



Network Continuous Improvement Strategy

Context:

The Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals (VASSP) and the Victorian Principals Association (VPA) note that principal class officers (PCOs) are expected to make an increased contribution to school networks under direction of the regional network leader (RNL). This position paper addresses the balance of responsibilities between PCOs' schools and the school network. The VASSP/VPA position has been determined in the following context:

Background to the VASSP/VPA Position:

- VASSP/VPA aspire to continuous improvement of schools and networks and supports the imperative for Victorian schools to produce student performances that compare favourably with national and international standards.
- Networks of schools in geographic proximity have been organised by DEECD as a vehicle for learning outcome improvements for all government schools.
- Current accountability requirements for PCOs mean an annual implementation plan (AIP) is required to be completed by a principal to outline the "stepped" implementation of four-year strategic intent.
- RNLs have been appointed to lead networks in the improvement of aggregated learning outcomes in a network and ensure the development of strategic plans and AIPs.
- There can be conflicts between a network AIP and an individual school AIP due to local contexts. The process of requiring signed-off commitment to a network AIP undermines the autonomy of individual PCOs to lead the agenda of an individual school.
- The relationship between a school's strategic plan and its AIP has been dislocated by the imposition of a network strategic plan.
- Since the school AIP frequently forms the basis of PCO performance plans, potential for unachievable goals or targets from network plans to be incorporated into PCO performance plans may create an insurmountable hurdle to the achievement of salary incremental progression.

VASSP/VPA Position:

- VASSP/VPA expects its members to aspire for high expectations for student achievement and to achieve this through continuous improvement.
- Principals must be supported in the delivery of their school-based performance outcomes as a first priority. If annual performances at individual schools do not demonstrate continuous improvement, then it is unlikely that the aggregated network outcome data will reflect improvement.
- VASSP/VPA support network AIPs aspiring to 'adding value' rather than annual percentage targets. Over the longer term, meeting or exceeding state benchmarks or other aspirational targets is appropriate.
- VASSP/VPA caution that unrealistic targets can deter effort and commitment and have no part in effective performance management systems for school staff or PCOs.
- VASSP/VPA believe that PCOs who judge that network targets are unrealistic for their schools must have capacity to negotiate alternative targets and/or additional resources.
- VASSP/VPA take the view that where a pedagogical strategy prescribed for a network/region fails to produce the desired outcomes, then individual PCOs cannot be held to account.
- VASSP/VPA believe that PCO performance management must take into account the contribution to improved network outcomes and individual school outcomes in recognition of the broader responsibilities of PCOs within DEECD's network improvement strategy.
- There is a significant requirement for accountability documentation within schools, including performance plans, literacy plans, numeracy plans, e-learning plans, individual learning plans, strategic plan – school, strategic plan – network, AIP – school and AIP – network. VASSP/VPA believe that strategic documentation requires streamlining.