The Institute for
Education Leadership

L'Institut de leadership
en éducation

ONTARIO

Ontario Leaders Collaborating for Student Achievement, Equity and Well-being
La collaboration des leaders en Ontario assure la réussite, l'équité et le bien-être des élèves.

www.education-leadership-ontario.ca

TIPS FOR USING *IDEAS INTO ACTION #9: EXPLORING THE COGNITIVE LEADERSHIP RESOURCES* TO STRENGTHEN LEADERSHIP PRACTICE

1. Find out what's in this resource and then focus on what you want to learn first.

Refer to the "WHAT'S INSIDE" column on page 2 which lists four main parts:

- **Part A** – The 'Personal Leadership Resources (PLRs)' section highlights the importance of the three categories of PLRs – cognitive, social, and psychological – in the effective enactment of the leadership practices of the Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF).
- **Part B** – 'Digging Deeper' offers a sampling of research to provide an evidence base for the three social PLRs – problem-solving expertise, role-specific knowledge, and systems thinking.
- **Part C** – suggests 'ten proven strategies' that include one or more approaches for developing and strengthening our cognitive PLRs.
- **Part D** – provides an annotated list of relevant resources for further reading.

2. Become familiar with the evidence base and then apply the strategies to real-life leadership scenarios.

One way to learn about the approaches suggested in the ten strategies is to try them out by applying them to actual leadership scenarios1. Page two of this tip sheet offers ten possible approaches. Work on your own and/or find a partner or two to collaborate on the application.

Case Study One: Negotiating Barriers to Student Success
Michael is the only son of a single mother who was educated in a district that she believes discriminated against her. As principal you have observed that Michael's behaviour has become increasingly difficult to manage. There was a strong recommendation for testing and support. However, the mother refuses either the support or to have her son tested saying the school is discriminating against her son. Meanwhile, other parents and staff are pressing you to act.

Case Study Two: Trouble with Penguins
This morning, as part of her discussion on families, one of the Grade 2 teachers reads a picture book *Tango Makes Three* to her students. The book is a true story about two male penguins in the Central Park Zoo who find an abandoned egg, build a nest, keep the egg warm, and nurture the newborn until it is grown. The teacher's intent was to help her students appreciate that families can have many different structures. You receive a phone call from an angry parent who says she wants her child removed from the classroom the next time the teacher reads a book about homosexuality.

> **Exploring the Cognitive PLRs**
>
> **Purpose:** Gain an understanding of evidence-based perspectives of the cognitive PLRs by applying strategies to leadership in real-life contexts
> **Process:**
> - Read the scenario.
> - Identify the problem.
> - Decide who is involved and what their roles are.
> - Try out one or more of the approaches listed on page 2 with the goal of finding possible solutions to the problem.
> - Assess the outcome(s).
> - Reflect on how the cognitive PLRs can contribute to a positive outcome and what you learned.

---

[1] These scenarios are adapted from *Leader of the Equitable School* (Ontario Principals' Council, 2012)

3. **Write Your Own Scenario**:
   - What's an event or issue you're facing right now? Why is it a problem?
   - Who else is involved and how? What are their roles?
   - What are the circumstances that led to the problem?

Try these approaches to test their effectiveness in using your social PLRs to bring about a possible solution to the problems in the scenarios.

1. **Think Better:**
   Use the Plus-Minus-Interesting (PMI) chart to consider the "evidence"' from all sides before making a commitment to a decision that solves the problem in the case study. (Page 14)
2. **Solve the Right Problem:**
   - Apply 'Root Cause Analysis' to the case study. (Page 17)
   - Use the "5 Whys" protocol to uncover the problem in the case. (Pages 17 to 18)
3. **Mitigate the Impact of Bias:**
   Analyse the situations with a view to identifying implicit biases. (Page 20)
4. **Strengthen Problem-Solving Know-How:**
   Identify the potential four decision-making "villains" in the case that need to be countered. (Page 24)
5. **Connect to Promote "Knowledge Flow":**
   Use the case study to connect your solution to Perkins' the five features of flow of knowledge in communities and organizations. Page 28
6. **Question to Open Minds:**
   Beginning with "what's on your mind?" use Stanier's seven coaching questions with a partner to solve the case study. (Page 29)
7. **Storytell to Move Hearts, Minds, Body & Spirit:**
   Monarth indicates that "data can persuade people, but it does not inspire them to act … you need to wrap your vision in a story that fires the imagination and stirs the soul." Create a story that builds capacity to solve the problem in the case study and ensures the issue is resolved. (Page 30)
8. **Grow Expertise:**
   Show how Duckworth's "grit" relates to the case study. (Pages 35 to 36)
9. **Apply Systems Thinking:**
   Use the 'iceberg' model as a thinking protocol to work through the case. (Page 35)
10. **Adopt Good "Self-Care" Habits**:
    Levitin suggests five ways that can serve as a "neural reset button." Which reset button would you use to perform better while solving the case study? (Page 40)