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Wysowl Pty Ltd
Newsletter Number 16
August 2004

THE MASTERY AND WISDOM
OF
IVAN WEBB

This newsletter is not a newsletter.

It is an invitation for you to wander through one of the most profound and thought provoking web sites I have had the good fortune to investigate. The site belongs to Ivan Webb. When I met him, Ivan was the principal of Riverside Primary School (RPS) in Tasmania. He is an inspiration, and I am sure you will not only enjoy, but also be impressed by the wisdom to be found at this site.

Ivan is a standard bearer. When so many were finding good excuses as to why Deming's approach did not really apply to them, or were confounded by the lack of examples from their own industry or special area, Ivan forged ahead and blazed his own trail. We can learn much from him.

<http://www.users.bigpond.com/ivan.webb/quality/schools/index.htm>

Just to give you a taste of the site here is one of my favourite quality stories:

BEN'S STORY

Ben was the ten-year-old second son of a single mother. He had four siblings ranging in age from less than one to early teens.

Ben arrived at the RPS and was well behind most of his class.

The Task:

To assist children to learn their tables the teachers have been giving children number fact grids with the numbers 1 to 12 randomly along the top and side. Children were given a maximum of seven minutes to complete the task of answering as many questions as possible. When children can get almost all answers correct in less than 3 minutes they

change to occasional maintenance testing: their 'number fact system' has stabilised and there is little point in further effort.

Children track their mastery, the quantity of correct answers and the time taken.

Following are Ben's results at the beginning and end of three weeks. The achievements are all due to Ben's efforts.

| Aspect | Initial Results | Results After 3 Weeks |
|----------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|
| MASTERY – Few Errors | More than 10 mistakes | 1 mistake |
| QUANTITY – Correct Answers | Less than 60 | 144 |
| TIME TAKEN | 7 minutes | a bit less than 7 minutes |

The teacher only showed him how to:

1. Track his achievements,
2. Identify what he knew, and
3. Identify what he needed to learn.

Ben did the rest.

In effect Ben learnt more than 80 number facts in three weeks. Not bad for a chronic underachiever.

Ben plotted his results on run charts as he progressed. His charts can be seen at Ivan's site. Where were the teachers like Ivan when I was at school?

Ivan makes the point that schools are fundamentally human systems, and addresses the subject from this perspective. However, as Ivan indicates, isn't every business a human system? Is it not true that the dimension most struggle with is the human element? I'll wager every one of us can find much profound knowledge at Ivan's site.

Have fun!



John McConnell