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Note for workshop discussion, exchange and feedback

Department of Education and Training, Victoria, Australia
June 2004

Blueprint for Government Schools

Introduction

Victorian government schools are currently administered according to the philosophy and mechanisms of self-managing schools. Victoria has one of the most devolved school management approaches among OECD nations.

Competition that focuses on striving for new approaches to improve student learning is welcome. This type of competition needs to be maintained. Initiatives such as Schools for Innovation and Excellence are an example of schools working together to successfully challenge and engage students.

Unfettered competition, where the drive to be the best is at the expense of students' outcomes in other schools, has adverse consequences. Unfettered competition between schools may not be conducive to meeting the needs of all students and all communities, nor to the provision of a full range of programs for the more diverse range of students now staying on at school.

The Government's approach to the management of the government school system is built upon a recognition that students' learning needs are different, and that they change across schools and across the school experience of students. Therefore, while the basic principle of self-management will be maintained, it is matched with a recognition of different learning needs and with an expectation that schools should work together to meet the needs of all students in their communities.

The Government expects its school system to focus on the critical objective of government school education – that all students, irrespective of the school they attend, where they live or their social and economic status, have an entitlement to a high-quality school education and a genuine opportunity to succeed. The Government does not want to settle for a school system with some excellent schools in it – the vision is for an excellent government school system.

Therefore, the strategies detailed in this Statement¹ are structured around the three key features of the government school system that need to be addressed:

- the concentration of poor outcomes in some schools and some regions
- high variations of outcomes between classes within schools, which highlights the importance of the teaching–learning relationship
- variations in outcomes between schools with similar student populations.

The strategies combine self-management with a recognition of a diversity in learning needs, and an expectation of shared responsibility and cooperation between schools, all within a context of a transparent and rigorous accountability framework. They emphasise the Government's belief that enhanced program delivery requires schools to plan together. The needs of all students cannot be met if schools work and plan in isolation.

¹ For further information <http://www.det.vic.gov.au/det/resources/blueprint.htm#statement>

The Government believes that there is broad consensus on what needs to be done to lift student outcomes. The consultation and research process has demonstrated that many of the reforms needed are already established practice in some schools. The task is to ensure that best practice spreads across the system.

The Government has identified three priority areas for reform:

1. Recognising and Responding to Diverse Student Needs
2. Building the Skills of the Education Workforce to Enhance the Teaching–learning Relationship
3. Continuously Improving Schools.

Recognising and Responding to Diverse Student Needs

Flagship Strategy 1: Student Learning

- The Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority will identify and develop a broad framework of ‘essential learnings’ for all Victorian students.
- The Government will develop new curriculum and reporting guidelines to assist government schools in deciding on curriculum development, improved teaching methods, assessment and reporting.
- Improved reporting on student achievement will be provided for parents and employers through the development of defined assessment measures of student progress.
- Principles of learning and teaching from Prep to Year 12 will be developed to support teachers’ professional development and provide advice in areas such as diversity of learning and thinking styles, student–teacher relationships and productive learning experiences.
- The Government will develop a knowledge bank that documents and ensures best practice is shared across the system.

Flagship Strategy 2: Developing a New Resource Allocation Model

- A new resource allocation model that is less complex and more transparent than the existing one, and which is flexible, equitable, efficient and student focused will be developed and implemented.

Building the Skills of the Education Workforce to Enhance the Teaching–Learning Relationship

Flagship Strategy 3: Building Leadership Capacity

- An improved principal selection process will be developed that includes increasing principal representation on selection panels, tailoring selection criteria to reflect the school’s needs, and encouraging contact between candidates and the employing school.

- The Government will establish a mentoring program for first time principals and a coaching support program for experienced principals to develop principals’ leadership capabilities.
- The Government will introduce a ‘balanced scorecard’ approach to improve the performance management of principals. This will link principal performance assessment to overall school performance.
- The Government will implement an accelerated development program for high potential leaders. Participants will benefit from exposure to leadership responsibilities, tailored professional development, and mentoring.
- The Government will also implement a development program for high performing principals that includes tailored professional development, placements in challenging schools, and mentoring other principals and aspiring principals.
- The Government will expand local administrative bureaus for networks of small schools to help alleviate the administrative workload of small schools.

Flagship Strategy 4: Creating and Supporting a Performance and Development Culture

- An accreditation scheme for performance and development culture schools will be introduced. Accredited schools will improve teacher effectiveness and therefore student outcomes.

Flagship Strategy 5: Teacher Professional Development

- The Government will invest \$5m each year to enable 460 teachers to undertake focused teacher professional leave, ranging from four to ten weeks. This will enhance teachers’ classroom practice.
- The Government will expand the induction program for beginning teachers and continue mentoring programs to ensure good induction and mentoring processes are spread across the school system.

Continuously Improving Schools

Flagship Strategy 6: School Improvement

- The Government will implement a differential model of school review to reflect schools’ different stages of development and to better target support and assistance.
- Clear and widely understood performance triggers will be developed to drive systemic intervention in under-performing schools to ensure that the best possible improvements are made and that cycles of under-performance are addressed early.
- To minimise the administrative burden on schools, a single planning and accountability document will be implemented (refer to page 26).
- Parent, teacher and student opinion data will be provided to all schools on a consistent basis to provide insight into school performance and information to support improvement.

Flagship Strategy 7: Leading Schools Fund

- The Government will establish the Leading Schools Fund in order to drive whole school improvement. The initiative will build on the knowledge and good practice already existing in schools and provide them with the incentive and opportunity to reach beyond their current practice and performance. It will facilitate strategic partnerships and collaboration between schools so that schools can learn from each other, assist each other and strengthen the government school system.

Blueprint Implementation: Beginnings

Effective schools share key characteristics such as high expectations for all learners, a shared vision and goals, strong accountability, learning communities, purposeful teaching, professional leadership and the provision of a stimulating and secure learning environment. The model below provides a broad description of the attributes of effective schools, adapting the work of Sammons, Hillman and Mortimore (1995).² This model provides a useful starting point for a more detailed conversation around school improvement.

System-wide improvement cannot be achieved simply by rolling out individual initiatives. This reform agenda is being implemented as a coherent strategy, with strong links being developed across many initiatives. The overarching objective of creating and sustaining effective schools underpins all of the *Blueprint* strategies and initiatives, providing our government school system with a shared purpose.

Let us consider in more detail three of the *Blueprint* initiatives:

- Providing *principal performance management* to help develop and recognise effective leaders – a key driver of effective schools;
- Building a *performance and development culture* across the school system to develop and support effective teachers and thus improve student outcomes; and
- Implementing a flexible *school review* system that recognises the differences in starting points across schools and creates a sound platform for building a system of effective schools.

² For further information refer to: <http://www.le.ac.uk/education/ESI/doc1f.html>



Diagram 1: Model of effective schools

Developing Effective Leaders

Principal Performance Management and Development

The *Blueprint for Government Schools* recognises that principals have a critical role to play in improving the educational outcomes of students in their schools. Principals are central in building the capacity of teachers and shaping the school environment. Building leadership capacity in our schools is therefore integral to the overall strategy described in the *Blueprint*. As part of Flagship Strategy 3, a ‘balanced scorecard’ approach to principal performance management will be implemented, focusing on developing effective leaders across the government school system.

The proposed performance management and development model uses the domains from Sergioanni’s *Model of Transformational Leadership*.³

The proposed key performance indicators include both quantitative (to apply to all principals) and qualitative (to be negotiated as part of the review process) measures. These measures could be supplemented by up to two school priorities, within each leadership domain.

No single metric can provide an understanding of a principal’s leadership capacity. The proposal is therefore to provide a group of measures that together provide a clear, holistic picture of leadership performance, that broadly reflect the principal’s role, are objective and can easily be tracked over time - as the key development focus will be on improvements over time.⁴ These measures will provide feedback to principals on each of the leadership domains (see Diagram 2).

³ Tom Sergiovanni (1984) Leadership and excellence in school, in *Educational Leadership*, 41,p 4-13.

⁴ For further information refer to www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/pd/schlead/capab.htm

Proposed Principal Balanced Scorecard

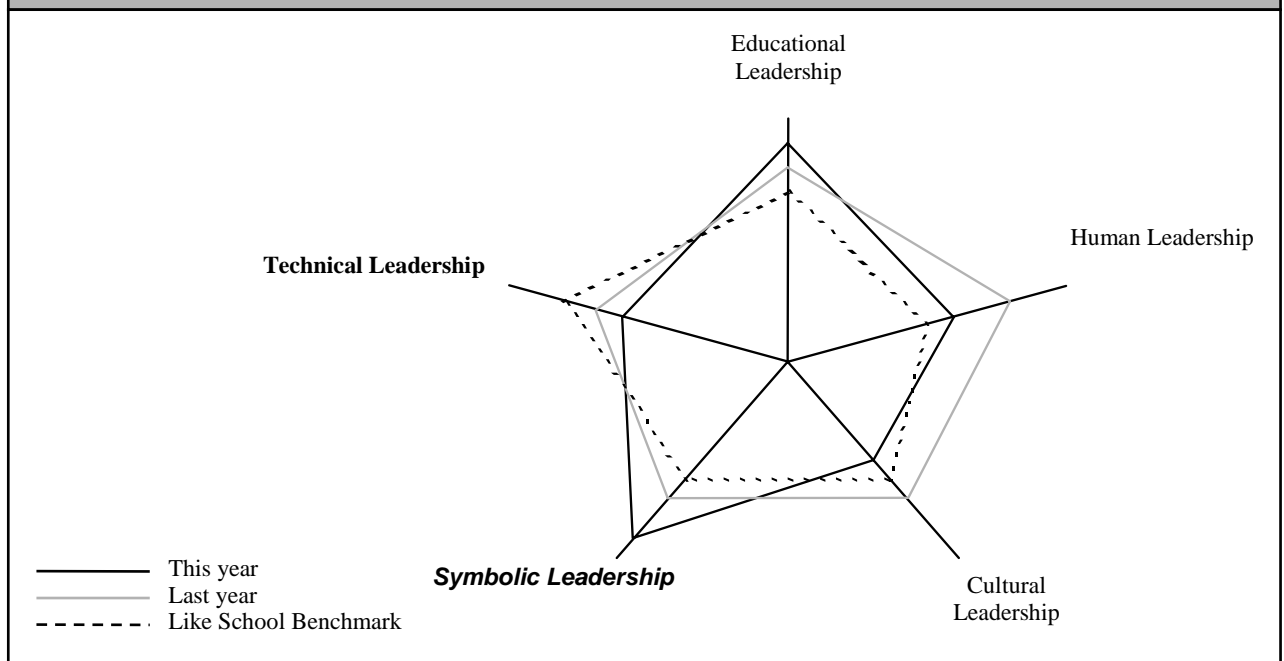


Diagram 2: Proposed Principal Balanced Scorecard

Leadership Domain	Key Performance Indicators	Quantitative Measures	Qualitative Measures
Technical Leadership Sound management skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Manages core business 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Staff survey (curriculum co-ordination, project management, role clarity, entrepreneurship) 	
Human Leadership Harnessing the school's social and interpersonal potential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Staff management • Performance & development culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Staff survey (supportive leadership, professional growth, participative decision-making, appraisal and recognition, role clarity, professional interaction, goal alignment) – Staff absence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions taken toward school accreditation for a performance and development culture.
Educational Leadership Expert knowledge about learning and maximising school capability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student achievement and outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – AIM numeracy and literacy results (PS) – VCE results (SC) – Student survey (selected measures) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions taken to develop and sustain the school as a learning organisation including ICT / eLearning integration.
Symbolic Leadership Modelling important goals and behaviours to the school, network and community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ System/network contribution ▪ Sharing good practice • Mentoring, coaching others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Principal peer survey (includes education provision items) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions taken to contribute to the government school system (eg, sharing good practice, mentoring/coaching, participation in networks, community linkages, use of knowledge bank).
Cultural Leadership Leading the school community by defining, strengthening and articulating values and beliefs that give the school its unique identity over time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parent relations ▪ Provides direction for school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Parent opinion survey – Staff survey (provides direction) 	

Table 1: A draft 'Balanced Scorecard' approach to principal performance management

Developing Effective Teachers

Creating a Performance and Development Culture in Schools

Effective schools are supportive and enriching learning organisations that provide teachers with objective, actionable feedback on their performance and opportunities for them to learn and grow.

A school that builds a performance and development culture enhances the effectiveness of its teachers to improve learning opportunities and outcomes for students. Such a school collects rich data to develop a deep understanding of individual teacher learning and practice and supports ongoing teacher development. Feedback to individual teachers is informed and

objective, and used to stimulate ongoing discussion around current performance and future development needs.

Elements of performance and development culture are already reflected in the practices of many Victorian government schools. However, there remains considerable variation in the quality and effectiveness of these practices.

Element	Metric	Self Assessment	External Verification
Induction for beginning teachers	All beginning teachers participate in an effective mentoring program	Submission describing mentoring program and testimonials by beginning teachers	Selected interviews with beginning teachers
Multiple sources of feedback on teacher effectiveness	Use of three of the following sources of data as part of annual review of which the first is mandatory: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adjusted student outcomes data Student feedback Parent feedback Observation data Attendance data 	Submission describing sources of data used and how they are used, including sample of how data is provided to teacher	Selected interviews with teachers
Customised development plans based on individual development needs	Each teacher has a development plan that clearly links to their own development issues	Submit process for preparing development plans, and sample development plan	Review of sample of development plans (randomly selected)
Quality professional development to meet those needs	Each teacher participates in professional development that helps improve their effectiveness as teachers	Description of professional development at the school with table describing professional development undertaken by each teacher. Can include observation of fellow teachers; coaching; mentoring etc	External survey of teachers; Selected interviews with teachers
Belief by staff that the school has a performance & development culture	Staff feel that the school culture is supportive of personal growth and development	Internal survey results	External survey of teachers; Selected teacher interviews

Source: BCG Analysis

Table 2: Draft Model of Performance and Development Accreditation

Developing Effective Schools

Differential Model of School Review

The *Blueprint* outlined the Government’s belief that strong teaching-learning relationships at the classroom level can be enhanced with effective individual and system-wide accountability arrangements. In order to be effective, these accountability arrangements must be flexible to meet the differing requirements of each school. School reviews are intended to assist schools in their effort to continuously improve student outcomes. Reviews provide an opportunity for schools to consider their performance, and develop priorities and strategies for improvement. The analysis of data and contextual information is key to the success of this initiative.

Review Model

Three types of review have been implemented, reflecting school performance and need.

Negotiated Reviews, for schools with student performance outcomes above expected levels, provide the opportunity for those schools to indicate their plans to improve and expand their horizons. Such schools are likely to demonstrate many of the characteristics of ‘effective schools’, such as high expectations for all learners, a shared vision and goals, strong accountability, learning communities, purposeful teaching, professional leadership and the provision of a stimulating and secure learning environment (see diagram 1, *Introduction*).

Negotiated school reviews will be managed by the Regional Office and involve a self-assessment plus a further process negotiated between the school and the Regional Office. They are expected to include an external element (for example, the use of peer and education experts to examine particular areas of the school that the community wants to explore and improve). Negotiated reviews will not be centrally funded.

Following a review, the school or Regional Office (as appropriate) is expected to compile a report that includes, as a minimum, recommendations for school improvement. To ensure that good practice and learning is shared across the system, these schools are expected to share their achievements, details of the review process undertaken, and outcomes from the review with other schools. The *Knowledge Bank*, a web-based repository of good practice, will be one tool used to disseminate this information.

Continuous Improvement Reviews, for schools where performance is satisfactory but indicators suggest there is scope for improvement, support those schools in obtaining expert advice and implementing enhancement programs. These reviews, centrally funded through contractual arrangements with review companies, are conducted by external reviewers and involve self-assessment with input from Regional Offices. The reviews focus on the areas of greatest risk and explore opportunities for improved performance.

Following the review, the reviewer will compile a report which includes analysis of each of the school’s goal areas, and makes recommendations for school improvement. The reviewer is expected to present the findings of the review to meetings of School Council and staff.

Diagnostic Reviews, for schools where student performance outcomes are below expected levels, are more intensive and tailored to meet those schools’ specific needs. The terms of reference for each diagnostic review are documented to include its timing, scope and objectives. Staff and parent focus groups may be included in these reviews.

Diagnostic reviews are centrally funded. The external reviewers provided for diagnostic reviews will undertake considerably greater discussion and analysis of school performance data to provide deeper findings and recommendations. These reviews also require significantly greater input from the Regional Offices, before, during and after the review. This recognises the opportunity for schools and Regional Offices to help drive school improvement. The reviewer will compile a report which identifies the factors preventing the school from achieving expected outcomes for students and will make recommendations for school improvement. These recommendations will be incorporated into the school’s improvement planning. The reviewer may also prepare recommendations for the DE&T Central and Regional Offices, regarding any organisational or management issues arising from the review and any additional support that the school needs to implement the recommendations. The reviewer is also expected to present the findings to the School Council and staff.

The Leading Schools Fund: a school transformation and renewal initiative

This initiative provides a model for whole school improvement and whole of government school system development. It is based on principles of flexibility, the development of innovative solutions at the local level, a highly skilled workforce and collaboration and cooperation between schools.

Secondary schools apply to become a part of the initiative and must meet the following three core objectives.

- To drive whole school and system transformation that will deliver continuous improvement in student outcomes
 - To drive system improvement through the sharing and transference of good practice, knowledge and programs
 - To develop and implement new models of education provision that will deliver enhanced curriculum options and improved student outcomes.
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To assist schools in developing proposals, schools are encouraged to demonstrate the following capacities:

1. To drive whole school and system improvement that will deliver continuous improvement in student outcomes

Specifically proposals should:

- Analyse current school performance in relation to student outcomes, identify the student outcomes to be improved and articulate the targets which will demonstrate the anticipated improvement
- Identify and describe the strategies that will lead to improved teacher effectiveness and improved student outcomes with the overall aim of enhancing pedagogy
- Identify and describe the strategies that will lead to enhanced school effectiveness and improved student outcomes
- Assess the current status of ICT infrastructure, equipment, software and teacher capabilities, and describe the strategies that will enhance student outcomes through the innovative use of ICT
- Describe how the strategies outlined in the Blueprint for Government Schools will be integrated with the school's strategic plan.

2. To drive system improvement through the sharing and transference of good practice, knowledge and programs

Specifically proposals should:

- Identify and describe any existing links with other schools and providers relating to the focus of the proposal

- Identify and describe a plan to share good practice, knowledge and programs with other schools, providers and the system as a whole.

3. To develop and implement new models of education provision that will deliver enhanced curriculum options and student outcomes

Specifically, proposals should:

- Analyse current education provision and student outcomes on a geographical basis with respect to issues such as demographics, market share, pathways and the range, breadth and depth of curriculum options for students
- Describe discussions with the region, other schools and providers, together with plans or strategies that have been developed to address the challenges of education provision in the geographical area.

The program is invitational, needs based and aims to be large scale within three years. The goal is to have 150 secondary schools participating by the end of 2006 with the overall expenditure of \$80 million for teachers and \$70 million for facilities.

