# Transcript

## Thought Leadership Series: Steve Munby on Imperfect Leadership

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**KATE MORRIS:**

... school, your role if you're joining with your team. It would be fantastic if you could do a shout-out, tell us about you, tell us where you're joining from and if you've got a particular area of interest, if you're a fan of Steve's book, send us a note, drop it in the chat. I just saw someone from Northcote High School there, my old school, Steve. Welcome, everyone. Kate Morris here from Bastow.

I'd like to acknowledge the Bastow team who've set us up beautifully today for the Thought Leadership Series. Steve Munby is with us. He's going to be speaking to us about his hot topic imperfect leadership and leadership in times of crisis and uncertainty, and certainly all of you have guided us beautifully through the last term and now into term 3 as we've transitioned from remote learning back to schools and now in remote learning again.

So it's a fantastic opportunity to have someone with great leadership, knowledge and integrity and incredible level of generosity and humanity about them to share this experience with us today. And we're going to get started in just a moment. Can I begin by acknowledging - thank you, Steve. Kate Morris here from Bastow. Fantastic to have you all here.

Can I begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we're working and learning and meeting today and pay our respects to their elders past, present and emerging and Aboriginal colleagues with us today. Delighted to be welcoming Steve Munby - welcome, Steve. Fantastic to have you back at Bastow. I know you've been a friend of Bastow, a friend of the Department of Education across a number of years and have advised and supported the work that we've done around communities of practice, also our leadership programs at Bastow and within the department and schools, so it's brilliant to have you here. I haven't met you before, but I have read your book.

You are one of those people that really make me think about the power of communication and the incredible knowledge, your great listening skills and your capability to consider how improvement should happen and how that equals performance both for individuals and organisations. So I'm going to hand over to you, Steve, and allow you to take our Victorian educators through the journey today. Thank you.

**STEVE MUNBY:**

Okay, thanks very much, everyone. It's great to get a chance to talk to you all here from Manchester in the UK to you all in Victoria and in Australia and a few from wider than that. It's great to be working with Bastow again too. I just wish I was there in person rather than doing this online. Now, I'm not a researcher or an academic, but I have led three large education organisations over 17 years and as a leader I've had to deal with many challenges and crises in my career. I've had to deal with the aftermath of the murder of children, I've had to deal with gangsters carrying guns, with the death of members of staff and wholesale redundancies, but the challenges that leaders in schools all over the world have had in recent weeks and months as a result of this pandemic are unprecedented and I saw this tweet on Twitter which said - sorry, I'll see if I can get it to come up. It's just not coming up. Hang on. Bear with me. Mmm, right. Technology.

There we are. It said, "My leadership development program never prepared me for this. "Of course no development program can possibly prepare leaders to help them to deal with the current issues and challenges that they face in this pandemic. We're in unchartered territory. You can't go to an experienced principal and say, "Well, how did you manage it last time?" because there has been no last time. There's no manual or mental map to fall back on. And the impact of the COVID-19 virus means that leaders in education in many parts of the world are being required to make decisions that might endanger lives and many leaders that I've been working with have been feeling isolated and stressed themselves.

And many in Victoria are deeply exhausted because after leading their schools through the bushfire emergency then straight into the COVID-19 crisis with hardly any break. Now, I know of someone in England who was appointed to a first ever principalship of a high school and began that role at the beginning of April and the school was in lockdown and so the children weren't going except for essential workers' children and hardly any of the staff were there. And during the Easter holidays a member of the science team, a member of science staff, died of COVID-19.

Now, it's tough enough for any principal to deal with the death of a member of staff in school, but to deal with it when it's a brand-new school that you've never worked in before and it's your first principalship, it's really challenging, and then to deal with it when you can't even bring the children and the staff together to grieve for the member of staff who's died because of lockdown and you can't even have a proper funeral for them, that is unprecedented. So we're in very, very challenging times, and I'm sure you have your own stories to tell about the challenges that you've been facing in your own context.

But there are some general principles of leadership that do apply in times of uncertainty and crisis and that's what I want to talk about today. And in doing so, I want to make reference to a book I wrote last year called "Imperfect Leadership: A book for leaders who know they don't know it all ". Now, why did I choose to call this book "Imperfect Leadership"? It's a strange title. I chose to call it that because I think imperfect leadership is the best way to describe my own leadership and that's not something I'm embarrassed about or ashamed of. In fact, I'm proud to be an imperfect leader because I have a problem with this idea of perfect leadership.

I have a problem with the idea that you're supposed to know it all. I think if we think we should be perfect as leaders, we'll make ourselves mentally or physically ill. We'll do our heads in. If we think we have to be perfect as leaders, we won't devolve responsibility to others, we'll do it all ourselves. And if we think we have to be perfect as leaders, we won't encourage others to step up into leadership because they have to be perfect too. So I want to speak in praise today of imperfect leadership. And in the book I write about an honest account of leadership. It's not one of these books you read where it's all about what wonderful things I did. It's actually about some of the mistakes that I made, some of the angst I went through. It's about my leadership journey.

Also there are 12 speeches, in the book there's 12 speeches, because every year I had to make a speech to a big conference of about 1,000 or 2,000 school leaders and since it was the same kind of people who turned up every year, that was 12 different speeches on school leadership. So in the book I've summarised what I said each year on school leadership. In the book I identify 10 important things about imperfect leadership. I say that imperfect leaders are aware of their strengths and weaknesses and their context. They are servant leaders. They know it's not all about them. They show up and walk into the wind, but they sometimes make mistakes and may need help to get up again. They value their teams and they empower them. They know they don't know it all. They ask for help and are invitational. They demonstrate power and love because they know everyone else is imperfect too. They make public promises on the most important things they want to achieve because they know their weaknesses and they may not do it otherwise. They acknowledge their mistakes and manage their ego. They learn from their mistakes. They encourage others to step up into leadership because nobody is the finished product as a leader, and they are authentic, honest, and they try to do the right thing.

Now, I'm not going to speak about all those aspects today. That would be a different speech. I'm going to focus today on those aspects of imperfect leadership that apply particularly to leadership at a time of crisis and uncertainty. And I've chosen seven principles for leading at a time of uncertainty as they apply to imperfect leadership. So here are the first of the seven principles. Principle one, be a servant leader.

Now, in May 2010 in England we had a change of government. We moved from a left of centre government to a right of centre government led by the Conservative Party and Michael Gove became the Minister for Education for the whole of England. Only three weeks after he was elected as the brand-new minister, it was the National College for School Leadership's annual conference and I was the CEO of the National College for School Leadership and we had over 2,000 school leaders with overflow rooms to get everyone so they could see it present for this conference and I was going to be giving the first keynote speech and the brand-new minister the second keynote speech and I had to think of something to say that would reassure school leaders and inspire them at a time of great uncertainty because they knew that the political landscape had changed and that education was about to change.

So I had to say something that was relevant to the 2000 school leaders in the audience, but also I was aware the Minister for Education, the brand-new minister, was sitting in the audience and was following me on stage after my speech. It was the most important speech I'd ever made, actually. I decided to speak about the idea of servant leadership because servant leadership is this concept of leadership as service. Servant leaders don't ask themselves, "What kind of leader do I want to be? "They ask themselves," What kind of leadership is wanted of me? "They see it as their fundamental duty to do everything in their power to act in the interests of those they serve, in our case children, young people and their families. Now, this resonates with the idea of imperfect leadership because imperfect leaders know they're not the finished product. It's not about ego. It's not all about me as the leader, it's about trying to do what is needed of me as the leader.

Now, as leaders we all need to develop our own leadership style. We need to learn to walk in our own shoes. Leaders need to develop their own leadership style based on their beliefs and values, their expertise and skills, their personality and their context. Now, much of this is fixed but some changes and therefore we need to change with it. Now, obviously if you change jobs, then of course your context changes. But actually you can find yourself in exactly the same job, in exactly the same school, but your context has still changed.

And actually changing as a leader is quite hard. Like teachers, leaders can form habits and develop ways of behaving that have served them well in the past and that have become instinctive. This can make it harder for leaders to change in the future. There are lots of good things about being an experienced leader compared to being a novice. Expert leaders can draw on their previous experience and knowledge. They have mental maps and they know what to do in this situation or in that situation.

All of this is good, it's how we acquire wisdom in leadership. But we can get a bit stuck sometimes. We can become narrow in our thinking, especially if we've been in the same school or organisation for a long time. I know I've got this wrong in the past myself. I don't know whether you've seen this sigmoid curve diagram. It's quite well known. It says most organisations start off and improve rapidly and then they reach maturity and then they start to decline. Now, if you spot as the leader - you spot the fact that you're near the top of the curve and change things, you can get an inflection point and get more improvement. If you don't spot it until you're coming over the other side, you can still change things but it's much harder to do so. There's more pain involved.

Now, for me at least twice in my leadership this happened to me. I was doing things as I had always been doing, things were going quite well and I failed to spot that my context had changed and required a different approach to my leadership. So spotting that context is really important. Now, everyone knows that the context has changed at the moment for school leaders because of COVID-19. So perhaps we're used to taking some ways of working for granted because we've been in the school for a long time, but is it now time to amend what we're doing in the light of our new context? What kind of communication is needed now from me compared to the past? What kind of delegation is needed from me now compared to the past? What do my staff and students and their parents need from me now that they didn't need from me six months ago? And how should I work and my school work differently to be the leader that they need now.

So my first reflection point is this - what might I need to change in my ways of working to make sure that the leadership that I'm doing meets the needs of my new context? So that's principle one, be a servant leader in terms of crisis. Principle two is show up and walk into the wind. Now, this may seem a pretty obvious point that in times of crisis you show up, but I could give you loads of examples of leaders who failed to show up in terms of crisis. I'm spoiled for choice actually. But I'm just going to give you two examples.

The first one is George Bush at Hurricane Katrina in 2005. The south-eastern coast of the USA was devastated. More than 1,000 people lost their lives, large parts of New Orleans had to be rebuilt. But George Bush, the President of the USA at the time, flew from his home in Texas, he flew over the site, he could see the devastation below, and carried on flying to Washington to the White House. There was an outcry and some people would say his leadership never recovered from that decision not to show up at Hurricane Katrina. The second example I'm going to quote to you is the Queen in Wales in 1966 and the Aberfan disaster when a slag heap engulfed a school and killed 109 children and five teachers. The Queen did not show up. She thought she'd be in the way, that others would be more equipped to deal with it than her, that she would be a distraction. It took eight days before she visited Aberfan and many years later she said, in 2002, that not going straightaway to Aberfan after the disaster was one of the biggest regrets of her reign. So colleagues, in times of crisis we show up.

On these occasions we don't delegate, unless we're actually too ill to be there or it's physically impossible for us to be there. We don't rush to our offices to respond to urgent requests from the department. We don't spend the day hiding away doing strategic planning confident that our team has it all under control. In these situations the community and those you lead need their leader, the boss, the person ultimately in charge, to be there, to empathise, to connect, to show how important this situation is.

Now, I haven't had to deal with a crisis like that, but I will give you one example from my own leadership. Many years ago I was a director of education for a local education authority in England. I had responsibility for 80 schools. It was a small authority near Merseyside in quite a deprived area. One day I was at my desk and I got a phone call from a high school principal. He said to me, "I'm calling you because I'm in fear of my life. "So I said," What's happened? "He said, " Well, we just temporarily excluded a child and I brought the father in to explain to the father why we were temporarily excluding his son and the father said, " You can't exclude my child ", so I was explaining to him why and what the rules were and the feller said," No, you misunderstand me, I won't let you exclude my child because if you do exclude him, I'll do you harm, ask the police about me. "

So after he'd left, the principal rang the police and the police said," Ah, yes, he's a gangster and a killer, we can't protect you. "That's when the principal rang me. Now, there's a few things I could have done when I got that phone call. I could have sent the school improvement adviser into the school. I could have telephoned the police from my office. But what I did do instead was I said to him, "I'll be there in 20 minutes. "I got in my car, I drove to the school, I went straight to his office and I said," From now on, you're not dealing with this on your own, we're going to deal with this together. "And we sorted it out, we got police protection, we dealt with the exclusion away from the school.

But many years later I was at a concert in Manchester and I came across this school principal. He came across to see me. He saw me and came up to me and he said, "I'll never ever forget that when I was frightened, really frightened, you showed up. "So colleagues, we show up in times of crisis. But we don't just show up, we walk into the wind. Walking into the wind is when you know that it's going to be really, really tough the thing that you have to do. Your stomach is churning, you want to run away. But you do that tough thing anyway because you know it's important that you do it. Now, in terms of crisis and uncertainty, there will be days when we desperately want to turn over and stay under the duvet that morning instead of going in to work, we can't face it, it's too hard. Some parents may be irate, the unions may be kicking off, teachers may be frightened, you're unsure whether you're making the right decisions and whether you've got it right this time, you don't know what's going to happen. But if we come across as a quivering wreck, that makes it so much harder for those we lead and for those who rely on us.

At times like this, at times of uncertainty and crisis, when there's nobody else, the job of leaders is to be there, to get up in the morning and go back to work and to walk into the wind. Now, as imperfect leaders, we get this wrong sometimes. We make mistakes. Sometimes we'll fall flat on our face. I like the Japanese proverb which says good leaders embrace fall down seven times, get up eight. That's a great proverb, "fall down seven times get up eight". But imperfect leaders may well need support to help them to get back up again. Fortunately, imperfect leaders are good at asking for help.

So my second reflection question is this - am I clear about the times when it is essential that I show up rather than delegate? And are there issues in my leadership that I've been avoiding? Is it time for me to walk into the wind? So principle three is ask for help internally and externally. Be an invitational leader. Now, invitational leadership is one of my main leadership styles it turns out and actually it's quite an effective style, it's quite an effective strategy to be an invitational leader. And there's three reasons why it's so effective. The first is this.

If we ask for help, we get better outcomes and better strategies if we ask for help from experts. Now, I'm going to show you some photographs. Here's a photograph of where I used to work in Knowsley in Merseyside in England. That was my office, I was in one of those rooms in that concrete building there, and my view was over McDonald's and a car park. I was in charge of 80 schools and I did that for five years. It was a very challenging job, but I loved it. But I went straight from that job to being Chief Executive of the National College for School Leadership in England and that was my office. It was huge. It had a lake and a moat. It had swans and the occasional heron. It had 100 bedrooms, a posh restaurant and a bar. That's a photograph of the bar that you can see there. And when I got the job, I was told that one of my roles was to advise the Education Minister on school leadership. Well, I'd never even met an Education Minister before, never mind advise them on school leadership, so I was completely out of my depth. It was way beyond my experience and expertise. And when you're in that kind of situation, the best thing to do is to ask for help from experts and that's what I did, I got myself four mentors. Mentor number one was Estelle Morris, who was the former Minister for Education, and she helped me to understand how ministers thought, how officials worked, how the machinery of government operated. That was invaluable to me. The second mentor I got was a guy called Tim Brickhouse, who was a guy full of moral purpose and I wanted to make sure I held on to my values in this job, and also he was a great strategist and I wanted to tap into his expert strategic thinking. The third mentor I got was someone you might know called Tony Mackay, who actually lives in Melbourne, and Tony Mackay is the best networker I've ever met and I knew if I was going to be effective as Chief Executive of the National College for School Leadership I needed to meet lots of key people who could do us harm or do us good and I needed someone to introduce me to these people and Tony was brilliant at doing that for me. And my fourth mentor was a guy called David Albury, who recently had written a report commissioned by the Government about the National College for School Leadership and the report that he'd written was quite critical, so I figured if he knew what the problems were with the National College, he could help me to sort them out. I could not have done the job without access to those four mentors.

So this idea of asking experts for help is so important in leadership. In England we have a soccer team called Liverpool. I'm not a fan of Liverpool per se, but they are currently the best team in England. And Jurgen Klopp, the manager, was asked just before the pandemic hit England why he was having a football match and this was at a press conference and this is what he said, "I am a football manager not an epidemiologist. Ask me about football and management. Ask the epidemiologists about Corona Virus. "Now, compare and contrast that with what Donald Trump said a couple of months ago at a press conference - " And then I see the disinfectant, where it knocks it out in one minute. And is there a way that we can do something like that, by injection inside or almost a cleaning, because you see it gets in the lungs, so it'd be interesting to check that.

"On the one hand here you have someone like Jurgen Klopp, who relies on the expertise of others, and someone else, like Donald Trump, who seems to think he's an expert in everything. Now, I know that as leaders we get put on the spot and that parents expect us to be able to answer their queries and respond to their concerns, I get that, so we need to know enough to be able to do that, but we also need to know when our boundaries of our knowledge are finished and we need to ask for expertise from outside or at least get a chance to talk it through with a colleague from another school or another organisation.

So the first reason we ask for help is we get better outcomes, we get better strategies. The second reason why asking for help is a good idea is it develops a sense of collective responsibility. If as leaders we say, "This is the broad direction I want us to go in in this time of crisis, but I need some help to work it through to do some problem solving to remove the barriers", et cetera, then that helps everyone to have a sense of collective responsibility and you can begin to deliver a coherent strategy that everyone buys into. You know there's that issue of vision. You know when you become a leader of a new organisation you're supposed to have a vision when you arrive. You're not supposed to turn up on day one of your new role and say, "Well, I don't know what to do. "

On the other hand, the people who you are leading expect you to have a vision that connects to their reality. And so it's hard to get it right as a leader. When I went to be Chief Executive at the National College for School Leadership in England I got all the staff together just before I started in the role as CEO and I told them this story. I said my wife and I had heard that the view in the Greek island of Santorini of the white buildings and the blue sea and the extinct volcano rising up out of the sea and the blue sky was one of the most beautiful views in the whole world, we'd seen photographs, so we decided to go and see for ourselves.

So we flew to Santorini, got off the plane into the minibus and the minibus took us to the cliff edge to see this fabulous view and that's what we saw. The mist had come down and we couldn't see a thing. Now, we knew that it was going to be a beautiful vision. We knew that the buildings would be white, the sea would be blue, the Caldera would be rising up out of the sea and the sky would be blue, we just had to wait for the mist to clear. So I told the staff at the National College, I said, "I have a vision for the future of the National College for School Leadership. It's got this aspect and it's got this aspect and it's got this aspect, but it's a misty vision and I want us to work together to clear the mist. "And this idea of a misty vision - you've got a vision, you've got some clarity about broad direction, but you need help to demystify it and make it truly real, that's an interesting concept. It's about building a sense of ownership and collective responsibility.

So that's a second reason why asking for help is a good idea. And the third reason that asking for help is a good idea is because it helps to build a sense of trust amongst your team and it encourages your team to ask for help too. Now, in the book I do lots of stuff about why leadership teams go wrong, teams go wrong, and in fact most leadership teams do go wrong. But I'm only going to mention one today briefly and that is this idea of trust. If trust breaks down in your leadership team, if people don't trust each other or don't trust you or you don't trust them, it's a very bad place to be. And Patrick Lencioni says that trusting teams admit weaknesses and mistakes, ask for help, accept questions and input about their areas of responsibility, take risks in offering feedback and assistance, appreciate and tap into one another's skills and experience, and offer and accept apologies without hesitation.

Now, if those are the characteristics of trusting teams, how can we possibly expect our teams to have those characteristics unless we as leaders model it? So as leaders we have to admit our weaknesses and mistakes. We have to ask for help and not pretend we know it all, accept challenge on our areas of expertise, take risks in offering feedback, tap into others' skills and expertise, and offer and accept apologies without hesitation. So asking for help and being an invitational leader helps to build trust amongst the team that we lead.

So principle three is am I asking for the help that I need internally and externally? Is there more that I could do to model invitational leadership in order to build trust amongst my team? Okay, principle four, be decisive but be quick to review and if necessary amend. See, in a crisis people want strong leadership, they want decisiveness, they want a clear direction. What they don't want is dither. Sometimes what's important is just to make a decision, but in unprecedented situations it's possible that we can get this wrong.

So on the one hand, we need to be decisive. On the other hand, we need to be open about the fact that these are best guesses and there's no certainty. We may be wrong. So we move forward, we make clear decisions, we're informed by careful reflection by asking for expertise, expert help, but we also need to review those decisions regularly and if the decision made in good faith turns out to be the wrong decision, then we need to admit that openly and then make the right decision. As my friend and colleague David Bell says, "If we made a bad call at the beginning of the crisis, or we have misstepped along the way, change course fast and don't make 'sorry' the hardest word. "Now, some state and government leaders seem to find it impossible to say," Sorry, we got that wrong. "Acknowledging responsibility is key here.

Frankly saying "I'm sorry you feel upset about that" doesn't fool anyone. They know you haven't really apologised. As Lewicki says, when it comes to an apology "the most important component is an acknowledgment of responsibility. Say it is your fault, that you made the mistake. "Imperfect leaders know that sorry is not the hardest word. I don't know if you've been following the crisis in the UK over the results of examinations for 18-year-olds, the external examine that decides your entry into university or apprenticeships or employment. No examinations took place this year because of COVID and each separate education system - Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, England - made the decision to use school-assessed grades but then to standardise them using an algorithm to make sure that the grades this year were no different from last year or not very different from last year.

Now, this went badly wrong in each of the four systems especially because those who were most disadvantaged children or came from the weakest schools did even worse than they ought to have done. So in Scotland the First Minister, the day after the grades were issued, announced that they'd got it wrong. She apologised personally, she took personal responsibility and said that from now on they weren't going to use the algorithm, they were just going to use the school-assessed grades.

In England, in contrast, the Minister announced there would be no U-turn, that the algorithm process was robust and he waited a whole week before then at the last minute announcing that the algorithm was flawed, the school grades would now be accepted, and he blamed the exams regulator for why everything went wrong.

Now, we're all imperfect leaders. We will make mistakes. People will forgive leaders who sometimes make mistakes and they'll admit to them, but they hate a cover-up or a blame culture. So reflection number 4 is this, am I avoiding any decisions that now need to be taken? How good am I at accepting responsibility when things go wrong and changing tack accordingly?

Principle five - deal with the urgent but build in some space for the strategic and for the future. Now, the urgent is essential. People need you to lead and to address what's coming at them, but sometimes the urgent can become compelling, almost attractive. The adrenaline flows, you feel important, you're making a difference, you're responding to immediate needs, but even in a crisis it's important to set some resources aside to look at the big picture and the long term.

Macka Baba, my friend, in a recent blog tells the story of how in 1940 when London was at war and completely isolated and being bombed every night by the Germans and an invasion of Britain was imminent, a small number of senior officials from the then Board of Education settled into a few rooms at a hotel in Bournemouth and set about the task of designing a school system for after the war. In the middle, in 1940, when everything looked hopeless, there they were planning for the future of the education system. Four years later this provided a foundation for the 1944 Education Act and the postwar education system. So one of my heroes is Leonard Cohen and he says, "There's a crack, there's a crack in everything. That's how the light gets in. "Now, the pandemic is a tragedy, it's horrible, it's doing nasty things, but it also does provide us an opportunity to step back and think.

So how can you use the pandemic as an opportunity to change things for the better? Now, I want you to imagine that the pandemic has happened, it's over, we've got a vaccine, everyone has had the vaccine, it's all scaled up, we no longer have a pandemic. We came through it. So I want you to imagine, with apologies to Adele, Hello from the Other Side, after the pandemic. So what's it like at the other side when the pandemic is all finished?

Well, I think there are three things that might have happened that would be great for our education systems and I want to talk about those three now. Imagine that this has happened, the pandemic has finished and this is what we've got now - a renewed valuing of schools, a move away from a technocratic approach towards a more rounded approach to education. Because during the pandemic there was some great online learning going on in homes throughout the world and we learnt from the very best of that online learning and that technology and we used it in a more blended way when schools came back, but the key message was that we really value schools. We really missed them when we couldn't go. We missed schools not just for the chance for students to learn again through a well-taught, face-to-face curriculum, though that's important, but for all the other hugely important aspects of school life.

So after the pandemic, there was a much clearer view amongst the general public and from governments that schools are so much more than organisations, they're about tests and examinations. The value of schools as communities of people came through much more strongly. For many young people, schools provide a sense of safety and security that perhaps they don't get at home, a sense of order and expectations that may be lacking elsewhere. For some students, it may be the only place where they can have a positive and valued relationship with a significant adult or a chance to spend time with a friend who likes them and values them. And schools help us to explore possibilities, not just in classrooms with teachers but in all kinds of social interaction that take place during and after the school day. And they connect us with people who are not like us and with people who are like us, encouraging us to embrace diversity and to explore identity. We miss schools for the humour, for the interaction, for the sense of belonging, and of course this applied to staff as well as to young people.

So after the pandemic there was a deeper public recognition about the purpose of schools, their value and their place in our lives. The Government too became less concerned just about measuring performance and more concerned about the broader aims of education and the crucial role that schools play in our society.

As a result of the pandemic, wellbeing and community engagement came back on the agenda as part of the core purpose of schools and not just a by-product. The second thing that happened after the pandemic was that there were fewer isolated schools. Collaboration became more embedded. There was a stronger focus on schools working together across local areas in the interests of all children in the whole community.

During the pandemic, some of the best school clusters and networks stepped up to provide support, working collaboratively with others to enhance their collective experience of the local community, sharing ideas, sharing resources. The lesson we learned from the pandemic was that schools that isolate themselves don't easily function well in times of crisis. There's a deeper realisation as a result of the pandemic that we're all in this together. I like this cartoon because some schools seem to think that if some schools are doing well, some schools are not doing well, it doesn't matter, but actually we're all in the same boat and if the boat goes down, we all die, we all drown, and there's a sense as a result of the pandemic, a realisation it's not us and them, we're all in the same boat, it's a collective responsibility here.

I want you to imagine that your school is this fishbowl on the left. It's familiar. Your expectations of the kind of swimming are traditional and known. You know who's in the bowl, you got used to it. But if you're going to have a whole system to improve, then you have to jump in the lake, but the lake has got some very strange fish in there who may have different kinds of swimming and it's a bit unknown. But the pandemic helps us to understand that jumping in the lake was a good idea, to take collective responsibility not just to stay in our own school. So, as a result of the pandemic, people became more willing to jump into the lake.

And, finally, Hello from the Other Side, there was a move towards collective responsibility and less of a focus on topdown accountability, not in a complacent or cosy way, but in a robust way. People at schools began to set out what they wanted to try to achieve, welcoming challenge, and being willing to be held to account by the communities they served. Accountability continued of course to make sure that public money was spent properly, the children were safe and secure in their school, the parents could send their children and be confident that the children would be well educated at school - all of that continued - but increasingly as a result of the pandemic schools focused less on looking upwards to the region or to the national or to the states and more looking outwards to their parents and their communities, setting out what they hoped they would achieve on aspects such as academic progress, but also on other aspects such as wellbeing and engagement, and were prepared to be held responsible for that by their own parents, by their own communities, by their own colleagues in other schools and by the system - outward-facing, lateral, collective responsibility rather than topdown accountability.

So how are you ensuring that even in the urgency of a crisis you and your team are building in some time to be strategic? My reflection is this: what are your hopes and ambitions for your school so your school doesn't just snap back into the old normal as my colleague and friend Simon Breakspear would say. What could the new better normal look like for your school or your community? Principle six - lead with empathy and authenticity and do the right thing.

As imperfect leaders, we know we sometimes make mistakes. We know that we find things hard ourselves, so we understand that other people find it hard too. As Plato said, be kind for everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle. So therefore we are genuine. In 2010 Goffee and Jones wrote a book called "Why Should Anyone Be Led by You?" It's an interesting question, why should anyone want to be led by you? And they said there are two reasons why people might want to be led by you. The first and the most important one, they said, was authenticity - you are genuine, you're authentic, you are honest, you're not playing games, you're not out for yourself, you've got integrity, you admit your mistakes.

The second reason why people might want to follow you is they think you might know what you're doing some of the time, so credibility and expertise, so expertise and credibility and authenticity. Now, in terms of world leaders, I think Angela Merkel more than most in Germany has demonstrated both of these aspects very well indeed, expertise and authenticity. A chemist by background, she's been very knowledgeable about the pandemic and has communicated that in a kind of grown-up and transparent way and she's shown empathy with the people that she's been talking to, the German citizens, and she's got very high ratings at the moment about her leadership.

I think another leader who has worked - seen as being very successful during this crisis has been Jacinda Ardern from New Zealand because when she speaks, she doesn't preach at them, she stands with them. And remember how she spoke to the children directly when she said that both the Easter bunny and the tooth fairy would be essential workers, talking directly to the children understanding their concerns. And a few weeks later she announced that she and her top team and the public service CEOs would all take a 20% pay cut because they still identified with what the citizens of New Zealand were going through, they were prepared to go through pain themselves.

One of the fundamentals of good leadership is to embrace the concept of fairness in the organisation. People have a deep-seated view, if you're asking them to do something, to take a risk, to go the extra mile, then you need to do it too. In the end if we want people to follow us, we want to have an impact as leaders, then we need to lead with integrity, we need to choose to do the right thing rather than the wrong thing.

One of my favourite writers on leadership is Brene Brown when she says, "Integrity is choosing courage over comfort, it's choosing what's right over what's fun, fast or easy; and it's practising your values, not just professing them. "And someone who many of you will know very well as a writer on leadership is Viviane Robinson, who's based in New Zealand but does a lot of work in Australia, and Viviane says that there are four things we need to be effective school leaders, use our knowledge and expertise, solve complex problems - not just simple problems but complex problems - build relational trust, and demonstrate virtues, and by virtues she means not just espousing values, but practising them, doing the right thing in the right way. I've been moved to tears by what I've seen of teachers and leaders around the world during the pandemic going out of their way to help disadvantaged children and families. It's been very moving to see people do this, doing the right thing.

In a famous speech in 2013, the Chief of the Australian Army, Lieutenant General David Morrison, once said "The standards we walk past are the standards we accept". I found that such an important statement, "The standards we walk past are the standards we accept". It's not just what we do, it's also what we choose not to do and what we choose to ignore rather than challenge. It's about virtues, about living and modelling the values. So leadership in a time of crisis and uncertainty is tough, but our behaviour matters. If we want people to trust us, we need to be authentic, demonstrate empathy, and choose to do the right things. So is there more that I can do to walk in the shoes of those I lead and see things from their perspective, like Jacinda with the Easter bunny and the tooth fairy. How well am I modelling the values of the organisation and choosing to do the right thing?

My final principle is lead with a balance of power and love. One of the most useful things I've ever found in my own leadership is reflecting on whether I've got the balance right between power in my leadership and love in my leadership. I come back to this time and time again in my own leadership. It's based on a quote by Martin Luther King, who said "Power without love is reckless and abusive and love without power is sentimental and anaemic" - "Power without love is reckless and abusive and love without power is sentimental and anaemic". By power I mean drive, focus, determination, urgency, high expectations, leading with pace, and by love I mean kindness, empathy, listening, being inclusive, asking for help, showing humility. In a crisis and in times of uncertainty we need to show power, drive, decisiveness, high expectations, pace and urgency. But as leaders we know we have to take people with us, that topdown leadership enables us to move fast but doesn't enable us to move far. That's why I like this African proverb which says "If you want to walk fast, walk alone. If you want to walk far, walk together ". And actually as leaders we want both, don't we? We don't want to wait five years for improvement, we want fast improvement. If you're coming in as a new CEO of an organisation, you don't want to say, "Well, in three or four years' time we might get better", we want it to get better quickly, but you also understand that you have to take people with you, you have to build sustainable improvement and that involves the love side of leadership, not just the power side of leadership. It's something I've wrested with all my career.

Interesting again, Jacinda Ardern said this recently, "One of the criticisms that I have faced over the years is that I'm not aggressive enough or assertive enough, or maybe somehow, because I'm empathetic, I'm weak. I totally rebel against that. I refuse to believe that you cannot be both compassionate and strong "- power and love. Now, colleagues, it is possible to think you're a perfect leader and have some success. It is possible. Again, Donald Trump has had some success. He says "Nobody has ever been more successful than me ", and he thinks he's a perfect leader. But if you want sustainable, long-term improvement and want to lead in a time of crisis and uncertainty, then we need to show these characteristics of imperfect leadership. We are servant leaders. We know it's not all about us. We show up and we walk into the wind, even if we may need some help to get up again when we fall. We ask for help, internally and externally. We build trust and collective responsibility. We are decisive, but we review and then admit mistakes. Sorry is not the hardest word for us. We deal with the urgent, we give space for the strategic. We lead with empathy and authenticity and do the right thing because we know that everyone is fighting a hard battle. And we lead with power and with love. We know it is about the long term, not just about the immediate crisis. I used to do quite a lot of work in Africa in my last job as CEO of Education Development Trust and I visited a slum in Nairobi in Kenya and that's a photograph of it. You'll see that it was like an open sewer and you could smell the stink for about a mile in all directions in this slum. And the children to go to school had to walk over the sewer into their school.

Now, I don't know what your schools are like, but it's hard to imagine a worse learning environment than that. It's actually an extremely awful environment for learning. But when the children got into the school, they were delighted to be there. They loved it. And I asked the principal, who is kneeling down there at the front, I asked him, "Why are you here in this awful learning environment, why are you doing this?" He said, "I'm here because without education these children have no hope. Their parents never went to school. Education is their only hope. That's why I'm here. I'm here to serve the needs of the community." And colleagues, that's true of all of us in education. It may be not as extreme as these children in the slums of Nairobi, but we're there to give hope through education and we're there to serve the needs of our communities. As I saw on Twitter from one school principal in England who said "We are solid! We will look after our colleagues, our kids and our communities. We feel privileged to be able to serve." Thank you, Kate.

**KATE**:

Thank you, Steve. Incredibly powerful. And I might just hold that thought and give everyone 30 seconds to jot a thought down in the chat and also to think about a question they would like Steve to answer because he is available for us to continue to discuss his incredible experience, his focus on people and purpose, and the experience he brings around education. But what I saw today was a teacher at work and a great communicator with incredible expertise, so I'm going to give you some moments now to jot into the chat your thoughts and we'll pick up a message in a moment. Thanks, Steve.

**STEVE**:

Okay.

**KATE:**

Jillian, Maria, have you picked up a question there for Steve?

**JILLIAN BROWN:**

Hi, Kate and Steve. Yes, there was one earlier on in the session. Somebody just commented, "Curious about the balance between showing up and micro managing" and then went on, "I've definitely had managers think they are showing up but actually signalling disempowerment to the team." Would you like to comment on that, Steve, while we're waiting for another question?

**STEVE:**

Yes. It's a hard one to get right of course because the last thing you want to do is to disempower your team because your team are probably better at dealing with some of these things than you are and that's the whole point of being an imperfect leader. But showing up doesn't mean micro managing. Showing up actually could be empowering for your team. You're not taking away their jobs, but you're giving out a key message that this issue is so important that the person who is the most accountable at the very top of the organisation is present and listening and empathising. That's all.

Now, obviously I said in my speech that you might say well, I'll leave it for my team to get on with because they're better at doing it than I am. Well, that might be the case, but it's still important for you to be there at time of crisis. It sends such a powerful message if you are there and such a powerful message if you're not there. But it's not about micro managing. It's about demonstrating your empathy and connection with the people that you're there to serve. Good point, though, good question.

**MARIA ODDO:**

I've also got a really good question here, Steve, from Jackie - "As a teacher, how do we encourage our leaders to lead in this way?"

**STEVE:**

Well, I think - you mean leading upwards, how do I lead upwards? That's right. Leading upwards is always a challenge and I think - I suppose we can ask for help, ask their advice, and in our classrooms, in our way of operating, because every teacher is a leader - in our way of operating a classroom, demonstrate those behaviours ourselves with our colleagues and with our young people so the people who are leading us can see how we're operating. But asking for help, being an invitational leader yourself and asking for help from those who lead in the school and listening to their advice is part of that.

But I think for me one of the issues is when you're a leader, you think you're supposed to know it all, you think you're supposed to not admit your weaknesses, but actually it shows more confidence if you do admit your weaknesses than if you pretend you haven't got any. So encouraging people to be honest about what they think when you're talking to them is an important aspect too.

**MARIA:**

I've got another one for you, Steve - the word situational leadership gets thrown around lately. What would you say to that?

**STEVE:**

Situational leadership?

**MARIA:**

Yes, that's right.

Steve: Okay, well, I think it's encapsulated by what I was saying earlier. I think we need to learn our own leadership style and that's about our expertise, our skills, our values and beliefs and our personality. That will not - that will change a bit, but fundamentally it won't change. Then we have to apply that to different situations and contexts and that context does change, even if we're in the same school or same role, and so we're constantly asking ourselves what is leadership for me now in this context compared to the previous context. And the context also changes because we're working with different people. So we might have some new members of staff and we might find that those new members of staff need a different kind of leadership approach from us from the previous members of staff.

So it's not fundamentally changing who you are or what your beliefs are or what your leadership style is, but it's asking yourself what kind of leadership is needed from me now with this person or this team in this context in this situation and that's a really healthy thing to ask - not that you have to change fundamentally, but to ask what is needed from you now as a leader in this context compared to the previous context.

Maria: Steve, I've got another one here that's a really interesting one. I think we've got about a minute to go - "As a beginning or aspiring leader, which principle could be best to focus on initially?"

Steve: Power and love, power and love, because it's the thing I've wrestled with all my life as a leader. Sometimes I lack confidence and I'm showing a lot of love in my leadership and not enough drive, focus, determination, high expectations. And then sometimes I'm so into that side of it, I've got very confident, and I'm not welcoming challenge and I'm not showing kindness and empathy and not taking people with me. That's a key one to wrestle with even in the early stages of leadership and right through leadership.

So the most experienced leaders will still be wrestling with that idea, getting the balance right between power, drive, high expectations, determination and kindness, empathy, inclusivity and the love side of leadership.

**MARIA:**

Thank you so much, Steve. I think we'll go to you, Kate. You're on mute, Kate.

Kate: Thanks, Maria. Steve is very happy to stay with us, so keep dropping your questions in. Clearly, if you've got other responsibilities and places to go, please do that. I will close with a couple of comments from our audience today, Steve, people talking about how brilliantly you communicated about leading with empathy and authenticity and that really incredibly important piece about being genuine, showing your vulnerability and how strongly that resonated for people, sharing the African proverb was brilliant and recognising the importance of the expertise of the whole leadership team.

Some great comments from some of our education support colleagues who are also part of the leadership team, business managers, in broader roles in schools, their expertise is absolutely critical and it's the partnership that comes with that and surrounding yourself with giants I think I've heard you talk about at other times. So we're just so delighted you're with us. Your empathy and your enthusiasm and your expertise exudes - you know, it's leaping through the screen at us and that certainly is a great way to finish the day.

**STEVE:**

Thank you, Kate.

Kate: Thank you so much and please stay behind if you would like to ask further questions, have an intimate moment with Steve. Thank you very much and we look forward to our next connection with you, Steve.

**STEVE:**

Thank you.

**JILL:**

So Steve, as we're waiting for people to add some more questions, some of them that we've collected, I'll just run another one past you. What would you suggest a team does if there's no relational trust?

Steve: Well, it depends whether you're the leader of the team or not. It's much harder if you're not the leader of the team. If you are the leader of the team, then I think the first thing you need to do is start modelling those imperfect leadership behaviours that I talked about earlier - asking for help, admitting your mistakes, acknowledging the expertise of others, and modelling that and that helps to build up trust. It's not like a - you know, there's been times in my own leadership where I've had leadership teams where there hasn't been enough trust and sometimes that's improved, but occasionally it's not improved and in the end those people have to leave or I have to leave.

But it's much harder to change it if you're not the leader, if you're just a member of the team and you want to build trust. You can change it in terms of your own behaviours with the people you're interacting with, but you're less likely to have an impact on the trust between, say, two other colleagues between each other on a team. That's much harder to deal with. But at least you can model it yourself in terms of your relationships to have authentic adult relationships with the people you're working with and model imperfect authentic leadership with those people. If you're the leader or the CEO or the principal, then it's different, you can do a lot more by modelling it yourself and by having an open discussion around that rather than ignoring the issues.

**MARIA:**

Thanks for that one, Steve. We've got another interesting question. What is your advice for a leader who's been misinterpreted and undermined who is a novice and is trying to be authentic and brave?

Steve: I think I need to understand the context there. It's hard to answer that question because I don't know who's misinterpreting. I think it's interesting that Goffee and Jones say there are two things that make a great leader. One is authenticity and genuineness and the other is doing the right thing, being an expert and making good decisions. You've got to get both. It's not just being authentic, you've got to make good decisions as well. I think if you're an imperfect leader, you'll ask for help. You'll listen to advice, you'll welcome challenge. You won't push it away, you'll welcome it in.

When I was Director of Education in Knowsley, we were in a very bad place when I went there and I asked for loads of help from the department, from officials. I wanted them in, I wanted them advising me. I wanted to listen to their advice, rather than keeping them out. So it became our problem, not just my problem, the department's issues, not just my issues, working together to solve the problems. So I would say stay authentic, stay genuine, but work on the challenge, ask them in and try to use their expertise and your own expertise together to make the right decisions.

**MARIA:**

I've got another one here for you, Steve. What tips do you have around making time and space to focus on future leadership?

**STEVE:**

When you're in a crisis, everything - it's all hands to the pump and you are - you know, you've got urgent things to do, I understand that, of course you've got to focus on those things, but I really think that it's important you build in some time, some time, for the big-picture stuff. So whether that's a meeting with your team just to - a virtual meeting if you're in lockdown of course, a virtual meeting with the team, just to spend a small part of that meeting thinking about big picture stuff rather than just the urgent.

One of the things that goes wrong in teams, and I say so in the book, is we get so focused on the urgent and the immediate, we never look at the big picture sufficiently. So you have to build that in to your team meetings, build it in, otherwise they won't happen. So I would say try to find some time even in the urgent crises to build in time for big thinking, big picture thinking, and also talk about it with others, get other people's ideas about what the big pictures might be, what they're doing, so you're not isolated. Learn from others, engage with others, collaborate on social networks or in whatever way you can, but look outward, don't just look inward.

**PETER HOUGH:**

Hi, Steve. We've got a question here, "As a leader, what would you make the key goal for when our students and teachers head back to school after the remote learning crisis when the whole community appears heightened? "

**STEVE:**

Just ask me that first part of the question again, please.

Peter: As a leader, what would you make the key goal for when our students and teachers head back to school after the remote learning crisis?

**STEVE:**

Well, I think again it depends on the context that you're in, but I would say a sense of inclusivity, a sense of belonging, a sense of all being part of it. I think some people are focusing on a kind of recovery approach. I'm less convinced about the recovery approach. I'm more convinced about the inclusivity approach that we connect with every child and every parent and community because they'll all of had different experiences. Some will have had great experiences in lockdown, some will have had horrible experiences in lockdown, most will be in between.

So it's about listening and connecting, rather than, "Here's the answer on day one, we're going to do this, this, this and this. "Steve, we've let everybody know about your book, but we've got a question here about what other leadership books have impacted you? Well, my favourite writer on leadership is Michael Fullan. He's the best - he puts into words the kind of leadership I try to do. He's such a great writer on leadership. He's got a new book out which he's written with Mary Jean Gallagher called "The Devil Is in the Details", which is a great book, and his previous one on nuanced leadership was also a great book. I'd also recommend Brene Brown. She's a brilliant writer on leadership. And in terms of school leadership, I'd recommend Viviane Robinson.

**KATE:**

And Steve, we've got a question from Noel Crease and his question is what's your favourite essay in your book?

**STEVE:**

Favourite what?

**KATE:**

Or favourite speech in your book.

Steve: Well, the most important speech I ever made was one I refer to about servant leadership because everyone was so worried about change and I had the Minister in the audience who was about to introduce all the change and getting the tenor right for that speech is the most important speech I ever made and I focused on leadership as service which went well with the Minister and with the school leaders. I suppose my favourite speech was the last one I gave in 2017 about ethical leadership. That was probably my favourite speech and that included the bit about legacy at the end and what is your legacy as a leader because I was finishing as a leader, a fourth-term leader at that point.

**KATE:**

Great. Thanks, Steve.

**JILL:**

Steve, someone else has asked - they're wondering what's been your personal success strategy to restore and recharge as a leader, as leadership requires a high level of sustained energy.

**STEVE:**

Yeah. I think being kind to yourself and not thinking that you have to be perfect. I think that's really important. You will get things wrong. You do have things that aren't brilliant some of the time. You accept that. I think it's a really important point, you accept the fact that not everything is as good as it needs to be all the time. That's the first thing.

Secondly I'd say find some way of being outside of school, outside of work, that's good for you. For me that was running for a long time. For many years I was a runner. It gave me a chance to kind of manage my stress and gave me good reflection time, but just something that gives you a hinterland. So those are my two absolute ones, accept that you're imperfect, accept that mistakes happen, that you're not going to do everything as well as you need to do it in all cases and don't beat yourself up over that. And secondly, build a hinterland and time to refresh and replenish in whatever way works for you and for me it was running.

Maria: We've got another question here for you, Steve. I think we can ask another one from Matt - if you believe that the leaders in your school have had their leadership capacity diminished by the pandemic crisis and you don't completely trust them, how would you approach leading them - taking over, giving more responsibility, or something else? A bit of a long one.

**STEVE:**

I think that's a really complex question.

**MARIA:**

Very complex. You might have to take it on notice.

**STEVE:**

Say it again.

**MARIA:**

So if you believe that the leaders in your school have had their leadership capacity diminished by the pandemic crisis and you don't completely trust them, how would you approach leading them - taking over, giving more responsibility, or something else?

Steve: Wow, I think - to be honest, I think this is a real issue. I think what's happened in some systems - I can't speak for Victoria - is that the schools keep going for essential workers for vulnerable children and the people that have been doing that have been mainly the school principal and the senior leaders and not the rest and some teachers have actually wanted to help but couldn't for health reasons but others maybe have been more reluctant to help. And you get an us and them in the school when they come back, so the people who've been part of the inner circle who've given everything 100% and others who've been more reticent and you even find the school principal starting to resent some of their own staff because of that. I've seen this in a few systems around the world. So I think it's a very, very important issue here that we have to put ourselves in the shoes of others. And there's all kinds of reasons why people may not have committed as much as you during the pandemic. That might be to do with their personal life, it might be to do with their health. There might be all kinds of fears and insecurities that they have. Be kind for everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle. So I think that's the first point.

So give them the benefit of the doubt. Trust them initially. Don't wait for them to prove their trust. Do the opposite, trust them initially. Now, if, having trusted them and empowered them, there are issues and problems, then of course you make - in a professional way, you provide challenge to that and you take - and if it's really bad, you have very difficult conversations with them about their behaviour. But the first thing is think about - put yourself in their shoes and show trust and if that is not worthwhile, then you have the professional discussion and professional conduct, but not the other way around in my view. It's a big issue, though. I know a lot of school principals are wrestling with this at the moment.

**KATE:**

Thanks, Steve.

**PETER:**

We've got an interesting question here focusing on students. Well, actually we've got two questions. I'll give them both to you. Question one, what might be a major positive for students that might be a takeaway after this? And question two is City or Union? (Laughs).

**STEVE:**

Right, a major positive for students. Well, I think for some students - for some students the lockdown has been a positive experience. They've had more time with their family, more time with their parents, they've had a chance to explore things in a way they wouldn't normally have if they're spending all their time at school. It will have embedded relationships and give them exciting new things to learn and think about. So that's a positive. For others it's been a real loss and they're missing their friends and they've not had the kind of learning that they need to have. So it depends on the context. The City or Union - you mean Manchester City or Manchester United. Well, I'm a Newcastle United supporter, so it's neither Manchester City nor Manchester United.

**KATE:**

Steve, I've got a question for you from one of our emerging leaders, self-described, who's taken on too much too quickly. "How do I show leadership? I'm still learning and want to continue to, but need their patience and support. I feel they think I'm asking for help. I feel they think asking for help is showing weakness and maybe that I need greater competence."

**STEVE:**

It's a tricky one. So if you're in a culture whereby admitting your weaknesses is seen as a problem, asking for help is seen as not good, that's a very bad place to be. It's not a good culture. I'd still in a very nice way do that, but I would make sure that when I got that advice I delivered and built up my credibility as a leader so that I was in a position to be able to ask for help again rather than just being someone who asks for help and doesn't deliver.

But if you're in a culture where you deliver and you ask for help and no help is forthcoming, you deliver, ask for help and no help is forthcoming and that's all you're getting, then I think you have to consider whether you should be staying in that organisation or in that school.

Folks, I have to go to Scotland in a minute, so any last questions before I go?

**MARIA:**

Could we finish on one more, Steve? What is the biggest challenge you have experienced and learnt from?

**STEVE:**

When I went to Knowsley as Director of Education we had the second worst examination results in the whole country and after a year of my leadership we had the worst examination results in the whole country. So we went from being the second worst to the worst. And the national newspaper wanted to do an interview with me because I was the worst leader in the country. And the local newspaper called for my resignation because I'd brought disgrace upon the borough. I'd only been in the post nine months. That was the biggest challenge for me. And if I hadn't had a mentor to help to see that I was doing the right things, I just needed more time, then I think I might have given up and felt I can't do this job.

But I got all the head teachers together and I told them that in three years' time people would be coming from all over the country to find out how we'd been so successful and we were successful. But at that point it was a low moment, it was a dark night of the soul moment for me.

**MARIA:**

Great. Thank you so much for sharing, Steve.

**KATE:**

Brilliant moments. Polly has a question just around the positive educational perspective study as a result of COVID in the UK.

**POLLY:**

I just wanted a reference, please, for that study that you quoted on the positive outcomes the principals reported.

**STEVE:**

Sorry, I didn't hear that properly.

**POLLY:**

You reported that there were lots of positive outcomes from COVID in the culture that was reported by principals about people understood how important it was to be collaborative --

**STEVE:**

I was saying if we get it right, then these three things could happen. One was about collaboration, one was about more collective responsibility, not topdown, and one was about valuing the richness that schools provide, not just the academic side.

**POLLY:**

And where did you get that information from?

**STEVE:**

It's a hope.

**POLLY:**

A hope, okay.

**STEVE:**

That's why I said imagine that it's two years' time or whenever the pandemic is finished and let's look back and say if we get it right, these things will happen, but we have to make them happen. We can't just sit back and see. We've got to try to make those three things happen because I think they're all good things.

**POLLY:**

Okay, thank you.

**KATE:**

Great. Thanks, Steve. I love that. We're focused on new hope, not old hopes. And there is a shout-out in the chat hope you're going to go swimming in Scotland. So thanks for swimming with us today. I think a fabulous moment for our Victorian educators and we've loved sharing this time with you. Thank you, Steve.

**STEVE:**

Yes, good to see you. Thanks very much, everyone. Thanks, Steve, you're a hero. Thank you. Come back to us next year. Great. Good to see you, Jillian.