Understand the power of teacher inquiry

Amy Sugrue, Teacher, Ilam School

So from the beginning of the project, we were asked to collect data. And I think that took a lot of us, you know, we felt a little bit unsure about what we were doing and what this data was and assumed it needed to be written and in figures. The CORE project really supported our team, with developing those skills to realise that data is all around us. And that we were constantly collecting data and constantly analysing that data throughout the day and going oh, well, I noticed this happened.

*Images of children in classrooms, teachers planning and researching*

Why did that happen? And what do I need to do about it? Or I'm noticing that this is continuously happening, so is there something that I need to change about it? Or is there a particular reason for why this might be happening?

Melanie Poynter, Syndicate Lead, Kaiapoi North School

So we didn't really understand what being a teacher researcher was when we first started. And I know that I'm a really good person at jumping in to solve a problem before I've even done any research. So I have certainly learnt to just hold back and gather observations and think first, reflect and get some data behind me before I even try and solve a problem.

Kerryn Archer, Teacher, Kaiapoi North School

I think we've learnt that making a systems change, like a new buddy system, actually takes time.

*Images of teachers planning and researching*

And it's a process that we have to work through, isn't it. And we think we're really good problem solvers, but actually, when we look at what we've done, and our research, we've
actually been through a very long process, to get to this result at the end.

**Melanie Poynter, Syndicate Lead, Kaiapoi North School**

And so many different sorts of data that, you know, to learn what qualitative data is in the fact that it can be a survey, it can be drawings, that can be observations, it can be gathering discussion…

**Kerryn Archer, Teacher, Kaiapoi North School**

… and voice too; student voice, parent voice, teacher voice.

**Melanie Poynter, Syndicate Lead, Kaiapoi North School**

We won't be rushing in to solve a problem. We'll be thinking first and being researchers.

**Julia Hinman, Teacher, Ilam School**

I think the biggest thing that I've learnt over the project has been about research and data in itself and the fact that the data can be as simple as your observations and collecting pictures, and looking at themes.

*Images of children in classrooms*

I think, overall, it's been a real eye opener, because I'm not somebody who I would have ever thought would have been doing research or collecting data in that kind of way. And I didn't think I had much to bring. So that now, that just observing the children, you're unpacking it in your head as well and thinking well what's it showing me? How can I make changes in my classroom to value that or to enhance that or work towards deeper goals?

**Nicola Gaskell, Teacher, Kaiapoi Borough School**

So the reason that we chose to start with the enrollment pack, I guess, because we were new to research, we wanted to start with something that was concrete and involved all the stakeholders so that we could start using some research techniques like having focus groups with the whānau, involving the children, to see what they knew about the enrollment pack. And if they thought there should be any changes. So we took some of these learnings to our kāhui ako. At the meetings, it was very clear that lots of the schools were facing similar challenges to us when the children were transitioning. And going forward, we hope that through those connections and continuing to build the shared understanding, we can do further work with our parent community, and help build the skills that children need to transition to school.
Amy Sugrue, Teacher, Ilam School

The skills that we learnt from this inquiry we will continue to carry through and continue inquiries. I don't think our inquiry really ever stopped. And that was a big realisation for us as a team that it was always happening, and then realising that these mini projects, inquiries, are benefiting our children and the skills that we gained from that were really, really beneficial.

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