

# LEADERSHIP QUALITIES DESCRIPTORS

## Descriptions of key, contemporary leadership qualities

### Community Membership

**To be a leader, you must first be accepted as the leader by the people you wish to lead, which requires you to become trusted.**

Such trust is built from the relationships, you have with all members of your school community. Thus, leadership is a relationship, not a position or role. Your leadership is formed in the everyday interactions you have with each and every person you have the responsibility to be leading. Simply put, your acceptance as the leader is created as you interact each day with individuals, particular groups, and your whole school community.

The people in your school community need to trust that what they see is not only acceptable, but also true to what you expect of others. Hence, you must realise that you are always on show; each person you encounter directly (individually) or indirectly (as a group member in the school community) each day will be judging your leadership capacity based on what they see, experience and feel about what this contact might mean for them in their work or their association with the school.

### Championing and Affirming

**Effective leaders know how to 'champion' the school and its community members.**

Championing is about affirming, praising and celebrating the achievements and successes of others and the school both in formal and informal ways, on a stage or in a corridor.

This is about being able to see and appreciate all of the good things that are happening, no matter how large or small the outcome. Importantly, it is about seeing how such achievements are slowly, but surely, achieving the vision and mission of the school.

To be able to truly champion the school or its community members, you must first be able to deeply understand and appreciate what is happening, which requires you to be an interested and active member of the school community.

Championing is also about acknowledging and appreciating the current levels of commitment and engagement, and thereby understanding the ability or otherwise of the the school to fully or partially take on any additional new initiatives or expectations.

## School Development

**Once a leader is well established within the school, and has built relational trust through championing the individuals, groups, and the school, they are then able to initiate the next step towards being a truly effective leader.**

This is about developing the school's capacity, by improving collegiality, cooperation, and performance quality.

School development is about building on individual and group strengths and achievements in order to help the school, as a whole, for individuals and teams to work better. Community members are being encouraged to learn from each other and to network better together in order to improve current practices.

School development is also about linking the various special teams, groups and committees within the school to improve the connectivity and information sharing, so that all are working to achieve the same strategic intentions.

When the entire school community is connected, it gives everyone a clear sense of purpose in what they are doing for the school, and more opportunities to learn and grow in how they are better able to do this.

## Future Planning

**The next action of a truly effective leader is to help the school community to become aware of what is happening elsewhere, that could eventually affect their own school.**

This sees the leader working collegially and openly with school community members in a future planning process. Once the community shows it is determined to work better (as individuals and cooperatively), the leader is then in a position to draw the attention of the community to the changing nature and demands of the external environment.

This involves you supporting the community in looking to the future, in order to determine what is necessary to be initiated in the present. Rather than telling the community what needs to happen, as an effective leader you draw attention to the future possible challenges for the school in an open, honest and inclusive manner, and seek feedback from the community members as to what this might mean for the school; what needs to start happening now to meet these challenges, and how it would be best to initiate these required developments. This is about creating a collegial means for maintaining the school's success and sustainability. It is about engaging all people – staff, students, parents – in creating the necessary change strategies. It is about allowing the community to be involved in designing its future, rather than having it thrust upon it with little understanding of why things need to change.

By aligning the school community with its wider reality, you are actually beginning any change process as you clearly establish its purpose in the minds and hearts of each and every community member.

# Self-knowledge and Mindset

**Before you can be a leader of people, you must deeply understand yourself.**

Your level of emotional intelligence determines how you interact with others. You must come to know your dominant values and how these impact on your behaviour. You must come to know your strengths and weaknesses and learn how to know and accept the strengths and weaknesses of others.

As an effective leader, you would seek to overcome your personal limitations, to learn from alternative points of view, even criticism, and find lessons and inspiration from the success of others.

This requires you to have a particular type of mindset – a growth mindset. Such a mindset does not expect that the best way to do things is 'set in stone' where work is continually performed the way it has always been done; but rather, it encourages each person, especially yourself, to learn how to perform their work better.

Thus, a leader with a growth mindset readily embraces new challenges, despite any personal sense of uncertainty or lack of full understanding.

# Inspire & Motivate Others

**Effective leaders stimulate and motivate people to engage in their work.**

They do this by providing a compelling positive image of the school and its possibilities. In order to be inspired and motivated, people need to know the purpose of their work and how their work contributes to the school.

As the leader, you must show that you are excited and positive about your work, and the work and achievements of community members, and you must be enthusiastic about the future opportunities for your school.

Further, you must ensure that people are enjoying coming to work in or for the school, as they sense they belong to a supportive community in which they can utilise their strengths and talents, and feel that they are making a uniquely positive contribution to the success and sustainability of their school.

## Teambuilding & Support

**Effective leaders know the importance for a person to belong to a team in which they feel accepted, supported and appreciated for the value they provide to that team.**

Hence, as a leader, you seek to ensure that the worth and contribution of people are acknowledged, appreciated and utilised.

Effective leaders know that each school has its own culture founded on a set of underlying assumptions and values that drive the processes, behaviours and interactions of the people in the school community. Thus, as the leader, you need to ensure that the culture remains aligned to the strategic purpose of the school, and that every person understands the same school purpose and school values.

You will also be an active member of particular teams or committees, where your responsibilities will include:

- 1) setting direction;
- 2) removing barriers that prevent the team's or committee's success;
- 3) providing clarity about roles and responsibilities;
- 4) ensuring there are adequate and appropriate resources to do the work;
- 5) ensuring future growth by providing any new learning and skills; and
- 6) working with the team or committee to develop efficiencies, opportunities for innovation and implementing change.