

# Professional Practice and Performance for Improved Learning: Performance and Development

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## Overview

The Victorian Government is introducing a new approach to professional practice and performance in government schools. The approach is being introduced to help us achieve exceptional learning outcomes for every Victorian student.

This paper is the third in a series of five documents called *Professional Practice and Performance for Improved Learning*. The series introduces a new approach to measuring, monitoring and most importantly, to improving performance in Victorian government schools through feedback and development.

The five papers focus on:

1. an overview of the new arrangements (including guiding principles for performance and development, which can be viewed [here](#).)
2. school accountability (which can be viewed [here](#))
3. **the performance and development of principals and school leaders and teachers (this paper)**
4. how we support the capability development of the Victorian education professions
5. school governance arrangements (this will focus on new arrangements for school councils and draw on the review of governance in Victorian government schools).

The Department is building a performance and development culture in the teaching profession and school leadership that values evidence and further encourages professionals to learn together as a team. This will increase the collective capacity of our schools as learning organisations that are fully equipped to respond to the learning needs of all students.

*From New Directions to Action: World Class Teaching and School Leadership* policy paper lays the foundations for a new approach to performance and development – aiming to develop a teaching profession that will raise student performance to match the very best jurisdictions worldwide - where ‘excellent teaching is the standard in every school, fostered through career-long learning and development.’ (2013, p. 13).

## Key features of the new performance and development process

- The balanced scorecard approach, based on the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and with a strong focus on student outcomes
- high quality conversations between a teacher and their principal (or appropriate member of the leadership team) about professional practice that has a positive impact on student learning gain
- end of cycle performance assessment which identifies strengths and areas for development, using a four point scale.

## Structure of this Paper

This paper outlines the underlying concepts, structures and processes for a new performance and development process for school leaders and teachers. Drawing from examples of current practice within Victorian schools, it describes what effective performance and development processes look like, why they are important and where they fit within a wider context of professional practice and professional learning.

The objective of this paper is to set the scene for an improved performance and development culture that will increase the effectiveness of teaching and learning and significantly contribute to our shared goal of lifting student outcomes across Victoria.

- **Section 1** elaborates upon the key concepts in performance and development in schools. It draws on evidence – both international and Australian – of the best ways to achieve a strong professional learning and performance culture to improve student learning outcomes.

- **Sections 2-4** describe the new performance and development process for principal class employees and teachers in Victorian government schools. The process builds upon the existing performance and development framework and the Performance and Development Culture initiative.

Successful and meaningful performance and development practices bring together several key components: the setting of clear expectations of performance and clear articulation of how success will be measured; the fostering of a strong professional learning culture within schools; and the provision of appropriate development opportunities for school leaders and teachers.

Taken together, these complementary components maximise learning and enhance system capacity to lift student learning outcomes.

## 1. Performance and development in the context of a professional learning culture

### 1.1 What is meant by 'performance and development'?

Performance and development is a continuous process through which professionals articulate expectations for performance and identify and pursue areas where development, growth and support are needed and/or desired. It is a cyclical process with clearly delineated stages for performance planning, feedback, reflection and review.

There are two components of performance and development: '**performance**', which relates to an agreed understanding of what constitutes effective professional practice, often taking the form of explicitly articulated standards; and '**development**', which informs and guides the improvement of performance through ongoing professional learning and feedback.

An effective performance and development process encourages and supports staff development at all career stages (*Hay Group 2012, p. 19*). It reinforces a culture of development that creates and sustains the conditions conducive to growth and improvement – through open feedback sessions, professional learning, and opportunities for peer collaboration – allowing teachers and principals to feel supported and engaged in their professional practice.

Performance and development enables the identification of areas for improvement - informed by student learning needs - and the pursuit of these to improve professional practice.<sup>1</sup>

### 1.2 Why is performance and development important?

We know from the Australian and international evidence that effective teaching is the most powerful in-school influence on student achievement (*Hattie 2003, OECD 2005*).

Effective performance and development is beneficial to both the school and the individual staff member. This is because the objective of high quality performance and development is to prepare and support educators to help every student achieve high standards of learning and development (*Dufour & Eaker 1998, pp. 260–61*).

The quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers.

*Barber and Mourshed 2007, p. 13*

A 2007 McKinsey report found that to improve instruction, high performing school systems do the following things well (*Barber & Mourshed 2007, p. 13*):

- they get the **right people** to become teachers (the quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers)
- they develop these people into **effective instructors** (the only way to improve outcomes is to improve instruction)

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<sup>1</sup> For more on identifying areas for improvement based on student learning needs see section 1.6 'Job embedded learning'.

- they **put in place systems** to ensure that every child is able to benefit from excellent instruction (the only way for the system to reach highest performance is to raise the standard of every student).

Given this, a high performing system must have a strong commitment to supporting quality teaching in every classroom as the foundation for improved student learning. Performance and development fulfills this role by supporting effective teaching and providing a clear link between what teachers know and do and what happens in the classroom to support student learning.

This recognition of the powerful impact of quality teaching and practice and its effect on student learning is central to understanding how to support effective performance and development. Improving practice requires changing the instructional core. 'The relationship of the teacher and the student in the presence of content must be at the centre of all efforts to improve performance' (*Elmore 2008*).

Richard Elmore identifies three ways to improve student learning at scale:

1. Increase the level of knowledge and skill that the teacher brings to the instructional process
2. Increase the level and complexity of the content that students are asked to learn
3. Change the role of the student in the instructional process. (*City, Elmore et al. 2009, p. 24.*)

...you cannot change learning and performance at scale without creating a strong, visible, transparent culture of instructional practice.

*City, Elmore et al. 2009, p.32*

As Elmore suggests, an effective approach to performance and development recognises and uses the interplay between teacher, student and content. It enables effective teaching by every teacher in every classroom to be fostered, expected and supported. A commitment to performance and development both acknowledges the importance of continuous learning at all career stages and all stages of student learning.

### 1.3 What does effective performance and development look like in practice?

Effective performance and development processes promote **collaboration**, establish **collective efficacy** and reinforce **professional trust and accountability**.

Research has shown that collaborative approaches to performance and development, including peer-to-peer observation, shared curriculum development, and team teaching are most effective in improving student and school outcomes (*Dufour & Eaker 1998, pp. 265–74*).

Collaborative practices involve teachers, school leaders and students. They include:

- collaborative curriculum design, teaching teams and moderation of student assessment and analysis of student achievement data
- peer-to-peer learning
- classroom observation, inquiry and feedback
- use of student feedback to drive classroom practice
- teacher reflective practice and teacher-led research.

The focus must shift from helping individuals become more effective in their isolated classrooms and schools, to creating a new collaborative culture based on interdependence, shared responsibility, and mutual accountability.

*Dufour and Marzano 2011, p.67*

Linda Darling-Hammond (*2013, p. 60*) argues that collaborative learning fosters a more coherent curriculum and set of practices across the school, and allows teachers and staff to share strategies and insights to help each other improve. According to Andy Hargreaves and Michael Fullan (*2012, p. 114*), these practices also elevate the contributions of individuals because they value people, both in their own right and for how they contribute to the group.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> For more on schools' internal accountability please see another paper in this series, [Professional Practice and Performance for Improved Learning: School Accountability](#).



## Collective efficacy and professional accountability

Extending beyond a focus on teacher development, Dufour and Marzano argue that the best strategy for improving schools and districts is developing the collective capacity of educators to function as members of a professional learning community (PLC).

The structure of PLCs is generally well established in Victorian schools. A PLC is a group that seeks to provide teachers and school leaders with a sense of personal and collective efficacy and responsibility and a forum for critical reflection, inquiry into practice and professional development. PLCs encourage innovation, open participants to change, and create a collective vision (*Dickerson 2011*). This reinforces the importance of a whole school community working together to improve learning, wellbeing and engagement for all students.

Shared knowledge and a focus on diverse pathways for learning are central to PLCs. They are learning communities based on the premise that **‘if students are to learn at higher levels, processes must be in place to ensure the ongoing, job-embedded learning of the adults who serve them’** (*Dufour & Marzano 2011, p. 21*). PLCs engage all members of the school community in learning activities for students and staff. Partnerships among stakeholders provide opportunities to share resources and address issues on individual, local and system-wide levels.

Collaborative practices provide teachers and school leaders with a sense of collective efficacy, where ‘beliefs about the faculty’s capability to successfully educate students constitute a norm that influences the actions and achievements of schools’ (*Goddard, Hoy et al. 2000, p. 496*). That is, teachers and principals perceive that together, they can enact positive change in their school and this belief has a meaningful impact on students.

Collective efficacy and collaboration are based on the notion that ‘...sustainable improvement can...never be done *to* or even *for* teachers. It can only ever be achieved *by* and *with* them’ (*Hargreaves & Fullan 2012 p. 45*). In schools where teachers and principals believe in their capacity to effect change a strong culture of professional trust and collective accountability for achieving high quality instructional practice is fostered.<sup>3</sup>

The accountability of school leaders to facilitate the development of a strong professional culture is also crucial to effective performance and development. One of the key roles of the principal, described in the Australian Professional Standard for Principals (2011, p. 9) is to ‘work with and through others to build a professional learning community that is focused on the continuous improvement of teaching and learning. Through managing performance, continuing professional learning and regular feedback, they support all staff to achieve high standards and develop their leadership capacity.’

Effective performance and development promotes collective efficacy and professional accountability which both help to facilitate a self-improving system. [The Compact: Roles and Responsibilities in Victorian government school education](#) (2013) articulates in more detail the various roles and responsibilities within the Victorian education system in relation to professional trust, autonomy, accountability and support. Another paper in this series on [school accountability](#) outlines the accountability arrangements for schools, underpinned by shared and transparent benchmarks for high quality instructional practice.

...collaborative cultures build social capital and therefore also professional capital in a school’s community. They accumulate and circulate knowledge and ideas, as well as assistance and support that help teachers become more effective, increase their confidence, and encourage them to be more open to and actively engaged in change.

*Hargreaves and Fullan 2012, p.114*

Schools and the Department share a professional commitment to continual, evidence-based improvement in teaching and learning and to improving student outcomes.

*The Compact 2013, p.4*

<sup>3</sup> See section 1.5.



## 1.4 What characterises a profession?

It is generally agreed that a '**profession**' has several key characteristics that elevate it to a higher level than a '**job**'. According to Howard Gardner and Lee Shulman, there are various fundamental elements necessary for groups to be considered professional. To be considered a profession, the following characteristics must be present:

- a theoretical foundation
- a specialised set of skills and practices unique to that profession that lead to technical and ethical decisions
- the exercise of professional judgment in complex situations
- a fostering of the 'continuing need to learn from one's experience' – namely, to practice thoughtfully and reflectively.
- a professional community responsible for the oversight and monitoring of quality in both practice and professional education. (*Gardner & Shulman 2005, pp. 14 – 15*).

Schools that function as professional communities are four times more likely to be improving academically.

*Lewis 2002, p.488*

In the teaching profession, these characteristics are evidenced, in part, by the existence of standards for student learning and effective teaching and leadership practice; and in part by rigorous, mandatory tertiary study required as a prerequisite for becoming a teacher. In Victoria these are also evidenced through the requirement that teachers be registered through the Victorian Institute of Teaching, a component of which is adherence to a Code of Ethics founded on the values of integrity, respect and responsibility.

### *Professional standards*

Standards for student learning and effective teaching and leadership practice are vital to effective performance and development processes for teachers, and school leaders. By defining shared goals for learning, and articulating expectations for teaching across different career stages, standards foster consistency, accountability and a solid foundation for performance review at the end of the performance cycle. Standards are also central to developing a professional culture because they help ensure a school's professional learning has a clear purpose, a clear plan of action and adequate support for teachers (*The Essential Guide to Professional Learning: Leading Culture, 2012*).

Professional standards simultaneously provide a clear set of expectations for teachers and school leaders at all career stages; and provide a reference point for identifying current and future learning and development needs.

A clear description of what constitutes teacher quality and quality school leadership for principals is encapsulated in the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and the Australian Professional Standard for Principals.

These standards articulate what teachers and principals are expected to know, understand and do to develop expertise in their work and to positively impact on students' learning and development. Experts in teaching – like experts in other fields – can quickly analyse complex situations and bring to bear many sources of knowledge about how to respond to them. They also have a broader and more flexible repertoire of skills they can draw on to achieve their goals (*Darling-Hammond & Baratz Snowden 2005, p. 32*).

The only way we can accomplish the changes we need is through intense focus in improving classroom practice. We can do it by declaring that this is the focus: reduce bad variation by increasing consistency. Teachers and teacher leaders will have to take a risk here. It is the one area that is within the control of teachers – break down the autonomy of the classroom so that greater consistency of practice can be achieved.

*Fullan 2006, p.58*

The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers are grouped into three categories:

1. Professional knowledge
2. Professional practice

### 3. Professional engagement.

The Australian Professional Standard for Principals is based on three leadership requirements<sup>4</sup>:

1. Vision and values
2. Knowledge and understanding
3. Personal qualities and social and interpersonal skills.

These requirements are enacted through five key professional practices:

1. Leading teaching and learning
2. Developing self and others
3. Leading improvement, innovation and change
4. Leading the management of the school
5. Engaging and working with the community.

By using these Standards as a benchmark, teachers and principals are able to understand both what is expected of them now, and the future knowledge, practices and behaviours deemed necessary by their peers to develop increasing levels of expertise in their professional practice.

## 1.5 How can a professional learning culture promote effective performance and development?

A professional learning culture encompasses the shared values, vision, structures and processes that support teachers and school leaders in their professional practice. In its broadest sense, a school's culture provides the wider context for all professional practice (*Senge 1990, p. 69*). It ties professionals to their collective organisation.

A strong professional learning culture engages all members of a school community. It links performance and development to collective understandings of good performance and is essential to fostering effective performance and development that guides continuous improvement with lasting school-wide effects.

A performance and development process for schools is effective only if it is guided by collective understandings of success and what constitutes sound performance. 'The teacher must know when learning is correct or incorrect; learn when to experiment and learn from the experience; learn to monitor, seek and give feedback; and know to try alternative learning strategies when others do not work. What is most important is that teaching is visible to the student, and that the learning is visible to the teacher' (*Hattie 2009, p. 25*).

This shared understanding of high quality instructional practice is derived from a strong professional learning culture – where school leaders work with teachers, students, parents and the wider community to craft a shared vision for learning, and are engaged in pursuing that vision together. A strong professional learning culture supports and contributes to the kind of professional learning that makes a genuine difference to the impact teacher practice has on improving student learning outcomes (see section 1.6).

Whilst the individual efforts of teachers and school leaders contribute to positive outcomes for students and schools, it is particularly collective efforts which have the most profound and lasting effects. In their

To improve student learning, professional learning needs to be conceived both as a means for improving teacher effectiveness and as a means for improving the effectiveness of schools.

*Cole 2012, p.6*

Teachers learn from each other and share good teaching practices through a range of opportunities at school and system levels. Observing and giving feedback on each other's practice is the norm.

*From New Directions to Action 2013, p. 13*

<sup>4</sup> See [http://www.aitsl.edu.au/verve/resources/Australian\\_Professional\\_Standards\\_for\\_Principals.pdf](http://www.aitsl.edu.au/verve/resources/Australian_Professional_Standards_for_Principals.pdf)

longitudinal study of restructured schools Newmann and Wehlage found many schools that had competent individual teachers lacked the organisational capacity to raise student achievement because meeting that challenge 'is beyond the skills of individual staff' and requires instead the organisation of 'human, technical, and social resources into an effective collective effort' (Dufour & Marzano 2011, p. 66).

## 1.6 What is meant by 'professional learning'?

Professional learning comprises the activities and experiences which guide development and improve performance. It is the formal and informal learning experiences undertaken by teachers and school leaders that improve their individual professional practice and the school's collective effectiveness as measured by improved student engagement and learning outcomes (Cole 2012, p. 6).

Effective professional learning focuses on developing the core attributes of an effective teacher.

Cole 2012, p.6

A commitment to providing and participating in professional learning opportunities is an integral part of an effective performance and development process. It is, first and foremost, the responsibility of principals to create the pre-conditions for adult learning in their schools – for example, to establish professional learning communities and provide opportunities for classroom observation and professional development. This responsibility is clearly articulated in the AITSL Professional Standard for Principals, which identifies the role of the principal as, in part, 'creating and sustaining the conditions under which quality teaching and learning thrive' (Australian Standard for Principals 2011, p. 2).

The AITSL *Charter for the Professional Learning of Teachers and School Leaders* (2012) outlines the importance of professional learning; the qualities of a professional learning culture; the characteristics of effective professional learning and the shared commitment and responsibility of teachers, school leaders and those who support them to engage in professional learning to improve educational outcomes for all young Australians.

The Charter highlights the importance of a collaborative approach to professional development that is broad and deep, treating individual and school-wide learning needs – both present and future – as equally important.

Improvement is a discipline, a practice that requires focus, knowledge, persistence and consistency over time.

Elmore 2002, p.13

Professional learning can be a powerful transformative tool for addressing development needs at both an individual and school-wide level. Another paper in this series on the capability development of Victorian teachers and school leaders outlines a range of professional learning opportunities available to support performance and development.

### *Job embedded learning*

There is strong evidence to suggest that a sustained approach to professional learning has a stronger impact on practice than ad-hoc learning opportunities and that the closer to the classroom those efforts to improve practice occur, the bigger the impact they are likely to have on student learning.

Research undertaken by Professor Helen Timperley and others in *Teacher Professional Learning and Development: Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration* (BES) (2008) analysed studies of professional development that led to improved outcomes for the students of participating teachers. The synthesis found that models of professional development that focus on one-off activities, with external experts presenting prescribed practices to teachers, have limited impact on student outcomes.

Targeted professional learning should 'become part of the expectations for teachers' roles and form an integral part of the culture of a school'.

Lieberman 1995, p.593

Rather, Timperley suggests a range of interactive elements should form the basis of a 'cycle of inquiry', including:

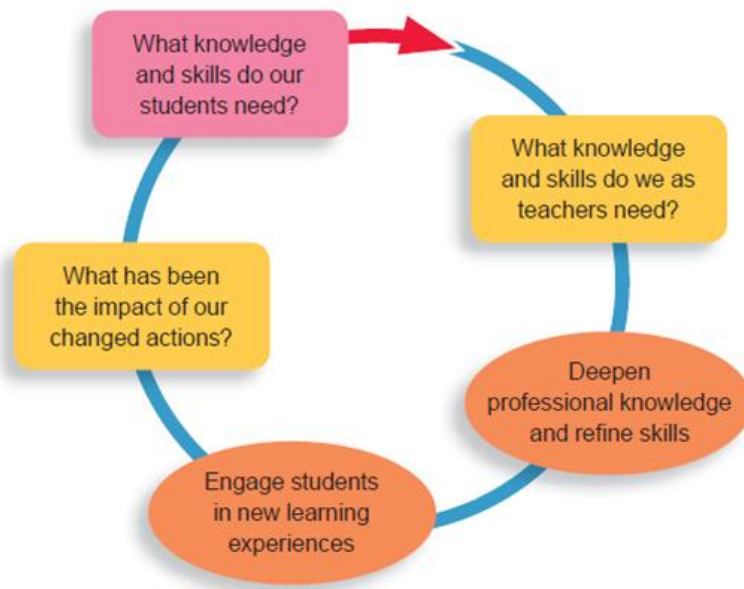
- **grounding learning** in the immediate problems of practice
- **deepening relevant pedagogical content** and assessment knowledge

- **engaging existing theories of practice** on which to base ongoing inquiry processes.

In this process, teachers collectively and individually identify key issues for student learning and these become the drivers for acquiring the knowledge they need to solve them, monitor the impact of their actions and adjust their practice accordingly (*Timperley et al 2008, Timperley 2011, p. 3*).

### Cycle of inquiry

The cycle of inquiry places professional learning within a process of **probing into student learning needs and identifying gaps in teacher knowledge to best support those needs**. The cycle establishes and reinforces a culture of learning, inquiry, evidence-seeking, and professional accountability.



Cycle of inquiry, *Timperley 2008*.

'Looking collaboratively and carefully at the work happening in their own classrooms leads teachers to deepen their understanding of that work through hearing others' perspectives and questions about it, which leads to the teacher developing new teaching approaches based on that understanding, which leads to change in their classroom practice, which leads to improved student learning' (*Allen & Blythe 2004, p. 30*).

## 2. A new performance and development process

### 2.1 Rationale

The 2010 Victorian Auditor General's Office (VAGO) report, *Managing Teacher Performance in Government Schools*, found that while the majority of Victorian schools had a performance and development process, many were failing to provide their teachers with the constructive feedback and support that teachers indicated they need and want. The VAGO report showed that about one in five teachers know little or nothing about how they are assessed and how to use the results in their next performance and development plan.

In the same report, 26 per cent of principals (about 400 schools) and 22 per cent of assessors expressed concern that they felt 'unprepared' or 'very unprepared' to identify underperformance. Conversely, principals also reported that the existing performance and development process – which is based upon a 'yes or no' successful performance evaluation – did not offer scope to identify and recognise high performers.

The majority of Australian teachers reported that evaluation of their work is largely done simply to fulfil administrative requirements and that their work has little impact on the way they teach in the classroom.

OECD 2009

These issues have also been documented in jurisdictions worldwide. For example, Darling-Hammond (2013, pp. 4–5) found that a group of expert teachers in the United States– the Accomplished California Teachers (ACT) network – identified similar problems with performance evaluation, including:

- Lack of consistent, clear standards of good practice
- Little or no consideration of student outcomes
- ‘Cookie-cutter’ procedures that do not consider teacher needs
- Detachment of teacher evaluation from professional development.

By addressing these issues, the new performance and development process aims to improve upon the existing performance and development processes of Victorian schools to ensure a strong professional learning culture is fostered in every school.

Drawing on research by leading experts and practitioners in the field, the new process draws on the best evidence of learning cultures in many Victorian schools, and seeks to expand such cultures of peer observation, evaluation and feedback to all schools to accelerate improvements in outcomes for students.

## 2.2 Key components of the new process

The following section outlines the six key components of the new approach – the balanced scorecard approach; performance and development dimensions; SMART goal methodology; evidence; feedback; assessment and decision making; and capacity to differentiate.

Support for schools is outlined in *section 3*.

### 2.2.1 Balanced scorecard approach

The new performance and development process adopts a balanced scorecard approach for principals and teachers. Developed by Kaplan and Norton at Harvard University in the early 1990s, balanced scorecards are one of the most widely adopted performance management frameworks reported in the 2013 Management Tools and Trends, published by Bain and Company (*Chapman, Hopwood & Shields 2009, Rigby & Bilodeau 2013*). They have been used in business, government and community organisations around the world and in numerous school jurisdictions to align the activities of an organisation to its strategic vision.

The balanced scorecard approach takes into account the full range of professional practice and allows professional assessment across four performance and development dimensions. It addresses the performance evaluation issues listed above. In particular, it promotes:

- **Consistency** – by implementing a state-wide performance and development process across every Victorian Government school will provide greater consistency in approach and ensure all teachers have a meaningful plan and receive feedback on their performance.
- **Transparency** – by documenting what is considered important in a school and providing the opportunity for open and substantive conversations between staff members and their reviewers about expectations for success and professional development needs.
- **Professional Agency** – by empowering staff members to devise their own annual performance and development goals, identify evidence, and identify their own professional development needs, aligned with the strategic goals and priorities of the school and student learning needs. These will be developed in conversation with their reviewer. It empowers schools to develop school-based professional learning with multiple sources of feedback, the use of a portfolio of evidence and flexibility through weightings, with principals having the final decision on performance and development outcomes for principals.
- **Collective efficacy** – by aligning to accountability processes through the School Performance Framework (School Strategic Plan, Annual Implementation Plan). It promotes the collective responsibility among all staff for the achievement of school goals and priorities and the outcomes of all students. (see pp. 6–7).

Balanced scorecards will be the guiding construct for the performance and development plans of principals and teachers in the new performance and development process.

### 2.2.2 Performance and development dimensions

The new performance and development process comprises four performance and development dimensions for each class of employee – principal class and teachers. Staff will be assessed against these across Victoria.

Teacher dimensions comprise:

1. Student outcomes
2. Professional knowledge
3. Professional practice
4. Professional engagement.

Teachers will be expected to set performance and development goals and use the AITSL Australian Professional Standards for Teachers for each career stage as benchmarks. Each teacher will be required to demonstrate that they have met the Australian Standards at the appropriate level (matched to their classification) in their individually developed goals.

For principal class employees, performance dimensions will be aligned with Victorian priorities and the AITSL Australian Principal Standard.

Principal class dimensions comprise:

1. School and student outcomes
2. Leadership of quality teaching and life-long learning
3. Strategic resource management
4. Strengthening community and system engagement.

Principal class employees will also set annual goals for their own performance and development and use the Australian Professional Standard for Principals as a benchmark. Principals can use the 360° and self-assessment surveys as a useful starting point to get an indication of their current performance based on feedback from multiple sources.

### 2.2.3 SMART goal methodology

Identifying the specific learning needs of each teacher and school leader is central to effective performance and development. Under the new process teachers and principals will be expected to formulate individual performance and development goals across each performance dimension.

Developed in consultation with principals or reviewers, performance and development goals will be aligned to the school strategic plan, annual implementation plan and focused on student learning needs. Goals should be clear, focused on student learning needs and aligned to school strategic goals (see '*Cycle of inquiry*' p.11). Performance and development goals should be stretch goals that follow the 'SMART goal' methodology – specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound.

The SMART goal method synthesises various aspects of effective performance and development. It builds important skills including identifying areas for improvement; formulating clear expectations for success; collecting evidence for determining success; and the process of developing goals in consultation with a principal or reviewer, which reinforces a transparent and open dialogue about successful performance and targeted development.



## 2.2.4 Evidence

Evidence has the potential to empower individuals to make meaningful and deliberate changes to increase their professional capacity and efficacy, demonstrated in particular by Timperley's 'cycle of inquiry'. Under the new process, evidence will play an important role in enhancing both individual and school capability and will be used to share and acknowledge achievements within and between schools, and to promote a culture of continuous improvement and professional growth.

[Educators] must be hungry for evidence of student learning and use that evidence to drive continuous improvement...

*Dufour and Marzano 2011, p.24*

For teachers, leaders, schools and for the system as a whole, the availability and use of quality evidence will be essential in monitoring progress and collective impact on improved student learning. For teachers working in classrooms, this means access to quality assessment tools to support the diagnosis of student learning needs, monitor the impact of instruction and identify progress. Valid and reliable evidence of student learning will also function as a source of information to guide teachers' self-evaluation and to feed into the performance and development cycle.

Utilising self-assessment tools, teachers will be empowered to provide evidence of their improved practice that demonstrates their progress and positive impact on enhancing student outcomes. School leaders will ensure that the gathering of quality data about student learning outcomes is part of the teaching and learning process within every classroom.

Under the new process, principals and teachers are required to demonstrate evidence of achievement of their performance and development goals. Measures may include evidence of student assessment and learning, as well as evidence of teacher practices derived from observations, video footage, artifacts and student surveys. Evidence may include<sup>5</sup>:

- peer and student feedback
- classroom observation and feedback
- evidence of scope and sequence and documented curriculum planning
- class assessments against AusVELS
- portfolios of student work
- on-demand assessments
- VCE assessments and data
- moderated teacher assessments.

Effective systems have developed an integrated set of measures that show what teachers do and what happens as a result.

*Darling-Hammond et al. 2011, p.10*

## 2.2.5 Feedback

The research is compelling – high quality feedback is a key driver of improved performance in individuals and organisations. Feedback, conceptualised by Hattie and Timperley (2007, p. 81) as 'information provided by an agent regarding aspects of one's performance or understanding', is central to performance and development. Quality feedback is an investment in improvement. In the new process, timely and multiple sources of feedback will be provided to all school staff.

Performers can only adjust their performance successfully if the information fed back to them is stable, accurate, and trustworthy.

*Wiggins 2012, p.13*

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<sup>5</sup> This list is by no means exhaustive; a broad range of evidence can be used to demonstrate achievement of performance and development goals. The identification of appropriate evidence for each goal is at the discretion of a principal or teacher and their reviewer.

Both verbal and written feedback should be provided to principal class employees and teachers. Informal feedback is encouraged throughout the cycle – from the reviewer, colleagues, peers, parents and students – to encourage continual reflection and improvement from all lenses of the learning environment. Jensen (2011) recommends that schools use between four to eight methods found to be the most effective in assessing and developing teaching and learning:

- student performance and assessments
- peer observation and collaboration
- direct observation of classroom teaching and learning
- student surveys
- parent surveys
- 360-degree assessment
- self-assessment
- external structured observation.

Fostering a culture of peer and student feedback has been shown to be transformative. One recent study found that giving secondary school teachers frequent observational feedback based on the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) boosted their students' achievement by the equivalent of moving from the 50<sup>th</sup> to the 59<sup>th</sup> percentile on Virginia's state tests (*Gerald 2012, p. 3*).

The new process will introduce more opportunities for peer observation and foster a culture of feedback that encourages teachers to work together to inquire into their practice, gather and reflect on evidence, to progress their practice and to strengthen the trust that builds a professional learning community.

If we want students to learn more, teachers must become students of their own teaching.

*Kane 2013*

### *Learner voice and agency*

Student voice will be emphasised as a source of feedback in the new performance and development process. Researchers from the MET project have found that student survey results correlated as strongly with predictions about student learning as classroom observations did, and that they proved a more reliable measure than observations alone. Researchers wrote, 'the average student knows effective teaching when he or she experiences it' (2012, p. 1).

Utilising student voice as evidence encourages a dialogue between teachers, school leaders and their students. Student voice is a valuable tool for evaluating the efficacy of teaching practices and encourages a culture of reflective practice within schools.

The *Towards Victoria as a Learning Community* position paper identifies peers and students as key observers (other than the principal or reviewer) in providing feedback to teachers, ensuring collective and reciprocal responsibility for improved teaching and learning, due consideration of student voice, and professional collaboration directly related to teacher practice and student learning (2012, p. 11).

Principals and school leaders will be supported with training and tools which will equip them to provide constructive and meaningful feedback to support teachers in meeting the needs of diverse and complex student and school communities.

### **2.2.6 Assessment and decision-making**

The new performance and development process introduces a system of review and decision-making which supports a strong professional learning culture and reinforces strong internal norms of professional accountability.

Evaluation of performance will be based on a comparison of an individual's demonstrated achievements against their own agreed performance and development goals at an end-cycle performance review with the principal or reviewer.

Studies have shown that participation in performance assessment based on national standards that actively engage teachers in their own performance and development not only reinforce a professional culture which values accountability, but also leads to significant learning for teachers and staff in the process.

Performance assessment for teachers – including the National Board Certification assessment process in the United States and the Connecticut BEST assessment – that require teachers to compile a comprehensive portfolio of evidence for their teaching objectives, practices and assessments against core standards for teaching have been found to stimulate improvement in their professional practice (*Darling-Hammond 2013, p. 27, Darling-Hammond, Amrein-Beardsley et al. 2011, p. 8*). These studies show that effective performance assessment of teachers 'both document and help teachers develop greater effectiveness' (*Darling-Hammond 2013, p. 27*).

Meaningful appraisal is geared to teacher development and improvements in learning. It helps teachers improve their teaching skills by identifying and developing specific aspects of their teaching. It improves the way they relate to students and colleagues and their job satisfaction, and has a large impact on student outcomes.

*Jensen 2011, p. 7*

By requiring teachers and school leaders to engage in the process of evidence-collection, assessment and decision making, the new process encourages teacher effectiveness.

### 2.2.7 Capacity to differentiate

To provide a mechanism for meaningful performance assessment and recognition, end-cycle performance reviews will be supported by the introduction of a four point differentiated scale of performance, establishing a mechanism for differentiated assessment. The outcomes will include definitions of each level to assist the principal or reviewer to make consistent, evidence-based and objective performance and development decisions in their school context.

Expectations for success will be established during the planning stage of the performance and development cycle, so that every staff member being reviewed clearly understands and agrees to what is required of them and is committed to achieving these expectations.

Differentiated performance and development assessments require reviewers to make meaningful distinctions in performance and development according to school expectations, local context, a teacher's career stage and his or her individualised development goals. It acknowledges that every teacher is different and that every school context is unique, thereby promoting a fair process both within schools and between schools.

The inclusion of a performance and development outcome for staff members who have *exceeded* set expectations provides acknowledgement and recognition of high performance and exceptional practice across the school system.

### 3. Support for schools

Vital to effective performance and development processes are the supporting structures and resources that enable principals and teachers to understand and participate in the new process.

#### 3.1 Tools and resources

The Department will support the new performance and development process by:

- developing a set of clear, high expectations to guide professional practice in all schools
- establishing a set of evidence-based expectations for observation and feedback to sustain professional practice in schools
- developing resources to support collaborative professional practice in schools and new accountability arrangements that will reflect, encourage and uphold these expectations
- providing training at key points of the cycle, including practice-based learning modules to help principals and school leaders and teachers understand the Balanced Scorecard, have meaningful performance conversations and make evidence-based performance decisions
- providing short, targeted learning modules to provide more in-depth support and capability building for each role, across all stages of the performance and development cycle
- providing resources to develop the capability of performance and development of assessors
- providing all schools with an instructional model tool to develop or adopt a theoretically-informed, evidence-based teaching practice model that best fits their circumstances. This resource will develop a shared understanding of quality pedagogy and will be a vital tool for schools to use in the new performance and development process
- developing the Victorian Professional Practice Framework – a framework encompassing all aspects of professional practice that will function as an online repository for high quality advice, tools, resources, standards and strategies that the Department has developed or sourced to assist all school practitioners in different areas of professional practice.

### 4. Towards a self-improving system

The new process will begin in Term 2, 2014. The performance and development cycle for 2014 will be the first to follow the new process and will commence in May 2014. To assist in implementation, supporting documentation and resources for schools will be available at this time.

The objective of implementing a new performance and development process is to improve student learning outcomes across Victoria. The three complementary components – performance and development; professional culture and professional development – will bring benefits to:

- Students – through increased opportunities for student voice to be incorporated into student learning and evidence of learning to be gathered and used to support further learning
- Teachers – through increased engagement in individual learning opportunities and support for developing new skills and enhancing existing capabilities; and by creating a shared commitment to peer learning
- School leaders – through the development and promotion of a professional learning culture that focuses a shared understanding of, and commitment to, continuous improvement and mutual support
- Parents – by sharing feedback and maximising their engagement in their children's learning at all stages.

Effective performance and development provides the link between student growth and teaching quality. If implemented with trust, care, respect and professional diligence, it improves student outcomes by orienting feedback to the purposeful development of professional practice, articulated through performance and development plans.

This cycle of development and feedback fosters a school system of continuous learning and engagement, by students, staff, and school leadership. It promotes collaborative professional practice within and between schools to increase system capacity. In this sense effective and meaningful performance and development facilitates a *self-improving* system of ongoing development where teachers, school leaders and other members of a school's community learn from one another and with one another to meet the learning needs of their students (Hargreaves 2011, p. 4).<sup>6</sup>

By forging a sense of collaborative learning across every Victorian school we aim to develop a professional culture that will help realise the full potential of every school leader and teacher, and lift the achievement, wellbeing and engagement of all students in our Victorian learning community.

## 5. Further information

The other papers in the series can be viewed online. For the first paper, *Professional Practice and Performance for Improved Learning: Overview*, click [here](#). The second paper: *Professional Practice and Performance for Improved Learning: School Accountability* can be viewed [here](#).

Other useful links include:

- [From New Directions to Action: World Class Teaching and School Leadership](#)
- [Towards Victoria as a Learning Community](#)
- Victoria as a Learning Community: [Action Plan](#)
- The Victoria as a Learning Community [website](#)
- [The Compact : Roles and Responsibilities in Victorian government school education](#)
- [The Bastow Institute of Educational Leadership](#)

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<sup>6</sup> See also Hargreaves 2012.

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