# Transcript

## Leading from the Middle with Andy Hargreaves

Duration: 1:21:00

JUSTINE MACKEY:  
Hi everybody. My name is Justine Mackey and I am a Principal in Residence here at the Academy. And we welcome you to today's Leading from the Middle presentation from Professor Andy Hargreaves, which is a part of the Academy's Thought Leadership Series. We appreciate and recognize the work that you do for your students, for your colleagues and for your communities to provide teaching and learning of the highest quality. And we do thank you for privileging this time for your professional learning at the end of your day, on behalf of the Academy, I acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the many lands we are on today. I'm on Wurundjeri land of the Kulin Nation land that was never ceded. I pay my respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, past and present, and I extend this respect to Aboriginal colleagues who are here with us today. We recognize the continuing connection to land, waters and community. It is my honour to introduce Professor Andy Hargreaves to you this afternoon, a world-renowned speaker, author and researcher focused on school improvement.

Professor Hargreaves is Visiting Professor at the University of Ottawa in Canada and Research Professor at Boston College in the US. He is an elected member of the US National Academy of Education, former President of the International Congress of School Effectiveness and Improvement, Former Advisor in Education to the Premier of Ontario and current Advisor to the First Minister of Scotland. Andy is Co-Founder and President of the ARC Education Collaboratory. Andy has published more than 30 books and has eight outstanding writing awards. An exceptional keynote speaker and workshop leader, he has delivered invited addresses in more than 50 countries, 47 US states and all Australian and Canadian states and provinces. He's been honoured in Canada, the US and the UK for services to public education and educational research. And this is really quite impressive. He's ranked by the Education Week US, as the number 15 scholar with the most influence on US education policy debate. And he has prepared an engaging session to help you reflect on your practice and make connections to his latest research.

Please remember to use the chat function throughout the session and it is now my pleasure to hand over to you, Andy. Thank you.

PROFESSOR ANDY HARGREAVES:  
Oh, well, good morning, everyone. Good afternoon. Good morning from Belgium, where I am at the moment. I'm sitting in a small hotel room and I apologize for the athletic gear, but once I'm done with this, I have to go straight out on a hike in the pouring rain for the rest of the day. So, we will be dry here and it's afternoon there and I want to thank Rosie and Gabriela and Justine for supporting this session. We have just under an hour and a half together to think about leadership and particularly leadership from the middle. What many of you listening in will understand as possibly middle leadership or middle tier leadership. It really comes out of these four of the more recent books. And on the left, you'll see, based on the collaborative work I've done with my Boston College colleague Dennis Shirley, work we've done in North America, but other parts of the world as well, thinking really about what goes on in the classroom, what goes on around the classroom, what goes on between teachers and students in terms of learning, engagement, well-being.

This comes out of collaborative work with schools. You'll hear a bit about it later on. So, ultimately, of course, that's the focus of everything which is improving and enhancing the quality of teaching, learning and engagement and well-being for all the young people that we serve. To do that, we have to think about how we work with each other in order to be more effective and more engaging with our kids. And so these two books on the right-hand side really get to that issue. 'Collaborative Professionalism' focuses mainly, but not exclusively on collaboration within the school, on how we work together as colleagues so that we can create more effective learning environments for our kids. And 'Leadership from the Middle' is really much more about collaboration between schools, whether it's in a region, whether it's in a network, as to see how when we work together across schools and soon you'll learn that this is perhaps more powerful than you think, we can actually significantly improve well-being and engagement in each of our own schools.

So, I'm gonna start off in a minute with a bit of an introduction. And the first half of this session, we're gonna have two or three kind of short, snappy interactions just to get everybody engaged with sort of the key ideas and what they mean to you. And in the second half, we're gonna give you an opportunity for a more extended discussion in a breakout room as to how these ideas apply to your practice. So, let's go to the next slide. Can we? So, really, there are two things as to why leadership from the middle and we'll outline what this means soon is particularly important at this point in time. Not just top down, not just bottom up, but leadership from the middle. So, there are things going on within our environment. And this slide illustrates some in a moment. And there are things also going on in terms of what our ambitions and aspirations are for our kids in our classrooms. This is the environment. And there are two acronyms here. I want you to imagine them, those of you who are geographers and indeed those of you or not, as tectonic plates pushing in from the side.

So, you're in this volcano here and so are your kids, so are your school, so are your communities. And these two things are creating a very complex and challenging environment, which is hard to drive directly from the top on the left, go about the next slide, please. There's a thing called GERM. Now, the originator of this acronym is your very own Pasi Sahlberg, adopted from Finland, but now a true blue Australian in every sense of the word. And GERM, he says, has been something that has been really pushing forward in many parts of the world since the 1980s and 1990s. And it has these components just as I'm going through them are these familiar to you at all? A standardization of curriculum, of outcomes, of levels of proficiency. Testing, particularly in Australia. Think about NAPLAN and the effect that testing and pressure exert on teachers and on schools. Accountability, which in a way is also about NAPLAN but involves other things like doing walkthroughs in your school, observing how teachers teach, whether they're meeting the criteria and so on.

And Australia is very much a good fit for this one. Is competition in Australia. You've got competition between independent schools, between Catholic schools and between public schools. So, schools are also talking about standards and looking where they are on the web and what their NAPLAN scores and so on and so forth. Under privatisation too, of course, the independent schools are semi-private. So, when you put these together, you've got educators who feel that other people are controlled, that they're under control, that other people are controlling their agenda rather than their communities being in charge of their own agenda. So, that's one side of the tectonic plate. The other side is a thing called VUCA. Now, VUCA is another acronym. It's not a foot disease, it's not a Verruca, it's a VUCA. And VUCA is a term invented by the military in the 1980s, then adopted by the business community. But when you look at this, you'll think, wow, this describes me and my life right now. So, VUCA is, Volatility, Uncertainty, Chaos, Ambiguity.

Do you feel you're in a VUCA-like world now? A world of climate change. A world of war in the West. A world of increasing violence and racism. Many different parts of the world. A world where we feel like big beasts are breathing down our neck and coming after us. A world of AI artificial intelligence, ChatGPT. Perhaps I will not be presenting this in another year, but a ChatGPT deep fake of me will be presenting this instead. What does that mean for assessment, for examinations, for what counts as original knowledge? Could be a good thing, could be a bad thing. Not all these things are bad things, but together they create the feeling if we don't do something about them that were out of control. So, put these two things together, GERM and VUCA and we feel under control and out of control. And this is exactly how we torture people so it can feel torturous to be under these twin sorts of pressures. And it's definitely very difficult to manage or lead a school when these two things combine in terms of the context that defines us.

Next slide, please. Now, alongside this, that's going in your context is a good ambition and a good aspiration. And I've been doing a lot of work on this for the last ten or 15 years in different places around inclusion. Currently, I'm developmentally evaluating ongoing the inclusion strategy for the province of Nova Scotia. You'll hear a few words about this, the work I've been doing with my colleague Jess Whitley in a moment. But you'll have heard about the word inclusion. The thing, to begin with, is we have a little gizmo here to try and crowdsource your ideas. So, let's have a look at what inclusion means to you. And Danielle is going to lead you through this. So, go to the right, you'll find in the chat box. Team, you're welcome to come in, but we can't hear you. So, just be clear about the instructions here. There are in the chat box on the right-hand side. It's the second one from Rosie Colosimo and just click on there and then we'll be able to get going on this activity. Team, do you have any instructions to add?

JUSTINE MACKEY:  
I think that, yes, you can either click on the link there or you can use the QR code and you'll see that when you open up the Slido, it asks you in three words or less tell us what does inclusion mean to you? So, take a moment for that and then I will share with Andy some of your thinking. So, take a moment to add your thoughts to the Slido.

GABRIELA BONI-FINCH:  
We have quite a few contributions now, Professor Hargreaves and I would like to share them with you. We have some beautiful words.

PROFESSOR ANDY HARGREAVES:  
Let's take a look. (INAUDIBLE).

GABRIELA BONI-FINCH:  
OK, so we have equal access together, involvement, open-mindedness, opportunity, acceptance, equity, belonging, access, and access, equity and belonging were the most mentioned in this activity. We also have everyone participates, everyone can have access, respect, valued opportunities, everyone together, safety, recognizing other gifts, learning for all, good for all.

PROFESSOR ANDY HARGREAVES:  
OK. So I got a lot of access and equity and a lot about everyone. Will not show these just yet. So, I just wanna say a few words before we put up the next words that are coming here. In 1990, three dozen young people who were physically disabled put down their wheelchairs and the other devices that could help them with their physical disabilities and climbed this. So think about this, crawled the 83 steps up the US Capitol building. It was called the Capitol Crawl as a movement. It was about advocacy. And this is seen as being the main force behind the Individuals with Disabilities Act in 1990, in the United States. Inclusion originally began as meaning special educational needs. What were the special needs that young people had? Physical, cognitive, emotional, developmental that required us to think harder about access, inclusion, belonging for everyone. But over time, since this first meaning evolved, the definition of inclusion has started to expand significantly, really to take the everyone part of it seriously.

So, when my colleague Jess Whitley surveyed educators in Nova Scotia, what they perceived inclusion to be, these are some of the words that they came up with. So, could we put them all up here so everyone can see? Alright, so take a look at these. And you've got things that you've thought about here, like equity and equality, for example. But you've got many other things as well beyond special needs. You've got human rights, you've got diversity, you've got participation. Well, now, not just in Nova Scotia, but through UNESCO, through the United Nations, we think of inclusion being about everybody, people with different languages, people who are LGBTQ+, for example. People of different faiths, people of different ethnicities, people who are new Australians, people who were traditional Indigenous original Australians. We think that inclusion refers to all these groups. And so one way of understanding how we've tried to approach this is by this little diagram that follows. So, I'm just gonna show you this next.

So, there'll be no conversation here. But what I'm gonna ask you to do is just look at this and think for yourself. Just privately for a minute how these got on circles. So, you don't need to put it in the chat box. How are these dots and circles reflect the way you approach inclusion in your school or your system, or indeed the way you'd like to approach inclusion in your school or system? So, I hope you've already started looking at this. I'm gonna give you about another 30 seconds just to reflect on it. It's not mine. It comes from a British Columbia professor, Shelley Moore, who's written a book with a fantastic title, a very practical book called 'One Without the Other.' So, just think about that 'One Without the Other.' Stay on the dots, if we can, please, for a minute. Alright. So, let's go through what Shelley Moore says. Basically, I'm gonna paraphrase and elaborate to some degree, but on the left, you've got a world where everybody's normal, apart from the people who aren't, and they're outsiders and we stigmatize them.

Way back in the 1970s, we had awful words for them, fatties, homos, racial epithets that are too awful to repeat, cripples. These were the outsiders. Everybody else is in the circle, but these are the outsiders. Then as we started to get through into the 1980s. So, the second circle is really we need to do something for the people who are outsiders. So, we'll find another place for them. We'll find another classroom, we'll find another school altogether, we'll find a special school that they can go to. The third is well, perhaps if they're in a special school or a different institution, they'll not get opportunity to mix with everybody else. So, what we'll do is we'll keep them in the school and as far as possible in the class, and then we'll try and find various kinds of supports to work with them as a group with the teacher or to have individual helpers alongside them in the class. This is kind of in the middle dot here. As we get towards the right-hand side, we're now saying, OK, we've got some kids in our class who are a bit different.

They may be recent immigrants, for example. They may be, you know, most of the kids may be white Australians, but we've got some Indigenous kids in our schools or some kids with special needs. And so what we need to have is cultural responsive teaching. So, we need to be able to differentiate our instruction so that the kids who are a bit different will have a Black History Month or the Cinco de Mayo or will connect the curriculum to their cultural and ethnic backgrounds. And in that way, it's really the teacher's responsibility now, mainly not the helper to bring about inclusion. Now, on the far right-hand side is the most challenging notion. There's no such thing as normal.

We're all neurodiverse. Each one of us is unique and different. Even my granddaughter, twins, they look alike, they're identical, but they're also unique and in their own ways. And so, alongside the standardisation of German and the chaos of VUCA. You have this movement towards the right-hand circle, which is treating every child In the class as a unique individual requiring their own responsiveness. Think about that for a minute. And now let's go to the next slide. I'm gonna tell you about Ishmael Beah. Ishmael Beah is someone I met many years ago. And I want you to imagine what it's like for Ishmael Beah to arrive in your class, or for the likes of Ishmael Beah to arrive in your class. Ishmael Beah was a boy soldier in Sierra Leone during the Civil War. He was in a village and the rebels attacked and his village was burnt down and many of his family were killed. He fled with a friend of his all across the country, risking near starvation in order to escape capture but eventually, he was captured by the rebels and at the age of 12 was forced to fight, was forced to become a boy soldier.

He was dosed up with crack cocaine like the others, to make him aggressive and violent. He killed people in cold blood. He killed people not just in battle, but lined up in front of him under the instructions of his commander. I had dinner with Ishmael Beah many years ago, a few years ago because Ishmael Beah was then rescued by UNICEF. He was, in a way, re-educated. He is adopted by an American family. He moved to the States and to a state school which didn't deal with him very well. And then he moved into an international school and became a UN ambassador for boy soldiers. And now he's a lawyer and a writer. Ishmael Beah or the likes of him came into your classroom after all this, how would you respond to him? Well, you might think, well, he is black. So the things are doing around Black History Month, or a Black Lives Matter or anything else related to this would be helpful. We might assume that he has post-traumatic stress. So will anybody who has expertise in dealing with trauma will bring them in to help him and also to help his teachers help him?

And, of course, he's a newcomer, he's an immigrant, he's a refugee. And so any knowledge we have about accommodating refugees and their families for a new culture, we need to take account of that as well. But there's a few things I've not told you about Ishmael Beah that aren't so obvious. Ishmael Beah loves soccer, he grew up with it, playing in the dirt outside the homes in his village. Ishmael Beah loves rap, he had a cassette, an old cassette tape recorder, and couldn't believe how eloquent these American black poets and musicians were with words and vocabulary. And Ishmael Beah loves the colonial curriculum of William Shakespeare and used to stand on a soapbox in front of his village elders, reciting soliloquies aloud from Hamlet, Macbeth and Julius Caesar. Ishmael Beah arrived in your school to engage him, to make him feel well and belong you need to know all these other things about Ishmael Beah too. You'd need to know the fullness of Ishmael Beah. But we have VUCA and chaos, we have this huge inclusion agenda.

How possibly can all of us understand everything about everybody? It's like the new movie, everything everywhere, all at once. This is what teaching feels like for us sometimes. So next slide, please. It feels like a huge obstacle then as to how we can understand everyone. The chaos from the outside, the demands for inclusion. That's a great book by Ryan Holiday. It's a very short book called 'The Obstacle is the Way' It Comes From, a statement by the emperor Marcus Aurelius in Roman Times, who says, 'When you think the obstacle...' is a very clever title look at the book. At first, when you read it, you think it says the obstacle in the way. But what Marcus Aurelius says is 'When you think the obstacle is in the way sometimes it is the way.' So we've all experienced this like a boss who doesn't give us what we want, so a promotion. We didn't get a grant that runs out an inspirational leader who leaves. Many of us have a policy we don't like. So what I want you to do is to think about a moment in your work when you've had an obstacle and it was frustrating at first, but when you rethought it, your thought not that the obstacle is in the way, but perhaps the obstacle is the way.

And what we're going to ask you to do right now is just take two minutes on this and ten people are gonna put these in the chat box. Is that correct? Or rather just gonna reflect? I don't recall.

JUSTINE MACKEY:  
For this one, Just have a personal reflection. You might like to write it down, but no need to put it in the chat unless you feel comfortable to do so.

PROFESSOR ANDY HARGREAVES:  
So when a very important for you just to think, well there's a big thing about middle leadership is treating obstacles as opportunities. Think of COVID, think of climate change. Like a really big things or think of really immediate things that affect you. When did the obstacle become the way for you? Alright. What I'm gonna do now is I'm gonna give you a very physical example and then a couple of smaller examples of when the obstacle might actually look like the way. Last summer, Northern Hemisphere summer, but about almost 12 months ago, I received an honorary doctorate from the University of Bolton in the UK. Now I have three honorary doctorates. This is not the most prestigious. It's a tiny university, it's ranked something like 2,000 in the world. But it's the nearest university to my hometown that often graduates people from struggling families who are the first to go to college in their neighbourhood. And to celebrate this, I thought I'd take a walk across the moors, across the hills from the university the day before to my hometown where I grew up and was raised to my home, to my first home.

It's about 15 miles, and I went with a colleague of mine. Seemed like a great idea, except COVID hadn't been long passed and many of the paths were overgrown and very difficult to get through. And eventually, we came to a path between two high barbed wire fences, quite a narrow path. And the trees were blown down, many of the trees were blown down. We got under the first one over the second one, and then we came to one with tangled limbs and branches very high up all the way over. It seemed impossible to get through. It was too far to go back, it would have added three hours to our hike to take the long way round. How will we deal with this obstacle? We can't get over it, we can't get under it, we can't get around it. And then I just read Holiday's book and thought the obstacle. In what way is this obstacle the way? And then I noticed that the tree was falling sideways and it was slanted like this. And so what I could do was I could get on the tree at this end and I holding on is a bit precarious to the branches further up, I could walk higher and higher up to the far side.

And then when I got to the far side, I could slide down and end up on the other side of the tree. The obstacle, the tree lying sideways, became the way to get through the tree. Not to go under it, over it or around it, to go with the tree. When you have an obstacle, how can it become as a leader your way? You may lose a grant from outside but that makes you depend then on your own capacity for change, not on a magic monetary that's been weighed by somebody else. When you're an inspirational leader leaves, you'll lose an inspirational leader but perhaps you can gain and use and bring into being the power of your own leadership. When your boss calls you in for a meeting, instead of saying, Oh, no what does she want now? Instead, say the boss has called me for a meeting, what can I get from the boss that will benefit us and our kids? How can we make the obstacle the way? How can we turn VUCA and everything that surrounding us and inclusion into an opportunity for teacher leadership, middle leadership, middle-level leadership?

Next slide, please. Well, the first thing that it does is it wipes away the importance of top-down innovation. So anybody who thinks you can change schools for the better with NAPLAN, or with loads and loads of standards for kids and for teachers and for leaders within the curriculum, ticking boxes, filling in checklists. Well, you can do this actually when the goals are few, when you just want to improve literacy and literacy scores and math scores and perhaps attendance or going to university. Then if what you're after is simple, driving things through from the top can work. We've seen this in a number of places, Ontario and Canada is one of them, but they stem needs to be steady, not volatile, not changing control, things need to be easily measured and the goals need to be very narrow and basic. So top-down can work, it's not always fun, but when VUCA comes along, it's really raising for us the question. Now the goals are complex, we just can't use top-down anymore. Next slide, please.

So now when it's like we did in COVID. Can we go back? No. We don't know what to do. We need speed, we need agility way, we need to be able to deal with constant and ever-evolving change. Our goals now include things like belonging, inclusion, creativity, collaboration, dealing with different identities within our schools. These are very different from improving literacy and numeracy. So we have another little exercise for you here. And this is the next slide. So if the top doesn't work, and by the way there's a problem with the bottom as well, because let me give you the Cambridge Dictionary definition of bottom up. If you thought that the answer to top-down was just to have everybody in their own classrooms do their own thing, bottom up, according to the Cambridge Dictionary, is considering the small or less important parts of an organisation. I'd have that on a slide for you but we prepared these slides two or three weeks ago, and I've only found this definition within the last two or three weeks.

But so it is considering the small or less important parts of an organisation. I mean, if you're bottom up, do you really wanna be a small or less important part of an organisation? Is this our way? Is this how we see it? So there has to be something else other than the top and the bottom, which brings us to the middle. So here the question is and this is for the chat box. So correct team, everybody?

JUSTINE MACKEY:  
Yes, thank you.

PROFESSOR ANDY HARGREAVES:  
OK. This is for the chat box. So in and no more than a couple of words and you can think of more than one example. Well, in everyday life, not in school, what idioms or phrases come to mind when you think about the word middle or the middle? What comes to mind? 'Stuck in the Middle', that's a good song. Bridge, conduits stuck in the middle with you between a rock and a hard place, meat in the sandwich, middle path Buddha, middle Man, boring, restricted, average, back and forth, comfortable, middle ground, medium, confusing, shelved, best of both, indecisive, middle child. That must be a middle child speaking. They're often neglected in between conduit. Alright. These are great. Thank you for all those. Could we go to the next slide, please? Right. So look at all these and I think what we're getting is in most cases, not all and we'll look at the twist on that. This is the obstacle in the way. The middle is a problem, the Middle East all, the middle is boring. The middle child gets neglected.

Nobody wants to go back and live in the Middle Ages. Many of us have middle-aged spread but don't particularly want it and it's definitely not flattering. The hobbits lived in Middle Earth. You may get feel poor between the rock and the hard place of being piggy in the middle or stuck in the middle. In Sweden, they talk about middle milk and middle beer, which is middle milk is between semi-skimmed and completely skimmed. A middle beer is even lighter, it is between light beer and fall beer. So the middle doesn't sound like a great place. I mean, look, if you're in middle management and you put that on a dating app, do you think loads of people are gonna swipe right when they say, Oh, yes, I'm so and so and I do this and I do that and I'm in middle management and that everybody else is gonna say, wow, that's so hot, this person's in middle management, can't wait to meet them. Know the middle gets a bad rap, basically. But a couple of your responses are kind of given the clue. There's another way to say the middle outside of Western European Australasian culture.

So the middle in Arabic culture is the best place to be. In Buddhist culture, it's the point of balance and harmony. To Aristotle, the middle was the golden mean of being like the perfect centre in all things. So let's take the obstacle of the middle being weak, boring, dull just a connector, just a linkage and think about how we can build it up more positively. And that's what we'll be doing for the rest of this session. Next slide. So here's the good news. In Nova Scotia, in Canada, where we're evaluating the inclusion strategy, which is a very ambitious inclusion strategy. So it is special education, it is indigenous populations. It is a French Canadians who are quite marginalised compared to English Canadians in all provinces except Quebec. It is historic African Nova Scotians who came up to Nova Scotia during slavery to avoid being recaptured by Southern Americans as they came towards Washington. It is a rural, white to poor like many rural Australians. All these groups are part of what's understood as inclusion and LGBTQ and a special needs as well.

And then we asked as people have been trying to implement this not just in theory as an idea in terms of awareness, but actually in practice in their own schools. What have been the things that have most helped them with inclusion? And from this survey on a five-point scale, these are five being like perfect implementation and zero or one being no implementation. Here are the top predictors. So a lot about the environment you create for staff and students within your own school and how well you run a teacher support team. So teacher support teams are groups of special education consultants, counsellors, language specialists, speech pathologists and so on who work around them with the classroom teachers in the school opportunities for dialogue. We're going down a bit here. So what the collaboration looks like is as important as how much collaboration there is, so not as much progress there. And let's go to the next slide, please. Because here's.. And here's the key thing, which is the second best predictor of full implementation on a five-point scale as to how well you'll collaborate internally, with your colleagues in your own school. The best predictor, in a volatile and uncertain environment, is collaboration with other leaders, and other schools. So think about that this is real interesting. Your best predictor of full implementation is not your collaboration within your own school. It is your collaboration with other leaders in other schools. Because when goals are complex, leaders are not robots, leaders are not algorithms. Leaders have to make complicated judgments and difficult environments by what to do isn't really completely clear. And that's when light during COVID, you turn to other leaders in other circumstances, for advice for examples for support. So the obstacle is the way. What we're learning here is, in a way, the old truism that collaboration helps. But we're already beginning to figure out that it's not just collaboration within your own school as a middle leader, that helps, but it's collaboration between your schools as well.

So let's start to unpack a bit what that looks like in the middle. First, it's really about now you don't have school districts in Victoria, or in Australia, you have regions. And so that's different from school districts, municipalities, local authorities, in other places, that this is what we did with 10 school districts, but I don't need to think so much about the districts. I want you to think about what they felt was important in terms of helping them to work together. So however you work with other schools just want you to bear this in mind. So what they felt was in an environment of complicated inclusion, each school and each district is different. Each one has its own set of diversities. Some may have a lot of Indigenous students, some may have a lot of newcomers. Some may have a lot of kids with special educational needs or by poverty are diversities are different. So we need each school and each system needs to be able to respond to the diversities in front. It can't have a kind of cookie-cutter response that affects everybody and then going if you see this, like a clock go around to about 3:00.

It's then how are the schools together, or the district's together actually don't just share practice, but they take collective responsibility for their results for each other's success. If you're thinking what does that mean? Let me give you an example from a project I'm doing right now, funded by the Lego Foundation to develop play-based learning in the middle years, with 41 schools in seven provinces across Canada. So think about that for a second. And what we've done is helped schools, develop projects, and then start to connect them online. And I've been visiting these schools face to face so three weeks ago, I was in the province of Newfoundland. And in Newfoundland, we have one school which has more newcomers than pretty much almost any other school in Newfoundland, a lot of poverty, a lot of post-traumatic stress. And they've done a lot if you like about the aspects of inclusion that surround teaching and learning. So they're great posters up for LGBTQ, there are teachers with signs up saying LGBTQ teacher, not just LGBTQ kids, they celebrate Ramadan and Passover, as well as Easter.

They have all kinds of ways of recognizing the diversity but the principal has difficulty actually getting getting the teachers to change the way they teach, and the way the learning looks, and the details of all the curriculum. So around the curriculum, it's very inclusive. But in the curriculum, she's finding it difficult to take a group of teachers who've been there a long time, not far from retirement, in some cases, finding it difficult to get them to change and quite frustrated. Then we go to another school in Newfoundland, which is in a small community, it's a kindergarten to end of high school, just about 120 kids. The principal is the deputy mayor. They don't have huge resources, but they have a lot going on, they have maker space, they have a thing called a Genius Hour, where each kid every week starts to make something like a solar panel or a guitar that is unique to a passion that they have. And they have Lego ladies. And Lego ladies are teams of about year seven girls who build robots that have to go to different stations and click different things on a huge LEGO table.

It takes weeks and weeks and weeks to do this. And then this tiny school came second in the Lego Ladies Championship for the whole province. Through our network, where these schools meet online, the first school that couldn't change instruction, connected with the second school that had the Lego ladies. So the principal thought, perhaps something like this would be a way to get my school, and people are excited about instruction. But they are very little money because they're in a poor community. They have about five Chromebooks per class, for example. So you know what they did? The principal of the second school that has the Lego ladies got all his unused Lego on robotics. There was a whole heap of it, stuck it in the back of his truck, and drove seven hours to the first school to deliver the equipment that would give the school a head start. This was school, working with school, not just sharing ideals, but the strong, helping the weak, the advantage, working with the less privileged in order to improve all kids learning that is collective responsibility.

And it's about exercising your own initiative, not just implementing other people's initiatives. It's... these are like on the right-hand side of the clock, and I wanna pick up just a couple more, they're not all of them. But doing this transparently so everyone can see. And even when you know you're the Deputy Mayor of your small community, that you don't just have an attitude of showing off. But you are humble about what you do, even and especially when you're doing well, you don't have all the answers, you don't have all the solutions, you're not better than everybody else. We're all working together for collective and equitable impact for all our kids. Next slide, please. So what this makes us think about having just outline this is there is a difference between what many people think of as being middle leadership, or middle tier leadership, on what we call on a fight the schools we work with call leading from the middle, not in the middle, but from the middle. And so leading in the middle is about... actually, it's about a set of metaphors that we've worked with.

And I have some beautiful slides for this. But three weeks ago, we didn't because I've created them since in terms of other work that we've been doing. So I'll just give you a sense of what's on those slides. Think about the metaphors that you use when you're talking about change with your staff. Or think about the metaphors that people in policy use when they talk to you or write documents. Leading in the middle is really about abstract systems. It's kind of technical, and soulless. It's about being on linkage in a machine or connection between other people just to improve performance. Next slide, please. And the next slide, please. So think about the left-hand side. So think which side are you on here as I'm talking. Are you on the left-hand side when you think about middle leadership? Do you call yourself a level, a layer or a tier? Do you in your school tend to use words like tools, output, scaling up, delivery, driving change, mobilizing knowledge, building capacity levels, tiers?

Do you use this hyper-masculine language of engineering systems, tools and machinery to describe how you're operating as a school in order to get your outputs? If you do, you're on the left-hand side. And you're about to improving performance, having more efficient systems, and connecting up all the dots and the person in the middle is the person who is there to connect these dots top to the bottom move changes up from the bottom implement changes coming down from the top. Is that how you see your school? Are you on the right-hand side? Are you more organic and embodied? Do you when you describe your school and your practice as a middle leader, do you talk about growth or sustainability or webs like a spider's web? Do you talk about the heart and the head, the guts, the soul? Do you talk about your school as if it's a human thing and not an abstract mechanical thing as if it's an environmental thing and not an abstract systemic thing? Leading from the metal, I want to encourage you to think is not about you're trying to be the middle management person connecting the top to the bottom to get its work done.

But do you see yourself as the core, the centre, the beating heart? Do you see yourself as a person who brings forth changes and makes initiative takes initiative, rather than just implementing other people's initiatives? Do you work in a web with other people taking responsibility for everything that you can create and do together? And all you're not just about better systems, but in your own town in your own city, working across different kinds of schools public, independent, and Catholic. Do you see yourself as building stronger communities for all the kids that you serve together? What kind of metal basically are you? That is the question. Next slide, please. Are we doing OK so far? Team are we doing OK?

JUSTINE MACKEY:  
We're doing well. We're a little bit behind.

PROFESSOR ANDY HARGREAVES:  
We're a tiny bit behind. That's just what I wanted to check. OK. That's good. Of course, never tell people what a tiny bit behind because they don't know. But I'm really glad you told me on this is the way that we have to because the way that we have to do it, but we're OK. So when you're leading from... So now think of yourself as kind of this embodied, empowered person leading from the middle, not just in the middle. And when we in Ontario in Canada, where we've done a lot of this work a few years ago, one schools have been at this for a while. And we interviewed them about what leading from the middle meant to them. This is what they said, it takes three things they said number one. Next slide. It's a philosophy. So here's their view, not ours. One of the teams we've worked with, got some Birchbox sold them up, and then on what they sold, they wrote these things here. And the Birchbox are symbolic, they're natural, they're growing rings, they spread out. The middle it said it it spreads out, like the ring of a tree.

It doesn't just connect levels. It's not just a tier, it grows and it spreads from an idea. You need to let it grow, let it flourish, its vitality, well-being, community growth, ripple effect. So the philosophy is not about German standardization on performance and implementation. The philosophy is about growth and interconnection, and a complex system. Is this your philosophy of what a middle level, or what leading from the middle means as a middle leader? Next. And then you need a structure. So, the philosophy doesn't happen by practice. So, think about the structures of middle leadership in your school, you may have teaching teams, you may have matrix management, you may have all kinds of structures, but one of them that is particularly effective is what in Ontario, they call the students of wonder, students are wonder is a student who struggles with their learning in some way may not be identified. And then everybody who knows that students, gathers around the table puts a picture of the students in the middle, you can see all those rolls around the end here, this is a diagram that the school itself drew.

And everybody brings their knowledge about the student to the table in order to help them and in order to support them. Next slide, please. And so this is very recent, this is our work in Nova Scotia. So this is how an African Nova Scotian vice principal describes their work. What they do is, again, they identify at each time 10 Children are particularly struggling, they bring everybody together and awesome. And these are the kinds of questions they ask, I'm not gonna read them all out. But what else do they need to do? Are they implementing it right? Or the trauma issues, what's going on with the home or with the family? And then they have a template where they can write down 10 or 15, things that they think might be helpful, and they share them and then over the next couple of weeks or so they try to bring into being things that they figured out together might be the issues that need addressing. Next slide, please. So now you've got a philosophy, which is about growth and spread, and ripple effects.

And you've got a structure that makes this happen. And as you've seen already, that leads to a culture, what we talk about in our book on collaborative professionalism, a culture of how you work together. And next slide, please. Sorry, go back. Back one. Yeah, and there are two things that are important about that culture. This is really significant. We're gonna talk about networks in a second. A collaborative culture is not about all being friends. And it is not about all having deep relationships with each other. In 1973, our researcher called Mark Granovetter looked at the relationships between people and communities. And he talks about the weak ties, the weak connections that hold communities together, we'll be looking at this in networks in a second. And by weak ties, he means people you don't have a lot of interaction with. But the interactions are very important. The person who wants the dog past your home, the person who delivers your mail, the teachers you bring together in a team, perhaps even on Zoom, even though they don't know each other very well, they're good at getting the job done.

"What really holds organisations together," Granovetter said, "are not the strong ties, the deep friendships." The tour little teachers like the Bobbsey Twins teaching in a pod together, outside on the edge of the school who can complete each other's sentences all the time and love working together because they agree on everything. That is a strong tie. But schools are more complicated than this. And so the weak ties are how you work together in a team. You do value each other as people, but you also value getting the job done. So you need two things. You need relationships and trust the informal side, but you also need to pay attention to the formal parts of the culture roles, responsibilities, and particularly protocols to guide difficult conversations. So, collaboration is a cliche, but it really matters what the collaboration looks like. And pay attention to the weak ties in your school, as well as to the strong ties within your school. And now we're gonna get into a more sustained activity. Because you've been listening for a while here. So we're gonna move this now into particularly into networks when we think not just how you work in your school, but how you work between your schools. So this has, what, seven minutes or four? Did we say four or seven? I can't remember now.

JUSTINE MACKEY:  
Let's go for seven.

PROFESSOR ANDY HARGREAVES:  
Let's go for seven. Alright, so think of a network that you're in, any network at all. It might be a family of schools, it might be a group of schools, it might be an innovation network. Any network that you've ever been in, could you think and talk for a few minutes about one positive and one negative thing that's come out of being that network? We don't have to pull these afterwards. Just talk about them within your groups and then we'll once you've kind of primed your thinking we'll come back for the closing session, OK?

ROSIE COLOSIMO:  
We're now ready.

PROFESSOR ANDY HARGREAVES:  
OK, so I hope you found that discussion interesting, helpful, and informative to think about networks. It's important to understand networks aren't just things between schools. Your school is a network. Everything is a network. Families are networks, communities are networks. They just describe the ways we do or don't connect with each other over time. So it applies within the school and it also applies beyond schools. I've worked with over the last 15 years with helping to establish or to evaluate about eight different networks. Now, the newest one is in New South Wales where I'm heading in a couple of days. And this is one what we are doing supported by the LEGO Foundation to develop these play-based schools across Canada. So we've, a number of years now, I've been thinking in very deliberate ways about networks always exist by accident or by design. This is about how to build networks consciously so that they do the things you really want them to. And this network happen to be about improving engagement and well-being for all students through play-based learning.

But we'll go on to the next slide and we will see two things. First, is what? Whatever your network whether you're within a school or between schools, it'll probably start off the form of the network will probably start off looking like the left-hand side. That means somebody's in charge of the network, a teacher leader perhaps, or a head of a department or might even be the principal. And they're the hub. And every time something happens, it goes back to the hub. So, the hub is kind of in control. Then you get something in the middle, which is what people often then move to, which is more like a cluster design. So you've got the hub in the middle and then you've got these other mini hubs around the outside. So people sometimes think of and you've had clusters before in Victoria, where you think in regions or a group of schools with particular interests, or at different areas of innovation. So each of those is a mini-hub. And the mini hubs connect back to the main hub, but there's still a kind of structure of control there.

The goal ultimately is to move to the right-hand side, which is now people are networking spontaneously. They've done that because you've designed it to reach that point, people start things. They don't always go back to the hub asking for permission or checking out with them. But if you've got something like this in your school, your teachers are now starting to network and innovate together without always coming back to the teacher, leader, or the principal or whoever it is, is running the school. So most networks begin like the left-hand side, but the goal is increasingly to get them to move towards the right-hand side, where you've got this dynamic web of self-generated interactions through the strong and weak ties that you have in your community. OK, so what are the kinds of things you need to think about when you're building a network deliberately? Let's go to the next slide, please. Alright, so here's a few things just to kind of login because not all networks are good. You'll have discussed this.

Some work out very well, some don't work out well. They don't work out well when you don't know what the network's about when you're say the goal of the network is to share practice, sharing practice in itself leads to few changes that actually benefit students. If networks are only about talking, people will give up quickly and move on to something else that has more of an immediate impact. So thinking about what you do is really important. I've just come back from running a network of actually seven ministers. They're senior staff and teacher union leaders from seven countries, and we met in Oslo to look at peace and democracy. And the reason the ministers and the others keep coming back is not because they can hear great speeches by me or anyone else, it's because of what they do. And over the two and a half days that we meet, we bring them to the point where they will work in groups that will coach each other with really difficult problems that they're finding it hard to solve within their own system.

This is what they keep coming back for. They're not just talking, they're talking with a view to doing something. It's a facilitated activity that has value and it leads to concrete results within their own systems. There is high trust amongst these people. And importantly on number three, not all these people are jazzy, ADHD, dramatic theatrical people who are the kind, who usually love to join networks. So who do networks attract? They attract the people who love to network. They attract people who love to do ice-breaking activities in staff meetings where other people are groaning and say, "Oh no, not another ice-breaking activity." They are right. So networks attract people who like to network. The difficulty, the strength of that is they're good at getting something started. And this is how principles usually start with an innovation, but then they find it difficult to spread it out to people who aren't like them. These people are more conservative, more cautious, perhaps in some cases longer experience, a little more sceptical, a little more questioning.

Remember the first school I just described where the principal found it difficult for the changes they were making to spread out to the staff? Now, take a second school where I was in just two weeks ago where one of the most questioning sceptical teachers in the school that was committed to the work they were doing was one of the first to be brought into the network and she didn't want to join. And she said, "The principal kept asking me." And she said, "I'm not sure I can do this." And the principal kept asking and she said, "Well, you know, I think if I do this, my kids are gonna be worse off unless she really believes that". But she said to us, and the principal just kept saying, "No, you are the one. No, you are the one." She's a sceptical teacher, she's a questioning teacher. She's a somewhat traditional teacher, and most of the other teachers in the school really respect her completely because of that. So when you set up a network don't make it only for the keeners, the dramatics, the theatricals, the out there, the fancy hats, the people who like cards and activities, but make sure it includes a range of people right at the beginning.

And then who will lead it? Who will steer it? Who will support it? How will you move the knowledge around? Will you do it in person or will you do it also digitally? What is the balance between doing it in person and doing it on Zoom meeting or Teams meetings? And how will you make sure that it survives and sustains? You know, here's something to think about which is sometimes we think we have to sustain a thing. But we don't. We have to, we don't have to sustain a project, we don't have to sustain a network. We have to sustain what the network stands for. So one thing for you to think about is this, any network that you're in now or that you're building, self-consciously think what is one thing we are doing now that will last forever even though the network is gone, a new relationship that I have, a new way of working that I've developed a new strategy that I'm using with my kids, a new mentality I might have about using digital, whereas I didn't want to use it before. Learning more outside where I was hesitant about outside learning before.

What is one thing that this network is changing in me and in us that will last forever? Be quite deliberate and quite conscious and self-reflective about that. So this calls for a set of leadership skills in you. And I'm gonna close with these and I'll talk about a couple of these more than the others. But here they are to they're at the, so this book will be coming out in August. It's called 'Leadership from the Middle'. When you go there, if you wanna think about your own leadership, the place to go is the end to the epilogue because the reviewer said, "This was the best part of the book." So perhaps begin with the epilogue first and then go back afterwards. And so think about your own leadership as we finish with these and perhaps take one of these with you after this meeting and then perhaps discuss it with a colleague in detail. So here we go. Next slide. For yourself, so particularly think for yourself as a middle leader. How often do you seize the initiative? Do you step forward before other people do you know, in this meeting in that we just had in Norway, we kept getting questions beforehand from the ministers, well, which other ministers are coming?

It was a bit like a prom dance. I'll come if they'll come. Well, tell me which other ones are coming. No, you be the leader, you go first. You say, "I'm coming, and then everybody else will follow." Don't with innovations or networks treat it like a prom dance and say, "I'm gonna only get into this if other people are getting into this." Take the lead. Be the first one over the top, the first one to move ahead, the first one to step forward. Don't wait for others. As the law enforcement people say in Scotland, proceed until apprehended. So, next one, please. Then here's the one I raised before. Lead up. So we think of middle leadership about leading people below you and leading people beside you, but you've also gotta lead people above you. Do you ever go to your boss, whoever that is, to give them praise, to give them praise without looking like a creep? Because you know what, your boss never gets praise. It's a lonely job. People go in to complain about things or to ask for things nine times out of ten.

So when do you by your own initiative go and give pr positive feed and praise back to your boss? And also 'cause then it's easy to give critical feedback later on once you've given, just like with kids, bosses are no different- given the positive feedback first and the critical feedback later. And so lead up, don't just lead across and lead down, lead up too. Next. Lot of what you'll deal with this paradoxical in leading from the middle. You're caught between the principal's office and the teachers, people wonder which side you were on. How do you step forward and show you are the leader, but also step back and distribute the leadership to people around you? How do you say your door is always open, but also protect the needs for your own time and your own mental health and your own renewal and refreshment? These are dilemmas, these are paradoxes. They have no automatic answers, but effective middle leaders know how to see paradoxes as not terrible obstacles, but as opportunities to do both and not either or to meet both demands at the same time rather than moving between one and the other.

You know, if sometimes you step back, but also don't step back all the time. But know when and how to step forward and to be the one at that instance who is really in the driver's seat. Next. And then lead together. But leading together doesn't mean giving other people horrible things you don't like to do. That is not leading together. Leading together means giving other people things to do that you love to do and sometimes having to watch them do it less well than you to begin with. That's really hard. But they have to learn how to do it. And to learn how to do it, you have to give away stuff you want to do as well as stuff you don't want to do. And then like that crystalline network, create an environment where people can step forward, want to step forward, and feel it's OK to be critical of your if you, they feel you're taking the wrong direction for values that you all agreeing together. If we agree on the same thing but disagree about the best ways to achieve it, we are truly blessed as a community.

Next. Remember, lead inclusively. Don't on the network with people who like to network, network with people who are a bit slower. Network with the finance people, network with people who like spreadsheets, network with people who like clear agendas and sticking to time every minute just as we are now. Network with the people who are different from you as well as ones who were the same, including people who look different from you as well as think differently from you. Number six, next. Lead sustainably. Don't make it all dependent on you. If you are run over by a bus or a bicycle or anything else tomorrow, is there not just one person, but are there a group of people who can stand in your shoes and take over, I'm last. You may not lead forever, but you must always lead for good. That is the moral imperative for all leadership at the end. Can I finish with a metaphor, team? Yes, no.

GABRIELA BONI-FINCH:  
Yes. We are out of time, but a quickly round-up would be great. Thank you.

PROFESSOR ANDY HARGREAVES:  
OK, so one-minute metaphor to close. When there's a storm coming what are most animals do? They run away or they hide. As they're trying to run away from the storm, they find the storm follows them all the time. They're in the storm, they're not escaping from it. There's one animal that doesn't, it's the buffalo. When the storm comes, the buffalo turns around and faces the storm and it knows it will be hard, but it realizes that by getting through the storm it will come out on the other side quicker and more effectively than anyone else. When you are leading from the middle are you gonna be like all the other animals and run with the storm, hide from the storm, be defeated by the obstacles? Or will you be a buffalo turn into the storm with the rest of the herd and come out the other side together? That's the challenge of middle leadership.

JUSTINE MACKEY:  
Thank you, Andy, that I'm so pleased that you finished with that beautiful metaphor. And thank you, everybody, for your participation in this afternoon's webinar with Andy Hargreaves. And really sort of thinking a couple of points there that idea of leading off don't wait, you know, be the beating heart and how you sort of manage that paradox of looking both ways at once and not leading just for inclusion, but through inclusion and that can be a challenge, But essentially that we're all here for leading for good through that moral imperative. So thank you so very much, Andy. It's been just such a joy to hear from you. And for all of those of you who are with us this afternoon, keep in mind that, you know, there are always ongoing professional learning opportunities here at the academy. Keep connected and look after yourselves, and we are here to support you with your leadership and your teaching work. So, thank you, everybody. Enjoy your evening.