

# Leadership Across Schools



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Participant Notes

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# Executive Summary

## *Ehara taku toa, he takitahi, he toa takitahi Strength is not of the individual but of the collective*

Collaborative practice brings together the wisdom, experiences and expertise of many so that “challenges are addressed through a coordinated and collective effort” (Donohoo & Velasco, 2016, p. xii). To achieve this requires effective leadership.

This fellowship examines the skills and initiatives required for effective leadership of principal colleagues and teacher-leaders (classroom teachers with a leadership role) within a network, so that they in turn improve teacher capability. An examination of explicit acts of leadership for collaborative practice within and across schools in England, Canada (British Columbia and Ontario), United States of America, Singapore and New Zealand was undertaken. Also informing this work was a review of the literature to further understand collaboration, the leadership of leaders (principal and teacher-leaders) and finally what collaborative practices grow leadership capability.

It became evident throughout the fellowship that there are three key themes when considering effective leadership across schools. The first of these relates to leadership and the variety of models evidenced. Such models include a single leadership, shared or co-leadership and finally leadership from outside the network. A Lead Principal (the formal leader/s of networked community of schools) needs a distributed and democratic style of leadership that reflects a connected and autonomous way of working (Wenmoth, 2015). One recommendation is that different models of leadership that best support the context and identified needs of each learning community are considered.

The second key role of a Lead Principal is about improving and growing the leadership capability of teacher-leaders and principal colleagues. Professional learning and development programmes, that align with the collective vision and reflect the identified needs of these leaders are recommended. Engaging in inquiry is an essential element of the learning as it develops professional agency (Timperley, Kaser, & Halbert, 2014). Agency can also be achieved through a culture of coaching where everyone is “open to new learning [and] engage together as professionals equally committed to facilitating one another’s leadership learning, development and well-being” (Robertson, 2016, pp. 1-2). To lead improvement, there needs to be a culture of learning.

Finally, leadership across schools requires clarity around the various models of collaborative practice. Leadership of, with, and for leaders within communities of learning requires consultation, flexibility and

effective communication. A further recommendation is to establish processes that provide evidence of progress. Student achievement information is one key indicator but assurance of the effectiveness of leadership and teacher professional learning and development programmes is also essential. Peer review can provide invaluable external perspectives which challenge and critique practice based on relationships of trust and mutual respect.

The learning, thinking and reflection undertaken as a result of this fellowship have been synthesised into a 'Leadership Across-Schools' model based on Simon Sinek's golden circle (Sinek, 2009). In the inner circle, the WHY, is the belief that by **leading leaders to challenge and grow teacher capability, student outcomes improve**. This is the fundamental role of the Lead Principal and informs all decisions.

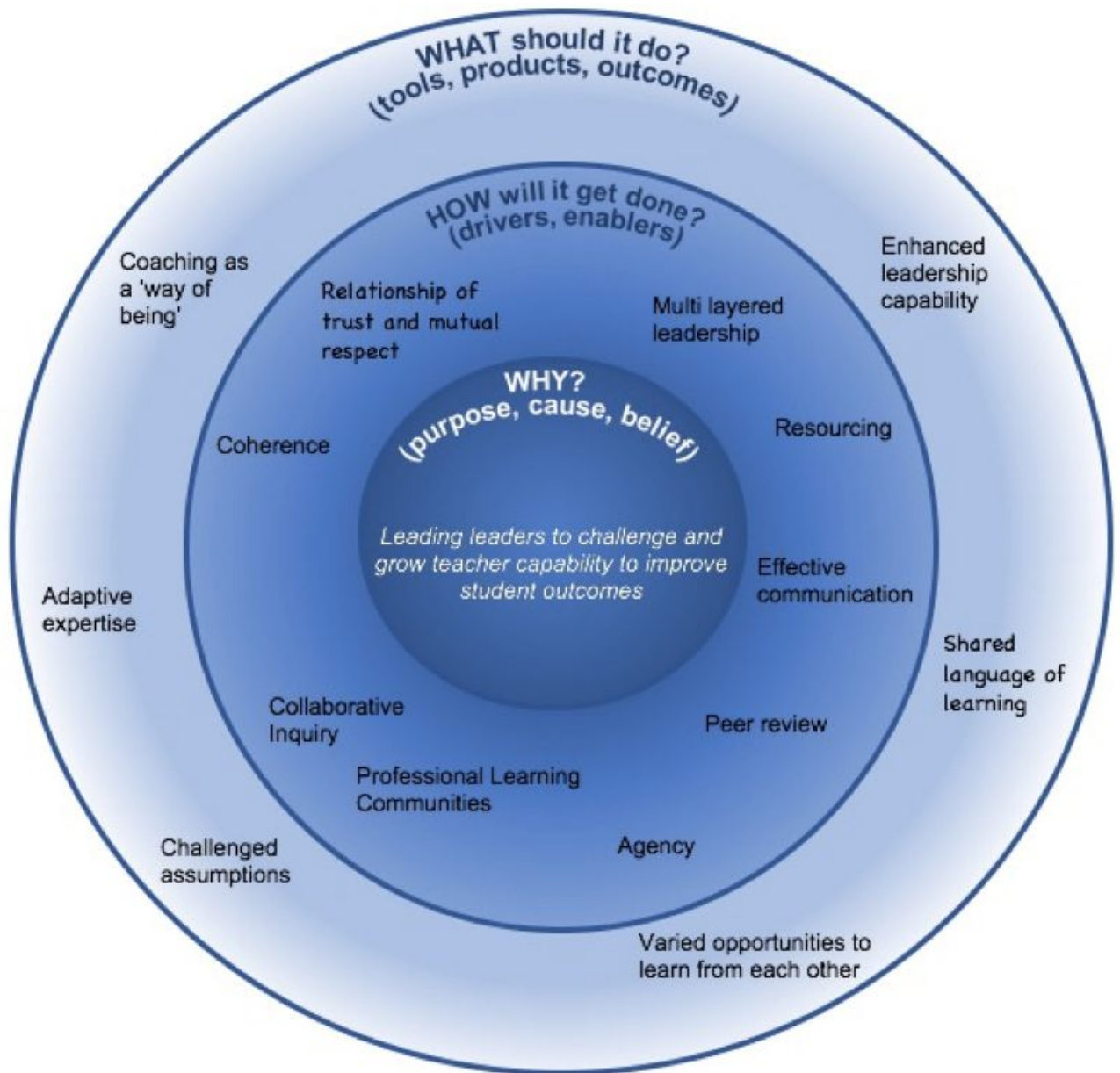
The next concentric circle, the HOW, relates to the key drivers / enablers of the central purpose. Within the context of the Leadership Across-Schools model, there are nine such drivers aimed at growing leader and teacher capability. These drivers reflect relational, organisational and capability growing considerations.

The outer circle, the WHAT, considers the agreed tools, products and outcomes. In the model there are six outcomes which provide evidence to inform accountability measures and the achievement of vision.

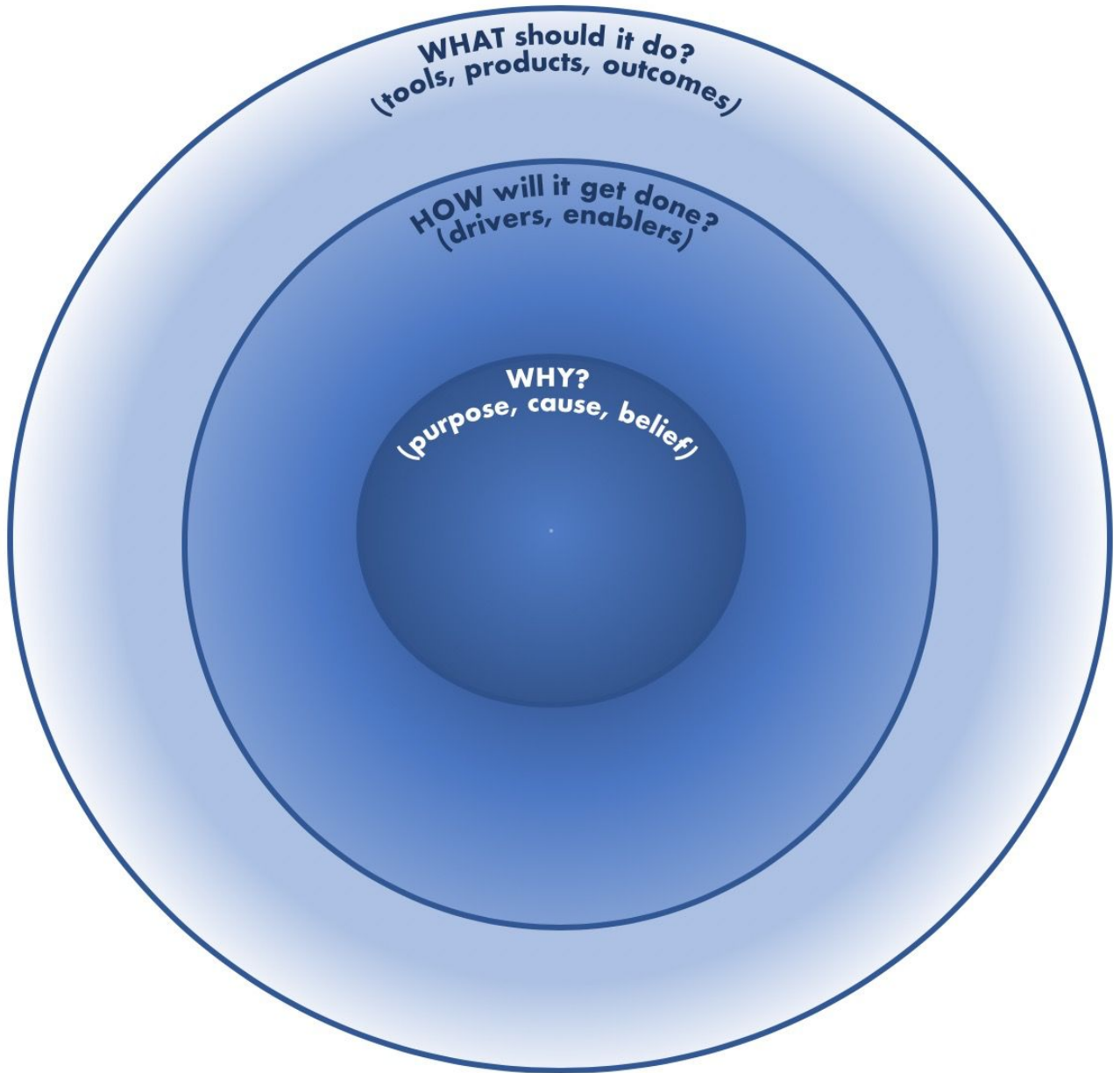
A key element to the success of a network is collectively identifying firstly the WHY, then the HOW and finally the WHAT. By facilitating the development of the network's own Sinek Circle, a leader will ensure clarity and inform the future decisions and actions to be taken.

The effectiveness of a networked learning community "will depend on the clarity and the legitimacy of their learning focus for student and teacher learning, the strength of the instructional leadership (both formal and informal) and the willingness of all to engage in collaborative inquiry that challenges thinking and practice, as a routine way of pursuing better outcomes for students" (Katz, Earl, & Jaafar, 2009, p. 107). Successful leaders may well be adept at leading their own school but when it comes to leading collaborative practice, Wenmoth (2015) suggests a different skill set is required. By allowing for flexibility in the model of leadership, building capability through collaborative inquiry models, and being clear about the WHY, HOW and WHAT of the work to be undertaken, the potential for significant improvement is maximised.

# Leadership Across Schools Model



## Develop Your Own



## Take Outs

