

# Appraisal

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## How effective is your appraisal system?

Consider the following scenario:

Mrs Brown has come into the school to talk to the Principal because her son John is having nightmares and doesn't want to come to school. Mrs Brown believes that the problem is the unpredictable and inconsistent way the teacher relates to the children. She says that the teacher has sometimes been really friendly and enthusiastic and then, for what seems to be for no reason, she can be moody, grumpy and negative. When the Principal talked with the DP, they agreed that they weren't surprised. This had been going on for years and between them they could think of a number of recent incidents that illustrated the problem. The Principal had already spoken to the teacher on two occasions this year. On one occasion when walking past the classroom, he heard her shouting at a student. On another occasion, the DP was relieving for the teacher and heard the children talking about how sarcastic she was. In several staff meetings, she has made passing comments that blame the students or put them down in some way.

When the Principal spoke to the teacher about these behaviours, she put it down to three or four difficult children. The teacher seemed unwilling to accept that she was part of the problem and or even if there was a problem at all. The Principal made it clear to the teacher that changes had to be made. The teacher referred to last year's appraisal in which her appraiser made positive comments about her performance against the professional standards. There were even affirming comments about her classroom environment. The teacher said that there had never been any other parent complaints or any concerns expressed about her performance in the past.

After Mrs Brown has left the school, the Principal checks out the teacher's previous year's appraisal report and finds no mention of any problems regarding her performance and notes the many positive comments. The Principal looks at this year's appraisal goals for the teacher. There is one goal related to the school's professional development in literacy, another to the school's numeracy target and a third and fourth related to completing an undergraduate degree and keeping the fish tank clean.

What does this tell us about this school's appraisal system?

Our experiences working in schools across the sectors indicate that this type of scenario is very common.

# Culture for Appraisal

<b>Systems</b>			
	<b>Typical Practice</b>	<b>Impact/Issue</b>	<b>Possible Solution(s)</b>
1	Unclear expectations of effective practice	Teachers don't know what the expected standard is. This can lead to inconsistencies between classes and departments	Articulating the key effective teaching and learning processes and what this looks like and sounds like in the classroom. Decide as a school things like: "What could an observer expect to see in any lesson in an effective classroom?" e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Relationships with students</li> <li>· Formative assessment</li> <li>· Differentiation</li> </ul>
2	Little attention is paid to creating an effective appraisal culture. The system focuses on compliance rather than creating an effective learning environment.	Appraisers focus on completing the appraisal documentation rather than improving learning. School leaders don't model receiving and acting on feedback. Teachers don't feel safe to take risks or make mistakes Teachers feel threatened or uncomfortable having observers in their classrooms.	Appraisers focus on teacher learning and the system allows flexibility in order to meet teachers' needs Give status and resourcing to the process so that those involved value and commit to the process and have the resources to do the job. Do less better
3	Schools usually only have one system that tries to accommodate both accountability and professional development	By combining it into one system, both the accountability and professional development is compromised with the result that neither is done well.	Separate the two processes Separate time frames Separate documentation A different person undertaking each process
4	The appraisal follows a predetermined system	Most appraisers complete the minimum requirements and this is the expectation of teachers. The individual needs of teachers can be ignored or compromised by this process.	The system must be flexible enough to accommodate the urgent and important needs of individual teachers in an appropriate rather than a predetermined way.

<b>Systems</b>			
	<b>Typical Practice</b>	<b>Impact/Issue</b>	<b>Possible Solution(s)</b>
5	<p>Most schools have a system where every teacher is required to set a school focused development goal.</p> <p>** The legislation requires one development objective to be set.</p>	<p>Development objectives are often based on school goals that may not reflect the identified performance needs of the individual teacher.</p>	<p>Goals must be personalized regardless of whether they are based on a school focus or not.</p>
	<p>The appraisal cycle runs for a calendar year; February to December</p>	<p>The most important aspects of the process often occur in the two busiest terms (one and four). This can result in a slow start and a rushed finish and inadequate action in between.</p> <p>When intensive work is required, the timeframes are not adjusted to accommodate the need.</p>	<p>The goal and actions required to meet the goal should determine the timeframes.</p> <p>Schools should feel free to trial different appraisal cycle schedules to accommodate competing demands. For example, start in term four or people working on different appraisal cycles.</p>
<b>Goal Setting</b>			
	<b>Typical Practice</b>	<b>Impact/Issue</b>	<b>Possible Solution(s)</b>
7.	<p>The goals are rarely based on evidence and are often set by the teacher based on their perceptions of their performance and/or on their wants rather than needs.</p>	<p>Sometimes a teacher's real needs are not addressed. The teacher is not challenged to change ineffective practice. Over time, teachers get comfortable and perceive ineffective practices as effective.</p> <p>Sometimes symptoms e.g. student behaviour or classroom management are identified as the development need, rather than identifying the underlying cause of the presenting issue.</p>	<p>The goal needs to be based on evidence, for example, outcomes of the previous appraisal or baseline data collected prior to the beginning of the appraisal process.</p> <p>Take time to identify the underlying cause(s) rather than respond to the presenting practice</p>
	8	<p>Sometimes the goals are not challenging and often describe practice that doesn't require extra effort or a year's worth of work. Sometimes they are trivial or safe.</p>	<p>Nothing changes. The appraisal process is devalued and seen as not being worth the time and effort and it does not contribute to improving teachers' practice.</p>

<b>Goal Setting</b>			
	<b>Typical Practice</b>	<b>Impact/Issue</b>	<b>Possible Solution(s)</b>
<b>9</b>	Some of the goals are difficult to achieve with the support available.	Important needs remain unaddressed. Teachers become frustrated at the lack of support. Teachers may use the lack of support as an excuse for lack of action.	Be explicit in the action plan about the nature of the support.  Do not set goals that are unable to be adequately resourced.
	The number of goals relating to the learning needs of the teacher are either too many or too few.	Too many goals leave a teacher feeling overwhelmed and set up to fail. Too few means important needs are not addressed.	The system should allow for flexibility in the number of goals set. There is not a formula. The number of goals should reflect the learning needs of the teacher.
<b>11</b>	School's focus on SMART goals	Easily measurable goals are set rather than more important goals that are harder to measure/achieve.	There is a way of measuring every goal. Be open minded about what constitutes evidence and different ways of collecting the evidence.  Build the capacity in the school for designing the measurement tools.
<b>12</b>	Lack of identifying and prioritizing an individual teacher's most important development need	Teachers avoid key issues. Students' learning continues to be compromised. The teacher's job satisfaction and career potential is compromised. The best teachers can become frustrated as they observe issues not being addressed. School time and money is wasted.	School and personal goals need to be specific and targeted to each teacher's needs. They must focus on what is important for that teacher. It may be that the school goal is not the highest priority for some teachers.

Data/Evidence Collection		
Typical Practice	Impact/Issue	Possible Solution(s)
13 The only evidence that gets collected and used, is from classroom observations	<p>Evidence from potentially valuable other sources, e.g. student achievement data, student work, feedback from teachers, parents, students, team leaders, HODs is not considered.</p> <p>Appraisers are not trained in appropriate data gathering techniques and their knowledge is limited to classroom observations.</p>	<p>The data gathered should be determined by the goal and how progress against the goal is best measured.</p> <p>Appraisers trained in a wide range of formal and informal data gathering techniques, e.g.</p> <p><b>Formal data collection strategies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Classroom observations</li> <li>Feedback from colleagues</li> <li>Feedback from students</li> <li>Student achievement and progress data</li> </ul> <p><b>Informal data collection strategies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Level of contribution to school development projects</li> <li>Relationships with parents, colleagues</li> <li>Conduct at meetings</li> <li>Feedback/comments/complaints from parents</li> <li>Timeliness of completing administration tasks</li> <li>Quality of documents</li> <li>Walk throughs</li> </ul>
14 Important evidence from senior leaders may not be included especially when they are not the appraiser.	<p>Vital information is not used in the appraisal.</p> <p>Reasonably serious issues left unaddressed and undocumented. If left unaddressed, it can eventuate in a crisis.</p>	<p>The system needs to allow for any important evidence to be included. Appraisers should dialogue with key people who are able to contribute to a teacher's appraisal. Feedback needs to be gathered from a range of sources.</p>

<b>Developing and monitoring action plans</b>														
<b>Typical Practice</b>	<b>Impact/Issue</b>	<b>Possible Solution(s)</b>												
15 Inadequate action plans to achieve development objectives (name and hope)	Lack of clarity of action and expectations Not enough actions to achieve change No real change to classroom practice	An action plan should have enough detail to guide and monitor the learning. The structure of the action plan should include: <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">The goal(s)</td> <td style="width: 50%;">The actions</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Timeframe</td> <td>Support needed</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Monitoring process</td> <td></td> </tr> </table> The content of the action plan should include opportunity for: <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">Theory (readings /research)</td> <td style="width: 50%;">Demonstration (observing others)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Practice</td> <td>Feedback</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Coaching</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	The goal(s)	The actions	Timeframe	Support needed	Monitoring process		Theory (readings /research)	Demonstration (observing others)	Practice	Feedback	Coaching	
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16 Lack of regular monitoring by the appraiser of progress towards achieving the goals.	Teachers are unsupported. Deep learning may not be achieved. Momentum can be lost Regular evidence is not collect and review of achievement of goals is based on perception rather than evidence.	Regular monitoring can include brief and informal discussions and observations. The appraiser needs to make frequent reference to the goals.												
<b>Appraisal skills</b>														
<b>Typical Practice</b>	<b>Impact/Issue</b>	<b>Possible Solution(s)</b>												
17 Appraisal training is formulaic and not designed to provide follow up for individual appraisers	Appraisers skills remain at a superficial level.	Individual appraisers need coaching to deepen their understanding and strengthen their skills. Appraisers need training in scaffolding teachers' learning.												

<b>Appraisal skills</b>		
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<b>18</b> The appraisers are not prepared to front issues and be open and honest	Nothing changes. Teacher's poor performance is reinforced. Appraisers are not supported to deal with the challenging issues as they arise.	Appraisers need to have training in learning conversations, fronting issues, giving feedback, feedforward and co-constructing solutions. Teachers need to know about how to give and receive feedback.
<b>Dealing with Problems/Issues</b>		
<b>Typical Practice</b>	<b>Impact/Issue</b>	<b>Possible Solution(s)</b>
<b>19</b> Senior leaders within a are knowledgeable about the performance issues of their staff but this is rarely evidenced in appraisal documentation.	When a principal wants to take action on a performance issue, the school documentation does not support the action or provide the evidence. Teacher advocates can use the lack of evidence against the school.	School documentation should reflect accurately the outcome of the appraisal. Principals should know about all performance issues in their school. Appraisers have a responsibility to the teacher and the school to ensure that appraisal reports are both accurate and honest. Principals should not sign off any report that does not accurately reflect any performance issues.
<b>20</b> Some teachers are allowed to avoid their appraisal obligations or sabotage the system.	Poor teacher performance is condoned and continues. Student learning is compromised. Allows teachers to avoid key issues. The best teachers can become frustrated as they observe issues not being addressed.	Students needs must take priority. Issues must be addressed and documented in an ongoing way. Appraisers must be supported to work with teachers who show resistant behaviour. The principal must monitor that all aspects of appraisal have been carried out with all teachers.