

Year Heads – Minding the Resource

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'From one urgent issue to the next –we never get time to take the long view – to figure out where we want to take things over the next term, the next year'.

This is a common comment I get when working with management and Year Head teams. There is so much going on in the day to day that it is really difficult to plan ahead, to focus on what is important and *not just* the urgent...issues such as:

- how can we support our Tutors more effectively?**
- what training do we need?**
- how to work with challenging parents?**
- how to build a positive morale in my year group?...**

Saving time

Time, time, time is the refrain that is constant...and it's not going to get much easier any time soon! In my work I have noticed that Year Heads who take a decision to step aside and review what is needed and develop a plan have really gained from the experience – facilitated or not. It is having chosen to take time and prioritise the longer view that creates a sense of direction and purpose that very positively influences the day to day working of a Year Head. There are always choices with some of the issues that cross a Year Head's desk – which to delegate or deal with and then how to do the delegating or dealing with. Having a greater clarity makes it at least somewhat easier to make decisions about what will be given attention in the day to day.

A Plan that works

The value is in having – at least once a year - a quality conversation about what is happening in the role and how do we wish to shape that role going forward. In facilitating such sessions I always find it helpful to evoke all the issues that are on the minds of the participants before we progress anywhere – it is in addressing these that real work can be done to make the experience of the role more beneficial to all...out of this the group can look at what is actually happening and then what they believe is needed and the gap between the real and desired is visible. It is this gap that is then addressed – how, concretely, do we develop the role and involve all concerned in the process.

Day to day concerns in the role

Another vital element to these sessions is addressing the common issues that arise for Year Heads by sharing approaches – it is really very encouraging to witness the very positive progress that is made from a session dealing very practically with concerns around **time, behaviour, year morale, assemblies, challenging parents, communication, information, decision-making...**

Making it work

The Year Head group with other key pastoral personnel and management form a very vital lynchpin in the organisation and effectiveness of the school. The value of setting aside some of that precious commodity that is time to plan will pay dividends again and again for all who participate. Some pointers to recall when having such a session:

1. Clarity of role for the Year Head – agreed and reviewed
2. Membership – who will make a valuable contribution to this session?
3. Overview of the key issues and concerns we have as a group
4. Focusing purpose and sense of direction for the team of Year Heads – what are the three or four core goals for us to work on in the coming year
5. An Action Plan that will support the implementation of the goals
6. Communication – between the group and with the staff – clear and regular
7. Meetings – ensuring effective operation of the team – good preparation, well chaired and effective participation, time given for meetings of different types depending on need
8. Annual review of operation of the Team in terms of purpose, effectiveness, development
9. Next Steps: what, who, when, resources, checking outcomes...
10. Acknowledgement for the Team – and some fun!

The above is a general checklist that can be used to facilitate a special meeting of the senior roles in the staff – whatever the make-up of the group to progress

significant development for the team. Visit www.curam.ie for further information on training and resources for Year Head teams.

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