

Middle Leader

Assistant Principal and Head Teacher | Role Description

The moral purpose of NSW public education

The commitment ‘to prepare our learners for rewarding lives as engaged citizens in a complex and dynamic society’¹ underpins the moral purpose of the NSW public education system. Public education is the enabler of equality and opportunity for all young people. Across NSW, diverse communities of learners are nurtured within the richness and values of a large, complex system – a system that is driven by a deeply held belief that every child can improve every day ‘no matter where they live or what kind of learning challenges they may face.’

The catalyst for achieving the ‘Education Goals for Young Australians’² is an urgent, unwavering focus on ‘excellence and equity’ through continuous improvement in the quality of teaching and learning in our public schools.

Assistant principals and head teachers enact this moral purpose by placing every child and young person at the centre of all decisions.

The assistant principal and head teacher

Leadership with integrity, courage and compassion is fundamental to create and sustain the positive conditions in which learning can flourish. Assistant principals and head teachers who create conditions that enable sustained improvement in teaching, and therefore student learning, have a significant influence on student outcomes. There is a clear link between quality leadership approaches and practices, and teaching and student learning.³

The research also acknowledges the complexity of leadership and recognises that highly effective school leaders use a range of interconnecting leadership approaches and practices in order to impact teaching and student learning.⁴

The primary purpose of the role

Assistant principals and head teachers in NSW public schools support the principal and teachers in preparing young people for rewarding lives as engaged citizens in a complex and dynamic society by maximising the learning, wellbeing and progress of every student every year. They inspire and motivate children and young people, staff, and the school community. They model reflective practices and set high expectations of leaders, teachers, students and self.

Assistant principals and head teachers are critical to ensuring the success of teaching and learning, promoting an inclusive and enabling culture. They build leadership capabilities and support ethical and purposeful school and team practices. Their role is characterised by their educational expertise, their ability to effectively lead teams, and their strategic leadership. They are responsive to the changing circumstances specific to their students, teachers, school and community.

Assistant principals and head teachers contribute to the school’s strategic vision, which is aligned to the department’s priorities. They work in partnership with the principal, executive team, staff and community to develop and facilitate a positive school culture. They are collaborative, collegial and empathetic leaders who work closely with others to create and sustain the conditions in which the values of public education flourish.

Assistant principals and head teachers are part of the school executive team.

Key accountabilities

Assistant principals and head teachers are accountable to the deputy principal and/or principal. They work with the principal, other executive, teaching and non-teaching staff to support the leadership, management and improvement of the school, within departmental guidelines and policies.

This role description states the key accountabilities of assistant principals and head teachers in NSW public schools as they relate to leading teaching and learning and developing self and others. Their responsibilities are determined according to the needs and priorities of each school.

Leading teaching and learning

Assistant principals and head teachers demonstrate educational expertise as leaders of teaching and learning. They foster the connection between student wellbeing, learning, and achievement, to enable improvement.

Assistant principals and head teachers:

- ensure teaching and learning programs align to the NSW curriculum and are differentiated to support the learning and needs of students
- lead and/or support the implementation of literacy and numeracy strategies
- lead evaluation practices to improve teaching and learning
- ensure evidence-informed teaching strategies support individual student progress, achievement and wellbeing
- ensure formative and summative assessment is embedded into teaching and learning
- foster an understanding of and respect for Aboriginal peoples, histories, culture and languages
- lead and/or support the implementation of effective classroom management strategies that enable an engaging and safe learning environment
- lead and manage systems and resources, including relevant technologies, to support teaching, learning, reporting and administration
- promote equity by recognising the uniqueness of all cultures, languages and communities
- collaborate effectively with executive, specialist teachers and external personnel to coordinate support and implement inclusive strategies for students and their families where appropriate
- promote and embed mutually respectful relationships between students, staff and the community
- facilitate contextually relevant opportunities that engage parents/carers in the education of their children
- ensure compliance with school, departmental and NESA policies.

Developing self and others

Assistant principals and head teachers build collaborative teams, based on strong relational trust. They draw on, and continue to develop, their educational expertise and high level interpersonal and

communication skills, to lead in a respectful, collegial, impactful manner. As a leader and co-learner, they engage in collaborative inquiry to improve professional knowledge and practice, engaging, inspiring and motivating others.

Assistant principals and head teachers:

- demonstrate high levels of educational expertise in their leadership of quality teaching practices
- provide differentiated professional learning opportunities that support growth of teachers
- foster and sustain a collaborative culture that enables complex problem solving and evidence-informed decisions
- support teachers to establish relevant and contextual goals for their growth and development, which lead to improvement
- seek, provide and respond to feedback that develops the capabilities of self and others
- commit to their own professional learning and wellbeing
- identify and develop leadership capabilities in others
- support staff to meet key accountabilities of their role
- manage and provide support for staff performance, improvement and conduct, effectively and respectfully, in consultation with senior executive and others.

Reporting line

Assistant principals and head teachers are accountable to the deputy principal and/or principal, depending on each school's executive structure.

They support the leadership, improvement and management of the school, within statewide guidelines and government policies.

Footnotes

1. NSW Department of Education Strategic Plan, 2018–2023. Retrieved from: education.nsw.gov.au/about-us/strategies-and-reports/strategic-plan
2. Education Council Secretariat. Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration. (December 2019). p3 – Preamble. Retrieved from: dese.gov.au/alice-springs-mparntwe-education-declaration
3. Education Council Secretariat. Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration. (December 2019). Retrieved from: dese.gov.au/alice-springs-mparntwe-education-declaration
4. Drysdale, L., Gurr, D. (2011). Theory and practice of successful school leadership in Australia. *School Leadership & Management*, 31(4), 355–368

Appendix

Goals of NSW public education

- All children make a strong start in learning and experience successful transitions.
- Every student is known, valued and cared for in our schools.
- Every student, every teacher, every leader and every school improves every year.
- Every student is engaged and challenged to continue to learn.
- All young people have a strong foundation in literacy and numeracy; deep content knowledge; and confidence in their ability to learn, adapt and be responsible citizens.
- All young people finish school well prepared for higher education, training and work.
- Education is a great place to work and our workforce is of the highest calibre.
- Staff are treated fairly, challenged, and led to focus on maximising outcomes for students.
- Community confidence in public education is high.
- Our education system reduces the impact of disadvantage.

Information

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