



The 'Mind of The Educational Leader', Capturing Creativity and Innovation of Wellness for School Leaders to Embrace Principals Now and Beyond.

Mrs Denise Lofts¹

¹NSW Secondary Principals' Council , Ultimo, Australia, ²University of NSW , Kensington , Australia, ³Ulladulla High School , Ulladulla, Australia

“Overworked and Overwhelmed” are words that we hear often in Principal circles. There are only 168 hours in a week, and it often feels like we work most of them. In fact research shows that professionals with a Smartphone are directly dialled in to work around 72 hours a week, add to that the hours we spend thinking or worrying about our work. It is true that hard work and success go hand in hand, but when does enough become too much. Or rather, what personal skills and support do we need in/for our future Principals so that they have the ability to navigate the nature of our complex role and build successful public schools. The NSW Department of Education have recognised the need for a ‘mindfulness’ approach. The complex work of principals is full of high stress, and our leaders need a way to do more than just get through the day, they need to find a way to clear their minds to make strong, thoughtful decisions.

The 2016 and 2018 Australian Principal Wellbeing Survey Summary outlines some alarming trends. Health and Wellbeing Outcomes Self-rated health results, is a very robust measure of future health, so the decline of health of Principals over time is of great concern. The report outlines a range of strategies, from improving the wellbeing, professional learning to work practices, however the indication that most school leaders are ‘learning on the job’.

Principals deal daily with parents’ greatest hopes and deepest fears: the lives and potential futures of their children. This means high levels of emotion are attached to many aspects of school functioning, and principals have to learn how to deal with this on the job, rather than through systematic preparation.

For our schools to continue to grow, embrace the future educational platforms and complexities for our students, it is imperative that our school leaders have the necessary mindset and skills to do so. The workshop will examine ‘Mindfulness and Wellbeing’ strategies for leadership and the how this capacity will build creative, well and innovative school leaders. If we improve the working conditions for principals we also improve the learning conditions for students, as the two are inseparable (Leithwood, 2006). Participants in this workshop will have the opportunity to engage in the research, work collaboratively with colleagues and walk away with strategies to apply immediately in their leadership roles and their schools.