

Podcast series

Leadership in Focus

Episode 6 – Middle Leadership

Discussion guide

The School Leadership Institute's Leadership in Focus podcast series shines a spotlight on school leaders and explores the key issues and challenges they face. This episode focuses on middle leadership.

[Episode 6 – Middle Leadership podcast 19:20 mins](#)

Speakers

Joanne Jarvis: SLI Director and host of the series

Dr Kylie Lipscombe: University of Wollongong

Corinna Robertson: SLI Principal, middle leadership

Discussion points

For individuals

- What is the primary purpose of the role of middle leadership and what practices are central to performing this vital work?
- How can principals ensure that middle leaders are able to do their best work? Consider the importance of collaboration and relational trust.
- Kylie Lipscombe refers to 'the space from where they lead in the middle between principal and teachers.' Explain why this space is so significant, as explored in this podcast and from your own experience.
- Seven responsibilities of middle leaders are outlined in the podcast. Which three are the most frequently enacted by middle leaders, according to the recent formal leadership research study? What area of the role are middle leaders focusing their leadership on – and what does this indicate?
- What are the benefits of the newly developed middle leaders' role description and how will this support you in your role?

For teams

- Professor Andy Hargreaves describes middle leaders as 'the heart, the soul, the backbone and the guts of leadership'. As a group, consider examples from your own work experience to see if you concur with this view of middle leaders.
- Discuss the ways in which middle leaders directly impact teaching and learning.
- Opportunities for middle leaders to engage in leadership development and feedback are identified as being vitally important. Explore ways that this engagement might be strengthened in your school.
- Kylie Lipscombe asserts that, 'being smack bang in the middle, merging two subcultures into one through shared goals that are working towards the school priorities, is a really important and significant position for middle leaders to be in.' Examine this statement as a group.

For your reference

[Formal Middle Leadership in NSW Public Schools:](#) School Leadership Institute.

[Formal Middle Leadership in NSW Public Schools Full Report December 2020.](#) Report commissioned by the School Leadership Institute.

Researchers: Dr Kylie Lipscombe, University of Wollongong; Dr John De Nobile, Macquarie University; Dr Sharon Tindall-Ford, University of Wollongong; Dr Christine Grice, The University of Sydney; foreword by Andy Hargreaves.

[Kylie Lipscombe Researchgate:](#) abstracts of recent articles.

[Middle Leadership Role Description:](#) School Leadership Institute.