

Engaging Teachers in Ongoing Learning: The Collaborative Professional Learning Model (CPL)

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Introduction

Education literature is steeped in signposts that identify ‘must have’ practices required in all school settings if we are going to authentically engage our teachers in the complex and dynamic actions of quality teaching. These practices have been brought together in the Collaborative Professional Learning model.

The Collaborative Professional Learning model is a comprehensive plan for onsite professional growth that engages teachers in deep investigation of practice with the intent to improve and consolidate learning. It requires thoughtful and well-planned processes and events that encourage collaborative problem solving in real time, with real students and real data in real classrooms.

We urge those responsible for our teachers’ pre-service, accreditation and professional development courses to provide for their needs in ways that are meaningful, stimulating and practical.

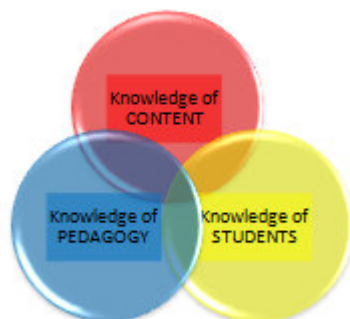
Mandate para #98

If we truly wish to nurture a hunger for learning as a system, we must first acknowledge the professionalism and capacity of our teaching staff. We must then give them the voice, trust and support necessary to engage in deep learning and nurture that deep learning in their colleagues. This is a fundamental premise of the Mandate and the guiding proposition of the Quality Catholic Schooling Framework.

THE MODEL EXPLAINED

Effective Teaching

Central to the CPL model is an understanding of effective teaching. Effective teachers bring a great deal of knowledge to the classroom and use it to support a diverse range of students (Hayes & Noonan, 2009). The three domains of teacher knowledge are:



- Knowledge of Subject Content
- Knowledge of Pedagogy
- Knowledge of Student Learning

The goal of any professional development must be dualistic; first, to increase knowledge in the three areas and second to assist teachers to integrate the knowledge effectively in order to support the learning of their students.

Effective professional development that can achieve this dual aim must be comprehensive, integrated and sustained over time.

Effective Professional Development: Collaborative professional Learning

There are no shortcuts to anyplace worth going.

Beverley Sills

The CPL model articulates six elements that contribute to the supportive school structures that are deliberately developed on the school site to assist teachers to engage in professional conversations and learning.

Shoulder to Shoulder Learning

Two heads are better than one.

John Heywood



It is easy for teachers to know what they could do, harder for them to be able to do it and most difficult for them to embed it into their daily practice (Joyce & Showers, 2002). Embedding effective practice into daily routines is a desired result of all professional development. This element focuses clearly on the work required to embed practice into authentic teacher routines. This element is about learning with colleagues, watching and thinking about classroom practice in real time and problem-solving together about how the practice would look during a real lesson sequence.

Models of Effective Practice

Information's pretty thin stuff unless mixed with experience.

Clarence Day, *The Crow's Nest*



This element focuses on capitalising on and maximising the expertise found in every school. All teachers require access to a model of what the practice might be and how it might look and having such models in every school provides ready access. This element is about developing situated expertise that provides a resource for continued learning and opportunities for induction as the need arises. The models of practice found in schools are solid demonstrations of how teaching and learning happens at the particular school.

Leadership

"If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader."

John Quincy Adams



This element focuses on two important aspects of leadership in every school. First it highlights the importance of designated leadership in attending to those issues that may distract teachers from being engaged in teaching and learning. Designated leaders also work with teachers to ensure that the school's vision is shared and that efforts to improve are seen as part of a whole school plan. Second, this element focuses on the role of teachers as leaders, where staff are proactive and empowered to work with each other to move forward. The goal of this aspect is to engage staff in improvement processes so that they see themselves as vital members of the community working together to steer the school to a better place.

Action Learning

All significant breakthroughs are break-"withs" old ways of thinking

Thomas Kuhn



Staff require an inquiry mindset if they are to engage with each other and literature to seek solutions to improvement of the programs and processes that exist in their school. Staff need to engage in a robust process that

enables work on an idea for a sustained period of time and contextualises it for their school and their particular students. Action learning processes ensure that staff can explore and refine the innovation, through trial and error, before embedding it in their school.

Professional Learning Communities

The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

Aristotle



This element highlights the importance of a collaborative culture that is characterised by professional discourse and shared pedagogies. There are formal and informal opportunities for collaborative problem-solving as teachers work together. There is an understanding that there are no islands of excellence in any school but a shared commitment in developing an accomplished school. This is achievable when the staff accept co-responsibility for the learning of all students at the school.

Professional Learning Events

Seek and you shall find.

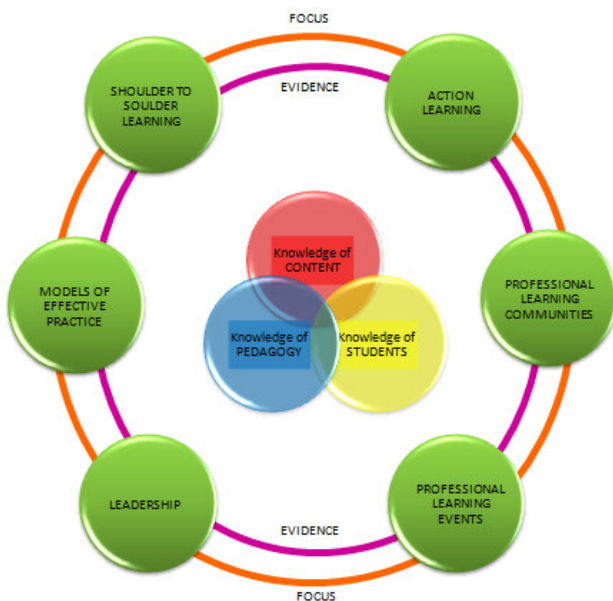
Matthew 7:7-8



There will always be times when, depending on the expertise available at the school, there will be a need to access outside expertise in order to take the learning further forward. Seeking outside expertise can take many forms such as conferences, workshops, school visits, professional reading and multimedia examples.

Bringing the Elements Together

The elements explored above, by themselves, are useful in supporting teacher professional development; however, schools and or individuals cannot choose to implement one or some and exclude others. To achieve a successful outcome, all elements must be in place and their interdependence harnessed. Synergy amongst the elements is greatly enhanced when two further concepts are employed- evidence and focus.



Evidence

A range of analysed and considered evidence ensures that the impact of each area is making a positive difference. This evidence serves as a means of accountability for the decisions of embedding new practices and to spotlight those practices that are making the biggest difference.

Focus

The school focus serves to draw the elements together in a practical way and aligns the learning opportunities. The focus ensures that the school engages in deep learning for sustained periods of time rather than engage in one-off learning opportunities or a split focus.

References

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