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Aligning professional learning, performance management and effective teaching

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Introduction

This paper on professional learning, performance management and effective teaching practices is a companion piece to previous Centre for Strategic Education papers on professional learning (Cole, 2004 and 2005). It stems from the concern that discussions about performance management, professional learning and effective teaching rarely intersect to produce a powerful and integrated model for lifting the performance of a school significantly.[1]

In the previous papers I discussed the processes for structuring effective teacher professional learning plans. I stressed the importance of schools building a strong professional learning culture and introduced the concept of professional learning plans being constructed around a few evidence-based teaching behaviours that could be introduced quite readily and refined over a term. In this paper I discuss the content of these plans and draw on recent writings about the relative effectiveness of various teaching practices and techniques, to illustrate how teaching models derived from

this research provide a structure for teacher planning, classroom practice and professional learning. I link effective professional learning with effective teaching practice and also discuss the limitations of the common practice of developing teachers' professional learning plans as part of an annual teacher review process – the major concern being that this process is based on a flawed understanding of effective professional learning processes, and that it usually results in a teacher's annual professional learning plan being at odds with the school's preferred processes for engaging staff in professional learning. Suggestions are provided for modifying teacher review processes so they are connected more closely with a school's improvement agenda.

The overall intent of this paper is to illustrate how a school can improve its effectiveness significantly by strengthening the alignment between its professional learning, performance management and teaching practices and processes.

In order to manage this complex agenda the paper is structured around six questions:

- Why is there poor transference between professional learning and improved classroom practice?

- What are the characteristics of effective professional learning?

- How is a strong professional learning culture developed?

- What are the characteristics of effective teaching practice?

- How can effective professional learning practice be coupled with effective teaching practice?

- Where does performance appraisal fit into the picture?

Why is there poor transference between professional learning and improved classroom practice?

Research into the effectiveness of professional learning is fairly consistent in the conclusion that most professional learning is ineffective in bringing about improvements in teaching and student outcomes.

> School leaders can inadvertently contribute to poor transference by conveying through their actions that they do not expect participation in professional learning to be a significant catalyst for change.

Surveys of the effectiveness of professional learning activities (Corcoran, 1995; Ingvarson, 2003; Newmann et al, 2000; and Supovitz and Turner, 2000) reveal that professional learning generally consists of unfocused, fragmented, low-intensity activities – such as short-term workshops with little or no follow-up – and consequently that the capacity of the profession to engage most of its members in effective modes of professional learning over the long term has been weak. One response to

these findings has been a substantial swing to professional learning activities that are school-based and school-managed.

The call for a reorientation of 'traditional' professional learning practices in schools is not driven by a concern about the quality of the advice and training provided in the vast majority of professional learning events that teachers attend. After all, it is because of their expertise and ability to communicate new knowledge and demonstrate new techniques effectively that presenters get invited to run workshops and deliver addresses at conferences. The concern is based on the evidence of the poor transference of what is learnt in these events to the school setting.

The problem of poor transference is a result of the limitations of professional learning delivery models based on experts lecturing to a large, mixed audience of educators. These models tend to work best when they focus on conveying information of interest to a broad constituency and when, for logistic reasons, presenters do not try to teach how to implement and refine instructional or behaviour management practices. They are good for alerting participants to the need for change and for conveying information about practices that could lift teacher and school performance, but not for producing change.

However, it is not only the limitations of the externally provided, large-scale, one-off event that explain why there is often a poor transference between the ideas and suggestions canvassed at a professional learning event and the take-up of these ideas in schools. The expectations that school leaders and teachers have towards professional learning can also contribute to poor transference.

School leaders can inadvertently contribute to poor transference by conveying through their actions that they do not expect participation in professional learning to be a significant catalyst for change. This unintended message can be conveyed if they

- have not established a clear statement of the school's teaching practice expectations;

- are not strategic in the way they allocated professional learning resources;

- have not built a strong professional learning culture;

- rely on the identification of new approaches to teaching to emerge from individual staff member's serendipitous participation in professional learning events;

- have not set up processes to ensure that evidence-based teaching practices are adopted by all teachers.

Teachers can also contribute to poor transference between professional learning and improved classroom practice. This can happen if they

- are teaching in a school where no agreement has been reached about what constitutes effective teaching practice;

- consider their professional learning to be a private matter that has consequences only for them;

- do not expect that their participation in professional learning will lead to a change in their teaching practice;

- are not supported to introduce improved teaching practices into their own classes;

- are not held accountable for the implementation of improved teaching practices that are consistent with the school's instructional and behaviour management models;

- are not encouraged and supported to assist other teachers in the school to extend their repertoire of effective teaching practices and techniques.

So, even when teachers' experience of professional learning has been profound and the new knowledge they have acquired would greatly benefit their own practice and that of other teachers in their school, unless there is agreement about what constitutes effective teaching and a positive professional learning culture within the school, the transference of this learning is likely to be very low.

The challenge for schools and systems is to refine their professional learning processes and practices in ways that strengthen the link between professional learning, improved classroom and school practice and improved student learning. A key starting point for ensuring that successful teaching practices become ubiquitous is to ensure that the main means for achieving this, professional learning, actually changes teachers' practice and contributes to their ongoing improvement.

Whilst research that questions the usefulness of traditional forms of teacher professional learning is becoming more widely understood and more influential in changing the nature of professional learning, some of the 'new and improved' forms of professional learning are still at the 'looks highly promising but not proven' stage. Indeed it has been observed by Elmore and Burney (1997) that 'while we know a good deal about the characteristics of good professional development, we know a good deal less about how to organise successful professional development so as to influence practice in large numbers of schools and classrooms'.

That is, researchers are now fairly consistent in their conclusions about what does not work and are happy to speculate about what should work. However, the time gap between when professional learning occurs, when teacher practice changes and student learning improves, and when the multiplicity of influences on a teacher that could contribute to changes in their practice, makes research into 'best practice' professional learning fairly problematic. What can be tracked at the school level is the change in teaching practice. What is harder to track is the link between particular professional learning activities and improved student outcomes. However, longitudinal studies and meta-analyses (Hattie, 2009) have been able to determine the effect size of particular teaching practices, and studies of highly effective teachers (Louden et al, 2005; and Lemov, 2010) have been able to identify those teaching strategies that appear to be most effective in promoting student engagement and learning. It would seem common sense, then, that professional learning would have a positive impact on

student learning if it was effective in promoting those teaching practices that researchers have identified as making the greatest impact on student learning.

Professional learning is not supposed to be an innocuous activity, it is supposed to make a difference and, while the difference should be evident in terms of an improvement in an individual teacher's practice, more importantly it should also be evident in the overall effectiveness of the school. This understanding – that the purpose of professional learning is to improve not only the effectiveness of the individual teacher but the effectiveness of the school – should be built into a school's working definition of professional learning. A suggested definition of professional learning to help to guide a school's professional learning policy and practice is as follows.

> *Professional learning is the formal and informal learning experiences undertaken by teachers and school leaders that improve their individual professional practice and the school's collective effectiveness as measured by improved student engagement and learning outcomes.*

Professional learning is not supposed to be an innocuous activity, it is supposed to make a difference

This definition introduces an effectiveness dimension, by setting the expectation that professional learning will produce changes in practice and ultimately in student learning outcomes. It acknowledges the diversity of formal and informal professional learning opportunities and activities available to teachers. It focuses on the outcomes rather than the inputs of professional learning and extends the outcome of professional learning from professional awareness, and the improvement in teaching knowledge and skills to the application of newly acquired knowledge and skills within classrooms. It

also positions professional learning as being concerned with not only the learning of the individual teacher but of the whole school, as it is not highly effective individual teachers or pockets of effective practice that change schools, but consistent application of effective teaching practice across the school. That is, to improve student learning, professional learning needs to be conceived both as a means for improving teacher effectiveness and as a means for improving the effectiveness of schools. This cannot be done if decisions about professional learning are viewed primarily as the prerogative of the individual teacher.

Finally, the definition acknowledges that the ultimate purpose for professional learning is to improve all students' learning outcomes.

What are the characteristics of effective professional learning?

Effective professional learning focuses on developing the core attributes of an effective teacher. It enhances teachers' understanding of the content that they teach and equips them with a range of strategies that enable their students to learn that content. It is directed towards providing teachers with the skills to teach and assess for deep understanding, and to develop students' metacognitive skills.

Studies of effective professional learning have delineated several characteristics found to be related to increased teacher capacity. One synthesis of various 'best practice' professional learning design principles (McRae et al, 2001) concludes that, to be effective, professional learning needs to be

- embedded in or directly related to the work of teaching;

- grounded in the content of teaching;

- organised around collaborative problem solving; and

- integrated into a comprehensive change process.

Another concludes that

> *to promote the kind of teacher learning that leads to improvement in teaching, professional development should concentrate on instruction and student outcomes in teachers' specific schools; provide opportunities for collegial inquiry, help, and feedback; and connect teachers to external expertise while also respecting teachers' discretion and creativity.*

(Newmann et al, 2000)

It has also been suggested that effective professional learning

> *focuses on concrete classroom applications of general ideas; it exposes teachers to actual practice rather than to descriptions of practice; it involves opportunities for observation, critique, and reflection; it involves opportunities for group support and collaboration; and it involves deliberate evaluation and feedback by skilled practitioners with expertise about good teaching.*

(Elmore and Burney, 1997)

This research suggests that there is an emerging consensus about the shifts in practice that are needed to make professional learning more effective in bringing about teaching and learning improvements across a school. There appears to be a broad agreement that professional learning primarily should be school-based and school-managed, and be focused on improving teaching practice. It is also broadly agreed that schools need to become learning communities, in which professional learning is a part of the teacher's everyday work and is structured in ways that enable teachers to focus on how to become more effective practitioners.

> just because professional learning is school-based and school-managed does not necessarily guarantee that it will impact on teaching practice in ways that produce school improvement

However, just because professional learning is school-based and school-managed does not necessarily guarantee that it will impact on teaching practice in ways that produce school improvement. If schools simply replicate the information-giving sessions typically provided at conferences, if they require all teachers to attend, regardless of their learning need; and if they use presenters with less expertise than the presenters used by external professional learning providers, they are likely to provoke teacher resentment and gain very little benefit. School-based and school-managed professional learning needs to be constructed around what we know about effective professional learning practices and effective teaching practices.

Table 1 contains a summary of some of the **reorientation** needed in professional learning practice, to make it more effective.

Table 1. Professional learning practices that need to be strengthened

Traditional practice	Practice strengthened by reorientation
Professional learning is an isolated event triggered by the individual teacher.	Professional learning is a routine practice within the school, involving all teachers.
Professional learning usually equates to attendance at an externally-provided conference or workshop.	Professional learning is promoted within the school by instructional coaches, structured meetings and forums, teaching demonstrations, workshops conducted by teachers and external experts, and other routine opportunities for formal and informal professional discussions.
The professional learning focus is on the acquisition of educational knowledge (eg, new theories, new policies and new research findings).	The professional learning focus is on the implementation of teaching strategies and techniques that make the biggest difference to student learning.

It should be noted that the items in the left-hand column are not replaced by those in the right-hand column; rather it is suggested that the practices in the right-hand column are to be given greater emphasis than those in the left-hand column. Indeed, it might not be possible to achieve the practices in the right-hand column without first experiencing the practices in the left-hand column.

For example, it is likely that teachers who are astute at regularly sourcing workshops where expert advice is provided that enhances their curriculum content knowledge and guides their teaching practice, would deliver engaging and effective lessons. The problem, though, is that few teachers can be afforded the opportunity to attend external professional learning events regularly; not all teachers are skilled enough to transfer into their own classroom practice what they heard or saw once at a workshop; and the vast bulk of teachers would not be able to find a professional learning activity that was tailored to meet their particular learning needs.

Table 2 summarises some of the traditional professional learning practices that need to be **replaced** by practices that have proved to be more effective in promoting improved teaching practice.

The practices listed in the right-hand side of Tables 1 and 2 characterise a school in which professional learning is being managed by the school to meet the improvement needs of the school. The practices in the left-hand column of Tables 1 and 2 characterise a school in which the professional learning may not be serving the improvement needs of the school. This is because the school is likely to have pockets of good practice, pockets of adequate practice and pockets of less than adequate practice.

The professional learning practices described on the right-hand side of Tables 1 and 2 encourage teachers to

> *function as members of a community of practitioners who share knowledge and commitments, who work together to create coherent curriculum and systems that support students, and collaborate in ways that advance their combined understanding and skill.*

(Darling-Hammond and Bransford, 2005)

Such an outcome is desired as effective schools are learning communities where there is a culture of teacher collaboration and collective responsibility for the development of effective

Table 2. Professional learning practices that need to be replaced

Traditional practice	Practice replaced with the following
No expectation of contributing to colleagues' professional learning.	Contributing to colleagues' professional learning is common practice.
Individual pursuit of professional learning for individual improvement.	Individual, group and whole-school pursuit of professional learning for school improvement.
Teachers' professional learning plans are a private matter and are not made public.	Teachers' professional learning plans, and particularly the teaching practices that are the focus of these plans, are made public so that teachers with a common learning focus can support each other and teachers who may be effectively using a practice that other teachers are looking to develop can offer them assistance.
Individual teacher professional learning plans are structured around generic professional learning.	Individual, group and whole-school professional learning plans are cumulative and structured around actions designed to promote precision teaching by skilling teachers in the use of evidence-based micro-teaching strategies and techniques.
Individual professional performance plans reviewed annually.	Individual, group and whole-school professional performance milestones are reported on and professional learning plans are reviewed and renewed each term.

teaching practices and improved student learning. Being part of a learning community is not simply about the pursuit of individual learning goals it also is about contributing to the learning and knowledge base of one's colleagues and the school.

How is a strong professional learning culture developed?

There are many taken-for-granted practices in schools that work against schools becoming places where 'every teacher engages in professional learning every day so every student achieves' (National Staff Development Council, undated).

One of the biggest challenges on the road to establishing the school as a rich environment for teacher learning is to 'de-privatise' the work of teachers and the results of this work. Signs of a privatised mindset about classroom teaching include reluctance by teachers to

- jointly plan and review work programs;
- adopt agreed and evidence-based instructional practices;
- follow agreed classroom protocols and procedures;
- allow others to observe them teach;
- mentor or coach less experienced colleagues;
- make their students' achievements transparent.

Very good teachers can have a 'privatised classroom' mindset. Typically, they work hard at preparing their lessons, run an orderly classroom, develop a good rapport with their students and are effective at supporting their students to achieve high results. The pity about such teachers having a privatised classroom mindset is that they are missing out on opportunities to become even better teachers and they are avoiding situations where they could assist others to become better teachers.

Very poor teachers can also have a privatised classroom mindset. Typically, they skimp on lesson preparation, have difficulty managing classroom misbehaviour, fail to develop positive and productive relationships with their students and have limited success at supporting their students to achieve high results. The pity about these teachers having a privatised classroom mindset is that they are not held accountable for their actions and they are not helped to become better teachers.

> Being part of a learning community is not simply about the pursuit of individual learning goals it also is about contributing to the learning and knowledge base of one's colleagues and the school.

In a school where practice is 'de-privatised' teachers consider that it is their professional responsibility to

- adopt practices that are consistent with the school's instructional and behaviour management models;
- make their practice public;
- keep learning and improving their practice;
- help colleagues with their professional learning;
- collect and share data about the performance of their students so that student, teacher and school performance is transparent;
- be concerned about the learning and wellbeing of all students in their school, not just those in their classes;
- set school, teacher and student improvement goals and targets;
- adopt a collective responsibility for improving student learning outcomes.

In a school where practice is 'de-privatised', an instructional model provides a framework for lesson planning and teaching; classroom teaching observation and feedback is commonplace; planning of professional learning is focused, pragmatic and shared; professional learning opportunities are structured into the day-to-day operations and routines of the school; and a culture of professional sharing, experimentation and critique has become the

norm. Unfortunately, many schools have not established such practices and still function in ways that are consistent with a 'privatised classroom' sensibility.

So, whilst it is easy to assert that teacher-facilitated and school-located professional learning, focused on classroom practice, is most likely to improve classroom teaching,[2] opportunities for this kind of professional learning may not be all that common in many schools. Indeed, it is likely that few teachers currently would agree that their school and colleagues present as the most effective sources for meeting their professional learning needs. Box 1 suggests some reasons why this might be so.

Nevertheless, these factors are not insurmountable and provide an initial list of the areas that could be worked on to make school workplaces rich with opportunities for professional learning and where professional learning arises from and feeds back into daily experience. A school with such a workplace could be described as having a strong professional learning culture.

A professional learning culture is most likely to develop when there is a high degree of leadership support for teacher learning and risk taking and when there is a high degree of staff interaction and co-dependence (Leithwood et al, 2004). Consequently strategies designed to produce these conditions need to be implemented.

Box 1. Factors that impede school-based professional learning

Most teachers
- ■ are reluctant to volunteer to mentor or coach colleagues;
- ■ are reluctant to demonstrate good practice;
- ■ are reluctant to ask colleagues for assistance or feedback;
- ■ are reluctant to have others observe them teach;
- ■ are reluctant to observe others teach and provide them with feedback;
- ■ do not see it as their role to contribute to the training/learning of other colleagues;
- ■ do not have the time to participate in or contribute to teacher-facilitated training.

Table 3. Strategies for building staff interaction and cooperation

Strategies	What is involved
Team planning	Colleagues work to plan jointly a syllabus, a unit of work, a lesson or an activity within a lesson, homework tasks, extra-curricular activities, parent meetings, and so forth.
Learning teams	Teachers agree to work together to explore teaching and learning issues and strategies and share teaching experiences.
Teaching teams	Teachers take responsibility for teaching a common group of students (eg, students in Year 6 or Year 9) and cooperate in the planning and delivery of lessons to the student group.
Team teaching	Teachers occupy the same classroom space (usually occupied by a class formed by consolidating two or more 'regular' classes) and share in the running of the consolidated classroom.
Mentoring	A formal relationship is established whereby a highly competent teacher supports a less competent teacher though the offering of advice and feedback.
Social gatherings	This includes any informal but planned activities that enable staff to relate within a social context – weekly social club, weekend retreats, staff dinners, staff sports teams, trivia nights, theatre nights.

A few of the typical strategies adopted by schools to build collegiality, trust and cooperation between staff are listed in Table 3. The first four strategies are designed to increase teacher dialogue about teaching and learning, and to encourage co-dependence. The latter 'softer' strategy, however, is equally important as teacher trust and risk-taking is more likely to be evident when individuals feel they have the friendship and loyalty of their colleagues as well as their professional respect.

These strategies, and other ones such as action research groups and professional reading and discussion groups, provide the foundation for building a strong professional learning culture.

A further layer of strategies that are likely to result in an examination of and feedback on one's actual classroom teaching effectiveness, builds on the previous strategies and contributes to the development of a strong professional learning culture. These are outlined in Table 4.

Schools committed to the development of a strong professional culture have looked across the school for opportunities to change arrangements, so that increased opportunities are provided for teachers to reflect on their practice and learn from each other. This has resulted in changes in the use of facilities, the way that professional learning resources are allocated, the management of professional learning, the school's professional learning policy and the time available for professional learning.

Further examples of various strategies adopted by schools to strengthen their professional learning culture are listed in Table 5.

Ideally the professional learning culture of the school would be such that teachers would be committed continually to

■ acquiring new knowledge and skills (learning what and how to improve their teaching);

■ implementing new practice (applying new knowledge and skills in the classroom);

■ refining new practice through self-reflection and feedback (improving implementation);

■ sharing new practice through demonstrations, workshops and presentations (teaching others what and how to improve their teaching);

■ assisting others to implement improvements through team planning and teaching, coaching and mentoring (spreading the implementation of new knowledge and skills in the classroom); and

■ refining each other's practice through observation and feedback.

Table 4. Strategies that contribute to a strong professional learning culture

Strategies	What is involved
Coaching	The coach is responsible for participating in regular discussion sessions with the teacher and for suggesting strategies designed to improve their performance.
Teacher observation	In-class observation of a specified element of teaching takes place and feedback is provided on the effectiveness of the teaching performance.
Teaching demonstration	A 'model' lesson is provided with a prior discussion to clarify purpose, expectations and desired outcomes and a debriefing session to review the lesson and its outcomes.
Walk Throughs	Instructionally focused Walk Throughs use observers who visit numerous classrooms for short periods of time to observe how a particular practice is being implemented and pool their individual observations to provide the leadership team with a report.
Inter-school pairing	This strategy involves one teacher working alongside a teacher in another school for a day a week for several weeks and then swapping the arrangement around and debriefing on the experience.

Table 5. School actions that contribute to a strong professional learning culture

Types of strategy	Actions
Facilities strategies	These include ■ establishing a lesson demonstration area (eg, a modified classroom with an adjacent viewing room); ■ establishing a workshop presentation area; ■ establishing small-group meeting rooms; ■ providing teaching teams and their student groups with a dedicated area for their classes.
Resourcing strategies	These include ■ using professional learning funds for in-school teacher release; ■ maintaining a well-stocked and up-to-date professional reading and viewing library; ■ supporting groups, rather than an individual, to attend professional network meetings and external training events; ■ engaging classroom coaches and demonstration teachers to work directly with teachers in their classrooms.
Professional learning management strategies	These include ■ lifting the status of the school's professional learning coordinator by allocating this role to a leader of significance within the school and including them in the school's leadership team; ■ building professional learning plans around a series of short-term classroom-focused activities and targets that are reviewed regularly; ■ making all teachers' professional learning targets public; ■ building the expectation that teachers with similar professional learning targets will work together to develop and share their knowledge and skills; ■ building the expectation that teachers will give timely reports on their professional learning progress; ■ building the expectation that collaborative teacher activities will produce artefacts (eg, units of work and rubrics) that other teachers can use to improve teaching and learning; ■ requiring teaching teams and learning teams to set and review progress towards improvement goals; ■ focusing on getting pockets of good practice spread across the school; ■ developing a professional learning policy that reflects a commitment to the maintenance of a strong professional learning culture.
Structural strategies	These include ■ allocating teaching duties in ways that result in a defined team of teachers taking responsibility for a common group of students (eg, a Year 7 or Year 9 teaching team); ■ timetabling to create blocks of free time for teachers to work together; ■ reallocating meeting time to professional learning time; ■ establishing a regular regime of staff-led professional learning events; ■ establishing processes to enable external professional learning experiences to feed into school-wide improvement planning (eg, by establishing a task force reliant on input from professional learning investigations); ■ including in experienced and effective teachers' role descriptions the responsibility for assisting other staff to improve their teaching competence.

Research suggests that creating a collaborative culture within schools is

the single most important factor for successful school improvement initiatives, the first order of business for those seeking to enhance their schools' effectiveness, an essential requirement of improving schools, the critical element in reform efforts, and the most promising strategy for sustained, substantive school improvement.

(DuFour, 2001)

It has also been suggested (DuFour, 1998) that in a school where there is a rich professional learning culture even flawed professional learning events can serve as a catalyst for professional growth, as there are systems to enable the insights from these events to be examined and discussed.

However, in a school context where teachers are not collaborative and used to sharing ideas and experimenting with their teaching practice, even professional learning programs with solid content and powerful training strategies are unlikely to be effective.

What are the characteristics of effective teaching practice?

Advice about professional learning rightly observes that it should be evidence-based and data-driven. The previous discussion has focused on the evidence about the kinds of professional learning processes and strategies that appear to be most effective in promoting a strong professional learning culture in schools and improving teaching practice. That is, it has been concerned about the forms of professional learning.

An equally important concern relates to the content of professional learning. What if we have adopted forms of professional learning that research suggests are effective in promoting improved teaching, but the content of the professional learning activity itself is concerned with promoting teaching practices that subsequently prove to be ineffective in

improving student engagement and learning? Clearly an evidence base also needs to inform the content of professional learning activities.

An oft-repeated joke is that schooling is in very good shape as there are only two questions remaining to be answered: what to teach and how to teach it. A similar joke could be made about professional learning, as only one issue remains unresolved, and that is how to marry what we know about effective professional learning with what we know about effective teaching.

To address this issue it is becoming more common for schools not only to document their curriculum, but also to document their instructional model and the instructional and classroom management strategies and techniques that research suggests are the most promising for engaging and improving the learning outcomes of students. These become the practices that the school's teachers are committed to implementing.

This development achieves several outcomes. By adopting a common instructional model, auditing teaching practice, engaging in discussions about what instructional and student management practices the school should endorse, and then codifying these teaching practices, greater clarity is provided for teachers about

- what constitutes effective teaching practice;

- the teaching strategies and techniques that all teachers in the school should be adopting and that should be observed when visiting each other's classrooms;

- the teaching strategies and techniques that the school's professional learning resources should primarily be dedicated towards improving; and

- teaching strategies and techniques that should be given priority when developing professional learning plans of individual teachers, teaching teams and the school.

The instructional model template in Table 6 outlines the different phases of a lesson and the essential features of each phase.[3] It is a model for planning and delivering a lesson

and is also a useful framework for structuring a school's professional learning activities. For example, teachers wishing to improve their lesson delivery could join with a few colleagues to discuss and provide each other with feedback on how well they are executing the essential features of each phase of the lesson. Similarly, a whole school might focus its professional learning for a term on staff sharing their current practices and techniques in relation to a particular phase of the lesson, and on trying out new ways to lift the effectiveness of their teaching in this phase.

Table 6. Instructional model template

Phase of lesson		Essential elements
Beginning of lesson	**CREATE INTEREST** Engage students' attention and put them in a receptive frame of mind. 1–5 minutes	▪ Stimulate interest and curiosity (eg, by using visuals). ▪ Present a purpose for learning. ▪ Connect learning to real-world experiences. ▪ Foster positive relationships with and between students. ▪ Control the classroom environment.
	LEARNING INTENTIONS Make the learning intentions and success criteria clear to students. 5–10 minutes	▪ Use student-friendly language. ▪ Establish learning goals: write them on the board or display them on-screen. ▪ Make assessment and performance requirements clear ('At the end of this lesson, you will know/be able to do/have done…'). ▪ Show examples, or models, of expected student performance. (eg, an excellent example of work by a student last year). ▪ If appropriate, reveal how you plan to conduct the lesson.
	ACTIVATE/REVIEW Activate prior knowledge and review relevant prior learning. 5–10 minutes	▪ Provide opportunities for students to demonstrate their current level of understanding through verbal and non-verbal means. ▪ Review/connect to prior learning. ▪ Use questioning techniques. ▪ Brainstorm. ▪ Elicit/teach/display key words.
Presentation	**TEACHER INPUT** Explicitly teach the concept.	▪ Provide clear explanations, definitions or rules (short and sharp!) ▪ Provide examples and non-examples. ▪ Use students' previous experiences as a basis for explaining concepts. ▪ Present information visually, and/or in concrete examples. ▪ Represent concept in multiple ways. ▪ Explicitly teach vocabulary or quickly review vocabulary previously taught.
	TEACHER INPUT Explicitly teach and model the skill.	▪ Provide steps as a scaffold. ▪ Provide examples. ▪ Present information visually. ▪ Reveal your inner thought processes to students – modelling. ▪ Provide modelling that is short and purposeful.
	CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING Monitor whether students have 'got it' before proceeding. If not, the concept or skill should be re-taught before guided practice begins.	▪ Use well-distributed questioning/checking for understanding. ▪ Use wait time. ▪ Ask higher-level questions. ▪ Ask for justification (evidence) and clarification from students. ▪ Make adjustments due to feedback if needed. ▪ Challenge misconceptions. ▪ Have students paraphrase and summarise.

Phase of lesson		Essential elements
Guided Practice	**DEVELOPMENT AND ENGAGEMENT** Develop student understanding of the concept or skill through activities or exercises.	■ Use tasks, activities or exercises that provide well-scaffolded opportunities for students to apply the knowledge or skill. ■ Give clear instructions, clear timeframe, clear expectations. ■ Provide a range of tasks that appeal to different learning styles and ability levels (rotating tasks at times). ■ Make effective use of e-learning tools and programs. ■ Use cues, questions and advance organisers. ■ Guide students in the use of note-taking and summarising skills. ■ Provide students with the opportunity to interact with one another in ways that enhance their learning.
	FEEDBACK AND INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT Move around the room and determine the level of mastery, and provide feedback and individual support as needed.	■ Identify students needing additional support/guided practice. ■ Move around the room. ■ Provide comments/written feedback on work. ■ Reinforce the connection between effort and achievement. ■ Provide recognition or praise for accomplishments related to the attainment of the learning goal.
Independent Practice	**APPLICATION** Ask your students to apply the concepts or skills in different contexts.	Application of concepts or skills: ■ may happen in the same lesson or a future lesson; ■ must occur on a repeating schedule so that the learning is not forgotten; ■ may be via homework, or individual or group work in class. As the teacher, you make connections – explain how this knowledge/skill can be applied/transferred to other learning contexts.
Review	**REVIEW** Bring the lesson presentation to an appropriate conclusion by reviewing and clarifying the key points, tying them together in a coherent whole.	■ Reinforce major points of the lesson. ■ Ensure students give feedback on what and how they have learned.

Other common instructional models adopted by schools are e[5] (an instructional model for Victorian government schools, see DEECD, 2009) and GANAG.[4] These models are similar to the one illustrated in Table 6, in that they establish how a lesson should commence, what should happen in the body of the lesson and how the lesson should be brought to a conclusion.

Lemov (2010) observes that one of the most important goals for teachers is to cause students to do as much of the cognitive work – the writing, the thinking, the analysing, the talking, the answering – as possible. A way for the teacher to make the transition from learning being dependent on the efforts of the teacher to learning being dependent on the efforts of the student is illustrated by Lemov's basic, five-step process for structuring your lessons. This process is illustrated in Table 7.[5]

Good behaviour and good learning are affected by the way that topics and lessons are planned and delivered. Research into classroom behaviour also reinforces the value of effective lesson preparation and delivery. Lewis (2010) draws on these findings to discuss the characteristics of classrooms where there is little time lost because of inappropriate behaviour.

Table 7. A five-step lesson structure

Step	Lesson segment	Who is doing what	Typical statement
1	Teacher	Teacher does	The first step in adding fractions with unlike denominators is to …
2	Both	Teacher does; student helps	Let's see if you've got it. How did we say we were going to make our denominators equal?
3	Both	Student does; teacher helps	Just to be clear that you understand, I need you to walk me through the process. What do I start with when adding fractions with unlike denominators?
4	Student	Student does	Now that we have solved this example, try one of your own.
5	Student	Student does, and does	We seem to be getting it so spend the next 6 minutes working on the problems I've provided and then I'll review where I think we are up to.

The findings are summarised in Table 8. Not surprisingly, most of the factors that contribute to good student behaviour in the classroom are the same factors that contribute to good student learning.

Key questions that emerge from these instructional models designed to enhance student engagement and learning (ie, Tables 6 and 8) that could become topics for discussion within teaching teams and at professional learning workshops in the school are outlined below.

■ How will you strengthen your relationship with your students?

■ What classroom arrangements will best aid your teaching?

■ How will you activate prior knowledge and review relevant prior learning?

■ How will you teach the concept?

■ How will you teach the skill?

■ What activities or tasks will you ask students to undertake?

■ What cooperative learning models will you adopt?

■ How will you promote student effort?

■ What homework tasks will you set?

■ How will you get your students to be interested in the lesson?

■ How will you communicate the learning goals and success criteria?

■ What questioning techniques will you adopt?

■ What academic vocabulary will you teach?

■ How will you check for understanding?

■ How will you help students to organise their learning?

■ Which students do you anticipate will need additional work?

■ What independent practice will students undertake?

■ How will you review the lesson?

It has been said that

the major challenge in improving teaching lies not so much in identifying and describing quality teaching, but in developing structures and approaches that ensure widespread use of successful teaching practices: to make best practice, common practice.

(Dinham et al, 2008)

When schools identify and document their particular instructional model, and their particular classroom behaviour management model, they are not only clarifying the lesson planning and teaching practices that the school is committed to; they are also establishing a framework to guide the school's professional learning activities and to make best practice common practice.

Table 8. Avoiding classroom disruptions

What teachers do	Examples of appropriate (and inappropriate) practices
Keep the lesson flowing.	■ Know exactly what you are going to do and have all of the necessary resources at hand. ■ At the beginning of the lesson or topic, inform students about the aims of the topic and the instruction and activities that will be used to achieve these aims. ■ Set up classroom rules and protocols so behaviour expectations are clear. ■ Let students know when an activity is going to be changed so they have time to finish what they are doing and prepare mentally for the change. ■ Always attend to the needs of the majority of the class and have them engaged in learning before attending to individual students who need special attention. ■ Give clear instructions when introducing a new task. Specify why it is being done, how it connects to work already complete or about to commence, what is to be done and an approximate time limit for the activity. ■ Don't allow yourself to be side-tracked into answering irrelevant questions or requests.
Keep students interested.	■ Vary the volume, speed and tone of your voice. ■ Be enthusiastic about what you teach. ■ Vary the manner in which you teach – vary assignments and activities (eg, debates, excursions, guest speakers, role plays); student groupings; seating arrangements; questioning intensity; student roles; the use of media; etc. Match the activities to the learning objective. ■ Move around the room while teaching and allow students to move occasionally. ■ Ensure that lesson content is challenging but achievable.
Keep students accountable for learning.	■ When questioning a class, don't accept the first correct answer and move on; take a number of answers before saying whether they are correct. ■ Ask a question and then select a student at random to answer it. ■ If a student refuses or cannot answer a question, seek answers from other students and then come back to that student for an answer – even if it is just to ask 'Do you agree with the last answer you heard?' ■ When asking a question and nominating a respondent, be prepared to wait a little time (say 5 seconds) to give the student time to frame an answer. ■ If a student has given a partial or inadequate answer, give them a follow-up question with 5 seconds of wait time or call on another student to take the student's answer further. ■ Occasionally ask a student who has given a correct answer why they answered that way. ■ Collect, correct and discuss key homework tasks. ■ Ask all of the class to respond to a question by writing their answer and hold it up so as you move around you are able to read it.
Make students feel monitored.	■ Position yourself in the classroom so that if you lift your eyes you can see all of the students – a corner location is good as you only need a 90 degree sweep of your eyes, whereas in the front you may need a 180 degree sweep. ■ When talking with one student do not become oblivious of the rest of the class – frequently scan the room to see that all is in order. ■ Whenever a student is seen to be off task, inform him/her that the behaviour has been seen and is not acceptable – this need not be done publicly but could be communicated by making eye contact and nodding disapproval.
Build strong goodwill.	■ Make opportunities to get to know your students well; spend positive time with them. ■ Demonstrate that you are concerned for the student; even though you may not like her/his behaviour. ■ Recognise the strengths of your students and encourage them. ■ Help them and accept help, and show your appreciation when they offer to help you. ■ Show interest in their lives outside the classroom and the school; support their sporting interests. ■ Engage them in conversations on topics that they want to talk about. ■ Show interest in their problems and generally convey that you respect, value and like them and are genuinely interested in their welfare.

How can effective professional learning practice be coupled with effective teaching practice?

An oft-referred-to rule of thumb about professional learning is that the further away from the school and the larger the professional learning event, the less likely that it will have an impact on the school.

Additional rules of thumb to guide professional practice are that

- schools need to determine their preferred teaching practices in order to target their professional learning activities effectively;

- learning how to implement the school's preferred teaching strategies and techniques effectively should be at the heart of all teachers' professional learning plans;

- learning how to implement a teaching strategy or master a teaching technique is best done when it is managed by the school and involves one's colleagues;

- learning how to implement a teaching strategy or master a teaching technique is best done when the learning task is concrete, specific and able to be completed in a relatively short period of time.

> By focusing on concrete actions that generally can be understood and implemented in a relatively short period, and then improved over time, teaching capacity is built step by step and the armoury of strategies and techniques available to the teacher is extended.

When determining the teaching strategies and techniques to adopt as their preferred set of teaching practices, many schools have turned to the advice provided by education departments and to the growing number of books on effective teaching. There are many research-based publications that have moved beyond describing what an effective teacher does, to describing how to implement effective practices. Robert Marzano (Marzano et al, 2005; and also see Marzano, 2001, 2003 and 2007), John Hattie (Hattie, 2009) and Doug Lemov (Lemov, 2010) are some of the more well-known education writers who have been successful in extracting from numerous research studies those teaching practices that are most effective in promoting student achievement.[6]

Marzano nominates nine general instructional categories and 34 specific behaviours and organises these strategies into a framework of effective instructional design. Lemov nominates forty-nine 'essential techniques' which can be mastered one at a time and which operate in synergy to produce exceptional teaching. Many schools are using these evidence-based, micro-teaching teaching strategies and techniques as the content for their professional learning plans.

Teaching strategies and techniques that can relate to classroom instruction or classroom management are subsets of teaching practice. The difference between a teaching strategy and teaching technique is that a strategy is a generalised approach to problems and a way to inform decisions; whereas a technique is something you do or say in a particular way (Lemov, 2010). And because a technique is an action, the more it is practised the better the teacher gets at performing it. By focusing on concrete actions that generally can be understood and implemented in a relatively short period, and then improved over time, teaching capacity is built step by step and the armoury of strategies and techniques available to the teacher is extended.

Individual and group professional learning plans become highly effective tools for promoting teacher collaboration and classroom improvement when they are practical, action-oriented and contain specific 'bite-sized' learning tasks that are to be completed within a ten-week timeframe. Such a professional learning plan would include a few evidence-based teaching practices that the teacher wishes to acquire or refine; the research-based

professional learning strategies that the teacher plans to use to enable them to understand the teaching strategy or technique and how to apply it; and the timeline within which the new practice will become part of the teacher's classroom instruction.

The adoption of a 'bite-sized' learning task means it is not too time-consuming to learn and not too daunting to implement in one's classroom. It also means that professional learning plans can be renewed regularly as learning tasks are translated in classroom practice. In this way, teacher improvement is a continuous process of accumulating expertise in evidence-based instructional and student management strategies and techniques.

Whilst individual teachers can and need to manage aspects of their own professional growth through reading, sharing ideas with colleagues, attending conferences, undertaking further study and being involved actively in professional networks, the nature of schools also requires that teachers work collaboratively to establish effective learning environments and develop consistency in the quality of their teaching. School-based professional learning helps to meet this requirement.

This approach to professional learning tends to reshape the sequence of 'learning' often experienced in traditional professional learning models. Here the emphasis is on the school identifying 'essential techniques' or bite-sized behavioural changes, individual teachers trialling the changed techniques and being supported by their colleagues to improve their understanding of when a particular technique is likely to have the most impact, and how to become more skilful in employing the technique. Traditionally the sequence of learning in a professional development context is exposure to a new approach through attendance at an external workshop or conference, an individual decision whether to find out more about the new approach and an individual decision about whether to adopt the new approach. If the decision is to adopt the new approach, this too is an individual endeavour.

The focus on 'bite-sized' behaviour changes in the classroom (eg, in order to make engaged participation the expectation, call on students regardless of whether they have raised their hands or not) enables teachers to act almost immediately to change their practice, and then refine their techniques through practice, observation and feedback. Rather than professional learning being a precursor to changed teaching behaviour, it becomes a means for initiating and refining a changed behaviour. Professional learning is transformed from a learning investigation into a learning action based on learning by doing.

These school-based models of professional learning are owned and managed by the staff, and are geared towards enhancing the use of evidence-based teaching practices and techniques and having them adopted across the whole school.

Where does teacher performance appraisal and feedback fit into the picture?

In most schooling jurisdictions, policies and practices for the management and review of teacher performance tend to be enshrined in industrial agreements. These agreements usually stipulate the minimum processes to be followed to ensure that performance review processes are transparent and that judgements of a teacher's performance are fair and based on valid sources of evidence.

Whilst acknowledging that there can at times be a tension between teacher accountability and teacher development agendas, particularly when appraisal processes are 'high-stakes' and can impact on a teacher's prospects for ongoing employment or promotion, both agendas seek the common outcome of improving teacher effectiveness. This outcome is best realised when the school has a vibrant professional learning culture.

Almost every teacher is involved in an annual performance appraisal and this is when

professional learning plans for teachers are constructed. However, the way in which formalised teacher performance appraisals are generally conducted often produces a 'disconnect' between a teacher's improvement plan and the school's professional learning policies and processes.

This disconnect is usually created because

■ each teacher's professional learning need becomes individualised and does not emerge from a consideration of the school's instructional model and the practices associated with implementing this model effectively;

■ areas for improvement are often stated in generic terms (such as improving classroom management);

■ professional learning plans are typically reviewed half way through the year and at the end of the year; and

■ evidence of improved performance could, but may not, include an observation of teaching.

These processes do not resonate in schools that have determined their instructional model and are in the process of systematically introducing 'bite-sized' evidence-based teaching practices and techniques that support their instructional model, as these schools already have a clear professional learning agenda. This agenda has been determined by teachers and is built around those practices and techniques that appear to have the most powerful impact on students' learning. In these schools, groups of teachers share common professional learning goals or targets that are described explicitly and are expected to be met and then revised each term. The bite-sized nature of the instructional changes encourages teachers to quickly introduce the new techniques and to refine their use through repeated practice, observing others and being observed, student feedback and self-reflection.

Even in schools where their professional learning activities are developed on an ad hoc basis, there is little or no correspondence

Box 2. A narrative

Our school's performance management and professional learning processes have helped to build a culture of teachers working in concert to lift their effectiveness, through agreeing on behaviours that are to be modelled in classes and in their relationships with colleagues and the broader school community.

Teaching and school effectiveness is being lifted through the establishment of teaching teams, a whole school commitment to implementing agreed protocols and practices and, in particular, a commitment to implementing as effectively as possible the school's instructional and student behaviour management models; and teachers being supported to identify and address ways to become more effective.

We gain insights into how effective we are by analysing feedback derived from examining students' work and achievement data; observing others teach and others observing our teaching; discussions with colleagues, coaches and mentors; student satisfaction surveys, and formal performance review meetings with line managers and/or the Principal.

This feedback provides us with a lens on student performance and on the techniques or practices that we could strengthen or introduce to improve our performance as classroom teachers, team members and contributors to the effective running of the school. Whilst some opportunities for gaining feedback need to be planned – such as classroom observations, assessment moderation meetings and the formal performance review meetings – others occur spontaneously through working collaboratively with colleagues, sharing experiences and engaging in professional discussion.

The performance review is our means for taking stock in relation to how we have demonstrated our 'knowledge, practice and professional engagement'[7] over the year. We are provided with a formal assessment of the standard of our contribution to the school, which is based on evidence presented by teachers and collected by the Principal. As the arbiter of the standard of our performance, the Principal has observed our classes and our contribution to the effective running of the school and collected evidence of our competence by dropping in on

team meetings, analysing relevant student achievement and satisfaction data, discussing our performance with our line managers and meeting with us several times through the year to specifically discuss our performance and our development needs.

The feedback and discussion in the performance review meeting assists us to reflect on our work over the year and identify important behavioural goals that will assist us to continue to progress our professional growth over the coming year.

These behavioural goals relate to our teaching and non-teaching roles and responsibilities. Because we draw our instructional and student management models from research-based practices and techniques and believe that there needs to be a consistency in the way these models are applied across the school, we select behaviour goals that will improve our instructional strategies and techniques, student management techniques and curriculum design in ways that are consistent with our overall school philosophy and policies on these matters.

Feedback and performance goals in relation to our non-teaching responsibilities are based on our performance in relation to key accountabilities associated with particular roles. All positions of responsibility in the school have a role description, a set of responsibilities and a description of key accountabilities.

The review discussion provides an opportunity to discuss how non-teaching responsibilities and accountabilities were met and to explore future non-teaching roles and responsibilities. If there is a need, we may refine the role, responsibility and accountability descriptions to ensure they reflect accurately what needs to be done and achieved by staff in a particular role. When providing feedback on our performance the Principal or our line manager engages us in a discussion of what has been achieved, how any difficulties were handled, and the skill sets that were required in order to effectively perform the role and meet its responsibilities and accountabilities. Where appropriate we provide evidence of our actions and achievements when undertaking a designated position of responsibility. We also consider how performance could be improved.

Prior self-reflection and discussions with our team and other colleagues assist us to identify possible ways in which our knowledge, skills or attitudes could be improved. Discussion in the review meeting focuses on identifying opportunities for furthering our capacity to take on teacher leadership and school-wide responsibility roles and helps to establish a few key performance indicators related to our teaching and non-teaching roles in the school. The performance review meeting culminates in the documentation of the outcomes of the review discussions.

To overcome the difficulty determining at the end of the year what actions a teacher might take in the following year to promote improvement, our school has adopted the practice of documenting teaching and teacher-leadership goals (and key performance indicators) in a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) and possible improvement actions in a draft Professional Learning Plan (PLP). This draft PLP is then discussed with our line manager and teaching or professional learning team at the start of the new school year and refined in light of possible changes in circumstances and priorities. This 'renewal' of the draft PLP at the start of the year also enables us to identify who might be pursuing similar improvement actions and to consolidate our individual plans into a group or team PLP.

To ensure that PLPs help to drive improvement, actions are described in specific terms and are to be implemented, and generally observed, within a relatively short time span (weeks rather than terms) whilst being refined over the longer term. Generally we review our success at implementing our improvement actions at the end of the term and develop a new PLP at the start of each school term. Each plan we develop over the year helps us to learn about and implement new instructional and classroom management techniques and to keep extending and improving our teaching capacity.

Wherever possible we are provided with school-based support to implement our improvement actions. This may take the form of us watching other teachers teach using a practice or technique we want to adopt, receiving feedback on a specific component of our teaching (eg, questioning technique) we want to improve, working in tandem with another teacher who will coach us in the techniques we want to improve, and researching online or reading about particular practices and techniques we have identified in our plan and then applying them when teaching or fulfilling a non-teaching role.

Because of the performance and development culture we have established in our school, we are supported in our daily work to pursue the goals in our Performance Improvement Plans and to undertake the actions in our Professional Learning Plans that will assist us to become more effective teachers, team members and teacher leaders.

between the teacher appraisal processes that lead to a professional learning plan for a teacher and the professional learning activities and events supported by the school.

The narrative in Box 2 describes how the potential for a disconnect between performance management and professional learning processes can be avoided. This has been achieved by the (hypothetical) school situating its performance review processes within the wider processes that it has adopted to promote a culture of professional learning. The narrative also serves to reinforce many of the messages in the previous sections of this paper.

Individual and group professional learning plans become highly effective tools for promoting teacher collaboration and classroom improvement when they are practical, action-oriented and contain specific 'bite-sized' learning tasks that are to be completed within

> adoption of a 'bite-sized' learning task means that it is not too time-consuming to learn and not too daunting to implement in one's classroom. It also means that professional learning plans can be regularly renewed as learning tasks are translated in classroom practice.

a ten-week timeframe. Such a professional learning plan would include a few evidence-based teaching practices that the teacher wishes to acquire or refine; the research-based professional learning strategies that the teacher plans to use to enable them to understand the teaching strategy or technique and how to apply it; and the timeline within which the new practice will become part of the teacher's classroom instruction.

The adoption of a 'bite-sized' learning task means that it is not too time-consuming to learn and not too daunting to implement in one's classroom. It also means that professional learning plans can be regularly renewed as learning tasks are translated in classroom

practice. In this way, teacher improvement is a continuous process of accumulating expertise in evidence-based instructional and student management strategies and techniques.

A performance and development policy that supports the processes and practices described above is likely to include statements similar to those below.

- All staff will be members of a Professional Learning Team.

- All staff will actively support their colleagues to improve their teaching.

- All staff will have a personal Professional Learning Plan.

- The school's instructional and classroom behaviour models will guide the practice of all teachers and provide a framework for professional learning activities and targets.

- Professional growth will be fostered by the adoption of bite-sized changes in practice, consistent with the school's instructional and classroom behaviour models.

- Priorities for the introduction or refinement of teaching practices will be established as a whole-school or sub-school activity each term.

- Professional Learning Plans will be based on explicit changes to practice that staff wish to initiate or refine, in order to improve their implementation of the school's instructional model, and which can be incorporated readily into their practice.

- Professional Learning Plan targets will be communicated to one's colleagues.

- Wherever possible, staff with a similar professional learning focus or target will work together and support each other to achieve their target.

- Professional Learning Plans will be reviewed each term – either through a professional learning team group review of each other's plans, a peer review or a review by a senior staff member.

- Wherever possible, professional learning will be school-located.

- Professional learning will be commissioned as a means for finding out more about an issue/teaching approach (eg, a team may be commissioned to visit an exemplary school, to research a particular topic or attend a conference).

- Professional learning activities beyond the school will be used as a means of extending networks and introducing new approaches to the school.

- Professional learning funds will be used to release teachers to undertake professional learning experiences within and beyond the school.

- The school will provide time for professional learning activities to be sustained.

- Wherever possible, attendance at an external professional learning activity will involve a minimum of three staff, who will be responsible for reporting back on the activity and its implications for school practice.

- All beginning teachers and teachers new to the school will be provided with a mentor.

- The strength of the school's professional learning culture will be reviewed annually.

- Staff performance reviews will focus on what happens in the classroom and what the teacher is doing to improve student engagement and learning outcomes.

In summary, schools that are most effective in bringing together what we know about effective professional learning and effective teaching have established their school's instructional model and identified specific 'micro-teaching' techniques consistent with the instructional model that all teachers commit to introducing into their repertoire of teaching practices. Teachers in these schools are

- sharing the responsibility for identifying highly effective micro-teaching techniques

that will make a difference to the effectiveness of teaching practice within the school;

- agreeing on a range of teaching techniques that all staff or teams of staff will adopt and refine over a set period of usually no longer than a term;

- setting school-wide take-up targets (eg, the four techniques that help to establish high academic expectations[8] will be evident in all Year 8 and 9 classrooms by the last week of term) and incorporating their own targets into their personal professional learning plans;

- documenting, trialling and demonstrating the selected techniques;

- supporting and reinforcing the adoption of the selected teaching techniques through coaching and mentoring, working in small teams, walkthroughs and receiving feedback following classroom observations;

- monitoring progress towards the achievement of the professional learning targets for the school or teams of teachers;

- acknowledging and celebrating when a particular set of the techniques has become a permanent part of most teachers' repertoire of teaching practices; and

- restarting the cycle of determining the next set of techniques to be adopted, establishing new school take-up targets in relation to these techniques, devising a whole-school implementation plan, translating the whole-school targets into individual teachers' targets and getting on with adopting the next set of bite-sized behaviour changes in their classrooms.

Teachers in these schools are assuming greater control of their own professional learning, by focusing on a few teaching strategies and techniques at a time, and by conducting teacher-led professional learning activities that introduce and then help to improve the application of these practices in classrooms across the school.

Conclusion

In schools where there is a strong professional learning culture, teachers' learning growth plans are being shaped in ways that differ from the traditional pattern and process. Typically, an individual professional learning plan is determined following a performance review discussion with the principal (or nominee), which identifies areas for improvement (often stated in generic terms, such as improved classroom management) and possible professional learning strategies designed to address these areas of need. Plans are typically reviewed half way through the year and at the end of the year. Evidence of improved performance could, but may not, include an observation of teaching.

schools that are most effective in bringing together what we know about effective professional learning and effective teaching tend to separate the documentation of improvement goals and possible improvement actions following a formal performance review.

In contrast, schools that are most effective in bringing together what we know about effective professional learning and effective teaching tend to separate the documentation of improvement goals and possible improvement actions following a formal performance review. This is done to ensure that teacher improvement actions contribute to whole-school improvement, not just the improvement of the individual teacher. In these schools Professional Learning Plans are term-long and sequential, and contain improvement actions focused on implementing and mastering three or four specific teaching techniques that the whole school has identified as being highly effective for promoting improved learning.

These professional learning approaches are being supplemented by school-managed professional learning that supports teachers to attend network, region and state-wide professional learning events in order to share their experience, learn from other teachers and teaching experts and bring new suggestions for improving school and teacher practice back into the school. By being clear about their instructional and classroom management models, well-versed in the literature of effective teaching and committed to working collaboratively to improve each other's lesson planning and instructional techniques, schools are able to achieve the twin targets of improving teaching effectiveness and consistency.

Schools that are successful at linking effective professional learning practices with effective teaching practices optimise the effectiveness of their professional learning and are producing changes in classroom practice that promote increased feelings of teacher efficacy, increased student engagement and improved learning outcomes.

Endnotes

1. Some of the ideas expressed in this paper emerged during the process of writing a paper on professional learning and contributing to a paper on performance and development that were commissioned by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL).

2. It is acknowledged that a teacher in a very small school is more likely to benefit from external input and participation in networks as their teaching environment is unlikely to provide adequate opportunities for meeting their professional learning needs.

3. This instructional model is based on the work of Joyce, B and Weill, M (2008) *Models of Teaching* as outlined in DEECD (2012) and Dean et al (2012).

4. The e⁵ instructional model (engage, explore, explain, elaborate and evaluate) is described in DEECD (2009). The GANAG instructional model (goal setting, accessing prior knowledge, new information, apply knowledge and generalisation or summary) is described in Pollock (2007).

5. Another model for transferring responsibility from the teacher to the student is provided by Fisher and Frey (2008) who advocate a four-stage process of focus lessons, guided instruction, collaborative learning, and independent tasks.

6. Other writers in this field include Cleveland (2011), Cole (2008), Hattie (2009), Lemov (2010), Lewis (2011), Linan-Thompson and Vaughn (2007), Marzano (2001, 2003 and 2007), Marzano, et al (2005), Munro (2002), Nottingham (2010), Petty (2009), Pollock (2007), Rogers (2011) and Tomlinson (2001).

7. The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL, 2011) has codified these as the three domains of teaching and describes standards in relation to these domains.

8. Doug Lemov (Lemov, 2010), for example, lists six essential techniques for setting high academic expectations.

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Leading the education debate Volume 3: Selected papers from the CSE's Seminar Series and Occasional Papers, 2007–2010 (2011)
Editors Vic Zbar and Tony Mackay

This third collection from the CSE Seminar Series and Occasional Papers has contributions from a number of significant contemporary and international education writers. It comprises 15 papers on school improvement and reform, and is organised in five parts: The challenge of implementation; Leadership remains key; Improving classroom practice; Disciplined innovation for improved systems and schools; and A system that engages educators, students and the community.

Volume 3 of *Leading the education debate* continues the sequence of volumes of collections of CSE papers. The two earlier volumes by the same editors, *Leading the education debate* (2003) and *Leading the education debate Volume 2* (2007), are also available from CSE.

Women in school leadership: Journeys to success (2010)
Compiled by Jim Watterston

Twelve women reflect on their personal and professional journeys to school leadership, the barriers they have overcome, the successes they have achieved and what they have learned along the way. Their experiences and advice provide inspiration for any teacher who might aspire to school leadership.

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Leading educational thinking and practice

About the Author

Peter Cole is Director of PTR Consulting, based in Melbourne. He describes this paper as a companion piece to two of his earlier publications for CSE: *Leadership and professional learning: Forty actions leaders can take to improve professional learning* (Seminar Series Paper 150, December, 2005) and *Professional development: A great way to avoid change* (Seminar Series Paper 140, December 2004.

About the Paper

The author's intent is to illustrate how a school can improve its effectiveness significantly by strengthening the alignment between its professional learning, performance management and teaching practices and processes.

In order to manage this complex agenda he structures the paper around six questions:

- Why is there poor transference between professional learning and improved classroom practice?
- What are the characteristics of effective professional learning?
- How is a strong professional learning culture developed?
- What are the characteristics of effective teaching practice?
- How can effective professional learning practice be coupled with effective teaching practice?
- Where does performance appraisal fit into the picture?

He concludes that schools that are successful at linking effective professional learning practices with effective teaching practices, optimise the effectiveness of their professional learning and produce changes in classroom practice that promote increased feelings of teacher efficacy, increased student engagement and improved learning outcomes.

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