



One good year deserves another

After a successful 2014, school leader plans on making Principal for a Day bigger and better this time around.

By Madeleine Regan

In 2014, Student Principal for a Day (sp4d) created an exciting opportunity for one student at Granville East Public School to experience school leadership. Principal Louise Reynolds registered her institution for sp4d for the first time. She explored the online resources and liked the 'funky factsheets' provided by Principals Australia Institute, which hosts the annual event across Australia.

In an article in the school newsletter, "A day in the Life of the Principal", Year 6 student Maryam Qazzaz described her experience and five photos showed the range of activities.

In her account, she outlined timeslots beginning at 8.30am with a teachers' meeting to discuss arrangements for an athletics carnival. In her first public duty, she addressed the school assembly to explain the sp4d program, what she hoped to achieve during the day and why leadership is important. Reynolds said Maryam's speech was well planned

and rehearsed, and thoughtful. Back in the principal's office, Maryam had her picture taken at the desk, then sent out the first of three notifications via the school app. She accompanied Reynolds to classrooms, reading a story to a Stage 1 class, before attending morning tea in the staffroom. Throughout the day, Reynolds asked Maryam reflective questions: What are you observing? How can a principal assist teachers and students? Why is it important for a principal to do yard duty?

LEADERSHIP: GIVING FEEDBACK

Looking at Maryam's entries as principal, one encounter stands out. She attended a meeting about a teacher's annual professional learning plan. Having given approval to Maryam's presence, the classroom teacher discussed her professional learning goals with Reynolds – a focused and specialised conversation for any principal!

A week after the event, Reynolds met with Maryam to reflect on her experience as principal. From many aspects of leadership, she distilled three main ideas:

1. Even though teachers have hard work they are always happy
2. Leadership is not just about bossing people around – it's about giving feedback
3. Teachers have the same questions as students, they just use more formal language.

In feedback after last year's event, Reynolds said, "I can't wait until next year – we will involve the students more ...". For sp4d 2015, she wants to engage the whole school.

"I want to build the momentum because I know the benefits now," she says. "I'll create a sense of anticipation and use the idea of being principal for a day as a bigger conversation about leadership. We'll spend several weeks [beforehand] posing questions about the qualities of a leader and ask, 'What would you do if you were principal?' I'll invite students to respond via our app and we'll use one or two of these each day to build up the focus on leadership in the school community."

This year, Reynolds will change the selection process and invite students to apply to be principal. This is to elevate the idea of leadership and increase the number of students who will have an opportunity for taking on the role. She also intends to run an in-house program in terms 3 and 4 with the 90 students in the three classes for years 5 and 6, to extend the idea of "the experience of life as a principal, its wonderful challenges and twists and turns". This process will be straightforward because she'll use the sp4d resources. Teachers will be able to plan lessons on leadership.

Reynolds' advice to other schools thinking about putting on the event in 2015 is to "sign up and watch students take on this challenge and harness the focus on what it means to be a leader". She says organising is achievable because the sp4d materials are effective and provide ideas that are feasible for all schools. For Reynolds, organising the sp4d program is part of the familiar work of schools to create occasions for students to experience leadership and responsibility. ■

Student Principal for a Day is on Wednesday, June 3. To sign up, go to: sp4d.edu.au/

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