A WORKING PRACTICE PROFILE

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP IN AN ECD SITE

What constitutes 'quality' in ECD is of vital interest to those concerned with improving provision in this sector. BRIDGE's ECD Community of Practice developed a Quality Reflection Tool to help practitioners consider what quality means in their own practice and contexts. The Tool was initially mediated by experienced ECD professionals working with ECD practitioners in the framework of structured pilot project across diverse sites. The following profile highlights key learnings for school leadership gleaned from a principal working at one such site.

The following diagram is an overview of the aforementioned learnings as they are layed out in this document:

1. EMPOWERMENT OF STAFF
→ Leadership/Ownership
→ Professional Development
→ Culture

2. PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT
→ Open Communication Channels
→ Set Expectations for Parental Involvement
→ Engage Working Parents
→ Create Opportunities to Connect
→ Connect With Families During Home Visits

3. NETWORKING
→ Reach out to all Stakeholders
→ Create a Community Resource Map
→ Connect with Curriculum

4. ETHICAL LEADERSHIP
→ Cultivate an Open Work Environment
→ Democratise Decision Making
→ Share and Delegate
→ Have a Clear Code of Conduct

1. EMPOWERMENT OF STAFF

The principal at this site encourages his staff to attend professional development courses. He is compassionate in his manner, listens, accepts input and respects the school community. He holds monthly one-on-one meetings with staff as and when necessary.

> ❞
> Empowering teachers impacts education to change in a positive direction.

KEY LEARNINGS

Leadership/Ownership
Provide teachers with an opportunity to participate in decision-making on curriculum development, school policy, strategy and mission.

Professional Development
Encourage teachers to set out personal goals, and offer your support in making them happen through professional development, funding, conferences, and publications.

Culture
Foster an environment that supports collaboration and team building: teacher lunches, day trips, and coffee chats before classes should be ongoing in your school to create a positive culture.

2. PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT

The principal holds termly parent meetings, and makes use of message books, SMSes and letters to regularly communicate with parents. Additionally, children's reports are forwarded to parents quarterly. Parents are made to feel welcome and included, and one-on-one meetings are regularly held to discuss sensitive issues.

> **No child is turned away, even if they cannot pay.**

KEY LEARNINGS

Open Communication Channels
Keep parents informed of learners' progress through parent meetings and academic reports.

Set Expectations for Parental Involvement
Discuss the upcoming academic year, the expectations for learners and outline specific ways parents could volunteer to help with school activities.

Engage Working Parents
Hold meetings after work hours and provide activities for children from working families.

Create Opportunities to Connect
Invite parents to classroom presentations from time to time (e.g. every two terms) and ensure the principal is in attendance too.

Connect With Families During Home Visits
Conduct visits to learners' homes to foster stronger relationships with the wider school community.

3. NETWORKING

The crèche enjoys a close working relationship with various stakeholder organisations in the area including the DSD, the police, Ashram, Child Welfare and local schools. The crèche also works collaboratively with a local primary school in sharing the CAPS curriculum.

KEY LEARNINGS

Reach out to all Stakeholders
A series of community walks are a great way to reach out to the broader school community. Get your teachers on board and go and knock on people's doors, visit local businesses and talk with them.

Create a Community Resource Map
A visual representation of your community and the various skills people have to offer is a great way to understand what community resources are available. Be sure to indicate the materials people can supply at cost or for free, the time they can invest in projects, and how they can connect to curriculum, and classroom activities.

Connect with Curriculum
Work to connect your school's core curriculum with the real world. Use fun, practical and project-based learning to help children link learning to their own contexts. Draw on the ideas given in the National Curriculum Framework for Birth to Four.

4. ETHICAL LEADERSHIP

The principal recognises the importance of ethical school leadership. The crèche adheres to a strict code of conduct.

KEY LEARNINGS

Cultivate an Open Work Environment
Develop an honest work environment where employees can report unethical behavior without fear of punishment.

Democratise Decision Making
Ask for feedback and suggestions from your staff. This will show them that you trust and respect their opinions.

Share and Delegate
Share information with and delegate tasks to your team to empower and motivate them.

Have a Clear Code of Conduct
A code of conduct promotes moral behaviour, acts as a guideline for ethical decision making, encourages positive relationships and acts as a reference for solving ethical dilemmas . It is essential that regular training includes explicit discussions about the code of conduct and ethical issues.

ECD breaks the cycle of poverty.