



## Dempster's Leading for Learning Framework (2009)

*Companion document*



Dempster's (2009) synthesis of contemporary research into 'leading learning' found that student learning is best achieved when:

- There is an agreed and shared **moral purpose**;
- '**Disciplined dialogue**' about learning in the school takes place;
- Planning, monitoring and accountability uses **a strong evidence base**;
- Everyone, including staff, are active **professional learners**;
- The **conditions for learning** are enhanced;
- The **curriculum and teaching** are coordinated, managed and monitored;
- **Distributive leadership** is the norm; and
- The school context is understood and connections with **parent and wider community support** are established.

## Dempster's Leading For Learning Framework

### Domains\*:

1. Conditions for Learning
2. Curriculum & Teaching
3. Parent & Community Support
4. Leadership
5. Professional Learning



*\*Please note, there is no hierarchical order to the domains. Although represented and described as individual domains, they are inter-related, with each impacting on the other. Collectively they significantly improve student learning.*

All factors that **enhance the quality** of the **physical, social** and **emotional** learning environment, within the local context.

### Examples (note some are mandated)

- Length of the school day
- Where classes take place & the suitability of the learning spaces
- An orderly learning environment where students are well known
- Well established home room & pastoral care structures
- Student services team & supports
- Clearly documented expectations & processes for students wellbeing, behaviour and discipline
- The number of transitions in a day
- Pastoral care processes; student-teacher and teacher-teacher relationships
- Students feel safe
- Conditions & suitability of the buildings and grounds
- Effect of the environment on concentration for learning
- Teacher consistency in implementing school expectations

### Programs for whole-school application: e.g. Positive Behaviour Support (PBS)

- This process promotes a base to support positive student behaviour in the school
- Develops the conditions to promote a calm and orderly learning environment, where expected behaviours are taught explicitly to students for the various school contexts
- Facilitates a school-wide process to ensure that there is consistency in expected behaviours and behaviour management processes are systematized across the school

## 2. Curriculum and teaching

Planning and coordination of a **guaranteed and viable** curriculum, ensures that all students have an **equal opportunity to learn**.

Each student will have access to an effective or **highly effective teacher** and **access to the same content, knowledge and skills** in each class.

*What Works in Schools: Translating Research into Practice, Marzano (2003)*

Eric Hanusek, a Stanford University economist, calculated that the students of highly effective teachers got **an entire year's worth of additional learning**. That is, a good teacher will get a gain of 1.5 grade level equivalent while an ineffective teacher will get 0.5 year during a single academic year. He also noted that the **achievement gap (lifetime income) could be closed** if a child were to have an **effective teacher for 3 to 4 years in a row**.

- The **pre-conditions** for high quality curriculum is a **safe and orderly** learning environment & **effective teaching** in every classroom
- Agreed whole-school instructional models are common in high performing schools where **new content is explicitly taught in sequenced and structured lessons**, using **evidence-based teaching** practices
- High quality instruction is **ensured by the school leaders**, so that all teachers are using instructional strategies in a way that reaches students. The leaders take appropriate steps to improve teacher competence when this goal is not being met
- **Guaranteed** = same curriculum is taught by all teachers, so that all students have the opportunity to learn it
- **Viable** = the amount of content in the curriculum is appropriate to the amount of time teachers have available to teach it
- For students from low SES backgrounds, greater access to four key resources **can and does improve student achievement**, particularly for students who start the school year from behind:
  1. *Grade-appropriate assignments*: +2 months of additional learning; starting behind grade-level, closed gap by 7 mths
  2. *Strong instruction*: those starting behind grade level, closed gaps to peers by 6 months
  3. *Higher levels of engagement*: +2.5 months of additional learning
  4. *Teachers who hold high expectations*: +4 months of additional learning

*The Opportunity Myth (2018)*

### 3. Parent and community support

Connecting with **parents and community members** *in the school* and *at home* to ensure that the overall **learning and life-chances of students are enhanced**.

The **largest positive effects** of home-school involvement are found when schools – usually in association with an external expert – **develop the capacity of parents to support their children's learning** through programmes that are designed to teach them specific skills (i.e. skills to promote reading and language development). Less powerful but still important, is the **quality of teacher-parent relationships**.

*Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration (2009)*

*School Leadership and Student Outcomes: Identifying What Works and Why*

Establishing **links and engaging with outside agencies**, whose knowledge, experience and skills may be **harnessed in the interests of the school**.

#### Examples of links with Parents include:

- School reports, Parent/Teacher interviews; Orientation nights and introductions to school key contacts
- Communications systems i.e. text messaging; newsletters
- Attendance at school carnivals, assemblies, performances
- Parent portal on school website, access to 'SEQTA', 'Connect' (or similar) for student results and assignments
- Stakeholder surveys include Parent perspectives e.g. Tell then From Me Survey (TTFM)
- Awareness of and communication with school-based support for students i.e. Chaplain, School Psychologist, Youth Worker, AEIO, Homework club; Engagement Officer
- School Board membership, P&C Committee

#### Examples of links with Community include:

- Working with/ observing practices of other high performing schools for Student Services and Academic support pathways i.e. Moderation, Excursions,
- Targeted support programs i.e. Clontarf & Girls' Academy; Tutoring
- Partnerships e.g. Local businesses for work-based learning; Fund raising; Aust. Business Community Network; Volunteering
- Government & Non-government agencies i.e. TAFE
- University partnerships i.e. Curtin AHEAD; access to researchers; Curtin STEM Mentors; UWA Aspire;
- Politicians i.e. Local, State and Federal members

Leadership is a particular type of **influence process** (and broader than the formal leaders). It can be **direct**, when leaders interact with others or **indirect**, and when they change the conditions in which people work. Leadership is embedded within specific **tasks and situations** and **distributed across people**.

*Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration (2009)*

*School Leadership and Student Outcomes: Identifying What Works and Why*

Focused **pedagogical leadership** is essential - one in which the principal participates as a co-learner with teachers in moving learning and the school forward. School leaders need to be **proactive leaders of teacher learning** as the latter affects student learning.

In short, effective school leaders do not just work on vision, acquire resources & manage the school; in addition they **mobilize the group to get results**. That this action-orientation ties to assessing & making progress is especially critical for the **main goal of education**; that is 'to raise the bar & close the achievement gap' for all students.

*Michael Fullan, BES – School Leadership & Student Outcomes, Forward (2015)*

The most successful school leaders are **open-minded and ready to learn from others**. They are **flexible** rather than dogmatic in their thinking within a **system of core values**, **persistent** - in pursuit of high expectations of staff motivation, commitment, learning & achievement for all; **resilient and optimistic**.

*Seven strong claims about successful school leadership, Leithwood et al, 2006*



All **formal and informal learning experiences** associated with improving students' learning and therefore life-chances.

Opportunities for **teachers** to engage in professional learning & development can have a substantial **impact on student learning**. Higher effect sizes are found in learning that focused on building teacher's **content knowledge & pedagogical knowledge**.

**School Leaders' active promotion & participation** in teacher learning & development has a large and **significant impact on student outcomes**.

*Best Evidence Synthesis Iterations (2009 & 2003)  
School Leadership and Student Outcomes: Identifying What Works and Why  
& Teacher Professional Learning and Development*

### Examples of high impact professional learning practices:

- Improve individual skills & knowledge, as well as collectively improve as a school
- Collaborative team time – PLCs discuss the relationship between what is taught & what is learned
- Induction processes – differentiate PL for different needs of teachers at different career stages  
i.e. Early career teachers; 3-8 years experience;  
10+ years experience; returns from extended leave
- Alignment of PL to school improvement agenda as an ongoing development journey - not just a 1-day event!
- Classroom observation & feedback processes, practices & protocols to support improvements in instruction
- Involves ongoing coaching to support sustained changes in practice
- Evidence-base to enhance knowledge – shared articles, work with experts
- PL is linked with realising the schools' moral purpose and aspiration for improved student performance
- Hattie says “the best teachers are the best learners”