LEADERSHIP IN FOCUS

# SLI podcast series discussion guide ep. 24

## Listening, learning and leading with community with Bilynda Robins

Use the discussion points below to reflect on your own leadership practice or as prompts for discussion with your leadership team. Choose those that resonate most in your context.

### Speakers

**Bilynda Robins:** Principal, York Public School
**Joanne Jarvis:** Executive Director, School Leadership Institute and host of the series

## Discussion points (Part 1)

### Listening to community

Bilynda reflects on the importance of listening to Aboriginal students, families and community when shaping Aboriginal education. Rather than determining what education should look like within the school, the schools involved listened to community perspectives and used these insights to shape their curriculum and practice. Bilynda identifies listening to community as one of the most important lessons from the journey.

**How well do we remain curious s and open to the perspectives, aspirations and experiences of Aboriginal students, families and community?**

**What might we need to hear more clearly, and how could we create better opportunities to listen?**

### Building cultural safety and belonging

Bilynda describes the importance of relationships in creating a school where students, families and staff feel valued, connected and that they belong. She highlights the role of being visible, accessible and responsive to families and community in building trust over time.

**What evidence tells us that Aboriginal students and families experience our school as culturally safe, inclusive and welcoming?**

**What could we do differently to strengthen cultural safety, connection and belonging for Aboriginal students and families?**

### Relationships that support engagement

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### Relationships that support engagement

Bilynda shares how strong relationships with families and community have supported engagement and improved transitions into school. The playgroup provides an opportunity to build relationships before children begin school and to connect families with early support and services.

**What practices do we have in place which deliberately strengthen student engagement, attendance and connection?**

**Which relationships could we invest in more deliberately to strengthen engagement, attendance and connection?**

## Discussion points (Part 2)

### Working beyond our school

The conversation highlights the power of schools working together, sharing learning and building collective expertise. Bilynda describes how collaboration enabled schools to trial different approaches, learn from one another and develop initiatives that would have been difficult to achieve alone.

**Where could we work more collectively with other schools, colleagues or community partners?**

**What could we learn or achieve together that would be difficult to achieve alone?**

### Strengthening transitions and shared expectations

Bilynda describes how collaboration between primary and high school teachers challenged assumptions about student learning and led to stronger understanding of expectations across the transition to Year 7. Teachers visiting one another's classrooms created greater continuity and a shared understanding of students' learning.

**What practices do we have in place to develop shared high expectations for students as they transition between settings or stages of schooling?**

**How could we strengthen shared expectations and continuity of learning across these transitions?**

### Sustaining relationships and impact

Bilynda reflects on the challenge of sustaining progress when key people, including principals and Aboriginal education representatives, change. She highlights the need for structures that preserve relationships, knowledge and learning beyond individual leaders.

**What leadership structures, relationships or routines are needed to sustain the progress we are making?**

**Where could we extend our influence beyond our own school to strengthen outcomes across our wider community?**

## Discussion point for teams

Bilynda reflects that the schools involved could have brought the broader community of practice into the work earlier and that Aboriginal education could have been more consistently positioned on leadership agendas.

**What is one opportunity for us to collaborate more widely or strengthen our partnerships with community to position Aboriginal education more consistently on the agenda beyond our school?**

**What is one action we could take now to turn that opportunity into sustained leadership practice?**