

# **PURPOSEFUL COLLABORATION COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY LEARNING IMPACT**

**PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE ELEMENTS**

VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS AGREEMENT 2017





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# FOREWORD

When asked why they chose teaching, most teachers say, ‘to make a positive difference to children’s lives.’ Choosing teaching is choosing a moral purpose to help children thrive in our fast-changing world. To keep up, children need to learn, adapt and improve throughout their lives. Every teacher preparing them for the future needs to keep learning, adapting and improving too.

Every Victorian government school teacher can now benefit from the three professional practice elements in the Victorian Government Schools Agreement 2017, which also guarantees teacher pay and conditions. The professional practice elements allocate more time and more support to the continuing task of improving professional practice.

The three professional practice elements build on school improvement foundations laid by the Education State.<sup>1</sup>

The *Framework for Improving Student Outcomes* has centred every school’s Annual Implementation Plan on student learning. Teachers and school leaders now use the common language of the *Framework for Improving Student Outcomes* introduced to build practice excellence, and to embed a culture of assessing the learning impact of teaching programs. The innovative Victorian Curriculum F–10 underpins teaching and learning programs that include a strong emphasis on personal and social skills, thinking skills and new areas of learning such as computational thinking.<sup>2</sup> The newly released *Literacy and Numeracy Strategy*, and *High Impact Teaching Strategies*, offer grounded support for effective teaching of foundational literacy and numeracy skills.

Education State initiatives like these are based on the best available evidence about what works to lift student outcomes. These initiatives bring Victoria to the cusp of a period of extraordinary opportunity for teachers and students. The three professional practice elements are strategic and practical. Together, the elements create opportunities for teachers to improve their professional practice by increasing time available for this important work, and by supporting teachers to collaborate.

Collaborative professional practice heightens the impact individual teachers—even the most accomplished—have on student learning. By inquiring as part of a team about how to improve their teaching and engaging in peer observation, individual teachers benefit from sharing their insights and experiences with colleagues.

The collective appetite for professional practice is the difference between good and great teaching. Extended to every school in Victoria, it is the difference between a good and a great school system.

Our children’s futures depend on our professional expertise and our collective commitment to ensure all students learn and progress.

**Bruce Armstrong**

**Deputy Secretary  
Regional Services Group**

<sup>1</sup> Education State: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/educationstate/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> Computational thinking: <http://www.bastow.vic.edu.au/Research/Bastow-Horizon-Thought-Leadership-ebook-Issue-6.pdf>

# THE PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE ELEMENTS

## VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS AGREEMENT 2017

### **Four days a year for professional practice**

- Teachers have four days a year (one per term) released from scheduled duties to further focus on the improved delivery of high quality teaching and learning.
- These days are in addition to existing student-free days.

### **Reconfiguring the working week to focus on teaching**

- The new model provides time (30 hours for teachers with the maximum face-to-face teaching load) for teachers to focus on the work directly related to the teaching and learning program of their students and class(es).
- The existing limit on face-to-face teaching is retained.
- The remaining eight hours in the working week for a full time teacher (pro rata for part time teachers) is available for other activities (such as yard duty, meetings, other duties and lunch). This time can be increased for teachers with leadership, management, or other significant responsibilities by reducing their face-to-face teaching load.

### **New classroom-based learning specialists to support teachers to improve their practice**

- The new classification provides a career pathway for highly skilled teachers who want to stay in the classroom and work with other teachers to improve their practice.
- Across the system 3,000 learning specialists will be appointed.

The professional practice elements outlined above must be implemented consistent with the relevant Victorian Government Schools Agreement 2017 clauses. Taken together, the professional practice elements create a ground breaking opportunity to place quality teaching at the heart of our approach to making Victoria the Education State. They recognise that all teachers need to be provided with time and support to focus on delivering high quality teaching and learning for all students.

# THE OPPORTUNITY FOR TEACHERS

In the Education State, every member of the system—teachers, education support staff, school leaders, regional and central staff supporting schools—is working collaboratively to improve the quality of education experienced by our students. We have a common motivation for working together. Only together can we fulfil a shared moral purpose of ensuring every student develops the knowledge, capabilities and attributes that position them to manage their distinctive futures with confidence.

Many schools have already invested significant time, planning and resources into improving their school and teaching practice. Some schools are already participating in a more formal approach to collaborative professional practice through the Victorian Professional Learning Communities initiative. These schools' Annual Implementation Plans set the improvement focus of teacher teams—the building blocks of Professional Learning Communities. In turn, these teams use the *Framework for Improving Student Outcomes* improvement cycle to connect gaps in students' learning with gaps in teachers' learning. They identify learning opportunities to close these gaps. The new teacher professional practice opportunities build on the foundations laid by these Education State initiatives and provide the time and supports for all schools to enhance student learning through collaborative professional practice.

In your school, collaborative practice builds upon and informs the individual practice of each teacher, and the professional practice elements of the Victorian Government Schools Agreement 2017 reflect increased support for individual teachers.

This support is provided in a context that recognises the increasingly complex role of teachers. This role involves deploying an array of pedagogies to accommodate the range of student learning needs and continuously reflecting on the impact they are having on student learning. Also recognised is the overwhelming evidence that tells us that the most effective teaching practice is built through an active and focused collaborative culture.

The professional practice elements support the development of both individual and collective competencies. Their inclusion in the Agreement is a recognition that all teachers need to be supported by their school and the system to have the time, tools and training in order to deliver high quality teaching and learning for every student. High quality teaching that uses evidence of student learning to inform and improve teaching practice involves a balance between consistent practice (achieved through collective agreement on what quality teaching practice entails) and individual teacher practice.<sup>3</sup>

The three professional practice elements explicitly recognise that more students can achieve excellence throughout their lives if all our work is organised around supporting professional practice that privileges purposeful collaboration, collective responsibility and learning impact.

## Purposeful collaboration

*Collaboration is a powerful way to deepen educator capacity, to increase the total value of the professional capital in the school, and to harness the power of the collective.*

Lyn Sharratt and Beate Planche<sup>4</sup>

Collaborative professional practice has a clear moral purpose: to increase student learning. It creates a culture of improvement, underpinned by a shared commitment to, and understanding of, high quality teaching practice. A common language of learning standards and progress enables teachers to work together to challenge and support each other, and track student progress over time. To improve the capacity of all teachers to deliver consistent, high quality teaching and learning in every classroom, teachers need to work together to collect and evaluate evidence of student learning and use this to make informed decisions about their teaching.<sup>5</sup>

3 Goss, P. & Hunter, J. 2015, *Targeted teaching: How better use of data can improve student learning*. Grattan Institute.

4 Sharratt, L. & Planche, B. 2016, *Leading Collaborative Learning: Empowering Excellence*. Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin.

5 Goss, P. & Hunter, J. 2015, *Targeted teaching: How better use of data can improve student learning*. Grattan Institute, pp. 41.

This kind of purposeful, supportive collaboration extends teacher practice to heights impossible to scale alone.<sup>6</sup>

In collaborating with purpose teachers can, for example:

- reflect on their current practice to identify both strengths and areas for improvement, share their strengths with their teams, and collaboratively design opportunities for improvement
- jointly create a unit of work to develop deep learning experiences, common assessment tasks, and a consistent approach to moderating student work
- gather evidence from several classrooms, including through peer observation, about how a particular literacy or numeracy skill is currently taught. Then with their colleagues design a common teaching approach comprising both current strategies that are working, and new strategies drawn from best practice research.

### Collective responsibility

*A strong normative environment inside the school, based on a belief in the capacity and efficacy of teachers and principals to influence student learning, coupled with the knowledge and skills necessary to act on those beliefs are prior conditions...*

Charles Abelman and Richard Elmore<sup>7</sup>

Teachers believe they make a difference to children's lives and feel personal responsibility for every student in their classes. When teachers share what they are doing in their own classes with colleagues, and look for opportunities for purposeful collaboration, they contribute to a school culture of collective responsibility.

Collective responsibility is the important shift towards improving instructional practices. Teacher collective responsibility lays the foundations for collective efficacy and, therefore, gains in student achievement.<sup>8</sup>

School leaders will work with teachers in their schools to identify professional practice priorities that are consistent with departmental and school priorities. In the Education State, this means improvement initiatives drawn from the *Framework for Improving Student Outcomes*, captured in the school's Strategic and Annual Implementation Plans, and reflected in everyone's Performance and Development Plans.

In contributing to school improvement priorities, individual teachers could:

- use peer observation and feedback, student feedback and self-reflection to extend their professional practice
- co-design learning programs using the Victorian Curriculum F-10 to establish learning goals and extend all students
- reflect on their own planning for assessment, including the use of explicit criteria, and work with colleagues to moderate the assessment tasks to strengthen accuracy and validity
- work with a colleague with specialist data expertise to interpret data from multiple sources, including the Insight Assessment Platform, to identify student achievement levels and determine future student learning needs
- build on their existing knowledge and skill in relation to one or two of the *High Impact Teaching Strategies*<sup>9</sup>
- work with students to empower them to take ownership of their own learning, supporting self-regulation and building self-efficacy.

6 Hattie, J. 2015, 'The applicability of visible learning to higher education', *Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Psychology*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 79-91.

7 Abelman, C. & Elmore, R. 1999, *When accountability knocks, will anyone answer?* Philadelphia: Consortium for Policy Research in Education, pp. 43. Retrieved from: [http://repository.upenn.edu/cpre\\_researchreports/93](http://repository.upenn.edu/cpre_researchreports/93)

8 Goddard, R. D., Goddard, Y.L., Kim, E. S. & Miller, R. 2015, 'A theoretical and empirical analysis of the roles of instructional leadership, teacher collaboration, and collective efficacy beliefs in support of student learning', *American Journal of Education*, vol. 121, pp. 501-530.

9 *High Impact Teaching Strategies*: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/teachers/support/highimpactteachstrat.pdf>

## Impacting learning

*Accomplishing the maximum impact on student learning depends on teams of teachers working together, with excellent leaders or coaches, agreeing on worthwhile outcomes, setting high expectations, knowing the students' starting and desired success in learning, seeking evidence continually about their impact on all students, modifying their teaching in light of this evaluation, and joining in the success of truly making a difference to student outcomes.*

John Hattie<sup>10</sup>

The rate of student learning increases when teachers in collaborative teams support one another to develop their skills in specific teaching strategies. Students learn even faster when highly skilled teachers lead collaborative teams focused on understanding what is working and why. They then proactively intervene with evidence-based approaches when students are behind the expected level to ensure that they make progress.

The new learning specialist role opens up a career pathway for highly skilled teachers who want more opportunities to demonstrate and model high quality teaching practice in their classroom, to support their colleagues to deepen their professional knowledge, expand their pedagogical repertoire and foster an ethic of reflective practice focused on continuous improvement.

School leadership and the values, systems and supports that they promote and embed within their everyday work will lay the foundations for learning specialists to lead teacher learning. Their activity could involve, for example:

- modelling a research-based teaching strategy, such as one of the *High Impact Teaching Strategies*,<sup>11</sup> and working with colleagues to incorporate into their teaching practice
- improving their colleagues' capacity to use assessment data to inform teaching and interventions that ensure student progress
- developing common assessment tasks and moderation processes that increase consistency and validity of teacher judgements relating to Victorian Curriculum F–10 learning progressions.

These activities are best pursued as part of professional learning communities, where teachers can learn in a culture characterised by positivity, curiosity, creativity and human flourishing.

<sup>10</sup> Hattie, J. 2012, *Visible learning for teachers: Maximizing impact on learning*. Oxford: Routledge.

<sup>11</sup> *High Impact Teaching Strategies*: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/teachers/support/highimpactteachstrat.pdf>



# OUR CHILDREN'S FUTURE

Our moral purpose is clear: to enhance the learning of every student and break the link between background and achievement. The *Framework for Improving Student Outcomes* gives schools clear direction to focus on a limited number of high impact improvement priorities. Using the *Framework for Improving Student Outcomes* improvement cycle, schools combine robust evidence with effective inquiry processes to highlight strengths and identify areas of existing practice that need improvement.


## FRAMEWORK FOR IMPROVING STUDENT OUTCOMES

Emphasis on *Excellence in teaching and learning*



## IMPROVEMENT CYCLE





In contributing to the school's Annual Implementation Plan, teachers can use the Agreement's three professional practice elements to reflect on and refine their individual practice across the core areas of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment of student learning. The reflections and subsequent professional learning activities such as observation, peer review and moderation, will contribute to their goals for improvement in their Performance and Development Plans.

Teachers help establish and maintain a student-centred professional learning culture by working together to learn and apply new and better approaches to improve student learning. Cultures like this recognise that effective teacher professional learning is a core lever for improving student learning, and that the most effective teacher professional learning is achieved through purposeful collaboration, collective responsibility and a focus on learning impact.

In high performance learning cultures, teachers are inquisitive, increasingly knowledgeable and well informed about becoming better practitioners together.<sup>12</sup> In being open to continually improving their practice to better prepare students for an uncertain but exciting future, teachers are at the forefront of our collective effort to create the next generation of curious, confident and competent citizens. Our children's futures depend on our expertise, and our collective commitment to ensure all students learn and progress.

**We welcome your views on the professional practice elements. To share your ideas and experiences, please get in touch by email:**  
[professional.practice@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:professional.practice@edumail.vic.gov.au)

<sup>12</sup> Hargreaves, A. & Fullan, M. 2012, *Professional Capital: Transforming Teaching in Every School*. Teachers College Press, New York & Toronto, pp. 127.

# PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE GUIDANCE

To learn more about...	Resource	Availability
Planning and implementing learning programs	<i>High Impact Teaching Strategies</i> Literacy Teaching Resource— F-6 core reading strategies and expert videos	Available now <sup>13</sup> Term 4, 2017
Teaching literacy and numeracy	Victorian Literacy Portal Victorian Numeracy Portal Wolfram Software Suite	Available now <sup>14</sup> Available now <sup>15</sup> Available now <sup>16</sup>
Assessing student learning	<i>Evaluating My Impact</i> for Professional Learning Communities—Teacher assessments of student learning  Literacy and Numeracy Assessment and Data Guide	Term 4, 2017  Term 4, 2017
Identifying and planning professional learning needs	<i>Evaluating My Impact</i> for Professional Learning Communities—Student perception  Guidance on the effective use of professional practice days	Term 4, 2017  Term 3, 2017
Working with colleagues to improve practice	Collaborative practice protocols	Term 4, 2017
Improving particular aspects of practice by observing, and being observed by, colleagues	<i>Evaluating My Impact</i> for Professional Learning Communities—Classroom observation  Guidance on peer observation	Term 4, 2017  Term 4, 2017
Supporting the learning of other teachers	Capability support for learning specialists Leading Effective Professional Learning Communities: Guidance	Term 1, 2018 2018



<sup>13</sup> *High Impact Teaching Strategies*: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/teachers/support/highimpactteachstrat.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> Victorian Literacy Portal: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/support/literacy/Pages/default.aspx?Redirect=1>

<sup>15</sup> Victorian Numeracy Portal: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/learningdev/vicstem/Pages/numeracyportal.aspx>

<sup>16</sup> Wolfram Software Suite: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/learningdev/vicstem/Pages/wolframsoftware.aspx>

*Our children's futures and that of the planet on which we live demands a system of education that produces young people who are **creative, critical, cultured, compassionate and courageous**; and are able to demonstrate that in their daily lives. On their behalf, as educators and parents **we should settle for nothing less.***

Joan Dalton and David Anderson<sup>17</sup>

