THE TEACHING GUARANTEE



EVERY DAY IS DIFFERENT

KEN DARVALL

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Dedication

To my wife, Jan Darvall, who has been an integral
part of my journey since Five Mile Tree.

To Dad and Mum, Tony and Ethel Darvall, for their values,
inspiration, encouragement and insight during my journey.

Foreword

"People grow through experiences, if they meet life honestly and courageously."
Eleanor Roosevelt (1884–1962), August 2, 1941

This book, *The Teaching Guarantee: Every Day is Different*, presents a summary of the experience of an educational thinker and leader who has spent half a century educating generations in multiple cultural environments, establishing schools and leading them at all stages, with a close follow-up to the development of teaching methods, curricula, and goals in the world. The experience of the author of the book, Dr Ken Darvall, was not limited to his country, Australia, and its educational curricula only, but it was an experience that spanned three continents in the world. Darvall started his work life as the Teacher-in-Charge of Five Mile Tree Public School at Crooked Corner (New South Wales, Australia) in May 1973. Then he worked, for over three decades, in his country's public schools, in the schools of indigenous inhabitants, Indigenous Australians, and private schools.

Then he moved outside Australia, spending two decades in the continents of Asia and Africa, as a director and leader of schools and a consultant for education and schools. He studied, taught, trained, and planned the implementation of the Australian, British, and American curricula, and the International Baccalaureate (IB) programs at its three levels: PYP, MYP, and DP, in 20 schools on three continents. Darvall has also established and led several International Baccalaureate International Schools in different countries and taught students from almost every nationality. He listened to them, followed up with his fellow teachers on their educational progression, met with their parents, and learned about their countries, cultures, religions, languages, and moods,

and their readiness for partnership and acceptance of the other. He was responsible for solving their problems and was concerned with creating a healthy environment for their coexistence. Darvall reaped a rich and diverse global experience. Then, with the nobility of the thinker and educational leader, he set about documenting it in this book to present it to the world as a trust to inform the succeeding generations. In the introduction to his book, Darvall writes: "This book reflects on my experiences and lessons learned over those 50 years and 20 schools that I have had the pleasure of leading."

This book gains its importance and high value from the fact that it relies on the practical and extensive experiences of Darvall, and it talks in detail about teaching, education, school, school leadership, teacher, curricula, standards and evaluation, global education, the International Baccalaureate Program, ways and requirements for accreditation of schools from international organizations, along with the student, the classroom, and effective ways to develop educational and administrative capacities in schools, including designing strategic plans, managing financial and human resources, dealing with various challenges faced by teachers and students, online learning, school activities, problem-solving, as well as interactions with students, parents, and the local community, how to form parents' associations and school boards. The book also includes practical and useful tips for principals and teachers on how to do their job effectively and efficiently and keep up with the current challenges of our times. The book views education as a guarantee for a better future for all humanity and its crucial importance in bringing about change and building knowledge communities. Here, the author recalls the African activist Nelson Mandela (1918-2013), who said: "Education is the most powerful weapon that you can use to change the world."

The book includes the author's vision of the world's best and most appropriate educational curricula. It is a vision, in my

estimation, insightful and accommodating, as it addresses the world's need to prepare a free and responsible person to live in a global community based on coexistence, peace and partnership on the planet, as well as the unity of the common destiny of all humanity. The author says, of course, from his own experience, and decisively: IB programs should be the global curriculum. He offers his advice to those working in the field of education, saying: "…I strongly advise teachers and educational leaders to become involved and implement IB programs into your schools as soon as you can." He summarises his best advice for teachers and principals on the curriculum: "My best advice to teachers and principals is to experience IB education at IB World Schools. IB education is what schooling should be all about globally."

The author calls for change, specifically the role of teachers in it, and believes that "Most teachers don't like change." However, "In the ever-changing world we live in, teachers should be at the forefront of change, preparing their students for the real world." The author is biased towards the future and its stakeholders, who represent the new generations, the generations of today, and calls for fairness to them through the new education that accompanies the present, not yesterday's education. He supported his objective and scientific argument with the opinion of the American philosopher John Dewey (1859-1952) who wrote: "If we teach today's students as we taught yesterday's, we rob them of tomorrow."

Of course, Darvall's bias towards the future was not a denial of humanity's heritage in education, its curricula and methods, or a denial of the merits of the first teachers. With the development of life, knowledge, and minds, many new meanings and concepts are revealed, so the methods, curricula, and objectives of education change, in addition to the development of human comprehension. Darvall talked about the new visions related to the need to unleash the human abilities, talents, and capabilities and referred to the relationship of freedom with education. In

light of the evolution and new knowledge that the world is witnessing, Darvall offers promise: “At the exponential rate that new knowledge is developing, I look forward to the next 10 years as an educational leader and share what I have learned in this time.”

Darvall’s vision and a summary of his experience in this book were consistent with the new theses. as he says: “Student wellbeing has always been a key aspect of the general purpose of school education: to promote the intellectual, physical, social, emotional, and moral development of students.” Here, in addition to his talk about freedom and education, the need to unleash people’s capacities, potentials and talents, ways of empowering them, and upgrading the rules of ethics, Darvall is consistent with the latest theses of developmental thought, which came in the thesis of the Indian economist and philosopher Amartya Kumar Sen, winner of the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences in 1998, and currently the Professor of Economics and Philosophy, Harvard University, United States. Sen’s thesis came in his book, *Development as Freedom*, (1999). He believes that the focus and goal of development is the human being, and that freedom is the ultimate goal of development and its primary means, and the meaning of development is freedom and the liberation of man from ignorance, disease, and underdevelopment. According to him, development is not only achieved by increasing income and gross domestic product (GDP), but also by empowering and strengthening people’s capabilities. Abilities enable opportunities for choice and life-making, and their deprivation is a more complete measure of poverty than income. The world widely celebrated the book, and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) adopted Sen’s ideas and described him as a pioneer of ethical economics, as he came out with the concept of development from economic effectiveness to the concept of development as freedom, and that the human being is its centre. The conceptual framework of United Nations development reports and projects have been

based on Sen's thought and work. I studied Sen's thesis and compared him with the Sudanese thinker Mahmoud Mohamed Taha. The comparison was published in a book, in both Arabic and English, under the title: *Post-Economic Development Themes: Development as Freedom- Mahmoud Mohamed Taha and Amartya Kumar Sen (A Comparative Approach)*, (2022).

The comparison revealed that Sen's ideas are in many respects nearly identical to those proposed earlier by Taha in many of his books and lectures during the period beginning in the early 1950s and continuing into the 1970s. The similarity between them was in many ideas and opinions, to the extent of congruence. Taha says, as Sen said: that development is freedom that means liberation of man from poverty, ignorance, and disease, and Taha added liberation from fear. The similarity between them also comes in the vision of each of them towards education in achieving development, and its role in increasing productivity, as it is on the path to possession of the capability, while Taha defines education, saying: "In short, we define education as the living's acquisition of ability." The comparison dealt with many axes, including, but not limited to, commitment to humanity and partnership with the planet, intellectual and social development, teamwork, and upgrading the rules of ethics. In his book, Darvall addresses most of these issues.

My acquaintance with Darvall dates back to 2003, when I met him, for the first time in Wollongong, Australia, as a committee member to interview him for the position of director of Al Jazeera Academy, Doha, State of Qatar, where I was working. When he presented his views, ideas, experience, and vision, he showed that he was a manager, thinker, and educational leader. Not much time passed before he was chosen to be the academy director, where he revealed amazing abilities in leadership and that he has a vision and commitment towards education and people. In a short time, he was able to create a healthy and attractive environment for students, teachers, workers, and parents, and soon he was

admired and respected by all. He managed and implemented the three levels of the International Baccalaureate programs at the academy, and the required standards and training. He made a leap in the development of the academy and established knowledge and human values that were appreciated and celebrated. His approach to solving problems was based on fairness, and his identity in those situations was justice. I followed all his work and achievements, and the meetings between us were an average of two, three, and sometimes four times a day. My relationship with him, for almost two decades, has been deepening with every new morning until today's date. I visited his country with him and met his large family, and he visited my country with me and met my family and friends as my constant and continuous bonding for him remained genuine and sincere.

The Free is the One who Works. The Genius is the one who Works.

Darvall, through his book or experiences, part of which I've witnessed, embodies a unique guiding model for the planetary educational leader, both in vision and in action. I was close to him, as our work and travel brought us together to recruit teachers, and we were adjacent neighbours in housing, and our families were intertwined. From this vantage point, I know how accurately he described himself when he wrote in the introduction to his book: "I must point out that I still enjoy coming to school each day, usually being the first to arrive." He was also the first to arrive at school and the last to leave. Whenever I contemplate the contribution of this distinguished and committed thinker, I find that, as I mentioned in previous different contexts: it combines two characteristics related to the concept of work and its value. The first characteristic, which is work, was talked about by my teacher, the Sudanese thinker Mahmoud Mohamed Taha, the propounder of the *New Understanding of Islam*, against whom a religious alliance conspired when he was sentenced to death and the sentence was

carried out in the Sudanese capital, Khartoum, on January 18, 1985, who saw that "the free person is He who works." And he who has "any knowledge that does not entail action, his is imperfect knowledge." As for the second characteristic, which relates to the answer to the question: Who is the genius? The Palestinian-American thinker Edward Said (1935-2003) wrote: When people are at the stage of study in universities and schools, there are evaluation criteria by which the levels of performance, success, intelligence, etc. are measured, and who is a genius can be determined. But after completing the study period and people enter the labor field, there will be a teacher, an engineer, a doctor, a carpenter, a blacksmith... etc., and each of them works in his field, what is the common between them through which we can evaluate so that we know who is a genius? Said replied, "the genius is the one who works."

In conclusion, I would like to apologise to the readers for my lengthy foreword, but I chose to take this opportunity to give my testimony to history about a man who continued to give with sincerity, dedication and uniqueness, as I lived with him, and I saw the extent of his sincerity and human and moral commitment towards education through generations of different nationalities and cultures. He truly believed in multiculturalism, in deed, not in word, not just metaphorically, as he was busy enriching and celebrating it. His human ceiling did not end within the limits of respecting and accepting the other, but rather he was coming out of himself to embrace the other. In my appreciation that he gave me the opportunity and the honour of presenting this book, it was a true expression of his belief in the human origins that unite us, a celebration of brotherhood and friendship, an exaltation of the planetary partnership, and an affirmation of the unity of the common destiny of all humanity. I am grateful to my dear friend, Ken Darvall, with whom I have the pleasure and privilege of friendship, for his confidence and opportunity to bridge the planetary communication between us on the one hand and us and the readers of the world on the other.

Distinguished reader, this book, which has given me the opportunity of this planetary connection, offers a rich, diverse global world experience, providing a deeper understanding of the key issues facing education and teachers of today and the tools they need to succeed in their roles. In my estimation, it represents a comprehensive guide for teachers, principals, and leaders of the educational process worldwide. It includes effective concepts and methods to improve educational performance and academic achievement and provides practical and innovative advice and solutions to school management's current and future challenges. It is also a real addition to the global library and an important reference for researchers and scholars and anyone interested in the field of education and its development, whether through work in the educational, developmental or political field or through an interest in improving the quality of education and access to it at the level of local and international communities.

Abdalla Elfakki Elbashir
Sudanese Researcher and Writer
Doha - State of Qatar
Thursday, April 27, 2023

Email: abdallaelbashir@gmail.com

YouTube Channel:
https://m.youtube.com/user/abdallaelbashir/videos

Facebook Page:
https://www.facebook.com/abdalla.elbashir.5

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I have spent 16 percent of my career at Tema International School (TIS), Ghana. This explains the constant references to the opportunities and experiences at **T**his **I**ncredible **S**chool. TIS is a story worth telling (and perhaps my next project?). To Mummy and Co-Founder, Mrs Comfort Adjavon, and Founding Family Members, Mrs Cecilia Ajavon-Oppan (General Manager), Mrs Frances Ajavon-Okudzeto (Deputy General Manager), I am grateful for you allowing me to be part of the TIS Family. It has been an honour. Other key team members with whom I work closely: Eddy Torkornoo (Administrator), "AB" Abraham Anum-Quaye (Transport Manager), Surama King (CAS Coordinator), Yvonne Tagoe (MYP Coordinator), Jacob Lumumba (PYP Coordinator), Angela Felbah (Graphic Communication Design Specialist), Gabriel Atseku (Boys Hostels Coordinator), Setor Adih (Girls Hostel Coordinator), Louis Welagaamo (my mighty fine neighbour) and Rita Fianko (Admissions), thank you for your support and dedication. I valued Ate and Carin Hemmes for their friendship and impact in establishing MYP, learning support, and Early Years planning while they were TIS family members. To all other TIS staff who make TIS the school it is today, continue to help TIS fly higher. I am forever grateful to

Mrs Dr Sylvia Boye for her continuous and unwavering support. Along with Mummy, Mrs Comfort Adjavon, these two are the grand dames of Ghana education for their impact over the decades. To our alumni, students, and parents, thank you for your support and for making TIS great.

Importantly, although not specifically mentioned here (a project in itself), I am grateful for all the people I have met and worked with over the past 50 years: students, staff, parents, and community members who form part of my experiences and fond memories.

In 2007, a senior student at Al Jazeera Academy, and a talented artist, gave me a sketch of myself. It is found at the end of this book. I believe it represents my favourite expression at the time: success is not enough; excellence is required. Thank you for my favourite sketch.

I express my gratitude and utmost appreciation to William, Lodie, Wency and the publishing team at ASPG (Canberra) for their professional support and guidance in realising this project. I recommend them, without hesitation, to unpublished authors.

Appreciate, value, and contribute to the teaching guarantee by making a difference often, if not daily.

Thank you.

Ken

Abbreviations

21c	Twenty-first century
7-12	Grades 7-12 (secondary school years)
ACEL	Australian Council for Educational Leaders
ACER	Australian Council for Educational Research
AIM	Australian Institute of Management
AJA	Al Jazeera Academy (Doha, Qatar)
ASCD	The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
CAS	Creativity, Activity, Service (core component of IB DP)
DP	Diploma Programme (International Baccalaureate)
Dukies	The Duke of Edinburgh International Awards Program
EAL	English as an Additional Language
GAT	Gifted and Talented
IB	International Baccalaureate
IGCSE	International General Certificate of Secondary Education
KFS	King Faisal School (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia)
Km	Kilometre
MB	ManageBac
MYP	Middle Years Programme (International Baccalaureate)
NSW	New South Wales (Australia)
OA	OpenApply
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
P-6	Preschool to Grade 6 (Primary school years)
PBL	Project-based Learning
PD	Professional development
PE	Physical education
PNG	Papua New Guinea (Oceania region)
PR	Professional reading

PYP	Primary Years Programme (International Baccalaureate)
SMIT	Star Mountains Institute of Technology
SMITIS	Star Mountains Institute of Technology International School
TED	Technology, education, design (as in TED Talks)
TIC	Teacher-in-Charge
TIS	Tema International School
UNE	University of New England
US/USA	United States of America

Introduction

The Teaching Guarantee

Since serving as the Teacher-in-Charge of Five Mile Tree Public School at Crooked Corner (New South Wales, Australia) in May 1973, I have coined a few sayings about school experiences that have rung true everywhere I have been. These include:

- The teaching guarantee: every day is different.
- Everyone is unique: one size does not fit all.
- A school is a school is a school.
- (As a teacher or principal), make a difference.

This book reflects on my experiences and lessons learnt over those 50 years and 20 schools I have enjoyed leading. The types of schools and their locations have added depth to my leadership skills and decision-making, and I have often said over the past 15-20 years, "been there, done that," as well as, "I am no longer surprised."

I have attempted to comment on what I see as the important aspects of schooling and being a principal. I hope my comments or observations may result in thoughtful discussions that may lead to actions in schools to improve their current practices in any way that will benefit the students under their care.

While there have been many happy, exciting, frustrating, disappointing, and sad days over the years, I must point out that I still enjoy coming to school each day, usually being the first to arrive. This is because of the teaching guarantee: every day is different. It reminds me of that famous line in *Forrest Gump*: "Life is like a box of chocolates. You never know what you're gonna get."

Yet, while I believe that "a school is a school is a school," each one remains unique. Yes, there are school canteens, libraries, classrooms, teachers, admin staff, technology, parent-teacher interviews, uniforms, carnivals, parent bodies, fundraising and a whole lot more of similar aspects that "make a school." Yet, each one remains different with its own strengths and challenges. Thus, each principal and teacher can make a difference in their school.

Teaching is a vocation. It's a tough job, and teachers must be passionate about what they do to make an impact. Teachers need to recharge themselves often to ensure their own wellbeing. But the rewards, while not financially attractive, are so fulfilling that you cherish the life memories. Watching and leading students at the start of a new academic year until the last day of the year and reflecting on how much each child has grown and matured as a learner is something money can't buy, nor many people may experience.

My best advice to teachers and principals is to experience IB education in IB World Schools. I have only enjoyed the experience over the past 19 years, and I wish I had experienced it much earlier than in 2004. IB education is what schooling should be all about globally. Read its documentation, and you will find your head nodding in agreement.

Life can be challenging and difficult for everyone. As a teacher, you witness daily challenges and difficulties within your class. The magnitude of these challenges increases dramatically, especially as you wear overall responsibility as the principal.

Peace, love, and happiness.

Ken Darvall 21 May 2023

SECTION 1

EACH DAY IS DIFFERENT



1

Opportunities and Experiences

While schooling is about learning, to be purposeful, learning must be based on as many opportunities and experiences as possible. And yes, to increase learning impact, ensure student choice reflects each learner's priorities. Ideally, this occurs within the classroom and in extracurricular activities. Additionally, activities should reflect real life to be meaningful to students.

Ten years ago, or more, specific experiences often occurred due to field trips and excursions to the capital or major regional centres to visit museums, galleries, major industrial sites, and performances. The further your school was from these major urban areas, the more restricted the experiences became. However, technological advances and COVID have enabled virtual experiences in lieu of long and expensive trips since then. Significant world sites and experiences are as close as your computer (or mobile phone.)

Technology has now made it possible to provide unlimited opportunities for learning across the key learning areas. The key to benefitting from technology will be cohesive curriculum planning to include these resources in curriculum-learning activities.

To fulfil the potential of each student, a school must enable as many experiences as possible for students. These experiences should include academic, cultural, sporting, and service opportunities. Larger schools should be able to provide more experiences for students due to their larger number of staff and resources. As I say to students who may be reluctant to try new

experiences, you may be a talented champion badminton player, but you will never know if you never try it.

As I mention in another chapter, "Boarding Schools," these environments have a distinct advantage over day schools when offering after-school experiences because, at the end of the school day, boarding students change and then head to their nominated after-school activity for an hour, the same time day students may spend travelling home in many cases. At TIS, we have a requirement that students must engage in a minimum of three after-school activities each week. These activities will usually satisfy the Duke of Edinburgh International Award requirements if completed satisfactorily over one to three semesters, depending on the award level. For day schools, an effective after-school program is extremely difficult because of the numerous competing options in so many fields. If a school does not have teams in the local community sporting competitions, then there will be local sporting clubs that students may join.

Students' future success will correlate with the number of opportunities and experiences they enjoy during their school years.

2

Multi-Age Classrooms

My first 12 years were spent in small schools (one- and two-teacher schools), which thrust me into the deep end of multi-age classrooms. However, I must emphasise that the small school experience, especially the one-teacher school, was what I specifically sought for my first teaching appointment.

As I moved to larger schools, there were many issues when composite (or multi-age) classes were formed due to school numbers, as teacher placement/allocation in schools is based on student numbers. Reality dictates that class allocations never reflect enrolled numbers, except in private schools, which can dictate final numbers for each grade level.

Yet, every class is a composite class!

Multi-age classrooms reflect life. Families. Workplaces. Universities. Social groups.

Younger members learn from older members (and often, vice versa).

In the one-teacher school, I always used age rather than grade groupings. I would use diagnostic attainment tests to ascertain the "age" level and then group accordingly. Age groups were then assigned colour names through which students progressed. Attainment testing occurred at the end of each term (of 15 weeks). There was no grade restriction on any group. Importantly, students were working at their level and progressing.

Composite classes provide the same opportunities.

So, when it comes to the typical single-grade class, you have a composite class. For example, let's say the class is Grade 3, where the students are from eight to nine years old. In reading, as in every other subject, the range of ability within Grade 3 will span about seven years. In my experience, you will have students with a reading age of:

- 5.5-6.4 years
- 6.5-7.4 years
- 7.5- 8.4 years
- 8.5-9.4 years
- 9.5-10.4 years
- 10.5-11.4 years
- 11.4-12+ years

You will find similar age ranges in spelling and mathematics. For those teachers who aim to teach "to the middle," they are missing most of the students in their class. Teachers catering to the different ability levels or providing personalised learning plans based on student performance data for their class will witness consistently improved student learning outcomes.

3

The Only Question for a Teacher

There is only one question (and one slight variation) to ask a teacher.

Why did you become a teacher?

That is the most important question I ask when recruiting new teachers. Further questions will be asked if I am satisfied with their response. The interview will end immediately if I am disturbed by their response.

The variation to the question for those considering becoming teachers is: why do you want to become a teacher?

The responses I am looking for are along the lines of:

- I love children and helping them learn.
- My best teacher made a huge impact on me and I want to help children learn by making the same positive impact on them.
- I enjoy helping children learn and mature into unique individuals.
- I like to have a positive influence on my students so each can achieve at, or exceed their natural ability levels.

Schools are all about the students and their learning journey. Teachers should be passionate about this purpose. Then I know a teacher will positively impact each child who comes under their care.

Teaching, like many vocations, is not an easy job. Like other jobs, you need the right people to make an impact on the most

important people in the world – our future, our students. There can't be any compromise because a negative impact can be extremely detrimental for the students.

What is the quickest way to end an interview with me? Tell me you only like working from 9 am to 3 pm and enjoying the school holidays, which will immediately terminate a recruitment interview.

Our students are too precious. This is why every teacher must be a positive role model for each student they encounter. If a teacher can't accept being a positive role model for students, then teaching is the wrong vocation.

4

Skills

What skills do I believe the 21c Principal requires to be effective?

As a results-focused educational leader, you should improve organisational performance, reputation, and cultural ethos by utilising strengths in strategic planning, teamwork, corporate management, policy development and review, curriculum development, student wellbeing, financial and personnel management, research and analysis, problem-solving and troubleshooting, organisational review, motivation, recruitment, coaching, business development, and marketing.

My personal approach has always been:

- Hands-on (know the business and all its components to ensure functionality).
- Maintain an open-door policy.
- Manage by walking around.
- Ensure continuous improvement.
- Develop effective teams.
- Enable contributions and promote talent development.
- Ensure the environment is proactive and one of opportunity for all stakeholders.
- Advocate and model the IB Learner Profile.

Leadership strengths should include:

- leading and managing curriculum change and development to ensure relevance and improved student learning outcomes.
- providing quality educational leadership, recruitment and workplace management services.

- leading schools out of their comfort zones to higher levels of excellence.
- ensuring effective and efficient organisational procedures and management practices, as well as a financially responsible framework.
- consolidating collaborative and effective teaching/ learning teams.
- ensuring interesting and stimulating instruction so that each student achieves as closely to the level of excellence as each child is able to achieve.
- fostering vibrant learning environments where innovation, initiative and individual excellence are valued and rewarded, and address the needs of today's students for tomorrow's world.
- emphasising the ongoing development of a school as a learning community, promoting a culture of quality throughout the school, and ensuring a wider community reputation as a school of excellence.
- facilitating leadership development and succession planning.

Essentially, a successful Principal will be:

- innovative and resourceful, energetic, hard-working and tireless, proactive and supportive;
- calm and resolute, with a sense of humour, goal-oriented and target-focused;
- a trouble-shooting specialist and a creative problem solver, as well as a strategic, lateral, and "big picture"' thinker, who can make tough and necessary decisions for the best of the school/college; and
- knowledge of, and experience in a variety of major international programs, for example, IB.

5

Starting School

Two essentials for a child's successful schooling are: enjoy preschool education for two years; and only allow your child to commence formal education when s/he is ready (and not when you want her/him to commence).

In different schools where I have worked across the world, I have witnessed a need by parents to start their children young in preschool or formal schooling. In Ghana, many parents also expect their children to "skip" a grade at some stage during their primary school years. In these situations, I believe parents are doing their children a disservice and even being negligent!

Wow! Isn't that a bit harsh? What about my premise that every child is different?

Let me explain by asking two questions.

- Would you throw your child in at the pool's deep end in full knowledge the child can't swim?
- Would you give your seven-year-old child the keys to your car and allow them to drive it anytime they like?

The obvious answer is no! The simple reason is that the child is not ready in both scenarios.

It is the same answer when it comes to starting formal schooling. The child must be ready. Specifically, the child must be socially ready to experience success. Success will follow if a child is ready to commence school.

Countries have different starting ages for children to commence formal (compulsory) schooling. In Finland, the starting age is seven years. Australian states have a starting age of five years, either from the start of the year or by halfway through the year. Preschools generally start one or two years before formal schooling commences.

In most countries, preschool education is not compulsory. In my experience, a child who has consistently attended preschool is more "ready" to commence formal schooling than a child without preschool experience. Let me emphasise here that the preschool experience must be play-based.

What are the readiness factors for a child to start preschool? The key factors are:

- being toilet trained;
- following directions;
- speech is coherent;
- handling transitions;
- minimal separation anxieties when a parent leaves; and
- interacting with other children.

For the child commencing formal education, the above readiness factors must be evident. Additionally, the child should be able to:

- write their first name;
- dress themselves;
- identify basic shapes;
- number counting and recognition to ten;
- know basic body parts and use;
- visually discriminate basic shapes;
- recognise basic colours;
- colour and cut a basic shape; and
- throw and catch a ball.

The parents should communicate any health concerns or learning issues, as well as personality (happy, sad, confident, shy) and the level of English (or the language of instruction). Note, there are no right or wrong answers here, but the information will ensure a more settled start to school than without this information.

From my experience, parents are better off holding their sons back a year so they can start confidently, while most girls appear to be school-ready at five years (for formal schooling).

So, what is my main concern about a child being "ready" for school when they commence? Children can't fail preschool! However, if they started young at preschool and do not demonstrate all readiness factors for formal schooling, another preschool year will be wise. A child who starts formal schooling and is not ready will experience mixed success in their first year. (Remember, success breeds success.) Minimal achievement will likely have a negative impact on the child and likely continue throughout their school education. If a child's social maturity remains an issue, then troublesome years will be Grades 4-5 in primary school and Grades 8-11 in secondary school.

Most parents have ambitions for their child to attend university upon completion of their secondary schooling. That is a total of 15 years of schooling (including two years at preschool) before commencing university (4-7 years). So, when your child starts young at preschool or formal schooling and then skips a grade, are parents setting their child up for success or failure?

When to start school is as hard as choosing the names for each of your children. Tend to be cautious rather than foolhardy, as the consequences will be realised further down the track.

6

The Parent Connection

The parent connection in any school is a critical success factor. Without their children, there is no school. Families have plenty of choices these days, so a lack of confidence in their school of choice or a diminished school reputation will alter the priority when it comes to their school of choice.

Any change to their school of choice priorities can damage schools. These may include:

- loss of teaching and non-teaching staff;
- a decrease in school funding;
- further damage to the school's reputation.

There will always be upset or irate parents in any school. In rare cases, the school may not be the "best-fit" for a child or family. It happens! However, it will be essential that the principal and school handle any sensitive matter with the respect, empathy, support, care and fairness that any situation deserves. If a family leaves, try to ensure they are your ambassadors for the school as a result of the way any situation was handled.

Schools must ensure parents have a voice and the opportunity to share concerns, suggestions, or initiatives as valued stakeholders. A strong and united parent voice sends a powerful, positive and important message to the wider community, which will only enhance a school's reputation. Remember, a school's reputation will determine school enrolments.

Don't just aim for participation from outside the school fence. Rather, strive for the engagement of parents inside the school. There are so many ways in which a strong parent connection can

add financial or personnel support without the costs. Common strategies include:

- classroom helpers (for example, with reading groups);
- library helpers (for example, stocktake, book covering, and repairs);
- canteen management (which can be a financial goldmine for schools, depending on school size);
- school events assistance (including organisational responsibilities);
- working bees (for school maintenance matters);
- school excursion supervision;
- targeted school fundraising activities; and
- formal and informal parent organisations (P&F and Mothers' Club).

It is most important that parents determine what their priorities are for their fundraising activities. This empowers the parents and becomes a source of pride that parents can point out all over a school where they have worked with the school to improve resources, facilities, and staffing.

Just be wary of cliques that have a different agenda to the school's priorities. Often, these cliques are a source of political power plays and can be detrimental to the school in terms of morale and miscommunication. If not kept in check, the school's reputation may also be harmed.

7

Inclusion

I support inclusion in schools with only one rider. The school must be able to cater for the inclusion need. For example, if a student with mobility issues is unable to access school facilities and resources due to the school's structures, such as a double story building with no elevator or ramp provisions, and there are no alternative options available (all required facilities are moved to ensure lower ground access), then admission will not be possible.

Perhaps it is my social justice philosophy, but I consider all students equal, even if there are inclusion issues. Every student deserves the best education available and near-same opportunities when possible, regardless of gender, religious beliefs, disability, or nationality.

Perhaps, it's the Australian viewpoint of supporting the "underdog" or less fortunate/disadvantaged sectors of the wider community.

So, I have enjoyed and am very proud to experience and promote:

- small schools;
- isolated schools;
- indigenous schools;
- rural central schools (K-10);
- Islamic schools;
- international training organisations; and
- schools in least-developed countries.

Each different type of experience brought its own set of challenges and opportunities. For me, each was an essential and

enjoyable experience. I know in each case I learnt a lot and left the school in a much better position when I left than when I first arrived.

I really enjoyed addressing the:

- isolation and indigenous issues at Weilmoringle (NSW);
- restricted curriculum choice at Collarenebri (NSW);
- the special education and indigenous issues at Moree (NSW);
- curriculum limitations and expansion options at Al Zahra (NSW), Al Jazeera (Qatar), and TIS (Ghana); and
- isolation, curriculum limitations, and expansion options at Tabubil (PNG).

Despite local factors, each student was offered the best possible education without restrictions. The parent connection was strong and appreciative in each environment because students were central to our goal. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the parent connection was a critical success factor in each school. Inclusion was not considered a limitation but a contribution essential for the awareness of others.

What is so important is the general awareness of all school stakeholders that students with inclusion needs are just as special as each other in the school with the same basic need - a positive learning environment to achieve to the best of their ability. All students deserve this, so why discriminate?

8

Initiative

Initiative is a critical attribute for any leader. A successful leader will present an initiative to address an issue, challenge, or opportunity by articulating why (it is important and what will be the outcomes), what (it is all about and the benefits), how (it will be implemented), when (it will be implemented), and who (will be involved). Ideally, initiatives will be encouraged by all stakeholders within the organisation.

I believe leaders must be solutions-oriented. Issues will always arise for any leader. Rather than being reactive, the approach should always be proactive, thus, solution-oriented. Leaders should be strategic in outlook, so their solutions are looking to address future challenges and opportunities rather than known issues. For example, for schools relying on public or private transport for the students to reach school, then traffic delays will be inevitable at some time. This is a known (predictable issue) so there will be plans in place for when students arrive late. The late students are probably already frustrated and anxious parents may be concerned about their safety, so a very "calming" routine needs to be in place so that students can start their school day without distractions.

On the other hand, a growing locality indicates a likely increased student population for the school. The principal and school management team should start looking at how an increasing school population will impact the dynamics of the school and how it will mitigate the expansion with minimal disruption to the school's learning programs.

Initiatives are often lacking sufficient detail to visualise its implementation. Three aspects are critical:

- planning is the key;
- ensure the initiative addresses the articulated issues or opportunity; and
- set key targets throughout the implementation process to keep planning on track.

Schools should be dynamic organisations, so principals will encourage initiatives and innovation from all stakeholders to ensure agency, empowerment, authenticity, and transparency.

For schools, major initiatives are likely to benefit from a grant process. While the application process can be painful, addressing all requirements usually results in sufficient funding to implement the initiative. When successful with a grant application, the principal should always promote its success and advise the school community why the initiative is important, its timeline, the project coordinator, and the outcomes.

Lower-cost initiatives likely to be funded by parent bodies must also receive the same promotion and acknowledgement. Ensuring a proactive parent body that provides funding for their initiatives will always be invaluable to schools.

9

Inspiration

Be the inspiration through your actions, words, and relationships within the school and wider community.

Best schools will have many sources of inspiration. These sources will include:

- principal
- school executives
- individual staff (teaching and non-teaching)
- the parent body
- individual parents
- the student body
- individual students
- wide community members
- visitors and guests
- consultants
- alumni
- personal mentors.

Inspiration provides hope, creates new goals, develops new initiatives, raises standards, and builds and strengthens school communities.

The experienced and successful principal will be the central person to inspire the school community. Valuing the importance of relationships, the principal will encourage and promote all stakeholders to inspire each other through their actions to ensure their school is the best it can be. Ongoing inspiration will do that when actions follow.

Inspiration will result from school pride and empowerment, with improved student outcomes at the centre of all actions. For example, whole school staff training is not aimed solely at the development of teachers but at improving their students' learning outcomes. Fundraising for new library resources is not about stocking shelves but enabling students to have a wider range of resources to assist their inquiry learning.

Successful schools will not lack inspiration. However, unsuccessful schools will be lacking in different areas, and it will be the role of any new principal to provide inspiration by articulating shared goals and outcomes, demonstrating actions that empower the various stakeholders within the school community and utilising this hope of a new beginning for the low-morale school. Ensuring relevance to the school's stakeholders so that engagement and ownership are valued and required will be an outcome of the principal's actions.

10

Lifelong Learning

Our lives are finite, but learning is infinite.

My first lecture when I commenced at Goulburn Teachers College (NSW, Australia) in 1971 was given by its principal, Dr Frank Whitebrook. It was titled, "Self-actualisation." I had never heard of the word! The topic piqued my interest, and we were required to write and submit a 2000-word essay on the importance of self-actualisation.

This was an important introduction to Maslow's hierarchy. The original hierarchy contained five levels (in the shape of a pyramid):

- 5: self-actualisation (realising your full potential);
- 4: esteem (respect for yourself and others);
- 3: relationships (sense of belonging and love);
- 2: safety (security and stability); and
- 1: the basics (food, water, shelter).

These are the critical steps for students to achieve their potential at school. While the first level is obvious, many schools worldwide need to cover this basic need as some families cannot do it. Safety is the next critical level when the basics are covered, and its importance is as relevant today as it was in the 1940s. The third level encompasses a critical responsibility for teachers and principals – relationships. As James Comer states, "no significant learning occurs without a significant relationship." Level 4 addresses the next critical need, esteem, where self-respect and respect for others exist. Success will seem unreachable if a student self-doubts and questions their worthiness. Believing in yourself and setting personal bests will enable the student to

reach the fifth level, self-actualisation, where the student realises their full potential.

Can anyone realise their full potential? I believe not and have held that view since that opening lecture in 1971. Goals can be reached, but then new goals are set in terms of personal best. Thus, potential remains out of reach but close enough to achieve the new goal and set the next goal. For example, why do records keep being broken and new ones set? Certainly, you are self-actualising during the process, but there is no endpoint. As Einstein is quoted, "When you stop learning, you start dying."

Thirty years after publishing his theory, Maslow added a new apex and labelled it level 6: self-transcendence (sense of meaning). Self-transcendence will certainly add a sense of meaning to anyone who is self-actualising. This sense of meaning results from an outcome of self-actualisation, a worldview. Their experiences and surroundings restrict everyone's worldview. The greater the experiences, the greater their worldview.

So as principals and teachers, how is your school providing for the basic needs of every student under your care? Is each student able to reach their potential? If not, why not?

Ultimately, it is about the opportunities and experiences schools enable within their safe and secure environment for students to develop their potential where failure is encouraged, as risk-taking and open-mindedness develop them beyond their comfort zone.

SECTION 2

EVERYONE IS UNIQUE: ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL



11

Context

Understanding the school context to which you are appointed (as a teacher, executive, or principal) should be a priority task. The school context will describe its unique features and detail information that reflect the school's educational, geographical, and social characteristics. It will usually state the school's key areas of strength and for improvement or further development. The school context will provide the meaning and understanding from which future plans and actions will be developed.

The context will provide you with the priorities for your planning and action. However, understanding the school's culture and ethos will reveal how to implement your plans and actions. Like students, each school is unique in its culture and ethos. Some schools will have empowered school communities, while others may have fractured school communities. I have worked in several different types of communities, and I have enjoyed their support very early in my tenure at each location.

The most important starting point for the newly appointed principal is identifying the most pressing issue. What is holding the school back? Effectively address the identified issue time-efficiently and you will enjoy many supporters because you are tackling the most important issues. It will be evident that you want to make effective change.

It is important to identify the powerbrokers among the staff and parents and try to align them with your strategic plans. Use these powerbrokers to communicate your ideas and their support. Also, look at creating alliances with different sections of a school community so that you have a support base for any action or events that may require assistance.

Especially among staff, try to identify the change agents who can support you in communicating and supporting your plans for change. Ensure that any changes will bring the most benefit to teachers regarding the roadblocks they face. Early success will again be contagious and empower staff with a can-do attitude.

I recommend belief statements that define your context. Here are our belief statements at TIS.

At TIS, we believe proof of evidence is important and required to demonstrate commitment.

At TIS, we believe balance—by maximising opportunities and experiences to enhance learning and challenge oneself, inside and outside the classroom—is the key to success.

At TIS, we believe excellence is achieved by continuously improving your personal best in all endeavours through consistent effort, a positive attitude, regular reflection, balance, persistence, a growth mindset, and no excuses.

At TIS, we believe experiential learning allows our students to understand the theory in the classroom to practise across the real world, where personal experiences and reflections add real meaning and a sense of purpose to each student, while making the world a better place.

At TIS, we believe adequate sleep each night will enable students to feel rested in the morning and ready to function at their best to tackle their daily challenges and tick off plenty of boxes. We know it will affect their performance, health, appetite, attitude, and behaviour without adequate rest.

At TIS, we believe that integrity, or the lack of it, defines the individual and their reputation. We strive to display it as our badge of honour.

At TIS, we believe that success is the result of: taking on new challenges by moving out of your comfort zone; ensuring consistency by avoiding complacency; understanding that performance requires balance; and reflecting on outcomes to set new personal best targets. After all, success is personal.

At TIS, we believe that through actions and service that demonstrate our commitment to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, we can make the world a better place. But we must be active and committed participants, not just vocal spectators.

At TIS, we believe that personal success is best judged by one's proficiency in demonstrating daily the ten IB Learner Profile attributes: thinker, inquirer, reflective, caring, open-minded, communicator, knowledgeable, risk-taker, balanced, and principled.

At TIS, we believe that sport, as one of the four pillars for student balance and ensuing success, promotes teamwork, challenges personal best, and emphasises the importance of appreciating how to lose before knowing how to win.

At TIS, we believe that service, as one of the four pillars for student balance and ensuing success, provides a hands-on experience to how we can make the world a better place through action and an understanding that success comes from helping others grow and becoming empowered.

At TIS, we believe that academics, as one of the four pillars for student balance and ensuing success, provide a theoretical lens for inquiry, critical thinking and conceptual understanding, and the opportunity to demonstrate our knowledge and understanding across many areas of learning.

At TIS, we believe that culture, as one of the four pillars for student balance and ensuing success, develops and enhances

the creative, artistic and performing skills and talents in each student.

At TIS, we believe the four pillars for student balance and ensuing success—academics, service, sport and culture—provide a theoretical lens for inquiry, critical thinking, and conceptual understanding in a real-world context through action. Across all four pillars, TIS prides itself on the opportunities and experiences that enable graduates to develop and enhance leadership attributes and skills to make a difference and the world better. As leaders, we create our footprints to ensure authenticity.

Only through knowing the context of a school can you develop the school's belief statements.

What does your school's belief statements look like?

12

Personalised Learning

The most valuable teaching experiences I enjoyed were the one-teacher schools. Within this learning environment, there is more emphasis on the individual and less on grade structures. You can meet the individual student where they are on the learning continuum across each key learning area. It's personalised learning and this was in the days when your technology of choice was the old spirit duplicator! If you missed that experience, be grateful!

These days, technology can make the personalised learning experience so powerful and immediate for the student. Feedback in many areas can be almost immediate. The only danger I see is the continuing reliance on technology (too much screen time) and possibly limiting social interactions with other students and teachers. Yet, appropriate strategies can be implemented to address these important issues.

The obvious lesson from the COVID school closures was personalising as much learning as possible by utilising the power of technology with appropriate software resources. Catering for a class of students in any lesson results in much-lost lesson/learning time. By individualising learning, you provide a student with a scope of learning experiences over which the student has agency and voice.

In the early 1980s, I used a contract system in my small school. Students were placed into ability groups for the basics (reading, maths, spelling, and writing). All the tasks for the day, including other key learning areas, were listed on the board without any timeframe except the start and end of the day. Students had a

choice regarding what they completed first and left for last. They were responsible for completing the day's contract while my role was assisting, supporting, and evaluating the learning evidence. According to standardised testing, it was an industrious learning environment, and students consistently achieved at or above their chronological age.

The initial concern voiced by opponents of personalised learning will be the time it takes to implement, especially in planning and preparation. Indeed, any new approach or strategy takes (a lot of) time to plan, prepare, and fine-tune its implementation. However, planning should also include the best structures to implement to make the personalised learning process efficient and effective for the teacher and each student. In teaching, if something is a burden, then something is not working, and the issues should be addressed immediately and not left to wane in bureaucracy.

The factory model of schooling is obsolete and ineffective. Yet, it is convenient for bureaucratic purposes. Schools and educators have the tools to implement personalised learning as standard practice in school. We need to move out of our comfort zones.

The teacher-student relationship remains important in school education and becomes even more so because of the emphasis on personalised learning. The teachers know each student better.

13

Teaching Experience

My 50 years as an educational leader have included so many different and varied experiences that I can confidently say, "Been there, done that!"

While possibly daunting for many, I was excited to become a Teacher-In-Charge (TIC) in my first appointment after completing teacher training in 1973. My practice teaching session at Wyndham Public School on the far south coast of New South Wales confirmed the excitement and opportunity such an experience would bring. Soon after that "prac," I was invited to meet the Bowral District Inspector, Bob Tyler, to discuss an appointment as TIC at a one-teacher school in his district. I was thrilled. So, when the big day came when my cohort received their appointment letters, I was excited and surprised. Yes, it was a TIC appointment, but where on Earth was Five Mile Tree Public School on the Bigga-Crookwell Road at Crooked Corner? I knew it had to be in New South Wales, but the name of the school and locality made it seem as though it was beyond the "Black Stump!" In fact, it was only about 80 km away from Goulburn Teachers College.

The surrounding district had about six one-teacher schools, so there was an active school network, unlike my time at Weilmoringle, the fourth most isolated school in New South Wales, where our local small schools' network also comprised the first and second most isolated schools in the state with hundreds of kilometres in between us.

Being the TIC of a one-teacher school thrust me in at the deep end of teaching, where I was responsible for about 20 students from Kindergarten to Grade 6, as well as being the school cleaner. In this situation, you learn quickly to ensure routines are

in place so that the teaching and learning were effective for each individual student across each grade and all key learning areas. Routines, planning, group work, classroom management, and supervision were my priorities. Remember, these were the days before release time for teachers was introduced. So, supervision before, during, and after school, and day-to-day teaching and cleaning were all mine. It was tiring but exciting, and one helluva experience that I valued so much. It was the perfect start to teaching with a wholesome experience from day one.

I enjoyed small schools, one- and two-teacher schools, for about 15 years in various parts of New South Wales. In 1985, I moved into Aboriginal education, commencing with a two-teacher school (Weilmoringle), followed by a K-10 central school (Collarenebri) and then a large Primary School (Moree). I enjoyed these experiences and began initiatives to improve outcomes for these students and their communities. The Wytaliba Project, the Colly Artist-in-Residence program, the NSW Board of Studies approved school-based courses at Collarenebri, Kinder Start, and the GAT programs at Moree made a difference.

Two years as a team leader for NSW quality assurance reviews were valuable and practical experiences as I commenced my doctorate while focusing on the effectiveness of the quality assurance review process. It was the first time in my experience that there was a start and finish to the job. There is always something waiting for your attention in schools, especially as a school principal.

In 2000, I established an educational consultancy that lasted a few years. During this period, I was appointed principal of a private business college in the heart of Sydney (NSW). My first task was to establish a senior high school for overseas students who wanted to pursue university admission once they had completed high school. I also assisted two other private business colleges establish senior high schools. I enjoyed a brief period as the Study Abroad Registrar for Arcadia University (USA) where I assisted students settle into their NSW universities and liaise

with universities about these students. I also spent time as the education director at a growing Islamic school in the southern suburbs of Sydney.

During this consultancy period, I became fascinated with the International Baccalaureate programs as I was aligned with everything it provided. In 2004, I accepted the offer to become the Director of Al Jazeera Academy (AJA) in Doha, Qatar. Three immediate challenges were awaiting me. First, the school of 250 students required experienced and stable leadership. Second, the school had to gain authorisation as an IB World School to offer the Diploma Programme. Third, we had to attract students to maximise the school's capacity. The first two priorities were completed within 15 months, while during my four years as the Academy Director, the school grew to 1500 students across P-12. After gaining DP authorisation, our initial plan was to bed down DP before considering PYP and MYP. At this time, different programs were operating at the preschool, primary, and junior secondary levels. However, it soon became obvious during the first year of implementing the Diploma Programme at AJA that for students moving from IGCSE to DP, it was like stepping from Earth to Mars. So, we fast-tracked our plans to implement PYP from P-6 and MYP from 7-11, alongside DP (12-13). PYP and MYP are easier to implement because the candidacy phase for each program allows schools to commence them before becoming authorised, while DP requires authorisation before commencing it. This period at AJA was an enormous experience living and working in a Muslim country as the educational leader of a large international school offering IB programs. Staff recruitment required frequent interviews in the UK, Europe, North America, south-east Asia, and Australia. From experience, our recruitment priorities were Australians, Canadians, and New Zealanders who demonstrated the best experience in inquiry teaching and learning.

When the school changed ownership, it was time to return to Australia. I was (re-) appointed as the Education Director of a

Sydney Islamic school I had previously consulted. There were two priorities: seek PYP authorisation and establish a secondary school. The second priority created two further priorities: MYP authorisation and DP authorisation. The first two priorities were completed within two years, with the secondary school requiring major capital works to satisfy learning space requirements. MYP was commenced as a candidate school, and the gradual implementation of each grade level in secondary allowed time to gain authorisation for DP and complete building requirements for the secondary school classes.

An opportunity to lead a school in Papua New Guinea arose in 2012 and agreeing to establish it as a PYP school was the critical role of this position, as well as establishing a secondary school on the same site. The Star Mountains Institute of Technology (SMIT) was a major initiative of the sovereign fund organisation that used the compensation money from the Ok Tedi mining disaster to establish an educational precinct at Tabubil, the site of the Ok Tedi Mining Company, that would cater from preschool to university, as well as vocational education and training. Tabubil made Weilmoringle seem like a teddy bear's picnic! The only way in was by plane. It is the second wettest place on Earth, and it makes interesting reading about it in Wikipedia! The Ok Tedi Corporation "owned" the town and controlled it. There was a lot of animosity between Ok Tedi and SMIT, fuelled by the desire of the then-Prime Minister to get his hands on the sovereign fund. By the end of 2013, SMIT folded and another organisation was given the contract to operate the local school.

Leaving at short notice, I secured the position of Primary School Principal at King Faisal School (KFS) in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Based within the Diplomatic Quarter, I was in the safest place in the world, living next door to the US embassy. KFS was authorised in PYP, MYP, and DP. Authentic implementation was an issue and my previous IB experience ensured that PYP was the most authentic program at KFS. I was frustrated in wanting to lead the school into the 21st century, however, the overall reluctance

to do so across the school made me look elsewhere. Fortunately, an opportunity to fill the gap in my experience base came up in Ghana with Tema International School (TIS) seeking a principal to lead its secondary boarding school (7-12). TIS ticked two boxes: it provided a boarding school experience for me, and making a difference in schools in Africa had been my goal for many years.

My best advice for teachers and (aspiring) principals? Gain as much experience in as many different school types, curricula, and communities as possible to become an accomplished educational leader who can make a difference in any school. Always look for opportunities and challenges to make a difference in a school and its community. Experience IB programs and never look back.



14
Conflict

What almost everyone dislikes are conflicts. I say almost as I have met people who seem to thrive in it!

Schools are prone to conflicts at all levels due to the diverse nature of any school. The worse part of a conflict is that it can spoil the day or days for the persons involved. For example, a student facing a school suspension will involve investigations that may take two days or more to complete, followed by meetings with parents, support, and senior staff before a determination is made. Add the record-keeping and a full week has passed with little other time for other important matters. This time for those involved creates a great deal of stress and angst.

However, the goal for all principals will be to resolve all (or as many as possible) conflicts by providing solutions that will work. Yet, there may be conflicts when the best resolution may be for the family to find another school because the current school cannot meet or satisfy the student's needs.

Let's look at some of the conflicts arising at each stakeholder level.

Student conflicts at school may involve bullying (cyber, teasing, body shaming, etc.), friendships, home issues, plagiarism, teacher-student relationships, learning, wellbeing, and behaviour. These are all time-consuming issues and, unfortunately, there are not enough counsellors at school to support a significant number of students, let alone all of them. In primary school, the teacher can be the best person to resolve a conflict as they usually know the student best. Depending on their experience, they may need

the support of members from the learning support team or senior management.

Parental conflicts will often voice all the student conflicts mentioned above. But we must also add homework, sports, classroom management, and teacher behaviour. It will demonstrate a positive school ethos if all conflicts are resolved at the grassroots level. However, senior management support is often required for those irate parents who enter the school gates.

Staff conflicts may arise from responsibilities and deadlines, such as duty supervision and student reporting. There may be union conflicts as well as performance concerns.

Performance and teacher behaviour conflicts are draining, especially when improvement targets are not met.

Leadership conflicts will often relate to leadership ability (and experience). Poor planning, communication, decision-making, and resourcing often result in low staff morale. Disenfranchised staff will soon choose to find greener pastures or add disharmony to the low staff morale.

School authority conflicts relate to head office interference regarding funding, personnel, facilities, and resources. The usual frustration is the lack of local knowledge or, more often, the lack of adequate resourcing to resolve the conflict. These are troublesome conflicts because school authorities usually hold the power balance.

When facing and trying to resolve conflicts, there are a few key priorities:

- understand the conflict by allowing the complainant time to articulate the concerns (and let off all steam) because knowing you are listening means you care, so they are ready to support you;

- avoid a bureaucratic response (we'll look into it and let you know) or support an action that is clearly at odds with school policy and best practice (hitting a student);
- suggest actions and a timeline so that the complainant appreciates you are taking the matter seriously; and,
- act immediately after the meeting and see how quickly the conflict can be resolved.

Ensure an open and transparent school climate in which all stakeholders understand their role and how important it is for everyone to always act in the best interests of the students.

15

Culture

Culture is a school's heart and soul, defining beliefs, values, customs, celebrations, and reputation.

In accepting a principal's appointment, you must be very aware of the prevailing culture and whether it fits comfortably with your values, beliefs, and leadership philosophy. If there is no alignment, a great deal of frustration will be experienced.

In several schools I have led, there has been no prevailing culture or an agreed need to change it. Again, by articulating your leadership philosophy and ensuring alignment, success and achievement will follow, along with a grateful school community.

What is my educational philosophy?

Key influences have been:

- Peter Senge (*The Fifth Discipline*)
- Tom Peters and Bob Waterman (*In Search of Excellence*)
- Steven Covey (*The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, The 8th Habit*)
- Brian Caldwell and Jim Spinks (*The Self-Managing School, Leading the Self-Managing School, Beyond the Self-Managing School, The Self-Transforming School*)
- Michael Fullan (*The New Meaning of Educational Change; Professional Capital; Deep Learning*)
- Thomas Sergiovanni (*Value-Added Leadership, The Principalship, Building Community into Schools*)
- Robert Greenleaf (*The Servant as Leader*)
- Bill George (*True North*)
- Robin Sharma *(The Leader Who Had No Title)*.

My basic premises are:

- The purpose of schooling is to develop students as future proactive and contributing citizens (as active learners and critical thinkers) within the community they live.
- School education is a three-way partnership involving the student, the parents, and the staff.
- A school must be student-centred.
- The educational leader's role is to plan the future, share the vision, demonstrate the values, energise the school community, implement the organisational requirements for success, coach the team, promote the achievements, and align all stakeholders to achieve articulated goals.
- A key role of the teacher is to maximise each child's learning potential and achievement.
- All members of a school community should strive to be: inquirers, knowledgeable, thinkers, communicators, principled, open-minded, caring, risk-takers, balanced, and reflective.

Putting theory into practice:

- Each child is different. Each school is different. Each community is different.
- The realities of school communities highlight the relevance of the Situational Leadership method of Blanchard and Hersey. Thus, managers must use different leadership styles, depending on the situation. Having analysed the situation, you then use the most appropriate leadership style.
- Yet, within any given environment, it is important to adopt Senge's five components (systems thinking, personal mastery, mental models, building shared vision, and team learning) as the planned outcome must be a learning organisation.

My personal approach is:

- Be hands-on (know the business and all its components to ensure functionality).
- Maintain an open-door policy.
- Manage by walking around.
- Ensure continuous improvement.
- Develop effective teams.
- Enable contributions and promote talent development.
- Ensure the environment is proactive and one of opportunity for all stakeholders.
- Advocate and model the IB Learner Profile.
- Ensuring expectations are exceeded.

What are my personal beliefs?

I believe:

- students are the raison d'être for an educational institution's existence.
- an effective quality educational institution provides an enriching, caring, challenging and exciting learning environment for each student.
- an educational institution's curriculum must be relevant, engage students, cater for individual needs and promote life-long learning.
- professional and caring staff are catalysts for a quality learning environment.
- teachers must engage and connect with their students for effective learning to occur.
- all learning programs must be well planned and adequately resourced to ensure anticipated outcomes are attained.
- educational institutions should be exciting and dynamic places for all students.
- school education is a social legacy to the community.

As an educational leader, I believe:

- pursuing True North: following only authenticity by leading with passion and purpose.
- compassion and understanding are as important qualities as dedication and resolve.
- building organisational capacity and developing leadership opportunities and mentoring potential leaders within all stakeholder groups.
- my legacy will be an improved institution, as judged by others.
- individuals will be respected, teamwork is valued and coaching/mentoring emphasised.

The clues for a successful school culture are found within.

16

Action Research

Action research allows teachers to influence research and best practice by conducting their own research within their daily routines.

To succeed, the research component must focus on an aspect of development within the classroom and be observed and evaluated over time.

To be effective, it should be an aspect that the teacher-researcher is passionate about, for example, reading success.

However, the focus must not be too broad that the research is inconclusive, and there must be several data input sources to triangulate and validate findings.

I conducted action research at a few schools as I was fascinated by the Hindmarsh Report which looked at the correlation between fitness and basic skills (reading, spelling, and mathematics). This South Australian research revealed there was a positive impact of student achievement when there was allocated time for PE within the daily program in Primary Schools.

Over a period of several years, I would test students in special fitness tasks, as well as reading (Neale Reading Analysis and Schonell), spelling (ACER spelling and Schonell) and mathematics (Schonell). Under the only 15-week school terms in New South Wales, I would complete testing students during weeks 11 and 12 before focusing on cultural performances and programs during the last three weeks.

What did the data reveal over this period?

- When students are unwell for a period of time (such as measles or chicken pox), their overall performance will decline by at least six months across all learning areas.
- An increase in student performance over a period of time was usually evident across all learning areas by a majority of students.
- An increase in school performance for students was usually evident in all learning areas over a period of time.
- The increase in the reading rate matched the decline in accuracy and comprehension growth over a period of time.

Was the research useful? Most definitely, and it guided my daily routine by starting the day with fitness activities for 10 minutes and ball games proficiency (captain, tunnel, and overhead ball) for 10 minutes. This was followed by a session of reading, spelling and writing, a session of mathematics, and other key learning areas.

How did I make up the 20 minutes of fitness each day? I reduced the lunch hour to 40 minutes, which is always enough for students to enjoy their lunch (20 minutes), followed by another 20 minutes of physical activity to end the lunch break. The students always determined this lunch physical activity.

17

Reputation

What do you want to be known for as your reputation as a teacher, principal, parent, or student?

What do you want your school's reputation to be?

Your or your school's reputation will be built around your actions and resulting achievements, the credibility of your achievements, the consistency of your achievements, the transparency of your achievements, and the marketing of your achievements.

The three keywords are consistency, actions, and achievements.

Actions should align to agreed priorities (and in priority order).

Consistency relates to your actions and achievements.

Achievements will be authenticated by the audience who recognises the achievements.

People start to notice once priorities are ticked off, especially in key critical areas, such as behaviour, academic, sporting and cultural performances, leadership, local, state, national and global awards, community service initiatives, and school representation at key events.

Keeping the school and the wider community aware of your actions and achievements assists in the promotion and marketing of your reputation.

Your reputation will be evidenced by increased school admissions and a higher calibre of staff applying to be part of your school.

However, poor actions and decisions will diminish any hard-earned reputation more quickly than it took to build your reputation.

18

Planning

The first key to success is planning. The second key is preparation.

Planning is the key to your day, lessons, meetings, reporting, communications, and strategic direction. Everything.

According to Murphy's Law, it certainly won't allow for a perfect day with unexpected interruptions. However, having planned for such issues, when one arises, you can resolve it because you had planned for it.

Following the planning, ensure adequate preparation to avoid a hiccup at an event or activity. It saves you from a lot of embarrassment.

What critical planning does a principal need to action? Essential planning that will occupy a significant amount of time includes:

- Strategic planning: what are the school's priorities over the next three to five years?
- Management planning: how do we implement the priorities set for the current year?
- Financial planning: how do we fund all priorities and ongoing budget costs?
- Personnel planning: do we have the (right) staff to implement the programs for the current year?
- Facilities planning: do we have appropriate facilities to implement the programs for the current year?
- Admissions planning: do we have accurate vacancy details so that the admissions process can take place confidently?

- Event planning: when will scheduled events and activities be held during the year?
- Excursions planning: what trips will be approved for bookings, and when will they occur?
- Curriculum planning: what are the curriculum priorities across the school and grades, and what are the timelines involved?
- Equipment planning: according to the replacement cycle, what equipment will be replaced this year, and when will it occur, according to the school budget?

Of course, this planning does not happen at the start of a new year. It usually begins up to a year before, for example, booking excursion accommodation for next year's trips.

With all the planning, the next phase is the preparation so that implementation is successful from the start of the new year.

Planning and preparation teams will involve parents, staff, executives and, hopefully, students.

Remember the old adage: proper planning prevents poor performance.

19

Admissions

This chapter is from a school's perspective. Another chapter, "Choosing the Right School," is from the parent's perspective.

A critical factor for a school is admissions. Without students, you don't have a school. Small numbers mean fewer resources, especially funding. For the undecided parents, the admissions process experience can be a circuit breaker. An unwelcoming or arduous process will result in the loss of potential families. Word-of-mouth will soon spread from those who experience an unhappy process. Can your school afford disenfranchised families "spreading the word?"

At the same time, the school's reputation will be just as important as the locality of the school. An outstanding reputation will result in waiting lists. A poor reputation will result in empty chairs and, possibly, empty classrooms. No principal wants the fragile task of reducing staff due to diminishing numbers! Reputation is discussed in an earlier chapter.

What are the key stages to the admissions process?

The key stages for the school are:

- Attraction (and promotion)
- School tour/open day
- Application
- Selection
- Decision
- Enrolment
- Commencement
- Relationships.

Attraction/Promotion

Parents have a choice when choosing the right school for their child/children. So how does a school attract parents so they are at least aware of your school? What else does a school do to ensure prospective parents visit your school to help their decision-making process? Everything a school does is a form of promotion or marketing. Media coverage that reveals many facets of a school's achievements is possibly more important than the signage and banners at the front and side of the school. This visual promotion will only be seen by those who pass the school. There will be many prospective parents who will not know of the school's existence if they never go past the school. The school's bulletins, communications, brochures, and website will all be essential for attracting continuing and new families to the school.

School Tours/Open Days

These play a key role in the admissions process. This is the time to "show off" the school and promote authenticity rather than being ostentatious – real, rather than fake. If there are any speaking sessions, include parents and student leaders to articulate their reasons why your school is their best choice. Use student ambassadors to take single families on a school tour as parents are impressed by what the "product" displays regarding the student tour leader. Importantly, don't let any family leave with any unasked questions. The key message for every prospective parent passing through your school is, "This is the best school for your child because of…"

Application

How easy is the application process for your school? Does it resemble a bureaucratic form for a government agency, or is it user-friendly? My advice is not to make it too cumbersome. Decide what information can wait until an offer is accepted to have all key information in your learning management system before a new student commences at your school.

I have been using online admission portals for the past 10 years (and I can recommend OpenApply by Faria). Online can save a lot of time both ways. The parents do not have to call the school; schools have the necessary data online rather than adding the new data to the school's management system.

Selection

For me, if a prospective student and family want to enrol at your school, and you have the space available, then don't let that family leave the school without an admission offer!

The selection process that may require a test and interview primarily ensures that the school can cater to the prospective student. If the applicant has mobility issues, can the child access all parts of the school? If the applicant does not speak the language of instruction, does the school have the relevant language support staff to assist this child?

Decision

An applicant is either suitable or unsuitable. If suitable and there are no vacancies, the child is placed on a waitlist (if a vacancy is anticipated soon.) Advise the families promptly so they are aware of the outcome. When making an offer, include all essential information you require for the school's management system that parents will need to ensure a successful start to the new school. Negotiate the best starting date for the school and family if not at the start of a new academic year.

Enrolment

If parents accept the admission offer, then enrolment has been confirmed.

Ensure all relevant staff know the first day so the new student and their parents enjoy a smooth start to their new school.

Commencement

The first day for a new student must be as impressive as the prospective student's and family's first visit. Meet and greet the new student early enough so that the new homeroom teacher meets and greets them, settles the student into the room, and provides any materials so that the start of the day is smooth and seamless. Set up buddies so the new student is not confused about any aspect of the new school's routines.

The only thing a parent wants to hear from their child at the end of their first day at a new school is: "I love my new school. I really enjoyed my day and made plenty of new friends."

Relationships

The admissions process does not stop after the first day. Maintain a positive and strong relationship with each family so that a student's younger siblings and cousins also become future students because of this relationship.

20

Teams

Teams can make or break a school!

Having effective teams operating across a school is critical to its success. The key advantages are:

- the promotion of engagement and empowerment
- collaboration across different sections of a school
- identification of future leaders
- a more authentic perspective on issues and solutions
- an opportunity to enable staff, parent and student voices.

The school leader can't do everything or be everywhere. The most effective way to ensure school-wide programs and activities is through teams established to address specific priorities for the year. To do so, priorities need to be identified by senior management before the start of a year and a decision needs to be made if a committee or team is required to be responsible for this priority. If yes, the team should be formed preferably towards the end of the preceding year so that it can unpack the specific priority and determine its strategies and actions to achieve its goals within a year. Doing so will save lost time at the start of the new academic year. However, any new staff arriving should be encouraged to join any team to which their values, strengths and interests align. Student and parent representatives should be encouraged to join teams when practical so that the school community has representation.

What are likely teams to be found within schools? Curriculum, finance, sport, events, facilities, extra-curricular, technology, learning support, fundraising, wellbeing, service, and success teams will be common across schools. However, there is no point

in establishing teams if no action is planned and possibly if the focus is not a priority for the year. To succeed, teams must have a timeline to achieve their goals within a specific timeframe. If the goal is to be achieved within three years, the team will disband after three years.

So how do teams make or break a school?

A great team will engage the school community and promote the school through its activities and achievements, instilling more pride within the school as specific goals are achieved. Collaboration and partnerships are celebrated. Team leaders' contributions will be identified (and hopefully rewarded). A team ethos will be recognised and celebrated, and a growth mindset should be evident.

A poor team will demonstrate a lack of cohesion and leadership, miscommunication, little achievement, and a fixed mindset. The negative vibes may impact the rest of the school and the lack of harmony will tarnish the school's reputation. It may even result in losing staff, students, and parents. In this instance, the principal's role will be to urgently refocus the group, and possibly change leaders and some team members to ensure each member contributes to the team's success and not its demise.

SECTION 3

A SCHOOL IS A SCHOOL IS A SCHOOL



21

Results

Academic results tend to be used to "label" a school by almost everyone.

My concerns with this approach are:

- comparing apples to oranges and trying to justify the conclusion
- failing to consider other factors when determining the best schools.

I know that in every school, each grade cohort is different to the one above and the one below. There are great, good, ordinary, and bad years.

What I have often wondered is if the science teacher at school X in the northern suburbs of Sydney, who consistently has one of their students score the top mark in science in the Higher School Certificate, would have the same impact on students in an isolated and impoverished indigenous community in outback New South Wales? If yes, then greatness should be recognised (and rewarded). If not, then why not?

Because each student is different, schools should be measured the percentage of students achieving or exceeding their predicted grades in each subject in final exams.

Of course, the no-grades movement will disagree with this approach for a good reason. While the priority in schools is focused on grades, then feedback is not important and will be ignored by most, which renders the assessment task as redundant.

At one school, a cohort achieved a 100% pass rate in their final exams—the first cohort to do so. This makes that cohort one of the best cohorts based on results. Their behaviour was poor and disappointing over the last semester, so the cohort deserves no "best" accolades.

The International Baccalaureate has the Learner Profile at the core of its programs. This learner profile articulates 10 attributes that learners should develop. These attributes are:

- inquirer
- thinker
- knowledgeable
- reflective
- communicator
- balanced
- caring
- open-minded
- risk-taker
- principled.

For me, any school producing students who can demonstrate each of those attributes to a high level daily is a very successful school.

High-achieving students who are not caring or principled will not make our world better. Nor will they make a good citizen in their community. Fortunately, most universities look beyond the academic results when offering placement. What is important is what else the prospective student brings to the table. How did they demonstrate their leadership and initiative during their final school years? How did they ensure balance in their lives?

22

Standards

Standards must be articulated and flexible (in terms of resetting them due to continuous improvement) and they will only be achieved by authentic teamwork, collaboration, and empowerment.

The standards to which I refer here are those that the school sets for its community and may be in terms of performance, attendance, dress, grievances, and communication. The standards will be in areas of school life that the school community deems important. One standard that I insist in schools is the 48-hour rule for communication. Too often, very small issues that should be resolved at the time of occurrence are left to fester into a major incident that should have been resolved months earlier. Establishing an open-door policy has been a standard that I have always adopted. Making parents book appointments may provide some order to the day, but it may also frustrate an irate parent who needs to be heard now. In 99.9% of irate parents, the matter is resolved by removing the time-delay strategies any organisation can establish to stifle issues. I detest bureaucracy so I expect processes can be streamlined so that issues can be addressed at the time and not "falling off the table."

Establishing a standards culture in a school demonstrates an empowered school with high expectations regarding standards. Such a culture exists at Tema International School (TIS) where each performance or event must be better than the previous year's event. Two key events are Founders' Week and the Annual Play.

TIS Founders' Week celebrates its Founders, Mr and Mrs Adjavon, along with their children and families (Founding

Family). Grade 11 students establish a program for the week, and separate teams are responsible for the daily activities. This responsibility becomes part of the students' CAS program. On Founders' Day, a concert is always followed by a special luncheon. Other significant events, such as Teachers' Day and International Day, are held on a separate day of this week so it is quite an exhausting celebration. But each year, the organising committee goes one better than the previous year by their planning, preparation and rules based on fun, sensibility and a celebration of our founders. I have witnessed eight of these celebrations; a higher standard is evident yearly.

The Annual Play is performed around the second weekend in November each year. The school's 10th-anniversary performance of *The Lion King* in 2015 was also hailed as the benchmark. However, subsequent productions had unique aspects that qualified each as the best performance. What each performance does is identify a couple of new stars who would be the least you expect to perform and surprise you with their magical performances. The 15th-anniversary performance was an adaptation of *Beauty and the Beast* at the National Theatre in Accra. It was simply stunning in every possible way. It would not have been out of place if performed on Broadway, New York. People stopped talking about *The Lion King*. It would be impossible to improve on the *Beauty and the Beast*. But a new standard is set by selecting unknown plays and producing a magical performance in which students excel in all their characterisations. Yes, the performance is better each year and the students ensure that the standards' culture is evident to all. To impress further, students take on the crew responsibilities for staging, music, costume, design, and makeup. Each year, I am mesmerised by these talented students and supporting staff. So, insist on a standards culture that empowers the school community to demonstrate and enjoy continuous improvement annually.

23

Personal Development

I have always considered personal development as the responsibility of the individual, while professional development is a joint responsibility of the individual and the employer.

Here, I want to focus on personal development, which may seem to some as a blurred line between personal and professional development.

With personal development, it is the individual's choice and direction that will determine personal development activities. A primary school teacher may prioritise learning to play a musical instrument, such as guitar or piano, to assist the teacher with an additional learning strategy within the classroom. Chess may be another example if a teacher is looking to start a chess club or enter students into a chess tournament.

In my case, I chose further education always to stay abreast of requirements for the next opportunity. After completing the two-year teaching certificate at Goulburn Teachers College, I completed the Diploma of Teaching by distance education. Then I sought to complete a Bachelor of Arts at the University of New England, again through distance education, like all my following degrees and post-graduate diploma. Following my bachelor's degree, I was interested in working in indigenous education so I decided to do the theory first before the practical experience. I completed the postgraduate Diploma in Educational Studies (Aboriginal Education) at Armidale College of Advanced Education. My practical experience afterwards was principalships at Weilmoringle Public School, Collarenebri Central School, and Moree Public School. At Collarenebri, I

regarded a master's degree in educational administration may soon become an essential requirement for principalships in the near future, so I completed this program at the University of New England.

The next step was obvious. I predicted that future educational leaders would require a Doctorate in Education within 10 years. While I was offered a place to undertake my doctoral studies at UNE and Charles Sturt University at Wagga Wagga, I preferred the Charles Sturt option. I focused on school quality assurance as I was commencing a period as a team leader in the NSW school quality assurance directorate.

Each additional degree or diploma made me a better person and educational leader. My master's degree and doctorate were the most practical-based studies that aligned closely with my daily work.

The doctorate was a big challenge for me as a writer who preferred to be succinct and keep most things to a single-page document. The funny thing was that I thought I was damn good at writing. However, the doctoral process only revealed how poor I was. Apart from the intense research, I recommend the doctoral process to any leader who wants to become a much-improved writer.

My personal interests went beyond academic studies. I also enjoyed sports coaching and a great deal of personal development occurred when coaching soccer, hockey, Australian football, gymnastics, and swimming teams at the various schools in which I have been involved.

What are your priorities for personal development?

24

Professional Development

As mentioned in the previous chapter, professional development is a joint responsibility for the individual and the employer.

For the employer, there will be mandatory and priority professional development activities for school staff and individual activities, such as principal conferences and librarian conferences. Managing professional development funding to ensure all staff receive relevant training in any year is often a juggling act. Having a three-year plan in which each individual staff member attends a relevant PD experience is more manageable.

However, it is just as important that staff demonstrate the benefits of training by their impact on the school. Unfortunately, for a minority of staff, such experiences are only seen as a day off or a quick break, depending on the location and venue of the experience. In my Saudi Arabian experience, different staff nominated exotic locations rather than closer venues.

Timing is also a big issue. From personal experience, being a representative in several regional committees can keep you out of school for several days each week. You need to consider its impact on the school during your absence. Miss a day and you have two days' work to catch up.

A great form of professional development for me was visiting other schools and wandering through classrooms to marvel at the evident creative ideas and strategies. I recommend this approach to all educators. Similarly, holding staff meetings in classrooms on a rotational basis provides a great opportunity for all staff to consider new approaches on display in other classrooms.

The individual's joint responsibility can be taken by attending professional association meetings and conferences. Doing so increases personal experiences and often in more meaningful and purposeful ways for the individual.

IB has a specific requirement for schools that wish to be authorised in terms of continuous professional development of staff. It's a mandatory obligation for schools and a critical component of school evaluations. In-school workshops are an effective way to conduct whole-school training on a key area for staff development.

A key strategy to ensure effective professional development within a school is to prioritise hiring experienced workshop leaders into key leadership roles. When TIS opened its Primary School Campus, the key personnel priority was an experienced PYP Coordinator who was also an experienced workshop leader. We had several strong candidates and selected Jacob Lumumba, with whom I had worked at a previous school. Ensuring Jacob had a non-teaching load meant he was also coaching and guiding teachers to become authentic PYP practitioners in classrooms. Our initial plan was to seek authorisation in the third year, but so effective was Jacob with his training and guidance that the school was authorised within two years. I am happy to declare the Primary School Campus as one of the most authentic PYP schools anywhere. The Lumumba factor is the key secret.

25

Reporting: The Importance of Data

When reporting to parents about a child's progress, never underestimate the importance of data. I hear you say, "There is nothing new here!"

Importantly, you can't ever give parents too much information!

The perfect report will contain evidence of learning (portfolio), the teacher's summary of strengths and areas for development for the next reporting session, and the student's reflection on their achievements (strengths) and next goals (areas for development).

Being specific and concise regarding strengths and areas for development, rather than generalised and vague statements, will come from the depth of data the teacher has available.

Accessing a depth of data should not be an issue with the significance of learning management systems in schools.

Importantly, each report should be personal and addressed to the student rather than just generic comments in which the student's name is not mentioned.

A report should not just capture academic subjects. It should also profile a student's soft skills, approaches to learning skills, interests inside and outside the classroom, and any school honours or representation outside the school.

The frequency of reporting to parents is a school's decision, but a detailed report should be available at least at the end of a semester, so twice each year. The advantage of learning

management systems is that reports can be produced at any time after the teacher inputs the data.

The publication or availability of reports should coincide with the opportunity of three-way interviews or student-led interviews. Enabling students to demonstrate evidence of their progress is a powerful and impressive strategy for students to own their learning.

26
Meetings

If principals are not careful, their life can be just one long meeting.

There are (too) many types of meetings depending on the type and size of the school. There will be assemblies, student leaders' meetings, staff, daily routine, and departmental meetings, executive or senior management team meetings, board and its sub-committee meetings, and parents' association meetings. I will not include meetings that may arise from the school district or sports associations. Some may be monthly, per term or semester, weekly or even daily. Ah, the good old days as the teacher-in-charge of a tiny school!

Meetings will have a purpose and at any time you question a meeting's purpose, discuss this matter with others to determine if it is an issue or a figment of your imagination. If it is to communicate information, consider sending an email rather than wasting others' time. Always use a meeting to reinforce school policy and strategies and build support for different school actions.

Everyone's time is precious and there is no perfect day or time for a meeting. In the 24/7 world in which we live, something is always happening at any hour or day. So be aware that there is no perfect day or time to hold a specific meeting. I like stand-up meetings so there are no long-winded discussions that have little to do with the purpose of the scheduled meeting. I remember joining a school, and the first staff meeting went 1.5 hours with nothing resolved on the four topics raised. There were plenty of discussions, no agreement, and too many opinions strayed from

the topic under discussion. Future meetings had a 30-minute deadline and any extension was by a consensus vote. Topics had to be listed on the staff whiteboard. The quickest meeting was 12 minutes, and the average was about 20 minutes. Actions and focused discussions were evident, and staff were happy that their time was respected.

Outcomes or agreed actions are critical for successful meetings and meeting notes after every meeting. If there aren't any, why was the meeting held? Provide staff with an opportunity to demonstrate their leadership potential by assigning them action responsibility (by volunteering, preferably, or by encouragement). This collaborative style encourages a strong team approach and team ethos. Many appreciate the responsibility, especially if the action responsibility is in an area of their expertise.

I strongly recommend rotating the venue for each staff meeting and allowing the class teacher of the room venue to chair the meeting. In this instance, there are three strong advantages. First, each staff member has the experience of chairing a meeting, which will be advantageous later in their career. Second, other teachers can glean ideas from being in a colleague's classroom, such as displays. Third, the rotation may encourage some teachers to increase their effort knowing that colleagues may be critical if they meet in an uninspiring classroom!

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Expectations

I believe it is very important for principals/schools to articulate the expectations of the key stakeholders: students, staff, and parents. The following expectations are what I consider to be important in a school.

Students
There are five aspects where high standards are always expected: performance, behaviour, presentation, communication, and participation.

Performance
It is expected that student performance will at least equal or exceed their natural ability. Regardless of a child's natural ability level, each student is expected to put their best effort into every task they attempt.

Behaviour
Students are expected to:

- Be ready to learn
- Wearing the correct school uniform
- Be in the right place at the right time (with the right gear/ equipment)
- Respect staff, students, and visitors
- Respect their own and the property of others
- Apply best effort into each activity
- Be honest.

Presentation
Students are expected to be in correct school uniform (and worn properly) when they are on school grounds or in the wider community representing the school.

Communication
"Sooner rather than later" is the standard for all communications. If there is an issue or concern, then individuals must communicate this issue or concern to the relevant party. All issues and concerns are expected to be addressed quickly (48-hour rule).

Participation
Students are expected to participate in all class/school activities. Failure to do so raises the question of commitment.

> *Setting an example is not the main means of influencing another, it is the only means.*
>
> - Albert Einstein

Staff
Staff must always be professional. Their actions and behaviours reflect themselves, their professional colleagues, and the school.

Staff will demonstrate their professionalism through:

- Their commitment to excellence and high standards will be reflected in the performance of their duties. Students' performance and their results are considered a reflection of teaching staff performance.
- Their efforts to ensure effective communication between colleagues, students, and parents. All communication must reflect a "sooner rather than later approach" (48-hour rule). Email is the preferred form of communication. Staff should copy in their Head of Department, Program Coordinator, and the Principal.
- Their establishment of strong home–school relationships.
- Their loyalty and commitment to the school, always and without exception.
- Their ability to **make a difference** to the school as a result of their professional and personal contributions by **value-adding in their individual areas of expertise**.

- Their prompt follow-through on all tasks and requirements for which they are responsible.
- Their participation in extra-curricular activities and school events.

"A candle loses nothing by lighting another candle."

- Anonymous

Parents

All parents are expected to:

- Support the policies and ethos of the school.
- Communicate, by email, any issues promptly with the class teacher or relevant staff member (48-hour rule) on working days (Monday–Friday, 8 am – 4 pm).
- Demonstrate courtesy and respect in their dealings with school staff and other parents.
- Attend parent/teacher interviews and information sessions.
- Participate in school functions and events.
- Pay school accounts according to the set time frames.
- Ensure their children return to school within the set timeframes.

"It's not what is poured into a student that counts, but what is planted."

- Linda Conway

28

International Baccalaureate Programmes

The International Baccalaureate (IB) offers four programmes across school education age groups. These programmes are:

- Primary Years Programme (PYP), which covers the age range of 3–12 years;
- Middle Years Programme (MYP), which covers the age range of 11–16 years;
- Diploma Programme (DP), which covers the age range of 16–19 years; and
- Career-related Programme (CP), which also covers the age range of 16–19 years.

The IB programmes are perfect for internationally mobile families. Its original purpose was to provide continuity and stability instead of dealing with the vagaries and weaknesses of national curricula. However, more and more schools are changing into IB World Schools due to the rigour and reputation of these IB programmes. I recall first hearing about IB back in the 1990s. Then in 2000, I read more about different aspects of IB programmes and their impact on different IB World Schools. As I read, I found myself continually nodding in agreement. What I was reading was exactly what I believed a school should be. As mentioned elsewhere, the opportunity to lead an IB World School arose in 2004 when I was appointed the Director of Al Jazeera Academy in Doha, Qatar. This school was seeking authorisation to offer the Diploma Programme. It was an opportunity too good to refuse and the start of a journey I have enjoyed ever since.

Let's have a brief look at each of these IB programmes…

PYP is the most authentic 21c programme of the IB suite of programmes, as it was the last programme to have implemented its seven-year review. (DP is currently undertaking its review.) In the current PYP model, the programme's core is focused on agency, emphasising voice, choice, and ownership. This central principle of agency underpins the three pillars of school life: the learner, learning and teaching, and the learning community. The PYP curriculum is transdisciplinary as it moves to learn across, between, and beyond disciplines. Each IB programme is inquiry-based and the PYP program of inquiry is organised and framed by six transdisciplinary themes:

- Who we are
- Where we are in place and time
- How we express ourselves
- How the world works
- How we organise ourselves
- Sharing the planet

In the early years, students only cover four transdisciplinary themes a year, while primary school grades cover all six yearly. More can be found about PYP here:
https://ibo.org/programmes/primary-years-programme/

I have been most fortunate to have been involved in establishing the best primary school (anywhere) at Tema International School, a goal I expressed when interviewing for the position in 2015. I make this bold claim because our experienced PYP Coordinator, Jacob Lumumba, wears all the PYP IBEN hats available (workshop coordinator, site visitor, consultant, and curriculum reviewer). As he does not carry a teaching load, Jacob spends most of each day in the classroom to guide and develop each teacher and assistant to become an experienced PYP educator. As a result, you can see, hear, and feel the learning happening in each classroom across the school. It's a beautiful and fulfilling experience where authentic learning is evident.

MYP, for many years, was the ugly duckling of the IB programmes until it implemented its model review in 2013 when it filled its critical "hole" and implemented eAssessments as the culminating exam at the end of MYP 5, the final year of the Middle Years Programme. Both PYP and MYP provide flexibility across national school systems and structures. For example, middle school in the USA commences in Grade 6, so MYP1 will be delivered in Grade 6. Some countries offer 2–5-year programs highlighting the program's flexibility. However, the final year of MYP, which is MYP5, must include the Personal Project, which is the MYP equivalent to the Exhibition (PYP) and the Extended Essay (DP).

The feature of MYP that stands out for me is assessment. Each subject comprises four assessment criteria (A, B, C, and D). We require students to be assessed three times across each criterion during a semester. Based on the levels awarded, teachers must make a best-fit judgement to determine the final level to be awarded. The total of each final level will then determine the final grade based on the MYP scale. Assessments are specific and criterion-based, which, in my opinion, ensures a more authentic result than other assessment forms.

The eAssessments conducted at the end of MYP5 must be seen to be believed! I am amazed every time I witness a session. Have you witnessed a cohort of students who are absolutely focused on an exam and not wasting a moment? I see it every time and it is an incredible sight. It is just a pity that DP has not implemented eAssessments. MYP students step into 21c with eAssessments and then move back to 19c with formal DP exams!

The other feature of MYP that I admire is the phased approach to language acquisition. There are six phases that students progress through. They do not equate to age; students do not have to start at phase 1. The phased approach caters for the individual student based on where they are learning a second language. Personally,

I would like to see the phased approach across all subjects. More information about the MYP can be found here: https://ibo.org/programmes/middle-years-programme/

The Diploma Programme is the gold passport to university. The Diploma provides choice and ensures balance and good preparation for university. Each student has a core requirement of the theory of knowledge (think philosophy), extended essay (4000 words), and creativity, activity and service (CAS). Then they must choose six subjects, one for each group, except for Group 6 (the arts) where students may go back and select a second subject from the other groups that may be required for their major focus at university. For example, a potential engineering student will select two sciences in lieu of an arts subject. Students must choose three subjects at Higher Level (240 hours) and three at Standard Level (150 hours). It is a rigorous program, but it is doable. The maturation growth that occurs over the two years of DP is amazing. At the end of two years, each student is ready to be successful at university. Each student changes due to DP – from a teenager to a mature adult. You need to witness it to believe (and admire) it (the maturation). More information about DP can be found here: https://ibo.org/programmes/diploma-programme/

I have not experienced CP but the program provides students with a vocational education pathway within the DP framework. It is a great option and provides an IB experience for students who take this pathway. More information about CP can be found here: https://ibo.org/programmes/career-related-programme/

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Boarding Schools

In Australia, I have worked in many remote locations. Secondary schooling will often be problematic for families because of the lack of facilities, the limited teaching experience of staff, or a restrictive subject selection (curriculum offering). In these cases, families moved, or children were sent to a boarding school to address the above limitations. In many cases, attending their parents' alma mater may have been a family tradition.

In Ghana, boarding schools can incorporate primary school grades, but almost all secondary-aged students attend boarding schools. What I found hard to understand when I first arrived in 2015 at Tema International School (TIS), which enrolled secondary boarding students only, was that some students lived within one kilometre of the school! My question was: so why would you board? For government secondary schools, families need to list three choices and usually, the successful choice is a long distance away from their home.

I accepted the TIS position because I wanted to experience leading a boarding school. It has been a most exciting experience with the main issues being external factors: unstable power supply and inconsistent Internet. I did not take long to understand the importance of boarding school experience for every student. TIS is the first school I have been involved in where all students go to university. Every single student! Please check out pages 5 and 6: https://www.tis.edu.gh/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/School-Profile-280922.pdf

The two biggest advantages that a boarding school has are:

- Students develop their self-management skills and can live away from home. What is the biggest issue for students heading off to university? It's not the academics! It is managing themselves and being able to do their own laundry and cooking and managing their transport from A to B.
- Boarding schools can provide more opportunities for its students as students don't have to travel home after their last lesson. Weekends can be spent on so many opportunities and activities, such as sports, service, and culture. These experiences build up an impressive university application. Personally, I believe boarding schools can add another six months of opportunities for their students. I proudly call TIS the home of the Fast and the Furious because of everything we can do within any year. Please check out our weekly Bulletin and tell me if I am wrong. https://www.tis.edu.gh/tis-bulletin/

The biggest issue for a boarding school, and I suppose it is the same for every school, is ensuring you have the best staff for a boarding school environment. Boarding schools will be the student's first home each year as they spend more time there than at home. So, ensuring a home environment with the required standards and duty of care is essential if a student is to succeed at a boarding school. Their home must be their safe place, while the learning environment must challenge them to excel in a balanced way in academics, sport, culture, and service.

At TIS, our extensive extra-curricular programs and service activities cover all the Duke of Edinburgh International Awards program requirements. We also conduct two expeditions annually for students so that any student can complete a minimum of one award (at bronze, silver, or gold level). This award provides an additional advantage to students when applying to universities.

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Choosing the Right School

I originally had in mind to look at this important issue to help parents. But, it is also an important issue for teachers, executives, and principals when selecting your next workplace. So, I will stick to my original intent and, in the end, also comment from the educator's perspective.

For a parent, the issue probably relates to two circumstances:

- a locality change
- current school issues (current school does not cater for family requirements, for example, a child's need to attend a high school, having completed primary schooling. Or it may be personal dissatisfaction with the current school.)

When it comes to choice, it is not often possible in relation to government schools which are often "zoned." Choice is usually not an issue for non-government schools, but it comes with a cost.

I believe the most important factor is how do you feel when visiting the school for the first time. To answer this question, you need to consider other questions to decide.

These additional questions include:

- What do you see, hear and feel?
- What do you sense is the ethos and culture of the school?
- What do you think about the tone of the school?
- Do you see happy, friendly, and helpful students and staff?
- Do you witness a sense a pride in the school?

- Is it a welcoming school?
- What is its reputation (from various sources)?
- Does it cater for your child's strengths and weaknesses?

In answering these questions, do you have confidence that this school will bring out the best in your child? Is it the environment in which your child can excel and be challenged?

Reflecting on your answers will indicate whether to apply for admission or continue to search.

For teachers, executive staff and principals, your next move should provide you with two things: opportunity and challenge. Both refer to your personal and professional growth due to choosing the right school to accept/select. For me, the experiences that come from the opportunity and challenges in a new school will develop you personally and professionally. The more varied experiences you can enjoy and different localities, the better your performance becomes in accepting future roles.

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Parents' Associations and School Boards

I have worked in schools that have had either or both, and depending on the experience, I have wished there were none on some occasions.

They don't work when an individual holds political ambitions and uses a role within the school body for self-promotion. Nor do they work when a clique wants "power" for their own agenda contrary to the school's published priorities.

A school board can provide depth to the school's leadership when members bring expertise to the advantage of the school, such as legal, financial, and building experience. Effective board members will be positive advocates for the school within the community.

Parents' associations can provide much valuable financial support through fundraising, especially in areas of a funding shortfall. This works well when parents own the agenda for their fundraising efforts by determining the priorities for their raised funds. Additionally, it provides a forum to communicate school issues and address matters of concern.

Having both in a school can be very time-consuming and sometimes repetitive. Monthly meetings are too often as it means you have a parents' meeting every two weeks. The time-consuming aspects are the preparation for each meeting and the follow-up after a meeting.

What can work better is parents' meetings that may be held twice per semester or term, depending on the length of each. Effective parent meetings at the start of each term or semester can be an effective communication strategy where the school's priorities for the next period of time are discussed. They should also be used to review policies or solicit information for proposals or special projects.

SECTION 4

MAKE A DIFFERENCE



32

Integrity

Integrity: what you do when no one is watching you.

Integrity = Principled (IB Learner Profile attribute).

Integrity = Trust.

Integrity = (your) Reputation.

Integrity is the badge of honour everyone should wear on their sleeve.

Integrity is the most important word at TIS. As I tell students, if everyone demonstrates integrity as a habit, then there is no need for rules as everyone will go about their day "doing the right thing."

The trouble is that, in life, there are few role models for others to follow. Unfortunately, too many consider integrity as a light switch, where you can turn it off and on when you want to. This is not integrity, but just kidding yourself.

People depend on friends whom they can trust. Lose that trust and lose your friends. In times of need, we need people whom we can trust, otherwise the help becomes a hindrance.

Most importantly, integrity becomes your reputation. Your reputation will stand with you through life. What reputation do you want to have, or be known by?

At a school level, all stakeholders need to be accountable for their integrity within the school. No one should be trying to harm, damage, or diminish a school's reputation through their

decisions and actions. People who demonstrate their integrity will only enhance their personal or organisation's reputation through their actions.

At TIS, our Integrity Code is:

TIS, as a family school that provides unique experiences, embodies a spirit of integrity and respect for others, which are central to each member's personal, academic and ethical development.

As a TIS family member, I promise to uphold and demonstrate its values and protect the school's reputation. I make this pledge in the spirit of honour and trust.

Behaviour and actions are considered in relation to the integrity code. If a student is bullying others, how do these actions relate to the integrity code? How do these actions impact on the school's reputation and values?

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Recruitment

During my career, I have recruited teachers and executive staff worldwide in: Australia, Papua New Guinea, Qatar, South Africa, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Ghana, England, Scotland, Ireland, Spain, Germany, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Thailand, Canada, and the United States of America.

The most important question for me is why the applicant became a teacher. What I am looking for is a love of children, a passion for motivating students to reach their true potential, and the need to develop a student in all areas, not just in academics. If applicants satisfy me with their response, then I look forward to the rest of the interaction with the applicant. If unsatisfied, then there are very few questions left to ask.

For IB schools, I like applicants to discuss their strengths and weaknesses in relation to the IB Learner Profile attributes. If applicants with IB experience can't answer this question satisfactorily, then there are no more questions to ask.

The key outcome for any position to be filled in a school is to find the right person who is the best fit. Please note that this is easier said than done; each appointment is a risk or gamble.

While knowing the requirements of any position to be filled, what you are searching for in any candidate is why they want to fill the position, what they bring to the school, how they will "fit" the ethos and culture of the school and, critically, how they will add value to the school and what they think will be their legacy to the school. Getting an idea of their preferred length of tenure is important as you want to have stability rather than the disruption of frequent staff turnover.

In international schools, when recruiting expat staff, you need to be aware that their best plans can disappear overnight by the sudden illness or death of a close loved one. I have witnessed this on many occasions and fully understand the expectation or obligation to care for a parent or other family member whose health status has changed from independent to dependent.

The other key issue to appreciate in international schools with ex-pat staff is the importance of the family's happiness. If the children aren't happy in their new environment, then the mother won't be happy. And, if the mother is not happy, then you know the rest of the story.

The "why" question at the interview can indicate likely behaviour down the track. I recall three different red flags when recruiting for Doha. The first was "taking leave without pay to travel." The second was "to meet a future marriage partner." Last, "to enjoy the social scene," matched the previous two reasons regarding a lack of full professional commitment to their new school. Schools can't afford to employ staff who are "here for a holiday" because, as we know, teachers have to bring their "best game" to the classroom.

34

Budget and Finance

Making a difference at any school requires a proactive leader who can inspire the school community to support the school's priorities and goals within a team culture focused on improving student outcomes. Budget and finance will be key factors in a school's success in terms of its outcomes.

Planning is critical to anything and everything you do. With such a finite resource, a budget plan must cover all known program requirements and allow for unexpected contingencies, as these will always occur in any school environment. I recommend 10% of funds to be set aside for contingencies. Utilising historical data is a critical step in the budget planning process. The budget plan should provide a concise monthly overview of the academic year's income and expenditure. This should be a one-page document.

The monthly budget review with actual income and expenditure versus the budgeted totals will determine if adjustments are required due to fluctuations in either income or expenditure. A surplus of funds can always be a nice feeling, but the delays in receiving supplies can quickly remove this feeling the following month. If making cuts due to a higher than anticipated expenditure, do so based on program priorities. Remember, the contingency funds allocated for each month can ensure all monthly priorities have been completed.

Monitoring a school budget is time-consuming but remains a critical responsibility for the principal, as the wheels can fall off very quickly without close monitoring. This monitoring should also ensure that best practice is evident regarding cash

handling and payments, as there are too many cases of fraud and embezzlement in schools due to mismanagement and poor oversight.

School funding is always tight. The support of parent bodies in supplementing a school's finances is always an indicator of parent involvement and engagement. Ensuring that the parent bodies nominate their targeted areas for financial support will always make the fundraising purposeful and something that will be visible to them, for example, library books, class readers or playground equipment. Additionally, having a few parents and staff on the budget committee will promote ownership and support, especially when tough decisions need to be made. And these tough decisions will occur!

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Mentors

Mentors are important at all stages of schooling, education, and throughout our lives. Our first mentors are our parents. Assisting them are grandparents and older siblings. Aunts, uncles, and older cousins may also be involved. At a school level, older students and teachers will fill this role for some students. Some lecturers make great mentors during teacher training and will provide a positive start for their mentees. Experienced colleagues can guide teachers through tough and uncertain times during a teaching career. Principals and executive staff will always appreciate a critical friend to bounce around ideas and issues that may seem unique but are usually not.

While teachers may claim they mentor their students daily, I see this as guidance and counselling rather than mentoring. Mentoring is personal choice, voice, and action.

The mentoring process will be successful if the mentee selects the mentor. If no choice is involved, the process is unlikely to proceed any further. The process must enable the mentee to set the goals and priorities for mentoring, ensuring voice and ownership. The action taken will be personal and if the process works, personal and professional growth will be evident.

What are the important attributes of a mentor? For me, the most critical attribute will be a wide-spectrum experience. By this, I mean the mentor's experiences will have incorporated any issues the mentee may raise as a goal or priority. The mentor's ideas and discussions should assist the mentee in determining the action and subsequent reflection. Being an effective communicator will be an essential attribute. The ability to articulate in a manner easily

understood by the mentee will determine the level of success of the process. Being empathic will ensure that the process is a comfortable and rewarding experience for the mentee. Being a person of integrity will ensure trust in the relationship between mentor and mentee.

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Communication

Effective communication in schools is the most difficult challenge a principal faces.

Of course, the paradox is that with so many communication tools and apps available and in use by schools across the globe, how can it be so difficult? As I sometimes wonder, smartphones are certainly not (smart) in the wrong hands.

How do you convey your messages and key information to such a diverse group of adults?

The one-teacher school, which is the hardest school environment for a teaching principal, is also the easiest one to communicate with everyone, simply due to the size of the school community and the personal and often daily interactions between the principal and school community members. Most communication is word-of-mouth, so it is direct messages with less chance of miscommunication.

A principal needs to answer several key questions to improve the effectiveness of school communication. The first is, what is the purpose of your communication? Within any school, there are many possible reasons. It may be general, personal, informative (regarding specific activities or events), an appeal (for example, assistance or fundraising), or feedback.

The purpose of the communication will often determine the frequency and the means of communication. If it is general, the communication may be placed in the school's newsletter, which these days are emailed or placed on the school's learning management system for access. It may also be added to the school's social media sites (Facebook, Instagram WhatsApp),

depending on the message. If it's personal, a phone call or email will be best. The school's newsletter may best serve other purposes, depending on its distribution frequency.

Being aware of the audience's preferred delivery tool and using it for communication will increase effectiveness in delivery and the likelihood of the communication being read. This will also depend on the frequency. People do not like being bombarded with messages that may seem irrelevant. Timing is an important factor. Do you provide advance notice or last minute to try and achieve the best outcome (for example, attendance at an event)?

I prefer regular communication that aims to inform and educate the school community and promote and market the school. Our weekly TIS Bulletin (*The Record*) is published every Friday during each semester. Parents, students, and staff receive a message on ManageBac about the publication and access to each new edition. Each new edition is placed on our website and distributed through WhatsApp. Each edition is 20+ pages. *The Record* contains evidence of our actions and achievements across the three IB programs for which we are authorised: PYP, MYP, and DP. Students' reflections and accounts of service initiatives usually fill many pages and detail why I have dubbed Tema International School as "the home of the Fast and the Furious." What the school achieves each year is incredible, and I can admit that without any exaggeration. Please tell me if I am wrong!
https://www.tis.edu.gh/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/TIS-Bulletin-160922_comp.pdf

With such an extensive range of activities, events, and service projects, any edition of the TIS Bulletin promotes and markets the school. For potential admission students, I refer them to our Bulletin page on our website. And the secret to getting any parent to read a school newsletter? Insert a photo of their child (and even an article about the student), and at least 10 other new readers will see that edition. It will be shown to grandparents, uncles, aunties, and cousins!

37

Success

At Tema International School, we provide each student with the keys to success, as witnessed by our alumni who have preceded you. However, as in life, as an individual, you have a choice. Too often, we hear many outgoing students express their disappointment that they did not make the most of the opportunities available to them. Yet, that was their choice.

At TIS, the keys to success encompass four components:

- As an IB World School, the IB Learner Profile is at the centre of each program. The ten IB Learner Profile attributes that define learners are:
  - knowledgeable
  - thinker
  - inquirer
  - communicator
  - reflective
  - balanced
  - caring
  - principled
  - risk-taker
  - open-minded.

Demonstrate each of these attributes authentically daily and you are well on the way to success. But, during their time at TIS, students can expect and must be willing to change as an individual because of the personal growth that occurs.

- Balance is essential for one's wellbeing. At TIS, being balanced means working to the best of your ability in academics, being involved in sports (and exercise),

participating in cultural activities and making a personal commitment and contribution to service projects. Being balanced complements the Dukies program, and each student 14 years and over is expected to achieve at least one Dukies Award while they attend TIS.

- One of our tipping points at TIS is the experiences available to students so that they can challenge themselves, demonstrate the Learner Profile attributes and satisfy requirements for the Dukies awards program.
- Integrity is our ultimate badge of honour at TIS. It defines being principled and places you on the ultimate pedestal in life as a trustworthy person.

These four keys require a growth mindset, persistence, and passion. Each key will challenge and change you as a person. What will determine your success will be the challenges you take, the choices you make, the actions you initiate and the opportunities you participate in. Success will follow those who demonstrate authenticity daily.

But, in the end, it becomes a matter of choice. Not everyone will challenge themselves or change by moving beyond their comfort zone. For these individuals, success will be elusive.

THE KEYS TO SUCCESS

Prerequisites (3Ps)
Positivity (growth mindset)
Persistence (self-discipline/grit)
Passion

Components
Learner Profile
Balance
Experiences
Integrity

Determinants
Challenges
Choices
Actions
Opportunities

Outcomes
Habits
Initiative
Decision-making
Perspective
Trust
Leadership

"Success is personal and a choice." - Dr Ken Darvall

38

Online Learning

While online learning has been around for decades, think distance learning and school of the air, it became the only answer for schools in March 2020, when COVID-19 started closing cities and countries. Fortunately, in this phase of the technology era, transferring from in-class learning to online learning was relatively easy in some schools. In other schools, equity issues created problems for schools and their communities.

I witnessed both sides in Ghana, with government school students missing schooling for 12 months before they reopened. At TIS, the transition was smooth as the learning management system and software programs were already operating to cater to online learning.

Nevertheless, there remained local challenges: power and connectivity. Power failures are common in Ghana and sometimes chronic, with no advance notice and no idea when power will resume. The Internet in Ghana is like ocean waves. It comes in and goes out and may stay out longer than it stays in! So, while we could provide live lessons via Zoom, there would be no guarantee that the teacher or students could join the lesson. Realising this real, local issue at the end of the first week of online learning, we made it compulsory for teachers to prerecord their teaching component of a lesson with an explanation of activities that would follow the teacher's recorded introduction. Using a variation of the playlist model, students in other parts of the world, including Australia, Qatar, USA, and Nigeria, no longer had to stick to Ghana time but could access lessons according to the timetable but in their time zones.

I was excited by the potential of online learning to improve teaching and learning. The critical change I could foresee was a focus on personalised learning. This is what it's all about. Make learning personal. Here, teachers had the opportunity to create flexible playlists, as well as challenging, but most importantly, catering to personal choice. This also allowed teachers to ensure personalised assessment. As it differed from what teachers were doing in the 'live' classroom experience, more effort and time were required from the teachers. It was now a case of utilising technology and software to create learning experiences honed into 21c learning experiences.

Yet, I was disappointed by the outcome. Too many teachers needed a growth mindset and felt unsafe to venture from their comfort zones. For some (or many), a lack of awareness or personal expertise with technology and applications made online learning a dreadful experience. Of course, students became aware very quickly of the evident deficiencies. Joining a Zoom lesson and switching off the microphone and video, allowed students to "attend" a lesson when doing whatever they liked, such as sleeping, gaming, or streaming movies. For these students, online schooling was heaven!

Unfortunately, the COVID years often gave everyone an excuse to do nothing. Some teachers did not do themselves any credit by ignoring protocols to ensure a successful online learning experience. Instead of personal and professional growth, we witnessed a decline, stagnation, feeling lost, and subsequent wellbeing issues. The paradox was that what everyone missed during the online learning years was the personal connection to the classroom experience. Yet only some realised or experienced the potential personalised online learning experience.

Sadly, it was a great opportunity lost, along with the learning!

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Celebrations

The following is my speech at the TIS 15th Anniversary Durbar, October 2018.

Wise people say one should never have regrets.

I'm disappointed. In myself. I was not able to meet and work with the late Co-Founder, Mr Adjavon. At least I know he will be smiling down on us today and nodding his head to say, "Well done, family."

The theme for the 15th-anniversary celebrations is: Reflecting on our journey. Inspiring new directions. This Durbar will also enable each of us to explore this theme.

2018 is a year of milestones:

- TIS celebrates 15 years.
- I celebrate 45 years in school education.
- IB is celebrating its 50th anniversary.

Did you notice the common denominator? Five. If you add the digits of the starting year of TIS – 2003 – the answer is 5. Also, I have been at TIS for three years, which is one-fifth of the total years for TIS.

To continue with this magic number, five, 25 years ago, the NSW Education Department seconded me to be a Team Leader of School Quality Assurance Reviews for northern New South Wales. This area, just north of Sydney to the Queensland border and stretching halfway to the South Australian border, is equal to the size of Ghana and some of its smaller neighbouring countries.

Over two years, I conducted 49 school quality assurance reviews involving a pre-visit, in-school review covering three to five days. A review report of up to 40 pages was sent to the school, the NSW Department of Education, and the NSW Government.

It was an exciting time and the only time in my career that had a start and finish. Schools and teaching are always busy. There is always something happening, and planning is always crucial. Each day is different. Each student is different. It is what I call the teaching guarantee. It is never-ending when you are leading a school. A school year may end, but responsibilities continue. There is never any warning about a leaking toilet or a broken pipe. However, during this two-year period as a quality assurance team leader, the start would be contacting a school to arrange the review, a pre-review visit to plan the review, the review visit to conduct the review and then publishing the final report to conclude the process for a school. It was a most satisfying experience.

The final report for a school identified a school's strengths and future directions. I want to adopt the same model today to mention Tema International School's strengths and future directions. But I will use my preferred terms: "I Know" will outline the strengths, and "I Wish" will specify future directions.

I Know

• *Family School*
First and foremost, TIS is a family school. It is the most used word to describe TIS. The Co-Founders espoused family values and these are reflected in the terminology you hear around the school. Everyone knows Mrs Adjavon as Mummy. Cecilia, our General Manager, is Aunty Cecilia to all.

As a boarding school, this family school approach is critical to the success of our students. Boarding is not easy and only some are suited to a boarding experience. It is easier to leave your

family to join others you have never met before at TIS because of its family ethos and values. Additionally, the size of the school ensures a personal experience where everyone knows everyone else and supports each other.

• *Inclusiveness*
TIS is an inclusive school and not a selective school. TIS accepts all students who can access our curriculum, opportunities, and experiences. At TIS, we believe the IB experience should be an essential experience for all students. We also believe that each student has their own talents. However, each student must be prepared to change, be open-minded, and be a risk-taker to take advantage of this TIS experience and discover their talents.

• *Opportunities and Experiences*
TIS has so many opportunities and experiences that I describe the pace as fast and furious. To maximise the TIS experience, students are expected to ensure balance. TIS is not just about academics. It is also about sport, cultural opportunities in music, drama, art, film and dance, leadership, and service learning, where we aim to improve the world. TIS students must demonstrate this balance as it will also benefit their university applications in Grade 12. Each student can demonstrate their strengths through the opportunities they experienced at TIS. So, the important message for all students is to seize these opportunities and develop and grow due to the ensuing experiences.

• *Outcomes*
The TIS Profile can be found on our website. My favourite page is 4. This page lists all the universities and colleges to which our graduating students, our proud alumni, have gained enrolment on completing the IB Diploma Programme at TIS. For the record, there is a total of 288 universities and colleges. USA dominates with 163, followed by the UK with 69, Canada with 27, and Ghana with 8. But also, we have had students enrol in universities in China, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, France, Hungary, Ireland,

Malaysia, Mauritius, Rwanda, South Korea, United Arab Emirates, Bulgaria, Singapore, and Spain. All in 15 years!

We are also setting the pace in school education in Ghana. Using ManageBac to ensure an informed school community through transparency, using digital textbooks, implementing MYP, and the many service learning opportunities available to our students set a high standard that other schools wish to emulate.

TIS believes strongly in communication and keeping our parents and TIS community well-informed. I challenge any school worldwide to match our standards regarding the size of our weekly bulletins and monthly newsletters. These publications are important to keep parents in touch with what is happening, as well as being an important record of what happens at TIS.

I Wish

• *Promotion*

Despite our communication efforts and the opportunities and experiences available to all our students, I believe TIS still remains West Africa's best-kept secret. But why should the TIS brand be a secret? To this end, every TIS family member is responsible for promoting Tema International School. How many know our fifth Creative Writing and Photography Workshop will be held in two weeks? Who is telling their neighbours and friends to purchase their tickets for the 15th Anniversary Annual Production at the National Theatre on 23 November? Who was proud of our students and staff who recently appeared on TV to promote some of our special 15th-anniversary events?

Remember, each of us is responsible as a family member to promote TIS. This is an important shared responsibility.

• *Authenticity*

Students, staff, and parents must strive harder to ensure authenticity. The most important value a person can demonstrate

is integrity: what you do when no one is watching. Yet, integrity results from authenticity.

Students must be balanced across academics, sports, cultural activities, and service. But how many are being authentic in their commitment to this balance? In this respect, teachers and parents must also demonstrate authenticity by demanding students demonstrate their balance instead of shunning it and encouraging an academic focus only.

For staff, the requirement for authentic assessment to ensure students can best articulate their understanding and knowledge is not as entrenched as it should be. How can you be role models to our students if we lack authenticity?

For parents, let's be authentic partners in their child's education. This requires accessing ManageBac and reading school bulletins and taking action as required. However, 110 parents have yet to access their ManageBac accounts.

• *Parent Awareness*
Increased parent awareness is required in three areas: MYP, balance, and subject and program selection regarding university admission.

Almost all parents have personally experienced the IGCSE and "chew and pour." Parents are comfortable with what they know. However, as we are 18 years into the 21st century, it is important that parents understand how learning has changed in schools and how students learn today compared to how parents learned in their time. Introducing the Middle Years Programme, or MYP, at TIS will ensure a smoother transition for students into the Diploma Programme, or DP, which is the TIS exit credential at the end of Grade 12. This introduction of MYP focused on inquiry learning and conceptual understanding, instead of memorisation. Students in Grade 9 today are likely to be engaged in jobs of the

future that do not currently exist. Memorisation won't help these students, however, conceptual understanding will.

I am very disappointed when I hear parents demand that their child/children will not participate in any after school activities, or school events, as they only want them to focus on their academics. What a deprived experience these students will have at TIS! What a boring and unhealthy life for any child! Sadly, these parents do not appreciate that university admission officers want to know what makes an applicant special and unique to allow them admission to their university or college. All students have academics, so what else do students bring to the table when applications are considered? Admission officers want to see leadership experiences, they want to find out about personal service initiatives and sporting involvement – all the balance requirements TIS expects from our students.

I wish parents understood the stress and anxiety they cause when demanding their child to choose subjects for DP and university programs in the future based on parents' choices and not their own child's interests and choices. Who are the students doing their learning for? Themselves or their parents? Why must a student experience angst and frustration by doing a subject in which they hold no interest or ability to achieve success? I have witnessed students miss out on their diploma because of these circumstances. Guiding their child, instead of demanding their compliance, will ensure greater parental satisfaction when students are admitted into the programs they seek.

• *Personalise Learning*

I was surprised our panellists at the inaugural TIS Education Forum did not promote personalised learning as the way to the future of school education. While we know that we are 18 years into the 21st century, many education observers still comment on the need to drag many schools into the 21st century. Will we hear the same criticism in 2033?

Schools, as we know them, are all about teaching and learning. Teaching had been the dominant focus in schools, with teachers using the "chalk and talk" approach. However, the change to student-centred education has put the correct focus on learning. While larger classes experienced a "one size fits all" approach, school technology is now making personalised learning a reality for learning in future years.

In many cases, photos of classrooms from the 1800s look eerily like many in the 2000s. Fortunately, the emphasis on learning, especially personalised learning, has resulted in educators rethinking the classroom and transforming it from the factory-model approach of the 1800s into a 21st-century learning environment that fosters collaboration, communication, cooperation, creativity, and critical thinking. For different reasons, the flexible learning environment caters best for the 21st-century learner and school owners during times of enrolment fluctuations.

While many curriculum models are in use globally, they all have many similarities in terms of required knowledge, skills, and understanding. The traditional factory-model approach is based on many assumptions: one year per grade before progression; students in a certain grade are expected to learn at the same rate; and when they leave the factory, students progress to the workforce, either directly or indirectly after completing university studies.

Assessment is gathering information that accurately reflects how well a student achieves the learning outcomes in a course. If the primary purpose of assessment and evaluation is to improve student learning, why are there many disappointed students and parents each time student progress reports are sent home? Do assessment tasks allow students to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skills? How valid are final grades? If personalised learning is a step into the future, will

personalised assessment tasks become the norm and exam halls become redundant?

What is critical to future school learning environments is to maximise the technological advantage to ensure personalised learning maximises the inclusiveness of all students and enables students to connect to their learning needs to ensure individual achievement and success. It's happening elsewhere, so it's time to explore this opportunity.

• *Challenges and Projects*
The foundation for personalised learning will be personal challenges and projects relevant to the individual. Therefore, the mantra across TIS should be two often-asked questions: What challenges are you addressing? And what current projects are you working on? These questions are not just for students. They are also meant for staff and parents. Learning does not stop at the end of Grade 12 or after gaining a university degree.

Of course, students can personalise their learning by using Kognity, ManageBac, and Pamoja in the near future. To this end, it is time that students control their learning.

I Thank You
I take this opportunity to thank you.

I thank the Founding Family for this incredible opportunity to be a member of the TIS family. What an honour and a privilege!

I thank our pioneers, students, staff, and parents for laying the foundation for our strong values and traditions.

I thank our parents for choosing TIS by enrolling their sons and daughters.

I thank our staff who provide a safe learning environment and a unique student experience.

I thank our students for the joy you bring to our lives every day, fast and furious.

I also thank our alumni who play such a key role in the TIS family, even after they have departed TIS. Two years ago, an alumnus advised just how important a role they play today. They provide excellent advice to our students when interacting with them on their return to their alma mater. When our newest alumni go to university, there are always TIS alumni to help our graduating students settle into the next stage of their learning journey by assisting with their orientation to their university, accommodation, studies and their new community. Their support is incredible and very appreciated.

I thank you all.

SECTION 5

LESSONS LEARNT



40

What I Learnt From 40 Years of School Leadership

"Excellence is the result of caring more than others think is wise, risking more than others think is safe, dreaming more than others think is practical, and expecting more than others think is impossible."

- Mac Anderson

Tabubil was an appropriate place to mark my 40 years as an educator, having spent these years throughout New South Wales, South Australia, Northern Territory, Qatar, Sudan, and now, Papua New Guinea. Interestingly, or surprisingly, these 40 years have been as an educational leader, starting out as the Teacher-In-Charge at Five Mile Tree Public School at Crooked Corner. Obviously, I have met many wonderful students, teachers, parents, and community members over this time and enjoyed living in many diverse communities. I have also learnt a lot and continue to do so.

Reflecting on this milestone, I would like to share 10 things that my time as an educational leader has taught me.

Real teachers love children.
When recruiting new staff, I ask an applicant why did you become a teacher. I must hear the applicant say words to the effect that "I love children." If I do not hear it, then I am not interested in working with them, no matter how good their credentials are. Students must be at the centre of everything a teacher does.

Working in international schools, this question is more relevant when selecting the right teacher. On the international teaching

circuit, you have your tourists, those on sabbatical and others who are escaping from, or hunting for, a relationship. In these instances, teaching is only a secondary focus.

Real teachers enjoy students' individuality and make a difference for every child, appreciating that each one has a talent. Real teachers go the extra mile and get a buzz over special moments.

> *"Education is the most powerful weapon that you can use to change the world."*
>
> *- Nelson Mandela*

Many teachers don't proofread their work, or understand assessment.

Student reporting time is one that I dread since this is when teachers' communication skills are on show for everyone to see. Despite written and oral instructions, it is obvious that many teachers fail to check their written communications. For some, they should erase words from their vocabulary. Others need to appreciate that the default spelling checker for many computers is US, and practice/practise has the opposite use in England and Australia. Unfortunately, in these cases, teachers overuse their foibles throughout every report. I often wonder about the decline in literacy standards. However, these teachers are a product of an earlier generation.

Assessment of learning and for learning is a similar story and a critical aspect of learning that many do not appreciate or understand. When teachers write "could do better," it is often a self-reflection. The sooner authentic assessment becomes a dominant aspect of the teaching learning process the better.

> *"The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn."*
>
> *- Alvin Toffler*

Most teachers don't like change.
In the ever-changing world in which we live, teachers should be at the forefront of change, preparing their students for the real world. Yet, even in 2013, a significant number of teachers are technology illiterate, and still teaching like they were 10, 20... years ago. In bygone days, a classroom was a teacher's kingdom in which they isolated themselves. Fortunately, the current era is focused on collaborative and cooperative learning environments.

For school leaders, they should emphasise the trialling of change and allow momentum to demand the full implementation of intended change.

> *"If we teach today's students as we taught yesterday's, we rob them of tomorrow."*
>
> *- John Dewey*

IB programs should be the global curriculum.
One shouldn't have regrets, so I strongly advise teachers and educational leaders to become involved and implement IB programs in their schools as soon as possible. With the student at the centre of each of the four programs and an emphasis on active learning and critical thinking, teachers will be invigorated by their teaching and learning environment in which the learner profile provides the underlay and overlay.

The Diploma Programme is the only school exit credential that matures and prepares students for tertiary studies and the real world beyond school.

> *"We are what we repeatedly do."*
>
> *- Aristotle*

The teaching guarantee: each day is different.
The best thing about teaching is that every child is different. The hardest thing about teaching is the same thing. There is no one

magic answer or solution to every facet of teaching and learning. Consequently, teaching is not a monotonous job like a supply chain. Every day is different. Some are marvellous, some are frustrating, some are sad, and some are very special moments. And you know what? Money can't buy those special moments.

> *"Success is a journey, not a destination. The doing is often more important than the outcome."*
>
> *- Arthur Ashe*

The teacher is the critical success factor in student learning achievement and development.

Many factors contribute to student achievement: health, nutrition, adequate rest, home environment, school learning environment, and the class teacher. Yet, the class teacher has the greatest impact on the student. This is why we must ensure students experience real teachers instead of fakes. A real teacher will ensure a personal, friendly, safe, caring and stimulating learning environment where students can equal or exceed their abilities. Classroom effectiveness will be evident through routine, consistency, connection, and engagement. If you doubt the importance of a good teacher, reflect on your own experiences and you will strive to emulate your best teachers while trying to erase memories of your worst teacher.

> *"If you can't explain it simply, then you probably can't explain it at all."*
>
> *- Noam Chomsky*

A teaching qualification does not make a teacher. Some of the best teachers do not have teaching qualifications.

Our first and main teachers are our parents. We have all witnessed the wisdom of the old saying that "the fruit does not fall far from its tree." Similarly, in schools, I have witnessed some brilliant teachers, some strong teachers, some average ones, and a significant number who should not be teaching (or allowed to

teach). I have also witnessed many individuals come and teach a lesson to a class and demonstrate that they would have been outstanding teachers had they chosen to become one.

"Nine-tenths of education is encouragement."

- Anatole France

Schools are schools are schools.

Parents like to ask what other schools are like elsewhere, nationally, and overseas. Schools are schools are schools. Schools have teachers, students, and parents who want to ensure they provide the best learning opportunities for their children and facilities, such as a library, playground, and canteen. Like children, each school is different in ethos and culture, yet the curriculum requirements and expectations are similar, as are the dominant values, communication media, and reporting on student progress. School leadership will have a significant impact on the level of success of a school.

"A person's a person, no matter how small."

- Dr Seuss

Schools today should be the most exciting places on Earth.

Brain research and its impact on learning theory, the use and range of technology, modern resources, and the quality of teacher training should ensure that schools today are the most exciting places on Earth. Unfortunately, politicians have played a far greater role in educational priorities in recent times than they should. Hijacking the educational agenda and skewing curriculum priorities, as illustrated by national testing regimes, only fosters conformity, compliance, and standardisation, rather than creative approaches to learning, as highlighted by Sir Ken Robinson.

"Not everything that matters can be measured, and not everything that can be measured matters."

- Albert Einstein

It's all about teamwork.
Always make sure you have the right team to achieve your goals. In the end, success will be the result of teamwork. The greater the success, the better the shared vision and ethos. Usually, it is a case of building effective teams from "scratch." My approach has been about leadership development, role and goal articulation, ownership, and, importantly, utilising individual strengths to maximise team performance.

> *"We find giving people freedom tends to unleash their potential."*
>
> *- Ken Gutterson*

At the exponential rate that new knowledge is developing, I look forward to the next 10 years as an educational leader and sharing what I have learnt during this time.

> *"The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second best time is now."*
>
> *- Chinese Proverb*



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Technology

I first started using computers in the classroom in 1983 at Woodford Dale Public School, located on the largest inland island (Woodford Island in the Clarence River, New South Wales) in the southern hemisphere. It was a VIC-20 with a keyboard, monitor, and tape player. I prepared weekly times tables questions to solve, and weekly spelling lists to complete. It was simple computing and simple to use and it was a great way for students to consolidate their learning in spelling and number facts.

Two years later, I accepted my first principalship position at New South Wales's fourth most isolated school – Weilmoringle Public School. In fact, all top four were in a 200-km radius of Bourke. Predominantly attended by Aboriginal students (93%), Weilmoringle was a two-teacher school with a student population of 20-60 students. The school had two computers, one Apple and one Atari. Here we used a daily roster system so that students completed tables and spelling exercises in the morning and writing in the afternoon. All students would be able to complete the morning session schedule. However, over a week, students would have two intensive writing sessions on the computer.

In my second year at Weilmoringle, I wrote an article for the *Aboriginal Child at School*[*] journal about using computers in the classroom. My two main observations were:

- students spent more time on the writing process when using a computer rather than writing a story in their book; and
- consequently, produced more writing, of which they were proud.

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[*] "Computers and Aboriginal Literacy." The Aboriginal Child at School: Vol. 14, No. 4, 1986.

I proposed the reason for this difference was no red pen being used to correct spelling, language structure, and grammar when using the computer. Thanks to technology, writing was now something these students looked forward to.

Almost 40 years later, I greatly admire the IB MYP eAssessments. At TIS, final-year Middle Years Programme (MYP5) students complete eAssessments in several subjects. I have never seen students more focused than when they are doing eAssessments. These may be two hours, but each student is fully focused for the duration. In contrast, some students in DP handwritten exams look bored, tired, and sometimes asleep.

Since 2016, students at TIS have been able to bring their own devices to school, on the understanding that they use them to assist their learning and not distract them from their learning. We use ManageBac as our learning management system across the school, ensuring transparency and accountability. To provide an eAssessment experience for 7-10 students, we use AssessPrep, so students are confident with the process by the time they reach Grade 10. Additionally, students in Grades 9-12 use Kognity, the digital textbook platform. Students at the Primary School Campus use Edmentum for reading, language, and mathematics, as well as Epic! as a library resource of reading materials.

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The Essence of Schooling

What do I regard as the essence of schooling?

Below is how I represent it at Tema International School.

Element	Attitude
At TIS	A positive attitude and approach to all actions will open up new opportunities and lead you to future success.
Experiences	All TIS programs, activities, and events.
Expectations	Participation; "can-do" approach; dream, believe, achieve; no excuses.
Learner Profile	Risk-taker, open-minded, balanced, principled, reflective.

Element	Commitment
At TIS	You must believe in your goals and then be determined to achieve them, despite challenges.
Experiences	All TIS programs, activities and events.
Expectations	100% effort and focus; determination; don't quit, finish what you started.
Learner Profile	Principled, balanced, reflective.

Element	Consistency
At TIS	Practice makes perfect; personal best approach to everything
Experiences	All TIS programs, activities, and events.
Expectations	No excuses; ensure consistency is a habit and not an event.
Learner Profile	Balanced, principled, reflective.

Element	Effort
At TIS	What you put into something is what you get out of it. Your effort determines your level of success.
Experiences	All TIS programs, activities, and events.
Expectations	100% effort, no excuses.
Learner Profile	Principled, balanced, reflective.

Element	Citizenship
At TIS	The TIS vision is to produce world-class citizens who can contribute to their community in the future.
Experiences	Student leadership roles, service-learning opportunities.
Expectations	Seek and accept leadership and service-learning opportunities.
Learner Profile	Principled, reflective, balanced, communicator, caring, thinker.

Element	Family
At TIS	We are all members of the TIS family.
Experiences	TIS Founders' Day; sporty family; hostel living; visiting Sundays.
Expectations	We must respect and support each other, and always protect and enhance our reputation.
Learner Profile	Principled, reflective, balanced, communicator, caring, thinker.

Element	International Mindedness
At TIS	Students, teachers, and parents have a range of perspectives, values, and traditions. The concept of international-mindedness builds on these diverse perspectives to generate a sense of common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet.

Experiences	School events, study tours, overseas excursions, each IB subject, service learning.
Expectations	We celebrate, support, and demonstrate a sense of common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet by what we say and do.
Learner Profile	Principled, open-minded, balanced, communicator, thinker.

Element	**Opportunities**
At TIS	A wide range of opportunities are available to develop and enhance skills and ability.
Experiences	Academic, leadership, cultural, sport, and service learning.
Expectations	Participation, balance, and best effort.
Learner Profile	Balanced, open-minded, risk-takers, communicators, principled.

Element	**Service**
At TIS	Service learning is one of the corner-stones at TIS, where we strive to make the world a better place, by taking action to help others.
Experiences	CAS, Action and Service, within the school, local, and wider communities.
Expectations	Individual initiatives and group projects from 7-12.
Learner Profile	Caring, reflective, thinker, knowledgeable, communicator, principled.

Element	**Transparency**
At TIS	Operating in such a way that is easy for others to see what actions are performed.
Experiences	Merit lists, student leadership opportunities, communication.
Expectations	School-wide
Learner Profile	Communicator, principled, reflective, knowledgeable.

Element	Perseverance
At TIS	We strive for excellence in all areas and leave nothing to chance, no excuses.
Experiences	All TIS programs, activities, and events.
Expectations	We are committed and determined to become the best we can be.
Learner Profile	Principled, thinker, communicator..

Element	Grit
At TIS	We articulate our goals and plan how to achieve our long-term goals, no excuses.
Experiences	All TIS programs, activities and events.
Expectations	Self-control, deferring short-term gratification, sustain interest and effort from 7-12.
Learner Profile	Principled, reflective, communicator, knowledgeable.

Element	Resilience
At TIS	We learn by our mistakes to become a better person.
Experiences	All TIS programs, activities, and events.
Expectations	We bounce back after disappointment, and we adapt and manage sources of stress and adversity.
Learner Profile	Principled, reflective, communicator

Element	Inquirer
At TIS	You develop your natural curiosity. You acquire the skills necessary to conduct inquiry and research and show independence in learning.
Experiences	Everything you do at TIS.
Expectations	You actively enjoy learning and this love of learning will be sustained throughout your life.
Learner Profile	University faculties regularly note IB students' passion for discovery.

Element	Knowledgeable
At TIS	You explore concepts, ideas, and issues that have local and global significance.
Experiences	Everything you do at TIS.
Expectations	You acquire in-depth knowledge and develop understanding across a broad and balanced range of disciplines.
Learner Profile	IB students are extraordinarily well prepared for the academic requirements of university coursework.

Element	Thinker
At TIS	You exercise initiative in applying thinking skills critically and creatively to recognize and approach complex problems, and make reasoned, ethical decisions.
Experiences	Everything you do at TIS.
Expectations	Our "thinking caps" are always switched on and only in sleep mode when lights are out.
Learner Profile	IB students contribute to discussions in a meaningful way. They do not shy away from challenging questions and, once they know the answer, follow up by asking "why?"

Element	Communicator
At TIS	You understand and express ideas and information confidently and creatively in more than one language and in a variety of modes of communication.
Experiences	Everything you do at TIS.
Expectations	You work effectively and willingly in collaboration with others.
Learner Profile	IB students regularly deliver stimulating presentations and drive excellence in group assignments.

Element	Principled
At TIS	You act with integrity and honesty, with a strong sense of fairness, justice and respect for the dignity of the individual, groups, and communities.
Experiences	Everything you do at TIS.
Expectations	You take responsibility for your own actions and the consequences that accompany them.
Learner Profile	IB students are infused with the academic integrity that is a fundamental value of universities and colleges.

Element	Open-Minded
At TIS	You understand and appreciate your own culture and personal history, and are open to the perspectives, values, and traditions of other individuals and communities.
Experiences	Everything you do at TIS.
Expectations	You are accustomed to seeking and evaluating a range of points of view, and are willing to grow from the experience.
Learner Profile	IB students have a deep understanding of various cultures and views, bringing an appreciation of new views to both their academic study and their involvement in local and wider communities. Their international mindedness complements the missions of the best tertiary institutions.

Element	Caring
At TIS	You show empathy, compassion, and respect towards the needs and feelings of others.
Experiences	Everything you do at TIS.
Expectations	You have a personal commitment to service, and act to make a positive difference to the lives of others and to the environment.

Learner Profile	IB students tell us they bring this commitment to community and others to their activities and leadership roles at university and carry it throughout their lives.

Element	**Risk-taker**
At TIS	You approach unfamiliar situations and uncertainty with courage and forethought, and have the independence of spirit to explore new roles, ideas and strategies.
Experiences	Everything you do at TIS.
Expectations	You are brave and articulate in defending your beliefs.
Learner Profile	IB students transition well to challenging university settings and show resilience and determination in their work. In academics, they have the confidence to approach new or unfamiliar subjects or material.

Element	Balanced
At TIS	You understand the importance of intellectual, physical, and emotional balance to achieve personal well-being for yourself and others.
Experiences	Everything you do at TIS.
Expectations	Ensure balance in your daily life.
Learner Profile	IB students are active participants in a wide range of aspects of campus life, as well as focusing on their academic development.

Element	Reflective
At TIS	You give thoughtful consideration to your own learning and experience.
Experiences	Everything you do at TIS.
Expectations	You are able to assess and understand your strengths and limitations in order to support your learning and personal development.

Learner Profile	IB students have developed an ability to reflect on their learning and to articulate how they learnt. They have learned that critical reflection is an important academic and life skill.

Element	**Responsibility**
At TIS	You are responsible for learning, behaviour, presentation, communication, punctuality, as well as your own and TIS property.
Experiences	Everything you do at TIS.
Expectations	You fulfill your responsibilities to the best of your ability and request assistance if you are unable to do so. Always try to exceed expectations.
Learner Profile	Principled, caring, thinker, reflective.

Element	**Choices**
At TIS	Personal growth and success are about the choices you make every day. TIS is full of opportunities and students must choose those that will enhance their personal growth and subsequent success.
Experiences	Everything you do at TIS.
Expectations	Participation, personal growth, health, safety and values should guide all choices made.
Learner Profile	Thinker, reflective, knowledgeable, principled, inquirer, communicator, balanced.

Element	**Self-management**
At TIS	You need to be organised and disciplined to fulfill your obligations and responsibilities to TIS expectations.
Experiences	Everything you do at TIS.
Expectations	Right place, right time, and with the right equipment. No excuses.
Learner Profile	Principled, thinker, reflective, inquirer, balanced, communicator.

Element	Participation
At TIS	Spoilt for choice, you participate in activities that will lead to personal growth and success but remain balanced.
Experiences	Academic, leadership, sport, cultural, service learning, and hostel activities.
Expectations	Have a go, best effort, always, no excuses.
Learner Profile	Balanced, inquirer, risk-taker, open-minded, communicator, reflective, thinker, knowledgeable, principled, caring.

Element	Focus
At TIS	Without focus, goals are just dreams.
Experiences	Everything you do at TIS.
Expectations	Goals, planning, no distractions, positive outcomes, personal success.
Learner Profile	Principled, thinker, reflective, knowledgeable, balanced, communicator.

Element	Identity
At TIS	Your focus, participation, self-management skills, the choices you make and fulfilling your responsibilities will determine your identity.
Experiences	Everything you do at TIS.
Expectations	World-class citizen with strong leadership and academic skills.
Learner Profile	Balanced, inquirer, risk-taker, open-minded, communicator, reflective, thinker, knowledgeable, principled, caring.

Element	Action
At TIS	The actions you take each day should be leading you to your ultimate goal at TIS: admission to your preferred program and university.
Experiences	Academic, leadership, sport, cultural, service learning, and hostel activities.
Expectations	Take positive action to ensure personal growth and success.
Learner Profile	Balanced, inquirer, risk-taker, open-minded, communicator, reflective, thinker, knowledgeable, principled, caring.

Element	Achievement
At TIS	You adopt a personal best mentality, while appreciating that you need to make mistakes to improve.
Experiences	Academic, leadership, sport, cultural, service learning, and hostel activities.
Expectations	Self-actualisation
Learner Profile	Balanced, inquirer, risk-taker, open-minded, communicator, reflective, thinker, knowledgeable, principled, caring.

Element	Accountability
At TIS	You have an obligation to account for your actions, accept responsibility for them, and disclose the outcomes in a transparent manner.
Experiences	Everything you do at TIS.
Expectations	You are accountable for your actions and achievements.
Learner Profile	Balanced, inquirer, risk-taker, open-minded, communicator, reflective, thinker, knowledgeable, principled, caring.

Element	Passion
At TIS	You achieve more, when you love what you are doing.
Experiences	Everything you do at TIS.
Expectations	Be passionate about everything you attempt.
Learner Profile	Inquirer, risk-taker, open-minded, communicator, reflective, thinker, knowledgeable, principled, caring, balanced.

Element	Impact
At TIS	You will make an impact in and out of TIS when you are passionate about your actions which will result in achievements, all of which are accountable.
Experiences	Academic, leadership, sport, cultural, service learning and hostel activities.
Expectations	Make an impact at TIS by being a role model for others.
Learner Profile	Balanced, inquirer, risk-taker, open-minded, communicator, reflective, thinker, knowledgeable, principled, caring.

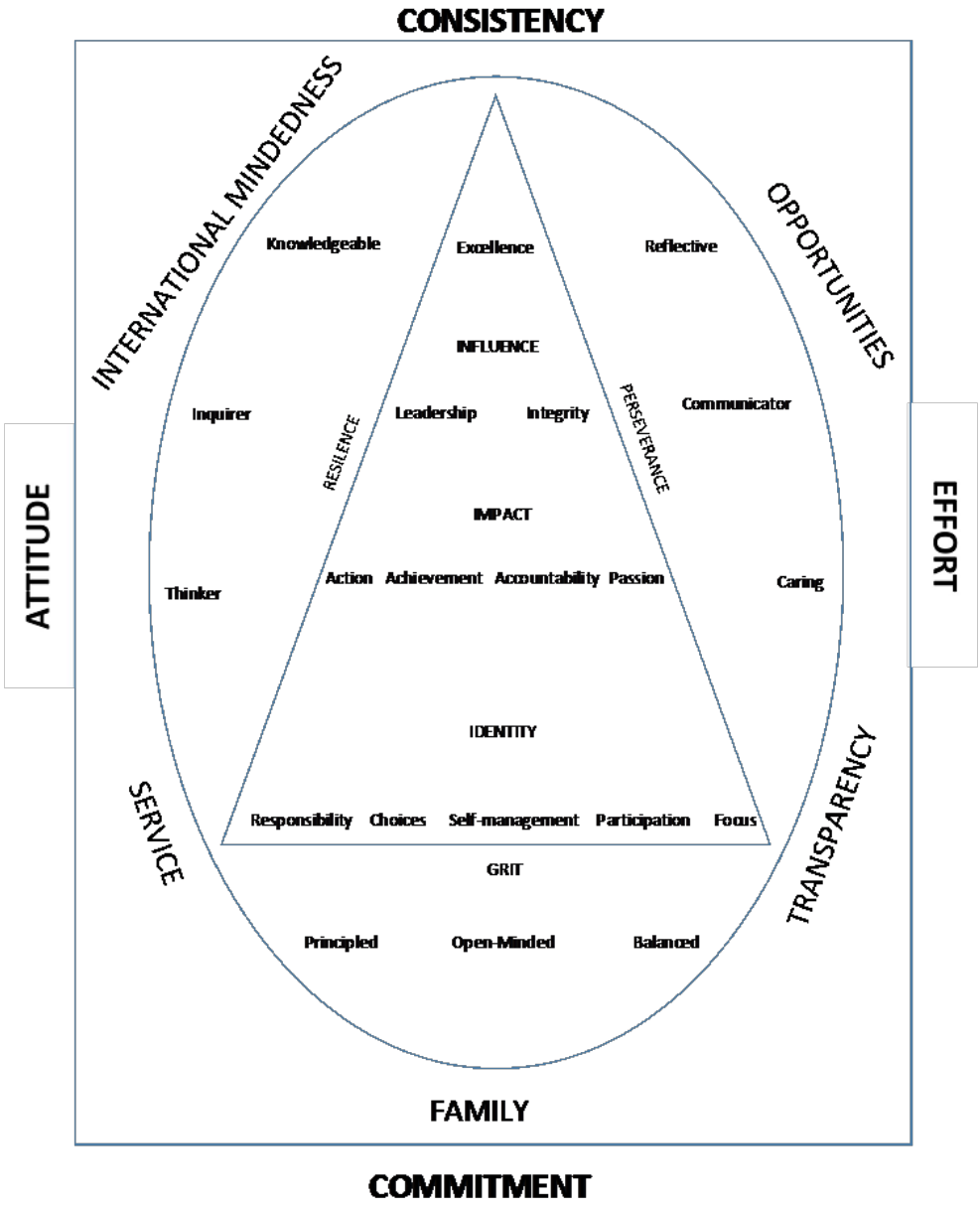
Element	Leadership
At TIS	There are many and varied leadership opportunities available to all.
Experiences	Everything you do at TIS.
Expectations	Develop and enhance your leadership skills at every opportunity.
Learner Profile	Balanced, inquirer, risk-taker, open-minded, communicator, reflective, thinker, knowledgeable, principled, caring.

Element	Integrity
At TIS	Integrity is doing the right thing, even when no one is watching. (CS Lewis)
Experiences	Everything you do at TIS.
Expectations	Demonstrate integrity as a matter of habit.
Learner Profile	Principled.

Element	Influence
At TIS	A leader with integrity will be capable of influencing others.
Experiences	Everything you do at TIS.
Expectations	Influence others to bring about positive change.
Learner Profile	Balanced, inquirer, risk-taker, open-minded, communicator, reflective, thinker, knowledgeable, principled, caring.

Element	Excellence
At TIS	We seek excellence in everything we attempt.
Experiences	Everything you do at TIS.
Expectations	Success is not enough, excellence is required. (Ken Darvall)
Learner Profile	Balanced, inquirer, risk-taker, open-minded, communicator, reflective, thinker, knowledgeable, principled, caring.

THE ESSENCE OF TEMA INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL



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Balance

Balance is one of the 10 IB Learner Profile attributes. According to IB, being balanced means, "we understand the importance of balancing different aspects of our lives – intellectual, physical, and emotional – to achieve wellbeing for ourselves and others. We recognise our interdependence with other people and the world in which we live." https://ibo.org/contentassets/fd82f70643ef4086b7d3f292cc214962/learner-profile-en.pdf

At a personal level, balance is essential for your wellbeing. In Ghana, typically, schools only focus on academics. The culture also supports minimum sleep (to get up early to study) and cramming for exams (with next-to-no sleep). So, for starters, most children are placing their wellbeing at risk due to the sleep issue. Teenagers need 7.5 - 8.5 hours of sleep each night. Cutting corners results in fatigue, poor judgement, decision-making, reactions, behaviour, nutrition, and health issues. In a word, sleep deprivation or a lack of sleep affects your performance. We are all aware of how our performance diminishes due to tiredness. Too often, I have seen students falling asleep in critical exams because they have been cramming for the last few weeks.

At TIS, being balanced means working to the best of your ability in academics, being involved in sports (and exercise), participating in cultural activities, and making a personal commitment and contribution to service projects. Being balanced complements the Dukies'* program and each student 14 years and over is expected to achieve at least one Dukies' Award while they attend TIS.

So, the four key areas of balance are: academics, culture, service, and sport. What are our expectations in each area?

Academics

This aspect is self-explanatory. TIS is an IB World School authorised to offer Primary Years Programme (PYP), Middle Years Programme (MYP), and Diploma Programme (DP). Fortunately, these programmes provide balance across the curriculum in terms of subject requirements.

For example, for the DP, students are required to take a first language study, as well as a second language. Students must select a "humanities" (Individuals and Societies), a science and mathematics. Arts are the sixth option, but students may select a second subject for any of the other groups. Additionally, students are required to complete the core of the DP: theory of knowledge (philosophy); an extended essay of 4000 words on a topic of their choice; and creativity, activity, and service (CAS).

Culture

At TIS, culture covers learning and/or playing a musical instrument, being part of the school band or orchestra, or joining the school choir, dance, or drama clubs. Each year, the school presents an annual performance towards the end of the first semester. This is student agency in action where students are involved in each of the director roles and being either onstage cast or backstage crew. These performances are outstanding, and each year, new stars are discovered.

Service

Service is a compulsory requirement of each IB programme through the actions that students initiate. Service is evident throughout MYP and DP, while each unit in PYP should enable students to initiate action. Service occurs after school and on weekends (the advantage of a boarding school!). Evidence of service activities always features in our weekly TIS Bulletin

(https://www.tis.edu.gh/tis-bulletin/) and the reflections within and the outcomes are impressive.

Sport

Students must engage in physical activity and TIS is fortunate enough to offer basketball, swimming, handball, football (soccer), badminton, squash, volleyball, athletics, tennis, and table tennis. The school also has a gym that students enjoy. Most of the above-listed sports have inter-hostel tournaments, house colour, and inter-school competitions. Each semester, we also hold a health walk of approximately eight kilometres.

The Dukies'* Awards Scheme complements our curricular and extracurricular programs, so our students can "kill two birds with one stone." The school organises a four-day expedition each semester to satisfy this adventure requirement at each award level.

What do universities look for? Obviously, TIS sets our students up for success at university by ensuring a balanced program and lifestyle. Every student at TIS goes to university, something I have not witnessed in any of the other schools I have had the pleasure to lead. Universities love TIS students. They come with a gold passport to university (DP); they can live independently (boarding experience); and they are actively involved in clubs and societies at the university as a result of their opportunities and experiences at TIS. Admission to the university is much more than academics. Admission officers are looking at how a student can benefit from what a university offers, but more importantly, what the student can bring to the university.

Wellbeing

Two areas dominating many teenagers' lives that skew the balance and negatively impact their wellbeing are gaming and social media, especially if their use is at an addiction level. By this, I mean that if a student must find out why the social

media “ping” and interrupts whatever they are doing, it is at an addiction level. Similarly, for the gamer, if they can’t stop at a specific time, “just five minutes more,” gaming is at an addiction level.

What I am seeing as the major impact of these addictions is disengagement from learning, incomplete work, poor grades, and resulting anxiety. Their wellbeing is at serious risk. There is no balance in their lives. They prefer to be on social media than exercise.

The big issue for everyone, not just teenagers, is managing your distractions to manage your time …. and life. This is where students believe school is so stressful because they do not have enough time. Remove all distractions and time is available.

- Dukies = Duke of Edinburgh International Awards

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Ageism

You can't beat experience, if it is the right experience. One of my disappointing experiences was at a coastal primary school. New South Wales has (or had) a transfer system based on years of service and locality. So, three years out the back of Bourke generally earned you a coastal school appointment. While serving in different isolated schools can be an invaluable experience, it ends up being worthless if your coastal appointment marks your retirement. I saw too many teachers switch off ("retire") once appointed to their dream coastal school. You know there is a problem when teachers have their fishing boats hooked up to their cars in the adjacent street to the school and beat the students out at the end of the day. Yes, a true but sad story.

At the same school, I attended a reporting session one afternoon. I joined the queue for my five minutes to find out how my son was going. What's his name? His class? When the teacher found his details, he pointed to the two columns and told me something completely different from what he had written on the termly report. I left unimpressed. About 20 minutes later, another parent came up and told me that she believed she was given my son's comments as feedback because it was completely different from what was written on her son's report. A similar experience at a different school with the same five-minute teacher feedback allocation. My strategy is to have the list of teachers and find the ones waiting for any parent. I had just about seen everybody this night when I saw the home science teacher was available for an interview. So, I approached her and asked how my son was going. She told me he was a delight to have in the class and really enjoyed each lesson. A friendly teacher, it was no wonder my son enjoyed the class. The next morning, I provided

feedback to my son who was bemused. He told me he wasn't doing home science that semester as he was now learning music as an elective.

Experience is so important in any situation. I encourage students and staff to take up any opportunities that will challenge them. In sports, I encourage students to attend district, regional, and state championships. The first time is for the experience, so you know what to do next time. In grand finals, the first time is to experience the thrill and the nerves so you know what to do next time. It is so important. Similarly, first-time parents experience a life-changing event with parenting but are more aware the next time, and don't make the same mistakes with their second child. Usually!

It is strange (and stupid) that so many organisations discard the importance of experience due to an ageist stance. Adults over 55 years find it hard to find a new job because of this perceived age factor. From my perspective, an ageist approach deprives an organisation of valuable experience, wisdom, and the calmness accompanying wisdom. It is those crisis moments when experience and wisdom come to the fore. I suggest that without that experience base, organisations do not reach their full capacity. "Been there, done that" experiences ensure possible crises are just mere hiccups. Satisfaction, instead of stress. You can't beat it.

Individuals should determine when they retire from the workforce. At times, health issues make that decision for them. Age should not be a restrictive practice in any organisation. Always keep an open mind.

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What I Have Learnt From 45 Years of School Leadership

Personal Introduction

I completed teacher training in rural New South Wales before accepting my first teaching job at Five Mile Tree Public School at Crooked Corner, New South Wales (May 1973). I was the Teacher-In Charge and taught 18-24 students from Kindergarten to Grade 6 in a single and small classroom building.

My first overseas experience was as the Academy Director at Al Jazeera Academy in Doha, Qatar. I accepted this leadership role and the opportunity to experience and become involved in IB programs (2004).

My focus over the last 14 years has been establishing and leading IB World Schools at: Al Jazeera Academy, Doha (PYP, MYP, DP) as Academy Director; Al Zahra College, Sydney, (PYP, MYP, DP) as Education Director; SMIT International School, Tabubil (Candidate PYP and MYP) as Principal; King Faisal School in Riyadh (PYP) as Primary Principal. I am Principal at Tema International School (DP and Candidate MYP).

My most interesting job was at Tabubil in Papua New Guinea. It is the second wettest place on Earth and telecommunications were almost non-existent. Yet, the students were the happiest whom I have ever met.

The most challenging job was as the principal of Weilmoringle Public School. It had the record as the fourth most isolated school in New South Wales and only required 10 points of rain

to make the local roads impassable for days and weeks. The student population was 95% Indigenous.

The most hectic job has been at Tema International School where we seem to fit 60 hours into a day, every day, and 30 days into a week, every week. I tell everyone that TIS is where the movie franchise, *Fast and Furious*, originated because that is how we operate. I kid you not. Check out our weekly bulletins online!

I celebrated 45 years of school leadership in 2018. Back in 2013 when I marked 40 years, I reflected on what the 40 years had taught me. On this occasion, I will reflect on **4** aspects that trouble me and **5** aspects that excite me.

4 Aspects That Trouble Me

• Leadership

> *"To me, the only sin is mediocrity."*
>
> *- Martha Graham*

I wonder if politicians are becoming role models for many leaders by only doing what will get them elected next time. I have been disappointed in recent years with the number of school leaders who appear to enjoy their comfort zones. How do I know? They are afraid to make tough decisions. However, leadership and popularity are two different things. Tough decisions may include staff reductions, budget, or resource restrictions. It may be school policy, or it may be staff promotions.

General Norman Schwarzkopf listed 14 rules of leadership in his autobiography, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*. Rule 13 says, "When placed in command, take charge." Making a decision is the only way to move forward, even incorrect decisions. A person who makes a thousand wrong decisions is better off than one who makes no decisions. Why? Because a person who has made a thousand wrong decisions has ruled out a thousand things that

do not work for them. They are much better prepared to progress towards success than those who keep attending meetings where no decisions are made.

Central to decision-making are transparency and accountability. Key actions and policy implementation should address school priorities in pursuit of its vision. In terms of a shared vision, it is always important that an organisation or school is heading in the same direction. In other words, there is shared ownership. To ensure shared ownership, there must be transparency at all levels so that everyone understands what is happening and what is planned. Hand in hand with transparency is accountability. Everyone is accountable in any organisation. A leader who dismisses transparency and holds everyone accountable, with the leader as the sole exception, will only ensure mediocrity as the outcome.

Most importantly, leaders must be role models. A leader must be able to articulate and demonstrate their values and what they expect from each colleague. Failure to do so will only result in a motley crew.

I am disappointed with the dominant view on ageism in any occupation and the restrictions within different fields and countries. Back in the 1990s, many teachers in New South Wales felt they had achieved everything if they secured a teaching post along the coast of NSW. What I witnessed were many teachers who were retired in their approach and lifestyle. How could I tell? When teachers beat the students out the school gates each day or teachers have their car parked each day with their fishing boat and gear at school, you must question their focus and priorities. You are as young as you think and as old as you feel. While teachers and leaders enjoy what they are doing and continue to make a difference each day, there should be no restrictions to their employment based on age. Restrictions should only ever be made on performance. With experience comes a lot of wisdom that should be valued instead of being discarded.

• **Shortcuts**

"When it comes to success, there are no shortcuts."
- Bo Bennett

I have become dismayed to see some students and their parents taking shortcuts with their learning. The two common experiences I have witnessed are the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) and pre-university programs.

The IGCSE is a junior secondary exit credential popular in many international schools, especially as it has external examinations at the end of this two-year program. Its value is that it can provide students with an external exam experience before undergoing a similar experience at the end of senior secondary school. I have seen instances when universities have accepted students with their IGCSE results and no senior secondary qualification. In these instances, I have questioned the quality of the university and the likely experience the student will have.

A junior secondary exit qualification was important when the school leaving age was 15 years, and students could commence apprenticeships. These days, when students are expected to complete their senior secondary schooling in many countries, a junior secondary qualification seems redundant.

Gaining university admission at the end of their senior secondary schooling is the common goal for most students. Many pre-university colleges globally promote a direct pathway to specific universities by completing their programs in lieu of senior secondary school. The marketing is tempting and successful, especially if it satisfies the goal of the prospective students (and parents). The targeted market is usually the lucrative international student sector. Often, the student's advantage is gaining permanent residency and employment (whilst a student).

If a student fails to meet university admission requirements, then additional time and costs are incurred.

Trying to short-cut schooling experience to save money can be appreciated in terms of the costs involved. However, I have heard much sadder experiences than good stories. As the former President of Harvard, Derek Bok, once said, "If you think education is expensive, try ignorance."

• School Readiness

"Wherever you are, make sure you're there."
- Dan Sullivan

At the other end of the scale, I worry about the children who start school too early, especially when they are not ready to start. Boys are the usual suspects, but it is not always limited to boys.

I am unsure if this issue is a result of parental pride (he/she is a very talented child), parental need (babysitting while both parents work), or parental expectations (he/she is the right age to start school). I have witnessed each scenario with parental pride, especially when my child is brighter than your child, being the most common.

Over the past 18 years, I have used a checklist of activities to determine if students are ready to start formal schooling. Activities, including writing your name, cutting out a circle shape, identifying random numbers from 1 to 10, throwing and catching a ball, and naming parts of the body (head, shoulders, knee) reveal a readiness factor. Observation within a mixed group of students is also essential to the process. Using this checklist, I have ensured that students have commenced their formal school successfully instead of struggling. As I inform prospective parents, your child has another 20 years of schooling ahead of them: 12-13 years in school and then 7-8 years at university,

as many parents expect their young child will earn a doctorate when they are at university. If children struggle in the early years of primary school, expect them to drop out around Grade 8 or 9.

I strongly recommend preschool or early childhood learning experiences for three- and four-year-old students. These students "stand out" when starting their formal schooling.

Additionally, I strongly discourage having preschool students "tutored." It is critical that the focus on essential learning at preschool should be on learning through play.

• Schools as Legacies to Communities

> *"What the best and wisest parent wants for his own child, that must be the community want for all its children."*
>
> *- John Dewey*

Education and health should be the two top priorities for any country. Without education as the top priority, there will be no change. Without a health priority, a country cannot enable its citizens to enjoy prosperity. Consequently, I believe that schools should be a legacy to their communities.

Each school has its own community. It may be based on location, curriculum, religious affiliation, size, nationality, reputation, or school ownership. Each school community will determine its own vision, values, and priorities.

Parents like to ask what other schools are like elsewhere, nationally, and overseas. Schools are schools are schools. Schools have teachers, students, and parents who want to ensure they provide the best learning opportunities for their children and facilities, such as a library, playground, and canteen. Like children, each school is different in ethos and culture, yet the curriculum requirements and expectations are similar, as are the

dominant values, communication media and reporting on student progress. School leadership will have a significant impact on the level of success for a school.

Brain research and its impact on learning theory, the use and range of technology, modern resources and the quality of teacher training should ensure that schools today are the most exciting places on Earth. Unfortunately, politicians have played a far greater role in educational priorities in recent times than they should. Hijacking the educational agenda and skewing curriculum priorities, as illustrated by national testing regimes, only fosters conformity, compliance, and standardisation, rather than creative approaches to learning, as highlighted by Sir Ken Robinson.

So why am I concerned? In Australia, most schools are not-for-profit, which is a prerequisite for any school to receive government funding, regardless if it is government or private. Any profits must be put back into the school for resources, staffing, and facilities. In this way, schools are a legacy to their community.

However, private schools in some other countries are strictly for profit to ensure it is a viable business entity for their owner/s. Decision-making and priorities are different in this context, where the focus is the return on investment. Short-term profits often precede teaching quality, resources, training, and curriculum options. In Qatar, in the mid-noughties, I observed a private school change its name and curriculum three times in three years due to disappointing admission numbers.

A school will not leave a legacy if it does not understand its role and purpose within society, specifically for its community.

5 Aspects That Excite Me

• The Focus is on Learning

"The great aim of education is not knowledge, but action."
- Herbert Spencer

Politicians and governments have had too much influence on school education over the past few decades. Twenty years ago, heads of education departments were educationists. This is no longer a priority in many states and countries. The rise of political appointments in education bureaucracies has only ensured a focus on short-term goals linked to election cycles. The fetish about standardised testing results and short-term fixes has been a dark shadow over teachers, classrooms, and schools. Teachers feel obliged to teach to the test to minimise the teacher-bashing when test results are published and any decline in performance is considered with rancour.

Yet, 18 years after the 21st century commenced, many still discuss implementing 21c learning. Why? Because the dominant school model resembles the factory model on which schools are based. However, the Internet and social media have promoted the voice of educators striving to ensure learning is relevant to students in relation to the context and world within which they live.

So, learning is now firmly on the agenda. Key questions are being asked. What do we mean by learning? How do students learn? Are we equipping students for tomorrow? Do we really engage students in today's classrooms? What is the role of the teacher?

In 2016, Will Richardson articulated nine "elephants in the classroom," things we don't really want to talk about in education. These are:

- We know that most students will forget most of the content that they "learn" in school.
- We know that most of our students are bored and disengaged.
- We know that deep, lasting learning requires conditions that schools and classrooms were not built for.
- We know that we're not assessing many of the things that really matter for future success.
- We know that grades, not learning, are the outcomes students and parents most interest in.
- We know that curriculum is just a guess.
- We know that separating learning into discrete subjects and time blocks is not the best way to prepare kids for the real world.
- We know (I think) that the system of education as currently constructed is not adequately preparing kids for what follows if and when they graduate.
- And finally, we know that learning that sticks is usually learned informally, that explicit knowledge accounts for very little of our success in most professions.

So, I am excited about what is happening at Templestowe Secondary College, the Khan Lab School, and the Portfolio School. The Finnish education model has its focus on the student. In each case, they focus on what is learning and how do students learn.

"Change is the end result of all true learning."

- Leo Buscaglia

• Personalised Learning

"It's not what you know, but rather what you can do with what you know."

- Tony Wagner

I suppose back in the early 1980s, when I was using student work contracts, this was a starting point for individualised learning. However, in the pre-Internet era, the range of learning options was very restricted. Nevertheless, students enjoyed the choice and options, so they were in charge of their learning and responsible for completing all requirements.

Then in the late 1980s, a group of isolated central schools in the north-west region of New South Wales trialled video conferencing to allow students to remain at their school and complete their senior secondary schooling instead of travelling hundreds of kilometres each day to attend a school that offered Grades 11 and 12. Teachers were shared and small numbers were involved, but it provided an opportunity for these isolated students that others in larger towns and cities took for granted.

Today, the Internet and available online resources have removed all restrictions and redefined personalised learning. So, with the online resources available, in an Internet-connected school, it is almost possible to lead a timetable-free school with a handful of key teachers for students to complete senior secondary school requirements.

Pamoja is a company (online school) that provides online courses for IB Diploma and Career Programmes. Currently, 3918 students are using their courses, involving 175 contracted teachers, covering 22 courses in 669 schools. Its online courses include: French, Spanish, and Mandarin; business management, philosophy, psychology and ITGS; mathematics; film; and theory of knowledge. With the exceptions of studies in language and literature, the sciences, and extended essay, all Diploma Programme requirements are covered. I have not included CAS, which is student-initiated.

However, Pamoja also allows schools to implement their programs using school personnel. This option includes biology,

chemistry, physics, and extended essay. Now, all DP requirements are covered except for studies in language and literature.

At Tema International School, we have been using Kognity that publishes digital textbooks for the IB Diploma Programme for the past two years (and IGCSE sciences for 12 months). Their DP digital textbooks include biology, chemistry, physics, business management, economics, geography, environmental systems and societies (ESS), psychology, and mathematics.

What impresses me about Kognity? The books are never out of date as changes occur when required. The authors include senior and chief examiners and senior educators, so you have experts helping your own experts at school. They are cost effective and there are no more lost or damaged textbooks.

What do teachers and students think?

HOD Mathematics
It's a win-win situation: Kognity marks for me; Kognity gives immediate feedback to students – a win-win situation. I believe that it enhances student learning, especially for less confident students who can practise as often as they want without others watching them.

HOD Science
Kognity explains concepts in very simple English. Even the very challenging concepts are simplified. The videos are always perfect to explain or enhance the understanding of the topic. I use Kognity to prepare my notes, use some diagrams and videos during lessons.

Biology Teacher
Kognity's online textbook is very relatable to students. Students prefer how they explain concepts more than any other resource.

G10 Student
As a biology student, I have to admit that biology has never really been easy for me. Kognity has been available for my class since Grade 9, but I didn't make much use of it until Grade 10. Finally, deciding to use Kognity is one of the best choices I could've made.

To begin with, Kognity is super interactive. As well as presenting basic core and supplement knowledge for biology in easy-to-understand lessons, it also includes helpful videos and activities that enable me to further my knowledge on different materials. Kognity is also visually pleasing through its use of HD pictures and minimalistic diagrams in lessons, and this aesthetic makes my learning experience enjoyable.

In addition to the above, Kognity has mini-tests (known as "Strength Tests") that I often use to build and strengthen my understanding of a topic. These strength tests are extra useful because they provide explanations that clarify which answers are correct, and why.

That's not all Kognity has to offer—it also comes with exam-style questions, of which I use to familiarise myself with the IGCSE exam experience. This increases my confidence when I take actual tests in class.

I can happily say that bio isn't as much of a struggle anymore, and I achieve much better scores than I did before when our teacher decides to test us. Practice makes perfect, and thanks to Kognity, I believe I'm on the path to achieving an A* in biology!

Personalised learning is now and will be an enormous game changer in schools over the next decade.

> *"No one who ever bought a drill wanted a drill. They wanted a hole. It's the task that matters."*
>
> *- Perry Marshall*

• Flexible Learning Environments

> *"If students are to develop 21st century skills such as creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving, collaboration, and the ability to access and analyse information, and if they are to become innovative and entrepreneurial, agile and adaptable and demonstrate initiative, then we must provide a learning environment that supports the development of these skills."*
>
> *- Anne Shaw*

Often, classrooms in schools today resemble what we see in photos from the 1800s. The facial expressions also look similar. All desks are in rows. There are also many similarities that schools and prisons share.

Preschool and primary classrooms are usually very visually attractive and enticing learning environments. The creativity starts to diminish from Grade 4 and you only sometimes see visually attractive secondary classrooms. Start lecturing to these secondary students in these uninspiring rooms and it is easy to appreciate why so many students are disengaged.

For school owners and leaders, ensuring sufficient facilities to cater for student numbers and curriculum requirements is always a worry, and often a nightmare, to ensure schools meet current needs and predict future requirements within restricted budgets. I have often witnessed whims, the next big idea, or a sudden increase or decline in student enrolments, have resulted in sudden or urgent building renovations.

As soon as a wall is in place, limitations have been set for using a room. Thus, the importance of flexible learning spaces is that changing needs and priorities do not affect the physical dimensions of a room, only the way is set up. In this way, buildings have more open areas to maximise usage.

Flexible learning spaces require flexible learning approaches with a focus on creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication.

• **Assessment**

> *"What if we assessed students' learning by measuring whether it made them want to learn more?"*
>
> *- Dennis Littky*

Aristotle defined the concept of habit all those years ago when he said, "We are what we repeatedly do." He also articulated the importance of habits: "Quality is not an act, it is a habit."

Some 1,900 years later, John Dewey emphasised relevance. "If we teach today's students as we taught yesterday's, we rob them of tomorrow." His contemporary, Jean Piaget, stated the principal goal of education is to "create people who are capable of doing new things, not simply repeating what other generations have done."

Dewey went further. "Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself. The self is not something ready-made but something in continuous formation through choice of action. Failure is instructive. The person who really thinks learns quite as much from his failures as from his successes."

Assessment is a critical component of the learning process. Yet, many teachers don't understand assessment. Student reporting time is one that I dread since this is when teachers' communication skills are on show for everyone to see. Despite written and oral instructions, it is obvious that many don't read, write, or spell to the expected standard. Nor do they check and/or edit their work. For some, they should erase words from their vocabulary. Unfortunately, in these cases, teachers overuse their foibles throughout every report. I often wonder about a decline

in literacy standards. However, these teachers are a product of an earlier generation.

Of course, if only grades are required on reports and no comments, then none of the above issues are relevant. But how would these reports inform parents, students, and teachers?

Assessment of learning and for learning is a similar story and a critical aspect of learning that many do not appreciate or understand. When teachers write "could do better," it is often a self-reflection. Although pockets of 21c learning are evident globally, the factory model approach of modern education is still prevailing in many schools and systems. A dominant teaching approach will tend to rely on textbooks and testing. Governments' hankering approach to standards-based education hijacks the learning agenda and only endorses the industrial age factory model in which one size fits all. Conversely, a dominant learning approach will utilise a variety of assessment strategies that will provide students with different opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and level of understanding. In this way, assessment is learning.

Joe Bower considered assessment as a conversation. In doing so, he also argued for the abolition of homework and grades, and recommended rethinking standardisation and accountability. In doing so, Bower challenges teachers to consider the purpose of teaching and learning for students and reflect on their own practices.

Arthur Ashe once said, "Success is a journey, not a destination. The doing is often more important than the outcome." In fact, we can easily substitute "success" with "life," or "learning."

If we then take a holistic approach to learning (and schooling) and move beyond our factory model to teaching (and schooling) to the 21c emphasis on learning (and schooling), then we can adopt

the conversational approach to student learning and document it (portfolios) to support students on their learning journey. Meaningful and timely feedback and direction, rather than an ambiguous exam grade, will motivate and be more relevant to students. Instead of the negativity and panic about exams, the conversation should focus on what the student can do and what they should do next, and not simply about what they can't do. However, the conversation must be ongoing throughout the years and not cease at the end of each school year. Most learning management systems in school should be able to manage this process.

Moving beyond a fragmented approach to assessment and learning will enhance the importance of deeper learning, as the emphasis is on learning and not teaching. Regular feedback and reflection from teacher and student will ensure that assessment becomes a learning conversation for all stakeholders, instead of vague comments (could do better/did not revise notes) and ambiguous grades. What is the difference between good and satisfactory?

Therefore, I endorse the no-grade movement in which teachers only provide feedback and no grades. The allocation of grades immediately negates any feedback and emphasises a mistake-free approach to learning, which is not reality.

> *"Give a kid a grade and the learning stops. Give feedback and extending questions and the learning goes deeper."*
>
> *- Justin Tarte*

- **Wellbeing**

> *"Not everything that matters can be measured, and not everything that can be measured matters."*
>
> *- Albert Einstein*

Student wellbeing has always been a key aspect of the general purpose of school education: to promote the intellectual, physical, social, emotional, and moral development of students.

However, wellbeing has taken a different and more important priority in schools these days. The impact of technology, the 24/7 world in which we live, the ease of access to information, family breakdowns, obesity, and our throw-away mentality have been significant. So, five key factors that affect students' performance are: sleep, balance, nutrition, stress, and anxiety.

Wellbeing is the foundation for student success. A key factor in wellbeing is adequate sleep. Studies reveal that the average amount of sleep teenagers get is between 7 and 7 ¼ hours. However, they need between 9 and 9 ½ hours (studies show that most teenagers need exactly 9 ¼ hours of sleep). Reasons for this include: a shift in sleep schedule (after puberty), early school start times, and social and school obligations.

As a result, most adolescents are sleep deprived. Sleep deprivation will impact many aspects of teenagers' functioning:

- Mood: sleep deprivation will cause teenagers to be moody, irritable, and cranky. In addition, they will have difficulty regulating their moods, such as by getting frustrated or upset more easily.
- Behaviour: teenagers who are sleep deprived are also more likely to engage in risk-taking behaviours.
- Cognitive ability: inadequate sleep will result in problems with attention, memory, decision-making, reaction time, and creativity, all of which are important in school.
- Academic performance: studies show that teenagers who get less sleep are more apt to get poor grades, fall asleep, and have school tardiness/absences.

Balance is a key attribute every day. I am disappointed that many students forget to exercise during exam periods. I worry that students make poor decisions due to their sleep deprivation.

Skipping meals and loading up on snacks will affect student health, especially during stressful examination sessions. Headaches, upset stomachs, and illness are common occurrences when students overlook the importance of nutrition to their wellbeing.

Exams = Stress. It's natural but very rare for students not to experience stress before and during exam sessions. To this end, I question if exams are the best way for how students can best demonstrate what they know and understand.

Anxiety is ever-present for exam candidates due to the expectations placed on them by parents, relatives, peers, teachers, and themselves. These expectations may impact students and their exam results more than distractions, poor revision techniques, or other factors. Sadly, there are too many teenage suicides that should always remind us how important wellbeing is for not only students but everyone.

In the end, we know as adults that we can't perform to our best, if we are tired, or had an interrupted night's sleep. Nor can students, so how can we prioritise wellbeing in our schools to ensure a key learning factor is in place?

The move by different secondary schools globally to later starting and finishing times to address the critical implications of the sleep factor is a proactive wellbeing initiative.

Key Messages

- Change to learning and learn to change.
- Be strategic in everything you do.
- Ensure transparency and accountability in your leadership.
- Readiness is a key to success.

- You learn through failure. Always fail forward. Never keep making the same mistakes.
- Seek opportunities that will challenge you.
- There are no shortcuts on the road to success.
- Use assessment as a learning conversation.
- Personalised learning and flexible learning environments flip the factory model approach to schooling, which is one size fits all.

Conclusion

We live in exciting times. Learners in the 21c are a new breed: Generation Alpha. Born from 2010 onwards, they have always lived in a world with smartphones, drones, tablet computers, apps, and 3D TV. Like Generation Z, they are extremely comfortable with technology; many were given smartphones or tablets to play with before they could even walk. I call them the iSwipe generation.

This unprecedented access to technology means our students have more information available to them than we could have dreamed of, even a couple of decades ago. They can teach themselves almost anything they want to know using the available resources. They also need to be made aware of the borders that used to contain our experience of the world strictly. Small children can communicate with people worldwide at the touch of a button. They increasingly have friends in numerous countries and grow up expecting that international travel will be a common part of their life.

As always, there are many exciting times ahead in school education and I look forward to sharing my reflections and recollections to celebrate 50 years in 2023.

> *"Believe that everything is a possibility, and then ask what you need to do to make it a reality."*
>
> *- Lauren McGoodwin*

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School Legacies

How a school impacts the individual student, year after year, is the school's legacy.

There will be hints from a school about its legacy or its intended legacy. The starting point will be the school's vision and purpose. What is the school hoping to achieve for its students?

A school's ethos and culture will also provide clues and direction.

What opportunities and experiences are available for students?

What are the current school initiatives that are evident?

What is the impact of the school on its community?

A school's reputation will provide all the clues about a school's legacy. Why do families want to send their child/children to a particular school?

The two tipping points at Tema International School (TIS) are: it's a family school; and the experiences available for students. Why are these important?

A Family School

TIS was established in 2003 by Mr and Mrs Adjavon and their family continues to play a strong role in the school. Until the Primary School campus was established in 2019, TIS was boarding only for secondary students from Grades 7 to 12. Staff are usually referred to as Uncle or Aunty. The Founders are known as Mummy and Daddy. The sense of family is important

as students spend more time as a TIS family member than they do with their own family.

A Unique Experience

A boarding school has many advantages. We expect students to participate at least three after-school activities a week. As an IB World School, there are always service projects "running," along with sporting activities and cultural performances. I dubbed the pace "Fast and Furious" in 2015; it gets faster yearly. In 2018, we introduced the Duke of Edinburgh International Awards Scheme as I saw it as a perfect match to what we do. Students did not have to do anything extra, except for the expedition, to satisfy award criteria.

All these experiences on offer, including overseas excursions, set up our students for university.

Did I mention that every TIS student goes to university at the end of Grade 12?

A school's legacy will ultimately reflect its reputation within and beyond the school community.

What is your school's reputation beyond the school community?

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Leadership: 21c in PNG

"Education is the most powerful weapon that you can use to change the world."

- Nelson Mandela

In 2013, schools should be the most exciting places for learners. Yet, across PNG, a picture is being painted where: compulsory school attendance is not enforced; there is no priority given to early childhood learning; students can be 21 years old and still be enrolled in elementary school; schools are facility and resource-poor; teachers are viewed as charity workers; and bureaucracy is hindering, rather than promoting, successful educational development.

The paper will be presented in two parts: requirements for 21st Century (21C) education in PNG; and the SMIT International School model that is being implemented in Tabubil.

The first part will address issues of curriculum, assessment, national standards, teacher education, and the economics of education within the context of PNG. The relevance of Darvall's dimensions for school improvement and development will also be introduced.

The second part of the paper will focus on SMIT International School and how it intends to make a difference in Tabubil, surrounding communities, and wider communities within PNG.

Requirements for 21C Education in PNG

"If we teach today's students as we taught yesterday's, we rob them of tomorrow."

- John Dewey

I have enjoyed residing in this beautiful country since October 2012. What impresses me are the warm, happy, and welcoming people I meet and the terrific students who display so many talents and respect learning. These talented students need the same opportunities that other global students experience to become the future leaders of PNG and PNG Vision 2050.

However, I am saddened when I see the opportunity to develop and prosper being ignored or overlooked, as evidenced by:

- the large number of students who do not attend school regularly or at all;
- the disinterest in early childhood learning;
- the forgotten students with disabilities who do not have the opportunity to attend school and receive the education to which they are entitled;
- students who can be 21 years old and still be enrolled in elementary school;
- schools that are facility and resource-poor;
- teachers who are viewed as charity workers due to non-payment or untimely payment of salaries; and
- the layers of bureaucracy that are hindering, rather than promoting successful educational development.

The trouble with many school structures worldwide today is that they reflect the industrial age model that is supposed to produce the same product due to a monotonous and regulated process. This suits non-living things, for example, making strawberry jam or manufacturing vehicles. However, this model needs to account for individual differences when it comes to schooling. If only schooling was a case of one size fits all. Then, we could dispense with teachers and use robots as class instructors!

As I often say, the best thing about teaching is that **every child is different**. It is also the worst thing, as there are no magic answers to suit all students to ensure maximum achievement.

As I look at what is happening across the international stage, we must ensure that our students are **active learners** and **critical thinkers** who can problem-solve, communicate, and collaborate. To this end, we must ensure we view learning as a lifelong journey, not something that starts when we enter school gates and ends when we leave them.

For those now teaching, ask yourself what knowledge you provide to your students today will remain relevant in 20 years. Will the jobs of your friends still exist in 20 years? My father-in-law was fascinated in the late 1990s when I showed him how a fax machine worked. I will not even consider discussing "cloud storage" with him!

What troubles me in PNG is that children start elementary school when they are six. Why aren't children starting at three years of age? Why aren't they learning through play to develop their social, language, numeracy, creative, gross and fine motor skills at this age? Two or three years of early childhood learning sets students up for success during their primary years. Importantly, these opportunities must be for all children, including those with disabilities.

In keeping with the theme of calibrating education, what is required in PNG, one of the most culturally diverse and least explored countries in the world, as well as being the sixth fastest growing economy in the world, while most of its people live in extreme poverty?

As many PNG people are illiterate, especially women, the priority should be to make education a national priority in budgetary expenditure. While there are many great plans for educational improvement in PNG, such plans only remain plans if there is no financial capacity to implement them. To ensure realistic educational improvement in PNG, it will be important to:

- decentralise educational structures and remove the layers of bureaucracy (evident from all the committees and boards) that stifle educational development and improvement to ensure funding goes directly to schools or local authorities;
- remodel school education to incorporate early childhood education from 3 to 5 years, primary school education from 5 to 12 years and secondary education from 12 to 17 years, with secondary pathway options available for students who are 15 years;
- develop 21c curriculum models for each of the three stages of schooling, supported by curriculum support materials to ensure effective implementation;
- restructure requirements for teacher training so that graduating teachers are capable of bringing real change to school education and are capable of teaching in a 21c classroom;
- establish standards for curriculum, teaching and educational leadership that provide the framework for improving educational standards across PNG;
- use a variety of school delivery models to provide maximum reach in such a geographically diverse country so that credible action is evident in providing education for all, and not just lip service.

These priorities provide the baseline for an initial 5–10-year project that allows the PNG government time to plan its economic strategies to ensure that education is a national priority.

With the adoption of a decentralised school education model, the focus must be on school development and improvement. In 2003, I developed a school development and improvement model that can be used as a school framework. The model is based on six basic premises:

- A school is a business. They must know and serve their clients.

- A school's goal must be to provide the best education possible.
- A school's reputation will be reflected in high performance standards and enrolment growth.
- A school's success will reflect its excellence.
- Schools must be student-centred organisations.
- Schools must be: strategic in their planning; goal-oriented; and results-driven.

Dimensions to School Development and Improvement: The Model

Dimension	**Achieving what we seek**	**Valuing what we have**	**Improving what we do**
Pillar	Leadership and management	Teaching and learning excellence	Reputation, growth and development
Attribute	Vision	Focused effort	Determination
Elements	Policies Personnel Resources Facilities Budget Communication Ethos & wellbeing IT School community	Curriculum Assessment & reporting Student tracking & benchmarking Student welfare Training & development Learning support Extra-curricular programs Integrated classroom technology Parents as engaged partners	Marketing & promotion Enrolments Performance standards External relations Affiliations/ Accreditation Public relations Annual school review Legislative requirements Action research
Assurance	How good are the leadership and management of the school?	How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?	How good does the school perform overall?

Ken Darvall (2003)

The model incorporates three dimensions for school improvement: valuing what we have, achieving what we seek, and improving what we do. Each dimension comprises a strategic pillar, an attribute, key elements, and an assurance determinant. Schools that are addressing each element within their own improvement plan will be able to provide appropriate evidence in terms of assurance to their key stakeholders.

The SMIT International School Model

> *"Education is the passport out of poverty for many indigenous students, yet we are still leaving thousands of kids behind."*
>
> *- Peter Garrett*

Tabubil, in the Western Province of Papua New Guinea, is the mining town of Ok Tedi Mining Ltd (OTML). The Papua New Guinea Sustainable Development Program (PNGSDP) vision for Tabubil is that it will be transformed into a mixed economy college town, led by the Star Mountains Institute of Technology (SMIT). SMIT's mission is to provide research, education, and training that support sustainable development for the benefit of the people of Tabubil, the Western Province and Papua New Guinea. To achieve its mission, SMIT will evolve into an internationally renowned, multi-site, multi-discipline research and learning institution with local, national, and international partners.

The SMIT International School is a private, commercially competitive school with approximately 33 staff and 280 students (P - 7). The school intends to increase its capacity to include Year 8, with a longer view also to offer Y9 -12.

The primary purpose of my position of School Principal is to provide academic and administrative leadership and management

in continuously improving the school's international quality and to establish the school as a model school for SMIT's teacher education program.

Tabubil International School transformed into the SMIT International School on 1 January 2013. I proposed that the two central strategies for improving the international quality of the school were:

- become an IB World School (authorised to offer the Primary Years Programme, Middle Years Programme, Diploma Programme and IB Career -Related Certificate); and
- increase capacity from K-6 to K-12.

Why was IB implementation so important? There were many fundamental reasons:

- Students are the central focus in each program to develop them as active learners and critical thinkers in an inquiry learning environment.
- To become authorised as an IB World School to offer an IB programme, schools must comply with the IB Programme Standards and Practices in terms of: philosophy, organisation (including leadership, structure, resources and support), and curriculum (including collaborative planning, the written curriculum, teaching and learning, and assessment).
- Learners strive to be: inquirers, knowledgeable, thinkers, communicators, principled, open-minded, caring, risk-takers, balanced, and reflective.
- The IB is a recognised leader in the field of international education.
- The IB chooses to define "international education"

according to the following criteria:

- Developing citizens of the world in relation to culture, language, and learning to live together.
- Building and reinforcing students' sense of identity and cultural awareness.
- Fostering students' recognition and development of universal human values.
- Stimulating curiosity and inquiry in order to foster a spirit of discovery and enjoyment of learning.
- Equipping students with the skills to learn and acquire knowledge, individually or collaboratively, and to apply these skills and knowledge accordingly across a broad range of areas.
- Providing international content while responding to local requirements and interests.
- Encouraging diversity and flexibility in teaching methods.
- Providing appropriate forms of assessment and international benchmarking.
- The IB aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect. To this end, the organization works with schools, governments and international organizations to develop challenging programmes of international education and rigorous assessment. These programmes encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right. (Ref: www.ibo.org)

The transition from an IEA-managed school to a SMIT-managed school resulted in a number of changes for the start of the school year. These included:

- adopting a 2hrs + 2hrs + 1hr timetable model to maximize effective learning time;

- restructuring the preschool into an Early Learning Centre that catered for three year-olds (Preschool) two full days a week and four-year-olds (Transition) three full days a week;
- establishing a Community Advisory Group, in lieu of a school board, to ensure wider community representation; and
- promoting student leadership opportunities across all grades, including a school parliament model.

To ensure we are striving to provide an international standard of education at SMIT International School, our articulated priorities for this year are:

- IB: trial the Primary Years Programme as a PYP Candidate School, seeking a verification visit in 2014; trial the Middle Years Programme as an MYP Interested School; implement ManageBac as an online learning management system across the school; and enable staff attendance at in-school and regional workshops.
- Upskilling: All staff is expected to upskill. Groundsmen will require various certificates/skill sets**.** Teaching assistants need to consider possible teacher training. National teachers need to look at Australian teaching qualifications. Further studies and IB courses will be important for expat teachers.
- Identity and reputation: The importance of what we do, how we communicate and what is achieved in the classroom are important; and the identity we seek of SMITIS is a friendly caring, personal, happy school.
- SMITIS will be a **lighthouse school** by assisting other local and district schools to improve school education in PNG.
- Teamwork**:** collaborative planning is mandatory.
- Intranet and Internet: ensure that communication is transparent; establish an Intranet as our knowledge base; and upgrade our Internet connectivity to enable use of the interactive whiteboards in each classroom.

- Further develop SMIT International School by planning the expansion of the secondary school, and establishing an effective maintenance and grounds improvement program.

Three aspects are evident as we reach the half-way mark of our first year. First, teachers have had to reflect on their teaching practices and adopt an inquiry approach to teaching and learning. This has challenged some in terms of their planning and assessment. Second, students have demonstrated increased self-confidence. Third, there has been increased parent involvement in meetings and an appreciation of the improved and comprehensive student progress reports (and three-way interviews) introduced.

We still have much to do and achieve. But with students as the focus of all our efforts, we look forward to the exciting journey ahead of us.

"We are what we repeatedly do."

-Aristotle



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Personal Legacies

A school leader leaves a personal legacy to the school by how the person has made a difference during tenure. What will be your personal legacy?

My approach to any appointment has stayed the same over 50 years. Any new appointment must be: a challenge, an opportunity, and a place where I can make a difference. Regarding the last criterion, my rider is, but it is up to the local school community to determine if and how I made a difference.

The approach a principal adopts at the school is important so that trust and support can be built quickly with teachers, students, and parents. In doing so, the new principal can gather data about what the school does well and needs to do better. It is also important to ascertain if any outstanding matters need to be addressed because they have been put aside into the too-hard basket.

The trust and support will be greatly enhanced if the ensuing priorities faithfully address the key issues articulated by the school community. A wide experience base and a new set of eyes can often resolve some key issues quickly and effectively. I remember commencing at Moree Public School in 1990. It had the reputation as the worst primary school in the town because of the violence in the playground. It was the first issue I tackled by greeting all students on arrival and then wandering the playground to support the teachers on duty. Getting the message across to the school community that violence would not be tolerated at school, followed up with several school suspensions, quickly got everyone's attention and the desired change. Over

three years, the school's reputation changed from the worst to the best and our school numbers increased from 450 to 600.

Addressing real issues for each section within the school community enhances leadership credibility. However, a key element here is establishing effective teams to support any action taken. At Tabubil in Papua New Guinea, the second wettest place on Earth, having parents understand the change in school name, ownership responsibility, and new curriculum emphasised the need for effective communication and engagement. One concern, typical of almost all schools, was the poor attendance and Parents and Wontoks meetings (the equivalent of the Parents and Citizens Association, or similar). An attendance of up to four people was typical. Food was expensive and a high cost for most local families. To remedy the attendance issue, I purchased two supermarket vouchers for the first meeting (150 and 50 Kina) and promoted the first meeting that there would be two lucky door prizes drawn at the end of the meeting. Twenty-seven parents attended and it was an effective meeting, as well as an exciting one at the end. I continued the same strategy for each meeting and attendance stayed above 20 parents in attendance.

An important role of the principal is ensuring cohesion across the different stakeholders within the school community. Often there are power plays within the parent groups when some parents may be trying to set an agenda that is not part of or possibly against agreed school priorities. I have been in a couple of schools where parents with political ambitions would run for key parent executive positions so it could further promote their political aspirations. In these instances, the parents were ineffective in the school roles, because their focus was not the school but their own political ambitions.

Establishing effective teams among teachers and parents are a critical role for a principal at the start and also throughout their

tenure as principal. Ensuring collaboration and delegation allows the principal to identify future leadership aspirants.

It is always most important that we remember that it's all about the students! Priorities, programs, and initiatives should always focus on improving student learning outcomes. If students remain as the core of all decision-making, then a lot of great things will be evident within the school.

It will be these actions, which the principal leads that become their personal legacy.

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Lessons From COVID

So, what did we learn from the pandemic?

First and foremost, very few students enjoyed the online experience for various reasons. However, most students missed other students' companionship, collaboration, and interactions with their teachers.

Second, masks are a necessary annoyance, making identity, appearance, and communication difficult.

Although schools closed, that did not stop learning or experiencing a range of virtual opportunities. Graduation, admissions, school choirs, public speaking, language, maths and science competitions, weekly assemblies, and a virtual school exchange still continued in this COVID world.

The COVID experience exemplifies mindset theory. For those with a fixed mindset, COVID was an excuse. "I can't complete this because of COVID!" Put simply, opportunities are lost. For those with a growth mindset, COVID created new opportunities and a reason to look at things differently. New opportunities have ensured that essential experiences remain available. These opportunities have been a boon for entrepreneurs who pivot their ideas to suit new needs, circumstances, and priorities.

However, COVID has shown us time and time again that complacency is COVID's best friend. Seeing the lack of face masks worn in the wider community during high infection rates was disappointing. It was disturbing to see the signs stating, "no masks, no entry," yet shop workers and customers were either

not wearing their masks or they had pulled their masks down. Sadly, not too many people seemed to care. All of us need to take responsibility for the health of each other.

It remains important to ensure all pandemic protocols are always observed to remain healthy during these times. It is consistency that we should demand, while complacency must be shunned. As someone commented, it's a pity that it took a million deaths for us to realise the importance of washing our hands.

Something that I have observed over the past two years has been the dramatic increase in poor customer service. Many places don't value or care about their customers or clients. Additionally, the quality of different goods and services has decreased significantly. It seems that COVID produced a "don't care" approach for many people. These trends are quite worrying.

From an Australian perspective, the high rates of COVID cases in 2023 remain disturbing. COVID is now a personal responsibility and infection numbers are no longer publicised. I spent three different periods of hotel quarantine when COVID cases were significantly less than what they are in 2023. The last two hotel quarantines were when I was double-vaccinated, but no health official cared. Nor were they interested!

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What 50 Years of School Leadership Has Taught Me

Time's Up!
50 years? What were you thinking?

Being a school leader has been an honour and a privilege for me to serve so many school communities over the past 50 years. The experiences have been many and varied and can be divided into stages: small schools, Indigenous education, Islamic school environments, IB world schools, and African school environments. As challenging as some of these contexts have been, I can openly state that I have enjoyed attending school each day. As an early bird, I have usually been the first or one of the first staff to arrive at any school on any day of the week (including weekends!)

Yet, there appears to be an expectation that you will consider retirement soon after you hit 50+ in chronological years. Fifty years in the profession? That is way too long!

Well, the only time to consider retiring, or changing professions, is when you feel what you are doing is a job. If there are no more challenges for you or you are no longer making a difference, then it is time to say "*adios*." Health issues may also be a key factor in the big "R" decision.

But ultimately, the individual knows when their time is up and it's time to pull the plug on their career. The number you write down for your age should not be part of any of those discussions, unless you are just taking up space. However, if this were the case, there would be no enjoyment for the individual in coming

to school each day for a full day's work. In this case, it would be just a job without any personal enjoyment or professional satisfaction.

So, what have 50 years of school leadership taught me? The following issues are what I consider to be important as I reflect over the years in the context of today's world in mind.

Legacy, Not Glory

As you climb the leadership ladder to success, it is about personal glory and achievement. Plenty of rungs are on the school leadership ladder, and climbing the ladder is about personal glory and impact. Leadership will always be about your impact within your organisation. However, it also involves becoming "known," networking and looking at the next rung on the ladder.

Once you reach the top of your ladder, success is about your legacy to the school community and education in general and nothing about personal glory. Leaders reach the stage where they focus on developing up-and-coming leaders and provide opportunities within their school environment to confirm their leadership potential. School achievement is about what the school team has achieved rather than the school leader. As I always say, when starting at a new school, I will make this a better school, but it is up to others to make that judgement, not me. This becomes the leader's personal legacy to a school community or organisation. Yes, it becomes part of your reputation in terms of impact, but you are not seeking personal glory when on top of the ladder of success. My satisfaction is seeing students' personal growth and development because of the impact of their teachers and school initiatives.

Personalise The Learning Experience

In the 21c school environment, we know that the factory model of education does not work, as each learner is unique. One size does

not or can't fit all. The COVID experience also highlighted the importance of personalised learning. Students who have strong relationships with their teachers are more academically engaged. The more personal the learning is for the student results in purposeful learning and positive student achievement outcomes.

It isn't rocket science, just the teaching guarantee! Each student is unique, so for effective learning to occur, personalised learning experiences must be provided. Fortunately, this is easier to do in 2023 than 20-50 years ago with the available technology in classrooms today. There is no excuse for it not to happen.

Won't it be more time-consuming? Not if teachers were catering for individual learners in their classrooms. In fact, the software will provide real-time data, which will be a real time-saver for teachers in terms of data collection, analysis, and next steps.

Adapt to the Circumstances

Almost 60 years ago, Bob Dylan released his prophetic hit, "The Times They are a Changin." The obvious sequel should be, "And They Have Been a Changin' Ever Since." These changes are why the static factory school education model outlived its purpose decades ago.

Schools should be environments of change and teachers should be leading agents of change within their communities. However, the factory model hinders the change process when teachers, as process workers, enjoy their comfort zones. Fortunately, 21c learning environments have changed this approach where student agency is now a cornerstone of the modern classroom environment. The more we learn about brain development and its impact on learning approaches and techniques, along with the rate of change and its impact on technology to support classroom learning, the more changes will improve learning practices and outcomes for everyone involved in the teaching and learning process in schools.

My advice has always been to trial initiatives that may improve what you do, especially student outcomes. In three words: adopt, adapt, innovate. Don't be afraid of change, but let it work for you and, most importantly, for your students. Remember, schools should be the most exciting places regarding learning environments, processes, programs, and outcomes.

Make A Difference

This advice is not just limited to school leaders. It is something that I challenge students, teachers, and parents to do. Make a difference through your actions to your school (or organisation). However, it should be the legacy of any leader to their community. Leaders must demonstrate how to make a difference as leaders are role models for their school, organisation, or community. Leaders make a difference by what they say (their intentions) and especially by what they do (their actions).

By making a difference, leaders are implementing strategic actions to move their school or organisation out of their comfort zone to a higher level of performance and achievement. Their actions will enhance the culture and climate of the school or organisation. The leader's challenge to make a difference must be towards agreed and shared outcomes. Community ownership of agreed actions will ensure commitment, effort, and progress.

Be Transparent, Accountable, and Ensure Integrity

Leaders must be strategic thinkers and planners with outstanding relationship and interpersonal skills who can motivate and lead others through their persuasive communication skills. However, the three attributes defining their leadership are transparency, accountability, and integrity. Three important words ending in "y" will always answer the "why" questions regarding decisions made and actions taken.

Transparency will provide all stakeholders with the clarity and purpose of any leadership action.

Accountability will ensure all stakeholders know the responsibilities entailed in any leadership action.

Integrity will enable all stakeholders to have an assurance that all leadership actions reflect the school's values and beliefs.

These three essential words will ensure the best reputation a school or organisation can enjoy.

Without them, expect major issues and problems.

No Limits

The first chapter of this book espoused the importance of opportunities and experiences for school community members to ensure personal challenges, growth, and achievements. Where possible, there should be no limits. Make it happen and enjoy the outcomes.

However, we must all be vigilant about the restrictions that any form of discrimination may impose if overlooked or not addressed. Age, gender, religion, ethnicity, or ability should not prevent anyone from enjoying an experience of opportunity that appeals or excites them. How will we know if this opportunity will reveal the next world champion? You won't know until you try. And try over many times.

My favourite saying about any opportunity or experience is to *become involved as we don't accept any passengers*. Or, as the Nike ad states so succinctly, *just do it!*

In the world in which we live today, there is no place for any form of discrimination that will restrict any person from participating. Inclusion must be sacrosanct without compromise.

Collaborate and Share

Two words dominate the 21c school environments across our world's many global villages. Collaborate and share.

In other words, teamwork and shared ownership break down the complicated times we live. Supporting and assisting your colleagues and, more importantly, learning with and from your colleagues ensures an industrious and collegial workplace where each member is valued and respected. Remember, no limits!

We expect our students to collaborate and share. Like everything else, they learn best from their role models – us. Let's ensure we show our students how to do it!

Challenges

To achieve your best, you must keep challenging yourself to push beyond your current limits to set new personal bests and best practices.

New leadership positions must always provide new opportunities and challenges to prove and improve your leadership abilities. These new opportunities that challenge you will enhance your leadership experiences which will always stand you in good stead. At a certain point in time, you will be able to exclaim, *been there, done that! At this point, you* can mentor potential leaders successfully from your wide experience base.

However, always appreciate the importance of leadership challenges and subsequent development. Trust me, nothing beats experience. It's always nice when there are no further surprises!

Within the school environment, it is why I recommend the establishment of the Duke of Edinburgh International Award Scheme (Dukies). This prestigious international award program is comprised of three levels and four sections. Participants

complete all four sections at each level to achieve their Award. The Bronze Level is for those students who are 14 years and over. The Silver Level is for students 15 years and over, while the Gold Level is for those 16 years and over. The four sections are: service, skills, physical recreation, and adventurous journey. The residential project is only completed at the Gold Level.

University and college admission managers look beyond academic results to determine what makes each student a "right fit" for their institution. While these managers highly regard the IB DP CAS program involvement and projects, a Duke of Edinburgh international award demonstrates achievement and commitment based on personal challenges across the award sections, which are key factors in success at university and in life. CAS complements the Dukies program, as many IB World Schools will appreciate. One of my many proud moments was establishing the Dukies program at Tema International School. I strongly encourage secondary school leaders to investigate the establishment of this program in your school if you value the importance of after-school/extracurricular activities.

Reflect To Achieve Best Practice

As a leader, you must always continue improving everything you do. This can only occur if you constantly reflect on your actions to ensure best practice.

While nothing beats experience, we can always improve what we do and how we do it.

You can always do better, no matter how good you think you are. This will only occur through reflection on what you do, how you do it, and what you achieve in terms of what you intend to achieve. Be honest. Be critical. It is always an essential and rewarding daily exercise.

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The Learning Jigsaw

Learning is a series of jigsaw puzzles. There are many different types of jigsaws. Some are easy. Some are hard. Some are easy to put together while others test our patience and skills before all the pieces come together. Some just seem impossible. Levels of difficulty will often depend on interests, ability, and maturity.

As a learner, you need to know and show.

You must know what each piece is and understand how it fits within the puzzle. Your inquiry into each piece will involve questions to elicit knowledge and understanding. This knowledge of each piece is important to understand how each piece fits together. This learning will involve trial and error and using this information to form your knowledge of each piece.

Once you know each piece, you must show your understanding by putting all pieces together to complete the jigsaw. Along the way, you will be asked to explain what you know about a piece and why you think it fits in a certain place within the puzzle. This questioning supports your learning by helping you clarify what you know and understand. Putting a puzzle together the first time is satisfying, but does it show what you know? Showing you can complete the puzzle several times and decreasing the time allowed to complete the puzzle on subsequent attempts will clearly show your success.

As a teacher, you must personalise, engage, and challenge each learner. Each learner is different, and we know one size does not fit all. Therefore, each learner must start at the appropriate level to know and show. Each learner must be engaged in the

learning process and the teaching strategies employed must be personalised to engage each learner in the inquiry process. This engagement will be reflected by the level of questioning by the learner. The teacher must articulate the essential understanding required for each puzzle and the concepts that are the building blocks to such understanding. Ensuring each learner starts at the right level is critical: too easy, the learner loses focus easily; if too hard, the learner often quits in frustration. Ensuring each learner is challenged to complete each puzzle and enjoy the success of each completion is the challenge for the teacher.

Each learner is different, and this is recognised by personalising the experiences. Nevertheless, many learners will enjoy working on a puzzle with other learners. These are valuable opportunities for learners as they question, explain, justify, and clarify their knowledge and understanding. Collaboration is successful when each learner is an active participant in the process.

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Professional Reading

I have always enjoyed being innovative.

Right from Day 1, back in 1973, when I was appointed Teacher-In-Charge of Five Mile Tree Public School at Crooked Corner (2583, New South Wales, Australia), I wanted to bring the spirit of Summerhill (A S Neill) into this one-room and enclosed-verandah school with 22 students, ranging from 5 to 12 years (Kindergarten to Grade 6). While space was at a premium, any variations were space conscious. Posters were placed on the ceilings as well as walls and windows. Students' desks were placed along the enclosed verandah so that the single classroom became open space for activities, performances, and project-based learning.

Two sources for my inspiration were professional readings, hard copies back then, and visiting other schools. These remain my main sources, although professional readings now incorporate videos, podcasts, and webinars. Two key questions were driving this search for more inspiration. How can I improve what I am doing? How can I improve student learning experiences (and outcomes)?

The various tertiary courses I completed supported my professional reading along the way. Compulsory textbooks and articles enriched my learning and ideas for change. Putting theory into practice depended on context and adaptation to ensure any change was purposeful and addressed an issue. The first thing you learn with any innovation is that it must be fit for purpose. An innovation may work brilliantly in one learning environment and be a disaster in another. Why? Context. Each individual

environment is different, even in the same school, because of the variables within, specifically the teacher and the students. Solution? Adapt. Understand why an innovation may work in your school or learning environment, which is why you want to try it, and then adapt it because of your contextual factors. Keep adapting until the results you are expecting are evident.

Professional associations are also a great source for professional reading. I enjoy ACEL, Corwin and ASCD. A professional association does not have to be based around education to be beneficial. Management institutes, such as AIM, specifically focus on leadership and management. Paid subscription services, such as Farnham Street and Marshall's Memo, are ideal, along with other subscriptions, like Edutopia, Wallace Foundation and A J Juliani.

For the past 15 years, I have been providing copies of articles I have enjoyed and/or thought staff members may benefit from reading the same article each time I send out a staff bulletin, at least weekly or twice per week.

I save my professional readings in a PR folder each year using the following categories: 21c, ACEL, assessment, best practice, careers, COVID, curriculum, digital citizenship, EAL, early years, general, habits of mind, IB, inquiry, leadership, learning, learning spaces, marketing, Marshall's memo, mentorship, OECD, other schools, parenting, PBL, performance, principles of learning, professional learning, research, retrieval practice, student agency, success, technology, TED, trauma-informed education practices, universities, visible learning, and wellbeing.

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Performance: To Become a Champion

At TIS, our goal is for each student to become a champion. TIS is an inclusive school and not a selective school. A tipping point for TIS is the range of experiences and opportunities available to students that will enable them to be champions. Add the bonus of being a boarding school, and the secret ingredient of fast and furious, and you then realise why the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award is a natural fit at TIS.

But to become a champion requires effort, attitude, action, and development over time. At TIS, there are three stages to becoming a champion: foundation, growth, and maturity. Different goals must be achieved within each stage before moving to the next stage. These goals are set out below.

Foundation Stage

• *Community*
Students must be authentic members of the TIS by contributing members of the TIS family who believe in making the world a better place. No passengers are allowed. We need active family members.

• *Culture*
As an inclusive school, we expect students always to seek their Personal Best and then improve upon their Personal Best, each day. TIS promotes leadership at every level of a student's journey through TIS. We expect students to explore these leadership opportunities to develop and mature their leadership attributes and skills to become future leaders. Importantly, we expect each student to demonstrate integrity – what you do, when no one is watching you.

• *Commitment*
There are four areas in which we expect each student will demonstrate commitment to ensuring a balanced student: academics, culture, sport, and service. Each area is as important as the other. One area should never become more important than the others. Creating an imbalance does not demonstrate a commitment to TIS or to the goal of becoming a champion.

• *Change*
"Change is the end result of all true learning." (Leo Buscaglia) Students must be prepared for change and to change if they are learners. The only way to improve and continually achieve your Personal Best is to change what you always do.

• *Curiosity*
Students must have or develop a sense of curiosity. We require inquirers, thinkers, and reflective students so they can become knowledgeable. Curiosity makes our brains more receptive to learning so that as we learn, we enjoy the sensation of learning.

• *Choices*
A tipping point for TIS is the range of experiences and opportunities available to ALL students. At TIS, we want students to discover, explore and develop their talents. We assist them in helping define their futures. As future leaders, their decision-making is important. So, when it comes to choices, students must participate in a wide range of TIS opportunities and experiences to enhance themselves as individuals. However, remember, there are always consequences for the choices you make. Do not become a cowboy by pleasing yourself and disregarding everything that defines TIS.

Growth Stage

Having laid a strong foundation, students must then achieve five key goals during a period of growth.

• *Clarity*

The first step at this stage is to define your specific goals and targets. Yes, there are so many opportunities and experiences available at TIS that if you keep wondering instead of taking action, you end up being a passenger and not a participant. Avoid confusion. Once students determine their end goal, they must define the essential experiences that will assist them to realise their dream (or ultimate) goal. But it starts at this point.

• *Challenges*

You can only improve what you do by setting challenges and achieving goals you thought you could not. Challenges are the key aspect of the "Dukies" program in which we strongly encourage all students to participate. So, a key question for each student is: what is your challenge? However, be wary of conflicts that have the potential to derail your challenge.

• *Connect*

Students must always be "in the moment." They require focus and must engage in everything they do. They need to remove all distractions.

• *Collaborate*

Collaboration is one of the most required skills in today's world. Two minds are better than one, and four are even better. Within any team, students must contribute. They must plan, work, and learn with and from others. Define your thinking and share your ideas.

• *Communicate*

Communication in all aspects (oral, written, and visual) is essential to becoming a champion. Students must be able to

express their thoughts and ideas to develop their understanding further. All students are provided opportunities to present in front of others, whether in small or large groups, to enhance their communication skills.

Maturity Stage

The final stage is maturation, with four key goals at this stage.

• *Confidence*
As you achieve, your confidence grows. Continue to rehearse and practise. However, students must ensure they don't allow any room for complacency due to over-confidence.

• *Control*
An important sign of maturity is taking control, or ownership, of your goals. So, focus on your goals. Ensure no distractions. Accept no excuses. You control your destiny.

• *Consistency*
Success requires consistency in effort, attitude, and actions. Performance reflects consistency.

• *Competent*
Once competency has been achieved, set new Personal Best targets to move to Champion status. Students must become a competitor to test their competency level at this stage.

• *Champion*
You are only as good as your last performance. Keep raising the bar by defining your new challenges.

• *Celebration*
It's time to celebrate your success, reflect on your achievement, and accept your new challenges.

THE CRYSTAL IN THE CROWN

Community

• Family • Making the world a better place

Culture

• Integrity • Personal Best • Leadership

Commitment

• Academic • Sport • Culture • Service

Change

• The only way to improve is to change what you always do.

Curiosity

• Curiosity makes our brains more receptive for learning, and that as we learn, we enjoy the sensation of learning.

Choices

• Participate in the wide range of opportunities and experiences at TIS.

Clarity

• Define your specific goals and targets.

Challenges

• Improve what you do by setting challenges and achieving goals you thought you could not.

Connect

• Always be in the moment. Engage in everything that you do.

Collaborate

• Contribute • Plan, work, and learn with others. Share your ideas.

Communicate

• Express your thoughts and ideas to develop your understanding further.

Confidence

• As you achieve, your confidence grows.
• Ensure you don't allow any room for complacency due to over-confidence.

Control

• Focus on your specific goals. No distractions.

Consistency

• Success requires consistency in effort, attitude, and actions.
• Performance reflects consistency.

Competent

• Once competency is achieved, set new PB targets to move to champion status.
• Be a competitor to test your competency level.

Champion

• You are only as good as your last performance. Keep raising the bar.

Celebration

• Celebrate your success. Reflect on your achievement. Consider your next challenge.

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Enjoy What You Do (And Keep Doing It!)

Why 50 years, Ken?

I am lucky. I chose a profession in which I wanted to help children. And, to this day, I enjoy attending school each day (and generally before dawn)! With the Teaching Guarantee, every day is different, so some days are harder than others in terms of satisfaction, depending on the issues that arise during a given day.

Strange as it may be, the "variation" days may sound almost like a day off compared to "normal" school day. The athletics and swimming carnival days are exhausting and should only be conducted on a Friday or the last day of the school week. Otherwise, the next day at school seems like 72 hours!

So, the answer is simply the Teaching Guarantee. Each day is different, just as each child and school are different. I have said for many years that a policy is only as current as the day it was written. After a policy is released, it soon becomes obvious that there must be exceptions.

As I have mentioned elsewhere, I enjoy opportunities and challenges. Once I have taken a school as far as I can, I commence looking for the next opportunity and challenge, personally and professionally.

I am very conscious of renewal and not growing stale and too comfortable. I must be able to make a difference always. The growth and challenges can be draining and for most of my career,

I have tended to move on after three or four years. Each new opportunity has added to my experience base, for which I am extremely grateful. Has one school been better than the other? I would have to say no as each provided me with a different experience, thus my gratitude.

So, in all aspects of life, enjoy what you are doing (and keep doing it!) Ensure that you have a "right fit" in terms of interests, priorities, and goals to continue growing and developing. When what you are doing becomes "just a job," then look for a change, as unhappiness in a job will affect your health and wellbeing.

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Gratitude

For all different reasons and excuses, there is not enough gratitude directed towards schools and the teaching community.

Schools are busy and complex organisations where things never seem to end.

Schools and education have been easy fodder for media bashing, especially by politicians who do so often for selfish and short-term political reasons.

Teaching is hard work. Leading a school is hard work. Unfortunately, the public relates school holidays to the easy "lot" of teachers.

Schools often present awards to students for different reasons, and end-of-year awards nights focus on the achievements of students (and not staff).

As I have mentioned to many staff, there is no better satisfaction for a teacher than to witness individual students' growth over a year. To think that your impact influenced this individual growth and progress is a feeling and satisfaction that money can't put a price on.

When former students meet you years later and talk so fondly about how you impacted their lives and influenced their values, these are very humbling and gratifying moments.

Schools need to take time out regularly to articulate gratitude to everyone who plays a part in a school. Teachers may receive

it more than the school cleaners, but should that be the case? The admin staff, generally the first point of contact for irate parents, will have many upsetting moments throughout the week. For those volunteer parents who assist in the classrooms, around the school or canteens. How do we express our gratitude to all members of our school community? And how often is it important to do so?

There is a lot to be grateful for in life each day. The same goes for each school day.

We should make it a daily habit to articulate our gratitude in schools so that a culture of positivity becomes ingrained.

Appreciation can go a long way. A lack of it can also disenfranchise important stakeholders in any school.

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Bureaucracy

Leaders should prioritise eliminating all levels of bureaucracy that stifle empowerment, voice, agency, and innovation. Bureaucracy exists to suppress complaints or issues that should be addressed but are not part of the existing "political" agenda. It often provides no value at all. I cite four examples during my tenure with the NSW Department of Education.

When I was Teacher-In-Charge (TIC) at my first school, File Mile Tree Public School, with 20-23 students, I would receive different calls from regional or head offices. On one occasion, I answered the phone and having identified my school and myself, the caller identified himself as someone at head office who wanted to speak to the teacher-in-charge. Sorry, I thought this was a dumb question, so I asked him to hold on while I went to look for the TIC. About five minutes later, I picked up the phone, identified myself (again) and asked how I could help. It was an irrelevant inquiry that was a waste of a phone call.

About the end of the second week of each term, principals had to complete an A3 (size) carbonised statistics form that you sent off individual copies to the head office, regional office, and district office. The last copy remained (almost illegible) for school records. There was an additional form for the first term in which you included all staff details. These forms could take up to two weeks to complete! After about 15 years of completing these every quarter, a colleague mentioned he no longer bothered with the forms and nobody seemed to care. So, I did the same thing, and nobody did care!

When looking for a change and a new school, I had to speak to a particular person in personnel at head office. You just had to be lucky. One day, I phoned, and someone answered and said they would put me through, which they did. To someone else who told me they would put me through, which they did. To someone else who told me they would put me through, which they did. This happened eight times when the person who answered was the first person I spoke to! It was the school holidays, so I visited the head office and met the person in the flesh. I was ushered to his desk, and he was most helpful and effective. However, I noticed his phone was off the hook, which explained why his line was always busy! I mentioned to him that his phone was off the hook and he quickly replied that it was the only way he could complete his work.

When I was principal at Moree Public School, the department supplied a fax machine to every government school. The use of this technology seemed exciting until reality hit. Before the fax machine era, head and regional offices would post weekly mail-outs. Questionnaires and returns generally had a two-week deadline to allow for postal delays. The dawn of the fax era changed this routine completely. Correspondence was being sent out to schools willy-nilly, and the reply date was often the same day! It was bureaucracy gone mad. One day after a gecko climbed inside the fax machine, it no longer worked. The dead gecko had fried one of the parts, meaning it had to be taken away for about six weeks to repair. After the first week, I contacted regional and head offices, stating my concern that I was missing departmental correspondence because the school's fax machine was being repaired. I was reassured that if the sender received an error message, then the department would mail out to the school at the end of the week all the faxed documents that triggered an error message. During those six weeks, I received one mail out!

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A Transforming World: The State of School Education in the Next 15 Years

In 2018, Tema International School celebrated 15 years. Here is my message from the school forum held to mark the occasion.

Happy birthday, Tema International School.

Fifteen years! What an incredible journey to date. So many experiences. So many stories. The reflections on the past 15 years have been very special for all. However, fast-forward 15 years to 2033. What will the school education experience be like then?

Today's special educational forum will consider and address that very question, without the assistance of any crystal balls, yet with their wisdom of experience. Please note that we are considering school education and not limiting the discussion to secondary school education. Although a leading secondary boarding school, TIS will soon offer a whole school education experience from Preschool to Grade 12, with the opening of its new Primary School in 2019.

While we know that we are 18 years into the 21st century, many education observers still comment on the need to drag many schools into the 21st century. Will we hear the same criticism in 2033? With the advent of AI, will there be the need for teachers in the future, let alone schools as we now know them?

Our guest speakers will cover various critical factors of school education: teaching and learning, the learning environment, curriculum, personnel, and assessment.

Schools, as we know them, are all about teaching and learning. Teaching had been the dominant focus in schools, with teachers using the "chalk and talk" approach. However, the change to student-centred education has put the correct focus on learning. While larger classes experienced a "one size fits all" approach, school technology is now making personalised learning a reality for learning in future years. How will this change the role of teachers in schools and the experiences for students? Will students need to come to school if personalised learning makes its expected impact in the coming years?

In many cases, photos of classrooms from the 1800s look eerily like many in the 2000s. Fortunately, the emphasis on learning, especially personalised learning, has resulted in educators rethinking the classroom and transforming it from the factory-model approach of the 1800s into a 21st-century learning environment that fosters collaboration, communication, cooperation, creativity, and critical thinking. For different reasons, the flexible learning environment caters best for the 21st-century learner and school owners during times of enrolment fluctuations. By moving to a flexible learning environment, will teachers lose their authority, and will this result in poor discipline standards? Are students' learning styles best suited to a controlled approach of the flexible learning model?

While many curriculum models are in use globally, they all have similarities regarding the required knowledge, skills, and understanding. The traditional factory-model approach is based on many assumptions: one year per grade before progression; students in a certain grade are expected to learn at the same rate; and when they leave the factory, students progress to the workforce, either directly or indirectly after completing university studies. What implications does personalised learning have on the traditional curriculum model and satisfying course requirements? How will e-learning change curriculum models in the future?

The teacher has the greatest impact on student learning in a classroom. Yet, there is a shortage of teachers globally and in many Third World countries, students attend school with unqualified teachers. So how do governments address this critical issue of insufficient teachers and likely inadequate funding for school education? How critical is class size to effective learning? Do we need to ensure that the advent of AI addresses the teacher shortage issue?

Assessment is the process of gathering information that accurately reflects how well a student achieves the learning outcomes in a course. If the primary purpose of assessment and evaluation is to improve student learning, why are there many disappointed students and parents each time student progress reports are sent home? Do assessment tasks allow students to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skills? How valid are final grades? If personalised learning is a step into the future, will personalised assessment tasks become the norm and exam halls become redundant?

The most important question is: What if students controlled their learning? It is a relevant question and an equally inspiring TED Talk. https://youtu.be/nMxqEkg3wQ0

The following was not part of the above message.

Now, fast-forward to 2023…. From November 2022 and with increasing and noticeable interest in December and January 2023 onwards, many questions have been asked about the real impact of artificial intelligence (AI) in the classroom. Suddenly, ChatGPT arrived and could prepare any written task for you. Sacre bleu! How would teachers and examiners determine authenticity?

So, my key question is: How will AI influence and change school education over the next 10 years? ChatGPT has provided the following response.

AI has the potential to revolutionise education in a number of ways over the next 10 years. Here are some possible ways AI may influence and change school education:

1. Personalized Learning: AI can analyse the learning style and progress of each student to tailor individualized lesson plans, assessments and support, that can better cater to the unique learning needs of each student.
2. Smart Content: AI can help develop smart content that is interactive, engaging, and relevant to each student's individual needs. AI can also identify gaps in learning, areas of struggle, and recommend targeted interventions or enrichment resources to aid understanding.
3. Automated Assessment and Feedback: AI can automate the grading of assignments and tests, providing immediate feedback to students, while also freeing up teachers' time to focus on other important tasks.
4. Intelligent Tutoring: AI-powered intelligent tutoring systems can provide personalized, responsive, and adaptive feedback to students, guiding them through their learning journey in real time.
5. Early Intervention and Support: AI can provide early intervention and support for struggling students by identifying at-risk students, flagging areas of weakness, and providing targeted interventions to improve academic performance and foster positive learning experiences.
6. Administrative Support: AI can streamline administrative tasks, such as scheduling, record keeping, and communication, allowing educators to focus on teaching and providing more personalized support for students.

Overall, AI has the potential to provide personalized, adaptive, and engaging learning experiences for students, while also freeing up educators to focus on teaching, mentoring, and building strong relationships with students. However, it is important to note that AI should not replace human teachers, but

rather complement and enhance their abilities to better serve the needs of students.

Any arguments? Not from me! The responses are succinct and align to my perception of the future classroom learning over the next ten years. Of course, the above AI response has been derived from professional literature.

And the point being…?

It is not a case of AI coming, so start buying your AI futuristic goggles. No, AI is here now and its impact on writing will be enormous.

Ignore or embrace? Ignore at your peril and embrace to maximise your knowledge and ability to adapt AI to maximise student learning outcomes. It's fun but still requires much thinking, reading, writing, and understanding to get the required outcome.

The year 2023 onwards will be exciting to observe how AI starts to impact individual learning spaces and how students and teachers can maximise their learning outcomes from their classroom experiences.

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Leadership Reflections

My Best Educational Leadership Experience

• *Context*

This school was in a town of 10,000 with a history of racial prejudice and tension. I was appointed Principal of one of two government Primary Schools in the city. It had the weakest reputation in town, with low staff morale, poor discipline, and an out-of-control environment.

• *Focus*

I had several priorities when I commenced:

- Ensure good discipline so that all students felt safe at school.
- Ensure staff worked in effective teams and as a whole school team.
- Establish learning programs to ensure relevance and improved learning outcomes.
- Work with the parent and wider communities to share a common vision.
- Enhance the reputation of the school and improve student enrolments.

• *Actions*

Fighting in the playground was a regular occurrence when I arrived. The playground was the "old wild West." The first two rules established were: this school is a happy school and we are all responsible for making it a happy school and anyone fighting will be suspended immediately from school. Staff worked hard promoting the happy school theme, and executive leaders were present any time students were in the playground. Over the first four weeks, about 20 students were suspended and the message

got out to the school community that fighting was no longer allowed at school. This improvement in behaviour management improved staff morale.

The school had four sections: early learning, junior primary, senior primary, and special ed. Each unit ensured effective learning programs and initiatives to support the happy school philosophy. As a whole school, we would meet each morning for 5-10 minutes for announcements and celebrate staff birthdays each Friday at recess for that week.

Two special programs initiated were: the Kinder Start program in which all Indigenous students joined when starting formal primary school. They were involved in a special readiness program to meet their needs adopting specific strategies aligned with cultural needs. The second program was a district Gifted and Talented (GAT) class that was established to extend more capable students while using the afternoon sessions to allow other students to develop their talents in single areas (for example, art, music, and sport).

Much time was spent meeting with parents, ensuring a viable parents' association and meeting community groups to explain the focus and strategies at the school so that their support ensured a common approach to what we strived to achieve. Many celebrations and barbecue lunches were provided to ensure a sense of a family school.

The change in school culture and focus brought much positive attention to the school, promoting our reputation as a proactive and innovative school. Enrolments increased by over 150 students over three years.

My Most Frustrating Educational Leadership Experience

• *Context*
This private boys' school catered for most of the royal family. An IB World School, offering PYP, MYP, and DP, also complied with rigid national education regulations. I was appointed the Principal of the Primary School, while there was a Preschool Principal, a Secondary School Principal, and a Director-General. Before my arrival, the Primary School had a PYP Principal and a national Principal. On arrival, there had been little attention given to PYP over the past few years with dual leadership and a fear of not satisfying national regulations, although disregarding PYP requirements.

• *Focus*
My priority was to find out where the school was at. Many issues had been swept under the carpet until I arrived, so the first month was spent listening to individuals who described issues that needed to be resolved. With the lack of cohesion and leadership across the Primary School, establishing effective teams was a key priority and ensuring an authentic PYP learning environment and experience. Attendance, punctuality, and behaviour were also obvious issues requiring attention.

• *Actions*
I surveyed staff at my first meeting to ascertain perceived strengths, weaknesses, and key priorities. I also had parents complete a similar survey. Emerging trends formed the basis of my action plan.

Although English was the medium of instruction, most staff spoke little English, and almost all staff did not possess a teaching qualification (as in a Bachelor of Teaching or Education). Consequently, curriculum planning and development, assessment and classroom management were common areas for improvement across the school. Ensuring a consistent and coherent approach was a priority.

Regular weekly staff meetings focused on implementing our priorities to ensure consistency of practice and awareness of best practices.

Teachers and parents found it refreshing that there was a clear focus on student learning and achievement, involvement of parents and consistency in the implementation of policy across the Primary School.

While good progress was evident within the Primary School, efforts at a senior management level (Principals and Director-General) were frustrating and often a barrier to what we were hoping to achieve in the Primary School. While I was promoting standards, transparency, responsibility and accountability, others appeared threatened and were only happy to continue supporting a culture of maintenance instead of improvement.

From my perspective, the most frustrating aspect was the determination of the other leaders to look after "their own patch" and avoid consistency of practice across the school, which is so important in any P-12 school system. These included student reporting, progression, attendance, admission issues at a fundamental level and teaching requirements for staff across the school, ranging from 6 to 18 hours per week.

Lessons Learnt from Both Experiences

- Define and articulate priorities and implement strategies to achieve specific goals and targets.
- Ensure intended targets address key stakeholders' issues.
- Establish effective teams with leaders to complete the tasks.
- Regularly meet with leaders and teams to ensure implementation strategies remain effective.
- Ensure school programs are relevant and improve student outcomes.

- Celebrate school achievements and successes.
- Move on if the prevailing culture is one of maintenance rather than improvement.
- Lead by example and be a role model for others.
- Be decisive, consistent, transparent, and accountable.
- (Try to) Ensure effective communication strategies to keep all school community members informed.

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Formal Welcome to New Students (2022)

We Are Ready!

It is my privilege and honour to welcome our newest members of the TIS family, our 2022 Newbies! I also welcome you to TIS Fast and Furious version 19.

At TIS, we offer you the keys to success. However, it is up to you to take those keys and keep them. The keys to success encompass four components:

- As an IB World School, the IB Learner Profile is at the centre of each program. The 10 IB Learner Profile attributes that define learners are:
  - knowledgeable
  - thinker
  - inquirer
  - communicator
  - reflective
  - balanced
  - caring
  - principled
  - risk-taker
  - open-minded

Demonstrate each of these attributes authentically daily and you are well on the way to success. But during your time at TIS, expect and be willing to change as an individual because of the personal growth that occurs.

- Balance is essential for your own wellbeing. At TIS, being balanced means working to the best of your ability in academics, being involved in sports (and exercise), participating in cultural activities and making a personal commitment and contribution to service projects. Being balanced complements the Dukies program and each student 14 years and over is expected to achieve at least one Dukies Award while they attend TIS.
- One of our tipping points at TIS is the experiences available to students to challenge themselves, demonstrate the Learner Profile attributes and satisfy requirements for the Dukies Awards Program.
- The ultimate badge of honour at TIS is to be a person of integrity. Integrity is doing the right thing when no one is watching you. At TIS, we have an integrity code, and we expect all students, staff, and parents to abide by our integrity code. As a TIS family member, we promise to uphold and demonstrate its values and protect the school's reputation. Breaching the integrity code brings into question your role in the TIS family.

These four keys require a growth mindset, persistence, and passion. Each key will challenge and change you as a person. What will determine your success will be the challenges you take, the choices you make, the actions you initiate and the opportunities you participate in. Success will follow those who demonstrate authenticity daily.

But in the end, it becomes a matter of choice. Not everyone will challenge themselves or change by moving beyond their comfort zone. For these individuals, success will be elusive.

Two key words at TIS are:

Distractions: The simple rule with the use of personal laptops at TIS is: they are to assist your learning, and not to distract you

from your learning. Distraction results in confiscation. Similarly, TIS encourages friendships, and we expect that boys know how to behave around boys, girls around girls, and gentlemen around ladies. However, we do not accept relationships at TIS because they distract students from learning.

Responsibility: As a student, you will have responsibilities to yourself, your room mates, your hostel, your class, grade and school. Mum and Dad will always support you, but they will not be here to ensure you look after your belongings and equipment. To be responsible, do not leave your items about. I hope your belongings are clearly labelled. When not required, use your lockers to secure them safely. Look after your device and take care of it.

Three bits of advice for everyone.

- Read the weekly TIS Bulletin. Then take action as required.
- Check your spam/junk folder for TIS emails. It may save embarrassment when we ask you to do so.
- Send us copies of bank payments because the information that banks provide us reflects poorly on the banks' services and reputation because of the lack of details.

Newbies, I look forward to seeing you make the most of the opportunities available to you at TIS.

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Best Advice for Leaders

After 50 years of school leadership, my best advice to aspiring leaders is here.

1. **Passion**. Be passionate about wanting to make a difference as a leader and strive to make your school or organisation a better place because of your leadership practices.
2. **Integrity.** Wear it as a badge of honour. Without integrity, there will be no trust or strong reputation for you or your school or organisation. Be **authentic**.
3. **Decisive**. Collaborate and value teamwork but be decisive. Don't turn your school or organisation into a bureaucratic jungle where you wait for issues to disappear because of inaction.
4. **Impact**. Define the key issues holding back your school or organisation and address them through effective actions.
5. **Identify**. Look for issues that hinder performance and address these head-on. Also, identify staff who have leadership potential and mentor them. Support those staff who require your coaching.
6. **Ethos**. As a leader, you can create the ethos of your school or organisation by articulating your vision and the practices you want evident for everyone to see. Create ownership of this ethos.
7. **Communicate**. Ensure everyone receives the same message. Perhaps, it is the hardest thing to do in any

setting. Try different means and use what works best. Importantly, ensure **transparency**.

8. **Visibility**. Be everywhere. Know your team and ensure your team knows you care about them.

9. **Challenges**. There will be many, and they will sometimes come thick and fast. Seize them as opportunities to develop you and your team as problem solvers.

10. **Mindset**. Ensure and role model a positive mindset. Embrace change and always encourage others. Embrace failing as a stepping-stone to success.

11. **Standards**. Articulate clear standards across your school or organisation. Strive for **excellence** in everything you do. Never accept anything less. Exceed expectations.

12. **Relationships**. This is the key to your impact. Develop strong relationships with all stakeholder groups. Ensure **respect** is paramount.

13. **Values**. Define and articulate the values of your school or organisation. Embrace and demonstrate them daily.

14. **Lead**. Set the pace for everyone to see and follow. Lead by example. Be a role model.

15. **Balance**. There will be plenty of bad moments to counter the good moments. Ensure you maintain a balance in your life. Never neglect your wellbeing.

16. **Focus**. Many distractions surround us. Maintain your focus on what your priorities are. One step at a time. Tick all boxes. No excuses.

17. **Simplicity**. Keep things simple. Don't complicate planning or actions so that the desired outcome is unattainable.

18. **Strategic**. See the "big picture." Plan and prepare meticulously (but ensure simplicity!) Pick your battles. Develop foresight and always ensure a "fit for purpose" approach to action.

19. **Inspire**. Be the inspiration, by what you do and say, for others to achieve their personal best.

20. **Innovate**. One size does not fit all! So, change great ideas so they do work for your school or organisation.

21. **Tech-savvy**. Embrace technology and how it may simplify or improve processes. Be mindful that its use does not become a distraction.

22. **Punctuality**. "Punctuality is next to godliness." If you're five minutes early, you're on time. Respect time, as it is the only thing you can't get back.

23. **Acknowledge**. Acknowledge achievements, especially by any stakeholder in your school or organisation. Also, acknowledge failed actions and the lessons learnt for future success.

24. **Reflect**. Often. Consider what worked well and why. Also, what didn't go to plan and why. Then try to use the first why (strengths) to address the second why (weaknesses) for future action.

25. **Read**. Daily. Leaders are readers. Know what is trending to consider for future projects and identify threats to your school or organisation.

26. **Accessible.** Being available is different to being visible. Maintain an open-door policy and avoid gatekeepers to ensure access to those who want to see you. The benefits outweigh the nuisance factor that may occur on occasion.

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Darvall's Dimensions for School Development and Improvement

Basic Premises

- A school is a business. They must know and serve their clients.
- A school's goal must be to provide the best education possible.
- A school's reputation will be reflected in high-performance standards and enrolment growth (and waiting lists).
- Schools must be:
  - strategic in their planning
  - goal-oriented
  - results-driven.
- A school's success will reflect their excellence.
- Schools must be student-centred organisations.

Three Dimensions for School Improvement

- Valuing what we have.
- Achieving what we seek.
- Improving what we do.

Three Strategic Pillars

- Teaching and learning excellence.
- Leadership and management.
- Reputation, growth and development.

Three Attributes

- Focused effort.
- Determination.
- Vision.

Assurance

- How good are the leadership and management of the school?
- How well does the curriculum meet the students' educational needs?
- How good does the school perform overall?

The Model: Darvall's Dimensions for School Development and Improvement

Dimension	Achieving what we seek	Valuing what we have	Improving what we do
Pillar	Leadership and management	Teaching and learning excellence	Reputation, growth, and development
Attribute	Vision	Focused effort	Determination
Elements	Policies Personnel Resources Facilities Budget Communication Ethos and wellbeing IT School community	Curriculum Assessment and reporting Student tracking and benchmarking Student welfare Training and development Learning support Extra-curricular programs Integrated classroom technology Parents as engaged partners	Marketing and promotion Enrolments Performance standards External relations Affiliations/ Accreditation Public relations Annual school review Legislative requirements Action research
Assurance	How good are the leadership and management of the school?	How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?	How good does the school perform overall?

Dr Ken Darvall (2003)

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Students: You are the Architect of Your Success

Success is always personal. Each goal we set should be a personal challenge. The challenge must be realistic and incremental. We should always be looking at improving our personal best. What happens when we reach our personal best? Do better. Do better than your best. This is the importance of a personal challenge. It is about you and not someone else. It is about self-improvement. It is why we promote the Duke of Edinburgh International Award at TIS. You are the architect of your success.

Success depends on five key elements. These key elements are: mindset, focus, timing, effort, and persistence. A growth mindset will ensure that perceived or actual obstacles do not prevent us from achieving our goals. Focusing on each step required to achieve our goal will ensure a positive outcome. Timing is everything and it should always be a key factor in your planning. "Timed to perfection" is an oft-quoted phrase and an important reminder about the critical importance of planning and preparation. Nothing is achieved without effort and the key adjective is consistent. Success is not a straight line and there will always be obstacles trying to block you from achieving your goals. This is when persistence is so important. You don't give up but endure the resistance until you reach your target. You can't be a spectator at TIS. It is your actions that will determine your success.

There is one secret to success and that is passion. If you are passionate about what you believe in and want to achieve, you are halfway there before you start. Your passion will become the

foundation and driver for the elements of success that you will eventually determine.

Tema International School is many things. It's (West) Africa's best-kept secret. It's the home of the fast and the furious. It's a family environment with unique opportunities and experiences for our students. In essence, TIS is about developing, promoting, and enhancing individuality and character, with the outcome being successful learners who contribute to making the world a better place. The two tipping points at Tema International School are: it's a family school; and the available opportunities make it a unique experience. This is part of the TIS DNA.

So, each year, it is only fitting that on the anniversary of the opening of TIS, we celebrate the TIS Family and the vision of our Founders and their family and how much family is important to the TIS ethos and culture. At the same time, we also celebrate the achievements of our students over the past year. In recognising these achievements, we also recognise the importance of balance at Tema International School.

Balance requires students to apply their best effort and be consistent in their academics so they are performing to their ability. Balance requires involvement in sport, as we know exercise is good for you and benefits academic performance. Students must be involved in cultural activities, whether learning or playing a musical instrument, being a member of the school band, orchestra, choir, and dance group, or being a member of the annual production, either onstage or backstage. Service is the final requirement for balance at TIS and it is a mandatory component of each IB programme. With balance, students can take advantage of the opportunities and experiences that TIS provides and make available to every student. There is no room for spectators at TIS. Fast and Furious is a way of life at TIS. It allows opportunities. It enables ownership. It promotes personal achievement. It ensures success. By taking

action, you determine your success. No one else. Remember, success is personal.

Embrace the TIS ethos and culture wherever and whenever. Be intentional. Become a champion. Celebrate your success.

"Don't be the best. Be the only." (Kevin Kelly)

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School Assemblies

School assemblies are opportune times for principals to interact and communicate key messages to students and those in attendance, often staff and parents. It's easy to waste this opportunity without strategically using it or lacking inspiration.

This year, I have used the following approach in a predictable format: three things. These are: what excites me, what concerns me, and what is important. To conclude, I always finish with a relevant quote. Here is an example.

What Excites Me	***What Concerns Me***
• Students' reflections	• Procrastination
- A special shout out to students whose reflections appeared in Friday's Bulletin. - Powerful, personal, articulate - Making us proud	- Leaving things until the last minute - Yesterday you said tomorrow - Just do it - You have created your stress - Plan by putting your thoughts on paper

What is Important?

What is the most important Learner Profile attribute?

- Reflective: requires Thinking and Communication
- Balance: you strive to develop each attribute.
- Inquirer: you are always learning.

- The #1 word at TIS: integrity
- Integrity is being principled.
- Principled means you will ensure you develop and strengthen each Learner Profile attribute.

Two quotes to think about:

"Deal with the big while it is still small."

- Lao Tzu

"The greatest pleasure is made by improving."

- Ben Hogan

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No, is Also an Answer

"Yes," is a word that can exude optimism, excitement, and hope.

In contrast, "no" is a word that may depict negativity, laziness, or stubbornness.

Yet in today's world, "no" must be appreciated as an answer, as well as the right decision. Over-commitment, wellbeing, imbalance, and best performance are key factors to consider before saying the next "yes." Certainly, we don't want to offend anyone by saying "no," which is the reason used often when saying "yes."

For principals, they receive invitations and requests by the bucket-load each day. With many principals working 80-100 hours each week, the last thing they need is a task, event, or activity that adds more time to their work week. Of course, it's about managing your time. However, principals must prioritise, delegate, or discard those requests that may seem an obligation. Select those that will benefit you professionally or the school in terms of marketing and promotion.

Teachers also receive too many requests and need to say "no" to those which are unplanned, inconvenient, impossible, or impractical. A request to coach a community sporting team may seem appropriate to your interests, but can you commit the time for weekend matches and weekday training sessions?

Students face the same dilemma except that friendships and "fashion" add additional pressure to say "yes." "Let's find a quiet spot and make out!" "Are you going to come to the party

on Saturday? There will be alcohol and drugs, so we will all have a great night." "I am having trouble doing this assessment. Can you do it for me and not tell anyone?" There are so many temptations to test the integrity of all. This is when it is important to say "no."

Parents often have the reverse dilemma. Their child asks their parents questions about parties and other social temptations. "Yes" will save fights, tantrums, and the silent treatment. "No" may save a visit to the police station, hospital, principal's office, or morgue, depending on the circumstances.

It is easier to say "yes" than to say "no."

"No" will always cause angst when being considered as the answer.

But start the habit of saying "no" when it is against your values or principles. If you can't commit to seeing a task through to the end, then say "no."

Explain to the other party why "no" is the only answer. The other party will often be determined to change your mind and decision. However, remain firm so your wellbeing, balance and integrity are not compromised.

Always remember, when making a decision, "no" is also an answer. It can also bring you more happiness than if you had said "yes."

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Online Learning Protocols

Organisation

Start with the subject curriculum overview (yearly plan). This plan lists and ensures that:

- curriculum and programme requirements are met for the academic year; and
- assessment requirements are satisfied each semester.

Break each unit into weekly (six days for secondary) learning modules. Each module has a specific focus to ensure unit completion.

Similarly, each lesson has a specific focus to ensure essential understanding and an opportunity to consolidate the intended learning outcomes and lead students to further personal inquiry.

Evidence

O1. A weekly overview plan (agenda) that will provide context by including lesson activities, requirements for each lesson, and the necessary links the students will need to access should be available on MB by COB on Day 6 for the following week. Information will be included under headings such as: *Lesson Focus, Learning Intentions and Outcomes.*

O2. Post lessons on MB with the utmost clarity with specific instructions under Stream and
Resources within your current unit planner.

O3. Add supporting resource files which must be clearly labelled in the Stream Playlist.

Asynchronous Learning

These lessons must be pre-recorded and added to your Playlist in Stream and Resources as the first file.

Pre-recorded lesson chunks (5-25 minutes) provide the intentions of each lesson, key information, actions, support materials and resources. Within the pre-recorded lesson, share your screen and demonstrate where they will find the relevant resources and demonstrate how to perform certain actions (for example, uploading to Dropbox.)

Provide an asynchronous lesson for each timetabled lesson that reinforces and extends students' learning and understanding.

Activities should provide evidence of participation and lead towards the unit's formative and summative assessment tasks.

Evidence

AL1. An asynchronous recording is available prior to each lesson.

AL2. The asynchronous lesson is purposeful and intentional with the required clarity.

AL3. An asynchronous lesson enables flexibility, and accessibility while promoting student autonomy, responsibility, and self-agency.

Synchronous Learning

Synchronous learning sessions provide important time for:

- explanation and clarification
- support
- feedback
- as a wellbeing check.

Sessions must be recorded and added as a resource to the lesson's playlist.

Teachers must be available for Zoom support during the designated lesson time.

Evidence

SL1. A synchronous recording is available on MB following each lesson.

SL2. Differentiation (group session) and personalised (individual session) support are provided through synchronous lessons.

Engagement Activities

Planned activities are the required actions that a student must complete within the designated lesson time due to the asynchronous pre-recorded lesson. It may also include a reflection component completed within the lesson times.

Evidence

EA1. The engagement activity is evidence of active participation in a lesson and must be confirmed when submitted by the end of the weekly cycle at the latest. Attendance registration is determined by satisfactory evidence of engagement task completion.

EA2: Engagement activities are strategic and developmental. Engagement activities aim to reinforce understanding and contribute significantly to formative assessment tasks.

Assessment Tasks

- Formative: the task provides the teacher with an idea of where students are at with their learning, and the teacher must provide feedback for clarity and the next challenge in their learning. These should promote further inquiry and

action and be beneficial to completing a summative task. Ensure a suitable submission date and not a congested date.

- Summative: the task will provide evidence of students' knowledge, skills, and understanding of the unit. Ensure a suitable submission date and not a congested date.

Evidence

AT1: Formative assessment tasks are periodic and not impromptu. Summative assessment tasks occur at the end of a unit.

AT2: Assessment tasks are strategic and developmental. Formative assessment tasks contribute significantly to summative tasks.

AT3: Assessment tasks satisfy assessment policy requirements.

AT4: The timing of assessment tasks is mindful of students' overall requirements, and must avoid congestion for submission and be mindful of time zones.

Caution

- Do not plan as a silo. Be aware of the whole picture when setting up activities.
- Activities and tasks should provide choices for students to ensure differentiation.
- Ensure a routine procedure for submitting each type of activity and task.

Best Practice

• Reflection

Three key questions to ask are:

1. What did you already know?
2. What was the most interesting thing you learnt?
3. What do you want to find out more about?

Reflection activities allow the teacher to gauge understanding and serve as feedback to the teacher. This informs immediate support.

Check reflection activities and give feedback after 24 hours.

• Engagement (v Attendance)
Attendance is passive, while engagement is active. A student can attend a Zoom session, have their camera and microphone off and be recorded as "present." Yet, experience informs us that this does not guarantee "presence" (viz., empty chairs, no contributions, no responses to questions, "chatting" with others on a second device.) Moving forward, all attendance must be viewed in terms of engagement. Being asleep in class is not "attendance." Completion of lesson activities is evidence of engagement at some level. An unsatisfactory level of engagement is unacceptable.

• Lessons
The typical lesson is asynchronous (30-40 minutes) and synchronous (20-30 minutes). The asynchronous session is compulsory. The synchronous session is optional for students. The asynchronous time allocation includes time for students to commence engagement tasks. Students not requiring support or clarification (synchronous session) will continue asynchronously.

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Ken Darvall Quotes

"Culture is the heart and soul of a school, and it will define beliefs, values, customs, celebrations and reputation."

"Action research allows teachers to influence research and best practice by conducting their own research with their daily routines. To be successful, the research component must focus on an aspect for development within the classroom and be observed and evaluated over a period of time. To be effective, it should be an aspect that the teacher-researcher is passionate about, for example, reading success. However, the focus must not be too broad that the research is inconclusive, and there must be several data input sources to triangulate and validate findings."

"Your own or your school's reputation will be built around your actions and resulting achievements, the credibility of your achievements, the consistency of your achievements, the transparency of your achievements, and the marketing of your achievements."

"The first key to success is planning.
The second key is preparation."

"Don't wait until it's too late."

"Teams can make or break a school!"

"Students' future success will correlate with the number of opportunities and experiences they enjoy during their school years."

"Two essentials for a child's successful schooling: enjoy preschool education for two years, and only allow your child to commence formal education when s/he is ready (and not when you want her/him to commence)."

"Our lives are finite, but learning is infinite."

"Be the inspiration through your actions, words and relationships within the school and wider community."

"If you hold back on life, you are holding yourself back."

"What it was, respect. What it is, understand. What it will be, create."

"Success is not enough. Excellence is required."

What if....you discover you have not been where you thought and are not going where you imagined?

"Teachers don't want to travel to the moon and back to find out they are exactly in the same place."

"Never stop short of the finish line. Always complete what you set out to achieve."

"Best effort. Always. No excuses."

"Looking over your shoulder all the time is more than just a pain in the neck, it stops you from looking to the future."

"Sometimes the thing you need most may not be."

"I am happy to help anyone, but I don't supply shovels and ladders."

"Value friendship and always be an authentic friend, no matter your circumstances. You can do this by being a person of integrity and always displaying each IB Learner Profile attribute daily."

"Your success is determined by you."

"By taking action, you determine your success. No one else. Remember, success is personal."

"Success is always personal. Each goal we set should be a personal challenge. The challenge must be realistic and incremental. We should always be looking at improving our personal best."

"Respect time. Ignore distractions. Control your interruptions."

"Always ask the right questions to get the right answers."

"It's not about what you can't do. It is about what you can do."

"If it's the wrong hole, you need to stop digging. Don't expect me to pass down a ladder if you don't stop."

"Leadership is foremost about teamwork, vision, and goals, being a role model, being a problem solver and trying to bring the best out in everyone."

"Distractions are your enemies."

"Success is about habits, not luck."

"Never accept being a spectator. Your actions become your reputation."

"Sadly, if they have no idea, then they have no idea."

"What is more important: your impact or your grade? Your grade is important for 72 hours. Your impact lasts a lifetime. What is your footprint?"

"Tomorrow is what you dream it will be by taking action to make it happen. Don't make it an excuse."

"Let NO be the safest answer and not a lazy response in today's world."

"Be intentional with your actions to achieve your goals."

The Teaching Guarantee:
- Every day is different.
- Every school is different.
- Every student is different.
- So, as a teacher or principal, make a difference.

"What will determine your level of success will be the challenges you take, the choices you make, the actions you initiate and the opportunities in which you participate. Success will follow those who demonstrate authenticity daily."

"Each of us is different but equal."



The Teaching Guarantee: Each Day is Different is a must-read for aspiring school leaders. This book not only promotes best practices for teachers and school bodies, but also offers valuable wisdom to benefit students for future success. Drawing from 50 years of authentic school leadership experience across three continents, the author explores all aspects of school education, from small and isolated schools to international schools and more. By sharing key lessons learned over time, this book provides readers with valuable insights and clues to achieve success and excellence in education. Get ready to make a difference and unlock your potential with *The Teaching Guarantee: Each Day is Different*.

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