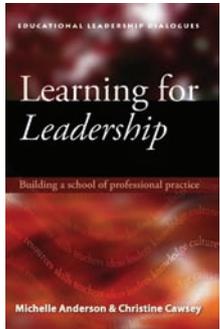


Learning for Leadership

Authors: Michelle Anderson and
Christine Cawsey
Publisher: ACER Press 2008



Professional learning is the central theme of this new book which examines the crucial elements required to nurture successful school leaders in a contemporary educational environment.

Part of the *Educational Leadership Dialogues* series, *Learning for Leadership: Building a school of professional practice* explores how school principals can instigate and maintain programs and practices that will develop the leadership potential of teachers in their school.

The first section, written by researcher Michelle Anderson, focuses on the changing context and expectations of school leadership, the nature of the Australian teacher workforce and the key developments in learning for leadership as well as examining shifts in professional learning. Within that theme, Principal Christine Cawsey provides a case study of one school's development over a decade.

Talking to *Education Today*, Ms Anderson said the *Educational Leadership Dialogues* series creates a bridge between educational research and practice, and provides resources that supported educational leadership.

"The series teams up researchers and experienced school principals to write short, evidence-based, practical guides on topics of significance, while engaging in a rich dialogue about practice and research," she says.

"It explains the theory behind the concept of educational leadership and then it tells the story of one Sydney school admired for its leadership development.

"By writing this book, we do not suggest that the program of leadership learning at Rooty Hill can or should be used identically by other school leaders. How Chris and the team approached learning for leadership had to take into account the school level differences of Rooty Hill for it to be successful. They could not simply apply some 'program' of leadership. The beauty of the book, I believe, is that together, the research and the case study provide a strong evidence base for others to pick and choose.

"In that regard, for some time now school leaders have recognized that experience alone is not enough."

For schools wanting to boost their leadership, this book includes a real story about real people who are struggling through similar issues as their peers in other schools when it comes to school leadership.

"It is particularly powerful at the end of the book when Chris looks at the questions raised in my research section of the book and then takes these back to her leadership team as a workshop," Michelle says.

Michelle said working with Christine was a fantastic experience. The pair had not worked together before but they were able to combine their talents as researcher and principal, to provide other educators with a practical guide.

"Chris was fantastic to work with and to keep faithful to the series as a 'dialogue' for us that really happened on a number of levels – at a content level and also at a process level we critiqued and challenged each other in terms of our writing and what we wanted to achieve with this book," Michelle said.

"Christine provides a rich narrative of her

schools' development and her focus on trying to develop the teacher capacity to focus on student learning. It is full of her experiences, both her personal perceptions and the actual tools used at Rooty Hill to identify and develop teacher capacity."

Michelle said when she was asked to outline the key components required for quality school leadership, Christine Cawsey's summary at the end of the book was a good one.

"Chris writes that when school leadership is at its best, it is committed to learning, for students, teachers and for itself. It recognises the contexts, shifts the culture, designs the strategies, finds key learning programs and activities and rigorously evaluates its own work. It uses data from a range of sources, is accountable for its actions and it focuses on improving the work of teachers as leaders and leaders as teachers as a moral and ethical imperative.

"Really, this book provides empirical evidence and sound tools which other school leaders can use, depending on their own school level differences and culture, to make change."

The Authors

Michelle Anderson is a Senior Research Fellow at ACER. Her work includes co-authoring Standards for School Leadership (for Teaching Australia) and the Australian Country Background Report for the OECD's Improving School Leadership Activity (for DEST). Previously, she was a researcher for England's National College for School Leadership.

Christine Cawsey is Principal of Rooty Hill High School, a comprehensive 7–12 school in Sydney. In 2007, she was a winner in the National Awards for Quality Schooling for Excellence by a Principal. She is Deputy President of the NSWSPC.

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