NSW Department of Education

School Leadership Institute

Senior Leadership - Aspiring Principals Leadership Program

Selection Process Feedback

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Introduction

The purpose of this document is to share feedback from the most recent selection process for the 'Senior Leadership - Aspiring Principals Leadership Program'. It is aimed at supporting senior leaders who applied for the program, to reflect on their current practice and core beliefs and how these were evidenced throughout the application process. We were delighted with the interest in the program across NSW. A combination of a written application, digital story, referee comments and a leadership conversation was used to determine an applicant's overall readiness for the program.

All applicants were assessed by panels of experienced current and retired principals against three levels of criteria: distinguished, promising and developing. This document describes the commonalities of attributes of applicants at each of these levels. It is important to note that some applicants demonstrated attributes across more than one level of the marking criteria.

At the heart of our work as educational leaders is a focus on providing every opportunity to enable the best possible learning outcomes for students. Senior leaders play a critical role in contributing to student and teacher learning, whilst also further developing their leadership capacity in preparation for principalship. We encourage all applicants to discuss this feedback and the discussion questions with their principals and Directors, Educational Leadership. We hope this document proves useful in supporting your leadership development.

Joanne Jarvis
Director
School Leadership Institute
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Leadership For Learning – Developing

Collaboration - Impact - Self-Awareness - Moral Purpose

The following tables provide observations of the attributes of applicants who are developing their leadership but did not demonstrate readiness for the 'Senior Leadership - Aspiring Principals Leadership Program'.

Written Leadership Impact

Developing
1. Outline of an evidence-informed, collaborative process leading improvement, innovation and change with assessment of impact.
Evidence-informed process: applicants did not demonstrate clarity about the issue they were seeking to address for their context. In many cases, evidence was limited to a single measure so that they were not able to paint a picture that described what was happening in their setting. In other cases, applicants relied on low-order examples. There was a lot of reference to data but little understanding of the type of evidence required to support a change process. **Collaboration:** applicants did not identify a collaborative process and in many cases, did not show a deep understanding of collaborative practices and/or educational leadership. Some applicants presented a list of actions without showing how they contributed to improvement, innovation and change. Some applicants confused collaboration with participating in a team. **Leading improvement, innovation and change:** applicants did not demonstrate a clear understanding of how to initiate and implement a change process. It was difficult to see the role they played in the process or their impact. The improvement sought was not clearly articulated. Their evidence of impact tended to be stated in general terms or confined to a single measure. At times, there were unsupported assertions of impact or claims about impact that were not substantiated. There was little or no reference to innovation and/or research.
2. Depth of experience leading colleagues to plan, implement and review the effectiveness of their practice.
Applicants tended to describe a single project or process that they had led. They cited limited evidence about leading professional learning and the impact on colleagues. It was difficult to see their contribution to a professional growth culture in their setting.
3. Demonstrated self-awareness of leadership practices that influence others and areas for personal development.
Applicants did not articulate self-awareness of leadership qualities requiring further development other than through a limited analysis of their practice. They tended to focus on student and teacher learning, rather than on themselves. They tended to lack clarity about their influence on colleagues. Identified areas for future development were not clearly linked to the process they led.
4. The degree to which applicant shows awareness of the role of leaders to the vitality of the NSW Department of Education system.
Applicants did not demonstrate an understanding of system leadership. They lacked evidence of how they contributed to the learning of others beyond their role or setting. They tended to describe, or list different tasks within their current role.

Digital Story

Developing
1. Ability to reflect deeply on their core beliefs and motivation to lead a NSW public school.
Applicants conveyed a series of personal reflections about learning without providing links between their moral purpose and leadership aspirations. Any core beliefs tended to be about education in general, as opposed to educational *leadership*.
2. Ability to link core beliefs to evidence of action or impact.
Applicants did not provide a strong indication of evidence of impact. References and examples chosen did not align to the core beliefs nor demonstrate evidence of leadership.
3. Ability to communicate a clear coherent, well-paced message
Applicants were not able to communicate with a well-paced and engaging message. Some presentations contained too much text and a sequence of slides and personalised quotes with little connection to core beliefs. Some messages were quite genuine but missed the point of the question. Some digital stories were a duplication of their application, listing skills rather than addressing the criteria for this component.

Career History

The career history of these applicants tended to be confined to a list of dates and roles without any annotations. Some applicants had very limited and/or narrow history of leadership roles and responsibilities.

Leadership Conversation with Panel

Developing
An opportunity to share with the panel insights about leadership impact and personal reflections.
Applicants demonstrated their eagerness to participate in the program however, they were unable to demonstrate their readiness. Applicants had difficulty articulating their impact with clarity and meaning. In some cases, the examples chosen did not address leadership capabilities, demonstrated limited self-awareness and lacked an understanding of educational leadership. In some cases, there was a focus on management rather than educational leadership. Some applicants were unable to articulate how they have engaged in collaborative practices to support the improvement of student and teacher learning.

Discussion Questions for Leadership Conversations

1. What evidence do you have that adequately describes what is happening for teachers and students in your setting?
2. How might you improve the way in which you connect your school context to the educational outcomes you are seeking to improve?
3. How will you collaborate in devising strategies to achieve those educational outcomes?
4. What whole-school initiative could you lead to develop your impact on teacher and student learning?
5. What do you need to consider in order to motivate staff to engage with a change process?
6. How can you evidence your impact on student and teacher learning?
7. What strategies could you consider to strengthen your capacity for self-awareness and your subsequent influence on teacher and student learning?
8. How might you refine your core beliefs about the impact you want to have on student and teacher learning as an educational leader?

Leadership For Learning – Promising

Collaboration - Impact - Self-Awareness - Moral Purpose

The following tables provide observations of the attributes of applicants who showed promise in their leadership but who did not demonstrate readiness for the 'Senior Leadership - Aspiring Principals Leadership Program'.

Written Leadership Impact

Promising
1. Outline of an evidence-informed, collaborative process leading improvement, innovation and change with assessment of impact.
Evidence-informed process: applicants provided some evidence connected to their school context. Some also referred to research but this tended to be confined to a list of well-known educational academics. They did not clearly link this research to the leading of improvement in their school context. **Collaboration:** applicants outlined a collaborative process but did not always move beyond acknowledging the importance of collaboration. They tended not to differentiate between collaboration, team work, and consultation. **Leading improvement, innovation and change:** applicants referred to a range of programs and or strategies without necessarily evaluating their impact. Evidence of their leadership role was not always clearly defined.
2. Depth of experience leading colleagues to plan, implement and review the effectiveness of their practice.
Applicants demonstrated evidence contributing to a professional learning culture in their setting. This was not necessarily connected to a well-articulated vision to improve student and teacher learning.
3. Demonstrated self-awareness of leadership practices that influence others and areas for personal development.
Applicants demonstrated self-awareness of their leadership qualities and their influence on colleagues. While they demonstrated analysis of their practice from feedback, they did not provide a clear link to planned action. Applicants identified the impact on the growth of others but did not always articulate their personal growth as an educational leader.
4. The degree to which applicant shows awareness of the role of leaders to the vitality of the NSW Department of Education system.
Some applicants had good examples of system wide involvement in their career timelines but did not always use those examples in relation to this criterion. There was a significant variation to this response across all applicants. There was some connection to system leadership and its impact on learning.

Digital Story

Promising
1. Ability to reflect deeply on their core beliefs and motivation to lead a NSW public school.
Applicants tended to convey personal values about why they want to lead a NSW public school, linked to their core beliefs but not necessarily to educational leadership.
2. Ability to link core beliefs to evidence of action or impact.
There was some evidence of impact on student and teacher learning but the examples tended to be about the activities rather than the results.
3. Ability to communicate a clear coherent, well-paced message.
Digital stories tended to be clear, transitioned smoothly, and were within the timeframe. Applicants were mostly confident and articulate. The message conveyed in the digital story did not demonstrate an authentic connection between core beliefs and the enactment of these in educational leadership.

Career History

Applicants identified leadership roles with some evidence of impact. However, they did not always describe the responsibilities attached to their role. Annotations were typically too brief or lacked description of their leadership support of colleagues. Some applicants identified a very narrow range of leadership experiences, which did not pertain to whole-school leadership; or could not demonstrate the potential for an initiative to impact across a school.

Leadership Conversation with Panel

Promising
An opportunity to share with the panel insights about leadership impact and personal reflections.
In some cases, the leadership conversations were stronger than the written application and/or digital story. Applicants were reflective about their practice but did not elaborate with confidence. Some applicants emphasized their roles and responsibilities rather than personal reflections and insights of their leadership and where to next for their leadership learning.

Discussion Questions for Leadership Conversations

1. How might you improve the way in which you critically connect educational research and your school context to the educational outcomes you are seeking to improve?
2. How might you lead a learning culture which creates a sustained and systemic collaborative culture to support student and teacher learning?
3. How can you develop your capacity to use a wide range of measures to evidence the impact of your educational leadership?
4. How might you enhance your capacity to motivate staff to engage with a change process?
5. What strategies could you consider to strengthen your capacity for self-awareness to lead to improvements for teacher and student learning?
6. How might you refine your core beliefs about the impact you want to have on student and teacher learning as an educational leader?

Leadership For Learning - Distinguished

Collaboration - Impact - Self-Awareness - Moral Purpose

The following tables provide observations of the attributes of applicants who demonstrated their leadership impact and moral purpose at a distinguished level. They demonstrated their readiness for the program.

Written Leadership Impact

Distinguished
1. Outline of an evidence-informed, collaborative process leading improvement, innovation and change with assessment of impact.
Evidence-informed process: applicants had a deep understanding of evidence-informed processes linked to teacher professional learning and linked to impact on student learning outcomes. **Collaboration:** applicants demonstrated authentic collaboration and a connection between research and practice. **Leading improvement, innovation and change:** applicants clearly linked the addressed issue to their context. They showed a high order capacity to lead innovative change processes. The examples they chose were highly appropriate to the given context. These applicants had a clear exposition of the processes used to plan and implement improvement processes. They used highly effective methodology to demonstrate significant impact on teacher and student learning. They understood the need to have a repertoire of skills beyond a single leadership style.
2. Depth of experience leading colleagues to plan, implement and review the effectiveness of their practice.
Applicants provided evidence for their systematic planning in creating the conditions for a professional growth culture. They had deep experience in planning, implementing and reviewing the effectiveness of their practice. Their work was informed by analysis of evidence as well as analysis of current research.
3. Demonstrated self-awareness of leadership practices that influence others and areas for personal development.
Applicants were able to draw insights about their leadership qualities and influence on their colleagues to modify their practice. They demonstrated a regular practice of seeking, analysing and especially acting on feedback.
4. The degree to which applicant shows awareness of the role of leaders to the vitality of the NSW Department of Education system.
Applicants clearly understood the concept of leadership and responsibility across the public education system. They had a deep understanding that systemic leadership meant taking responsibility for leading and learning within a public education system. Applicants were able to demonstrate influence in a mixture of formal and informal roles and actively sought different roles to develop breadth and depth of expertise and credibility.

Digital Story

Distinguished
1. Ability to reflect deeply on their core beliefs and motivation to lead a NSW public school.
Applicants clearly explained what motivates them to lead. They provided an authentic explanation of the moral dimension of leadership and clearly understood leadership in a public system context.
2. Ability to link core beliefs to evidence of action or impact.
Applicants provided evidence of the impact of each belief through verbal explanations or images from their school. Their visuals and/or music did not get in the way of their message. There was a clear link between values and action.
3. Ability to communicate a clear coherent, well-paced message.
Applicants were articulate and passionate in their face-to-face presentation. The story was cohesive and transitioned smoothly. Their creative elements supported rather than detracted from their message.

Career History

The leadership roles and responsibilities throughout their career history demonstrated educational leadership with significant impact. The brief annotations of their roles demonstrated their significant influence in support of colleagues.

Leadership Conversation with Panel

Distinguished
An opportunity to share with the panel insights about leadership impact and personal reflections.
Applicants demonstrated their confidence to lead with influence and to instill confidence in others. They were highly reflective, comfortable in exposing vulnerability and communicating in a conversational tone. They were able to discuss their knowledge of self and how they might motivate others to engage with the process. Seeking feedback and analysing self and practice were important components of their leadership. They were able to project a sense of who they are – a passionate and enthusiastic educator, a deep thinker.

Discussion Questions for Leadership Conversations

1. How might you improve the way in which you critically connect educational research and your school context to the educational outcomes you are seeking to improve?

2. How might you lead a learning culture which creates a sustained and systemic collaborative culture to support student and teacher learning?

3. How can you develop your capacity to use a wide range of measures to evidence the impact of your educational leadership?

4. How might you enhance your capacity to motivate staff to engage with a change process?

5. What strategies could you consider to strengthen your capacity for self-awareness to lead to improvements for teacher and student learning?

6. How might you refine your core beliefs about the impact you want to have on student and teacher learning as an educational leader?