

Flourish program gives stressed principals a hand

Principals can access a way forward with program, *ET Staff*

Prin cipals are a put a upon bunch and for an increasing number it was becoming a bit much, with many leaving the profession. And with no one willing to take up the positions left vacant the situation looked decidedly challenging.

The Flourish Movement is one of the few that seeks to help principals manage their time and their workload so that something of a life could happen outside of work, it was created by Dr Adam Fraser a peak performance researcher and principal Bob Willets of Berry Public School with Deakin university.

After a two-year trial Flourish been proven to make a statistically significant difference and is ready to be rolled out.

Dr Fraser said; “In an effort to save the education profession, The Flourish Movement will see over 1000 teachers, leaders and staff members start the 2019 school year in a whole different way.”

The program’s creation was instigated by Bob Willetts, who was tired of seeing talented people walk out on education, the trial program was created and run by Dr Fraser and Dr John Moliniaux from Deakin and has achieved significant results including; 56% increase in positivity at work; 20% decrease in stress levels; 18% reduction on the the amount of pressure felt at work; 16% increase in energy levels at the end of the day; 11% increase in the level of enjoyment experienced at work.

“The first step was to study how the job has changed, how principals spent their time and what the impact of the job was on them. From there we sat down with Bob and other principals and presented our ideas to them. With their help we moulded those ideas into a program,” Adam Fraser says.

The Flourish Movement is delivered in three parts. The first is research; participants diarise their work, complete surveys and undergo interviews with the convenors.

The principals are then put through a 12-month program which consists of one face-to-face workshop every term. The principals make friends and receive support and information from the Flourish Movement. All are reinterviewed at the end.

Between the research component and the workshops, participants in the Flourish Movement were able to create a very personalised plan for behaviour change for themselves.

The diaries generated provide a detailed picture of their use of time and their experience as a principal. Every entry begins with what each has done after they left work and when they returned, with a view to eventually creating a separation between work and home life.

Foremost, the process revealed that principals were spending a disproportionate amount of time on administrative and



communication tasks, planning and staff development. An impression of how they were feeling at those times; their energy levels and mood was also developed.

One of the most common and energy-draining problems was how many times the principals were interrupted and had to switch tasks while they were trying to concentrate on another piece of work.

The findings were an eye opener for Fraser and the other researchers who work outside the teaching profession.

“The admin tasks generally drained the principals but when they were actually leading and interacting with students and parents was when they felt the best about themselves and their jobs,” Fraser says.

It came down to identifying the best times of the day to complete tasks and whether it was up to them to complete those tasks or whether they could be delegated.

Fraser encouraged principals to change the way that they worked to build more time and space to concentrate on leading teaching and learning, being an educational leader rather than an administrator.

“It’s a matter of creating that space by outsourcing, delegating, or saying ‘that doesn’t have to be done right now’, putting the important tasks first, not being a slave to your email, having a plan for what you wanted to achieve each day and prioritising that plan,” Fraser says.

In a nutshell, it’s about learning to do more with what you have and using your time and resources more efficiently to create more time for the parts of the job principals find enriching. It’s simple but profound stuff and the results have been dramatic.