

Richard Bruford

Statement of Philosophy on Learning

Learning is about developing a student's personal attributes alongside the challenges of an academically rigorous curriculum. As educators we are challenged with guiding a child in both individual and collaborative tasks; giving them ownership of their decisions with the opportunity to reflect and learn from the choices that they make; stimulating their curiosity to find out more or try something new; supporting them in gaining an understanding of who they are and respecting differences in others.

With this in mind, schools should promote challenging, exciting and engaging learning opportunities that prepare students for the world beyond school and encourages them to make a positive contribution to society.

A curriculum that is academically rigorous provides students with the opportunity to learn about areas of knowledge set in context where learning can be significant and relevant to the student. In addition, students need to be provided with opportunities for learning outside the classroom to develop their physical and creative interests, along with activities that foster care and concern for others.

I believe that good schools are inclusive and constantly seek to support the diversity of learners in the community academically, socially, emotionally and culturally. Social emotional learning is more than being explicitly taught, it must also be embedded in the curriculum and, more importantly, modelled by teachers. Further to this, schools must go beyond multicultural acceptance and move towards intercultural competency where we empower students to become global citizens and contribute to social sustainability.

In a fast-changing world, our respect of difference is being significantly challenged and the role of deferential dialogue and the ability to collaborate and communicate effectively to solve problems has become a pressing need. Students must be equipped with the essential collaborative skills through opportunities for to listen, talk and interact with each other in a positive and respectful learning environment. I am firmly committed to a values-based education that emphasizes compassionate interaction and empathy.

Learning experiences should cultivate curiosity, enabling students to become both creative and critical thinkers. Learning must focus on the development of information literacy and for students to be given agency in developing their own points of view and, without fear, ask questions about their learning and what is being presented to them both inside and outside the school building. Students must be equipped with the skills to think creatively about the problems that both they and society face, being encouraged to take action and explore solutions taking the risk to fail from time to time in order to be successful.

Successful learning, however, is founded upon the relationships that students build with their teachers and each other. A safe, supportive and positive school environment must be provided for students in which to learn and spend a great deal of their time. Students need to enjoy school and find it to be a place where they can thrive.

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Statement of Leadership Philosophy

The role of an educational leader is to foster a culture of collaboration and professional learning among teachers, administrators and support staff that allows them to play a significant role in the transformation of children into responsible young adults.

Educational research, to a large extent, shows that the biggest direct influence on student outcomes in schools is the teacher. To this end, the greatest impact a leader can have is the way they promote, and participate in, professional learning with teachers along with the collective establishment of goals and expectations for both staff and students. Further to this, I view it essential that school leaders build healthy relationships with, and recognize the important role of, support staff that help to create and maintain a highly functional school environment.

A healthy school culture hinges on the trust that school leaders build with their team. The cornerstone of developing a climate of trust in a school lies, first and foremost with the integrity of the leader and their willingness to be a role model for those they lead. This is aided by a transparency with decision-making and the ability to listen and provide the appropriate support through situational leadership. Furthermore, the best leaders show belief in their team to turn vision into reality and empower their staff through acknowledgement that success in schools is a collaborative effort.

Good educational leaders understand the complexities associated with change and transformation. They can play both a leading, facilitative or supportive role with school initiatives but, most importantly, know when to push the change effort and when to show restraint to ensure that schools do not suffer from change fatigue. Additionally, leaders who are involved in successful transformation efforts in schools have a firm grasp on what aspects need to be loose or tight depending on the context. The ability to communicate these expectations clearly to all stakeholders is crucial to ensuring that vision becomes reality.

The best leaders are solution focused rather than problem focused. An open-minded approach to solving problems is crucial, having the understanding that, oftentimes, there is no one right answer. Leaders are also willing to take risks in solving problems, with a willingness to fail in their endeavors from time to time and use such instances as opportunities to learn and grow. If we want a growth mindset in our schools, then leaders must be the flag bearers.

Navigating difficult circumstances with a calm and quiet confidence enables school leaders to build social and cultural capital with all members of the school community. The application of emotional intelligence with more challenging conversations becomes crucial to setting the tone for a stable and purposeful environment at which students are the most important factor in the decision-making process. Moreover, whilst striving for consensus in decision-making is desirable, on occasion, universal agreement may not be able to be reached. The best school leaders are able to provide transparent decisions without hidden agenda or playing favorites that prevents cynicism from forming.

Most importantly, the best school leaders enjoy their work and making a positive difference to the lives of others with the understanding that leading schools is a privilege to make the world a better place.