



Reaseheath College is a specialist land-based college in Cheshire with a superb range of vocational programmes and qualifications on offer. Following a number of management and organisational changes, there was a desire to identify ways of enabling managers to work together across the college and increase the capacity of leadership both in the curriculum departments as well as the corporate/cross college support services. The college senior leadership team felt that a management development programme to support the middle leaders in 2005-2006 was essential.

A detailed training needs analysis was undertaken which highlighted skills development areas such as leading teams, managing performance, delegation, change management, self-management, coaching and strategic thinking.

Meredydd David, Principal comments:

*"After undertaking a detailed training needs analysis we invited three well known specialist leadership and management training organisations to tender for the contract. This process included working with us to identify our needs, meeting members of the College management team and presenting selected elements of the programme to that team. Hti were selected due to the quality of their preparatory work, the quality of delivery of the taster sessions, and the flexibility they guaranteed for the programme design and delivery."*



The expected outcomes of the programme were:

- Personal leadership development for all attending
- Development of the new management structure and greater accountability
- Creation of a team culture with managers understanding and supporting each other
- A positive effect on talent management and succession planning

Designed around the principles of accelerated learning, the programme has intellectual rigour but sessions are aimed at providing practical ideas that can be taken back to the workplace. Several diagnostic tools and leadership models have been used such as the Myer-Briggs Personality Type Indicator, the Thomas Kilman model for Conflict Management and Ken Blanchard's model of Situational Leadership.

Led by a Senior Consultant, Ian Wilson, the programme caters for 25 delegates with morning and afternoon sessions throughout the year covering the following:

- Understanding oneself and others
- Essentials of leadership - styles and situations
- Developing highly motivated and effective groups and teams
- Managing performance and handling difficult messages
- Coaching and development
- Negotiation and resolving conflict
- Stress and managing the work-life balance

*“What I have valued most about HTI’s approach has been their easy style to deal with and the consultant’s ability to meet the needs of a wide diversity of delegates”.*

In response to feedback from delegates and the College, HTI were able to adapt the programme during the year and included new modules on:

- Situational leadership
- Time Management
- Employment Law

Programme delegates were formed into four Learning Sets that were facilitated by four of the senior leadership team including the Principal and Deputy. The Learning Sets have been given the challenge to find solutions to issues identified during the induction session. Emerging from these are positive ideas to help re-define and develop specific middle management roles and responsibilities and proposals aimed at creating a more effective meetings and communications strategies.

As the programme has progressed it has developed to meet the evolving priorities of the college. HR Director, Abby Willans, said “The training has met the needs of the college very very well, better than expected! The programme has been adapted along the way as we have come to understand more about what people meant in the training needs analysis. What I have valued most about HTI’s approach has been their easy style to deal with and the consultant’s ability to meet the needs of a wide diversity of delegates”.

---

#### And what do the delegates think?

Through the on-going evaluation of the programme, delegates have picked on a range of things that they thought were the best aspects of the programme including:

*“Understanding what makes an individual ‘tick’ using the MBTI traits .... it is always interesting to see how people are and how they perceive themselves .... also to learn about myself and consider improvements in (my) ability to lead effectively”*

*“It focussed on what I feel are my weaknesses, for example the discussion on reluctant team members and difficult messages and how to get them across”*

*“A key learning point has been how to make an effective team from an existing group, how challenging projects help to form teamwork and what alienates members of the team from taking part.”*

---

**Abby Willans** said that she had seen changes in behaviour with “more understanding across the managers and enhanced respect for each other’s functions, roles and responsibilities”.

This was supported by one delegate who feedback “It has all been very good, being able to discuss management issues with other staff from other areas has been an excellent opportunity ... we have started to understand each other better and listen to each others differences .... Makes us think in different ways and consider new approaches”

Abby commented that this programme is part of a long-term journey – “it has already made an impact on the achievement of College objectives and from this excellent start we now need to keep the momentum, sustaining and extending the commitment to staff”.

Meredydd comments “Reaseheath College was on a journey that took it from Good to Outstanding and all colleagues were bought into this vision. Staff are our main and most important assets and our vision will only be deliverable with their full involvement. The training added to the skills and expertise of our management team and has given managers the confidence and many of the tools needed to make this achievable.”.

For a further discussion about these activities please contact Yolanda McKay on tel 024 7669 8510