

## SOCIAL INNOVATIONS EDUBYTE 16, MANAGING YOUR TEAM

### MOVING FROM DAY-TO-DAY MANAGEMENT TO EFFECTIVE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP



**Matthew X. Joseph**, director of curriculum, instruction, and assessment at Leicester Public Schools in Massachusetts USA, suggests that for managers to move beyond day-to-day management to true leadership, they need to understand the capacity of their staff, promote open communication, and provide useful feedback. He recommends these **7 Tips for Effective School Leadership**:

#### 1. Focus on respect rather than popularity

Joseph says while it can be tempting to make a decision your staff might want, rather centre your decision-making process around student needs. He says: “I have found that if you keep students at the core of your decision-making and are consistent, most teachers will accept unpopular decisions, especially if you communicate your reasoning.”

**Tip 1:** For every decision you take as a manager, test it against these questions:

- How will this decision serve the learners in our care?
- In line with the vision of Social Innovations after-school centres, question further: Will this decision help develop learners who are confident, independent and who have a positive attitude to learning?

**If you can't easily answer these questions, then question your decision.**

#### 2. Establish clear goals

Make sure that goals are clear, and that all team members are working towards the same goals.

**Tip 2:** Makes sure that the main goals are top-of-mind for all team members and reiterate these goals at weekly meetings.

For example, if a goal is to achieve 95% plus attendance at an after-school academy, how will your decisions help build learner attendance? If your goal is to improve learner understanding of place value this term, how will your planning and decisions help achieve that? **If you are all working towards common goals, it is easier to make decisions that will be supported by your team.**

#### 3. Listen to input from your staff and learners

Avoid assuming your solution is the only solution. Set aside time for interacting with staff and responding to their concerns and be visible to learners. Creating a people-first culture shows staff that you value their input and take their concerns seriously. Be strategic about your open-door policy, though. For example, invite feedback and discussion in weekly team meetings. “Block out the times in your daily and weekly calendar to focus on students and your goals as well as being visible through classroom visits,” Joseph advises.”

### **Tip 3: Consult, and be available**

- Consult with staff regularly through weekly meetings. By doing this you will build team spirit and work better as a team. See more about consensual leadership in the EduByte 15: Learning from Theory Z.
- Be visible to learners in your school or after-school centre. Do regular rounds of classes, check in on learners as you do so, look regularly at their workbooks and offer informal feedback and encouragement.

## **4. Lead by example**

Model the traits that you would like to see your staff members display. Even small actions – like how you dress, or how you speak to learners to eat lunch – can be an opportunity to model behaviour you would like to see in your staff.

**Tip 4:** Model the behaviour you would like to see. For example: be on time every day; fulfil your duties with diligence and care; talk to people respectfully.

## **5. Provide regular feedback**

Give feedback to your staff regularly and on-the-spot. For example, acknowledge examples of best practice in the classroom, and address issues of concern on the spot. Give feedback as soon as you can. Don't only wait for weekly meetings. Instant feedback boosts confidence of team members and can also nip a problem in the bud before it escalates.

**Tip 5:** Give on the spot feedback where appropriate. This will encourage their team members to continuously build their strengths and to work on areas of weakness.

## **6. Delegate**

Establish a relationship of trust with your staff such that you can delegate some of the responsibilities to them and free up your time for other priorities.

**Tip 6:** Delegate some duties to e.g. a deputy manager or another teacher. This will allow things to run smoothly if, for example, you are off sick for a day. It also encourages continuity, so that if you are promoted to another post, or leave the school, there are people in your team who can easily be offered the opportunity to become managers.

## 7. Make meetings matter

“Meetings for the sake of having regular meetings-particularly if there is nothing on the agenda, frustrates people,” Joseph writes. If you are not aiming for an outcome in a meeting, then you are wasting time.

### Tip 7: Plan meetings

- Plan weekly meetings beforehand. Share the agenda beforehand so that people can prepare.
- Make sure that you plan the meeting to work towards outcomes.
- Don't drag out meetings! Keep them moving and keep to the agenda.
- Think about if you need a meeting? For example, if you just need to share information about an issue you could do so through WhatsApp or email.

### Use these 7 tips

Use these 7 tips to reflect on your management practice. You could, for example, focus on one or two and build the tips into your practice, and then work on others. Either way, constant reflection and self-evaluation is important if you want to move from day-to-day management towards true leadership.

This is an open source educational resource drafted by Social Innovations mentor Sibongile Nkosi. This note draws from [this article](#) on EduTopia.org by Laura Lee. See more EduBytes on [www.socialinnovations.co.za](http://www.socialinnovations.co.za). Search for more articles to inform your teaching and management practice on [www.edutopia.org](http://www.edutopia.org).