Using data on learner achievement

Concept	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Learner data		No regular review of learner data takes place.	Only provincial test results are used to monitor learner achievement; data are analysed annually against annual results.	Only provincial test results are used to monitor learner achievement; data for the past three years are analysed.	Multiple sources of data on learner achievement are analysed, including formative and summative assessment. Progress of learner cohorts is monitored.
Demographic data	Only data required by the DBE or GDE is collected and reported on.	Only data required by the province (e.g. attendance) are collected, reported and analysed at the school.	Data other than on learner achievement are used to guide decision making.	Data other than on learner achievement are used to guide decision making. This includes quantitative data as well as qualitative data gathered from learners.	Many types of data are gathered. Secondary schools look at post school data such as admission to HEIs, success rates, remediation and completion of course.
Staff data		Only data required by the province (e.g. teacher qualifications) are verified at the district; no data re staff are used at the school level.	Data about staff include objective (qualitative) information that is used to plan professional development and CPD.	Both qualitative and quantitative data are gathered about staff.	Both qualitative and quantitative data are gathered about staff. This information includes teacher preparation and preparedness, learning and staff needs.

Parents and the community	Data about parents and the community are not used by the school for decision making purposes.	Data on parental involvement at the school are collected.	Data on parental involvement and community characteristics are compiled.	Both qualitative and quantitative data are gathered.	Both qualitative and quantitative data are gathered and parents/ community help to analyse and interpret the data.
Data collection, storage, retrieval and accessibility		School data from a number of sources is not organised in a single location.	School data are gathered and stored.	School data are gathered, and are available on request.	School data are summarised, displayed and accessible.

From Edie Holcomb

How to use this tool

1. **Understanding the categories**

Explaining the levels				
Level 1	**Level 2**	**Level 3**	**Level 4**	**Level 5**
Unsatisfactory	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent

Explaining the colour coding			
Red	**Amber**	**Green**	**Blue**

Non- compliant, emergency measures needed	Some efforts being made, but a more co-ordinated, inclusive and strategic approach is needed	Satisfactory, but there is room for improvement	Good, encourage the school to maintain this level and quality of engagement

2. **Who must do what?**

Role player	Teachers	SMT	District Official/ curriculum specialist
Preparatory task	Discuss the use of data on learner achievement and indicate current performance.	Review the information provided by teachers.	Ask the school to complete the analysis and provide the responses in the Subject Improvement Plan and School Improvement Plan. Analyse the responses.
Intervention	Mark as priorities for action in the Subject Improvement Plan.	In priorities for action in the Subject Improvement Plan.	Plan the intervention based on the responses provided and your own analysis. Set incremental targets for improvement and explain both what and how the school can reach these targets. Turn the 'standard' for the next level into an action to undertake and a target to strive for.
Follow up	Implement the steps that will lead to improvement	Support and monitor the implementation of the actions required	Having set a date for implementation, plan to visit the school to review implementation and offer further support and assistance.

3. **What documents must this be linked to?**

The Subject Improvement Plan; The School Improvement Plan (SIP); the performance dashboard; the data warehouse.

Learning Summary

This topic starts with your role as a leader, tasked with the responsibility to ensure that teachers teach and learners learn. As an Instructional Leader, you need to understand your role and responsibilities in leading the delivery of the curriculum. You need to consider what behaviours and attitudes from you as the leader, set the scene for effective instruction and successful learning. We consider what can and should you be doing to ensure that the focus is on teaching and learning. Thereafter, the unit considers what motivation, support and accountability strategies and methods can be utilised effectively in the school and by yourself to improve teaching and learning.

Leadership role

Understanding yourself as a leader

In module 2, you looked at yourself as a leader in the school, and reflected deeply on 'how' you can and should be and behave. In this section of the course, which focuses on Instructional Leadership, we need to pose the following leadership challenge:

> "Do you believe that the heart of school improvement rests in improving daily teaching and learning practices in your school – including engaging learners and their parents?"

> (Adapted from Ben Levin, p. 8).

This question is at the core of this module. Following on from the 'challenge', is the further question:

> "If you believe that improving daily teaching and learning practices in your school is vital, what are you doing every day in your school in order to ensure that this becomes a reality?"

This module provides practical actions for you as the instructional leader in your school.

Leadership behaviours to set the scene for achievement

The following leadership practices and behaviours are typical of an Instructional Leader as they help to improve teaching:

Naming the practice	What this practice means
Focusing on school vision, mission and goals	The Instructional Leader (principal) is clear about the purpose, aim and goals of the school. S/he illustrates in unequivocally that the primary 'task' of the school is about 'instruction for improved learner achievement'.
Discussing expectations for learner achievement	The Instructional Leader leads discussions that dissect learner results, whether these are based on national assessment, common tests or classroom assessments. The discussions look at school, grade, and learner

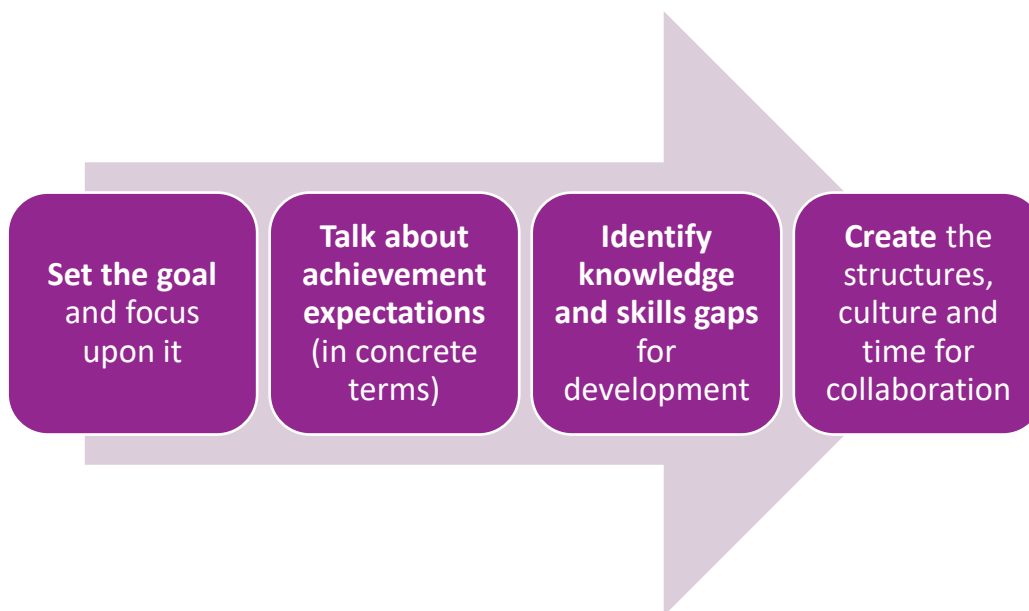|	
	achievement, and even drill down further to actual topics for each learner.
Tracking teacher's professional development needs	The Instructional Leader insists that information is gathered, data is aggregated and analysed and then used to determine actual and specific, rather than imagined and vague, needs. These must then be factored into Personal Development Plans for teachers.
Creating structures and opportunities for teachers to collaborate	The Instructional Leader uses his/ her authority to make sure that teachers have the space and time to work together. This is about organising the opportunity, but also encouraging the behaviour.
Demonstrating support for collaboration	The Instructional Leader actively indicates his/ her belief in collaboration. When collaboration takes place, this is acknowledged.
Scheduling time so that teachers can meet	The Instructional Leader organises opportunities specifically for collaborative team work on specific learning and teaching related matters.

(Adapted from Holcomb, p. 122).

The behaviours and practices described above can be clustered as follows:

Set the goal and focus upon it → **Talk about achievement expectations** (in concrete terms) → **Identify knowledge and skills gaps** for development → **Create** the structures, culture and time for collaboration

Focus on teaching and learning

In the book "Education Reform in New York City", the authors discuss a new focus on learning:

> "We intended to rebuild the system around a new mission, one that puts children and their learning first."

(O'Day, *et al*, p.19.)

Again, the challenge to you as the Instructional Leader in your school is:

> "Does your school's vision and mission put learners, their learning and their achievement first?"

Inspiration

As an Instructional Leader, do you concern yourself with administrative and organisational matters alone, or do you pay attention to inspiring your teachers with the joy of teaching? Do you talk about learning being fun? Do you encourage your teachers to be creative and enthusiastic?

Watch Ken Robinson's Ted Talk: "How to escape education's death valley" for food for thought and inspiration for yourself.

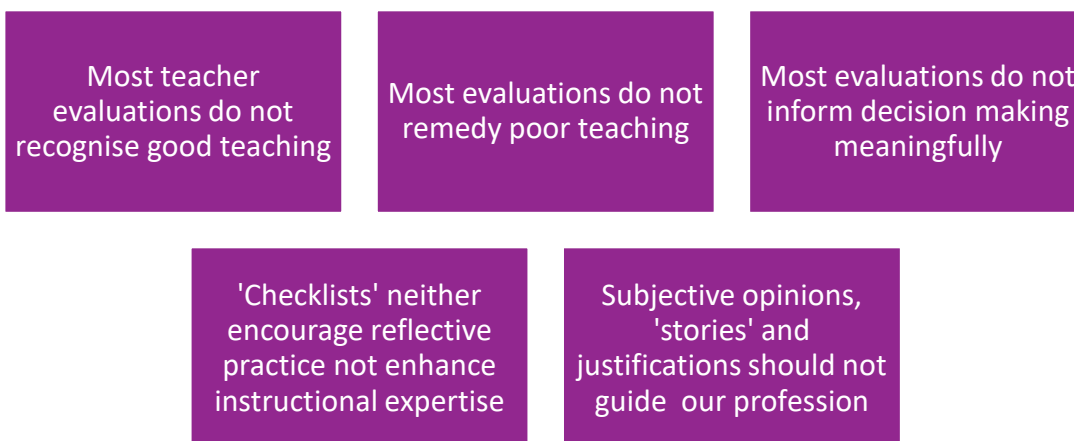*(http://www.kenrobinsonhowtoescapeeducation'sdeathvalley)*

Motivation

An important question that an Instructional Leader should ask is:

"What would motivate teachers to make significant changes in their behaviour?"

First of all, what does NOT motivate for excellence in instruction?

Most teacher evaluations do not recognise good teaching	Most evaluations do not remedy poor teaching	Most evaluations do not inform decision making meaningfully
'Checklists' neither encourage reflective practice not enhance instructional expertise	Subjective opinions, 'stories' and justifications should not guide our profession	

Now, **what will motivate educators** to make significant changes in their behaviour and practice?

Evidence of objectively better results is a lever for change	Being a team member brings positive peer pressure as well as support	Being a team memebr reuslts in behaviour change and improved practice
Common tests - set collectively and discussed openly - encourage accountability	Collective analysis of commonly set tests is a powerful motivator for improvement	

In summary, consider the following:

1. The **collective expertise of the teachers** within a school or district is the key to making a positive impact on learning.
2. **Improved professional practice** will improve learning.
3. Improved professional practice requires teachers **to change unsuccessful practices.**
4. Powerful motivators for persuading teachers to change the way they teach are:
   - realising the importance of **concrete evidence** of their teaching, and
   - **working as part of a team** towards a common goal and receiving support from it as well as being subjected to its group pressure.
5. The best strategy for utilising motivators and improving professional practice lies in setting up a collaborative team which analyses team-developed common formative assessments regularly and uses these to improve the teaching and learning process.

(The information on motivation for Instructional Leadership has been distilled from research conducted by a number of researchers, presented in Du Four, pp. 195-7.)

Support for improvement

The Instructional Leader needs to ask him/herself what support for teaching and learning looks like. "Support" is not a fuzzy, warm concept about "I hear you, I know it is difficult…." Rather, support requires targeted, specific responses to articulated or observed needs. Support is rather like good delegation: you assign a task to be completed, but then specify the parameters of the task, such as the deadline, the standard that is required, and enquire what assistance is needed in order for the task to be accomplished as required.

Support can include:

Coaching;	**Structured team tasks;**
(one on one discussions around a particular skill)	(dividing tasks around a joint responsibility –e.g. setting common assessments)
Directed conversations;	**Setting targets;**

(based on a particular topic, probing for deeper answers)

(breaking tasks down into bite sized pieces against a goal)

- **Structured feedback;**

(moving through a process from point A to point B)

- **Articulation of standards;**

(explaining the standard required –a format, the amount of detail, the length, the amount of analysis required)

- **Modelling best practice;**

(lead teacher to teach a model lesson – discussion afterwards)

- **Inputs;**

(providing information on a teaching technique, assessment method etc.)

- **Training on specific topics** (based on needs identified from data analysis e.g. of common tests)