

Examples from 2009 School Self-Evaluations

Student Learning

A series of documents have been prepared which contain illustrative examples of completed sections of a school self-evaluation.

This document contains examples of completed sections relating to the Student Learning outcome area. These are drawn from school self-evaluations prepared by schools in 2009. In each case, the schools are referred to by a generic name, such as Victoria Primary School or Victoria Secondary College as appropriate.

These examples are aimed at assisting schools who may be about to undertake their self-evaluation by highlighting a range of very effective ways in which schools have tackled and presented information within their school self-evaluations.

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Q1: What Did We Aim To Do?

Q1 Example 1 - a small primary school

To maintain and extend the high levels of student achievement in Literacy through years P-6
To improve student achievement in Mathematics Years P-6 aligned to VELLS.

40% of all students (deemed capable) achieving above expected level in English and Mathematics

Learning growth in mathematics to be at least one CSF level at each stage across the school

Q1 Example 2 - a primary school

The key goal in Victoria Primary School's current strategic plan is to improve student achievement against the English and Mathematics Essential Learning Standards with the long term intention of getting all students deemed capable to the appropriate standards.

More specific targets set in terms of both literacy and numeracy includes:

1. Increasing the proportions of Prep, 2,4, and 6 students assessed as meeting (established or above) the English and Mathematics Standards appropriate to each year level to a figure of at least 80% by the end of the School Strategic Plan period as measured by the teacher assessment indicators
2. An 80% reduction in the percentage of Prep, 2, 4, and 6 students beginning or lower than the appropriate VELLS Levels
3. A progressive increase in the percentage of students who are reading text levels 5 (Year Prep), 15 (Year 1) and 20 (Year 2) respectively
4. A decrease in the percentage of students who are reading at 50% accuracy and below at text levels 5 (Year Prep), 15 (Year 1) and 20 (Year 2) respectively. Specific improvement strategies such as the full implementation of Victorian Essential Learning standards and an Inquiry based approach across multiple domains embedding ICT were also addressed in regards to curriculum development. The numeracy focus included clarity of teaching and learning methodology Prep – Year 6 and implementing a common approach across the school including strategies and language.

Q1 Example 3 - a secondary college

Our student learning outcomes were framed within the broad context of *enabling our students to become independent, self-regulated life-long learners*. More specifically we aimed for improvement in autonomous and self-directed learning, particularly in Middle Years which we believe will lead to enhancement of VCE results.

Achieving the above student outcomes was dependent on the key improvement strategy which was set, namely;

Enhancement of the pedagogical, organisational and cultural aspects of school life which transform student learning and well-being through further growth in teacher effectiveness.

The Middle School focus was around the attainment of very high levels of performance against VELLS and AIM measures and the improvement of MYRAD data in relation to the areas of; thinking and learning, control over learning, in-depth learning and decision making about learning.

The Senior School focus was around achieving greater consistency across and within subjects in relation to; increasing the number of study scores above 40, reducing the number of ENTER's below 50 and reducing between class variations.

Q1 Example 4 - a secondary college

Our student learning goal for the period of the school strategic plan was to develop a learning environment in which there are high expectations and approaches to teaching appropriate to the learning needs of individual students, resulting in improved learning outcomes.

These improved outcomes were to be measured by the following targets:

1. Improved scores on the "Teachers and Teaching" section of the Student Opinion Survey:
 - a) At least 75% agreement at all year levels with the statements in the "teacher energy and enthusiasm" variable (2005: 55% agreement)
 - b) At least 80% agreement at all year levels with the statements in the "Feedback" variable (2005: 75%)
 - c) At least 80% agreement at all year levels with the statements in the "Quality of Teaching" variable (2005: 76%)
2. Improved scores on the "Feelings about Yourself and School" section of the Student Opinion Survey:
 - a) At least 60% agreement at all year levels with the statements in the "Connectedness to School" variable (2005: 39%)
 - b) At least 60% agreement at all year levels with the statements in the "Connectedness to Teachers" variable (2005: 52%)
3. Improved scores for the "Student Orientation" variable on the Staff Opinion Survey: 75 or better for the "Student Orientation" variable (2005: 66.8)
4. Achievement data:
 - a) Matched cohort growth for the Year 7 and Year 9 AIM tests to be above 1.0
 - b) Mean scores in subsequent years (Year 7 and 8) for the TORCH test (English) and the ACER Maths Test ("value-added" measures) to be benchmarked and a target established for the degree of improvement to be shown in the latter year.
 - c) Teacher judgements against the VELs:
 - At least 20% of students to be reported as achieving above the expected level In English and Mathematics in Years 7 to 10
 - 10% or fewer students to be reported as achieving below the expected level in English and Mathematics in Years 7 to 10.

Q2: What Did We Achieve?

Q2 Example 1 - a small primary school

The very small cohorts and the high mobility of students can lead to a high degree of statistical error. It is important to the school community that no individual student is identified in this report. For example the grade 5 results are based on the performance of one student only.

Trend data P-6 VELS Teacher Judgements for the period indicates that teachers generally are using the range of grades bearing in mind that these are not the same teachers each year. There appears to be a downward trend P-6 with the tail growing to 17% in 2008 in Measurement, Chance and Data.

2008 NAPLAN data indicates that in Year 3 Numeracy, students achieved well above expected levels thus achieving our target. However there is no reliable trend data throughout the school level report to assist evaluation.

Q2 Example 2 – a primary school

Parents at Victoria Primary School have a high level of satisfaction with the school and there is a strong belief that the school provides a strong learning focus in a stimulating environment. Parent feedback indicates general satisfaction with the reporting process within the school.

Key literacy data indicates a gradual increase in student achievement levels including Assessment of Reading (P – 2), NAPLAN, AIM and to some extent teacher judgments. This would be expected given the strong focus that has been placed on literacy within the school over the period of the strategic plan.

There was a gradual increase in the reading benchmark data at Year Prep from 2005 – 2007 reflecting strong teaching particularly in the early years. However the data currently indicates a steady decline over the last two years. At the same time the number of students at risk has increased to close to 20% at Year Prep and decreased at Year 1 and two. It is interesting to note that significantly more boys reached benchmark in Prep in 2008 compared to girls. There has however been disparity between teacher judgment and Assessment of Reading at Prep and Year one over the past three years in favour of teacher judgment.

Year 3 teacher judgments are comparable to the NAPLAN results in reading where students are above state means. The opposite trend is evident in Year 5 reading.

A strong early year's literacy program has ensured that the 2008 Year 4 cohort had improved significantly from Year Prep where only 61% reached benchmark to 97% at or above expected levels over the two year period. (As per teacher judgments) Cohort data across the school has improved whilst the number of students at risk has declined over the past 3 years. However no students in Years 1, 3, 4, 5 or 6 have received higher than a B in teacher judgments on the new student reports.

NAPLAN results in writing are significantly above the state mean at Years 3 & 5 and match the SFO percentile range at Year 5. Although this is a pleasing result there are a significant number of students at risk in both cohorts who need to be monitored and tracked. While the percentage of students achieving at or above expected levels has stayed constant in Prep and Year 1, with the exception of grade 4, the remainder have shown a slight but steady decline. All cohorts have shown a drop in achievement, the most noticeable occurring in grades 2, 5 and 6. In grades 5 and 6 particularly, the percentage of students at significant risk is relatively high, however NAPLAN data in grade 5 does not support this observation and is well above the state achievement levels, as are the Grade 3 results.

While Speaking and listening achievement at or above expected levels is constant at greater than 90% across all grades, year 5 and 6 judgments are of some concern. It is pleasing to note that from Prep to Year 4 there are only a handful of students that are falling just below expected levels, however cohort data shows the percentage of students achieving at or above expected levels has declined over time.

State wide and National testing programs have shown that student performance in Mathematics at Year 3 has shown a slight upward trend from 2003 – 2007. However student achievement levels have remained below the state mean in all but 2005 as have school means as a percentile against the SFO percentile range. This pattern is reflected in Year five data with students consistently performing below expected levels. It is however pleasing to note that in 2007 20% of Year 5 students performed at Level 5, well above expected levels. This same cohort of students was also significantly above the state means in 2005.

The Year 3 students performed well in 2007 with 81% of students at or above expected levels. Again in 2008, a large percentage was significantly above expected levels. At the same time there were a large percentage of students who were just below expected levels which pulls the data down. The number of students at **significant** risk has decreased across the period of the strategic plan at Year 3 which is pleasing.

National numeracy testing in 2008 indicates that both cohorts of students are again achieving below expected levels. However a large proportion of students in Year 3 are only slightly below expected bands and achievement levels. Again the means are below the SFO percentile range with the data at Year 5 significantly below.

The Mathematics online interview implemented at the beginning of 2009 indicates that students are not meeting all expected “growth points” in the Early Years prior to completing the required assessment programs.

The school goal was that teacher judgments against the VELS dimension of Number reflect an increase in the proportions of Year Prep, 2, 4, and 6 students assessed as meeting (established or above) the Mathematics Standards to a figure of at least 80%.

Staff opinion indicates that curriculum coordination, professional interactions and goal congruence within the school is improving. Staff holds a strong belief that the work demands at Victoria Primary School are not excessive.

Q2 Example 3 - a secondary college

The student learning outcome set for Middle School were, in the majority of cases, met and met strongly.

VELS, AIM and recent NAPLAN data indicate that our students are achieving very high levels of literacy and numeracy. Not only are students achieving above the national benchmarks a considerable proportion of students are achieving in the highest bands. At least 96% of students from Year 7-10 are meeting VELS in English and Mathematics. Year 7 and 9 AIM (replaced by NAPLAN) results show considerable strength in Year 7 Writing and Year 7 and 9 Numeracy.

MYRAD data shows a positive trend in most areas, the exception being Year 8 student perceptions in the areas of thinking and learning and in-depth learning. A highlight of the data is the significant increase in Year 9 perceptions of in-depth learning.

VCE results continue to be strong when analysed using a variety of measures such as;

- perfect ENTER scores of 99.95 (achieved in 2006 and 2008),
- study scores of 50 (achieved each year)
- the number of Honour Roll students (ENTER scores over 97) is consistently high.

We are also continuing to encourage Year 12 students to undertake University Enhancement subjects and all have performed exceptionally well, with some obtaining top places in First Year achievements.

Whilst the percentage of study scores above 40 were below the target of 28% an analysis of study scores by subjects shows that in some subject areas (Accounting, Biology, Physics, English Language, Music Performance (Group and Solo) and Chinese Second Language) the percentage of students achieving study scores of 40 and above is well above the school's target.

The number of students achieving ENTERs below 50 is low and viewed positively in comparison to SFO, however it remains just below the target.

Between class variations, in subject areas with multiple classes, show reductions in some subject areas and not others and will obviously remain a priority for Learning Areas and professional learning in the next Strategic Plan period.

In light of VCE results across the state we may well consider our targets for improvement to be ambitious, in that we have not met all of them. Victoria High School has consistently been ranked in the top five Government schools in Victoria over many years.

Q2 Example 4 – a secondary college

The College set out to improve all VCE study scores to equal Like Schools Group Means and to lift the percentage of study scores above 40. The Like Schools Group is no longer a point of comparison. However comparing the All Study Scores against the State [all government schools] Mean Scores, the College has demonstrated consistently higher results. The percentage of study scores over forty throughout the State has remained steady over the three years (6.0%, 6.1%, 5.9%) and in comparison, the College scores for the three years were well above the state average (9.1%, 9.8%, 6.6%). It is pleasing to report that there has been an increase in the numbers of students achieving ENTER scores over 90 in these three years compared to previous years.

Staff were resourced and encouraged to undertake professional development activities to focus on best practice in VCE teaching and learning strategies. In this three year period, it is evident that Real Retention rates have consistently remained well above the State Mean and there is an improvement in the actual completion of Year 12 studies. In terms of Student Destination Data, consistently over the three years, there has been a strong university and TAFE orientation, with a small number of students successfully undertaking apprenticeships each year.

Years 7-10: At Years 7-10, the focus was on improving student learning through a thorough implementation of VELs. Teachers undertook curriculum review and implementation across the 7-10 curricular: course development and assessment and reporting. To cover all Domains of VELs, each Discipline was responsible for reporting on their own Domain as well as a relevant Domain from the Physical, Personal and Social Learning Strand or the Interdisciplinary Strand. This resulted in considerable curriculum development and teacher professional learning.

A new College report format was developed to include the mandated requirements, as well as comprehensively report all aspects of VELs student achievement, internal assessments, diagnostic comments and student goal setting. All of these changes to provide additional College input have been received most positively by parents after earlier concerns about the new model were reflected in the 2006 Parent Opinion Survey.

In the area of literacy and numeracy intervention, there is an established PAT testing system for all Years 7, 8 and 9 students to monitor progression of students and inform teaching practice.

In order to improve student engagement at Year 9, a Professional Learning Team focused on using IWBs to enhance the Year 9 curriculum. Curriculum material was developed which was then put on the intranet for all staff. The Learning Team gave staff PL in this area, and both staff and student anecdotal feedback was extremely positive about the level of student engagement. The variable on the Student Attitudes to Schooling Survey for 'Learning Confidence' increased over the three years well into the fourth quartile.

For the Middle Years, the I & E funding was a very effective resource in terms of the Victoria College Cluster of schools developing a close relationship which enhanced student transition and facilitated student engagement. All teachers in the Middle Years shared professional learning and shared results of PAT testing, to create a dialogue towards consistency of outcomes and to inform the transitions process. The variables 'Teacher Effectiveness' and 'Student Learning' improved and 'Learning Confidence' remained in the fourth quartile.

The College received P&D Culture Accreditation after a considerable cultural change successfully delivered the standards of the P&D Framework. Teacher Learning Teams, with the focus on improving student achievement outcomes, were developed and the staff embraced this cohesive approach to collegiate professional practice. PoLT, student engagement through improved teaching and learning strategies and ICT were areas of staff professional learning focus, as well as targets in personal development plans. Each learning team examined College data and selected specific areas on which to base their team focus for improvement.

Induction programs for all new staff members were reviewed, a Survival Guide was developed and a more extensive phased program was implemented. The data from the P&D Culture Report demonstrates a resounding endorsement from staff that all standards were implemented.

Q3: Why Did We Achieve / Not Achieve Our Aims?

Q3 Example 1 - a small primary school

Focus on development of the whole child is seen as one of Victoria PS most obvious reasons for improved student outcomes with all teaching and learning focussed on improving individual student learning outcomes- physically, academically, socially and emotionally.

Classroom programs are supported by an integrated curriculum that strives to make connections with real life learning experiences, enriched by specialist programs such as Art, Library and LOTE-Indonesian. Development of Individual Learning Plans for all students aims for precision in curriculum planning. Programs can then provide the depth and breadth necessary to accommodate for all learners.

Student voice is given a high priority with opportunities for students to provide feedback in both formal (Attitudes to School Survey/Ministries Program) and informal, such as through discussion groups unpacking Attitudes to School data.

Delivery of programs such as Program Achieve and Circle Time provide students with the language to express themselves in a succinct and appropriate manner. The development of social and emotional intelligences is seen as enhancing student academic success.

During 2007, the staff worked hard on Performance and Development Culture, with the recognition that we achieved Accreditation early in 2008. This significant achievement is celebrated as a sign of progress on our journey of performance and development. Staff members have commented that they feel empowered by this process, as it supports their own professional learning in the context of school goals.

The staff at Victoria Primary School has been aware of the need for moderation in the Teacher Assessment of the VELS due to the isolation of the staff in relation to other professionals. We have made significant progress as a cluster of schools to address this. Closer cluster ties have seen a significant shift in the sharing of teaching strategies across the cluster of schools. Staff are willing and able to share classroom practices with other teachers by making feedback visits to a range of other classrooms within the cluster as well as to other schools that provide special expertise in an area that teacher perceive needs improvement.

Staff believe that students are encouraged to be successful and are treated as individuals. Staff are aware of and proactive in their personal development plans that reflect their own strengths and that address perceived weaknesses as well as working toward the overall plan for the school. Staff are actively involved in the planning of and implementation of solid Annual Implementation Plans in guiding the school in an improvement agenda.

These factors have enabled the staff to feel connected and able to achieve at a high level. Parent Opinion Survey results in the area of School Climate have shown vast improvements over the last three years in all areas. Parents view the school favourably in meeting their child's needs.

Q3 Example 2 - a primary school

Victoria Primary School has grown over the strategic plan period. At the same time there has been a significant increase in teaching staff including many in their first years of teaching. This has meant that support has been needed to drive teaching and learning in the classroom and there has been a focus on teaching and learning in literacy to continue the established pattern of improvement. At the same time, transience has been an ongoing issue as has cohort growth. This was certainly reflected in the NAPLAN and AIM data where a change of two or three pupils within a small cohort may well influence data.

Numeracy teaching and learning programs have been overshadowed by a strong emphasis on literacy teaching. During the past three years there hasn't been a consistent staff member driving change in numeracy. In 2006 a staff member was trained as an early year's numeracy coordinator and although no time was allocated for the role, the staff member led numeracy

planning within the Prep – 2 team. The Literacy professional learning team's focus has been on resourcing and moderation particularly in writing.

A review of numeracy teaching was held in 2007 in light of the new school vision. A staff forum addressed the question: In a school that is "Creating Tomorrow Today" what would effective numeracy teaching look like? Staff overwhelmingly agreed that the best way forward was a whole school approach with consistent language across the school and a firm assessment schedule for data collection and analysis. It was also evident from the feedback gained that staff believed they were better teachers of literacy than numeracy and more confident in that area in addressing student needs. The national testing program, teacher judgments certainly reflected this, particularly in the senior area of the school. (Year 3 – 6). The leadership of the school agreed that there was a need to ignite interest in numeracy.

At the beginning of 2008 teacher enthusiasm and interest in numeracy teaching and learning was gained through a whole school curriculum day with an external consultant. The day spent unpacking "numeration" led to professional discussions across the school and after school numeracy walks where teaching practice was shared via classroom displays, photos and children's work. Staff awareness of teaching approaches was enhanced. Moderation activities around open ended tasks in the dimension of measurement also encouraged discussion. A draft teaching statement on numeration was developed with particular discussions around "language" which will continue to be developed during 2009. At the commencement of the current school year another professional development day was held on "problem solving", again with the consultant. This has been an ongoing focus in classrooms this year.

All year prep students have been assessed in regards to receptive and expressive language needs. In 2008 as reflected in the reading data twelve Year Prep students received additional language support via small group programs with the Speech pathologist. These were followed up again this year with several remaining in support programs and others directed to Reading Recovery. In addition the school has a high proportion of students funded under the program for students with disabilities. As these students are reading at the minimum standard (eg Level 5 at the end of Year 1) they are then included in school data. The Prep language screening program also identified that students phonemic awareness skills have decreased over the past few years.

Reading Recovery has been in place targeting Year one students throughout the strategic plan period. (EFT 0.5) at the same time this staff member has had periods of study leave, long service leave and other long absences. The school was unable to replace the teacher which affected continuity of programs and access for students at risk.

The school employed a speech pathologist (EFT 0.2) from the school budget. With the high number of students with identified language difficulties and autism in the school, access was limited within the program. However for those students receiving access growth in skills was measureable. Integration support staff also facilitates small groups to ensure that skills continue to be developed between visits by the Speech Pathologist.

A strong literacy focus on the past 18 months has been around comprehension skills particularly from Year 2 – 6. The introduction of the PROBE assessments has enabled teachers to clearly identify student strengths and weaknesses and implement appropriate strategies to address needs.

Planning documentation in both literacy and numeracy is developed by individual teams rather than from a whole school approach. Numeracy planners are now being developed on an annual and term by term basis highlighting specific foci for those students above or below expected standards. In this way planning is across levels. A whole school approach is now being developed including specific whole class teaching and working towards targeted small group instruction as per the literacy program. A regional numeracy coach and school based coach are driving this change with the Numeracy coordinator.

Teacher judgments in both literacy and numeracy need to be targeted with an emphasis on moderation across teams and year levels. In general results in both domains indicate that staff may well be erring on the side of caution. At the same time patterns appear to have varied during years where there were composite classes and those in which single grades were allocated.

Assessment of learning in both Literacy and particularly in Numeracy needs to be a strong focus to lead to improved student outcomes. Staff need to have a shared vision in regards to assessment 'for,' 'of' and 'as' learning across all domains. At the same time there needs to be agreed levels of achievement as to whether or not students have clearly met standards teamed with moderation across teams.

Professional develop during 2006 -2007 was based on a more individualized approach rather than whole school. Staff development activities such as those addressed in numeracy have certainly impacted on teaching and learning programs across the school and the introduction of professional learning teams has ensured that learning has been ongoing and needs based.

Staff performance reviews over the past two years have seen staff develop specific personal goals in regards to teaching and learning in both Literacy and Numeracy.

Q3 Example 3 - a secondary college

The College invested a great deal of time, energy and planning into the improvement of student learning outcomes during the strategic planning period. PoLT was clearly linked to the Performance and Development process through the promotion of Professional Learning Teams (PLT's) and project - based activities. The extensive consultation and team based approach adopted by the leadership of the College in the early years of the planning period resulted in Performance and Development Culture accreditation in 2006. This process served to heighten staff awareness of PoLT in particular and its strong links to enhancing student engagement and performance.

The Leading Schools Fund provided the College with significant additional funds to introduce flexible learning spaces, teaching and learning coaches and the means to explore and pursue the development of cross curricular rich learning tasks for the middle years. With the conclusion of this program in 2007, the long - term impacts of the initiatives associated with the program are questionable. The College created flexible learning spaces for each of the Domain or KLA areas and the take up of working in a team - based facility whilst initially encouraging, has clearly diminished. The only program areas where these spaces appear to have had long lasting impact and consistent application are in the areas of VCAL, Precal and LOTE.

The impact of the Teaching and Learning Coaches has been difficult to measure. Anecdotally, there were some positive benefits to those staff involved in the program, particularly as it exposed those staff involved to alternate strategies, to reflect on their teaching practice and to receive feedback about their performance. Since then many of the coaches or those who learnt from them have left the College due to retirement, transfer or promotion. Over the last two years there has been a significant change in staff within the College and a re-structure in leadership. There were some questions early on from staff not involved with the program, as to how effectively the some coaches were utilising their time, which might suggest some shortcomings in the clarity of purpose with respect to their roles. Overall, there is little hard evidence or data to demonstrate a strong ongoing benefit for the initiative although our e-potential survey data shows a fairly good response in this area which could be used to indicate that it was quite effective.

The targets set in relation to AIM were largely met although as indicated earlier, the change to NAPLAN testing made comparative purposes more difficult. The College was near or at state base means with the AIM testing program. However, when comparing results with the SFO percentile data it would suggest that our students were performing outside their expected performance levels over the 2004-2007 period. This point was reinforced with the

introduction of the NAPLAN tests, which showed a considerable gap between the expected and actual performance levels at both Years 7 and 9, particularly in relation to Reading and Writing. The results are however only for the one year period, hence it is difficult to draw lasting conclusions from the data. Of concern, are the relative percentages of students performing at or below the benchmark levels at both year 7 and 9 from the initial data sets.

The results in AIM and NAPLAN have not shifted significantly over the planning period. Upon reflection, it appears that there was a lack of strategic focus across the college on enhancing performance in these areas although there were efforts made to better prepare students for the tests in both English and Maths. There needs to be a whole school focus on the improvement of literacy and numeracy. In addition, the special programs offered in these areas at the junior levels (years 7 and 8) need to be revisited to develop a far more cohesive focus across the school and linked to future pathways.

The targeted areas of VCE Further, Methods and Specialist Mathematics showed some demonstrable improvements, particularly in the first few years of the planning period. This was a result of considerable planning and focus from the Mathematics Domain and needs to be recognised as such.

The relative performances re the successful completion rates for both VCAL and VET are very pleasing. The College is one of the largest providers in the state for these programs and the take up by students supports the strong multiple pathway focus offered by the College. A great deal of the success with respect to these programs must be attributed to the leadership, innovation and teamwork of those staff involved in the programs.

Q3 Example 4 - a secondary college

While many of the targets set in 2005 were not met, we would now question how relevant or realistic many of these targets were in establishing whether student learning performance did in fact improve over the period of the plan.

However, a number of factors impacted on what we were able to achieve in terms of improving student learning:

- A number of changes to the curriculum programs and structure were developed and implemented, with a view to improving student achievement and engagement in learning. In 2007, we introduced the 90 minute period as a means through which teachers might be able to engage students in more depth, and with a wider variety of strategies to suit their learning needs. In 2008, a working party reviewed this and recommended that it be continued in the future, thus affirming the need and intention to provide longer periods of uninterrupted time for learning. This necessitated a review of the time allocations for each subject area in Years 7 to 10.

Qualitative feedback from staff suggests that the new structure works well for teachers who differentiate their teaching and adapt it to the variety of different learning styles and needs exhibited by students. Those teachers who employ a narrower range of teaching strategies are more likely to have difficulties with this new structure.

- The Teaching and Learning Committee continued to lead and support Key Learning Areas in their implementation of Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) assessment and reporting, with a focus in 2008 on the interdisciplinary domains of ICT and communication. However, Parent Opinion Survey data suggests that this objective has not been successfully implemented in the area of reporting.
- 2007 was the first year that teachers assessed and reported on student achievement against the VELS standards, so it was expected that there would be discrepancies between 2006 and 2007 in reported student achievement levels. However, in 2008,

the second year of implementing VELs assessment and reporting, the large percentages of students being reported as achieving well below the expected levels suggest that many teachers are still coming to terms with the VELs standards and progression points. Teachers' judgements against the VELs standards in Mathematics, in particular, also seem to be at odds with the high levels of performance achieved in the NAPLAN testing at Year 9 and with VCE performance in Mathematics. While it may take several more reporting periods until we can be confident of the accuracy and consistency of teacher assessments against the VELs, this should improve as VELs assessment and reporting practices are refined across the College.

- In recognition that we needed to improve the literacy performance of our students, as reflected in our SLR data, we renewed our focus on whole-school literacy in 2008, with the Literacy Co-ordinator recruiting and training representatives from all KLAs in strategies to enhance literacy in their subject areas. The strategy focused on raising awareness amongst all teachers of the literacy demands of their subjects and providing an ongoing program of professional learning to familiarise teachers with teaching strategies to improve students' literacy within their subject areas. For some teachers, it has been challenging to develop strategies for enhancing their students' literacy skills in the areas in which they teach, and the whole school strategy has thus been unevenly taken up and implemented so far. The 2008 NAPLAN and VCE data confirm that we need to sustain this focus on whole school literacy in 2009 and beyond. Additional attention should be placed on developing students' writing skills across the curriculum.
- For 2009, the Year 10 curriculum was reviewed and aligned with VCE, to facilitate acceleration into VCE studies and enhance student choice and specialisation. Teachers report that the restructure has raised the learning expectations of students, and narrowed the gap between Years 10 and 11. We look forward to validating this perception when we review these students' VCE results in 2011.
- The process for redemption of outcome tasks was reviewed for VCE students, to improve student motivation and attendance. The increased rigour of this process may have been a contributing factor to students' levels of engagement with their teachers declining in 2008. However, we believe it will in the longer term serve to raise expectations and provide more rigour to the processes of student performance and work ethic.
- In 2008, a week-long "Headstart" Program was introduced for Year 10 and 11 students, whereby students commenced work on their 2009 studies at the end of 2008. Students in Years 7 to 9 were also promoted to the next year level and undertook tasks from the 2009 program during the final two weeks of the school year. Evaluation of this strategy is incomplete, but feedback from KLA leaders suggests that it worked very well in the senior school, though less so in the junior school, and that teachers will need to be provided with more opportunities to prepare for the program and develop more commitment to it, if the program is to fully achieve its objectives. We believe that this strategy will also raise expectations and performance levels, and we look forward to analysing our 2009 data in this regard. We will further review and enhance this program over the period of the next Strategic Plan.
- We have yet to achieve a shared and consensually agreed vision, perspective or underlying set of beliefs practised across all KLAs regarding what constitutes effective teaching and learning at Victoria Secondary College. Consequently, greater emphasis needs to be placed on developing consistency in teachers' understanding of variations in students' learning styles, and how data about individual student learning performance can be effectively used to enhance the teaching and learning process for each student. Teachers generally understand the data sets available to them, but need much more support and training in how to use the data to improve their teaching and learning strategies, and thus improve student learning performance.

- Likewise, we do not have a shared or consistent understanding or application of high expectations or desired learning outcomes that are prerequisites for both improved student attitudes to teacher effectiveness and improved student learning performance.
- The Action Learning Teams were set up in 2006 to facilitate the implementation of a vibrant performance and development culture, the achievement of which would be reflected by formal accreditation. While some team members have found the teams to be very valuable, the time and commitment allocated to their implementation has not been sufficient to allow them to achieve their objectives. Insufficient time allocation to the teams within the meetings calendar and a lack of structural coherency are factors that could well have undermined the potential of the ALTs, and these will need to be addressed in the next Strategic Plan.
- Whilst our school has undertaken the accreditation process for performance and development and has made significant progress in this area, it has yet to achieve such accreditation, which suggests that some of the key elements of the process have yet to be embedded in the culture of the college. This could be a significant contributing factor to the unevenness of teacher performance, and point to the need for further support and accountability mechanisms to keep the focus on “teachers as learners”.
- “On demand” testing has only just been introduced as a means of generating useful information regarding students’ individualised learning attributes and levels. There is much scope for assisting staff to understand how they might use this information to improve their teaching and learning strategies. It is encouraging, however, that an increasing number of our staff are realising the usefulness of such a process.

Q4: How Effectively Did We Manage Our Resources to Support the Achievement of Our Aims?

Q4 Example 1 - a small primary school

Plans were laid to build our ICT capacity as increased resources and skill levels were identified as key components of successful curriculum delivery. Interactive Whiteboards were installed in classrooms and laptops leased to provide increased access to ICT for students. Software programs were sourced to compliment this technology. Appropriate training was delivered with all programs as this was seen as essential in embedding ICT in program delivery.

All professional learning was determined through our AIP's and informed by student learning needs. Participation in external programs have had a positive impact on student outcomes with staff applying the 'learning system' model to assess the impact of their learning on student achievement.

The increasing enrolment numbers have allowed us to maintain three full time teachers ensuring stable teaching at all levels. This has further allowed for the employment of reading intervention/numeracy intervention teachers which seen a demonstrable improvement in reading and numeracy levels for many students.

The employment of a part time teacher aide and an increase in the time allocation in 2008 has been very beneficial.

The increased teacher interaction through the Network Community Cluster has provided all staff with an improved pedagogical interaction with a wide range of teachers.

Q4 Example 2 - a primary school

- the selection of teaching staff continues to be a major asset of our school. The school has retained a close association with the Universities to ensure that we have the opportunity to employ graduate teachers
- the completion of the Performance and Development Culture initiatives focussed staff on the continued need to:
 - tailor individual and whole school P.D to ensure improved classroom teaching practices and to ensure that quality P.D is offered
 - offer ongoing feedback on performance (both formal and informal)
 - have P.D plans in place
- allocation of teaching staff has been a major contributing factor to the successes achieved in the last Strategic Plan period.
- Victoria PS has continued to conduct:
 - at least 3 classes over entitlement each year which has enabled us to keep classroom numbers to a minimum
 - straight grades at all levels (with no composite classes at any grade level)
- Professional development is continually offered to all staff by internal and external providers
- Staff
 - will often attend P.D initiatives 'in teams' which ensures and encourages them to introduce the ideas/initiatives back into their year level program
 - have timetabled release with other members of their team to aid planning
- each year the ICT, English and Maths budgets continue to receive a significant proportion of the Curriculum allocation. Other curriculum programs which are well funded are Art/Craft, PD and Student Welfare.
- the introduction of I/Whiteboards into our school has commenced with all grade 5 and 6 classes having one. (It is anticipated that the remainder of the school will receive interactive whiteboards within the next Strategic Plan period.)
- the school facilities continue to offer our students a stimulating environment

- the new Art/Craft facility enables teachers to team teach 2 grades at one time
- the new kitchen offers our students opportunities to complete 'hands on' activities. This facility also enables opportunities for small groups of students (of different abilities) opportunities to work in an environment other than their classroom.

Our Student Welfare Program enhances our whole school environment through:

- Bully Busters
- Students Awards and recognition programs
- Junior School Council
- camping and hiking Programs
- buddies.

All these programs assist to provide our students with life skills and opportunities to experience success.

Resourcing and the ongoing development of the grounds and buildings continues to be significant. In the lifetime of this Strategic Plan we have:

- built a new Art/Craft facility and a new kitchen
- added a significant extension to our staffroom
- converted the former Art/Craft Centre into a resource room, storerooms for the gym and offices for our Psychologist and Speech Therapists
- installed security fences.

The maintenance of our building occurs each year with the ongoing painting and refurbishment classrooms.

Q4 Example 3 - a secondary college

The resources available to a school include physical resources, such as buildings and equipment; personnel, including teaching and support staff; time, for meeting and as time allowances; monetary resources, for conducting or accessing special programs and professional learning opportunities; and leadership, including, both Principal Class and Teaching Class leaders, such as KLA, sub-school, year level and program leaders. At Victoria Secondary College, over the past four years, we have established structures and processes for improving teaching and learning practices based on all of the elements of a performance and development culture. Thus we have established Performance and Development Partnerships for all teachers to support them in setting goals and strategies to reach those goals. Through our Action Learning Teams (ALT), we encourage classroom observations and feedback and have developed a professional learning process aligned to this. Our Leading Teachers mentor and review other teachers. Collaborative approaches are integral to all of this.

Yet we have not allocated sufficient time or professional learning resources to support these collaborative processes. ALT's have met just twice in Term 1, 2009, for instance, and some teachers have yet to meet with their Leading Teacher mentors.

If we want teachers to collaborate together in classroom observations and reflections, we must commit to and develop a structure to allow this to happen, and systematise the process accordingly. We must then allocate time to allow this to happen, and resources to allow professional learning to take place. If we support the concept, then we must resource it properly. It would appear that we have so many demands on our time that the intended focus is diffused.

Literacy and numeracy support resourcing is also limited, given that it has been a key school priority, and this will need to be addressed in the next strategic planning period.

Over the years, the College has accumulated a vast array of equipment and resources, as well as infrastructure, to support the teaching and learning process: computer hardware and network resources, electronic whiteboards, data projectors, DVD players and so on. Yet not

all of these resources are effectively used and managed. Some of it is obsolete. Some of it is broken. All of this frustrates teachers in the performance of their duties.

Insufficient time and funding for professional learning and in-class support in using these teaching resources has also been a source of frustration, which we have sought to address in 2009 by appointment of eLearning coaches.

The distribution of leadership and management resources across the three areas of the Strategic Plan currently does not reflect the priorities of the College, in terms of the numbers of leadership positions and time allowances allocated to each of the goal areas. While the majority of Leading Teachers (10 out of 17) have leadership portfolios in the Student Learning area, fewer periods are allocated as time allowances to them than are allocated to those Leading Teachers who have as their primary responsibility Student Engagement and Well being (72 periods per fortnight compared with 96 periods per fortnight), and no Leading Teachers have portfolios in Student Pathways and Transitions, though the Heads of School and Senior School Level Co-ordinators do play a role in this area. It should be acknowledged, however, that Leading Teacher roles overlap and tend to embrace all three areas of student learning, wellbeing and engagement, and pathways and transitions.

Q4 Example 4 - a secondary college

- The College undertook to provide comprehensive VCE studies and resourced these accordingly. There were 30 internal studies offered, whilst some students took a small number of external studies, thus catering for a broad range of student needs. A VCE Coordinator, as well as Years 11 and 12 Coordinators, each with an Assistant to check attendance, oversaw the program. A Careers Coordinator provided course and vocational counselling. The College appointed an International Student Coordinator and dedicated ESL provision for the International Students. A LOTE teacher assistant is funded to support the LOTE teaching staff in the delivery of LOTE programs. In the last 3 years, we have slowly reduced the number of Expert teachers. The cost of Experts has impacted greatly on our budgets. In 2008, we had 47, and in 2007 and 2006, we had 48. This year, we have 40.8 EFT.
- For Years 7-10, one of the specific targets of the Strategic Plan was to increase reading comprehension by the end of Year 7. Every student in Year 7 underwent PAT testing at the start of the year to ascertain their skills levels in literacy and numeracy. These results were reported to classroom teachers and used to identify students for Reading Recovery and Maths intervention. The College has resourced, from Language Support funding, a Language Coordinator and teachers who take small withdrawal classes. Towards the end of the year, all Year 7 students are again tested to monitor their level of achievement over that year. This testing program, along with NAPLAN results and teacher judgements against VELS, strengthens teacher knowledge about individual students and classes and therefore helps inform practice. Students were tracked even when in different forms and there was improvement in reading comprehension until Year 9 when they are assessed with a distinctly different ACER test.
- Staff professional learning, part of the P&D Culture, has been a priority in the past three years, but in the last two years, budgetary constraints reduced the availability of funds for professional learning. Learning areas were given a tight budget structure in which to operate, thus professional learning was less dependent on external providers and more focused on the College staff delivering professional development activities, both within their Learning Area as well as to the whole staff. DEECD 'Principles of Effective Professional Learning' underpinned the College PL program. The mandated allocation of 3 day professional learning at the beginning of the year has added difficulty to providing opportunities for whole staff PL.

- Over the past two years, the College has had the endorsement of the College Council for a half day given for Teacher Learning Team presentations. This has been a valuable sharing of exemplary curriculum for teaching and learning improvement.
- The Induction Program, for teachers and ESS new to the College, allocates mentors and provides phased induction professional learning to complement critical activities taking place during the year. A half-day Induction Program is held prior to the resumption of the College. This has translated into new staff members feeling far more confident.
- Considerable resources have been allocated to the provision of ICT to ensure comprehensive Learning Area access and staff access to professional learning opportunities in this field. The College now has 28 interactive whiteboards and has increased the number of dedicated computer rooms to eleven as funds from the Federal Government Computer grant is spent. The College was a recipient of \$278,000 from the Federal Government's National Secondary Computer fund and a minor computer grant, to fund the purchase of 278 computers and has increased the number of IWBs. The challenge in the next three years will be to resource extensive and necessary professional learning, as well as resource ICT provision in terms of upgrades, maintenance and software. An Ultranet coach from the Region has been a valuable resource for College planning and the ICT sub-committee consisting of parents and staff, which has been a valuable forum to oversee College eLearning and provision. Resourcing six ICT coaches has provided staff with easy access to one-to-one PL. While the College eLearning Plan was developed in 2009, this significant document will ensure a strategic focus for implementation of ICT and also places the College in readiness for the Ultranet.

Q5: What Can We Do In The Future To Continue To Improve?

Q5 Example 1 - a small primary school

In order to maintain our standards we will be able to clearly define goals for improvement based on this School Self Assessment.

From the data analysis there is room for improvement in the both Literacy and Numeracy. The Literacy improvement focus is in the areas of Writing however, Reading will continue to be a major focus area for the school. The school sees the enormous benefits of a consistent and sustained focus on Reading from the previous school strategic plan period, so it is vital to keep this momentum going.

The trend in Number is erratic and there has not been a consistent upward trend across the seven year levels during the review period. An improvement in the Number area in mathematics could also be a focus.

With Annual Implementation Plans and Individual Learning Plans for all students determining staff professional learning, improved student learning outcomes should be achieved. This will be supported by:

- The new Network Community Cluster arrangements with student access to an increased range of teacher expertise, learning opportunities and shared resources. Staff will have enhanced opportunities to share planning, assessment/moderation and aggregation of data across the cluster
- Design and delivery of cluster Curriculum Plans and improved, workable and relevant Literacy and Numeracy Assessment Plans and the delivery of the Common Curriculum to all schools via training for all staff;
- Alignment of school AIPs and Principal and staff Performance and Development Plans with Network goals, towards achieving the Regions priorities;
- NAPLAN testing program trend data - for comparisons with national, rather than state results;
- Continued development and improvement in the provision of ICT.

Q5 Example 2 - a primary school

For the future we will:

- further develop our school-wide approach to policy and curriculum planning while building teacher capacity to enhance student learning
- promote English and Mathematics as the basis for learning and continue to set high expectations
- implement a school wide spelling program to further enhance our writing results
- introduce and implement On-Line Testing
- continue to monitor student achievement and ensure that teacher judgements are consistent across levels
- monitor the academic performance of students in grades 3-4 for improvement
- investigate and purchase comprehension materials for the grade 2-3 students
- continue to place emphasis on teaching/improving our students' abilities to comprehend
- review the writing genre taught at each grade level
- continue to have students on ILPs in each grade with an emphasis to extend the more talented students as well as those 'at risk'
- continue to offer extension classes in Literacy and Numeracy
- aim to demonstrate the 'value added' to each cohort of students (from Preps –grade 6) one VELS level at grades Prep, 2, 4 and 6 (across each VELS level)

- continue to place a strong emphasis on student welfare and our social skills programs

Q5 Example 3 - a secondary college

1. In terms of our Student Learning goal, it is clear that expectations for achievement have been raised, especially in the Mathematics/Science area, and NAPLAN data and VCE study scores reflect these high expectations. **But we now need to develop a whole-school commitment to raising expectations, and this should be integral to a whole school approach to effective teaching and learning.** Student and parent opinion data stress the continuing need for stimulating teaching that establishes a culture of high expectation and performance.

2. The NAPLAN Year 9 data also confirms **the need to sustain and even increase our focus on improving literacy across the curriculum**, in both reading comprehension and writing.

3. The VCE data indicates that achievement levels have improved relative to “like schools” in English, Mathematics and Science subjects but that, in the Commerce area (Accounting, Economics, Business Management and Legal Studies) and in some humanities subjects (History and Geography), achievement has declined relative to “like schools” and the state median study score and a significant number of students also appear to be underperforming according to “value-added” measures. The consequence of this underperformance is an increasing gap between high achieving students and underperformers. Our “tail” is lengthening, and we need to address this issue in the earlier years of secondary school through a concerted whole-school approach to effective teaching and learning that incorporates whole school literacy commitments and strategies. Provision of additional VET subjects or programs and/or a VCAL program to meet the needs of more vocationally-oriented students at VCE level could also be investigated, as could our VCE subject offerings and course selection processes. The Network Provision Plan may assist our students in this regard.

4. **The key area, therefore, that warrants our focus for the next four years is an absolute commitment to enhancing teaching and learning processes across the school.** Our resources need to be aligned to this and our meeting schedules and agendas need to be reviewed in the light of this. We need to fully embrace all aspects of the performance and development culture and we need to systematise and institutionalise this in the way we work and organise our days. We must also provide appropriately differentiated curricula and teaching strategies to meet the needs of the full range of students at all year levels. While opportunities for extension and acceleration of academically able students presently exist, in the LEEP Program and within the VCE, more attention needs to be focused on providing challenging programs and activities for students who are achieving at higher than expected levels in other classes and year levels in all subject areas. At the other end of the scale, students who are achieving at lower than expected levels or who are underperforming need to be provided with more appropriate learning activities and curricula which will stimulate and challenge them sufficiently to enable them to progress.

5. **Essential to this is the need for all teachers to use student performance data to identify students’ achievement levels, to establish appropriate expectations and to deliver teaching that caters for students at their point of need.** More and more teachers are recognising the power of this information, but professional development resources (time, expertise and money) need to be allocated to ensure that school leaders at all levels are able to support teachers in the interpretation and use of this information. The professional learning program in place for 2009 is focused on equipping all teachers with the skills and teaching strategies to engage all students in meaningful learning and cater for their different learning styles and abilities. The challenge for all of us is to ensure that teacher meeting time can also accommodate this type of activity. To this end, there needs to be a review of the meeting scheduling and format, in order to make more strategically effective use of the time available to teachers.

Q5 Example 4 - a secondary college

One of the strengths of Victoria Secondary College is undoubtedly the breadth of curriculum options and hence learning pathways open to students. A student completing their later year's studies can conceivably finish their schooling with 3 certificates ie; VCE, VCAL and VET. The challenge we have is trying to offer multiple pathways whilst still retaining rigour and challenge in all areas. This can be a difficult challenge to meet.

The College must set itself on a path to boost both its median and all VCE study scores to meet the challenge of an ever increasing number of neighbouring independent schools and losing students to select entry schools. This will require a highly strategic and committed focus to the analysis of performance in all VCE outcome areas. A greater emphasis on the use of data in relation to performance must be built into the next plan and all staff must have access to a professional development program designed to highlight the relevance of it as a tool and how it can be used to improve student performance.

The High Achievers program needs to have greater continuity and support for the students who participate beyond year 9. This was highlighted by a review of the program in 2008. The appointment of a Leading Teacher responsible for Academic Achievement and Enhancement reflects the desire of the College to provide support for these students as well as additional opportunities for those students who are seeking to maximise their VCE results.

At the same time, the College has to ensure that VCAL and VET studies are not seen as "soft" options for students but rather as valuable, challenging and stimulating alternatives to the tertiary pathway. This will require an overview of these programs and a strong focus to re-culture them so they are universally seen as highly valuable and rigorous programs in their own right. The impact of these programs across other areas of the College needs to be re-assessed within the next planning period to ensure they do not restrict other initiatives in the middle year's programs of the College.

With the introduction of the NAPLAN testing program, the College must accept the challenge to ensure all students in years 7 – 10 are functioning at or above the national minimum benchmarks. The initial data from 2008 suggests that a significant portion of year 7 and 9 students were below this benchmark. This has ramifications for the Literacy and Numeracy support programs offered by the College as well as the approaches to be adopted by all domain areas but specifically English and Mathematics.

With the successful introduction and growth of Pre-cal studies, the College must explore its offerings at years 7 – 9. There is evidence to suggest that a growing number of students in these levels are disengaging from the traditional studies offered at these levels – mainly because they lack the literacy and numeracy skills or their interests lie in a vocational pathway. It will be imperative to review the 7 – 9 curriculum with the purposes of linking resulting changes to:

- The Guiding Principles of the recently adopted Educational Philosophy.
- The new Learning Team structure thereby maximising the opportunities for greater personalisation of learning.
- To provide for greater engagement and improvements in performance.

There is a strong belief from parents that a number of areas need to be addressed if we are to enhance student learning. Some of these suggestions include the following:

- Teaching students to study.
- The publishing of homework schedules
- Teaching organisation and time management skills.
- Communicating work not completed by students promptly to parents.
- Enforcing set dates.
- Consistency in the enforcement of mobile phone and i-pods policy.
- Consistency of assessment processes amongst staff.
- Continued improvement in the student management processes of the college.