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Project Title:

To investigate the use of performance data by teachers and senior school managers for self-review and improved teaching and learning practices.

Acknowledgements

The principals and staff of the schools I visited must be thanked for their great hospitality, information and insight into the way they used student performance data and their current self-review and teaching and learning professional development systems.

TeachNZ, the Macleans College Board of Trustees and senior managers and staff at Macleans must also be thanked.

Executive Summary and Purpose

For the past 14 years teachers at Macleans College, assisted by assessment experts and computer programmer specialists, have developed a data-driven inquiry tool to measure the comparative growth students have achieved year-by-year, enabling teachers to self-review by analysing the results and then set goals to improve their teaching practice to improve constantly student performance.

The main purpose of my visiting other schools was to find out if they had or were in the process of developing a tool and methodology to carry out a similar process.

In most of the schools very robust processes were in place and a lot of work was continuing to better analyse student performance data. One school stood out for a particular emphasis they placed on a school-wide system of measurement and constant recognition of diligence and attitude among their students as a major driver of academic success.

Overall in being able to view and hear about the inter-locking systems necessary to have a self-review procedure work in a school, I was fortunate in picking up invaluable practices which we are implementing over the next year or so at Macleans.

Background Rationale, Methodology and Findings

The prime driver of creating and utilising the data-driven inquiry tool at Macleans College is the ability, now provided to teachers, senior staff and through reports to the Board of Trustees, to reflect on and review student academic performance and growth by being able to view an array of charts and graphs designed for that purpose.

For example the following inquiries can be made by individual teachers:

- The viewing of the achievement of individual students in my class
- The viewing of the achievement of my class as a whole
- Has student achievement in NCEA Level 2 English improved over time
- Did students attain similar achievement levels across multiple subjects in 2015
- Has there been an improvement in Maori student achievement in NCEA Level 1 over the past four years
- How can we predict future student achievement in NCEA English.

This analysis, review and reflection process acts as a catalyst to advance constantly and improve teaching practices through a comprehensive, enlarged and a reviewed constantly professional development programme both in and out of school and on-line.

The system has generated various related initiatives to refine constantly and contribute to the sum of the parts.

For example the appraisal process has been refined constantly and a New Zealand school I visited on the sabbatical prompted a major change to the Annual Reports, Annual Plans of Departments and Faculties to tie the goals more closely into the teacher inquiry and PLG, or Professional Learning Group, activities.

This goal centred approach and the obligation of the teacher to assess the good, bad and indifferent performance of students in their classes, flows through to the selection of their annual teaching inquiry which they are able to discuss and receive feedback through their appraisal and the regular cross-curricular and curriculum professional learning groups or PLGs that run throughout the school year.

Attestation requirements are also incorporated and can be assessed through this system and the Year 1/Year 2 teacher programme has the benefit of all of the robust features that have been implemented.

The system also provides senior managers with easy access to a wide variety of in-depth information about individual students, teachers, subjects, classes, subject levels, ethnic and gender performance which act as drivers to better informed decision making, planning and reporting so that the Board of Trustees is also better informed so both governance and management can work together to enhance student and teacher performance through various programmes and allocation of resources.

A major finding, mentioned above, was seeing a very interesting system in a school that centred on student attitude and engagement. This involves regular assessment of the students against a range of criteria and school-wide reporting of the results to the students, staff and parents.

The reporting of student attitude is not new and is almost certain to be present in all schools, but the level of detail and 'buy-in' by students, parents and staff with this example made it very worthy of further study.

The system immediately appealed as a complement and enhancement to the graphs and charts depicting student academic performance on our computer data tool, and provides further invaluable information about individual students.

The Teacher Guide for the Diligence Scale has five levels of descriptions to match the level of diligence and they are rated 1-5.

The five levels range from 1= Exemplary; 2 = Highly Commendable; 3 = Working Well; 4 = Needs Improvement and 5 = Unacceptance.

Each level or category has the same major areas for assessment under the headings:

- Attitude to Learning and Engagement
- Use of Technology
- Homework, Assignments and Mastery
- Attitude to others
- Punctuality, Equipment and Attendance.

Under each of these headings specific criteria is assessed and the student provided with a level grade.

The power of this more defined and specific system was apparent with the impact it was obviously having with the students and parents.

We intend adapting this very well thought out system as part of our 'computer data tool' and it has expedited the momentum towards an interactive parent and student portal where historical data is displayed and current performance can be updated, including diligence.

The teacher observation systems in place in several schools that were visited were not so much data driven but provided invaluable insight into a variety of interesting ways and means that the analysis of teachers teaching, as carried out by their Heads of Department and peers, was utilised in the drive for highlighting 'best practices'.

These systems are also being added to the component parts of what we are attempting to build at Macleans.

Benefits/Conclusions

The privilege of other schools sharing their best practises in the use of data, professional development systems and the quite outstanding integration of diligence assessment into the entire 'learning' environment was of major benefit to further refine and enhance the utilities of our data tool.

The school visits once again highlighted the major benefit of looking and sharing, and in every school as a minimum you become the recipient of an innovation or method you either have not thought of or implemented and realise you should.