



leading lights

grow your leadership potential

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President's Comment



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President

Nga mihi nui ki a toutou

I am writing this message the week following the All Blacks' victory in the final of the Rugby World Cup. Over the course of the tournament, and in the days since, much has been spoken and written about Richie McCaw's leadership and the impact this had on the team's success. Earlier this year Graeme Henry suggested that McCaw is among our finest All Blacks captains and paid tribute to both his bravery and adaptability.¹ Former captain Tana Umaga has praised "his steel, his bravery, his ability to lead from the front and lead by example".² His determination and courage in playing so well while carrying an injury and also successfully leading the team has also been commented on. It appears that McCaw was not always such an effective leader, with a lack of leadership being one of the reasons cited for the team's poor performance in the 2007 tournament. In an interview given in 2010, McCaw talked about how he had grown as a leader and what he has learned from his leadership experience. He reflected that the most important thing he had learned was "it's not just about me; it's about having a good group. I don't pretend to know it all. You need an environment that allows people to give things a go and contribute. The most important thing is to have a collective buy-in to what you are trying to achieve".³

The leadership attributes of modesty and determination shown by McCaw fit closely with Jim Collins Level 5 leadership which he describes as "a paradoxical mix of personal humility and personal will".⁴

Another New Zealand sports' leader who epitomises these qualities is Casey Williams, the Silver Ferns' captain. She is described by her former coach as having a "warrior spirit"

and her humility was obvious in her comment upon being awarded a Queens Birthday honour earlier this year: "It is very hard because it is not just me, I can only do what I do because of everybody else".⁵

There have been other inspirational young leaders in the public eye. We are all familiar with Sam Johnson, leader of the student volunteer army (SVA) which helped in the clean-up of Christchurch after the devastating earthquakes. Sam also shows Level 5 leadership characteristics. He persevered with his idea of the SVA despite initial scepticism from residents and resistance from official bodies and he is also quick to acknowledge the efforts of

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those around him rather than taking the credit himself. On being given a recent award for his work he commented: "I'm a wee bit embarrassed if anything, because there are so many people doing amazing things in Christchurch and I get way too much recognition for the team's efforts".⁶ Both Richie and Sam held formal leadership roles while at school which may have impacted on their later leadership strengths.

A recent school leader has suggested that all students, rather than just those with identified skills or positions need to be given opportunities to develop leadership skills. William Leith, head boy of Heretaunga College in 2010 suggested at a Cognition Institute Symposium that "leadership is a skill for everyone. Everyone needs to know how to lead their own lives, and support others to lead theirs".⁷ William suggests that attention to leadership starts too late and that teachers need to give students more freedom

and encourage their independence. So when should leadership education begin? I am currently supervising a post-graduate student researching teachers' beliefs and practices regarding young children's leadership in both New Zealand and Honduras. Preliminary findings from this study show that teacher perceptions of leadership impact on their practice including the ways in which they encourage leadership in young children. How do teachers in your setting perceive leadership and how does this impact on their practice? Do they see leadership potential in all children/students or do they have narrow views regarding future leaders, and how is

Level 5 leadership encouraged? The strand in next year's NZEALS conference involving school student perspectives will be a great opportunity to gain new understandings and inform our thinking in this area and hopefully other strands will also encourage debate and discussion on student leadership.

Best wishes for the rest of the year and for a restful break over Christmas.

E noho ra,
Kate Thornton

¹Rugby News 26/5/2011

²Otago Daily Times 16/9/2011

³Westpac Love Red Magazine October 2011

⁴Good to Great (2001) Harper Business

⁵www.nz.herald.co.nz 6/6/2011

⁶www.stuff.co.nz 31/10/2011

⁷www.cognitioninstitute.org.nz