Sabbatical Report

Term 2 - 2010

Performance Appraisal
Of
Support Staff

Allan Pond
Principal

Marton Junction School

Contents

Acknowledgements

<u>Schools Visited / Surveyed</u>

Aranui (Wanganui)
Berampore (Wellington)
Carterton (Wairarapa)
Churton (Wanganui)
Cloverlea (Palmerston North)
Eketahuna (Wairarapa)
Featherston (Wairarapa)
Frimley (Hastings)
Gonville (Wanganui)
Hastings Central
Kaitoke (Wanganui)
Kelburn Normal (Wellington)
Lakeview (Masterton)
Manchester Street (Feilding)
Masterton Primary
Miramar Central (Wellington)
Napier Central
North Street (Feilding)
Peterhead (Hastings)
Seatoun (Wellington)
South End (Carterton, Wairarapa)
Taradale (Napier)
Wanganui East
Westmere (Wanganui)

Awapuni (Palmerston North)
Carlton (Wanganui)
Castlecliff (Wanganui)
Clive (Hawkes Bay)
Durie Hill (Wanganui)
Eskdale (Hawkes Bay)
Flaxmere (Hastings)
Gladstone (Wairarapa)
Greytown (Wairarapa)
Irongate (Hastings)
Keith Street (Wanganui)
Kena Kena (Paraparaumu)
Lytton Street (Feilding)
Martinborough (Wairarapa)
Milson (Palmerston North)
Miramar North (Wellington)
Newtown (Wellington)
Otaki (Kapiti)
Roslyn (Palmerston North)
Solway (Masterton)
Takaro (Palmerston North)
Tawa (Wellington)
West End (Palmerston North)

Purpose / Background

Purpose

To research.....

i)   the number of teacher-aides employed in schools, in comparison to the number of classes / pupils.

ii)   the degree to which schools carry out Performance Appraisal of Support Staff (teacher-aides, office administration staff, caretakers / cleaners).

iii)   the relative importance placed on appraisal of support staff

iv)   the perceived effectiveness of processes used for support staff appraisal

Background

Marton Junction is a small school, currently running just 4 classes.
We employ a comparatively high number of teacher-aides
(1.5 per class / 1 teacher-aide to every 12.5 pupils).

Teacher-aides are an extremely important and valuable resource in our school. We appraise our teacher-aides annually and believe we have a robust and effective system. We feel that all employees benefit from feedback as to how well they carry out their roles in the school and that focused, school goal related appraisals benefit both staff growth and pupil learning.

Note: The number of office administration and caretaking / cleaning staff employed in our school is similar to most schools of comparative size.

Rationale

I was interested in investigating schools' practices in regard to support staff.

I wanted to compare numbers of support staff employed (teacher-aides in particular).

I wanted to find out whether performance appraisal was carried out for these members of staff and assess the importance placed on it by school management.

Also, where it was done, I was interested in finding out who in the school was responsible for the process and how effective the school felt it was.

Collecting information regarding methods used to appraise support staff was another intention.

Introduction

I have really appreciated the opportunity both to have a 'reflective break' and to visit a large number of schools.

I was made welcome in every school I visited (or contacted) and appreciated the time given me by a large number of very professional, very busy people!

As well as collecting data in the area of my research, it was of great benefit to have the time to visit so many schools and have the opportunity to talk - mainly to Principals - about other aspects of school management and the Principal's role.

Seeing the variety of systems in place, and hearing about the many ways schools deal with issues and cater for pupils' needs, is of huge value in putting your own situation in perspective.

I feel I gained something from every school visited and have returned from sabbatical refreshed, re-motivated and with countless 'good ideas'.

The challenge will be to adapt those ideas and use them for the benefit of my own school .... before I inevitably become overrun by the daily demands of the job!

I applaud the NZEI for working so hard to establish sabbatical leave provisions and the Ministry of Education for making them available to Principals.

To those considering applying in the future, I wholeheartedly recommend it.

The following report summarises data collected.

Methodology

I arranged my itinerary so as to spend two days in each of the five selected areas in the lower / central North Island.

Schools were randomly selected and approached prior to the end of the first term, either by e-mail or telephone.
I explained the purpose of my proposed visit and prepared a timetable that would allow me to visit 4 or 5 schools each day.

The majority of schools approached were happy to accommodate my request.
Those that were not able to have me visit all had sound reasons for it not being suitable and supplied some useful information on the spot.

Areas visited were as follows;

        Week 3 - Wairarapa

        Week 4 - Kapiti / Wellington

        Week 5 - Wanganui

        Week 7 - Hawkes Bay

        Week 8 - Feilding / Palmerston North
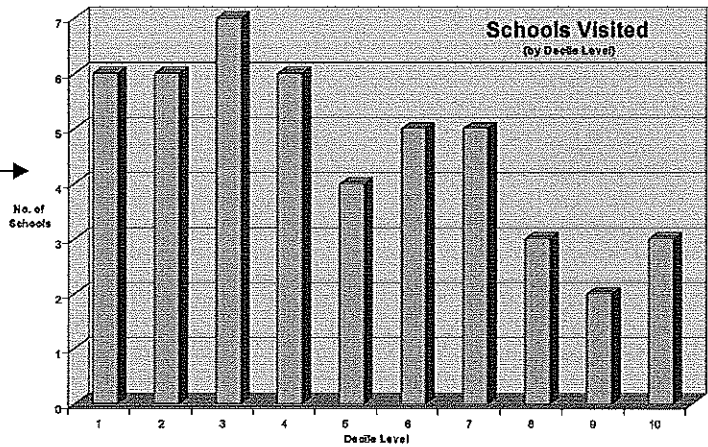
(Note: My GPS was invaluable!)

I prepared a data gathering sheet to use on each visit that included specific questions, continuums etc (See Appendix - page 12).
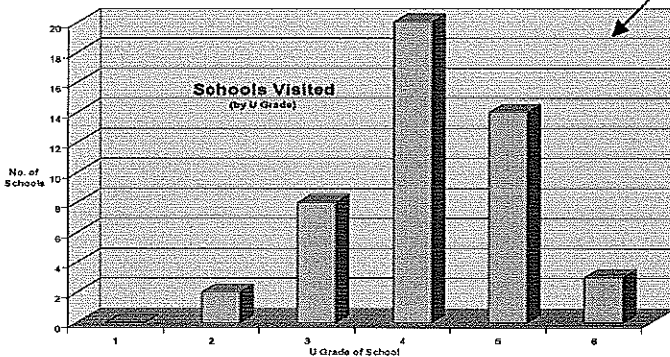
I also made use of a dictaphone.

Following visits I collated data to produce the following information.

Breakdown of Schools Included in Research

Decile Level	Number of Schools
1	6
2	6
3	7
4	6
5	4
6	5
7	5
8	3
9	2
10	3

U Grade of School	Number of Schools
1	0
2	2
3	8
4	20
5	14
6	3

NOTE: Rolls ranged from 75 to 525, with an average school roll of 263.

Type of School

Full Primary	Contributing
21	26

Personnel Providing Information

Principal	Acting Principal	SENCO	AP / DP
42	2	4	3

(Note: in some schools I met with more than 1 staff member - i.e Principal & SENCO)

Findings

Number of Teacher-Aides Employed

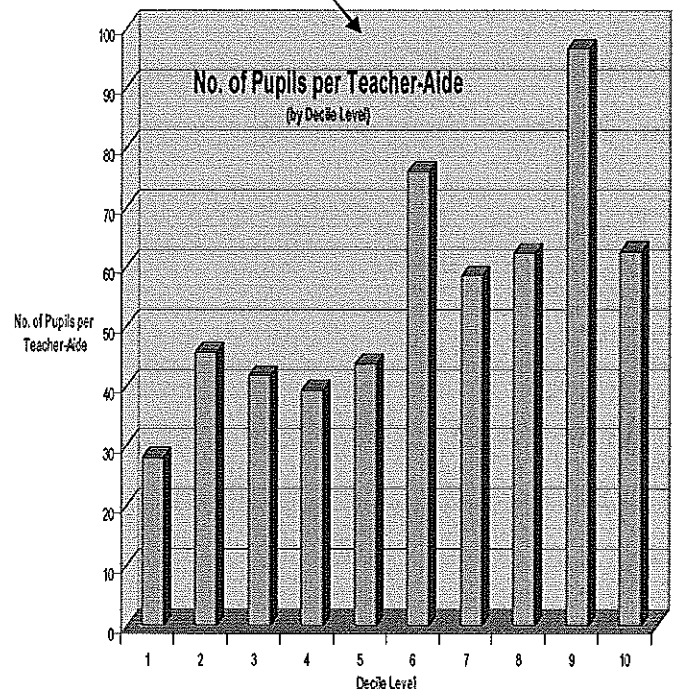The number of teacher-aides employed across the 47 schools surveyed worked out at 0.54 per class.

The average number of pupils per teacher-aide was 50.3.

Decile Level Comparisons

Teacher-Aides per Class			Pupils per Teacher-Aide	
Range	Average	Decile	Average	Range
0.6 to 0.8	0.7	1	28.1	25.0 to 30.0
0.2 to 1.0	0.6	2	45.7	19.4 to 96.0
0.4 to 0.8	0.6	3	41.8	30.5 to 58.3
0.4 to 1.1	0.7	4	39.3	21.1 to 42.5
0.3 to 1.0	0.6	5	43.7	23.1 to 68.0
0.2 to 0.8	0.4	6	76.0	28.8 to 125.0
0.2 to 0.6	0.4	7	58.5	35.3 to 99.0
0.3 to 0.4	0.4	8	62.2	56.0 to 70.6
0.1 to 0.4	0.2	9	96.4	65.1 to 142.0
0.3 to 0.5	0.4	10	62.5	51.9 to 82.5

Teacher-Aides per Class
(by Decile Level)

No. of Teacher-Aides per Class

Decile Level

No. of Pupils per Teacher-Aide
(by Decile Level)

No. of Pupils per Teacher-Aide

Decile Level
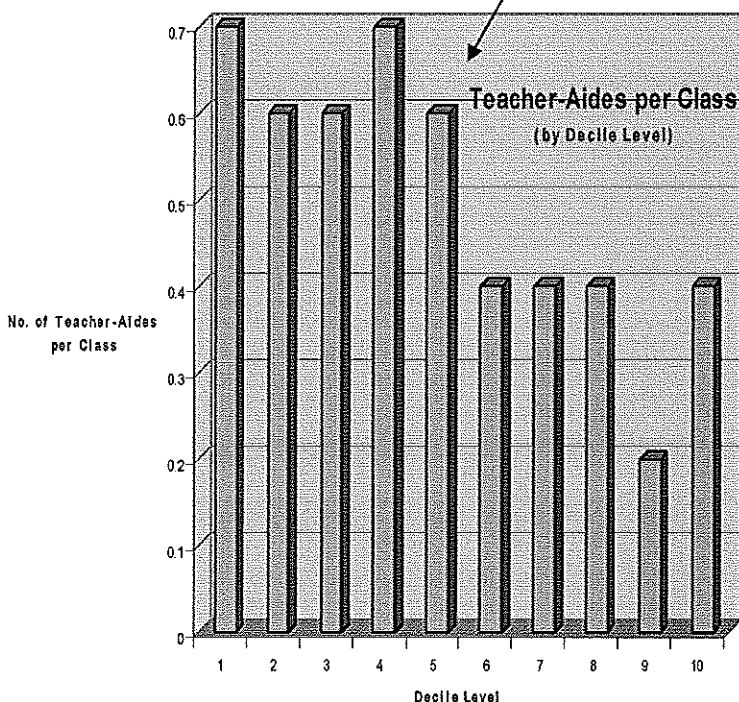
In answer to the Question......

"Are your Support Staff appraised?"

Category of Support Staff	Overall %age (of the 47 schools surveyed) who do appraise	%age Decile 1	%age Decile 2	%age Decile 3	%age Decile 4	%age Decile 5	%age Decile 6	%age Decile 7	%age Decile 8	%age Decile 9	%age Decile 10
Teacher-Aides	79%	100%	100%	86%	80%	33%	75%	75%	75%	100%	67%
Office Administration	70%	83%	83%	71%	80%	17%	75%	75%	50%	50%	100%
Caretaking/Cleaning	47%	33%	67%	71%	20%	33%	25%	75%	25%	50%	33%

"How often are your Support Staff appraised?"
(of the schools who do appraise)

Category of Support Staff	Annually	More Often (i.e 2x a year, each term)
Teacher-Aides	83%	17%
Office Administration	100%	-
Caretaking/Cleaning	100%	-

"Who is responsible for carrying out your Support Staff appraisal?"
(of the schools who do appraise)

Category of Support Staff	Principal	Senior Management Staff	SENCO	Other (B.O.T etc.)
Teacher-Aides	44%	29%	27%	
Office Administration	94%	6%		
Caretaking/Cleaning	82%	4%		14%

"How effective do you feel your appraisal system is in giving feedback to staff on their levels of performance?"
(on a 1 to 5 continuum)

Not Effective				Extremely Effective
5%	2%	24%	45%	24%

"How effective do you feel your appraisal system is in bringing about improvements in their performance?"
(on a 1 to 5 continuum)

Not Effective				Extremely Effective
5%	10%	32%	36%	17%

"How effective do you feel your appraisal system is in contributing to the meeting of school goals/aims etc?"
(on a 1 to 5 continuum)

Not Effective				Extremely Effective
10%	10%	12%	56%	12%

63% - of schools surveyed felt their Support Staff appraisal system had direct links to the relevant Collective Agreement

100% - of schools surveyed felt their Support Staff appraisal system had direct links to the employee's Job Description

68% - of schools surveyed felt their Support Staff appraisal system had direct links to the school's Charter/Strategic Plan

"How important do you feel the appraisal of Support Staff is in relation to overall school priorities?"
(on a 1 to 5 continuum)

Not Important				Extremely Important
9%	29%	11%	38%	13%

Methods Used to Appraise Support Staff

While there was a variety of systems, most tended to be organised along similar lines.

All schools who appraised their support staff based their system around the employee's job description.

Most systems involved; some form of goal-setting, some aspect of self-appraisal, and clear links to the employee's professional development (either already completed or planned for the future).

Some systems were more informal, with a few schools stating that they carried out 'oral appraisals' but did not document discussions.

A number required employee's to produce evidence of performance (such as photographs, written reports, children's work).

'Thought Provoking' Comments! (from those interviewed)

"Day to day interactions with staff are far more effective than a formal, planned appraisal."

"Dignity for all is vital in whatever system you use."

"Appraising all staff in a school affirms the value you place in them."

"Staff must have a very clear understanding of the process."

"Appraisal must be consistent and non-threatening."

"We must ensure we budget for effective support staff professional development."

"Support staff must 'buy in' to the process for it to be effective."

"Our school funds teacher-aides who sit for qualifications."

"Appraisal of support staff is of lower priority than appraisal of teaching staff."

"The right person has to go in and appraise. If the staff member doesn't respect the appraiser then you might as well not do it!"

"The person who is carrying out the appraisal may know what's going on but do the people who are being appraised understand the process?"

"We hold monthly meetings for teacher-aides, to ensure that we communicate what is going on in the school .... and give them a voice."

"Performance appraisal of support staff is very important as long as it's not just a system where you sit down and write a report after 12 months. It needs to be an on-going process, with regular feedback."

"One of the most critical aspects of appraisal is induction."

"The appraisal system here is based on professional development. We're not talking about an appraisal system based on competency."

"Any appraisal system should be one that is aimed at 'growing' the individual in their job."

"The more honest we are with the feedback .... in the end ...the better it is."

"If you look at appraisal as being about development... then it is a waste of time the Principal carrying out the appraisal of a teacher-aide. It needs to be their classroom teacher ... or even (if the respect is there) ... appraise each other."

"The teacher-aides do a self-appraisal, they get a teacher appraisal, and then they get a family appraisal. If they've been working with a special needs child, through the I.E.P, they get feedback from the family as to how things are going."

"We use student data in our teacher-aide appraisals because ... after all ... that's their job."

"Really... we put the effort into the teacher's appraisal."

"It is a waste of time appraising the cleaner and the caretaker. We just do it for the paper trail."

"With our caretaker, we make a formal time to have an informal chat."

"Everybody needs positive feedback."

"Gone are the days when teacher-aides are employed to mix paint."

"It's the people, it's the people, it's the people ..... who make the difference!"

"It's voluntary. If teacher-aides ask for an appraisal they get one."

"Day-by-day interactions with support staff are far more effective than an organised appraisal system."

"Our support staff don't see it as a relevant exercise, it is just something they 'have to do'!"

"Teacher-aide appraisals follow those of the teacher. Part of the teacher's appraisal is to ask 'how has your teacher-aide gone this year?' Then I summarise this information and can feedback to the teacher-aide as part of their appraisal."

"We encourage our support staff to use their appraisal documentation as part of their C.V."

Implications / Benefits / Conclusions

There are still a significant number of schools in which management does not see real value in carrying out documented, formal appraisal of their support staff.

Most however, feel that their support staff are valuable, essential components in the school's operation.

They state that; regular, meaningful appraisal of these members of staff has the effect of ...1) confirming their value to the school.
        2) impacting directly on student achievement.
        3) growing staff capabilities and strengths.

What came through strongly was that in a high proportion of schools, teacher-aides give of a lot of their own (unpaid!) time to attend and be involved in school events and participate in staff meetings and appropriate professional development opportunities etc. They do these things both to further their own development and to support the school.

The sabbatical experience proved extremely beneficial to me.
It provided an opportunity to 'step back' from my day-to-day role in my school, reflect on where we were at ...and on where I was at!
It gave me the chance to see a large number of other schools and compare many aspects of their organisation, their environment and facilities, and the philosophy underpinning their operation.

Perhaps most importantly, it gave me the opportunity to rest, to evaluate aspects of my own lifestyle and to give thought to the question ... "Where to from here?"

APPENDIX

Research Project - Appraisal of Support Staff in Primary Schools

School Name: _____

Staff Member Providing Information: _____
                                    (Role:_____)

School Roll: _____ **Grade:** _____ **Decile:** ____ **Type:** _____
                                                      (FP/Con/State/Prvt)

No. of classes: _____ **No. of Support Staff (Total)** _____
                          Teacher Aides   _____
                          Clerical   _____
                          Caret./Clean./Grds   _____

Are your teacher-aides appraised?   _____ How often? _____
Are your clerical staff appraised?   _____ How often? _____
Are your crtkng/clean/grds staff appr.   _____ How often? _____

Who is responsible for carrying out the appraisal process for;
    Teacher-aides?   _____

    Clerical staff?   _____
                      _____

    Crtkng Etc?   _____
                      _____

What method(s) are used for;

    Teacher-aide appraisal? _____
                      _____
                      _____
                      _____
                      _____
                      _____
                      _____

    Clerical staff ? _____
                      _____
                      _____
                      _____
                      _____
                      _____

Caretkg/Grds/Cler. staff ?_____

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

On a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 is ineffective and 5 is extremely effective),
how effective do you feel this appraisal system is in ;

     i) giving feedback to support staff on their levels of performance ?

        1   _____   5

     ii) bringing about improvements in their performance?

        1   _____   5

     iii) contributing to the meeting of school goals/aims etc?

        1   _____   5

Would you say that your appraisal system has direct links to;

   -   the support staff (etc) CEC?   _____
   -   the employees's job description?   _____
   -   the school charter/ strategic plan etc?   _____

On a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 is not important and 5 is extremely important),
how important do you feel the appraisal of support staff is in relation to overall
school priorities?

        1   _____   5

Do you have any other comments / information regarding appraisal of support
staff in your school? _____

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____