Realizing the Power of Professional Learning from a Formative Perspective
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New Zealand Education’s Greatest Challenge

- High average achievement
- A big gap between the middle / top and the low achievers
  - Stratified along socio-economic and ethnic lines
- Some poor mental health indicators (youth suicide, bullying)
Two questions
to discuss with the person
next to you

1. What is your greatest challenge in relation to academic, social outcomes for students (that schools can do something about)?

2. Would teachers identify the same challenge?
   – If not – what would they say?
A Contradiction ...

Professional learning and development can be effective in meeting these challenges

BUT

Most of it is a waste of time in improving social and academic outcomes for young people.
Student learning in the past
What We Know About Learning

How are we doing?

Where are we going?

Where to Next?

Having clear goals, co- and self-regulating learning through feedback is powerful
This means -

- Co-constructing meaning rather than transmission
  - Linking new ideas with existing ideas
    - Unpack misconceptions together
  - Actively constructing new ideas in holistic frameworks
  - Students taking joint responsibility
  - Feedback and feed-forward
Teacher learning in the past
Teacher learning now
Where are we going?
How are we doing?
Where to Next?
A formative perspective
Using a Formative Approach: The Evidence Base
Professional Development in literacy in New Zealand

- 300 schools over two years
- On average 2-3 times expected rate of progress for students nationally
- Lowest achieving 20%: 3-5 times expected rate of progress
- Sustained improvement for at least three years after the external support stopped
Many Non-Academic Examples

• Secondary schools:
  – Managing student behaviour
  – Helping students become independent reflective learners

• Primary schools
  – Inclusion of children with special needs
  – Integrating immigrant students
Locate Professional Learning in an Image of Professionalism

- **Teachers as adaptive experts** (e.g. Hatano & Inagaki, 1986; Hammerness et al., 2005)
- Committed to promoting the learning of each student
- Constantly seeking relevant knowledge and skills to achieve this
- Seeking evidence on the impact of their practice on student learning (social, emotional, academic)
Routine to Adaptive Experts

**Routine Experts**

- Apply a core set of skills with increasing fluency and efficiency
- Own beliefs taken for granted and not open to scrutiny
- Based on notions of novice to experts – practice makes perfect

**Adaptive Experts**

- Flexibly retrieve, organise and apply professional knowledge
- Aware of own beliefs underpinning practice and when they get in the way
- Recognise when old problems persist or new problems arise and seek expert knowledge
An example from assessment

Routine experts

- Assessment and learning are sequential
- Assessment reflects student capability
- Investigating the impact of teaching undermines professionalism

Routine experts

- Assessment and learning are integrated
- Assessment is about the effectiveness of teaching
- Investigating the impact of teaching is essential to improvement
A formative approach to professional learning and inquiry consistent with developing adaptive expertise
Teacher inquiry and knowledge-building cycle to promote valued student outcomes

1. What knowledge and skills do our students need?
2. What knowledge and skills do we as teachers need?
3. What has been the impact of our changed actions?
4. Deepen professional knowledge and refine skills
5. Engage students in new learning experiences
Some New Emphases

• Intellectual engagement rather than passively acquiring knowledge
• Social-emotional engagement – strongly influences how students engage with school learning
• Self-regulation – a better predictor of academic achievement than IQ at 4 years
Teacher inquiry and knowledge-building cycle to promote valued student outcomes

- What knowledge and skills do our students need?
- What has been the impact of our changed actions?
- Engage students in new learning experiences
- Deepen professional knowledge and refine skills
- What knowledge and skills do we as teachers need?
Finding Out about Teachers’ Knowledge and Practice

Investigate together:
- How we have contributed to existing student outcomes?
- What do we already know that we can use to promote improved outcomes for students?
- What do we need to learn and do to promote these outcomes?
- What sources of evidence / knowledge can we use?
Assessment information

Information about student capability

- Students receive marks
- Information reported to parents
- Students told what they need to learn

Information to focus for professional learning

- Teachers use the information to identify student challenges to focus their own professional inquiry
What knowledge and skills do our students need? What knowledge and skills do we as teachers need? What has been the impact of our changed actions? Engage students in new learning experiences. Deepen professional knowledge and refine skills.
Deepen Professional Knowledge and Refine Skills

Important considerations:
• Base on first two parts of the cycle (creates the “need to know”)
• Consider research findings about different approaches
  – Integrate knowledge, skills and theory
    • Curriculum, assessment, pedagogy
  – Focus on the teaching / learning links;
• Discuss existing ideas about students, assessment, curriculum and how to teach it
Deepen Professional Knowledge

From

• Starting here based on some else’s “desire to tell”
• Experts tell teachers about new knowledge and skills

To

• Arises from analysis of earlier parts of the cycle creating the teachers’ “need to know”
• Experts work alongside teachers to solve teaching and learning problems
What does not work
Start with learner-related challenges

Student learning

Teacher learning
Transferring learning:
To other contexts – students, curricula
Teacher inquiry and knowledge-building cycle to promote valued student outcomes

What knowledge and skills do our students need?

What has been the impact of our changed actions?

Engage students in new learning experiences

Deepen professional knowledge and refine skills

What knowledge and skills do we as teachers need?
Engage students in new learning experiences

From

• Teachers left to work out how to apply new knowledge and skills in their classrooms
• Changing practice is optional

To

• Coaches work with teachers in classrooms to apply new knowledge and skills – an integral part of learning
• Changing practice is part of the professional learning – it is not optional
Teacher inquiry and knowledge-building cycle to promote valued student outcomes

What knowledge and skills do our students need?

What has been the impact of our changed actions?

Engage students in new learning experiences

Deepen professional knowledge and refine skills

What knowledge and skills do we as teachers need?
Information about student capability

• Students receive marks
• Information reported to parents
• Students told what they need to learn

Assessment information

Information about the effectiveness of changes to practice

• Teachers use the information to work out if the changes they have made are more effective than what they did before
• Basis for refocusing professional inquiry
Teachers make the difference

But they cannot do it alone
FIVE DIMENSIONS OF EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP
Derived from Quantitative Studies Linking Leadership with Student Outcomes
(Robinson, Hohepa and Lloyd, 2009)

1. Establishing Goals and Expectations
Effect Size: 0.42

2. Resourcing Strategically
Effect Size: 0.31

3. Planning, Coordinating and Evaluating Teaching and the Curriculum
Effect Size: 0.42

4. Promoting and Participating in Teacher Learning and Development
Effect Size: 0.84

5. Ensuring an Orderly and Supportive Environment
Effect Size: 0.27
Beliefs, knowledge and Skills of School Leaders

To lead effectively, leaders become adaptive experts who take a formative perspective and know enough to:

- Work through the inquiry and knowledge building cycles with their teachers to improve outcomes in relation to your school goals
Focused and deep then transfer
What knowledge and skills do the teachers already have and need?

What knowledge and skills do I as leader need to teach the teachers?

What has been the impact of my changed actions on the teachers and students?

Engage teachers in new learning experiences

Deepen leader knowledge and refine leadership skills

Leader inquiry and knowledge-building cycle to promote valued teaching and student outcomes
Where to Next?

How are we doing?

Where are we going?

Teachers

Leaders

Students
Keeping it all Going through Ongoing Inquiry

Refocusing New challenges

Coherence within a learning system

Students’ needs → Professional inquiry → Checking outcomes → Knowledge Skills → Student opportunities

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Thank you for listening and participating
- Helen