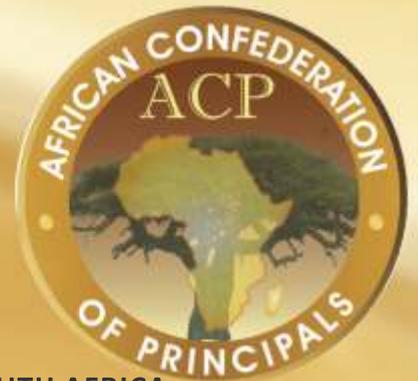
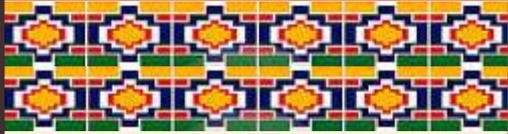




The African Principal



INITIATIVE OF ICP REPRESENTATIVE FOR AFRICA: ALTA VAN HEERDEN, SOUTH AFRICA



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**Thembi
Ndlovu**

From the ACP President's Pen

NOT AN EASY ROAD

Thembi Ndlovu (ACP and SAPA President)

Brian Parsley, a motivational speaker has written an article worth sharing.

He says, in the beginning we all set out to climb the mountain, but when life gets in the way, we settle for what is 'realistic' Fact is, one has the potential to achieve anything desired if we commit. We all want to be the best version of ourselves, whether it's six-pack, making vast amounts of money, or just happiness.



Unfortunately, what most of us lack is patience and endurance to succeed which comes with pain.

Pain is a feeling, but also the perception of discomfort. Very few rewards in life come without pain. If you are looking for an easy way to achieve your personal or professional goals, keep dreaming.

Life never gets easier but experiences create a higher tolerance to the pain life freely gives. Your ability to thrive in the face of adversity does more than make you stronger—it makes you a winner. It is not wealth but a feeling of accomplishment we want, something most people will never have.

The big question is: Are your goals really your own? Do you allow your dreams to be dictated by societal standards or by the way you are judged by others?

To achieve your goals require some sacrifices. How much time are you willing to commit each day to achieve the goals you set, regardless of circumstances? How much are you willing to commit to this venture with zero return?

We live in the world of instant gratification, but reality dictates that things do not come easily or quickly. Personal and professional aspirations always come down to your willingness to commit to your goal. Focus on why you are doing it and the rest falls into place.

Imagine: A mother's pain threshold during child birth. She goes through it enduring the pain because of the bigger reward at the end.

TO ALL SCHOOL LEADERS, Push through the pain knowing that in the end you will be proud that you did what most people would not endure. Set your goals high, commit and endure the journey to success. You will get your reward.



Message from the ICP Immediate Past President – Ari Pokka

Dear African Colleagues

Throughout my career ICP conventions have been my beacons every second year. Like the World Cup or European Cup, it is always in my diary. I look forward to them with great anticipation of making unforgettable memories, friends and develop professionally.

I attribute my remarkable growth as a school leader mostly to this international family, the same family in which you, my African friends, have shared a lot of your knowledge and wisdom.

ICP has given me wings to travel all around the world, but somehow I've lost my heart to Africa. As most love stories goes, you never know whether it is the truth, or your imagination, but who really cares. In Africa I have seen a great people, I have heard many sad stories, but have also seen some of the most beautiful places on earth. I've

seen all those young boys and girls of Africa, who are the future of your continent.

The Future will be a long journey, but I'm sure that you are ready for it..... because you my colleagues are future makers, every one of you! And if you sometimes feel you are alone, don't despair. You are part of a bigger story. You have friends and colleagues all over the world, yes, and one very special one in Finland.

See you in Cape Town! It is my last presidential duty, but be sure that someday I'll be back, because my clock is still ticking ICP time!

Yours,
Ari Pokka
Past President ICP



Mr and Mrs Pokka with African Delegates

Create the space, create the success.

When looking for the Eastern Cape education results one often goes to the bottom of the lists. Not in three schools, amongst others, in Duncan Village, in the East London district, where many learners live in shacks, while their parents work in Cape Town or Johannesburg, and their grandparents stay in Transkei, or their parents have sadly died, or they are unknown. Ever tried to run a school without parental engagement? Let us salute the following. All no fee paying schools, so very underfunded,.



Lujiza Public Primary

Infrastructure issues matter in education: beauty of surroundings impact learners' inner being, as does cleanliness, good teaching and leadership. These all impact education results. Proof of this lies in the Garden of Lujiza Public Primary grade R block (pictured) which in the 14 schools I am blessed to mentor in Duncan Village has good leadership, teaching commitment, psycho-social support, a kitchen, clean toilets, less litter, and vegetable gardens often looked after by the community.



Lujiza Public Primary

The Lujiza results for Term 1, 2017 were: 934 learners at the school had a 99% attendance rate, and a report mark pass rate of 88% against a District target of 60%.

The first focus of the new principal who arrived at Qaqamba Secondary last year, 2016, was the poor infrastructure as well as punctuality and safety. The toilets shown on the right took considerable time and tenacity to get the education department to fix the leaking taps and take control of the water supply as well as facing off "Izinyoka snakes" who were stealing electricity and furniture etc into the shacks. The female learners were now able to use the toilets for the whole month. To cut a long story short the Qaqamba Secondary school matric results at the end of 2016 showed a 300% improvement over the previous year. That is something!



Qaqamba Secondary School

Bolekwa Mangcunyana, the teacher pictured below, has picked up the suggestion of focussing, through separation, on those who can't read. After the term 1 results she separated this group from the rest of the Grade 3 class of 45 learners, into a classroom next door on Mondays for 2 hours and focusses on the Grade 1 learnings that these have not yet achieved. She does not separate them from their class during the rest of the week so they don't feel inferior. Her results at the end of the year will no doubt show significant improvement. Nompumelelo Primary is building its staff team togetherness through, for example, inter house athletics, and choir competitions, after years of squabbling.



Nompumelelo Primary

Let us salute three Principals: Nomhla Mtwla, Luzoko Lugodlo, and Mpumelelo Kolisile.

David Wylde
SEED Mentor
Duncan Village, East London
May 2017

SWAPA WORKSHOP & ELECTIVE CONFERENCE

VENUE: ESIBAYENI LODGE
DATES: 9 – 10 MAY 2017

Extract from the Opening remarks delivered by new SWAPA president Welcome Mhlanga



Mr. Welcome Mhlanga

Today we meet under the theme 'The Principal in a Changing Socio-economic and Political Environment'. We have a line-up of quality speakers who are going to unpack the theme and challenge us to be leaders of high quality.

As SWAPA we are cognisant of the fact that education is dynamic and so are the roles and responsibilities of the School Principal. As Heads of Schools it is imperative that we increase our leadership capacity to remain relevant and effective in the face of the frequent changes taking place in the education landscape.

In what John C. Maxwell calls the Law of the Lid, he argues that "Leadership ability is the lid that determines a person's level of effectiveness. The lower an individual's ability to lead, the lower the lid on his potential. The higher the leadership, the greater the effectiveness". (John C. Maxwell, 1998:1)

We are gathered here today to lift the lid of leadership! Colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, it is my belief that at the end of this workshop we shall all say "it was all worth the time".

The INSET (In Service Training) policy rationale clearly states that pre-service training needs to be supported by an equally efficient and professional in-service teacher education and training (INSET) system, since teachers' professional knowledge, like all other professional knowledge, weakens over time and requires constant re-modelling, upgrading and re-shaping. It goes on to reiterate that the development and in-servicing of the human resources base of any education system should be of vital concern and should be awarded high priority.

One of the INSET policy objectives is "To provide head teachers with on-going training in managerial skills in order to improve the quality of education in schools (The Swaziland Education and Training Sector Policy, 2011:42).

It is on this basis that we once again make a sincere call to our Ministry to prioritise in-service training for Principals. Principals as controlling officers need to be continually empowered in school management, in line with modern trends.

Mr PS, we strongly believe that once Principals are properly equipped with management/managerial skills the route to parliament (Public Accounts Committee) will grow thick grass (indlela leya ku PAC itakwena). As a SWAPA family it really disturbs us when our colleagues are hauled before the PAC and subjected to harsh treatment in the public space.

Having said all this, SWAPA as a stakeholder in education, pledges its support to the Ministry of Education and Training. We request the Ministry to see the organization as a partner than an opposition.

In closing, allow me as programme director to wish all nominees (including myself) the best of luck in the forthcoming elective conference. I sense a mixture of excitement and anxiety as the hour approaches. May those appointed to serve our noble organization at this time prevail. Muhle SWAPA Muhle!!!!!!

Thank you for listening. Siyabonga kulalela.

Welcome S. Mhlanga
SWAPA President



Voting for a new SWAPA Executive Committee



The newly elected SWAPA Executive Committee

SWAPA ELECTIVE CONFERENCE

(Continued)

Our inaugural elective conference held on 9 and 10 May was a wonderful experience. Thanks to all of you for your attendance and for the collegial interaction on educational matters. It was indeed a worthwhile experience.

Your words of welcome, Mr Welcome Mhlanga the then Vice President of the Association inspired us, particularly when you conceded SWAPA's determination to move towards signing the recognition agreement with government this year. And that the numbers are growing following the vigorous membership drives the four regions have had recently. Yes the association is moving forward to 'become a force to be reckoned with' in the country. 'Muhle SWAPA Muhle'

To Dr. N. Dlamini; Director of NCC thank you for the key note address on 'The Principal in the Changing Socio- Economic and Political Environment' and for reminding us about the need as Principals to reflect on our leadership; and how it has impacted the schools we are leading. In addition to that, as Principals we should ensure that effective teaching and learning practices and the general administration of the schools do not remain isolated and static but that they change, are changeable and that the change is often constantly, frequently and continually relevant to the global village.

Wow to Reverend A Dlamini for the presentation on 'The Implications of Social Changes for Schools and its Mandate to Offer Quality Education. Precisely, the social changes sweeping across have both positive and negative implications for schools. Only the school and a Principal with a well-crafted and defined vision will survive the test of time.

To Alta Van Heerden, ICP: Representative for Africa. Thank you for gracing our conference and your presentation on 'Principals Association and their enhancement on the Principal's Leadership and quality Education. You have given us assurance that we are on the right track and further encouraged us to thrive to grow ourselves and others. The greatest benefit of association is access to professional mentoring and coaching which we are enjoying right now and hoping to enjoy from interaction with Principals in Africa and across the globe through ACP and ICP. Your enthusiasm is amazing Alta!

The highlight of this conference was on the 10th when the following were elected as the National Executive Council for the period 2017 – 2020:

1. President – Mr Welcome Mhlanga
2. Vice President – Mr Petros Horton
3. General Secretary – Ms Thembi Nxumalo
4. Vice GS – Ms Gugu P Dlamini
5. Organising Secretary – Mr Edmund Vilakati
6. Treasurer – Ms Cynthia Mhlophe
7. Publications Editor – Ms Phindile Makhanya

The following is a picture from the conference.



Enjoy your passion!
Phindile Makhanya

A most joyous experience at the SWAPA Elective Conference

It was a great joy to represent the International Confederation of Principals (ICP) at the recent SWAPA Elective Conference to deliver a presentation on the importance of being affiliated to a professional principals' association.

As my school programme was very busy, I decided to travel to Swaziland and back in a day (a decision I would later regret as I only arrived home at 22:30 that evening). I started my journey in Cape Town at 05:00, travelled to Johannesburg and then to Swaziland. On arrival at Manzini Airport in Swaziland I was greeted by two very friendly gentlemen, whom I later discovered are well-known principals in the area. They were my travel companions to the conference venue and their interesting conversations shortened the hour-long journey substantially.

At the conference venue, I was once again greeted with great enthusiasm. The Swazi principals are very friendly people and they know how to make a visitor feel welcome. I only spent a few hours with these amazing people, but I felt as if I'd known them for years.

The theme of the conference was 'The Principal in a Changing Socio-economic and Political Environment' and the programme made provision for a variety of speakers, who addressed the topic from different perspectives.



Alta van Heerden and SWAPA Delegates

I would have loved to have spent more time in Swaziland but unfortunately, I had to return to my responsibilities at Sunlands Primary School because our South African schools did not have school holidays during my visit to Swaziland.

I would like to congratulate Welcome Mhlanga on his appointment as president of SWAPA. I know that he and his team are committed to excellence and bringing about the change that they envisage in their schools.

I wish SWAPA much success for the future and look forward to this association growing into a formidable force in Africa.

Alta van Heerden
ICP Representative for Africa

Lesotho Principals' Association rejects Five year contract

During the General meeting of LESPA held at the ECOL centre on the 26th May 2017, members rejected the proposed five year contract for principals.

LESPA members said any contract between the employee and the employer must be negotiated. In this case the employer is imposing the contract for five years on principals.

The previous performance contract has now come to an end and the government has not paid the agreed gratuity of 25% of the salary yet. LESPA members felt that the gratuity should be 50% in the new contract as is the case in other Southern African countries.

In the new contract principals are expected to resign from their present teaching positions, which will affect their terminal benefits negatively. The new remuneration package is also very low and not comparable with countries such as Swaziland, Botswana and South Africa.

A monthly deduction of one third of principals' salaries is mentioned in the contract, if a principal fails to pay tuition fee share. This clause is unacceptable to principals.

Dr Ramatla Easow Varkey
Secretary General LESPA



LESPA Elections

The principals' association in Lesotho has recently elected their new executive committee for the next few years until 2021. They are:

President:	Mr Teboho Mokhomo
Vice-President:	Dr Ramatla Easow Varkey
Secretary:	Mrs Majoalone Mathebeng
Vice:	Mr Monare
Treasurer:	Mrs Maitumeleng Mohapi
PRO 1:	Mr Moteuli Mathafeng
PRO 2:	Mrs Moses Phole
Members:	Mrs Malichaba, Mr Mpati, Mr Mafaesa.

We congratulate the executive and wish them much success in the years ahead.

A YEARNING FOR LEARNING

By Tim Middleton, Zimbabwe

A Head was once asked, “How many people work at your school?” and he was able to answer promptly and proudly, “Sixty-five.” The questioner was intrigued and suggested that was not all that many but the Head quickly replied that that was the right amount of staff for the number of pupils that were at the school, given all the subject requirements and sporting disciplines. The enquirer paused for a while before following up with the question: “Don't your pupils work?”

The apocryphal story above may raise a smile but it is probably a pretty accurate example of what any Head would say. It most likely stems from the very concept that school is about teaching and it is teachers who do the teaching – so they are the ones who are working. No doubt, too, the pupils would be very quick to jump in and add that the teachers are getting paid and they (the pupils) are not, so do not expect them to work! It also has a lot to do with why we produce programmed youngsters instead of principled ones, as we considered in a previous article. I would wish to argue here that there is too much emphasis on teachers and teaching in our schools and not enough on the learners and learning. 'Teaching' is an anagram of 'cheating' and perhaps we 'cheat' our youngsters by teaching them, by spoon-feeding them. It is not simply a matter of the old adage “Don't-give-a-man-but-teach-them-how-to-fish” – it is rather 'help him to learn to fish himself'.

We need to help pupils learn how to learn. Our role as teachers (and parents) is to facilitate the pupils' learning. The purpose, the goal, of education is not teaching but learning. After all, we can have an awful lot of teaching going on (and some of it may be awful too) but there may be very little learning. And often the learning that does take place does not come from what is taught. The fact is that pupils are learning all the time – the question is whether they are learning what they are being taught. As we have noted in previous articles, they are learning from teachers, parents, politicians and celebrities all the time but those may not be the things we want them to learn. They may learn from adults that bullying works – after all, no-one ever sits down and teaches a child to bully yet look around you, not just in schools, and consider the amount of bullying that exists. They are learning far more than they are being taught.

We must therefore help them to learn the right things. They need to learn, first of all, to learn for themselves. While educationalists might focus on the variety of different teaching styles we should also remember the variety of different learning styles. Many learn the most from experience. When we learn how to drive a car, no-one teaches us in a room to push our right foot down on the accelerator at the same time as we lift our left foot gently and slowly on the clutch and so on ... we are put in a car and we learn, by doing it! It was Confucius who said a long time ago: “I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand.”

People can above all learn from their mistakes – yet too often parents and teachers do not allow youngsters to make mistakes or to lose, so they miss out on an incredibly important part of the curriculum. Pupils must learn to handle both “triumph and disaster” appropriately and positively, as the poet Kipling said (in his poem “If”). They must learn to do it, ultimately, on their own.

People must learn to make decisions so we must give them opportunities to make decisions, easy ones to begin with but harder ones as they go on. Coaches screaming constant instructions from the sidelines are not helping the players to make decisions; players are not learning anything from that.

People must learn to see what is important and to make the most of opportunities presented to them. Pupils must learn to earn respect but that does not come from text-books or homework. They need to learn to ask questions, to search for answers, to find purpose for themselves.

The bottom line is that learning is more important than teaching. Therefore we must instil in our youngsters a yearning for learning. Then everyone will be working without knowing it or without thinking it – and the Head will give a different answer.



Never-Ending Journey



I was one of those people that used to think teaching abroad is some kind of paid vacation, or sight-seeing with a paycheck. It's definitely not that easy. But in the end, it's worth the challenge.

After 26 years in the South African education system, both Government and Independent, but mainly High School, a twist of fate saw me moving to Yangon, Myanmar with no set plans, but to join my husband. I don't speak Burmese, and I knew nothing about the country, Myanmar.

As I stepped off the plane in Yangon, I realized I was the only foreigner in sight. Every single sign was in Burmese and is completely unintelligible to me. That's when it hit me...this was not Durban, this wasn't even another Western country, which while foreign was still familiar and comfortable. It was an entirely different experience than anything I had known. And it just got deeper.

In the words of Sting: "Oh, I'm an alien, I'm a legal alien. I'm an Englishman in New York...."

After 2 weeks in Yangon, I was very fortunate to be offered the position of Principal at an Early Childhood Center, a pre-school attached to an Elementary and High School. Myanmar just stepped out of years of isolation and there is a growing need for teachers and "international schools" are mushrooming all over the place. Most caters for locals who value, and can afford to pay for, a specific type of education in a specific language, as well as for the community of multi-national employees, mainly from Asia and America.

This year was filled with adventures and experiences, from the first time I walked into the school and all the little ones hid behind their teachers, because they had never seen a very tall, blonde westerner in real life, to getting used to walking around barefoot.

There were many changes to adapt to besides the change of location and culture. I, personally, love very direct communication, but this approach can be perceived as too aggressive, especially in Myanmar, where, for example, indirect communication is the norm, and "saving face" is their guiding principal.

There is the change in the student body and colleagues, the change in parental expectations, the loss of familiar signs and symbols and all of this have a huge impact on your professional satisfaction and personal happiness.

But to watch a country pull itself together after years of isolation and military rule is an amazing experience. The change in this last year alone, has been significant. The Burmese people have been kind, welcoming and grateful for me joining their school.

After a year, I can honestly say that moving to Myanmar was one of the better decisions of my life. I was afforded a unique opportunity to become part of a community, to teach, and also to learn from my students, teachers and their country. Compensation aside, I have gained an experience that has truly served me well. Professionally, it gave me access to new educational systems and practices, taking me totally out of my comfort zone.

Personally, the gains were even greater. It is here in my little school, with nowhere to hide and only local staff, that I've received the gifts of fortitude, the confidence to laugh at myself, and the ability to communicate and connect with people outside the boundaries of words.

There were some hard times, and some dark moments where I felt totally isolated, but I've learned how to get through it. Knowing I've survived this year has helped give me perspective on life and things I take for granted.

Yes, it was perhaps, one of my less logical decisions, but there were adventures to be had and money to be made. It has been a year of travel and laughter, ridiculous situations, embarrassment, and great learning.

There are many websites and blogs to research, but the best advice I can give to anyone moving to teach abroad is: "Expect the unexpected."

René MacQuillin,
Myanmar



My ECC staff and I

Why should Educational Robotics be part of the ABC Christian Academy Curriculum?

ABC Christian Academy is a small international missionary school in Lilongwe, Malawi. We provide a high standard of education to students from around 20 different nationalities. Despite the normal day to day problems such as lack of electricity, we have persevered and decided that at the start of the 2017-2018 Academic year, we will introduce Robotics and Educational Lego from Reception through to Fifth Grade.

Worldwide research has shown that knowledge alone is not enough to prepare our learners for working and living in the 21st century. A study done by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (people from the business community, education leaders and policymakers) defined a set of essential skills which are now known as the 21st century skills. They are the following:

3 R's - Reading, wRiting, aRithmetic

4 C's - Critical thinking, Creativity, Communication, Collaboration

2 M's - Meta-cognition (thinking about your own thinking), Motivation

While the 3 R's have always been taught in schools, very little attention has been given to developing the other 6 skills. On top of that more and more people believe that coding is a new language and that every child deserves to be fluent in it.

How will we do it?

In Reception and Grade 1 we introduce the LEGO® Early Simple Machine (ESM) DUPLO® sets. All mechanical machines are made up of a combination of 6 simple machines and by using these sets our young learners are introduced to real life concepts like gears, wheels and pulleys. In Reception they build models from instructions and in Grade 1 we allow and motivate them to design their own models enhancing creativity and critical thinking as well as communication and collaboration as they work in groups.

This is done to prepare them for the Robotics programme that is introduced in Grade 2 and Grade 3 where the LEGO® WeDo sets are used. LEGO® WeDo is a simple-to-use tool that enables students to learn and construct with LEGO sized bricks and then bring their models to life by programming them using the very child friendly WeDo software.



The WeDo Software System

These sets also include a motion and a tilt sensor which allows the models to be programmed to obtain information from the environment and “make decisions” based on this information.

Learners work in pairs of two and each of these groups use a **dedicated laptop** and WeDo set allowing them to build, programme and discover at their own pace.

As in Grade 1, Grade 3 learners design and programme their own models.

When our learners reach the Intermediate phase we change to the more advanced LEGO® Mindstorms sets which include more intricate motors and a variety of sensors. In a systematic way the learners are introduced to a more advanced programming language in order to programme their robots to function in an autonomous way. Starting off they build a robot from instructions, but as they progress they are challenged to solve “real life” problems where they need to design the models and programme them to solve a given problem.

By exposing our learners to child friendly technology and programming from a young age, we believe that they will master the much needed 21st century skills as well as the confidence to face the challenges they will have to face in the very competitive world they are growing up in.

Jannie Le Roux
Headmaster
ABC Christian Academy
Lilongwe, Malawi



Educational Robotics

Health and wellbeing: Lessons from the field.



PRINCIPAL
HEALTH & WELLBEING

Sheree Vertigan: ICP Executive Secretary

With the release of Dr. Philip Riley's Principal Health and Well-being Survey (2016) <http://www.principalhealth.org> attention turns again to how we can improve principal well-being. It is clear from the longitudinal data that there is no simple remedy to address the issue and that the answer cannot be found by focusing solely on the principal or the school. It is about community and society and how we, collectively, respond to this huge issue.

As a former Principal and Past President of the Australian Secondary Principals Association, as well as a coach and critical friend to many current principals, the following are a reflection from that experience on practices and strategies that can make a difference.

It is appropriate to state upfront that there is no one strategy, no magic ingredient that will make a difference in every context. Everyone in education acknowledges the role played by culture and context: they can be both a barrier and an enabler.

Each one of the strategies raised is a topic for in-depth discussion: the following is an overview not a definitive list.

Personal Introduction

A couple of quick points to give some personal commentary beyond my CV:

You cannot look after others unless you take care of yourself

Leadership always starts from within

No job, no role, is more important than your health

Everyone needs a strategy to manage self

In 2006, I was introduced to Ellen J. Langer and the concept of mindfulness.

Put simply, mindfulness and mindlessness is about how our mindset or our thinking influences our

behaviors. In the context of leading a school, it is often about searching for the right response for the situation rather than being dogmatic, rigid and continuing to do things that don't work repeatedly. We all have choice and we all have responsibilities.

Mindfulness is about:

Time to contemplate and reflect

Being proactive rather than reactive

Using interactions to build trusting relationships

Building social capital so that there is a shared commitment.

Everyone needs a strategy and for me it is mindfulness. I try to practice mindfulness all day, every day. Sometimes I succeed and sometimes I fail, but it is always there as part of my mindset and the lens through which I view my role.

We need to be upfront and recognise that stress will always be present in our profession: it is how we respond that is the key.

In 2002 I became the Principal of a school that had been destroyed by an arsonist. The school was relocated on a temporary site while a new school was built. Understandably this was a very stressful event but of concern was the number of staff who had not been able to adjust or heal. Their mental state had a profound impact on the tone of the school, their capacity to teach, their interaction with students and our capacity to cover all the sick leave days.

After much research and extensive consultation, we made the decision to undertake a program of mental health awareness training for the whole school. The leadership team trained the teachers, key teachers trained the senior students, and the senior students then trained or worked with the junior students.

Health and wellbeing: Lessons from the field.

Representatives from each group then worked with parents, explaining what we were doing and why we were doing it. The outcome was a dramatic improvement in school attendance for students and teachers, an increase in the number of people who self-referred to the school psychologists and overall, we became a happier healthier place.

1. Self-management

Overview

Mindfulness is my personal management strategy that I use in combination with a fitness regime – my experience has shown that everyone needs to identify a personal strategy and learn to use it as a construct for your day and specifically in moments of stress.

Learn to like yourself; learn to care for yourself; find friends and colleagues who share similar mindsets and similar interests and find people who you know you can trust.

Separate the personal from the professional - learn to talk about other things apart from school and education with your colleagues and personal network.

Strategies:

Physical health

Invite staff members to join a 'fit club' with you: try to get a group discount

Negotiate with a local doctor or pharmacist to provide staff with an annual free health check

Sign up to online health challenges, e.g. 10,000 steps a day

Mental health

Keep a well-being journal – use it as a private debrief and an opportunity to identify what causes stress. We all have our own writing styles but some starters might include:

- Rate 'my day' and then describe what was behind the rating.
- Identify high points and low points – record your response to these points?
- Did I celebrate or enjoy achievements of self and others?

- What would I do differently next time? What do I need to do to make changes to my practices?
- What am I hearing and what am I thinking?
- What has made me sad, mad or glad today?
(I regularly ask this question of my staff – it is a great litmus test)

Commit to undertaking professional learning or seeking advice around how to recognise and manage stressors. That advice may be provided by a coach, a mentor, a critical friend or psychologist/psychiatrist

Emotional and mental health matter- when you visit <http://www.lumosity.com> a site designed to exercise your brain and improve mental agility the first question is 'how you are feeling today?' Emotional well-being will colour your interactions and impact on your day.

Work Practices

Schools exist in a world of new policies, new directions and constant change. Evidence shows that principals' workloads have increased and intensified. It is easy to get caught up in the rhetoric that everything is both urgent and important. In this environment, most react rather than consider and respond – a reactionary environment is a stressful environment, and it is very easy to become overwhelmed and unable to operate productively.

Colleagues have spoken about their inability to focus on new tasks or big picture strategic work, instead they have found themselves focusing on small often less important busy work just so they can manage their day.

This environment is not only detrimental to an individual's health, but it also contributes to a loss of focus and impetus, which in turn impacts on productivity and school outcomes. Put simply, you can't get the best outcomes for your school when your health and well-being is under threat.

The Breakthrough Coach' - Malachi Panacost, for example, provides a multitude of strategies to help the

Health and wellbeing: Lessons from the field.

Principals find time to focus on the important i.e. blocking out regular times in your diary when you are in classrooms or times when you cannot be interrupted, and ensuring that roles are clearly defined and tasks appropriately allocated.

2. Professional supports

Overview

A recent study undertaken by MIT Leadership Center revealed that status and authority, associated with position, could both insulate and isolate leaders. Being a Principal can be a very lonely position; it is critical that principals invest in building connections and relationships - education is a people business! Both evidence and experience have shown that too many people wait until they are heading towards a crisis before they look to colleagues for support. There is no point to stoicism – learn to be 'help seeking' and begin to develop a set of protective strategies.

Strategies

Create a buddy or critical friend network.

Find a mentor or coach

Lobby colleague principals or members of Principal Associations to urge employers to appoint a mentor in readiness for Day One of a new Principal's assignment or create a profession driven mentor program.

Don't let pride or fear get in the way, **reach out** as there is always someone who is willing to listen, to share and to support. Acknowledgement of an issue is an opportunity for growth and development.

3. Practices (organizational)

Overview

Schools are by their very nature stressful places: they are communities of diverse individuals who can behave in unpredictable ways. People respond to stress in different ways: some are energised and some

are overwhelmed but for all there is an optimum level of stress that provides impetus or motivation.

There are always factors i.e. classroom management, behavior management, lesson preparation that add pressure in a school day, and there are regular events in a school year that can be defined as pressure times (orientation days, examinations, reporting and parent interviews). These cannot be ignored and principals must work with staff to develop appropriate strategies and response.

Strategies and policies

Ensure that teachers are well supported by collaboratively developed policies i.e supportive school community, behavior management

Ensure that a clearly articulated, well-resourced school plan drives everything that happens in the school. Teachers need to know what they need to do, when they need to do it and what supports have been provided so that they can get on with their work

Limit the number of priorities

Be willing to ask the question – how does this new policy or new information relate to our school plan? And then be the person who says 'no' to all the disconnected information that arrives in a school.

Create temporary special circumstances during pressure times

4. Fair, frank and consistent conversations

Overview

There is much discussion about 'challenging conversations,' and how they may be used to prevent or diffuse difficult situations. I would argue that it should be about every conversation and every interaction. It is through conversation and interaction that we build understanding, trust and a sense of collective responsibility.

We need to be aware of our spoken language, our body language and the subliminal messages that we are sending. School communities are places of diversity;

Health and wellbeing: Lessons from the field.

we cannot assume that people understand what we are trying to say, and we must recognise that there are times when 'we' only hear what we want to hear rather than being fully present in the conversation.

It takes time to build a culture that supports fair, frank and consistent conversations.

Strategies:

Value silence – learn to sit, listen and be present in every conversation.

Always follow up, don't make rash promises and provide an explanation when there are changed circumstances.

Avoid the temptation to provide all the answers or solutions. Remember that sometimes there are no answers, or that you may need time to consider the response.

Build an inclusive consultative culture that values open communication and provides genuine opportunities for everyone including students and families to contribute to decision-making.

Create an environment where feedback is sought and supported by opportunities for growth and development. Leave nothing to chance and ensure that there are clear ground rules, defined expectations and outcomes.

Separate feedback from performance management processes. Again, leave nothing to chance, ensure that there are clear ground rules, defined expectations and outcomes, and ensure that all conversations are honest and fair.

5. Community relationships.

Many of the above strategies can be applied to conversations with parents and the community. It is about establishing relationships built upon mutual respect. The role of both the teacher and the parent can be challenging but if the agreed starting point is that they share a common concern for the child and they value the contribution that each party is making to that child's development then the outcome is more likely to be positive.

We must accept the reality that from time to time there are random irrational acts: generally abusive or aggressive for which there is little preparation.

In these situations, your response and follow up are critical. Do not be a hero; try to keep yourself, your teachers and students safe. We must guard against accepting violent aggressive behavior as normal and stop offering up excuses as to why the person would behave that way. Never hesitate to call for support from the Police or your Employer – both are charged with keeping you and the school community safe.

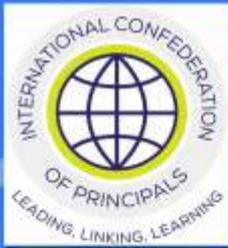
All schools must have procedures, policies and training in place to respond to such scenarios however it does not matter how many rules we have in place, there is always the potential for the unforeseen.

Building social capital is not something that you do one day and then walk away: it must be internalized into all our actions, relationships, policies and practice. As a principal building social capital – you must “walk the talk and talk the walk” – leave nothing to chance and always be mindful of the impact of your actions, behaviors and policies.

Final Words

There is no denying that being a principal is challenging however there several strategies and behaviours that can make a difference to the leader's health and well-being which in turn will have a positive impact on a school community. Ultimately it is about being proactive – for yourself, for your staff and your community! There is much work to do in this space and you have a voice and a role to play.





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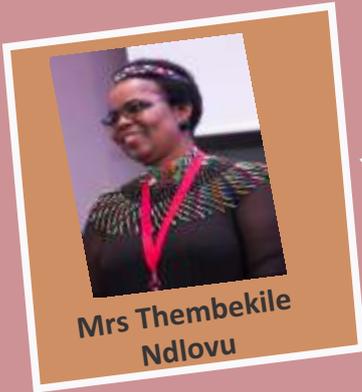
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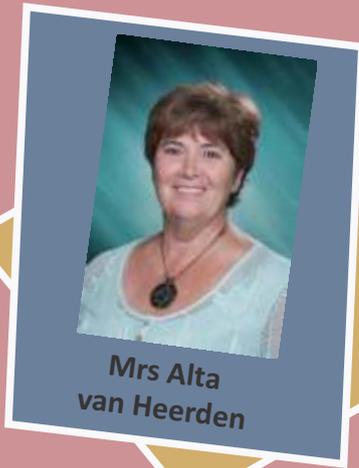
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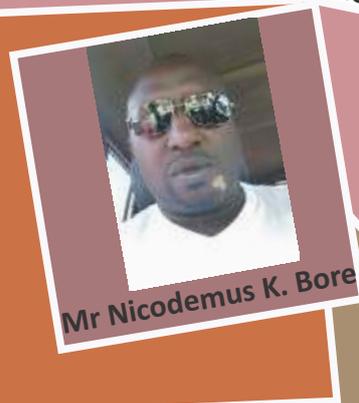
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