



Stella Maris Primary School

Professional Learning for Staff in Catholic Schools Policy 2.18

Rationale

Staff in Catholic schools are called to share in a special way in the mission of the Church. Church documents emphasise the need for well-educated and dedicated staff in Catholic schools, whose contribution to the life of a Catholic school gives witness to the values of the Gospel and the mission of the Church. The work of school leaders, teachers and school officers (support staff) requires a sophisticated array of knowledge, skills and attributes, which, in the face of constant and rapid social, economic, technological and educational change, requires continual enhancement.

Continuing professional learning is an essential component of school improvement and staff development. Professional learning is valued and recognised, in particular, as a major contributing factor towards improvement in student learning outcomes. A school's commitment to professional learning assists teachers to realise their vocation as educators in Catholic schools and assists support staff in their role of service to the school community.

Effective schools are learning communities in which all staff are lifelong learners who contribute to the community's learning and knowledge base in order to achieve the goals of the Catholic school and realise its vision.

This policy applies to all staff in Catholic schools, whether teaching or not.

Definitions

- **Professional learning** encompasses a broad range of activities and processes of reflection, enrichment and growth, planned to achieve sustainable improvement in professional practice and student learning through ongoing development of skills, knowledge, understanding and self-awareness.
- **Professional development** is generally synonymous with 'professional learning' as contained in this policy.
- **Staff** is used to denote Catholic school employees, including school leaders, teachers, teachers' aides, school officers and school services officers.
- **School authority** or **employer** may be a school's principal, canonical administrator, congregational leader or parish priest.

Principles

1. Improving professional practice. Professional learning in Catholic schools should be an ongoing process of personal and professional growth as well as religious formation, planned to improve professional practice, in order to bring about improvement in student learning outcomes.

2. Staff responsibility. All staff members are responsible for meeting relevant professional standards and enhancing their professional knowledge and practice by:

- pursuing ongoing professional learning in all aspects of their work;
- gaining an understanding of Catholic teachings that underpin their practice;
- reflecting critically on practice and achievements;
- contributing to the professional learning of colleagues, especially through sharing knowledge and practice; and
- participating actively in broader professional networks.

3. Leaders' responsibility. School leaders play a crucial role through their commitment to and leadership of professional learning and faith formation for all staff. They should create organisational conditions that support the development of a vibrant professional learning community and enhance the Catholic identity of the school, ensuring a balance between the professional learning goals of individual staff and the vision and goals of the school. School

leaders have a particular responsibility for the induction of staff, whether they are new to teaching, new to the school or new to positions of responsibility.

Procedures

1. Policy development

Schools should develop a professional learning policy using a process of consultation between the school leadership team, teachers and support staff. The policy should take into account:

- the school's mission or vision statement, and its particular culture and ethos;
- the School Improvement Plan¹ and other school policies;
- the professional learning needs of individual staff members;
- considerations of equity, access and inclusiveness;
- this Catholic Education Melbourne policy;
- relevant sector, national and state education policies and programs;
- requirements for teacher registration;
- requirements for accreditation to teach in a Catholic school, including accreditation to teach Religious Education²; and
- current research into effective professional learning.

2. Structures

School leaders should establish appropriate organisational structures to facilitate professional learning for all staff. This might involve the appointment of a Professional Learning Coordinator or the inclusion of these responsibilities within another leadership role. It might also involve the establishment of a Professional Learning Committee representing both teaching and non-teaching staff.

3. Implementation

a. In planning professional learning, schools should:

- allocate sufficient time and resources to develop the school as a learning community, especially in facilitating the work of professional learning teams;
- facilitate ongoing religious formation for staff to enhance the Catholic identity of the school;
- make available regular professional learning activities for all staff, both within and outside the workplace, and whether developed internally or provided by Catholic Education Melbourne or by external organisations;
- allow time to develop the skills, knowledge and understandings to change staff practice; and
- systematically evaluate programs to inform future planning.

b. Professional learning provision should:

- engage staff in reflection on and research into their professional practice within a collegial environment;
- support staff to give and receive feedback on professional practice;
- be planned according to principles of adult learning and adult faith formation, allowing for various styles of learning;
- be strategically planned, with a balance of theory and practice; and
- be connected to day-to-day work to create opportunities for sustainable change in professional practice.

c. At an individual staff level, schools should:

- assist staff in planning career paths and in meeting individual professional needs, including the development of individual professional learning plans;
- encourage and support staff to undertake formal study or training;
- recognise staff expertise and experience;
- ensure effective induction of staff who are new to the school or to the role;
- implement regular review and appraisal of staff; and
- facilitate accreditation of staff³.

d. Schools should develop procedures for:

- communication of information about professional learning activities;
- applying and authorising participation in professional learning activities;
- sharing learning from external professional learning activities with colleagues;
- recording participation by staff in activities; and
- reporting outcomes and experiences of professional learning to appropriate groups in the school community.

4. Accountability

Schools will need to meet regulatory reporting requirements of staff participation in professional learning occurring both within and outside the workplace.

Catholic Education Melbourne February 2009 (Revised)

Endnotes

¹ See School Improvement Framework on the Catholic Education Victoria Network (CEVN)

² Refer CECV policies 1.6 and 1.7

³ Refer CECV policies 1.6 and 1.7

References

Catholic Education Commission of Victoria 2005, *Leadership in Catholic Schools: Development Framework and Standards of Practice*.

Catholic Education Office Melbourne 2008, *Learning Centred Schools Framework*, <http://www.ceomelb.catholic.edu.au>

Catholic Education Office Melbourne 2006, School Improvement Framework, [Catholic Education Victoria Network](#)(CEVN)

NSW Department of Education and Training, Professional Learning Directorate 2004, *Professional Learning Policy For Schools*

Victorian Institute of Teaching 2003, [Standards of Professional Practice for Full Registration](#)



This policy will be reviewed in each review year

This policy was last updated in 2016