

St Patrick's College, Silverstream

Implementation of Professional Learning Groups

Jan
2010

- **NZCER Staff survey carried out late 2009 indicated high level of dissatisfaction with current professional learning opportunities and systems.**
- Lack of alignment between student data, student learning needs and teacher PD.
- Lack of alignment with school strategic planning.
- Irregular and ad hoc PD.
- Leaders need to be seen to be learning as well.
- Purpose and value of 'walkthroughs' questioned.
- Too many goals and they were to do with compliance, rather than learning.
- Lack of teacher knowledge of teaching as inquiry.

Term 1
2010

- Wanted to identify teacher learning needs through school annual plan and to develop PLGs that embedded 'teaching as inquiry'
- 5 PLG were created. These were informed by goals in the school annual plan – Boys & Learning, Clarity in the Classroom, First Class, Literacy, Senior Engagement & Motivation. Each PLG was led by 2 staff, including all 4 members of the Leadership Team.

Term 2
& 3
2010

- Each PLG ran for 4 weeks, staff engaged in 4 of the 5 PLGs available, Literacy & First Class PLGs were compulsory for all staff.
- Feedback was collected and collated at the end of each PLG round and at the conclusion of all 4 PLGs.
- This feedback informed and refined the shape of PLGs for 2011.

Term 4
2010

- Caffeine & Pedagogy – Extended 'Clarity in the Classroom' PLG was a voluntary PLG ran for 4 sessions across 8 weeks in Term 4. 10 staff participated in these sessions.
- As the Annual Plan for 2011 was being developed feedback from PLGs, along with student data, helped inform the areas of teaching and learning for PLGs in 2011.
- Expressions of interest to lead PLG (lead the learning) and to engage in facilitator learning during Term 1, 2011, were sought from staff in Term 4 2010.

Term 1
2011

- Training PLG Facilitators took place over the course of Term 1, led by JD and Jo Grant.
- Facilitators engaged in 6 learning sessions to build skills and confidence to lead learning.
- The sessions focused on building cohesion and alignment with the Annual Plan, identifying facilitator needs to be able to lead the PLGs in Term 2 and 3 and revisiting inquiry to ensure it is central to all the PLGs.
- A criterion for effective facilitation at St. Patrick's College, Silverstream was developed.

Term 2 &
3
2011

- PLG sessions of 9 weeks and teachers have engaged in one PLG each term – 2 PLGs in total.
- During the time the facilitators have been observed, have received feedback on their practice, have monitored the impact of their PLG, and have been supported with active reflection by JD and Jo Grant.
- Departmental feedback took place during Week 10, supported with focusing questions.
- Feedback sought and some recommendations were made to leadership around areas of best practice as identified through PLG inquiries.
- At the end of the first PLG in Term 1 evaluation took place within each PLG, as well as evaluation of all PLGs in terms of quality of facilitation & PLG process. Feedback was collated by facilitators and by JD to inform practice for Term 3.

Looking
Ahead

- Further refinement of PLG structure – look to allocate set professional learning time across the whole year.
- How can we integrate HODs leading learning with their Departments in PLG time?
- Growing our current facilitator practice and building the number of internal facilitators.

Term 4
2011

- Asked BOT to support the continued growth of professional learning in the college by agreeing to a 'late start Tuesday' for the whole year.
- Investigating how we could better align professional learning and appraisal in the college.
- Exploring how teachers can be truly engaged in 'teaching as inquiry' under the PLG umbrella foci, with the vision of moving theory to practice.
- Exploring how facilitators of PLGs can move to 'learning alongside' colleagues.

Term 1
2012

- Contracted Nicki Dowling, PL Facilitator from Massey University to assist us to create a sustainable link between in-school PL/PLGs/teacher registration/ appraisal and student achievement.
- The objective was to develop a structure whereby teachers can actively review and reflect on their practice by engaging in their own personal inquiries. Teaching as Inquiry is to be at the heart of the PLGs.
- PLG Facilitators participated in a 'leading learning' workshop to grow their mentoring and coaching skills, in order to shift to 'learning alongside' one another in the PLGs. Facilitators look to take on an educative mentoring role.
- e-Professional Learning Portfolios are developed and housed within FirstClass. Documents guide 'Teaching as Inquiry' and connections with the RTCs.

Term 2
2012

- PLGs are created by DP, Teaching and Learning. The groups contain 8 members (including the leader) and are made up of teachers from a range of curriculum areas, range of experience and genders.
- Structure for PLG programme is developed. Across the term there is the opportunity to learn within groups, learn alongside critical friends and engage in personal learning. A framework for each session is provided for the Leaders by DP, Teaching & Learning.
- PLGs form their own protocols at the start of the term.
- Each teacher formulates an inquiry into their own practice under the umbrella focus for the term; 'Improving Relational Practice'
- Professional learning conversations and questions provide the opportunity for critique and feedback within the group.
- Critical Friends and HODs observe and feedback on classroom practice.
- Engagement in the inquiry enables all teachers to gather 'evidence' to place in the professional learning portfolios to demonstrate they are developing their practice and attending to the RTCs.
- Time is built into the PLG structure for teachers to work on their Professional Learning Portfolios, share their learning with others in the PLG and collect 'evidence' for appraisal purposes.
- PLG Leaders continue to be mentored as leaders by DP, Teaching and Learning throughout the year.

Term 3
2012

- PLGs are moving to a co-leadership or shared leadership model. One PLG has moved to collaborative learning (no designated leader).
- Further learning is focused on developing the listening and questioning skills to be an effective 'critical friend'.
- There will be an opportunity for the whole staff to share their inquiries and learning with each other during 'Case Study' week.

Looking
ahead

- How might we provide the opportunity for Departments to engage in inquiries central to their departmental goals to improve student achievement?
- What might the ERO report '*Teaching as Inquiry: Responding to Learners*' (July 2012) mean for the future direction of teaching as inquiry and professional learning at the college?