

Leadership and lollipop moments

Leadership and the *National Quality Framework* assessment and rating process

Everyday leadership and lollipops

Leadership is a term that has become so common that it is often taken for granted. Often there are also dominant ideas about who can lead and what leadership should look like. Ideas and images from the world of business and corporations often colour our ideas about leaders.

Speaking at the TED innovation conference in 2010, Drew Dudley challenged listeners to think about leadership in a different way. In his address, Dudley speaks of a seemingly insignificant moment in his life where a small gesture (handing out a lollipop) changed the life of another. Realising the significance of this moment to the receiver of the lollipop some years later, Dudley coined the phrase 'lollipop moments' to signify instances of everyday leadership. Dudley says that we have made leadership bigger than ourselves

and we no longer recognise everyday acts as opportunities for leadership. We need to recognise, celebrate and make lollipop moments happen again and again in order to improve our own lives and the lives of others.

At our kindergarten this provocation got our team thinking about leadership and what leadership looks like. Dudley's idea of lollipop moments helped us to think differently about leadership than we had before. In the conception of lollipop moments, leadership is an everyday act in which you can make a difference in the life of another. With this in mind, we got to thinking about the capacities that we all have for leadership and how we can use these to help others. We turned to thinking about the process of assessment for the *National Quality Framework* (NQF) that we had undertaken a few years before and the ways in which we demonstrated leadership

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during this process. We considered Dudley's notion of everyday leadership and how we might support others who are yet to go through their own assessments.

Assessment and rating

At our kindy, it was also time to review our Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) and get ready for the beginning of another assessment cycle. We had so many more questions than the first time that we were assessed:

- How do we demonstrate our continuing improvement?
- Being assessed as 'exceeding' the first time, what does 'exceeding' look like the second time around?
- What will the assessors look for on this second assessment cycle?

We wondered what the assessment cycle must be like for others who have now seen other centres go through it, who may have heard many rumours and might be worried about what it will be like.

Lollipop moments and words of wisdom

With our newfound knowledge of leadership and in the spirit of 'lollipop moments', our team would like to offer the following reflections for other educators upon our initial assessment and rating visit. We hope that this wisdom will prove useful to others on their journey of self-reflection and preparation for assessment.

Words of wisdom from the staff at Aspley East Kindergarten:

Don't be afraid of the whole process being so judgemental on you personally ... it's easy to feel insecure about your own knowledge, however, every single day you are performing your job and you do know your job.

Have confidence in yourselves that what you do every day is right.

It was not as daunting as I thought it would be as I felt prepared to answer questions about our processes. The assessors were very easy to get along with and showed us, by way of their feedback, that we were doing well and ultimately made their job easier.

Being assessed within the first six months of the implementation of the NQF was very daunting, scary and overwhelming. Our notice and subsequent assessment came during a very busy time where we had experienced staff changes and a major refurbishment project. We all had faith in our practices, based on relationships and needed to work together to support each other, collaborate and work cooperatively.

Don't 'over think' the process. Just be yourself as we already know what we are doing. I was terrified as I thought if I said the wrong thing that I would let my centre

down. On the day of the assessment, the assessor started chatting to me, it wasn't until she had moved on that I realised that I had 'passed the test'. Whilst we were chatting, I realised that I was actually being assessed without realising it!

The self-assessment process helped us to review our programs and practices and think about why we do things the way that we do. It helped us to solidify our values and beliefs and learn to articulate them more strongly. Some things we actually disagreed with in discussion with the assessors, but from the self-assessment process, we were able to justify why we did things a different way to what the NQS was suggesting.

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References

Dudley, D. (2010). Everyday Leadership. Retrieved 29 October 2015, from http://www.ted.com/talks/drew_dudley_everyday_leadership#t-350779.

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