

# HEARTS AT WORK



## Why Happy Teachers Create Great Schools

*A Resource Book for Principals, Leadership Teams, and Teachers on  
Fostering Teacher Wellbeing, Strengthening Morale,  
and Developing Schools of Excellence*



**CHAPTER ALIGNED REFLECTIONS, ACTIVITIES, ASSESSMENTS,  
PULSE SURVEYS AND MORE FOR PRINCIPALS, LEADERSHIP TEAMS,  
TEACHERS, STUDENTS AND PARENTS**

## **CHAPTER 13**

### **Navigating Change and Uncertainty with Teachers**

#### **Chapter Summary**

- Change succeeds when leaders communicate clearly, consistently, and honestly.
- Teachers cope better when they feel supported—practically and emotionally.
- Listening, flexibility, and trust are non-negotiable during uncertain times. Resilience grows through shared effort, reflection, and small wins. When teachers feel guided, valued, and supported, change becomes a collective journey—not a burden

# Reflections & Action Steps

## 1. Communicating Vision During Transitions

### Reflection Prompts (Principal Self-Reflection)

- How clearly can my teachers explain why a current change is happening?
- Have I communicated the vision more than once, in more than one way?
- What fears or assumptions might teachers be holding that I haven't addressed?
- Do teachers feel listened to—or only informed?

### Action Steps (What Principals Do Next)

- Write a one-page "Change Story" explaining the why, what, and what's next.
- Share the same message across at least three channels (staff meeting, email, informal conversations).
- Schedule structured listening spaces (Q&A sessions, small group discussions).
- Track recurring questions and update communication accordingly.

### Chapter Activities for Principals

#### Activity: Vision Clarity Audit

- Ask 5 teachers to answer anonymously: "What is the change? Why is it happening? What does it mean for me?"
- If answers vary widely, refine and re-communicate the vision.

## 2. Supporting Teachers Through Uncertain Times

### Reflection Prompts

- How do teachers currently experience my support—procedural or personal?
- Where have I shown flexibility, and where might rigidity be adding stress?
- Do teachers feel safe saying, "This is too much right now"?
- Whose voices am I not hearing during uncertainty?

### Action Steps

- Introduce regular check-ins (monthly or fortnightly) focused on well-being, not performance.
- Review deadlines, expectations, and non-essential tasks—pause or simplify where possible.
- Create a visible list of available support resources (tech, emotional, peer-based).
- Publicly acknowledge effort, not just outcomes.

## Chapter Activities

Activity: Stress Mapping Exercise

- Ask staff to anonymously list top 3 stressors during the current change.
- Categorize them into:
  - Can control now
  - Can reduce
  - Must temporarily accept
- Act visibly on at least one “can control now” item.

## 3. Building Resilience During Organizational Changes

### Reflection Prompts

- How do I personally model resilience during uncertainty?
- Do teachers see mistakes as learning—or as risks?
- What routines create stability even when systems are changing?
- Where can resilience be strengthened collectively, not individually?

### Action Steps

- Normalize conversations about setbacks and learning from failure.
- Build predictable routines (weekly updates, fixed meeting rhythms).
- Encourage peer support systems or informal learning circles.
- Promote self-care practices without guilt or stigma.

## Chapter Activities

Activity: Resilience Reflection Circle

- In small groups, teachers discuss:
  - One challenge faced
  - One strategy that helped
  - One lesson learned
- Capture patterns and share collective insights back to staff.

## 4. Leading Change Initiatives Effectively (Integrated Practice)

### Reflection Prompts

- Am I leading change with teachers or to teachers?
- How often do I close the loop after listening?
- What small wins can I highlight to sustain momentum?
- How am I adjusting leadership strategies based on teacher feedback?

## Action Steps

- Create a Change Progress Board (physical or digital):
  - What we heard
  - What we changed
  - What's next
- Share monthly "You said – We did" updates.
- Celebrate progress publicly, even if outcomes are still evolving.
- Adjust leadership approach based on morale and feedback data.

## Chapter Activities

Activity: Feedback-to-Action Review

- Review one recent change initiative.
- Answer as a leadership team:
  - What feedback did we collect?
  - What did we act on?
  - What did we explain but couldn't change?
- Identify one improvement for the next cycle.

## Reflection for Principals

Pause & Reflect

- What kind of leadership do teachers experience from me during uncertainty?
- What one habit, if changed, would most improve trust during transitions?
- How visible is my care, clarity, and consistency?

## Chapter-End Action Commitment

### One-Month Commitment

Principals commit to:

- One communication improvement
- One support action for teacher well-being
- One resilience-building practice

Document it, share it with staff, and review after 30 days.

### How This Chapter Is Used in Practice

- ✓ Principal self-assessment & coaching
- ✓ Leadership team workshops
- ✓ Change management planning

- ✓ Teacher morale and trust-building initiatives

## Principal Self-Assessment Rubric

### Navigating Change and Uncertainty with Teachers

#### How to use this rubric

- Read each descriptor and mark the level that best reflects your current practice, not intent.
- Evidence matters: ask yourself “What would teachers say?”
- Revisit the rubric every 3–6 months during periods of change.

#### 1. Communicating Vision During Change

Level	Indicators
Emerging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vision is shared late or inconsistently.</li> <li>• Communication focuses on what is changing, not why.</li> <li>• Teachers express confusion or mixed understanding of the change.</li> </ul>
Strong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vision is communicated early and through multiple channels.</li> <li>• Rationale and expected benefits are clearly explained.</li> <li>• Teachers generally understand the direction and their role.</li> </ul>
Exemplary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vision is clear, compelling, and repeatedly reinforced.</li> <li>• Storytelling and examples make the change relatable.</li> <li>• Teachers can confidently articulate the purpose and future direction themselves.</li> </ul>

#### 2. Listening and Responding to Teacher Concerns

Level	Indicators
Emerging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback is collected irregularly or informally.</li> <li>• Teachers feel unheard or unsure if feedback matters.</li> <li>• Responses to concerns are reactive or defensive.</li> </ul>
Strong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structured opportunities exist for questions and feedback.</li> <li>• Teachers feel safe raising concerns.</li> <li>• Some adjustments are made based on feedback.</li> </ul>
Exemplary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active listening is visible and consistent.</li> <li>• Teachers trust that concerns lead to dialogue and action.</li> <li>• Feedback meaningfully shapes decisions and communication.</li> </ul>

### 3. Supporting Teachers During Uncertainty

Level	Indicators
Emerging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Expectations remain rigid despite changing conditions.</li><li>• Support is mostly procedural rather than emotional.</li><li>• Teacher stress or fatigue goes largely unaddressed.</li></ul>
Strong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Flexibility is offered when challenges arise.</li><li>• Resources and support systems are available and communicated.</li><li>• Effort is acknowledged during difficult periods.</li></ul>
Exemplary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Well-being is a visible leadership priority.</li><li>• Teachers feel genuinely cared for as people, not just professionals.</li><li>• Support reduces burnout and strengthens trust.</li></ul>

### 4. Building Resilience and Psychological Safety

Level	Indicators
Emerging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mistakes are quietly avoided or penalized.</li><li>• Fear of failure limits innovation during change.</li><li>• Teachers hesitate to experiment or speak openly.</li></ul>
Strong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Learning from setbacks is encouraged.</li><li>• Teachers are supported to try new approaches.</li><li>• Stability is provided through routines and predictability.</li></ul>
Exemplary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Psychological safety is deeply embedded.</li><li>• Failure is openly discussed as part of learning.</li><li>• Teachers show confidence, adaptability, and collective resilience.</li></ul>

### 5. Modelling Leadership During Uncertainty

Level	Indicators
Emerging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stress or uncertainty is passed down unintentionally.</li><li>• Leaders appear overwhelmed or inconsistent.</li><li>• Self-care and reflection are rarely modelled.</li></ul>
Strong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Calm, steady leadership is visible.</li><li>• Challenges are acknowledged honestly.</li><li>• Principals model balance and reflective practice.</li></ul>
Exemplary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Leadership presence reassures and stabilizes others.</li><li>• Transparency builds deep credibility.</li><li>• Principals model resilience, humility, and adaptability consistently.</li></ul>

## 6. Closing the Loop and Sustaining Trust

Level	Indicators
Emerging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Feedback is collected but rarely revisited.</li><li>• Teachers don't see visible outcomes of their input.</li><li>• Trust erodes during prolonged change.</li></ul>
Strong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Updates are shared on actions taken.</li><li>• Teachers see partial follow-through.</li><li>• Trust is generally maintained.</li></ul>
Exemplary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Feedback-to-action cycles are transparent and routine.</li><li>• "You said – We did" is clearly visible.</li><li>• Trust strengthens even during difficult transitions.</li></ul>

### Overall Reflection (For Principals)

- My strongest area right now is: \_\_\_\_\_
  - My most urgent growth area is: \_\_\_\_\_
  - One leadership habit I will intentionally change during the next transition is: \_\_\_\_\_
- 

### Optional Scoring Guide (for Coaching Use)

- Emerging = 1
- Strong = 2
- Exemplary = 3

### Total Score Interpretation

- 6–9: Foundational leadership in change – priority development area
- 10–14: Stable leadership with growth opportunities
- 15–18: High-trust, adaptive leadership during uncertainty

## Teacher Morale Pulse Survey

### Navigating Change & Uncertainty

#### Instructions:

Please rate each statement based on your experience over the past few weeks.

#### Scale:

1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree

### **A. Communication & Clarity**

1. I understand why recent changes are being made in the school.
2. School leadership communicates changes clearly and consistently.
3. I know what is expected of me during this period of change.

### **B. Support & Trust**

1. I feel supported by school leadership during uncertain or stressful times.
2. My concerns or questions are listened to and taken seriously.
3. I trust leadership to act in the best interests of teachers and students.

### **C. Workload & Well-being**

1. Expectations feel realistic given current circumstances.
2. I feel encouraged to take care of my well-being.
3. I feel emotionally supported, not just professionally managed.

### **D. Resilience & Confidence**

1. I feel confident adapting to changes in my role or responsibilities.
2. Mistakes or struggles during change are treated as learning opportunities.
3. I feel hopeful about where the school is heading.

### **Open-Ended (Optional)**

1. One thing that has helped me cope during recent changes is:

---

2. One thing school leadership could do to better support me right now is:

---

### **Quick Interpretation (for Principals)**

- High scores (4–5) → Communication and trust are working
- Mixed scores → Clarify expectations and increase listening
- Low scores (1–2) → Immediate action needed around support, pacing, or transparency

# Student Morale Pulse Survey

## How School Feels During Changes

### Instructions:

Please answer honestly. There are no right or wrong answers.

### Scale:

1= Not true at all; 2= A little true; 3= Sometimes true; 4= Mostly true; 5= Very true

### A. Safety & Understanding

1. I understand what changes are happening in school.
2. Teachers explain changes in ways I can understand.
3. I feel safe asking questions when things feel confusing.

### B. Emotional Well-being

1. I feel calm and supported at school most days.
2. Adults in school care about how I am feeling.
3. If I feel worried or stressed, I know who to talk to.

### C. Belonging & Connection

1. I feel that I belong in my class and school.
2. Teachers are patient and understanding during changes.
3. My efforts are noticed, even when things are difficult.

### D. Confidence & Hope

1. I feel confident handling new routines or expectations.
2. Mistakes are treated as chances to learn.
3. I feel positive about coming to school.

### Open-Ended (Optional)

1. One thing that helps me feel better at school right now is: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. One thing adults could do to make school feel easier during changes is: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### **Quick Interpretation (for Principals)**

- High scores → Emotional safety and clarity are strong
- Low scores in Section B → Increase emotional check-ins and student support
- Low scores in Section D → Focus on reassurance, routines, and encouragement

### **Recommended Use**

- Run these surveys every 6–8 weeks during change periods
- Share 2–3 key findings openly (age-appropriate for students)
- Always communicate: “You said → We are doing