

# What are the critical success factors required for strengthening Collective Teacher Efficacy and collaborative practice, to enhance learner and teacher success and wellbeing?

## Authors

Lynne Huddleston- Pahiatua School

Debra Peck- Riverdale School Palmerston North

Sabbatical period- term 3 2019

## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank our two Boards of Trustees for their commitment to our ongoing development. We recognise and would like to thank the leadership teams in each of our schools, who have maintained and added value to the school in higher acting positions during our absence. We would also like to thank the Ministry of Education for making this opportunity available.

## Purpose

As our school communities become more diverse and complex it is important that we are reflecting on how well our school direction caters for and meets the needs of our learners. We need to be considering what new practices and pedagogies might be required to meet specific needs and contribute to equity and excellence.

## Executive Summary

Attendance at 2019 Visible Learning Plus Conference- Las Vegas- July 7-10 along with 2400 other attendees, has reinforced to us the vital importance of evaluating the impact of teaching on learning. As schools that follow the principles of visible learning and embrace collaborative practice, we have been prompted to reflect on the importance of assessment for learning. Further developing our school cultures to ensure that the conditions for collective teacher efficacy are in place are priorities as we move forward. We are committed to ensuring that the conditions to empower teachers to learn are reviewed and refined.

Our tendency in New Zealand education to focus on the failures, rather than celebrating successes is something that has resonated with us. The areas of feedback, transfer of learning and scaffolding are all areas for collective focus as we move forward in our schools.

## Background and Rationale

The inquiry at the heart of this sabbatical is directly influenced by current review and developments, in each of our schools. Issues include: extending and enriching achievement through the key competencies; moving from engagement of learners to empowerment, learner and teacher wellbeing,

moving to the next level with teacher collaboration, exploring deep learning, further developing the Visible Learning practices already in place.

As Principals we are currently reflecting on how our school's charter and strategic plans are preparing learners for the complexities of a diverse society. Both schools have strong practices in place for learner achievement in the core areas, as well as culturally responsive practices. We are seeking to innovate further to ensure that progress, achievement and wellbeing are maximised through collaborative endeavour.

We are both heavily invested in collaborative practice and the use of flexible learning environments. We both believe in the power of the collective and are wanting to build upon the successful practices already in place in our schools.

### Methodology

Prior to term 3 we worked on the development of our leadership inquiry parameters, engaged in exploratory reading and made school visit arrangements.

During term 3 we attended the 2019 Visible Learning Plus Conference- Las Vegas- July 7-10, undertook NZ school visits and one Principal visited 2 dedicated Dyslexia schools in Dublin and investigated the resources made available to support teachers with dyslexia and students with ASD. The schools in Ireland are well supported and encouraged to diagnose Dyslexia as a learning disability by the time students are six years old.

We kept reflective blogs and met regularly as Principals throughout the sabbatical.

### Findings

Our key findings in relation to strengthening collective teacher efficacy and collaborative practice include:

- John Hattie's evolving research continues to provide sound direction for improving teaching and learning
- Teachers knowing the impact their teaching has on learning is vital
- A collective approach to evaluating impact is vital. This is illustrated by the concept that teachers move beyond gathering evidence and move towards collectively interpreting evidence in order to determine interventions required
- Feedback is vital. As leaders we must reflect on how we actually go about giving teachers feedback about *how* they teach. Does our feedback focus on what learners learn rather than how teachers teach?
- Working collectively and collaboratively helps teachers to be able to look at themselves rather than blame others

- The conditions to empower our teachers are directly under the influence of leaders- for example-intentional inquiry, development of PLCs, embracing mistakes, focusing in on the quality of teacher talk
- The six enabling conditions for collective teacher efficacy outlined below are guiding our decision making

### Six Enabling Conditions

School characteristics associated with collective teacher efficacy, documented in the research, helped in identifying six enabling conditions for collective efficacy to flourish (Donohoo, 2017). While enabling conditions do not *cause* things to happen, they increase the likelihood that things will turn out as expected.

1. **Advanced Teacher Influence**  
Advanced teacher influence is defined by the degree to which teachers are provided opportunities to participate in important school-wide decisions.
2. **Goal Consensus**  
Reaching consensus on goals not only increases collective efficacy, it also has a direct and measurable impact on student achievement (Robinson, Hohepa, and Lloyd, 2009)
3. **Teachers' Knowledge About One Another's Work**  
Teachers gain confidence in their peers' ability to impact student learning when they have more intimate knowledge about each other's practice.
4. **Cohesive Staff**  
Cohesion is defined as the degree to which teachers agree with each other on fundamental educational issues.
5. **Responsiveness of Leadership**  
Responsive leaders show concern and respect for their staff and protect teachers from issues that detract from their teaching time and focus.
6. **Effective Systems of Intervention**  
Effective systems of intervention help in ensuring that all students are successful.

Fostering collective teacher efficacy is a timely and important issue if we are going to realize success for all students. Fostering collective teacher efficacy should be at the forefront of a planned strategic effort in all schools and school boards. Attending to the six enabling conditions outlined in this blog is a step toward realizing the possibility of collective teacher efficacy in schools.

### Implications/Conclusions

As a result of our sabbatical reflection and learning we have greater clarity about our direction going forward.

Embedding identified practices into the curriculum delivery plan is a practical outcome for one school while focusing on conversations at monitoring meetings is a practical step for the other school.

The practices that our schools currently have in place have been affirmed and we honing in more closely on assessment for learning practices- particularly the area of feedback. Decision making based on collective efficacy principles is also an area that has potential to bring positive benefits to our schools.

#### References

-John Hattie- Visible Learning

-John Hattie- Ten Mindframes for Visible Learning

-Jenni Donohoo-Collective Teacher Efficacy-How Educators Beliefs Impact Student Learning

-Michael Fullan- A Rich Seam-How New Pedagogies Find Deep learning

-Dr Pauline Cogan- Dyslexia Association Ireland-early dyslexia detection