

## **Sabbatical Report:**

**JOINING THE DOTS:** how do principals link their school's charter target goals to performance management, teaching as inquiry, and teachers' professional portfolios to best address their students' learning needs?

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This sabbatical report is not intended to be an academic report nor is it intended to critique other schools in their processes and practices.

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## **Executive Summary**

The inquiry was planned to enable me to visit schools in both the North Island and the South Island including: schools of varying decile rating, schools ranging in size and schools in rural, suburban and urban areas of New Zealand. A key outcome from the diversity of schools visited was the commitment of each principal to provide the best possible learning environment for every student in their school. In doing this they took the mandatory requirements required of schools by the Ministry of Education and made them work towards supporting student achievement, as opposed to viewing them as a compliance just to be done.

Principals viewed their students as being central to the decision making happening in their schools. They used their knowledge of effective leadership to motivate their management personnel and their teachers into becoming open to learning. Over time principals have joined together the range of Ministry of Education requirements such as: school charter

achievement targets; end of year reporting inclusive of an analysis of variance; National Standards; Teaching as Inquiry as in the New Zealand Curriculum (2007); performance management and teacher professional portfolios to make them part of their school's everyday business, tailoring them according to the processes and practices already in the school.

A common theme found in most schools was the belief in the power of teacher professional development. Principals have linked professional development to the requirements of performance management, and further linked professional development to Teaching as Inquiry, as a means to more specifically target student learning needs. Student learning is linked to the criteria required by the National Standards. With clear vision, effective leadership, effective processes and procedures within each school, student achievement remains the core business with the many elements of compliance linked in support of the core business rather than being the driving force of it.

### **Purpose of the Inquiry**

The requirements of New Zealand schools by the Ministry of Education have taken on change more recently, with school charters needing to contain some descriptions of student learning needs with end of year reporting containing an analysis of the outcomes. Teachers are required to reflect on, and be appraised in line with, the Registered Teacher Criteria as well as keeping a portfolio of the evidence of their work. Teachers are also required to be attested against the Teacher Professional Standards. Teaching as Inquiry is a pedagogy described in the New Zealand Curriculum (2007) which supports teachers as they look critically at the learning needs of their students and the outcomes of their practice.

The intent of this inquiry is to help develop ways to link Forrest Hill School's student achievement charter goals with the work done by teachers in their use of the Registered Teacher Criteria within a performance management framework. This is to include the use of Teaching as Inquiry as defined in the NZC, and each teacher's commitment to keeping a professional portfolio demonstrating their on-going professional growth in providing quality teaching to support the learning and achievements of all students.

### **Background**

In the mid 1980's there was much in the way of public sector reform under the then Labour led government. In the education sector there became a lean towards schools requiring to

act autonomously, to increase the home-school partnership, and to improve educational opportunity and achievement for disadvantaged groups, particularly Māori children and children from low-income homes. In 1989 'Tomorrow's Schools' was set up with the promise from David Lange, the then Prime Minister and Minister of Education that it would result in:

*"....more immediate delivery of resources to schools, more parental and community involvement, and greater teacher responsibility ..... leading to improved learning opportunities for the children of this country. (Minister of Education, David Lange August 1988).*

The government's responsibility for education became that of monitoring educational outcomes as well as providing resourcing and staffing. A survey completed ten years after the introduction of the decentralised model of schooling in New Zealand showed that hard work was required at the school level to make self-managing schools a reality.

*There was tension between people in schools and in the newly formed government agencies. There were constant deadlines which kept changing, along with requirements. The wave of paperwork and the contentious issue of bulk-funding teachers' salaries raised doubts about the reality of school-government partnership. But partnership at school level usually worked. Few wanted to go back to the old system, but misgivings remained about inadequate resourcing and growing inequity between schools.*

(Cathy Wylie: Impact of Education Reforms 2012)

Over the years since the 1989 'Tomorrow's Schools' there have been many reforms that have helped to shape the education framework that we have now, starting from the Ministry of Education 'hands off, policy only' concept, to include (as some examples): the abolition of zoning in 1991 and the reinstatement of zoning in 1998; the abolition of teacher registration in 1991 and the reinstatement of this in 1996; the National Education Guidelines issued in 1993 consisting of national educational goals and national curriculum statements; bulk funding being removed in 2001 after a ten year trial, abolition of the School Inspectorate and the presence of the Education Review Office and then in 2007 a revised New Zealand Curriculum (NZCER Impact of Reforms).

In 2008 the then National party introduced a policy of National Standards in reading, writing and mathematics for primary-aged students. The intent of the standards was to lift the tail of under achievement across New Zealand schools. Draft standards were released for

consultation in May 2009 and the standards introduced at the beginning of the 2010 school year with the requirement for schools to report on student achievement using the National Standards by 2011. The Ministry of Education began to provide professional development for teachers, and further to this, National Standard documentation continues to be distributed to schools outlining in greater detail descriptions of what the standards contain and exemplars of what the learning must look like.

In more recent years there has been the requirement for schools to include student achievement target goals in relation to the national standards in their annual charters. An analysis of the variances between set goals and actual student achievement outcomes is to be reported on as part of each school's end of year annual reporting. These requirements are all part of the Ministry of Education's drive to raise student achievement.

Since 1997 the Ministry of Education has made performance management, including teacher and principal appraisal, a mandatory requirement reflective of section 77c of the State Sector Act 1988. This is a compliance that school boards are responsible for and that principals must enact. It is asserted in the Best Evidence Synthesis: School Leadership and School Outcomes (Robinson, V; Hohepa, C. 2009) that teacher appraisal is effective in raising student achievement. Of importance, however, it is identified by the writers that for appraisal to improve teaching and learning it should not function as a compliance based evaluation of teaching, but rather should provide an opportunity for teachers and leaders to inquire together into the impact of teaching on student learning. The writers assert that teachers having 'learning goals' inspire a different chain of thought and behaviour to having 'performance goals'. Performance goals encourage teachers to choose those that they will achieve, avoiding the sorts of experiences that are necessary in order to grow and flourish. 'Learning goals' require the taking of risk – for the teacher who doesn't worry about making mistakes, leading to new learning, change and growth.

Teacher appraisal in New Zealand occurs in two specific instances: to provide evidence for the renewal of registration to teach, and as part of the employer's performance management process for salary progression and professional learning. There is a problematic aspect, however, with two different sets of teaching standards that describe the expectation of the work of a teacher: the Registered Teacher Criteria developed by the New Zealand Teachers Council and the Teacher Professional Standards that identify three levels of competence associated with the New Zealand Education Institute (NZEI) Collective Agreement. An investigation completed by the OECD New Zealand (2012) identifies that schools often lack clarity about what standards are used in performance

management processes often leading to the amalgamation of the Registered Teacher Criteria and the Teacher Professional Standards.

During a review completed by the Education Review Office in 2014 it was noted that most of the schools reviewed had 'compliant' performance management systems that included all the accountability aspects required yet there was limited evidence of performance management as an integral component of overall school improvement (ERO 2014). 'High quality' appraisal compared with 'compliant' appraisal was clarified further as being linked to the goals of the school's strategic plan, to the annual plan and to decisions about teacher professional learning and development. Leadership is an important component of the appraisal process used in schools. With focused leadership can come the building of professional capability to improve outcomes for all students where appraisal is embedded into an improvement focused self – review system (ERO 2014).

Good appraisal practice to support the raising of student achievement involves the teacher setting their appraisal goals reflective of their student's learning needs rather than what is going to be taught (Education Review Office, 2014). Teachers follow through from their direct acts of teaching by looking deeply into student achievement outcomes to notice the impact of their teaching practice, analysing what aspects of their practice need to improve. This process of teacher self-review reflects the process of Teaching as Inquiry (New Zealand Curriculum, 2007) which is done cyclically during the teaching and learning process in the classroom (Robinson, V. Hohepa, M. & Lloyd, C. 2009; Timperley 2013; Education Review Office 2014). The evaluation of the effectiveness of a teacher therefore, will include their ability to strengthen the relationship between their own teaching and the achievement of their student (Sennema, C; Robinson, V. 2007).

Teaching as Inquiry is a methodology that requires teachers to analyse their teaching practice in light of the learning response evidence of their students. Student learning goals are specific along with the act of teaching used to address the learning need. The cyclical nature of Teaching as Inquiry enables the teacher to respond to the learning outcome in time for the next learning session. Leaders have a responsibility to set up systems and procedures in their school that support teachers in their use of the inquiry process including regular opportunity to discuss their inquiry plans and outcomes with colleagues and the expectation for teachers to routinely carry out the process (Education Review Office 2012). Robinson and Lai (2006) also emphasise the value of learning conversations in educational settings to improve teaching practice and student achievement. Collaborative inquiry is one of the most powerful enablers of change in practice that can influence student learning

(Katz & Earl 2010). In the review completed by the Education Review Office on teachers' use of inquiry (ERO 2012) a recommendation was made for school leaders to create opportunities to sustain professional learning about effective teaching practice by incorporating Teaching as Inquiry into their performance management system.

## **Methodology**

To gather information to help inform my inquiry, I felt it important to have face to face conversations with principals in their own school setting. It was important that the principals could see me as a principal colleague committed to doing the best for the students in my school in the same way that they were doing in their respective schools.

To ensure a wide perspective I planned on visiting a range of schools, making initial contact by phone outlining my sabbatical inquiry and inviting interest. All principals contacted were interested in the inquiry area and accepted this opportunity. This resulted in visits to a total of thirteen principals from schools in Wellington, Christchurch, Kaiapoi, Oroua, Nelson and Auckland. The schools spanned from decile 3 to 10 and were from rural areas, suburban areas and urban areas, ranging in size from very small to medium and to very large.

Using email I followed up my initial contact with the principals with a copy of my inquiry proposal and invited follow up communication as was necessary to ensure the principals were fully informed about my role and intentions.

During each interview, with permission, I captured the dialogue using an ipad and then wrote up transcripts at the end of each day. This enabled me to look for trends and patterns which then became the content for the written report.

## **Findings**

The principals who contributed to this investigation spoke of their awareness of what seemed to be continued levels of compliance required by the Ministry of Education as well as the New Zealand Teachers Council. The requirements mostly referred to included:

- School charters that describe the school's achievement target groups, the achievement goals and an outline of how the groups will be catered for, followed by the reporting of the outcomes to the Ministry of Education on a template referred to as the Analysis of Variance.

- The introduction of the Registered Teacher Criteria and the need for these to focus within performance management, whilst attestation is required using the Teacher Professional Standards.
- The requirement for teachers to be able to produce evidence of successful teaching by means of a professional portfolio.
- The introduction of National Standards and the need to report student achievement against these.

Professional discussions with each principal revealed a common solid commitment to 'make good' of the requirements, with each principal having developed, with various levels of teacher involvement, structures, systems and procedures reflective of their professional beliefs. The principals demonstrated a range of knowledge and understandings of current research relating to: teaching and learning processes of both children and adults, ie: the way children learn and the way adults learn; effective leadership; quality teaching and the effects these all have on student learning and achievement. This knowledge has been the foundation that has enabled the principals to confidently lead the essential processes of review, next steps, and future implementation with further on-going review. There was a common concern that added requirements from the Ministry of Education and the NZ Teachers Council could well become added levels of work for teachers, taking away time which principals considered better put into the analysis of student learning in response to teaching practices. Principals asserted that it would be easy just to 'tick off' the compliance requirements but considered this attitude contributing to a waste of thought, energy and time.

### **National Standards; Target Groups; Reporting of Achievement**

In each school, analysed end of year achievement data, both summative and formative is used to inform the teaching target goal/s for the following year. These are written into the school's updated Charter and sent to the Ministry of Education as required using the templates issued by the Ministry of Education. One principal described how the school's team leaders each lead their team's achievement analysis which is then sent to the principal and to the curriculum leaders. The curriculum leaders, using the data, complete an analysis of progress and achievement across each year level in their specific curriculum area with the analysis outcomes going to the Principal and whole staff. In this same school syndicate progress and achievement is presented to the Board of Trustees by team leaders, year level progress and achievement is presented by the curriculum leaders and whole school achievement trends and patterns are presented by the principal. Many of the



larger schools differentiated the end of year reporting of national standards to the Board of Trustees in a similar way.

A small number of principals, mostly in smaller schools, clarified that when National Standard information was completed, they themselves examined the collated end of year over all teacher judgement information, identifying the trends and patterns that are evident before involving whole staff in the analysis process. Using the trends and patterns noted some of the principals stated that they involved their Board of Trustees in the recognition of the target groups, whilst others more directly told the Board of the identified target groups evidenced by the data analysis outcomes.

Some schools focused their target group priority on students who had over all teacher judgements (OTJ's) that were *well below* or *below* the national standard expectation, whilst some other schools focused their target groups on students who had OTJ's that placed them *only just at expectation* or who were *just below expectation*. It was clarified by a principal that the students who were *below* and *well below* expectation had sources of support provided for them by the school anyway, and so were not going to be disadvantaged for not being labelled as a charter target group. Another principal shared her concern that the school now tended to be less focused on 'stretching' the students who had potential, due to so much focus going into the lower achieving students.

One principal explained that if midyear OTJ evidence demonstrated new areas of concern then new target groups were established and the charter description was changed midyear to reflect this. A small number of principals explained that although each year their schools identified a range of target groups as recommended by teachers, not all of these are reflected in the charter as such. These principals clarified further that the groups not identified in the charter receive the same quality teaching and intervention opportunities as those identified in the charter.

### **The Role of Performance Management**

All principals viewed performance management as the improvement factor in teaching and student learning. The principals spoke confidently about the links they had made between teacher appraisal goals and the charter target group learning needs. The principals also ensured that there were strong links between performance management and Teaching as Inquiry with one principal describing Teaching as Inquiry as being the 'mechanism' of appraisal.

Each school has developed their own processes and procedures for teacher appraisal. Most schools require two to three formal appraisal meetings a year where the appraiser and the teacher discuss findings from the Teaching as Inquiry cycles, looking particularly at progress made by the students and the reasons that accounted for this, as well as developments from a second individual appraisal goal. Most formal appraisal meetings occur after school or in classroom release time with these involving dialogue between the appraiser and the teacher. In several schools coaching was described as being the communication style during appraisal meetings.

As well as formal appraisal meetings appraisers complete short informal observations in classrooms which are followed up with short feedback meetings, either soon after the observation or at the end of the day. These informal meetings are in addition to the scheduled and more formalised two or three meetings a year. In some schools, mostly larger schools, the principal has delegated the role of appraiser but attends some appraisal meetings, sometimes unannounced. They also have a meeting with each teacher towards the end of the year in reference to the appraisal process, outcomes and next steps.

Most principals identified that their teachers are required to have two goals each year as part of the appraisal process: one being focused on the needs of a targeted group of students related to the school's charter target group in reading, writing or maths and the other being more aligned to the school's strategic education goals. Several principals described the second goal as being suitable for an 'Action Research' inquiry involving several cycles of inquiry on-going through the year. One of these principals questioned the reasoning behind teachers having to conclude an Action Research inquiry at the end of the year, citing the value in enabling the teacher to continue with the process to go more deeply into the big question and letting the inquiry come to a natural end. Another principal explained that the teachers in his school are required to complete an action research project each year reflective of one of the school's annual goals, which could be linked to their Teaching as Inquiry work. A literature review is required and data needs to be drawn from parents and students as well as other appropriate sources. Teachers are required to present their findings at the end of the year to an audience, which may be at a parent information day / afternoon / evening, or to the Board of Trustees, or to a cluster schools group (as some of the examples provided). Some teachers from this school have extended their research into a second year. The principal explained that many of the teachers have indicated that they feel more confident in themselves as teachers having been through this process, with several of them now embarking on postgraduate studies, with their assignment work dovetailing into their school action research projects.

With Teaching as Inquiry being used as the pedagogical approach to accelerating student progress, all principals described the importance for teachers to be critical in their analysis of student learning in relation to the effectiveness of their teaching practice. They also described the need for appraisers to be skilled in their use of a range of probing questions to engage teachers in conversations that required them to talk about their teaching practice effectiveness whilst drawing on evidence to support their beliefs.

Three principals spoke of their concern about the level of critical analysis in the conversations that appraisers had with their teachers, as well as the depth of thinking that teachers engaged in when examining student responses to their own teaching practices. The principals referenced their beliefs about the need for robust and evidenced conversations to literature, citing the Ministry of Education's Best Evidence Synthesis Programme, and work completed by researchers including: Timperly & Parr 2010; Sinnema & Robinson 2007; and Katz & Earl 2010. Two principals spoke about the need to train teachers and leaders in what to look for when they observe another teacher and how to develop productive conversations about teaching practices. Another principal described the need to 'grow the middle leaders', having noticed appraisal conversations being 'fluffy' in contrast to being 'precise'. The principal also believed that a lack of subject content knowledge by some teachers was a barrier to providing precise and solid feedback to students as to their next steps, and also to their own analysis of why a student's progress is not at the expected level.

### **Registered Teacher Criteria; Teacher Professional Standards; Tataiako**

As well as having a personal performance goal, teachers are required by the New Zealand Teachers Council to reflect on their teaching in light of the Registered Teacher Criteria. This is a more recent added layer of compliance and one that the principals who took part in this investigation have dealt with in a similar way: by requiring teachers to make their own links to the Registered Teacher Criteria when reflecting on their practice, and recording these links in their appraisal reporting document. The links are also discussed at appraisal meetings with the appraiser.

Several principals identified a difficulty that their teachers had in assigning an act of teaching to a specific Registered Teacher Criteria due to the nature of the criteria allowing for overlapping acts of teaching, thus making any process of using these in a linear way unproductive. Several principals reflected that their teachers did not know the Registered Teachers Criteria very well, to a degree which interfered with the depth of their reflections.

The principals asserted that the process of teacher reference to the criteria was only being carried out since it was a requirement. The Teacher Professional Standards are dealt with by most principals in a similar way, with teachers being required to make reflective links to these when working on their appraisal reporting. One principal described that when a teacher is due for attestation they meet together and they specifically talk about the Teacher Professional Standards in reference to the appraisal outcomes over the past three years and to the teaching and learning being carried out in the classroom in the current year. Another principal, who is experienced and recently appointed to a new school, explained that since she does not really know the capabilities of her staff yet, when an attestation has been required, she has observed in the teacher's classroom leading up to the required attestation and had referred back to previous appraisal documentation before making the attestation.

### **Teaching as Inquiry**

All principals view the process of Teaching as Inquiry as being central to focusing direct acts of teaching to the needs of the learner, and as such, a process that informs teacher appraisal and teacher competence.

In each school, Teaching as Inquiry is linked to teaching practice that is used to support charter target groups. Half of the schools considered a typical target inquiry group would consist of around five or so students, with principals explaining that this seemed to be a manageable number of students for this practice. Principals generally described that by using the process of inquiry, teachers are supported in the process of critically analysing their teaching practice in light of the learning outcomes demonstrated by their students. One principal spoke of a 'sense of urgency' relating to student needs being specifically addressed and that teaching strategies must be 'above and beyond' with the view that if the strategy doesn't work then 'change it.' Another principal shared a concern about teachers becoming so process driven that we could 'kill the love of learning' by being so 'prescriptive about teaching', and that this approach could frustrate and possibly put a 'ceiling on the learning' of more capable learners.

Some principals clarified that Teaching as Inquiry processes are also in use in a wider sense beyond the charter target students in their schools. There is some similarity in the way Teaching as Inquiry is used in each school with processes and practices developed ensuring the inquiry is embedded into the learning process. In some schools when a target student has achieved their learning goal they are removed from the focus of inquiry with

another student taking that space. In some other schools the same student will remain in the target inquiry group until the end of the year.

All principals described their belief in regular teacher involvement in collaborative practice analysis conversations. All of the schools require teaching teams to have meetings where part is devoted to conversations about student learning, progress made by the target students and the teaching strategies that have been used. In all of the schools, learning conversations are mostly weekly, and in some schools every three weeks or three times during a term. These conversations require teachers to talk in depth about the learning needs of their target group, the types of teaching strategies that have been used along with the evidence of these, along with the strategies that did not have the desired effect and why this was so. Principals explained that these conversations enabled teachers to trial teaching strategies that have worked for other teachers and to get help from each other when they didn't know what to do next.

Many principals advised that some team leaders provide readings for their team members with the expectation that these are to be read and will be discussed at a future meeting. Principals also reflected on the importance of team leaders knowing how to engage their teachers in analytical thinking conversations to get the best possible learning outcomes for both teachers and students. In some smaller schools the principals attended these meetings seeing their role as asking the deeper questions to get their teachers to reflect more deeply on their actions and the student response outcome. The principals saw their presence as a means of supporting a model of desired professional talk and the shape of learning conversations expected in the school. In larger schools the principals also attended such meetings – both announced and unannounced, not to just learn more about the progress that students in the school are making, but for gaining a growing confidence in the depth of critical analysis facilitated by the team leaders and the engagement demonstrated by the teachers. Quality levels of appraiser and team leader facilitation and the level of thinking by teachers were often reflected on by the principals with some concern.

Many of the schools had procedures that involved the team leaders talking at senior management meetings about where their teachers are with their Teaching as Inquiry processes. It was explained that the sharing supported the less experienced leaders as well as providing leadership tips or coaching tips. The sharing also enabled the identification of trends or patterns emerging, leading to decisions about professional development across the school or for groups of teachers reflective of need.

Around half of the principals had taken steps to increase the opportunity for teachers to be involved in learning conversations by creating alternative teacher meeting groups. In addition to the weekly team / hub meetings these principals have formed what they referred to as 'quality learning circle groups' or 'professional learning groups' which are organised vertically and so represented by teachers from across all year levels. Teachers in these groups are involved in wider conversations such as: professional development that individuals or groups might have completed, observations that have been made in other teachers' classrooms or in other schools. The discussions may centre on the 'second' appraisal goal that most teachers have, which in the main, is focused on the school's strategic direction or something particular to a teacher's practice. Readings and follow through discussions also feature at these meetings. Most of these principals noted that over time there had been growing levels of robust thinking and debate amongst teachers.

Half of the principals visited have invested in coaching as a method for engaging teachers in constructive conversation. These principals have noticed increased levels of competence demonstrated by the team leaders and appraisers in carrying out effective conversations, leading to teachers becoming more critical as they reflective on and analyse their own teaching practices. Four of these principals noticed that even when teachers engaged in informal learning conversations during the day they were now tending to use coaching conversations. In one middle sized school, the fully released deputy principal, who has completed a full training course in coaching, has become the coach for all of the teachers in the school. She supports teachers in the development of their Teaching as Inquiry work, provides readings for teachers as and when appropriate and carries out 'walk through' visits in classrooms across the school, looking particularly at teachers working with target groups. Another school does similarly by having a mentor teacher available for others to go to.

### **Principals / Appraisers Visiting Classrooms**

There are variations of belief held by the principals about visiting classrooms and observing teacher practice. The appraisal processes described by the Ministry of Education, NZ Teachers Council and in the Education Review Office Report (May 2014) highlight the need for principals / appraisers to observe in classrooms and to observe teachers as they teach with follow up feedback conversations. Some principals spoke about their belief in classroom / teacher observations with feedback being crucial to the process of teacher improvement. In most schools the principal visits classrooms in the form of a series of 'walk throughs'. These seem to be mainly 10 to 15 minute visits. The principals will observe teaching that is taking place, what the students are engaged in and will collect student

voice by chatting to students as they are working. One principal spoke about how she also looks for evidence relating to the Registered Teacher Criteria and the cultural competencies as described in Tataiako (Ministry of Education 2011). If there is anything of concern noticed then there will be a meeting to talk about this after the visit. In some schools, mainly larger schools where the appraiser is the team or syndicate leader, this person will also complete unannounced walk through visits. Some appraisers provided feedback straight way whilst a small number gave no immediate feedback but followed up the visit promptly with a meeting enabling the teacher to talk about what they were doing when the appraiser was in the room, why this was happening, whether it was successful or not as well as the reasons as to why it was successful or not.

In many of the schools visited, teachers worked in 'hubs' of three or four teachers where the pedagogy reflected co-operative teaching. It was explained by the principals that the teachers were used to being observed by other people at any time during the day. In these learning environments teachers were able to learn from each other in an authentic set up, they were supported when dealing with challenging situations, and all the teachers in the hub were responsible for all of the students. 'Co-teaching' also tended to support teachers to grow their levels of accountability towards their work and the outcomes that they effect by means of the de-privatisation that surrounds a cooperative styled pedagogy. One principal further explained how he completes a walk through the teaching hubs making specific observations which are then followed up with feedback to the teachers together, thus enabling all teachers to learn from the feedback. The leaders of hub teams also do this.

A concern was shared by a principal about the potential for walk through visits becoming contrived as well as a 'tick box' process, reflective more of a school based formulaic and compliance exercise rather than one to engage teachers into analysing their own practice with an appraiser or teaching colleague. The principal shared a genuine concern about the many templates available on the internet designed to be used for 'checking the presence' of certain teaching acts and learning programmes, which on their own are simply a compliance with no quality attached. The principal described his belief that Teaching as Inquiry, along with actual evidence to substantiate observations and conversations was at the heart of enhancing student learning and should be the driving force of appraisal.

There was a belief shared by a small number of principals that when appraisal is 'done to teachers' it can inadvertently turn teachers into becoming dependent learners. Over time teachers have learned that they will be appraised by means of being observed, having

meetings and a report written up by the appraiser at the end of the year for them. Teachers are sometimes given readings by their appraiser and teachers will ensure they use 'best practice' when being observed for appraisal purposes. Teachers will be given feedback by the appraiser and from this a goal is likely to be identified for them for their future development. This small number of principals recalled 'reasons' provided by teachers for not responding to certain appraisal requirements reflective of a dependence mind-set such as: I didn't get any feedback; I haven't been given readings; I wasn't told what to do; I can't find my performance goal. The principals asserted that instead of appraisal 'being done' to teachers by a senior teacher / leader who may, or even may not be more knowledgeable about quality teaching than they are, the responsibility for professional reading and the thinking behind their teaching actions should be based on teachers' own observations of the learning being accomplished by their students. The principals with this mind set were adverse to continually providing their teachers with 'how to' information all the time, and so developed a culture where teachers developed an intrinsic motivation to inquire themselves making good use of all the knowledge held in the school by their colleagues around them.

One principal referenced the work of Dr Carol Dwek, Professor of Psychology at Stanford University, and the need to give the locus of professional learning control back to the teachers, with them identifying their own 'learning development goals' opposed to having 'performance goals'. The appraisal process in this school is based on the belief that adults need to know how to be a reflective learner and be involved in constructing (or co-constructing) their own learning development goals. A feature of this school's appraisal process is the provision for each teacher along with their peer / coach to have a series of short observations in other classrooms over the course of the year, to notice and to see things that will build on their own pedagogical knowledge. Each observation is immediately followed by a discussion with the peer / coach whose role it is to support the teacher in reflecting on their own practice in light of what they have observed, with the focus on coaching rather than dialogue. The school has invested long term in whole school professional development to enable all teachers to have the skills in knowing what to observe when in a classroom, the questions to ask that support the reflective process and the skills required on how to support the reflective process for others. There is the view in the school that being a senior or middle leader does not necessarily make a teacher better in the classroom than other teachers. As such, teachers choose their own peer / coach, though this is monitored for the sake of robustness. The school has developed procedures that support and guide the accountability aspect of each teacher's performance through the appraisal process which includes the principal meeting to discuss the process and outcomes at the end of the year. The belief in teachers mentoring other teachers in contrast



to middle or senior leaders being the ones carrying out the mentoring role is held by an additional two other principals interviewed, who are moving towards creating the foundation for this practice with their staff.

### **Evidence of Teacher Competency**

Principals described a range of ways used by teachers to capture their own reflections, research findings, their professional development and appraisal information.

One principal has encouraged teachers to keep a professional blog that contains all of their professional information. It was explained that the blog was an easy way of keeping everything together in one place and was available anywhere and at any time and by nearly anybody. This has been a work in progress, with teachers initially being reluctant to explore a 'new' way of capturing their professional work. Each teacher's blog is used to record such content as: professional development involvement and how teachers have implemented new learning and their reflections relating to this; feedback received from a colleague, their appraiser and the principal; reflections and next steps after visits to other classrooms or schools; outcomes from staff meetings leading to some action and their reflections on changes made in their own teaching. The principal will sometimes pose a question to teachers who are required to reflect on, find out about and respond to in their blog. Teaching as Inquiry outcomes and resulting changes in teaching strategies with the follow through effects of this are also recorded on the blog. Teachers are encouraged to use the blog to upload videos or photos taken relating to their teaching and student learning that illustrate specific strategies of practice. They are also required to make links between their practice and the Registered Teacher Criteria and the Teacher Professional Standards within the blog write ups. The principal has access to each teacher's blog and although there is no set number of times that teachers are expected to make an entry, teachers do so around every three weeks. In addition to the evidence collated on each teacher's blog further evidence is found in the minutes of quality learning circle conversations, providing another insight into each teacher's thinking and contributions to their own professional learning. The principal has a belief in the value of teacher agency where teachers are in control of their development as a teacher and are actively involved in collating the evidence of this.

In another school, teachers work cooperatively in the collection of teaching practice evidence, and over time collate this evidence into a syndicate 'learning story' in the form of a 'big book'. It captures evidence of student prior knowledge, the generation of new knowledge, the outcomes of the student based inquiry learning including student voice and self-assessment. The teachers look for trends and patterns that appear identifying teaching

practices that have gone well and practices that need to be reflected on and reviewed. The big book becomes part of the school's curriculum review and is usually presented to the Board of Trustees by the teachers as part of the reporting and review process. From these reviews the current year's outcomes become next year's goals. In addition to the syndicate learning story, each classroom teacher develops a record of the learning process involving their own students on their classroom wall. This is a work in progress over time, on which all students post learning accomplishments and reflective thoughts. The wall story is a focus during student led conferences providing the evidence of each individual student's learning whilst being explained by the student to their parents. Furthermore, it demonstrates insight into the teaching strategies that have been used, thus providing evidence of teaching practices. Some staff meetings each year are set aside for teachers to visit other classrooms whilst teachers talk about their class learning story to colleagues, leading to further professional learning through the school.

Another school has made use of the school's computerised learning platform as a means to collate and share the evidence of teachers' growth and development. Teachers use their own space on the platform to upload their appraisal goals and related observational feedback, their own reflective thinking and changes made to their practice from Teaching as Inquiry, videos / photos of their teaching practice and of the learning process in the classroom, samples of student learning illustrating successful teaching strategies, and reflections following observations made in other classrooms or of a professional reading completed. Another element of this model, not seen in other schools, is the openness of the learning platform, to not just teachers but also to the parent community.

Most schools promote shared web-based tools which teachers use to keep appraisal related information. Observational records, discussion records, professional development opportunities and reflections on the implementation of new practices are recorded and shared with appropriate people such as the appraiser, team leader, the principal and colleagues. Teachers have been encouraged to upload video taken as part of their reflective practice, or video demonstrating student voice and action during the learning process, as well as photos and illustrations of student progress and accomplishments. The most common web-based documents used are Google Docs which are then shared. Many principals spoke of the concept of de-privatisation and how this enables teachers to support each other and also adds another layer of accountability, such as keeping reflective entries up to date or run the risk of colleagues thinking that they are not performing well. Some principals indicated that their teachers demonstrate various stages of confidence in the use

of web-based tools as a means to collect and collate their professional development evidence, with most having persevered with the encouragement provided

As previously described, all schools have procedures and practices that involve teams of teachers having practice analysis conversations together relating to their Teaching as Inquiry goals. In the main, recordings of the conversations are made on a shared Google Doc, with teachers usually taking it in turns to type up the conversation details. This applies in reading, writing and maths, so over the course of a year there becomes a wealth of recordings containing problem solving, the sharing of teaching strategies and reflections on professional readings, as a few examples. In addition, 'quality learning circle' groups, generally made up of teachers across the year levels record their meeting minutes on a shared Google Doc forming another source of evidence of each teacher's practice. As such, teachers have several places where there is evidence to support any application for re-registration. In the schools where teachers have a second appraisal goal web based tools are mostly used in the form of blogs or Google Docs. Most principals felt that there is plenty of evidence in their schools that each teacher has to refer to if required, to prove or illustrate the quality of their teaching practice to the NZ Teachers Council, without having to prepare and keep-up-to date a separate professional portfolio.

## **Conclusion**

'Joining the Dots' is well established in the majority of schools visited, with links between performance management, Teaching as Inquiry and teacher professional development all contributing to the analysed outcomes of the achievement goals identified in each school's charter and reported on in the end of year report to the Ministry of Education.

In every school, students and their achievement potential is central to decision making. The majority of principals have high expectations of their staff and require them to be ongoing learners. A common need identified by many principals relates to professional development for middle management personnel in the leading of rigorous learning conversations.

The majority of principals expect teachers to keep evidence of their work as registered teachers. In the main, records are expected to be kept digitally and reflective of each teacher's own effectiveness alongside student accomplishment.

The investigation has confirmed the strategic direction that Forrest Hill School is taking with the integration of the compliances required by the Ministry of Education and the New Zealand Teachers Council into school policies and procedures with teacher professional development and Teaching as Inquiry being the driving force for improved achievement outcomes.

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