



Job Crafting: How Connecting Our Work With Meaning Helps Us Lead Through Diversity

Ms Angela Falkenberg¹

¹*South Australian Primary Principals Association (SAPPA), Hindmarsh, Australia*

Schools are tasked with the important job of preparing students for the future while balancing the competing demands of the now. This requires leaders to be both agile and responsive in connecting current and future needs.

Leading with agility includes connecting teacher work to personal meaning as a strategy in building a positive culture and in improving student learning. The agile leader has the responsibility to understand and utilise the strengths of staff and to create the conditions for these strengths to be used in achieving real fulfillment at work.

There are good reasons for this, a US Energy Project survey of 12000 employees in 2014 found that employees who derive meaning from their work, are three times more likely to stay with their organisations, have 1.7 times greater job satisfaction and are 1.4 times more engaged at work.

The meaning focused leader provides clarity around why we do what we do and ensures educators have effective interpersonal skills to build and maintain positive relationships with others. The de-privatised classroom places importance on educators being able to work and learn with others; a necessary skill now and into the future. The McKinsey Global Institute discussion paper Skills shift: automation and the future of the workforce May 2018 identified that the social and emotional, sometimes called “soft skills” such as advanced communication and negotiation, empathy, the ability to learn continuously, to manage others and to be adaptable will become increasingly important for educators both in the teaching of these skills and in the modelling of them.

In this session, leaders can explore 1. the question ‘what’s your why?’ and how job crafting (the way we think about our work and how we might craft it for a positive alignment with meaning) can assist in leading others and ourselves in times of diversity. 2. Learn additional strategies that create the supportive workplace culture that assists and engages staff in transformational change. These strategies were curated through my experiences in leading three diverse schools; two in low socio-economic communities; one of these a newly established school from three closing schools and staff and parents experiencing resulting uncertainty; and one a high socio-economic status school where I facilitated the move from interpersonal discord to effective relationships.