



Leadership, well-being and trust

with Rynette de Villiers,
Head of the International School of Utrecht, Netherlands



*"These are the wonder years...students wonder and they think about what the world is like and...they are really, really idealist. They know they can change the world. They don't **think** they can change the world they **know** they can change the world."*

Join Rynette de Villiers, Head of School at the International School of Utrecht in the Netherlands on our second [#PYPvoices podcast](#) where she discusses leading an IB continuum school and developing a culture of well-being and trust - with a focus on teacher agency.

"Every teacher brings something unique and special to their school – it is the responsibility of leadership to identify that and incorporate it into their vision to create something valuable in the here and now."



"What I find is that many of our staff, and I'm sure it's not only at my school, but many educators are perfectionists. And the business of education is a very dangerous place for perfectionists, because it is never finished."

Learn about your teachers, ask yourself what is that 'something special' about each one of them, what is their passion, what drives them?

I ask my team the following questions:

- Where is your heart?
- What is it that you need in order to be the best possible educator that you can be?

The resulting professional development should not only concern leadership, curriculum design or subject matter, but also consciously support collective and individual well-being.

Teachers want and need different things, like leadership, soft skills, communication with parents, more activities with students or their own time management skills. Work out how to support those needs and remember that can also take the form of a coach or mentor.



“As a leader, the goal is to ensure that everyone around children is ready and best equipped to help them learn.”

Leaders have a responsibility to support and help their teachers to flourish, both personally and professionally. It is important to create an environment where teachers have authentic voice, choice and ownership of their professional life and their own learning.

“Teachers need to feel safe enough to have those difficult conversations. From my side, from management side, it is important that they understand that they're in a safe environment and all learning takes time.”

Creating a culture of trust requires an open and honest two-way dialogue to promote emotional well-being. If teachers do not feel safe, if they do not feel secure, if they do not feel looked after, then that next step, the learning, can't really happen.

New teachers can find adapting to a new school challenging. Develop a comprehensive induction plan - especially important for those teachers coming in from abroad. Help them settle in to their new country and connect with others to build a personal support network. Allow them six months or so to find their way and then follow up with them regularly, with open and honest conversations to build trust.

Rynette's top tips!

1. **If you're leading an IB continuum school**
Encourage your PYP teachers to teach inquiry to DP teachers – the results can be mind-blowing!

2. **If you're a teacher interviewing for a new role**
The head of school and their vision really influence the whole culture of a school, so why not include these questions?
 - a. What is your story?
 - b. What is your vision?
 - c. What is your vision on education?

