

LEADERSHIP LENS

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This month's interview

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COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE CREATES A MUCH STRONGER, SHARED DIRECTION.

“The calibre of people I work with is energising, and I love giving back to the profession.”

William Wallace’s path to school leadership was shaped by a deep family legacy in education.

Growing up with his grandfather and numerous other family members as teachers, education seemed an inevitable calling. However, his journey wasn’t straightforward.

“I actually ended up, at the end of high school, getting a scholarship to do Business and Law at university,” Wallace recalls. “But I had a real heart for education and wanted to contribute to future generations.”

Inspired by the lifelong impact his grandfather had on students, Wallace pursued teaching, realising early on the power of relationships in shaping young lives. Leadership, he notes, became a natural progression, allowing him to cultivate a positive school culture and make a lasting impact beyond the classroom.

Influential Mentorship and Key Turning Points

Throughout his career, Wallace has been fortunate to learn from exceptional leaders. One of the most significant influences was Anne Mulcahy, his first principal, who modelled visionary leadership.

“She had been principal for 20 years but continually reinvented herself, always learning and growing,” Wallace reflects. “She had such a heart for kids and acted from a place of integrity. She recognised leadership potential in me before I saw it in myself.”

Mulcahy’s encouragement and belief in his capabilities were pivotal, sparking Wallace’s commitment to leadership and shaping his understanding of school culture, moral purpose, and continuous improvement.

Lifelong Learning and Professional Growth

A firm believer in lifelong learning, Wallace has pursued extensive professional development to enhance his leadership capacity.

“When I first went into leadership, studying a Master of Education was essential to understand leadership practice. Moving into middle school leadership, I completed theological studies to support my teaching and leadership in Christian studies.

More recently, the MBA has helped me navigate the business side of school leadership.” His commitment to ongoing learning extends to governance and strategic leadership. “The company directors course has been invaluable in contributing effectively to the school board and broader independent school associations. The calibre of people I work with is energising, and I love giving back to the profession.”

Motivation and Community Impact

At the core of Wallace’s leadership is a passion for fostering a thriving learning community. “It’s about seeing the school grow and flourish—not just students but staff, parents, and the wider community.

Schools are becoming more of a social hub, and we have a unique role in supporting family wellbeing, building relationships, and strengthening connections.”

He emphasises the importance of a holistic approach, ensuring that students develop academically, socially, emotionally, and spiritually. Likewise, empowering staff and fostering a positive culture within the school is a key motivation.



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Leadership Style: From Head to Heart

Faith plays a fundamental role in Wallace’s leadership. Golden Grove Lutheran’s strong connection with the local church reinforces his belief in education as a mission of service and community.

“In leadership, I strive to be transcendental—living out my faith seamlessly through my actions and interactions. Over time, I’ve shifted from being a more head-focused leader, strong on curriculum and compliance, to recognising that relationships are the true foundation of effective leadership.”

He values collaboration and communication, ensuring that the school’s strategic vision is shaped collectively. “When you engage staff, students, and families in the vision, the collective intelligence creates a much stronger, shared direction.”

Navigating Challenges: The Power of Courageous Conversations

One of the biggest challenges Wallace has faced is developing the ability to navigate difficult conversations effectively.

“Naturally, as educators, we want to maintain positive relationships. But I’ve come to see that what might feel like conflict is often just a courageous conversation that benefits both parties.”

Drawing inspiration from leadership expert Pete Scazzero, Wallace has learned that conflict can be a catalyst for growth.

“Sometimes, those tough conversations are necessary for the organisation to move forward. Approaching them constructively can lead to real progress and improvement.”

Advice to Aspiring Leaders

For Wallace, leadership begins with deep self-awareness. He emphasises the importance of understanding one’s strengths and areas for growth and advocates for a strengths-based approach rather than focusing excessively on weaknesses.

Feedback plays a crucial role in this process, as leaders must remain open to reflection and constructive criticism. “A big part of leadership is being intentional every day about your growth,” Wallace shares. “It’s about those small wins that accumulate over time, shifting from operational thinking to strategic leadership.”

He also underscores the value of mentorship, particularly from individuals outside one’s immediate school environment. “Having a trusted mentor or coach can help unpack feedback, provide perspective, and guide leaders in their growth,” he explains.

As educators progress through middle leadership roles and towards principalship, Wallace notes a critical shift in mindset—leaders must transition from managing teams to engaging strategically with governing boards, a skill that requires a nuanced understanding of governance and decision-making processes.

Navigating Change in Education

Wallace’s approach to change management has been shaped by major events like the COVID-19 pandemic. Adaptability, he asserts, is key.

“Sometimes, you don’t have all the facts, and you need to be comfortable making decisions with the best information available at the time,” he explains.

Successful change management, he says, follows a structured process: identifying the need for change, setting clear and measurable goals, and implementing a well-thought-out plan. “It’s about understanding where we are now, where we need to be, and how we navigate that transition effectively.”

Equally important is fostering a culture of collaboration. Wallace highlights the importance of engaging staff, identifying key advocates within the school, and ensuring that teachers have the necessary resources and professional learning opportunities to implement changes successfully. Feedback loops, involving staff, parents, and stakeholders, play a crucial role in refining the process and ensuring long-term success.

Supporting Early Career Teachers

A significant part of Wallace’s leadership is his commitment to nurturing early career teachers. Recognising the challenges they face, he stresses the importance of mentorship and structured support.

“We’ve designed our teaching structures so that early career teachers are always paired with experienced mentors,” he explains. In addition, Golden Grove Lutheran has created a dedicated teacher mentor role within its leadership team, ensuring that new teachers receive continuous guidance and resources.



“I’ve always encouraged new leaders to think carefully about balancing their roles with their family life.”

Professional development is another key pillar. “Each teacher has a bespoke annual professional learning plan,” Wallace shares. “It’s not a one-size-fits-all approach. We tailor learning to their individual goals and aspirations.”

By incorporating external coaching and encouraging early career teachers to reflect on their growth, Wallace ensures that they develop confidence and resilience in the classroom.

Prioritising Teacher Retention and Wellbeing

Understanding that teacher wellbeing directly impacts retention, Wallace has implemented structured support systems within the school. Golden Grove Lutheran collaborates with external companies such as Champ Programs to conduct annual staff wellbeing surveys. The insights gained are shared with a consultative committee representing different areas of the school, enabling leadership to respond proactively to staff needs.

“Sometimes, it’s about simple but meaningful support,” he explains. “For example, if financial stress is a concern, we bring in financial advisors to assist staff. If sleep or general wellbeing is an issue, we explore relevant programs to help.” By fostering a responsive and supportive work environment, Wallace ensures that staff feel valued and equipped to perform at their best.

Work-Life Balance: Leading by Example

As a leader, Wallace acknowledges the challenge of maintaining work-life balance, particularly for those stepping into leadership roles. Reflecting on his own experience as a father of three boys, he emphasises the importance of intentional time management.

“I’ve always encouraged new leaders to think carefully about balancing their roles with their family life,” he shares. “Children grow up fast, and it’s crucial to be present.”

Drawing inspiration from leadership expert Pete Scazzero, Wallace incorporates structured reflection into his routine, ensuring that his priorities align with his personal and professional commitments. “Taking time to disconnect is important. Whether it’s playing golf, working on home renovations, or spending time with friends outside of education, these activities provide perspective and prevent burnout.”

The Future of Education: A Vision for the Next Decade

Looking ahead, Wallace sees several transformative trends shaping education over the next five to ten years.

The integration of wellbeing initiatives into school culture will be crucial for student and staff success, as education moves toward a more holistic approach. Employers are also increasingly prioritising soft skills such as collaboration, creativity, and empathy, which Wallace believes will define future success. Additionally, global learning and cultural awareness will play a growing role in education, particularly for schools like Golden Grove Lutheran that embrace the International Baccalaureate framework. As AI and data analytics continue to evolve, personalised learning experiences will become more prevalent, enhancing both student engagement and teacher efficiency.

Wallace also predicts a shift in traditional senior secondary education, with micro-credentialing and alternative pathways providing students with more flexible and interest-driven learning opportunities. Lastly, sustainability and social responsibility will remain key focus areas, particularly in faith-based and values-driven schools.



What are you most proud of?

“I’m incredibly proud of our school community and how it has flourished. We’ve always been passionate about the strong partnership between our school and church, as well as the broader connections we’ve built with local organisations. From a school perspective, I’m particularly proud of our focus on innovation. One exciting example is our partnership with the One Giant Leap Foundation, which connects students with space exploration. Our youngest students, in Years 1 and 2, were involved in engaging experiments, which was fantastic.”

As an IB school, we prioritise innovation in our curriculum, constantly trialing new ideas and thinking outside the box. This approach has led to opportunities like our sister school partnership in Japan and the possibility of attending the International Space Expo there later this year. We’ve also embraced AI and technology in our classrooms and introduced a specialist STEM program alongside Japanese, art, music, and sports, ensuring students can explore diverse interests.

What excites me most is seeing our staff and students embrace these opportunities. The passion for innovation has infused our teaching, and the joy of learning has truly taken off. Watching students discover what they love and pursue their passions and interests has been incredibly rewarding.”

Will Wallace is the Principal of [Golden Grove Lutheran Primary School](#).

