School Strategic Planning Guidelines 2012
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Executive Summary

Strategic planning ensures that a common purpose and values are established for the school and the school’s strategic direction for the next four years is identified and expressed through goals, targets and key improvement strategies.

These guidelines are designed to assist school communities to engage in strategic thinking and planning to set the future direction for the school.

The school strategic plan is the key planning document for the school and its community. Regardless of school type, all government schools strive to improve in these three student outcome areas:
- student learning
- student engagement and wellbeing
- student pathways and transitions.

Within each of the outcome areas, schools have the flexibility to define their goals and targets. These goals and targets will be based on a thorough analysis of student and other school data and with consideration to government and regional priorities where they are relevant.

The school strategic plan informs the development of annual implementation plans which set out how the school will go about implementing the key improvement strategies. These plans then inform the development of principal class and staff performance and development plans. The school strategic plan needs to be developed within the broader context of regional and system improvement.

1. Introduction

The School Accountability and Improvement Framework (the Framework) provides a key resource to support Victorian government schools and their communities identify and implement a shared vision for improvement.

Each element of the Framework is linked to provide a coherent and streamlined means for schools to:
- understand their performance (self-evaluation and review)
- identify their vision and purpose and set goals and targets for improvement (school strategic plan)
- put into operation their improvement plans and manage resources (annual implementation plan)
- report on their performance (annual report to the school community).

The Framework builds on the relationships that exist within each school: those with the school council as the governing body, school staff, and parents and the broader community in which the school is located. Shared responsibility, partnerships and transparency are seen as key principles within the Framework in supporting quality student outcomes.

The development of the school strategic plan is conducted as part of the year of self-evaluation, review and planning and follows the timeline shown in Figure 1.

These guidelines outline the process for school strategic planning.

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Figure 1: Year of self-evaluation, review and planning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jan</th>
<th>Feb</th>
<th>Mar</th>
<th>Apr</th>
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<th>Sep</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

School Self Evaluation

School Review

School Strategic Plan
2. Key points for school strategic planning

A school strategic plan sets out the school’s strategic direction for the next four years. This includes the school’s purpose, values and environmental context, as well as goals, targets and key improvement strategies in the three student outcome areas.

The school strategic plan is:

- informed by the information gathered and directions identified throughout the school self-evaluation and school review processes
- informed through staff, student and parent consultation, and engagement with relevant community agencies
- to be completed by the end of the year of self-evaluation, review and planning (Figure 1), and endorsed by the school council and Regional Director or nominee
- a living document and can be changed; if a school’s circumstances change it is possible for the school strategic plan to be updated outside of this cycle to make it responsive to emerging initiatives.

Schools are encouraged to share their school strategic plan with their community.

While school communities may go about this work in quite different ways, there are common processes that underpin effective strategic planning. These include:

- defining the school’s core purpose and values
- taking a ‘future’s perspective’ of the needs of children and young people and the context of the school in its community
- agreeing on the outcomes the school is striving to achieve for its students
- selecting a few key improvement strategies that are critical to the school’s success
- deciding how resources will be generated, enhanced or allocated to achieve the desired outcomes
- planning the implementation of the strategy
- identifying how the school will know when success has been achieved
- ensuring that the school community is engaged in the development of the school’s strategic direction.

3. Developing the school strategic plan

An effective school strategic plan comprises three distinct parts:

1. School profile, including:
   - purpose
   - values
   - environmental context – the challenges and risks the school faces and the opportunities available to the school (internal and external).

2. Strategic intent, including:
   - goals and targets for each student outcome area (student learning, student engagement and wellbeing, student pathways and transitions)
   - key improvement strategies for achieving improvement in student outcomes.

3. Indicative planner, including:
   - key improvement strategies
   - the broad scope of activities year by year
   - the desired changes in practice and behaviours indicated as achievement milestones.

A link to resources related to the development of the school strategic plan is provided in the ‘Further support and information’ section.

4. School profile

What is the purpose of our school?

Strategic planning needs to be anchored in the school’s fundamental reason for existence – its purpose. A school’s statement of purpose answers the basic questions of What are we here for? and What is the school’s fundamental reason for being? Statements of purpose often describe the following:

- the people we are serving
- the services we wish to provide for them
- the level at which we wish to provide the services.

Purpose statements are:

- shared and owned by the school community
- appropriate to the needs of the local community
- well articulated and easily understood by the school community.

The statement of purpose is used in planning discussions and acts as a reality check to ensure that the goals, targets and key improvement strategies are aligned with the school’s direction.
Examples of school purposes

To develop students’ life skills through learning with fun and creativity whilst encouraging friendship, connecting with others and celebrating our success together. *(Glen Iris Primary School)*
The college is committed to the development of lifelong learning skills that motivate and enable all students to achieve their individual goals and make a positive contribution to the global community. *(Vermont Secondary College)*

Our college is committed to helping develop in students the capacity, desire and tools to achieve their best in all endeavours. We will foster a sense of awareness, responsibility and respect, globally, for family and community and personal growth. We will support and encourage students in the pursuit of excellence. *(Apollo Bay P–12 College)*

To provide a friendly, caring and dynamic learning environment that engages students who work to achieve their personal best in an atmosphere of mutual respect and cooperation. Create a stimulating and supportive environment for all teachers and assist, inform and involve parents. *(Ascot Vale Specialist School)*

What are our values?

Values are those things that are most important to us. Values describe the guiding principles and beliefs of the school community. Value statements answer the questions:

- What do we believe and value in this school?
- What does this school stand for?
- How does the school want to operate?

Value statements:

- provide a basis for decision-making and action
- shape the way people work together by creating shared expectations and norms
- help the school community to remain focused on what is important.

Examples of school values

The values which form the basis of the actions for the whole school community are:

**Respect:** Showing care and concern for other people and property

Developing a sense of pride, self-esteem and personal identity.

**Integrity:** Being honest, sincere, truthful and trustworthy

Supporting the values of Glen Iris Primary School *(Glen Iris Primary School)*

Our college demonstrates the following agreed set of values:

**Excellence:** In the achievement of individual and team goals (Do your very best)

**Integrity:** Of individuals in their words, actions and relationships (Do the right thing)

**Responsibility:** For our words and actions (Be in charge of yourself)

**Tolerance:** Of diversity and individual differences (Understand and accept that people are different)

*(Vermont Secondary College)*

The environmental context

Strategic planning recognises that each school operates within its own unique environment. Analysis of a school’s environmental context answers the question *What are the influences that will impact on our school community into the future?*

Environmental contexts comprise a complex combination of factors including:

- student and parental expectations
- socio-demographic composition
- changing demographics
- curriculum provision
- facilities and infrastructure
- organisational sustainability
- labour market conditions
- government policies and regulations.

An important part of strategic planning is considering the impact of current and emerging environmental factors (and the risks and opportunities these present) on the outcomes the school wants to achieve and the strategies the school intends to use to achieve these outcomes. An environmental analysis can be used to:

- capitalise on the school’s internal strengths to take advantage of opportunities
- capitalise on the school’s internal strengths to minimise external challenges or risks
- align with local needs and government priorities.

Schools will need to consider the future needs of young people in the community to provide high quality and diverse learning opportunities. This might involve working with the region and other principals to consider local mapping of education provision. In many cases, this might result in collaborative strategic planning with other schools, education providers and community agencies to ensure the best possible outcomes for young people in the community.

A number of commonly used tools to assist with environmental analysis can be found on the DEECD website. Please see the ‘Further support and information’ section. A useful source of information for secondary schools may be the environmental
scan conducted by their Local Learning and Employment Network. The school self-evaluation, completed early in the year of self-evaluation, review and planning, will provide some information on school context, but the environmental scan in the school strategic plan builds on this process.

**Examples of school context**

**Social – community and demographics**
- located in a very mixed social demographic
- 30% of families entitled to receive Educational Maintenance Allowance
- 30% of families where one or both parents/guardians are professional or business proprietors
- new low cost housing development is underway in the east
- unemployment is high
- 44% of students speak a language other than English at home
- likely to see an increase in current enrolment of 450
- 15% of students participate in the International Students Program

**Educational**
- embedding of the Ultranet
- embedding of the e5 Instructional Model
- implementation of the Abilities Based Learning and Educational Support (ABLES)

**Technological**
- the use of Web 2.0 is embedded in curriculum planning and delivery
- approximately 30% of students have access to a computer at home
- every student has access to a computer at school
- electronic whiteboards in all classrooms.

**Environmental – grounds and facilities**
- caters to particular cohorts of students (i.e. prayer room, specially designed playground space for students with intellectual disabilities)
- all rooms are well-equipped and conducive to effective learning
- all spaces are heated and air-conditioned
- areas of concern include the adequacy of staff planning and resource space and limited storage space
- grounds are well established with attractive gardens
- extensive range of play spaces for children, including two ovals, full grass oval and four adventure playgrounds
- the sloping site is an ongoing concern for maintenance as is the effect of wet weather upon usability of grassed areas.

**5. Strategic intent**

A school’s strategic intent is defined by:
- goals and targets for improvement in the three student outcome areas
- key improvement strategies to achieve the goals and targets.

This is the most challenging part of the school strategic planning process – identifying what outcomes the school will focus on for the next four years, and the three or four key improvement strategies which are powerful enough to move the school to achieving those outcomes. The indicative planner provides an opportunity to broadly scope how the key improvement strategies will be implemented over the cycle and to identify the achievement milestones.

The three outcomes are closely related with, for example, greater student engagement being likely to lead to improved retention and better student learning outcomes.

**6. Goals**

Goals are aspirational statements. They define what student outcomes the school is striving to achieve in the areas of student learning, engagement and wellbeing, and pathways and transitions. Goals will evolve from a range of sources including:
- the school’s purpose, values and environmental context
- analysis of student outcomes from the school self-evaluation and school review process
- the strategic planning community consultation process
- discussion with other schools, networks and other providers
- the government’s priorities for education and early childhood development
- regional priorities.

Schools have the flexibility to define their goals according to the needs of their school. Some schools may choose to have more than one goal statement within each student outcome area. For example, schools may choose to have goal statements for the Early Years, Middle Years or Later Years student groupings.

At least one goal is required in each of the three student outcome areas.

**Goal specification checklist**

The following criteria should be considered when specifying goal statements:
- The goal is expressed in terms of improvement in student outcomes.
The goal addresses an area requiring significant improvement in the school’s student outcomes.

A robust evidence base has been used to identify the goal area.

The goal simply, briefly and precisely describes the student outcome area that the school is trying to improve.

Staff and the wider school community accept the goal as appropriate.

### Examples of school goals

#### Student learning
- To improve numeracy outcomes for all students
- To improve literacy outcomes for all students
- To foster the achievement of high quality educational outcomes for all students with a particular focus on literacy and mathematics
- To improve student learning and achievement in English with a focus on Years 7-10
- To improve student achievement in senior secondary pathways

#### Student engagement and wellbeing
- To improve student safety and wellbeing
- To develop and promote behaviours and attitudes across the school community that support the achievement of ‘personal best’
- To improve student engagement in their learning

#### Student pathways and transitions
- To improve transitions for students and their families into, through and out of the school
- To improve student retention with a focus on expanded pathways in the later years
- To ensure that all students have a smooth, planned and logical progression through the stages of learning

### 7. Targets

Targets are the measures of success in achievement of the goals. They describe how the school will measure achievement of its goals. Targets can take a number of forms. They may focus on raising the achievement of all students, or on improving the minimum or maximum levels of achievement in a group of students. Targets can be set in relation to year levels or specific cohorts of students.

Targets are best expressed as proportions of students meeting various ‘standards’, rather than relative to a state-wide mean or performance at a SFO band.

Expressing targets in terms of the proportion of students at, above, or below ‘standards’:

- provides a focus to schools and classroom teachers on what outcomes the school is trying to achieve
- enables teachers to identify which students, year levels, or specific cohorts of students, are above, at or below the expected standard ensuring appropriate support strategies can be put in place
- ensures the control over reaching the targets sits with the school community.

When setting targets, it is useful to consider the following:

- Are they measurable? Targets need to be clear, simple indicators that can be quantified and described easily. Targets can be expressed using the standard school performance measures that are collected and monitored annually or using school specific data collections.
- Are they realistic yet challenging? Targets should always be improvement oriented and provide a stretch for the school.
- Are they achievable within a specified timeframe? Targets should have a four-year timeframe for achievement.

Importantly, targets reflect the achievement of goals (that is, improvements in actual student outcomes), not the achievement of strategies or actions designed to achieve these goals. For example, the proportion of students with individual learning plans reflects an action taken by the school, not whether or not student outcomes have actually improved. Strategies describe how improvement is to be achieved, whilst targets specify actual improvements in student outcomes.

#### A target is required for each goal.

### Target specification checklist

The following criteria should be considered when specifying targets:

- Each student outcome area has a target.
- The target is an appropriate indicator of success in the goal area.
- The target focuses people on the desired improvement over the four-year timeframe.
- The target is expressed as a proportion of students, year levels, or specific cohorts reaching a particular standard
- Data are available as evidence of improvement and can be collected and reported on annually
- Staff and the wider school community accept the target as an appropriate indicator of success in the agreed goal area.
- A limited number of targets are set against each goal.
## Examples of targets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student outcome area</th>
<th>Target</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student Learning</strong></td>
<td>By 2016, the percentage of Year 5 students assessed at or above the national minimum standard in NAPLAN numeracy will increase by 10 percentage points from 80% to 90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The percentage of students in Years 7–10 who have progressed by one VELS level over the previous 2 year period will increase from 75% in 2011 to 95% by the end of 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>By 2016, the proportion of study scores above 40 will be 17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>By 2016 all students with individual learning plans will have made at least satisfactory or better progress against every goal in their plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student Engagement and Wellbeing</strong></td>
<td>To increase the student safety mean in the student attitudes to school survey to at least 4.5 by 2016 from 3.1 in 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>By 2016, the staff opinion survey results for student motivation and student orientation to improve from 58.0 in 2011 to at or above 75.0 (on the 100 point scale)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To increase average student attendance rates from 90% in 2011 to 95% by 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student Pathways and Transitions</strong></td>
<td>To increase the proportion of students exiting to further education, training or full time employment by 5 percentage points, from 80% in 2011 to 85% in 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The proportion of parents reporting satisfaction with the preschool-to-school transition and orientation program to improve from 70% in 2011 to 95% or above by 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To improve the score for the transitions variable in the parent opinion survey in 2016 to 5.75 from 4.62 in 2011</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 8. Key improvement strategies

Key improvement strategies are high level actions that the school will use to achieve its goals and targets. They represent the school’s ‘theory of action’: that is, the school’s understanding of the logically connected steps or high-level actions that need to be put into place to achieve improvement (Elmore 2004). For example, a school’s theory of action could include the notion that if teachers undertake targeted professional learning that is aligned with the school’s teaching and learning priorities, then this will improve teacher practice, which will in turn improve student learning outcomes. It is important that the leadership of the school can articulate their theory of action so that staff understand why they are doing what they do and what they are aiming to achieve.

Key improvement strategies are broad and are likely to take several years to have an impact. Implementation is rolled out through annual implementation plans that outline the detailed actions required to support achievement of the strategy. It is important to choose a few key strategies on which to focus the school’s energies.

Key improvement strategies should focus on the school’s broad intent, not on the implementation of specific programs or initiatives. For example, a strategy ‘Introduce improved practices and procedures for managing student attendance, including the introduction of the *It’s not OK to be away* program’ is more ‘future-proof’ and reflects the school’s intent more effectively than simply ‘Introduce the *It’s not OK to be away* program’. Focusing on the intent of a strategy, rather than a specific program, ensures that the school strategic plan is sufficiently flexible to allow the school to refine the program or accommodate new programs that reflect the broad strategy.

Significant departmental programs or initiatives in which the school is engaged can be readily integrated into the school strategic plan, as they are each designed to contribute either directly or indirectly to improved student outcomes. For example:

- the e5 Instructional Model
- the Ultranet
- the Victorian Early Years Learning Framework
- the Victorian Essential Learning Standards
- the Victorian Careers Curriculum Framework
- the Victorian Prevention and Health Promotion Achievement Program
- Principles of Learning and Teaching
- Managed Individual Pathways
- Transition: A Positive Start to School.
These initiatives are clearly linked to improved student outcomes in one or all of the three student outcome areas. Participation in these programs and initiatives can therefore be incorporated into the school strategic plan as part of a key improvement strategy. The benefit of integrating these programs into a single strategic plan is that the school can clearly state what outcomes these initiatives are trying to achieve. Furthermore, a single strategic plan and single annual implementation plan removes the need for separate planning and accountability arrangements for different initiatives, streamlining the administrative workload of planning and reporting.

There are additional resources and services provided by the Department that can contribute to school and student engagement and wellbeing outcomes including Student Support Services Officers (SSSOS), Primary and Secondary School Nurses, Primary Welfare Officers (PWOs), School Focused Youth Service (SFYS) Coordinators and professionals from early childhood services. The establishment of partnerships with other government, early childhood and community services, including kindergartens, child care providers, child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS), local government youth services, family support services and local community service organisations, can provide additional expertise and support for children and young people, their families and for schools. Facilitating programs and support for vulnerable children and young people and their families within the school community can contribute significantly to improved student learning and engagement and wellbeing outcomes.

It is important to note that key improvement strategies may be equally applicable for achieving improvement across the three student outcome areas. The school self-evaluation and school review will provide insight into strategies which may assist the school in improving student outcomes.

### Examples of key improvement strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student outcome area</th>
<th>Key improvement strategy</th>
<th>Link with Effective Schools Model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Learning</td>
<td>Establish collective accountability for the monitoring of progress and assessment of individual students and cohorts of students</td>
<td>Accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enhance teacher practice through the development of an agreed school-wide pedagogy based on the e5 Instructional Model</td>
<td>Focus on teaching and learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improve school curriculum planning and documentation to ensure alignment with the Victorian Essential Learning Standards</td>
<td>Focus on teaching and learning</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Build the leadership capacity of all staff through the adoption of a distributed model of leadership</td>
<td>Professional leadership</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Support student engagement and learning through the development of collaborative learning spaces on the Ultranet</td>
<td>Stimulating and secure learning environment</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Create a comprehensive standards-based learning program with a particular focus on physical, personal and social learning</td>
<td>Stimulating and secure learning environment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- A small number of key improvement strategies is preferred.
- Key improvement strategies may be applicable to the achievement of more than one goal or student outcome area.

### Key improvement strategy checklist

The following criteria (adapted from the Australian Institute of Company Directors’ Integrity Model for Assessing Strategic Plans) should be considered when specifying key improvement strategies:

- There is a clear link between the key improvement strategies chosen and the school’s goals and targets
- The key improvement strategy is comprehensive (addresses all the issues) and appropriate (makes sense in terms of the school’s purpose, values and environmental context)
- The key improvement strategy is feasible (can be developed with the school’s resources) and sustainable (is enduring) over the four-year period
- The achievement of the key improvement strategies can be operationalised and measured (that is, broken down into actions)
- The key improvement strategy is easily understood and able to be articulated in simple terms to staff and the school community
- Data, achievement milestones and other evidence of achievement can be collected and reported on regularly
- Staff and the wider school community accept the key improvement strategy as appropriate.
## Student Strategic Planning Guidelines 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student outcome area</th>
<th>Key improvement strategy</th>
<th>Link with Effective Schools Model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Create a learning environment characterised by high expectations of all students</td>
<td>Focus on teaching and learning</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strengthen the performance and development culture to support improved instructional practice</td>
<td>High expectations of all learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Establish collective accountability for the assessment and monitoring of progress of individual students, cohorts of students, and the school as a whole</td>
<td>Focus on teaching and learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Engagement and Wellbeing</td>
<td>Develop and implement an agreed approach to student safety and wellbeing</td>
<td>Stimulating and secure learning environment</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increase student involvement and participation in decision making through an enhanced student voice</td>
<td>Stimulating and secure learning environment Shared vision and goals</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Develop and implement a comprehensive approach to engaging all families in supporting high expectations for student learning</td>
<td>High expectations Learning communities</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Implement a School Engagement Policy to improve student management practices</td>
<td>Stimulating and secure learning environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Pathways and Transitions</td>
<td>Develop and implement effective teacher professional learning to improve pathways planning for all students</td>
<td>Learning communities High expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Broaden senior secondary learning options to meet student aspirations and destinations</td>
<td>Learning communities High expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Develop agreed processes and protocols to support successful transitions to senior secondary pathways</td>
<td>Learning communities Focus on teaching and learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enhance transitions to early years school programs for incoming students and their families</td>
<td>Focus on teaching and learning Stimulating and secure learning environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strengthen and broaden community partnerships</td>
<td>Learning communities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 9. The Effective Schools Model

Just as the Effective Schools Model provides a useful lens for reflecting on the school’s performance in the self evaluation process, it can also guide the development of the school strategic plan (see Figure 2).

The Effective Schools Model, which describes eight correlates of effective schools, provides a useful way of thinking about current practice and can assist in evaluating current practice and in identifying opportunities for improvement.
10. Indicative planner

The purpose of the indicative planner is to assist schools to prioritise their key improvement strategies and to describe the changes of practice and behaviours that might be observable at a school if the key improvement strategies were being effectively implemented. The indicative planner describes the actions to be undertaken and the achievement milestones that will be used to indicate success.

**Actions**

Actions are the specific activities to be undertaken in that year to progress the key improvement strategies. There may be more than one action for each strategy or significant project. In breaking down the key improvement strategy into actions, schools may differ in the level of specificity in which they list these actions. Some schools may choose to include a detailed list of actions, while others may like to include only the main actions, leaving the detail to become part of a specific project plan that is used by those who will implement the action.

**Achievement milestones**

Achievement milestones are used to demonstrate whether the strategies and actions have been successful. Achievement milestones reflect changes in practice and behaviours.

To simplify and focus the school’s monitoring of progress, it is recommended that schools set a limited number of achievement milestones within the indicative planner. This way, everyone in the school is clear about what improvements they are trying to achieve. Too many milestones may cause the school to lose focus on the key things that need to be achieved.

One way of reflecting upon suitable achievement milestones is to consider the Effective Schools Model. The Effective Schools Model defines eight correlates of an effective school. These correlates essentially describe the types of practices and behaviours that might be observable at a school (achievement milestones) if key improvement strategies were being effectively implemented. For example, consider a school that had a key improvement strategy related to improving professional leadership at the school. Effective schools are characterised by professional leadership that distributes authority and responsibility across the school by providing teachers with genuine opportunities to participate directly in decisions about curriculum, professional learning priorities, school and resource management, and other policy decisions. An achievement milestone could then be framed to reflect these practices and behaviours.

Other resources can also be used to develop descriptions of practices and behaviours, for example, the e5 Instructional Model, the Performance and Development Culture Revised Self Assessment Framework, the Developmental Learning Framework for School Leaders and Principles of Learning and Teaching.

Importantly, achievement milestones may be set for the whole school or for particular areas of the school (e.g., the Mathematics or professional learning team for the early years). Schools can engage in a dialogue with teachers, parents and students to assess whether the achievement milestone has been met (qualitative data).

generally, schools should set a small number of achievement milestones each year.

**Achievement milestone checklist**

The following criteria should be considered when specifying achievement milestones:

- The achievement milestone describes changes in practice and behaviours
- The achievement milestone has a defined timeframe for achievement – week, term, semester, within the year
- The achievement milestone is easily understood and able to be explained in simple terms to staff and the school community
- The achievement milestone describes the intended result in sufficient detail to ensure that people will agree when it has been achieved
- Data, processes or activities used to demonstrate achievement of the milestone can be collected easily or readily observed and reported on regularly.

**Examples of achievement milestones**

Examples illustrating how primary and secondary schools may present their goals, targets and key improvement strategies can be found on the DEECD website. A link is provided in the ‘Further support and information’ section.

**Achievement milestones related to improved teacher practice**

- By the end of Term 3, all teachers will routinely use the e5 Instructional Model in professional learning teams to reflect on their classroom practice
- By the end of Term 3, all teachers will have completed two peer observation and feedback sessions
- All teachers use student feedback from at least one class to improve student engagement in learning by the end of Term 2
- By the end of the year, all teachers use Learning Task observations to inform planning and teaching
- All teachers have received targeted, focused feedback on their teaching practice at least once during Term 4
- All teachers are using a variety of Learning Tasks to deliver a range of activities to students throughout the year
- Student goals and portfolios are developed by the end of Term 1 and maintained in Ultranet eXpress Spaces
- All teachers are using student performance data to inform their teaching by the end of Term 3
- International student program staff have participated in the professional learning and mentoring program by the end of Term 4.

**Achievement milestones related to improved curriculum**
- By the end of Term 2, teachers are utilising the Ultranet for collaborative curriculum development and delivery, supported by professional learning teams
- By the end of Term 4, teachers identify and include activities involving higher order thinking skills into their teaching
- Teachers are differentiating the curriculum in their planning to cater for and engage all students by the end of Term 2
- By the end of Term 4, all staff will have participated in professional learning associated with the Australian Curriculum.

**Achievement milestones related to improved assessment**
- All teachers become confident with interpreting NAPLAN data by the end of Term 3
- By the end of Term 2, all staff regularly use moderation practices to ensure consistency of assessment

**Achievement milestones related to improved student management**
- All staff believe they have had the opportunity to contribute to the purpose and values identified in the new school strategic plan
- By the end of Term 1, staff have completed performance and development plans that demonstrate links with the school strategic plan and annual implementation plan
- By the end of Term 4, all staff have had an end-of-year discussion related to their performance and development plan, including the feedback sources they have utilised to inform their practice.

**Achievement milestones related to improved organisational health**
- At least three active Ultranet Community Spaces are used to increase knowledge and pathway options for young people throughout the year
- Careers and MIPs team will have worked with local council to develop a work placement program for students at risk by the end of Term 2.

**11. Summary structure of the strategic plan**

The following table provides a summary of the different parts of the school strategic plan, together with a series of key questions and information that can be used to assist schools to complete their plans.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements of strategic plan</th>
<th>Questions to focus strategic thinking and discussion</th>
<th>Informed by: (examples – people and tools)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. School Profile</td>
<td>Purpose: What is this school’s fundamental reason for existence? What is the purpose of this school?</td>
<td>• all members of the school community • focused discussions, mind maps, sharing stories</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

School Strategic Planning Guidelines 2012 13
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements of strategic plan</th>
<th>Questions to focus strategic thinking and discussion</th>
<th>Informed by: (examples – people and tools)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Values**                | What do we value in this school? What does this school stand for, and how does it want to operate? | • all members of the school community  
• community needs  
• government priorities for education and training |
| **Environmental context** | What are the influences that will impact on our school community in the next four years? | • demographic data (e.g. socioeconomic, gender, cultural background, ethnicity, religion)  
• environmental analysis using a range of tools including Local Learning and Employment Network plans, local community plans, regional post-compulsory education access plans  
• special programs e.g. PSD, Koorie programs, International Students Program, etc  
• the Ultranet - opportunities for collaboration, communication, and data management  
• curriculum options available at neighbouring schools  
• programs available at TAFE institutes and ACE providers  
• Youth Guarantee in TAFE  
• transition support workers |

2. Strategic Intent

| Goals | What outcomes are we trying to achieve for our students in the next four years?  
Student learning  
Student engagement and wellbeing  
Student pathways and transitions | • school self-evaluation (including analysis of performance data and other school-collected evidence)  
• school review report  
• advice from region and central office  
• community input  
• Ultranet reporting |

| Targets | How will we know whether we are achieving these outcomes? | • past performance levels and trends  
• different cohort/year level achievements  
• anticipated cohort growth  
• understanding any limits to the data used |

| Key improvement strategies | What do we have to do to achieve the outcomes we want? (those that will make the most difference, not everything that you have to do – a total of 3 to 5 for the 3 outcome areas is recommended) | • school self-evaluation – identification of strengths and weaknesses  
• school review report  
• analysis of the school’s environmental context  
• government priorities for education and early childhood development  
• research on effective schools  
• research on transition to school |

3. Indicative Planner

| Actions | What actions/activities will we undertake to implement the Key improvement | • e5 Instructional Model  
• Principles of Learning and Teaching |
### Elements of strategic plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions to focus strategic thinking and discussion</th>
<th>Informed by: (examples – people and tools)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategies</td>
<td>• Victorian Careers Curriculum Planning Guidelines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• research on effective schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• research on transition to school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Achievement milestones</strong></td>
<td>• research on effective schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What changes in practice and behaviours do we expect to see if the key improvement strategies have been successfully implemented?</td>
<td>• research on transition to school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited number per year recommended.</td>
<td>• e5 Instructional Model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Principles of Learning and Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Revised Performance and Development Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Self-assessment Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ultranet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 12. Process for developing the school strategic plan

The school strategic plan is a platform for facilitating discussion and debate around the strategic directions and development of the school. The completed strategic planning document is a valuable management tool for the school. Engaging students, parents and staff as well as other relevant community agencies in the strategic planning process ensures that there is a shared sense of purpose, and a shared understanding of what the school is trying to achieve and how it plans to get there.

Strategic planning is best coordinated through a planning team, with input from staff, students and parents. Engaging staff, students and parents early in the strategic planning process is crucial to ensure shared ownership and vision for the school’s strategic directions. Schools may wish to consider having subgroups take responsibility for gathering additional information or leading different aspects of the process. For example, staff might lead sessions for analysing the changing environmental context of the school, or conduct a SWOR (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and risks) analysis on current practice in the school.

Schools are encouraged to use Ultranet Collaborative and Community Spaces and tools such as the polling application, existing meeting times and arrangements to facilitate conversations about the school’s purpose, values and strategic directions. Virtual or actual focus groups with parents, students, staff and other community members are extremely valuable activities that add different perspectives to the planning activity.

Schools are encouraged to plan collaboratively with other schools, other education and training providers including early childhood services and relevant community agencies to minimise duplication and ensure a broad range of pathways are available across the locality. Local Learning and Employment networks and the region can provide assistance in developing these linkages and providing a broader view.

The approach adopted by schools when developing their school strategic plan will be influenced by the individual circumstances and characteristics of the school. For example, the relevance of existing plans, the existing consultation and communication processes, and levels of expertise in school planning may impact on the planning process adopted by the school.

The greatest challenge in any organisation is finding sufficient time to meet, discuss and develop longer-term objectives. This concern can be partly addressed by ensuring that meetings are well planned and scheduled at a time that will get the best value. As a rule, having frequent short, focused meetings maintains the momentum, but it is useful to schedule one or two longer sessions where possible at appropriate times in the process.

The following table presents an example of one school’s approach to developing a school strategic plan. Schools may find this useful when developing their own school strategic plan.
## Example process for developing the school strategic plan

| Getting started | • Determine composition of school planning team  
|                | • Determine strategy for engaging staff, students, school council, regional office, and wider school community  
|                | • Design and set up Ultranet Collaborative Spaces for collaborative planning across schools and other education and training providers including early childhood services  
|                | • Design and set up an Ultranet Community Space for focus groups  
|                | • Determine timeline for completion of consultation process and development of plan  
|                | • Schedule focus groups and/or meetings with staff, students, community, region and school council  
|                | • Schedule planning sessions. |
| Gathering input | • Conduct focus groups and/or meetings with staff, students, community and school council to:  
|                |  □ scope out the purpose and values  
|                |  □ undertake environmental analysis  
|                |  □ use feedback tools to identify possible improvement strategies.  
|                | • Consolidate feedback from focus groups and meetings and prepare draft purpose and values statements. |
| Consolidating the learning | • Conduct planning sessions to review and publish relevant information:  
|                |  □ purpose and values statements  
|                |  □ recommendations from school review report, school self-evaluation  
|                |  □ environmental analysis  
|                | • Develop draft goals, targets and key improvement strategies  
|                | • Identify key actions and timelines. |
| Finalising the plan | • Prepare draft plan  
|                | • Discuss with staff, school council and school community  
|                | • Discuss with schools, Local Employment and Learning Network and other education and training providers including early childhood services  
|                | • Discuss with the region  
|                | • Amend draft as required  
|                | • Finalise plan and provide to the region for review  
|                | • Distribute to school council for signing at next meeting. |
| School endorsement | • Signing of plan by school council. |
| Regional endorsement | • Submit plan to the Regional Director for sign-off  
|                | • Submission to DEECD. |
| Implementation and monitoring | • Plan implementation of the key improvement strategies  
|                | • Establish a cycle of ongoing review and monitoring of progress against plan. |
13. Submission and endorsement

The school strategic plan must be signed-off by the school principal, Regional Director or nominee and school council president.

A draft of the strategic plan should be provided to the region for quality assurance prior to it being submitted to school council. The school strategic plan is then tabled at a meeting of the school council for sign-off. The minutes of the school council meeting record the school council’s sign-off of the strategic plan, with the signed school strategic plan attached.

Once fully signed-off, the final school strategic plan is forwarded electronically to the region, who will sign and return a copy to the school. The region will retain the original of the school strategic plan.

The region will ensure the final version is saved to Edutrack following the advice provided by the Department.

14. Timelines

The school strategic plan must be endorsed by the Regional Director or nominee by the end of the calendar year prior to the strategic plan coming into effect. That is, a strategic plan for 2013–2016 should be completed by the 30 December 2012. In exceptional circumstances regions may seek an extension to this timeline from the central office, and will advise the school as to the revised submission date.

New and recently merged schools are expected to develop a school strategic plan within 12 months of commencement. An annual implementation plan will be required for these schools from the date of commencement. These requirements should be discussed with the region.

15. Updating the plan

As indicated above, while the school strategic plan is designed to follow a four-year cycle, if a school’s circumstances change it is possible for the school strategic plan to be updated outside of this cycle.

Schools wishing to update their school strategic plan out-of-cycle should contact their region for further information. The submission and endorsement requirements for the new school strategic plan will be the same as outlined previously in these guidelines.

16. Communicating the plan

The school strategic plan is a public document and should be available to any member of the school community upon request. Many schools have their school strategic plan on a single A3 page that is displayed in several prominent places around the school or available on their website.

17. Things to remember when strategic planning

Important points to remember when undertaking development of the school strategic plan:

- Ensure wide ranging input into the process by seeking the views of the school community including staff, students, school council, parents, other schools, early childhood services, the Local Learning and Employment Network, the regional office and community agencies
- There is no right or wrong way to undertake school strategic planning and many approaches and methodologies can be used – quality learning tools are excellent for gathering ideas
- There is no ‘perfect’ plan – it’s about doing your best at strategic thinking and learning from what you are doing, and learning from other schools
- Build on the good work that is already going on in your school. Prioritise your choice of strategies and recognise that you will not be able to do everything
- Consider the change implications, and therefore the change management implications, that may be implicit in your school strategic plan
- Communicate progress in your planning in a range of ways with all stakeholders and celebrate achievements
- Do not try to do it all at once. The real value in strategic planning is in the process – it takes both time and effort.

18. Summary of roles in school strategic planning

How is the school council involved in school strategic planning?

The school council is an integral part of the governance structure of the school. The school council role includes:

- development of a long term view of the future of the school
- participating in the development of the school strategic plan and engaging the school community; for example, through focus groups, Ultranet community and collaboration spaces and meetings
- providing feedback on draft versions of the school strategic plan
- signing the school strategic plan
- monitoring progress against the goals, targets and key improvement strategies in the school strategic plan
- contributing to the development and monitoring of annual implementation plans.
How are the school principal and the school leadership team involved in school strategic planning?

The school principal plays a central role in school strategic planning, both in their role as principal and as executive officer on school council. The principal, supported by the school leadership team, is responsible for leading the development and implementation of the school strategic plan including:

- briefing the school community, including staff, students, school council and parents, on the process for developing the school strategic plan
- ensuring appropriate opportunities for staff, students, parents, the region and others in the community to participate in the planning process; for example, through focus groups, Ultranet community and collaboration spaces and meetings
- ensuring that appropriate preparation and consultation time has been provided in the planning schedule
- identifying opportunities to work collaboratively with other education providers and community agencies
- signing the school strategic plan
- keeping the school community, including staff, students, council and parents informed of progress against the goals, targets and key improvement strategies in the school strategic plan. The school annual report provides a valuable vehicle for this
- developing and implementing annual implementation plans.

This school level planning informs the development of the principal’s performance and development plan. The principal class performance and development plan focuses on the role the principal will play in contributing to achieving the school’s goals, targets and key improvement strategies and the targeted professional learning required to achieve this.

How are school staff involved in school strategic planning?

School staff contribute to the strategic planning process through direct engagement in their roles as staff members as well as through their representation on the school council. Staff performance and development plans will also be informed by school level planning. Staff are engaged in the process through:

- participating in the development of the school strategic plan; for example, through Ultranet community and collaboration spaces and focus groups and meetings
- providing feedback on draft versions of the school strategic plan
- monitoring progress against the goals, targets and key improvement strategies in the school strategic plan in staff meetings and school council meetings.

How are parents and students involved in school strategic planning?

Parents and students contribute to the strategic planning process through:

- participating in the development of the school strategic plan; for example, through focus groups and meetings
- representation on the school council and junior school council/student representative council
- participating in sub-committees and the Parents’ and Friends’ Association.

What is the role of the region in school strategic planning?

Regions are accountable for the performance of schools within their region and oversee a range of school support services. Regions are responsible for:

- providing training, support and advice to schools in the school strategic planning process
- understanding the unique context of each school, the broader local area and providing support and guidance on the school strategic plan
- signing the school strategic plan
- developing processes to ensure that school strategic planning is consistent with the School Accountability and Improvement Framework and departmental policy
- encouraging and supporting schools to undertake their planning through collaboration and cooperation with other schools via the Ultranet
- ensuring the final copy of each school’s strategic plan is saved to Edutrack following advice provided by the Department.

What is the role of the DEECD central office?

The School Improvement Division is responsible for:

- developing the department’s policy framework for school strategic planning, including guidelines, templates, resources and better practice examples
- facilitating the sharing of good practice in school strategic planning across the state
- monitoring and evaluating the school strategic planning process to support continuous improvement
19. **Further support and information**

School Accountability and Improvement Framework:

School Strategic Plan guidelines, templates and examples:

Annual Implementation Plan guidelines and templates:

Regional contacts:
The region can provide further assistance to schools. A list of regional accountability and improvement personnel is located at

For further information regarding the *Accountability and Improvement Framework*, please email:
schoolaccountability@edumail.vic.gov.au

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**References**

Australian Institute of Company Directors (date unknown) *Integrity Model for Assessing Strategic Plans*, AICD, Sydney.

