

## WAKATIPU HIGH SCHOOL

Private Bag 50080, 68 Fryer Street, Queenstown

Phone: 64 3 442 7370 Fax: 64 3 442 7261

Email: [office@wakatipu.school.nz](mailto:office@wakatipu.school.nz)

Web: [www.wakatipu.school.nz](http://www.wakatipu.school.nz)



### PRINCIPAL'S SABBATICAL

Kevin Orlowski, Wakatipu High School, Queenstown

The purpose of taking sabbatical leave was to investigate how I could use specific classroom visits that have an observation component to give teachers constructive feedback on the differentiated classroom endeavours. (*Note: Logic demands that the Executive Summary is located towards the end of this report*).

#### Purpose and Background:

Goal 1 of the WHS Strategic Plan reads "To develop the educational outcomes for students at Wakatipu High School by implementing differentiated instruction in all classes".

#### Annual Target:

To support a teaching community of best practice by providing Resourcing to allow differentiated instruction to occur across the school.

#### Tasks:

2005	<p>Why - Key concepts: All members of every department are clear about why they teach what they teach</p> <p>Who - Pre-Assessment: Explore, experiment with pre-assessment tasks that identify students' readiness, interest and profile in relation to key concepts and contexts</p> <p>What – Content: Teachers to explore, experiment a variety of means for differentiating content</p>
2006	<p>Where, When – Process: Plan units that provide alternative learning routes for student learning</p>
2007	<p>How - Process and Product: Offer choices of product</p>

My 2005 Principal's Appraisal detailed a desire by the Teaching Staff for me to undertake more visits to their classrooms.

I needed to find out how I could use specific classroom visits, that have an observation component, to give teachers constructive feedback on their differentiated teaching endeavours.

I needed to articulate a process that would:

- allow the above to happen in a constructive manner and not develop into a time consuming/ineffective exercise.
- promote wider understanding of the benefits of differentiation and its connection to teaching and learning
- see best practice strategies being adopted effectively across the whole school

#### Programme Outline:

My programme involved:

- a. Literature search and review of relevant research on best practice, observational strategies and differentiated instruction that reinforced the use of effective pedagogical strategies and actively connects practice to learning (ASCD website).

- b. A visit programme to Otago/Southland secondary schools that participated in the Differentiated Curriculum 2nd National Conference in Sydney, 2004. (Mt Aspiring, SBHS, Central Southland).
- c. Visits to:
  - Lilian Baylis School, 323 Kennington Lane, Kennington, London SE11 5QY. Phone 0044 207 091 9500. Principal: Gary Phillips. Email [gary.phillips@lilianbaylis.com](mailto:gary.phillips@lilianbaylis.com)
  - Northwood College, Maxwell Road, Northwood, Middlesex HA6 2YE. Phone 0044 192 382 5446. Principal: C J Simister. Email [SimJan@Northwoodcollege.co.uk](mailto:SimJan@Northwoodcollege.co.uk)

**Findings, Implications and Conclusion** are all covered in the following report:

## **DIFFERENTIATION**

### **INTRODUCTION**

At Wakatipu High School we are trying to build a professional learning community so teachers can learn about effective instructional and assessment practices. "It's critical that we find ways for teachers to learn on the job."

### **1. THE ROLE OF RESEARCH AND EVIDENCE**

*(From Ben Levin, Leadership Implications Of Some Positive Developments In Education Policy (Pp 9-11)*

Practice needs to be shaped by data and research. This interest in data and research is shared by governments, academics, schools and parents and the public. The reasons for this shift in attention are multiple, including a more educated profession, more educated citizens, more reliable guidance as a result of more and better research, better tools for analysis, and others. (Levin, 2004a).

The OECD concluded a few years ago that the expenditure on research in education in all countries was typically well under 1% of education expenditures – a low investment relative to other knowledge-intensive sectors, especially health (OECD, 2002). Moreover, education research tends to be small scale and fragmented, generally lacking the programmatic approach – many studies looking at aspects of an issue of interest – that is most likely to yield significant cumulative evidence. Yet research is providing increasing guidance to policy and practice in a range of areas, from the importance of early childhood development to effective instructions in early reading to knowledge about the factors that increase or decrease the likelihood that students will graduate from high school.

To take a national example of attention to research, the UK Department for Education and Skills has commissioned public external evaluations of many of its most important policy initiatives and has used the results of these evaluations to reshape policies (Earl et al., 2003). The British government has also funded the EPPI (Evidence-Informed Policy and Practice) Centre ([eppi.ioe.ac.uk](http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk)) to do syntheses of research in selected areas.

The National Education Research Forum (NERF – [www.nerf-uk.org](http://www.nerf-uk.org)) is a vehicle for broad discussion of research issues and is linked to some other creations, such as the Teacher Research Panel and the Teaching and Learning Research Programme ([www.rlrp.org](http://www.rlrp.org)) funded to promote quality research on teachers and teaching while also increasing the capacity of educators to find and use relevant research.

- School principals must take seriously their requirement to help people learn the new skills.
- Professional development needs to be integrated more strongly with school planning and priorities, and school policies must be reviewed to ensure that they do support effective practices.

To borrow a phrase from Mike Sutton (*Coaching for Pedagogical Change p32*) "The answer to school improvement, and more importantly the change in pedagogy, lay in working with teachers."

**I wish to investigate how I can use specific classroom visits, that have an observation component to give teachers constructive feedback on the differentiated teaching endeavours.**

**This is where my sabbatical begins.**

Hattie (2003, p9) said, "It is what teachers know, do and care about which is very powerful in the learning equation and it is the one source of variance that can be enhanced with the greatest potential of success."

Hattie (2002) and Bishop et al (2001) identified a range of skills and attributes that effective teachers demonstrate. The common features from these various authors included teacher expectations, instructional match, reflective behaviour, passion for teaching, and that students are a central focus.

Differentiation refers to matching instruction to individual students; it is individualising and personalising education with the intention of developing the full potential of all learners.

### ***Tracy L Riley Qualitative Differentiation for Gifted and Talented Students (p347-8)***

The principles of differentiation for all learners are outlined by Tomlinson (1999, P48):

- The teacher is clear about what matters in the subject matter.
- The teacher understands, appreciates and builds upon student differences.
- Assessment and instruction are inseparable.
- The teacher adjusts content, process and product in response to student readiness, interests and learning profiles.
- All students participate in respectful work.
- Students and teachers collaborate in learning.
- Goals of a differentiated classroom are maximum growth and individual success.
- Flexibility is the hallmark of a differentiated classroom.

Differentiated classrooms are characterised by flexible grouping, including opportunities for individual endeavours and marked by "tiered", or ability-dependent, objectives for learning. Decisions regarding instruction are based upon student readiness, interests and learning profiles. Strategies associated with differentiation for all students include learning contracts, investigations, compacting, interest or learning centres, learning stations, personalised learning agendas and tiered activities.

## **DIFFERENTIATION MYTHS AND REALITIES**

***Source: ASCD Educational Update 2006: Vol 48 No 1, p3***

According to Differentiation Instruction guru Carol Ann Tomlinson, a lot of confusion exists about what differentiated instruction is and isn't. One myth that plagues differentiation is that it is in conflict with standards-based education. Tomlinson offered two major reasons why this is not so.

First, standards guide *what* to teach, and differentiation guides *how* to teach. No matter what you're teaching, it will be learned better if taught in a way that's responsive to a learner's needs.

Next, differentiation is about providing a variety of means and supports for mastering a standard, not changing the content of standards. A richer framework of meaning helps students more effectively learn, recall, relate to, retain and retrieve content. Tomlinson concluded that differentiation is a means of *achieving* standards by making them accessible to a wider arrange of learning styles and student interests.

## **2. DIFFERENTIATING THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT: CHARACTERISTICS**

### ***From Riley Qualitative Differentiation for Gifted and Talented Students (p762-3)***

Qualitatively differentiating the contact process and products requires dramatic changes in the learning environment, ensuring it is responsible (Clark, 1997) to invitational (Cathcart, 1994). A classroom which invites and responds to individual learning is characterised by a number of factors "determined by both the teacher and physical classroom environment" (Ministry of Education, 2000, P37). Maker and Nielson (1995) outline these:

- Learner-centred rather than teacher-centred.

- Teacher independent rather than teacher dependent for most tasks, including classroom management.
- Open to new people, materials and things.
- Complex and filled with resources.
- Open to acceptance rather than judgement, and so “psychologically safe” for risk-taking, creativity and individuality.
- Open to varied groupings.
- Flexible in all aspects of management, especially scheduling.
- Tolerant of high mobility of movement, both in and out of the classroom.

Hunt and Seney (2001) state that “by using these guidelines, environments are created which provide the comfort, autonomy and opportunities gifted learners need for optimum growth and development.” (p45).

Creating an environment suitable for gifted learners incorporates not only “physical” space for growth, but also “social-emotional” space. In New Zealand both the physical and emotional spaces need to be appropriate for a range of diverse cultures – taking into account diversity and respecting culturally-specific learning needs. Clark (1997) refers to this combination as the creation of “people space”. Physically, she describes classrooms that are comfortable, nicely furnished, colourful, and resource rich. Hunt and Seney (2001) add the need for careful physical organisation and consideration of the overall layout of furniture and resources. They state that “in short, the room should be designed as a learning laboratory: (p64). Physically, the learning environment might not even be a classroom, but a marae, a park, a library, the bush or a museum. The key is to “match” the environment to the students and the differentiated curriculum.

Psychologically, the learning environment should allow and encourage gifted and talented students to “be themselves”, to take risks, to build trust and develop self-confidence. A classroom of this nature celebrates diversity and individuality. George (1997) describes this sort of classroom as one with “a comfortable atmosphere – humour, praise, positive enthusiastic attitude on part of the teacher – defined by one colleague as “cheerfulness”” (p108).

Clark (1997) refers to a responsive learning environment which is characterised by the physical and psychological/social elements outlined in the following table.

#### **A responsive learning environment checklist:**

*You will know that the physical environment is responsive when:*

1. There is space for students to simultaneously participate in a variety of activities.
2. Students have access to materials with a range of levels and topic.
3. There is space for the students to engage in a variety of instructional groupings, and flexible groupings is used.
4. There are areas supportive of student self-management.
5. Desks are not individually owned.
6. The classroom has a comfortable, inviting ambience supportive of exploration, application, and personal construction of knowledge.

*You will know that the social/emotional environment is responsive when:*

1. The emotional climate is warm and accepting.
2. The class operates with clear guidelines decided upon cooperatively.
3. Instruction is based on each individual student’s needs and interests and assessed by the teacher from the student’s interaction with the materials and the concepts.
4. Student activities, products, and ideas are reflected around the classroom.
5. Student choice is evident in planning instruction, and products of evaluation.
6. Building and practising affective skills are a consistent and valued part of the curriculum and of each teaching day.
7. Students and teachers show evidence of shared responsibility for learning.
8. Empowering language is evident between teacher and students and among students

9. Students show evidence of becoming independent learners with skills of inquiry and self-evaluation (Clark, 1997, P328).

Cathcart (1994) makes reference to an invitational environment. This is a learning environment, which is also responsive to needs, but at the same time invites students to actively engage in their learning. Choice, variety and flexibility are highlights of an invitational learning environment. Tomlinson (1999) suggests creating healthy classroom environments, which are reliant upon the teacher to facilitate individuality, holistic educational experiences and joy in learning. In this way, it is clear that to differentiate the learning environment qualitatively, the teachers takes charge.

### **Teachers: the key which unlocks differentiation**

In order to effectively differentiate, the final, but without doubt most important, element is the teacher.

School for the Future (Samuel Marsden Collegiate) recommends that the provision of the following will complement quality differentiated instruction:

- Access to on-line resources which use a powerful combination of video, multimedia, text and graphics, prepared by specialists in a centralised resource development facility and delivered to individuals or groups by technology.
- Provision for the teacher to teach the whole class or part of the class, assisted by technology as appropriate.
- Provision for all students to learn the same way or to choose ways which suit the individual learning styles, assisted by technology as appropriate.
- Access to individualised curriculum pathways, diagnostic testing and assessment of progress, managed by technology.
- Students moving independently between learning areas as necessary, managed by technology.
- Individualised access to network resources.
  - Wireless networking
  - Light-weight notebook computers; e-books.
  - Continuity of access to network resources away from schools.

### **3. HOW DO WE CURRENTLY GO ABOUT DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION AT WAKATIPU HIGH SCHOOL**

#### **Wakatipu High School Strategic Plan, Goal 1:**

- **to raise the standard of achievement and improve the proportion of students leaving school with a qualification, individual skills and a career plan**
- **to support a teaching community of best practice by providing Resourcing to allow differentiated instruction to occur across the school**
- **to provide appropriate professional development opportunities for the staff**

Our start point is our Learning Profile which details:

- What do we know about the learner to justify striving for differentiated instruction?
- What does the teacher know about teaching and learning in a differentiated classroom?
- What do we know about the organisation and management of the teaching and learning environment to facilitate a differentiated curriculum?

In a class of 25-30 students at Wakatipu High School, **10-15%** will have some form of learning difficulty. Some of these students will need frequent repetition of skills and explanation of concepts. A similar number of students will already have met many of the level outcomes and may already be achieving the next level(s) outcomes in literacy and / or numeracy tasks. These students will need more complex work provided with less repetition.

Around **30%** of the class will be Visual Spatial learners (Silverman, 2002). The learning profile of visual spatial learners does not readily align with the traditional hierarchical organisation of curricula and many accepted classroom practices. The auditory Sequential learning preference for the remaining twenty students in the class will be fairly well suited to the dominant western pedagogies.

Low socio-economic status, gender, ethnicity and non-English speaking backgrounds add further dimensions to understanding. These factors need to be considered with other data in the pursuit of appropriate differentiated instruction.

Pre-testing or pre-assessment should not be overlooked as essential and relatively simple means for determining student readiness. It is difficult to justify not using pre-testing or pre-assessment before any new syllabus material is introduced and yet many teachers continue to make assumptions about student readiness based on lock step progression, chronological age and syllabus structure.

We currently use SSP Testing, PAT's etc.

Tomlinson once again provides excellent guidance for the differentiated classroom:

- Teachers using what they know about students' readiness, interests and learning profiles.
- Teachers presenting learning options e.g. differentiated levels of difficulty
- Teachers providing choice about topics and models of responding.
- Teachers presenting information in different ways.
- Teachers using good questioning.
- Teachers providing opportunities for student metacognition.
- Teachers being explicit about the teaching/learning strategies being used.
- Teachers facilitating cooperative learning.
- Teachers designing homework to extend skills and understanding.
- Students and teachers responding to each other respectfully.
- Students engaged in respectful learning experiences that are important, interesting and powerful.

*McGrath (1998) and Tomlinson & Kalbfleisch (1998)*

#### 4. **THE FUTURE**

Professional development is essential for any meaningful change to occur.

- Tuesday: Professional Learning Team and Learning Philosophy meetings.
- Department Coordinating and planning programme of work e.g.
  1. At each staff meeting, a member of staff volunteers to share a strategy they have found effective for differentiating the curriculum.
  2. Academic support staff supply targeted learning outcomes to support students with learning needs.
  3. More elaborate class profiles developed by academic support staff for planning meetings in conjunction with class teachers.
  4. Computer lab and lap top classrooms.
  5. Robust research findings are suggesting that differentiated Classrooms provide the most effective, supportive learning environments. The development of Differentiated Curriculum in schools can be supported by clearly defined change programmes that include major contemporary pedagogical reforms with supporting professional development.

## 5. DIFFERENTIATION STRATEGIES<sup>1</sup>

### Information Gathering

In response to questioning staff identified the following as tasks that have been most successful:

- Adapting for each class according to the class profile or pretest data.
- Assignment tasks with choices and points.
- Keeping the student(s) challenged.
- Critical literacy approach because it makes students think outside the square.
- Insoluble questions which require logical thinking and problem solving.
- Research questions that are not just “find out” questions.
- Expanding the horizons of students.
- Personal interest.
- Consulting with students to suggest a programme of extension.
- Individual goal setting.
- Encourage independence and independent thought.
- Plan in detail and successfully to meet the diverse needs of the students.

Notably, these strategies are mainly individual. Strategies that are not recommended included expecting a strategy to fit all students and pick up activities that are dished out to the top students. Busy activities such as additional work are unstimulating as is dividing the class into groups by ability. The important thing with any strategy is to articulate the rationale to the student.

Teachers always revise previous learning at the start, have clear objectives, which they share with students. Teachers make work thoroughly, give encouraging comments and set very clear targets for improvement.

Focus more explicitly on the role of assessment in assisting students to achieve better learning outcomes.

Assessment tasks need to be transparent and reflect the intended learning outcomes of the curriculum. Students should also be provided with rubrics that explicitly state how students' representations of work would be assessed.

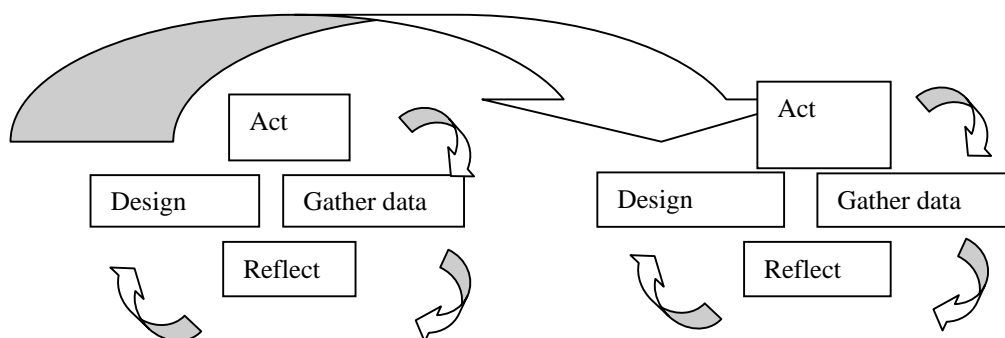
### **Individual:**

- Prior knowledge and skills.
- Differentiated tasks by allocating points to tasks.
- A faster pace.
- Delving into topics at a deeper skill level, complexity – working at own level, checkpoints/diary/system.
- Problem solving.
- Practical applications.
- Outside school competitions e.g. Asia Wise.
- Buy in buy out/opt out of class in favour of negotiated IEP e.g. law, environment, economics.
- More complex meeting material.
- Choice of task.
- Climbing the mountain.

---

<sup>1</sup> I would like to acknowledge to considerable input that Ms Wendy Perkins had in this section. Her Leadership Learning Report on Differentiation proved invaluable.

- Acceleration with content complexity.
- Enrichment with content processing.
- Critical literacy questions, e.g. thinking beyond the text.
- Comparing texts.
- Mind-stretching choices into extension tasks.
- Recommendation of advanced personal reading, especially classics.
- Computer art and graphical work.
- Individual goal setting.
- Show them the big picture and devise methods of achieving.
- Teacher conferencing.
- Timed talking activities.
- Cooperative learning<sup>2</sup>.
- Formative assessment<sup>2</sup>.
- Student generated questioning<sup>2</sup>.
- Critical reflection<sup>2</sup>.
- Provide regular skilled feedback to each student<sup>3</sup>.
- Get regular skilled feedback on your performance<sup>3</sup>.
- Ensure that each student develops a rich conscious repertoire of thinking skills<sup>3</sup>.
- Make explicit the thinking skills that you are teaching<sup>3</sup>.
- Focus of the development of actionable knowledge rather than the acquisition of information<sup>3</sup>.
- Ensure that each student regularly experiences the ecstasy of learning<sup>3</sup>.
- Show students that learning is interactive –teach them to action learn<sup>3</sup>



#### Group:

- Groups organised according to strengths or weaknesses with a variable composition.
- Giving leadership in mixed groupings.
- Cooperative learning situation.

<sup>2</sup> Russell Bishop found these four elements critical in promoting culturally appropriate and responsive contexts for learning.

<sup>3</sup> Similarly John Edwards of Australia stresses equally important elements in promoting individual learning.

- Extension groups involving research and investigation work with more open ended focus, includes own interest.
- Think-pair-share.
- Ensure students have time and opportunities to discuss and share ideas prior to writing. Discussion, pair and group work opportunities, whereby students have the opportunity to rehearse, learn from their peers and try out ideas and the discussion is not curtailed too quickly.
- Numbered heads together.

Discussion, pair and group work opportunities, whereby students have the opportunity to rehearse, learn from their peers and try out ideas, in encouraged in most subjects. Questioning is often skilled but sometimes students' discussions are curtailed too quickly to move the students on the writing.

The use of homework is satisfactory.

- Use of ICT
- Interactive whiteboards

A typical lesson would involve the teacher in presenting some problems to the students having them work on them individually for about ten minutes, then join with one or two other students to further consider the problem and the different ideas that each student brought to the task. Following this the small groups of students would then be responsible for presenting their methods and justification for solving the problem to the whole.

### **Implementation:**

As stated earlier raising the Comprehension levels is also a priority for the English Department. Differentiation principles have easily fitted into this learning area. The National English Monitoring Project (NEMP) cites:

*"Students would benefit from a stronger focus on comprehension through developing their conscious use of reading strategies that involve making connections and inferences".*

To this end the English Department have invested in a collection of the Complete Comprehension range of text published in Australia. In 2005 teaching staff have used the levels of questioning (similar in principle to Bloom's Taxonomy – hierarchy) to develop students' comprehension skills. Staff have specifically taught the students comprehension skills, developed their ability to elicit deeper information and make wider connection. These skills fall under an assortment of hierarchical learning challenges:

1. **On the surface:** Basic literal questions. Answer clearly written in the text.
2. **Discoveries:** Questions about the purpose, structure and features of the text, e.g. audience, language and construction.
3. **Delving deeply:** Inferential or interpretive questions. Students use their own knowledge and thinking, as well as information from the text to answer questions.
4. **Hidden depths:** Creative, critical or higher-order thinking questions. Students need to individually respond and justify their response.
5. **Extend yourself:** Open-ended questions. Opportunity to respond to the text at a deeper level by writing, viewing, listening and speaking.

### **Evaluation**

Differentiation provides a framework for designing and teaching lessons which infuse specific thinking skills into standard content instruction. Teachers must develop a clear understanding of the key concepts of a field of knowledge enabling them to have clarity of purpose in their unit planning. Teachers also need to be reflective about their explorative questioning skills.

It is well known that primary students learn to read and at secondary school they read to learn. However, teaching thinking also produces learning. Ron Richart, Harvard project Zero recommends that teachers need to "create cultures of thinking in our schools that actively engage students in thinking on an ongoing basis." Classrooms must be thoughtful, learning

must be personalised, embrace higher-order thinking and impart knowledge and skills that requires them to solve critical problems.

Guy Clacton, University of Bristol, described a "Fourth Generation" approach is now emerging which is more long term, more low key, more about cultivation than training – and more powerful. The focus is on practical ways in which school and classroom cultures can strengthen the habits, values and dispositions that underpin a supple, confident attitude to life long learning.

### **Recommendations:**

To differentiate the content you are looking for ways to increase the complexity of the content to meet the individual learning needs of the students you are teaching. One way of increasing the complexity is by increasing the depth and sophistication of understanding the key concepts.

In a recent NEMP report it was reported that many students feel that they do not get specific feedback on what they are good at in reading and what they need to improve. Ms Perkins can see opportunities for this type of feedback in situations where students are becoming more able to make their own learning connections. The AsTle programme currently being implemented would be invaluable in giving this feedback.

The idea of responding to learner's needs can take teachers out of their comfort zones. Perspectives and belief systems are challenged. This all takes time – something teachers do not have. At Wakatipu High School, English Department staff have adapted with enthusiasm, shared and discussed ideas. By collating resources into organised teaching packs the implementation of differentiation can be sustained consistently.

I would strongly advocate linking differentiation and thinking skills. In so many of my conversations, both in NZ and in the UK, there was more than an apparent synergy.

A couple of wonderful school/educational authority web sites confirmed this:

- [www.ltag.education.tas.gov.au](http://www.ltag.education.tas.gov.au) (this is lower case "L"tag)
- [www.kurwongbss.qld.edu.au](http://www.kurwongbss.qld.edu.au) and click on thinking skills

The new Te Pataka Matihiko (our Digital Storehouse) <http://www.tki.org.nz/r/digistore> also looks like a great new resource.

- [www.ascd.org](http://www.ascd.org) also has a wealth of information on thinking and differentiation.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The walk through need not be long, averaging no longer than five minutes in each classroom. The key is consistency and commitment.

Useful articles can be found in:

- ASCD Educational Leadership, May 2002, p34;
- ASCD Educational Leadership, Feb 2005, p52
- ASCD Educational Leadership, April 2006, p14

## WALKTHROUGHS

Summary from Educational Leadership, May 2000

### 1. Benefits of Walkthroughs

Benefits of implementing a daily schedule of short, unscheduled walkthroughs are:

- Principal and senior staff become more familiar with the school's curriculum and teachers' instructional practices.
- Principal and senior staff can gauge the climate of a school: Are students engaged? Are cross-curricular concepts a part of everyday teaching? Are new teachers catching on?
- A team atmosphere develops as teachers, Principal and senior staff examine instruction and student motivation and achievement together.
- Principal and senior staff establish themselves as instructional mentors, influencing teaching, learning and ongoing school renewal.

### 2. Getting Started

Together, teachers, Principal and senior staff can determine their school's approach by asking several important questions:

- How can the walkthrough process contribute to our school's approach to renewal?
- What are some of the reasons for conducting periodic walkthroughs? Who should visit classrooms? Which rooms? How often?
- What questions should observers bring to walkthroughs? What questions should observers ask student?
- What other data can we gather and analyse to complement insights from walkthroughs?
- How can we create a positive experience for all participants?

### 3. Basic Procedures and Questions

The observer's questions can include:

- Is there a clear academic focus? *Can I ascertain the purpose and expectations of the lesson when I enter the classroom, through what I see on the wall or hear from the teacher and students?*
- What is the level of student engagement? *In general, is the movement, sound, or silence, productive? Is student engagement high (80-100%), medium (40-79%), or low (0-39%)? What specific student behaviours indicate the level of engagement?*
- What do the walls of the classroom show? *Is the environment pleasant and innovative? Look for displays of*
  - *Exemplary work*
  - *Specific scoring criteria (or specific standards and targeted benchmark skills)*
  - *Writing samples with scoring rubrics*
  - *Helpful information on mechanics of writing (such as capitalisation and punctuation skills)*
  - *Helpful information on problem solving*
  - *Classroom agreements (ground rules)*

- How well do student understand the assignment? *Select at least two students to speak to quietly and quickly, either at their desks or in the corridor. Ask them some questions:*
  - *What are you working on?*
  - *Why are you doing this work?*
  - *Is what you are working on interesting to you?*
  - *Is what you are working on in other classes interesting to you?*
  - *What do you do in this class if you need extra help?*
  - *May I see one or two examples of work from this class?*

Students' answers should go beyond identifying the assignment. The goal is for students to be able to identify the skills they are working on and why. Encourage them to do their best.

- Do students communicate effectively and demonstrate critical thinking skills? *Do I see evidence of productive communication styles and higher-order questioning? Can students respond in ways that include personal perspectives and imaginative and thoughtful analysis of new information?*

### **Post Script:**

#### **Smart and Good Schools**

Throughout history, and in cultures all over the world, education rightly conceived has had great goals to help students become good. They need character for both. The 2005 report *Smart and Good High schools: Integrating Excellence and Ethics for Success in School, Work and Beyond* by Thomas Lickona and Matthew Davidson views character as the cornerstone of success in school and life.

Eight strengths of character, taken together, offer a vision of a person flourishing over a lifetime:

- Lifelong learner and integrative thinker
- Diligent and capable performer
- Socially and emotionally skilled person
- Ethical thinker
- Respectful and responsible moral agent
- Self-disciplined person who pursues a healthy lifestyle
- Contributing community member and democratic citizen
- Spiritual person engaged in crafting a life of noble purpose

The report describes promising classroom and school wide practices that can help foster the eight strengths through an ethical learning community. It also describes practices that create a professional ethical learning community in which staff members work together to maximise their positive impact on excellence and ethics and the eight strengths of character.

To down load a free copy, go to [www.cortland.edu/character/highschool](http://www.cortland.edu/character/highschool)

Attached is a copy of the Walkthrough Observation Sheet.

# Bibliography

Levin B *Leadership Implications Of Some Positive Developments In Educational Policy* pp9-11

McAlpine D and Moltzen R (2004) *Gifted and Talented: New Zealand Perspectives, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*, Kanuka Grove Press  
pp 345 – 367

Perkins W (2005) *Differentiation For Top Students*. Leadership and Learning Development Project Action Research  
2005. Wakatipu High School, Queenstown, NZ

Silverman LK (2000) *Upside – Down Brilliance The Visual Spatial Learner*. De Leon Publishing: Denver, CO USA

Sutton, M *Coaching For Pedagogical Change* p32

Tomlinson CA (1999) *The Differentiated Classroom* ASCD: Alexandria VA, USA

Tomlinson CA & Kalbfleisch ML (1998) “Teach Me Teach My Brain; A Call For Differentiated Classrooms”  
*Educational Leadership* Vol 61 n2 pp 6-11 Oct 2003

Wormeli R (2006) Differentiating for Tweens. *ASCD Educational Leadership* pp14-19

# WALKTHROUGH OBSERVATION SHEET

Principal/Senior Staff:

TEACHER: \_\_\_\_\_

OBSERVER: \_\_\_\_\_

CLASS LEVEL: \_\_\_\_\_/SUBJECT: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

✓ if obvious, NA if not applicable, X if not obvious

## A: Planning

<b>1. EVIDENCE OF PROFILES FOR THE CLASS:</b>	Self	Principal
Identify the range of students in the following area:		
A. Needs arising from age range in class	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B. Curriculum content being differentiated	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C. Planning is for differentiated instruction	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>2. ASSESSMENT EVIDENCE</b>	Self	Principal
A. Pre-assessment identified in lesson/unit plan	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B. Formative, authentic and summative	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C. Assessment tasks meet the needs of the range of student ability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D. Assessment by stated objectives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E. Records of assessment are kept	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## B. Observations

<b>1. CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT</b> <i>(after Clarke 1997 p 328)</i>	Self	Principal
A. There is a space for students to simultaneously participate in a variety of activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B. Students have access to materials with a range of levels and topic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C. There is space for the students to engage in a variety of instructional groupings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D. There are areas supportive of student self management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E. Desks are not individually owned	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
F. Ambience supportive of exploration, application, personal construction of knowledge	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
G. Emotional climate is warm and accepting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
H. The class operates with clear guidelines decided upon cooperatively	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I. Instruction based on individual students needs and interests	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
J. Student activities, products, ideas are reflected around the classroom	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
K. Student choice is evident in planning instruction and products of evaluation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
L. Building/practising affective skills are consistent and valued part of curriculum/teaching day	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
M. Students and teachers show evidence of shared responsibility for learning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
N. Empowering language is evident between teacher and students and among students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
O. Students show evidence of independent learning/skills of enquiry/self evaluation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>2. TEACHING TECHNIQUES</b>	Self	Principal
A. Programme of work <b>meets identified needs of the students</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B. Issues identified in the Class profiles are being addressed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C. A variety of teaching methods and learning activities are evident	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D. <b>Learning Intentions</b> for the students are clearly expressed, realistic and challenging	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E. Emphasis is given to assisting student to learn for themselves	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>3. MOTIVATION OF STUDENTS</b>	Self	Principal
A. All aspects of <b>learning</b> are celebrated	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B. Student's <b>learning</b> is encouraged and praised	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C. Rapport is established with students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D. Students are engaged in <b>learning</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E. All students participate in respectful work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
F. Students and teacher collaborate in learning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>4. CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT</b>	Self	Principal
A. <b>School-wide Learning Behaviours</b> are applied consistently and fairly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B. <b>Classroom Learning Behaviours</b> are encouraged and reinforced	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C. <b>Classroom routines</b> are established and applied consistently	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D. A <b>safe physical and emotional</b> working environment is provided	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E. A positive and <b>stimulating</b> learning environment is provided	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
F. Homework is regularly set and monitored	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
G. The School Diary is used to record homework and communicate with parents/caregivers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
H. On balance, the following are achieved;	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Teacher uses gender inclusive language	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• One sex / group etc does not dominate teacher time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Good working atmosphere	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Students are on task	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>SUMMARY STATEMENT</b>	
Principal .....	Date .....

*NB: Remember, differentiating is about providing a variety of means and supports for mastering a standard, not changing the content of standards.*

.....  
Teacher signature

.....  
Principal's signature

.....  
Dated