LINK 24: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY 1.

THE PUBLIC PURPOSES OF EDUCATION: Identifying and prioritising purposes.

Participants: School staff and community members.

Purposes: To clarify the purposes of education and specifically its public purposes.

Materials: Parts 2 and 3 of the Report to AGPPA

Time: 1.5 hours (plus reading preparation time)

Activity: Debating the purposes of education.

Preparation
- Participants are asked to read parts 1 and 2 of the AGPPA report before coming to the activity.

Activity
- Divide into three groups of no more than 10 per group (Note: If the whole group is larger than 30 you will need to adapt this activity) and one group of 3 – 4 people.
- Allocate to each large group one of the three purposes of education outlined in parts 2 and 3 (i.e. individual, economic and democratic).
- The task for each group is to develop a ten minute argument for its allocated purpose in systems and schools. Two members of the group should be selected to present the case to the whole group.
- The task for the small group is to develop a set of criteria against which to judge the debate, and a mechanism for marking the debate. Copies of the criteria should be distributed to the whole group.
- Conduct the debate with each pair having no more than 10 minutes to present its case.
- At the conclusion of the debate participants mark each group against the criteria.
- Aggregate the marks and declare the winner.

Debrief
- The whole group should then debrief on the exercise, including a discussion about the extent to which national policy and school policies are consistent with one or more of the purposes of education.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY 2

PURPOSES OF EDUCATION: What are the views of our school community?

Participants

School staff (teachers, administrators, support staff) OR school staff and other school community members as appropriate (e.g. parents). By involving all staff (and/or parents as appropriate) in the activity, multiple perspectives will be available – in this regard, it is recommended that the principal or other staff member not be the facilitator of the sessions, but that all staff be involved as active participants. The facilitator of this activity should be familiar with the key ideas underpinning the activity in Parts 2 and 3 of the AGPPA report.

Purposes

This activity is designed to assist school communities explore the purposes of schooling in their particular context. Participants will:
- determine the purposes of schooling held by staff (and parents) in their school – in terms of what is desired and what is the reality of their actual enactment;
- discuss the similarities and differences across the desired priorities and enactment;
- identify those purposes where there is lack of desired alignment and any barriers to achieving the agreed on desired purposes; and,
- develop strategies to address those barriers and ways to achieve a stronger focus on the desired purposes.

Materials

Session 1 (see below)
- copies of the short form of the National Survey [22] (one copy per participant)

Session 2 (see below)
- copies of the summary of staff data (one copy per participant)
- one copy per group of summary data [21b] from Australian primary principals
- OHTs (and pens) for recording and sharing group discussions (or other medium appropriate for this)

Activities

Session 1 (about 15 minutes) – *Completion of survey*
- distribute copies of the short form of the survey to all staff (and/or parents) and invite them to complete the survey individually
- explain the purposes of the activity to the participants and their role in completing the survey (staff and/or parents/community members) - the facilitator must prepare before the session (e.g. briefing about the activity, arrange for copies of the survey to be made, organise room etc)
- inform participants that surveys will be collated, summarised and returned for discussion at a follow-up session – remind them that completion is anonymous

- post-session 1:
  - results analysed and summarised into percentage responses for each item/response category
  - results are collated into summary tables and returned to staff before Session 2 to allow time for consideration of the results

Session 2 (up to 90 minutes) – *Discussion of survey results*
- whole group reminded of aims of the activity and briefed about the small group processes (as below) to be used in current session
- discussion facilitated via small groups (e.g. 6 staff per group) depending on the overall size of the participant group
- small groups are invited to discuss, identify and agree on (30 to 45 minutes):
  - *most important items* (say a maximum of 6) where there is a major difference between what is seen as a priority purpose and what is reported as not being enacted to a very high level in the school
  - the *barriers* that are believed to work against the enactment of those purposes in their school
  - *strategies* that might be put in place to address those barriers and hence work towards achieving the desired purposes in the school
- small groups share their findings with the whole group as appropriate (30 minutes) – this will depend on the size of the overall group e.g. may be done via summary OHTs.
- overall agreements (and disagreements) are collated/recorded (10 minutes) – whole-group discussion with final summary of priority future actions noted
- post-session 2 – an Action Plan is developed by a small group for addressing the above, answering the question: *What do we now do with this new knowledge about our school's purposes?*

Session 3 – optional (follow-up/ongoing)
  - this activity extends the above examination into existing policies and practices in the school
  - it is probably best undertaken by a smaller group (e.g. the leadership team) of the school
- the key findings of the above activities (including the Action Plan) are revisited and agreed upon
- particular policy(ies) selected for examination
- the key findings are used as criteria for assessing the chosen policy with regard to its address of the purpose(s) and potential to support their enactment in the school
- a variety of school policies, key decisions and so on can be examined in this way.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY 3

PURPOSES OF EDUCATION: CASES-PBL WORKSHOP[1]

Participants

This activity is best undertaken with groups of school leaders (from across schools) OR with school leadership teams (within/across schools)

Purposes

To examine understandings and enactment of purposes of education in a real-life school setting and identify leadership challenges (and actions) relevant to those purposes.

Materials

- see details as below for materials for various aspects of the activity
- copies of the case study and questions
- copies of the Melbourne Declaration [25]
- OHTs (and pens) for recording and sharing group discussions (or other medium appropriate for this)

Time

Up to two hours

Activities

For Facilitators - before the workshop

- Ensure that you are familiar with these notes and the case study (including their related questions), the process that is to be followed and what participants are required to do.
- Well before the group session, book a venue which will accommodate the expected number, will allow large and small group interaction, and has access to a whiteboard, and projection and computing facilities if required. For the small group work, it is probably better that groups are not be too close to each other so there is plenty of opportunity for vigorous debate as issues emerge. If catering will be needed, ensure that this is arranged at the same time.
- You should assume that the minimum time for a group session dealing with one case study is about an hour and a half. This includes time for initial settling in, introductions, the conduct of the group session, one short break for refreshments, and wrapping up. It is possible that the discussion could be

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[1] The ideas presented here draw on those developed for the *Leadership Matters Cases,* published by Education Queensland.

extended for a considerably longer time, depending on the group, the facilitator and the discussion that flows.

- Send out the case (the story about the school plus the issue see below) to participants at least two weeks before the event (do not include the questions for discussion at this stage – these can be distributed at the workshop). Encourage them to get familiar with the content of the case before the workshop – start to "live" the case.

During the workshop

- Ensure that participants are introduced to each other if required, asking each member to give a brief (60 second!) introduction about themselves.
- Let the group self-identify a recorder and facilitator, although these tasks may be shared throughout the session – but it is important to establish these roles, at least to begin with.
- Make sure that all participants are familiar with the process and purpose.
- Throughout the session, encourage participants to discuss their own experience which are relevant to the case study, and which shed light on the issues.
- Remind them that: (i) there are no "right" and "wrong" answers (ii) they need to base their judgments and decisions on the data provided in the case – if they make assumptions, they need to note these and any implications of so making them (iii) everyone's opinion in the group is important – no one person holds all the wisdom, all the answers about the case – beware the "expert", because the problematic issues raised in the cases are derived from the experiences of some of the most senior and most successful experiences in the state!
- Use the questions provided (and any other questions or ideas you feel might be useful) to stimulate discussion. Try to establish an exploratory, open-ended atmosphere in which participants try out ideas, seek alternative views and consider options. Participants should approach the discussion as if they were in the position of the key leader in the case study, and should consider how to analyse the situation, and devise a course of action.
- During this discussion, encourage participants to:
  o evaluate the actions taken by the leader(s) in the case study;
  o consider the characteristics of effective or ineffective leadership as illustrated in the case study;
  o reflect on their own leadership in the light of lessons from the case study;
  o explore alternative strategies and ask 'what if' questions, ensuring they examine the implications of any such alternative strategies.
- Throughout the activity it is important to ensure all participants are as fully engaged in the exercise as possible. It may be that some participants consider the case study too easy or low-level. Such participants might be involved in a discussion of the buried complexities of the case (e.g. an analysis of the range of stakeholder interests affected by the series of events). Others may find the case overwhelming, and these participants may need stronger facilitation, guidance and direction.
- At the end of the activity, ask participants, both in the group and individually, to identify one or more areas in which they feel they have work to do on their own leadership capabilities – this might take the form of a personal reflection i.e. what have they learnt about their own leadership – strengths, areas for

further development?. The focus should be on both knowledge and action: understanding that they need a broad range of capabilities, and identifying ways in which they can enhance their portfolio of skills. The participant template may provide a basis for stimulus questions to individuals on this issue. They should also be asked to try to take a helicopter or meta view of the case and identify two or three key leadership issues (capabilities) this particular case exemplifies.

CASE STUDY: Southern Hills State School

Southern Hills State School was originally established in 1902 and is located on a main arterial road in an "older" area of Derbyville and is about 4 kilometres from the CBD. As a general trend, one side of this road is characterised by higher social economic families, the other side those less so. In the early 1980s, the school welcomed students from refugee backgrounds from Vietnam. In the 1990s, students whose families had fled from the Bosnian-Serbo-Croatian conflicts began enrolling at the school. During 2000, students from African nations arriving in Australia as humanitarian refugees came to Southern Hills; some were orphans and many had never known school. At the same time as opening its doors to waves of refugee migration, Southern Hills was and still is the neighbourhood school for generations of local families.

The school is enrolment-managed; that is, families must live within a specific catchment area before their children can attend the school. School enrolment is at a maximum and draws from a local catchment area which includes families from affluent middle class backgrounds (e.g. there is large hospital close-by with many professional families with students at the school), in addition to those families whose experiences are that of less privileged socio-economic conditions (e.g. some of whom are refugees). In 2007 Southern Hills established and staffed a school Arts Centre dedicated to the development of the artistic skills and talents of its students. Also in 2007, Southern Hills school community welcomed its first cohort of Preparatory Year students. Careful planning and a commitment to the ethos of multi-age education ensured the young learners enjoyed a highly positive start to school.

The **School Vision is:**
We are a community that respects individuals and believes that cultural diversity can enrich all our lives. Our children enjoy a holistic education in a caring, nurturing environment. Their academic and social skills, emotional development and creative talents are encouraged to grow so that each child excels in their own way. We embrace change as a means of preparing learners for the challenges of a complex future. Our mandate is to give children the best start on their life-long learning journey.

Student enrolment and profile

Southern Hills State School currently has an enrolment of 273 students covering 33 different cultural groups, for which all are carefully catered through the various programs offered in the school. Approximately 75% of the school community is white Anglo-Saxon coming from countries such as New Zealand, England and so forth, while the remaining 25% include diverse African nations, the Philippines and some other Asian cultures, Afghanistan and Iraq. Staff comments regarding students (and their differences) indicate this is not a matter of concern for them as staff, nor for the students.

Physically, the school covers a relatively small area, yet boasts its own swimming pool, a permaculture garden currently under development and a selection of colourful displays, many of which have been created by the students. The principal explains

this *garden project is a perfect example of how parents who have an interest in that aspect have assisted with the establishment of the perma-culture garden program and continue*. A ceramic wall mural, also created by the students, bears witness to the scope of the specialised arts program available within the school which recently has been in possession of its own kiln for the firing of pottery.

The 2008 Annual Report notes that Southern Hills values highly the strength of its multicultural school community. A focus on developing the "whole child" academically, socially and emotionally continued to permeate the school ethos. A continued strong emphasis on proactive anti-bullying strategies was reflected in school opinion survey results: Student satisfaction that the school is a "good school" remained above state averages for the third consecutive year. Parent satisfaction with the school climate was significantly above "state" and "like-school" averages for the second consecutive year. Parent satisfaction that their "child is safe at this school" was significantly above state and like school means for the third consecutive year. Staff satisfaction with school morale remained significantly above "state" and "like school" averages for the third consecutive year.

Positive parental involvement is welcomed and encouraged at Southern Hills. Parent satisfaction in the area of "school – community" relations was significantly above state average (based on the School Opinion Survey data). Specifically, parents' satisfaction with the opportunities they have to participate in the life of the school was significantly above state average. Parents and community members make valuable contributions to the education of students.

Productive community partnerships are well established with local high schools, local church (which is close by) and the Department of Multicultural Affairs.

Principal and school leadership

The principal (Anna), now in her ninth year at Southern Hills, is innovative, focused, forward moving and supportive of both students and staff with a determination and a commitment to excellence. She is driven by the belief that *every single child has the right to succeed, and can succeed*, and maintains a high profile within the school, assisting with special needs students, visiting classrooms, managing the student leadership program, and choosing to undertake playground duty. Having overseen the progress of one generation (Prep to Year 7) through the school, Anna is very familiar with the students and their families and displays an obvious interest in their progress and well-being. She seems to know all the students by their first name and many of the parents. Her background – as a child of immigrants from Germany to Australia - appears to have contributed significantly to her commitment to the languages program currently operating within the school. Anna is bilingual, possessing a German heritage and did not learn English until attending school. She is currently in the process of learning Indonesian. Beyond this she has a special interest in special education and learning difficulties and has worked for some years in these areas.

Anna arrived at Southern Hills in 1999 and faced a number of challenges. The expectation for those students with a language background other than English was very low, and the expectation for refugee students, who were often survivors of severe

trauma in their home countries, were even lower. From this beginning, the long-term dream was born with the aim of creating an environment:

> *focussed on student outcomes both academic and social. Within this "dream" the challenges presented by the complexities of the school were seen as opportunities for improvement. A multi-facetted approach for school renewal was commenced*

When asked about Southern Hills, one parent commented: *We love it, we love the school. I don't think there's anything that we would imagine that Ella could be doing in a State school that isn't already happening here.* Carla is not only a parent but also works on a part-time basis in the front office/reception area – she is thus in an excellent position to observe what is happening in the school from a number of different perspectives. She notes that:

> *You know, what I love about the school and what I loved about it from when I started learning about it, was that they didn't just do the things that every other school, you know, they did all the extras as well, things like HRE and philosophy, those sort of things were hugely appealing.*

There is a very supportive cohort of parents associated with the school, 10-15 of whom regularly attend Parents & Friends' meetings, *work with the school on issues of curriculum, and they endorse school policy, and fund raise.* Volunteers also assist with the school canteen and also the uniform shop. The parents to whom the researcher had access were extremely positive in their attitude toward Southern Hills and both the principal and the staff spoke well of the supportive nature of the parents who were able to make themselves available to assist. Some difficulties can arise in this area as a number of the parents are ESL and not fluent in the English language which does inhibit communication in some ways such as sending notes home with the students. Another parent, Tanya, provided some interesting insights into some of the key considerations evident for parents when choosing a school. These included a strong sense of community, multi-age, and multiculturalism.

Our Values permeates the whole school and was developed from the ground up by the school community. With respect to these, Anna notes:

> *A core set of values, known as the "Our Values" drives the school and defines expectations of all members of the school community, including students and teachers. ... We know through the wisdom gained from our experience that a strong relationship exists between learning outcomes and social outcomes.*

The Our Values set encourages students to learn to take responsibility for their own behaviour, and places a strong emphasis on the following values:
- community
- resilience
- integrity
- opportunity
- respect
- embracing diversity.

The school developed the Our Values set through a series of workshop activities for the school community just before the commencement of the case study research. They replaced a previous framework of operation and practice. It is expected that they are embedded in all aspects of school life. The academic observed one class engaging in a lively discussion among students as to the real meaning (in action) of some of the values. They appear not be just a set of words, but a foundational set of values and beliefs for all in the Southern Hills school community. The school belief system reflects the ideal that students, teachers, staff and parents have the right to feel safe at school, to be treated with dignity and respect, and to learn, teach and/or work in a supportive environment.

Staff (teachers and administration personnel) are expected to operate within this framework and develop classroom expectations and routines accordingly. Values and professional responsibilities are clearly defined under the key headings of the Our Values, with a vast range of examples being provided for each category (Values and Professional Responsibilities). Students are encouraged to align their behaviour with the Our Values through an award system designed to reinforce appropriate behaviour, both in the classroom and in the playground. Rewards can accompany the green cards that are issued to students on a random basis. Yellow and red cards also form part of the Behaviour Influence Plan (Responsible Behaviour Plan, 2008).

Because of the nature of some of its families, the school provides support for *parents who don't have a high level of social understanding of systems and bureaucracies and protocols*. For example, the ESL teacher provides assistance with Centerlink and Medicare forms. This type of assistance can be provided for perhaps 2-3 years for refugee families.

Southern Hills State School

The issue

The school has recently received its latest NAPLAN test scores and will soon see these made public via the *My School* website. Anna knows that the staff and parents will be quite upset by the results as they show the achievement levels are less than what was hoped for. By making the results public via *My School* website, Anna is concerned the community views of the school may diminish.

Anna is quite upset by this as she has worked tirelessly, as have the staff and many parents, to progress the school educationally and culturally from where it was just a few short years ago. Anna feels the school is at a disadvantage as it has a high ESL student makeup – indeed, many refugee students have limited or no education to speak of in their past experiences. She also suspects that some parents will encourage her to reduce the emphasis on public purposes that have driven the school such as the broader educational and social-emotional development programs in the school, and focus more on the content of the NAPLAN tests. Some parents have even suggested she might, in future, discourage some of the potentially lower performing students, such as the refuges, from enrolling at Southern Hills with a view to raising the NAPLAN scores in the future. This view is not shared across all parents, but it is starting to create dissent among some parents. Anna is also aware that a few teachers are starting to doubt their current broad educational focus at Southern Hills as some have received negative comments from colleagues in other schools about the likely performance of their students.

Questions for discussion

1. Put yourself in the role of Anna. As principal, you will be talking with both staff and parents at a school community meeting tomorrow evening about the results and the fact they will soon be made public.

Anna begins to draft out some notes for the meeting … she is very keen that the important purposes and values of education that have driven her and the school in recent years not be damaged. She notes a copy of the Melbourne Declaration of schooling on her desk and decides to see if there is something there she might draw on.

- What 3 to 5 key message should she mention in her presentation to staff and parents on? Base, at least some of these, around the notion of the purposes of education as identified in the Melbourne Declaration, particularly those that might relate to broader public purposes of schooling.
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2. Anna decides that she is not prepared to toss out all the work she and others have done in the school on building an educational environment that is inclusive and one that is built on the notion that all children can succeed and that education is about more than just what is measured on externally imposed test scores. That is, she is committed to ensuring that public purposes of education have prominence in the school. In short, she decides to place the children and their education (and futures) over and above 'success' on the NAPLAN. She now receives a phone call from her District Director (her supervisor) who wants to visit tomorrow to discuss how she is going to "lift" het test scores for next year. Anna begins (again) to draft some notes for the meeting …

- What 3 to 5 key message should she try to focus her discussion on with the District Director? Base, at least some of these, around the notion of the purposes of education as identified in the Melbourne Declaration, particularly those that might relate to broader public purposes.
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3. The meeting with the District Director does not go well. He indicates he is under pressure from "the top" and is not interested in her arguments about the nature and context of the school and its students and community and demands that she provide a three-point plan by the end of the week to address the NAPLAN scores. Anna mulls over this and reflects on her personal and professional commitments to social justice, to educating young people broadly for the future and to an ethical stance. She recalls that she is soon due for long service leave and has been promising herself a holiday for some time. What should she (YOU) do?

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY 4

THE PUBLIC PURPOSES OF EDUCATION: Policies and programs and the Melbourne Goals

PARTICIPANTS School staff and other school community members as appropriate.

PURPOSES: The purpose of the activity is to support teachers to examine school education policy and program developments from their positions as active professionals. It is based upon the assumption that professionals should be active in the processes of policy formation, enactment and review. It is designed to support school leaders and teachers to strengthen their capacity for professional input and action in education policies and programs.

MATERIALS

- Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australian [25], pages 6-8
- Toolbox [28]
- Information compiled from the web on the policy or program.

TIME: Approximately 2-3 hours.

ACTIVITY:

Preparation

- The planning group to discuss and select a major policy educational policy or program, such as My School, teaching standards, or performance payments for school leaders.

- The group prepares a summary of the policy or program using public materials from the web. The materials are distributed to the whole group.

Activity

- Divide the whole group into sub groups of approximately 8 people. All groups to be provided with copies of page 6-8 of the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australian [25]

- Each group is to consider the question: *Is the policy or program likely to support or weaken the achievement of the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australian?*

- Using the toolbox [28] each group to assign tasks to two further sub groups:
    - Explain dimensions (when, where, what) of the policy or program.
    - Elaborate the stated or apparent purposes (why) of the policy or program. (Groups to have access to the web to do this.)

    (Approximately 30 minutes)

- Using the toolbox, the sub group then discusses the key question and prepares a brief (5 minute) presentation to the whole group. The

activity facilitator then asks the whole group to consider its response to the policy or program.

Debrief

- The whole group to discuss any follow up set of actions, such as representation through professional associations; information and commentary to the school community; etc.