



# NSW Deputy Principals' Conference

Got the Job: Now what happens?

# Appointed

- I was successful at interview in early Term 4, 2007 for a position to commence on Day 1 of 2008.
- This had some advantages:
- I got to clean out my office,
- I was able to say good bye to staff and students,
- I had time to think and read about my new school,
- I had time to meet the new staff and the Relieving Principal.
- Not everyone gets these opportunities!

# Principals' Induction Conference

- Two days towards the end of the January holidays.
- An opportunity is provided later in the year for Principals appointed after Term 1.
- This is a very worthwhile event.
- You realise you are not alone.
- You get a sense of the size of the task
- You get a reassuring handbook and CD, which is the distilled wisdom of Principals.
- It is not the answer to everything!

# Every School is Different

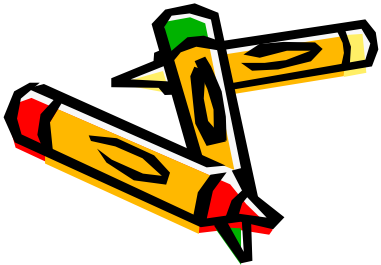
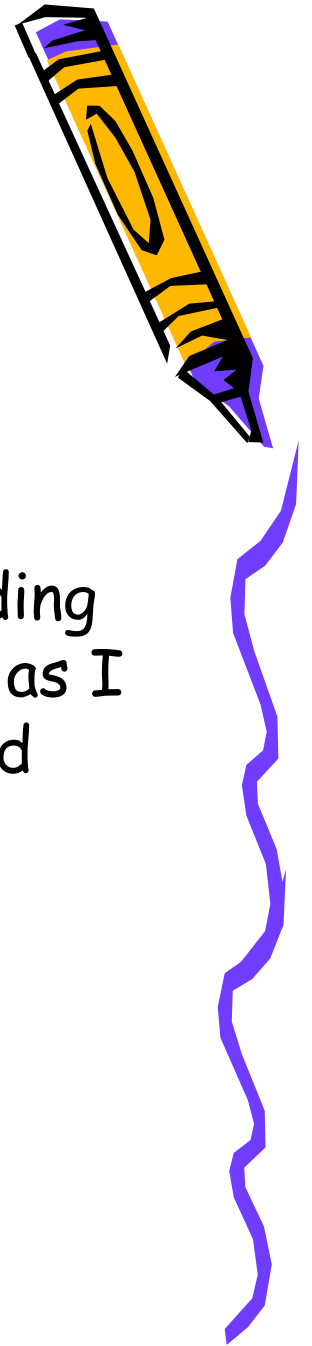
- I replaced a very senior Principal who had been in the school for 17 years.
- There is a very experienced staff who know what they are doing.
- It is in the Eastern Suburbs with a lot of private competition.
- The last Head Teacher appointed from outside the school came in more than 10 years ago.
- It has faced declining numbers.
- The staff is accepting of the need for change.
- The canteen was a disgrace.

# Getting to work

- I like to go overseas in the Christmas vacation.
- I didn't this year . . . .
- I'm glad I spent those two weeks in January, in the school, meeting: the GA, the cleaners, the people who cleaned the canteen, the staff who popped in, the SASS staff who popped in, some new parents.
- There was nothing in the filing cabinets.

# The Vision Thing

- George Bush Snr was challenged by it.
- I was a bit anxious about being too visionary too early.
- I have written down what I want to achieve and it is evolving.
- It is something to gauge progress.
- It remains my guiding light and develops as I grow to understand the school.



# Understanding the School

- Read and re-read everything:
  - ✓ School Plan,
  - ✓ ASR,
  - ✓ Newsletters and Bulletins,
  - ✓ Old Yearbooks,
  - ✓ Staff files,
  - ✓ Anything you can find.

- I found some things I could support staff with early and build their confidence in me (and mine). . .
- Satisfactory participation.
- Attendance.

# Listen for a Term

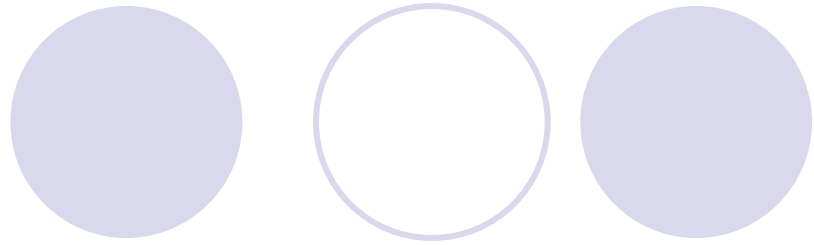
- I find it hard to shut up, but managed for a term (just!).
- During this time, I quietly consulted and identified the topic I wanted to lead with at School Development Day.
- For me it was literacy.
- It gave me the opportunity to look at the whole school.

- Discussions with staff about existing practice. It was focused in one area.
- Working with HTs in relation to explicit literacy teaching and programs.
- Looking at literacy in assessment tasks.
- Building capacity to move literacy forward in the school.
- Growing my authority.



# Listen for a Term

- Perception is an interesting thing.
- I thought I had been restrained, had been making small changes, with a gradual but definite increase in tempo over time.

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- Eating dinner with one of the DPs in mid-August, he was astounded when I said I felt I was working under capacity.
  - Perception is an interesting thing . . .

# Talk to the Kids



- Boys form bonds with people not curriculum or institutions, so being in a boys' school meant getting out there and forming some bonds.
- The canteen.

- The Student Leaders and helping them to develop an effective legacy.
- Student Focus.
- Getting to know those who know the deputies, well.

# The Challenges

- These vary from person to person because of the experiences we bring to a position. . . .



# The Challenges

- The expectation, from Day 1, that you do, in fact, know the answer.



# The Challenges

- Not getting trapped at your desk.
- Not getting lost, in the school, in the demands, in trying to do it all.
- Not importing your previous school. This is really hard!



# The Challenges

- Finance. Telling the staff that belts had to be tightened.
- Finance is not as scary as my previous boss made it out to be.
- Changing a culture from faculty budgets only to including program budgets.



# The Challenges

- **Credibility.**
- My credibility has always been through my teaching, the one thing I am not doing now.
- However, helping kids and staff brings credibility.



# The Challenges

- Being measured in my actions. My nature is to want everything done yesterday.
- Time: and the demands on it from the DET, Region, staff, parents.
- It is a marathon not a sprint.



# The Highs

- Staff goodwill and willingness to give me a go.
- The kids: most kids in most schools are good, decent people. They wanted to know about me and what I would bring.
- The sense of having a vision of where this place could be and being able to do something to achieve that.
- Realising why I got this job and not another; understanding how my skills and experience are right for this school.

# The Lows

- Physical and intellectual exhaustion.
- Things you don't want to deal with but must: you cannot flick all the rubbish to the DPs.
- Staff who are experiencing difficulties with their teaching and having to bite the bullet.