

VPA Study Award 2015
PSW Developing others – Building Capacity
Hillsmeade Primary School, Narre Warren South

Project Title: Leading from within... (for middle leaders)

Project outcomes:

The project's aim was to build the capacity of newly appointed leaders at Hillsmeade Primary School to develop a consistent approach to data literacy and providing feedback across the large school. The principal at the time, Deborah Harry, started at the school in 2014. She implemented a distributed leadership model by Semester 2 by appointing eight Professional Learning Team Leaders, two Leading Teachers and a Teaching and Learning Assistant Principal. With a large deficit in place, this financial award allowed the leaders to go off site to undertake relevant professional learning.

We chose to develop a common approach to giving and receiving feedback including having challenging conversations. This presentation by Robyn Buckeridge, a VASSP Field Officer, allowed the leaders to experiment with providing feedback using the GROWTH process. The GROWTH model provided a whole school framework for the leaders to then discuss within their PLTs. By the end of 2016, all teaching staff of this large school (approximately 900 students) had used this model as they had the opportunity to practice this approach of giving and receiving feedback during our triad classroom observations.

GROWTH process for conducting a feedback session

Goal	<i>What are you trying to achieve through this conversation?</i> <i>What behaviours do you want the person to modify?</i> <i>Focus on behaviours and actions.</i> <i>Ensure that the changed behaviour is SMART.</i>
Reality	<i>What is the current reality from your point of view?</i> <i>Describe the behaviours you have observed, or others have observed/told you.</i> <i>How do you think the person might view current reality?</i> <i>Seek through your conversation to get the person to understand the impact of the behaviours observed on others.</i>

Options	<p><i>Ask non-confrontational questions such as “Are there things you might do to act differently?” “Are there other ways of acting in these situations?” “Had you thought of.....?”</i></p> <p><i>Seek all options and work toward adopting what appears to the person to be most achievable.</i></p>
Will	<p><i>“So what will you do? When?”</i></p>
Tactics, strategies	<p><i>“How might you go about this?”</i></p> <p><i>“Had you thought of ...?”</i></p> <p><i>“Could you possibly try.....?”</i></p>
How will this be sustained?	<p><i>“Would you like me to reflect with you further on any changes I notice?”</i></p> <p><i>“Would you consider any other close colleague who might act in this capacity?”</i></p>

The second outcome of this project was that the leaders had a consistent and improved understanding of how to lead the conversations and use data to drive school improvement. All leaders participated in a professional development session facilitated by Student Performance Analyser (SPA Markbook). By the end of the session, the middle leaders (PLT leaders and LTs) agreed that they had:

- Built their data literacy understanding;
- Developed their confidence to drive data discussions within their team;
- Identified appropriate tools to support leaders with their work;
- Trialled a data tracking resource to positively impact time efficiency.

Another outcome of this project was the development of a shared understanding of the necessity of having a consistent approach to leading school improvement using a distributed leadership model. The impact of building the capacity of the entire leadership team has been positive with improved student outcomes over the past three years.