

LEARNING SPECIALISTS: BUILDING EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

OVERVIEW

- The new learning specialist position provides a career pathway for highly skilled teachers who want to stay in the classroom **and** work with other teachers to improve their practice.
- Learning specialists will model excellence in teaching and learning and lead collaborative inquiry focused on improving student learning outcomes.
- Schools can plan their use of the learning specialists through their School Strategic Plan (SSP) and the Annual Implementation Plan (AIP).
- Learning specialists can be advertised and recruited during Term 4 2017 for commencement in 2018.

ROLE OF THE LEARNING SPECIALIST

From the commencement of the 2018 school year the *Victorian Government Schools Agreement 2017* (VGSA 2017) introduces a new promotion position, the learning specialist, at the same level as the leading teacher classification.

The learning specialist role is aimed at building excellence in teaching and learning within the teaching service.

Learning specialists will be highly skilled classroom practitioners who continue to spend the majority of their time in the classroom.

Learning specialists will have deep knowledge and expertise in high quality teaching and learning and have a range of responsibilities as per Schedule 2 of the VGSA 2017.

EFFECTIVE LEARNING SPECIALISTS

Learning specialists lead and facilitate continuous learning to improve the skill, knowledge and effectiveness of the teaching workforce.

Learning specialist roles will be effective when:

- they are part of a whole-school approach to creating a high performance learning culture
- they have the professional knowledge and skills to influence other teachers
- they are exemplary classroom practitioners who can model classroom practice including through teaching demonstration lessons
- they are instructional leaders who can support principals by leading teacher professional learning.

'The teacher leader understands the evolving nature of teaching and learning, established and emerging technologies, and the school community. The teacher leader uses this knowledge to promote, design, and facilitate job-embedded professional learning aligned with school improvement goals.'

Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium¹

¹ *Teacher Leader Model Standards*: <http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/TeacherLeaderModelStandards2011.pdf>

LEADING THE LEARNING OF OTHER TEACHERS

Learning specialists will support the learning of other teachers through:

- providing opportunities for colleagues to observe high-quality teaching and to reflect on these observations
- leading purposeful, data-informed collaborative inquiry focused on improving student learning outcomes
- modelling High Impact Teaching Strategies and supporting other teachers to embed these strategies in their own practice.

Recruitment Online will be updated to enable advertisement of learning specialist positions from the commencement of Term 4 2017 for take up in 2018.

Separate advice from the Department is available on [HRWeb and Recruitment Online](#) regarding the selection processes for the teaching service, selection criteria and the appropriate use of higher duties.

When considering the appointment of learning specialists, schools need to consider whether candidates have the capabilities required for this role, as described in Schedule 2 of the VGSA 2017.

PLANNING FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Learning specialists provide capacity within schools to strengthen leadership structures to improve professional learning systems.

The [Organisation Design Guide for Victorian School Leaders](#) provides planning principles that can support the introduction of learning specialist roles into a school's leadership structure.

The School Strategic Plan (SSP) and the Annual Implementation Plan (AIP) are the mechanisms to plan the use of learning specialist positions.

USING RESOURCES TO ACHIEVE THE BEST OUTCOME FOR YOUR SCHOOL

Framework for Improving Student Outcomes

The Framework for Improving Student Outcomes (FISO) includes an Improvement Cycle related to [instructional and shared leadership](#). Creating a culture of working collaboratively to continuously improve teaching and learning is at its heart. The learning specialist role will be vital to ongoing implementation of the FISO and related Education State initiatives.

Victorian Professional Learning Communities Initiative

Over the next four years 800 Victorian Government schools will receive intensive implementation support that includes a comprehensive program of professional learning and expert advice from regionally-based teams. Participating schools can consider how best to use learning specialists to promote instructional leadership and implement the Victorian Professional Learning Communities (PLC) initiative.

OTHER SUPPORT

Frequently Asked Questions and other information can be found on the schools intranet at the following link: [Professional practice — Victorian Government Schools Agreement 2017](#).

For more information on learning specialists, please email: professional.practice@edumail.vic.gov.au