

Spiral of Inquiry: Developing a Hunch Toolkit



This is a Toolkit of resources for educators to use when leading, designing and implementing the Developing a Hunch phase of the [Spiral of Inquiry](#) (Kaser & Halbert). It has been put together by Rebecca Sweeney at CORE Education and complements the way that she mentors leaders in the use of the Spiral of Inquiry. Workshops are tailored for each school, kura or service. The Toolkit is not prescriptive, and provides a range of ideas that leaders might like to use with staff. For more information or to ask questions email Rebecca: rebecca.sweeney@core-ed.org <http://www.noii.ca/>

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Complex Problems

A reminder from Helen Timperley below about Complex Problems (source: NOII conference presentation 2017) - if you find your team can relate to all of these descriptors of complex problems as you engage in the messiness of inquiry - then you're engaging in true Teaching as Inquiry - this should be how it feels. We are looking for complex pedagogical problems to solve:

- The problem itself is often not well defined
- The causes of the problem are unclear and contested
- Lots of arguments about the best solution (and most are likely to be ineffective)
- Typically there is variable commitment to solving it



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 <p>simple</p>	 <p>complicated</p>	 <p>complex</p>
<p>following a recipe</p>	<p>sending a rocket to the moon</p>	<p>raising a child</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recipes are essential. • expertise is helpful but not required. • produce standardised product. • best recipes give good results every time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • formulae are critical. sending one rocket increases assurance that the next will be ok. • high levels of expertise in multiple fields needed. • rockets are similar in critical ways. • there is a high degree of certainty in the outcome once the original issues are solved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • formulae have limited application. • raising one child gives experience, but no assurance of success with another. • expertise can contribute but is neither necessary nor sufficient for success. • each child is unique and must be approached individually • uncertainty of outcome remains.

Layout by Danielle Myburgh, content based on Snyder (2013) @MissDtheTeacher www.MissDtheTeacher.blogspot.com



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Considerations

- Provoke your team to be curious, not defensive.
- Focus on areas over which you have control.
- Find quick ways to test your hunches.
- Involve learners and their families in checking your hunches.

Above image from the Spiral Playbook available online here: <http://c21canada.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Spiral-Playbook.pdf>



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Possible steps to take during Hunchwork

5 Whys

1. Ensure staff have a good understanding of this phase using the [Grey Boxes article](#) - go over it and discuss it
2. Remind staff we are not moving to solutions yet (although you can talk about any prototypes you've tried and their success)
3. Now that you have completed some actions to move through the Focusing phase, work as a team to come up with a “challenge statement” about your target learners.
4. Consider the messages in this video before you engage in hunchwork: Blame is a discharge of discomfort and pain - avoiding accountability - [3 min video from Brene Brown](#)
5. Work through this adapted “5 Whys” process to understand your practices against the challenges/strengths of the target learners - ensure you remain focused on whatever came out of Focusing - don't drift wider again. Use the [Hunch Template](#) if you think it is useful.

Adapted 5 Whys Process

1. Each teacher considers the “challenge statement” about the focus learners.
2. THINK: Each teacher (on their own) writes down one negative practice that they believe they are using that is causing the challenge to occur.
3. THINK: Each teacher (on their own) writes down one positive practice that they believe they are using that is helping to address the challenge.
4. SHARE: starting with the leader of the team each person shares their negative practice and then their positive practice
 - a. Share the negative practice (record it in the hunch template)
 - b. One person (nominated facilitator) asks the teacher why they use that practice (the teacher must explain why by “pointing the finger inwards” and must not blame outside factors) (record reason in hunch template)
 - c. Facilitator continues to ask WHY four more times to extract further thinking from the teacher - all information is recorded in the template (an a-ha moment usually occurs where all can see that the initial problem is not the real problem after all)
 - d. Continue the same process with the positive practice and repeat for the whole team

Note: this process takes a lot of time and the team dialogue is an important aspect. As an indication, 1.5 hours will get the process started



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with 2-3 people sharing their practices and reasons. This process is an adaptation of the [5 Whys process](#)

Example of 5 Whys Template:

Challenge statement about learners goes here...	
Our practices attached to the challenge	Our reasons for using those practices
You can list any negative, ineffective or problematic practices here for exploration. You can list any currently used positive, effective practices here that might help to address the challenge.	Explain “why” for each practice five times - digging into the practice. Every explanation why must be worded as another practice you use. Keep the finger pointing inwards.

Hunch Sharing

Try this alternative approach to the 5 Whys:

- a. Each team member considers the challenge and relevant principle(s) of learning
- b. Each team member writes down 3 “Hunches” (e.g. I think that the kids have poor oral language skills and that is why there is an issue; I think I might be providing poor quality feedback to learners; I think we need to provide more collaborative groupwork)
- c. Once everyone has shared their hunches (which are often ideas and solutions and sometimes thoughts about what is causing the issue) - find the common ones you all agree on or would like to investigate further. Ensure you respect all views, but also ensure that any hunches must be proven or discounted by evidence.
- d. Enter into the hunch phase by building a plan together to either prove or disprove the hunches



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6. From the 5 whys and the above “hunch” work - a team inquiry should emerge - look at what has emerged and try to create a sentence or paragraph that will be your “focused inquiry” for the foreseeable future. This can be worded as a big question starting with “How might we...” or it can just be a series of sentences or hypotheses. Share this with me for critique.
7. After this, the team can work together on creating a theory of action and a change plan - move into Learning and Taking Action.

Hunch Sharing template example:

Challenge: word your challenge that you are currently facing about learners (a problem-based, factual statement about learners that comes from the evidence in your Scanning and Focusing work):	
<p>Our Hunches about our practices:</p> <p>I think we need to...(use this less often as it is solution focussed)</p> <p>I think the problem is...</p> <p>I think I could do...(use this less often as it is solution focussed)</p> <p>I think I am...</p> <p>I wonder if we might be...</p>	<p>Questions to follow up on with actions:</p> <p>E.g. research further on...</p> <p>Observe teachers in relation to...</p> <p>Ask learners or parents...</p> <p>Review current practices or processes/tools</p> <p>Find out more about what we don't yet know through research or looking at our current practice</p>

Shelley Moore on Bowling: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RYtUIU8MjlY>

Decision Making after Hunchwork

<https://deltalearns.ca/decisions/>



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Examples of Hunchwork

The following are real examples of team hunchwork. These could be used in a range of ways. One example would be for leaders to use these examples to determine the evaluative capability of the teams who did these - how evaluative do you think the team members are? As a leader what would you do next to improve their capability to critique their own practice or to reflect on their practice? How useful are the follow up questions? As a leader how would you deepen the hunchwork experience so that your team is more able to identify the real pedagogical challenges attached to the learners challenges? It is important to note that during Hunchwork, teams haven't necessarily landed on the right solutions yet - they have only identified the problems in their practice and have yet to engage in the Learning phase to find out more about what to do next. Be patient and allow teachers to follow the natural path towards changing their practice, rather than leaping in as a leader with all the answers.

Video of Focusing using 7 Principles of Learning, and then 5 Whys

[This series of slides](#) includes a video demonstration of Rebbecca Sweeney showing a Team Leader in a school how to:

- Focus using the 7 Principles of Learning
- Create a Spidergram of Hunches
- Use the 5 Whys process to deeply understand our hunches

Example 1

Challenge: (a challenge is worded to summarise all Scanning and Focusing work - it is a purely evidence-based statement with no assumptions or opinions) *Learners are not taking risks and are not showing resilience. They take the easiest option when given choices in*



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learning. They need reassurance that they are “correct”. They are hesitant to take risks and can become emotional or frustrated when learning is hard for them.

Related 7 Principles: [Assessment for Learning](#)

Hunches: (below is a record of hunches recorded through a team conversation about the challenge - using grey boxes article to guide the conversation)

Hunch	Follow up Questions <i>(Record any questions here that fell out of your conversations/hunches - identify the follow up action and which phase of the Spirals it involves)</i>
<p>This could just be developmental and appropriate for age and stage.</p> <p>“I assume they can do it and if I see they can’t I don’t respond - or leave it too long to respond, therefore missing the moment. This relates to a lack of forward thinking/planning - I just keep moving forward without checking in or taking time to support/scaffold”</p>	<p>What are some of the key developmental processes we should expect to see for this age in relation to self-management in learning?</p> <p><i>(Action: Learning Phase - locate research and information about this)</i></p> <p>Why do learners feel this is hard? Why do they take the easy option?</p> <p><i>(Action: Scanning/Hunch Phase - find out the answer to this from learners and their whānau)</i></p>



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<p>They need to know where they are going - goal setting and reflection - scaffolding and frameworks for success</p> <p>Quality feedback</p> <p>“I don’t scaffold enough visually and orally for success” (think feedback, prompting and direction that is appropriate for child’s level)</p> <p>“I don’t use my time well in relation to feedback - and feedback is not equitable across my learners” (consider priorities - being clear on what are our must-do’s, our should-do’s and our could-do’s)</p> <p>“I’m not sure what is next for the kids and sometimes don’t follow up with kids on feedback I have given” (revisit, follow up, explore curriculum progressions etc)</p>	<p>What kind of feedback are teachers giving? <i>(Action: Scanning/Hunch Phase - observe teachers and record findings)</i></p> <p>Do kids know where they’re going and how to get there? <i>(Action: Scanning/Hunch Phase - learner voice)</i></p> <p>How do we get kids away from focusing on the “tick” or the “sticker”? (output) <i>(Action: Learning Phase - research on Growth Mindset/Learning Pit and Assessment for Learning)</i></p> <p>What is good practice for quality feedback and feedforward? <i>(Action: Learning Phase - research on Assessment for Learning)</i></p> <p>How do you do both verbal and written feedback well? <i>(Action: Learning Phase - research on Assessment for Learning)</i></p>
<p>Learning Pit - Growth mindset</p>	<p>Do we understand what Growth Mindset/Learning Pit is and how to facilitate/teach this well? (Angela Duckworth, Carol Dweck)</p>



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Example 2

Challenge: Learners are not engaged and connected to their learning (clarity and purpose). They are not open to being challenged in their learning and they produce the minimum without depth. They are focused on output rather than the process of learning. Socially and emotionally, learners can be reactive if work is too hard. They focus on comparing themselves to others.

Related 7 Principles: [Assessment for Learning](#), [Stretching all Students](#)

Hunches:

Hunch	Follow up Questions
I think I am struggling to find the appropriate level of learning - worry that I aim too high or low. Is learning varied enough? Emotional needs of learners range while their academic level can be the same. Do we push them too fast in relation to understandings and developmental needs?	What is developmentally appropriate - emotionally, socially? <i>Action: Learning - research this and consider circle time, guided play and building resilience, also consider the two Principles for Learning identified for your inquiry)</i>
I wonder about learner problem-solving ability and willingness. How much has been done for them? “Learned helplessness” and self regulation. Also Growth Mindset and knowing the purpose of learning. Providing safe ways to fail.	How much do we focus on the front half of the curriculum and Key Competencies in planning and practice? What self regulation-opportunities and frameworks do we provide? (managing self) Are our expectations clear enough? <i>Action: Hunch - find out through reviewing planning and observing practice</i>
Is what we’re doing of interest to learners? Do they have choice and	What’s the best way to support kids to identify what they don’t



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flexibility to run with what they are interested in?
Am I making things too busy? Doing too much? - coverage rather than depth? Focused on academic levels at expense of other things?

know? Or to support kids to explore possibilities? (engagement and agency)

Action: Learning - research this - also consider the two Principles for Learning identified for your inquiry

Example 3

Challenge: Learners are very anxious and have emotional social fears that lead to a fear of making mistakes in learning. They need a lot of reassurance and won't just "have a go". Learners are not self-managing.

Related 7 Principles: [Emotions are Integral to Learning](#) and [Learners at the Centre \(Growth Mindset\)](#)

Hunches

Hunch	Follow up questions
I need to put more emphasis on self-regulation (setting own timetables, power of Yet)	Do our anxious learners need to have more control in their learning? <i>Action: Learning - find out more about how anxiousness in learning relates to learner agency</i> <i>Hunch - revisit what we used to do to foster self-regulation and look at how we bring this back into our daily practice - embedded</i> <i>Explore Emotions are Integral to Learning and Learners at the Centre</i>
We don't make expectations clear at the start of the year. Do we make learners anxious because we expect too much?	Is the step between Year 1, 2 and 3 too big? Can we weave between year levels more?



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	<p><i>Action: Learning - what should we be expecting in terms of self management at years 1, 2 and 3? What do we currently expect? Explore Learners at the Centre</i></p>
<p>Our parents need to know what expectations in learning are and what good learning looks like. We need to use multiple ways of communicating this with parents.</p>	<p>Do parents need to know us and trust us before they really share things about their children?</p> <p><i>Action: Learning - What communication methods would parents like? Provide them with examples of the possibilities and invite their ideas. (e.g. weekly emails, verandah chats, celebrating culture, facebook)</i></p>
<p>Are we/do we need to consider the cultures of our children and their families?</p>	<p>How do we do this?</p> <p><i>Action: Learning - research on how to consider culture in relation to learning</i></p>
<p>I am rushing everyday - am I prioritising the right things? When we are busy, does our anxiety impact on our learners?</p>	<p>What is expected of us? What are our Must-do's, Should-do's and Could-do's? How do we work smarter, not harder?</p> <p><i>Action: Learning/Hunch - explore ways to identify priorities and clarify with leadership. Identify team priorities and focus areas.</i></p>
<p>Are we making time for Key Competencies and values learning?</p>	<p>Coverage versus Quality: how much time do we allow for teachable moments and the front half of the curriculum?</p> <p><i>Action: Learning - examples from other schools. Prioritising Key Competencies</i> <i>Learning about Learners at the Centre & Emotions are Integral to Learning</i></p>



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Example 4

Challenge: Learners don't see themselves as writers/learners. Self esteem is an issue and learners say they are "not good at writing". They don't think that they have good ideas. Learners are focused on surface features and on the end results/output rather than on the process of learning. There is a lack of connection between learning and relevance/purpose to self - learners don't know what they are learning and why.

Related 7 Principles: [Building Horizontal Connections](#) and [Learners at the Centre \(Growth Mindset\)](#)

Hunches

Hunch	Follow up Questions
I tell kids what we are learning and why all the time	<p>Are we fostering self-regulation in our learners? How do we teach self-regulation? What does a self-regulating learner look like at this level (age and stage)?</p> <p><i>Action: Learning & Hunch - Explore Learners at the Centre (including regulating emotions & motivations and setting realistic goals...)</i></p>
I have over complicated explaining what we are learning and why - need to keep the purpose simple.	<p>What do we already collectively know and do as a team to ensure depth of practice in relation to fostering an understanding of what learners are learning and why? (what do we know about avoiding shallow and ineffective ways of doing this?)</p> <p><i>Action: Learning - explore Building Horizontal Connections (with a focus on relevant, purposeful, authentic learning gained from sensemaking in groups/collaborative learning)</i></p> <p><i>Hunch - record what we do well and record examples of ineffective</i></p>



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	<i>practice to develop a team understanding.</i>
I haven't consistently sought opportunities for learners to share and discuss in pairs and groups - this leads to a lack of confidence and not seeing self as a learner.	How do we foster the process of learning and make this explicit? <i>Action: Learning - explore Building Horizontal Connections (with a focus on relevant, purposeful, authentic learning gained from sensemaking in groups/collaborative learning)</i>
Modelling what learning is and how it occurs. We learn without realising it - reflecting afterwards can highlight the learning we just experienced	Do we openly talk about and share the thinking behind our modelling for learners? <i>Action: Hunch - observations of practice</i>
Goal setting and recording, effective feedback and feedforward	How is it possible to manage these things in our learning programmes? (feels like we are spread a bit thin). <i>Action: Learning - what do other schools/teams do? Explore Assessment for Learning?</i>

Example 5

Our practices attached to the challenge	Our reasons for using those practices	Follow up hunch tasks (further Scanning, Learning or Action)
Not allowing kids time to respond or reflect on their learning	Worried about time. I'm trying to push everything I want to do through this little wormhole This is coming from enthusiasm as I know	Action: Need to slow down and do one or two things well rather than try to do everything at a shallow level. - Teach the skills and strategies for



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<p>+ I explicitly make horizontal links by allowing kids to look across the curriculum and think about what they're doing</p>	<p>the learning can happen This comes from frustration because it's not happening. I feel like these kids are missing out. I know how to slow down and do things well, but other things impact on my ability to do this.</p> <p>Allows for purpose and drive to get kids engaged.</p>	<p>critical thinking and pair sharing - allow for time for this</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Look at reflection and explain what this looks like - provide time for this
<p>The focus has become about finishing rather than on quality of the learning. Other kids have now picked up that finishing is the end goal.</p> <p>+ The use of devices and allowing time for individual investigations</p>	<p>I spend a lot of time making sure everyone has finished. I want everyone to be at the same stage. Same stage focus has come in as my programme is now looser and kids need to be more independent. I haven't done enough scaffolding for independent learning that is wide ranging.</p> <p>50% of class can operate in this environment, the rest need more support.</p>	<p>Action: A bit of slowing down on implementation of a self managing classroom programme. Implement one thing at a time to build towards all learners self managing. Be wary of tightening control in response to a "fail"</p>



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Action plan after Hunchwork

Action Plan Following up Hunch Work				
Hunch	Principle	Action	Who	By when?

Reviewing Hunchwork before moving to Learning

1. Review focusing and hunching - how well did we do this? What could go better?
 - a. How were beliefs exposed during this phase?
 - b. How did you investigate hunches and explore your own practices?
 - c. Does anyone have any hunches left that need investigation?
 - d. Did the team treat everyone's beliefs with respect?

[Tool 1.4 Teacher-focused to be learning-centred](#) *Schools should be powerful learning and professional working environments for teachers and educators. This is not about emphasising the importance of teachers at the expense of students but it is to recognise that being teacher-focused is integral to being learning-centred. The seven Principles reformulated around educators offer a way to do this. Reformulating the original Learning Principles around teachers and educators gives a specification for learning environments that they should be:*

- *places where educators share a clear priority about the centrality of learning, for their students but also for themselves, and are fully engaged in meeting that priority; the teachers as well as the students understand themselves as learners*



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- where teaching is not viewed as a private matter and is often collaborative
- where teachers are recognised as performing much more effectively when motivated, which in turn is intricately linked to their emotions (satisfaction, self-efficacy, avoidance of helplessness and anxiety etc.)
- places which are acutely sensitive to individual differences in the capacities and experiences of teachers
- highly demanding for each educator while avoiding excessive overload and stress that diminishes not enhances performance
- where expectations for educators are clear and they work formatively – in their assessments and teaching of learners but also through organisational design strategies that generate rich evaluative information on the teaching and learning taking place
- where there is horizontal connectedness to which educators centrally contribute – across activities and subjects, in- and out-of-school and with other schools, groups and organisations with which the educators are connected. The 21st century learning environment demands educator roles in which their own learning is central as well.

Step One: What do these educator principles mean and how well do they describe our school or district? Discuss how well these principles apply to the teachers and educators in your school, learning environment, school district or cluster. How well do some apply but not others? To some people but not others? Naturally, the teachers must be prominent in these discussions and should often lead them. It will also be important to engage others involved in the teaching so that the full educator voice is heard. As strategies and narratives are prepared, others from the wider learning community should be brought in, too. Take the time to clarify what these educator principles mean in practice in your setting. This is a key aspect of this tool. But, also ascertain whether all agree that these are appropriate principles for teachers and educators; if any disagree, what are the grounds for doing so? Is this disagreement in principle or does it reflect different views about what each should mean in practice? Are particular principles more controversial than others?

Step Two: Choose one of the educator principles as the focus for action Decide which of the seven principles should become the priority focus for change in your setting. Choose one that enjoys widespread support while being judged as strategic for making your school or district become more powerfully learning-centred. Take time to decide which one is best for your school, district or cluster. Try to ensure consensus about this choice as it will guide subsequent action and requires commitment from all concerned.

Step Three: Decide on strategies for putting the educator principle into action and implement them This is the critical stage of identifying which changes are needed in order to put the principle into effect, and then acting to make the changes happen. Time will again be needed to arrive at strategies that will make a difference rather than just tinkering around the edges. You will need to be open to innovation and thinking “out of the box”. Each participant should be given the chance to put ideas on the table. The senior leadership will need to be fully committed. It may be at this stage that you need to go back to Step Two if you find that the identified actions for a particular educator principle will make less of an



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impact than first thought. The chosen educator principle and the strategies for putting it into practice should be integrated into the wider vision for learning in the school/ district. A narrative should be prepared which spells out why and how these actions will be instrumental in realising the broader vision of the learning environment. This narrative should be concise and yet able to make the key arguments; it too will need to be discussed and revised. All educators will need to be on board and stay on board. You will need to take stock at regular intervals and to confront unexpected barriers including possible loss of professional enthusiasm.

Step Four: Take stock to decide what more needs to be done and whether the exercise should be repeated Having kept the educator community on board and after a suitable lapse of time (say, a year), discuss the progress made on the change strategy. Discuss whether the initial choice of principle was a good one and whether the strategies chosen were the most appropriate. Discuss whether they could have been more successfully implemented. Discuss the impact of the strategies not only on the adult staff but on the quality of the learning. This may well be the time to revisit the chosen strategies and to revise the narrative. Otherwise, and if there is an appetite for more but with different directions and focus, repeat the exercise by choosing another principle and follow the four steps. Or instead, apply another tool in this Handbook.

Critique and feedback

During the Developing a Hunch phase staff are involved in teamwork that includes critique of their own and others' practices. This will become more important during the Learning, Taking Action and Checking phases as teams begin to design and implement new practices or changes. Observations of each other are a key part of change and mutual accountability around the change. Staff will be defining and articulating new agreed practices and then checking to see if they are using these. It is important that staff are supported to critique practice and offer feedback in ways that are effective.

Another aspect of feedback to consider and plan for at this stage, is the feedback on your practice from learners and their whānau.

Read more about providing feedback at

<https://www.lifehacker.com.au/2012/06/give-criticism-without-sounding-like-a-jerk/#r5wGQBClofwj11LC.99>



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<http://esheninger.blogspot.co.nz/2018/01/five-components-of-good-feedback.html?m=1>

Observation and feedback approaches:

<https://www.aitsl.edu.au/tools-resources/resource/learning-walks>

https://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/default-document-library/how-to-guide---learning-walks.pdf?sfvrsn=d1acec3c_2



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