

# **Leading Dialogues about teaching and learning**

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Independent Thinking Ltd

# Leadership

Dialogues

Conversations & Activities  
for Leadership Teams

John West-Burnham

and Dave Harris

@bravehead

# Who am I??

- ❖ After 30 years in Schools, loving a new phase of my life
- ❖ Formed a 3-18 school by amalgamating a secondary, junior & infants in record time
- ❖ Formed an innovative academy with a university
- ❖ Author of “Are You Dropping the baton?”
- ❖ Author of “Brave Heads”
- ❖ Author of “Leadership Dialogues” with Prof. John West Burnham
- ❖ Ex-chair of CATS – working across the world on improving transition
- ❖ Business Director for Independent Thinking
- ❖ Believe that work without passion is pointless



Independent Thinking is a network of educators, organisations and schools working globally to change the way young people think about themselves, their education and their futures – and so to change the world.

@ITLWorldwide



# This session

Leadership, Dialogue and how to really effect teaching and learning in your school.



Bob Orsillo











Why is  
dialogue  
important?

# Dialogue:

- Enhances relationships
- Builds trust
- Secures effective communication
- Facilitates learning
- Engages motivation
- Models effective leadership

- A Effective Leadership
- B Thinking Strategically
- C Leading innovation & Change
- D Leading Teaching & Learning
- E Leading and managing Resources
- F Leading People
- G Collaboration
- H Engaging with Students, Parents & community



**SO WHAT DOES RESEARCH TELL US?**

Biggest single effect is internal variation in teaching



90<sup>th</sup> %

37<sup>th</sup> %

# WHAT PERCENTAGE OF YOUR NORMAL WEEK?

People



Leadership

Management

Systems

# 1. SHARED VALUES

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“Authentic leaders anchor their practice in ideas, values and commitments” - Sergiovanni



(See Finland for agreement around key values)



Moral  
behaviour

Personal  
Values

Ethical roots



## The values system for your school

A2(ii)

Put a cross on the false/true continuum to show your school.

1. I have a clearly articulated and consistent view of the nature and purpose of schools and the education system.

FALSE

TRUE

2. I am confident in our advocacy of equity across the school.

FALSE

TRUE

3. My behaviour exemplifies the moral and professional standards that we aspire to for the whole school.

FALSE

TRUE

4. My decision making is value driven rather than pragmatic.

FALSE

TRUE

5. I regularly monitor the actual experience of members of the school community against our aspirations.

FALSE

TRUE

6. I am confident that the well-being of every young person is central to the school's purpose and practice.

FALSE

TRUE

7. I set clear standards and I am not frightened to challenge poor performance.

FALSE

TRUE

8. Our values are based on consensus and consistently applied.

FALSE

TRUE

9. I work to ensure that the school's values are known, shared, understood and acted on.

FALSE

TRUE

10. Our shared values directly inform our day-to-day leadership and management.

FALSE

TRUE

## 2. TRUST

“trust remains a powerful and strong predictor of student achievement even after the effects of student background, prior achievement, race and Gender have been taken into account” Day et al



What happens when people make mistakes at your school?

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“School leaders and teachers need to create school, staffroom and classroom environments where error is welcomed as a learning opportunity, where discarding incorrect knowledge and understandings is welcomed and where participants can feel safe to learn, re-learn and explore knowledge and understanding.”(Hattie, 2008)

# Trust

Who would say:

‘Mistrust and fear, that’s what creates  
a great school!’

Bryk et al. (2010: 45–46) report on a detailed and systematic longitudinal study carried out since 1989 looking at over 100 schools that have improved, compared with over 100 schools that have declined.

The key differences between the schools has enabled them to create a framework for school improvement that is made up of a number of 'essential supports':

1. Leadership as the driver for change.
2. Parent–community ties.
3. Professional capacity – promoting the quality of staff and focusing on improvement.
4. A student-centred learning climate.
5. Instructional guidance – focusing on ambitious educational achievement for every child.

# Is that all we need?



This is where so much of our current system fails. It is too politically driven, resulting in an unhealthy focus on the ingredients rather than the method. 'Experts' see a wonderful cake, one that is superb in look, smell and taste, and then become obsessed about its constituents.

identical ingredients can, and will, be turned into a revolting mush without due care.

# 3. PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Effect size comparison:

(by Robinson)

0.84 - promoting & participating in teacher learning & development

0.42 - Establishing goals and expectations

0.42 - Planning, coordinating and evaluating the curriculum

0.31 - strategic resourcing

0.27 - Ensuring an orderly and supportive environment

“The leader participates in the learning as a leader, learner or both... both informal and formal” JWB

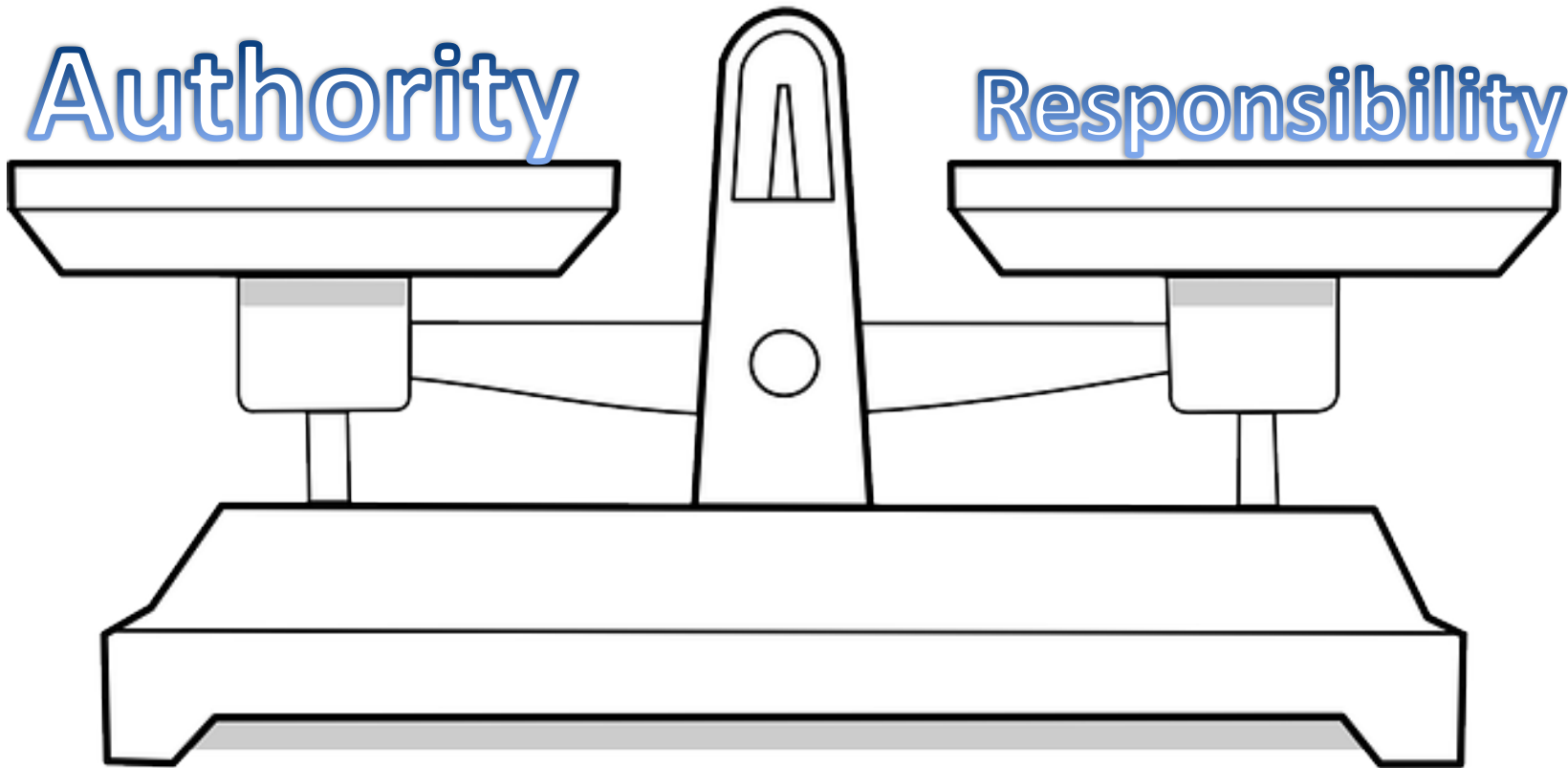
## 4. MOVE FROM FIND AND FIX TO PREDICT & PREVENT

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“The best way to close the gap is to prevent children failing and that means actively challenging poor and inappropriate performance and that in turn means identifying and embedding appropriate performance.... It is not just what we do, it's the way that things are done!” JWB

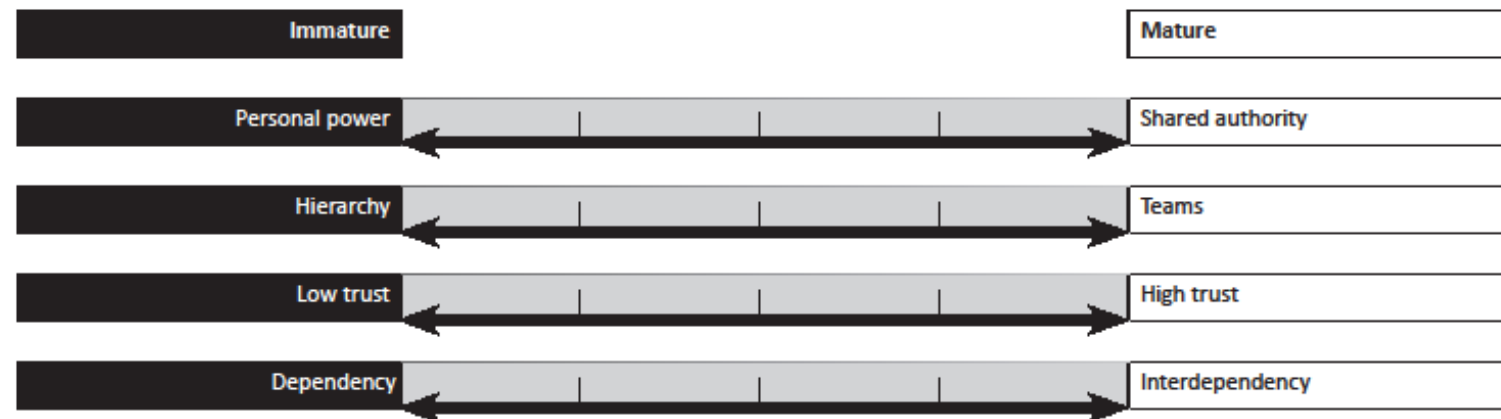
Authority

Responsibility



## Authority and responsibility in your leadership team

F5(i)



Control	Delegation	Empowerment	Subsidiarity

Use the prompts above to analyse how your school's leadership could best be described.

# WHAT THE RESEARCH IS TELLING US

1. Shared Values
2. Trust
3. Professional Learning
4. Move from find and fix to Predict & Prevent

Is this what is happening in your schools?

How much of your  
meeting time is  
leadership?

Can you create more leadership time?

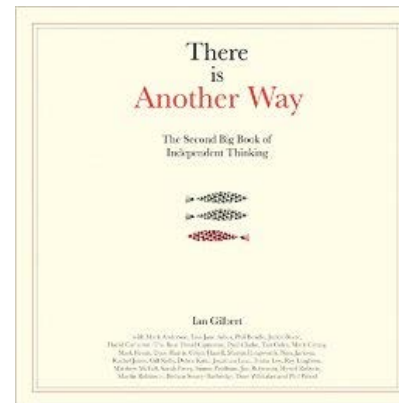
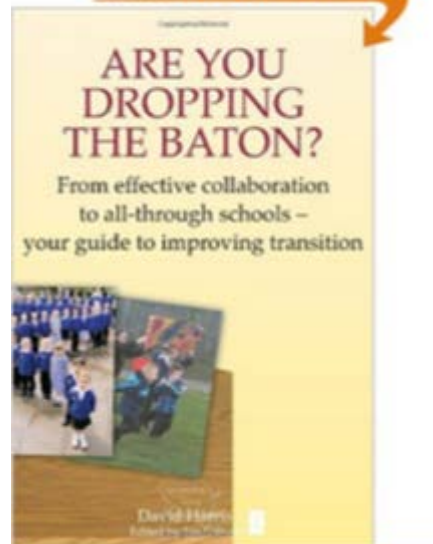
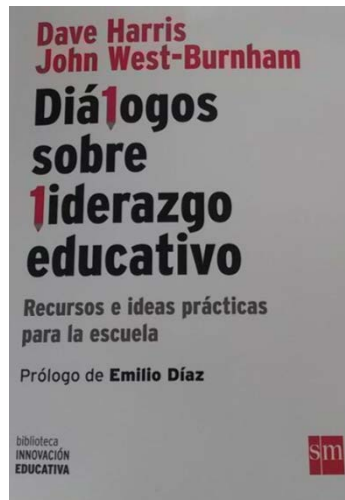


We must learn the lessons of the  
past

## WISE WORDS

*Sometimes the weight of living in this atmosphere of responsibility, work and weariness seems almost more than I can bear. I feel like a bird in a cage, beating against the bars, longing to be free, but baffled everywhere*

*He dreamed of breaking through the monotony and the grind of teachers lives, the treadmill of constant preparation and ceaseless evaluation, which are so apt to dry up and narrow mind and spirit*



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