



SCHOOL LEADERSHIP FRAME: AN INDIGENOUS FOCUS

The APAPDC L5 frame for building leadership in schools has been designed upon a series of five propositions about leadership development and how leadership capability is built.

The propositions below can be used as an audit tool for school leaders to prompt thinking about their leadership in this area and also identify areas in which they can work more strategically in the future.

Although this resource has been written for school leaders of Indigenous students in mind, the framework will be of interest to school leaders who do not have Indigenous enrolments but are committed to promoting Reconciliation and Indigenous perspectives within their school.

**For further information about the L5 frame refer to the APAPDC website:
www.apapdc.edu.au**

1. Leadership starts from within

Leaders committed to Indigenous perspectives:

1. Value and acknowledge Indigenous culture
2. Have a strong commitment to improving outcomes for Indigenous students
3. Have explored their own personal feelings about racism, social justice and equity
4. Are honest about their own beliefs and attitudes towards Indigenous Australians
5. Understand that leadership in Indigenous education requires sensitivity, persistence and belief in their ability to make a real difference

Key themes: *Beliefs, Values, Integrity, Vision, Responsibility, Commitment, Courage, Resilience*

2. Leadership is about influencing others

Leaders committed to Indigenous perspectives:

1. Listen to, and act on, community input
2. Build quality relationships within the school community
3. Work with the knowledge that relationships within and between the Indigenous community can be complex
4. Promote the importance and significance of protocols and symbols such as: Acknowledgement of Country, Respect for Elders, flying Indigenous flags, inviting Indigenous representatives into the school and events such as Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week.
5. Develop communication skills and processes that are respectful, engaging, inclusive and responsive to input from their local community
6. Be aware of the perceptions and beliefs held by the Indigenous community about the title and role of the Principal
7. Model inclusive practices
8. Are aware that in addition to inviting parents and families into the school, leaders also need to go out into the community and connect with the community on their terms
9. Establish an effective collegial network (for example through the Dare to Lead Action Areas)
10. Build strategic relationships to understand the nuances of the community
11. Clearly articulate and document the school's directions and priorities in Indigenous education
12. Ensure that Indigenous education is the business of all staff and not solely the responsibility of the Indigenous staff in the school

Key themes: Power, Communication, Respect, Expectations, Politics, Trust

3. Leadership develops a rich learning environment

Leaders committed to Indigenous perspectives:

1. Ensure that all staff and students develop an informed understanding of Indigenous peoples, their cultures and the importance of the Reconciliation process
2. Actively promote contact between Indigenous and non Indigenous staff and students
3. Employ Indigenous staff in a range of responsibilities across the school
4. Understand students will learn better when they experience a whole-student approach to health and wellbeing i.e.:
 - Respectful and caring relationships
 - High but achievable expectations
 - Opportunities for authentic participation and contribution
5. Are actively involved in supporting and promoting an improvement in outcomes for Indigenous students through strategic planning involving:
 - Developing clear and realistic but also challenging targets for improvements
 - Developing school action plans which define tasks about Indigenous education matters, assign responsibilities and establish timelines
 - Identifying the resources necessary to support the process of improvement and commit to a budget for this
 - Seeking advice from sources beyond the school if required
 - Collecting data about what is really happening within the school and use this as a basis for monitoring progress
 - Documenting and celebrate successes
 - Utilising the *Dare to Lead* project and its partner resources as a guide in detailing the above
6. Support the role of parents and families as the primary educators of their children and the importance of family/school/community partnerships
7. Understand that curriculum activities centred on Indigenous culture need to be handled sensitively and positively.
8. Encourage the development of a whole school curriculum with an Indigenous perspective
9. Value the life experience that their Indigenous students bring to school

Key themes: *Intellect, Facilitation, Teaching, Openness,
Evidence, Collaboration, Rigour*

4. Leadership builds professionalism and management capability

Leaders committed to Indigenous perspectives:

1. Provide formal feedback to their staff and the school board/council about school performance in relation to issues such as attendance, student retention and academic performance. This is done through the maintenance of rigorous data collection of attendance and student achievement.
2. Ensure that the management of the school is underpinned by values such as quality of relationships, commitment to equity and social justice and respect for others
3. Encourage networking opportunities for their staff with staff from other schools with Indigenous students.
4. Are vigilant in keeping up with current Indigenous education, trends, issues and directions
5. Encourage all staff to set performance goals and targets for personal growth and development in an Indigenous context
6. Are active members of the Dare to Lead coalition
7. Ensure that their school's Indigenous Education plan is a part of their school's Strategic Plan

Key themes: Systems, Evaluation, Accountability, Consistency, Networks, Trends

5. Leadership inspires leadership actions and aspirations in others

Leaders committed to Indigenous perspectives:

1. Invite Indigenous community role models into the school to motivate and challenge all staff, students, parents and families
2. Value and celebrate all staff achievements in the area of Indigenous education
3. Provide opportunities for all staff to increase their knowledge of Indigenous history and culture by engaging with relevant cultural learnings
4. Mentor and provide mentors for all aspirant leaders
5. Provide a supportive environment where risk-taking is acceptable and 'mistakes' are seen as learning opportunities

Key themes: Encouragement, Risk, Opportunities, Mentoring, Coaching, Modelling

Workshop Discussion Starters

Relates to proposition 1: Knowing who are the traditional owners of your area

1. It is the first time that you have invited an Elder to the school assembly to perform a Welcome to Country. After the assembly you are criticised by a parent for inviting the wrong person.

- How would you respond in the first instance?
- What would you do next and who would you engage in this process?
- Would you do anything differently in the future?

Relates to proposition 2: Engaging parents and connecting with the community

2. You have just attended a meeting with the outgoing principal of your new school. He/she complains about the unwillingness of Indigenous parents to attend school assemblies, performances and parents' nights or School council meetings. The outgoing principal concluded their 'handover' session with you by advising that all meetings with the local Indigenous community should be held on school grounds.

- How would you address this situation as the new principal?
- What historical/cultural issues might you need to address?
- What sense can you make of the outgoing principal's advice?

Relates to proposition 2: Resentment of non-Indigenous parents due to perceived favouritism

3. Your P & C president voices general community concerns about the preferential treatment given to the Indigenous students in your school.

- What is your immediate response?
- How would you address the situation with members of the broader community?
- To what extent do issues of this nature provide you with opportunities to create a more harmonious school community?

Relates to proposition 3: Understanding resilience in Indigenous communities

4. The MindMatters mental health secondary school program has used the metaphor of a 'Strong Tree' * as a basis for exploring the things that Indigenous students and school staff believe help Indigenous students to be resilient.



- How does your school contribute to the development of resilience in its Indigenous students?
- What stops young people from being strong or resilient?
- How does a lack of resilience impact on student learning?

* For background on the 'Strong Tree' developed by the Iwantja school and community in South Australia please refer to:
<http://cms.curriculum.edu.au/mindmatters/atsi/strengthtree.htm>

Relates to proposition 3: Developing a welcome environment for parents and families

5. Invitations for parent and families are sent out regularly through the school newsletter and no one comes!

- Why is this so?
- How would you create an environment where parents and families participate in school activities on a regular basis?

Relates to proposition 3: Cultural understanding

6. Mary is appointed as principal to a remote school. She has had no previous experience with Indigenous people or Indigenous culture.

In her first week, three Indigenous students from one family display violent behaviour and she suspends them in line with mandatory policy. There is a strong community backlash, which has led to racist complaints being made at a district level.

- Did Mary do the right thing?
- How can Mary salvage her credibility with the community?
- What steps could Mary take next time a similar incident occurs?

Relates to proposition 4: Management of the school

7. John, a new principal at the school, sees that the previous principal has spent \$10,000 from the main school budget on a literacy program that employs local Elders. John cuts this line of funding with out consulting anyone. The local community on hearing of the cut complain to the District Director. The District Director has asked John to come for a meeting in his office with the local AECG President.

- *What would you do if you were John?*
- *How would you prepare for the meeting if you were John?*
- *What are the points you are willing to negotiate on?*
- *What are the implications for the Indigenous community in the removal of this project?*

Relates to proposition 4: Professional development of staff

8. Your school's Indigenous Education Worker has completed his teaching degree and been appointed to your school in a teaching role. The staff that have worked with him in the past don't believe he has the skills necessary to be a good teacher, and bring their concerns to you.

- *How would you respond to the concerns of your staff?*
- *How will you manage the induction of this 'new' teacher?*

Relates to proposition 4: Professional development of staff

9. An Indigenous Teacher is selected as your new Assistant Principal through the normal merit selection processes. The applicant's CV didn't indicate her Aboriginality. Upon commencement of duties the new AP takes a strong lead role in Indigenous Education. Staff and community raise several concerns about her ability to do the job.

- *What concerns could staff have?*
- *What concerns could community have?*
- *How, as Principal, would you address both staff and community concerns, and the welfare of the Assistant Principal?*

Relates to Proposition 3: Developing a rich learning environment

10. Your Deputy Principal comes to you after collecting all of the school's teaching programs and comments about the lack of Indigenous perspectives across curriculum areas.

- What processes would you put in place to ensure an Indigenous perspective across key learning areas
- Who should be involved in this process?

Relates to Proposition 3: rich learning environment

11. A member of the School Executive is concerned at the large number of Indigenous students who fall in the lower band of achievement in numeracy and literacy. She has gathered strong support from her staff and colleagues for the implementation of a remedial withdrawal focused curriculum for these students. Your Indigenous Education Worker has expressed strong reservations about this planned program.

- What are your feelings on the matter?
- What are the implications of this planned program?
- What could be the reservations of the Indigenous Education Worker?
- How are you going to resolve this situation?

Relates to Proposition 5: Inspiring leadership actions in others

12. The District has implemented a reward ceremony for students and staff who have achieved excellence in Indigenous leadership programs. You have nominated 2 Indigenous students and a staff member. At a staff meeting teachers raise their concern that this process is reverse racism and they wish the school to have nothing to do with it.

- What are the significant issues in this scenario?
- Should Indigenous students be recognised for their achievements in this way?
- How can you address staff concerns?