# Transcript

**Leading Learning and Re-establishing School Community**

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IAN HAMILTON: Well, good morning. Welcome, everybody. My name is Ian Hamilton from Genos International. It's fantastic that you've put some time aside to join us this morning for this webinar in the series of webinars that are being run for you: Leading In Challenging Times. Today's webinar is all about Leading Learning and Re‑Establishing School Communities. Please settle in. Make yourself comfortable. There is a workbook that comes with this webinar that we sent to you with your reminder, and you do have time, if you haven't printed it already, to print it now. I will reference it a couple of times during the webinar but it is really for you to take away and reference some of the models that I'll be talking about. And a pen would be really useful as well. So we've got a few minutes before we start before I hand over to Kate, and I'll be back in a moment.

KATE MORRIS: Thanks, Ian. Kate Morris here from Bastow. If you could just drop into the chat, everyone, where you are joining us from, so your name and your school, that would be fantastic. Really interested to see the diverse range of schools and school communities that are represented with us today. So if you could just go to the chat and pop your name in and your school, that would be fantastic. Thank you.

IAN HAMILTON: Great idea, Kate. And just on that, when you send us a chat, you've got an option to send it just to us, but we would prefer you sent it to everybody. So there's a little dropdown arrow and it will say "To All Panellists and Attendees". That's the one to use. That way everybody can see the contribution that you're making during the webinar.

KATE MORRIS: Thanks, Ian. Today we've got with us Ian Hamilton from Genos International. He's our lead expert today. Genos are certainly ‑ well, beyond our educators, of course; thank you, Ian ‑ so Genos has a strong specialisation in emotional intelligence and supporting communities as they transition across a whole range of experiences, and certainly this has been new territory for us all across the past couple of months.

Our other experts with us today are Tamina Taylor from Yinnar Primary School, principal ‑ delighted to have you with us today, Tamina ‑ and Kerrie Dowsley from St Albans Secondary College.

KERRIE DOWSLEY: Hi, everyone.

KATE MORRIS: Fantastic to be represented from different regions and certainly different types of school communities. And as the chat comes in, we can see you from all across Victoria ‑ South Oakleigh Secondary College, Mount Rowan in Ballarat, Camberwell South, St Helena, Glengala, a whole range of schools across the State and different roles and different responsibilities that certainly reflect on all the work that we have been doing across this time to create the conditions for success for young people to learn from home, for our staff to be able to work from home, and the transition back to school this week for primaries and secondaries and for our specialist schools a little bit earlier. So a fantastic opportunity for us to reflect and to think about the achievements across this time and the enormous effort and leadership that you've shown.

IAN HAMILTON: Thank you, Kate. I've noticed it's literally just ticked past 10 o'clock so I think we should start. Thank you very much for that introduction. Just before I hand over to you, just once again there is a workbook that comes with the webinar this morning which I will reference on a couple of occasions. So please do have that close to hand. You've still just got time to print it, if you haven't done so already, and you will need a pen. And I'll hand over to Kate just to formally open the webinar and then you'll hear from me again in a moment.

KATE MORRIS: Thank you, Ian. Kate Morris here from Bastow and I'd like to begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of the many lands that we're meeting on today and pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. It's great to have you with us as we launch into a Genos and Bastow webinar around how to create the conditions for success or the things that you're doing as a school to come back to school and think about your successes across the last couple of months but also some of the challenges and ways of working that you're going to need to think about and consider and share across today.

We're delighted to have Kerrie Dowsley with us from St Albans Secondary College and Tamina Taylor from Yinnar Primary School. And to launch our session today, we've got David Howes with us. Thank you for joining us, David. David is the Deputy Secretary of Schools and Regional Services and I'll hand over to you. Thank you, David.

DAVID HOWES: Thanks very much, Kate. Ian, welcome to you and, everybody, thank you for taking this time out of your day for this session. Can I also begin by acknowledging that wherever we are, we're meeting on lands of traditional owners. For me, I'm meeting on the lands of the people of the Kulin Nation and I pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging, and acknowledge traditional owners right across Victoria, wherever we're all meeting.

Can I say just two things very briefly before the webinar gets underway. The first is thank you for the extraordinary efforts over these last now eight weeks. We're into the third day of the full return, two and a half weeks into partial return, and it's gone extraordinarily smoothly, and that's only because of the extraordinary hard work that you've done in leading your schools. So these things don't happen by fluke. So thank you very much. But that hard work has also come at a cost. I'm aware that people are very, very tired and that's one of the reasons why I think it is so important to have this time out to spend a little bit of time sharing our learning because there is no playbook for what we're going through on a day‑to‑day basis at the moment. We've got the benefit of Ian's expertise and the expertise of Genos and it's one of those instances where it's so important to draw on some external expertise, but I'm sure Ian would be the first to say while there's some analogous situations that we can learn from, there is no playbook for what we're going through so we're all learning as we go. These twin goals that are highlighted by the title of this seminar are the ones that are being juggled across the State, both re‑establishing learning but re‑establishing schools as communities. I want to emphasise that, from my perspective, both of those things are equally important and both are equally interdependent, but it's a challenge walking and chewing gum at the same time. So to have the chance to take an hour out I am sure will be very useful. Thank you to Kerrie and Tamina for being able to contribute your expertise as well and I'm sure this is going to be very valuable.

So, Ian, it's great to draw on your knowledge, experience. Kate, thank you to Bastow for pulling this together so quickly. And without further ado, Ian, I think I'm handing over to you.

IAN HAMILTON: You are, David. Thank you. That's fantastic. Thanks very much for that introduction.

So I'd like to just do a little bit of scene setting before I start because, as I mentioned earlier, this webinar forms a series Leading in Challenging Times. The first of those webinars was delivered on 28th May and a recording of that webinar is available if you missed it. Very much the focus there was about leading others. What's really interesting about this series is that it was conceived and thought about before the return back to onsite learning, and so we do have a great opportunity during the time we've got this morning to actually talk and share about some of our experiences that we've had over the last two and a half weeks, and I indeed would like to engage in a conversation about what's gone really well. I think it's really important to focus on the positives and to share those every bit as much as it is to talk about some of the challenges that we're facing as well. So if you missed the first webinar, there is a recording of that available.

We're here today to talk about Leading Learning and Re‑Establishing School Communities. There is a second opportunity to engage in this webinar at 4.30 this afternoon, so if you know anybody who was unable to attend this morning, please let them know we'll be running this again. And then looking forward, next week, Leading Self on 18th of June. Same time: 10 o'clock, 4.30. Registrations are available for that webinar as well and they come together to form this set to help you with what, as David has said, has been an unprecedented and particularly challenging period across all school communities.

So let's get focused in then on what we will be covering this morning. So really the objectives of the session are to explore the range of contexts in which learning needs to be had and to think about the role of leaders at all levels to set clear priorities during what has been an extraordinarily challenging transitional period and beyond. So there will be some looking backwards, there will be some reflection in the moment and hopefully there will be a lot of looking forwards as well, and that's where I think you can contribute significantly through the chat box and we'll draw in our experts who are on the ground managing this like you are every day.

Secondly, we're also going to talk about ways in which leaders can enhance their capacity to just tune into their community and promote things like wellbeing, cohesion and clarity. I think, as David has mentioned, we have seen some extraordinary examples of leadership over the last few weeks. The care for the individual has been a hallmark that we've seen across schools and I think more broadly within society. I was fascinated to read only last night that there's been some great work done around homelessness. It just shows what can be done when the focus is in the right place. Again, this webinar will be talking about what things have you been doing that have brought communities back together but, equally, what are the ongoing challenges that you're likely to face over the next few months. As ever with a webinar like this, it's about presenting you with some ideas and some tools and techniques but also sharing some of the things that you're doing with the wider group.

So in terms of the actual objectives of the session, one of the first things we're going to talk about is really getting an understanding of the journeys that have been taken by schools during the start of the COVID‑19 pandemic. What does this look like? We often hear the word 'change', for example, but realistically that's a very simplistic word to describe a much more complex process. We'll start by looking at the journeys that schools have taken and then we will move into a set of models, tools and techniques that really help you prioritise actions around your communication, communicating with clarity and compassion, so giving you a real sense of "What are some of the things that I can do to lead with great clarity, lead clearly, really engage people?". It's a call to action. It's engaging them, hearts and minds, so that we can really re‑establish communities to the best effect.

Finally, and probably I think most importantly ‑ and out the corner of my eye, because I'm trying to look at the camera, I can see an awful lot of chat coming in already and I can see Kate and other people reading that ‑ share your thoughts, views and opinions. That's one of the most powerful things that this webinar provides. That certainly won't be kept on the recording but it's just a very, very useful way for us to build our capacity during this time.

Now, webinars like this are interesting in many regards because they do three things. Sometimes they provide you with content that's new, and I hope that's the case today. I hope there will be some things that Genos and the Bastow team have put together that are very new for you that really kind of spark an idea in your mind. I often call them the 'golden nuggets' when I'm running a program. If you can take away one or two things, that can be really meaningful, and if that is the case for you, I would suggest you write them down, star them in the workbook and these could be things you might want to implement immediately.

Sometimes ‑ and I think probably realistically, based on the experience level of the group that we've got with us today ‑ there will be things you've seen before. There's very little that's brand new in this webinar but what I think it does do is it gives you the opportunity to think about: how could I enhance that within my own leadership, how could I harness it, how could I use it, how could I use that to great effect? So it may be about dusting off some things that you're familiar with already.

Finally, you may well ‑ and I would expect you to ‑ see some things in the webinar that you have seen before that are part and parcel of the way that you organise yourself and the way that you lead. If you really feel experienced about this, it could well be that there's a fantastic opportunity to think about coaching and mentoring others who are less experienced in that area. It's a fantastic skill to be able to develop, to look at somebody in your team who you think might benefit from doing more of this themselves, and then coach and mentor them to that effect. So, as I go through the content, keep those three things in mind and we will revisit those at the end of the webinar.

The other thing I would like you to consider as we go through the webinar ‑ and this is very much feeding into the chat that I described earlier ‑ is please share your great stories of what's working well. There's nothing better than positive messages. Let's hear those. We will stop at several periods during the webinar to really call out some of those and share them with the broader group.

What have you learnt? If you've learnt something and you think that would be worth sharing, that would be really good too, so please consider sharing that with the broader group, and then sitting back and thinking, "What can I learn from others? What might there be here in this content that might be beneficial for me? And how can others contribute to meeting foreseeable challenges? What do I need to do to connect more broadly to meet the challenges that inevitably lie ahead? And, as Kate's mentioned earlier, please use the chat box to share that. Chat to all. "All Attendees and Panellists" is the best way to do that.

So this has been a really unprecedented time and what has characterised the offsite learning and the return to onsite learning is that school leaders and teachers really now have a unique opportunity to harness into just the newfound respect that all sectors of school communities, we believe, have found for the role of schools. Parents, students and staff really have a newfound respect for the gratitude for the work of schools. I've got a Year 12 daughter and I've been amazed at the lengths her school has gone to to help her through what is the most difficult, most challenging and important year of her school career. I certainly have felt this real sense of gratitude for just the way the teachers have gone out of their way to assist her.

Leading into that, clearly there's a better sense of connection between parents and schools. I probably feel more connected now that I've ever done. I know the teachers' names very well. I know some of the things they're doing above and beyond to try and assist learning. The other element to this ‑ and this is something I haven't personally experienced because my daughter's a little bit older ‑ but if you've got younger children, I think parents have realised this is a really challenging task. Parents have strongly engaged in their children's learning and have probably been quite pleased that they've gone back to school. It's been time consuming, it's demanding and it really has given them a newfound respect for learning.

Finally, teachers (inaudible) the school community have probably experienced a slight sense of loss ‑ you know, the breakdown of the community, the drop‑offs at the driveway at the end of the school, the loss of connection, and there's probably been a real sense of how important that community is there as well. So putting all of that together, it does present a really unique window of opportunity to harness upon all of these things that have been happening around these three groups ‑ parents, students and staff.

So I said earlier I'd like to start with a really positive message, and this is why I really want to bring you into the webinar very early on. What's gone well since your return to onsite learning? David mentioned you're 2.5 weeks in. Reflecting on your return to school, please share your success stories in the chat box. Whilst you type away and whilst the team are monitoring those, I would like to invite Tamina and Kerrie, who are very much at the coalface of this, to share some of their own experiences. Tamina, would it be okay for me to start with you?

TAMINA TAYLOR: Yes, sure. Thanks, Ian. Thanks, everyone. Nice to be part of this today. I've just been reading some of the comments in the chat and I agree entirely, we have covered some of the things that have been really successful for our school. But one of our most successful things I think, and you mentioned it in the slide before, Ian, was that continuation of a more authentic partnership in the learning. I think that's been really significant for our school. We have had in the past great parent partnerships. We thought they were really good. But when you look at how deep they are now and how much richer, they were probably pretty surface and it was probably more one way. We've got parents now that are really far more engaged in the learning but also so much more trusting of the staff, and the wave goodbyes at the gates have been, "Here you are; we trust you more, we'll pass you over" and then teachers I've noticed are really much more insightful and a bit more eager to actually share the learning and what's been happening, not just what they've been doing but the learning and the a‑ha moments that they've been having with parents using the technology that we started using over the remote learning. So I've been really excited about that partnership which has got so much stronger.

IAN HAMILTON: Wonderful. That's great, Tamina, and I can see that sparking some comment from the broader group as well. So thank you very much for that. Kerrie, could I hand over to you for your perspectives, please?

KERRIE DOWSLEY: Thanks, Ian, and also welcome, everybody, to the webinar. I think, as Tamina said, there's just a sense of excitement and enthusiasm as we return and it's in some ways quite surprising. I did wonder whether it was because the holidays were just two weeks away but it is more than that. There's an openness. There's a sense of discovery, of empowerment for teachers, and for our ES staff as well. Also, I think for the students, we're just in the process now of thinking about: how do we capture what we learnt, how do we capture all the good things that we did and the new ways of working and not lose that excitement and that enthusiasm, and what is it that we can take forward with us as we move back in over the next few weeks? So very much a sense of renewal perhaps and discovery and then questioning about what this means for our work from hereon in.

IAN HAMILTON: Wonderful. Thanks very much, Kerrie. Really, really helpful insights. I'm conscious there's a lot of conversation happening in the chat box there. Tamina, could I hand over to you maybe just to summarise anything that's caught your eye in the last minute or two while we've been talking about some of the success stories.

TAMINA TAYLOR: Yes. Aynam ‑ I think I've said that right ‑ says the new sense of collegiality and camaraderie amongst the staff, but also Trav mentioned about the students who were more difficult before or more reluctant to become engaged ‑ and I know some of my colleagues in La Trobe Valley have also said this ‑ that those reluctant students or the school refusers have actually been far more engaged and ready to come back to school. So that's been really exciting.

IAN HAMILTON: Thank you very much. Great. So let's keep moving through the content of the webinar. As ever with these events, time moves really, really quickly. I think the clock's go on fast speed when you're in a webinar. So let's just take a look backwards before we take a look forwards. What I want to do at the start of this webinar is reflect on the journeys that have been undertaken since this unexpected arrival of COVID‑19 globally but particularly within Australia. You can hear 'change' mentioned all the time and we've all experienced significant change, change in every aspect of our lives. If you think about the school community, there's been enormous change. But if you look at it more deeply, 'change' is a very simplistic word to use to describe a far more complex process and I think, and we think in the design of this webinar, exploring transition that leads to a change is more significant and more meaningful from the perspective of leadership. So the word 'transition' is obviously far deeper than 'change' because there is a process, and if you look at the literature around transition, it's very well understood that it's a psychological process people go through to come to terms with a new situation.

If you take yourself back to February and March, when we were all coming to terms with the fact that there was likely to be significant change happening within schools, we started on a period of transition. Incrementally things happened and, of course, that eventually resulted in schools closing and people learning from home. That psychological process that people go through is immensely challenging. What we know is that this is a process that occurs over time and it doesn't necessarily have a clear end point. In fact, one of my colleagues in the design of this webinar said you can't really even draw this as a picture because it's ongoing. Transition is just moving from one state to another. Of course, therefore, if you look at my third point on the slide, it's very individual and it's very internal. Some people are more biologically predisposed to ride the waves of transition and move through things much more quickly than others. But what we do know for all of us is it usually starts with the ending of something. Something has to stop for something new to begin.

So if you look at this diagrammatically, what we've really seen from schools ‑ the journey, what does it look like ‑ is there's been some endings. Some things have ended and I'm looking very much backwards now ‑ the start of learning from home, the ending of learning at school, the kind of dismantling of the traditional school community, the sports clubs. All of the other things that happen within schools came to an end, some of it incrementally, some of it quite quickly. All of us were plunged into what we often like to describe as this new phase of exploration, new ways of working, new ways of doing things and, indeed, some of the webinars that we ran a couple of months ago were very much talking about how do we find our way through what is a very turbulent time. Of course, turbulence is not dissimilar to what you'd experience in an aircraft. You're sitting there one minute drinking a cup of coffee and the next minute you're putting your seatbelt on and you're buckling down because you've unexpectedly hit some rough patch of air, and this is very much what's happened in schools. Turbulence can be short‑lived. Some people can ride through it more quickly and other people take some time to move through it. I think what's really significant about turbulence is it's here to stay and it presents significant challenges for leadership.

Then, finally, we have this idea that out of turbulence there will be new beginnings. We're seeing those over the last two and a half weeks. But as my colleague said to me earlier, the likelihood is we are in for some more transition ahead and some more turbulence. I hope by showing you this model it just gives you a sense that change is very simplistic but the transition is something that we can think much more deeply about, and recognising that that turbulent phase has affected many of us, and this is where really good leadership is needed to really help people get engaged around what are the new beginnings.

So I'm going to hand back to Tamina and Kerrie. I'm really interested to know from your perspective ‑ and I'll start with you, Kerrie, if that's okay ‑ what's been the turbulence like in your particular school based on this notion of endings and new beginnings?

KERRIE DOWSLEY: I think just seeing a couple of the comments in the chat, Ian, people have referred to the staff anxiety and a sense of loss for certain things, and that certainly has been an experience that we've had. I'm not sure it's not just staff anxiety. It's student anxiety and parent anxiety as well. So I think that's been a source of turbulence. Perhaps 'turbulence' isn't quite the right word, but as we come back, for me there's a sense of uncertainty about students' mindset about being back and how we dig into that and uncover that. We know that many of them are feeling a bit ambivalent but we need to know who is feeling left behind, who is now feeling held back by the return to classroom learning because we know that some kids jumped ahead. Who had a voice online and now doesn't in the classroom? And for us particularly, we're looking at that in terms of some of the gender issues that we feel maybe surfaced as a result of that transition into and out of online learning, and so what does that look like for us? So we want to be doing some pulse surveys with kids and some forums and focus groups with them to uncover some of this and to work through that sense of uncertainty and turbulence on our part and perhaps on their part too.

IAN HAMILTON: Fantastic. Thanks very much. I think what it reminds me of is the fact that turbulence creates a range of thinking, feeling and behaviour and it's different for everybody. Also the other point Kerrie made that I think is really significant is that we transition through this at different speeds and people can get stuck and you can even recycle back, so this concept of anxiousness, concern ‑ I think these are things that you may not visibly see but will manifest potentially in the way that people are thinking and behaving around you. So fantastic.

Tamina, could I hand over to you for some thoughts from yourself around that transition curve.

TAMINA TAYLOR: Really building on what Kerrie said, for me it's also been very difficult ‑ and the turbulence as a leader to actually say how do you manage that to know how fast to go, how slow to go, and having different people respond in different ways, that we've got to sort of be like, I feel, the meerkat watching everybody and keeping an eye out on everyone, but also keeping our learning agenda and getting focus back. So when do we start some more rigorous learning around our professional learning? When do we hold back? How much time do we give kids? And I have found that's quite turbulent for me as a leader, in wondering how to manage all that and work through it in a very calm way and communicate very clearly.

IAN HAMILTON: I love your analogy there ‑ the leader who is moving fast through transition standing on the hill looking down at the valley at people who are yet to catch up. We do move through things much more quickly. If you've been through lots of these before, you might have a greater resilience to see the way ahead. So great insights. Thanks very much. Kerrie, is there anything coming through on the chat that has really caught your eye that you'd just like to flag for us before I move on?

KERRIE DOWSLEY: I think Marz just picked up on that idea of experiencing that turbulence and just the exhausting nature of that, but also the turbulence associated I think in our own thinking as leaders about how we capture and not lose what we have learnt and what great practices and ways of working together have been surfaced as a result of this and how we can build those into practice moving forward.

IAN HAMILTON: Yes. Very much. Lessons learned; sitting back and reflecting, "What did we do well? What would we repeat next time?". Fantastic. Thank you very much for that. Let me keep moving because, again, I'm conscious we have content to get through.

When we think about turbulence and we think about rising to the challenge of meeting individual needs, very much as Tamina said, from leadership, there's a multitude of things that can be done. But for the purpose of this webinar today, we're going to look at three big things. We're going to look at leading with clarity of message. We're going to look at some simple ideas, but more hard in practice to implement, around communication, and then just finally and very lightly, I'm going to finish with this concept of compassionate leadership ‑ not to go into it in any great detail but just to really leverage off this idea that there have been amazing examples of compassion shown at all levels of leadership across schools and here is a great opportunity to maintain that momentum.

So let's start with clarity. Now, if you joined the webinar the week before last with Dr Ben Palmer, he was very much talking about: what are the clarity‑building behaviours that leaders exhibit when they're demonstrating as well and invited you to think about which are the ones that are most important for you. We know that being clear to a large degree is also being consistent. There's nothing worse than feeling like I'm being led in an inconsistent way; having clear direction, knowing that that's a message that's repeated in multiple different ways and a leader leading and behaving in a way that's consistent with the things that they say. The openness to be able to share your own vulnerability ‑ that's certainly something that's far more accepted now in leadership than it ever used to be ‑ and by role modelling that, inviting others to do so.

Being really clear about what are our priorities, and this is something I am going to focus on in a moment: the expectations, responsibilities and time frames. These again are great clarity‑building behaviours. Regularly engaging with stakeholders and responding to their needs, so understanding that people will have different needs, very much going back to that turbulence; people experiencing things differently, needing different things from leadership. And then this idea of collaboration, connecting with others to make sense of ambiguity and coming up with a collaborated, co‑created understanding. These are all really powerful clarity‑building behaviours.

So in your workbook, under 'Clarity', what I'd like you to do in the context of leading learning and re‑establishing your school community, I'd just like you very quickly, without going into too much thought about it, jot down in your workbook ‑ and the page number that you need is page 5, that little table at the bottom there ‑ what are the top three things on your to‑do list that are about you re‑establishing learning and leading and re‑establishing your school community? So don't put too much thought into it. I'm only going to give you a couple of minutes. Just jot down, when you leave this webinar today, what are going to be the big three things that are on that list for you? Then I'll explore that a bit further in a moment. So capture these with a short description. They can be big things and they can be little things. What are the top three things on your list around clarity, thinking about those behaviours that we just talked about: stakeholder engagement, consistency in what I say and what I do, co‑creating solutions? What's on your list? Page 5 in your workbook. (Pause). You'll see a little table at the bottom there. Just jot down what that looks like. It could be leading a meeting; it could be forming a group to work through a problem. What's on your list? What are they? It could be something quite small. It could be a technical issue that you need to resolve. Just jot down what those three things are. I'll just give you another 30 seconds to do that. (Pause).

So now you've got those three things on your list, three things that you're going to get to as a priority, what I'd like to do is revisit that very, very powerful matrix, first developed by President Eisenhower, who was a military general and then was I think the 34th President of the US back in the '50s and '60s, and he described all tasks as being either urgent or important, and this was subsequently popularised by Stephen Covey, who sadly passed away a few years ago. But I had the privilege of actually watching him present when he spoke about this. Very, very engaging presenter, very, very theatrical, and he spoke about the fact that if you look at any task on your desk, there's always going to be a certain level of urgency and importance attached to it. He put it into four boxes and he said that if you look at urgency on the vertical axis and importance on the horizontal axis, almost any task that you're about to engage in can be pegged into one of these four boxes. And what's so interesting from his perspective ‑ and I think we would agree with this ‑ is that sometimes the things we really want to get to, the things that are about building clarity, the big ticket items, the strategically important things, are the things that we don't always end up spending the majority of our time on.

So which box was he talking about? Well, he was talking about box 4. They're important but they're not urgent. They're not urgent because they're strategic, because we need time to think about them and time to do them well. But if your desk looks anything like mine at the moment, you may well find a lot more time spent working on things that are perhaps highly urgent and less important, and sometimes not urgent and not important at all. I mean, the analogy of things being passed to you, that monkey sort of type scenario comes through very strongly to my mind here.

So this is a really powerful way to not only coach others but to think about: what are the things that I need to be doing at the moment that are going to make the biggest difference? So going back to that little table of three things that you identified a moment ago, you've now got the opportunity to put ticks against whether these are actually urgent and important. So I'd invite you to do that. So just go back to your workbook and have a look at that. Where do my tasks sit? Am I in the right box and, if not, what might need to happen for me to really be able to step away from those until I have greater clarity around what I'm doing?

Once you've done that, I'm going to launch a short poll and basically what I want you to do here is let us know. Because everyone has now got these notes in your workbook, we can't see them. We'd love to know where you're working. So we're going to give you those four options, multiple choice. So you might have one item that sits in box 4, another item in box 3, another item in box 2. I'm going to launch that poll now and please do some voting for us. This will be very insightful to see where your top three activities are currently sitting. If Kerrie or Tamina could give me a thumbs up if you can see the poll, or Kate, thanks very much. That's great. So I can see here the percentage of votes coming through. We've got votes coming in already. Fantastic. We're nearly a third of the way through, so please keep your votes coming in. (Pause). And we're halfway there. I'll just give that another 30 seconds. Tamina and Kerrie, when I launch the results, I might just ask either of you if you've got an insight to share with me because you're very much at the coalface here, knowing what these challenges are. I might just bring you in here briefly, if that's okay, once I launch the results. I'll just hold that up for about 10 more seconds. If you've not voted, you've got a chance to do so. I can see that we've got over 120 votes, which is just fantastic. Again, once again this isn't data that we could lift off the internet. This is very much your experience today, what's happening right now for you.

Fantastic. Sorry if you didn't get a chance to vote. Let me end that poll now and launch those results. If Tamina or Kerrie could give me a thumbs up if you can see them, fantastic. What are we noticing? Well, just before I hand over, box 2, 61% of you are saying that you're spending time in that urgent/important area. Thankfully we're not engaged too much in not‑important and not‑urgent tasks. Box 1, 10%. This is good too. And box 4, about 47% of us. Tamina, is it okay to just pass to you maybe for a few comments on what you're seeing on that poll?

TAMINA TAYLOR: Yes, I think people are realising that what they need to get to first is happening. We're getting to the important and the urgent, and there's some things at this point in time we have to do now, and I think this time in COVID when things come across our desk, we have to prioritise on our feet, and I think that's what I'm seeing in point 2. People are saying, "Yes, we've got a lot of things to do" but there are also some things that aren't so urgent but they are important to do. So I think there's a real balance. It's great to see that.

IAN HAMILTON: Fantastic. Kerrie, would you like to add anything before I move on?

KERRIE DOWSLEY: I think that moving into the box 4, important/not urgent, is people coming through that turbulence perhaps, Ian, and then beginning to get some clear air and some space to look ahead. Staying in urgent and important is really necessary but it's exhausting work, and it is good to see that the important and not urgent is also really strongly represented there.

IAN HAMILTON: Yes. Great. Fantastic. What would be interesting is if we'd run the poll 2.5 weeks ago, as you were about to start onsite learning, would it look different? And if we ran the poll in 2.5 weeks time, would it look different again? Almost certainly. I think, as I said earlier, this isn't new but it's a great reminder, and if you've got people in your leadership team who you think could be more strategic or maybe need to prioritise their work differently, it's a great little coaching model as well. I think it impacts us all in very significant ways. So thanks very much for your insights there. So let me keep moving on. So we've run the poll and we can see these were the four categories.

Next, let's move on from clarity and talk a little bit about communication. Now, when we talk about communication, we could spend weeks but I think what's really significant about communication is that we all tend to, through experience, communicate in the way that we like to receive information. So what do I mean by that? Well, I reckon if you went through your inbox and looked at two or three of the emails that you just sent, you would see a pattern emerging through them, and the pattern generally is that we get focused in on two or three of these big areas. And one of the great references, if you want to explore this a bit further, is the Herrmann brain dominance model where they look at this idea that we've got very much thinking preferences that manifest themselves in the way that we communicate, and they talk about the big four types of communication. There are some of us who are very, very clear about what needs to be done, and if ever you've received an email that's got lots of underlining and dot points and great clarity, that's the type of email that comes from somebody who needs clarity: "You tell me what needs to be done, give me real precision and I'll do it". There are other people who are very, very skilled at putting together what we call the how, the execution, so there might be some time lines. The word I'm hearing a lot at the moment from businesses is 'road maps', "What's the road map for this particular organisation? What are the incremental stages that we need to hit to reach our goals". And so some of our communication has not only the 'what' but it has, "Okay, this is how we're going to get there". Key milestones and dates. If ever you've had an Excel spreadsheet attached to an email, you probably know the person is talking about not only the 'how' but the 'what' as well.

What's interesting as well is that some of us are really good at the visionary stuff, so this is about the 'why', and the 'why', of course, is about really engaging people in "What's so significant about what you're asking me to do? Where are you taking me? Where is the direction? Why is this so important now as opposed to yesterday or tomorrow? Why is it that we are doing this above other things?". It's back to the urgent and important matrix again. Then, finally, there's the whole section of communication about who I communicate too, when I communicate to them, stakeholder mapping, putting it all together in a matrix.

So if you're interested in exploring this further, the Herrmann brain matrix model have a lot of applications around this, and one of the big ones is communication. So if you think about communication, the likelihood is that we are probably going to be focussing in on at least two or three of those areas in our communication but rarely all four, and if we do, we may not do it as effectively as we could. So in your workbook on page 6, we're going to give you a little opportunity to do a really quick tick off list. So if you think about something that you have communicated recently or are about to communicate ‑ so you can look at it in two different ways ‑ tick the boxes as to where you think you've placed most of your energy and your focus. The Herrmann research would suggest that about 60 to 65% of us have a dominance in two to three areas, rarely all four. Some of us have a really strong focus on just one. So just go through that list on page 6 and just do a mental tick‑off. Have you considered these following things? Have you focused in one area more than another? I'd be really interested to see your results there because what we're really talking about here is expanding our capacity to message to the broadest possible audience so that when people receive our communication, it really captivates them, engages them because it's meeting their specific needs. So I might just pull in Kerrie and Tamina just really briefly again there, just to see if you've got any thoughts or anything coming through on the chat around different styles there and what you've perhaps noticed from your teaching leaders? Tamina, can I get any thoughts from you there?

TAMINA TAYLOR: I'm looking at the one in the 'what', about being concise. I'm thinking that's probably an area that, if I reflect on my communication to the community and my staff, when there's been so many things and particular opportunities that we have had to communicate and we've got to get it right, I've found being concise very difficult. So that's something that I'm working on and this is helping me to think about what to do.

IAN HAMILTON: Kerrie, I can see you've got a big smile on your face. And you're on mute by the way just at the moment, Kerrie. Kerrie, you're on mute at the moment.

KERRIE DOWSLEY: I was just trying not to let the bells interfere.

IAN HAMILTON: Okay. Very good. Any insights from you around your communications?

KERRIE DOWSLEY: Yes, I was just thinking about the dot points. I don't want to write another email with a whole lot of dot points in it but I probably will. But I think for us, we thought a lot about the 'why' this time. When we were thinking about communicating with staff in the lead‑up to going into remote learning, we thought about: what are the different things that we need to communicate with staff and have communication back from them on? We came up with three areas. We thought about their wellbeing, their teaching practice and the wellbeing and progress of their students, and around that we set up a communication tree with weekly check‑ins with each person around those three things. So thinking about the 'why' enabled us to come up with then the 'how'.

IAN HAMILTON: Fantastic. Thanks for that insight. Herrmann would describe it as an organising model. It just gives us an opportunity to think about "Where might my blind spots be in my communication? Where are my natural strengths coming through?". So sometimes you have to really force yourself to do exactly what you've just described, you know: why is this significant right now right at this point in time?

So there's the reference in the workbook. I recommend you read that article. It's a great product, something again that gives yourself insight, and the more insight you can get around your over preferences, particularly around communication, the more powerful your communication can be.

The one bit there that we didn't really focus on in too great a depth was the 'who', and, of course, who you communicate to is every bit as important as why you're communicating and what. Of course, in the planning of this webinar, we talked a lot about who are the key stakeholder groups and we kind of landed on this sort of model around parents, students and staff, but with the inclusion of this sense of massive turbulence, this disruption, this unprecedented change that schools have experienced. Never anything like in their history have they experienced changes like this. What has this meant for the way that you have been communicating with different groups?

I'd like to launch another poll. I'd really like to get your thoughts on this: what has been the biggest challenge for you around communicating to these really big stakeholder groups? So let me pull up that poll now. What I'd like to hear from you is which has been the most challenging. So let me just pull that poll up now. Which group represents the most significant communication challenge? That could be historically, it could be today or it could be going forward. If you've got any particular comments to make about this, please do so in the chat box as well, and I'm just launching that poll now. Tamina or Kerrie,, if you could give me the thumbs up if that's come up on your screen. Wonderful. Thank you. I think this is going to create some discussion, so let's certainly be ready to monitor the chat box as this comes through. So about half of you have voted. I'm just going to leave that for another ‑ let's give it 30 seconds just to catch up. We're up to nearly 100 votes. Thank you once again. Just really good point‑in‑time feedback. This is your experience. 15 seconds to go. If we just get a last chance to vote, wonderful. I'm going to end those results and share those. Again, if I could have a thumbs up that you can see those, wonderful. Great. Tamina, what are you noticing?

TAMINA TAYLOR: Sorry, I'm just having a chuckle at reading KT's comment. Can I just comment on ‑‑

IAN HAMILTON: Absolutely. Please do.

TAMINA TAYLOR: KT mentioned that despite being a one‑on‑one school, they learnt students didn't read emails. If I heard that once, I heard it 100 times from not just students but parents, which has come out in the poll, that they don't read the instructions; they're not reading the emails. We're trying every which way to communicate. I think KT said they've ended up using Instagram ‑ and I know a lot of schools in La Trobe Valley have used Facebook ‑ you know, short, sharp. They changed their whole approach but it was a big challenge.

But for me, back to the poll: parents, that's come out really strongly, and then staff close behind, which is interesting. I think the parents ‑ a bit like the comment from KT ‑ the diversity on what they're willing to engage with and their levels of literacy. I think Andrea or Tania mentioned about EAL and your different communities. Knowing your community and how they're going to respond and using the right mode to help with that is important.

IAN HAMILTON: Yes. Fantastic. I know that as a parent, we've often sat at home thinking, "There's going to be a newsletter or something's going to arrive in a minute to give us an update on what we're seeing happen at State level". Yes. Interesting. Big, big challenges: how to communicate, how to message that. So please keep sharing your experiences. Kerrie, can I turn to you, please. What about yourself?

KERRIE DOWSLEY: I think just getting that cut‑through of the message. At a particular time, what did any particular group need to know, and again I would really echo obviously in relation to our community the challenge of communicating with parents, particularly those where you've got a higher percentage of non‑English speaking background or where you may have literacy issues, and indeed just the access to technology and ensuring that we were able to support that communication by getting families access to technology. It was so fast, the whole thing, that it was very difficult to keep up with translations for different communications.

IAN HAMILTON: Yes. And for someone like myself, who may not even think about that as being a leadership challenge, but absolutely, yes. Now, I can see out the corner of my eye that my chat box is scrolling pretty quickly. I'm not reading it obviously because I'm facilitating, but, Tamina, hopefully you've had a quick chance to look at some of those comments around communicating to different groups, communicating in different ways. Anything that you'd like to add?

TAMINA TAYLOR: Yes, there's a couple of here. It's going so fast, which is great to see what they are saying. Simon said the three Cs of communication. In Victoria, they learned to communicate the successes and activities using multiple platforms. I think Robin makes a really interesting point ‑ the challenge and the concerns about people unwilling to engage with longer communications and is the volume of the messages, so just the change in how we're receiving so much information and messaging and what we do about that.

IAN HAMILTON: A quick question from me. How big a proportion of your day would crafting messages and thinking about recipients ‑ how much of that time would it take for you? I'm interested to know.

TAMINA TAYLOR: Me personally?

IAN HAMILTON: Yes. How much of your working day is spent actually putting these messages together?

TAMINA TAYLOR: I think it depends on the message actually. At different times I've found it easier but I do spend a lot of my time trying to make sure it's clear and really thinking about my audience and my parents. Depending on how much was out in the media at this particular transition time, I felt that the messaging from the Government that was consistent all along really helped us in the return to school with no parents in the schoolyard. So we only had to say some of those things once and it was easy, it was clear, because it's consistent messages from everywhere. But it's when there was a grey area that I found that harder and we took a lot longer to do that. I always get someone to read my messages because, as I said earlier, I like to improve on being more concise, so I ask staff and other people to read it and I say, "Okay, you're a parent; put your parent hat on. What can we take out of this? What's the clear message? Is it what I expect it to be?". So that's where I spend more time because I want to get it right. Probably that was my biggest learning during the COVID remote learning and coming back: to improve my communication.

IAN HAMILTON: Yes. Kerrie, did you want to say anything about that?

KERRIE DOWSLEY: I think, Ian, someone mentioned a really interesting point in the chat about the whole notion of trust and building trust with their communities in their communication and in the information that they were providing for them. So I just thought that was an interesting aspect of communication. Perhaps a precursor to thinking about what we write and how we write it is what that level of trust is in our communication with our community.

IAN HAMILTON: Yes. Fantastic. I think one of the things that you've both spoken about is putting yourself in the shoes of the recipient, thinking about the information they want, how are they going to read this? It may be that they're going to look for different things to what I focused in on. So an immensely complex topic but I think an organising principle like the what, the how, the why and the who are really important, and if you want to go back to that checklist, there's a lot more things we could have put in there but hopefully that's giving you a little bit of a snapshot on where your preferences are likely to sit.

Now, we talked a little bit about the 'why' and, Kerrie, you just gave me a great lead into this. When we put messages together and we're thinking about clarity and we're thinking about the big things, the things that are important to do, I was reminded ‑ and we as a design group, when we put this together, were reminded about the very popular, pioneering sort of work by Simon Sinek where he talked in simple terms ‑ but, of course, it's much more complicated than this ‑ about the fact that we're often very quick to talk about what needs to happen, how it needs to happen, but sometimes we neglect why this is so significant. Kerrie, I think you just made a great point a moment ago about starting with 'why'. It's really at the centre of his work. If you haven't read his book, I'd recommend you do so. He talks a lot about business examples but I think when we're communicating, really engaging people, taking them on the journey with us as leaders, it's so significantly important. He even draws his three circles very much like this. And if you think about the model that I was just talking about, he's very much capturing the same thing, minus the 'who', but he's really placing much greater emphasis on that 'why'. Why is this an important message now? Why is it that I want people to pay attention to this? And then how am I going to do that in such a way that's going to bring them with me? So Simon Sinek's work is really useful, very accessible, and I would strongly recommend you have a look at that because it certainly can be the case sometimes that we work in the reverse order. We spend a lot of time thinking about what we need people to do, how we want them to achieve that, and not necessarily enough focus around the 'why'. I can just see Maria's posted a clip to where you can see him on YouTube. As I said, highly accessible. You don't necessarily need to read the book, although I'd love you to, but a great opportunity for you to really get a sense of how people who are skilled at this message really, really powerfully. Any other thoughts on that, Kerrie and Tamina, before I move on?

KERRIE DOWSLEY: I just think there's some great ideas on the chat about what people were doing in terms of communicating with their families and with their communities ‑ you know, the use of hashtags and weekly phone calls to each family. Obviously that depends on the size of the school. The role of pastoral care teachers. So some fabulous strategies there.

IAN HAMILTON: Fantastic. Tamina, anything from you?

TAMINA TAYLOR: I think the same as Kerrie actually. I think what's coming out was just the creativity and the variety in the use of platforms and where they've been trying to find something that will engage the staff, particularly a lot of staff morale building and fun things as well in difficult times. I think Kaylee has said a staff Friday Kahoot! Session and I think I read earlier there was a Prosecco Friday night. I think there were a few of those going on in the early days too, which were a bit of fun. So they're all very important. Even though we're seeing fun, it's that morale and keeping the communication going, even if it's a short amount of time, and there's a lot of that in the chat.

KERRIE DOWSLEY: Ian ‑ just jumping in there ‑ people have mentioned their ES staff and the role that they play in communicating with families, particularly, but not exclusively I imagine, with funded students. I think we certainly experienced that here, where there was a great sense of satisfaction and an increased sense of purpose amongst those staff with those direct contacts with families.

IAN HAMILTON: That's the power of the chat. Thank you very much for raising that. So let me just pause for a moment. When we talk about communication, what we've not tried to do in this webinar is just give you three abstract models. What we're really trying to do is give you a sense that they do all interlink closely together. We've talked about the 'why' as probably the thing that holds them all together. So we talked about the urgent and the important matrix. Spending a few moments thinking about 'why' can be a really useful tool then to think about: where am I spending my time? Am I in the right area? Am I doing the things in box 4 that we know is the place where we all want to be but sometimes it's just very hard to get to? And then thinking about that broader model around the 'what' that we need to communicate, the 'how' it needs to get done, 'why' it's so significant and 'who' as well is another great little organising principle. And I'm hoping bringing those three together will give you a little bit of a strategic sense about "How effective is my communication at the moment? What am I doing well? What can I support others to do differently and how might this shape some of the future messages that I put together?".

So, finally, let's just talk about compassion. Now, this is really interesting. We're certainly not going to devote a lengthy amount of time in this webinar to compassionate leadership. What I think is interesting is you don't need to do a program to be a compassionate leader. In fact, if you've listened to my colleague Dr Ben Palmer recently on some of his webinars, he's talked about a similar concept with empathy. You don't need to train yourself to be empathetic. We are naturally predisposed to not only being empathetic but to also be compassionate to others. I think what can get in the way is being busy, losing attention or focus. But what we have seen and what I think has characterised this period is when schools have gone through transition and people have moved through that at different speeds, they have required a level of focus which probably hasn't been given to them before, and we have seen great, great examples of that. Some of the stories that have come through about care for the individual have just been quite phenomenal. As I said earlier, there is a great window of opportunity not to go back to business as usual but to think about: what was I doing differently at an individual level, whether that's parents or students or staff, that really gave me an extra dimension to my leadership, that I need to just keep doing? A lot of it comes down to just getting really focused in and spending time with people. When we think about the concept of compassion, it's slightly different to empathy because there's this sense of being motivated to help and, of course, I think we all are intrinsically wired to help others.

So when we look at compassion, what we're really talking about is three components. This cognitive element of: let me try and understand the issue of the problem or your thinking at the moment; let me try and feel the way that you're feeling about this issue; and then, finally, the display through our behaviour of a commitment to make a response to this. There was great insights from some of my colleagues in building this. This is not necessarily about a defined solution or even making a commitment to solve the problem, but making a commitment to respond. In the workbook I even put a reference from Brené Brown there talking about little boundaries that might need to be put around this. But I think there's no doubt that school leadership has been characterised by a deep sense of connection and compassion over these last few weeks and something I think that is very much worth keeping front of mind as we move through this next phase or transition.

Your thoughts on that would be great as I move into the summary. I will just go over to Tamina and Kerrie one more time in a moment just to see if there's any thoughts coming through. But I think it's a fantastic opportunity here to just build upon the great work that's been done so far.

So, in summary, we've looked at that model around the fact that people move through transition as a part of the process of change and they will undoubtedly experience turbulence along the way. Leaders rise to that challenge by recognising people move through turbulence at different speeds and it requires different styles of leadership to assist people along the way. As I have said already, managing turbulence along the way.

We talked about clarity. We've lent back a little bit on the last webinar but we've also talked about: what are behaviours that I can demonstrate to be clear in my messaging? What might be some of the things I could coach others to do to send out really clear messages? Then, finally, I have just touched very briefly on the importance of just keeping up that great work as leaders that we've been doing, recognising that being compassionate is something that we're all instinctively able to do but we've got to create the energy and the focus in order for us to be able to do that.

So a little bit of a reflection just before I close. I spoke earlier at the outset of the webinar about something new, something familiar and something you may well be quite experienced in. We've love to hear your thoughts around this. Just before I put the music on, I will just finally hand over to Tamina and Kerrie just to see if there are any concluding comments you'd like to make around that ‑ something new, something familiar, something you can coach others. Then, finally, just a final plug: Leading Self, the last of these three webinars is on the 18th of June at 10 o'clock and 4.30. Please register. We'd love you to join us. Kerrie, we might hand over to you one last time. Anything coming through that you'd like to share?

KERRIE DOWSLEY: I think the whole idea around re‑establishing and what that looks like. Going back to that poll, 47% of us are sitting in that important/non‑urgent and ready to think forward. So how do we draw the threads together and then weave that into perhaps our AIPs and our strategic plans? What do they now look like in the context of this experience? So how do we re‑establish for term 3 and term 4 with that in mind?

IAN HAMILTON: Thank you very much. And, Tamina, a few last words from you?

TAMINA TAYLOR: What's probably coming through for me ‑ in the chat line and I've been thinking about it ‑ is that personal connection that I think in the busyness of schools that we had prior to COVID and that we learnt the value even more ‑ we might have known the value ‑ that personal connection, that check‑in and that taking time to be really present in the conversations that we're having and valuing each other and building that trust amongst our colleagues and with parents. I think that's something that's really going to take us forward and I can see that's important to a lot of our participants.

IAN HAMILTON: Yes. Fantastic. A great way to conclude: the parents, the students and the staff are our most important asset, taking time to prioritise their needs, and that is really the hallmark of being compassionate, showing that understanding. That's really powerful.

So I'm just going to play a little bit of music just to bring the webinar to a close. We've got a minute left. I'd love to hear your concluding thoughts. I can't emphasise how grateful I am for Tamina and Kerrie's input. You really are on the coalface. Your expert knowledge, your ability to be able to interpret the chat with the assistance of the team that are feeding that to you as well ‑ I shouldn't underestimate how big a job that is, which has happened quietly and silently in the background. Thank you very much. Please pass any concluding comments into the chat box and thank you very much. I wish you the best of luck over the next few weeks and months as you continue that transition.

(Music plays)