Creating a learning system:
Principals as leaders of learning
‘There is only one way to achieve greater coherence, and that is through purposeful action and interaction ... monitoring progress, and continuous correction. All of this requires the right mixture of “pressure and support”: the press for progress within supportive and focused cultures. ’

- Fullan & Quinn, 2015
Creating a learning system

We want to recognise your remarkable endeavours in creating school environments that value collaboration, trust and collective responsibility. As system learners, we celebrate this shared success, and we look to the opportunities and challenges in the year ahead.

Over the past three years leaders, teachers and students have come together to put evidence to work by developing and implementing plans for sustained improvement. There is little doubt that this has led to inspiring improvements across schools in Victoria. Compared to previous years, we have witnessed improvement in more NAPLAN domains and at more year levels. We recognise and respect your willingness to cultivate collaborative learning cultures, and to use evidence as an essential guide in driving improvement.

Our ambition in 2019 is to continue to deepen our collaborative work through rich opportunities to learn together using a communities of practice approach. Our intent is to rigorously use collaborative inquiry approaches that enable us to examine, develop and broaden our leadership practices.

Keeping up-to-date with the evidence is a fundamental expectation of school leaders. As school leaders you understand that your team looks to you for deep professional knowledge, practice and ethics. To respond to that expectation, principals need opportunities to share ideas and expertise, to reflect, learn and grow professionally, to access quality evidence about all aspects of school leadership. If we do this purposefully, together we will create a dynamic learning system.

This brochure’s purpose is to support our shared approach to system learning. That approach generates a system where learning is shared and valued, good ideas are spread, expertise is developed, and our improvement actions are challenged as we enter into experiences of reflection, planning and prioritisation for 2019. The next 12 months are crucial for sustaining and deepening the improvements achieved. Continuing improvement relies on thoughtful and active leadership and collaborative learning. All levels of the system are partners in securing outcomes that reflect the excellence we strive for.

Bruce Armstrong
Deputy Secretary
Regional Services Group
First Peoples

We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as Australia’s First Peoples and as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land and water on which we live and work.

We acknowledge the contribution and resilience of generations of Elders, past and present, of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations. It is this resilience that enables us to contribute to an Australian history that celebrates one of the world’s oldest continuing cultures.

We are committed to working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, families, elders, communities and organisations to improve life outcomes, service provision and recognition.

Our commitment

The Victorian Government has a strong commitment to improving education outcomes for all Aboriginal learners across early childhood, schools, and training and skills. Through the Department of Education and Training and the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated, the government has worked in partnership with the Victorian Aboriginal community to develop the Marrung Aboriginal Education Plan 2016–26.

Marrung will deliver on our shared vision for Victoria: a state where the rich and thriving culture, knowledge and experience of First Nations peoples are celebrated by all Victorians; where our universal service systems are inclusive, responsive and respectful of Aboriginal people at every stage of their learning and development journey; and where every Aboriginal person achieves their potential, succeeds in life, and feels strong in their cultural identity.

‘Education is the roadmap to reducing Aboriginal disadvantage – it should be the essence of our effort.’

– Premier of Victoria, The Hon Daniel Andrews MP

‘Closing the Gap’ – Premier’s Speech, 19 March 2015
Our vision

As leaders in the Education State, you lead your schools with passion, commitment and deliberate intention. Drawing on this, we aspire to excellence in learning growth for all Victorian students.

This year is an opportunity to work closely together to leverage and deepen our success. We know the best way to improve student learning is to bring our knowledgeable educators together in a spirit of collaboration. That is what we will do.

School improvement is a long-term, collective commitment: it demands that we continue to share expertise and learn from one another. We are making progress. Supporting our endeavour, the Framework for Improving Student Outcomes empowers school improvement teams to focus on a small number of key strategies that will have the greatest impact on school improvement.

The Education State Targets have always been resolutely ambitious. Our determination to meet them has been just as resolute, and we are now seeing the green shoots of change.

In shaping a system that is responsive, cohesive and highly networked, we generate enormous public value – for our students and our communities. We build a system that fosters excellence and improves outcomes for every child and young person in every community.

In 2019 we ask all our leaders to deepen collaboration.

The key question, then, is how can we achieve the strongest system coherence, capacity and commitment resulting in sustained improvement?

‘Leadership from the Middle can be briefly defined as: a deliberate strategy that increases the capacity and internal coherence of the middle as it becomes a more effective partner upward to the state and downward to its schools and communities, in pursuit of greater system improvement.’

— Fullan, 2015
Our values:
The way we learn, the way we lead

The work we do is really important – and the way we do it also matters.

The Department’s values provide us with guiding principles for the decisions we make every day.

Our values, and how we live them, go to the heart of the integrity of our public education system, which has an immeasurable impact on thousands of lives each year.

Shared values help us set expectations of how we should all behave and treat each other. Shared values empower us to create and sustain an organisation that values high performance, strong accountability and continual learning – for ourselves and our students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Our values</th>
<th>Our behaviours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RESPONSIVENESS</td>
<td>We respond in a timely way with our best work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTEGRITY</td>
<td>We are honest, ethical and transparent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMPARTIALITY</td>
<td>We behave in the best interests of the public by making fair and objective decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACCOUNTABILITY</td>
<td>We hold ourselves and others to account for the work that we do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESPECT</td>
<td>We value others and accept their differences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEADERSHIP</td>
<td>We are genuine, supportive, and lead by doing the right thing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HUMAN RIGHTS</td>
<td>We uphold and respect the rights of others</td>
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Our mission:
Principals as leaders of learning

Why collaborate?

In the Education State, education professional collaboration is one of the practices that has the greatest impact on results. We know collaboration between educators builds social capital. It increases our knowledge and our skills. It empowers us to take risks, to initiate and implement change: good ideas diffuse through the system and are adopted by many. And hence collaboration will improve student learning outcomes.

In 2019 we will have new opportunities to learn together through our communities of practice approach which provides for us a platform on which to deepen trusted learning relationships based on deliberate design. Through Area Principal Forums, the Education State Schools Conference, and engagement in Communities of Practice, we will learn, share, collaborate, design and implement ideas, then evaluate our progress.

Our learning will begin with data and evidence which enables us to explore our students’ achievements, challenges and growth. We will share our insights on what helps to lift student outcomes. Our new learning will accelerate our capabilities for applying evidence-informed approaches to school improvement and for planning high impact school actions. We will evaluate and monitor our learning and our students’ progress.

When we meet together we will engage in deeper collaboration. We will strengthen relationships that purposefully call on trust, mutual support and a sense of collective responsibility.

As agents of improvement and leaders of learning in our system, we will engage in reflective and open dialogue about our data, our growth and our vision. This will help all our students become ‘change makers in their own and other people’s lives’ (Hargreaves, 2018).

‘The journey from leading to succeeding requires deliberation. We must allocate time and attention to actions that have the greatest impact on results and fulfil our purpose …’

– Reeves, 2016
Our learning principles

Our aim is to consistently advance our learning, communication and collaboration practices to create an effective and sustainable culture of learning throughout our system.

To ensure we continue to build our capabilities in collective leadership and improve outcomes for all, we incorporate transformative learning principles in our learning. They are informed by evidence that challenges adult learners to develop a deeper understanding of themselves as leaders and how they can most effectively lead improvement.

We endorse four characteristics of transformative learning approaches that lead to constructive orientations in leader understanding, identity and practice. These approaches:

- anchor professional learning in learner needs and higher order learning aspirations
- enable learners to reimagine their identities as leaders by surfacing deeper beliefs, values, assumptions and attitudes
- creatively apply learning and leadership in context – they connect to the real world and the challenges of day to day roles
- encourage active learning by engaging in dialogue that values questioning, critical reflection and challenge.

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Working with evidence

Our leadership learning focus builds collaboration, trust and collective responsibility in the mission to improve student learning outcomes. This approach is guided by an increased emphasis on rigorous self evaluation which draws on a strong evidence base.

John Hattie (2011) speaks of working with evidence as a way of thinking: ‘[T]hose teachers who are students of their own impact are the teachers who are the most influential in raising students’ achievement.’

Our challenge is to ensure we use evidence of student learning, along with evidence about our impact as leaders and teachers, to continue to create the conditions that enable improved learning outcomes for all students.

The Framework for Improving Student Outcomes (FISO) broadens our collective understanding and expertise about how to deepen teachers’ capabilities in using data and evidence to monitor, evaluate and understand students’ learning progress and development. It encourages us to leverage Student Voice to build students’ capacity to monitor, understand and have agency in their own learning.

Model

The FISO Improvement Model uses the latest evidence and research on student learning and global best practice to help schools focus their efforts on key areas that are known to have the greatest impact on school improvement. It explicitly identifies Curriculum planning and assessment and Evaluating impact on learning as priority initiatives within Excellence in teaching and learning, and the range of school performance information school leaders can access to support the evidence of student learning and growth.

Method

The FISO Improvement Cycle provides the framework within which school leaders analyse evidence, prioritise, plan, implement and evaluate key strategies and actions put in place to meet the challenge of improving student learning outcomes.

Measures

Improvement measures available to Victorian schools include a range of data sets across various aspects of schooling. These provide schools with reliable instruments to evaluate and monitor the effect of their school improvement efforts on student outcomes.

Panorama Reports, Network Reports (coming in 2019) and Differentiated Performance Measures assist schools in implementing the improvement cycle, providing a common evidence base for self-evaluation, school reviews, strategic planning, annual planning and performance and development processes and reviews.

‘No profession, nor the people served by it, can progress without the ability and willingness of professionals to share their knowledge and expertise and to figure out complex problems of practice together.’

– Hargreaves & O’Connor, 2018
Framework for Improving Student Outcomes

Prioritise and set goals
- Curriculum planning and assessment
- Building practice excellence
- Evaluating impact on learning

Develop and plan
- Evidence-based high impact teaching strategies
- Parents and carers as partners
- Global citizenship

Evaluate and diagnose
- Empowering students and building school pride
- Positive climate for learning
- Professional leadership

Implement and monitor
- Health and wellbeing
- Setting expectations and promoting inclusion
- Intellectual engagement and self awareness
- Vision values and culture
- Strategic resource management
- Building leadership teams

Curriculum planning and assessment
Building practice excellence
Evaluating impact on learning
Evidence-based high impact teaching strategies
Parents and carers as partners
Global citizenship
Empowering students and building school pride
Positive climate for learning
Professional leadership
Health and wellbeing
Setting expectations and promoting inclusion
Intellectual engagement and self awareness
Vision values and culture
Strategic resource management
Building leadership teams
Creating a learning system
11
Our ambition: Creating a sustainable learning system

By supporting and strengthening collaborative practice at all levels of our system, we build an ecosystem of leaders, teachers and learners who learn together. From Communities of Practice working across schools, to School Improvement Teams and Professional Learning Communities working within schools, this way of working creates a sustainable learning system.

In 2019, Area Principal Forums and the Education State Schools Conference will enable school leaders to come together as a community of learners and to develop mastery in leading learning.

Each term, principals and school leaders will have opportunities to develop and strengthen these capabilities:

1. **Strengthening instructional leadership**: Principals and school leaders enrich their skills, knowledge and insights into leading quality teaching and learning.

2. **Developing an evaluative mindset**: Principals and school leaders deepen their knowledge of how data and evidence inform and drive school improvement through a continuous process of learning.

3. **Creating collective responsibility and collective efficacy**: Principals and school leaders are enabled through collaborative problem-solving to apply evidence-informed improvement ideas that enhance student learning to develop shared responsibility for all learners.

4. **Embedding structures, processes and culture**: Principals and school leaders are equipped to embed the structures, processes and culture within schools to support continuous learning and a high-performance culture.

5. **Leading improvement**: Principals and school leaders lead improvement informed by their understanding of the values and beliefs of the staff they lead. They regularly assess the impact of chosen improvement strategies on leader and teacher professional knowledge, practice, ethics and student outcomes.
In 2019, we will enrich and deepen opportunities for purposeful collaborative learning through participation in Communities of Practice, Area Principal Forums, and the 2019 Education State Schools Conference.

These opportunities support and enable collaborative learning among principals, assistant principals and school leaders. Learning experiences will encompass exploring data and evidence about what helps lift student learning outcomes; developing and sharing ideas and evidence-informed, innovative approaches to school improvement; and planning in-school actions and applying new learning.

Specifically, these learning experiences provide an opportunity for school leaders to:
- accelerate the improvement of student outcomes through significant learning growth
- establish and lead professional learning cultures, enabling teachers to continue to improve their professional knowledge and practice so they positively impact student learning outcomes
- continue to develop as leaders, learners and inquirers
- be empowered to take short-term and long-term action, articulated within the school Annual Implementation Plan, that improves the impact of classroom practice, their school, network and the education system more broadly.
‘... collaborative professionalism is about how teachers and other educators transform teaching and learning together to work with all students to develop fulfilling lives of meaning, purpose and success. It is evidence-informed, but not data-driven, and involves deep and sometimes demanding dialogue, candid but constructive feedback, and continuous collaborative inquiry.’

– Hargreaves & O’Connor, 2018
Supporting collaborative learning: Getting closer to the classroom

Some resources to explore:

**Shared reading**

- ‘Building instructional leaders’ capacity in conversations using data and evidence’ by Helen Timperley
- Collaborative professionalism: When teaching means learning for all by Andy Hargreaves

**Shared professional learning**

- School Improvement Toolkit (currently in development)

**Shared action and reflection**

- Instructional rounds in education: a network approach to improving teaching and learning by Elizabeth City et al
- Sharratt Learning Walks; see: youtu.be/K6417m3kNIE

‘... we learn by doing the work, not by telling other people to do the work, not by having done the work at some time in the past, not by hiring experts who can act as proxies for our knowledge about how to do the work …’

— Elmore, 2008
Since 2016, the Community of Practice (CoP) approach has been Victoria's vehicle for developing collaborative learning cultures within principal networks. Over the past two years, networks across the state have used FISO to engage in relevant, purposeful and sustained learning and action, informed by evidence, to improve student outcomes.

Communities of Practice build demonstrable growth from within and across the school community. Research suggests that for any model or program to be effective, it must be ‘embedded, personal and continuous’ (Munby, 2018). Improvements to any system or model must be integrated into the fabric of the system pedagogy for the change to be sustained over the long term.

**Three pillars for success**

The three pillars of success provide clarity about the key elements required to bring the CoP approach to life.

**Pillar 1** guides how we work together to create an environment in which people can build a culture of collaboration and challenge in which they feel safe. This will help us strive to be our best and help us work on the areas that are stopping us from being our best. We have a shared purpose of why we are together, and we take collective responsibility for achieving our goals.

**Pillar 2** guides how we use data and evidence to inform our decision-making, focused on bringing about improved outcomes. We are curious and use an inquiry-based approach to investigate our problems of practice, and we use evidence and data to monitor the impact. This requires us to be agile in our thinking and practice so we can magnify the impact of our improvement strategies.

**Pillar 3** guides how we accept collective accountability for our outcomes, and how we hold ourselves and others accountable for achieving our aspirational goals. We are altruistic. We focus on improving outcomes for all students in every classroom, in every community.
Communities of Practice (CoPs) are deliberate and planned collaborative learning experiences. Typically this involves:

- pre-learning activities
- spending time reflecting on our own context and making connections to the CoP work
- developing short cycles of action and reflection that take principals into each-other’s schools and close to the classroom
- testing new improvement strategies, reflecting and monitoring progress during implementation, and changing course as necessary
- looking for opportunities for school partnering; for example, through School Improvement Teams.

The following example goes through this process.

### 2019 Communities of Practice program design

Communities of Practice (CoPs) are deliberate and planned collaborative learning experiences. Typically this involves:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
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<th>Format</th>
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</table>
| **Pre-work** | **Getting ready for learning** | Establish pre-meeting routines conducted by all members of the CoP prior to a formal meeting:  
  - Send out agenda with pre-reading attached  
  - Collect evidence of impact to share during the visit  
  - Share artefacts with the CoP  
  - Complete professional readings |
| **Session 1** | **Setting the context** | Provide an overview of the school’s context, including recent school learning developments  
  - Share key documents and data sets  
  - Set the scene for how you intend your CoP to support the work in your school |
| **Session 2** | **Action** | Establish a regular pattern for the CoP’s work – the pattern reflects constant deepening of understanding for all CoP members, based in research and practice  
  - Use an evidence-based inquiry process and change course as necessary  
  - Establish processes that support challenge, stretch thinking and inform practice |
| **Session 3** | **Working on issues/hot topics, exchanging information** | Plan for administrative time to sustain learning within the CoP, managing issues that arise so they do not hinder progress for all |
| **Session 4** | **Oversight of CoP** | Monitor progress in achieving milestones, and change plans and goals as necessary  
  - Review structures and processes regularly  
  - Monitor the CoP’s culture  
  - Prepare to share with and report to the network |
Area Principal Forums

The Area Principal Forums are designed to provide valuable time for school leaders to work and learn collaboratively together. They initiate opportunities for exploring how best to connect, embed, use and contextualise content and resources in ways that enrich school leaders’ learning to improve learning outcomes for all students.

2019 Area Principal Forums program design

Each forum will be designed around four key learning elements described below.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Format</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
<td><strong>Welcome</strong>&lt;br&gt;Reflections and vision&lt;br&gt;System Messages</td>
<td>Regional Director updates Education State progress and achievements and creates coherence for the work ahead.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Session 1</strong></td>
<td><strong>Problems of practice for school improvement</strong></td>
<td>Every participant is involved in collaborative problem-solving learning activities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Session 2** | **System resources for improvement** | Participants work together to deepen knowledge about new resources within and between each of the following sectors:  
  • primary schools  
  • secondary schools  
  • specialist schools. |
| **Session 3** | **Communities of Practice (CoPs)** | Participants learn together in their CoP by:  
  • exploring and challenging each others ideas  
  • building collective efficacy. |
| **Session 4** | **Local focus**<br>Case studies of excellence<br>Celebration of successes | Whole-of-forum discussion where participants:  
  • present ideas  
  • discuss challenges  
  • share resolutions. |
Leading Learning for Excellence is the theme for this year’s Education State School Leadership Conference (ESSLC). The program focuses on inspiring strong instructional leadership that delivers real improvements to student outcomes.

Participants choose days and sessions in line with their school’s improvement focus, ensuring relevant learning experiences that will help lead improvement work in their schools.

You’ll have the opportunity to learn from experts in your chosen areas of focus, hear from your peers, and look deeply into how you can apply knowledge to your own context.

Learn from over 15 local and international expert practitioners, including John Hattie, Barbara Blackburn (Canada), Jan Owen and Russell Quaglia (USA), as they lead immersive and interactive workshops aligned to the Framework for Improving Student Outcomes priorities.

For more information on the ESSLC, visit the Bastow website.
Bastow professional learning: Building leadership capability across the state

The Bastow Institute of Educational Leadership aims to create powerful leadership learning across Victoria – online, in regional settings, and out of the Bastow facilities in North Melbourne. Innovative, evidence-based professional learning focuses on building leadership capability at all levels of our education system, embedding collaborative practice to promote and support continuous improvement.

Developing leaders at every stage of their career

Bastow career-stage programs and initiatives focus on supporting leadership development needs. They include:

- Communities of Practice
- Create – for middle leaders
- Evolve – for new principals
- Impact – for emerging leaders
- Inspire – for emerging local leaders
- Talent Management Framework – for principals and leadership teams
- Unlocking Potential (UP) – for aspiring principals
- Victorian Aspirant Principal Assessment (VAPA) – for aspiring principals
- WISE – for system leaders.

Courses

Bastow courses empower learners to lead change and improvement; they address a wide range of subjects and disciplines, and include:

- Leading Literacy for Networks
- Learning Specialist suite
- Literacy Data, Assessment and Practice (fully online)
- Open-to-Learning Leadership
- Strategic Management for School Leaders
- Using Data Wisely.

Professional conversations

Thought leadership and events at Bastow provide opportunities to engage and connect with diverse perspectives on education and leadership. Offerings include:

- Alumni program
- Bastow Educational Leadership podcast
- Emerging Leaders Conference
- Middle Leaders Conference
- Twilight events.

See the Bastow website for more information or to register: www.bastow.vic.edu.au
Resources

Class Resource: Literacy Learning Toolkit

Communities of Practice (CoPs)


Excellence in Teaching and Learning

FISO resources

Framework for Improving Student Outcomes (FISO)

High Impact Teaching Strategies (HITS)

Improve your teaching (multiple DET tools and resources)

Literacy and Numeracy Strategy

Marrung - Aboriginal Education Plan 2016-2026

Pedagogical Model

Peer Observation

Practice Principles for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (PPETL)

Practice Principles for teaching birth to eight years (includes Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLF)

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)

Professional Practice Elements

School Performance and improvement

Strategic Planning Online Tool (SPOT)

Victorian Curriculum F-10

Victorian Literacy Portal
References


‘The centerpiece of all successful whole-system reform cases is capacity building – the development of individual and group efficacy when it comes to new skills, resources and motivation ... The bottom line for those engaged in whole-system reform is that the core strategy must focus on thorough and widespread capacity building, especially the collective capacity of groups.’

– Fullan, 2012