



Miramar Central School

Te Kura O Whataitai

Empowering Our Children

Sabbatical Report

**Performance Management
with a Coaching Ethos**

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*“We do not learn from experience.
We learn from reflecting on experience.”*

John Dewey.

Purpose

The purpose of this sabbatical report was to investigate how coaching can and is used to enhance the performance of teachers in a selection of primary schools in Auckland and Wellington.

The investigation included a review of academic literature and a number of interviews and conversations with principals of New Zealand schools that use coaching methods to improve teacher performance.

The primary purpose of the report was to inform a direct application of the ideas discovered in Miramar Central School, however thought has been given to recording the findings in a way that is expected to help any school leadership team wishing to pursue a similar approach.

Acknowledgements

Firstly I would like to acknowledge the Miramar Central Board of Trustees for supporting my application for a sabbatical during term 3 of 2015.

A special thanks goes to my Deputy Principal Karina McKiernan in particular, and the Leadership Team, for doing a great job in running the school in my absence.

I would like to thank the following principals and school leaders for sharing their thoughts and experience over the course of my sabbatical and allowing access to their schools to understand first hand how their systems work: Justine McDonald, Bernard Fitzgibbon, Colin Dale, Bruce Warren, Peter Mulcahy, Tracey Harnett, Kayleen Macnee, Kerry Delaney, Bruce McDonald, Martin Van Rijswijk, Kath Corby, Jude Pentecost and Liz Rhodes

Acknowledgement also goes to the Ministry of Education for the sabbatical provision for principals.

The sabbatical has provided me with an invaluable opportunity to read, reflect and have time to critically engage in an area of personal interest, and importantly, to refresh and recharge.

Background

The coaching journey for me began in the early 1980s when I trained as a 'Parent to Parent' counselor for IHC based on the work of 'humanist' theorists such as Carl Rogers. I have applied 'Active Listening' in appraisal conversations as a matter of course without fully recognising the potential of 'coaching' for personal and professional development.

In 2012 the Board appointed both a Deputy and Assistant Principal and, as Principal I was faced with their induction.

As principals are prone to do, I discussed my plans with other colleagues, in particular Justine McDonald, then Principal at Kelburn Normal School, who suggested that an external leadership facilitator Mark Sweeney, who she had used, would be well worth engaging.

My association with Mark Sweeney has been instrumental in developing a leadership plan using a coaching ethos with my Leadership Team. I genuinely contend that the 'deep' learning conversations, co-construction and shared understandings that have evolved since we instigated coaching and mentoring with Mark's guidance, have had a marked influence on the quality of leadership at Miramar Central School

Research into Coaching and its place in Performance Management

In the document '**Supporting school improvement through effective teacher appraisal May 2014**' Educational Review Office, it states:

'School leaders have a pivotal role in ensuring appraisal processes are working well and result in improved teaching and outcomes for students. They need to develop processes that balance the focus on improvement with the requirements for accountability.'

This document advocates aspects such as collaborative practice, frank and open discussions about the impact on learning and achievement, self reflection, shared responsibility for professional learning, consultation with the teacher, setting written development goals, confidentiality, detailed documentation, supporting school goals and values, and organizational support through people, time and tools.

What I find interesting though, is that it doesn't mention or promote 'coaching' as a useful methodology.

The Education Council of New Zealand (EDUCANZ) that has replaced the New Zealand Teachers' Council has been conducting a series of workshops on the appraisal of teachers.

The workshops have been instigated to support professional leaders to build their knowledge and confidence in appraising teachers using the 'new' Practising Teacher Criteria, for the issue and renewal of their practising certificate, and to improve ākonga - learning and achievement.

EDUCANZ has shifted the onus for Teacher Registration away from school leaders onto teachers. Appraisals are a requirement of the Collective Agreement and Teachers Registration, and must be completed annually. In the past appraisal has sat outside the Teacher Registration process.

The new Registration framework now means appraisal is a necessary vehicle through which teachers can work towards gathering the evidence against the 12

Criteria. EDUCANZ warns teachers who choose not to engage with what their professional body is asking, it is clearly stated, risk losing full registration.

It is vital that teachers and leaders are fully cognizant of what evidence is required and factor in process and time for this to occur.

The conceptual framework used in the workshops covered:

- 1. Performance Management - performance growth**
- 2. Evaluative Capability - inquiry into practice**
- 3. Open to learning framework**
- 4. Culture of Self-responsibility**

It promotes the notion that, if appraisal is done well, the appraisee is focused on their authentic professional learning goals and the organisational need for accountability is met.

Promoted in a slide for Workshop One are: ***Twelve Core Elements of Employee Engagement:***

- The need to know what is expected
- Have the necessary materials and equipment
- Have the opportunity to use their talents everyday
- Receive recognition for accomplishment
- Feel someone in the organisation cares at a personal level
- Know that personal development is encouraged
- Feel their opinions count
- Feel their work is important to the organisation's mission
- Have co-workers committed to doing quality work
- Have good relationships with colleagues at work
- Have talked to the leaders regularly about their progress
- Have opportunity to learn and grow.

(Buckingham and Coffman 1999)

In Webinar 1 a slide entitled '**A possible appraisal process**' included a mention of coaching observations and feedback in the flow diagram. Surprisingly again, it seems that coaching has been underplayed as a significant methodology.

What is it about coaching that makes it so effective and empowering in performance growth?

In '***Changing on the Job -Developing Leaders for a Complex World***' Jennifer Garvey Berger (2012) believes **Leaders need to cultivate wisdom in the way they:**

- **Shape the future – Grow curiosity leading to openness to learning.** With an exponential growth in information, and as things get more complex, becoming curious is a way to make meaning and have purpose
- **Lead people – Recognize people as sense-makers.** The way people construct their world is their reality
- **Accomplish Tasks – Think and create together.** This will co-construct the world as it is and create the way we want the future to be

Garvey Berger advocates that we can support one another on this journey through coaching, facilitation and developing the core habits of mind that support growth. Leaders need to be aware though that with coaching, the *capacity* to do a thing is not the same as the *skill* to do it, and both of these are different from the *desire* to do it.

Coaching as a practice, if carefully instigated, will go a long way to addressing all of the '*Twelve Core Elements of Employee Engagement*' and encourage wisdom and growth.

The teaching and learning interface is where learning happens and therefore teacher learning and development must be the focus for school improvement and raising achievement and attainment.

Teachers and school leaders, because of their exposure and experience with formative assessment have become well aware of the power and effectiveness of engagement in, and feedback for, learning.

Helen Timperley's (2009) work based on '*Best Evidence Synthesis of research into Teacher Professional Learning and Development*' has found that when teachers' learning is based on their genuine assessment and understanding of pupils' learning, they start to make adaptations to their practice which can lead to real differences in student outcomes.

Timperley (2011) outlines the crucial role of conversations in promoting teacher and school improvement.

'Schools are places of high activity and the oil of conversations that create and carry meaning across these activities largely determines whether they become opportunities for learning and developing adaptive expertise, or not. Among other things, they provide the vision for new possibilities through goal setting, and feedback on effectiveness.'

Making such a shift involves changing mind-sets and is a complex process.

Learning theories based on the analysis of teaching and leadership practice place the importance on four principles:

1. engaging prior conceptions
2. developing a deep foundation of knowledge
3. constructing learning through social interactions
4. developing meta-cognitive and self-regulated learning orientations.

Hattie's analysis in *Visible Learning 2009* makes the link between challenge and feedback as two essential ingredients in learning. Coaching is a vehicle for promoting this.

Cowie in her thesis '*Coaching for improving teacher practice within a professional development initiative*' (2010) has suggested that further research needed to be undertaken in order to explore the links between coaching and outcomes for students. She contends that the link with student outcomes was still

rather tenuous.

Cowie reported on an ***Extending High Standards Across Schools Project (Ministry of Education 2009)*** where coaching was used as a means to improve practice. Measured outcomes were recorded such as teachers demonstrating engagement, reflective thinking, change in teacher practice and enhanced quality of teaching and learning. Teachers reported that coaching had helped them focus on “teacher talk” that was based on pedagogy. This had improved their effectiveness by a focus on outcomes for students. Coaches and principals reported that coaching had moved the culture of the school closer to a learner centred environment. Teachers demonstrated that they were passionate and enthusiastic about what they did and were willing to share this enthusiasm with others.

An All Blacks coaching perspective:

When one thinks of coaching what immediately springs to mind is coaching as used in sport. Few would deny that the All Blacks are an example of a hugely successful team in world sport. Certainly, at the time of writing, the best team in world rugby.

Recently released are a series of video clips and articles entitled ‘**An All Black’s Perspective**’ (KPMG Business Insights-ASB Ambition Series 2015). Coaching personnel from the All Blacks Coaching Panel offer what they see as the key ingredients that make a high-performing team.

Leadership is seen as influencing by providing an inclusive and engaged culture with a clear sense of purpose and collective strength:

- **‘Culture eats strategy for breakfast. Build an inclusive culture’**
- Create, maintain and nurture the culture that flows through the organisation
- Invest in capable, motivated people and be clear about expectations will create an unbeatable team
- **‘Empower individuals by showing them the bigger picture’**
- **A leadership team needs to be dynamic and agile, adopting and reinforcing a mind-set of innovation**
- Leaders need to inspire the next generation to ‘build it better’
- Although it is important to have a clear leader, the team collaborate with each other and leadership so that insights are not lost
- **Providing the right encouragement and reward leads to an engaged team who will strive to keep at the top of their game**
- **Clarity of purpose is crucial.** There is a need to know not only what you are doing, but why you are doing it
- **Targeted capability needs to be aligned to the core competence**
- Even the best ideas need discipline and process to make things happen
- By standardising the basics, having rituals and routines, will ensure enough energy can be focused on the key purpose
- Don’t just have a plan that is looked at once, have a living framework that allows adjustment when necessary whilst remaining on track and true to your purpose
- Remember to allow for feedback and early identification of issues or defects

- **Keeping track and analysing the trends will keep you at the top of your game**
- Have effective reporting systems in place to regularly measure performance

The messages promoted here dovetail with the elements of effective coaching as used in education. The emboldened in particular provide some useful insights into what makes a successful coaching regime.

Definition and Essential Components of Coaching

In view of the above, the definition of coaching I like is:

‘A one-to-one conversation focused on the enhancement of learning and development through increasing self-awareness and a sense of personal responsibility where the coach facilitates the self-directed learning of the coachee through questioning, active listening and appropriate challenge in a supportive and encouraging climate.’ Christian van Nieuwerburgh, 2012

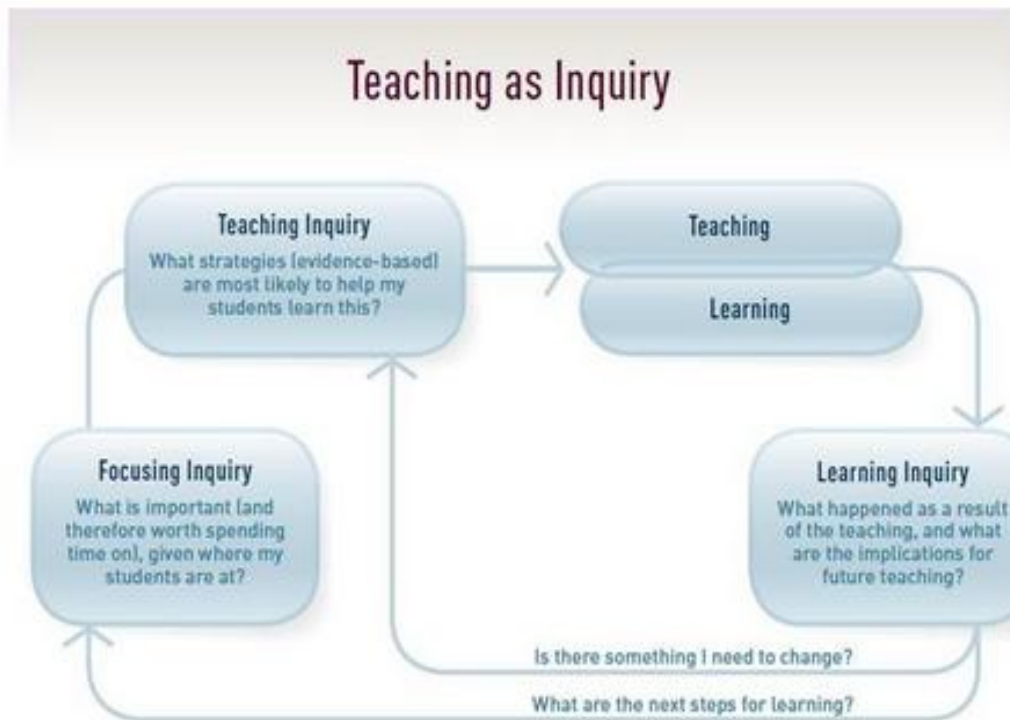
Given this definition what then are the essential components of Coaching as a methodology?

- Coaching is reciprocal where partners collaborate and co-construct together to set professional goals and achieve them (Robertson 2008)
- It involves challenge and feedback as it encourages teachers to reflect on the ways they teach and how students learn. It leads to ‘gravitas’ – knowledge gained from deep reflection and practice (Hattie 2009)
- Opportunities for focused and authentic discussion are the essence of coaching where the role of the coaching partner is to assist their partner to be reflective *in action*, *on action* and *for future action*, resulting in a knowledge of practice (Robertson and Timperley 2007)
- Coaching is successful when it is embedded in a positive school culture where there are shared values between coach and learner, the learning is consensual and there is a common understanding of the direction of the school
- Sufficient time for the development of a coaching ‘culture’ and the establishment of the professional coaching relationship needs to be allocated
- Respect, honesty and trust are crucial for the coaching relationship in order to promote and address deep learning issues
- Selecting one’s own goals for development in authentic teaching and learning contexts enhances self-determination and ownership to the challenge of improving teaching practice
- Confidentiality is vital as it allows the coachee to really trust the process and the coaching relationship delving deep into presenting and evaluating their teaching and challenging their thinking
- The coaching roles and process needs to be clearly understood by everyone taking part
- Desire, capacity and skill are important considerations and should not be underestimated. The coaching ‘hat’ may need to be taken off and replaced with a mentoring, training or leadership one. Coaching is inherently about

'unlocking a person's potential to maximize their own performance' (Whitmore 2002). The coach should avoid giving solutions or advice and guidance to the coachee

Coaching Models

Teaching as Inquiry is advocated in The New Zealand Curriculum (2007)



Coaching can sit behind the cycle of teacher inquiry, where the teacher's developmental needs are clearly based on those of the students and their outcomes. When the organisations' goals are based on outcomes for students then these can also inform the strategic goals of the school and also the appraisal goals of teachers. It promotes deep and focused conversations with teachers and incorporates the questions to be asked about practice to improve learning outcomes for students.

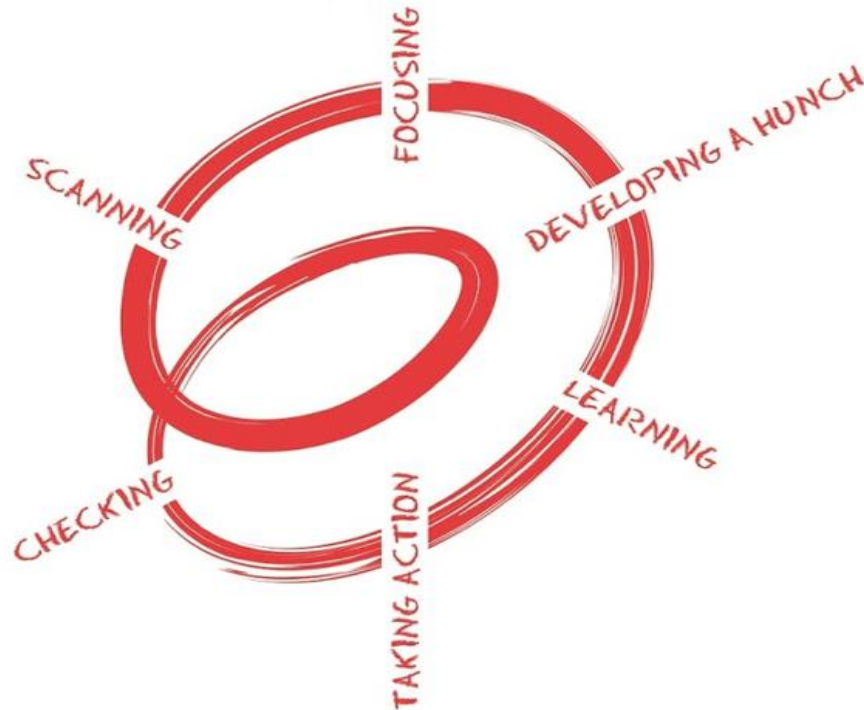
'Teaching As Inquiry' (TAI) is a process that uses an evidence based professional learning cycle. This is used to help each teacher evaluate the impact of their professional learning not only on their practice but also for their students' learning outcomes.

At **Whangarei Primary School** to help identify the focus for their TAI, each teacher in collaboration with their appraiser gives careful consideration to the key inquiry question:

'Based on the needs of my student, what do I need to know and do differently in my teaching practice to progress the learning of my students?'

The school uses *Temperley's Spiral of Inquiry (2014)* as the basis for the TAI process.

What's going on for the Learners?



Each teacher uses student assessment data (including student voice), ongoing reflection (including professional dialogue with colleagues) and research to help give consideration to their professional practice against six guiding questions:

- **Scanning:** What is going on for our learners?
- **Focusing:** What is going to give you the biggest impact?
- **Hunches:** What is leading to this situation?
- **Learning:** What do you need to learn and how will you design new learning?
- **Taking action:** What will you do differently?
- **Checking:** Have we made enough of a difference?

Practice Analysis Conversations (Timperley 2011), one each term, are used to guide appraisal. These, in effect, are a form of leadership coaching with specific protocols for each of the conversations. The first part involves a pre-observation conversation to set the scene and develop criteria for effectiveness. The second part involves a co-constructed analysis of practice using the pre-observation conversation as the basis. The third involves the identification of possible new practices and how the teacher would monitor them in terms of their effectiveness for students.

As they progress through each of the six dimensions the teacher also reflects upon and gathers evidence for their professional portfolio on how their on-going practice is meeting the Professional Standards, Practicing Teacher Criteria and The Cultural

Competencies in *Tataiako*.

The schools I visited on Auckland's North Shore 'East Coast Bays Cluster' used the GROWTH model.



This is an extended version of the GROW model (Whitmore 2002).

Coaching using this methodology was embedded within each school's Performance Management System with every fully registered teacher in the cluster either trained or undergoing training in coaching using the GROWTH model.

Individual teachers set goals focused on meeting school development goals and/or personal development goals or to meet student achievement expectations.

I-SMART (Inspiring, Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Results driven, Time bound) goals were used to focus and as a guide to effective goal setting.

Coaching partners were determined by personal preference or as agreed.

All records of coaching goals and outcomes are shared between the coach and the coachee. They were confidential to the parties involved and to the Principal. Principals had access to all staff coaching and performance management data. Digital Pro forma and templates were developed by each school to guide the process.

One school had introduced 'Appraisal Connector' (Interlead) an e-online portfolio developed to guide, sort, process and report on appraisal data.

The cluster approach for using coaching as a methodology for teacher growth and development has embedded practice.


Most of the Wellington Schools and one Auckland School I visited were influenced and guided by the work of Mark Sweeney of Impact Education. Mark promotes the ARA Coaching Pathway for use ‘checking in’ once individual development goals via the GROW model have been set:

ARA - Coaching Pathway
A Coaching / Problem Solving Conversation – Checking In NOT Checking On

Aims *I just want you to refresh me as to what your goals are /
Why are these important ? / How do these link to our aims?
What are your indicators of success?* Paraphrase – So.....

Reality *So talk me through me exactly where you are at
& how you know that / how we can be sure of that.
How can we verify that?
What’s been achieved ? What’s not been achieved?
What have you tried? What has worked / not worked?* Paraphrase – So.....

Actions *So pinpoint your next steps to me
What will you do? What will happen?
What will that look like?
What’s your plan? What will we see / by when?* Paraphrase – So.....



There are 2 accompanying documents that clarify the ARA roles and responsibilities:

Role Descriptions

My Job

Coach

Do

- Use ARA process
- Challenge coachee to evaluate
- Encourage coachee to problem solve
- Help set goals
- Push for precision/clarity
- Encourage coachee
- Stay future oriented
- Recognise & suspend your judgments
- Stay in role

Avoid

- Being an expert
- 'Solutioning' the coachee
- Telling the coachee what to do
- Getting into 'psychotherapy'
- Going into the past
- Blame and shame

Your Job

Coachee

Do

- Reflect and challenge own thinking
- Be creative with ideas/options
- Seek to increase awareness of own capability
- Accept the coach's questions and challenges positively
- Take risks with thinking
- Try new things
- Seek to take responsibility for achieving outcomes
- Commit to goals
- Participate actively in problem solving
- Be frank and forthright with coach

Avoid

- Expecting the coach to solve things
- Expecting perfection
- Blame & shame when things don't work
- Using the past to justify inaction



My Job

- ✓ Ask questions
- ✓ Challenge you
- ✓ Keep things on track
- ✓ Avoid rescuing
- ✓ Help you plan

Your Job

- ✓ Evaluate yourself
- ✓ Use the time to take stock
- ✓ Explain your verification
- ✓ Stay focused – keep precise
- ✓ Create next action steps



Each of the schools I visited in Wellington were on their own 'authentic' coaching journey all of them convinced that coaching had been effective in engaging staff to improve their pedagogy.

- Some schools were using coaching as a methodology with their leadership team as coaches within the leadership team
- Others were using their leadership team as coaches with their teaching teams
- Three schools had organized co-teaching pairs where teachers nominated who they wanted as coaches
- One school has 'triads' where coaching was part of a development team with a school focus
- One school had experimented with the use of 'video' clips of teaching practice for later unpacking and reflection on the teaching and learning process

Where school development goals were incorporated into the coaching focus, then principals and leadership reported positive, meaningful and productive outcomes.

Most schools now operate an individual teacher e-portfolio system to store coaching, professional development, appraisal and attestation data with access restricted to those needing it as outlined above. School specific pro forma templates are used to guide the process.

Key messages gained from my research and visits to schools

- **'Culture eats strategy for breakfast. Build an inclusive culture'**
- **Coaching as a methodology is considered hugely important, empowering and valuable by principals and teachers.** Where used it had a positive, and in some cases a transformational, effect on the engagement of teachers in professional learning and development
- **Research based on Constructivist – Developmental theory as outlined above contends that the system by which people make meaning, grow and change over time is a result of their unique life experiences.** Sense-making by leaders and staff is facilitated by learning conversations and this is where coaching as outlined empowers others towards their full potential
- **'Empower individuals by showing them the bigger picture.'** The coaching role and process need to be clearly understood by all those taking part
- **Clarity of purpose is crucial.** You need to know not only what you are doing but why you are doing it
- **Leadership has a complexity of roles that are distinct and not necessarily interrelated.** The Institute of Executive Coaching and Leadership provides a useful summary of the many 'faces' of leadership:



Leading

Inspiring the team, setting the direction and creating fellowship



Managing

Managing people and resources to achieve outcomes.
Keeping things organized and operational



Mentoring

Providing expert advice



Training

Teaching and gaining new skill or knowledge



Counselling

Providing advice and guidance to a person with a problem



Consulting

Identifying the problem and providing a solution



Coaching

Empowering others to reach their potential

IECL 2013

- **Leaders need to be aware also that with coaching the *capacity* to do a thing is not the same as the *skill* to do it and both of these are different from the *desire* to do it.** The different roles of Leading, Mentoring, Managing, Mentoring and Coaching need to be clear, all needing different 'hats'. It is important to declare which hat one is wearing in professional development conversations
- **Time is a critical element when planning to introduce or use coaching as a means of teacher development.** Leadership needs to plan time into the annual plan for the purpose of coaching. If coaching is considered

important as an ethos then something else will need to be minimized or deleted

- **There is merit in considering an integrated approach** incorporating Charter and Annual Plan goals, Teaching as Inquiry, and School and individual professional development into the coaching schema
- **Coaching models and templates are useful** for guiding the process and recording goals, data and outcomes
- **Laminated cue cards with the coaching 'model' and focus questions keep things open, focused and transparent**
- **Individual teacher portfolios where all performance management and coaching documents, data and records are kept are useful** as it allows for easy access
- **It is important to have clarity between the different processes and relationships.** There is an apparent tension between promoting teacher professional learning and development and appraisal against the Registered Teacher Criteria and Attestation. **Coaching is about development and growth and not competency and attestation**
- **Schools where coaching was used as a key component, were all on their own timeline and journey in terms of how and when it was used**
- **EDUCANZ and ERO while promoting open-learning conversations, a culture of self-responsibility and recognizing the importance of employee engagement, seem to be out of touch with, or reluctant to advocate for, the intrinsic value of coaching**

Implications

Having already experienced the positive and transformational effect that coaching has had on my leadership team and as a result of my research and visits to schools, I am convinced there is real merit in spreading coaching practice school-wide with the rest of the teaching team.

I am cognizant that, as principal, I will need to develop a strategy that will effect the necessary change in practice. To achieve this it is useful to consider the *Best Evidence Synthesis: Teacher professional learning and development* (Timperley, et al., 2007) that recognized that conditions that promote learning for teachers are complex.

This strategy will need to consider professional learning experiences around:

Context:

- dovetail with the existing school culture and strategic plan

- actively gain support from the Leadership Team in co-construction of the strategy and learning culture
- offer extended time for opportunities to learn about coaching as an ethos
- give access to external expertise where considered useful
- engage all teachers in the learning process
- give opportunities to question and challenge
- give teachers opportunities to participate in a professional community of practice once school direction is determined
- promote practices that are consistent with wider trends in policy and research

Content:

- integrate different aspects by making connections with developing pedagogy
- make clear links between teaching and learning underpinning the change strategy
- use assessment to focus teaching and enhance self-regulation
- promote sustainability with in depth understanding, identifying next steps and the development of a coaching culture

Activity:

- develop practice that is clearly aligned with intended learning goals
- promote choice with purposeful activities co-constructed with teachers
- give opportunities for teachers to discuss and negotiate understandings
- emphasise an ongoing focus on student learning

Conclusions

Professional learning and development that focus on the outcomes for students should drive the focus for teacher growth.

Appraisal is based on developing the needs of the school where as coaching is based on developing both the needs of the school and also the needs of the individual.

Coaching will allow the teachers the freedom to trial, experiment and reflect on changes in their teaching, in a safe forum based on trust. It will facilitate the development of deeper learning.

Within a coaching culture the responsibility for growth and development lies with the person being coached. They become accountable to themselves and as a result are accountable to the school and commit to their professional development.

Indications are that coaching is a worthwhile ethos that supports the professional learning of teachers. It provides opportunities for teachers to take ownership of their own developmental needs in a manner that is non-threatening and personalised. The locus of power for a teacher's professional learning needs lies with the teacher and leads to their personal accountabilities. It needs to be part of the culture and fabric of a school and be based on honest and open communication

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