

Sabbatical Report

Sustaining Teacher Capability

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Thanks to:

Our Lady of Lourdes Board of Trustees for approving my sabbatical
My Deputy Principals, Jody and Colette who led the school so capably in my absence.
My office manager Kath who keeps the school ticking along so well and for her support of the DP's in their acting Principal role
Our Lady of Lourdes staff for their support
Ministry Of Education for providing this opportunity
Colleagues I visited and surveyed who shared their knowledge and wisdom so generously with me

Purpose and Rationale

Over the past several years we have spent considerable time and funds on professional development to raise teacher capability in different curriculum areas. This had been effective in the short term. I was interested in how to sustain and transfer raised effective practice across all learning areas regardless of the curriculum focus in any one year. I wanted to know 'Is it possible to achieve sustainability, and if so, what factors would contribute to it?'

Activities Undertaken (Methodology)

In order to gain a broad perspective and reach a larger number of colleagues from a range of different sizes and types of school, I sent out a survey as well as personally visiting several schools. Very useful information was collected and responses are collated under the specific questions asked below. I also undertook professional discussions and readings.

Survey Questions:

What systems do you have in place that measure teacher effectiveness?
What are the key indicators you look for/expect when a teacher is 'capable'?
What practices do you have in place to share good practice?
What do you find to be the most effective model for PD delivery?
What other structures and systems do you have in place to ensure PD is most effective?

Findings from the Survey Questions

Systems in place that measure teacher effectiveness;

- Appraisals based on teacher Inquiry
- Regular class observations by senior management. Observations based around teacher goals, PD focus and school expectations. Feedback provided for teachers and followed up at next observation.
- Feedback/ critique from outside facilitators
- Professional Learning Group Programmes
- Data analysis to assess impact of teaching
- Monitoring meetings to look at strategies teachers use and what impact they are having
- Videos of teacher practice followed by “practice analysis conversations” to support teachers in their inquiry
- Self review questionnaires for staff - a reflection on their practice and the PD that has been carried out over the past year. This is followed up by discussion with Principal.
- Self review timetable and procedures to ensure a consistent, balanced approach to reviewing programmes and practice throughout the school. A staff member is allocated a unit to lead areas of major review.
- Feedback from students and parents
- Annual attestation quality assurance checklist against the professional standards
- Collecting in teacher’s planning and providing written feedback

Key indicators you look for/expect when a teacher is ‘capable’

- Prepared to contribute actively and with an open mind in school wide PD
- An expectation they are still learning and be prepared to set goals and work to achieve them
- Have high expectations for every student
- Work collaboratively with all staff members
- Be open to feedback from colleagues
- Planning and assessment reflects what is happening in the classroom and there is evidence of reflection of their own practice
- Feedback to students is focussed and effective and based on the learning intention and success criteria of the lesson
- Teachers are proactive in their communication with parents
- Students in their room are happy, know the purpose of their learning, are aware of what they need to do to be successful at the task at hand and that learning is seen as a positive experience
- Progress is evident in every student
- Their classroom environment and practice reflects school culture and expectations.

Practices to share good practice?

- Team meetings which include a time for discussing target group students
- Observations of teachers who have been identified as experts in their field within the school
- Staff meetings include opportunities to share effective practice
- School and team assemblies provide the opportunity to share outcomes of classroom programmes
- Mentoring, coaching programmes
- QLC/PLC Group Programmes which include discussion of professional readings
- Cross cluster workshops and mini conferences

- School wide expos
- 'Techie brekkies' that staff share the leadership of dependent on their area of expertise
- Sharing on the virtual learning network and cluster wiki
- Good teaching examples on e-portfolios

Most effective model for PD

- PD that involves whole staff and preferably on site
- PD that is based on need rather than externally driven priorities
- Use of respected facilitators who know the school culture
- A mix of outside facilitators and expertise on own staff
- One focus for the year or even up to two years
- PD that is centred around student achievement rather than teacher behaviour
- LPDP based around the inquiry cycle which means that it is needs driven and building from strengths

Structures to ensure PD is effective

- Reflective practise (verbal and written)
- Surveys following implementation of PD initiatives to review the impact, teachers capability and teachers commitment to sustaining the initiative.
- Ensuring PD is aligned to strategic direction and self review outcomes
- Focus on keeping the main thing manageable and not letting people flounder under lots of different pressures.
- Follow up PD for new staff
- Being part of a cluster with common focus
- PD goals linked to appraisal
- Feedback from PLC sessions
- Analysis of student achievement in targeted area

Further relevant information was found from a range of research and professional readings. A reference list has been included at the end of this report if you are interested in reading further. The reading that best explains the findings is Lai, M. McNaughton, S. Hsiao, S. (2010) Sustaining improvements in student achievement; Myth or reality? (pp. 11-17). *Teaching and Learning set 1*. The important factors for sustainability are listed with *'the cycle of inquiry that allows the school to learn, using evidence, the effectiveness of its practices, what it needs to do next and what it needs to stop doing p. 11) as the first factor. I can see that this has impact for the leadership of a school to ensure practices and decision making are based on these key factors.*

Implications

The implications from these findings are numerous. There is a clear message that the practices in place in my school support sustained raised teacher capability. The direction that we have moved to in recent years is one that is useful to be continued and built upon. Leadership that supports these findings is important. Quong and Walker (2010) state "being strategic is more than strategic planning, or strategic intent, it is about deliberate and sustained practice.' (p. 22). Ongoing engagement in professional learning requires finding the right facilitators who use current practice that can be woven across all curriculum. Evidence based practice and assessment for learning are foundational in the sustainability model as this is how teacher effectiveness can be measured. The need to

include deep and meaningful student voice in the teaching and learning cycle is an area that has far reaching implications. The purpose of student voice is to ensure needs of diverse learners and groups of students such as Maori, Pasifika and English as a Second Language are met by every teacher. The professional development needs to have strong pedagogical content.

Conclusion

The sabbatical has allowed me to share ideas about raising and sustaining teacher capability with colleagues and I will do so upon my return to school with staff and the Board. I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to reflect on this topic and feel reassured that we are indeed heading in the right direction. It has been of great value to have had this time for reflection and to interact with colleagues to discuss deep educational issues.

References

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