

School Leadership Development Strategy

School Leadership Institute



Overview

School leaders play a vital role in providing every student in NSW public schools with a great education and the best start in life. They have a significant impact on classroom results, guide teacher development, and lead engagement with their school community.

Developing the leadership skills and capabilities of staff in our schools is crucial in reaching our goal of being the finest education system in Australia, as well as ensuring a future supply of effective, committed school leaders.

Since 2017 the NSW Department of Education has been significantly increasing support for current and aspiring school leaders under the School Leadership Strategy. The School Leadership Institute (SLI) was established in 2018 under this strategy and now offers a range of world-class leadership development programs for NSW teachers and school leaders.

Our new School Leadership Development Strategy outlines how the department, through the SLI, will continue to invest in and develop the skills of school leaders to help lift student achievement.

It builds on the 2017 strategy and sets the priorities and actions for the SLI over the next 4 years.

Our strategy is based on the key areas of:

- Induction – providing tailored induction opportunities for school leaders at every stage.
- Identifying and developing future leaders – identifying potential future leaders and offering world-class, evidence informed leadership development opportunities and programs.
- Supporting and strengthening current principals – through ongoing professional learning and development opportunities.

Our actions will deliver on these key areas through a range of programs and initiatives. These include:

- A **School Leadership Identification Framework**.
- A new **FASTstream program** to support high potential teachers into principal roles.
- **Rural and remote leadership development initiatives** to cater for the unique needs of leaders in these schools.

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- A new **Middle Leadership Development Program (MLDP)** for formal middle school leaders.
- New or updated role descriptions for **principals, deputy principals, assistant principals and head teachers**.
- A new **Principal Leadership Framework**.

The strategy also commits to building on our current induction programs, and our Senior Leadership - Aspiring Principals Leadership Program and Growing Great Leaders program.

The School Leadership Development Strategy aligns to the department's School Success Model by ensuring that principals and other school leaders are provided with evidence-informed support and guidance to help them achieve their strategic improvement goals. Principals will continue to be supported to make evidence-informed decisions, develop strategic improvement plans, as well as lead staff and work with their communities to improve outcomes for students. The strategy also supports the department's Strategic Plan goal that 'every student, teacher, leader and school improves every year.'

Central to this strategy are the SLI's Development Continuum and Leadership for Learning Frameworks. The continuum sets out the development pathway and key stages for school leaders. The 3 frameworks provide a tool for current and aspiring school leaders to help them develop their leadership behaviours and actions.

Together, these components provide the foundation for the development of current and future school leaders, leading to further teaching and learning improvements in schools and across our system.

We will review this strategy in 4 years to ensure it continues to meet the needs of the profession and takes into account new research and evidence.

Building on the 2017 strategy

Since the School Leadership Strategy was released in 2017:

- The School Leadership Institute has been established and now offers a range of leadership development programs.

- The number of Director, Educational Leadership (DEL) positions has doubled.
- Principals School Leadership (PSLs) and Principals Coach/Mentors (PCMs) are supporting newly appointed principals for their first 2 years.
- Comprehensive induction programs for principals, deputy principals and middle leaders are in place.

“Trust underpins and affects the quality of any relationship, every connection, every work project... it changes the quality of every present moment and alters the trajectory and outcomes of every future.”

Stephen Covey

The evidence

Leadership development research

Key educational research highlights the direct connection between school leadership, teacher professional learning and improved student outcomes. Excellence in leadership remains a crucial factor in determining whether students and schools succeed. It is second only to the in-school effects of excellence in teaching practices.¹

High performing school leaders focus on leading teaching and learning and the development of teachers.² Teachers see these school leaders as having strong pedagogical knowledge that progresses student learning. They develop teacher capabilities through engaging in evaluation of teaching and its effect on student learning in a highly collaborative, trusting environment.³

Investing in building the capabilities of leaders is an essential component of any successful reform process, improvement strategy or initiative.⁴ Building capability must remain systemic to enable the growth and achievement of all students in all schools. Furthermore, systemic capacity building must be broad (every school) and deep (every classroom).

Moral purpose and school leadership

Public education is the enabler of equality and opportunity for all young people. It has the power to transform lives. In NSW, the commitment 'to prepare

young people for rewarding lives as engaged citizens in a complex and dynamic society'⁵ underpins the moral purpose of public education. 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”.⁵

The achievement of the department’s strategic goals requires effective leadership enacted with a strong moral purpose that builds relational trust, a commitment to action, educational expertise and collective efficacy. Together, they establish a mindset that places the success of every child and young person at the centre of all decisions.

Investing in school leadership in NSW

The NSW public education system is a highly complex and diverse system inclusive of large, small, metropolitan, rural and remote schools with significant differences within and between schools and the communities and students they serve. This level of complexity and diversity requires a highly skilled workforce, led by highly skilled leaders at all levels, to achieve the vision “to be Australia’s best education system and one of the finest in the world.”⁵

A growing body of evidence around the world shows that investing in leadership at all phases of a school leader’s career will make a substantial difference to the quality of teaching and therefore the quality of student learning. Munby argues “I am not aware of any high-performing school system, or one that is rapidly improving, that leaves leadership development to chance. It is too big a risk for the future.”⁶

Fundamental to strengthening school leadership is the key role that highly effective and experienced leaders play. They demonstrate collective responsibility for the success of the public education system by supporting the leadership development of others. School principals and other educational leaders at all levels are responsible for creating and sustaining high quality learning environments and conditions under which quality teaching and learning takes place.

A key focus for leadership development is the assurance of inclusivity, diversity and equity of access to all programs, contextualised to the needs of leaders in all NSW school settings. Our program design and development includes a commitment to the provision of culturally appropriate induction and development

¹ Kenneth Leithwood, Alma Harris & David Hopkins. (2019). Seven strong claims about successful school leadership revisited. *School Leadership & Management*, 40:1-18.10.1080/13632434.2019.1596077

² Robinson, V. (2018). *Reduce Change to Increase Improvement*. Corwin.

³ Hopkins, D. (2017). The William Walker Oration, 'The Past, Present and Future of School Improvement and System Reform'. *Monograph 56:ACEL*.

⁴ Fullan, M. (2011). Choosing the wrong drivers for whole system reform. *Melbourne: Seminar Series 204*, Centre for Strategic Education.

⁵ NSW Department of Education. (2018). *Strategic Plan 2018-2022*.

⁶ Munby, S. (2019). *Imperfect Leadership*. p20. Crown House Publishing.



opportunities to current and aspiring Aboriginal leaders. Tailored initiatives that further address the complexities specific to rural and remote areas enables high quality leadership development opportunities for all school leaders. The SLI is committed to contributing to system priorities by working collaboratively with other dedicated units within the department.

development in NSW. Other international experts also share their expertise with the SLI.

Under this strategy we will continue to develop, refine and evaluate programs and resources to build school leadership capacity across the NSW public school system.

“School leadership is a profoundly moral, ethical and emotional activity designed to encourage a school’s staff to build and act on a shared and evolving vision of enhanced educational experiences for pupils.”

“There is a wealth of evidence that the quality of leaders positively enhances teaching and learning.”

Louise Stoll and Dean Fink

Alma Harris

The strategy

The School Leadership Institute

The driving philosophy of the SLI sits within our Vision and Mission Statement.

Our vision is to shape a future that enables all educational leaders to influence and impact positively on the learning of teachers and students in our public schools.

Our mission is the provision of world-class, evidence-informed, future-focused leadership development programs and initiatives to make the difference we seek in public education.

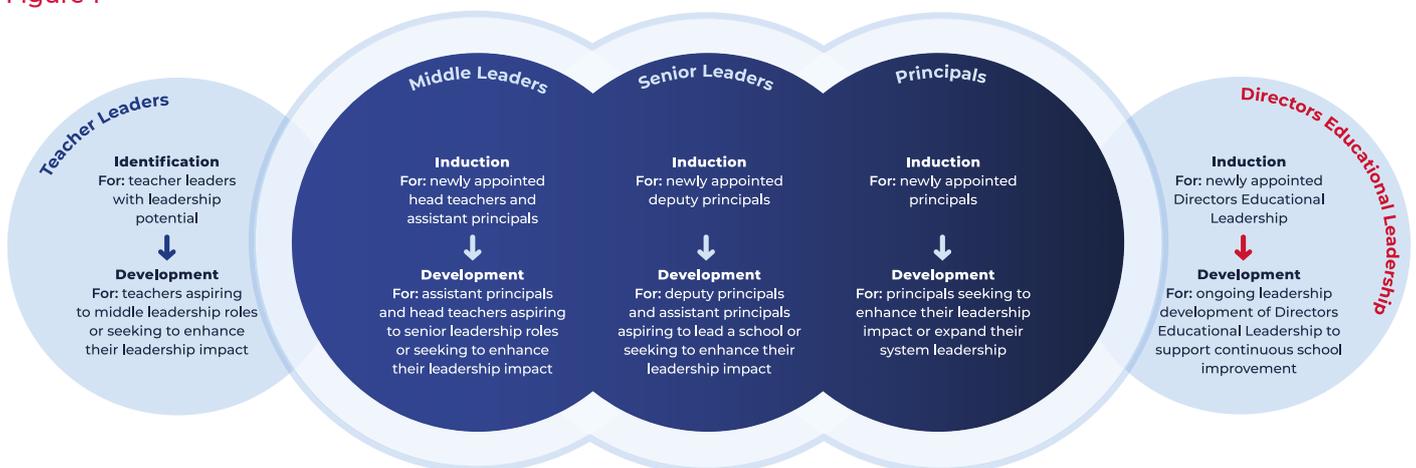
An Advisory Board, including internationally recognised experts and representatives of key stakeholder groups, offers valuable insights regarding leadership

School Leadership Institute Development Continuum

The School Leadership Institute Development Continuum underpins all SLI programs. It provides the foundation for the strategy to develop the leadership capabilities of school leaders at each stage of their career. It articulates opportunities for leadership learning through interrelated career stages (Figure 1). At each stage the learning focus is on developing skills, capabilities and mindsets to enhance leadership impact. This will enable leaders to expand their sphere of leadership influence on the learning of teachers and students within and across NSW public schools. The continuum also identifies key transition points for teachers and school leaders into broader leadership roles.

All our programs are evolving, responsive to the needs of the profession, aligned to the School Leadership Institute Development Continuum and delivered using a range of methodologies.

Figure 1



School Leadership Institute Development Continuum



“One of the key principles of leadership is that leaders must strive to be model learners. They must continue to read and engage in discussions about all manner of subjects as well as the most recent theories of learning. As leaders they should question current practices, and never feel that they have progressed beyond the point of being a learner. Learning is truly a lifelong experience and cannot be thought of simply as a destination.”

T.J. Sergiovanni

Leadership induction

“The more leaders focus their relationships, their work and their own learning on the core business of teaching and learning, the greater their influence on student outcomes.”

Viviane Robinson

Leadership induction provides newly appointed, first time school leaders at principal, deputy principal, head teacher and assistant principal level an orientation into their role within the NSW Department of Education. The SLI holds inductions at key points throughout the year to support new leadership appointments.

As part of the School Leadership Development Strategy the SLI will continue to offer induction conferences for school leaders.

This will be supported by:

- An updated Principal Role Description and new Deputy Principal Role Description, which were released in March 2021.
- A new role description for assistant principals and head teachers which will be released in 2022.

Leadership identification and development

Investing in the early identification and development of teachers who demonstrate potential for formal leadership is an essential element of the School Leadership Development Strategy.

The School Leadership Identification Framework

We are developing a new School Leadership Identification Framework (SLIF) to support the identification of teacher leaders who demonstrate capabilities and behaviours which signal potential for leadership development.

The SLIF is an evidence-informed resource that has been developed as a result of extensive input, rigorous review and validation by a range of school-based teaching staff and leaders in NSW.

Under this strategy:

- A pilot program is underway in 2021.
- The framework will be rolled out to all schools in 2022.

The SLIF will align with policies and procedures including the Performance and Development Plan (PDP), HALT requirements and the Strategic Improvement Plan (SIP).

Leadership FASTstream program

The FASTstream program will strengthen the way the DoE identifies the leadership capabilities of high potential staff early in their career, and attract them to suitable leadership roles, including a strong focus on rural and remote schools. It will support existing high performing teachers and new teaching graduates through an intensive leadership development experience.

It will begin in Term 1, 2022.

Leadership development programs

Leadership development programs will build the knowledge, understanding, skills and capabilities that leaders need to ensure continuous school improvement within the values and policies of the NSW public education system.

Our existing and new development programs will:

- be evidence informed
- enable the building of system leadership and capability within regions and networks
- cultivate the development of professional learning communities
- engage in key partnerships with experts in leadership learning
- ensure our schools continue to be led by effective, high quality school leaders.

Rural and remote leadership development

The SLI has been piloting a Rural and Remote Leadership Development Program. It will be evaluated to inform future leadership development tailored to the unique needs of leaders in these schools



Middle leadership development

Middle school leaders (assistant principals and head teachers) play a significant role to enact the school vision and lead excellence in teaching practices. They help to translate and implement the vision of the school to impact student learning outcomes.

Under this strategy:

- We will deliver a program to support formal middle school leaders with tailored leadership development resources and content.
- The program will be offered in partnership with the University of Wollongong and the University of Newcastle.

The program will be evaluated and expanded over time to support up to 500 middle leaders per year.

“As a middle leader in a school you probably have the potential to make more difference to the outcomes for pupils than any other group of staff. It is an often quoted cliché but middle leaders really are the engine room of the school.”

Buck, Tomlinson & Toop

Senior leadership development

The SLI will continue to offer our leadership development programs for current and aspiring senior school leaders as part of this strategy, as well as develop new programs of support and professional learning.

- Our Senior Leadership - Aspiring Principals Leadership Program has been in place since 2018. It is a rigorous program for deputy principals and assistant principals who are willing to commit to a challenging program to enhance their leadership impact. It also supports school leaders to be confident and ready to become a principal.

“As for the best leaders, the one factor that differentiates them from the rest is not skill or qualifications but mindset... they have exceptionally high aspirations, courage to take people further than they thought possible and huge resilience in the face of adversity.”

Jo Owen

Principal development

Newly appointed principals

Following induction, principals are invited to participate in an extended leadership development program called Growing Great Leaders. They will engage with world recognised educational leaders to build their understanding of the complex work of school improvement. Principals will strengthen their practice by learning key leadership skills, and applying them to their unique contexts, and applying them to current leadership challenges.

Ongoing coaching support for the first two years is provided by PSLs or PCMs. DELs also play a vital role in supporting the professional growth of principals.

Principals

We will continue to offer opportunities to engage with national and international academics on high level leadership concepts under this strategy.

- The Principal Scholarship Program provides opportunities for current principals to undertake further tertiary learning to enhance their leadership impact.
- Scholarships are also offered to DELs.

Principal Leadership Framework

We have developed a Principal Leadership Framework (PLF) to support the professional growth of principals. It identifies the behaviours and actions that impact teacher and student learning and the key drivers for leadership effectiveness. It is aligned to the Principal Role Description, is informed by the School Excellence Framework (SEF), and underpinned by research.



- Principals will be able to use the PLF to reflect on their own practices and engage with their DEL regarding the impact they are having on teaching and learning, and how it can be strengthened.
- The framework will provide consistent expectations, language, understanding and judgment of principal accountability and the developmental drivers and impacts of principal leadership.
- The SLI has developed resources aligned to the key drivers of leadership effectiveness to support principals to deepen and amplify their leadership capabilities.
- The PLF will be available to school leaders in Term 1, 2022.

SLI Alumni

An Alumni program encourages and supports participants in SLI programs to continue to learn together through a range of rich experiences that build the foundation of strong collaborative networks between colleagues across the system. This approach will build system leadership.

Leadership research

We will continue to work with key educational researchers to commission formal research to support the ongoing development and evaluation of our programs and frameworks.

- A growing suite of research and reports can be found on the SLI website.
- Strong research principles ensure our programs are aligned to best practice and meet the needs of leaders within the NSW public education system.

System leadership

The SLI actively explores avenues to develop system leadership and incorporate it into all of our work.

Experienced, successful leaders play a pivotal role in supporting the leadership development of colleagues at all stages of their career. These leaders demonstrate a deep commitment to expanding their sphere of influence in system leadership through a strong moral purpose to improve teaching and learning beyond their own school.

Under this strategy we will continue to offer opportunities for system leaders to collaborate and influence the learning of others beyond their own setting by contributing to our key programs and initiatives. A range of roles including program facilitators, mentors and participation on selection panels are some of the ways that experienced school leaders contribute to the vitality of NSW public education.

Evaluation

- We evaluate all of our programs to ensure they meet the needs of participants, are relevant to the profession and are informed by the latest evidence.
- We will review this strategy in 2025.

Timeline

Currently underway

Principal, deputy principal and middle leader induction programs

Rural and Remote Leadership Development Program

Senior Leadership - Aspiring Principals Leadership Program

Growing Great Leaders program

Looking ahead

Term 1 2022

Middle Leadership Development Program

Term 1 2022

Principal Leadership Framework

Term 1 2022

FASTstream program begins

Term 2 2022

School Leadership Identification Framework

