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Spiral of Inquiry: Learning, Taking Action & Checking Toolkit



This is a Toolkit for educational leaders to use when leading, designing and implementing the Learning, Taking Action and Checking phases of the Spiral of Inquiry (Kaser & Halbert). It has been put together by Rebecca Sweeney and complements the way that she mentors leaders in the use of the Spiral of Inquiry. This Toolkit is not prescriptive, but provides a range of ideas that leaders might like to use. For more information or to ask questions email [Rebecca](#) or visit the NOIIE site: [Networks of Inquiry and Indigenous Education \(NOIIE\)](#)

Complex Problems

Ideas for Starting a Learning, Taking Action and Checking Plan

Idea 1: Goal Setting

Consider the elements of a Learning and Change Plan



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Complex Problems

A reminder from Helen Timperley below about Complex Problems (source: NOII conference presentation 2017) - if you find your team can relate to all of these descriptors of complex problems as you engage in the messiness of inquiry - then you're engaging in true Teaching as Inquiry - this should be how it feels. We are looking for complex pedagogical problems to solve:

- The problem itself is often not well defined
- The causes of the problem are unclear and contested
- Lots of arguments about the best solution (and most are likely to be ineffective)






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- Typically there is variable commitment to solving it

 simple	 complicated	 complex
following a recipe	sending a rocket to the moon	raising a child
<ul style="list-style-type: none">recipes are essential.expertise is helpful but not required.produce standardised product.best recipes give good results every time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">formulae are critical. sending one rocket increases assurance that the next will be ok.high levels of expertise in multiple fields needed.rockets are similar in critical ways.there is a high degree of certainty in the outcome once the original issues are solved.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">formulae have limited application.raising one child gives experience, but no assurance of success with another.expertise can contribute but is neither necessary nor sufficient for success.each child is unique and must be approached individuallyuncertainty of outcome remains.

Layout by Danielle Myburgh, content based on Snyder (2013) @MissDtheTeacher www.MissDtheTeacher.blogspot.com



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Considerations

- Stay curious. Don't adopt a solution just because it's popular or readily available.
- Continue to ask the three big-picture questions (page 19).
- Look for insights from other schools and systems with a similar focus.
- Stay connected with your network to sustain the momentum of learning.
- Involve everyone in the learning, including formal leaders, teachers and support staff.
- Return to the seven principles of learning (page 13) to keep the learning engaging and relevant for all.

30 • The Spiral Playbook



Considerations

- Ensure everyone knows they are expected to DO something different.
- Make time and provide support for the new action.
If you are adding a new expectation, set something aside to make room.
- Make risk-taking less risky. Celebrate failures and successes as part of new learning.
- Ensure lots of opportunities for reflection. Keep your network involved.
- Ask *how will we know?* Have ways to measure the results of the actions at the checking phase.

32 • The Spiral Playbook

Above image from the Spiral Playbook available online here: <http://c21canada.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Spiral-Playbook.pdf>



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7 Principles Toolkit

Ideas for Starting a Learning, Taking Action and Checking Plan

[A possible template to play with - make a copy](#)

[SPRINTS - as a way to deepen your cycles of action](#)

[Taking Action - agreeing on changes as a team](#)

Following Scanning, Focusing and Developing a Hunch phases, teams will have decided on their focus inquiry - an area in which the team will learn, take action and check to see if they've made enough of a difference for focus learners. It seems most sensible at this point to start to think about building a team plan that covers the learning, action and checking they will do over the next period.

Essentially, teams are designing their own professional learning and the plans for implementing this. Mo te whakaahua mātauranga kaiako, kāore he painga i a kaiako - when it comes to the design of teacher learning, there is no one better than teachers. This is why there is no one way to design your professional learning, nor are there templates or shortcuts to this process. There are key design principles for adult professional learning which can be explored to develop teacher understandings in this area.

Idea 1: Goal Setting

1. Create a set of Learner Goal(s)

Do this by taking your original Challenge (used in 5 Whys) and writing learner goals that oppose the challenge. For example if learners



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are not self-regulated - the learner goal would be that learners become self-regulating in their learning. Set some goals with learners - ensuring that they have some agency over what is going to change for them in their learning. Share aspects of your team's inquiry that might make sense to the learners or that they could comment on. Use a Learner Map process to help learners to set goals.

2. Create a set of Team Goal(s)

Using the focused inquiry that has emerged from Hunchwork (5 Whys etc), and the learner goals, create a set of team goals. Do this as a team and take the time to work on drafts so that everyone has a voice. For example:

We will create a teacher student partnership around learning.

We will give students more opportunities to develop as self regulated learners.

We will focus on the learning process not the outcome.

Team goals should involve a change in practice across the team so that you are working on the same or similar change together. Individuals may break this down differently for their own practice but always come together as a team to learn from one another and to agree on what it is you will be doing consistently together for your learners.

You can also word your team goals as a set of questions to explore or as a theory of action (or [theory for improvement](#)) to prove/disprove. However you choose to do this, it is not set in stone and will probably change as you engage in New Learning.

3. Identify the relevant Principles of Learning - these may have changed since the exploration during Hunchwork

Revisit the [toolkit](#) to refresh your team on what each Principal of Learning is about. Is your inquiry shifting more towards one or two principles? Can you narrow down to aspects of one or two principles?

4. Now, that you have explored some hunches and have landed on a focus for more in-depth learning and action, what is it you need to learn more about?

Create a document to record the initial learning to be done against your identified focused inquiry/team goals. The following table may help your team to organise their thoughts about the initial stages of learning. These initial stages of Learning are sort-of like a "Book Club" where the team shares readings and new knowledge through regular dialogue.

Goals	Blockers	Solution Requirements	Learning tasks
<i>List each goal or focus area in a</i>	<i>What are the factors that may</i>	<i>Although you haven't landed on</i>	<i>In this column, put in any links to</i>



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<p><i>Sweeney Consulting Aotearoa</i></p> <p><i>different row</i></p>	<p><i>block you from reaching your goals?</i></p>	<p><i>the final solution yet, as you learn more about your focused inquiry you can add any requirements of the solution in this column. What must the final solution include? What will the solution require in order to address the Blockers?</i></p>	<p><i>research or resources to explore. Record any questions you will need to find answers to. Put references to books and others things your team will be exploring during this initial learning. Identify who will be doing what and how you will share back the learning with the team</i></p>
<p>We will create a teacher student partnership around learning.</p>	<p>Time Systems Parents Teachers not letting go.</p>	<p>Students need to value learning</p> <p>Must align to our school vision.</p> <p>Parents must have a say in what learner agency looks like Learner agency must be scaffolded</p> <p>Must include a focus on building strong relationships between learners and teachers.</p> <p>Must engage learners.</p>	<p>Research Learner Agency - general and content specific:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - understand how agency affects learner outcomes - Learn how to scaffold agency - How do we change student's understanding around their shared contribution to their learning, instead of relying on the teachers? - What do effective student-teacher relationships look like? - How do we know that the teacher-student partnership is adding value?





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The above could be seen as the initial stages of the Learning Phase - we don't know what we don't know so we're starting to explore to uncover some of these things. Once the team has done that, it will be in a better position to decide on what changes are needed and will refine the inquiry further. Often at this stage, the inquiry is far too wide and big. Below is an example of a team inquiry that was too big and unmanageable. As they started to explore readings and research, they narrowed further to the highlighted questions. Beyond this, the team found the need to consult with some experts in the field of Play Based Learning - it became too difficult for them to design their learning without external expertise. Often this can't be done right away due to school budgets so the team could choose to work on change that they could manage using available resources and research until they could engage with an expert.

Challenge: Focus Learners: can't speak with us about what their learning needs are or how they prefer to learn; don't have clarity about what school is/looks like/feels like; don't always know how to respond to having choice in their learning and in group work; Will follow others rather than finding their own opportunities to be stretched or to succeed in learning.



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Key Pedagogical Links: Recognizing and planning for individual differences (within our Play Based

Learning approach)

Learners at the Centre (choice and agency, self regulation)

- Stretching all students (opportunities to experience and celebrate success) and focus on progress
- Social nature of learning (ways to group kids for learning)

Team Inquiry: How might we best cater for individual learning needs in a play based learning environment?

Next Steps

LEARNING

1. Explore ways to support focus learners to progress from their individual starting points (differentiation, individualised learning, UDL?)
2. Explore ways to move away from ability grouping and to successfully implement mixed ability grouping
3. Improve our understanding of provocation in play.
4. Find out how reading, writing and maths can fit better with play based learning in ways that are not contradictory (our current ways of focusing on achievement in these areas seem to be contradicting the Play Based Learning approach)
5. Learn more about the next steps towards a play based learning approach that puts the process of learning first rather than the output of learning (achievement)
6. Learn more about how to develop self-regulated learners (particularly developing metacognitive skills - [see toolkit](#) , and teaching learners that the ability to learn is not a fixed quantity)
7. Find examples/other schools succeeding in this area

ACTION

1. Give time to observe focus kids to see what they are interested and engaged in as individuals
2. *Add more here as you engage in the learning tasks above...*



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Consider the elements of a Learning and Change Plan

An exercise worth doing with your team is to ask “What were the elements of effective Professional Learning that worked for you in the past?” Below is a list that came from a team taking turns to share what worked for them:

- Shared experience with colleagues , collaborative (we need to make time in our plan to get together)
- Hands-on, practical - can try out and develop with someone else (we need to build in observations)
- Built on previous learning - improve on something I can already do (we need to do an exercise to identify and share current team strengths)
- Meets the needs of learners I have in front of me (we need to include regular Checking meetings to see the progress of our learners)
- Engaging and interesting (we all need to agree on the way forward)
- Challenging and requires change - provocative questioning about own practice - critical thinking opps (our plan needs to have clear goals for teacher practice that are focused on change and we need to build in time for team observations and feedback)
- Opportunities to reflect and share back
- When a process is introduced where you can see the application of it in your own context - well planned out for practice

Therefore what does our team need to consider in a learning and change plan? The team could then consider all the elements of their plan together and start to draw this up.

Refining and Reviewing your Learning and Change Plan

Once you have established your focused inquiry, and have started to build a learning and change plan, use the questions from the [grey boxes](#) article to critique and add to your learning and change plan:

Learning Considerations: Now, that you have explored some hunches and have landed on a focus for more indepth learning and action, what is it you need to learn more about? Are there schools with a similar focus from which you can learn? What resources can you access? How can



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Sweeney Consulting Aotearoa you make sure that the strategies you are considering are evidence-informed, current and fit with your context? What designs for professional learning will you use? Over time how will you build in multiple opportunities for learning during the school day? How will you sustain the momentum and keep the learning engaging? How will you address the varied needs of educators in your setting? How will you ensure that everyone – formal leaders, teachers and support staff – are engaged in their learning?

Taking Action Considerations: How will you ensure that everyone involved knows they are expected to DO something different? How will you make sure they have the time and support to try out new actions? How will you provide opportunities to learn from what is working – as well as from the challenges faced - when trying out new approaches? How can you make risk-taking less risky? How will you build in collegial support for new actions? How will you ensure there are lots of opportunities for reflection? How will you open up classroom doors as you try out new approaches? What will you do to model new actions yourself?

Checking Considerations: What evidence will you be seeking to know you are making a difference? How much difference? When will you check and how often? How can you check in a way that allows for adjustment – right away? How will you make it safe for participants to share what they are learning in the checking phase? How will you celebrate the additional learning gains you have collectively made?

Getting past your first attempt at learning and change

The following example of what a team has done to revisit their progress with their inquiry may be helpful:

Next step:

- Review our target learners to see if we've had success (Checking - work through these questions in grey boxes article as a team)
- Go back to the original achievement issues: Have we made a difference for their Writing? Have they developed a Growth Mindset in Writing? Are they doing great goal setting in Writing?
- If not, review how well you've implemented the change (Growth Mindset and Goal Setting) - ask the team, do we need to deepen our practice in this area? Or do we need to come up with a different solution? (Hunchwork)
- Also do a general review of how well we have been engaging in Learning, Taking Action and Checking ([self review doc](#))



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If not finished with this particular inquiry:

- Revisit your plan for teacher learning and action
 - What phase haven't we done for a while? (hunchwork - Andrea observes everyone, then debriefs to identify agreed gaps in GM practice and goal setting in writing with target)
 - Meet as a team to do 5 whys (name the existing challenge for target learners - e.g. kids haven't got GM etc) (use [Hunch toolkit](#))

Agreeing on the new teacher practices as a team

Below is a real example of a team that is starting to identify changes in their practice based on the learning they've engaged in so far. They're now entering into a continuous iterative cycle of inquiry, moving between Learning, Taking Action and Checking regularly (say every 2-3 weeks they will come together to review changed practices and whether or not these have made enough of a difference.

Learner goals (use these to see if target learners are making progress): Want to get kids talking about their learning goals more. They know their learning goals. They know how to use their learning logs and they know why they are using these. We don't want kids parroting their learning goals.

Learners will engage in knowledge without being let to it. Students develop persistence and motivation to learn.

Learning: explore research on goal setting/self regulation - the following are some key things we've learned that we want to include in our solution:

- Giving choice about how and where they learn
- Giving time for reflection
- Space to work independently



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- Adapt planning and delivery to allow for time for reflection and goal setting (look at ways to reduce content delivery)

Teacher goals - Our Change in Practice:

- Co-construction of learning goals with learners using indicators
- Setting up learning logs properly - as a working document for learners
- Modelling ways to achieve our learning goals
- Reflect with learners on learning and learning goals

Our Agreed practices

Co-construction of learning goals with learners using indicators	Setting up learning logs properly - as a working document for learners	Modelling ways to achieve learning goals	Reflect with learners on learning and learning goals
<p>Give learners some choice of which indicators they want to work on. Encourage them to seek a challenge.</p> <p>Refer to reflection - where they're at and what next - build on strengths and what is working.</p>	<p>Goals are inside the learning document and the learning document is visible to the learner every day.</p> <p>Learning logs have space for individual next steps for every learner.</p> <p>Learning activities are designed to match the learning logs/goals.</p>	<p>Encourage learners to get support from a buddy or to show a buddy what they can do.</p> <p>Weekly celebration - Role plays: how did I use my goal to tell me what learning activities to do? (a range of lower and higher achieving kids).</p>	<p>Reminder given to learner about what a good learner is/does.</p> <p>Learning logs are always used in reflection time.</p> <p>Capture learner questions at the end of every day or block to include into regular reflection time.</p>



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<p>Sweeney Consulting Aotearoa</p> <p>Goal is visible</p>	<p>Learner can</p>	<p>Support learners</p>	<p>Planning shows</p>
<p>and accessible all the time (e.g. stuck into book or group goal on the wall)</p> <p>Learner writes the goal in their own words</p> <p>Using our reading concept maps to set goals</p> <p>Further team learning: How should goals be worded for good understanding? (no parroting) and for low readers?</p>	<p>identify the appropriate activity to reach their goal.</p> <p>Learning logs have a space for reflection and are used in every reflection time.</p>	<p>to take goals home with them.</p> <p>Encourage a culture where learners can see each others' goals and work with similar learners to achieve their goal.</p> <p>Regularly brainstorm/unpack what a good learner does/is (focused on the process of learning, not output)</p> <p>Further team learning: find out some effective practice in modelling goal setting that allows for learner choice/agency</p>	<p>that time has been scheduled to sit down and reflect with all learners.</p> <p>Enable choice in ways to reflect (e.g. Learners are using Dojo to reflect sometimes, and talking with a buddy at other times etc)</p>

Get the team diary out and make a plan for change in practice that includes the components you identified above. Build in periods for Taking Action (over 2-3 weeks), then time to come together to reflect on how it went and what next. Build in time for checking (gathering learner voice or observing each other as teachers). Build in time for further Learning (identifying questions we still have and time to research these).





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Engaging in the spiral of inquiry, learning and action develops adaptive expertise. This is particularly evident in this phase where professionals seek new learning in order to improve.

[View Helen Timperley describe adaptive expertise](#) - AITSL on Youtube

What some leaders and teachers have said

"Student feedback to teachers is proving to be very powerful and integral to teacher learning."

"When you have a video you can have multiple people looking at practices. This helps to build trust and relationships."

"Teachers set goals. They read academic research as well as have discussion time in their groups. Teachers know the sources. We believe in a growth mindset as part of the teacher learning."

"Teachers need opportunities to engage with other teachers about their theories of practice. They have to have time to do this and build confidence in themselves to do this."

Leadership challenges

Mindset challenges

New learning is about learning to change practice and improve outcomes for targeted learners. It is complex, deep and sustained. It is not just for professional interest.

"We always talk about change and what we are going to do when we learn something new. Otherwise we have just forgotten by the next day."

Organisational challenges



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- Finding the time for teachers to learn together is the obvious challenge. Examine your meeting times and what is achieved in them. Think of new ways to impart organisational information and use your meeting times for professional learning.
- Accessing the expertise that will support everyone to develop new knowledge and deepen their skills. The expertise may be in the school.

"Leadership is at the core. Where do I get expertise from? Who is available? How do I use The Pond? How do I get external expertise? I can't do all this on my own."

Taking Action Leadership challenges

Mindset challenges

- Taking action involves leaders as much as teachers. (If you are expecting only teachers to change, then you have missed some important ideas in the spiral of inquiry.)
- Taking no action isn't an option – everyone must do things differently if outcomes are going to improve for learners.
- Ensuring everyone realises that professional learning must be about doing things differently, that is, talking about taking action is not the same as taking action.
- Involving learners in deciding whether the action taken is effective in helping them to learn.

Organisational challenges

- Providing time and opportunities to ensure the action taken is consistent with the intended changes and is making a difference for learners.
- Providing time and opportunities to review the effectiveness of the action.

- <http://www.educationalleaders.govt.nz/Leading-learning/Spiral-of-inquiry-leaders-leading-learning/New-learning/Tools-and-approaches>
 - Sustain momentum by setting timeframes for action – two or four weeks – and reporting back on progress.
 - Establish a process for team support and reflection.
 - Focus observations specifically on the new practice.



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- ii. <http://www.educationalleaders.govt.nz/Leading-learning/Spiral-of-inquiry-leaders-leading-learning/Taking-action/Tools-and-approaches>

Checking

The following tools are useful ideas and examples to support teachers to design how they will Check if they've made enough of a difference for learners:

- [Student interview tool](#)
- [Curiosity: Draw!](#)
- [Empathy square](#)
- Sharing ideas/examples across the Kāhui Ako

[Using indigenous knowledge and understandings in inquiry](#)

Considering Māori ways of doing and knowing to address the challenge?

Time 1 and 2 data for Checking

Sprints help you to both predict the impact of your changed practice and then measure the impact once you've changed your practice. Your predictions should be measurable and you should be able to get a measurement of where the learner is at with this before and after you've changed your practice. These measures could be:

Shift/change/prediction of impact	Method for measuring
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<i>Sweeney Consulting</i> <i>Aotearoa</i> Improvements in mindset or feelings of the learner about their learning or about themselves as a learner	Learner voice
Changes in progress and achievement	Formative assessment - Progress and achievement data
Improvements in self regulation	Observations of learners
Core Competency/Key Competency improvements	Student surveys (self assessments)

-

When staff lose sight of the purpose of Spirals or get frustrated:

Spirals of Inquiry: What's the point?

- *Self Improvement, not compliance*
- *What's going on for our learners? How do we know? Do you know me enough to teach me?*

5 min PMI where staff work in their teams to record the positives, minuses and interestings of Spirals this year.

Year ? of Spirals - what should we be noticing?

Review PMIs, then go over some or all of the following reminders, depending on what comes out from teams:

- *Spirals enables and fosters teachers to collaborate - "collaborative inquiry matters" and fosters collective professional agency - "making a real and substantial difference requires that all of us pull together"*
- *Spirals requires us to put learners and their whānau at the heart of change in our practice, involving them in all phases of the process*
- *Spirals are grounded in learning science knowledge and are underpinned by the 7 Principles of Learning - these principles must be taken into consideration as we move through the process. Learner agency is also important as we learn about what to do in our practice*



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- *What works for the target learners that we select for Spirals of Inquiry will make a difference for all learners because ultimately, you are changing and transforming teacher practice.*

What next with Spirals?

Create a common vision across all teams so that we are clear about the purpose of Spirals and where we're headed. Use the Minus/Negatives of the PMI to create opposing positives that become the vision actions...

Common Phrases and Glossary

This document is an example of a language guide for leaders so that staff can hear the same messages and language from all leaders across the school or service in relation to Spirals of Inquiry. Don't copy this - create your own version that will work for your leadership team and staff.

Pitching Spirals

General

Spirals of Inquiry is the very latest iteration of Teaching as Inquiry (a process found in 2007 in the most effective examples of teacher professional development from around the world).

Spirals was developed between 2012 and 2014 by Linda Kaser and Judy Halbert who are based in British Columbia. Helen Timperley has also been involved in the development of Spirals.

The differences between Spirals and older versions/frameworks for teaching as inquiry include the following key improvements:

- *Spirals enables and fosters teachers to collaborate - "collaborative inquiry matters" and fosters collective professional agency - "making a real and substantial difference requires that all of us pull together"*
- *Spirals requires us to put learners and their whānau at the heart of change in our practice, involving them in all phases of the process*



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Sweeney Consulting Aotearoa - Spirals are grounded in learning science knowledge and are underpinned by the 7 Principles of Learning - these principles must be taken into consideration as we move through the process. Learner agency is also important as we learn about what to do in our practice

What works for the target learners that we select for Spirals of Inquiry will make a difference for all learners because ultimately, you are changing and transforming teacher practice.

Organisational Capability is important. How are you making time as a team to have formal and informal conversations about what is going on for your learners and how you know, as well as how well you are engaging in the Spirals process as a team?

Critique your actions. Point the finger inwards

The spiral of inquiry demands that new learning – how and what we are going to learn – emerges from a thorough scan, is sharpened through focusing, and is informed by the hunches we have developed. (Kaser & Halbert)

Checking does not always have to be formal or at a fixed time. Throughout the spiral we are constantly asking ‘What’s going on for our learners?’ and ‘How do we know?’ This is the point in the spiral where collectively we check in to see whether or not we are making enough of a difference as a team.

Spirals of Inquiry are longer, slower, deeper versions of a teacher’s daily Act, Reflect, Act, Check process for deeper transformation of your practice

About Teacher Efficacy:

The embedding of Spirals of Inquiry as a framework for practitioner change strongly supports teacher efficacy. When implemented and embedded well, Spirals of Inquiry enables teachers and leaders to utilise their professional judgments and intuitions to navigate and deeply understand the "data behind the data". As they move from identifying learners with achievement challenges to Scanning these learners' strengths and challenges, teachers and leaders use the Spirals framework to gradually expose their assumptions, hunches and then focused inquiries by engaging in continuous collaborative reflection. Teacher efficacy is supported by the framework as teachers and leaders begin to feel more respected and trusted as professionals to use their developing adaptive expertise to deeply understand what is going on for learners



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Sweeney Consulting Aotearoa and what this means for their pedagogical practice. Efficacy is also built through the collaborative nature of Spirals of Inquiry - whereby teachers and leaders support each other to build their capability to inquire - including group reflection on data and practice. As genuine focused inquiries emerge, teachers and leaders find new energy to seek the learning they need in order to change their practice and embed that change to make a difference for learners. The agency of the professionals in this process is emphasised alongside the agency of learners and whānau.

Common Phrases

What's going on for our learners? How do we know?

What assumptions might we be making?

Point the finger inwards

SCANNING: WHAT IS GOING ON FOR YOUR LEARNERS?

What scanning is:

An inquiry and evidence-seeking mindset

A wide perspective on learning

Involves finding out what is happening for all learners from their perspectives and those of their families and their community

What scanning is not:

Seeking evidence to reinforce the status quo

Only looking at aspects of academic learning that are easily measured

Exclusively about what the professionals think



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FOCUSING: WHAT'S GOING TO GIVE YOU THE BIGGEST IMPACT?

What focusing is:

Uses information from the scan to identify an area for concentrated team learning and action

Usually requires collection of further information to ensure accurate understanding of the situation

Builds on strengths or positives as well as gaining clarity on challenges

Identifies a common area many people can buy into

What focusing is *not*:

The time to introduce completely new areas disconnected from the scanning process

About assuming you have it all figured out and don't need to investigate any further

Just about problems or challenges

About everyone choosing his/her own area of interest



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DEVELOPING A HUNCH: WHAT'S LEADING TO THIS SITUATION?

What developing a hunch is:

About getting deeply held beliefs and assumptions out on the table about our own practices

Considering practices that we can do something about

Checking our assumptions for accuracy before moving ahead

What developing hunches is not:

A general brainstorm of all possibilities

Being obsessed with the actions of others or issues over which we have limited influence

Venting about the past, fuming about the present or finding someone to blame

Glossary

Data = when we talk about data in Spirals, we are referring to both soft and hard data, both qualitative and quantitative



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Collaborative Teaching as Inquiry = The recommended way to engage with Spirals of Inquiry - working with other teachers to scan, focus, reflect and move forward through all phase of the Spirals

Evaluative capability = your ability to inquire into your own practice in a disciplined way using Spirals

Organisational capability = your school's ability to ensure space, time and resource match the needs of implementation of Spirals of Inquiry

[ERO - Teaching Approaches and Strategies that work](#)

[Holt - How Children Learn](#)



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Spiral of Inquiry: Checking Toolkit

Considerations

- Decide in advance what evidence you will gather on the impact of the change.
- Collect evidence of what is happening as it happens.
- Ask the learners for feedback, using the four key questions for learners (page 20), as you did when scanning.
- Make it safe for all participants to share what they are learning.
- Celebrate what you are learning as a team.

34 • The Spiral Playbook

<http://c21canada.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Spiral-Playbook.pdf>

An example of Checking

The Checking phase can often help you if you think you've reached "the end of an inquiry". Going through the Checking Phase process will help to confirm your next steps. For example, whether to go to the Scanning phase or whether to return to further actions within the Learning and Taking Action phases. Below is a real example of a team's thinking when they felt they had taken some action and were ready to "start a new



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Sweeney Consulting Aotearoa Inquiry". What they found was that they had not yet taken much deep action and needed to review what they had done through peer observations of practice, then decide whether or not they'd made enough of a difference for their learners. Their inquiry is ongoing.

Original inquiry goals:

Learners: Learners will understand/know their next steps in learning through the feedback they are given and will be able to articulate their understanding.

Teachers: We will deepen our understanding of quality feedback. Through this we will be able to give effective feedback to our students that is individualised and targeted.

Facilitator question: do you have an agreed definition of what Quality Feedback should look like? This should be part of your Learning and Change Plan for the Learning and Taking Action phases.

Our Definition of Quality Feedback:

- Students get individualised feedback (not blanket or delivered in the same way)
- Clarity of language and understanding - specific, next steps are clear
- Writing feedback on Post-Its can support my verbal conversations with learners and enable clarity about what I am feeding back to the learner
- Partnership with the learner - working alongside them, they drive the feedback by sharing their thoughts on their work first
- Neutral - focusing on the task/topic (not the student)
- Avoiding surface level praise
- Teach and encourage self-check before talking with the teacher
- Supporting learners to make connections to outcomes and then identify gaps
- Ensuring learners have clarity on the purpose of the learning process/task
- Using exemplars to assist the feedback process
- Supporting learners to re-write achievement criteria in their own words

Facilitator prompt: Okay let's go through the Checking questions in the grey boxes article to see where you're at with your inquiry and change...



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Sweeney Consulting **Checking** *Aotearoa*

What evidence will you be seeking to know you are making a difference? How much Difference?

- Learners will understand/know their next steps in learning through the feedback they are given and will be able to articulate their understanding.
- Learners are making more than usual progress with their achievement or producing higher quality work.

When will you check and how often? How can you check in a way that allows for adjustment – right away?

Learner voice:

- PostIts and Feedback form (seeking how prepared they felt and other questions)
- Sought learner commentary on how valuable they felt the feedback was

Teacher practice:

- Next step: co-construct an Observation process using our criteria for effective feedback
- Come back together

How will you make it safe for participants to share what they are learning in the checking Phase?

We will co-construct all processes and changes together as a team and agree on the ways forward together. We will continue to build trust with each other.

How will you celebrate the additional learning gains you have collectively made?

We need to think more about this and perhaps involve the learners and their whānau.





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Learning leadership and evaluative thinking

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