

Performance and development teams

Ringwood Secondary College, Victoria

Case study and materials connected to the video of effective existing performance and development practice

Ringwood Secondary College is a large Year 7 to 12 secondary school located in the gateway to the outer eastern suburbs of Melbourne, which has experienced sustained enrolment growth over time. In 2011, the school was featured in a Grattan Institute report for its balanced scorecard approach to teacher performance and development, as outlined in more detail below.

Performance and development within the college occurs in the context of a comprehensive strategy for building a professional culture aimed at promoting meaningful conversations about teaching and learning in the school. Thus, it is linked to the professional reading which all staff are expected to undertake, the operation of Performance and Development Groups, the work of major Professional Learning Teams on key aspects of whole-school change, and the professional development in which all staff are expected to engage.

All leaders and teachers within the college participate in cross-faculty Performance and Development Groups of six, led by either an assistant principal or leading teacher in the school.

A teacher's performance and development plan

All teachers are expected to have a performance and development plan using a common format which, at its heart, has teaching excellence goals. Teachers must set two teaching excellence goals related to the overall goals of the school, one of which must be derived from the college model of highly effective teaching and learning aligned to the instructional model known as E5 — ie, Engage, Explore, Explain, Elaborate and Evaluate. Teachers then establish up to three specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound (SMART) targets for each goal and identify up to three strategies to enable these targets to be achieved. Sources of data are identified to assess progress towards the targets and goals, and then used as part of discussions within Performance and Development Groups about the implementation of individual plans.

The remainder of the plan focuses on:

- teaming and leadership, where the teacher lists their involvement in informal teaching teams, any teams which are leading major change within the school and any other leadership they undertake
- professional learning, including a minimum of two compulsory college-based activities and at least one external professional development program during the year
- a minimum of one contribution the teacher is making to the school or the system as a whole.

The school has produced a sample annual plan to help staff to formulate theirs, along with samples of targets and data on which they can draw.



About

Performance and development within Ringwood Secondary College occurs in the context of a comprehensive strategy for building a professional culture aimed at promoting meaningful conversations about teaching and learning in the school. It is linked to the professional plan, the operation of Performance and Development Groups, and the professional development in which all staff are expected to engage.

Questions for discussion

1. Ringwood Secondary College have identified 4 key areas of focus in their performance and development work. What key areas of focus would work for your school context?
2. How do or could performance and development groups which share data about their teaching goals add value to existing performance and development practices in your school?
3. What aspects of professional practice would you like to address if part of a performance and development group?

School Context

Ringwood Secondary College

Ringwood, Victoria

School type: Government

Stage of schooling: Secondary

School location: Metropolitan

The work of the P&D Groups

The Performance and Development Groups are a means by which teachers can work together to develop their plans, share progress, get support they may need, seek help as required, and generally hold each other to account. The group leaders ensure that meetings are 'visionary, professional and team building' in approach, that feedback is provided to all members of the group, and that agreed meeting protocols are observed. They also provide feedback to the leadership of the school, including referral to a separate process of any performance concerns.

The teams meet once per term with tasks appropriate to the implementation of their members' plans. More specifically:

- in week five of term one, each group member spends up to ten minutes outlining their proposed plan and the group discusses this for five minutes to provide feedback aimed at finalising the plan
- in week four of terms two and three all staff discuss their progress for five minutes followed by a 30 to 45 minute discussion on a key whole-school professional development theme
- in week eight or nine of term four each group member presents their completed plans for ten minutes which is followed by five minutes of discussion by the group. This involves detailing their progress through the year in achieving their targets along with the data that supports the assessment they have made.

Beyond this, teachers can avail themselves of the offer of an interview with a member of the principal class, along the lines that all leading teachers have during the year.

The school has added further rigour to the whole process by developing its own student survey linked to the E5 instructional approach, which the overwhelming majority of teachers have chosen to use. Results of the survey have been seen to influence the classroom practices some teachers use, and two students recently interviewed for a newspaper article on the school described to the journalist how their teachers had changed aspects of their approach in response to their student survey results.

The school is now supplementing this successful collaborative performance and development approach through a newly-established mentoring program whereby recently retired teachers work with staff who have sought support to tackle a problem of practice they are seeking to resolve.

In 2013 it intends to extend some initial learning walks and classroom visits that have occurred with an expectation that classroom observations will become a part of the performance and development approach.

An indication of the effect

The school views itself as involved in a journey that started around five years ago. While still very much underway, the road travelled so far already has seen what one leader described as 'an observable cultural shift from me to we as a way of thinking about how we want to operate in this school'. Put simply, leaders and teachers are seeing more collective planning and practice and staff opinion, as measured by annual surveys of such variables as morale and professional growth, is both trending upwards and strong.

Student achievement in the college has been maintained in a context where it enrolls a growing number of Burmese refugees, and student surveys suggest a growing perception of stimulating learning in the school.

Teachers generally are more receptive to giving and receiving feedback, including from students, and the subsequent changes in practice reflect a growing skill set in the school.

Implementation

Over the last 5 years Ringwood S.C has pursued a strategy of continual review and improvement of their performance and development processes in the context of a comprehensive strategy for building a professional culture.

The school community has been working to build up the role of their Performance and Development Groups and Professional Learning Teams. These focus on meaningful conversations about teaching and learning.

The school leadership has worked closely with the staff to demonstrate the benefits of using, analysing and sharing data for the purposes of better understanding the impact they are having on student learning and the extent to which they are able to achieve their goals.

References

¹B Jensen 2011, Better teacher appraisal and feedback: Improving performance, Grattan Institute, Melbourne

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