



**COMMUNITIES
OF PRACTICE**

SELF ASSESSMENT TOOL

Getting the most from the Education State's new school networks

This document will guide you through the Communities of Practice (CoP) approach

Networks can lift student outcomes by adopting a CoP approach to collaboration.

Effective school networks are at the heart of implementing the Framework for Improving Student Outcomes (FISO).

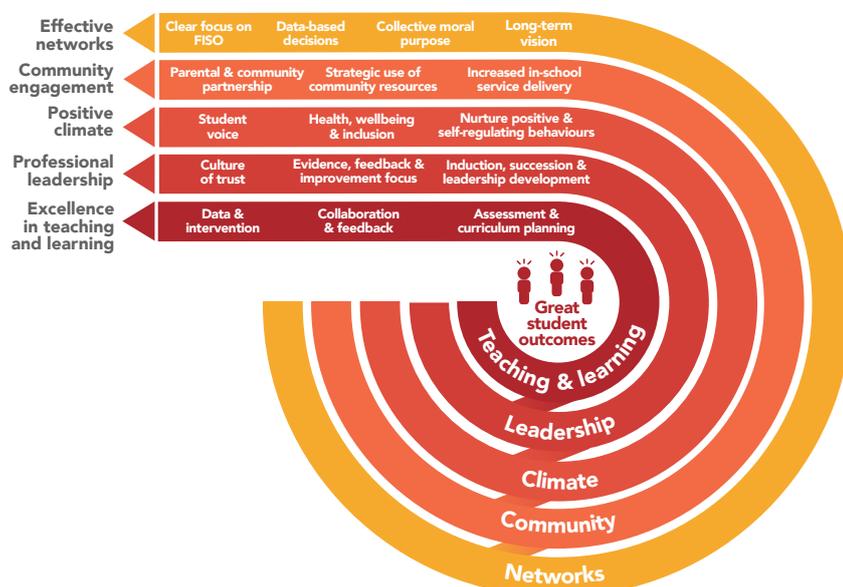
Networks operating as CoP will focus on implementing the FISO with support from Senior Education Improvement Leaders (SEILs), Area Directors and multi-disciplinary teams.

To achieve the Education State vision, each network in Victoria must adopt a CoP approach.

Highly effective networks:

- have an unrelenting focus on improvement
- are guided by a long-term vision for improving student outcomes that extends five or more years
- make decisions based on data regularly, shared and interrogated
- are committed to driving improvement with effective peer review
- share and analyse performance information systematically, and apply improvements across the network
- enjoy strong engagement and collaboration with external agencies such as community organisations, tertiary institutions and businesses to improve outcomes.

Great schools and great networks harness the power of great school practice to achieve great outcomes for all students.



Schools helping each other to improve is a powerful and sustainable approach to school improvement.

The best education systems in the world are highly networked. These successful education systems have principals who are well-connected to their peers through active partnerships or learning networks of schools. These learning networks are known as 'Communities of Practice'.

Collaboration between schools can improve both schools' performances more quickly than the national average¹. Evidence from the OECD², the World Bank and further research tells us the best performing education systems are those in which the foundations for collaboration are well established – school autonomy is high, but accountability is also rigorous³. Successful networks have a compelling commitment to improving outcomes for all students, transparent results and practice, regular reciprocal reviews of members' performance, and continuously challenging each other to do better.

Collaboration is the way forward for our schools. The sharing of effort, knowledge and resources in the pursuit of shared goals plays a central role in the achievement of student learning outcomes and reducing inequality across educational systems.

(Footnotes: 1 - Bentley and Cazaly 2015. 2- OECD 2015, 3- Farrar 2015)



SEILs will work with network chairs to help networks improve student outcomes.

Networks will be owned and driven by principals. Your SEIL and regional support team will provide flexible support to drive FISO implementation and help develop your network as a community of practice. They will help to make the most of the strengths of your network and address any areas of need.

SEILs will play a variety of roles in networks, depending on your network's self-assessed needs and FISO focus area priorities.

Connector

Brokers relationships to help your network nurture its strengths, bridge areas of development and pursue greater opportunities.

This means your SEIL could:

- connect your networks with experts in education who can contribute to the network's objectives
- connect your networks with relevant government agencies, businesses and others who have an interest in great student outcomes.

Integrator

Maintains information-sharing relationships with other networks across the state.

This means your SEIL could:

- foster relationships with other networks to share experience and expertise according to needs
- support communication channels within the network.

Facilitator

Focuses on enabling collaboration between your network's members, and stimulates interest within your network to ensure member engagement.

Your SEIL could assist you to respectfully:

- build trust between members by helping them address outstanding issues
- help members to share performance data to support network initiatives.

Challenge partner

Helps your network members to challenge each other to improve performance, and continually challenges the entire network's performance.

This means your SEIL could:

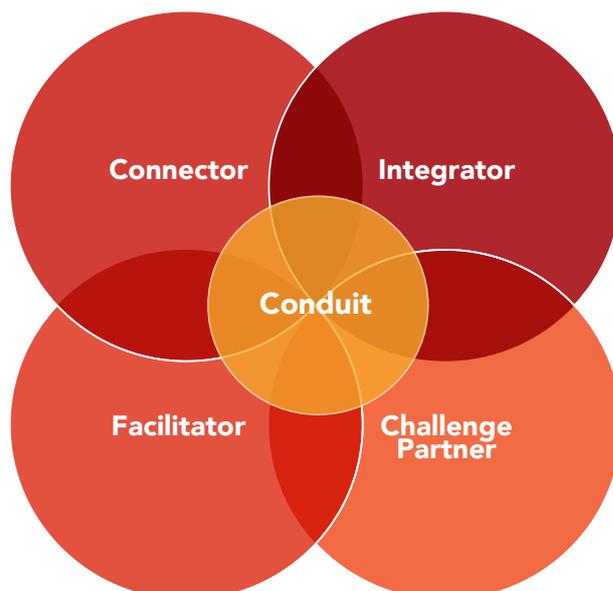
- support the evolution of a network from an emerging collegiate and information sharing focus, to a culture of transparent results and practice
- source professional development that enables challenging conversations in a spirit of reciprocity and professional trust.

Conduit

Acts as a bridge between the central office and your network, enabling a two-way flow of information and feedback to align and recognise your network's efforts and achievements.

This means your SEIL could:

- help your network interpret the implications of new policies or changes
- share your network's successes and feedback to central office for broad dissemination and sharing.



Find this and other resources online

www.bastow.vic.edu.au/communities-of-practice

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