Leadership and Risk Taking

South West Teaching Schools Conference
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About Us

We are an education charity with a mission to address educational disadvantage by growing a movement of outstanding middle leaders. We support your drive to provide an outstanding education for all your pupils by offering rigorous middle leadership development programmes. Impact on pupil outcomes is embedded throughout, alongside an unrelenting focus on supporting your school goals.
Our Aims

Teaching Leaders aims to drive change in three key areas:

1. **Pupils**: To maximise the impact on pupil achievement and close the achievement gap

2. **Teams**: To improve teacher quality, team performance and motivation

3. **Retention**: To keep the best middle leaders in schools in challenging contexts
Our Programmes
Our National Movement

**Our Reach**

- 957 Total number of TL Schools
- 637 Secondary schools
- 271 Primary schools
- 49 All-through schools

**Total number of pupils reached through Impact Initiatives**

314,880

**Total number of current Participants and Alumni**

1,958
What Do We Mean By Risk?
Learning Objectives

• An opportunity to reflect on and enhance your current confidence levels in taking well judged risks as a leader

• To explore effective risk management and risk mitigation theory in relation to school based leadership scenarios

• To reflect on how you can apply your learning to your own context, identifying ways to develop your capacity to take well judged risk
Three Zones of Leadership

- Comfort Zone
- Learning Zone
- Danger Zone
The Learning Zone

- 20% of people live here
- living without limits
- exploring new things
- opportunity
- things that are risky
- things I have never done
- doing difficult
- things that are easy
- being like everyone else
- playing it safe
- regret
- just getting by
- risk-free
- mediocrity
- fear
- things you find easy to do
- pursuing your dreams
- acting in the face of fear
- dreams
- 80% of people live here
- things I am afraid of doing
- abundance
Activity

For one minute, individually, list all the barriers that you either perceive or experience in terms of developing the risk taking component of your leadership behaviour.
“Risk taking is hard to adopt among leaders, because recognised leaders have the most to lose and aspiring leaders may be discounted as lacking in knowledge or common sense. However, most well-known leaders at some point face a challenge that requires risk taking. This becomes a measure of their greatness. This will set their leadership apart from others.

Key to success in any undertaking is to understand that risk taking is an integral part of leadership. However, risk taking by itself without understanding the nuances of the challenge will doom any project to failure.”

Swimming with the sharks: perspectives on professional risk taking, J. McGowan. 2007
Risk Scenarios

Task
1. Would you take the risk? Yes or no?
2. If no, what is your rationale?
3. If yes, why and how would you mitigate the risk?

Scenario 1. A Head of Year 10 under pressure to exclude a pupil.

Scenario 2. A Head of English under pressure to remove their 2 Ic

Scenario 3. A primary Senior Leader who only has one vacancy but has two good candidates and wants to ask the head if he can have both
Risk: Scenario 1 (pastoral ml, sec)

You are Head of Year 10 in a challenging school in an Inner City. You have two pupils on the SEN register who have serious behavioural issues and recent family incidents have sent their behaviour off track (one boy’s Dad recently went to prison and the other family had a bereavement). Both pupils’ attainment and progress has dropped and it is having an impact on the rest of the year. Both have received fixed term exclusions and SLT now want to push for permanent exclusion before the start of year 11. If you don’t they will hold you accountable for year 11 results. You know the families well and have been working with them since year 7. They had a sibling moved to a nearby school who got involved in a gang and has been permanently excluded so the families are opposed to a move. Personally, you have a young family and have just bought a new house.

Do you take the risk and not exclude the pupil?
Risk: Scenario 2 (subject ML, sec)

You are Head of English in a challenging school in a rural coastal town. Last year, you promoted a high performing teacher to become your second-in-charge KS4, but they are now struggling in role to manage staff and English results have dropped below 40%. You are due Ofsted and due to current English KS4 projections the school could slip into notice to improve. Senior management have confidence in you for now, but want to remove the 2ic. If things do not improve, they have made it clear that they may want change at HoD too. On a personal note, you have a young family, your partner lost their job last year and have just bought a new house.

Do you take the risk and not remove the 2 ic?
Risk: Scenario 3 (SL, primary)

You are a senior leader in a small inner city primary school with a falling roll, which has just come out of special measures. It is 18 May and you have just completed interviewing. You have had five applicants for a phase leader role in your school after having an unfilled vacancy for over 18 months and many short term supply teachers.

At interview you have two equally really strong candidates. You know that one of your phase leaders may be considering leaving in October to go travelling.

Do you take the risk and get the head to agree you can employ both candidates?
Risk Management Models
Risk Based Decision Making Model

Evaluate Risk

Identify Risk Response Options

Terminate
- Is activity just not worth the risk?

Treat
- Can risk-reward be cost-effectively managed?

Tolerate
- Is risk-reward balance acceptable, is it tolerable?

Transfer
- Is transfer of legal responsibility or financial impact of risk feasible?

Evaluate Risk Response Options

Risk Appetite

Cost-Benefit

Stakeholder Values

Mandatory Requirements

Decision

No - clearly not worthwhile
Hold - no clear answer: further assessment required or decision made on consensus view
Yes - clearly worthwhile

Fig 2. Risk Based Decision Making Process
## Risk Impact/Probability Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact</th>
<th>Risk Management Actions</th>
<th>Likelihood</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Significant</td>
<td><img src="image1" alt="Considerable management required" /></td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><img src="image2" alt="Manage and monitor risks" /></td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><img src="image3" alt="Extensive management required" /></td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td><img src="image4" alt="Risk may be worth accepting with monitoring" /></td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><img src="image5" alt="Management effort worthwhile" /></td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><img src="image6" alt="Management effort required" /></td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor</td>
<td><img src="image7" alt="Accept risks" /></td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><img src="image8" alt="Accept risks but monitor" /></td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><img src="image9" alt="Manage and monitor risks" /></td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Risk Management Models

Risk Management models support the process of identifying and mitigate risk.

Part 1. Individual (5 mins)
Read the handouts and gain an understanding of both models.

Part 2. Group discussion (5 mins)
1. Are the models helpful? If so in what situations?
2. Would using either of these models to consider your chosen scenario have influenced your decision or confidence levels in taking the risk?
What are the opportunities for you to take risks in your role which will help:

a) Develop your area of responsibility?

b) Develop you as a leader?

c) In each case identify key actions you will take to assess whether those risks should be taken and when you can mitigate against any potential issues.
Leaders who want to achieve success understand that taking risk is an essential part of achieving results. Leaders must discover their ‘risk tolerance’ by stepping-out of the comfort zone and engage:

- Don’t let restricted thinking stop you
- Focus on the rewards
- Learn from mistakes
- Recognise that success and failure are connected
Contact Us

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Thank You!