

Creating and Supporting a Performance & Development Culture

Sample Application – Element 3 – Corio West PS

Customised individual teacher development plans based on both development needs and school priorities

The professional culture of our school has been transformed over recent years from an authoritative top down decision making model, to one where the teacher voice is sought and valued. Teacher development planning now recognises the individual teacher requirements and this is balanced with the goals, values and objectives of our school. Our approach is to encourage our teachers to have the confidence to articulate their needs, then to devise a plan which lifts their professional skills and thereby positively affecting the learning outcomes of their students.

We have explicitly detailed our school's Charter priorities in many forums and the teachers have set team goals to meet the needs of our students in relation to these priorities.

Our whole school development plans are negotiated and set at the beginning of every year and reviewed during the year as required. Our plans are formulated after consideration is given to D.E.T. initiatives and priorities, charter priorities, student outcome data and teacher feedback provided via Professional Learning Plans, and Staff Organisation Health Survey etc. This is then married with work load issues, time allocations and the availability of school resources (both human and fiscal). An over view is then created to inform our Professional Development program and meeting schedule.

Our P.E.P program presents our teachers with an opportunity to convey their professional needs as an individual or collectively as a team of learners. We have a Professional Development coordinator who liaises with the leadership team and staff, to ensure a comprehensive and professionally rigorous program is delivered.

Individuals complete a Professional Learning Plan and also utilize Teacher Focus Plans to customise their development. The Professional Learning Plans enable the teacher to flag for the P.D. coordinator and the Leadership team individual development requirements. The Teacher Focus Plans are created by the individual teacher to suit their needs or interests. Each teacher completes two plans per term which allows individual teachers to customise their own development in relation to their classroom requirements or to an area of personal endeavour. The plans document actions to be taken, professional development requirements, feedback systems to be used and an overall outcome. The plans are then shared with colleagues at a CSF Level team meeting. The professional feedback gained in this way enables the teachers to customise and modify their future Teacher Focus Plans.

Once all individual teacher Professional Learning Plans are collated, common areas may be isolated thereby promoting a whole school approach to addressing the professional requirements. Our "You Can Do It – Social Skills" P.D favourably addressed our student welfare needs and our recent "Intel – teach to the future" P.D has lifted our ICT skills and revamped our Integrated curriculum.

Annually our principal allocates extra roles and leadership opportunities to share the work load of our busy productive school. This provides an avenue for teachers to seek out roles and responsibilities that match or stretch their professional capabilities.

Customisation is also supported by our leadership team, as the principal, assistant principal and two leading teachers, are embedded into our school's curriculum planning and delivery. The team is very hands on in relation to our school programs and can make recommendations for curriculum adjustments or suggest modifications to our plans or schedules.

At our school we are very open to enabling teachers to pursue their interests. One of our teachers is currently undertaking a D.E&T program Masters and Young Leadership study tour to Chile, later in the year she will go to London. We have a teacher on exchange to Canada. Last year we had a team of our senior staff undertaken a Commonwealth Govt. Quality Teaching Program. Enterprise Education has now been introduced into our senior school. Several of our teachers have accessed Regional Professional development or briefings to develop their skill sets. Currently our senior teachers are part of a planning team to plan how to refurbish our senior facilities.

Enterprise Education, a curriculum that flourishes in our senior school, is a vital example of an empowered team of teachers who challenged themselves to develop a new pedagogy for our senior school. The team sought resources, expertise, goals set, harnessed energies and now Enterprise Education is lifting student outcomes and has certainly energised careers.

Over the past two years feedback systems have informed our daily practice. Examples being the abandoning of K.L.A committees replacing them with stages of schooling teams supported by an appropriate budget, our preference to undertaken focused whole school professional development, the changes made to our Professional Recognition Program to reflect team goals and our seeking grants and resources to assist teacher teams.

While our school has a strong support system to assist teacher professional growth, we also put the onus back on the teacher to be accountable for their development. The level of customization is controlled by the teacher. Their enthusiasm, curiosity and professionalism all contributes to the overall plan that is generated and acted upon.

Our Teacher Organisation Health survey has elements that support our opinion that teacher development is being catered for. Benchmarks for Professional growth, Participation in decision making, and Professional interaction elements for the past three years are all above the state benchmarks. Informal feedback from teachers in our school would endorse a positive culture in regards to our school meeting the needs of our students and our teachers.

A new component this year incorporated in our Professional Learning Plans has been to asked if any teachers would like to undertake an Action Research project in an area of their chose and six teachers put ideas forward. Our leadership team will now discuss ways to assist teams to undertake their projects.

We have learnt that teacher development has a higher implementation success rate if presented to the whole staff at once, thus enabling us to develop a common vocabulary, implementation strategy and provide collegiate team support. Also we have learnt that teachers learn best when they can relate their development to their grade and practise skills or strategies in a real, not contrived, school context. It is essential that teachers talk to colleagues. We are gregarious social beings and our work place exploits this. We know that we know something, when we can explain it to someone else. Hence the Teacher Focus Plans are shared at team meetings. Also team meetings encourage accountability to our approach, where colleagues, in a non threatening manner, can give reward and recognition to teacher, or encourage participation.

Teacher develop is also enhanced by the support and appropriate recognition to participants given by the principal and assistant principal. The impact of reward and recognition is never our looked.

We believe that we have the systems and philosophy in place that will see this area grow and develop as teachers continue to share and plan together in our supportive learning community. The old days of waiting for professional opportunities to come to you is being replaced by a belief that “fortune favours the brave”, and the well planned. The programs we have added or strengthened have created for us a more focused and professionally energetic community.