

#1 THE SCHOOL LEADER'S OWN DEVELOPMENT

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For which practical questions does this card offer SUGGESTIONS:

- How do I ensure that I keep on learning?
- How do I set a good example as a learning school leader?

Why is it important to work on your own development?

The work of the school leader is becoming increasingly complex. This requires a learning school leader. This learning mainly takes place in daily practice, but can also be done by participating in more formal forms of professionalisation, such as, for example, following a course. The more explicitly you, being a school leader, are conscious of your own learning, the more you learn. Learning and working go hand in hand. By talking about your learning process in your team, you set a good example for teachers and students. By setting a good example – by leading your own learning process and showing this – others can copy the art and you contribute to the development of a learning school. Teachers can contribute most to student learning if they continuously learn themselves. The same applies to the school leader – school leaders can contribute most to the learning of the teachers by learning themselves.

What is needed for working on your own development?

Realize that you learn a lot accidentally. School leaders learn most from their daily practice and through collaboration with their colleagues. But practice is not enough, you really learn when you deliberately reflect on your experiences.

By giving yourself the time to reflect on your daily actions, you can make your learning process explicit. By making your learning process explicit, you can work on this in a more targeted way.

Step 1) Organize reflection time, together with colleagues.

Make time to reflect. Do this in a way that suits you – for example by looking back every morning on the day before for 15 minutes, walking and reflecting regularly, thinking in the evening on your couch or regularly organizing a reflection meeting with your colleagues. By exchanging experiences with colleagues and helping each other in reflection, you may discover new (action) perspectives. Collaboration can help you make explicit what is important to you, what you want to achieve and why you act the way you act.

Check for yourself – preferably in consultation with teachers – where the greatest urgency lies at your school. Use the school leader card “Stimulating teacher learning”. In particular, think about the following questions:

- What does achieving the goals of our teacher team and our organization require?
- How can I support teachers’ learning processes (individually and collectively)?
- What (structural and cultural) changes are needed in the organization?
- What does that require from my role?
- What leadership practices and personal qualities can I develop for this?
(see: <https://bit.ly/39IF4S0>)

Step 2) Determine your learning needs (what do you want to learn)?

Think about the following questions (preferably discuss these with your management team or, if possible, with colleagues and/or director/staff of your office):

- Where do you stand in your development in relation to the professional standard?
- How do you measure where you stand? Use the elements from the professional standard for school leaders.
- How skilled are you already in certain leadership practices and using personal qualities?
- What knowledge do you already have?
- You can also use information from observations, diary entries and 360 degree feedback.
- Connect with what you are already good at, what motivates you to develop further.

- Where do you want to be?
- How specific can you describe that? Use the elements from the professional standard for school leaders. What is your professional development goal?
- What can we as school leaders mean for each other's learning process?
- What do you need to get where you want to get?

To answer that last question, you can use different learning activities (see step 3).

Step 3) Organize your own learning activities.

As a school leader, you can undertake various learning activities to achieve your development goal. You can do that in a more or less formal setting. The context can offer you learning opportunities for this. How do you create a rich learning environment for yourself? What can your director/staff of your office do in this regard? Some suggestions for this are listed below.

LEARNING ACTIVITY SCHOOL LEADER

- Provide learning opportunities as a school leader or as the board or as an educational authority.

KEEPING UP WITH RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

- Provide continuous access to educational courses.
- Visit conferences.
- Ask experts to provide targeted information.
- Provide access to reading/ media (professional) literature.
- Discuss (subject) literature.

LEARNING THROUGH THE THOUGHTS AND BEHAVIOUR OF OTHERS

- Let school leaders share their knowledge with each other by having them give presentations..
- Have school leaders share their preparations for team meetings.
- Have school leaders learn from each other's professional practices (for example by job shadowing each other for a day).
- Participate in a cross-mentoring program.

LEARNING BY DOING AND EXPERIMENTING

- Set up experimental situations.
- Give school leaders new challenging tasks.
- Conduct research work.

LEARNING THROUGH REFLECTION

- Make time to reflect.
- Do research work.
- Stimulate mutual school visits and let school leaders ask each other questions.
- Use 'video coaching' and ask school leaders questions.
- Ask and give feedback as a school leader and ask reflection questions during school visits.

LEARNING THROUGH COLLABORATION

- Encourage mutual school visits and giving each other feedback.
- Have school leaders prepare team meetings together.
- Let school leaders draw up change management plans and discuss progress together.
- Make school leaders do research together.