The new school plan
Preparing your community

Transformational school leadership

The new school plan will provide principals with the opportunity to lead educational innovation for the improved delivery of quality teaching, learning and leadership outcomes for all NSW public schools.

The new school plan will support school leaders in working proactively with their staff and school communities to establish school strategic directions and key educational improvements. It will support collaborative leadership and community consultation for strategic decision making, ensuring that the educational priorities of the school reflect the goals and learning needs of students, staff and parents.

Principals will be encouraged to collaboratively lead the new school planning processes by working closely with their students, school staff and local community to make evidence-informed decisions that focus on continuous educational improvement. It is important to involve students, staff, parents and other key community group members.

This partnership approach will help build cultures of high performance and shared trust in schools, empowering staff and community members in working together to achieve the goals of NSW public education.

Dynamic thinking, learning and planning

The new school plan shifts planning from a mechanical to a dynamic learning process, bringing a much sharper focus to the school’s key strategic directions and local needs.

School leaders will be better supported to:

- use thought leadership skills to establish the school’s strategic directions based on the 5Ps of purpose, people, processes, practices and products. Inspired by Simon Sinek’s Golden Circle, the new school plan will help principals define a ‘Why’ – ‘How’ – ‘What’ approach for developing school planning directions;

- establish the educational and cultural practices that need to emerge from the implementation of the school plan to define the skill development and professional learning necessary to achieve the school’s key improvements;

- build a shared educational vision with their students, staff and community. Organisational success occurs when ‘everyone in the organisation can say why we do what we do – the purpose’. The approach encourages principals to develop cultures of systems leadership and school excellence through the new school plan.

Best practice through school planning

The development of the new school plan and processes has been informed by international research into high performing educational systems. Each step of the process ensures an aligned state approach for principals:

1. Deliver consistent educational governance: striking the right balance to ensure the specific needs of each school community are met in delivering quality education.

2. Embed school evaluative procedures: ensuring evaluation and assessment contribute to the improvement of teaching and learning outcomes.

3. Build capacity: developing the skills, knowledge and understanding of the school community.

4. Use data appropriately: organising evaluative information to facilitate effective and strategic use of evaluation and assessment results.

Knowing your educational landscape

Before introducing the new school plan, setting the scene by taking the time to explore the ‘educational landscape’ of your school will be of enormous benefit.

The ‘educational landscape’ of your school includes knowing the educational priorities, dreams and ambitions of your school community. Going beyond a knowledge of your student performance data to reflect on the relationship dynamics, educational processes and practices, cultural artefacts, symbols of success, collective histories and shared stories will help frame the transformative thinking and processes in the new school plan.

Getting to know what your community values about your current school practices is essential in setting the scene for change. Strategies to explore your school’s landscape could include:

- establishing teams to provide a snapshot of the school’s current educational practices and performance to understand how teaching and learning, leadership culture and values, student engagement and achievement are perceived by the community
- exploring new ways of evidence-seeking for strategic improvement to assist a collective approach that is informed by the students, staff and parents of the school
- encouraging the collection of educational priorities, dreams and ambitions of your community by creating a visual storyboard of preferred future scenarios for the school.

Aligning your teams for change

Preparing your community for change takes effective leadership and authentic support from stakeholders in your school. Managing the change process isn’t enough – leadership is the key.

Leading educational innovation involves building upon a powerful approach for change. Knowing the way your community thinks and works together as a team to come up with creative solutions is essential before introducing change or new reforms. This includes:

- creating a powerful coalition that represents the voice of your students, staff, parents and community to establish a shared approach to change implementation
- determining the values and motivators of your team to create a strategy that delivers a shared vision for change
- communicating this strategy for change through consistent and multiple ways to reinforce the message
- dealing with any concerns and anxieties in an open and honest way – providing both high support and high expectations as a leader to enhance team effectiveness
- removing obstacles to the change process by aligning your shared vision to all aspects of school culture and operations – from professional learning, strategic planning and performance review processes
- celebrating short-term wins and long-term success measures to ensure ongoing motivation and to embed the change into sustainable school practice.

Designing a better future

Once you have established a positive team-building approach, defining and clarifying future educational priorities is the next step.

Leaders will be encouraged to use a range of group-thinking processes to determine future educational priorities that are expansive and allow the school to project a vision for ongoing improvement beyond five to ten years. Ways to encourage strategic, creative and higher-order thinking could include:

- working together with students, staff, parents and the local community to conduct strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats analyses, Best and Worst scenarios, Values vs Effort ratings or future narrative scenarios to help prioritise the future educational goals of the school
- creating a collaborative vision statement for future transformation, ensuring alignment with the educational priorities, dreams and ambitions of the community to support educational innovation and culture-building processes across the school
- developing a logic model of the school’s future legacy, establishing key improvement outcomes across one, three, five years or beyond
- engaging stakeholders in meaningful and strategic conversations that support the future legacy that the school community wants to be remembered for will support a powerful school planning approach.

From shared vision to collective efficacy

Building upon a collective moral imperative for all community members to contribute effectively, with a focus on transforming a school over a 5-10 year timeframe, highlights the paradigm shift of the new school plan.

The use of the SPs promotes systems leadership and collective efficacy by embedding a values-driven approach for system improvement and sustainability. It provides a collaborative strategy for principals and their communities to plan, implement, monitor and track key improvements, while simultaneously building a culture of high performance.

The new approach supports principals and their communities in transforming their shared vision to achieve quality educational delivery through the establishment of each component of the school plan:

- purpose – the development of 3 strategic directions which will support educational innovation and improvements
- people – a clear plan to build the capabilities of the school community to contribute effectively
- processes – ensuring the school’s systems for project management deliver education improvements
- products – the achievement of key improvement outcomes and deliverables
- practice – the embedded cultural practices that will sustain educational improvements.