Catholic Education Office
Archdiocese of Melbourne

RESOURCE GUIDE 5

Encouraging Other Women to Take the Next Step

5.1 Supporting Other Women in their Leadership Journey

5.2 Being a Role Model

Share your stories to teach, empower, align and motivate.

TRINIDAD HUNT, INSPIRING LEADERSHIP FOR WOMEN PROGRAM

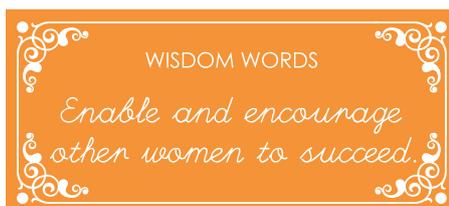# 5.1 Supporting Other Women in their Leadership Journey

EXPLORING THE ISSUE

As women look forward to where they are heading in their own leadership journey, they may forget the role they can play in supporting other women to achieve their goal of leadership. How can women leaders nurture those who are aspiring to leadership?

… a 'good boss' can influence the trajectory of our careers and touch our lives with their wisdom … Many fine leaders understand the importance of fostering leadership in others and, in so doing, build organisational capability (Valerio 2009, p. 72).

There are many ways to support women in their leadership aspirations. It is important to set up structures that enable women to be supported by rich and comprehensive feedback from a variety of sources, such as multi-rater feedback tools, self-assessments from personality and preference questionnaires, leadership-style inventories, peer observations from other program participants, and participant interviews. Intensive feedback programs can be an effective form of leadership development for women who need more opportunities to obtain feedback about how they are perceived (Valerio 2009).

Mentoring and coaching can support a woman's career development. It is essential to acknowledge the challenges that women face on their leadership journeys and to assist them to find ways to overcome them. These challenges have been outlined in other sections of this Resource Guide. A positive response to these challenges may provide the impetus for these women to take the next step in leadership.

> **WISDOM WORDS**
> *Enable and encourage other women to succeed.*

Delegation is important when assisting women in their leadership development. It allows others to act in roles, fill positions, and take on extra responsibility. Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011, p. 96) urge leaders to have a well-organised succession plan. This should include opportunities for others to lead.

Unfortunately, the research indicates that there is a contradiction in the way women are seen in relation to supporting each other. Barbara Watterson (2010) highlights the issue of women not supporting each other and asks, 'If one of the strategies to attract women into school leadership is about supporting

other women, how much is this happening, or are women sometimes their own worst enemies?' (Watterston et al. 2010, p. 14).

It is worth reflecting on what drives unsupportive behaviours. Cultural stereotypes can identify masculine attributes with leadership, while women can be viewed as too tough or too feminine in this context. In Caroline Turner's article, 'Women leading women: Supporters or saboteurs?' (2012), we read that while women can be great bosses, mentors and supporters, they are less likely than men to want a woman boss and are more likely to be tough on other women. One reason offered for this is that there are so few women at the top that the spotlight is focused on them. Turner suggests that when this is addressed, we will see the gamut of behaviours from women, not just the 'queen bee' stereotype. By becoming aware of behaviour and understanding what underlies unsupportive behaviour, women can stop undermining and start championing other women.

THE WOMEN SAY

It was interesting to note that the *Round Table Forum* participants had not thought about ways in which they might assist other women to progress into leadership. In fact, they had experienced situations where women have been their 'worst enemies'. These situations included women being overly critical of other women in leadership positions, not supporting women as they moved up the leadership ladder, and making it clear they did not like working for a female leader. Yet within the group there was also one principal who had nurtured four female deputy principals to principalship and was happy to continue this role.

The Round Table Forum participants valued the 'MasterMind Partnerships' they had been part of in the *Inspiring Leadership for Women* program. This strategy is outlined below. One woman described the partnership as 'powerful', while another had retained the partnership beyond her participation in the program.

The *Round Table Forum* participants had a number of suggestions for encouraging other women in their leadership journey:

- Encourage them to start small by taking on a leadership role, such as the Lunchtime Computer Club.
- Remind them that initially they are able to teach in a classroom as well as being a leader.
- Build succession planning early in teachers' careers.
- Make sure they can have some time release from classroom duties so that they can successfully fulfil leadership roles, such as Religious Education Leader and Literacy Leader.

SHARING THE LEARNING

As a leader, it is important to empower others and to help women to build new skills and knowledge. This means handing over the power, influence and information to someone else and making them responsible for the task. It is important that these women are capable, ready and willing to be empowered. They will need to be supported as they move into new areas.

Opportunities for growth and leadership development include:

- taking on a challenging task that requires you to learn new skills or knowledge
- filling a position for the short term
- taking on acting roles for more long-term experience
- taking on a task or project the principal would normally do
- being delegated a particular responsibility.

MasterMind Partnerships

Trinidad Hunt sets up MasterMind Partnerships in the Inspiring Leadership for Women program. The women are partnered with another participant in the program and are told that their objective is to empower their partner to accomplish their goals, visions and intentions. The singular, most important purpose of a MasterMind partner is to ensure that their partner 'wins'. This process builds a 'safe', trusting relationship that enables effective learning and authentic mentoring to take place.

The women communicate over a three-month period between Day 2 and 3 of

the program. They stay in touch in ways that are convenient for them, such as face-to-face meetings, emails, phone calls, or text messages. Partners elicit, listen and help each other clarify their goals, moving each other to ever-higher levels of achievement. How they listen, how they dialogue and elicit, and how they help each other make decisions in a positive, encouraging way are critical to producing positive results with this process.

This is an extremely powerful process that helps participants develop the basic skills necessary for higher levels of coaching and mentoring in the future. It can be applied in most work situations where two people agree to be MasterMind partners. When the women report back on this partnership on the third day of the *Inspiring Leadership for Women program*, many talk about how it has had a life-changing impact.

Shadowing

Shadowing leaders is a strategy that provides an opportunity to build relationships with people in roles we might aspire to fulfil. We can find out what the role is really like, and this also helps to define the type of leader we would like to be.

The CEOM *re:th!nk Aspiring to Principalship* program includes a shadowing component. For two days, participants shadow a principal who matches their leadership capability goals. This is a mutually beneficial process that assists the aspirant principal while allowing the principal to share their knowledge. It also provides further insight into principalship for women who are considering this as a future career step.

5.2 Being a Role Model

EXPLORING THE ISSUE

The importance of providing positive role models for women who are aspiring to leadership has been emphasised in the research. Women need to learn more about how other women have achieved success and reached their professional goals. Having access to positive female role models enables women to imagine themselves in those roles and emulate good leadership (Valerio 2009).

Unfortunately, some women may be modelling leadership that involves long working hours, lack of work–life balance, and striving to live up to unrealistic expectations. Their words, actions and behaviour can have a negative impact on the way leadership is perceived, and other women may be deterred from applying for leadership positions. The words that leaders use when talking about their work can have a big influence on perspectives of others who may be considering the role of a senior leader or principal.

> **WISDOM WORDS**
>
> *Be the light that you want to see in others.*
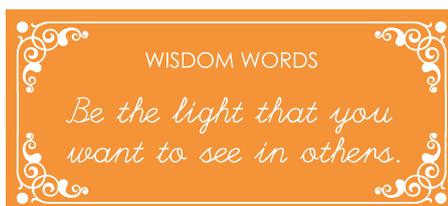
THE WOMEN SAY

At the end of the Round Table Forum, the participants began to realise that they may actually be sending the wrong message to their staff. The scenario below was presented to them. It assisted them to see the important role they had in promoting a positive image of leadership to others. They began to realise that powerful role models are those people who have healthy, happy relationships and enjoy their work.

The *Round Table Forum* participants identified a number of actions women in leadership could take to ensure that a positive and sustainable image of leadership is portrayed to others:

- Ensure as leader or principal you 'walk the talk' in regards to time management.
- Talk about your 'other life' outside work.
- Set clear guidelines and expectations around the role of the principal. Separate your private/social life/work life.
- Ensure there is clarity about leadership roles.

- Model being a calm principal, not a frantic one.
- Share that you are not always perfect.
- Set a goal per term for being a good role model, then seek feedback from others regarding your role modelling.
- Encourage the team approach to organising and planning.

The Round Table Forum participants were asked to reflect on the question: 'What do you love about your role as leader?' They shared that leadership was exciting, energising, varied, collegial, invigorating, and challenging. They described what they loved about leadership and this gave them the language to talk positively about their leadership role.

SHARING THE LEARNING

In order to attract other women to leadership, the role must be seen as manageable and sustainable. Women leaders have a responsibility to model sustainable leadership. They can demonstrate ways of leading that may not be present in traditional models of leadership. They can delineate their private and school life and work realistic hours. They can focus their energy on developing capabilities that will make them a great leader and talk positively about their leadership role.

Behaviour	Intended Communication	Unintended Communication
1. Get to work at 6.00 am. Leave work at 7.00 pm.	1. I am committed to my job.	1. Leadership is too hard. The costs are too high.
2. 'First Response' for any crisis – challenge.	2. I lead from the front. I am a good crisis manager.	2. I don't trust people and don't have confidence in other's abilities. I am disempowering.

References

WISDOM WORDS

*Be the change you
want to see.*

Grogan, M & Shakeshaft, C 2011, *Women and Educational Leadership*, Jossey-Bass, San Fransisco, California.

Turner, C 2012, 'Women leading women: Supporters or saboteurs?', *Forbes*, accessed 25 September www.forbes.com/sites/womensmedia/2012/10/03/women-leading-women-supporters-or-saboteurs.

Valerio, AM 2009, *Developing Women Leaders: A Guide for Men and Women in Organizations*, Wiley-Blackwell, UK.

Watterston, J, Redman, K & Watterston, B (eds.) 2010, *Women in School Leadership: Journeys to Success*, Australian Council for Educational Leaders (ACEL), NSW.

It is important for women to hear other women's stories of success in leadership and hear the positive aspects of being a leader. The Inspiring Leadership for Women program provides a safe environment for women to share their stories, which in turn energise those who hear them.

Participants develop a Philosophy of Leadership which helps them to identify the qualities they value as leaders, which in turn enables them to see themselves as role models. In order to be a positive role model they are asked to consider:

• What actions will I take?
• What words will I speak?
• What behaviours will I exhibit?
• What habits will I change?

Women can be role models in a formal way through mentoring, women's networks, speaking on leadership,

or sharing their own leadership stories with others. They can model informally through the language they use when they speak about their role and its challenges, and through their behaviour and body language. By encouraging more women to be role models, we can challenge the stereotypes and the status quo.

JOHN 14:12

I am telling you the truth: those who believe in me will do what I do—yes, they will do even greater things, because I am going to the Father.

PHILIPPIANS 4:9

What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.