Effective, pupil focussed, professional learning environments in schools: evidence led contributions from teachers and leaders.

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This session

- Nature of the evidence base
- An empirical example from schools serving vulnerable communities
- The professional learning environment what is it and why focus on it?
- Empirical example no 2 Researching and tracking professional learning environment s - key components
- Some findings about accountability and development
- A real world, practical example

The evidence base – reviews about

- Effective teacher engagement in and with research (Bell et al, 2010)

- Effective CPD (4 EPPI quality assured reviews)

- New Zealand Best Evidence Syntheses (BES):
  - effective CPD (Timperley et al, 2007)
  - effective leadership (Robinson et al, 2009)

- Work based professional learning (Buckler et al 2009)

- Professional Learning Communities (Stoll et al 2006, Vescio et al 2007)

- A comparison of practices in Strong and Exceptional Schools serving vulnerable communities (Bell and Cordingley)

Characteristics of effective CPD*L*

- Intent focus on pupils' needs/ aspirations for them
- Access to external specialist to challenge orthodoxies and model possibilities
- Sustained peer support to refine new approaches
- Structured professional dialogue rooted in high quality evidence from trying new things and pupil responses
- Opportunities to learn from looking intently at learning
- Developing underpinning rationale or practical theory
- Support and challenge from leaders
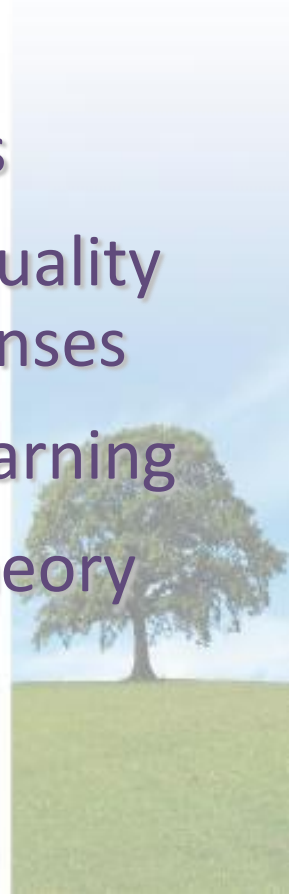
Empirical example 1

- A qualitative, in depth comparison of the practices of exceptional schools serving vulnerable communities and their counterparts
- Key findings about
  - the professional learning
  - Leadership
  - Pedagogy and
  - working with the community

Professional learning (PL)

- *Exceptional schools* invested very systematically in Professional Learning. Teachers were proactive in PL
  - *In strong schools* professional learning was more centrally led
  - In *strong schools* there was less consistent teacher ownership of responsibility for Professional Learning
- *Exceptional schools* invested systematically in training for mentors and coaches across the school
  - *Strong schools* focused less on formal coaching and structured mentoring and rarely trained coaches and mentors

Leadership

- Leaders more aware of the importance of modeling learning in *exceptional schools*
- *Exceptional schools were* more engaged in networked learning and external partnerships than *strong schools*.
- In *Exceptional Schools* all new recruits are expected explicitly to own schools' values and pedagogical priorities and leaders actively shape this
- Support for new teachers delegated to departments and less clear in *strong schools* –

Leadership

- Most Exceptional Schools were involved in initial teacher education

- Strong schools much less involved

- Performance management used rigorously and systematically in *Exceptional Schools* and persistent under performers left

- In *Strong Schools* performance management and its effect on the quality of teachers was delegated and less consistent

The models of pedagogy

- Strong schools had a single model of pedagogy
- Models varied in emphasis and structure. What was key was having an agreed approach & scaffolding
- One e.g. described multiple teaching and learning strategies in different sections of a guidance document.
- Use was monitored – eg in relation to securing breadth
- Benefits, rationale and pitfalls of approaches illustrated
- Strategies covered, e.g. peer and self assessment, questioning, inclusion and independent learning
- Tools were provided to support and structure use

Exceptional schools compared with strong schools serving vulnerable communities

- http://www.curee.co.uk/publication/characteristics-high-performing-schools-teach-first-research-report

Sauce for the Goose

- Too much focus on CPD done to teachers, not enough on their learning about their pupils' learning
- CPD*L* for leaders, staff and pupils also means
  - recognising, reviewing, and building on what people understand, know and do as part of trying new things
  - Developing understanding about why as well as what
- It means devleoping a professional learning environment for teachers that models the practices we want them to use with pupils

"I'll have what he's having!"

http://www.curee.org.uk/content/sauce-goose-learning-entitlements-work-teachers-well-their-pupils
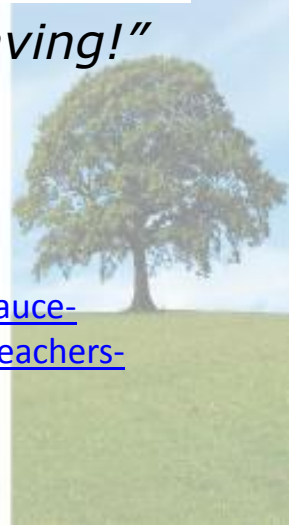
Why focus on effective learning environments 1?

- Without:
  - clarity re anatomy of professional growth eg via incremental (cf AITSL) standards; and/or
  - effective PL processes and systems

  CPD becomes ad hoc, busy but unfocussed - "done to" teachers
- Need for measurement in Performance Management to secure consistency ties it to *raising the floor*
- *Raising the ceiling* means grappling with unseen, open ended factors eg depth of PL and collaboration, developing theory, growing self direction and self questioning/ awareness

Effective learning environments v Professional Learning Communities?

- The quality of teaching is the key to change
- Teacher learning and support for it drives that
- Leadership of CPDL is key contribution that leaders make - "tools" help systematise this (Robinson)
- Leadership + tools + pedagogy for CPDL – combine to create a learning community...
- Design and operation of the learning environment is what makes this happen...
- "Culture" and "Community" are outcomes more than inputs – environment is also easier to evidence

# Translating the evidence into a research tool for calibrating PL environments that:

🦆 Focuses on what makes a difference for staff *and* pupils

🦆 Evidences effectiveness and efficiency in 5 key areas:

    🦆 **collaboration** as a professional learning strategy

    🦆 **use of expertise** to ensure depth and accuracy/ challenge orthodoxies

    🦆 **use of evidence within the PL process** to link staff and pupil learning

    🦆 Formative and summative **needs analysis to** personalise learning

    🦆 **leadership** of professional learning via

        🦆 Modelling effective professional learning
        🦆 Strategic prioritisation of CPDL
        🦆 Effective evaluation
        🦆 Securing coherence via tools and monitoring progress

| Non student based PLC evidence	Professional learning communities with student evidence	Professional learning environment component we are researching
Collaboration	Collaboration	Collaboration
Shared norms and values	Culture	Leadership and modelling of professional learning and tools to systematise
A collective focus on student learning	Focus on student learning	Focus on connecting PL and student learning outcomes *and* processes
De-privatisation of practice	Teacher authority/ ability to make decisions	Use of a wide of a wide range of evidence
Reflective dialogue	Continuing teacher learning	Formative needs analysis – AFL for staff
		Recognition/ use of specialist expertise

Leaders modelling professional learning

- Frequently one of the lowest 'scoring' areas, especially in secondary schools
  - Leaders believing they are expected to 'know everything'
  - Diffident about investing in their own learning
- But most staff believed that knowing more about leaders' work-based learning would help them be more self-directing and ambitious in their PL
- Whole school CPD sessions frequently seen as poor modelling of professional learning and of teaching – because of absence of differentiation, opaque logic
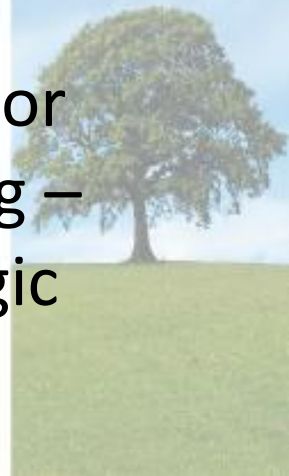
Leaders modelling professional learning – some examples of good practice

- Leaders actively participating in R&D groups and research based PL (eg RLS) alongside other staff

- Experimentation and risk-taking: a head teacher setting out to improve his observation and feedback skills and inviting staff into workshops to help him do this eg via videos

- Leadership team participating fully in "Golden Lesson " weeks where *all* staff volunteer lessons when they are trying something new and invite people in to help them refine it and recognise strengths to keep via sytematised feedback

- Intensive training to ensure high quality coaching around PM observations and asking teachers to identify developmental (v performance) oriented foci for at least one observation a year
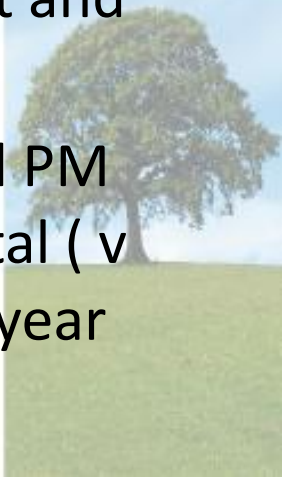
Connecting professional development with pupil learning

- In virtually all schools, evidence about professional *learning processes* and student responses was a 'gap' and a key recommendation

- Student data and evidence of their work (e.g. Workbooks) was frequently used *only* for accountability

- Complexity of using student learning process data within professional *learning:*

    - Need for tools and training

    - Need to focus in depth on sub samples

A work in progress - an example of an evolving professional learning environment?

- Deputy head and CPDL leader designs and leads a Professional Learning Programme (PLP) for *all Staff*

- All activity is oriented towards student success – (some support staff feel PLP insufficiently focussed on their own professional development because of this)

- PLP via 2.30- 4.30 sessions each Wednesday, 3 whole day sessions, multiple enquiry/R&D groups and extensive degree and M level study

Effective CPDL embedded systematically in a school?

- PLP provides a mix of CPDL approaches e.g. interactive whole school sessions, departmental groups and special interest research and development groups

- Staff choose support/ activities, from a varied programme, in the context of their specific goals/targets

- Extensive staff consultation re PLP via surveys, CPD focus groups and linked meta analyses of data from enquiries and achievement profiles

Strengths and weaknesses in this environment

Strengths

- Emphasis on investment in CPDL and shared culture
- Focus on pupil learning and active evaluation of CPD
- Differentiated, varied approaches and degree of choice
- Strategic use of collaboration

Areas for development

- Links with (and delivery of)Performance Management
- Modelling of learning by leaders
- Development of theory and practice side by side
- Evidence *within* the professional learning process?
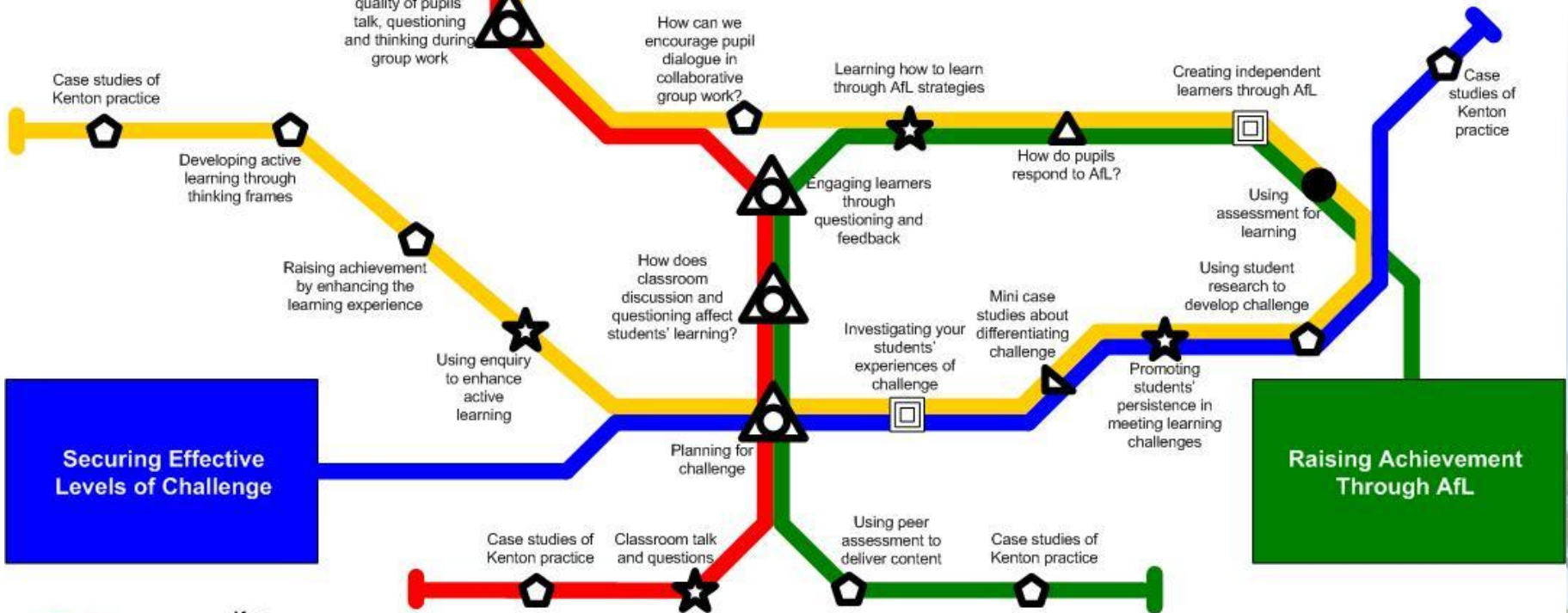
Embedding CPDL next steps

- PLP refined to incorporate evidence based co-coaching approach for *all* staff - partners from different departments and roles
  - Supported by trained co-coaching champions
  - Research route map to underpin co-coaching with research evidence via research summaries, enquiry tools and practice evidence via video
  - *Recently, underpinned by active use of 100 video cameras*

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