

Developing a ‘Wholeness’ to Appraisal

Formatively and summatively assessing teaching practice to develop teachers as reflective inquirers

What’s the point of appraisal?

A highly effective appraisal system does more than evaluate teachers. It successfully provides each teacher with meaningful and relevant development opportunities and accelerates professional renewal. Appraisal systems not providing teachers with this are potentially doing more damage than good – possibly undermining professional relationships, eroding professional integrity, disempowering teachers as learners and fostering amongst many a false sense of security.

What’s wrong with most appraisal systems?

Traditional school based appraisal systems fail to engage the vast majority of teachers in a process of professional revitalisation, replenishment and regeneration. Traditional appraisal, based on someone entering a classroom to collect data and to engage teachers in conversation does not create a culture in which self knowledge is honoured as essential to both personal fulfilment and organisational success.

Rather than assisting teachers identify a ‘learning edge’ these systems limit teachers to defining themselves by what they already know. Traditional appraisal does not honour or leverage teachers’ aspirations as a creative, productive force. Instead teachers find themselves exposed to a system providing a limited or fragmented sense of self.

How can I develop an appraisal system which focuses on the ‘whole’?

We know intuitively, and research consistently informs us, that balancing Formative Assessment with Summative Assessment provides us with a means for providing students with a highly effective and robust way of strengthening learning. Students’ needs are best met because data from both sources is used to feedback into a learning system evolving around each student.

If we know it works for students then are we thinking about this for our staff? The ideal learning system for your teachers is one which feeds them from both sources – not just one. The answer lies in being able to provide teachers with Summative and Formative data on their teaching practice.

What do you mean by ‘teaching practice data’ and what about student achievement data?

Schools are rich in student achievement data. But what teaching practice data are you collecting? How useful is student achievement data in accelerating the development of a teacher’s practice? To what extent does student achievement data really aid a teacher to pull their practice apart? There is ample evidence suggesting it can be very useful. However, it can also be limiting if this is the only data we provide teachers with. In fact we believe using only Student Achievement data can sometimes get in the way – that it can inhibit catalysing teachers’ evaluation and reflection of their practice.

Think of it like this...



Teachers are often tired, stressed, pushed for time and living harried time constrained schedules. Often their energy levels are low and it's easy to default to deficit based thinking. When not in these states teachers can be deficit thinkers because it's easy and they don't need to think deeply or bring change to their practice.

The Teacher's Balance Sheet
Sources of Student
Variation in Achievement

	%	%
Students		50
Student's Homes		5-10
School		5-10
Peer Effects		5-10
Teachers		30
Total	65-80	30

Teachers may not know the research but they implicitly know that much of what they are able to achieve in terms of raising student achievement lies outside their control. John Hattie's research bears this out.



How many times have you heard a teacher externalise blame for part or sometimes all of a student's underperformance Point the finger somewhere else? Rather than looking inwards and asking 'What is my contribution to why my student/students are underachieving?' you might sometimes be more likely to hear externalised reasons - things which lie beyond their control - the student's attitude, the school's poor discipline, the sheer number of meetings they have to attend, the number of new initiatives they are trying to put into practice, the particular parents of a child and/or the student's home situation, a teacher from the previous year, the amount of time missed through sport, illness ...the figures suggest they could be right. If you had teaching practice data however you would be able to assist your teachers to reflect on their practice rather than on their students.

This is an important consideration.

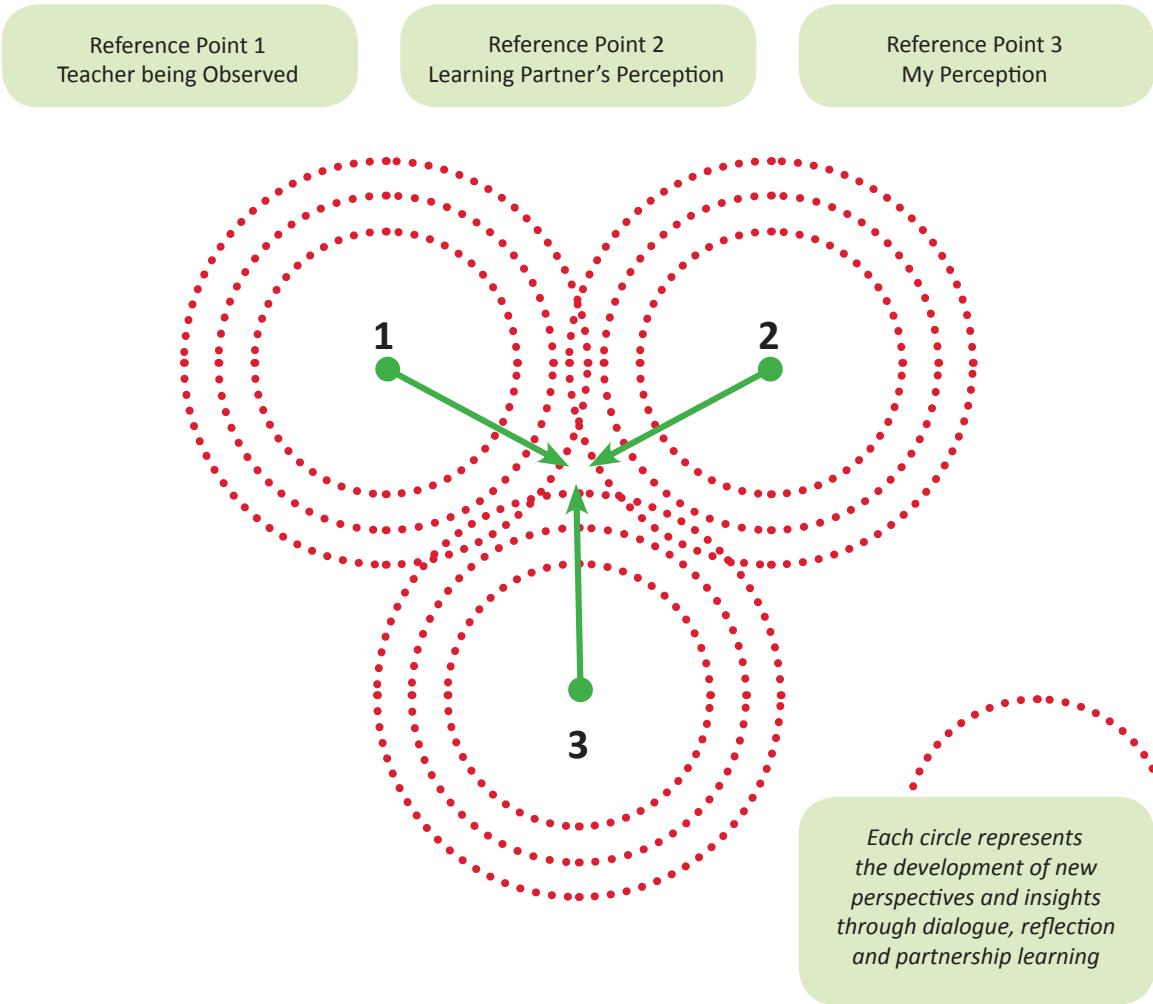
Providing teachers with regular high quality information on their teaching practice provides teachers with potentially powerful opportunities to look at themselves in the mirror and to internalise their contribution to their students' successes and failures.



Imagine the rate of acceleration in teacher growth and development if each had access to student achievement data and data on their teaching practice both of which were generated formatively and summatively.

What might teaching practice data look like?

Formative Data can and should be collected by teachers themselves. One very powerful way we have discovered we can help teachers do this is by training them in how to undertake 4 Minute Walk Throughs. By Walking Through a colleague’s classroom, with a Learning Partner/s, each seeks answers to 12 carefully researched questions which focuses each teacher on the right areas to inquire into. By then engaging in dialogue (not discussion) after their Walk Through based on the sharing of each others’ answers, the teacher and their learning partner are able to quickly establish reference points which accelerate their ability to identify their own areas for development. Because there are three reference points, teachers can triangulate and Formatively Assess exactly where their capabilities lie. They create their own sense of personal anxiety around their development and take ownership for it very quickly. Motivation for change and growth comes from within – it’s not external. Teachers move themselves from a state of ‘bliss’ to a state of ‘healthy anxiety’.



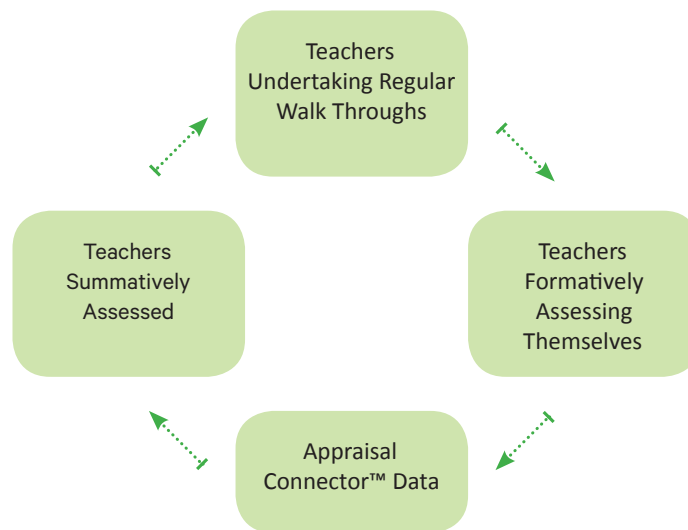
Summative Data can be provided for each teacher by using InterLEAD Connector.™ You can set each teacher up to receive Teaching Practice Data as many times a year as you like. For more information on InterLEAD Connector™ go to the section on this website.

Helping teachers move from a fragmented view to a whole view of their practice

By providing opportunities for your teachers to be trained in how to undertake Walk Throughs, to engage in and be able to facilitate reflective dialogue and to ask reflective questions, and to adhere to the principles and guidelines of Partnership Learning, each will be empowered to be able to honestly and accurately generate for themselves formative data on their practice.

By allowing teachers access to InterLEAD Connector™ you will be able to provide them with regular Summative data.

When teachers have the capacity to combine both sources you have the makings of a dynamic and rich system of teacher self appraisal which will invigorate and replenish them as human beings, and most importantly strengthen their belief that you do have as their leader, their best professional interests at heart. For the first time in their professional life you will probably allow them to glimpse a view of their 'whole'.



The one thing teachers require for personal inquiry and reflection

The notion of Teacher as Inquirer is a cornerstone of a school with aspirations of becoming an authentic Professional Learning Community. Teacher reflection, partnership learning and engaging each other in dialogue (Professional Learning Conversations) are baseline practices. The intention behind these practices is to provide teachers with 'deep learning' (Transformational Learning) opportunities which:

- *Allows them to challenge their own basic beliefs, assumptions, mental models; and*
- *Allows them to develop new insights and to look at their practices through a new lens or lenses.*

The one thing required by teachers which literally allows them to pull apart their practice and to reconstruct it is information. They need to be informed. They need data on their practice and it needs to be highly rich and relevant data. Inquiry is less about asking questions. It's more about providing teachers opportunities to frame up the right questions – these are the questions which allow them to start unlocking their thinking around what they do in the classroom and how they go about doing it. But they require rich data on their teaching practice to be able to do it well.

What might the benefits be of an adult learning system like this?

By giving teachers access to both formative data and summative data on their teaching practice you will be able to very quickly and easily:

- *Provide teachers with the data many have for so long waited for which allows them to evaluate their teaching practice honestly and without fear;*
- *Shift the burden for professional growth and development to each teacher;*
- *Shift teachers very quickly to self appraisal – rather than anyone else ‘beating them up’ each teacher effectively beats them self up (it’s also called deep learning or transformational learning);*
- *Data gathered via both means provides evidence of teacher reflection for Teacher Registration;*
- *Shift teachers to Self Appraisal – they can write up their own reports because they are informed;*
- *Raise the quality and regularity of informal professional dialogue across your school around teaching practice;*
- *Honour each teacher as a professional and create a high trust professional learning community.*



Questions - please contact us

Learn more at www.interlead.co.nz, email connector@interlead.co.nz or contact one of our team. We will be happy to provide you with more information.



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