Transcript Ross Fox's Keynote Address
Part 6 – Our journey so far

Science of Learning

Leadership Accelerator

19 May 2022

A joint venture between

knowledge society

Crowther Centre
AN ENGINE THAT POWERS SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Primary
focus

I'll just go briefly through what we've done. First of all, it's all about just for an organising framework, curriculum, pedagogy and assessment.

I'll start with pedagogy.We did need to do a lot of understanding on what the Science of Reading, and Science of Learning were about and what their implications were for pedagogy. In a number of instances, we've used really high quality coaches in conjunction with high quality program, so it's a meshing of pedagogy and curriculum that we can use to support the teacher to make the change they need to do. There were a couple of very profound things we learnt about professional learning. What we did was we commissioned eight units, virtual, so they could be watched in a staff meeting and discussed or watched in your own time. These eight learning units cover the Science of Reading, the Science of Learning - different aspects of what we thought were important in understanding what we wanted to all know. In our professional learning approach, there were four stages that we recognised had to occur. The first; there needed to be a knowledge of the theory that was relevant to the Science of Learning and Science of Reading. We couldn't start changing if we didn't have professional engagement on that. Then the second thing was we wanted our professional learning not to be abstract, but to be practical. We wanted to offer a demonstration of effective practice to all teachers involved. We needed, thirdly, to give them a chance to practise the practice and to have a go at it. Then we needed to confirm that change and affirm the teacher by giving them high quality coaching and feedback.

Nothing I've said hopefully is revolutionary, but to get that precise, we're not going to have whole PD sessions out of school with no children near them, to talk about teaching and learning. That's not the focus and model. We're going to go into the classroom, into the school where we want that change to happen. We do some out of school come together, but we've got a really precise agenda about what we need to know.

The second aspect of it is choosing really high quality coaches to work with people that of the likes of Lorraine Hammond, Tony Hatton-Roberts (who'll be talking later), Michael Roberts and a number of others, the TeachWell coaches. Because we need the best feedback to our teachers in the classroom to help them improve their practice. We've put a huge commitment into that.

Until recently, it might not be true anymore, but we were the largest system implementation ever of InitiaLit in Australia. We were really worried that there'd be a rebellion that we asked teachers to use what is a highly scripted program. We were amazed when more than 200 teachers wanted to be part of it and have been so enthusiastic, because I think we've

engaged fundamentally with the vocation of a teacher, which is " I want to see my students learning". Whatever preconceptions or biases I might have about how that happens to start with, if I haven't engaged in an understanding of the science, when they see the students learning, they're on fire, like we all are. That's the privilege that we have in education is to see that.

Catalyst in numbers

100%

Principals engaged in Leadership professional learning

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700+

teachers engaged in High Impact Teaching Practice, with every school participating

350+

teachers participating in InitiaLit training

90%

schools using evidence-based literacy intervention across K-12

Catalyst

We have made significant progress. We've got all of our principals engaged. We've got of our sort of 2,000 teaching staff. We've had more than 700 engaged in various aspects of it. Our commitment is to have our other bold goal alongside every child is a competent reader, is to have high impact teaching practice evident in every classroom. One of the challenges is fidelity or precision in this. When we announce that - Google is an easy transnational sort of facilitator, and what happened is people started Googling high impact teaching, so they found their high impact teaching strategies from Victoria, of which I wouldn't use some of them, I don't think they're evidence-based. I don't think they're what you need to prioritise. I don't think they're very good. I'm on video maybe I'll be quoted about that. I think it's more akin to a framework of a list of everything you might think what you want to do. It's not a good professional guide for how you're going to discern what you need to do that's going to make the most impact for your students. We actually had a bit of a challenge to then say, no, this is the definition of what high impact teaching practice is in our Archdiocese. We had some friends to help do that, but that is a continuing challenge to say not everything we enjoy doing we do in our classrooms is high impact teaching practice. I think as professionals our obligation is to draw the line between good and bad teaching practice or effective and ineffective, and we've all got choices with how we spend our time. We should be minimising that ineffective teaching practice or marginal teaching practice. That's a real challenge, by the way. For example, very controversial: I do not think it's helpful to start with a reflection on differentiation. If you're talking about "in classroom high quality pedagogy", I think there's all sorts of things you can do before that becomes a critical conversation. That's

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got to be tested according to the evidence that you might consult and how you go about it, but I think that it reflects on what is your core model of teaching and learning, and is differentiation going to be a starting point? If it is, the problem is it has all sorts of implications for how many lessons you get to run simultaneously in your classrooms or maybe how many different assessments you're going to set. I don't disagree that differentiation is an important concept to encounter, but I still have reservations about it being a dominant first port of call for determining instruction.