger teams
2. Replace central planning with local experimentation
3. Learn to be patient
4. Find ways to create the change initiative itself as a shared learning opportunity
5. Revisit and refine your guiding principles

Peter Senge et al

Reflection 6: Learning from Other Schools

1. How do you feel about these ideas?
2. How do they resemble the best schools in which you have worked?
3. How do you think your staff will respond to these ideas? Your students? Your parents and broader school community? The Board?
4. What strategies will you use to manage these conditions and the expectations of your community with respect to change and innovation? Whose help will you need?

Learning from Business

Creating the conditions for successful innovation – six necessary climactic conditions that enable innovation to flourish:

- Management commitment
- Positive strategic thinking
- A long-term perspective
- Responsiveness to change
- Acceptance of risk
- The right internal environment

John Adair

Igniting a Revolution – GE's Strategies for Dealing with Change

- Keep watch for ways to create more opportunities and to become more competitive
- Be Number 1 or Number 2 and keep redefining your market
- Downsize before it's too late!
- Use acquisitions to make quantum leaps
- Learning culture 1: use boundarylessness and empowerment to nurture a learning culture
- Learning culture 2: inculcate the best ideas into the business no matter where they come from

Robert Slater

Building a leadership team to support your enterprise – six key success factors in the fall of the heroic CEO and the rise of the leadership team:

1. First, decide if you need and want a team
2. Create a compelling purpose for your leadership team
3. Get the right people on your team – and the wrong ones off
4. Give your leadership team the structure it needs to work
5. Give your leadership team the support it needs to succeed
6. Coach your team – and timing is everything

Ruth Wageman, Debra A Nunes, James A Burgess & J Richard Hackman

Bridging the knowing-doing gap – there are no simple answers but 8 guidelines can help to shape your actions:

1. Why before How: Philosophy is important
2. Knowing comes from doing and teaching others how
3. Action counts more than elegant plans and concepts
4. There is no doing without mistakes – what is the company's response?
5. Beware of false analogies: fight the competition, not each other
6. Measure what matters and what can help turn knowledge into action
7. What leaders do, how they allocate their time and how they allocate resources matters

Jeffrey Pfeffer & Robert Sutton

Reflection 7

1. How do you feel about these ideas?
2. How does our profession respond to ideas from the business world?
3. Which of these ideas might translate most readily to your school?
4. Which of these ideas might require the most effort to achieve a good cultural fit?
5. How do you think your staff will respond to these ideas?
6. What strategies will you use to manage these responses?

Evaluating Your Culture of Enterprise

A checklist for making a difference:

- What is your idea?
- Why do you want to do it?
- What is your school's current culture of enterprise?
- How will your idea fit into this existing culture?
- What can you do to help your idea succeed?
- What help and resources will you need to make it work?
- How will you know when it's working?

Criteria for evaluation: school communities that have a healthy sense of enterprise can demonstrate the following:

- **Student achievement:** Whole school improvement in results measured through tracking and leading to expanded opportunities
- **Relationships within your community:** Community members feeling empowered to take initiative to look for new possibilities
- **Communication:** Words and action match and appeal to the wider community
- **School initiatives:** Aspirational and responsive new programs which reach well beyond reasonable expectations
- **Your school's reputation:** Responsive to needs and positive about change

Reflection 8: Evaluating Your Culture of Enterprise

1. How do you feel about these ideas?
2. How does our profession respond to processes of evaluation?
3. What are the best examples of collegial and professional evaluation that you have seen?
4. What strategies will you use to introduce and/or manage your evaluation processes?

Conclusions

A model for building a culture of enterprise in your school: building change through enterprise means the way in which your school community encourages its members to explore new possibilities and ways of improving itself:

1. Build your enterprise
2. Lead for enterprise
3. Find your champions
4. Know your enemy
5. Learn from other schools
6. Learn from business
7. Evaluate your enterprise

A final thought on leading an enterprise:

As an observer of life in organizations, I think I can say with some authority that people who are making an effort to embrace the future are a happier lot than those who are clinging to the past. That is not to say that learning how to become part of the twenty-first century enterprise is easy. But people who are attempting to grow, to become more comfortable with change, to develop leadership skills – these men and women are typically driven by a sense that they are doing what is right for themselves, their families and their organizations. That sense of purpose spurs them on and inspires them during rough periods.

And those people at the top of enterprises today, who encourage others to leap into the future, who help them overcome natural fears, and who thus expand the leadership capacity in their organizations – these people provide a profoundly important service for the entire human community. We need more of these people. And we will get them.

John P Kotter

Selected Reading

- John Adair, *Leadership for Innovation, How to organize team creativity and harvest ideas*, Kogan-Page, 2007
Gregory Berns, *Iconoclast, A neuroscientist reveals how to think differently*, Harvard Business Press, 2010
Michael Fullan, *Change Forces The Sequel*, Falmer Press, 1999
Michael Fullan, *Change Forces With A Vengeance*, Falmer Press, 2003
Andy Hargreaves & Dean Fink, *Sustainable Leadership*, Jossey-Bass, 2006
Harvard Business Essentials, *Innovator's Toolkit*, Harvard Business Press, 2009
Robert Kagan & Lisa Laskow, *Immunity to Change*, Harvard Business Press, 2009
John P Kotter, *Leading Change*, Harvard Business School, 1996
Ian F McNeely with Lisa Wolverson, *Reinventing Knowledge, From Alexandra to the Internet*, WW Norton & Co, 2008
H Mintzberg, *Strategic Thinking as Seeing in Strategy Bites Back*, Prentice Hall, 1995
Martyn Newman, *Emotional Capitalists The New Leaders*, John Wiley & Sons Australia, 2007
Jeffrey Pfeffer & Robert Sutton, *The Knowing-Doing Gap, How Smart Companies Turn Knowledge into Action*, Harvard Business School Press, 2000
Peter Senge et al, *Schools That Learn, A Fifth Discipline Fieldbook*, Currency, 2000
Robert Slater, *29 Leadership Secrets from Jack Welch*, McGraw-Hill, 2003
Geoff Southworth, *School Leadership: What we know and what it means for schools, their leaders and policy*, CSE, 2009
Ruth Wageman, Debra A Nunes, James A Burgess & J Richard Hackman, *Senior Leadership Teams, What it takes to make them great*, Harvard Business School Press, 2008
Vic Zbar, *School improvement and reform: The 'holy trinity' of consistency, innovation and capacity*, CSE, 2009