



appraisal<sup>TM</sup>  
connector

Connecting Appraisal with Professional  
Learning, Reflection and Teacher Growth

**APPRAISAL  
CONNECTOR<sup>TM</sup>**

**INFORMATION BOOKLET  
Using the Appraisal Connector System<sup>TM</sup>**





## Appraisal Connector Information Booklet

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## What is the Appraisal Connector?

The Appraisal Connector is a simple online appraisal system designed for New Zealand educators in Special Education, Early Childhood, Primary, Intermediate, Middle and Secondary Schools. It has taken 18 months to develop and trial with teachers in New Zealand schools and now we are offering the service for the first time to early childhood services.

The Appraisal Connector removes on-going difficulties associated with traditional appraisal and performance management systems. These include:

- + Deep rooted fear and mistrust.
- + Dishonesty and gamesmanship.
- + Poorly informed and framed professional conversations.
- + Referring to compliancy as coaching.
- + Appraisals designed using pedagogical thinking.
- + Enormous constraints busy professionals have around time.

*(These are explained in detail on page 15)*



## What are teachers saying who have used the Appraisal Connector?

Feedback from teachers who have piloted the Appraisal Connector say the biggest advantages are:

- + Its simplicity and ease of use.
- + It takes minimum time and can be completed at home.
- + It only focuses on those aspects, which really count in the learning environment and how subsequently it allows more informed and detailed dialogue to occur. This directly impacts on teachers' thinking and practice.
- + The flexibility - teachers like the choices they are able to make.
- + It doesn't have to be based on one or two contrived observations.

## What are the benefits for leaders?

There are many benefits and these are outlined in depth on pages 12 & 13. Some are outlined briefly below:

- + Leaders appreciate having access to every teacher's appraisal at the tip of their fingers - they can access each report through a special briefcase.
- + Should ERO ask you for your views on the capabilities of each of your teachers you have the data at your fingertips.
- + For the first time, leaders have access to a consolidated report combining the data of every teacher. Leaders are able to identify where gaps and strengths lie across and within teams.
- + Data becomes part of self review - a tool for improving teaching practice.
- + Provides targeted differentiated professional development for teachers and informs future professional development planning.
- + Saves time as leaders are not chasing people for paperwork and completions - automated email responses do this for you.
- + No need to design each year a new appraisal booklet - teachers and leaders are able to download their data as PDF reports with detailed analysis of data.
- + Reasonably priced and affordable, the Appraisal Connector fits within any budget irrespective of other commitments.



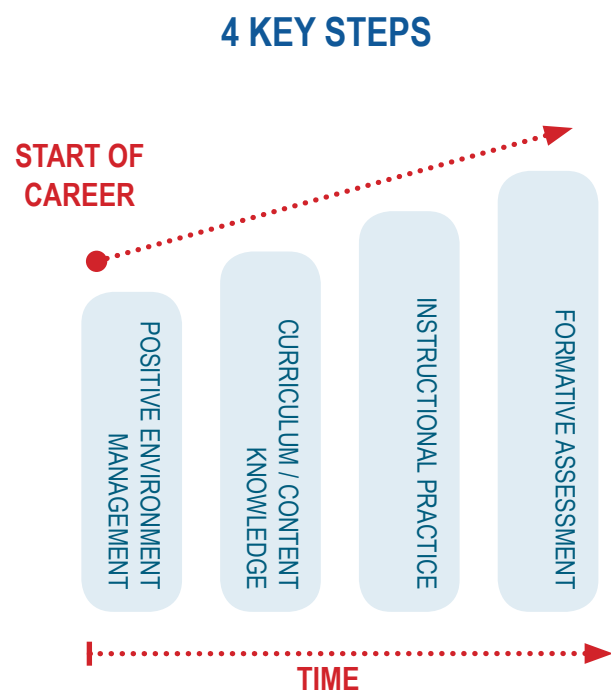
## Why is the Appraisal Connector so powerful?

Lengthy longitudinal studies from the University of Kansas Educational Department show how teachers are required to develop mastery in sequence through four clearly defined steps.

Appraisal Connector focuses on gaining data from these four key steps as stated below.

Teachers must initially master their environment management in positive ways before being ready to generally focus on curriculum and content. Having developed deeper understanding of the curriculum and their content knowledge, teachers next should focus on their instructional practices, and then have opportunities to grow their ability to formatively assess.

To get the sequence wrong is to undermine the ability of a teacher to develop in normal and healthy ways - a little like trying to force a child to walk before they have mastered crawling. We generally don't do this because of the harm we know it can cause. Thinking in the same way when it comes to teacher development can be very useful. A highly effective performance appraisal system should be able to help teachers and their coaches identify exactly where each teacher's greatest needs and strengths are. Being able to tailor opportunities for each staff member by generating relevant, personalised and highly significant information will allow you to provide a useful appraisal system. Working on the basis that a conversation is only as good as the information brought to it, data collected via the Appraisal Connector allows for rich professional dialogue to take place.



## How will it accelerate the development of our professional learning community?

### Productive Conversations

In his research over a decade ago seminal thinker William Isaacs noted how the vast majority of people participate in 'unproductive' conversations both at work and at home. This trend has occurred because we have created two very different types of discourse - discussion and dialogue.

The roots of discussion are the same as concussion and percussion and mean 'to shake apart'. At the heart of discussion is thinking alone and like a game of ping-pong, words and ideas bounce backwards and forwards. Like most games the aim is to prevail. The majority of participants in discussion can come to feel unsafe and to stay safe use flight (silent) tactics - withdrawing, avoiding, masking and sugar-coating - and fight (violent) tactics - controlling, labelling and attacking. The overriding focus in discussion is survival and it means too often our talk fails to influence others' thinking, behaviour or practice.

At the heart of dialogue are relationships. In Greek dia means 'thought' and logos 'word'. Dialogue is a flow of meaning - a conversation in which people think together in relationship. When people talk about reflective practice and teacher inquiry what they are referring to is the need to dialogue. When people speak of the need for teachers to question, engage, inquire and collaborate - to engage in learning teachers need to be able to engage others initially in reflective dialogue (evaluating what they do and why) and then generative dialogue (creating new possibilities) in sequence. Discussion is less than helpful - dialogue is the key.

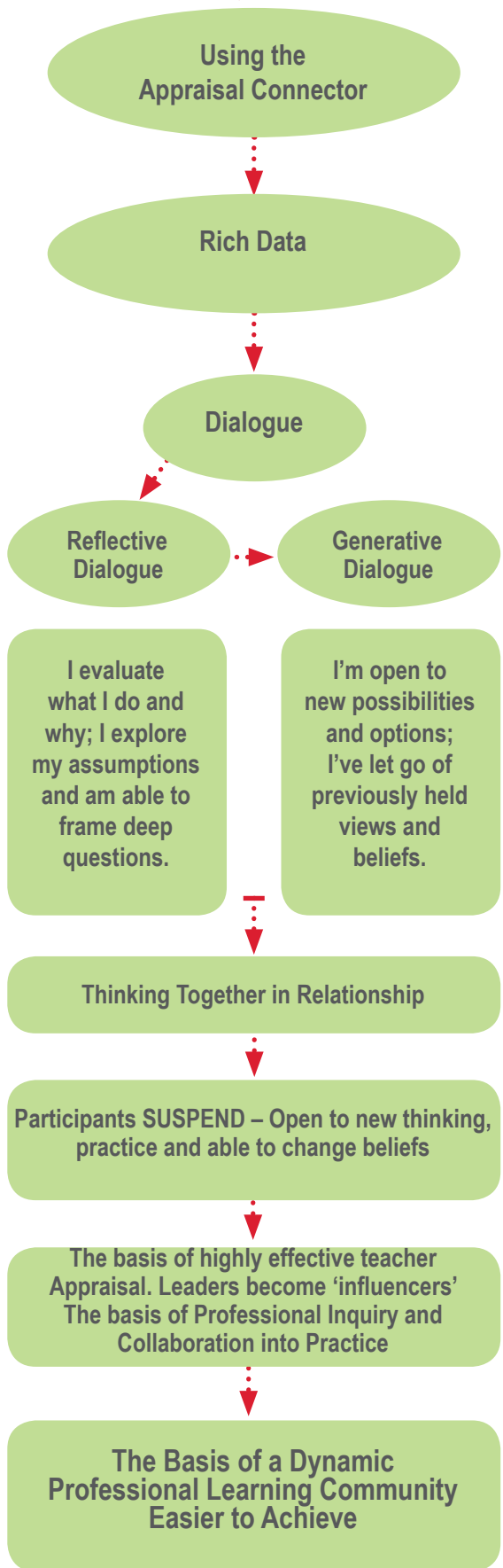
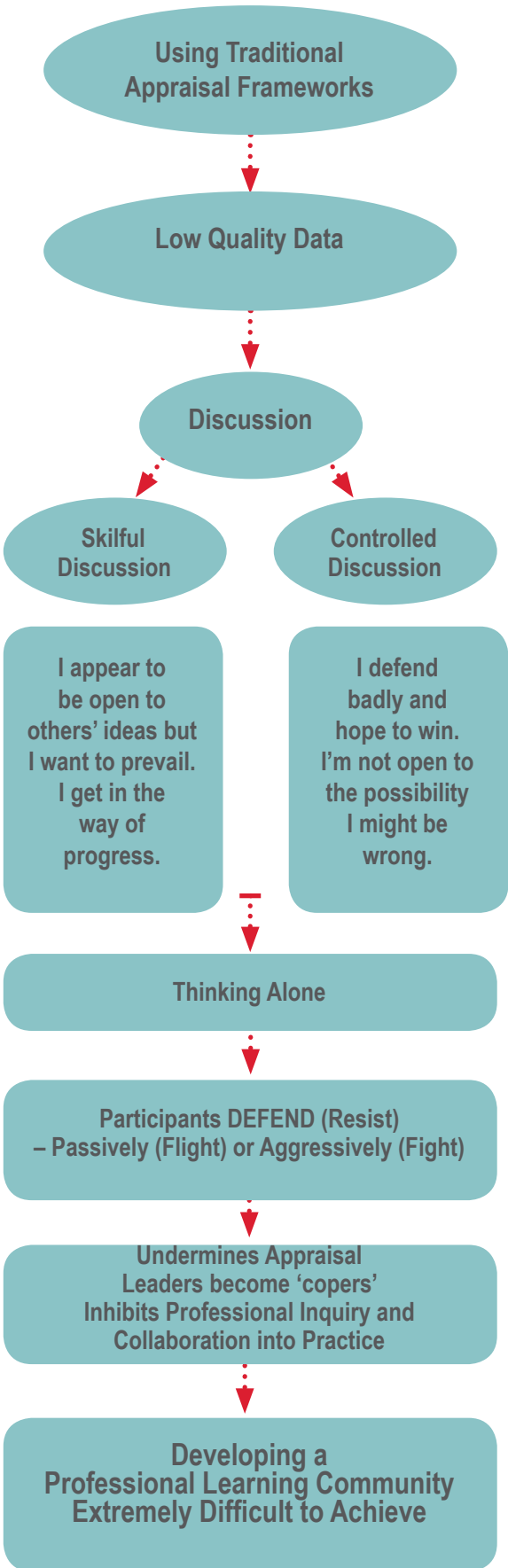
So why do we default to discussion when dialogue is so beneficial? There are many reasons but we believe one important reason is because we tend to be 'teaching practice data poor'. It means raising the quality and voracity of professional dialogue around teaching and learning has proven to be extremely difficult.

Through our work in education over the last decade we have noticed how using data as a vehicle for reflecting on teaching practice often increases teacher defensiveness and de-rails potentially meaningful professional reflection. Being unable to access rich data around each teacher practice has meant professional inquiry can lead to unproductive discussion and not productive dialogue. Not having rich data on teaching practice, teachers and leaders are often hamstrung and unable to move from discussion to dialogue.

In response to this most frustrating leadership issue we have developed the Appraisal Connector system. It's designed to provide teachers and leaders with the rich information they require to move discussion to dialogue.

What is not so well known is that there are two types of dialogue - Reflective Dialogue and Generative Dialogue and they take place in sequence. In Reflective Dialogue we evaluate what we do and why. A teacher requires rich data on their teaching practice to do this. Without it, they are unable to move to Generative Dialogue where they open up to new possibilities and options and are able to let go of previously held views. The Appraisal Connector is a key to starting the 'dialogue chain reaction' and capturing teachers in a process of personalised professional learning.

# How do we Gather Data on Teacher Practice?





## The Benefits of Dialogue

Research shows how the modern world has lost the ability to dialogue. Discussion has become our default means of human transmission. This is fatal in organisations seeking to put learning at the heart of their systems and communities - dialogue is the key to high quality collaboration.

Dialogue is the key to unlocking learning within performance appraisal and to generating creative tension to make meetings more meaningful. Facilitating conversations with parents, excelling at collegial coaching and mentoring, and influencing others in powerful ways through a range of professional conversations - courageous, reflective, learning, feedback, feed forward - all requires mastery of dialogue.

Research shows that mastering the art of dialogue kick starts careers, strengthens professional and personal relationships, improves peoples' emotional health, and harmonises teams, organisations and families. The most difficult challenges can dissolve, workplace performance increases and personal and professional happiness improves - all exponentially.

## Two Steps to Developing a Dialogue Driven Learning Community

The quality of conversations is linked directly to two things:

### **Step 1 - Supporting Reflective Dialogue to Generative Dialogue**

Leaders need to ensure their 'adult learning systems' provide teachers with rich personalised data on their teaching. Leaders and teachers need to have something worth reflecting on before they can engage in reflective dialogue and move through to generative dialogue. An absence of rich data is a fatal problem. One way of overcoming this is to use Appraisal Connector - an on-line appraisal system highlighting exactly where each teacher's developmental areas and strengths lie.

### **Step 2 - Developing Skills to Dialogue**

To dialogue one needs to have knowledge, skills and abilities. Research consistently highlights how few people are able to dialogue when conversations become critical, professional, high stakes and personal. They veer to discussion extremely quickly.

## What areas does the Appraisal Connector focus on?

Those areas which research consistently show make the greatest difference to the quality of a teacher's teaching and their children's learning.

One section focuses on The Big Four - The Craft of Teaching:

- + Environment/Classroom Management
- + Content Knowledge
- + Instructional Practice
- + Formative Assessment

Another section focuses on the Key Competencies of the New Zealand Curriculum and how each teacher contributes to their Professional Learning Community. To what extent does each teacher model through their professional interactions with each other, parents and with children, managing self, relating to others, thinking and participating, and contributing?

Questions have been designed to relate directly to the Registered Teacher Criteria. For those with leadership and management responsibilities there is an additional section to complete.



## What does the data look like when it is displayed and reported?

Data is displayed in an easy to use and interpret report using a 'cockpit' approach with data displayed as a series of dials. \*Examples from each of The Big Four are provided on the next few pages.

*\*Please note the examples used are taken from school-based data.*

### Teaching Practice ( The Classroom )

The Big Four is the framework for improving instructional practice developed by the University of Kansas Centre for Research and Learning. The Big Four are about focussing teachers' attention on high yielding teaching practices. More specifically it's about asking teachers to:

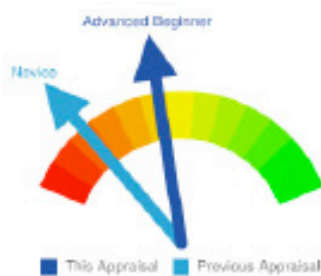
- Encourage Positive Behaviour
- Focus on Essential Content
- Increase Learning through effective Instruction; and
- Increase Student Motivation through Formative Assessment

The Big Four also provide a useful framework for the provision of tailored professional development and learning for teachers. In sequence each of the Big Four provides the typical developmental pathway teachers take across their careers. Typically a novice teacher initially focuses on gaining control in the classroom and reinforcing positive behaviour. Once achieved the next focus becomes deepening knowledge and understanding of essential content ( Curriculum ) and then in sequence, developing effective instruction before typically looking at increasing student motivation through Formative Assessment.

This Self Review Instrument is designed to generate feedback across all of the Big Four areas. As teachers and school leaders take part in developmental conversations based on this feedback, they will be able to discuss where to focus developmental efforts in the context of individual teachers' careers.

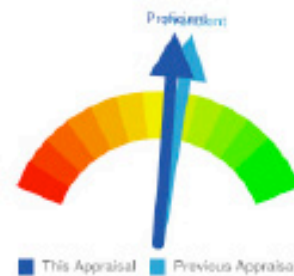
### Classroom Management

#### Self Appraisal: **Advanced Beginner**



Current: Advanced Beginner  
Previous: Novice

#### Other Appraisal: **Proficient**



Current: Proficient  
Previous: Proficient

#### My Comments:

I believe the areas I need to work on are making the learning environment challenging which will then lead to less disruptive events in my classroom.

#### Other Comments:

Andrew needs to maintain acceptable levels of behaviour in his classroom and I believe this is an area he needs to work on over the coming months.

## Content Knowledge

### Self Appraisal: **Advanced Beginner**



Current: **Advanced Beginner**  
Previous: **Advanced Beginner**

### Other Appraisal: **Advanced Beginner**



Current: **Advanced Beginner**  
Previous: **Advanced Beginner**

### Other Comments:

I feel if Andrew focused on using content that stretched students in their learning then he would improve student learning outcomes significantly.

## Instructional Practice

### Self Appraisal: **Advanced Beginner**



Current: **Advanced Beginner**  
Previous: **Proficient**

### Other Appraisal: **Advanced Beginner**



Current: **Advanced Beginner**  
Previous: **Advanced Beginner**

### Areas to Develop

( x1 ) Applying a range of differing teaching strategies and techniques to meet the needs of students from diverse cultures and backgrounds.

### My Comments:

I need to better identify when my students lose interest and have plans in place to gain back their interest.

### Other Comments:

I believe Andrew could improve his Instructional Practice by improving the classroom interactions he has with his students, making it a two way conversation.

## Formative Assessment

### Self Appraisal: **Advanced Beginner**



Current: Advanced Beginner  
Previous: Proficient

#### Areas to Develop

Enabling students to develop as independent learners.

### Other Appraisal: **Proficient**



Current: Proficient  
Previous: Advanced Beginner

#### Areas to Develop

( x1 ) Ensuring that everyone in the class, including you, is held to account for responsibilities.

#### Other Comments:

It would be great if Andrew reflected on his student data to help him fully understand how it could improve his own teaching practice.

The Appraisal Connector includes these Sections:

- + Introduction and Explanations
- + Overview of Results Ratings and Levels of Capability
- + Key Competencies
- + Registered Teacher Criteria
- + Management Responsibilities
- + Appraisal Response Review

## What benefits will the appraisal connector provide me with as a leader?

There are many...

### **Differentiated organisation wide professional development...**

Traditionally information from each teacher's appraisal sits in isolation from other teachers. A leader has no ability to determine what patterns exist across their organisation. Because the Appraisal Connector centralises data gathering, as a leader you can access a consolidated report showing where the teaching gaps and strengths lie across your whole organisation or within teams.

For example data might show:

- + 17% of your teachers require development around developing social competence in children;
- + 28% of teachers require curriculum and content development;
- + 27% are ready for development around their instructional practices; and
- + 28% are ready for developmental opportunities around formative assessment.

With this information you are able to provide specific targeted professional development and increase value for money and effectiveness. It is a vehicle through which you are able to plan future professional development.

With this new knowledge, and because you know who these teachers are, you have the ability to form Professional Learning Communities across your organisation in more informed ways. Communities of practice can be established and you can identify who could be teamed up for desired partnership learning opportunities.

### **Self Review and the Education Review Office...**

Data generated using the Appraisal Connector doubles as a self review tool on professional development and teaching practice. You can use the data from each teacher should the Education Review Office team ask for your views on where you believe each of your teachers' capabilities are, and where the strengths and areas for future development lie. You can also monitor the impact your professional development is having across your organisation regularly and very easily.

### **Developing a culture of continual improvement...**

Most leaders whether they are aware of it or not are advocates of William Deming, father of the School of Continual Improvement. Most leaders believe there are always better ways to do things - if they look hard enough and they keep their ears open. Appraisal has not traditionally assisted their cause in this area.



Traditionally because of time constraints appraisal is undertaken once a year. It means a whole year may have passed before a teacher receives information on areas of their practice they may need to target, or receive affirmation on. A year is a long time in the life of a child who is in that organisation.

Research shows the more regularly teachers become informed about their practice the more likely it is they will make changes to it. Using the Appraisal Connector you can choose how often each teacher becomes informed on their practice. You can choose from any of the following options...

**One Appraisal per teacher each year**

**Two Appraisals per teacher each year**

**Three Appraisals per teacher each year**

**Four Appraisals per teacher each year**



Research informs us how teacher development is best achieved when regular and on-going developmental opportunities occur - not when they are one off annual events.

The Appraisal Connector overcomes this easily because you can choose whether you wish teachers to be appraised half yearly, every third of the year or every quarter. Teachers offered these opportunities have discovered the richness of regular reflection and the power of receiving regular information on critical aspects of their practice. It has also had a significant impact on maintaining teacher's motivation and energy for achieving goals.

Reducing time frames into half a year, a third of a year or a quarter year of a year gives not only teachers' targets and goals to work towards but also allows them to achieve them and to move onto other meritorious ones too. Because the questions Appraisal Connector uses allows teachers to easily break down key elements of teaching, their goals become more focused and more easily achievable.

Data is also retained from previous appraisals and presented in any one report so that teachers and leaders can monitor and measure gains in performance over time.

#### **Instant access to performance information for leaders and teachers...**

As leader, you have access to an on-line briefcase of appraisals for your viewing at any time. What it means is that you have access to each teacher's appraisal at your fingertips. You and each teacher can view their comprehensive appraisal report - which can be viewed on-line (HTML) or printed as required (PDF).

#### **Dovetails with Teacher Registration...**

Because the Appraisal Connector incorporates the new Registered Teacher Criteria, teachers may use information as evidence for Teacher Registration purposes.

## What research forms the basis of the Appraisal Connector?

The difference between a fad and something worthwhile, useful and here to stay has a research backing. The biggest issue we had was limiting our research base. Eventually we limited ourselves to the thinking, frameworks and models provided by the following people as we genuinely believe their thinking is relevant to New Zealand Educators in a New Zealand setting.

**Professor John Hattie** at Auckland University, who has spent years using mathematical models to measure sources of variation in student achievement.

**Robert Marzano**, speaker, trainer, and author of more than 30 books and 150 articles on topics such as instruction, assessment, writing and implementing standards, cognition, effective leadership, and school intervention.

**Dr Jim Knight**, research associate at the University of Kansas Centre for Research on Learning and the president of the Instructional Coaching Group. He has spent more than a decade studying instructional coaching and has written several books on the topic.

**Douglas Hall**, adult education expert.

**Deborah Meier**, author of *In Schools We Trust*.

The work of **Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot**, Professor of Education at Harvard University.

**Dr Reuven Bar-On** and his work on Emotional Intelligence.

Change expert **Otto Scharmer**, author of *Theory U: Leading from the future as it Emerges*.

**Robert Fritz**, author of *The Path of Least Resistance* and *Creating* who has outlined the power of the Tension-Resolution process in guiding behaviour.

We have also drawn on the work of management experts such as **Peter Drucker, Walter Mahler, Robert Blake & Jane Mouton, Joseph Folkman & Jack Zenger**.





## The flaws with traditional existing appraisal and performance management systems

The Appraisal Connector has been born out of growing frustration amongst leaders and teachers over the last decade and a half. Whilst appraisal/performance management is mandated as a process it is perceived by the majority of teachers to be more about compliancy than professional development and growth. For leaders the frustration is that irrespective of the time they put into an appraisal, whether little or a lot, it does not lead to significant, sustained improvements in teaching practice. The value for time and money is not there. There are many reasons for the failure of traditional appraisal some of which are highlighted below:

**A Culture of Fear and Mistrust:** Teachers fear the process is about catching them out. Often teachers have memories of teacher training where the lecturer came in and tried to fix them. The belief that people coming in must be judging and evaluating them is long held on to by teachers. Once bitten, twice shy and there are invisible scars.

**Dishonesty and Gamesmanship:** Teachers often feel compelled to 'bring out their best china' when being observed especially if they feel they are being evaluated or feel threatened. It means data gathered by an observer is potentially null and void. It means any follow up conversation based on this data is also null and void. It means the teacher effectively wins the appraisal game - but do their children? Usually not, because this game isn't about improving practice but more about survival, wanting to feel valued and reaching the next pay increment. It's not about children's learning pathways.

**Poor Conversations and Poor Information:** Conversations will always be poor if both the appraiser and appraisee know implicitly the data they are talking about is null and void. There is no integrity in the process. However, even if the data is authentic and genuine, to shift teachers' practice first the teacher's thinking must shift. Reflective Dialogue leading to Generative Dialogue are the two conversational mechanisms to achieve this. Traditional coaching conversations are based on feedback and informational gathering questions which can lead to less than helpful interviewing and interrogatory style conversations, which aid the appraiser but not the person being appraised.

**Referring to Compliance as Coaching:** The way coaching is undertaken in many instances is not coaching but a way of seeking teachers to comply. It's compliance but under a different name - about buy-in as opposed to ownership.

**Appraisals Based on Pedagogical Thinking:** Pedagogy refers in a pure sense to the art, science, theory and practice of learning for children. Very simply, in Greek 'peda' refers to child and 'gogy' learning. Most educators at levels high enough in their organisation with responsibility and authority to develop adult learning systems like appraisal have mastered pedagogy and use pedagogical thinking implicitly within their systems. Appraisal would work if the target audience were children. Unfortunately when teachers sometimes explain how they feel as though they are treated like children through their appraisal they are right – it's based on pedagogical principles. Design an appraisal using principles of andragogy (adult learning) and your teachers will have at their disposal an appraisal system, which drives their professional learning.

**Time:** Due to some if not all of the above reasons we don't put aside time to do appraisal well. We fill our time up with other more pressing things and claim not to have enough time to do it well, or at all.

## If I sought more information who would I speak to?

For more information visit [www.interlead.co.nz](http://www.interlead.co.nz), email [acs@interlead.co.nz](mailto:acs@interlead.co.nz) or contact:

**Primary and Secondary Education:** Tony, Phil, John, Judith or Andrew.

**Early Childhood Education:** Liz, Karen or Judith.

We will be very happy to provide you with the information you require.



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