Developing Literacy Leadership

‘... it is a leader’s role as capacity builder that is fundamental to learning in a complex, changing world.’ Stoll, Bolam and Collarbone (quoted in Stoll, 2004, p.112)

Since the introduction of Literacy Advance in 1998, significant gains have been made to students’ literacy outcomes. Literacy Advance, a systemic design approach, focussed attention on student literacy development and promoted good teaching practices. The gains can be attributed to establishing the role of literacy leaders and building their capacity to support teachers in developing a greater understanding of the literacy needs of students (Ainley & Fleming, 2003). The challenge now, is to continue school improvement by maintaining a focus on intelligent leadership that generates effective literacy teaching and learning.

THE IMPORTANCE OF LITERACY LEADERSHIP

The critical role of educational leadership in school improvement is well documented (Bush & Glover 2003, Elmore 2000, Fullan 2001, 2004). Similarly, research and experience, such as witnessed in the CEOM Literacy Advance strategy, have demonstrated that intelligent literacy leadership delivers sustained, positive impacts on students’ literacy performance.

The National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy documents the need for principals to ‘... build positive cultures and articulate high aspirations and expectations in their schools for all students to succeed.’ (Teaching Reading, 2005, p. 16) In this context, the CEOM Literacy Strategy aims to support literacy leaders as they build their capacity to create coherent school based literacy provision.

DEFINING LITERACY LEADERSHIP

Literacy leadership is a collaborative endeavour that engages the principal, the leadership team, the literacy leader and teachers. Although the configuration of literacy leadership will vary from school to school it will always involve commitment, focus and the pursuit of high expectations. Effective schools foster leadership initiatives from all members of the professional community reflecting a collaborative relationship among colleagues.

The principal as educational leader articulates a vision for literacy learning and engages in strategic action for literacy improvement and fosters a cohesive professional learning community. This is done by:

- supporting the school’s literacy leaders
- promoting the continuity of literacy policy and innovative practices within their own and other schools
- sponsoring the design, development and delivery of equitable and excellent literacy curriculum.

Literacy leaders in collaboration with their teacher teams enable substantive improvement in literacy teaching and students’ literacy learning when they:

- commit to continuous improvement of literacy outcomes for all students in their own school as well as in their networks or clusters
- ensure literacy learning and teaching is focussed, coordinated and responsive to students’ learning needs
- are available to their colleagues as a resource of ideas and expertise
- take and share responsibility for students’ literacy learning by engaging in team professional inquiry and learning.
- lead professional learning teams to build a culture of professional inquiry about learning and literacy guide, coach and support teachers in their classrooms
- build teachers’ expertise and agency, knowledge and capacity by investigating evidence, posing essential questions and promoting collaborative problem solving.

LEADERSHIP FOR LITERACY LEARNING

In 2007, in collaboration with literacy leaders, the CECV Leadership in Catholic Schools: Developmental Framework and Standards of Practice (CECV, 2005) was used to derive a framework with a specific literacy focus for literacy leaders. Titled the Literacy Leadership Framework, (see page 3) it formalises the description above of distributed leadership for literacy and it provides a scaffold to focus the work of the literacy leader. By clearly defining and articulating agreed literacy leadership practices the Framework provides the architecture upon which CEOM’s Literacy Leaders Project is built.

The Literacy Leadership Framework aims to support and strengthen the capacities of principals, literacy leaders and teachers to be effective initiators and managers of strategies that promote continuous improvement in literacy. It describes the actions of leaders in the five guiding conceptions of leadership (Leadership Framework, CECV, 2005):

- The Faith Community
- A Vision for the Whole School Community
- Teaching and Learning
- People and Resources
- Community
LITERACY LEADERSHIP PROJECT

The Literacy Leadership Project recognises that literacy leadership is embedded in the structures and cultures of schools. Catholic schools appoint a literacy leader who is provided with adequate time to perform this role. However literacy leadership not only resides with the literacy leader but also with the principal and teachers. Together they strive to make a difference by:

- promoting a comprehensive approach to literacy teaching
- building a sense of common purpose
- creating a vibrant professional learning culture and community.

The Literacy Leadership Project aims to support schools with the task of literacy improvement. The goal is to build the leadership capacity of the literacy leader, to raise their profile and to focus explicitly on the leadership dimensions of the role. The Project includes:

- accredited pathways for post graduate study embedded in professional learning programs
- in-school CEOM support
- CEOM professional learning clusters and sessions
- focus on literacy leaders from years prep to ten.

Designed specifically for literacy leaders in Catholic schools, the accredited pathways have been developed in collaboration with the University of Melbourne. Each unit earns credit towards a Specialist Certificate in Literacy Leadership or a Postgraduate Certificate in Literacy Leadership.

P-6 Literacy Leadership Clusters

This program involves literacy leaders, prep to six, in a professional learning cluster in each of the four regions. The professional learning supports literacy leaders to develop their capacity as leaders through working with the Literacy Leadership Framework. In supporting school communities, literacy leaders need to develop a deep understanding of:

- literacy learning
- managing professional learning teams and
- how to transfer literacy knowledge into effective practice.

Literacy leaders explore areas of literacy leadership, current trends and challenges related to literacy education, and strategic approaches for continuous literacy improvement.

Experienced Literacy Leaders

This program is designed to support experienced literacy leaders from years prep to six. It includes an accredited pathway with professional learning provided by CEOM and the University of Melbourne. It involves completion of two units of study. The first unit recognises prior experience, with participants awarded a recognition of prior learning for foundations of literacy leadership. The second unit, titled Leading Literacy Learning, focuses on the development of skills needed to promote an environment that effectively contributes to the literacy learning of all children in their school. It guides participants in how to mobilise and energise others by applying strategic thinking to the building of relationships and the achievement of agreed outcomes. Using the Literacy Leadership Framework, participants identify areas for self improvement and opportunities for the development of members of their literacy team.

P-6 New Literacy Leaders

This professional learning program targets new literacy leaders from years prep to six. It provides an accredited unit, titled Foundations of Literacy Leadership, with professional learning being provided by CEOM and the University of Melbourne. It investigates the Literacy Leadership Framework and supports participants to identify their key challenges. Responding to these challenges and supported by recent research, different approaches to school leadership are explored, and key principles and approaches to literacy leadership are identified. Built within this program is support to establish mentoring between new and experienced literacy leaders.

P-4 Literacies: Foundation Years

This program provided by CEOM, supports literacy leaders to encourage, acknowledge and guide the professional learning and work of their teacher colleagues. Literacy leaders attend off site professional learning with members of their team who require support with foundational literacies. It allows for a shared experience so that literacy leaders can, in a timely way, assist teachers to make connections to build coherence within their teaching processes and so improve their practice.

The program provides stimulus and processes to inform differentiated professional learning plans for individual teachers and the modelling of effective professional learning delivery.

Middle Years Leaders

Middle Years (5–9) leaders are participating in the project as described above and a leaders program specifically targeted for them is under development.

Literacy Assessment Project

This project involves a commitment from schools to participate over a three year period with the role of the literacy leader being crucial. It has an accredited pathway with professional learning being provided by CEOM and the University of Melbourne. It involves two units. The first unit, Leading a Professional Learning Culture examines the leadership necessary for developing a learning community. Participants focus on topics and skills such as collaborative decision making, problem solving, conflict management and negotiation, and team processes. An understanding of the importance of setting standards, evidence based decision making, performance monitoring and feedback are also examined. The second unit, Assessment for Literacy Learning investigates the integral role of assessment for literacy learning and teaching. Literacy leaders develop a theoretical and practical understanding of the principles of assessment, where the emphasis is on purpose, data collection and strengths and weaknesses of various approaches that are consistent with CEOM practices.

Literacy assessment practices are explored together with how they can be used to improve learning outcomes at both the individual and school level. Literacy leaders are exposed to a range of assessment purposes, evidence gathering procedures, interpretation frameworks, decision making strategies, as well as recording and reporting formats.
# LITERACY LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area 1</th>
<th>Area 2</th>
<th>Area 3</th>
<th>Area 4</th>
<th>Area 5</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Faith Community</strong></td>
<td><strong>Vision For The Whole School Community</strong></td>
<td><strong>Teaching And Learning</strong></td>
<td><strong>People And Resources</strong></td>
<td><strong>Community</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.1 The Catholic identity of the school</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.1 A vision for teaching and learning</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.1 A focus on student learning outcomes</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.1 Professional learning and development</strong></td>
<td><strong>5.1 Communication with families</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy leaders are committed to meeting the educational needs of all students in environments imbued with the values of the Gospel and educational mission of the Church.</td>
<td>Literacy leaders actively and collaboratively develop and communicate a shared whole-school vision that is centred on the guidance and improvement of literacy teaching and learning.</td>
<td>Literacy leaders advocate and ensure a focus on student learning outcomes.</td>
<td>Literacy leaders are learners who encourage, acknowledge and support the professional learning and work of their colleagues.</td>
<td>Literacy leaders ensure communication with families.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.2 Education in life and faith</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.2 A rigorous and respectful learning culture</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.2 Curriculum and assessment</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.2 Staff Appraisal and performance review</strong></td>
<td><strong>5.2 Partnerships</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy leaders ensure that the literacy teaching will enable students to meet the demands of the world.</td>
<td>Literacy Leaders actively and collaboratively promote and build a culture of learning that is respectful of teachers and students.</td>
<td>Literacy leaders inform the development of literacy within curriculum and assessment policies and monitor the implementation of these.</td>
<td>Literacy leaders develop insights based on classroom observations and professional conversations centred around literacy. The literacy leadership meeting provides a forum to share these both at an individual and staff level.</td>
<td>Literacy leaders forge partnerships with others who can have a positive impact on student literacy learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.3 Celebration of life and faith</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.3 Policy and program development</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.3 A safe and effective environment</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.3 Resources</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.4 Pastoral care</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy leaders are aware that in the development of the whole person, education in literacy is of vital importance.</td>
<td>Literacy leaders strategically and collaboratively develop a literacy plan which supports the school’s vision for teaching and learning.</td>
<td>Literacy leaders actively and collaboratively cultivate and promote a safe and effective environment for teaching and learning.</td>
<td>Literacy leaders actively and collaboratively select and organise resources to maximise student literacy learning.</td>
<td>Literacy leaders support and promote the school pastoral care policy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.4 Action and social justice</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.4 Teacher professionalism</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.4 Quality teaching</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.4 Pastoral care</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.4 Pastoral care</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy leaders ensure that students are empowered to use literacy to take action on relevant and important social justice issues.</td>
<td>Literacy leaders actively and collaboratively build a culture that promotes professional teacher behaviour.</td>
<td>Literacy leaders are expert teachers who actively and collaboratively assist colleagues to improve teaching practice.</td>
<td>Literacy leaders support and promote the school pastoral care policy.</td>
<td>Literacy leaders support and promote the school pastoral care policy.</td>
</tr>
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REFERENCES


USING THIS DOCUMENT

You are welcome to copy this document for discussions in Professional Learning Team meetings or cluster meetings. Electronic copies are available on CEVN-ISS under Literacy.

FEEDBACK

This paper is one of a series developed by the CEOM Literacy Team to define key messages about literacy learning and teaching, and improving student literacy outcomes.

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