PEER OBSERVATION, FEEDBACK AND REFLECTION:
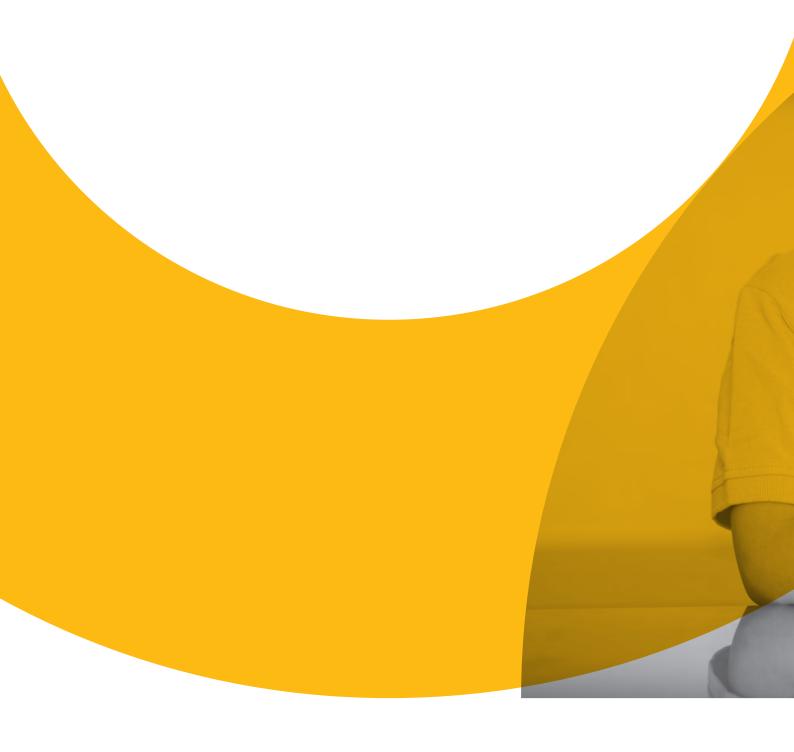## A GUIDE FOR PRINCIPALS AND SCHOOL LEADERS

Professional
Practice

THE
**EDUCATION
STATE**

VICTORIA
State
Government

Education
and Training

CONTENTS

We welcome your input. If you have any feedback on the peer observation guide, please share your feedback at professional.practice@edumail.vic.gov.au.

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide has been developed to support principals and school leaders to introduce and embed peer observation in schools. This guide is applicable to all school contexts.

Peer observation implemented under these guidelines is not to be used in any unsatisfactory performance procedure. Management of unsatisfactory performance is to be conducted under the Guidelines for Managing Complaints, Misconduct and Unsatisfactory Performance in the Teaching Service.

The use of this peer observation material is optional for schools. Where appropriate to the needs of the school, this guide can support the implementation and embedding of peer observation.

How these resources are structured

- A guide for principals and school leaders, which introduces peer observation, including feedback and reflection, as an improvement strategy to enhance student learning. This guide includes advice on the preconditions for successful peer observation and how to establish a culture that enables this practice to happen.
- A guide for teachers, which describes the stages and steps of peer observation. This includes information about what each phase involves, good techniques and practices, as well as advice for both the teacher being observed and the teacher who is observing. Examples and links to further resources are also included.
- Tools for peer observation: each phase in the cycle of peer observation includes an annotated template for teachers to inform their self reflection, pre observation conversation, observation, and post observation reflection and feedback. These tools are available on the Department's website at www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/practice/Pages/peerobservation.aspx.

INTRODUCTION TO PEER OBSERVATION
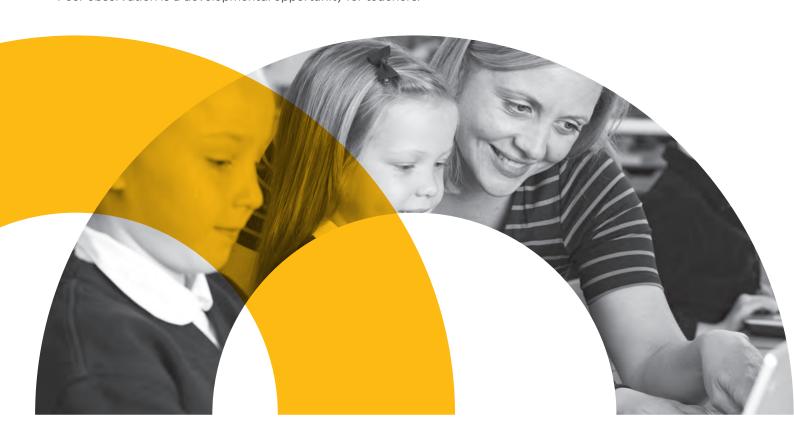
What is peer observation?

Peer observation involves teachers observing each other's practice and learning from one another, focusing on teachers' individual needs and the opportunity to both learn from others' practice and offer constructive feedback to peers. Peer observation aims to support the sharing of practice and builds self-awareness about the impact of one's teaching practice in order to affect change.[1]

Peer observation is a structured and negotiated way of teachers working together to refine and improve their practice, and can support teachers to enhance student learning when situated in a broader culture of collaboration, mutual trust and respect. To be successful, peer observations must have a specific focus, for example, lesson structure or the articulation of lesson objectives.[2]

Whole-school protocols and preconditions support peer observation to be structured and ensure that outcomes for staff and students are maximised. The Victorian Government Schools Agreement 2017 requires that arrangements for collaboration, peer observation including feedback and reflection, and coaching are the subject of consultation. To this end, school leaders should establish protocols, procedures and structures that support peer observation as a core part of school-based professional learning, using the school's agreed consultative arrangements.

Peer observation is a developmental opportunity for teachers.

> To be successful, peer observations must have a specific focus, for example, lesson structure or the articulation of lesson objectives.

[1]   Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) 'How-to Guide: Peer observation'
      https://www.aitsl.edu.au/tools-resources/resource/peer-observation
[2]   Ibid.

Why engage in peer observation?

Peer observation enables teachers to build their individual capability and develop a shared understanding of effective classroom practice. It also allows teachers to build their capability in giving and receiving feedback.

Research shows that when done well, peer observation, including feedback and reflection, has a high impact on improving professional practice and can be an important part of a teacher's professional development.[3] The Victorian Teaching and Learning Model (including the Practice Principles for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, the Pedagogical Model and the High Impact Teaching Strategies) can support teachers to determine the focus of peer observations. For example, areas of focus could include pedagogical approaches, curriculum planning, assessment strategies or opportunities for student voice and agency within the lesson.

Peer observation can benefit both the teacher being observed and the observer. Peer observation can:

- provide opportunities to discuss challenges and successes with trusted colleagues
- support the sharing of ideas and expertise among teachers
- build a community of trust through opening classroom practice to a wider audience
- support a focus on improving the impact of learning[4]
- contribute to the collective efficacy of the whole school.

What does the research tell us?

Classroom observation has become one of the most widely used sources of research internationally to give feedback to teachers.[5] There is extensive research on using peer observation to support individual teachers, teams of teachers and a whole-school instructional approach, as well as making a positive contribution to the collective efficacy and the educational culture of a school.[6]

Research about the efficacy and potential of peer observation points to benefits of accuracy, agency, adaptive expertise, collaboration, collective efficacy, impact on student learning and school culture.

ACCURACY — Macklin and Zbar have identified that, despite what many of us think, it is often the case that others have a better sense of our competence and performance than we have ourselves. Their work draws on the body of research by American academic David Dunning on ambiguity and self-evaluation to illustrate how self-perception tends towards overconfidence.[7]

AGENCY— Danielson found that "the conversations following an observation are the best opportunity to engage teachers in thinking through how they can strengthen their practice."[8] Smith and Starmer, drawing on the research of Timperley and Robinson, argue that peer observation provides greater opportunity to move away from a desire to tell teachers what to do and enables them instead to unpack their beliefs about practice. Observation needs to focus on teachers' learning, not remediation or inspection.[9]

3   DuFour, R., & Eaker, R. E. (1998), Professional learning communities at work: best practices for enhancing student achievement. Bloomington, Ind.: National Education Service; Alexandria, Va. ASCD, c1998.

4   Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership 'How-to Guide: Peer observation' https://www.aitsl.edu.au/tools-resources/resource/peer-observation

5   "Developing your school with Cambridge: A guide for school leaders" 6: Evaluating Teaching, Cambridge International http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/images/271311-evaluating-teaching.pdf

6   Danielson Charlotte, (2012) Teacher Evaluation: What's Fair? What's Effective? pp 32 – 37 in Educational Leadership Vol 70, No 3.

7   Macklin, P and Zbar, V., Driving School Improvement; a practical guide, ACER Press, 2017; Kruger, J and Dunning, D 1999, 'Unskilled and Unaware of It: How Difficulties in Recognizing One's Own Incompetence Lead to Inflated Self Assessments' Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, vol.77, no.6 , pp1121-1134.

8   Danielson Charlotte, (2012) Teacher Evaluation: What's Fair? What's Effective? pp 32 – 37 in Educational Leadership Vol 70, No 3.

9   Smith Ruth and Starmer Lisa, Building Adaptive expertise: Professional learning that works with teachers, not on them, Australian Educational Leader, Vol 39., No 4 2017; Timperley, H & Robinson, V 2002, Partnership: Focussing the Relationship on the Task of School Improvement, New Zealand Council for Educational Research

ADAPTIVE EXPERTISE — peer observation provides schools with a flexible approach which supports personalised and reflective professional learning that is based on trust and openness to learning. It enables teachers at different stages of their development and with different individual goals for improvement to gain new professional knowledge.[10]

COLLABORATION — the goal of schools is to improve practice in order to improve student engagement and learning. Collaboration facilitates this as peer observation enables teachers in learning teams or like contexts, such as 'Year 7' or 'Literacy', to inquire into their practice. It is central to helping each other improve in a school, and invites feedback on individuals' teaching practice that can enable them to improve and provides the opportunity to see others teach and provide them with feedback as well, and learn from their approach.[11] It is a valuable tool to contribute to informed whole-school approaches to teaching and learning.

COLLECTIVE EFFICACY — Smith and Starmer state that peer observation provides greater opportunity to move away from a desire to tell teachers what to do and instead enables teachers to draw on their own deep knowledge of the context and pedagogy that is most effective for their learners. Grimm, Kaufman and Doty suggest that "adaptive expertise is about being self-aware, having agency over your ability to make a difference and striving for the best outcomes for your students. Engaging in effective professional conversations can support you to learn from one another and develop collective agency".[12] Hattie cites collective teacher efficacy as the greatest influence on student learning, which was also a feature of studies by Goddard, Hoy and Woolfolk-Hoy.[13]

IMPACT ON STUDENT LEARNING — Teaching practice accounts for approximately 30 per cent of the variance in student learning. Therefore, what teachers know, do and care about is very powerful.[14] Providing opportunities for teachers to learn about teaching practices, share evidence-based methods, and to find out what is working and for whom will contribute to developing a culture that will make a difference to student outcomes.[15]

SCHOOL CULTURE — When classroom observation involves self-assessment, reflection on practice and professional conversation it can make a dramatic contribution to the educational culture of a school.[16] Through observing others and receiving feedback, good teaching practice can be spread throughout the entire school.[17] Leithwood and Beatty identify that the school climate and culture must be supportive in order for teaching and learning to be maximised.[18]

GOOD PRACTICE CAN BE OBSERVED — Danielson contends that while teaching is supported by a lot of work behind the scenes (planning, preparing, working with colleagues, organising, marking, reporting), the quintessential skill of teaching *is teaching*, and it can be observed.[19] Importantly, interactive work with students can be observed. The critical work of teachers happens in the classroom and artefacts of learning can be observed. Students' learning tasks and outcomes can be the subject of peer observations and identifying good practice through observations is a crucial part of professional feedback.[20] City, Elmore, Fiarman and Teitel establish the importance of focusing on learning content and tasks as a tool in improving teacher instruction and student learning.[21]

[10] Smith Ruth and Starmer Lisa, Building Adaptive expertise: Professional learning that works with teachers, not on them, Australian Educational Leader, Vol 39., No 4 2017

[11] Macklin, P and Zbar, V., Driving School Improvement; a practical guide, ACER Press, 2017

[12] AITSL, Enhancing Professional Conversations https://www.aitsl.edu.au/lead-develop/develop-others/coach-others/professional-conversations; Grimm, E, Kaufman, T & Doty, D 2014 'rethinking Classroom Observation', Educational Leadership, vol.71, no.8 pp24-29

[13] Hattie (2017) Video 'Collaborative Impact' at Cognitive Education "Collaborative Impact: Research and Practice Conference 2017" https://visible-learning.org/2017/05/video-john-hattie-collaborative-impact/; Goddard, R, Hoy, W & Woolfolk Hoy, A 2014 'Collective Efficacy Beliefs: Theoretical Developments, Empirical Evidence, and Future Directions' Educational Researcher vol. 33, no.3, pp3-13.

[14] Hattie, John, (2003) Teachers Make a Difference, What is the Research Evidence? ACER Conference Paper.

[15] Hattie, John (2009) Visible Learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement, Milton Park, Abingdon, Routledge, Taylor and Francis Publishers

[16] Danielson Charlotte, (2012) Teacher Evaluation: What's Fair? What's Effective? pp 32 – 37 in Educational Leadership Vol 70, No 3.

[17] Pamela Macklin and Vic Zbar, Driving School Improvement; a practical guide, ACER Press, 2017

[18] Leithwood, K. & B. Beatty (2008) Leading with Teacher Emotions in Mind. SAGE

[19] Danielson Charlotte, (2012) Teacher Evaluation: What's Fair? What's Effective? pp 32 – 37 in Educational Leadership Vol 70, No 3

[20] Ibid.

[21] City, E., Elmore, R., Fiarman, S. & L. Teitel (2009) "Instructional Rounds in Education: A Network Approach to Improving Teaching and Learning" Harvard Graduate School of Education

THE EDUCATION STATE AND PEER OBSERVATION

The aspiration to lift student outcomes across Victoria is at the heart of the Education State reforms. Quality teaching and school leadership are two powerful levers for achieving this aspiration. Achieving excellence in student outcomes in the Education State is about recognising, supporting and sharing best practice within Victorian government schools.

Key initiatives

Peer observation contributes to the Department's key initiatives as a strategy to support teacher professional learning and student learning. The following information illustrates how peer observation is aligned with these initiatives.

Victorian Government Schools Agreement 2017

The professional practice elements of the Victorian Government Schools Agreement 2017 create a groundbreaking opportunity to place quality teaching at the heart of our approach to making Victoria the Education State.

Peer observation is one area which teachers may choose to focus on for their professional practice days.

The Framework for Improving Student Outcomes

Creating a culture of working collaboratively to continuously improve teaching and learning is central to the Framework for Improving Student Outcomes (FISO). FISO articulates the critical role of the teacher and the importance of school culture in enhancing teacher practice and student learning.

Within the FISO Continua of Practice, the *Building practice excellence, Evidence based high-impact teaching strategies* and *Instructional and shared leadership* dimensions, and the FISO Continua for Improvement Cycle, feature references to the strategies of observation, reflection and feedback. The most relevant areas of the FISO Continua of Practice relating to peer observation have been included in Table 1.

Creating a culture of working collaboratively to continuously improve teaching and learning is central to the Framework for Improving Student Outcomes (FISO)

Table 1. Extract from the FISO Continua of Practice

EMERGING	EVOLVING	EMBEDDING	EXCELLING
FISO priority area: Excellence in Teaching and Learning			
FISO dimension: High-impact improvement initiative: Building practice excellence			
Professional learning is collaborative, involving reflection and feedback			
Teachers occasionally give and receive feedback with a focus on improving practice.	Teams monitor the impact of teaching strategies on student learning and adapt teaching to advance student progress. Teachers provide, seek out and receive feedback from peers and school leaders to improve teaching practice.	The school has explicit systems for collaboration, classroom observation, the modelling of effective practice and feedback. Teaching teams regularly observe and provide feedback on teaching, with support and input from leaders and input from students.	The school has established teaching teams dedicated to challenging and improving each other's practice.
Professional learning is ongoing, supported and fully integrated into the culture of the school			
		School leaders facilitate opportunities for staff to learn from each other and model continuous learning in their own practice.	
FISO dimension: Evidence based high-impact teaching strategies			
The school develops teacher knowledge of high impact strategies			
.	The school provides opportunities for teachers to observe and discuss best practice teaching. There is a shared language to describe agreed high-impact strategies.	Teachers have opportunities to observe skilled colleagues, trial and review new strategies, receive feedback and focused coaching to support changes to their practice.	
The school implements consistent and sustained high-impact teaching strategies			
	Teachers can identify their own pedagogy. They share challenges and reflect on practice and share self-assessment and feedback with some trusted colleagues.	Teachers demonstrate the confidence and skills to talk about quality teaching. They question their impact through analysing various data, are open to having their teaching reviewed, and are welcoming and responsive to thoughtful and constructive feedback.	Individuals and teams are open to critically evaluating their practice in a culture of trust and with a strong sense of collective efficacy – a belief that teachers are jointly responsible for ensuring success for all students.
The school monitors and evaluates its practice			
			School leaders work with teachers to evaluate the effectiveness of high-impact teaching strategies to refine curriculum, pedagogy and programs and plan for further improvement.
FISO priority area: Professional leadership			
FISO dimension: Instructional and shared leadership			
School leaders lead teaching and learning			
			Leaders model and demonstrate high levels of pedagogical knowledge and skill, including expert knowledge of evidence based teaching strategies.

Options for teachers to consider when choosing to focus on peer observation may include:

Practice Principles for Excellence in Teaching and Learning

The *Practice Principles for Excellence in Teaching and Learning*[22] (the Practice Principles) provide a starting point for reflection and discussion about teachers' professional practice. They can be used by the teacher as focus areas for peer observation and improvement in student learning outcomes.

The Practice Principles are based on a body of research and, as a whole, they provide a precise representation of practice excellence in the classroom.

For example, Action 7.4 in the Practice Principles notes that teachers should challenge and support each other to improve practice. The evidence of this action includes peer observations, including feedback and reflection, on teaching practice.

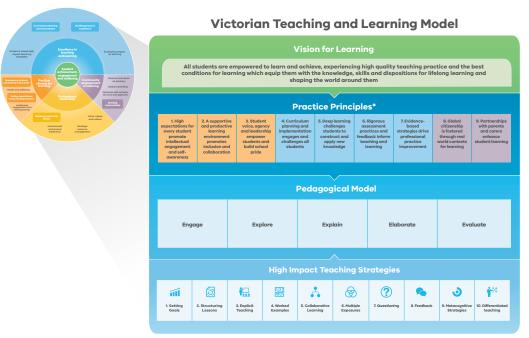## The High Impact Teaching Strategies

The High Impact Teaching Strategies (HITS)[23] are a suggested starting point for teachers to consider when planning peer observations. The HITS are 10 instructional strategies that, when implemented with fidelity, reliably increase student learning. While the HITS alone do not constitute a complete framework for professional practice, they are part of the full set of instructional practices that contribute to a comprehensive suite of resources.

The use of HITS across schools and networks will also facilitate the sharing of best practice and allow for continuous learning.

The HITS are linked to each other and connected to a broader repertoire of teaching skills and knowledge. They can be connected to collaboration between teachers in professional learning communities and integrated classroom and school planning around curriculum, instruction and assessment.

The key elements of the HITS provide examples of areas of teaching practice that individual teachers may choose to explore when engaging in peer observation. The relationship between the pedagogical resources is outlined in the image below.

Image 1: Victorian Teaching and Learning Model

*The Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) is an essential resource for primary school teachers. Abilities Based Learning and Education (ABLES) is an essential resource for specialist school teachers.

22 The Department of Education and Training (2017) Practice Principles for Excellence in Teaching and Learning www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/practice/Pages/principlesexcellence.aspx
23 The High Impact Teaching Strategies: Excellence in Teaching and Learning can be downloaded at http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/teachers/support/highimpactteachstrat.pdf

The Victorian Professional Learning Communities initiative

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are based on the notion that students learn more when their teachers work together. Through the Victorian PLC initiative, Victorian government schools are building a collaborative culture of continuous improvement in teaching and learning to improve outcomes for every student.

Peer observation in the PLC Maturity Matrix

Peer observation and collaborative practice is fundamental to PLCs and is a feature of the PLC Maturity Matrix. The matrix articulates the attributes of an effective PLC. For each element of an effective PLC, the Maturity Matrix provides indicative statements so that a school can self-assess its level of progress and set developmental goals. [24]

The high-impact improvement initiative of *Building practice excellence* is relevant to peer observation as it articulates how teachers work collaboratively through classroom observations, and give and receive feedback to achieve consistent instructional approaches. This continuum of practice from the PLC Maturity Matrix is included in Table 2.

Literacy and Numeracy Strategy

The Department's Literacy and Numeracy Strategy was developed to provide easily accessible, high quality, and differentiated literacy and numeracy support to Victorian teachers. Teachers can consider their literacy or numeracy teaching practices as a focus of their observations.

The *School Leaders' Guide to Improving Literacy and Numeracy Outcomes* provides guidance with respect to building a culture committed to continuous improvement, and supporting teachers to develop their knowledge and capacity to identify, implement and evaluate the use of evidence-based high-impact teaching strategies. The *School Leaders' Guide to Improving Literacy and Numeracy Outcomes* may inform the focus of peer observation activities.

Table 2. Excerpt from the PLC Maturity Matrix (Building practice excellence)

	EMERGING	EVOLVING	EMBEDDING	EXCELLING
Building practice excellence	Teachers work in isolation and define their practice individually. There is variation in quality of teaching across the school, with few opportunities to discuss and agree what constitutes excellence in teaching and learning. Collaborative strategies such as shared analysis of students' work sample, student feedback, peer observation are beginning to be established.	Teachers have high expectations for all students. Individually, teachers are inclusive and responsive to the individual needs of their students. However, the quality of teaching and learning is variable because there are no formal, agreed protocol of what constitutes excellent teaching.	The school has a clear instructional model that is based on research related to high-impact teaching strategies. All teachers follow the model which drives and informs the work of PLCs. Teachers are committed to improving their practice and actively seek feedback and support from each other. Curriculum and pedagogical expertise is celebrated and shared across the school.	Teacher are skilled in classroom observation, validating judgements using a range of evidence, and giving and receiving feedback in order to secure outstanding teaching and learning across their own and other schools, including the use of high-leverage approaches to address the important curriculum issues. PLCs support and challenge each other continuously to review the impact of their practices and approaches.

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[24] The Professional Learning Communities Maturity Matrix can be downloaded at http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/management/improvement/Pages/proflearncommunities.aspx#link56

Alignment with school priorities

The school strategic plan is the school's statement to its community about what it stands for and intends to do over the next four years to improve student outcomes. It defines what the school values most and sets out the school's goals, targets and key strategies for improvement.[25] The Practice Principles allow teachers to identify areas of professional development aligned to the school's Annual Implementation Plan, therefore contributing to the broader school improvement direction. Schools implementing peer observation in line with agreed school improvement priorities will strengthen personal and school improvement goals. Activities might include engaging peers and learning specialists in observation of the explicit teaching of language demands, introducing one of the High Impact Teaching Strategies, lesson pace, teacher feedback to students, student participation or the introduction of numeracy in physical education.

Approaches to peer observation as professional learning

Teachers may already be engaged in a range of professional activities which include observations. This section provides descriptions for some of the approaches used in schools. This guide could inform a current approach or could be used as a starting point for a new approach.

Classroom observations can occur in a range of forms and consist of teachers' instructional practices being observed by other teachers.

Learning walks might include professional learning community team observations and aim to reinforce a shared vision for high quality teaching and provide support to enable collective responsibility for achieving school-wide priorities.

Digital recording might include individual observations and team analysis using technology to review and evaluate instructional practice, and to contribute to collaborative team learning. Protocols around the use, storage and management of digital recordings are agreed in consultation with participants and ensure compliance with the school's obligation with regard to photographing and filming students as per the School Policy Advisory Guide at http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/pages/photoandfilm.aspx.

Professional learning teams aim to support the individual development of teachers through the sharing of instructional practices and building skills for seeking, giving and receiving feedback. Small groups of colleagues observe each other's lessons to investigate answers to specific questions about instructional practice. This is determined by each individual teacher and informed by a structured and agreed focus. A teacher or other individual observes a lesson to gain an understanding of some aspect of teaching, learning or classroom interaction.

Observation snapshots aim to provide teachers with a convenient option for obtaining timely feedback from a colleague focused on a specific teaching practice. A feedback seeking opportunity is initiated by an individual teacher and involves a colleague from their teaching team observing part of a lesson and sharing feedback 'pointers' in real time.

Instructional rounds include school-to-school observations where a group of leaders and nominated teachers visit a host school to observe practice in a range of classrooms. Instructional rounds focus on an area of improvement that has been identified following an examination of aggregated student data and provide a means of modelling the effective implementation of a particular teaching strategy or approach. The area of improvement is embedded in the work of the school and tied to a current school improvement area. Participants learn to identify patterns of practice across the school through the collection of evidence from multiple classrooms. This evidence might be drawn from observations focused on pedagogical practices, curriculum development, assessment or opportunities for student voice and it forms the basis for predicting the next level of work to improve student learning for all teachers in the school where observations are occurring.

Lesson study is a form of professional development where a small team of teachers work together in a systematic cycle of planning, teaching, observing, refining and reviewing specific lessons in order to examine their practice and improve their impact on student learning. [26]

25   The Department of Education and Training (2017) Improving School Governance: Strategic Planning
     http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/principals/governance/strategicplanningph.PDF
26   AITSL (2017), Lesson Study, https://www.aitsl.edu.au/tools-resources/resource/lesson-study

PUTTING PEER OBSERVATION INTO PRACTICE

Peer observation, including feedback and reflection, is a high-impact approach to improving professional practice and student learning outcomes. Peer observation can be an effective professional learning approach for teachers at all stages of their careers, including graduate teachers working towards full registration.

Establishing a culture of professional practice and peer observation

The effective use of the "teachers observing teachers" strategies is predicated on a culture that nurtures a collegial exchange of ideas and promotes a level of trust.

For peer observation to successfully impact on student learning, schools need a culture of professional practice. School leaders are encouraged to create a culture that is respectful, trusting and supportive, as well as creating the preconditions for success in peer observation.

School leaders should establish protocols, procedures and structures that support peer observation as a core part of school-based professional learning using the school's agreed consultative arrangements. As stated by Guskey, "significant change in teachers' beliefs and attitudes takes place only after student learning outcomes have changed which depends on changed classroom practices that teachers adopt".[27]

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27   Guskey T. R (1983) Staff Development and Teacher Change, Educational Leadership 41 in Macklin P and Zbar V, (2017) Driving School Improvement: a practical guide ACER Press, Camberwell

Establishing the preconditions for success

A culture that is respectful, trusting and supportive is a precondition for success in peer observation. It is critical that peer observation is understood to be a developmental opportunity for teachers.

In establishing the preconditions for success:

- **Conduct a whole-school or team assessment of the school**

  This document includes prompts for a group assessment of the school's situation (see page 21). School leaders are also encouraged to consider the school's self-evaluation against the FISO Continua of Practice and the Practice Principles for Excellence in Teaching and Learning. Facilitator notes are also provided to assist in the conduct of the meetings for the assessment.

  The process of assessment should indicate areas of strength and where support is required.

  For more information, see:

  FISO Continua of Practice: http://www.education.vic. gov.au/Documents/school/teachers/management/ improvement/ContinuaForSchoolImprovement.pdf

  Practice Principles for Excellence in Teaching and Learning reflection tools: http://www.education. vic.gov.au/Documents/school/teachers/support/ practiceprinreflection.pdf

- **Engaging in conversation with staff about the rationale, purpose and outcomes of peer observation**

  When there is consultation and collaboration about why peer observation is being embarked upon, the cultural change can be a smooth one. Teachers will have their own perspectives and experiences when it comes to peer observation. It is important that all teachers are given the opportunity to share their perspectives.

Establishing protocols, procedures and structures that support peer observation

Research confirms that structures, procedures and protocols must be in place to support peer observation to be successful in building teacher practice.

In establishing the protocols, procedures and structures to support peer observation:

- **Develop, implement and review whole-school peer observation protocols that articulate expected norms and values and build trust between colleagues**

  This document includes prompts for the development of whole-school peer observation protocols (see page 22).

  Developing protocols that guide actions related to an observation experience will support effective implementation by increasing consistency in the quality of observation and feedback experiences.

- **Establish procedures to support peer observation**

  Procedures should be planned, scheduled and aligned to school priorities. Implementation of peer observation should be via a staged approach so that individuals can build awareness, understanding and commitment for change.

- **Establish structures to support peer observation**

  Teachers need to be engaged in establishing peer observation arrangements including nominating who will conduct the observation and the timing of the observation prior to observations occurring.

ESTABLISHING A CULTURE OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE AND PEER OBSERVATION

ESTABLISH THE NORMS AND VALUES FOR SUCCESS	ESTABLISH PROTOCOLS, PROCEDURES AND STRUCTURES THAT SUPPORT PEER OBSERVATIONS
Success in peer observation is a culture that is respectful, trusting and supportive.	The protocols, procedures and structures are critical in determining whether peer observation is effective.

CONTEXT	WHY UNDERTAKE PEER OBSERVATIONS?	PROTOCOLS	PROCEDURES
How ready is your school and teachers to engage in peer observation? *Conduct a whole-school or team assessment of readiness.*	Do teachers understand the rationale, purpose, connection to current school practice/ structures and potential outcomes of peer observations? *Provide staff with information about peer observation at a staff meeting. This could include professional readings.*	Does your school have protocols that articulate expected behaviours and actions in peer observation? *Protocols are agreed by all staff and should be reviewed at the whole-school level.*	Do you have planned, scheduled and aligned procedures to support the implementation of whole-school peer observations? Are you implementing peer observations via a staged approach with the opportunity to reflect on and adjust processes?
Tools	**Tools**	**Tools**	**Tools**
School readiness assessment Facilitator notes	The peer observation guide Facilitator notes Professional readings (see reference list)	Sample protocols Facilitator notes	Professional readings (see reference list)

Ongoing refinement of and adjustments to the school's peer observation practices

Professional learning

Student learning

The 'cycle of peer observation'

The 'cycle of peer observation' provides a basis for the implementation of peer observation, reflection and feedback.

The cycle includes the key phases for successful peer observation, which supports improvements in teaching practice and student learning.

The 'cycle of peer observation'

Teacher self-reflection

Implementation of new strategies and improved teaching and learning

Self-reflection informs future peer observation activities

Post observation conversation

Pre observation conversation

Provides an opportunity for structured feedback and reflection, based on agreed criteria with a focus on progressing student learning

Underpinned by supportive and collaborative whole-school protocols and developmental approach

Teachers learning from one another, building a shared understanding of effective practice

Teacher and observer reflection

Peer observation

- Successful peer observation is built on a culture that is respectful, trusting and supportive.

- Peer observation should be focused on an agreed aspect of learning and teaching practice (such as the Practice Principles or the HITS) and be planned, scheduled and aligned with school improvement priorities.

- Protocols, procedures and structures that support peer observation should be established prior to observations taking place.

- Peer observation is a developmental opportunity for teachers.

- Peer observation should be implemented via a staged approach where teachers have opportunities to reflect and adjust processes over time.

- Peer observations can occur between two teachers, or within teams such as professional learning communities, if agreed by teachers.

REFERENCES

Links to other tools

Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) 'How-to Guide: Peer observation https://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/default-document-library/how-to-guide---peer-observation.pdf?sfvrsn=4aadec3c_2

AITSL, Classroom observation strategies https://www.aitsl.edu.au/lead-develop/develop-others/classroom-observation/classroom-observation-strategies

AITSL, Effective Professional Conversations – Helen Timperley https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XJrkAENKjzw

AITSL, Enhancing Professional Conversations https://www.aitsl.edu.au/lead-develop/develop-others/coach-others/professional-conversations

AITSL, Improving Your Classroom Practice https://www.aitsl.edu.au/lead-develop/develop-others/classroom-observation/classroom-practice

Teachers Observing Teachers: A Professional Development Tool for Every School http://www.educationworld.com/a_admin/admin/admin297.shtml

The Victorian Institute of Teaching, Moving from Provision to Full Registration https://www.vit.vic.edu.au/registered-teacher/moving-to-full-registration

Professional reading

AITSL, Literature review – Professional conversations and improvement-focused feedback https://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/default-document-library/professional-conversations-literature-review-oct-2015.pdf?sfvrsn=fc2ec3c_0

Danielson Charlotte, (2012) Teacher Evaluation: What's Fair? What's Effective? pp – 37 in Educational Leadership Vol 70, No 3.

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ASSESSMENT OF READINESS FOR PEER OBSERVATION

The following question prompts are for use at a leadership or whole-school level. They aim to support school leaders to undertake an assessment of the school's readiness to engage in peer observation as well as for individual teachers to reflect on their practice. This activity will provide a basis for whole-school agreements about what is needed to support teachers to constructively conduct peer observations to improve student learning.

Facilitator notes

a. Establish an environment where teachers are able to discuss their responses with colleagues. This might be in current Professional Learning Community groups, year level or faculty teams, or it might be an opportunity to allocate teachers to random groups which expose them to different perspectives. Group sizes might be maximised by limiting them to no greater than eight.

b. Provide resources for note taking and brainstorming to occur.

c. Prior to the group discussion, highlight the importance of respecting differences in viewpoints and encourage teachers to use evidence to explain their choices. Consider whether implementing a protocol for discussion might be necessary to ensure that all group members have a voice in the discussion.

d. At the end of the group discussions, encourage whole-group sharing of agreed responses and note the key outcomes of the discussion both verbally and as written statements which are shared with your staff visually.

e. Follow up with all staff members through a written summary of the key agreements and outcomes of the session. This will provide a basis for the introduction of peer observations.

Activity and discussion prompts

1. Using the FISO Continua of Practice highlight the descriptors which best apply to your school's practice.

2. Using the Practice Principles for Excellence in Teaching and Learning reflection tools, assess the school's (and/or your individual) practice.

3. Share your responses with your colleagues and discuss the reasons for your selection.

4. What do the continua describe as your individual next phase for improvement? For the school, how might this look in practice?

5. How can this link with the school improvement priorities and individual focus areas within a teacher's Performance and Development Plan?

PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING PEER OBSERVATION PROTOCOLS

What types of protocols are needed?

Determining what types of protocols are needed to implement peer observation is the first stage of developing whole-school protocols. Developing protocols that guide actions before, during and after an observation experience will support effective implementation by increasing staff confidence in the process, developing a culture of collegiate respect and building consistency in the quality of observation and feedback.

The level of scaffolding provided by the protocols will vary in line with the experience and maturity of the school's peer observation processes. For example, larger schools may need more formalised protocols. Schools in which practices are embedded as norms may need fewer protocols.

Prompts in developing protocols

The following decision-making prompts can be used in developing relevant protocols:

Focusing the observation

- *What is the purpose of peer observation and what roles do participants play to support the achievement of the purpose?*
- *What will be the agreed focus for the observation and feedback?*
- *Who will be involved in the observation?*
- *How long is needed for the observation?*
- *When is the best time for the observation to occur (the beginning, during part of, the end, all of a lesson or over a series of lessons)?*

Undertaking the observation

- *What is the agreed role in the classroom for the teacher and observer?*
- *What will be done to prepare students for an observer in their learning space?*
- *Where would you like the observer to be located (appropriateness of options other than the back of the room)?*
- *What type of 'presence' do you want the observer to have (team teacher, coach, in the background)?*

- *Will the observer have any interaction with the teacher and/or students and if so how and when?*
- *How will observations and data be recorded and stored and what role can technology play?*
- *How can the observer incorporate visual diagrams to capture the interaction in teaching and learning activities?*
- *Do these protocols comply with the school's obligation with regard to photographing and filming students as per the School Policy Advisory Guide at http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/pages/photoandfilm.aspx?*

Learning after the observation

- *What are the expectations for self-reflection?*
- *What role will colleagues and the team play in the reflection, analysis and feedback process, if any?*
- *How will learning be shared within and across teams, if appropriate and agreed?*
- *What is the role for school leadership in supporting school-wide learning from observations?*
- *How will learning be integrated into the school's improvement activities?*