



Excellence in Professional Practice Conference 2017

Case studies of practice



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FOREWORD

The Excellence in Professional Practice Conference (EPPC) is now in its fifth year, and is an exciting and vibrant forum for teachers and schools to share the outcomes of their investigative research work into their own practices.

Through events and publications, ACER is keen to support and share ways in which teachers and school leaders work as an 'improvement community' through 'collective leadership'. The focus of an improvement community is on finding solutions to specific problems of practice. The shared activities of the community include understanding starting points; designing possible solutions; monitoring implementation and changes in practice; monitoring student outcomes; and evaluating the effectiveness of new solutions through ongoing, iterative 'improvement research'. To enhance this 'improvement agenda' a new category was introduced to the conference program; the case study of practice. We are pleased we are able to now present in this Case Studies of Practice book the 12 case studies of practice presented as concurrent sessions at EPPC 2017.

The case studies of practice offer educators a unique insight into how individual schools 'self-manage' problems of practice identified in their school context. Through the evidence-based investigations, the case study authors describe successful practice at a particular point in time with a focus on the implications for teaching and learning. The case studies present accounts of school leaders, teachers and at times partner educationalists working together to develop approaches to a particular identified school concern. Methods they employ to solve the issue or concern are discussed with evaluative comments and summaries of the evidence of impact and conclusions. The case studies, although context-specific, provide key messages and offer new insights into successful strategies that can lead to improved outcomes in other settings.

The case studies approach engages the teacher in an evidence-based practice that places them as the 'researcher' within their own school context. The processes and outcomes of case study research creates new systems and developed understandings for teaching and learning. Case study research is a powerful organisation element for schools dealing with the ongoing cycle of school improvement agendas and challenges of the 21st century in light of teachers' increasing role in the development of educational knowledge for today's classroom.

I thank the Case Study authors for their contribution to this book and congratulate them on their continued quest to improve learning in their schools.

Lynda Rosman



ACER Institute
Manager Programs and Projects

LET'S TALK:

Improving Literacy Outcomes through Oral Assessments



Summar Austin is currently the Head of English at Mount Roskill Grammar School. She studied English and Psychology at the University of Auckland before going on to complete graduate studies in mental health, secondary school teaching and educational leadership. She is interested in e-learning and classroom innovation, and has presented examples of practice at subject associations and national conferences. Summar has taught English in large, multicultural schools in Auckland.

Context

This case study was developed to meet the needs of a class in a large co-educational state school of over 2000 students. The ethnic makeup of the school is diverse, and the class of 27 students reflected this, with students from Chinese, Polynesian, Middle Eastern, Indian, Asian, Pakeha and other European backgrounds. The students come from a mix of lower to middle class socio-economic backgrounds. The school practices class banding, with three broad bands (A, B and C). Students are sorted into classes within these bands based on prior attainment.

After finishing their studies at the end of Year 13, most students go on to university study. In order to meet the entrance requirements to a New Zealand university, students need to have met the University Entrance requirement by collecting a number of credits from a range of national assessments, called Achievement Standards.

The focus of this case study is on the Achievement Standard Form developed personal responses to independently read texts, supported by evidence, worth four credits. This assessment is most commonly delivered in students' second-to-last year of secondary school (Year 12, equivalent of Australian Year 11). It is a New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) internal assessment derived from Achievement Objectives at Level 7 of the national English curriculum. It draws from curriculum strands in reading, listening and viewing, which stipulate that students at this level will select and read texts for enjoyment and personal fulfilment, integrate sources of information and prior knowledge purposefully, confidently and precisely to make sense of increasingly varied and complex texts, and think critically about texts with understanding and confidence. These indicators reflect similar skills outlined in the Australian English Curriculum, which includes such content as making personal connections with texts, questioning texts to draw conclusions and considering how texts are constructed for particular purposes, audiences and contexts.

The Case Study

The subject of the case study was a B-band Year 12 English class of 27 students, including 10 females and 17 males. The focus of my teaching inquiry was on improving the class' results in University Entrance literacy using Achievement Standard 2.9. The intervention followed an inquiry cycle of regular scoping, implementation and review. I followed a series of key steps, as set out in the New Zealand Curriculum guidelines for teacher inquiry

Step One: Focusing Inquiry

What is important (and therefore worth spending my time on) given where my students are at?

Success in this standard involves forming a genuine opinion about aspects of texts and being able to support that opinion with evidence. Student voice evidence taken from this course suggested many of these students did not feel confident in English, and that writing in particular presented a genuine obstacle. Formative work and diagnostic activities revealed a number of trends, including a general lack of confidence in full class discussion, good engagement with small group discussion, and a slow pace when completing written work. I decided that it was important to spend time developing students' confidence in their personal response in oral discussions as this would feed into success in the standard.

Step Two: Teaching Inquiry

What strategies (evidence based) are most likely to help my students learn this?

I identified a number of strategies to help students' personal response to texts. These included:

- Explicitly teaching, and frequently reinforcing the requirements of the standard and giving exemplars of work.
- Providing scaffolds for talking about texts in a meaningful way, and allowing opportunities for group discussions.
- Generating interview templates and questions to help students ask each other meaningful questions about the texts.

Step Three: Teaching and Learning

Specific lesson ideas are trialed and outcomes examined

I introduced a series of open interview questions that were intended to open up discussion. Students selected five questions, took some bullet point notes and interviewed each other. Then they broke into pairs or small groups and filmed their interviews for a personal response.

I coached students in interview technique. We took a week to set up the interviews with students taking their own notes in bullet point form before the interviews took place. Students interviewed each other in the first instance. Following the review process outlined in step five, the interviews become more teacher-led. Under this model, I was able to coach students and prompt them for further evidence to help them meet the criteria.

Step Five: Learning Inquiry

What happened as a result of the teaching and what are the implications for further teaching?

Review took place throughout the year, after students submitted each of the six reading responses. After the first round of interviews, I found that students had difficulty focusing on the response, and were more self-conscious around the camera when interviewed by their friends. I realised that having a good understanding of the assessment criteria was necessary in the interviewer. I also realised that some students were giving good responses by answering the interview questions in their notes, and this provided them with another avenue for success in the standard.

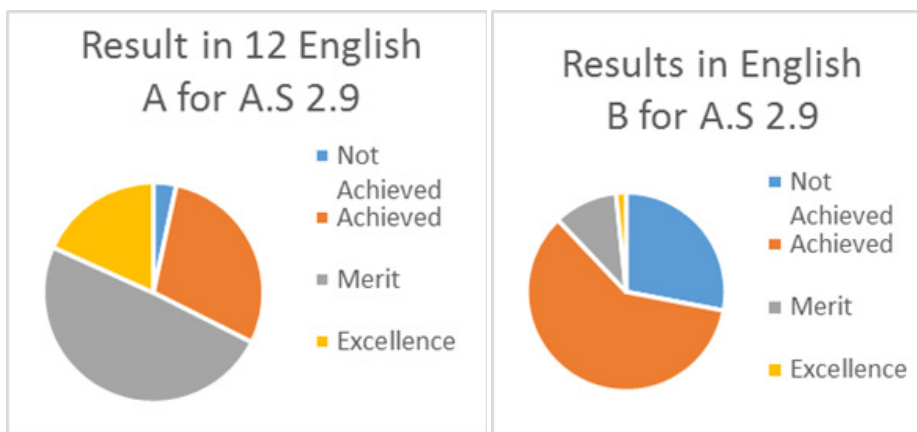
In subsequent assessment points, students completed either oral responses as interviews that I conducted, or written responses. Students were given the opportunity to try all forms. In the final submission, eight students submitted a combination of oral and written responses, and 19 students submitted written responses using either the traditional format or the interview questions. Each student submitted six responses in total, and the final grade comprised a 'best-fit' of all six response grades.

Results

I measured the success of the intervention using two criteria.

- The number of students who were successful in achieving the assessment overall
- The extent to which students submitted better responses in oral form as part of the submission

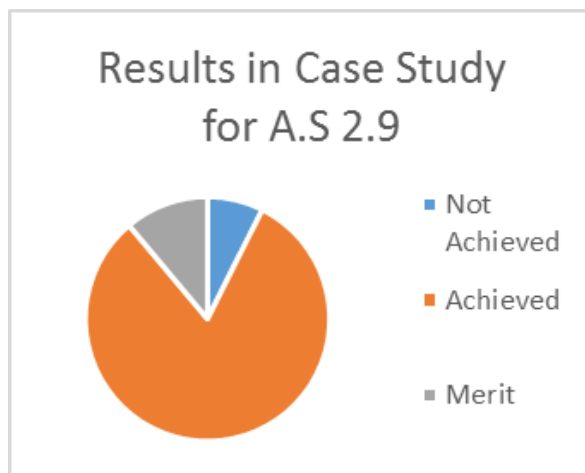
The two graphs below demonstrate the difference between the A and B-band results in 2016. Assessments are graded as Standard Achieved, Achieved with Merit, or Achieved with Excellence.



We can see from this side by side comparison that 12 English B had a higher number of students who did not achieve the standard (28% compared with only 3% in A-band). The majority of students in B-band Achieved (60%), whereas the majority of students in A-band are gaining Merits (49%) or Excellence (18%).

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In comparison, the case study class demonstrates a larger proportion of students who gained Achieved (81%) compared to the rest of the B-band cohort, and a significant reduction in the number of students who did not achieve the standard (two individuals did not achieve). However, the percentage of students gaining Merit in this standard remains low, and no students gained Excellence.



Collectively, this case study data suggests a measure of success in helping students gain the standard, but it also prompts questions about how the model could be adapted in future to help students attain Excellence.

Qualitative Findings

As the overall grade is derived from a range of reading responses, it is possible to examine differences in individual responses within the assessment.

Eight students submitted oral reading responses for their final submission. For the students who sat the oral logs, there was a difference in the quality of their response, but that difference was mediated by the expertise of the interviewer. Students who completed the interview questions and recorded logs at home or were interviewed by peers did not get the immediate feedback or prompting that would help them develop their responses. Students who completed structured interviews with their teacher benefited from the feedback and attained Merit or Excellence in some responses.

Discussion

The success of the case study suggests that interviews act as a form of coaching for students as they come to grips with the expectations of the standard. Feedback was immediate, and allowed students to improve their responses within the time-frame of the interview.

Although some students were able to produce better responses when interviewed compared with their written work, this did not necessarily result in a better grade for them overall. Several factors account for this:

- The 'best-fit' nature of grading means that students are awarded a grade based on the majority of their responses rather than the best outcomes.
- Students did not take up the opportunities to resubmit responses in order to lift their grade.
- Organising one:one interviews with a ratio of one teacher to 27 students made it difficult to complete as many interviews as required to lift achievement.

Possible next steps to help raise the number of Merits and Excellences:

- Introducing interviews earlier in the year so that students can benefit from being coached in their responses.
- Coaching students on questioning and interviewing techniques so they feel confident to interview their peers.
- Following up with students who should resubmit in order to improve their grade.

Conclusions

It is important that we meet the needs of our students by tailoring assessments to suit their particular strengths, without undermining the intent of the Achievement Standard. Being aware of the assessment requirements and where teachers have leeway to alter modes of assessment within the boundaries of the assessment is crucial to task success.

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IMPROVING TEACHER CLARITY:

Enacting Visible Learning Theory into action



Nicole Blyth has held the role of the Dean of Teaching and Learning at Penrhos College for the past six years. This role inspires and challenges her lead continual improvement of academic curriculum and pedagogy in the secondary school, along with line management of academic staff. Nicole started her career as a Chemistry teacher in 1997 and has worked at a range of public and private schools in both metropolitan and country areas. Nicole has a Master of Education with Honours, focusing on teacher training and technology integration, is a qualified GROWTH coach and assessor of AITSL certification of teachers.



David Hunter is currently the Dean of Professional Learning, Development and Growth at Penrhos College, a position he has held for the past six years. He has 31 years of experience teaching in secondary classrooms across Western Australia and has held a variety of leadership positions in several schools. David has been involved in the design, delivery and evaluation of the Visible Learning professional development program at the College since its inception. He is also a qualified GROWTH coach who loves working with his staff to be the best they can be.

Background

Penrhos College's Visible Learning journey began in 2011, with an organisational restructure of the secondary school. There was a desire to reduce the duplication of roles and introduces a new Teaching and Learning leadership team. This signalled a strong future focus on teacher practice, students' learning and the ongoing professional growth of the teaching staff.

One of the first objectives of the new leadership team was to introduce a culture of lesson observation and feedback to teachers on their classroom practice. Sharing practice and determining the characteristics of excellent teaching were the desired outcomes. Ongoing lesson observations over that year revealed that, while students were engaged in their learning activities, they were not able to articulate what it was that they were learning. They were also unable to say whether they had made any progress in their learning. It became apparent that a divide existed between the learning the teachers thought was occurring in their classes and what the students were able to describe. Communication around the feedback teachers were getting regarding their lesson observation needed to improve. The College engaged GROWTH Coaching International to provide middle and senior management with the appropriate coaching skills to be able to assist staff in their ongoing development. GROWTH Coaching training and professional reading from Knight (2007), supported managers to work in partnership with staff toward our aspirations.

Our Journey

In 2013, several key leaders attended the McMillan Professional Learning Australia-run workshop, Visible Learning Plus – Foundation seminar. This PD was a catalyst for further research into Hattie's (2009) Visible Learning, which resonated well with many educators in the College. This initial investigation identified three elements that would have a positive effect on the student's learning. Hence, this led to a whole school focus on delivering a 'three-part' lesson. The three-part lesson set down the minimum expectations for teachers to a) set clear learning objectives for the lesson, b) deliver the learning through some form of activity, and c) conclude with a plenary to check for understanding.

During 2013, evidence gathered from lesson observations indicated that, for those staff using lesson objectives, the language used in them was not assisting the students' understanding of the learning. There was substantial evidence to suggest that we had not fully engaged the staff in the value of this practice. Thus the Teaching and Learning team decided that all teaching staff needed to be made aware of Hattie's research and McMillan Professional Learning Australia were contracted to deliver the Foundation seminar at the beginning of Term 1 2014, to the 120 K-12 staff. This powerful workshop challenged the staff's perception of what works in promoting learning. They left with a better understanding of the rationale of the three-part lesson and began to engage in the process of providing clarity to the learning for their students.

McMillan Professional Learning Australia delivered two additional workshops to the leadership team over 2014. The Evidence into Action Day 1 gathered middle and senior leaders together to gather, collect and examine evidence that would be used to help answer the focus questions for each of the Visible Learning Strands. As a part of the process a substantial amount of data was collected and evaluated. This included student interviews to determine the extent to which they were demonstrating Visible Learner characteristics, determining effect sizes based on NAPLAN results for numeracy, student surveys to determine the level of inspiration and passion in their teachers, along with the quality of feedback given to them. In addition, teaching staff completed the Visible Learning School Matrix survey to gather baseline data about their perceptions of how Visible Learning was being enacted in the school. Prior to the second Evidence into Action day, this data was presented and reviewed by middle and senior leaders. The answers to these initial focus questions led to strategic guidelines for our Visible Learning journey at the College. During the second Evidence into Action day, senior leaders developed an aspirational statement for Visible Learning (see Figure 1) that focused on students and their learning. Using the evidence gathered, they then identified focus areas of development that would lead to the achievement of our aspiration. The focus areas addressed in bold (see Figure 2) were our initial priorities.

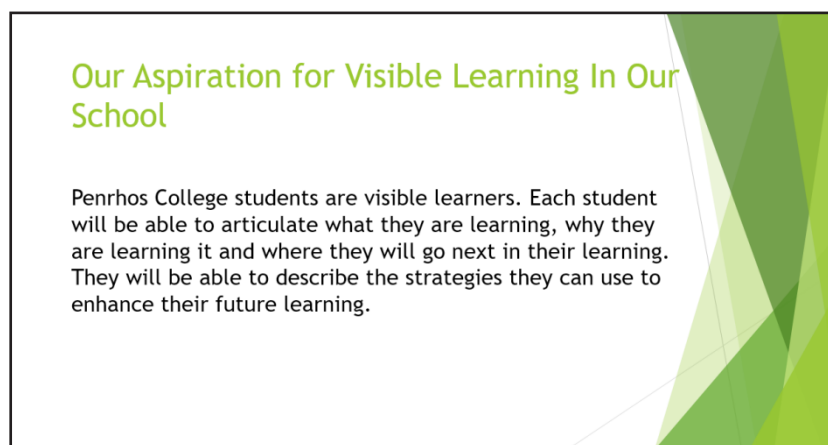


Figure 1: Aspiration for Visible Learning (*slide from Introduction to Visible Learning workshop delivered to teaching staff in 2015*)

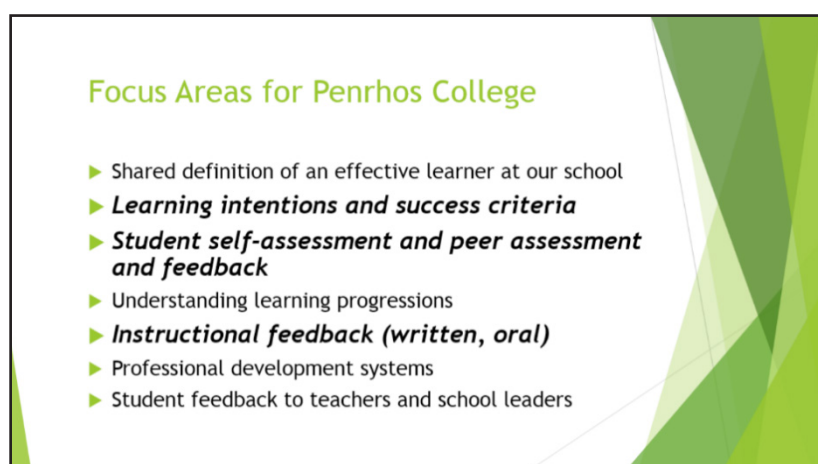


Figure 2: Focus area (slide from *Introduction to Visible Learning workshop delivered to teaching staff in 2015*)

The initial timeline for addressing these aspects was, upon reflection, very ambitious. A coordinated whole College professional learning plan was developed. Three sessions were dedicated to whole staff Visible Learning workshops and the other six sessions were left to Heads of Department and Team Leaders to decide the strategic priorities they wished to progress. The plan was to introduce the concept of learning intentions over Term 1 2015, with staff embedding these into their practice immediately. Success criteria was introduced at the beginning of Term 2 and feedback was introduced at the beginning of Term 3. Each of these three foci was delivered to K-12 staff by the Teaching and Learning team. The workshops were structured to raise awareness of the theory and using illustrations of practice, show the practical application of the theory.

All teachers found the task of unpacking the content into the knowledge, understandings and skills required to address the learning very challenging. For many departments the starting point was to rebadge syllabus statements or content descriptors as learning intentions. Other areas produced statements about the task and not the learning. Considerable debate surrounded the correct representation of learning intentions and several formats emerged, depending if the reference source was Hattie (2009), Marzano (2009) or Glasson (2009). To avoid confusion for the students, it was decided that all learning intentions should be framed using an active verb within them to describe the depth of knowledge, understanding or skill development required.

During Term 3 of 2015, it was evident that the majority of departments were not ready to address any aspects of feedback. It was decided at this time to reassess the timeline set and be more responsive to the rate of learning of the staff. Consequently, the rest of the professional learning time for 2015 was devoted to addressing learning intentions. As part of a yearly review of programmes of study, teachers were instructed to include learning intentions into these documents, by the end of 2015 in preparation for the 2016 school year. The purpose of this was to promote consistent use of the learning intentions across multiple classes of the same discipline, within the same year. Allowing more time to develop learning intentions and making staff accountable for them was pivotal in creating engagement and momentum.



IMPROVING TEACHER CLARITY: Enacting Visible Learning Theory into action

The professional learning plan for 2016 was initially developed around new curriculum implementation, success criteria and feedback, but it became evident early in the year that addressing feedback was again going to be too ambitious. In the secondary school, departments were at quite different points in their Visible Learning journey, so the nine professional learning sessions were left open to Heads of Department to decide and differentiate according to their own groups' progress with support from senior leaders.

Most departments adopted a differentiated approach to their success criteria statements, writing them in a 'must', 'should', 'could' format. The 'should' and 'could' criteria addressing higher levels of Blooms or SOLO taxonomies. In some areas, this revealed a duplication of statements in both the learning intentions and success criteria, so many departments conducted a review of their learning intentions, reducing the number of intentions addressed and elevating them to bigger conceptual or procedural ideas.

We relaunched our feedback focus in 2017 using the work of Hattie & Timperley (2007), Brookhart (2008) and Wiliam (2016). A consultant was contracted to deliver a workshop on feedback at the beginning of Term 1. The four types of feedback, task, process, self-regulatory and praise were addressed and exemplars of plenaries and other feedback strategies provided. Department teams will use their professional learning sessions to place feedback strategies into the context of their subjects and another whole staff workshop is planned for Term 4 to address the self-regulatory behaviour we wish to develop in our students.

Our Data

The student voice surveys of the 48 students, conducted in the initial data collection process, revealed some telling insights into what was occurring in classrooms and the way students learn. We decided to continue to conduct these surveys at the end of each year, as a way of evaluating the implementation process. In 2015, the survey was modified to capture more information on the students' perceptions of Visible Learning, this time using specific terminology e.g. learning intentions and success criteria, which had been masked in the original survey. The surveys involved videoing two groups of four students in each year group (7–12), each student randomly chosen from their form group to answer nine questions. There was opportunity to add additional comments about their learning at the end of the survey. From the students' responses, it was possible to determine the degree of uptake of the program by the teachers, as well as, the effect of making learning more visible for the students. The results of these surveys, including video footage and student quotes, were presented to the staff at the end of the 2015 school year. In addition to the student voice surveys, other sources of evidence for evaluating the program were obtained from lesson observations, walk throughs and a Teaching and Learning Class On-line Survey.

A similar collection of data was gathered at the end of 2016 with the results again reported back to the staff. The student voice surveys were modified to include questions about feedback and plenaries. However, the questions common to both surveys provided some comparative data on the success of the program. For example, the students responded positively to the usefulness of learning intentions (Figure 3), citing reasons relating to preparation for assessments, learning in class and revision at home, as the significant uses of them.

Do you find learning intentions useful?

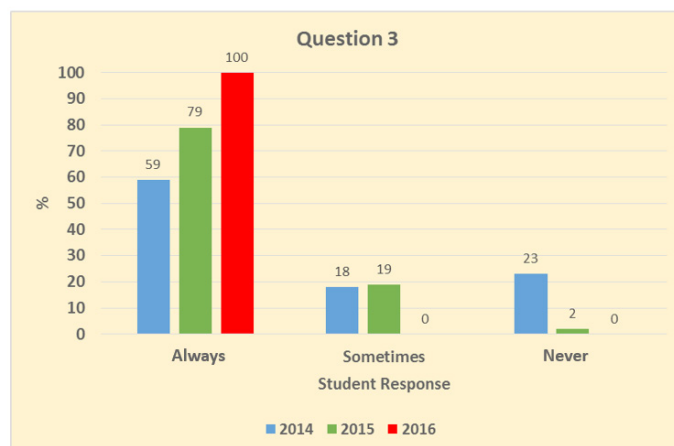


Figure 3: Graph showing historical student perspective on learning intentions

Below is a selection of comments from Year 7 students on why they find learning intentions useful:

- 'They help me to know and understand what we are doing in class and I don't get confused.'
- 'It gives me something to work on. It is a set of things to focus on and you don't have to go to other sources to work out what you are learning.'
- 'I find them useful for study and I go through them before a test.'

There is still considerable work to do in embedding success criteria into the daily routine of lesson delivery, with Languages and HASS the only departments who consistently deliver lessons containing learning intentions, success criteria and a plenary. While there has been a slight increase in the percentage of students reporting that teachers 'sometimes' discuss success criteria with them, a significant number of students are indicating that success criteria are not being discussed. The percentage of students who regularly have success criteria discussed with them is low.

Do your teachers discuss with you the things you need to do in the lesson for the learning to be successful, i.e. the success criteria?

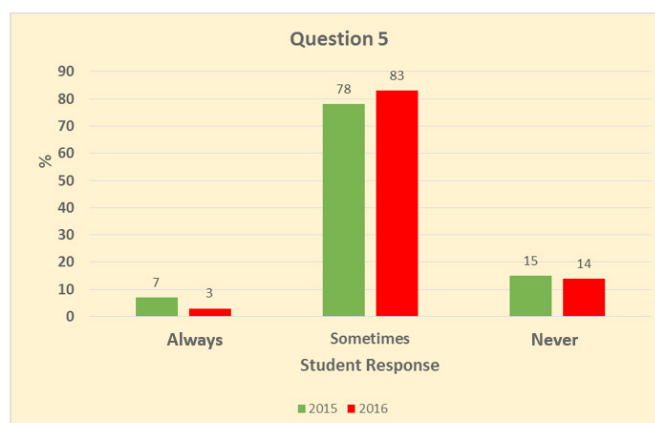


Figure 4: Graph show historical student perspective on success criteria



IMPROVING TEACHER CLARITY: Enacting Visible Learning Theory into action

Below is a selection of comments from students related to question 5 (Figure 4) of the survey:

- 'Definitely in French we have the learning intentions and success criteria – must, should and could, which helps us push ourselves to get the main one which is could, but you know you need to do the should one.'
- 'In English we get a thorough explanation of what we should do and that is written on the board, which is good to refer to in case you go off track or miss something.'
- 'In French every lesson. Some subjects use them without using that terminology.'

Conclusions and Recommendations

Whilst our journey is ongoing, we have learnt that listening to feedback is crucial and change cannot be rushed. Investment in time and resources is required for changes in pedagogical practice to occur. Once teachers have had their awareness raised by professional learning, they then need time and support to implement new ideas. This also involves coaching to develop and consolidate practice. This combination has facilitated the majority of our teachers to move toward becoming unconsciously competent (Joyce & Showers, 2002), in using learning intentions and success criteria as a natural part of their lesson delivery.

Although we don't have concrete data, it appears our Visible Learning program is (anecdotally) correlating positively with outstanding academic achievement, with the College ranking in the top ten schools in the state (median ATAR) for the past five years. Since the implementation of Visible Learning, our rankings have gone from ninth (2014) to sixth (2015) to third (2016). What makes this more impressive is our modelling for each of these cohorts over Year 11 and 12 did not indicate any significant difference in the students' ability across each of those years.

Our school improvement plan incorporated a deliberate range of strategies that have evolved over time to support the improvement in teacher quality and to foster better student learning outcomes. Visible Learning has been our key priority and will continue through our next planning cycle of 2018-2020. Our plan is to develop a greater focus on our community's understanding of the characteristics of a Penrhos Learner and how students are supported to develop these skills through their phases of development.

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SUBJECT COORDINATOR LEADERSHIP: Is it a Contributing Factor to Student Achievement?



Deborah Buscall currently holds the position of Secondary School Consultant at Catholic Education Office, Sydney. She is a highly experienced educator who has held a range of positions in secondary schools in NSW. Her early career was in the public system in urban schools in Sydney. Her latter career has been in urban Catholic schools in Sydney. She has held positions in the Diocese of Parramatta, Broken Bay and more recently in Sydney Catholic Schools. She has held leadership positions as a Subject Coordinator, an Administration Coordinator, a Deputy Principal and a School Principal in a large co-educational Catholic secondary school. It was in her role as a secondary principal for nine years that her interest in the leadership of subject coordinators and student achievement was enlivened.

This enlivened interest continued in her current role as a Secondary Schools Consultant in the Inner West Region of Sydney Catholic Schools. In this role she works closely with 10 Inner West secondary schools to improve their schools' results in NAPLAN and the NSW Higher School Certificate.

This enlivened interest also became the focus of her Doctoral Study through the Australian Catholic University. Her thesis is now completed and waiting for the process of examination. The thesis is titled: 'A Study of Higher and Lower Performing Subject Departments in Sydney Catholic Schools'. The case study at this conference is informed by this doctoral work.

The subject department structure of secondary schools and the influence of the leadership of the subject coordinator on student achievement has been largely ignored in the school improvement agenda. When Leithwood set out to explore the research that focused on subject coordinator leadership and its relation to student achievement, he found that there were only 42 studies that he was able to access (2016). This is in stark contrast to the thousands of studies about principal leadership that other writers are able to access when exploring school improvement (Robinson et al., 2009; Hattie, 2009; Waters, Marzano & McNulty, 2003; Leithwood et al., 2006).

Both Leithwood (2016) and the researcher of the doctoral study that informs this article, were prompted by the apparent resilience of secondary schools to improvement and the belief that subject coordinator leadership was untapped in terms of its contribution to school improvement.

This study explored the relationship of subject coordinator leadership and student achievement, which is a major factor in school improvement, in 13 subject departments in eight secondary schools in Sydney Catholic Schools (SCS) which is the largest Catholic educational system in New South Wales, Australia. Although the study was driven by the wide focus of raising student achievement in the New South Wales Higher School Certificate (HSC) it had a broader focus in relation to improving student achievement.

Although SCS had focused largely on the leadership of principals in seeking to improve student achievement in the NSW HSC, there had been less focus on other leadership positions in secondary schools. In this impetus to improve student achievement, educational writers, senior SCS leaders, and this researcher had also focused on principal leadership and had tended to place a lesser focus on other leadership positions that existed in all secondary schools in SCS, such as the leadership position of the subject coordinators.

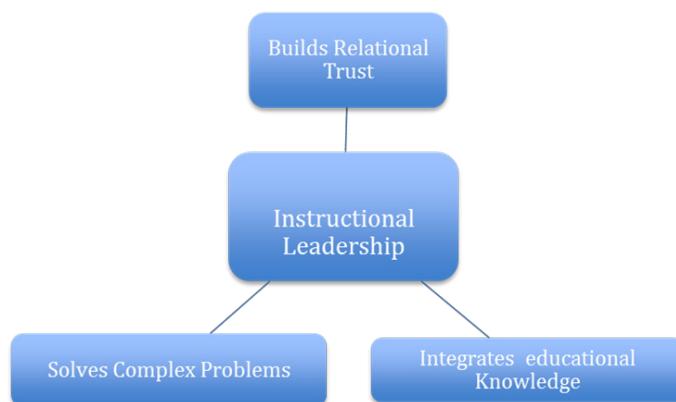
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This researcher had placed emphasis on the leadership of the principal in relation to improving student achievement, even though in her previous role as principal of a large co-educational Catholic secondary school she had believed that subject coordinators had some influence on improving student achievement in their subject departments. As a result of her belief that the leadership of subject coordinators and, subsequently, teachers in subject departments in this researcher's school could have some influence in improving student achievement generally and in the NSW HSC, she had provided them with professional learning opportunities that she believed would assist their leadership in improving student achievement.

In the current impetus for improvement in student achievement, the researcher again turned her attention to the leadership of these subject coordinators. This was at a time when educational researchers and SCS senior leaders had not been giving the same attention to the leadership of subject coordinators as they had toward the leadership of principals in relation to improving student achievement.

The data for this study of 13 subject departments in eight secondary schools was gathered from the Educational Leadership Practice Survey (ELP, 2012) which was a survey adapted from the original survey that was trialed in 2009 by New Zealand Council of Educational Research (NZCER). The survey development was informed by the findings of the meta-analysis of School Leadership and Student Outcomes: Identifying What Works and Why (Robinson et al., 2009).

¹This meta-analysis found that in schools where leadership influenced student learning outcomes there were 5 dimensions of leadership that directly affected student learning outcomes and there were three leadership capabilities that had an indirect effect. The following diagram explains how the dimensions and capabilities work to influence student learning outcomes in the meta-analysis of Robinson et al., (2009).



Instructional Leadership was found to consist of five dimensions with a range of effect sizes:

- Collaborative Goal Setting (effect size 0.42)²
- Strategic Resourcing (effect size 0.31)
- Quality Curriculum and Teaching (0.42)
- Participating and leading collaborative teacher professional learning (effect size 8.4)
- Safe and Supportive Environment (effect size 0.2 (Robinson et al., 2009))

The leadership capabilities that were found to have an indirect effect were building strong relational trust, solving complex problems, integration of educational knowledge (Robinson et al., 2009).

¹ *School Leadership and Student Achievement: Identifying What Works and Why* (Robinson et al., 2009) will be referred to as BES (Robinson et al., 2009) from this point.

² Effect size is the measurement of the effect of an intervention. According to Hattie the average effect size is 0.40, so the effect of influence can be measured against this effect size.



SUBJECT COORDINATOR LEADERSHIP: Is it a Contributing Factor to Student Achievement?

When the data from the 13 subject departments was examined, it was found that in all the subject departments in the case study, instructional leadership as framed by the adapted ELP (2012) was found to be effectively led by the subject coordinator in all subject departments. As this form of leadership by the principal was found to influence student achievement, it followed that this form of leadership as it was found in the 13 subject departments had influenced student achievement in all the subject departments in this study which were all relatively high performing. Therefore, the leadership of the subject coordinator had been found to be a contributing factor in these 13 subject departments.

What was of interest from the findings was that the dimension that was found to have the greatest effect on student achievement 'Promoting and participating in collaborative teacher professional learning' with an effect size of 0.84 was the least effectively led in all subject departments. This finding has implications for how subject coordinators can further improve the current student achievement in their subject department.

What was also of interest was that all teachers in all 13 subject departments rated their subject coordinator as highly effective in the leadership capabilities – this is a highly unusual finding in light of the range of the subject departments and the number of teachers. A conclusion that was drawn was that the teachers were rating their subject coordinator in terms of their 'niceness' or the strength of social relationships rather than their professional leadership as related to student achievement.

It appeared that the subject departments were overwhelmingly congenial rather than also being collegial – a finding which has been found to influence student achievement. Whilst social, that is congenial, relationships are essential as subject departments involve teachers working in a relational environment, these type of relationships have not been found to influence student achievement. However, when the relationships within a subject department are overwhelmingly collegial, that is professional relationships that involve teachers working together to work on problems to improve student achievement, student achievement has been found to improve (Sammons et al., 1997; Day, 2011).

In light of this conclusion, the challenge for subject coordinators appeared to be how they develop a collegial environment within their subject departments where this professional conversation to improve student achievement can occur in a non-threatening way. Robinson's later writings (2011) named strong relational trust as being conducive to developing this collegial environment. In a study that focused on schools, leaders of those schools were found to build trust by modelling and expecting the following four qualities: respect for those they lead, personal regard for their staff, competence, and personal integrity (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). It follows that the consequences for teachers of high relational trust in subject departments are a positive attitude to innovation and risk, enhanced commitment to their work, formation of an enhanced professional community, and more outreach to parents. Next, it follows that the consequences for students are improved academic outcomes and a higher likelihood of positive social outcomes, as was found in the original BES (Robinson et al., 2009).

This capacity for building high relational trust is the 'how' of implementing any change that has the purpose of improving student achievement, because it provides a collegial environment where teachers can engage with their beliefs, identity, and efficacy in relation to the proposed change, and to be committed to what is being proposed (Tschannen-Moran, 2013).

Bryk and Schneider (2002) also suggest that 'relational trust' refers to the trust that develops between people who work or socialise together over a period of time, and is built on each person in the relationship living up to what the other person expects of them. This interaction occurs over time as teachers sit, work, and plan together. It also occurs in the classroom as teachers teach their students on a regular basis.



SUBJECT COORDINATOR LEADERSHIP: Is it a Contributing Factor to Student Achievement?

When the relationship is based on trust, conversations about quality of performance can occur in a professional manner:

Relationships among educators within a school range from vigorously healthy to dangerously competitive. Strengthen those relationships, and you improve professional practice. (Barth, 2006)

An additional area of interest that emerged from the findings in this study was that, whilst there was little difference found in the effectiveness of subject coordinator leadership that focused on student achievement in a smaller sample of three higher and three lower performing subject departments, there appeared to be an unidentified element that influenced student achievement.

The conclusion was that the unidentified element was teacher collective efficacy and academic optimism that existed in the three higher performing subject departments. This researcher drew this conclusion based on the research of Bryk & Schneider (2003), Tschannen-Moran & Hoy (2000) and Hattie (2015). Each of these researchers found that there were intangible elements that were found in higher performing schools, elements such as academic optimism and teacher collective efficacy. Collective efficacy can be found within an organisation, and represents the shared perceptions of group members 'concerning the performance capability of a social system as a whole' (Bandura, 1997, p. 469.) Collective efficacy is also associated with what people do, their level of effort and persistence, shared thoughts, stress levels, and achievement of groups.

The concept of 'collective efficacy' and its impact on student achievement has been supported by (Hattie, 2015) when he further added to the number of influences on student achievement from 138 to 195 effect sizes that had the greatest influence on student achievement.. He found that the effect of 'collective efficacy' on student achievement has emerged as having a significant impact, with an effect size of 1.52.

This concept of collective efficacy has been shown to be critical in what has been called 'academic optimism', where all teachers are committed to ensuring students attain the best results despite potential blockers.

The concept of academic optimism was developed by Hoy and Hoy (2006) as it included collective efficacy (all students can learn). Also included in this term was academic emphasis and subject department trust (teachers make a difference to students). It was concluded that when these factors are present, students learn more.

It follows that this study has contributed to the limited knowledge about the influence of subject departments in influencing student achievement as it delved into not just the theory of leadership that has been found to influence student achievement but also into the execution of this leadership which is often elusive for subject coordinators. The human factors of teachers and teaching in subject departments may account for the resilience of secondary schools to improvement – a closer understanding of these factors may assist subject coordinators in being a stronger influence on improving student achievement not only in the eight secondary schools in SCS but also in secondary schools further afield.

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FEEDBACK ON FEEDBACK:

Evaluating the impact of feedback on the performance of Senior Visual Art students



Peter Cooke has been a classroom practitioner for 35 years, the majority of that time as a teacher of Visual Art and Media Studies. He has experience as Panel Chair of Senior Visual Art within the Queensland criterion-based system and is also a CIS (Council of International Schools) Accredited Team Member. His particular interest is in curriculum design and implementation within both junior and senior secondary Visual Art.



Dr Patsy Norton is a Master Teacher at Craigslea State High School, where her responsibility is to improve teacher capability and student learning outcomes. She has had extensive experience in public and independent schools as well as in administration roles, as Head of Department and Dean of Studies. Her professional passion is the teaching of English. In addition, she enjoys supporting teachers in the implementation of literacy learning strategies across the curriculum as well as encouraging classroom-based action research. Her personal research interests lie in teacher learning, literacy learning, and pedagogy.

Introduction

Educators are concerned to understand what types of feedback, under what conditions and for what purpose, actually contribute to student learning and possibly performance, because 'the type of feedback and the way it is given can be differentially effective' (Hattie & Timperley, 2007, p. 81). Within this contemporary context, students and teachers are challenged not only to be familiar with types of feedback, but also to communicate with each other as to the impact – positive or negative – of the feedback. At Craigslea State High School, the teacher of Years 11 and 12 Visual Art undertook classroom-based evaluative research into the impact of types of feedback given on one group of students over two years. This was undertaken within the context of both the school's pedagogical framework Classroom Instruction That Works (Pitler & Stone, 2012), which advocates timely and criterion-referenced feedback, and Queensland's criterion-based Senior Visual Art syllabus (Queensland Studies Authority, 2007). Research in this context questioned (a) To what extent feedback enhances the performance of senior Visual Art students? and (b) What kind of feedback is most valued by the senior Visual Art students? Thus the goal of the investigation was to elicit feedback on feedback (Dinham, 2008). What follows is a categorisation of types of feedback utilised, identified by theoretical categories, details of data collection and analysis, as well as the findings and conclusion to this report.



FEEDBACK ON FEEDBACK:

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Categorisation of Feedback

Three key categories of feedback were identified from the theory, including praise (Brophy, 1981), and verification and elaboration (Shute, 2008). These three were used to identify the nature of feedback given to students, as shown in Table One. Each type was intended to signal 'a gap between a current level of performance and some desired level of performance' (Shute, 2008, p.15). In addition, in targeting one or more of the syllabus criteria (namely visual literacy, application, appraising) in each type of feedback, the teacher demonstrated 'response efficiency' (Shute, 2008, p.159). A point to note is that in the first of the two senior years, tasks and results were formative, while in the second year, tasks contributed to the overall exit result.

Feedback to Visual Art Students	Categories of feedback derived from theory
Written Feedback: Appraising Criterion	Elaboration
Oral Feedback Individual Visual Literacy and Application Criteria	Elaboration
Oral Feedback: Whole Class Visual Literacy and Application Criteria	Praise and elaboration
Mid Semester 1 Reporting: Achievement levels A – E (overall result based on all three criteria)	Praise and verification
Peer Feedback: Written and verbal Visual Literacy and Application Criteria	Praise, Verification and Elaboration
Semester 1, 2, 3 Reporting: Achievement levels A – E and comments re individual criteria including Visual Literacy, Application and Appraising Criteria.	Praise and Elaboration

Table 1: Types of Feedback

Verification features less frequently in the table, as this was a matter of indicating that a task met a targeted criterion at an A-E level, whereas frequently used elaboration took the form of considered specific feedback about how to improve performance on a criterion, and/or how to meet task requirements. Praise was used quite deliberately, despite Brophy's (1981) advice that praise has less reinforcement value for the 16-17 year old adolescents than other feedback, as a means of nurturing a positive mindset (Dweck, 1986) along with effort and motivation.

Data collection and analysis

Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected to determine students' evaluation of the feedback given. Task performance results and exit results gave quantitative data, while a student survey and interviews with those students whose results improved gave qualitative data that complemented the quantitative data as well as providing a response to the second/minor research question.

Tables 2 and 3 show students' results on three syllabus criteria, collected at the end of Term One, Year 11 and Term 3, Year 12 to support comparison of results over time.



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YEAR 11 Term 1 ACHIEVEMENT STANDARDS					
ASSESSMENT CRITERIA	STANDARD A	STANDARD B	STANDARD C	STANDARD D	STANDARD E
Visual Literacy	10%	55%	25%	10%	0%
Application	10%	45%	30%	15%	0%
Appraising	10%	45%	35%	10%	0%

Table 2: Year 11 results end Term One, 2015

YEAR 12 Term 4 ACHIEVEMENT STANDARDS					
ASSESSMENT CRITERIA	STANDARD A	STANDARD B	STANDARD C	STANDARD D	STANDARD E
Visual Literacy	20%	40%	40%	0%	0%
Application	20%	40%	40%	0%	0%
Appraising	25%	40%	25%	10%	0%

Table 3: Year 12 results end Term 3, 2016

A comparison of the two tables reveals a significant and consistent improvement of at least 10% from B to A in all three criteria, as well as the same improvement in two of the three criteria at the lower end. Movement in the middle levels can account for those changes. The lack of movement at the lower end of the group in the Appraising Criterion could be attributed, among other factors such as lack of effort or capability, to the lack of literacy skills in research and essay writing, given appraising is generally assessed in writing tasks. What is particularly interesting is the 15% shift in the Appraising criterion at the upper end, where the same challenges of literacy and coherence would apply. The shift could, perhaps, be attributed to feedback about the criterion demands or the literacy demands. Student feedback was used to check the validity of this assumption.

Year 11 and Year 12 results were also compared at four points in the two years of study, shown in Table 4. To an extent this is not as interesting as the comparison based on criteria, but students tend to focus on overall results in their evaluation of progress, despite the intense approach to feedback based on separate criteria.

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Overall Standards achieved across two years					
	Standard A	Standard B	Standard C	Standard D	Standard E
YEAR 11 TERM 1 2015	10%	40%	35%	15%	0%
YEAR 11 TERM 4 2015	20%	40%	35%	5%	0%
YEAR 12 TERM 2 2016	5%	45%	35%	10%	5%
YEAR 12 TERM 4 2016	20%	40%	40%	0%	0%

Table 4: Summative Achievement over three criteria for Year 11 and 12 at four points in time

What the comparison reveals is that the Standard A to Standard C pass rate improved from 85% in Year 11, 2015 to 100% in Year 12, 2016. Further, there was an increase of 35% in achievement standards over the three criteria. 60% of students remained at the same level while 5% decreased levels. Specifically, movements across levels were as follows:

- 5 % of students improved from A to A+
- 15% of students improved from B to A
- 5% of students improved from B to B+
- 5% of students improved from C to B
- 15% of students improved from D to C.

The question remained, however, as to whether students attributed the pleasing improvement to feedback given. Survey data displayed in Table Five suggested that written feedback/ elaboration targeting the appraising criterion, was both the most highly valued by students and the contributor to improved performance. Individual oral feedback/elaboration targeting both visual literacy and application was next favoured. Therefore there would seem to be a balanced effect, in that all criteria are met by feedback of value to students. However, oral one-on-one feedback was less regularly given. This analysis was clarified by the qualitative data obtained from the survey comments and interviews with the small group (of varied ability) whose performance improved significantly.

It is interesting to note that students rated verification feedback in the form of reporting results well below teacher written and oral feedback, because reports were perceived as directed to parents. This feedback on reporting results did not improve performance, in the opinion of students of varied abilities. Most students valued praise as positive reinforcement but did not appreciate any form of criticism, even if constructive. Lower ability students in particular valued peer feedback supported by collaborative interaction, as this helped to improve their understanding of unit concepts and improved their overall achievement from a D and E Standard to a C Standard. In contrast, a high ability student in the interview group appreciated the variety of feedback types, as well as the opportunity to self-direct learning.

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Evaluating the impact of feedback on the performance of Senior Visual Art students

TYPES OF FEEDBACK	PLEASE RATE Teacher Usage (circle)			Feedback influence on improving your Overall Performance (circle)		
	regular	sometimes	never	strong	some	none
Written Feedback: Appraising Criterion	90%	10%	0%	60%	35%	5%
Oral Feedback Individual Visual Literacy and Application Criterion	75%	25%	0%	55%	40%	5%
Oral Feedback: Whole Class Visual Literacy and Application Criterion	65%	25%	10%	25%	65%	10%
Mid Semester Reporting : Achievement levels A – E	35%	65%	0%	15%	70%	15%
Peer Feedback: Written and verbal Visual Literacy and Application Criterion	10%	80%	10%	15%	60%	25%
Semester Reporting: Achievement levels A – E and Visual Literacy, Application and Appraising Criterion.	35%	65%	0%	15%	75%	10%

Table 5: Quantitative survey results

Conclusion

The improvement in performance by the Visual Art students between early Year 11 and late Year 12 suggested a causal relationship between feedback and performance in this school context. Other variables could also have contributed to this situation, but student feedback to the teacher added a degree of validation to the findings of the research. What was notable about this evaluative approach by the practitioner is that the partnership between the teacher and students in the process of meta-learning, or thinking about learning, enhanced the level of awareness of the potential of feedback. It is hoped that this sharing of an authentic classroom-based investigation into feedback may also be of value for other practitioners.



FEEDBACK ON FEEDBACK:

Evaluating the impact of feedback on the performance of Senior Visual Art students

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EVIDENCED-BASED INTERNSHIP:

Is there more than anecdotal data to support its design?



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Jessica Cubbage is the Special Programs Manager at Lesmurdie Senior High School where she motivates, engages, and mentors staff to be instructionally intelligent. Within this role Jessica has committed to the improved learning of Pre-Service Teachers (PSTs) through the integration of an extended placement model focusing on instructional design under the mentorship of highly accomplished teachers. Her professional expertise includes growth coaching, conference accreditation training and establishing effective feedback systems. Jessica has a particular interest and expertise in building pedagogical capacity and developing instructional leadership focus at all levels of school management.

Overview of the context and scope of the study

Hattie (2015) exhorts us to move from ‘anecdotes and war stories to solid evidence’ rather than relying on information compiled from anecdotes, stories, or items of hearsay — ‘pseudo-data produced from anecdotes’ (www.urbandictionary.com) in developing practice in education. However there are particular challenges that practitioners and researchers face in collecting reliable and valid evidence to make defensible generalisations about what constitutes best practice in the preparation of pre service teachers.

Despite the dearth of hard research evidence, Lesmurdie Senior High School in partnership with Curtin School of Education has established a program to improve the quality of professional experience offered. This program evolved from the school’s very clear commitment to developing effective teachers through systematic training of teachers to become critical, reflective practitioners. Exposing pre service teachers to that same training and support, it was postulated, would augment preparation for the workplace in a significant way.

The school: Lesmurdie Senior High School

Located some 30 kilometres south east of the CBD on the Darling scarp, Lesmurdie Senior High School was established in 1981 and gained Independent Public School status in 2011 (<http://www.lesmurdie.wa.edu.au/>). It has an enrolment of just over 1000 students and a staff of 115 teaching and non-teaching personnel. Lesmurdie has developed a program based on a culture of high expectations that focuses on the links between effective instructional design and student engagement. It has done this by adopting a Professional Learning Community framework, a highly collaborative approach that fosters opportunities for professional growth based on relevant and timely feedback on performance. In practice this means that all teaching staff participate in classroom observation and feedback based on a growth coaching model of performance management.

Overview of the theoretical approach

The school and its partner, Curtin University School of Education, subscribe to the Darling-Hammond (2006, p.ix) view that that it is a ‘...damaging myth that good teachers are born and not made...’ and that excellent pre-service education can provide the knowledge and skills to ensure quality teachers and teaching. However, the research into Initial Teacher Education (ITE) courses we found was limited and mainly small-scale, action research. Typically it was based on limited cases, variable teaching contexts, diverse learners and different teaching areas which restrict generalisability of the findings (Ingvarson et al, 2014). Larger scale research often depends exclusively on survey-collected reflections by principals and newly-graduated teachers on course relevance and efficacy (Zeichner, 1999).

Bahn and Mellor (2016) provided a useful way to focus our research program. They propose that researchers should consider questions such as, ‘What impact does a strong professional identity make on the capacity of a teacher to take leadership of learning design for their classes?’ and that to do this we must consider ‘how do we best develop a strong professional identity, what are its features, what experiences are most generative?’

The program offered through the Lesmurdie partnership attempts to address these research questions and enact the features of high-quality professional experiences described in research reviews (see, for example, Ure, 2009), providing opportunity for collaboration on curriculum and assessments; evaluation of pre-service and mentor teachers’ own learning; low-key observation of teaching and frequent feedback; and creating opportunities for the pre service teacher to become genuinely embedded within the school and to adopt a strong professional identity as an educator under the intensive supervision of mentor who is an experienced and effective teacher.

Evidence supporting this approach

Data collected in surveys of graduate teachers in September 2016 confirmed that around a third of Curtin graduate teachers had limited confidence in their skills and understandings, as defined by the Graduate teaching standards. More worrying is that the skills that might be considered absolutely central to effective teaching - Standard 3 and Standard 5 - were identified as the area where they felt least prepared and in need of most professional learning.¹

¹ The target group for the 2016 survey was those who completed their teaching qualifications in the previous year (2015) and were appointed to public schools. The purpose of the survey was to collect from first year graduates shortly after they qualify, their perceptions of their higher education experience and classroom readiness.

EVIDENCED-BASED INTERNSHIP: Is there more than anecdota to support its design?

Graduate standards	v. confident/ conf	Somewhat confident/ not confident	Professional learning?
1. know students and how they learn	66% (65)	34% (34)	30% (31)
2. know content and how to teach	61% (60)	39% (38)	42%(43)
3. plan & implement effective T & L	55% (54)	45% (44)	51%(53)
4. create safe & supportive learning environment	64% (63)	36% (35)	40% (41)
5. assess, give feedback & report	45% (44)	55% (54)	59% (61)
6. engage in PL	65% (64)	35% (34)	29% (30)
7. engage with colleagues, p/c & community	69% (68)	31% (30)	28% (29)
No PL required in relation to the Standards			15% (15)

Table 1. Curtin graduate teacher confidence in relation to the graduate teaching standards and perceived professional learning needs.

Overview of the CULIP Project: design and processes

Lesmurdie has made deliberate and strategic use of the partnership with Curtin University to induct pre service teachers into a professional community characterised by ‘a focus on student learning, collaboration, reflective dialogue and deprivatisation of practice’ (Ingvarson et al, 2014 p.8). In its enactment, this means that PST’s contact with the school extends significantly beyond the prescribed 10-week internship.

EVIDENCED-BASED INTERNSHIP: Is there more than anecdotal to support its design?

Term 1	
Week 1&2	School development day for whole staff and for Curtin preservice teachers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to Observation Protocols/ Observation schedule/Feedback sessions Induction for Curtin preservice teachers <u>Handbook</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professionalism • Expectations of PSTs and mentors • Behaviour Management/Classroom Management • Daily procedures
Week 3&4	Min 2 day visit by PST with Mentor (Observation and team teaching)
Week 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research project – observation of student for 3 consecutive periods. Review and feedback
Week 6-8	Prearranged optional visits with Mentor
Week 9	Masterclass on reporting and parent/ teacher interviews <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portal • Assessment Outlines/Report Data Entry/Comment Bank/Progress Reports • LSHS reporting guidelines • Parent Teacher Interviews Protocols Dealing with difficult parents Observe MT interviews
Week 10	PSTs attend parent/ teacher interviews day (T.1, T3)
Term 2	Internship
Term 3	Interns begin placements as per University requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Week 5 Masterclass at Curtin conducted by LSHS Principal– Resume Writing • Masterclass delivered at LSHS by Curtin academic staff for mentor teachers
Term 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curtin conducts selection process for LSHS Intern Program • Mentor teachers undergo AITSL Supervising Pre-Service Training at LSHS • Curtin advises of successful applicants following selection process.

Table 2. Summary of CULIP Project



EVIDENCED-BASED INTERNSHIP: Is there more than anecdotal to support its design?

The project began half way through 2016 when staff members from each of the key learning areas were recruited. At that point staff were advised of the theoretical rationale for the project, citing in particular the work of Rosie Le Cornu that asserts that the more explicit and transparent the relationship between the school, university and mentor teacher, the higher the quality of professional experiences (Le Cornu, 2012). At the point of recruitment, staff understood that participating in the CULIP project would be a year-long commitment that included extensive mentoring as well as their own professional development and learning. The staff who volunteered for this program faced no financial or in-kind rewards. It is fair to say that the rewards they receive from their participation come from the personal and professional satisfaction that accrues from providing support and guidance to those entering the profession.

The school project leaders developed a year-long program that begins with induction into the school and its cycle of regular, low-stakes observation and feedback. The project has also had explicit focus on operationalisation of AITSL standards, particularly Standard 3 (plan & implement effective teaching and learning) Standard 5 (assess, provide feedback and report) and Standard 7 (engage professionally with colleagues, parents/ care-givers and the community). A summary of the program is provided in Appendix 1. For the school, this investment in pre-service teacher training is pivotal in enabling the school to recruit high achieving graduate teachers.

Phase two of this project commences in Term 4 and focuses on impact. Using survey questionnaire from the Graduate survey, attitudes of the PST and participating staff in the school will be collected. Formal assessments of school-based experiences will also be used, as will information collected from formal structured interviews (exit interviews) with the PST and mentors.

Conclusions and recommendations

Setting up and conducting this project requires enormous effort and goodwill on the part of all stakeholders; all parties goes well beyond what has been traditionally been the expectation for an internship. There is no additional financial recompense for school personnel and PST get no additional formal credit in their course. All participants have been made aware of the level of commitment required and all have signed up willingly and enthusiastically; they are a self-selected group of highly motivated participants and it would be surprising if these PSTs do not go on to become skilled and confident graduate teachers. Establishing rigorous data collection for this project is therefore a challenge: apart from the highly unrepresentative sample of teachers and PSTs the numbers of PSTs, while large for the school to manage, is small and the uncontrolled variables are many.

This project also risks being consigned to the basket of 'ungeneralisable small scale study'. However, it is an important step for both the school and teacher education provider in defining and delivering purposeful and consistent professional experiences for pre-service teachers in the distinctive context of Lesmurdie Senior High School.

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Building Shared Understandings, Capacity and Self-Reflection through a Whole-School Coaching Model



Dr Gregory Cunningham has a special research interest in visual literacy having completed his doctorate in this field prior to a post-doctoral sabbatical at the College of William and Mary in Virginia, United States. A passionate teacher of English, Greg has presented research into emerging practices in the English classroom and boys' education at conferences in Australia, the United Kingdom and in the United States. He has been a site researcher in the Harvard International Case Study Research Project determining the efficacy of staff practice and student understanding relating to the Teaching for Understanding framework which Barker College has used as teaching and learning framework. Currently his work relates directly to research conducted by The Barker Institute and in the areas of professional accreditation and teacher coaching. Greg has also represented the independent school sector on NSW professional learning committees. In this capacity, he has also served as an assessor and consultant on accreditation processes and professional development in NSW.



Dr Bradley Merrick is a musician and music teacher, currently responsible for the development and integration of best practice through professional learning, innovation and research at the Barker Institute. His PhD examined the influence of self-efficacy and self-regulation upon student understanding and engagement when composing music using technology. He has presented locally, nationally and internationally at a range of symposia and conferences. He has co-authored several music textbooks combined with scholarly articles and papers that explore emerging approaches to teaching and learning. He contributed to the Oxford Handbook on Music Education (2012) and the The Routledge Companion to Music, Technology, and Education (2017). He is currently National President of the Australian Society for Music Education.

Overview of the context and scope of the study

Barker College is an independent Anglican day and boarding school located in Hornsby, New South Wales. Founded in 1890, Barker is currently an all-boys' school from Pre-Kindergarten to Year 9 and co-educational in Years 10 to 12. Barker Darkinjung, an indigenous junior co-education campus, is situated on the Central Coast of New South Wales. In November 2016, the Barker College School Council resolved to move to a fully coeducational model by 2022. The School currently caters for approximately 2100 students including 60 boarders in Years 10 to 12.

The Barker Institute was established at Barker College in 2014 as a key strategic initiative. The Barker Institute aims to utilise the latest research and evidence to improve teaching practice and student understanding through meaningful interactions with staff, students, and parents across all stages of learning whether in the Preparatory, Junior, Middle or Senior schools. It also attempts to align its core aims with the needs of parents and members of the community, seeking to connect with and share emerging educational innovation and research with those outside the school environment.

A central tenet in professional learning is to engage staff in self-reflection of their own practice using a peer-coaching model within a College of Teachers (COT) structure, where staff could nominate or be nominated to be trained as coaches and to work with colleagues across the School (Pre-K to Year 12). The COT model draws on the 'growth mindset' work of Dweck (2006), seeking to develop professional learning and personal growth from a positive frame of reference rather than a deficit approach. Key reference areas include setting professional learning goals, referencing current practice and then seeking opportunities for seeking improvement.

As senior staff reflected on the emerging thinking and literature about 'collaborative professional learning' (Sharrat and Planche, 2016), the importance of connecting with ongoing research data was further highlighted. During 2016, the Barker Institute engaged in a reflective process to evaluate the initial success and validity of the coaching framework and its implementation. The methodology employed to collect data from the members of the COT included ongoing semi-structured discussions at meetings and utilising group reflection protocols. These were combined with individual reflection sheets throughout the year which included specific target areas of the COT program.

In its first year, the staff co-ordinating the work of the Barker Institute and the College of Teachers reviewed the training and implementation by examining this data for emerging themes. Where appropriate, these personnel and the COT Lead Coach across the School also provided their own perspectives and insights on innovative approaches to practice that could be offered as adjuncts to the coaching process. These included the provision of regular shared 'open-lessons' for observations, the creation of small professional learning groups for discussion about pedagogy, the trialling of the coaching process across the school with willing participants and, where possible, the ongoing collection of feedback and data from staff.

Overview of the research methodology

The research that underpins this case study employed a mixed methodology including protocols such as survey, semi-structured discussion, and open-ended questionnaires. These types of collection tools are best aligned with an educational innovation (similar to action research) that encourages ongoing collection of data through reflection which then reshapes the focus and clarity of engagement (Mills and Butroyd, 2014). By employing a range of different, contextualised approaches to data collection and thematic analysis, the rich nature of the experience was highlighted and annotated effectively amidst the busy schedules of the teaching staff involved.

Overview of the data collected and analysed

There were a range of data collected within the reflection process which was analysed thematically to assist the professional learning community of the School as it moved into the next phase of the COT. Responses were organised and presented to highlight key areas of collective thinking for the N=45 participants.

Overarching comments such as: 'It is good to see a Growth Model being used to develop awareness of other staff across the School' and 'We are now able to build relationships that lead to trust', highlighted the initial positive impact of the professional learning opportunities that were made available through the COT.

The responses from staff, which continually referenced that they valued the opportunity to work alongside their peers in a non-threatening, supportive environment, were the most valuable outcomes of the process. Participants consistently noted that this process allowed them to see the professional practice of teaching through a different and sometimes contrasting

lens. They often alluded to the variance in learning levels and subjects observed, emphasising that the emerging 'growth model' used by the School fosters strong cross-curriculum interaction and dialogue. In analysing the responses from participants, the key thematic areas they valued from the COT were:

- Professional conversations and improved communication
- Empowering staff and celebrating success in others
- Encouraging and supportive atmosphere
- Building relationships
- Developing open, positive and collegial classrooms
- Increased capacity to listen and to reflect on practice
- Opportunities to observe a range of teaching styles
- Using a model that was both affirming and non-threatening
- Opportunities to set professional goals related to practice and reflection
- Situations to learn about and manage difficult conversations

Similar to other innovations in a crowded education setting, participants highlighted the need to be aware of the structural and operational nuances of a school that can inhibit access to professional learning opportunities. This was particularly important to provide participants the very best chance to collaborate in learning from one another. Comments such as 'We need to look at the timetable and align coaching with available periods' and suggestions as 'We need to consider the structural aspects of the School and make it a whole school professional learning target' highlighted the need to be aware of the environmental changes needed as educational innovations are embedded in school settings.

The data and subsequent findings also reinforced that the overarching Growth Model used by the College of Teachers was an appropriate framework. Although only based on limited surveys and group reflections, the data presented suggests that participants consider that the COT has fostered a clear basis for dialogue and engagement in purposeful reflection, focusing on the coaching-mentoring process and the development of professional conversations.

Several participants also suggested that the COT should be a central dimension in the professional learning goals of the School. It would appear that there is a perceived congruence of the COT with the whole-school mission and purpose that offers a strong sense of 'reciprocity' which is an important aspect in this collaborative process wherein the leaders and believers (staff) of the organisation feel that they are receiving mutual benefits for their efforts while demonstrating sensitivity to the possible power balances that may exist (Sharratt and Planche, 2016).

Many staff referenced the increased sense of capacity, skill and confidence they have gained from their initial involvement highlighting the following skill areas that they had become aware of and fostered:

- Development of trust with other professionals
- The ability to be fully present in a conversation with a colleague
- Increased emotional connection with others in a professional context
- The ability to treat others as equals
- The ability to find common ground with others
- The capacity to praise others

These attributes are all specifically related to the collaborative process and they highlight how the notion of 'collective efficacy' and collaboration are integral skills to develop in a coaching framework harnessed within the COT.

Importantly, the data also provided key reference points for reflection and recalibration as the Barker Institute looks to continue implementing this model of professional learning in 2017. These findings are more 'operational' in their focus, often alluding to structural or design considerations within the overall organisation. A number of key suggestions were referenced in the data, providing significant insights for staff overseeing the project to reshape future iterations of the COT process. Crucial suggestions from staff included:

- Provision of connecting staff with others who have specific subject or educational experiences. In response, a College of Teachers' Directory has been created and published for access across the 220-teaching staff;
- Increased allocation of time for staff to meet, observe, and coach staff members. Since this request, availability of some period release time has been offered while also assisting staff to align more closely with those who may have similar breaks in their teaching timetables;
- Opportunity to review the process continually and to share both the positives and negatives from the experience. Since receiving this data, regular meetings of all COT members are held each term with specific areas of focus and discussion relative to reflection and teaching practice;
- Greater access to time. This has been tabled for consideration as the School expands its size and plans for the full implementation of co-education from PreK-12 in the future within the specific reference area researching 'Shape of the Day' considerations.

Outcomes of the approach

In an educational environment where teachers are expected continually to refine their practice and to modify their teaching to suit the needs of learners, the College of Teachers' innovation has filled an important space in the suite of professional learning activities offered to staff at Barker College. As highlighted in the data, there has been a positive response to the COT, particularly the reflective focus and shared learning opportunities it has provided. By aligning the provision of the COT with emerging research and a sustained level of access through the Barker Institute, the qualitative data would suggest that staff are placing a high value on the relationships that this experience is providing for them.

As externally provided professional learning opportunities have become so diverse and inaccessible to many staff due to cost and level of access, it is apparent that an in-house, shared coaching experience, firmly centred around ongoing feedback and reflection, has been well received within the School. Given the number of participants (N=45) and the increasing interest in the process across the campus, schools need strongly to consider the provision and design of professional learning for their teaching communities and to create opportunities that provide increased context and relevance for their staff. It would appear that in contextualising professional learning in the school-based environment, there is large degree of authenticity and connection for staff as it has value and personal worth to the participants. Edwards and Martin highlight 'one measure of a profession is how it looks after its own' (2016, p.45) and it would appear that the COT experience is catering for the needs of the staff at the School.

Conclusions and recommendations

The collective findings and reflection of participants are strongly aligned with Robinson's (2015) suggestion that 'effective practitioners need continuing opportunities for professional development to refresh their own creative practices and to keep pace with related development policy practice and research more generally' (p.127). Participants have certainly enjoyed the involvement and the opportunity to look beyond their own subject or stage level in the classroom.

The data collected has indicated that staff have the capacity and propensity to engage in professional learning that is both personalised, shared and relevant. Most importantly, these findings suggest the need to be provide a supportive environment in which to engage collaboratively. Although initial data has highlighted strong support for the COT, the findings have identified the need continually to reassess the design and implementation of such an initiative, given the ongoing changes in the day-to-day operational structures and demands on staff which, in turn, impact upon engagement in professional learning opportunities. At all times, it is important to remember that a school is a 'living organism' and that flexibility is needed to ensure the longevity and success of any educational innovation in the 21st Century.

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Developing, Adapting and Evaluating Authentic Professional Learning



Michelle Hostrup is the Principal of Daceyville Public School. Michelle has been a teacher and school leader in London and Sydney for over 15 years, working in a range of primary and special education settings. She is committed to leading school improvement through contextualised, long term professional learning programs. Michelle has worked in the NSW Department of Education's Futures Learning unit to develop resources and professional learning to support teachers across the state in implementing future-focused teaching and learning. She is passionate about engaging teachers in sustainable innovation and quality teaching practices.



Hollie van Ravenstein is an Assistant Principal at Camdenville Public School. She has experience in classroom teaching, instructional coaching and developing professional learning. Hollie is passionate about supporting Early Career Teachers (ECTs) and created a professional learning program to support the needs of ECTs from the Newtown Network of Schools. She has presented lectures at the University of Sydney on topics such as, implementing alternative methods in mainstream settings and skills needed to survive your first years of teaching. Hollie is actively engaged in building collaborative teams and leading schools in implementing innovative practices that allow student voice and choice.

Background

Camdenville Public School is a future-focused primary school located in Sydney's inner west. Since 2013 the school has been exploring and implementing a range of innovative pedagogies and practices, including Project-Based Learning (PBL) and Flexible Learning Spaces. This change in approach arose out of school-based evaluation that identified a lack of engagement and motivation in students which was impacting on student learning outcomes and behaviour. These practices were developed and implemented over a three year period.

Overview of the context and scope of the study

Camdenville Public School's innovative approach to teaching and learning is evident through the incorporation of Project-Based Learning (PBL), integration of technology in all aspects of learning, student led design of Flexible Learning Spaces, the use of social media and rich and authentic connections with the wider community. The school serves the socially and culturally diverse local suburbs of Newtown, St Peters, Enmore and Marrickville. There are approximately 260 students in the school as well as a preschool on site. In recent years the school population has been increasing at a steady rate due to demographic changes in the area. 4% of the student population identify as Indigenous and 27% of students have a language background other than English. The school staff have changed significantly since 2011 with an increase in the number of Early Career Teachers. In 2016 63% of the teaching staff were in their first five years of teaching, with three out of the 11 teachers in their first full year of teaching.

Camdenville Public School undertook a review of the research on PBL and identified key features that were evident in a range of articles, books and teacher resources about PBL.

These features include:

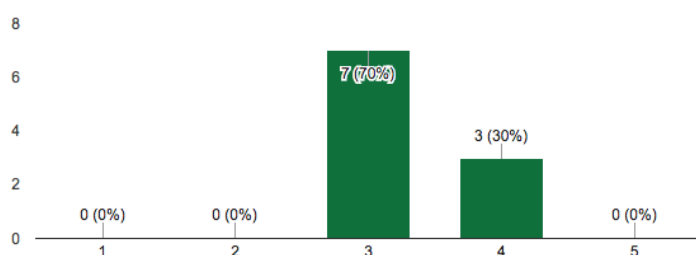
- Providing students with complex tasks that require them to engage in problem solving, design, decision-making and investigation;
- Connecting the task to authentic 'real-world' contexts and audiences, often projects culminate in the presentation of realistic products to experts or applying the products to real situations;
- Teacher facilitation rather than explicit direction;
- Explicit learning goals closely connected to curriculum outcomes; and
- Authentic assessment.

By the end of 2015 all teachers had received professional learning in PBL. The key elements as identified by Thomas (2000, p.1) were being implemented to differing extents in classrooms across the school. In Term 1 2016 the school conducted a review of PBL. The evidence gathered through Instructional Rounds, work samples, teacher evaluation, program documents and a teacher survey suggested teacher understandings of PBL was not consistent across the school and that not all teachers felt confident planning and implementing the approach in its entirety. A survey of teachers demonstrated that 70% of teachers felt only somewhat confident in teaching through PBL as demonstrated in Table 1.

Table 1. Survey - Confidence levels of teachers using a Project Based Learning approach

I feel confident in teaching using a Project-Based Learning approach.

(10 responses)



Additional information identified a number of teachers would like support in managing the process when different groups are working on different activities, providing feedback effectively and making the most of class time to enable students to achieve project goals and produce work of a high quality.

Table 2.	Table 3.																																				
Teacher Confidence Level - Planning for PBL	Teacher Confidence Level - Supporting PBL processes																																				
<p>I feel comfortable planning for PBL time and allowing for multiple tasks or activities to be taking place at the same time.</p> <p>(10 responses)</p> <table><thead><tr><th>Confidence Level</th><th>Number of Responses</th><th>Percentage</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>1</td><td>0</td><td>0%</td></tr><tr><td>2</td><td>1</td><td>10%</td></tr><tr><td>3</td><td>6</td><td>60%</td></tr><tr><td>4</td><td>3</td><td>30%</td></tr><tr><td>5</td><td>0</td><td>0%</td></tr></tbody></table>	Confidence Level	Number of Responses	Percentage	1	0	0%	2	1	10%	3	6	60%	4	3	30%	5	0	0%	<p>I feel confident in supporting the process of product development and a culminating event through the use of multiple rounds of feedback/feedforward, success criteria and 'project time'.</p> <p>(10 responses)</p> <table><thead><tr><th>Confidence Level</th><th>Number of Responses</th><th>Percentage</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>1</td><td>0</td><td>0%</td></tr><tr><td>2</td><td>1</td><td>10%</td></tr><tr><td>3</td><td>7</td><td>70%</td></tr><tr><td>4</td><td>2</td><td>20%</td></tr><tr><td>5</td><td>0</td><td>0%</td></tr></tbody></table>	Confidence Level	Number of Responses	Percentage	1	0	0%	2	1	10%	3	7	70%	4	2	20%	5	0	0%
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In response, the school leadership team developed a concurrent program of professional learning in tandem with a whole school PBL project to take place in Term 3 2016. Each week the Teacher Professional Learning (TPL) session addressed a particular aspect of PBL. Teachers engaged in reading blogs, articles and research papers about a range of areas. In addition to the TPL program the school leadership team identified the opportunity for a common PBL project for the whole school around the topic of Wellbeing.

Following each TPL session a whole school planning meeting took place. At this meeting teachers shared the status of their class's PBL, discussed opportunities for collaboration between students across classes, identified curriculum outcomes that would be appropriate for the following week's learning programs and worked in stage teams to create lesson plans to address the outcomes. Explicit attention was paid to the PBL focus area for that week's professional learning and strategies were developed to trial in classrooms for the following week. This process provided a structure for teachers to discuss their learning and put it into practice with the support of colleagues. Each TPL session commenced with an opportunity for teachers to share the strategies they had trialled with examples of student learning and evaluate the effectiveness of the approach, give and receive feedback and set goals for future teaching and learning. In between TPL sessions the school leadership team gathered resources and planned sessions to address the next topic as identified by teachers.

Overview of the approach

In her synthesis of research on effective teacher professional development that has demonstrated a positive impact on student outcomes Timperley (2008) identified ten key principles including: providing teachers with opportunities to drive their own professional development, allowing teachers to work collaboratively to learn and apply evidence based practices, establishing a professional learning culture that provides a safe and authentic environment for professional enquiry and ensuring school leaders take an active role in developing professional learning and maintaining momentum within schools. Our approach addressed these key principles. All staff were involved in directing the learning throughout our TPL program and we used a range of data pre and during the TPL to design each professional learning session, set 'in-between' tasks and used these as discussion starters in following sessions.



Developing, Adapting and Evaluating Authentic Professional Learning

This professional learning process ensured teachers were provided with opportunities to learn and apply new pedagogical skills in their classrooms and evaluate and reflect on these practices with colleagues. Spanning two terms the TPL program maintained momentum through weekly TPL sessions, 'in-between' tasks, whole staff planning sessions and leadership team meetings to evaluate and plan the 'next steps' in the TPL program.

Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) has provided a number of reviews of research around the key aspects of school improvement, including professional learning. Collaboration is highlighted as important for developing a shared commitment and responsibility towards student outcomes and contributes to the ongoing improvement of teaching practices and pedagogies (AITSL, 2013). Collaboration was at the centre of this approach to professional learning as teachers were engaged in gathering and evaluating evidence, sharing ideas, providing each other with feedback and planning teaching and learning programs together throughout the project. This collaboration was possible, at least in part, due to the learning culture that was established in the school. An effective learning culture in a school has a number of key features, including: engaging teachers in collaboration, using data to inform decision making and learning activities, conducting professional learning that is based on current research and identifying the impact of professional learning on staff and student outcomes from the outset (AITSL, 2013). All of these features are well established at Camdenville and have enabled teachers to develop expectations for the quality, purpose and impact of professional learning. This generates a level of trust in the school leadership and the processes put in place for ongoing professional learning.

Instructional Rounds as defined by City (2011, p.2) is a disciplined way for educators to work together to improve instruction and is a practice that combines three common elements of improvement: classroom observation, an improvement strategy, and a network of educators. Instructional Rounds is an embedded practice at Camdenville Public School used to drive school change. In this instance Instructional Rounds provided an opportunity for teachers to act as researchers by gathering evidence, identifying patterns and evaluating what this meant for students in the school and their own practice. The rounds process ensured that the identified 'problem of practice' of how to improve teacher understanding of PBL practices and subsequent TPL program was contextualised and directly linked to valued student outcomes. Rounds was conducted pre and post-intervention to gather evidence and ensure that all teachers were involved in establishing clear goals and a plan for action to improve the practice of PBL across the school.

Overview of the data collected and analysed

The following information provides an overview of the methods used to collect the data, the time-frame, and the background information.

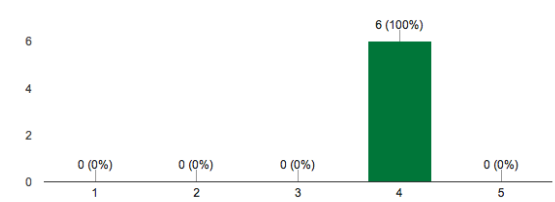
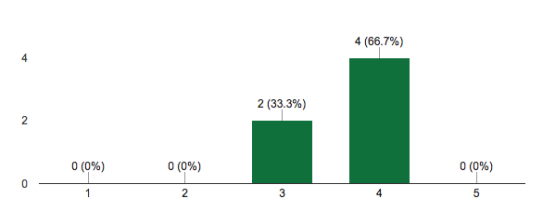
Evaluation tool used	Time frame	Background information
Anonymous online teacher surveys pre and post the professional learning program.	Conducted in Week 1 Term 3 and again in Week 11 Term 3.	A Google form was used to survey teachers pre and post intervention. A combination of questions asking them to use a Likert Scale to rate their level of confidence in different aspects of PBL and open ended questions was used.
Teacher reflections throughout the process.	Recorded during weekly TPL and whole school planning sessions and collected prior to the intervention.	Through discussions during the TPL and the planning meetings teacher reflections were shared and recorded on the school professional learning website. This provided a reference point for starting conversations and for teachers to reflect on previous learning. Previous teacher reflections from previous PBL projects were collected and formed part of the evidence that indicated the need for the intervention.
Teacher programs	Samples were collected from previous projects in Term 1 and Term 2, during the intervention in Term 3 and after the intervention in Term 4.	Samples of programs including plans for hook events, lessons to develop Driving Questions, plans to support students working in different groups, planning for assessment, lessons focused on feedback and feedforward sessions. The samples were collected before, during and after the intervention and compared. Scaffolds and prompts developed by teachers to support students during Project-Based Learning were uploaded onto Google Drive by teachers throughout the whole school Wellbeing PBL project and captured during Instructional Rounds.
Photos of classroom environments	Photos were taken during Instructional Rounds in Week 3 Term 3 and Week 4 Term 4. Teachers shared photos in Week 8 Term 3.	During the first Instructional Round at the beginning of Term 3 photos were taken of classroom displays, particularly the Project Wall, student work, classroom organisation and students taking part in PBL. This process was repeated at the end of the intervention and the photos were compared and evaluated by the whole staff to identify what changes they could see evidence of. Teachers uploaded photos to Google Drive. Photo Elicitation was used as an evaluative tool for teachers to identify if real world connections were being made, if student voice and choice was playing a role in the project and to check if the whole school PBL project was on track.

Student products	Photos of products were taken prior to the intervention at the conclusion of PBL projects in Week 4 Term 3, towards the end of the school project in Week 11 Term 3, when finalised in Term 4 and at the conclusion of subsequent projects.	A Google document was created and shared so teachers could record the products that the students in their class were creating. This enabled teachers to identify different ideas for students who were stuck and provide opportunities for students to collaborate across classes. Photos of student products were taken to compare the quality to that of previous products produced prior to the intervention.
Student interviews	Recorded at the end of the intervention in Week 2 Term 4.	Students were interviewed at the end of the intervention and asked a series of questions about their experiences, what they learnt and what they would do differently in the future.
Teacher interviews	Recorded at the end of the project in Week 2 Term 4.	Teachers were interviewed one on one after the intervention and asked what they had learnt through this process, what changes it had made to their practice and what they would do differently in the future.

Outcomes of the approach

The post intervention surveys and interviews showed a substantial change in teacher confidence in a variety of aspects of PBL and much greater consistency in programming and practice across the school. Pre and post teacher surveys clearly demonstrate these results. In the post-intervention survey 100% of teachers reported that they feel confident using a PBL approach up from 30% in the pre-intervention teacher survey. When looking at specific aspects of PBL, 83% of teachers reported that they ensure opportunities for students to exercise voice and control, which is an increase of 33%. Overall teachers responded that they felt more comfortable allowing students to direct the course of PBL and involve a wide range of experts and have more opportunities to share their work with an authentic audience for feedback. 100% of teachers feel comfortable allowing students to choose their own products or presentation strategy up from 70%. 83% of teachers are confident in supporting the process of PBL, an increase from 20% before the intervention. Responses to open-ended questions state that teachers feel more confident in planning for PBL, utilising assessment processes, supporting students in managing the PBL process and connecting content taught in other lessons to the PBL product and process.

Subsequent Instructional Rounds identified positive changes in classroom practice. Student products were of consistently higher quality across the school and there was greater collaboration across classes due to the common topic and shared understanding of teachers. When evaluating the photos taken of the different aspects of the learning environments and the tasks in which students were engaged, teachers identified a number of significant changes, such as: students working on a greater range of products, a greater level of student self-direction and increased collaboration across different classes and year groups. There was also evidence of teachers delivering activities of increased differentiation and a greater variety of scaffolding strategies for students to use as they worked through different tasks.

Table 4: Post Survey - Teacher Confidence Level in Teaching PBL	Table 5: Post Survey - Teacher Confidence Level in Planning and managing PBL																																				
<p>I feel confident in teaching using a Project-Based Learning approach.</p> <p>(6 responses)</p>  <table><thead><tr><th>Confidence Level</th><th>Number of Responses</th><th>Percentage</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>1</td><td>0</td><td>0%</td></tr><tr><td>2</td><td>0</td><td>0%</td></tr><tr><td>3</td><td>0</td><td>0%</td></tr><tr><td>4</td><td>6</td><td>100%</td></tr><tr><td>5</td><td>0</td><td>0%</td></tr></tbody></table>	Confidence Level	Number of Responses	Percentage	1	0	0%	2	0	0%	3	0	0%	4	6	100%	5	0	0%	<p>I feel comfortable planning for PBL time and allowing for multiple tasks or activities to be taking place at the same time.</p> <p>(6 responses)</p>  <table><thead><tr><th>Confidence Level</th><th>Number of Responses</th><th>Percentage</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>1</td><td>0</td><td>0%</td></tr><tr><td>2</td><td>0</td><td>0%</td></tr><tr><td>3</td><td>2</td><td>33.3%</td></tr><tr><td>4</td><td>4</td><td>66.7%</td></tr><tr><td>5</td><td>0</td><td>0%</td></tr></tbody></table>	Confidence Level	Number of Responses	Percentage	1	0	0%	2	0	0%	3	2	33.3%	4	4	66.7%	5	0	0%
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Gathering a selection of teacher programs alongside student work samples provided evidence of greater detail in the planning process. Teacher programs demonstrated: much clearer steps for each part of the PBL, appropriate learning objectives, detailed success criteria, a greater level of differentiation, specific strategies to support student reflection and planning for different possibilities. Teacher interviews reinforced this evidence with teachers commenting on how it had helped them feel more confident to experiment and how seeing people implementing their ideas made them feel more confident. A number of teachers commented on how they had an improved understanding of different teaching strategies to use during PBL and how much more confident they felt in allowing for student self-direction whilst also providing the level of scaffolding and support necessary.

The planning process for the subsequent Term 4 PBL highlighted the ongoing positive impact of the approach. Teachers continued to be more aware of the different aspects of PBL and demonstrate a deeper understanding of how to develop an authentic PBL project. They planned different features in greater detail, such as the entry event, ongoing feedback, assessment, opportunities to allow student voice and collaboration. In Term 1 2017 there were significant changes in the school leadership team, however teachers ensured the key processes of PBL still took place. Teachers drove the planning process and provided each other with feedback on their draft PBL plans and ensured that the PBL met the standards established during the Term 3 2016 TPL. TPL conducted in Term 1 2017 by teachers can be likened to the approach used during Term 3.

Conclusions and recommendations

The evidence collected following the intervention showed a significant improvement in teacher confidence in a variety of aspects of PBL, higher quality of student work across the school and greater collaboration across classes due to the shared understanding of teachers. Gathering a range of school based evidence, such as lesson observations, coaching records, teacher reflections, teacher programs, student reflections and products, prior to implementing the professional learning enabled the leadership team to plan learning that would meet the needs of the teachers and impact practice across the school. While this evidence gave a good starting point and overview, it was also important to respond to feedback and issues that arose each week. This ensured the changing and diverse needs identified by the whole staff were met and that teachers could authentically implement what they learnt in real-time.

Embedding a range of processes for teacher reflection in the TPL program, including the collection and evaluation of evidence from their own classrooms, structured discussions and using professional readings as prompts, enabled teachers to question their own practice and understanding, learn from and support each other and set goals for future learning. The opportunities for reflection, evaluation and goal-setting were what drove this project and empowered teachers to take ownership of the learning process. This was further enhanced by the culture of trust and collaboration that existed at the school prior to the intervention. Without a high level of trust and a belief in the value of collaboration this sort of project would be very difficult to run effectively and would likely have a reduced impact across the school.

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LEADING LEARNING:

Exploring the Inter-Related Roles of School Leaders



Tania Leach is a Regional Project Officer in the Darling Downs South West Region for Education Queensland and member of the Leadership Research International at the University of Southern Queensland. Tania's role has a strong focus on Educational Research. She has a Master's degree in Curriculum and Pedagogy and is a current Doctoral Candidate with a focus on leadership roles that promote system coherence. She has taught students from Prep to year 12, worked within the roles of Head of Department and Head of School, and is guest lecturer at the University of Southern Queensland. Her current regional and inter-regional projects include: Purposeful pedagogy: improving numeracy outcomes and Collaboration at a System Level - findings, possibilities and future implications.



Susan Paterson has been a Master Teacher working across two schools in the Darling Downs South West Region in Southern Queensland since 2015. She is a qualified high school teacher who commenced her teaching career in Alpha in Central Queensland in 1983. Susan then worked in North Queensland where she spent 20 years teaching in secondary and primary schools. She has spent many years in literacy and pedagogy coaching and behaviour and curriculum support roles. This year she is working closely with the Regional Project Officer, Tania Leach, to implement a consistent pedagogy in numeracy at one school to build the capacity of staff to explicitly teach key concepts. Susan is passionate about improving student outcomes; academic, social and emotional, but also invigorating teachers to improve their pedagogy.

This paper explores the inter-related leadership roles of a Principal, Regional Project Officer, Master Teacher and Teacher Leaders in improving teaching quality in a Queensland State primary school. Throughout the two year case study, various leadership structures were enacted and their impact on school improvement analysed.

The case study is set within Gatton State School, a rural, primary, P-6 state school with a student population of 491 and an ICSEA rating of 929. The town is east of Toowoomba in QLD approximately an hour and a half west of Brisbane. The school draws its enrolment from the town of Gatton plus other Lockyer Valley towns and rural residences. 14.7% of enrolments are from English as an Additional Language Dialect (EALD) backgrounds, 12.8% indigenous and 10.8% of students have a verification.

Research in the area of leadership and school improvement often focuses on the work of Principals as instructional leaders who foster distributed leadership practices (Lewis & Andrews, 2009; Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2001). David Hargreaves (2011), Frank Crowther and Associates (2011), and Peter Senge (1990) are a few of the researchers who have championed models for school improvement. Factors that have contributed to successful implementation models leverage shared understandings and the development of key competencies in partnership with shared accountabilities. Such explanations, however, do little to clarify how the various leadership roles within a school are simultaneously enacted.

LEADING LEARNING: Exploring the Inter-Related Roles of School Leaders

This paper seeks to shed light on how the various leadership layers are enacted, bridging the gap between school improvement strategies and the resulting classroom practice. The study was guided by the following research question: What leadership structures effectively support the implementation of whole school improvement strategies?

- a. How do leaders interpret and enact their roles within each model?
- b. How do teachers perceive the role of leaders within each model?
- c. What contextual considerations are reflected in implementing leadership structures?
- d. What implications emerge from these findings?

A case study has been utilised to emphasise the voices of practitioners, articulating their processes for enacting school improvement practices over the two year period. Two researchers were involved in the writing of this paper: one insider Master Teacher, one insider/outside project officer researcher.

Over the two years of the case study, three distinct distributive leadership structures were enacted.

- Collective leadership through the implementation of multiple pilot studies to evidence contextually appropriate practices
- Collaborative leadership through the implementation of siloed but connected pedagogical improvement strategies
- Co-leading through a whole school pedagogical improvement strategy

In this study, recorded narratives (through semi-structured interviews) of the lived experiences of seven leadership members and 20 teachers, highlighted the key interactions and reflections that occurred within their separate, but interrelated roles. Reflections were continually captured throughout the case study, illuminating the visible leadership changes. By utilising this methodology, the researchers acknowledge that interpretations of data are influenced by personal values and beliefs.

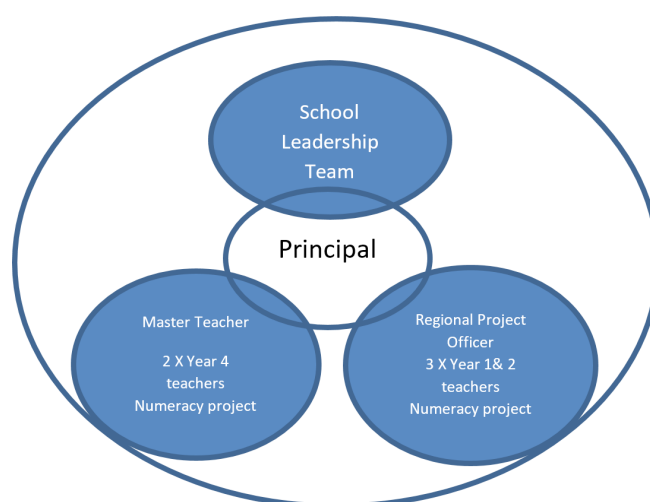
Two filters were applied to the leadership team narratives: 1) context specific distributive leadership processes and 2) consistent pedagogies. These were supplemented with strategy extracts, observations and feedback. A summary of the findings is below, supported by narrative excerpts.

Although each model is structured differently, they all reflected the common distributive leadership characteristics of shared leadership, distributed power and functions and a system approach to school improvement.

Model 1: Collective Leadership

This model was characterised by:

1. A central authority (the Principal) and leadership team, comprising the Principal, deputy, HOSES, STLaN and Behaviour Support. The Master Teacher and Regional Project Officer sat outside of this team.
2. The Principal collaborated with each leader outside of the leadership team to identify the improvement focus and target cohorts.
3. Autonomy was given to the Master Teacher and Regional Project Officer in the implementation model.
4. Each aspect worked independently of each other.



Narrative Excerpt 1

The Master Teacher role was a state initiative based on NAPLAN data to support schools to improve student outcomes. I was a middle leader, a lynch pin between the Principal and staff. After consultation with the Principal to establish the basis of my role within the school, I was allowed autonomy in the implementation of my project. Because of the Principal's leadership style, the lead teachers and I worked collaboratively to plan, develop and implement the rollout of the project, checking in with the Principal when necessary to ensure that he was informed.

While each leadership aspect contributed to school improvement, they worked independently of each other. The leadership team's and school community's knowledge of the Master Teacher and Regional Project Officer roles and implementation strategies was limited to the Principal and those working with them.

When leaders were asked about the benefits of this model they stated that it was effective in implementing contextualised practices because the teachers involved were enthusiastic and continually shared their success with other teachers.

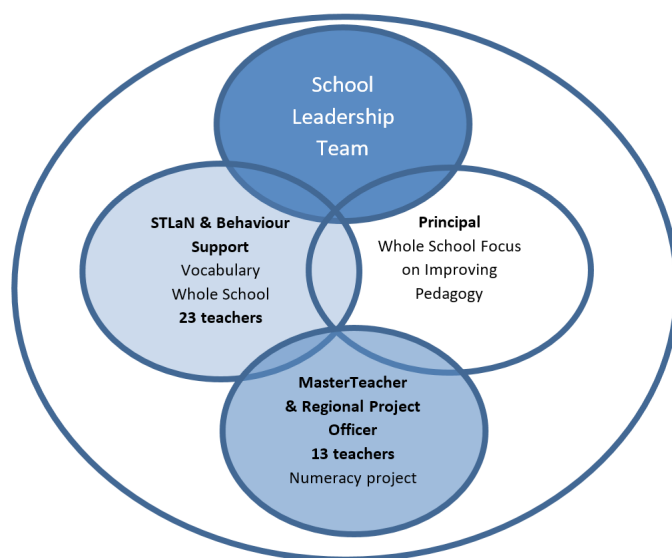
Narrative Excerpt 2

'...when they became so passionate about what they were doing. That was effective because it influenced others into thinking, "Right! If these guys are thinking its good value, then it has to be good value.'

Model 2: Collaborative Leadership

This model was characterised by:

1. Inter-connected leadership teams focussed on a common whole school improvement priority
2. The Principal was connected to each team, however not all teams were directly connected with each other
3. Autonomy was given to each project
4. Co leading and collaboration within each project began to emerge
5. Each aspect formally worked independently of each other however, informally connected over common pedagogies which began to streamline communication



Within the leadership structures the overarching connection of pedagogy was known, however teachers perceived these as competing learning area agendas rather than complementary pedagogies. In addition to this, the multiple projects resulted in an overall lack of clarity for teachers. This was reflected in their inability to identify the school focus. They were also unable to identify the various leadership roles and structures in place beyond knowing the Principal and deputy leadership roles and the projects in which they were involved. This was also evidenced in the State School Review feedback process. The leaders within each project have reflected that the integrity of the implementation and subsequent results were impacted by their inability to provide frequent and targeted support to all teachers involved. As a result the implementation became more rigid and reflective practices diminished.

Narrative Excerpt 3

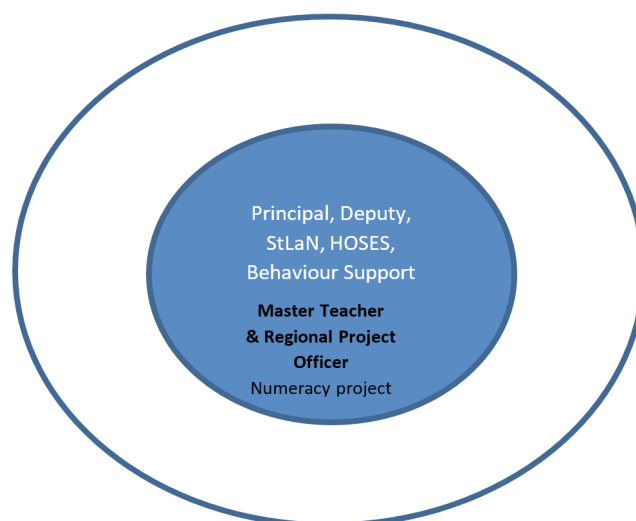
'I just could not physically get around every Teacher every week to support them. There was not enough time in the week!'

This model would not be used again in this context as it was counter-productive to the implementation of a whole school sharp and narrow focus.

Model 3: Co-Leadership

This model was characterised by:

1. A single leadership team focussed on a common whole school improvement priority
2. Clearly defined roles and expectations for co leading
3. Co constructed strategy with common metalanguage
4. Co-learning opportunities
5. Shared accountability
6. Embedded Reflective practices
7. Streamlined communication and support structures.



Narrative Excerpt 4

'We've really examined our roles.... looked at what we were unpacking in the school to have a narrow focus...the Principal and the deputy have come on board in leading that with us and ...we are involved with the Master Teacher as well.'

Narrative Excerpt 5

'In the leadership meetings, we met once a week....being able to be upfront about if we set goals for the last fortnight, and did we get them done? And being answerable to each other "to inform" where we're going...'

This model provided clarity of the school improvement focus for teachers. When interviewed, all teachers identified the whole school focus, leadership support structures and the various leadership roles and responsibilities (provision of professional development, modelling, observation and feedback and development of common resources) with emerging common metalanguage. The leadership team have now identified the implementation of common pedagogies within all classrooms through fortnightly observation and feedback cycles.

The leadership team members acknowledged the importance of frequent formal meetings and stressed the importance of trust within the team, so they could openly communicate their own learning needs, ask clarifying questions and collectively reflect upon, and analyse, the impact of the strategy. This emphasised the role that a positive culture plays within a team and highlights the impact that a cohesive team has when co-leading a whole school improvement strategy.

Narrative Excerpt 6

'There has to be an atmosphere of success, where we all believe there can be improvement in our teaching, which will lead to improvement in student outcomes. It is the atmosphere within this school ...where new teachers walk in and hear teachers talking positively. Even if it has been uncomfortable at times, "the teachers" still believe it is good for them and good for the kids... 'So we'll do it because it works.' 'We are starting to see that where we have been focussing the data is beginning to show and improve.'

Through a process of concept extraction the research team contracted these key points to identify the overarching characteristics for enacting a co- leading distributive leadership model.

Characteristic 1: Co leading through distributive leadership roles required co constructed knowledge and strategy

Narrative Excerpt 7

'Attending an in-service together as a leadership team is definitely co-learning because we've had some moments there where we thought..."We hadn't thought about doing it that way"...and bringing them back to the school as a team "means" we are on the same page.'

Narrative Excerpt 8

'When we began to focus our pedagogy on Instructional Routines, we didn't know what that was, so we learnt it together. We (the leadership team) were learning at the same time as the teachers, sometimes the staff meeting before we delivered it. We're finding out and learning together. So I'm confident that we are all on the same page'

Characteristic 2: Leadership actions and communications were underpinned by a culture of trust

Narrative Excerpt 9

'Trust is important to feel comfortable to share what you're feeling or seeing in an honest and transparent way. Trusting our strengths allows us to work together with purpose'

Characteristic 3: Contextually-relevant practices required embedding formal reflective practice at all levels

Narrative Excerpt 10

'I would never have used Instructional Routines without the frequent support. I now realise that my teaching was quite flowery and needed to be more explicit...this has helped me and I can see the changes in the students.'

The findings of this case study revealed the following:

- 1 The key characteristics essential to the enactment of the co-leading distributive leadership model
- 2 The co-leading model provided a platform to build the collective capability of the leadership team
- 3 Clarity of the school improvement agenda and processes from all key stakeholders
- 4 The emergence of contextualised whole school pedagogy observable in:
 - a. A positive shift in teachers' focus from the delivery of pre-planned lessons to differentiating teaching based on student learning needs
 - b. Consistent pedagogical practices being observed in 100% of classrooms

Conclusions and recommendations

Partnerships between the various leadership levels involve more than explicit roles and responsibilities. Shared ownership, (developed through reflective practice and collaborative inquiry), contributes to effective strategy translation and implementation. In order for this to occur, all leaders must have a thorough understanding of their current capabilities, the school, the staff and student learning needs. In that way, interventions and enhancements can start at various points within a continuum as this provides the type of flexibility and adaptability that allows for shared ownership of the school improvement agenda to be developed within context.

Although a small case study, this research provides insights into the lived experiences of enacting complex change and improvement policy agendas. Future research would benefit from increasing the scope of the case studies to better understand the processes and approaches that best support practitioners to successfully translate policy into practice in their own contexts.

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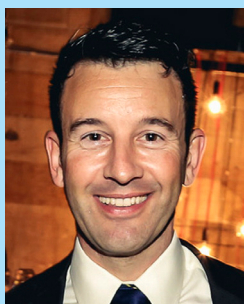
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TRACKING AND VISUALISING STUDENT EFFORT: A Practical Analytics Tool for Student Engagement



Robin Nagy is currently the Dean of Students at Redlands School, Sydney. Robin has been a practising teacher for over twenty years. He has worked for six years at Cranbrook School, Sydney as a Housemaster and Teacher of Mathematics. Robin has also worked internationally as a Mathematics Teacher and Head of Year at Bangkok Patana International School, Thailand and City of London School, UK. Robin also worked in industry as a Firmware Development Engineer. He served on the Executive of the Mathematics Association of New South Wales for several years and has presented at numerous state and national conferences.

Overview of the context and scope of the study

There is an urgent need for our educational system to shift assessment regimes from a narrow, high-stakes focus on grades, to more holistic definitions that value and nurture the qualities that lifelong learners will need. In the world beyond the classroom, dispositional characteristics such as persistence, resilience, self-discipline and effort are increasingly becoming valued as more reliable indicators of success than academic results alone, and this is supported by current research into these 'non-cognitive' character traits.

This case study describes the development and refinement of a (secondary) school-wide 'Student Effort Tracking' project which seeks to quantify and make visible each student's effort over time and its relationship to academic achievement.

The rationale behind a school-wide focus on 'effort', rather than solely on academic achievement, is to improve intrinsic motivation for learning in all students, by explicitly identifying and recognising the behavioural and learning dispositions which promote growth mindsets and lead to academic development and improvement.

This practical analytics tool has been deployed in successive iterations over seven years, in two Sydney secondary schools. There is strong evidence that it has successfully improved student motivation for learning across all cohorts and has led to high quality, data-driven coaching conversations between students and teachers.

One of the ways in which this data is reported to staff and students is using a dynamic bubble-chart to display student progress over time: <https://vimeo.com/168306314>

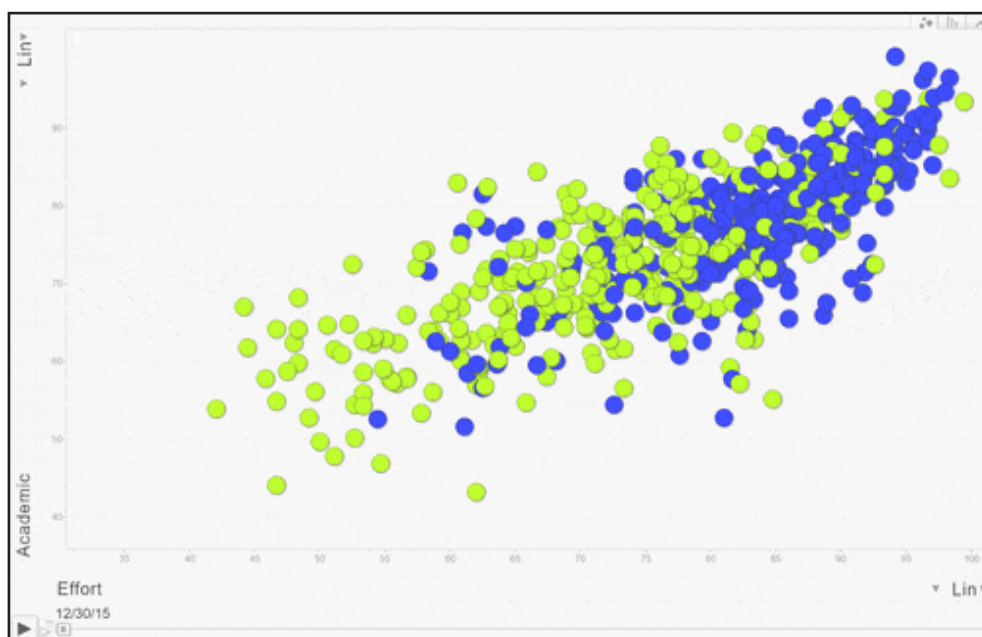


Fig.1 A Still Frame from the Dynamic Bubble-Chart showing Academic Achievement against Effort with boys in green and girls in blue.

Fundamental to ensuring buy-in from all stakeholders, has been agreement of a shared set of expectations and standards for 'effort-grading', including the creation and development of agreed criteria and rubrics. This has been achieved through regular staff and student dialogue and evaluation and refinement of the salient behavioural and learning dispositions which comprise 'student effort'.

Overview of the data collected and analysed

Currently, at the end of each term, student 'effort' is graded by teachers in three criteria, 'Behaviour', 'Diligence' and 'Engagement' using a five point scale and rubric (see Fig.2). This results in a score from 3 to 15 in each subject.

TRACKING AND VISUALISING STUDENT EFFORT: A Practical Analytics Tool for Student Engagement

Effort Tracking Rubric					
	5- Outstanding	4- Very Good	3- Good	2- Fair	1- Unsatisfactory
Behaviour	Classroom Conduct and Attitude, Politeness and Respect, Consideration for the Learning of Others				
	Proactively models positive classroom behaviour and attitude at all times, avoids distraction and shows respect and consideration for others. Is polite and courteous at all times.	Consistently demonstrates good behaviour and attitude conducive to learning and avoids distractions in class.	Usually demonstrates a positive attitude in class and is rarely distracted.	Generally shows a positive attitude in class but is sometimes distracted or inconsiderate of the learning of others.	Rarely exhibits conduct and attitude appropriate for a conducive learning environment.
Diligence	Self-discipline, Self-reflection, Independent Motivation, Persistence, Conscientious Application to Classwork and Homework				
	Demonstrates an excellent approach to all activities in class and at home, presenting work to the best of his/her ability at all times and bringing all required equipment to class. Is independently motivated and disciplined and takes pride in the quality of all work produced, frequently exceeding expectations of conscientiousness and persistence.	Completes all work to a high personal standard in a timely manner and fulfils all expectations for coursework. Brings all equipment to class. Demonstrates a self-disciplined approach to all activities and often independently persists when academically challenged.	Usually completes work to a good personal standard, brings equipment to class and demonstrates self-discipline in application to coursework.	Shows some self-discipline in completing most coursework with a reasonable level of application.	Rarely fulfils expectations with regard to self-discipline, conscientiousness and application to coursework.
Engagement	Classroom Focus, Communication (Verbal and Body Language), Personal Presentation and Punctuality, Participation and Contribution in Groups and Class				
	Consistently demonstrates the highest standards of attention and focus in class, contributing where appropriate to group or classroom forums and/or demonstrating active listening skills at all times. Is always punctual and well-presented.	Actively listens to all teacher explanations and instructions and where appropriate, participates in group and class forums. Is punctual and well-presented.	Usually demonstrates good focus in class, listening to teacher instructions and explanations and appropriately participating in group and class forums. Is usually punctual and well-presented.	Is generally well-focused and on-task in class, participating from time to time in group class forums.	Is rarely focused in class and often off-task.

Fig.2 An example of the Effort Tracking Rubric

One important aspect of entering this data is that the whole class is graded on each criteria in turn, to reduce the influence of grading from one criteria to the next for a particular student and to ensure consistency of application of the rubric to each student in the class. Evidence suggests that when a student is graded on multiple criteria at once, the correlation between criteria is much higher. For this reason, effort grading is kept quite separate from academic achievement input.

An overall 'Effort Score' is then created by averaging all these subject grades and scaling to yield a number from 20 to 100. This 'Effort Score' is then tracked against the student's academic achievement from term to term, and presented in the dynamic bubble chart, set (anonymously) against the background of all other students. Importantly, students also grade their own effort using the same approach (without seeing their teachers' grading) and their 'Effort Score' can then be compared to that of their teachers.

Following publication of these effort grades, at the start of each term, teachers have targeted student-led coaching conversations with all students based on their effort scores from the previous term, and students use the 'bubble-chart' and quantitative subject-specific information to set goals for the term ahead within the context of 'Effort'.

Although this rubric continues to be discussed and refined, it is often in the analysis of teacher-student assessment discrepancy that shared expectations are re-aligned. Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that the precise syntax of the rubric has little effect on the distribution of grades and that both teachers and students adopt a 'global impression' approach to their assessment. Nevertheless, the ongoing development of the rubric provides an important process for articulating a set of shared standards and expectations surrounding the learning environment.

Overview of the theoretical, research or methodological approach

The theory and development of this project are set out extensively in the following peer-reviewed paper which was published in the Journal of Learning Analytics Special Section on Learning Analytics for 21st Century Competencies in September 2016:

<https://learning-analytics.info/journals/index.php/JLA/article/view/4954/5621> (Nagy, 2016).

Schools seek to maximise the best possible academic outcomes for their students, but these are usually determined systemically, through assessment via high-stakes summative testing. However, a results-driven success-focus can paradoxically lead to a decline in achievement for some students and a widening of the gap between higher and lower achieving students; this is due to the detrimental effect on student wellbeing and intrinsic motivation for learning (McDonald, 2001; Harlen & Deakin Crick, 2003). Students who lack innate 'academic buoyancy' (Martin, 2010) see their lack of success in academic assessment as evidence to support a fixed mindset; that diligence has no effect on 'smartness' and they lose confidence in their own capacity to learn (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Harlen & Deakin Crick, 2003).

The three criteria of Behaviour, Diligence and Engagement find resonance with recent research suggesting a tripartite taxonomy of character (Park et al, 2017); respectively intrapersonal, intellectual and interpersonal traits, although there is a degree of fluidity and overlap, particularly with the first and third of these factors.

Outcomes of the approach

Over the past 12 months, every cohort has seen an improvement in average Effort grades (see Fig.3) and there is considerable evidence to suggest that the process is making a positive difference to student motivation for learning (see Figs.4 and 5).

Moreover, on several occasions, a dramatic decline in a particular student's effort score has highlighted (sometimes previously unknown) pastoral issues and allowed timely interventions to occur. Comparison of student and teacher grading can often reveal students with perfectionist tendencies as well as those who lack an objective sense of their own character. In these cases, appropriate interventions and targeted coaching conversations can be tailored to suit individual students' needs.

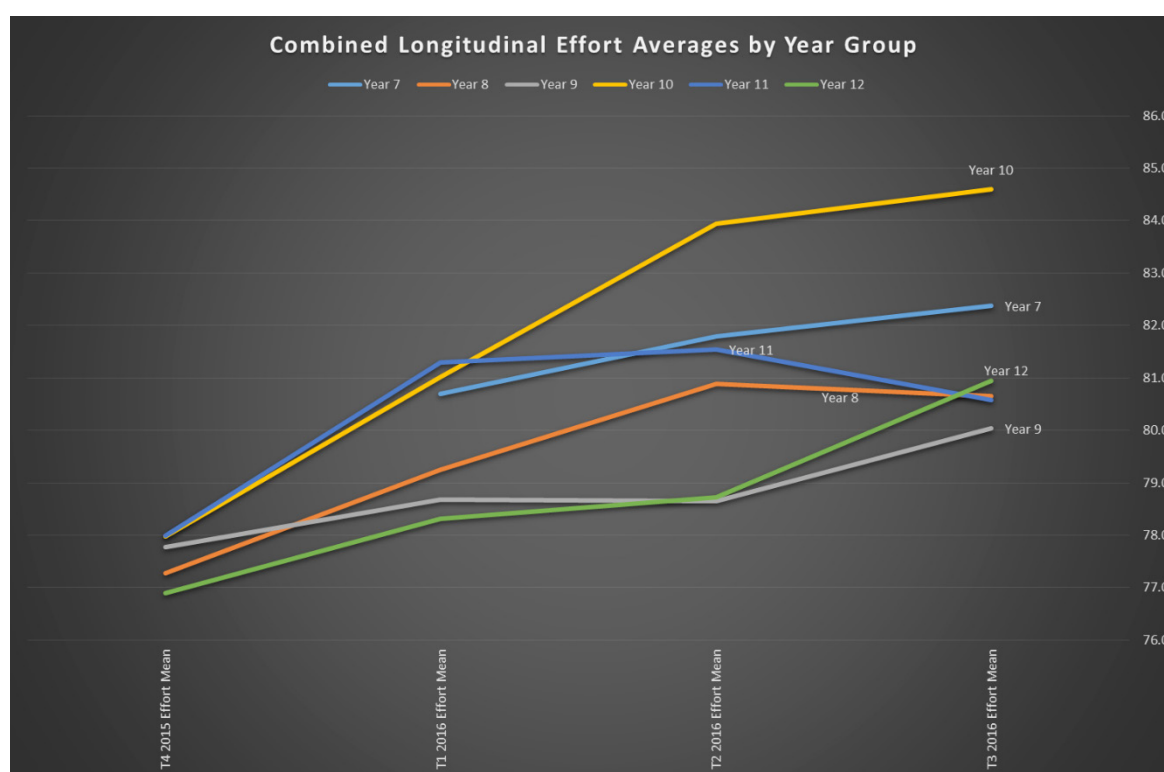


Fig.3. Graph showing average effort score improving in all cohorts over a year

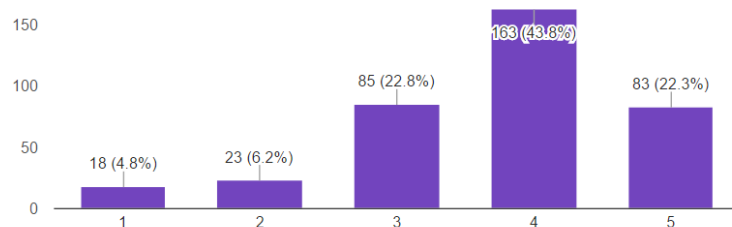
There have been interesting indications that further analysis of boys' and girls' effort grading may yield useful information which could further inform teachers' practices. For instance, in all cohorts, the discrepancy between (teacher assessed) boys' and girls' effort scores is significantly greater than the discrepancy between their respective academic achievement scores. This would suggest that perhaps teachers' classroom expectations are naturally biased towards female behavioural and learning dispositions. Alternatively, it may suggest that girls are more willing to identify and adhere to teacher expectations and/or are more visible in doing so. Reflecting on whether or not our shared expectations of classroom behaviour, diligence and engagement are equally beneficial for both boys' and girls' learning is one important consequence of this analysis.

By focusing on the processes rather than the outcomes of learning, the school's 'success-focus' can be intentionally shifted towards these more nurturing and developmental dispositions under the umbrella term 'Effort'. In this way, all students can see a more immediate indication of 'success' by monitoring progress in their 'Effort Grades'. This promotes the adoption of a growth mindset when viewed in the context of the dynamic bubble chart, where students have visual reinforcement of the positive, but delayed, correlation between effort and academic achievement. In addition, student intrinsic motivation is fostered with a positive effect not only on academic achievement and student wellbeing, but on lifelong-learning traits and character development.

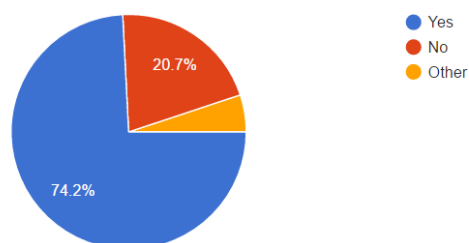
TRACKING AND VISUALISING STUDENT EFFORT: A Practical Analytics Tool for Student Engagement

How motivated do you feel to improve (or maintain) your Effort grades this term?

(372 responses)



Are you happy to continue to grade your own effort each term? (372 responses)



Do you want to continue to receive termly Effort grades from your teachers each term?

(372 responses)

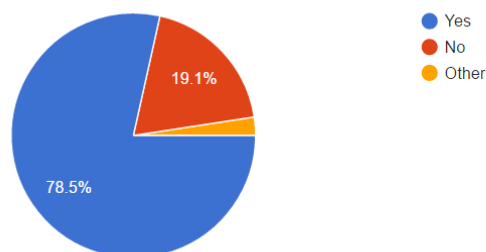
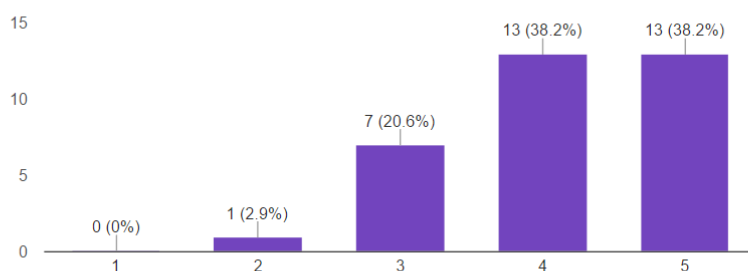


Fig.4 Results of a recent Student Survey on Effort Tracking, showing an overwhelmingly positive response to the motivational aspects of effort grading.

TRACKING AND VISUALISING STUDENT EFFORT: A Practical Analytics Tool for Student Engagement

How valuable do you feel these one-on-one conversations are for students?

(34 responses)



Do you support conducting these one-on-one conversations at the beginning of each term?

(34 responses)

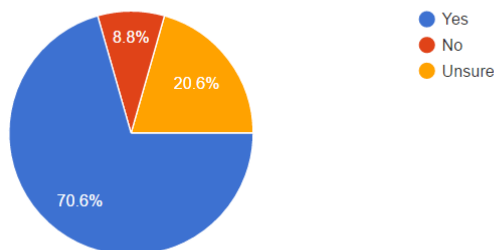


Fig.5 Results of a recent Staff Survey on Effort Tracking, showing a strongly positive response to the usefulness of termly one-on-one coaching conversations.

Some student comments from a recent feedback survey include:

- The effort tracking project is a really good way for students to understand where they are in the year in terms of effort. It also is an efficient way to know what your teachers think. [Year 8 girl]
- I feel like the effort tracking is great as it shows you how far you have come and can serve as either a reward (which feels great) or a reminder to focus and concentrate more in school. [Year 8 boy]
- It gives me confidence and reassurance to hear from my teachers and make sure I understand how to improve and be on the same page with the teacher. [Year 9 girl]
- I believe that the effort tracking project is very useful and allows for me to set goals and improve on my grades. [Year 9 boy]
- I think it's important to recognise that effort and success are often closely linked so I think effort tracking is valuable. [Year 10 girl]
- It has given me the ability to reflect on my efforts during the school year. I think that the results make you think about changing your attitude to learning. [Year 10 boy]
- Effort tracking puts into perspective how hard I try in class and makes me realise I can do even better. [Year 11 girl]
- Effort Tracking is a great way to see how I am improving over the year and has helped me improve my effort and overall grading. [Year 11 boy]
- I think the project encourages me to maintain energy and engagement in my lessons, as it is nice to be recognised for the work I put in. [Year 12 girl]
- I feel like it's a great tool which is helpful for reflecting how hard you're working regardless of your actual results. It's also interesting / very important to see the disparity between how you think you're going versus how your teachers view your efforts. [Year 12 girl]
- It shows the direct correlation between effort and results. [Year 12 boy]

Some staff comments from a recent feedback survey include:

- It is great in the Senior Study context because you can initiate conversations about their effort and attitude in the library that are positive and constructive. It leads them to examine their attitude and can lead to an increased effort and a positive improvement with at-risk students. It is also affirming for the hard workers and allows conversations re: clever use of time and resources. In short it is helpful across the whole spectrum. It lets them seem you 'notice' them in a positive way. [Teacher/Librarian]
- I think effort tracking is important as it acknowledges those students who try very hard, however, do not achieve a high academic result. [Teacher/ Year 10 Pastoral Tutor]
- These interviews were particularly helpful in bonding with the tutor class, and for students to see my value in their school lives for the upcoming year. [Teacher/Year 12 Pastoral Tutor]
- I think this is an excellent initiative, it is a worthwhile tool that has been embraced. [Teacher]

Conclusions and recommendations

Research indicates that increasing testing does not raise academic standards and promotes an extrinsic rather than intrinsic motivation for learning. Rather than nurturing a joy of lifelong learning, this 'results-driven focus' emphasises distinct ability-divisions which promotes 'fixed-mindsets' in students, teachers and parents. The result is to create an academic climate where failure is seen as a reinforcement of inability, rather than a challenge to be overcome, and one in which students' anxiety levels increase, often with a detrimental effect on their performance and wellbeing.

By comparing students with each other based on their effort, rather than their achievement alone, we subtly shift the systemic 'success-focus' onto qualities which promote a growth-mindset in all students and develop important 'non-cognitive' character traits such as persistence and resilience. The engagement and professional development of teachers is critical to embedding and sustaining a project of this sort.

This case-study shows that, although challenging, evaluating and quantifying student effort is possible, and that it is in the dynamic tracking processes and conversations surrounding this formative form of assessment, where many of the main benefits are to be found, rather than in the momentary snapshots and finite, summative effort scores themselves.

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SCHOOL-WIDE APPLICATION OF ACTION LEARNING:

Teacher-driven learning, for improved student engagement and learning outcomes



Patrick Flanagan is a teacher at Whalan Public School. He is passionate about teaching students with intellectual disabilities to ensure they have access to quality curriculum. His interest in future-focused classrooms and the development of expert learner skills for his students led to his in-class research project.



Helen Polios is currently deputy principal at Whalan Public School. She has 27 years' experience as a primary school teacher and school leader. She has taught and led teams of teachers in a number of metropolitan schools in Sydney, NSW. Over the last eight years, she has led the creation of a strong professional community, through the use of the school-wide action learning model. Teachers at the school are a diverse group of enthusiastic educators, who are committed to improvement through collaborative practices.



Lalyne Smith is a teacher at Whalan Public School. She is in her second year of teaching. She is passionate about teaching children and applying her theoretical knowledge into effective classroom practice. Lalyne's in-class research project was developed in response to one of her Performance and Development Plan goals to develop her capacity to effectively teach reading.



Ana Talde is a teacher at Whalan Public School. He has been teaching young children for three years. Her interest in developing independent writers who set goals and reflect on their writing led to her in-class research project. Ana used a bump up wall for writing and the school's expert learner framework to support her young writers.



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School Context

Whalan Public School is a P-6, NSW government school located within the metropolitan area of Sydney. The school's student body comprises 371 students, of whom 21% are Aboriginal and 32% are students who speak English as an Additional Language/Dialect (EAL/D). The school also houses a two-unit preschool and four support classes for students with intellectual disabilities. The school has an Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) of 850, which, when compared to the national average of 1000, demonstrates the level of educational disadvantage that these students come to school with (ACARA, 2015). As a result of these complex issues facing the school on a daily basis, the school has made the professional learning of its teachers a high priority since 2004.

In 2004, Whalan Public School was a very complex environment. The school had had a long history of: poor academic results in the Basic Skills Test (now NAPLAN), ongoing social and behavioural issues, punitive sanctions, a high rate of student suspensions, a culture of low teacher morale and of teachers trying to survive each day (Flick, 2011). The Literacy Block was identified as being a specific time in which teachers struggled with student behaviour (Flick, 2011). These issues, along with a change in leadership within the school, led to a leading-literacy expert being invited to work as academic partner to the school. At this time the school took an approach to teacher professional development, which reflected the traditional principles of Action Learning and was supported by the Australian Government Quality Teaching Program (AGQTP), Quality Teaching Action Learning (QTAL) initiative. A small volunteer group of teachers worked with the academic partner in order to help improve student engagement during the Literacy Block (Flick, 2011). Promising findings occurred as a result of this more traditional Action Learning project, as improved teacher knowledge resulted in increased student academic outcomes (Flick, 2011). However because of the specific model implemented, only a small number of teachers benefitted from the learning that resulted from this program, and when those teachers who were involved left the school to take up promotions in other schools, the impetus created by the project went with them (Flick, 2011).

Therefore in 2009, the new incoming leadership questioned whether or not Action Learning could be stretched to include the whole school's staff. The aim of this Whole School Action Learning Project (WSALP) was to bring about a change in the school ethos through long-term engagement in whole school professional development. In an evaluation of this program, Flick (2011) found that the Action Learning process resulted in: quality input from the academic partner being received by the teachers, time to engage in professional dialogue with colleagues, and that this discussion supported and promoted teachers to implement change in pedagogy within their classrooms. She also noted how the modification and stretching of Action Learning to the whole school enabled the development of: positive collegial relationships among the whole teaching and support staff, the development of a common language and understanding amongst the whole school's staff, and the construction of shared vision of literacy and learning between the staff. Flick (2011) also discovered that the strengths of the WSALP were: the appropriately qualified academic partner, the trust established between the academic partner and the school executive, opportunities for collaboration between staff, the quality leadership of the school, and opportunities to celebrate success, which took the form of presenting their learning at national conferences. Overall she found that the WSALP resulted in the professional development of the whole staff at the school (Flick, 2011).



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Since 2011, Whalan Public School has continued to stretch and modify Action Learning as a platform for teacher professional development. At the end of 2012, the whole school's staff were involved in a 12 week Action Learning project which focused on developing teachers' knowledge and skills of writing. This period of time marks a subtle change in the use of Action Learning at the school as the executive staff began taking more responsibility for their own professional development. The academic partner reflects on how during this time his role as academic partner changed, in that instead of him being the one identifying the issues that the Action Learning project would address and designing the tasks and workshops, the executive staff began to take responsibility for the form and focus of the Action Learning projects, while he helped them stay true to the principles of Action Learning (Academic Partner, personal comms, 2016). Whalan Public School continues to stretch, modify and adapt the principles of Action Learning as a platform for teacher professional development and learning.

Theoretical Approach

Action Learning (Revans, 1982) is an approach to professional development used commonly within schools. It is a process by which school improvement can occur as they build their capacity to improve their practice (Dinham, Abusson & Brady, 2008; Ewing et al., 2009). Ewing et al., (2009, p.5) describes how Action Learning is 'based on the belief that professionals working together have the ability to ask meaningful and searching questions about their own practice and formulate answers to those questions'. Action Learning, as opposed to Action Research, focuses on the learning that occurs as teachers ask these meaningful and searching questions, research their own practices and reflect on how their practices may be improved. Action Learning involves teams of teachers (usually 6-8) participating in ongoing cycles of action, review, planning and action (Ewing et al., 2009; Dick, 1997). Experiential learning underpins the learning component of Action Learning, both of which are Constructivist in nature (Academic Partner, personal comms, 2016).



SCHOOL-WIDE APPLICATION OF ACTION LEARNING:

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Overview of Case Study

Initially and like many other schools, Action Learning was implemented at Whalan Public School on a small scale and with a small group of teachers (see Beveridge, 2010; Beveridge & Hinde, 2009; Kilpatrick & Loughland, 2012; Warhurst et al., 2010). However, since this time, and uniquely to Whalan Public School, the use of Action Learning has been stretched and modified to include the whole school's staff. In 2016, 23 Action Learning projects were undertaken by the classroom, support and executive staff.

Table 1 – A sample of the Action Learning projects undertaken in 2016.

Title	Author	Position
Ownership, Leadership and Autonomy	Gillian Kliese	5/6 classroom teacher
Establishing a 21 st Century Learning Environment	Patrick Flanagan	Support unit teacher
Enhancing Social and Emotional Awareness of Students	Ben Ross	2/3 classroom teacher
Student-led Learning Portfolios	Helen Polios	Deputy Principal
Reflective Writers	Ana Talde	Year 1 teacher
Improving Reading Strategies in Year 1	Tracie Weller	Year 1 teacher
Using ICT in Kindergarten	Jenny Keeghan	Kindergarten teacher
Does it Look Right? Sound Right? Make Sense?	Lalynne Smith	1/2 classroom teacher
Shoulder-Shoulder	Michelle Van Vliet	Stage team leader
Using Data to Improve Teaching Practice	Sam Gillard	Instructional leader

These Action Learning programs occurred over one semester, in which the staff were provided with four half-day sessions to meet with their team - an across-stage Professional Learning Community (PLC). During their time together the teachers were able to: discuss their individual project, reflect on their progress, ask questions, gain feedback and further develop their Action Learning project. Each PLC was given autonomy in deciding the process that they would undertake in order to complete their Action Learning projects. This process often involved: collaborative discussion amongst teachers, the reading of relevant literature, the sharing of student work samples, the giving and receiving of feedback about their projects, reflecting on their progress, and documenting evidence of teacher and student learning. At the end of 2016, all 23 individual Action Learning projects were written up, bound together and presented to staff as a record of their achievements.

SCHOOL-WIDE APPLICATION OF ACTION LEARNING:

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Findings

Overall findings across the 23 projects included: improved teacher professional learning, changes in classroom practice and improvement in student outcomes.

Table 2 – A Sample of the Findings

Title	Teacher Learning	Changes in Classroom Practice	Improved Student Outcomes
<p>Reflective Writers</p> <p>Ana Talde</p>	<p><i>What makes an expert learner?</i> Whalan Public School Staff (Professional Learning)</p> <p><i>Walks and Talks data</i></p> <p><i>Self-efficacy, motivation and performance by Dale E. Schunk.</i></p> <p><i>Reflection: A Key Component to Critical Thinking by Colley, Bilics & Lerch.</i></p> <p><i>Critical Reflection: What Do We Really Mean? By P. Lucas.</i></p>	<p><i>I have also introduced peer evaluations where students share their writing to a friend and they give feedback using the strategy 'two stars and a wish'.</i></p> <p><i>I would like to implement the writing process and apply new strategies for reviewing and editing.</i></p> <p><i>I will also continue to use the writing and reading program implemented by the instructional leader.</i></p>	<p><i>Students are reflecting on their writing by checking their writing against the writing process chart and the success criteria.</i></p> <p><i>Most students are successfully achieving their targets and goals, which have developed confidence and high self-efficacy in their writing.</i></p> <p><i>During this semester there was a 23% increase in the number of students in Cluster 6, a 19% increase in the students in Cluster 7 and a 17% decrease in the number of students in Cluster 4.</i></p>
<p>Student-Led Learning Portfolios</p> <p>Helen Polios</p>	<p><i>My inexperience with online environments caused some initial frustrations. With perseverance, I was able to create a small class and begin learning how to add student work to the app.</i></p> <p><i>I have also learnt the importance of setting up a timeline with checkpoints along the way so that both the teacher and I can ensure we are on target to achieve the goal.</i></p>	<p><i>The classroom teacher now has embedded structures to support students in leading their parent-teacher interview with the use of a learning portfolio.</i></p> <p><i>Students now participate in regular writing conferences with the teacher and their peers and use their individual writing folder to annotate samples, discuss them with the teacher/peers and set writing goals.</i></p> <p><i>The learning intention and success criteria are visible at all times.</i></p>	<p><i>Students are using the language of learning intentions and success criteria when talking with the teacher and when talking to each other.</i></p> <p><i>In the area of writing, students are setting goals and annotating their writing samples with the use of grade based 'I can...' statements.</i></p> <p><i>Students set individual writing goals based on areas they need to develop in writing, identified during writing conferences when discussing annotated samples.</i></p>

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Does it Look Right? Sound Right? Make Sense? Lalynne Smith	<p><i>I researched modelled reading strategies and effective ways to decode unfamiliar words and make meaning in texts.</i></p> <p><i>I discovered that many of my students were only relying on visual information and initial sounds.</i></p> <p><i>I looked into Marie Clay's work and decided to implement teacher prompting using the four types of information in print.</i></p>	<p><i>I observed two guided reading lessons, taking notes. I analysed the information I gathered from these observations and implemented in into my daily guided reading sessions.</i></p> <p><i>Upon reading all the literature, I incorporated the four types of information in print into my daily modelled reading group time.</i></p> <p><i>I was trying to implement too many reading strategies at once. I found it really helpful to choose one strategy and set goals for my students.</i></p>	<p><i>I have also found that students are now self-correcting and are able to decode words independently after implementing the four types of information in print.</i></p> <p><i>Students are beginning to ask themselves, 'does that sound right, make sense and look right' when reading rather than appealing to the teacher.</i></p> <p><i>During this semester there was a 28% increase in the number of students in Cluster 6 and a 37% decrease in the number of students in Cluster 4.</i></p>
Establishing a 21 st Century Learning Environment Patrick Flanagan	<p>Teach Like a Pirate by Dave Burgess</p> <p>World Class Learners by Yong Zhao</p> <p>Transforming Our Learners Experience: Future Focused Learning Design – Cargill's Classroom Blog</p>	<p><i>The learning spaces are much more user friendly in terms of collaboration.</i></p> <p><i>The inclusion of collaborative skills (linked to the expert learner framework) in the daily success criteria, are a reminder of exactly what is required of the students.</i></p>	<p><i>Students can access the learning intentions and success criteria.</i></p> <p><i>Students are beginning to appreciate that each member of the group has something to offer.</i></p> <p><i>Students are engaged in what they are learning and want to achieve success.</i></p>

Lessons Learnt

The results suggest that while the aim and purpose of all professional development should be improved student learning, there are certain pre-requisites that need to be met before student learning can be significantly improve. The findings from Whalan suggest a three-stage process comprising: changes in teacher learning, changes in classroom practice and changes in student outcomes. Furthermore, it can be concluded that these changes can only occur given sufficient time (Academic Partner, personal comms. 2017).



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ACTION LEARNING:

Innovation and improvement through collaborative professional learning



Kirstine Gonano is currently Deputy Principal at Campbelltown Performing Arts High School. She has been a passionate educator for 21 years. She is committed to empowering students as active participants in their learning. Using project-based learning, she has developed strong partnerships with the local community, enabling students to innovate and create new solutions to local problems. Kirstine has led teams of teachers to explore classroom practice and use evidence-based research to create new approaches to teaching and learning. Her work has been recognised in a number of forums including the award of ACEL's NSW Educational Leadership in 2016.



Stacey Quince is the Principal at Campbelltown Performing Arts High School. She is passionate about improving student learning outcomes through quality teacher professional learning and empowering students as active participants in the learning process. She has collaboratively implemented practitioner research in a range of areas including student engagement, assessment, and technology-based learning. Stacey has researched new and emerging pedagogies and professional learning as the recipient of a NSW Premier's Teacher Scholarship and NSW Department of Education Mary Armstrong Leadership Fellowship. Stacey is the recipient of ACEL's NSW Educational Award and AITSL's Australian Award for Excellence in Teacher Leadership.

Context and overview

Located in South-Western Sydney, Campbelltown Performing Arts High School (CPAHS) has an enrolment of 1100 students from Years 7-12. Students are drawn from the Campbelltown area and beyond, either as local area students (50%) or through an audition process into the performing arts disciplines of dance, drama, music (instrumental and vocal) or circus arts (50%). The student body represents a diverse range of cultural backgrounds with approximately 35% of students coming from a language background other than English across 56 language groups. The school enjoys a strong focus on Aboriginal education and culture, with 112 Aboriginal students supported through leadership and partnership programs.

CPAHS has implemented a highly successful whole school innovation and improvement agenda through the strategic and comprehensive implementation of action learning (AL) projects over 10 years. This process began in 2006, with two teams investigating how the implementation of identified reading strategies within cross-curriculum units of work impacted on students' reading skills. The success of this iteration led to subsequent action learning projects on other targeted areas for improvement including Aboriginal education, formative assessment, the use of technology and the impact of flexible spaces on learning outcomes.



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This approach to professional learning, developed in collaboration with academic partners from Western Sydney University, has built a strong culture of teachers as ‘practitioner-researchers’ at a whole school level. CPAHS has consistently used action learning to build teachers’ understanding and capacity across more than 25 action learning projects on a range of new and emerging pedagogies to deepen student engagement and improve learning outcomes for students. Most recently, this includes action learning projects on peer and self-assessment, personalised learning, project-based learning and co-created learning. All projects are informed by extensive professional learning for participating teachers and are underpinned by rigorous and comprehensive evaluation plans.

CPAHS was awarded the 2015 NSW Department of Education Secretary’s School Achievement Award in recognition of the success of this model.

Research-informed practice

Action learning is a model of collaborative professional learning that is based on the belief that, when teachers are provided with the opportunity and structures to share their expertise and critically reflect on their practice, they can identify and resolve significant learning challenges. Action learning is an iterative approach to professional learning that values teachers as both a source of knowledge and users of knowledge to generate new ideas and practices. The model of action learning implemented at CPAHS has drawn from a range of sources¹ and been refined each year following feedback from participants.

Leaders of action learning teams at CPAHS have drawn from Lingard and Renshaw’s assertion that teachers must take on a ‘researcherly disposition’ to improve their practice and that this is further strengthened when ‘research-informed’ teachers collaborate with researchers². Hence, the action learning model at CPAHS has been refined for over 10 years in collaboration with academic partners from Western Sydney University (WSU), most notably, Professor Wayne Sawyer. The capacity of teachers to engage in action learning at CPAHS has been strengthened through professional learning, co-developed and delivered by school leaders and tertiary-based researchers.

¹ Aubusson, P., Ewing, R. and Hoban, G. (2009) *Action Learning in Schools: Reframing Teachers’ Professional Learning and Development*. London: Routledge Education.

Brady, L., Aubusson, P. & Dinham, S. (2006). *Action learning for school improvement. Educational Practice and Theory*, 28 (2), pp. 27-39.

Dinham, S. (2016) *Leading Learning and Teaching*. Camberwell, Victoria: ACER Press.

² Lingard, B. & Renshaw, P. (2009) “Teaching as a research-informed and research-informing profession” In A. Campbell and S. Groundwater-Smith (eds), *Connecting inquiry and professional learning*. London: Routledge, pp. 26-39.



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A consistent focus on student engagement within and across action learning projects at CPAHS has been influenced by Munns, Sawyer and Cole's *Teachers for a Fair Go*³, an action research project on student engagement among low SES primary school students in Sydney's South West. Aligned with the project is Woodward and Munns' REAL framework⁴ which offers a three-dimensional model of reflection questions for students to consider and share their thoughts and feelings about their learning at cognitive, affective and operative levels. The leadership team at CPAHS have worked in collaboration with WSU academics to develop a teacher reflection tool using the REAL framework to gain insight into teachers' engagement, progress and challenges throughout the implementation of each project. These ongoing teacher reflections provide insight into both individual teachers' perceptions as each project progresses as well as insight into teachers' perceptions within and across action learning projects.

Earl and Timperley's work on evaluative thinking for successful innovation in education⁵ has also been a key influence on the evaluation approach used in every action learning project at CPAHS, particularly over the past three years. This approach sees action learning teams collecting data and analysing evidence throughout implementation and responding to the 'twists and turns' of the innovation as it unfolds. The school leadership team has worked closely with WSU academics to develop a set of evaluation tools based on the principles of evaluative thinking which includes focus groups, surveys, work sample analysis, teacher reflections, photo voice and photo elicitation, interviews and video analysis. Teams select evaluation tools that best suit the focus of their project and draw from other data sources including pre/post-tests and external data.

Methodology

Action learning teams at CPAHS consist of between six to eight participants, including two leaders. Participation is voluntary with teachers selecting an area of professional interest for their research. Approximately 75% of the current staff has participated in action learning projects and there are many teachers who elect to participate in action learning projects every year. Teams are led by pairs of teachers, often consisting of an executive teacher (head teacher or deputy principal) and an experienced classroom teacher. Each project cycle lasts for one school year, with teams typically planning in Term 1, implementing in Terms 2 - 3 and finalising evaluation and reporting in Term 4.

Professional learning and support is provided to team leaders by the principal and academic partners and all participants are released for four half days to work on key elements of the project throughout the year, in addition to meeting regularly for planning, to discuss evidence and to provide feedback to each other. As part of this process, teams are provided with scaffolds and support material to formulate research questions, plan for implementation, develop an evaluation framework, identify appropriate evaluation tools and write a report. They are also provided with timeframes and an online space for curation of material.

³ Munns, G., Sawyer, W. Cole, B. & Fair Go Team (2013) *Exemplary Teachers of Students in Poverty*. London: Routledge

⁴ Munns, G., & Woodward, H. (2006). "Student engagement and student self-assessment: the REAL framework". *Assessment in education: principles, policy & practice*. Retrieved 20 January 2017, from <http://electronicportfolios.org/academy/intro/schedule/lesson-4/RESEARCH-StudentEngagementandself-assessmenttheREALframework.pdf>

⁵ Earl, L. and H. Timperley (2015), "Evaluative thinking for successful educational innovation", OECD Education Working Papers. No. 122., OECD Publishing, Paris.



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Where teams are investigating areas previously explored by other teams, they build on previous iterations of action learning by accessing previous reporting findings and tools. Each team also draws on research relevant to the field of their project. The finding of action learning projects are shared with all teachers via whole school professional learning, including TeachMeet style presentations, and the reports are available for all staff. Many of the school's common practices, including the extensive use of peer and self-assessment, project-based learning, and the use of flexible learning spaces, have been adopted and scaled following successful action learning projects.

Impact of action learning

During initial planning, teams identify data sources that are fit for purpose, before triangulating them and discussing their 'trustworthiness' as part of the evaluation and reporting process throughout implementation. Hence, the qualitative and quantitative data collected and analysed is different for each action learning project. Every project, however, uses teacher REAL framework reflections to gather consistent data across teams on teachers' perceptions regarding the impact of action learning on their own learning.

Typical responses from teachers' REAL framework reflections include:

'Working as a team member, I feel less pressure; I know that different people will bring different things to the mix and I don't feel solely responsible for the success of the project. It makes me more likely to take risks as I am able to compare my outcomes with other team members and learn from these experiences. When certain aspects of the project haven't worked as planned I discussed with other members of the team the frustrations they had faced; this helped me know that I wasn't the only one facing these issues and we were able to share different ways we could overcome them.'

'The clinics set up in the project provided valuable feedback and helped clarify questions to find solutions to problems encountered throughout the project.'

'I do feel that I was given permission to make mistakes and that was a positive, liberating experience. Working within the AL team has provided me with support and the opportunity to discuss ideas prior to potentially implementing them.'

'I have grown as a teacher as this process has encouraged me to revisit and acknowledge the importance of home school connections. If I can concentrate on promoting these pathways in the future I believe my teaching will be more effective and ultimately the students will experience greater success.'

'I saw the students change from being disinterested and believing they weren't good at anything to becoming engaged and feeling better about themselves in the classroom.'



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Outcomes of action learning at CPAHS

Analysis of action learning reports and the evidence sets within indicate that, at a whole school level, action learning at CPAHS has:

- Fostered a culture of innovation and evidence-informed practice;
- Improved teacher understanding of how to plan, implement, reflect upon and evaluate their teaching practice;
- Broadened teacher understanding of how to effectively implement a range of new and emerging pedagogies;
- Increased teacher collaboration through cross-curriculum teams;
- Built leadership density through a strategic approach to the leadership of teams;
- Enhanced student agency through personalisation, authentic and sustained connections to community and co-created learning;
- Increased student engagement across years and subjects;
- Improved student learning outcomes in a range of areas.

Conclusions and recommendations

The implementation of action learning has been a highly effective and transformative approach to teacher professional learning at CPAHS and beyond. This model has provided teachers with the processes, time and space to continually improve practice and to explore new and emerging pedagogies. Action learning projects have supported teachers to engage in collaborative research, directly related to the work of teaching within their school context, impacting significantly on both teacher and student knowledge and skills. There is a need to continue to build the capacity of teachers to use a range of data sources for evaluation purposes, including strengthened understanding of how to engage in logic modelling during planning and implementation phases.

The codification of the action learning process and evaluation tools at CPAHS has recently supported 28 other schools to successfully implement action learning projects to address contextual learning challenges, indicating a potential for further diffusion and scaling across the profession.

DISTRIBUTIVE LEADERSHIP:

Creating teacher leaders, developing collective efficacy and enhancing community voice



Karena Aczel is an experienced primary school educator. She has a passion for coupling knowledge of school context and staff experiences with a deep understanding of student needs to implement evidence-based teaching and learning experiences. Currently working in a school leadership role, Karena has a deep knowledge of curriculum, strengthened through engaging in research and data and she draws upon this in her collaborative pedagogical approach. Developing the process of inquiry in future leaders, and supporting implementation and review of a range of unique whole-school initiatives is integral to her role.



Rachel Roebuck is Master Teacher at Bribie Island State School. With more than 20 years' experience as a primary school educator, she has held many positions within Education Qld including class teacher, Reading Recovery teacher, learning support teacher, literacy/pedagogy coach et al. Rachel is dedicated to improving student outcomes and teacher effectiveness through evidence-based best practice, collaboration and professional learning.



Estelle Wolstencroft is a teacher at Bribie Island State School. She currently teaches Year 4 and co-leads the implementation of a growth mindset initiative at the school. Estelle's commitment to improving student outcomes and continual professional learning has led to her emerging as a valued teacher leader at BISS. Collaboration with colleagues is a strength of her practice.



DISTRIBUTIVE LEADERSHIP:

Creating teacher leaders, developing collective efficacy and enhancing community voice

Overview of the context and scope of the study

Bribie Island State School has been providing a quality education to children on Bribie Island since 1924. Within a stone's throw of the beautiful Pumicestone Passage, Bribie Island State School is situated approximately 40 minutes north of Brisbane. The school has a current enrolment of 665 and an ICSEA rating of 935.

The school vision 'An Enriched Education for All' is highlighted in a range of curricula and extra curricula activities on offer. The School Motto: COURAGE, GROWTH, ACHIEVEMENT aims to foster a culture framed by individual resilience and success (for students and staff). Extra curricula learning opportunities for students include; Science Club, Instrumental Music, Cheerleading, Early Act (Rotary), Student Leadership, Choir, Academic Competitions, Speech Choir and Robotics et al. The capacity of the school to offer such diverse and inclusive offerings comes from the passion and commitment of the staff. Staff at Bribie Island State School go 'above and beyond' to ensure all students are provided an opportunity to enrich their education and succeed.

Bribie's distributive leadership model is at the heart of a school culture that not only builds teacher leadership capacity but also increases community voice. In recent years much work has been done to embed a clear school wide pedagogical framework aligned with The Art and Science of Teaching (Marzano, 2007). Establishing this framework as a norm for school processes has grown shared language and priorities.

In complex organisations like schools, leadership change is inevitable and occurs on a regular basis. Such changes at our site cast light on a need to widen our leadership paradigm and build capacity within our organisation. We recognised the need for a collective responsibility for our students and our school. Actions taken included:

- identifying key staff, providing opportunities for staff to develop and lead programs across the school
- providing release for staff to advance these projects and share with their colleagues
- expanding upon student-based interest areas and providing a wide range of opportunities to address these
- engaging teaching staff in leading programs bringing a 'real perspective' to their implementation
- developing staff knowledge in key areas
- developing a culture of mentoring and trust

The Leadership Team (Principal, Deputy, Head of Curriculum (H.O.C), Head of Special Education Services (H.O.S.E.S), Guidance Officer, Master Teacher, Support Teacher Literacy and Numeracy (STLaN) and Business Services Manager (BSM) act as instructional leaders and facilitators of staff learning focusing on the following key elements:

- prioritisation
- research based practice
- alignment of curriculum
- instruction and assessment
- data analysis and promoting a culture of continuous learning.

Each member of the Leadership Team is responsible for the line management of various programs/committees. Teacher leadership roles include: Lead Learning Managers, Committee Chairpersons, Mentors, Lead Teachers and facilitators of professional learning etc. Teacher leaders are supported by the Leadership Team through coaching relationships and observation/feedback protocols.



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All teachers are encouraged to take on leadership roles, based on their aspirations, interests or skills.

This Distributive Leadership model has been in operation since 2014. We have trialled, reflected upon and grown the initiative over time.

Examples of practice include:

- Teacher leaders presenting weekly after school professional development. These sessions focus on sharing examples of practice, school based programs and resources to support student outcomes.
- Lead Learning Managers (LLMs), who act as key point of contact for the Year Level PLC. They ensure there is a shared responsibility for improved student outcomes and a balance of roles and responsibilities for members of the PLC. LLMs participate in data analysis and lead PLC discussion based on results, creating and monitoring learning Goals for the year level. They lead the year level PLC to engage in evidence based, best practice, resulting in collective efficacy.
- Lead Teachers take responsibility for the creation and implementation of school initiatives. Release time is provided for Lead Teachers to work on prioritised school programs.

Overview of the theoretical, research or methodological approach

Distributive Leadership involves mobilising leadership expertise at all levels of the school in order to generate more opportunities for change and to build the capacity for improvement. (Harris, 2014). Roland Barth (2006) stated that 'A true mark of a leader is not how many followers one begets but how many leaders.'

At Bribie Island State School (BISS) we are mobilising teacher leaders through formal and informal leadership roles. INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP AT BISS (school policy document) describes how the principal exercises instructional leadership by facilitating teacher learning. Based upon Roland Barth's (2006) notion of collegiality for improvement, BISS has adopted four aspects of collegiality:

TEACHERS

- talking together about students
- developing curriculum together
- observing one another
- teaching one another

At Bribie Island State School we recognise that staff have extensive and diverse areas of passion and expertise. We commit to the development of these future leaders through a culture of collective efficacy and distributive leadership. Professor John Hattie (2016) ranks collective efficacy as the number one factor influencing student achievement, with an effect size of 1.57. Articulating and embedding a clear and focussed Explicit Improvement Agenda for the school has led to shared goals and increased opportunities for teacher leaders to emerge.

Building a culture of collegiality has strengthened our leadership model and seen the emergence of many teacher leaders across the school.

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The School Improvement Hierarchy, pictured right, incorporates the nine domains of the National School Improvement Tool. This diagram serves to assist schools in determining their current position in their improvement agenda, and guide what is prioritised next. The bottom tier of the pyramid is the foundation of the hierarchy and acts as a pre-requisite for other levels. Our leadership model serves to strengthen a culture that promotes learning, data analysis and effective pedagogical strategies all while building an expert teaching team.

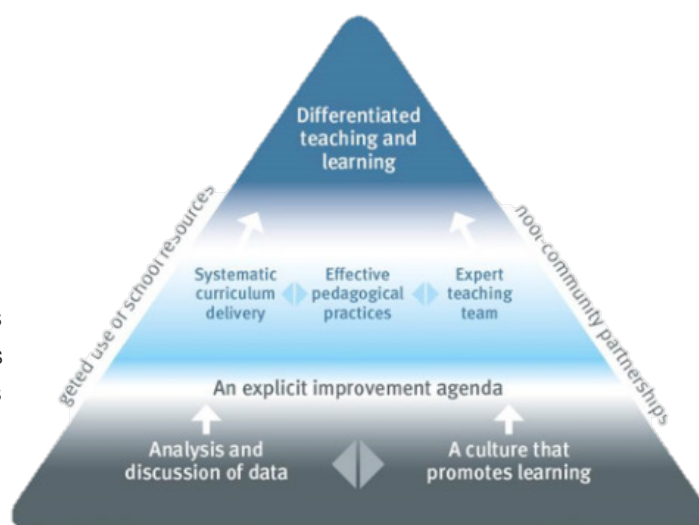


Figure 1 from DET Qld, education.qld.gov.au/schoolperformance

Overview of the data collected and analysed

Under the BISS Distributive Leadership Model we have seen an increase in class teachers taking on leadership roles across the school in recent years.

Year	# of teacher leaders	Year	# of teacher leaders	Year	# of teacher leaders
2014	10	2015	12	2016	19

2017 : 26 (76% of teaching staff)

The Department of Education and Training QLD School Opinion Survey for Staff includes a group of items related to building teacher capability. These include:

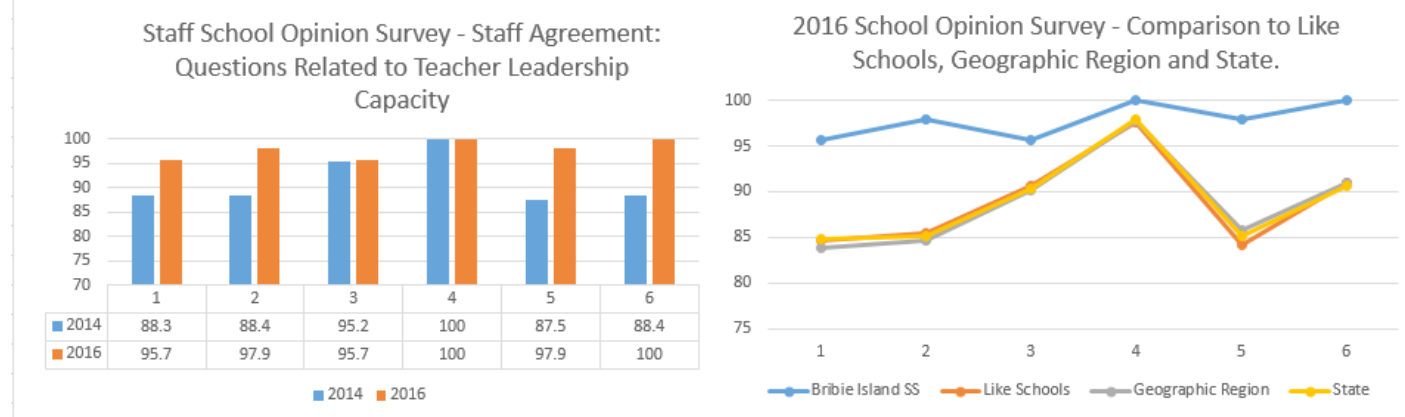
- S2098 This school asks for my input.
- S2099 This school encourages me to provide constructive feedback.
- S2100 This school encourages me to take part in professional development activities.
- S2101 This school encourages me to take responsibility for my work.
- S2102 This school encourages me to undertake leadership roles.
- S2103 This school encourages coaching and mentoring activities.

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Graph 1 shows a growth trend in agreement (%) with these statements since 2014 (commencement of distributive leadership model).

Graph 2 shows comparison data between BISS and like schools, geographic region and state. Agreement at BISS was higher in all items (listed above).



NAPLAN Effect Size Gain shows a significant increase in positive effect (relative to nation) 2014-2016.

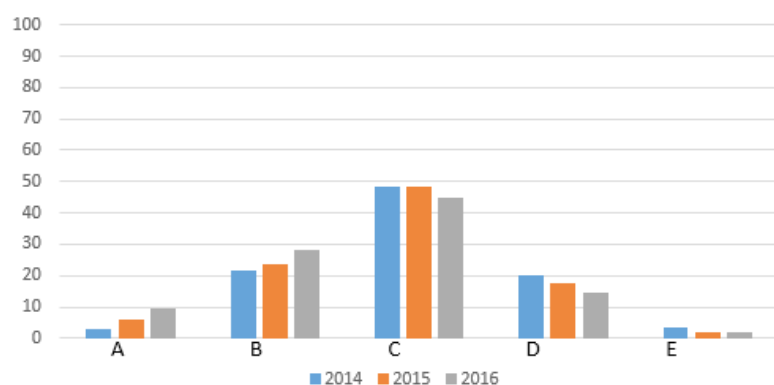
Comparative data, BISS to Qld State Schools show higher gains than state in all areas 2014 - 2016

Effect Size Gain (Relative to the Nation)

Effect Size Gain (new methodology)								Student Count	
Year Levels	Strand	2012-2014		2013-2015		2014-2016		2014-2016	
		This School	Qld State Schools	This School	Qld State Schools	This School	Qld State Schools	Test 1 School	Test 2 School
03-05	R	0.22	0.08	0.18	0.10	0.33	0.10	84	91
03-05	W	0.12	-0.02	-0.19	0.01	0.35	0.06	83	92
03-05	S	0.14	0.10	0.04	0.08	0.08	0.04	84	93
03-05	G&P	0.25	0.13	-0.04	0.09	0.38	0.08	84	93
03-05	N	0.27	0.12	0.18	0.07	0.19	0.05	83	93

Reproduced from Bribie Island SS – Data Profile Semester 2 2016

Bribie Island State School: Percentage of Students Achieving A to E Ratings (P-Yr6, All subjects).



The number of A and B Academic Achievement Ratings awarded have also increased during the life of the project.



DISTRIBUTIVE LEADERSHIP:

Creating teacher leaders, developing collective efficacy and enhancing community voice

Outcomes of the approach

Bribie's distributive leadership model has been recognised as an example of best practice through Education Queensland's Showcase Awards for Excellence. The school was named State Finalist for Leadership Team of the Year in 2015 and Principal of the Year in 2016.

Increasing teacher leadership capacity has seen a range of teacher led curriculum programs emerge in recent years. School based curriculum and pedagogy initiatives led by teacher leaders include: Read It, Speak It, Write It (Early Years Literacy), Growth Mindset Project, Vocab and Spelling Project, Oral Language Project, Reading Program etc.

Over the last three years we have seen a significant increase in the number of teachers taking on leadership roles/responsibilities within the school. We have seen increased staff engagement in curriculum and extra curriculum projects. Staff willingness to share practice has increased significantly, with class teachers regularly sharing practice via staff meetings, resource sharing, professional development, collaborative planning etc.

Conclusions and recommendations

Mobilising teacher leaders has resulted in enhanced collegiality and professional learning opportunities across the school. A growth mindset culture is developing within the school as the school community assumes a collective responsibility for student outcomes.

Success of this project can be attributed to:

- Staff commitment to continual learning and improvement.
- School commitment to listening to the student, staff and community voice, and putting effort into meeting the needs of our school community.
- The School Administration Team valuing the diverse areas of passion and expertise that exist within the school community.
- A culture of collegiate sharing (including observation and feedback protocols).
- Collective Efficacy– A shared belief that if we work together, and do the 'right work' as decided upon collectively we will improve student outcomes.

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