

PRINCIPALS AS LITERACY LEADERS

EVIDENCE and IDEAS GATHERING TECHNIQUES for SCHOOL LEADERS

This guide has been compiled by Neil Dempster, Sandra Easey and Pam Pearson from Griffith University to support principals and schools involved in the original PALL Pilot Project.

It has been revised for use during the current PALL Project.

**EVIDENCE and IDEAS GATHERING TECHNIQUES for
SCHOOL LEADERS**

The booklet has been organised in three parts as follows:

- Part 1 provides examples of data gathering techniques to support each element of the Leadership for Learning Blueprint

- Part 2 comprises general processes schools can use to focus disciplined dialogue on learning

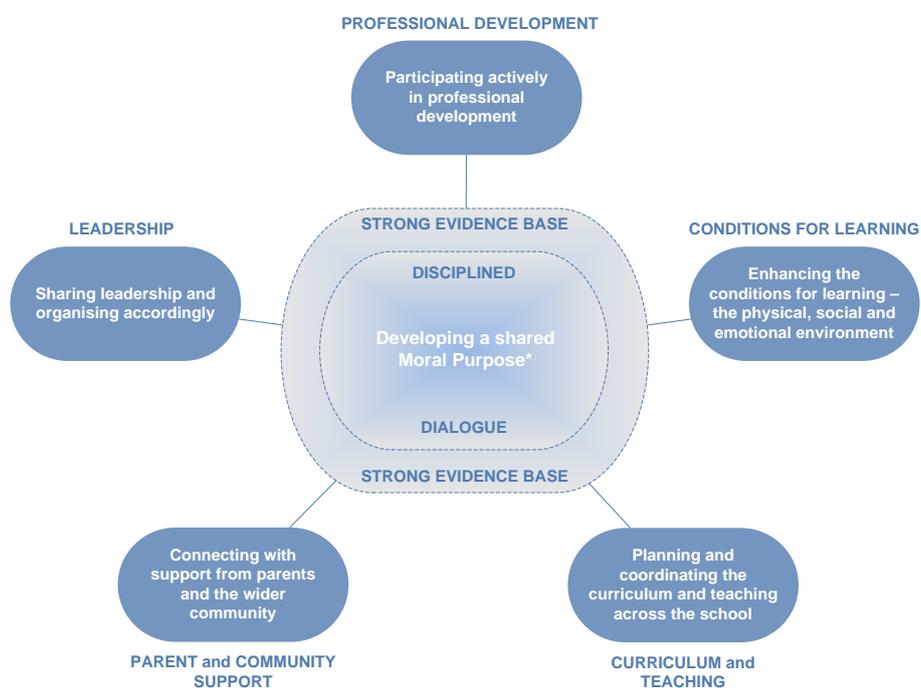
- Part 3 is the beginning of a collection of techniques that may be used to gather data from students.

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PART 1

Leading Learning – A Framework



* Improving student learning and performance

Outstanding Leadership for Learning:

- rests on an understanding that it is only through improved learning that student performance is enhanced over time.
- requires leaders' continuous attention to each of the domains in the Leadership for Learning Framework

Leadership actions linked with improved learning and student achievement are described for each of the dimensions of the Leadership for Learning Framework in the following pages.

How strong is the school's evidence base?

A STRONG
EVIDENCE BASE

Outstanding Leaders of Learning:

- Pursue systematic data gathering
- Ensure that both school and system data are gathered
- Plan for learning based on data
- Monitor learning based on data
- Share accountability tasks with teachers based on classroom, school and system data.

The evidence base referred to here is about student learning and achievement. That evidence base forms the foundation for 'disciplined dialogue', a key feature of the Leadership for Learning Framework. This activity asks teachers to differentiate between evidence about learning and evidence about achievement.

What constitutes strong evidence about learning?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What constitutes strong evidence about achievement?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Why is the distinction between these two types of evidence so important in teaching?

What is “disciplined dialogue”?

DISCIPLINED
DIALOGUE

Outstanding Leaders of Learning:

- Reinforce ‘moral purpose’ as the motivation for dialogue
- Conduct focused conversations on the leadership for learning dimensions
- Scaffold discussions on qualitative and quantitative data
- Seek improvement strategies as the outcome.

‘Disciplined Dialogue’ is the general term given to the professional conversations principals lead with their teachers at school. Conversations are ‘disciplined’ in two senses: (i) they are disciplined by the moral purpose of the school, namely, the enhancement of children’s lives through improvement in learning and achievement; and (ii) they are disciplined because they are stimulated by the use of a strong evidence base. They are not conversations based on hearsay, prejudice, stereotype or conjecture. They are conversations which employ sound qualitative and quantitative data about learning and performance and which inexorably seek answers to three central questions:

- (i) **What do we see in these data or what does this evidence show us is happening here?**
- (ii) **Why do we think this is so?**
- (iii) **What if anything, should we be doing about it?**

With a group of teachers, practise a ‘disciplined dialogue’ in relation to the evidence presented in the table below using the three questions.

	Tennis	Tennis	Snooker	Snooker	Swimming	Swimming	Soccer	Soccer
AGES	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
5- 8	0	2	0	0	10	15	20	10
9- 12	10	15	2	0	15	25	40	20
13- 16	25	10	20	0	25	25	50	10
17- 20	20	5	30	5	10	20	40	5
	55	32	52	5	60	85	150	45

Table 1. Sports played by boys and girls at a local general sporting club

Examining aspects of the school's moral purpose

DEVELOPING A
SHARED MORAL
PURPOSE

Outstanding Leaders of Learning:

- **Build vision and set directions collaboratively**
- **Set high expectations**
- **Communicate clear learning and achievement goals**
- **Ensure consensus on goals**
- **See that goals are embedded in school and classroom routines**

Sample Activity: Ensuring consensus on goals

Take a set of positive adjectives from the school's mission and values statement. Construct a list with their opposites as set out below and administer the instrument with all members of staff, then with parents and children (with adaptations). Conduct *Disciplined Dialogue* on the findings.

Please score by circling a number on the 1 to 5 rating scale.

This school is:

Safe	1	2	3	4	5	Unsafe
Parent-friendly	1	2	3	4	5	Parent-unfriendly
Orderly	1	2	3	4	5	Disorderly
Competitive	1	2	3	4	5	Cooperative
Backward-looking	1	2	3	4	5	Forward looking
Tense	1	2	3	4	5	Relaxed
Reactive	1	2	3	4	5	Proactive
Teacher-friendly	1	2	3	4	5	Teacher-unfriendly
Attractive	1	2	3	4	5	Unattractive
Welcoming	1	2	3	4	5	Unwelcoming
Inclusive	1	2	3	4	5	Divisive
Student-friendly	1	2	3	4	5	Student-unfriendly

Judging the quality of professional development

PARTICIPATING
ACTIVELY IN
PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT

Outstanding Leaders of Learning:

- Support, evaluate and develop teacher quality
- Play an active 'hands on' role in professional development
- Participate as 'leading learners' with teachers in professional development
- Concentrate on the development of deep knowledge about key areas
- Promote skills in data analysis and interpretation through PD amongst teachers
- Ensure that teachers are engaged in extended professional learning about school priority areas

Following a series of Professional Development activities with members of staff, ask teachers (as in the example below) whether they are confident to use particular strategies. This could be preceded by a frequency check for each skill – I work with my students on these skills – frequently, sometimes, seldom, never. Discuss the findings using *Disciplined Dialogue*. A further variation would be to adapt the instrument so that students can record how confident they are to use each of the strategies – Very Confident to Not at all Confident. Comparing teachers' and children's results will open up clear lines of discussion for further improvement action.

Comprehension Teaching Strategies for:	I am confident to teach these now	I am not confident to teach these yet
Questioning strategies		
Predicting strategies		
Making Connection strategies		
Visualising strategies		
Inferring strategies		
Summarising strategies		
Synthesising strategies		
Judging strategies		

Understanding conditions for learning

Enhancing the conditions for learning- the physical, social and emotional environment

Outstanding Leaders of Learning:

- **Manage resources strategically**
- **Align funds with learning priorities**
- **Apply resources to the conditions of learning**
 - Provide a safe and pleasant physical environment**
 - Ensure social and emotional support for learners**
- **Understand and respect difference**
- **Celebrate teacher and student successes.**

Understanding the Conditions for Learning – the physical, social and emotional environment

A Narrative:

We recount a story told by a colleague teaching physically disabled students in the Czechoslovakia of Iron Curtain days. She said that the most telling lesson about learning she gained from over thirty years with such children was the importance of *patience* in teaching and the significance of *small achievements* in the eyes of learners. She went on to say that watching skill acquisition for these children was hugely rewarding for herself and her teachers. It required a learning environment where patience had to accompany repeated attempts, repeated failure and repeated frustration; where support, encouragement and persistence had to be meted out with good humour; where laughter and frowns were the constant companions of struggling youngsters; and where no-one entertained any thoughts of giving up. The smallest of gains was great cause for celebration. For example, when trying to help severely physically disabled children to feed themselves, getting a hand even close to the object spoon was to be applauded; lifting it off the table unaided was a major achievement and getting it to the mouth, even empty, a gold medal result. We see quite starkly in this story, two very important elements in the learning environment to which teachers and leaders needed undiluted commitment. Of course support and celebration would have had to be accompanied by other conditions for learning if the talents and capacities of children with disabilities were to be harnessed in learning for life.

(1) What do we hear in this narrative about the conditions of learning?

(2) Why do they do what they do?

(3) What examples might we identify in our school?

(4) Why do we do what we do?

(5) What, if anything should we be doing in the future?

From: MacBeath, J. and Dempster, N. (2009) *Connecting Leadership and Learning: Principles for Practice*, London, Routledge.

**PLANNING AND COORDINATING THE
CURRICULUM AND TEACHING ACROSS
THE SCHOOL**

Outstanding Leaders of Learning:

- **Participate actively in curriculum decision making**
- **Coordinate and manage the teaching and learning program**
- **Maintain commitment to curriculum priorities**
- **Actively oversee the school's overall curriculum**
- **Observe teachers in action directly and provide specific feedback**
- **Ensure systemic monitoring of student learning and progress**
- **Display a keen interest in students' classroom work and achievements**

Think of a Principal who was a 'boss' of yours on the way through to your present position. Call this person "Principal X'.

Now make a judgment out of ten about his or her performance in each of the areas of leadership listed below* (where 1 is *extremely limited or non-existent performance* and 10 is *outstanding performance*). The third column is for you for a later time when you have a chance to reflect on your own leadership.

Curriculum and Teaching

Outstanding Leaders of Learning:	Principal 'X' rates:	My rating
1. Participate actively in curriculum decision making	1..2..3..4..5..6..7..8..9..10	1..2..3..4..5..6..7..8..9..10
2. Coordinate and manage the teaching and learning program	1..2..3..4..5..6..7..8..9..10	1..2..3..4..5..6..7..8..9..10
3. Maintain commitment to curriculum priorities	1..2..3..4..5..6..7..8..9..10	1..2..3..4..5..6..7..8..9..10
4. Actively evaluate the school's overall curriculum	1..2..3..4..5..6..7..8..9..10	1..2..3..4..5..6..7..8..9..10
5. Observe teachers in action and provide specific feedback	1..2..3..4..5..6..7..8..9..10	1..2..3..4..5..6..7..8..9..10
6. Ensure systematic monitoring of student progress	1..2..3..4..5..6..7..8..9..10	1..2..3..4..5..6..7..8..9..10
7. Display a keen interest in students' classroom work, both gains and achievements	1..2..3..4..5..6..7..8..9..10	1..2..3..4..5..6..7..8..9..10

In what aspects of leadership for learning was Principal 'X' best and why?

Worst and why?

What could be done to improve his or her leadership practice?

Now return to the instrument and make an assessment of your own leadership. A more revealing outcome will be achieved if you adapt the instrument and ask your teachers to complete the instrument with their assessment of your actions against each item. Personal reflection on the data could precede an open *Disciplined Dialogue* discussion of findings with teachers, leading to what you and they might do differently.

* Each of the areas of performance is taken from the research studies from which the Leadership for Learning Framework was synthesised.

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Understanding orientations to the school's curriculum and to children's teaching and learning

Teachers' Orientations to children and their teaching and learning (Watkins, 2001)

Rate the strength of your views about children, their learning and their teaching.

Please use the following five point scale and circle your rating for each item below.

A view not strongly held 1__2__3__4__5 A view very strongly held

Statements	Rating
1. Personal effort by students is the most significant factor in their literacy success	1_2_3_4_5
2. Students find their greatest satisfaction in doing better than others	1_2_3_4_5
3. Teachers should be judged on 'value added' rather than absolute measures of student literacy performance	1_2_3_4_5
4. Strong competition amongst students improves performance	1_2_3_4_5
5. Teachers should concentrate on helping students achieve 'personal bests'	1_2_3_4_5
6. Teachers should constantly compare students' literacy performance	1_2_3_4_5
7. Individual leaning tasks always enhance literacy achievement	1_2_3_4_5
8. Ability is the most significant factor in student success	1_2_3_4_5
9. Normative standards measuring student literacy performance are essential	1_2_3_4_5
10. Most student satisfaction is found in small gains	1_2_3_4_5

Having completed your individual rating, meet as a group to attain a sum of your scores for each statement. Go now to the second sheet which shows each of the statements against two orientations to teaching and learning. Transfer your group's collective score for each item to that sheet and TOTAL them for each orientation.

A Learning Orientation:

1. Personal effort by students is the most significant factor in their literacy success
3. Teachers should be judged on 'value added' rather than absolute measures of student literacy performance
5. Teachers should concentrate on helping students achieve 'personal bests'
7. Individual learning tasks always enhance literacy achievement
10. Most student satisfaction is found in small gains

GROUP TOTAL _____

A Performance Orientation:

8. Ability is the most significant factor in student success
6. Teachers should constantly compare students' literacy performance
9. Normative standards measuring student literacy performance are essential
4. Strong competition amongst students improves performance
2. Students find their greatest satisfaction in doing better than others

GROUP TOTAL _____

Discuss the findings as a group and make a general statement about your school.

The general view in the findings on our staff's present orientation to student learning and teaching suggests or shows:

What three questions or implications are raised by the general view you have advanced?

Questions or implications:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

What if anything should we be doing about this?

Finding out about parent and community connections

CONNECTING WITH
SUPPORT FROM PARENTS
AND THE WIDER
COMMUNITY

Outstanding Leaders of Learning:

- Are active in local and professional communities
- Include parents as integral to the school's learning programs
- Involve wider community support to improve learning
- Network with other schools and teachers on good practice
- Seek the input of professionals beyond the school

COMMUNITY PROFILE

Date: / /

Completed by: Professional staff member (Please circle)

Ancillary staff member

Relief teacher

Administrator

Caregiver

Please evaluate the school's stage of development in relation to each characteristic on the following continuum:

1. This school is not at all like this.
2. This school has a few of these features
3. This school has many of these features
4. This accurately describes this school.

Characteristic	Rating			
	1	2	3	4
Encourages family involvement				
Sees caregivers as integral to the learning program				
Welcomes and trains volunteers				
Actively supports home- school partnerships				
Communicates effectively				
Is well regarded in the local community				
Is active in district networks to support good practice				
Participates in wider community activities				
Is regarded as a community hub				
Uses collaborative practices				

Adapted from: MacBeath J. 1996 *Moving and Improving Strategies That Work*, Griffith University Centre for Leadership and Management in Education, Brisbane

Examining distributed or shared leadership

SHARING LEADERSHIP AND
ORGANISING
ACCORDINGLY

Outstanding Leaders of Learning:

- Plan school organisation structures to support shared leadership
- Share leadership systematically with teachers
- Encourage team work amongst teachers
- Build collaborative work cultures.

Distributive or shared leadership

Dispersed? Leadership occurs sporadically but only when someone on the staff decides to take action.

What examples of dispersed leadership are there in our school?

- 1.
- 2.

Delegated? Leadership tasks determined by the Principal and then are distributed to specific people.

What examples of delegated leadership are there in our school?

- 1.
- 2.

Shared? Leadership tasks are determined together by groups of people with responsibilities for action accepted and carried out by different people at different times.

What examples of shared leadership are there in our school?

- 1.
- 2.

Extended to students? Leadership tasks are discussed with students who contribute to deciding what actions are needed and who should have responsibility for them.

What examples of leadership extended to students are there in our school?

- 1.
- 2.

Extended to parents and community members? Leadership tasks are discussed with parents and community members who together decide what actions are needed and who should have responsibility for them.

What examples of leadership extended into the community are there in our school?

- 1.
- 2.

On the basis of the evidence, what kind of leadership profile do we have and why do we have the profile we do?

What if anything, should we be doing about it?

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PART 2

A Good Idea Laboratory

A useful technique to extend, modify, qualify, enhance or otherwise change existing ideas is the concept of an Ideas Laboratory. By experimenting with ideas generated by a range of questions applied to a set of conditions or circumstances, surprises can often occur.

Advantages: The technique can be implemented with large or small groups and its timing is flexible enough to allow for extended or limited discussion.

Blue Print application: Useful for ideas on the dimensions - **curriculum, conditions for learning** and **professional development**

Process:

- When people are unhappy with existing conditions or circumstances, it is easy to find 'where the shoe is pinching'. To begin the process, ask groups to identify what is troubling them, what they would like to change in their workplace, what they would like to do differently *e.g.*

What aspects of our approach to literacy learning across the school do we need to change?

What areas of professional development do we need to improve?

- Once the idea is articulated the group then works through the following list of questions to see what changes they can generate from each different starting point.
- Lists of ideas are kept in each case:-

Change the shape?	Like something?
Change the presentation?	Substitute?
Change the form?	Mix?
Change the appearance?	Smaller?
Add motion?	Lighter?
Magnify?	Eliminate?
More strength?	Re-arrange?
Longer time?	Another process?
Other ways?	Combine?
- 1. Not all questions need to be addressed and other questions may be identified as useful. Choices should be made only of those that apply to the original idea. Once a list of responses to the chosen questions has been completed, the group should identify those changes that carry the most practical appeal. These can then be taken and developed into action sequences to secure their realisation.

Original source unknown

Concerns Analysis

Sometimes known as the *Nominal Group Technique*, this process is recommended for setting priorities, identifying urgent issues, highlighting important matters and so on.

Advantages: Individual views are encouraged while whole group views are gathered.

Blue Print application: Useful for identifying concerns in *all dimensions* of the Leadership for Literacy Learning Blue Print.

Process: Two methods are explained.

First Method

The whole group of teachers, community members or students is divided into small groups of 6-7 members for initial rankings. Each small group has a group leader (who may have been trained beforehand).

The steps in the process follow:

- I. Give the whole group the topic to be considered. *e.g.*

What are three significant concerns you have about our school reading program?

OR

What are the three important issues we face relating to our library facilities?

OR

What are three urgent matters for our teachers in their literacy Professional development?

OR

What are three problems we have in support for reading in our community?

- II. The total group can be given the topic the day before, or at the beginning of the meeting.
- III. Individuals working within small groups, proceed to develop their own lists of suggestions regarding the topic presented. (Use paper or cards). Suggested time for this step is 3-5 minutes.

- IV. The small group leader asks each member to read out their contribution/s. Each person is asked in turn, around the group, until all suggestions have been shared. The contributions are listed without comment, or discussion. Suggested time for this step is 5 or 6 minutes.
- V. When all items are listed, explanations of the items can be sought and given. Similar items can be lumped together. (Grouping similar items tends to broaden their scope, hence broadening the focus of any actions which flow from the process). Label items A,B,C etc. Suggested time for this step 10 minutes.
- VI. Each small group member including the leader is asked to spend a certain amount of money (e.g. \$100) on the items, distributing the dollars as they see fit with the maximum of \$50 for any one item. This is one example of using a numerical technique to achieve a priority listing. Each small group member records the spending on each item from the list. Suggested time for this step is 5 minutes.
- VII. The leader of the small group then works down the list and totals the amount spent on each item. Suggested time for this item is 5 minutes.
- VIII. The group lists the top priorities on a fresh piece of paper e.g.3-5 items. Suggested time for this step is 5 minutes.
- IX. Each group then brings its list to the whole meeting. The lists of small groups are consolidated on a total group list using Step IV. Steps V, VI and VII are repeated for the whole group with a final list of priorities emerging.
- X. In the school situation, the final list of priorities may need to be considered by a school team before a selection is made and ratified by the staff involved. Such a selection will need to be made on the basis of practical constraints such as:
 - the scope of the issue itself;
 - the time needed to conduct an investigation if necessary;
 - the people available; and
 - the resources required to carry out effective action.

Second Method

- I. Form groups of 5-6.
- II. Individually write down what you feel are the 3 most significant concerns e.g. about the school's approach to the teaching of reading.

- III. Gather together in a group and share concerns in turn around the group. (One person in the group should list each concern for the group).
- IV. When all concerns are listed, explanations for meaning may be sought and given where necessary. Similar items can be lumped together.
- V. Label the final list of concerns A,B,C etc.
- VI. As a group use this critically rating technique to determine group priorities:
 - 1st priority = 5 points
 - 2nd priority = 4 points
 - 3rd priority = 3 points

e.g The numerical rating of the priority is multiplied by the number of times it is given that rating.

For concern A	7x5	35
	4x4	16
	3x3	9
	3x2	6
	1x1	1
Total No =	18	67

- i.e.
- | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------|
| 7 people rated concern A: | first priority |
| 4 people rated concern A: | second priority |
| 3 people rated concern A: | third priority |
| 3 people rated concern A: | fourth priority |
| 1 person rated concern A: | fifth priority |

If the total for each concern is divided by the number of people in the group, a “criticality rating” can be calculated for each concern. eg. 67 divided by 18 = 3.72 for concern A.

Repeat the process for each concern.

- VII Report the first three priorities to the group with their criticality ratings

Original source unknown

Problem Identification Technique or 1-3-6

A process used to identify unique school problems. This process is similar to the Nominal Group Technique. The main difference is that the voting takes place on all the items, not a restricted number.

It is useful in the problem identification phase of curriculum development, to facilitate consensus decisions on priority problems.

Advantages: Relatively easy process to run. Minimal time and materials needed. Reduces influence of dominant group personalities. Promotes equal status of members. Can be used with groups of varying expertise and experience.

Requires an appropriate organisational climate. Opportunity for criticism only and not praise. Limited time for clarification of ideas. Can be time consuming if lists of statements are lengthy.

Blue Print application: Useful for *all dimensions* of the Leadership for Literacy Learning Blue Print.

Process:

1. Each person in the group lists privately, all the concerns s/he has about the aspect of the school under examination. *e.g.*

What do we need to do to make the school more effective in the teaching of reading?

What would make the school a more welcoming place for Indigenous parents?

2. Divide into groups of three and combine lists. If items are similar they are listed only once. The purpose is to combine everyone's thoughts – no discussion of values or ideas should take place.
3. Each group of three meets with another group to combine lists again. (This step helps ensure anonymity). All items are written on chart paper ready for display. Similar items should be written only once.
4. Ideas on each sheet of chart paper are discussed by the whole group for CLARIFICATION only.
5. Label the list of statements alphabetically A-Z

6. Give each person the same number of cards as there are statements. Each person writes on each card the alphabetical letter corresponding to one item on the list and then gives each lettered item a priority number. (Most important No 1; item of least importance last). Each person works on these priorities alone.
7. When cards are completed, collect and collate according to alphabetical letter. Tally priority numbers for each pile (items with the lowest number will be the highest priority).
8. Record totals. Select the top ten items for future action.

Original source unknown

Modified Problem Identification Technique 1-3-6

This process is a refinement of the problem identification technique. The process used is one which enables a range of opinions to be ranked in priority order rather than just those items with the heaviest weighting.

Advantages / Limitations: This modification gives the range of opinions in priority order, rather than just those items with the heaviest weighting.

Blueprint application: Useful for *all dimensions* of the Leadership for Learning Blueprint.

Process: This process is similar to the Problem Identification Technique 1-2-3 but requires two extra meetings.

Meeting 1:

Proceed to Step 4 of the Problem Identification Technique 1-2-3.

Following Meeting 1:

Facilitator collects statements and collates in the format of a "Likert"-type scale. If there are 11 items that have been identified then the scale will be from 1 to 11; 1 being the least important and 11 being the most important.

Meeting 2:

Group members are asked to individually rate each statement in order of its importance on the scale provided.

Following meeting 2:

Facilitator collects and collates the ratings in the following way:

Step 1

This step involves obtaining the middle value for all the items that have been ranked by the group.

if statement 1 has been rated by 7 people on an 11 point scale in the following way:

2 4 5 6 8 9 10

Then the middle value is the fourth one i.e. **6**.

If the same item was rated by 6 people:

1 2 4 5 8 9

then the middle value is between the 3rd and 4th scores. i.e the middle value is **4.5**

Step 2

Rank the middle values for all the items from the lowest to the highest i.e. from the most important to the least important. Choose the top 25% of the items as priorities or a reasonable % depending on the group size.

Analyse the contents of this 25% of items to determine the major categories requiring attention.

A check may be necessary to see that there is reasonable consensus of opinion on the items chosen. If a wide range of opinion exists it may be necessary to use another type of group process in order to resolve differences.

Original source unknown

Force –Field Analysis

To identify and modify the ‘forces’ that maintain the gap between ‘where we want to be’ and ‘where we are’. The technique assumes that the current situation is the result of counteracting forces. One set of forces is pushing the situation towards a more desired state (the helping forces) and a second set is acting to restrain the movement in the desired direction (hindering forces).

Blueprint application: Useful for *all dimensions* of the Leadership for Literacy Learning Blueprint.

Process:

1. Present a statement or problem in terms of the current state and the desired state
e.g.

Our early reading strategies do not seem to be producing the level of improvement we want to see in our students.

OR

Staff attendance at professional development activities in literacy is low and higher participation would improve our teaching.

2. Draw a line down the centre of a chart or whiteboard. Label the left hand column ‘helping forces’ and the right hand column ‘hindering forces’.
3. Brainstorm a list of ‘helping forces’ that is, those forces that are helping to push the current situation in the direction we want to go.
4. Brainstorm a list of ‘hindering forces’ that is those forces that are stopping you from getting where you want to go.
5. Identify and underline those hindering forces that are the most important and most able to be influenced.
6. For each of the underlined hindering forces think of a list of action steps that can be taken to reduce or eliminate the effect of the force.
7. Repeat this process for the helping forces.
8. Process each of the action steps and identify those that are most likely to have an effect. Then plan for action.

Original source unknown

Forward Snowball

Forward snowball is a cooperative approach to generating ideas and information. It can be readily applied to 'brainstorming', problem solving and other creative exercises. The technique ensures that all individuals contribute and process ideas. This is not always the case with other techniques for generating ideas.

Snowballs can generate ideas and process information very quickly. They can be used as an introduction to or as a follow up to a larger learning task.

Advantages/ limitations: The forward snowball protects the idea that individuals bring to the topic or problem. All ideas are considered of equal worth and are considered equally by recording in a rolling list. One disadvantage is that idea may be repeated as the groups snowball.

Blueprint application: Useful for *all dimensions* of the Leadership for Learning Blueprint.

Process:

1. Start with the individual making his /her list of ideas in response to a starter question

What are the reasons for our students performing poorly in reading comprehension?

OR

Why is there low and irregular attendance at parent- teacher meetings across the school?

This way all participants are involved in the brainstorm, which often is not the case in an open style brainstorm where the facilitators write up what is called out. Individuals then combine in pairs or threes to add to their lists.

2. Combining similar responses into single items is not essential but it does have its benefits.
3. Ideas will be duplicated and may need to be reframed into one idea. In synthesizing ideas participants not only process the volume of information, they also sharpen their descriptions.
4. Lists can be combined by physically drawing up a third list or by taking one list and simply adding the others to it. Another option is to require all the participants to upgrade their own individual lists. This way they all have a complete list at the end of the process.

5. Set fairly tight timelines on each process. Some topics will require more time but generally the quicker the process the better.
6. A forward snowball can be effective when only two or three 'join ups' are made, depending on the purpose or nature of the topic. Facilitators need to monitor groups to see if the main task is being achieved and whether the next step is worth taking.

Variation: Instead of pairing up after completing the individual lists, participants form groups of three to combine or synthesize their ideas and then move to groups of six. The role of the individual is somewhat diminished by this modification but it is useful with larger groups at times.

**** This variation can also be applied to Reverse snowball.**

Original source unknown

Reverse Snowball

The Reverse Snowball can help people to process a large amount of information quickly. It helps to clarify and describe ideas and is particularly useful for tasks that require prioritising. It may be useful to further process and prioritise information and ideas generated in Forward Snowball.

Advantages/ limitations: Ideas are lost in the amalgamation process. However consensus is pursued throughout.

Blueprint application: Useful for *all dimensions* of the Leadership for Literacy Learning Blueprint.

Process:

1. To start the process, individuals list or select 3 important ideas related to a chosen topic, issue or problem *e.g.*

Students are not using the school library enough.

OR

A significant number of children are complaining about homework.

2. Each person writes down his or her ideas in three minutes.
3. Individuals form pairs and have five minutes to meld the two lists into one. The new list must contain three ideas. In other words the six ideas have to be reduced to three by eliminating the least significant or by reframing similar ideas.
4. Each pair joins another pair to form a group of four. They have five minutes to incorporate their two lists into one by reducing the ideas from six to three.
5. Each small group joins another to form a group of eight. They have five minutes to incorporate their two lists list into one of three ideas.
6. The process can continue until all participants have been joined into a single group.

A number of points need emphasising:

- Individuals can keep their own running record of the three major ideas. As groups get bigger, appoint a custodian or recorder to each group to ensure a final consensus is recorded.
- Monitor the groups to see if consensus is being achieved and to determine when to stop the “Reverse Snowball”.

Original source unknown

Crossover

The Crossover is used for generating and sharing ideas. It can be used as a review technique to provide individuals with feedback on their ideas and allow them to see other people's perspectives.

Advantages/ limitations: Some people may not like the contrived nature of the crossover technique. It requires reasonable space to ensure that groups get a talking area of their own. On balance though, it provides individuals with a number of forums in a limited time and the chance to hear many different ideas whilst protecting their own.

Blueprint application: Useful for *all dimensions* involved in the Leadership for Learning Blueprint.

Process:

1. Divide participants into three equal sized groups. Label them A, B and C.
2. In an open space arrange group A in a circle.

Members should be evenly spaced, about a metre apart, and be facing outwards. They are to be known as CIRCLE A.

3. Take group B and form an outer circle around circle A.

There should be less than a metre space between the two circles. Circle B members are evenly spaced and each is aligned with a member of circle A.

4. Arrange group C around circle B in the same fashion as in Step 3. With the addition of circle C there should be three concentric circles. Ensure that members of all three circles are aligned.
5. Explain that when instructed the three aligned members form a group, with one member from circle A, one from circle B and one from circle C.
6. Introduce the topic to the participants *e.g.*

Ways to improve the literacy outcomes of students identified in the diagnostic net.

How do we ensure continuity of learning across the school?

An example of the topic may be to generate ideas about 'ways to improve safety in the school grounds'.

7. The group spends four minutes discussing or brainstorming the topic. The three members (one from each circle form a group but should still maintain their position in the circular structure).
8. On a given signal members move apart and return to their original positions. They are then instructed to form a new group along the following pattern:
 - Circle A members stay as they are.
 - Circle B members rotate clockwise on position.
 - Circle C members rotate one position anti-clockwise.
 - Each member of each circle is therefore aligned with a different member.
9. The new groups discuss the topic, review the ideas they have gathered so far and try to add new ones. St a new time limit.
10. At a given signal the members return to their original positions, rotate to form new groups and continue working.

The process continues until the circles have fully rotated and members are back in their original positions – or until all ideas are exhausted.

Variation: The process can be used to both generate and prioritise ideas at the same time. Simply for the first two or three rotations groups generate ideas, and then for the last rotations they review, reduce and prioritise ideas. Individuals come out with what they consider are the best two or three ideas.

Original source unknown

Think Pair Share

Think pair share is a simple, versatile and efficient technique. It could be described as the building block of paired learning. It highlights the importance of individual contribution within cooperative learning. The technique can be readily applied to learning tasks which involve problem solving, answering questions, responding to challenges and preparing for activities.

Materials required: Some material for individual recording and access to a whiteboard or other resource is necessary to retrieve the ideas from pairs.

Advantages/ limitations: The technique is particularly useful for gathering different perspectives or learning different ways of doing things. Its disadvantage is that it is based on a combination of personal experience rather than comprehensive data.

Blueprint application: Useful for *all dimensions* of the Leadership for Learning Blueprint.

Process:

1. Divide the participants into pairs - avoid pairing friends.
2. Introduce and clarify the task *e.g.*

Identify ways that we can improve our community connections.

OR

What can we do differently to make sure professional development is effective?

3. Individually participants think through the topic.
4. Without discussion they jot down ideas, possible solutions or answers.
5. Silence should be asked for in this time.
6. Partners share ideas.
7. They may query ideas and discuss the possible answers or solutions.
8. The task is completed and this may involve the whole group sharing and recording/ reporting on the work of each pair.

There is a clear expectation in this technique that each will make a contribution in turn.

Round Robin

The Round Robin can be used for gathering information, generating ideas or reviewing work. The technique is highly effective with written material and especially helpful when the writing and presentation is important, such as plans and reports.

Advantages: The Round Robin provides an opportunity in which many opinions on an important document can be gathered in a relative short time. It assumes the participants have knowledge of the area on which the document focuses.

Process:

The following process relates to the Round Robin for review purposes.

1. Have documents well prepared and in a form for easy reading. Recording sheets should also be prepared prior to the activity.
 2. Divide the participants into small groups. Try to make the groups are around the same size. The larger the group the more feedback the participants are likely to receive. However, the time needed for feedback increases with the size of the group.
 3. If necessary, allow participants time to complete their individual tasks. In some cases participants will have to complete individual work, such as drafts, before the groups are constituted. In other cases there may be some advantage in having participants complete the individual tasks in the group setting.
1. Documents are prepared for the Round Robin by :
 - Placing the participant's name on them
 - Presenting them in a way that allows room for written feedback. This can be done by enlarging the document to give space, providing a column, etc.
 - Provide a heading card containing a question relevant to the document. *e.g.*

What changes should be made to the school prospectus to encourage enrolments?

OR

How well does the school reading program support continuity of learning across the years?

OR

What should we include in our Reading Induction Program for new staff?

OR

What considerations should be taken into account in determining the school's literacy professional development program?

2. Rotate the documents around the group, one place at a time.
3. Each participant 'reviews' the new document received. The facilitator may stipulate that feedback relates to certain areas, or relates to points of clarification or new ideas.
4. The facilitator will need to manage the flow of documents e.g. by a time limit or by participants having only one paper at a time.
5. Where the participant has a comment that has already been detailed they should write 'agree'. There will also be circumstances, particularly with more personal topics where it may be decided only positive comments are to be noted.
6. Documents rotate until the participants receive their original back.
7. Participants consider the feedback and may rework the document if necessary.
8. In some cases discussion and clarification may be undertaken at this point with participants asking for added views on the feedback they have received.

Original source unknown

Slip /Card Writing

Slip /Card writing can be used to collect a large number of ideas from any meeting in just a few minutes. Even the shyest person contributes as the method preserves anonymity as no one knows who offers each idea.

Advantages: It sidesteps competition where some members of the group try to 'outshine' others. It also produces a multitude of ideas in a form that allows for fast sorting for action planning.

Blueprint application: Useful for *all dimensions* of the Leadership for Learning Blueprint.

Process:

1. Everyone at the meeting receives a pad of paper or cards. The leader presents a problem statement in a 'how to' form *e.g.*

How can we better share the leadership of reading with staff and students at the school?

OR

How can we make the school library more effective for staff, students and parents?

2. The leader then explains the importance of holding back judgements and asks that each person writes down as many answers to the question as time allows. Each answer must be written on a separate slip of paper. Time given need only be 4-5 minutes.
3. Although any facet of a problem works well for slip writing "How can we ..." questions yield the highest returns for each effort.
4. When explaining the activity, the leader should explain the question and the process.
5. After the initial slip writing, groups may be asked to sort and categorise answers. This will assist in later action planning.

Original source unknown

“How to” sessions

‘How to’ sessions are useful when something has been going wrong, and the cause is known but simple corrective action is for one reason or another is not available. New alternative actions, usually adaptive in nature, must be found.

Limitations: The pitfalls in using ‘How to’ include:

- Trying to solve too general a problem.
- Not recording the proper information
- Recording information when it is not necessary.
- Getting bogged down in rambling shop talk.
- Stopping with one possible solution.

Blueprint application: Useful for *all dimensions* of the Leadership for Learning Blueprint.

Process:

1. The person with the problem is asked: “Tell us your problem in one sentence beginning with the words, ‘How to...’ *e.g.*

How to show Ahama that her culture is really valued.

How to help Sam improve his attitude to reading.

This sentence is recorded on a board.

2. The participants are asked, “Write down on a piece of paper all the different ways you see this problem. All ways are to begin with How to”. Often these may be incomplete or inaccurate or distorted – but none should be rejected.
3. While the participants are writing, ask the person with the problem questions to provide some input to the writing groups.

Questions such as these are typical:

Give us some background to the problem.

How did it get like this?

Why is this your problem and what is your part in it?

What have you already tried or thought of trying?

Why haven’t these worked?

What would you like from an ideal solution?

4. The participants are then asked to give their statements of how they see the problem, of how they would solve it, beginning with the words “How to”. Record as many of these in the form of a Flip Chart. Ask for further explanation if an interesting or unusual approach is offered. The person with the problem may also contribute to the ‘how to’s’. In recording responses do not offer judgments – just get as many ideas as possible.
5. The person with the problem is then asked to select a specific statement, one that seems promising or interesting, and explain why that one was selected.
6. The participants now move towards solution thinking ‘Any ideas which might move us towards solving the problem?’
7. From time to time, the person with the problem is asked to summarise what they have heard, this checks for understanding.
8. Referring to Step 6, the question is asked, “What do you like about these ideas?” This is an attempt to stretch the problem a little beyond easy and obvious responses.
9. The Leader keeps recycling back to the participants looking for other ideas to add to the original idea..
10. Steps 7-10 are cycled through until a possible solution begins to emerge, or until it is clear the line of thought will not go any further or will not work. (If this happens the person can select another ‘How to’ and repeat the process.
11. When the person with the problem feels enthusiastic or satisfied with an idea, it is useful to record answers to the following questions in a Flip Board format:
 - Describe the possible solution to your problem.
 - Why do you think it will work for you?
 - What can you do with it? (Use the group to ensure nothing is left out).
 - How is this solution new for you?
 - What are the steps you will take to implement the idea. (Include dates, people, actions, etc). Although the question is directed to the person with the problem, participants may contribute in this step.

Note: Sometimes it is useful to ask the group for possible solutions before starting Step 6. If there are any well developed ideas on hand, it is helpful to get them out quickly. It might not then be necessary to go through the ideas building process.

Brainstorming (and variations)

To elicit ideas on a particular situation, usually an open ended problem

Limitations:

- The lack of structure could permit 'secondary' goals to become important.
- Care needs to be taken that the leader does not 'favour' an idea.

Blueprint application: Useful for *all dimensions* of the Leadership for Learning Blueprint.

Process:

1. Good brainstorming activities start off with a 'defreezing activity, a deliberate appeal to the motives of the group and the relevance of the subject, a clear statement of the situation to which ideas are directed, and an open statement of the rules of the game -no censoring.
2. If you are trying to brainstorm *e.g.*

Ways to make the teaching of vocabulary more interesting for students.

How to improve the effectiveness of staff meetings on reading.

Expect the ideas to flow slowly at first, but then build up momentum by recording as quickly as possible and constantly requesting 'What is next?', 'Who has another one?', 'Can we build on that?'

There are five basic rules for brainstorming:

1. Rule out criticism. Evaluation has no part in brainstorming.
2. 'Free-wheeling' is welcomed. Even wild ideas are heard and recorded.
3. Quantity is encouraged without reference to quality. The more ideas the more likelihood of useful ideas.
4. Listen to others ideas. Look for combinations of and linking of ideas and improvements. Piggyback ideas on others.
5. All ideas are recorded without censoring. It is best if this recording is visible to all.

For groups experienced in unstructured techniques, pure brainstorming sessions may be useful but sometimes it is useful to reflect on sessions you may have been involved in re the following:

- Have they been totally non-judgmental?
- Did other secondary agendas seem to emerge for some individuals? ('I'm sure I can give the most ridiculous suggestion'. 'I'm bound to impress the boss')
- Did the really divergent thinker start to open up?
- Was there an attempt to draw out the 'odd' thought?
- Was the problem too general, not open-ended enough or too narrow?

Below is a summary of the rules you may like to use:

So you want to brainstorm. Try the following rules:

- I. Set the climate; use an exercise to build trust, legitimise the 'odd idea, build confidence.*
- II. Check out that you are really working on the RIGHT problem. (5-10 minutes)*
- III. Have a practice session on a light 'practice' problem. (3-5 minutes).*
- IV. Brainstorm your issue. (10-15 minutes).*
- V. Extend ideas using a 'wild' one as a trigger, or by putting some ideas on slips, and swapping them around the group. (5-10 minutes)*
- VI. Ask individuals to develop further ideas from what is already recorded.*

There are many variations to brainstorming. The more common are:

The Gordon technique

In this technique the leader starts the discussion with some of the concepts basic to or closely associated with the problem or decision situation. He/ She then stimulates the discussion, and reveals the true nature of the situation when the group is close to a satisfactory conclusion.

Cascade sessions

Each group member is given one of the ideas that have been generated, and is asked to write new ideas silently, triggered by the one given. Each member has their idea to brainstorm written on their sheet of paper. After three minutes each person hands their paper to their neighbour, who then uses these top-of-the-page ideas as triggers, or stepping stones, to some new ones. After another three minutes the process can be repeated once more.

Trigger sessions

Start with slip writing. At the end of four minutes each member of the group reads out his/her list, triggering others present to write more ideas on slips. Sometimes triggering can be encouraged to develop onto verbal, group brainstorming to alternate with periods of slip writing. Note however, that this method removes the anonymity of slip writing.

Original source unknown

Delphi Technique

To survey the ideas of stakeholders, who are not necessarily meeting face to face, in order to reach agreement. It must be noted that this can be a very time consuming process.

Blueprint application: Useful for *all dimensions* of the Leadership for Learning Blueprint.

Process:

1. Group participants agree on a broad and unambiguous question for consideration by respondents *e.g.*

Why do you think that some children have trouble completing their reading homework?

OR

What are the attributes of a good reading school?

2. Select the sample size. This technique can make great demands on the organisers. This should be considered when deciding how many people to involve.
3. Select and contact respondents. Ordinarily those people who have some interest in the question and have the necessary information to contribute would be selected.
4. Send out a first round questionnaire. This will usually include a statement of the issue or problem, possibly a few open ended questions or a request for suggested solutions, and a clear set of instructions.
5. Collate first round results. Develop a feedback report by summarising results so they can be clearly understood by respondents in the second round.
6. Send out second round questionnaire containing the summarised results of the first round. In the second round, areas of agreement/disagreement from the first round are identified, questions for clarification posed, tentative priorities identified, and a request for a vote on priorities stated.
7. Analyse second round results. Collate priorities and develop a feedback report.
8. Repeat as necessary until an acceptable level of consensus is achieved to help solve the problem at hand.
9. Prepare a final report and send to respondents.

Original source unknown

Constructive Controversy

Constructive Controversy is an abbreviated and flexible form of debating, with an emphasis on 'taking perspectives' and building consensus. It is useful for dealing with values, ethics, opinions, conflicts of interest, dilemmas and professional codes. It is a good preparation exercise for tackling controversial issues. It is also valuable as a follow up exercise to difficult issues.

Blueprint application: Useful for *all dimensions* of the Leadership for Learning Blueprint.

Process:

There are many forms that constructive Controversies can take. Facilitators can modify the standard process with a combination of variations.

1. Introduce a controversial or contestable issue to the group *e.g.*

The only thing we should really be concerned about at his school is results in literacy and numeracy.

OR

Any children new to the school should be included immediately in reading improvement programs already underway.

- It is important to frame the topic in an adversarial manner so there are two apparently opposing points of view – a positive and a negative.
2. Divide participants into groups of four so that each group is made up of two pairs.
 - One pair is to support the affirmative and one the negative.
 3. Pairs research the topic and prepare their cases.
 - Explain that they will need to be capable of arguing both sides of the issue.
 - The amount of time allocated to research and preparation depends on the topic and the purpose of the exercise.
 4. Pairs try to convince each other that their side is the right one.
 - A time limit is set for this stage. The time should allow each member to make one or two contributions. Individual contributions should not be longer than one minute. Participants should not be interrupted.

- The time allocated should take into account Step 6. You can be fairly arbitrary with the time.
5. At a set juncture the debate is halted.
 - The pairs are to swap sides and continue debating. The affirmative pair now argue the negative case and the negative pair the positive case.
 6. When the debate is concluded the group must try to reach a 'position of consensus' on the issue.
 - The consensus reflects areas of agreement, disagreement, compromise, uncertainty and alternative solutions. They may need anywhere from five to fifteen minutes for this task.
 - Some guidelines on how to report on the consensus position will help to focus this exercise. For example the consensus must be summarised in no more than two sentences. It may have to conform to a format like 'Yes/ No, we believe.....because.....but.....because.....'”
 7. To conclude the exercise:
 - Each group makes a brief report to a plenary session on their 'consensus position'.

Original source unknown

Excursion techniques

Excursion techniques can help when the more normal processes of ideas building do not give satisfactory results, one or another form of excursion from the problem may assist. An excursion is useful if you are really stuck.

An excursion is a trip away from the problem into a line of thought that has little to do with the problem.

The idea is to stimulate divergent thinking, which is hard to do when you are concentrating on the point where you are stuck. By departing from the core of the issue and generating a climate of detachment, of 'playing around', it may be possible accidentally to discover a new thought.

Advantages / Limitations: An excursion is useful if you are really stuck for ideas. Limitations are the difficulties in linking it to the original problem.

Blueprint application: Useful for *all dimensions* of the Leadership for Literacy Blueprint.

Process:

1. State the problem as a 'how to' chart. Leave this up to one side throughout the excursion exercise *e.g.*

How can student and parent aspirations be changed so that literacy is valued above all else?

How can we ensure that our professional journey leads to positive outcomes for students?

2. Select a key word from the statement or problem. The key word should be one which is as suggestive, interesting or concrete as possible, and which can lead thought away from the problem (as it is stated). Write the key word on a flip chart.
3. Ask the participants to tell you anything that the word suggests. Ask one at a time, with each one building on the previous comment. Write down the list of associations on the second flip chart as it develops.
4. Select a word from the list. Remove the list and write the new word on the flip chart. Again select the word that gives the best chance of leading the participants away from the problem.
5. Ask participants to construct a fantasy on the word, and write the fantasies privately on a sheet of paper.

6. Ask participants to try to build a group fantasy starting with one person's and adding to it, one at a time, or have several fantasies described without connecting them.
7. Write down the key elements of the fantasy or fantasies from step 5 as participants describe them. (If the group is having trouble getting away from reality into fantasy, interrupt at critical moments with outrageous questions. Build towards fantasy).
8. Repeat steps 5-7 until everyone's away from reality.
9. When it is apparent that the entire group is in fantasy (everybody's having fun and the words/elements have no connection with the original problem), quite suddenly ask the group to move back to the original real problem and offer a connection between any of the last recorded elements and the real problem. Accept even a seemingly absurd connection. These are typically called out, but they may trigger a thought in another group member.

Original source unknown

Panel Forum

This process consists of two parts:

- A panel discussion in which selected people speak on a specific topic for a set period of time. The facilitator may ask questions of panel members to clarify or expand upon any points.
- A forum discussion, in which the entire group may participate by directing comments and questions to members of the panel.

Suitable when used for discussions in larger groups where resolutions do not have to be made or consensus reached. It can also be used for groups to report back on sub-committee work.

Advantages/ limitations: Allows for input from a number of resource people.

Allows groups to react to both the positive and negative.

Unless well planned can become an opportunity to raise irrelevant issues or personal attacks.

Blueprint application: Useful for *all dimensions* of the Leadership for Learning Blueprint.

Process:

1. Each panel member/group prepares individually. Groups could comprise *e.g.*

Three teachers talking about what they did to improve outcomes in the teaching of letter – sound relationships.

OR

Principal and admin team speaking about using a framework to lead learning and how teachers are essential to the process.

2. The facilitator introduces each panel member to the total group, notes the time and requests closure after the allotted time has elapsed. The facilitator can also request clarification of issues as speakers proceed.
3. The facilitator opens the forum discussion inviting group members to ask questions or contribute comments.
4. Facilitator summarises major points of discussion.

Transactional Evaluation

A process which looks at the effects of change on the individuals concerned. It involves the acquisition of information and values, feedback of this information into the system and continuous monitoring of the effects. The emphasis is on diagnosis and improvement of the system.

Uses: To discover issues important to individuals and to see if there is any consensus of opinion on the issues. To transform 'conflict' situations into more 'productive' situations in order to bring about change. To clarify the roles of those persons involved in program change.

Advantages/ limitations: The advantages and limitations include:

- A wide range of opinions and values are obtained.
- Organisational efficiency improves because of the attention to potential role threats.
- Concern for human values as well as program outcomes leads to greater honesty of interchange and more valid data.
- Involves a wide range of personnel skills.
- Resistance from participants due to threat of change.
- It can be an unwieldy process to use with large groups.

Blueprint application: Useful for *all dimensions* of the Leadership for Learning Blueprint.

Process:

This technique can be approached in two ways:

- a) A one session approach in which statements are gathered, organised, voted on and discussed in the one meeting. This approach requires resources available during the meeting to collect, collate and organise the information quickly, so the normal process outlined below can be completed in the one meeting.
- b) An approach where information is collected via interview, brainstorming, etc., and prepared before the meeting takes place.

Both approaches follow the same steps:

1. Statements about the area of concern or on a substantial issue are obtained from:
 - A single group e.g. teachers
 - Several groups e.g. parents, teachers, students. *e.g.*

What do you think about our approach to literacy learning in the early years?

OR

What are your views on the resourcing of our reading improvement programs?

Statements are taken verbatim from persons.

Meaning of some items may not be clear.

Validity of statements is not important here; statements are merely springboards to discussion and planning.

2. All statements are incorporated into a questionnaire. Responses are limited to: strongly agree (A), agree (B), disagree (C), strongly disagree (D).

Participants are required to indicate their response by placing a tick in the appropriate box.

3. On completion by all participants, responses are collated and the number of A, B, C, D responses are indicated numerically in relevant columns. Distribution of responses can also be represented by vertical graphs.
4. Use the three Disciplined Dialogue' questions to discuss the data assembled:
 - What do we see in these data?
 - Why are we seeing what we are?
 - What if anything should we be doing about this?

Original source unknown

Quality circles

A Quality Circle, is, in summary, a small group of volunteers who meet, for a short period (one hour weekly/fortnightly) under the leadership of a colleague to identify, analyse and provide solutions to problems relevant to their work context.

Advantages/ limitations: Quality Circles can have a positive effect on staff relations, attitudes and team development (often not quantifiable).

Blueprint application: Useful for *all dimensions* of the Leadership for Learning Blueprint.

Process:

1. Clarification of administrators' interest and acknowledgement of their responsibilities to the process. The Circle must know it operates independently.
2. Selection of focus groups. It is suggested a 'try it first' approach is most effective. If circles work on a small scale then requests for more Circles can follow.
3. Briefing with involved third parties. Ensure representation of all including associations such as unions if suggested.
4. Selection of Group Leaders. This is a critical step for each new Quality Circle. Leaders must be seen as a positive force by the work group and be focused on the purpose and topic. *e.g.*

The role of paraprofessionals in the school's literacy programs.

OR

Resourcing reading teaching and learning to improve outcomes.

Acceptance of the leader is critical. Quality Circles are usually tools for leaders and therefore election of the leader is not suggested. It is important that the leader sees him/herself as a facilitator.

5. Calling for volunteers. The group leaders should explain the 'grass roots' approach of the Circle. Volunteers for the circle are then called for.
6. Training of Group Leaders. The leadership role is essential for group facilitation, the availability of resources, data gathering and processing, group creativity concepts, etc.

7. Training of Circle members. Circle members should be trained in a range of group processes, data gathering methods, simple statistical measures, problem-solving techniques, creativity tools and report preparation.

Quality Circles' thinking assumes (reasonably) that wasted potential exists at the 'grassroots' of organisations.

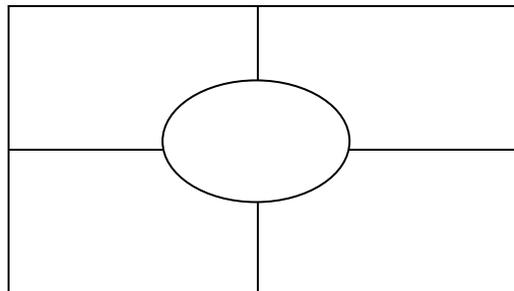
Looking in the Rubbish Bin

Looking in the Rubbish Bin is a useful process to help people identify the problem issues that should be addressed. It is a way of identifying the issues that are causing concern and then prioritising which issues should be dealt with.

Advantages / Limitations: Problem issues that are causing concern are identified and disciplined dialogue is used to develop a plan of action.

Process

Staff works in pairs in tables of 8. On the table is a sheet of butcher paper divided in to four segments with a circle left blank in the middle as illustrated below:



Each pair jots down in its own quadrant a number of things that should be consigned to the school rubbish bin i.e. things that they would not want a visitor, such as a parent enquiring about enrolment, or a district supervisor to see or be aware of.

These are shared in the group of eight and agreement is reached on two or three items that should be removed from the rubbish bin and made visible to enable them to be dealt with. These are written in the circle.

Each table group displays its chart on the wall. Staff members peruse the charts and compare ideas.

In a whole group discussion staff members reach agreement on the hidden things that matter and use disciplined dialogue questions to devise a plan for action.

Adapted from: MacBeath J. & Mc Glynn A, *Self Evaluation- What's in it for schools?* , Routledge Falmer, London, 2002

PART 3

STUDENT SURVEY- ATTITUDES TO LEARNING

People at home

Tick one box

(think of whoever mainly looks after you- dad, mum, grandparent, aunt...)

At home I am **never** encouraged to do well at school

At home I am **hardly ever** encouraged to do well at school

At home I am **usually** encouraged to do well at school

At home I am **always** encouraged to do well at school

Being successful

Tick one box

I **always** get to do something I'm good at

I **usually** get to do something I'm good at

I **hardly ever** get to do something I'm good at

I **never** get to do something I'm good at

Getting homework

Tick one box

I **never** get homework

I **hardly ever** get homework

I **usually** get homework

I get homework **nearly every night**

If you have ticked this box miss out the next TWO questions

Doing homework

Tick one box

I **always** remember to do my homework

I **usually** remember to do my homework

I **hardly ever** remember to do my homework

I **never** remember to do my homework

If you have ticked this box miss out the next question

If I don't do my homework

Tick one box

If I haven't done my homework teachers **always** notice

If I haven't done my homework teachers **usually** notice

If I haven't done my homework teachers **hardly ever** notice

Teachers **never** notice if I haven't done my homework

Thinking Hard

Tick one box

I **always** have to think hard to do my work

I **usually** have to think hard to do my work

I **hardly ever** have to think hard to do my work

I **never** have to think hard to do my work

Liking school

Tick one box

I am **always** happy to come to school

I am **usually** happy to come to school

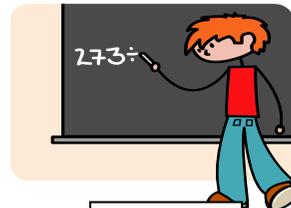
I am **hardly ever** happy to come to school

I am **never** happy to come to school

Adapted from

MacBeath J. 1996 *Moving and Improving Strategies That Work*, Griffith University Centre for Leadership and Management in Education, Brisbane

Student Survey –Self as a Learner

<p>I always do my best at school</p> <div style="text-align: center; border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 30px; margin: 10px auto;"></div>	<p>Most of the time I do my best at school</p> <div style="text-align: center; border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 30px; margin: 10px auto;"></div>	<p>Sometimes I do my best at school</p> <div style="text-align: center; border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 30px; margin: 10px auto;"></div>	<p>I never do my best at school</p> <div style="text-align: center; border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 30px; margin: 10px auto;"></div>
<p>I can't do anything well</p> <div style="text-align: center; border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 100%; background-color: #ff0000; position: relative;">  </div> <div style="text-align: center; border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 30px; margin: 10px auto;"></div>	<p>I can do some things well</p> <div style="text-align: center; border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 100%; background-color: #ffa500; position: relative;">  </div> <div style="text-align: center; border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 30px; margin: 10px auto;"></div>	<p>I can do most things well</p> <div style="text-align: center; border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 100%; background-color: #add8e6; position: relative;">  </div> <div style="text-align: center; border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 30px; margin: 10px auto;"></div>	<p>I can do everything well</p> <div style="text-align: center; border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 100%; background-color: #fff9c4; position: relative;">  </div> <div style="text-align: center; border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 30px; margin: 10px auto;"></div>
<p>My teacher thinks my work is very good</p> <div style="text-align: center; border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 30px; margin: 10px auto;"></div>	<p>My teacher thinks my work is quite good</p> <div style="text-align: center; border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 30px; margin: 10px auto;"></div>	<p>My teacher thinks my work isn't very good</p> <div style="text-align: center; border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 30px; margin: 10px auto;"></div>	<p>My teacher thinks my work is terrible</p> <div style="text-align: center; border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 30px; margin: 10px auto;"></div>
<p>I always need help to do my work</p> <div style="text-align: center; border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 30px; margin: 10px auto;"></div>	<p>I usually need help to do my work</p> <div style="text-align: center; border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 30px; margin: 10px auto;"></div>	<p>I sometimes need help to do my work</p> <div style="text-align: center; border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 30px; margin: 10px auto;"></div>	<p>I never need help to do my work.</p> <div style="text-align: center; border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 30px; margin: 10px auto;"></div>

Adapted from MacBeath J. 1996 *Moving and Improving Strategies That Work*, Griffith University Centre for Leadership and Management in Education, Brisbane

SPOT CHECK – Student Motivation

The 'spot check' is a one page sheet containing 14 paired items. It is a way of ascertaining students' different levels of motivation and thinking at different points during a lesson. It is most beneficial when used in different lessons and at different times of the day e.g. in a music lesson, doing library research, during a maths lesson.

Before you start the lesson, please circle the words most relevant to you:

Too cold too hot happy sad bored excited tired hungry angry scared

Tick or colour in one of the faces below to show your level of interest in what you are about to learn.



At the signal from the teacher, take a minute to fill in the sheet below. Number 1 applies to the words on the left, 3 to the words on the right, 2 neither one nor the other.

<i>concentrating</i>	1	2	3	<i>thinking about other things</i>
<i>alert</i>	1	2	3	<i>tired</i>
<i>relaxed</i>	1	2	3	<i>anxious</i>
<i>wanting to be here</i>	1	2	3	<i>wanting to be somewhere else</i>
<i>happy</i>	1	2	3	<i>sad</i>
<i>active</i>	1	2	3	<i>passive</i>
<i>excited</i>	1	2	3	<i>bored</i>
<i>time passing quickly</i>	1	2	3	<i>time passing slowly</i>
<i>full of energy</i>	1	2	3	<i>very little energy</i>
<i>think lesson is important</i>	1	2	3	<i>don't think lesson is important</i>
<i>friendly</i>	1	2	3	<i>lonely</i>
<i>easy to concentrate</i>	1	2	3	<i>hard to concentrate</i>
<i>cheerful</i>	1	2	3	<i>irritable</i>
<i>easy to be creative</i>	1	2	3	<i>difficult to be creative</i>

Tick or colour in one of the faces below to show how you feel you have benefited from the lesson.



Adapted from: MacBeath J. & Mc Glynn A, *Self Evaluation- What's in it for schools?*, Routledge Falmer, London, 2002

SNAPSHOTS

Students' views of conditions for learning

Digital cameras can be used effectively as research instruments to gain insight into students' opinions about aspects of school climate, school culture or school facilities.

Students form groups of three and use a digital camera to take photographs of e.g. *places in the school that I feel happy in, places I like to learn, places I like to read, places I feel good in with my friends, places I don't like to be in.*

Students print and display their photographs placing underneath each display a large sheet of chart paper. All students in the class take part in a gallery walk and have the opportunity to write a comment on the chart paper expressing an opinion about the places selected for the snapshots. When everyone has had an opportunity to contribute to the comments a further gallery walk takes place.

The evidence of the snapshots combined with the comments is used as a basis for disciplined dialogue with the whole class.

- (i) **What does this evidence show us is happening here?**
- (ii) **Why do we think this is so?**
- (iii) **What if anything, should we be doing about it?**

An older class may be 'buddied' with a younger class for this activity.

EAVESDROPPING

Student focused discussion

This technique allows for observation of a focused conversation conducted by a large group.

Students are seated in circle formation and two to four observers sit outside the circle to listen and take notes.

The facilitator explains the protocols for the discussion:

- The discussion is controlled by the students
- No one raises their hand to speak
- Only one person speaks at a time
- Everyone has the opportunity to be heard
- The observers do not take part in the conversation.
- The observers will be recording the conversation in writing.

Students practise the process with a trial question e.g. ***Why is the school library not used by boys very much?***

The key question is then posed e.g. ***How does our school assist students to become successful learners?***

The observers record as much of the discussion as possible and, at the end of the discussion period, provide feedback to the circle re the content of the discussion.

The recorders observations are collated by the facilitator and may be used as evidence for disciplined dialogue.