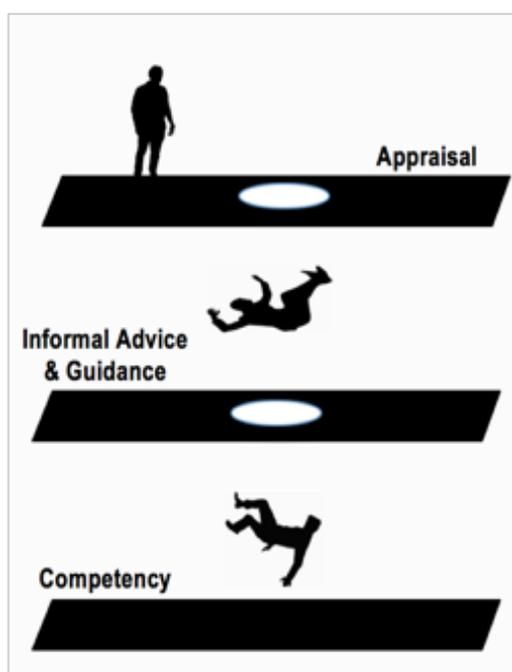


5. Performance Management: Fewer Snakes - More Ladders

By Tony Burkin

A pedagogy we use to humanise learning when teaching students is differentiation.

A problem with traditional teacher appraisal is how differentiation around teacher's



This framework does little to support the needs of the vast majority of teachers. It's high in accountability, low in learning, development, growth, inspiration, invigoration, revitalisation, stimulation and rejuvenation. Being a blunt tool, it doesn't differentiate and has eroded educators' goodwill, contributed to teachers' and leaders' cynicism, increased workload for very little benefit, and has been treated as a test – a threat – as opposed to an opportunity.

development has not been a fundamental guiding principle. Teacher appraisal has been more akin to playing Snakes & Ladders but with lots of snakes and too few ladders.

The thinking has been that so long as teachers are able to prove competency the reward is to be exposed to the same process the following year. The same test repeated year after year.

Thinking in this way all teachers are treated equally, but in doing so the principle of equity is undermined. It's not fair.

The diagram shows the possible pathways traditional appraisal offers. Fall through the appraisal floor, you're on Informal Advice & Guidance. Slip through this floor and you're on Competency.

Our article ***Humanising Appraisal: From Performance Appraisal to Performance Management***, identified nine teacher profiles based on the concepts of peoples' decency quotients (read our article ***Guilty or Not Guilty?***) and the level of performance one consistently demonstrates. Doing this allows us to build a more nuanced approach to supporting teachers – to thinking more about how best to differentiate an approach for each as opposed to exposing everyone to the same test year after year.

The nine profiles can be simplified into four basic zones – red, blue, green and yellow.

P R O F E S S I O N A L I S M	Decency Quotient Consistently Demonstrated	High	Earnest Underperformer	Solid Citizen	Superstar	
		Moderate	Unreliable Underperformer	Unreliable Journeyman	Unreliable Whiz	
		Low	Underperforming Amateur	Amateur Journeyman	Gifted Amateur	
				Novice	Proficient	Mastery
	Level of Performance Consistently Demonstrated					

Red Zone Teachers

Performance Management - Informal Advice & Guidance/Competency

Teachers falling in or around the red zone are best served with highly geared 100% externally imposed accountability approaches. The teacher has a combination of both attitudinal and teaching practice issues. They are probably linked.

Someone other than the teacher is managing both the teacher's performance around teaching practice and their decency (professionalism).

An accountability approach is not dehumanising. What would be dehumanising would be to ignore the serious issues associated with *red zoner's* and the additional burdens they create for colleagues (particularly in shared learning spaces) and learners. Because this person is unable to hold them self to account someone else needs to.

Performance management for *red zoner's* is based on the fundamental principle that someone is

managing them. This will be challenging work with great potential for confrontation and conflict.

It will be more of a test. For the leader managing the *red zoner*, it will be more of a psychological test. For the *red zoner* it will be both psychological and feel like a series of on-going performance tests.

Feedback and professional conversation is likely at times to focus on personal character flaws the *red zoner* possesses (examples might include poor time keeping, inability to yield to others' better ideas, poor planning, disorganisation, low commitment, persistent missing of meetings, persistent inattention to detail, incivility towards parents/colleagues) and it's likely it could be the first time anyone has communicated such things to them because others have recoiled at the idea of having such potentially tough conversations.

Yellow Zone Teachers

Performance Management - Professionalism

Yellow zoner's do not have issues with their teaching practice. They vary between being good and great but they do bring attitudinal challenges.

Yellow zoner's may not be collegial. They maybe mavericks. They may let others down. When selflessness is required they may lapse into selfishness.

In shared learning spaces for example *yellow zoner's* may not transition at agreed upon times and thus make lives difficult for colleagues. They may fail to meet deadlines and in doing so inconvenience and hinder the performance of others. Reports may consistently be poorly done and it's clear they have not proof read them because they are relying on others to do it for them. They may shift the burden and blame others when they are at fault themselves and talk about others behind people's backs in negative and disparaging ways. Often these blemishes are overlooked historically because we can be blinded by the *yellow zoner's* brilliance in the classroom or if not at the brilliant level, their sound teaching practice.

Performance management specifically focuses on the *yellow zoner's* social competencies – self

managing as a professional, professionally relating to others, professionally participating & contributing and thinking like a professional – and the leader will need to be strong and be comfortable having honest performance conversations focusing on aspects of the *yellow zoner's* personal character which may not have been challenged before.

As the leader attempts to *lean in* and red flag the *yellow zoner's* behaviours and attitudes the *yellow zoner* is likely to *lean back in* and defend themselves by suggesting their students always get good results and they're a good teacher. Be prepared to ensure the *yellow zoner* does not hijack the conversation in this way. *Lean back in* and focus the conversation back on their attitude, motivation and professionalism. This is not a conversation on teaching practice.

Performance management is more challenge than support in this case because it has a disciplinary feel to it. In the same way we may be holding to account a mischievous or disobedient student we are doing the same here but with an adult who should know better. At times this will feel like a psychological battle of wills for all involved.

Blue Zone Teachers

Performance Management – Teaching Practice

Blue zone teachers are motivated to learn and improve but lack crucial skills, knowledge and abilities. The management of performance is undertaken by them around teaching practice. The focus on developing pedagogy and deepening curriculum knowledge will be important and because teachers in this zone are motivated to learn, the approach to Performance Management should be developmentally orientated but dedicated to meeting clearly negotiated targets

and goals on-going throughout the year. It's more performance support than psychological challenge for the leader and for the teacher it will be performance challenge and potentially a psychological battle at times with themselves.

Blue zoner's are the teachers for whom if you have undertaken professional development and learning round coaching, are your targets. *Blue zoner's* are coachable.

Green Zone Teachers

Performance Management - Stretch

Green zoner's can be trusted to self-author their development, to take responsibility for accurately self-evaluating their practice, and to set realistic yet challenging improvement challenges. They manage their own performance.

student achievement sits outside a teacher's realm of influence. It might be that a teacher grows an area of their pedagogy significantly but is not reflected in student achievement data.

One successful approach we have supported schools and centres develop is to set green zone teachers the challenge of proving they are better teachers in November/December than they were in January/February with the proviso that they cannot use student achievement data as evidence of improvement. We encourage teachers to undertake a focused professional inquiry homing in on an area of their pedagogy.

The stipulation that student achievement data should not be used is twofold.

Often students receive external coaching and tutoring outside their schools and centres. Secondly, John Hattie suggests some 70% of

In acknowledging people do not fit neatly into zones we need to recognise periods of transition. Thinking in this way provides a useful and potentially powerful way to think about how leaders need a range of skills and abilities to ensure approaches to appraisal align with where each teacher sits. Rather than providing snakes to slide down, performance management provides ladders to pull ourselves up on.