Middle Leadership Matters: a practical approach to leading from the middle

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@eMPOWERedNZ
Ko Wai Au?
Who’s in the room?

Currently, I am:

13 responses

- 38.5% an aspiring middle leader
- 30.8% a beginning middle leader
- 15.4% an experienced middle leader
- 7.7% a DP / Principal
- Somewhere just below experienced
- Facilitator
Learning Outcomes:

Select the areas of middle leadership you would like to focus on during our workshop:

13 responses

- Understanding your role: 4 (30.8%)
- Building meaningful relationships: 6 (46.2%)
- Identifying areas for development: 5 (38.5%)
- Creating synergies: 7 (53.8%)
- Leading change: 6 (46.2%)
- Learning conversations: 7 (53.8%)
- Supporting middle leaders: 1 (7.7%)
Learning Outcomes:

We will explore:

- Importance of middle leaders
- Practical approaches for middle leaders
- Middle Leader Inquiry - *Community of Leaders (CoL)*
Middle Leadership

“Pivotal part to play in helping their schools pursue their goals and achieve their objectives.

Influential positions...to drive curriculum, change and innovation”

(Ministry of Education, 2012)
Role of Middle Leaders - the reality

- Conduit between senior leadership & teachers
- Multifaceted role
- Instructional leader & teacher
- Lead, develop & appraise staff
- Tension between new Kāhui Ako roles
Middle Leaders - rewarding aspects

- Supporting teachers, students, and teams
- Flexible role
- Relationships
- Growth in my career
- Designing curriculum
- Lead others in best practice
- Motivate staff
Middle Leaders - your reality

“Helping out my team and supporting them in their roles, making a difference in children's lives and learning”

“Having new ideas taken on board, finding the middle ground for difficult situations with staff, learning to coach others.”

“Seeing others progress, meeting the needs of others, inspiring others”
Middle Leaders - the challenges

- TIME
- Lack of strategic direction + systems
- No voice in SLT
- Challenging conversations
- Developing teams
- Staff resistance
- No Career Pathway

Challenges for Middle Leaders 2016:
Lack of Leadership Development

In my current position, I am provided with specific leadership development to undertake my middle leader role:

13 responses
Lack of appraisal for middle leaders

In my current position, I am effectively appraised in my role as a middle leader:

13 responses
Crisis in the ‘Middle’

Then:

- Undervalued practice
- Ineffective practice
- Inadequate training

Then Now

Nothing has changed

(Bassett, 2012 & Robson, 2012)
Crisis in the ‘Middle’ - call to action

“The need to find solutions to the issues for middle leaders is critical” (2017)
Middle Leaders Matter

Empower Online Course 2018

Pathway to MEdLM
Middle Leaders Matter

Self

Leading from the Middle

Team

Community of Leaders
Characteristics for Effective Teams:

- In your group, consider the **characteristics** of an effective team?
Characteristics of effective Teams:

- Open and honest
- View mistakes as opportunities to learn
- Energy and enthusiasm
- Share information internally and externally
- Create a learning culture
- Clear, shared vision and direction
- Challenge and support each other
- Climate of relational trust
- Manage and resolve conflict
- Creativity and flexibility
- Effective collaboration
- Team capacity

(Adapted from Preskill & Torres, 1999)
Reflect:

- Discuss the **conditions** required to foster effective teams

- **Stay & Stray** - compare, critique, challenge
Effective teams

- Collaborative decision making
- Synergy
- Relational trust
- Open to learning
- Addressing the elephant/s in the room
- Continuous improvement
- Sense Making

Leadership Development

“middle leader’s role demands a set of leadership & management skills which requires specialised knowledge & training”

(Bassett, 2016)
Effective Appraisal

“ensuring appraisal of middle leaders is effective... requires school level policy, process and practice of appraisal that specifically targets middle leaders”

(Cardno & Robson, 2016)
A Balanced Approach

Effective Middle Leadership Development & Appraisal

- Strategic
- Balanced
- Ongoing
- Continuous improvement
Current Research

Snapshot 2017

- Quantitative study - Aotearoa, NZ
- Middle Leaders as **instructional leaders** (n = 132)
- Role Expectation & Performance Confidence

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<td>Secondary</td>
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Male: 17%  Female: 79%  Experienced ML (4 yrs+) 76%

Leading from the Middle
Emerging Data:

Significant GAP between role expectation & confidence:

➢ Appraisal: *having difficult conversations with teachers*

➢ Curriculum: *facilitating curriculum discussions*

➢ Development: *encouraging teaching as inquiry practice*
Learning Conversations

“...the development of personal skills in relation to any form of management or leadership development is essential. In particular, a focus on the self-development of managers to build their capacity for self-awareness...”

(Cardno, 2012)
Problems

1. Simple
2. Complex
   ➢ people
3. How do we react?
   ➢ Avoid
   ➢ Soft Sell
   ➢ Hard Sell

Learning Conversations
Learning Conversations

1. What is the *ongoing* problem?
2. What *evidence* is informing this?

Check your Assumptions
The Ladder of Inference:

I feel annoyed and disappointed.

Jane won’t be active or willing to be a team player
Jane is obviously bored, & not impressed with the initiative.
If she is looking out the window, she must not be listening.

You notice that Jane is staring out the window.

In a team meeting, you are sharing a new initiative.

**Take Action**: Invite and involve Jane to share her opinion

Activity:

How might we go back to the pool of data to avoid taking action based on flawed assumptions?
Taking Action:

State your view directly
  My point of view is...

Present views one at a time
  I have a few thoughts...Let me start with...

Present conclusions as options
  One possibility is...

Share your reasoning
  And here’s why I am suggesting...

Share your examples
  For example...
Reflection:

Think of a recent experience

Share your experience

Evaluate this using the ladder of inference
Middle Leadership Matters

“In order for our middle leaders to feel valued and developed as leaders, meaningful appraisal experiences, and middle leadership development opportunities need to be a priority”

(Robson & Bassett, 2017)
Middle Leader Inquiry

“appraisal...will deliver best results if it is linked to professional development...based on a culture of professional inquiry...to improve practice”

(OECD, 2016)
Middle Leader Inquiry

- The role of middle leaders in New Zealand secondary schools: expectations and challenges (Bassett, 2016)
- Realising the Value of Performance Appraisal for Middle Leaders in New Zealand Secondary Schools (Cardno & Robson, 2016)
- Creating Collaborative effectiveness (Martin & Bradbeer, 2016)

View: Effective Teams @Stonefields School

Listen: Middle Leaders Matter Podcast

@uLearnNZ  #uLearn17  #CENZ17
Middle Leaders Matter:

Continue the conversation - #cenz17

➢ November 9th - 4pm online - more details to follow

User Feedback: https://goo.gl/mxcwAW

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He pātaï?
Thank you
Tēnā koutou
Fa’afetai lava
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<tr>
<td>9:00</td>
<td>Welcome and Welcome to the Conference</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:15</td>
<td>Introducing the Program and Conference Agenda</td>
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Thursday 12 October

Welcome Breakout + 11:15am – 12:45pm

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Workshop – 90 minutes