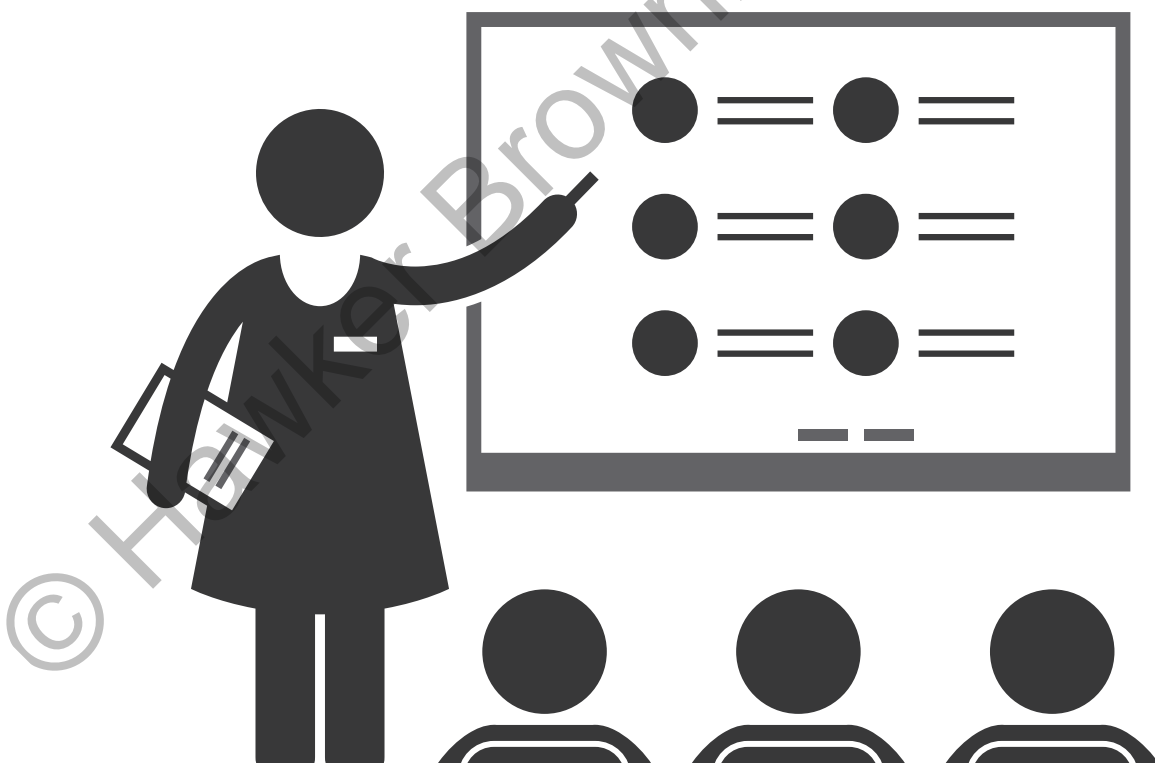


# IMPLEMENTING AN EFFECTIVE TEACHER FEEDBACK PROGRAM

THE PIROZZO PROCESS



Ralph Pirozzo



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# Introduction

Providing effective feedback to teachers is critical in improving teaching standards and student performance – but how can we deliver this feedback in a way that does not lead to misunderstanding, animosity or the undermining of teachers’ professionalism?

In this book, I outline how schools can develop a sustainable, low-cost teacher feedback program that can be implemented in any school. I call this approach the Pirozzo Process (Figure 1, p. 2), and each chapter of the book is dedicated to one of its seven steps:

1. Find your philosophy of leadership (pp. 5–11).

In Step 1, leaders establish a cohesive, evidence-based approach to leadership that underpins the way in which feedback is delivered.

2. Create a Time Allocation Inventory (pp. 13–17).

By utilising the Time Allocation Inventory provided in Step 2, leaders determine exactly how much time they can commit to the feedback process.

3. Build knowledge of unit planning (pp. 19–25).

Step 3 asks leaders to strengthen their understanding of lesson planning using the Pirozzo Matrix, an ingenious resource that cross-references Bloom’s taxonomy with Gardner’s multiple intelligences.

4. Learn to use a variety of thinking tools (pp. 27–34).

Step 4 introduces leaders to a range of thinking tools that will enable them to provide clear, easy-to-understand feedback using a mutually-agreed model.

5. Develop conflict-resolution skills (pp. 35–43).

Leaders are encouraged to familiarise themselves with research-based strategies designed to mitigate conflict that arises from the feedback process.

6. Launch an effective teacher feedback program (pp. 45–51).

In Step 6, leaders put what they have learnt into action using Roger’s diffusion of innovation theory and Lewin’s (1943) force field analysis.

7. Apply four strategies for providing effective feedback (pp. 53–75).

Step 7 offers four essential strategies for the provision of feedback: the former Sunshine Coast Region’s coaching model, a unit evaluation form, classroom observation matrices and a teacher feedback form.

In implementing the Pirozzo Process, the responsibility for maintaining the efficacy of feedback rests primarily on the individual providing the feedback, referred to here as the *observer*. As the person responsible for delivering productive feedback that guides teacher

## Implement an effective feedback program: The Pirozzo Process

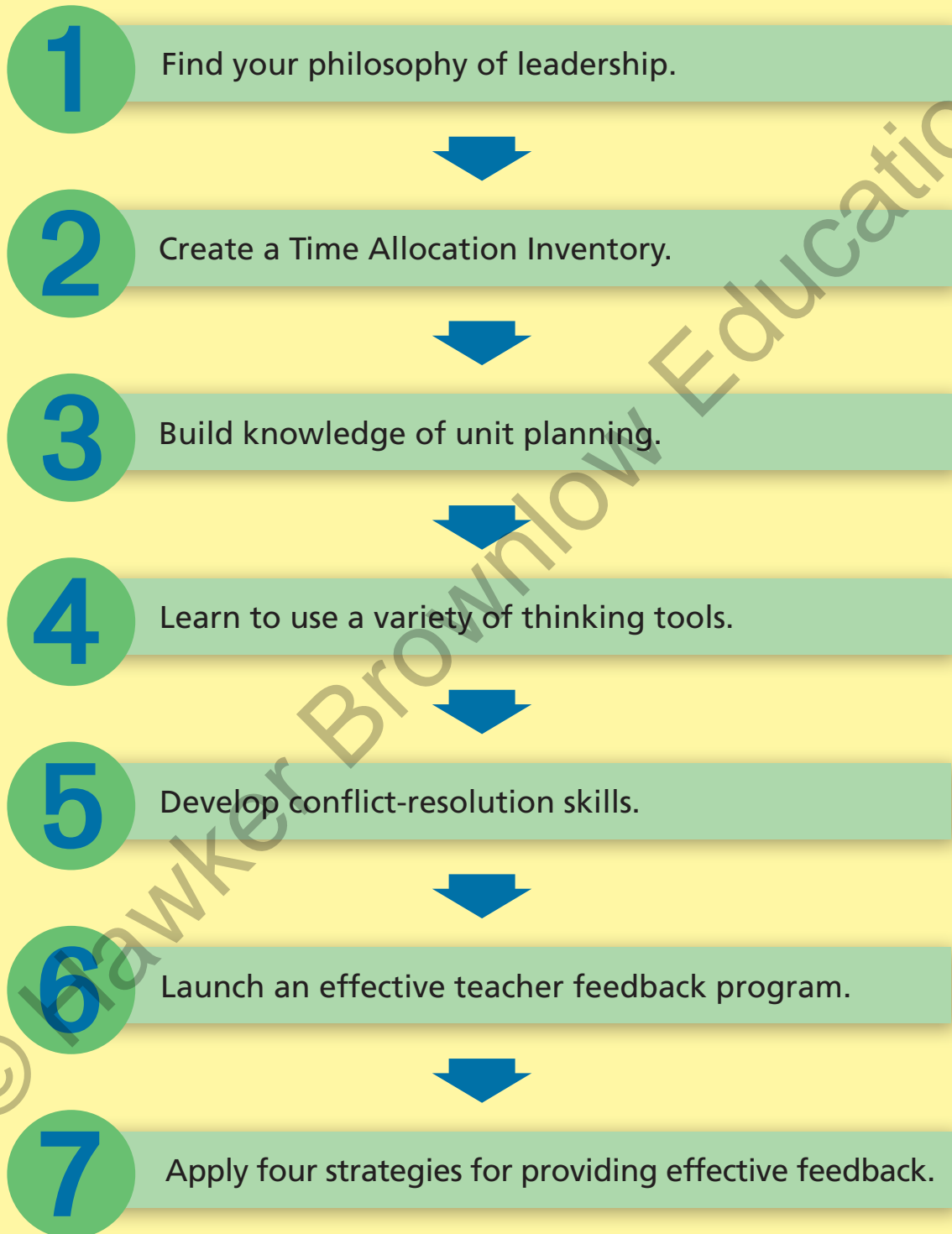


Figure 1

practice, the observer takes a leadership role. In practice, the observer could hold any of the following positions:

- principal
- deputy principal
- assistant principal
- head of department
- head of curriculum
- coach
- mentor
- peer

But regardless of their job description, an effective observer will possess the following knowledge and skills:

- excellent leadership style and outstanding time-management skills
- in-depth knowledge of unit planning
- expertise in using a variety of thinking tools
- elaborate conflict resolution skills
- capacity to implement an effective feedback program across the school
- ability to choose from four different strategies that can be used to provide feedback

It is critical to the success of the program that if the nominated observers cannot demonstrate these skills, then the Pirozzo Process should not be implemented until they have acquired these prerequisites.

In addition to the observer, the other principal participant in the feedback process is the person who receives the feedback, here referred to as the *teacher*. This is because in practice, most recipients of feedback will indeed be teachers, although the process explored in *Implementing an Effective Teacher Feedback Program* is equally applicable when providing feedback to other support staff.

# Step 1

## Find your philosophy of leadership

It is impossible to establish a program for effective feedback without first clarifying the leadership philosophy that underpins the process. To assist leaders in tailoring their own approaches, I have summarised five of the most influential theories of leadership:

- Kurt Lewin's three leadership styles
- Steven Covey's seven habits of highly effective people
- *The Effective Executive* by Peter F Drucker
- Michael Fullan's six secrets of change
- *Shackleton's Way* by Margot Morrell and Stephanie Capparell

In reviewing the above works, leadership emerges as a complex, challenging and multifaceted role. It also becomes clear that a leader's feedback greatly influences the people that receive it in terms of the quality of teaching and learning as well as students' learning outcomes.

### Lewin's three leadership styles

Lewin is widely regarded as the founder of social psychology. In 1939, he and his associates set out to research different styles of leadership by assigning schoolchildren to one of three groups (Lewin, Uppit & White 1939). The first group was led by an *autocratic* leader; the second was led by a *democratic* leader; and the third was led by a *laissez-faire* leader. While the children participated in an arts and crafts project, the researchers observed the children's behaviour in response to the three different styles of leadership.

This groundbreaking early study was very influential in establishing three primary leadership styles:

#### I. Autocratic leadership

Lewin claims that an autocratic leader

- has clear expectations about what needs to be done, when it should be done and how it should be done
- creates a distinction between the leader and the rest of the group
- makes decisions independently, with little or no input from the rest of the group
- privileges obedience, loyalty and strict adherence to rules
- cultivates reliable and devoted followers
- acts as the principal authority figure when it comes to establishing and maintaining order

The decision-making process is less creative under autocratic leadership, and leaders who abuse this style may be viewed as controlling, coercive, bossy, punitive, close-minded or dictatorial. This type of leadership is best applied in situations where there is little time for group decision-making.

2. Democratic leadership

According to Lewin, democratic leadership is generally the most effective leadership style. A democratic leader

- offers guidance to group members
- acts as part of the group
- encourages group members to participate but retains final say over the decision-making process

Group members feel engaged in the process and are consequently more motivated and creative.

3. Laissez-faire leadership

Lewin's researchers discovered that this type of leadership is generally the least effective style, because the laissez-faire leader

- offers little or no guidance to group members
- leaves the decision-making process up to group members
- creates very poorly defined roles

Under laissez-faire leaders, participants show little cooperation, lack motivation and make more demands on the leader.

Reflection

What impact will Lewin's work have on you and your team?

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Drucker's *The Effective Executive*

Drucker (2006) believes that employees are assets, not liabilities. He argues that knowledgeable workers are the essential ingredient of the modern economy, and a manager's job is to both prepare people to perform and give them freedom to so.

Each chapter of *The Effective Executive* focuses on one of seven tips and strategies that leaders need to know in order to achieve top performance and great results:

## Step 1: Find your philosophy of leadership

1. Effectiveness can be learned
2. Know thy time
3. What can I contribute?
4. Making strength productive
5. First things first
6. The elements of decision-making
7. Effective decisions

Fundamentally, effective executives

- work systematically at managing the limited time that they have
- focus on results, not effort
- build on strengths rather than weaknesses
- look for opportunities, not problems
- prioritise areas where superior performance will produce the best outcomes
- make decisions selectively and effectively

### Reflection

What impact will Drucker's work have on you and on your team?

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### Covey's seven habits of highly effective people

In his seminal book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, Covey (2013) lays out the seven things that successful people do to distinguish themselves from their less-successful peers. His argument is that by educating one's own conscience in an attempt to assume these fundamental habits of thought, anyone can become a highly effective person who routinely achieves their personal and professional goals.

The seven key cognitive habits identified by Covey in *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* are as follows:

#### I. Be proactive

Proactive people focus their time, energy and attention on the things that they can control. They take responsibility for their own lives rather than blaming their problems on their genetics, upbringing or circumstances.



2. Begin with the end in mind

This habit is based on the principle that all things are created twice; the mental creation is followed by the physical creation. Covey argues that by keeping the desired end result in mind, effective people are more likely to achieve their aims.

3. Put first things first

Putting first things first is about life management as well as your purpose, values, roles and priorities. In this context, 'first things' are those that you personally find most worthwhile.

4. Think win/win

People who think win/win see life as a cooperative arena, not a competitive one. A person who approaches conflicts with a win-win attitude possesses three vital character traits: integrity, maturity and abundance mentality.

5. Seek first to understand, then to be understood

Communication is the most important skill in life, yet most people listen with the intent to reply rather than to understand. By contrast, effective leaders ensure that they are listening to and respecting the opinions of those whom they lead.

6. Synergise

Synergy is the habit of creative cooperation. It is the process through which individuals combine their skills and experiences to produce better results than they could achieve on their own.

7. Sharpen the saw

Sharpening the saw means taking care of 'the greatest asset you have – you' (Covey 2013). It involves striving for continuous improvement in the following areas:

- physical – healthy eating, exercising and resting
- social and emotional – making social and meaningful connections with others
- mental – learning, reading, writing and teaching
- spiritual – expanding the self through meditation or creative pursuits

Reflection

What impact will Covey's work have on you and your team?

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