

Worth thinking about

Some discussion points from the national Teaching and School Practices picture

Our advisory group urged us to pull out some discussion points from the national TSP picture, with some 'provocations' to get people thinking about their own practices, and their own school. So here are some points that particularly struck us, with questions to start school team discussions, and help you to dig deeper into things that you are focusing on.

Schools differ a lot when it comes to teachers' reports of their own practices. They differ even more in terms of what teachers report about effective school practices.

- How much variation do you see in teachers' responses in your own school on the items that matter most to you?

For example, you might be focused on practices you've been working on shifting, such as the use of more flexible grouping, or the use of feedback and feedforward with students. Is the variation what you would expect in terms of the work you've been doing? Are you surprised at the range? Are you seeing teachers expressing lack of confidence here?

Teachers have least confidence in some of the most rewarding aspects of the New Zealand Curriculum for student learning and for teachers practice, including aspects of teaching as inquiry. It's not surprising, given that these are new and future-focused and haven't been given as much systemic support as they needed.

- What is the picture for your school on the *Optimising students' opportunities to learn* domain?
- How does this match with the attention you've been able to give these NZC aspects? If the school picture is further back than you would like, what can you do to learn from others about how they have changed practice in their school?

We found very little correlation between what teachers said about their teaching as inquiry practices, and what the same teachers said about their school inquiry processes and whether inquiry was used to make changes. That indicates a mismatch that may mean valuable time is being spent on activity that is not consistent or coherent, and unable to contribute to shifting practice in ways that students and teachers find worthwhile.

- How similar are teachers' answers at your school to the items in the Teaching as Inquiry domains in the Teaching and School Practices sections?
- How do teachers see the role of their inquiry in changing their own practice, and contributing to improvement in the school?

Strategic resource allocation—mainly using time to support teachers working productively together—was the lowest rated school practices domain. Professional feedback and support, and the Collaborative practices set of items had low ratings also.

- What does the picture look like in your school?
- How could you arrange things differently if teacher ratings are low, or very variable, suggesting that only some teachers have the opportunity to add to the effectiveness of each other's practice, and the school?

School Practices for Māori learners was another low-rated set of items.

- What does the picture look like in your school for the items relating to Māori students, culturally responsive pedagogy, and actively seeking the expertise of the local community, hapū and iwi?
- How does this match with the attention you've given to Māori students learning and culturally responsive pedagogy?
- If the school picture is further back than you would like, what can you do to learn from others about how they have changed practice in their school?

Principals tend to rate school practices more highly than teachers, though not always.

- Which practices does the principal rate more highly than teachers at your school?
- Which practices do they rate lower than teachers?
- Can you see some patterns in the differences?

For example, the principal might think something is happening better because they are relying on information or perceptions that don't give the picture teachers see. How could the principal check their assumptions?

Or the principal may have a bigger picture or deeper understanding of something than the teachers, and rate something lower than teachers. Are there signals here to find out more about why teachers think as they do? What assumptions do they have?

Principals and teachers have similar views about how well the principal works with others, but principals are more self-critical about how well they provide direction and fresh horizons.

- Where does the principal's view differ most from teachers' views for the Principal Leadership items?
- Can you see some patterns in the differences? What do they suggest about communication, or what the principal might want to focus on in their own professional learning and work with peers or coaches?