

Evaluate the effect of their teaching

Formative evaluation (i.e. when teachers receive feedback on where they are going, how they are going and where to next, in terms of their impact on student learning) is one the most powerful influences on student achievement. As the leader it is important that you fully believe that your fundamental task is to support your teachers to evaluate the effects of their teaching on their students' achievement. Once teachers become evaluators of the effects of their own teaching, then they are better placed to know what to do next to enhance student learning. These decisions will always be evidence-based. You will be setting up systems and processes to support teachers to mine their student data regularly to evaluate what has been learnt and what needs to be learnt next.

In your leadership role, the teachers are like your own class and your role is to constantly monitor and evaluate the effects of your leadership, the professional development opportunities you give and adjust your support accordingly. You may need to differentiate the learning opportunities for teachers, as they will have a wide range of strengths and needs, just as students do. There will be teachers who have strengths that they can model and share with other teachers, and as the literacy leader you will be identifying these teachers and setting up opportunities for them to share best practice.

'It is a way of thinking that makes the difference' (Hattie, 2012)

Are change agents!

'Leaders and teachers believe success and failure in student learning is about what they, as teachers or leaders did and did not do... we are change agents!' (Hattie 2012)

As the literacy leader your role is to challenge and support your teachers to believe that they need to be activators, not facilitators, and they are primarily responsible for enhancing student learning. As a change agent yourself, it is important to foster positive beliefs such as:

- All students can be challenged
- Limitations of social class and home resources are surmountable – 'don't blame the kids'
- We need to develop high expectations for all students (relative to their starting points)
- Not accepting deficit thinking, no labelling and no low expectations!

Changing the deepset beliefs of some teachers may be your biggest challenge as a literacy leader. You will need to be the change agent yourself to inspire and model this mindframe.

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Talk more about the learning

Teachers will often talk about teaching: best practice, new strategies, tasks and activities. However, in your role as literacy leader you will need to challenge teachers to be more critical about the effect of these on how students learn. Do your teachers have clearly articulated theories of learning? Do they monitor students to notice when and how learning is occurring, and for which students some strategies are working/not working? Professional discussions need to focus on how children learn, using evidence of students' learning in multiple ways, and how they might learn differently. An effective literacy leader will deliberately question, prompt and support these discussions at staff meetings, monitoring meetings and in informal conversations with teachers. You will promote the concept of teachers as adaptive experts, exploring multiple ways of teaching and learning and support teachers to evaluate what has worked best for particular groups of students, using data as the touchstone.

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See assessment as feedback

Once the data is gathered in Phase One of the inquiry cycle, as a literacy leader you will lead and support discussions with your teachers to interpret assessment results. Key questions to ask teachers:

- Who did you teach well?
- Who did you teach not so well?
- What are the gaps?
- Where are the strengths?
- What is achieved?
- What are the next learning steps?

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Engage in dialogue not monologue

Just as teachers need to know when to talk and when to actively listen to students, a literacy leader also needs to remember this when leading a practice analysis conversation, following a teacher observation. It is not about telling a teacher what they should/need to do, but together describing, explaining and evaluating the lesson. From this, some recommendations for next steps may be co-constructed as part of a teacher's authentic inquiry into improving their own practice. As the literacy leader you do not need to know all the answers, but can lead a conversation with teachers to support their own inquiry.

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Enjoy the challenge

Improving student achievement is a primary outcome of successful literacy leadership, but this can be challenging. Leaders and teachers need to enjoy the challenge of learning and never retreat to just 'doing their best'. All teachers will believe that they are 'doing their best' in their classrooms, but to achieve improved outcomes, teachers need to have a positive mindframe that will accept this challenge. This mindframe requires leaders to exhort and support teachers to do something differently and therefore make changes to their practice. At times, the challenge may seem daunting. What may be challenging for one teacher may be business as usual for another. Just as we differentiate learning for our students, literacy leaders need to differentiate learning for teachers, maintaining a level of challenge for all teachers.

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Develop positive relationships

'Learning thrives on error' (Hattie, p 165). It is absolutely vital to create warm, empathetic and trustworthy climates where errors are welcomed as opportunities for learning. This is absolutely vital for students but it just as important for leaders to establish this climate for teachers. Your role as literacy leader is to support the establishment and maintenance of a true professional learning community. To lead this successfully will entail you setting up the parameters and protocols for teachers to feel safe to evaluate the effects of their teaching, especially when a student's progress is slow. Teachers need encouragement to uncover deep-seated beliefs about teaching and learning, to discard incorrect knowledge and seek new understandings through genuine inquiry. One way to ensure this is to have a relentless focus on reflection about their impact based on the evidence of students' learning. Teachers may feel anxious about being observed, and so an effective literacy leader will set up an observation process that is clear, well planned and well understood in terms of purpose, criteria and process.

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Use the language of learning

As the literacy leader you will play an important role in fostering effective home-school partnerships. Current research highlights the benefits of ensuring that parents and whanau are familiar with the language of learning in schools. The [Flaxmere Project](#) showed that parents who understood the importance of deliberate practice opportunities, the differences between surface and deep knowing, the meaning of learning intentions and success criteria were better able to talk to their children and support them in their learning. Encourage your teachers to share assessment data with their students, to use correct terminology in the classrooms and to talk to their parents using this language of learning, especially when discussing progress and how this is being achieved.

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