

# 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 2**

### **Understanding the Role of Principals in Shaping Teacher Morale**

#### **Chapter Summary**

Teacher morale is not a soft issue—it's a leadership responsibility. History and research show that how principals lead deeply affects how teachers feel. Trust, recognition, and everyday interactions matter more than big announcements. Small, consistent actions can reverse burnout and build pride. When teachers feel valued, schools don't just function—they flourish.

## Reflective Discussion Guides

### Reflection Questions

- When was the last time a teacher felt truly heard in your school?
- What daily leadership habit might be unintentionally lowering morale?
- How do teachers experience your communication—clear or confusing?
- Where could trust be strengthened right now?

### Group Discussion Prompts

- “One leadership action that boosted morale in my school was...”
- “A time I felt unsupported as a leader/teacher was...”
- “What teachers need more of right now is...”
- “If morale improved, student learning would change by...”

### Try This This Week: Morale Check-In

- Speak to three teachers informally this week.
- Ask one question only: “What’s making your work harder right now?”
- Don’t solve—just listen and thank them.

### Try This This Week: Visibility Matters

- Visit five classrooms for five minutes each.
- Look for effort, not perfection.
- Acknowledge one positive observation verbally.

### Try This Week: Reduce One Burden

- Identify one unnecessary task or report teachers complete.
- Simplify it, delay it, or remove it.
- Tell teachers why you did it.

### Try This This Week: Listening Practice

- In your next conversation, pause before responding.
- Paraphrase what the teacher said.
- Ask, “Did I understand that correctly?”

# Self-Assessment Questionnaire

## The Role of Principals in Shaping Teacher Morale

### Instructions

Rate yourself honestly using the scale below and tick (✓) the appropriate box.

5:  Always   4:  Often   3:  Sometimes   2:  Rarely   1:  Never

### Section A: Vision, Purpose & Meaning

| No. | Statement  | 5                        | 4                        | 3                        | 2                        | 1                        |
|-----|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1   | I consistently communicate a clear school vision that inspires teachers.                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2   | I help teachers see how their daily work connects to a larger educational purpose.         | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3   | I reinforce the dignity and value of teaching in staff meetings and interactions.          | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4   | I ensure policy changes are explained with clarity and encouragement rather than pressure. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

### Section B: Respect, Trust & Emotional Climate

| No. | Statement   | 5                        | 4                        | 3                        | 2                        | 1                        |
|-----|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 5   | I treat teachers with respect, even during disagreements.                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6   | I listen to teachers' concerns without interrupting or dismissing them.       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7   | I avoid public criticism and handle corrective feedback privately.            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8   | I create a climate where teachers feel psychologically safe to express ideas. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

### Section C: Recognition & Appreciation

| No. | Statement  | 5                        | 4                        | 3                        | 2                        | 1                        |
|-----|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 9   | I regularly acknowledge teachers' efforts, not just results. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10  | I celebrate small successes, not only major achievements.    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

| No. | Statement  | 5                        | 4                        | 3                        | 2                        | 1                        |
|-----|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 11  | I ensure appreciation is fair and not limited to a few visible performers. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 12  | I personally express gratitude for extra responsibilities teachers handle. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

### Section D: Professional Growth & Support

| No. | Statement  | 5                        | 4                        | 3                        | 2                        | 1                        |
|-----|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 13  | I provide opportunities for professional development based on teacher needs. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 14  | I mentor struggling teachers instead of labelling them.                      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 15  | I encourage innovation and new approaches without punishing mistakes.        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 16  | I ensure workload distribution is reasonably balanced among staff.           | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

### Section E: Leadership Integrity & Decision-Making

| No. | Statement   | 5                        | 4                        | 3                        | 2                        | 1                        |
|-----|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 17  | I make decisions transparently and explain the reasons behind them.     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 18  | I avoid favouritism in assigning responsibilities or opportunities.     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 19  | I protect teachers from unnecessary external pressure when appropriate. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 20  | I regularly reflect on how my behaviour impacts staff morale.           | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

## Scoring & Interpretation

**Step 1: Add your total score (Minimum = 20 | Maximum = 100).**

**85–100: Strong Morale Builder**

You are actively shaping a positive and energising school culture. Focus on sustaining systems so morale does not depend only on personality.

**70–84: Stable but Vulnerable**

Teachers likely feel supported, but there may be silent stress areas. Identify specific gaps and act intentionally.

### 55–69: At Risk Zone

Morale may fluctuate. Staff may comply but not feel inspired. Immediate reflective leadership adjustments are needed.

### Below 55: Critical Intervention Required

Teacher morale is likely low or fragile. Consider structured feedback, mentoring, and systemic leadership changes.

### Reflection Questions for Principals

1. Which three items did I score lowest on, and why?
2. What specific leadership behaviour of mine might unintentionally lower morale?
3. If teachers rated me anonymously, would my score be higher or lower?
4. What one concrete change can I implement in the next 30 days to improve teacher morale?
5. Who can give me honest feedback about my leadership impact?

## Teacher Survey: Principal's Role in Shaping Teacher Morale

Please rate how accurately each statement reflects your Principal's leadership abilities.

5:  Always   4:  Often   3:  Sometimes   2:  Rarely   1:  Never

### A. Vision, Purpose & Meaning

| No. | Statement   | 5                        | 4                        | 3                        | 2                        | 1                        |
|-----|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1   | The Principal communicates a clear and inspiring school vision. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2   | The Principal helps teachers see purpose in their daily work.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3   | The Principal reinforces respect for the teaching profession.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4   | Policy changes are explained with clarity and encouragement.    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

### B. Respect, Trust & Emotional Climate

| No. | Statement  | 5                        | 4                        | 3                        | 2                        | 1                        |
|-----|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 5   | The Principal treats teachers respectfully during disagreements. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

| No. | Statement   | 5                        | 4                        | 3                        | 2                        | 1                        |
|-----|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 6   | The Principal listens seriously to teachers' concerns.      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7   | Corrective feedback is given privately, not publicly.       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8   | The school climate allows teachers to express ideas safely. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

### C. Recognition & Appreciation

| No. | Statement   | 5                        | 4                        | 3                        | 2                        | 1                        |
|-----|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 9   | The Principal acknowledges teachers' efforts.                 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10  | Small achievements are recognised and celebrated.             | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11  | Appreciation is fair and not limited to a few individuals.    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 12  | The Principal expresses gratitude for extra responsibilities. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

### D. Professional Growth & Support

| No. | Statement  | 5                        | 4                        | 3                        | 2                        | 1                        |
|-----|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 13  | Professional development opportunities meet teachers' needs. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 14  | Struggling teachers are supported constructively.            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 15  | Innovation is encouraged without fear of punishment.         | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 16  | Workload distribution is reasonably balanced.                | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

### E. Leadership Integrity & Decision-Making

| No. | Statement   | 5                        | 4                        | 3                        | 2                        | 1                        |
|-----|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 17  | Decisions are made transparently.                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 18  | Responsibilities are assigned without favouritism.                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 19  | The Principal protects teachers from unnecessary external pressure. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 20  | The Principal reflects and adapts based on staff feedback.          | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Higher total scores indicate stronger perceived morale-building leadership.