

14th Annual  
**Hawker Brownlow**

# Thinking & Learning Conference

**TOM HIERCK**

**FRIDAY 19 MAY**

**Building Your Learning Community  
– All Hands on Deck**

**Session 1**

**MELBOURNE**



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# TOM HIERCK

Tom Hierck has been an educator since 1983, in a career that has spanned all year levels and included many roles in public education. His experiences as a teacher, school leader, department of education project leader and executive director have provided a unique context for his education philosophy.

Tom is a compelling presenter, infusing his message of hope with strategies culled from the real world. He understands that educators face unprecedented challenges and knows which strategies will best serve learning communities.



Tom has presented to schools across North America and internationally, imparting a message of celebration for educators seeking to make a difference in the lives of students. His dynamic presentations explore the importance of positive learning environments and the role of assessment in improving student learning. True to his belief that 'every student is a success story waiting to be told', Tom is passionate about working with teachers and school leaders to create positive school cultures and build effective relationships that facilitate learning for all students.

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## A message from Hawker Brownlow Education

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# The WHY

"We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us. We already know more than we need to do that. Whether or not we do it must finally depend on how we feel about the fact that we haven't so far."

—Ron Edmonds, Harvard University

**The WHY** is the **process** of exploring your schools core beliefs, habits and assumptions. The goal is to get clear on your school's fundamental purpose. The end product of the **WHY** is the development of your school's guiding mantra.

**What is your school's current mission or guiding statement?**

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**What two words would you use to describe your school's culture?**

## Developing Your School's Guiding Mantra

### What is a mantra?

A mantra is a 3 to 5 word statement that clearly defines who your school is, and why you matter to people. A mantra is a powerful, energy infused chant that everyone inside and outside your organization can instantly get his or her heads around.

A mantra is defined as a word, sound or statement repeated frequently to aid in concentration of thought. In Sanskrit, mantra literally means "instrument of thought". In schools, we suggest a mantra is a highly effective organizing principle easily shared by people who care.

Your school's mantra should be created collaboratively, and meet the following criteria:

### Mantra Criteria

#### Memorable

It is vital that your guiding school mantra finds its way into your schools' subconscious, as velcro attaching your mission to your commitments, behaviors and decisions.

#### Simple

In order to be memorable, your guiding school mantra should get one simple idea across in as few words as possible, we recommend 3-5. You can't mean everything to everybody, so just focus on one specific thing. Say ONE thing well.

#### Credible

At the same time, remember that your guiding school mantra won't be worth anything if you not walking your talk. Everything you say and do should align with your guiding school mantra.

#### Positive

It almost goes without saying that your guiding school mantra should take an affirmative tone, stated in terms of what you're seeking, not avoiding.

#### Uniquely Yours

Make sure your guiding school mantra is unmistakably about your school.

Staff members should develop a commitment statement (I message) based on the context of their individual role at the school. Some examples of guiding school mantras and I- messages are provided on the following page.

## Mantra Examples

While your school's mantra is a unifying principle, it's critical that you make personal commitments to that end. Collective mobilization begins with individual responsibility. That's why we've included examples of I-messages below.

| Mantra                              | Mantra in practice (I-message)   |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| <b>We Work As A Village</b>         | ALL of us are smarter than one of us. I commit to embrace a true collaborative culture. I will pull my weight as part of my interdependent team.   |
| <b>We believe you can achieve!!</b> | I embrace accountability for our results, and I am constantly asking, " <i>Is there something else I can do?</i> "   |
| <b>Every Child Is My Child</b>      | I consider every child my child, and the failure of any one of them is not an option. I am humble enough to ask for help, and think abundantly enough to share resources and best practices. |
| <b>Tomorrow Depends upon TODAY</b>  | I will spend time focusing on factors I can control, and hold my teammates accountable to do the same.   |
| <b>Act as If</b>                    | I operate each day as if we are already the ideal school we described.   |

In 3-5 words, what would you suggest for your school's guiding mantra?

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**I-Message Commitment**

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**For Clarifying Your Fundamental Purpose and Your School's Mantra, Ask:**

1. What is our school's fundamental purpose? What is our school's unshakable sense of mission?
2. What makes our school special and unique?
3. What do we mean when we say that ALL students can learn? Does ALL really mean ALL?
4. Was our school built as a place where teachers come and teach or as a place where students come and learn? What evidence do we have to support our choice?
5. What happens in our school when a student experiences difficulty in learning?
6. What is our school's one non-negotiable that serves as a lens for everything we do? What is our school's North Star?
7. Why did you become an educator?
8. Think of a child you love with every fiber of your being. If you had an opportunity to create a guiding mantra for their school, what would it be?

At the heart of every Great Group is a shared dream. All Great Groups believe that they are on a mission and that they could change the world, make a dent in the universe. They are obsessed with their work. It becomes not a job but a fervent quest. That belief is what brings the necessary cohesion and energy to their work.

(Warren G. Bennis, "The Secrets of Great Groups,"

*Leader to Leader Journal*, No. 3, 1997)

# The HOW

When people begin to act, people begin to hope. When people begin to gain hope, they begin to behave differently. When people behave differently, they experience success. When people experience success, their attitudes change. When a person's attitude changes, it affects others' attitudes. This is the essence of re-culturing schools into professional learning communities.

(DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, Learning by Doing, 2010)

The **HOW** is the **process** of **Connect** with the moral imperative of your **collective commitment** to the **Five Essential Elements of a PLC**. The five elements are:

1. **A Focus on Learning**
2. **The Collaborative Culture**
3. **Clearly Define What Every Student Needs To Learn**
4. **Constantly Measure Our Effectiveness**
5. **Systematically Respond When Students Do Not Learn**

It is important to note that the **HOW** consists of *behaviors*, not *beliefs*.

## **Culture of Accountability**

### **Embed to Ensure**

The most effective way to build collective efficacy in this context is to embed experiences and routine practices of the school that will facilitate adults engaging in expected behaviors.

## ***Start, Stop, and Continue List***

**Desired Result:**

|  |
|--|
|  |
|--|

**Behaviors to *Start*:**

|   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 |  |
| 2 |  |
| 3 |  |
| 4 |  |
| 5 |  |

**Behaviors to *Stop*:**

|   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 |  |
| 2 |  |
| 3 |  |
| 4 |  |
| 5 |  |

**Behaviors to *Continue*:**

|   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 |  |
| 2 |  |
| 3 |  |
| 4 |  |
| 5 |  |



**For clarifying the HOW of your school, ask:**

1. What are the specific commitments we must honor to achieve our WHY and EYE?
2. What are the specific behaviors we can exhibit to make a personal contribution to the success of our school?
3. What commitments are we prepared to make to each other?
4. How will we demonstrate learning for **all**?

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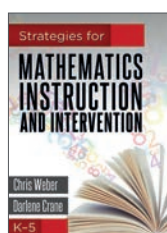
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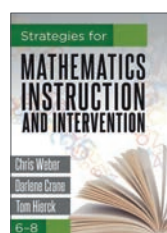
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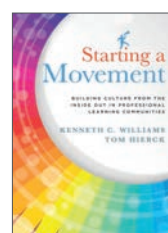
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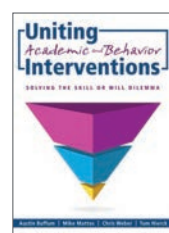
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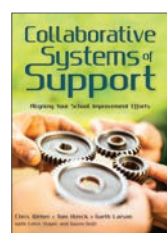
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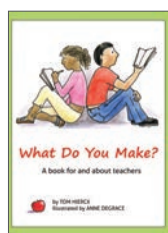
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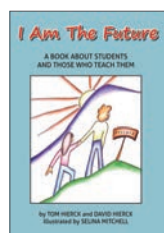
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