

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 8

Recognizing and Celebrating Teacher Achievements

Chapter Summary

- Recognition isn't about grand gestures—it's about meaningful noticing.
- Both formal programmes and informal moments play a role in sustaining morale.
- Stories of success inspire confidence and a growth mindset.
- When recognition reflects school values, culture becomes consistent and strong.
- Most of all, teachers thrive when they feel genuinely seen, appreciated, and respected.

Action Steps & Chapter Activities for Principals

Section 1: Implementing Formal Recognition Programmes

Reflection Prompts (Pause & Think)

- Who gets formally recognized in my school—and who quietly works hard but remains unseen?
- Do our recognition practices motivate teachers or feel routine and symbolic?
- Are recognition criteria clear, fair, and aligned with our school's values?
- How often do I personally initiate recognition rather than delegating it?

Action Steps (What Principals Do)

- Identify 3 key behaviours you want to reinforce (e.g., innovation, student care, teamwork).
- Create a simple recognition structure (monthly/term-based).
- Ensure recognition includes effort, progress, and consistency, not just results.
- Communicate criteria clearly to staff.

Chapter Activity: Design Your School Recognition Map

Activity Instructions:

1. List current recognition practices in your school.
2. Mark which ones are:
 - Outcome-based
 - Effort-based
 - Value-based
3. Redesign one recognition practice to better reflect school values.

Output: A one-page "School Recognition Framework"

Section 2: Informal Acknowledgment Techniques

Reflection Prompts

- How often do I acknowledge teachers in everyday conversations?
- Do teachers leave interactions with me feeling heard or hurried?
- What small behaviours can I change to show appreciation more naturally?
- Am I present—or preoccupied—when teachers speak to me?

Action Steps

- Practice one informal acknowledgment daily (verbal or non-verbal).
- Use specific phrases (“I noticed how you handled that situation”).
- Build 5-minute walk-around time into your daily routine.
- End meetings with one appreciation statement.

Chapter Activity: The 7-Day Acknowledgment Challenge

Activity Instructions:

- For one week, consciously acknowledge:
 - One teacher effort per day
 - One behind-the-scenes contribution
- Keep a simple reflection log:
 - What did I acknowledge?
 - How did the teacher respond?

Output: Insight into how small actions influence morale.

Section 3: Using Stories of Success to Boost Morale

Reflection Prompts

- What stories dominate conversations in our school—problems or progress?
- Do teachers hear stories they can relate to and learn from?
- Whose stories are missing (new teachers, quiet performers, support staff)?
- Do I use stories to explain why decisions are made?

Action Steps

- Introduce a “Teacher Story Moment” in staff meetings.
- Share at least one success story during assemblies or circulars.
- Highlight learning journeys, not just achievements.
- Invite teachers to share stories voluntarily.

Chapter Activity: Build a School Success Story Bank

Activity Instructions:

- Collect 5 short stories:
 - Classroom innovation
 - Student turnaround
 - Team collaboration

- Display or share them digitally or on noticeboards.

Output: A living archive of positive school narratives.

Section 4: Aligning Recognition with School Values

Reflection Prompts

- Can teachers clearly say what behaviours are valued in this school?
- Are our recognition practices reinforcing the right culture?
- Do we reward compliance—or commitment and care?
- Are recognition opportunities equitable across roles and departments?

Action Steps

- List 3–4 core school values.
- Define visible behaviours for each value.
- Link every recognition explicitly to a value (“This shows teamwork because...”).
- Review recognition patterns for bias or repetition.

Chapter Activity: Values-to-Action Alignment Exercise

Activity Instructions:

1. Write each school value.
2. List examples of teacher behaviour that reflect it.
 - Match each behaviour with a recognition method.

Output: A practical Values-Aligned Recognition Chart

Principal Self-Check

Tick what is true for your school:

- Teachers feel appreciated beyond academic results
- Recognition happens formally and informally
- Success stories are shared regularly
- Recognition reflects school values
- Teacher morale has improved this term

Teacher Pulse Survey

Recognition, Appreciation & School Culture

Purpose (to share with teachers):

This survey helps the school understand how recognition and appreciation are experienced by teachers. Your responses are confidential and will be used only to improve school culture and morale.

Rating Scale

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

A. Feeling Seen and Valued

1. I feel that my efforts are noticed in this school.
2. My work is appreciated even when results are not immediately visible.
3. Recognition here feels genuine, not tokenistic.
4. I feel valued as a professional, not just judged by outcomes.

B. Formal Recognition Practices

1. The school has clear and fair ways of recognizing teachers.
2. Recognition is not limited to a small group of teachers.
3. Achievements and milestones are celebrated regularly.
4. Recognition reflects what the school truly values.

C. Informal Acknowledgment by Leadership

1. School leaders acknowledge teachers in everyday interactions.
2. I feel heard when I speak to the principal or leadership team.
3. Small gestures of appreciation are common in our school.
4. Interactions with leadership make me feel respected.

D. Stories, Sharing & Collective Pride

1. Success stories of teachers are shared in staff meetings or communications.
2. These stories feel relatable and inspiring.
3. Teachers are encouraged to share their own classroom successes.
4. Hearing others' stories motivates me to keep improving.

E. Alignment with School Values

1. Recognition in this school reflects values like care, teamwork, and effort.
2. I understand what behaviours are appreciated here.
3. Different strengths (academic, pastoral, collaborative) are valued.
4. Recognition helps build a positive school culture.

Open-Ended Reflection (Optional but Powerful)

- One way I feel appreciated in this school is:
- One way the school could improve recognition or appreciation is:
- A small achievement or effort that deserves recognition (mine or someone else's):

How Principals Should Use This Survey (Guidance)

- Run once per term or twice a year
- Share patterns and themes, not individual responses
- Focus on 2–3 improvement actions, not everything
- Communicate clearly: “This is what we heard → This is what we will change”

Principal Integration

Final Reflection

- Recognition shapes culture more than rules do.
- What principals notice becomes what teachers repeat.
- Small, sincere appreciation builds lasting morale.
- Stories make effort visible and meaningful.
- Aligned recognition turns values into daily practice.