THE LEADER-LEARNER ENGAGEMENT INDEX
putting personal values, leadership style, and learning power to the test

1. LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE (stakeholder expectations)

As we have already said, stakeholder response to the announcement of the arrival of a newcomer will be driven not only by past experiences and third party influences but by their stake in the future of the school.

At the very heart is **the pupil community**, their learning power and the culture they experience in the school's classrooms. Are they learning to learn? What learning experience are they taking into environments they graduate into: further formal education, employment? Leaders will already have experiences of curriculum, classroom and student successes but no one size fits all and what works in one learning environment is not necessarily transferable in its entirety. The measurement and assessment of learning power and the building of capacity and confidence that will enable each individual student to adapt to changing circumstances and environments requires a culture dynamic that will not necessarily be easy to pursue.

Student expectation will be fuelled by their peers, their parents, their teachers and previous relations with authority.

No leader is an island and leadership style will manifest itself through the commitment of the **Senior Management Team** and their personal leadership styles. The sharing of the new leader's personal vision and preferred direction should take place at the earliest possible moment, inviting challenge and accepting revision and amendment. Additionally, the team must be reminded to be mindful of the need to be responsive to the outcomes of the forthcoming stakeholder audit.

The **Teaching Staff** will probably have a different view, influenced by their experience of working with the newcomer's predecessor and the senior management team. In some cases they will be change-weary and disbelievers in fruitful consultation.

Both the **Senior Management Team and the Teaching Staff** should be encouraged to express their views concerning not only the values that they would like to see encompassing the school environment in which they would prefer to work but also the character, as they experience it, of the wider stakeholder community.

2. THE LEADER-LEARNER VISION (personal desire/direction)

The true Leader-Learner will have taken the opportunity to amend, adapt and enhance the vision that they arrived with to take account of the preferences and prescriptions of their management and staff teams. However, in doing so, it will be important to maintain a direction that is learning-centric and puts learning and student learning power as the factors fundamental to future success.

See PLANNING for a SUCCESSFUL FUTURE

3. **COMMUNITY CULTURE AUDIT (stakeholder expectation v. public and classroom realities)**

Stakeholders will include the Governing Body; Parents; Prospective Parent Families; Local Council and other community services; School Zone parents who chose alternative schools; Students; Feeder Schools; Employers and other local educational institutions. This will appear onerous at the outset and will require a representative database to be compiled but the benefits to be derived from the audit exercise far outweigh the time spent and can be conducted on the leadership's behalf by such as the Parent Teachers' Association or students as project work. 'Ownership' of the programme by a group of stakeholders augers well for their engagement in the visioning and planning processes.

There are a number of ways in which audits can be conducted. They have a dual purpose: to determine what the expectations of each stakeholder group are and to match their perceptions and preferences with the realities of the school environment and its predominant cultural profile.
- **Social media**
- **Representative consultation groups**
- **Door drop questionnaires**
- **Telephone**
- **High Street Questionnaire Research**

… or an appropriate combination

The learning process will reveal a number of misconceptions and misunderstandings as well as the pervading realities. It will also enable the leadership team both to create a more engaging strategic vision and to inform their relationship management action plans in such a way as to optimise stakeholder buy-in to their future plans.

4. **COMMUNUCATION AUDIT (information & knowledge transfer)**

In the majority of stakeholder audits it is lack of communication and information that lies at the top of their list of frustrations. However, in today's social, digital and multimedia environments there is no excuse for breakdowns in information management and the transfer of essential knowledge. The critical issue here is to understand which technical solutions are most appropriate to each stakeholder group and how best to communicate with those stakeholders who may not have regular access to those technologies.

If the school has no history of on-line or blended learning it will be important to create a process by which curriculum can be relayed to the student population should a breakdown in school attendance be necessitated by such as the Foot and Mouth Outbreaks or Corona Virus.

5. **QUICK WINS (audit response: immediate added value volunteered)**

It may well be that the introduction of a more robust communication strategy becomes a priority. Nonetheless, to volunteer immediate solutions to easily-resolved stakeholder frustrations in the wake of the audit is an excellent way to create goodwill.

6. **KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT (communication strategy implementation)**

Whether or not, the implementation of a revised communication strategy is identified as a 'Quick Win' it will need to be worked on to ensure the longer-term satisfaction of the stakeholders.

7. MANAGEMENT MOBILISATION (skills audit: CPD)

In many schools a major frustration of the staff team is the lack of attention paid to their personal and professional training and development. Frequently, CPD (Continuous Personal Development) has been found not to be a priority. The 'make-over' of a school that is truly Learning-Powered cannot be achieved in its absence.

We have already discussed a number of mechanisms for staff cooperation, knowledge transfer, and personal and professional development in the section on **Learning Power and Leadership** and whilst a Skills Audit will add value to the development of individual training and development programmes, the most significant contribution will come from the introduction and acceptance of a culture of classroom observation.

8. RE-ENGINEERED VISION (teamworking/capture/distribution)

If the leadership team has followed a learning journey similar to that we have prescribed here, it should now have sufficient data to re-engineer its' vision, gain the support of the staff team, capture the imagination of all stakeholders and distribute and communicate the vision widely. It is wise to trial the re-engineered vision with stakeholder representatives, take account of their contributions and harness them to the dissemination process.

9. EMPOWERMENT (freedom to experiment)

Empowerment is an over-used, and often abused, claim in many organisations, and schools among them. Why? Because whilst the intention may be honourable and genuine, the empowered often find themselves without the skills and attributes to carry out the duties that empowerment allows.

In a Learning-Powered environment, empowerment needs to be matched by 'emancipation', the freedoms that come with the appropriate skills, knowledge and behaviours. However, all too often these attributes need to be learned rather than being naturally inherent and offered as essential pre-requisites within the CPD curriculum.

10. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT (relationship management strategy)

Stakeholder representation is vital as the school sets about creating a relationship management strategy that ensures an acceptable way of working, the opportunity to contribute to the implementation of the school's mission and strategic decision-making processes and develops mechanisms for the communication of ideas as well as re-visiting the Complaints Procedure.

11. STRATEGIC PLANNING (bringing the vision to life)

See PLANNING for a SUCCESSFUL FUTURE

The emphasis here is on the word *strategic.* The majority of school plans purport to be strategic but are, in truth, tactical, addressing the issues and challenges of today rather than taking the strategic approach that expects and anticipates change. Changes in national, or even global, circumstance may require political, economic, social or technical adjustment over a very few years or, in some cases, even

months. Closer to home, the school's student market may also change with such as the construction of new housing estates or changes in the ethnic profile of the local population.

With these things such as these in mind, the plan becomes a much more dynamic document that maps the school's future journey, takes account of key risks and critical success factors and identifies the milestones to gaining competitive advantage in an evolving competitive educational environment.

12. LEADER-LEARNER'S RE-EVALUATION (personal learning journey: reviewed and redirected)

This is the Leader-Learner's work is never done! Nonetheless, he or she should take the opportunity, at regular intervals, to reflect on their own learning journey and re-consider their strengths and weaknesses as a leader-learner as they move step by step towards the development of a Learning-Powered School.

The following interrogation of '**the DNA of the Leader-Learner'** provides some invaluable assistance with the reflective process.

THE DNA OF THE 'LEADER-LEARNER'

ELLI'S DIMENSIONS: THE POSITIVE 'POLES'	THE DNA OF THE LEADER-LEARNER
Changing and Learning ... open-minded, flexible, adaptable, takes advantage of new learning opportunities	**A reflective thinker ... uses experiences to inform improvement, people-centred, respectful, value-driven**
Critical Curiosity ... dissatisfied with received wisdom and probes to find hidden truths	**Inquisitive ... appreciates the value of in-depth questioning, welcoming alternative perspectives**
Meaning Making ... uses new information in combination with previous experiences to create purpose and direction	**Visionary ... natural strategist, champions CPD and personal enquiry, own development learning-centric**
Creativity ... uses imagination and intuition productively, has confidence to experiment, comfortable taking risks	**Creative ... positively enjoys a chance to 'think outside the box' seeing difficulties as opportunities not obstacles**
Learning Relationships ... willing to take and respect advice and to delegate but confident making final decision	**Inclusive ... consultative decision-maker using new knowledge well. Embraces disadvantage, learning needs**
Strategic Awareness ... clarity of purpose, 'comfortable in own skin', diligent and works out solutions to problems	**Self-motivated ... passionate, humble, wants to make a difference to broadening scope of education**
Resilience ... never gives up, even when the going gets tough determined to succeed and welcomes the challenge	**Resolute ... remains resolute in personal advocacy, wrestles with every difficulty, accepts correction positively**

The power to learn is the essential weapon in the leader's armoury. He or she can never be right about everything and 'learning to learn' from the success and failure of their own actions and from the mistakes made by themselves and others is a show of confidence and humility, not of weakness.

Learning Power's on-line profiling instrument provides welcome assistance. It distils learning into 7 dimensions in order to create a simple 'learning profile' that offers the learner a platform for gaining a better understanding of their personal learning strengths and weaknesses. More than that, at the point that the on-line profile is undertaken, it is directly responsive to the immediate learning environment and to the personal circumstances in which the learner finds themselves. The profiling instrument is the *Effective Lifelong Learning Inventory,* known affectionately as *ELLI.*

ELLI was originally research-validated by the Graduate School of Education, University of Bristol, and has been in active academic research in the UK and USA as well as operational practice globally for more than 20 years. The on-line questionnaire produces a 'spidergraphic' that becomes the basis for informed training interventions to address weaknesses and play to the strengths. The suite of supporting programmes and pathways record the learning derived from operational practice in schools, Further and Higher Education, business and government and challenge the type and traitcasting of psychometrics. The pathways then lead to a documented national '*Standard'* or road-map, the *Learning Quality Framework.*