# Mapping potential overload

There is a lot of evidence from New Zealand and internationally that focusing on improving more than one aspect of learning at a time results in less improvement, not more. Learning ‘a bit of this and a bit of that’ usually doesn’t result in the kinds of fundamental changes that make the difference. Part of the reason is that educators who are learning how to change their practice sufficiently to make a real difference for students are usually also teaching full-time, or leading part of, or a whole school.

So, as a leader, are you contributing to the plethora of initiatives and new things expected of yourself and your staff? Here is one way to find out.

## Process

1. Give each participant a large sheet of paper and some marker pens, including you as a leader if it is relevant.
2. Ask participants to get into small groups to identify all the current foci and planned new foci related to learning or change. These foci might include:

* developing professional knowledge or practice
* introducing new roles, eg. coaches or mentors
* re-structuring spaces
* introducing modern learning practices or digital devices.

1. Then ask them to:

* identify the organisational arrangements that support the development of the current activities, eg. PLCs, opportunities for observations, job or role descriptions; and how new foci will be supported
* show how the foci and the organisational arrangements are linked (or not)
* note who is involved – which leaders, teachers or targeted students.

## Reflection 1

1. Ask the participants to identify whether:

* all foci are adequately supported by colleagues, leaders or other organisational supports
* some of the foci are linked, eg. social-emotional learning and mathematics
* any one teacher is involved in more than one linked foci – if they are it is unlikely they will have the time and space to learn sufficiently to really make a difference.

1. Then ask them to categorise foci using the following symbols:

**√** the foci and activities for which you have evidence of real impact on teaching and student learning

- the organisational arrangements that support them (or not)

\* the foci and activities for which you don’t have evidence about impact but think they are probably having some impact

- the organisational arrangements that support them (or not)

**X** the foci and activities you think aren’t having much impact

- the organisational arrangements that support them (or not)

## Reflection 2

1. Ask the participants to identify:

* what they can and should delete – and what might be getting in the way of doing so – this might lead to investigating another hunch
* whether the most organisational support is given to those foci for which there is evidence they are making a real difference.