

SABBATICAL LEAVE REPORT

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Decile 5 Grade 4 School

Sincere thanks to the Ministry of Education for the opportunity to have Sabbatical leave, to the Board of Trustees for their support and to the Associate Principals at Riverton Primary, Katie Pennicott and Nigel Easson, for picking up the reins while I was on Sabbatical. This was an excellent opportunity for Katie and Nigel to have practical leadership experience, as they are undertaking the Aspiring Principals programme in 2011.

As well as undertaking the focus project, the Sabbatical leave was an excellent opportunity to read more extensively about a number of 'what ifs' I had in my head. Just as importantly it gave me a chance to clear my head of the 'trivia' of Principalship and to recharge and regain the passion for curriculum leadership. We need to ensure we are continually questioning our practice and striving for on-going improvement in our teaching and learning programmes and this was a very timely intervention to do just that. A lot of my reading, interviewing and research was unrelated to my focus question but nevertheless very valuable in reshaping my leadership strategy.

I would recommend all principals, after a number of years in the job, take the opportunity to apply to have the time to reflect on and review their practice

Focus

To investigate how evidence gathered from collecting data can be used to make informed judgements about teaching practice and learning achievement.

Rationale - Purpose of Study

To improve the use of the data we collect from Nationally referenced tests (PAT, STAR, asTTle) so that learning can be enhanced and teaching practice improved.

Background Information

I have been concerned for some time that while we collect and report on the results of the Nationally referenced tests, it really is a 'so what' situation.

What do we actually do with the data to ensure accelerated gains can be made? In our case really a pat on the back if we manage to get a good percentage of the students past the expected achieved level.

The majority of children sit around the same stanine/scale score (STAR, PAT) or appropriate level (asTTle) for several years and we have accepted that provided they hit around the expected level each year, they are making progress.

What can we learn from more in-depth analysis to push the achievement scores up?

On visiting a number of other schools, I discovered the same situation occurs.

Methodology

Prior to the sabbatical, all children in Years 4-6 will be tested on PAT, asTTle reading comprehension and maths. The tests will be marked using a variety of highlighter colours to identify patterns of incorrect answers.

This actually took a long time with regards to the PAT testing although it can be commercially contracted out.

The results were collated and analysed and we looked at the gaps in the students' knowledge.

Findings

PAT results showed retrieving information was a strength for the majority of students but local and global inference questions were the common areas of errors.

For maths it was number strategies and geometry and measurement that needed more attention.

asTTle results showed the same deficits as PAT.

Implications

We looked at the deficit areas in a series of professional learning meetings and developed some booklets to provide strategies for teachers in best teaching practice.

Teachers were encouraged to share what worked and observe and give feed back to each other. Because we were part of a Literacy contract where observation and focussed feedback were the norm, it was a continuation of the practices that had been developed.

Teaching

Teachers changed their teaching focus to concentrate on the areas of deficit but all strategies for reading and all strands for maths were still taught. More emphasis was put on students learning what inference (local and global) in reading means and shared texts were regularly used in a whole class setting as well as the guided reading learning sessions.

In maths, teachers did a lot of on-going learning around number strategies particularly problem solving and geometry and measurement.

Again some learning was whole class, some stage grouping and some family maths homework.

We also introduced reflection journals that were added to weekly with specific learning goals that were the basis for self and peer reflection and continued each week.

The reflection journals have made a significant difference in students being able to identify and reflect on their next step learning and as a result achievement data has been valued by the students. The eagerness when we completed the October testing, for the data to be shared by the students was an interesting sideline. Never before had we experienced students asking teachers if they had the results from their asTTle or PAT tests and the delight when they had moved up one or two stanines or sub levels

Outcomes

All the year 4-6 students were tested again at the end of October (5mths later.)
The comparison data showed good gains for a significant percentage of the students compared to their scores in May.

Comparison of Scores over 5mths.

Year Level	PAT Maths	asTTle Reading	PAT Reading
Y6	20% moved 2+ stanines 50% moved 1 stanine	75% moved 2+ sub levels	33% moved 2+ stanines 33% moved 1 stanine
Y5	20% moved 2+ stanines 33% moved 1 stanine	54% moved 2+ sub levels	25% moved 2+ stanines 45% moved 1 stanine
Y4	25% moved 2+ stanines 50% moved 1 stanine	33% moved 2+ sub levels	25% moved 2+ stanines 34% moved 1 stanine

Next Steps

We will continue to work on the areas of both in teacher development and learning activities.

- Student achievement patterns will continue to be analysed and used to plan professional learning.

- There is open discussion of student's results and teachers are actively involved in the testing and analysis processes.
- Regular opportunities are timetabled and provided for teachers to improve their teaching through observation and modelling of effective teaching.
- Regular observation of teaching practice and high quality, focussed feedback given.
- Decisions to maintain or to change particular teaching approaches are based on evidence about the impact of student achievement.
- Professional learning meetings are planned and include serious discussion about how to improve teaching and learning.
- Shared learning regarding specific teaching strategies will be documented and made available to all teachers and students.
- Students need to be actively involved in the whole process to ensure engagement and understanding of what they need to focus on learning and practicing.