



Office for
Government
School
Education

Secondary Teacher Assistants Initiative Principal Guidelines 2008–2010

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Introduction

Central to workforce reform is the belief that 'the quality of the workforce (principals, teachers and non-teaching staff) is a key driver of educational results within schools' (Council for the Australian Federation, 2007: 32). Principals and teachers currently rely on a range of non-teaching staff to support school programs and operations to assist in the achievement of quality outcomes for students.

The *Secondary Teacher Assistants (STAs)* initiative is a workforce reform strategy that is part of the Government's '*Better Schools, Better Performance*' policy, which aims to improve educational outcomes and support teaching excellence in Victorian schools. This initiative responds to and supports the Blueprint's Workforce Reform Strategy, which emphasises the value of attracting the best, encouraging high performing school workforces and ensuring access to effective professional learning.

The *Secondary Teacher Assistants Initiative – Principal Guidelines (2008–10)* have been developed to support the integrated and flexible implementation of this initiative within Victorian Government secondary schools. These guidelines have been informed by the evaluation findings derived throughout 2008.

Purpose

As part of the 2006 election commitment the Government announced that 300 secondary teacher assistants would be employed in secondary schools across Victoria over a three-year period. The purpose of the initiative is to support secondary classroom teachers by reducing the administrative component of their work to enable them to focus on the teaching and learning process.

Scope

Secondary teacher assistants are to be employed on a fixed-term basis within the school services officer (SSO) employment structure. Their role is to be clearly differentiated from existing non-teaching staff in schools, through a specific focus on administrative functions that would otherwise need to be undertaken by teachers.

The initiative was introduced in two stages, the first of which commenced in 2008. Ninety EFT secondary teacher assistants were employed across 92 secondary schools for a period of three years. The initial 2008 cohort of secondary teacher assistants was allocated to secondary schools identified as having the greatest need using 2007 census information.

The second stage of the initiative will see an additional 210 EFT secondary teacher assistants employed in 206 schools for the 2009 school year for a period of two years. In total 298 schools will employ secondary teacher assistants.

The *Secondary Teacher Assistants* initiative is supported through a professional learning program provided by the Department for both secondary teacher assistants and the teachers who work with them. An ongoing evaluation is also being conducted to measure the initiative's impact and provide opportunities for continuous improvement.

Funding

The *Secondary Teacher Assistants* initiative is funded at the maximum 48/52 salary of the school services officer (SSO) level 1 (range 2) plus payroll tax and superannuation and is allocated through the Student Resource Package (SRP). Funding will be allocated at a campus level based

on the Non–Traditional Setting Review implemented in 2006 and distributed according to secondary campus size. This ensures a minimum of 0.2 EFT for secondary campuses with smaller enrolments, and a maximum of 1.5 EFT for campuses with larger enrolments.

While funding for the *Secondary Teacher Assistants* initiative is set at 48/52, a secondary teacher assistant may be employed within any of the employment models specified for school services officers (52/52, 48/52 or school year models of employment).

Statewide professional learning is provided for participants. Costs associated with the program delivery are met by the Department.

1. Roles and responsibilities

Principals, teachers and secondary teacher assistants have a range of roles and responsibilities that support the successful implementation of the *Secondary Teacher Assistants* initiative.

1.1 Principals

Principals are responsible for overseeing the implementation of the *Secondary Teacher Assistants* initiative within their school and will:

- consider school priorities, current staffing arrangements and the needs of teachers and students in order to determine the effective deployment of secondary teacher assistants
- develop a position description consistent with the role described in these guidelines and the dimensions of work for SSOs. Sample position descriptions are provided at **Attachment 2** and SSO dimensions of work can be accessed at:

<http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/hrweb/workm/plan/dimensSSO.htm>

- ensure employment of secondary teacher assistants is at not less than SSO level 1 range 2 commencing at the beginning of the school year
- communicate to the broader school community the primary purpose of secondary teacher assistants, which is to support classroom teachers by reducing the administrative component of their work to enable them to focus on teaching and learning
- delegate responsibility for overseeing and monitoring the work of each secondary teacher assistant to a relevant team leader and ensure the team leader can perform this duty within the context of the overall work requirements of the team leader
- ensure school based induction, professional learning and work planning occurs for secondary teacher assistants and that time is made available for this purpose
- release secondary teacher assistants and the teachers working with them, to attend professional learning activities provided through this initiative
- participate in the ongoing evaluation of this initiative, and support the participation of relevant teachers and secondary teacher assistants
- ensure that the performance and development process for secondary teacher assistants forms part of the school's performance and development arrangements.

Implementation strategies are included in **Attachment 1**.

1.2 Teachers Working with Secondary Teacher Assistants

The teacher with responsibility for the work of a secondary teacher assistant (relevant team leader) will:

- co-ordinate the day-to-day activities of the secondary teacher assistant in consultation with other teachers
- collect information from relevant teachers to inform the development and review of the secondary teacher assistant's Performance and Development Plan

- ensure planning and preparation with the secondary teacher assistant occurs on a regular basis
- participate in the professional learning activities with their appointed secondary teacher assistant
- ensure that the secondary teacher assistant is supervised by a qualified teacher during any classroom activities
- participate in the ongoing evaluation of the *Secondary Teacher Assistants* initiative.

1.3 Secondary Teacher Assistants

The *Secondary Teacher Assistants* initiative supports secondary classroom teachers' focus on teaching and learning by reducing the administrative component of their work. Secondary teacher assistants will:

- carry out allocated activities and tasks determined by the school, consistent with the purpose of this initiative
- participate in planning activities with the relevant team leader on a regular basis and document in the Weekly Planning Tool as per **Attachment 3**
- monitor outcomes/progress through the Weekly Reflection Tool as per **Attachment 4**
- participate in professional learning activities provided through this initiative
- participate in the ongoing evaluation of this initiative.

Secondary teacher assistants require the capacity to be flexible, adaptable and willing to learn in a work environment where the day-to-day priorities and tasks may vary considerably. A school environment necessitates communication with students, teachers and parents about routine policy and procedural matters. Secondary teacher assistants may also be assigned responsibilities that require them to have specialist skills or expertise e.g. database management, data analysis, research, or specific software tools. In addition to any skills derived from professional learning provided through this initiative, secondary teacher assistants should bring to their role:

- basic numeracy and literacy skills
- sound written and verbal communication skills
- basic information technology skills
- team based skills.

Typical functions

Duties for each secondary teacher assistant will vary according to the specific needs and priorities determined by the school. In general the focus will be administrative tasks directly supporting teachers. Tasks should accord with the dimensions of work for SSO level 1, range 2 and should not include the duties of a teacher, as defined in clause 2.6.1 of the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* (Vic) or its successor :

...delivery of an educational program or the assessment of student participation in an educational program...

The following are examples of typical duties that were undertaken by secondary teacher assistants in 2008:

Basic administration	School attendance	Excursions/Camps/Events
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Photocopying ▪ Laminating, labeling, displays, certificates ▪ Typing, filing, shredding ▪ Ordering resources (e.g. stationery, science equipment, technology) ▪ Ordering and maintenance of text books ▪ Minute taking ▪ Student/staff bulletins ▪ Newsletters, school magazine ▪ Parent enquiries ▪ Public relations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Monitor/record absences ▪ Follow up parents/students ▪ Update rolls ▪ Issue late passes ▪ Coordinate detentions ▪ Admin and follow up related to suspensions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Organise camps/excursions/incursions ▪ Collect forms/money ▪ Track attendance ▪ Event preparation

System/program support	Teacher support/preparation	Coordination tasks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Data entry (e.g. VASS, MIPS, careers) ▪ Mark book ▪ Testing administration (e.g. NAPLAN, On Demand testing) ▪ Program administration (e.g. Premier's Reading Challenge, Duke of Edinburgh, Beacon) ▪ Overseas student data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Background research ▪ Document preparation, multimedia resource development ▪ In class teaching support (e.g. resource distribution) ▪ Technical support (e.g. art, woodwork) ▪ Reporting maintenance issues, OH&S audits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Arranging for work placements, student transition, careers counseling, MIPS, pathways follow up ▪ Inter-school liaison (e.g. feeder schools) ▪ Coordinate school-wide literacy programs

Sample position descriptions including selection criteria are provided as **Attachment 2**.

2. Accountability and performance measures

Schools are responsible for ensuring that there is a focus on continually improving outcomes for students – student learning, student engagement and wellbeing, and student pathways and transitions.

2.1 Reporting Requirements

In order that the Department can provide support to schools implementing the initiative, coordinate associated professional learning and facilitate evaluation of the program, schools are requested to report the following details to the **Teacher and SSO Development Unit by 3 April 2009**:

- name and email contact for each secondary teacher assistant employed under this initiative
- time fraction for each secondary teacher assistant employed
- EFT allocation for secondary teacher assistants in the school's SRP
- role of each secondary teacher assistant
- name and email contact of the appointed relevant team leader.

2.2 Link to Strategic Plans

The *Secondary Teacher Assistants* initiative should be incorporated in the school strategic plan to support an existing key improvement strategy or reflect part of a key improvement strategy. The school's implementation strategy for this initiative should then be reflected in the annual implementation plan, removing the need for separate accountability arrangements and minimising the administrative burden on schools. Any impacts of this initiative should be reported on as part of the school's achievement milestones provided in the annual report.

Further information to assist schools in developing their strategic plans and annual implementation plans can be found at the following links:

- School strategic plan templates
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/management/schoolimprovement/accountability/strategicplan.htm>
- Annual implementation plan guidelines
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/management/schoolimprovement/accountability/implementation.htm>
- Annual implementation plan templates
http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/account/operate/AIP_2008-gdl-v1.00-20080129.pdf

3. Evaluation of the Initiative

3.1 Evaluation Methods

I & J Management Services has been engaged by the Department to evaluate the *Secondary Teacher Assistants* initiative over a three-year period. Throughout the initiative they will consult widely with principals, secondary teacher assistants, the teachers they work with and Departmental staff, capturing information through:

- site visits to a sample of secondary schools employing a secondary teacher assistant
- six-monthly school surveys of all schools employing a secondary teacher assistant
- an on-line discussion forum for secondary teacher assistants
- interviews with central office.

3.2 Purpose of Evaluation

Schools are requested to provide timely contributions to the evaluation process which will:

- determine the extent to which the initiative actually reduces the administrative component of the secondary teachers' workload
- identifies those factors that support or inhibit the initiative and document examples of good practice
- monitor ongoing implementation and provide regular feedback to the Department to allow continuous improvement of the initiative
- determine future directions and assess the long-term viability of the initiative.

3.3 Findings

Initial findings as outlined in the Progress Report 1 'Evaluation of the Secondary Teacher Assistants Initiative' highlight the 'overwhelming evidence to indicate that the *Secondary Teacher Assistants* initiative is working' with examples cited where the employment of secondary teacher assistants is taking the 'administrative load of teachers' providing them with increased time for planning and teaching.

More time is spent on lesson planning, team teaching, consulting and teaching other staff members and actually teaching in class. This is a win-win for teachers and students as time is not being taken up with filing and administrative duties.

Principal

The following advice is in response to implementation issues identified through the initial stages of the evaluation:

- The guidelines need to include more specific information about the role of the secondary teacher assistant – examples of current practice.
- Role clarity and effective recruitment processes are critical to the successful implementation of the initiative as highlighted by the following extracts:

Those schools that have taken greatest advantage of the Secondary Teacher Assistants initiative are those where the school's leadership team spent time before employing their secondary teacher assistant, thinking about how they could maximize the value of the secondary teacher assistant for teachers and

students. These schools have generally identified areas of need consistent with their Strategic Plans and school priorities and defined secondary teacher assistant duties and required skills sets that will best fill those needs. This meant they started their recruitment process with a clear understanding of the type of applicant they were seeking.

Some schools went through several rounds of advertising their secondary teacher assistant position and interviewing applicants before they finally appointed a secondary teacher assistant. The difficulty in finding the right candidate was compounded where schools did not have a very clear idea of how they wanted to use the secondary teacher assistant.

- To be true to the intent of the initiative schools should ensure that secondary teacher assistants are undertaking administrative tasks that were previously completed by teachers and that the funds are not used to support an existing SSO position with no change to responsibilities.

Case studies highlighting particular school experiences and approaches to the implementation of the *Secondary Teacher Assistants* initiative are included in **Attachment 6**.

4. Secondary Teacher Assistants Planning, Implementing and Evaluation Tool Box

Attachments 1 to 6 of these guidelines are a series of sample documents, templates and case studies designed to assist schools in developing qualitative and quantitative records that will aid in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the *Secondary Teacher Assistants* initiative. Attachments provided include:

Attachment 1

Implementation Strategies – Secondary Teacher Assistants Initiative Tool provides principals with ideas to assist in the successful implementation of this initiative.

Attachment 2

Sample Job Descriptions and Key Selection Criteria

Attachment 3

Secondary Teacher Assistants Weekly Planning Tool provides schools with an example of a weekly log that may be used by secondary teacher assistants to record activities to be undertaken over the course of the week.

Attachment 4

Weekly Reflection Tool provides an example of a weekly log that may be used to document activities undertaken by secondary teacher assistants and how teachers are able to use additional time.

Attachment 5

Sample Performance and Development Plans

Attachment 6

Case Studies

5. Resources

5.1 Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Resources

The Department's website contains information relevant to secondary teacher assistants employed as school service officers that will assist in the implementation of the *Secondary Teacher Assistants* initiative. The following online resources provide some useful information:

5.1.1 Employment policy and conditions

- School service officers career structure
<http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/hrweb/careers/sso/ssestruct.htm>
- Employment
<http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/hrweb/employcond/default.htm>
- School service officers employment models
<http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/hrweb/employcond/res/empmodSSO.htm>
- Salary
<http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/hrweb/employcond/salary/salaries.htm>
- Legislative framework
<http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/hrweb/employcond/res/legislat.htm>
- Performance and Development for school service officers
<http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/hrweb/workm/perform/pmgmntTS.htm>
- Safety, Health and Wellbeing
<http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/hrweb/safetyhw/default.htm>

5.1.2 Policy and Legislation

- Code of conduct
<http://www.ssa.vic.gov.au/CA2571410025903D/0/B0BC354DFB95C22CCA2574970003A8C9?OpenDocument>
- Public Administration Act 2004
[http://www.ssa.vic.gov.au/CA2571410025903D/WebObj/PAAAct2004/\\$File/PAAAct2004.pdf](http://www.ssa.vic.gov.au/CA2571410025903D/WebObj/PAAAct2004/$File/PAAAct2004.pdf)

5.1.3 Student Learning Resources

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/studentlearning/default.htm>

5.1.4 Student Diversity and Wellbeing

- English as a Second Language
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/studentlearning/programs/esl/>
- Koorie education
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/news/newsalerts/indigenoustrat.htm>
- Students with disabilities
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/aboutschool/lifeatschool/studentswithdisabilities.htm>
- Student wellbeing
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/wellbeing/policy.htm>

5.1.5 Professional Learning

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/proflearning/teacher/default.htm>

5.2 Other Online Resources

Note: If these resources are used to assist or inform the development of the role of a secondary teacher assistant, it is important to ensure that the role is consistent with the “Dimensions of Work” for the school services officer classification.

There are a number of additional online resources which provide further information for principals, teachers and secondary teacher assistants to support the implementation of the *Secondary Teacher Assistants* initiative. Some of these include:

Teachers TV

Teachers TV is a UK site that provides a number of short video clips on a range of subjects that may be viewed online. The following clips relate specifically to teacher assistants working in secondary schools:

- Working with Teacher Assistants (TAs) in Secondary Schools – Using TAs Effectively
<http://www.teachers.tv/video/3101>
- Working with TAs in Secondary Schools – TA for a Day
<http://www.teachers.tv/video/3100>
- Secondary TAs – Planning Work
<http://www.teachers.tv/video/1523>

Teacher Net

Teacher Net is another UK site that provides a range of teacher assistant resources that may also be of assistance to principals, teachers and secondary teacher assistants. The following link to online publications for schools provides further information regarding the role of teacher assistants:

<http://publications.teachernet.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=searchresults&ft=teaching+assistants&pn=1&rpp=1&ShowHide=4&Area=1>

6. References

Council for the Australian Federation (2007) Federalist Paper 2: The Future of Schooling in Australia. Revised Edition (online). Available at:

[http://www.dpc.vic.gov.au/CA256D800027B102/Lookup/FutureofSchoolingInAustralia/\\$file/Final%20Report%20on%20The%20Future%20of%20Schooling%20in%20Australia%20September%202007\(2\).pdf](http://www.dpc.vic.gov.au/CA256D800027B102/Lookup/FutureofSchoolingInAustralia/$file/Final%20Report%20on%20The%20Future%20of%20Schooling%20in%20Australia%20September%202007(2).pdf)

Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic), No 24 of 2006, Part 2.6 Victorian Institute of Teaching. Page 129. Available online at <http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/>

Victorian Government (2008). 'Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development' (online). Available at: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/directions/blueprint2008/default.htm>

I&J Management Services (July 2008). Department of Education and Early Childhood Development – Evaluation of the Secondary Teacher Assistants Initiative: Progress Report No.1 July 2008

- Planning and Evaluation Tool 1 - Implementation Strategies - Secondary Teacher Assistants Initiative

Identify Priorities for Deployment

It is suggested that the school leadership team determine priorities for deployment of secondary teacher assistants by examining learning priorities and other areas for development specified in the School Strategic Plan. They should also consider the teacher administrative burden identifying exactly where teacher time is taken up with administrative tasks. These tasks can then be mapped against school priorities in order to determine specific tasks and duties to be performed by the secondary teacher assistant.

Clearly Defined Job Description

The job description should target key improvement strategies identified in the school strategic plan. Consideration should also be given to any specialist skills that may be required of the secondary teacher assistant to meet the particular job needs for each school e.g. data analysis, specific software applications etc.

The intent of the initiative is likely to be successful if the resulting Job Description:

- includes duties previously being actioned by a member of the teaching staff
- aligns with school strategic goals
- includes the EFT funding at SSO level 1, range 2

The secondary teacher assistant duties should be:

- within the dimensions of work of an SSO level 1, range 2
- directly supporting teaching staff members with their administrative workload
- reviewed on a regular basis to check for alignment with the intent of initiative.

Appointment of a Team Leader

Secondary teacher assistants are able to have a greater impact on reducing the teacher administrative burden when they work closely with a dedicated member of the teaching staff, usually the relevant team leader, who oversees their work and can provide ongoing performance development and planning.

Raise awareness of the role of Secondary Teacher Assistants

Evaluation to date has highlighted the importance of raising awareness of the secondary teacher assistants' role within the broader school community. Increasing awareness and understanding of

the role of secondary teacher assistants may assist with the integration of these new staff into the school structure, improve working relationships, increase the effectiveness and impact of this initiative on achieving positive outcomes for students, and assist in creating positive working experiences for staff employed as secondary teacher assistants. Strategies to assist in raising awareness of the role of secondary teacher assistants include:

- discuss with school staff the purpose of this initiative and the role that secondary teacher assistants will play within the broader school community, prior to their commencement
- ensure that the teachers who works with secondary teacher assistant(s) attend the Phase One professional learning program to enable them to fully utilise the skills and capabilities of secondary teacher assistants
- provide clear and concise guidelines to teachers regarding the parameters of the role of secondary teacher assistants
- provide parents with information and updates regarding this initiative via school newsletters
- ensure secondary teacher assistants are included in staff meetings and forums as appropriate.

Regular Opportunities for Planning and Preparation

It has also been demonstrated that secondary teacher assistants require adequate time for planning and preparation with teachers. It is suggested that each secondary teacher assistant spend an allocated period of time with their team leader each week for the purpose of planning and preparation. It is recommended that this time is used to discuss the week's activities and review progress. Tasks to be completed over the course of the week may be outlined via a written plan or included in the Weekly Planning Log as per **Attachment 3**.

Ongoing Performance Planning, Professional Learning and Support

In addition to a school-based induction program, it has been demonstrated that secondary teacher assistants benefit from the opportunity to engage in ongoing professional learning activities, including active support from their team leader and regular performance and development reviews. To this end it is important that each secondary teacher assistant has a Performance and Development plan in place and that the plan is regularly reviewed by the principal or their appointed delegate who should have a good understanding of the day-to-day duties of the secondary teacher assistant. Sample Performance and Development Plans for secondary teacher assistants are at **Attachment 5**.

School Internal Accountability

The impact of the *Secondary Teacher Assistants* initiative can be measured at the school level by considering whether the initiative has delivered:

- More time for teaching staff members to concentrate on their teaching?
- Effective support to teaching staff?

Sample Job Description

Secondary Teacher Assistant – Support in Literacy Focus

Role Brief

The *Secondary Teacher Assistant* initiative is a workforce reform strategy that is part of the Government's '*Better Schools, Better Performance*' policy, which aims to improve educational outcomes and support teaching excellence in Victorian schools.

Principals and teachers rely on a range of non-teaching staff to support school programs and operations to assist in the achievement of quality outcomes for students. The role of a secondary teacher assistant (STA) has a different focus from roles of other SSOs (non-teaching staff) employed in schools.

The purpose of the *Secondary Teacher Assistants* initiative is to support secondary classroom teachers by reducing the administrative component of their work to enable them to focus on teaching and learning. Secondary teacher assistants will:

- carry out allocated activities and tasks determined by the school consistent with this role description
- participate in planning and preparation with teachers on a regular basis
- participate in professional learning activities provided through this initiative
- participate in the ongoing evaluation of this initiative.

SAMPLE JOB DESCRIPTION

School Profile

AAA College isschool website www.*****.vic.edu.au

Position Description: Secondary Teacher Assistant – supporting literacy programs

Classification: School Services Officer level 1, range 2

Employment Mode: 48/52

Time Fraction: 0.8 EFT and work across two campuses

A Melbourne campus – 0.4 (Monday, Tuesday)

B Melbourne campus – 0.4 (Wednesday, Thursday)

The days at campus A and B are open to negotiation.

Responsibilities

The incumbent will work subject to guidance from the College Principal and/or Teaching staff to:

Classroom Support

- set up activities that help to develop students' literacy and numeracy skills, i.e. co-coordinating tasks for the Premiers Reading Challenge, On Demand Testing

- display/mount students' work
- source teaching and learning materials relevant to the literacy program
- provide basic assistance and advice to students as required
- co-ordinate administrative tasks during National Literacy and Numeracy testing period

Communication:

- on behalf of the class teacher make appointments with parents
- liaise with external organisations for the purpose of acquiring materials and equipment

Records management:

- maintain relevant student records, e.g. student attendance, student homework
- monitor student attendance via the absentee roll, follow up parent phone calls

Maintenance of school resources:

- ensure literacy aids/materials within the work area are properly maintained and available for student use
- ensure identified risks regarding equipment, resources and facilities are reported to appropriate personnel within the school
- prepare equipment for teacher and student use, i.e. On Demand Computer resources

Other typical duties:

- administrative tasks such as, photocopying teaching materials, data entry
- taking minutes of meetings
- booking rooms
- sourcing learning and teaching materials

Selection Criteria

- KSC1** Demonstrated capacity to undertake support tasks across a range of functions including the capacity to assist with the coordination of these tasks.
- KSC2** Demonstrated skills and experience necessary to carry out the responsibilities of the position including the appropriate qualifications, technical skills and expertise as relevant to the position.
- KSC3** Demonstrated capacity to communicate effectively with a range of persons including the capacity to provide advice and assistance on school matters.
- KSC4** Capacity to work co-operatively with a range of people including teachers, school services officers, students and parents and the capacity to undertake lower level supervisory tasks.
- KSC5** Demonstrated commitment to professional learning and growth.

Sample Job Description

Secondary Teacher Assistant – Student Engagement Focus

Role Brief

The *Secondary Teacher Assistant* initiative is a workforce reform strategy that is part of the Government's '*Better Schools, Better Performance*' policy, which aims to improve educational outcomes and support teaching excellence in Victorian schools.

Principals and teachers rely on a range of non-teaching staff to support school programs and operations to assist in the achievement of quality outcomes for students. The role of a secondary teacher assistant (STA) has a different focus from roles of other SSOs (non-teaching staff) employed in schools.

The purpose of the *Secondary Teacher Assistants* initiative is to support secondary classroom teachers by reducing the administrative component of their work to enable them to focus on teaching and learning. Secondary teacher assistants will:

- carry out allocated activities and tasks determined by the school consistent with this role description
- participate in planning and preparation with teachers on a regular basis
- participate in professional learning activities provided through this initiative
- participate in the ongoing evaluation of this initiative.

SAMPLE JOB DESCRIPTION

School Profile

AAA College isschool website www.****.vic.edu.au

Position Description: Secondary Teacher Assistant – student engagement support

Classification: School Services Officer level 1, range 2

Employment Mode: 48/52

Time Fraction: 0.6 EFT (preferably Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, open for negotiation)

Responsibilities

The School Leadership Team has identified the role of the secondary teacher assistant to take an active part in the school's key improvement strategy of student engagement and wellbeing.

The incumbent will work subject to guidance from the college principal and/or sub school coordinators to assist with:

Classroom Support

- collect classroom roll and liaise with teaching staff to ensure accurate roll marking
- liaise when necessary with the student wellbeing coordinator, student support worker

Communication:

- monitor and follow up student absence
- on behalf of the class teacher alert guardians to student absence and receive calls related to student absence
- take part in student wellbeing committee
- assist with preparation and mailing of student absence in student files
- prepare regular update bulletin relating to ongoing issues with student engagement

Records management:

- maintaining relevant student records in regards to absenteeism via CASES 21, Roll Mark
- track students who have left and update the student records via On Track Data
- prepare and file relevant documentation relating to student absence in student files

Maintenance of school resources:

- be aware and alert to OH&S guideline

Other typical duties:

- administrative tasks such as, photocopying teaching materials, data entry
- taking minutes of meetings
- booking rooms

Selection Criteria

- KSC1** Demonstrated capacity to undertake support tasks across a range of functions including the capacity to assist with the coordination of these tasks.
- KSC2** Demonstrated skills and experience necessary to carry out the responsibilities of the position including the appropriate qualifications, technical skills and expertise as relevant to the position.
- KSC3** Demonstrated capacity to communicate effectively with a range of persons including the capacity to provide advice and assistance on school matters.
- KSC4** Capacity to work cooperatively with a range of people including teachers, school services officers, students and parents and the capacity to undertake lower level supervisory tasks.
- KSC5** Demonstrated commitment to professional learning and growth.

Weekly Planning Tool for Secondary Teacher Assistants

Name of STA: Week Beginning:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Reflections <i>(to be completed by the secondary teacher assistant at the end of the week)</i>
AM						
PM						

Weekly planning tool is completed by team leader outlining the weekly activities of secondary teacher assistants.
Use this tool to record priority curriculum areas (i.e. literacy and numeracy)

Weekly Reflection Tool for Secondary Teacher Assistants

Week Beginning:

Teacher/s Name/s:

Secondary Teacher Assistant Name:

Weekly Secondary Teacher Assistant activities:
e.g. Photocopied course work
Completed filing

Weekly Secondary Teacher Assistant outcomes:
i.e. How did teachers use additional time?
e.g. Provided an opportunity to brainstorm teaching ideas with

Reflections:

This tool could be completed at the end of each week and used to review

Sample - Performance and Development Plan for a Secondary Teacher Assistant Example 1

School: e.g. Victoria West High School				Secondary Teacher Assistant: John Citizen		
Year	Campus	EFT Campus Allocation	Team Leader	Priority Curriculum Area/s	Focus Year Level/s	Key Activities
e.g. 2008	e.g. Northern Campus	e.g. 0.6 (Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays)	e.g. Sarah Jones	e.g. Science	e.g. Year 9	e.g. Prepare lesson materials (i.e. word processing, photocopying) and display student work Assistance with planning Year 9 science camp <u>Access Additional Professional Learning:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in in-house science professional learning • Access professional learning to use the SMART Board in the classroom

Measures:

- Weekly planning tool completed by team leader and secondary teacher assistants outlining the weekly activities of secondary teacher assistants
- Weekly log completed by team leader that records activities and outcomes of secondary teacher assistants, in addition to reflections on how to continually improve the effective utilisation of the skills and capabilities of secondary teacher assistants.

Successful targets:

- Time spent by secondary teacher assistants on key activities as per Weekly Planning Tool
- Increase in teacher time spent on student-focused activities.

Sample - Performance and Development Plan for a Secondary Teacher Assistant Example 2

School: e.g. Victoria East Secondary College					Secondary Teacher Assistant: John Nguyen	
Year	Campus	EFT Campus Allocation	Team Leader	Priority Curriculum Area/s	Focus Year Level/s	Key Activities
e.g. 2008	e.g. Southern Campus	e.g. 1 EFT	e.g. Mary Pappas	e.g. Literacy	e.g. Year 7	e.g. Source teaching and learning materials
School: e.g. Victoria East Secondary College					Secondary Teacher Assistant: Sue Brown	
Year	Campus	EFT Campus Allocation	Team Leader	Priority Curriculum Area/s	Focus Year Level/s	Key Activities
e.g. 2008	e.g. Southern Campus	e.g. 0.3 (Mondays and alternate Tuesdays)	e.g. Ian Wong	e.g. Numeracy	e.g. Year 10	e.g. Supporting teacher with the preparation of learning activities and the physical teaching space
<p>Measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weekly planning tool completed by team leader and secondary teacher assistants outlining the weekly activities of secondary teacher assistants Weekly log completed by team leader that records activities and outcomes of secondary teacher assistants, in addition to reflections on how to continually improve the effective utilisation of the skills and capabilities of secondary teacher assistants. <p>Successful targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time spent by secondary teacher assistants on key activities as per Weekly Planning Tool Increase in teacher time spent on student-focused activities. 						

Case Study 1 – Wellington Secondary College

Wellington Secondary College is located in Eastern Metropolitan Region. It has an enrolment of more than 1,200 students from a range of ethnic backgrounds.

Through the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's Secondary Teacher Assistants (STA) initiative, the school received funding for 2008 to employ 1.5EFT to reduce the administrative burden on classroom teachers and enable them to better focus on achieving teaching and learning outcomes.

The school's leadership team embraced this new initiative and brainstormed ways in which employing new SSO staff could best assist their teachers. Senior management, Assistant Principals and Heads of Sub-schools were consulted and a model developed.

Wellington Secondary College decided to employ three secondary teacher assistants at 0.5 EFT, with each one attached to one of the college's three sub-schools – Junior, Middle and Senior. The secondary teacher assistants report directly to the Head of their sub-school but work collaboratively with all teachers allocated at their levels.

What do the secondary teacher assistants at Wellington do?

The secondary teacher assistants undertake tasks to assist teachers specific to their sub-school.

- *The Junior School secondary teacher assistant works with the Sub-school Manager, the Year 7 Coordinator and Year 8 Coordinator, each of whom has a teaching load. She facilitates the transition of students into the school; maintains attendance data (both entering data into the school's system and being the primary contact for parents regarding absence); facilitates and manages paperwork associated with the Even Start program (a federally funded initiative to provide tutoring support to Year 8 students that are below the expected level); and organises the Year 8 camp (including all the associated paperwork).*
- *The Middle School secondary teacher assistant works with their Sub-school Manager, the Year 9 and 10 Coordinators and the teachers who*

work at Years 9 and 10. Her role is largely focused on following up student absence; ensuring that students' contact details are kept current (including parental contact details for easier communication between school and home); issuing late slips; issuing uniform passes; checking progress reports for students who are on behaviour or homework cards; and general administration to assist teachers, such as photocopying and collection of forms and monies for camps.

- *The Senior School secondary teacher assistant works with their respective Sub-school Manager and year level coordinators, as well as the Victorian Assessment Software System (VASS) administrator and the other staff working at these levels. Her work involves a variety of administrative tasks previously carried out by the teachers and leaders she works with. This includes ensuring communication between teachers and students is maintained by photocopying letters/forms and information and distributing those to teachers via their roll folders; answering the phones and handling student enquiries; maintaining a record of student lateness and issuing detentions; typing letters on behalf of the staff and distributing those to families.*

What has been the impact on the school?

The more consistent approach to attendance across the school as a result of having the secondary teacher assistants dedicated to this task and following up on absence has already resulted in students more regularly attending classes, which invariably improves their ability to learn. Teachers were previously attempting to follow up on student absence whilst also carrying out their teaching role, are now more focused on their teaching. The culture of the school is changing as parents and students become more aware of the importance of attending school and of the need to inform the school of absences, and that the school will follow up on unexplained absences. The school sees this as a 'preventative absenteeism' – a means of ensuring that the students are not absent in the first place.

The skill sets that the secondary teacher assistants have brought to the school have assisted in the development of centralised and more effective recording systems across the entire school. For example, the Junior School secondary teacher assistant has highly developed skills in using spreadsheets and assists teachers to access records more efficiently by educating them in how to do this.

At a more basic level the presence of the three secondary teacher assistants has allowed the Heads of Sub-schools and their year level coordinators to interact with the students on a more personal level. Their discretionary time was

previously taken up with administrative tasks that, whilst they are important for the school and the students, were not the best use of their time and skills. The teachers now have more time to work directly with students to assist them in solving problems; improving their learning strategies and ensuring that they feel valued. As a result of not having to focus on tasks teachers are able to focus on doing their job better, whether it is developing new programs to assist students or families, or assisting students to investigate future learning and employment pathways.

“(The initiative) has allowed the teachers to do their key work – teaching.”

Case Study 2 – Carrum Downs Secondary College

Carrum Downs Secondary College is located in Southern Metropolitan Region. It has an enrolment of more than 1200 students from Years 7 to 11, and over the next year, the College will grow further as it begins the final intake process for students in Year 12.

Through the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's Secondary Teacher Assistants (STA) initiative the school received funding for 2008 to employ 1.3 EFT to reduce the administrative burden on classroom teachers and enable them to better focus on achieving teaching and learning outcomes.

The school's leadership team embraced this new initiative and moved quickly to employ their new staff prior to the end of the 2007 school year. A general job description was created and advertised via recruitment online.

What do the secondary teacher assistants at Carrum Downs do?

The secondary teacher assistants undertake tasks to assist teachers specific to their sub-school.

- *The Middle School (Years 7, 8 and 9) secondary teacher assistant works full time with the Middle Years Curriculum Manager. She regularly attends classes to assist the teachers within the learning space; enters data; types minutes; assists and attends to teachers requests in regards to online demand testing; creates a timetable for classes to complete surveys for the 'Principles of Learning & Teaching' and maintains survey results. She also responds to all middle school teachers' requests on Mark book changes and makes sure templates/subjects are correct; prepares curriculum folders when needed; attends to phone calls; laminates and photocopies when needed.*
- *The Senior School (Years 10, 11 and 12) secondary teacher assistant works three days a week with the Senior Years Curriculum Manager. Her work involves a variety of administrative tasks including: filing, phone calls, data entry, shredding, organising exams (printing, distributing, setting up rooms), chasing up queries for the Senior Curriculum Manager, laminating and photocopying. She*

also assists within classrooms by assisting students to stay on task, photocopying worksheets for students and distributing work to students. The secondary teacher assistant has also attended school excursions.

What has been the impact on the school?

Carrum Downs Secondary College decided to employ two secondary teacher assistants – one at 0.5 EFT, and the other at 1.0 EFT (which, as a total of 1.5 EFT is a commitment above their funding allocation). Each secondary teacher assistant is assigned to work with their respective Curriculum Leader to assist in reducing administrative burden on that leader.

Carrum Downs Secondary College has a high proportion of beginning and graduate teachers. With the secondary teacher assistants freeing up the time of the Curriculum Leaders, these experienced teachers have been able to act as mentors for the other teachers at their levels – working with them collaboratively in team teaching situations to model good teaching practice. The decision by the school to place their experienced teachers into a mentoring role aims to strengthen the pedagogical skills of the new teachers. It also aims to increase their confidence within their own teaching practice. All of this helps to improve the quality of teaching that is occurring at the school.

Case Study 3 – Attendance Officer

In 2008 ninety-two Victorian Government secondary schools received funding through the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's Secondary Teacher Assistants (STA) initiative to employ a School Services Officer to reduce the administrative burden on classroom teachers and enable them to better focus on achieving teaching and learning outcomes.

Schools have elected to use this employee in different ways, but for many the 'Secondary Teacher Assistants' initiative provided the opportunity to focus on the issue of student attendance, in particular absenteeism and lateness to school. Attendance is a common focal area in schools Strategic and Annual Implementation Plans, and for many of the schools that received secondary teacher assistant funding in 2008, attendance was a major issue. In association with the Departments 'It's Not OK to be Away' initiative, these schools thought that appointment of a staff member dedicated to ensuring that students are attending school should increase student attendance, reduce teachers administrative burden and as a result bring an improvement in student learning outcomes.

The stories of two schools that used the funding to focus on the attendance issue are told below.

Secondary College #1

A college in the Western Metropolitan Region received secondary teacher assistant funding equivalent to 0.8EFT. The school leadership decided to focus on attendance as the main component of their secondary teacher assistant's work. The secondary teacher assistant works across all three campuses, with attendance being her focus at two of those locations.

What does the secondary teacher assistant do?

- Monitors late arrivals and issues late passes to students. When a student records four late arrivals in a term a letter is sent home to the parents and a lunchtime detention is issued.
- Monitors the Attendance Hotline – which parents can call to note if their child is going to be absent.
- Monitors the rolls marked by teachers to observe patterns of absence.
- Contacts parents about unexplained absences.

What impact does it have?

- Teachers do not have to use their preparation and planning time to contact parents about absences.
- Students are being made more accountable for their attendance at school.
- Parents are more conscious about their responsibility in ensuring that their child is attending school, and if they are going to be absent informing the school why this is.
- Decreased absenteeism means that students are attending school more regularly, and have a greater chance of learning.

Secondary College #2

A Year 7-10 college in regional Victoria has an enrolment of around 600 students, but the school population is transient with families moving into and out of the area on a regular basis, contributing to significant issues with attendance. The school was allocated 0.8EFT secondary teacher assistant funding. The appointment of a secondary teacher assistant to undertake the role of Attendance Officer was seen as important for the school as it meant having someone dedicated to the task of ensuring that students attended school.

What does the secondary teacher assistant do?

- Maintains all of the data entry associated with attendance. She manages the Student Roll Monitors who collect attendance data using PDAs and then uploads that data into the system.
- Produces reports on absences for class teachers so that they can check with the student or teacher involved.
- Identifies students that have significant attendance issues and at weekly meetings brings this to the attention of the Sub-school managers and Assistant Principal.
- Pro-actively phones families of students identified as being 'at risk' to ensure that the student is encouraged and supported to attend school.

What impact does it have?

- Classroom teachers can focus on providing their students with support in an advisory role with their learning and goal setting, rather than following up on absences.
- Students 'at risk' are identified and supported earlier on, which may improve their long term success at school.
- Teachers that were normally taken out of classroom teaching to follow up on absences are able to return to teaching.

Summary

Schools that have tackled the attendance issue through the 'Secondary Teacher Assistant' initiative feel that allocation of dedicated staff to the role has improved the commitment to attendance. For some schools where attendance issues have been ongoing for many years a cultural shift of re-educating teachers, parents and students about the importance of attending school is beginning to happen. Schools are reporting that when the same person is following up on absences every day, parents are more likely to make the effort to inform the school prior to a student being away, and are feeling supported in their efforts to ensure that their child attends. Families are being made accountable for attendance, because there

is someone at the school who will follow up if their child is away. Social welfare issues are also being identified by the Attendance Officer as a result of their regular contact with students and families, and these can then be referred on for assistance before the issue becomes too great for the family and school to deal with. Schools are also reporting that teachers are becoming more accountable for their attendance records as the Attendance Officer is the one who is monitoring the lists. Patterns of absenteeism in particular subjects, are also being identified earlier and counseling or mediation can be provided to ensure that the student returns to the classroom