

# Staff Training in Style

## A Manual for Creating Permanent Motivation and Skills

*Barbara Prashnig, M.A. Director of the Creative Learning Centre in Auckland offers an inspiring approach to staff training in times when teachers, principals and administrators suffer from heavy workloads and stress due to changes in the education system and new curriculum developments.*

### Vive la Difference!

Teachers vary in style and personality as much as their students, principals or administrators. There are many who prefer to work alone while others thrive in task-oriented teams or love being on committees. Some function better in the early morning, while many don't 'come alive' until the afternoon or later.

Some teachers want their principals and supervisors in action and give them immediate feedback, while others prefer that 'authority figures' totally remove themselves from their classrooms. And these are only a few of the different teaching style administrators encounter day by day.

Outstanding administrators, therefore, modify their supervisory style to be responsive to individual teachers' styles to reach goals that would benefit students. Moreover, specific situations with individuals and groups require different administrative responses.

For example, a principal may need to be strong and autocratic during a crisis or an important situation with far-reaching effects such as a fire in the school, student misbehaviour or the unwillingness of selected staff to act responsibly. Committees and written reports are not appropriate in those situations.

However, and inflexible BOT and the always autocratic principal will not be as successful as a collaborative leader when changes are necessary involving matters near and dear to hearts of classroom teachers, such as curriculum modifications, new teaching strategies, teacher performance and student assessments, administrative and economical changes. In most cases, teachers, students and parents could and should be included in the decision making process.

A simple Four Step Plan to match styles, enhance collaboration and increase productivity among teaching and administration staff.

### Step I: Assessment

A. Assessing all teachers, administrators and BOT members for their Working Style with the Working Style Analysis (WSA) and all teachers for their Teaching Style with the "Teaching Style Analysis" (TSA).

B. All administrators for the admin style with the "Excellence for Learning" (EFL - Administrator Version)

C. All students for their learning styles with the Learning Style Analysis (LSA Junior or Senior)

### Step II: Information

A. Discussions about different teaching, working and admin styles among all staff - understanding diversity

B. Explanation of different profiles and the ramifications of different styles for daily work

C. Review of administrators' and BOT members' styles with the management group

D. Review of teachers' working and teaching styles and implications for their classroom teaching

E. Explanation of students' Learning Style Profiles on an individual and group basis to students and parents

### Step III: Comparison and Planning

A. Comparison of teachers' and administrators' perceptions of each other

B. Comparison of the main areas of their Learning and Working Style Profiles as well as their teaching and admin styles

C. Working out strategies for positive interaction

D. Comparison of students' and teachers' profiles

E. Planning for staff training, meetings and projects using strategies, which suit different styles, are motivational and enhance collaboration

### Step IV: Taking Action

A. Implementation of new strategies for staff interaction, training and

teaching methods, classroom interaction based on Learning Styles

B. Monitoring increase in productivity and performance of staff

C. Documentation of positive changes and their effects on students, parents and the wider community

Instead of having staff who out of frustration and despair often fit into the categories of Traditionalists ('Good Old Days'), Chronic Complainers, By the Book Bureaucrats, Meeting Dominators, Verbal Abusers, Narrow Minded Nit Pickers, Do Nothings (Retired on the Job), Blind Followers, Cynical Sceptics and Sarcastic Inflexibles, education institutions could have people on their staff who love the work they do, who feel at ease with the demands put towards them and who are open to change.

When personality types and style differences are understood, diversity in administration and management styles rather cherished than levelled out and teaching styles are matched with students' learning styles in daily classroom situations, educators will experience less stress and burn out and more job satisfaction. Principals and administrators will be able to do their high pressure jobs with greater effectiveness and the community at large will be more satisfied with the services they provide.

Individually as well as a group, this new breed of educators and administrators will certainly be able to make a difference not only to their own lives but also to the lives of their students to prepare them for our fast changing world approaching the 21st century.

*If readers are interested in receiving more information about new approaches to staff training, increasing motivation and staff performance, please contact us at: Technology Based Solutions email: asktbs@aol.com*