



# Communities of Practice

## Getting the most from the Education State's school networks

This document guides you through a Communities of Practice (CoP) approach.

### Networks can lift student outcomes by adopting a CoP approach to collaboration

Effective school networks are at the heart of implementing the Framework for Improving Student Outcomes (FISO).

CoPs within networks focus on priorities identified using network data and evidence to improve student learning outcomes. Networks are encouraged to use FISO 2.0, including updated tools and resources with support from Senior Education Improvement Leaders (SEILs), Area Directors and multi-disciplinary teams.

### To achieve the Education State vision, each network in Victoria adopts a CoP approach

#### Highly effective networks:

- > **set** clear goals focused on shared problems of practice
- > **take** collective ownership and responsibility for all students
- > **participate** in active learning through a process of inquiry
- > **share** and analyse performance information systematically, and apply improvements across the network
- > **provide** sufficient time for peer learning through CoP
- > **include** representatives who can bring new perspectives to the problem and to finding solutions
- > **enjoy** strong engagement and collaboration with external agencies such as community organisations, tertiary institutions and business to improve outcomes.

**Great schools and great networks harness the power of great school practice to achieve great outcomes for all students.**

**Schools helping each other to improve is a powerful and sustainable approach to school improvement.**

The best education systems in the world are highly networked. These successful education systems have principals who are well-connected to their peers through active partnerships or learning networks of schools. These learning networks are known as 'Communities of Practice'.

Collaboration between schools can improve both schools' performances more quickly than the national average<sup>1</sup>. Evidence from the OECD<sup>2</sup>, the World Bank and further research tells us the best performing education systems are those in which the foundations for collaboration are well established – school autonomy is high, but accountability is also rigorous<sup>3</sup>. Successful networks have a compelling commitment to improving outcomes for all students, transparent results and practice, regular reciprocal reviews of members' performance, and continuously challenging each other to do better.

Collaboration is the way forward for our schools. The sharing of effort, knowledge and resources in the pursuit of shared goals plays a central role in the achievement of student learning outcomes and reducing inequality across educational systems.

#### FOOTNOTES

1. Bentley & Cazaly 2015 2. OECD 2015 3. Farrar 2015

## SEILs work with network chairs to help networks improve student outcomes

Networks are owned and driven by principals in partnership with the SEIL. The SEIL and regional support team will provide flexible support to drive FISO 2.0 implementation. They will help to make the most of the strengths of your network and address any areas of need.

## SEILs play a variety of roles in networks, depending on the network's self-assessed needs and FISO focus area priorities

### Connector

Brokers relationships to help your network nurture its strengths, bridge areas of development and pursue greater opportunities.

#### This means your SEIL could:

- > **connect** your networks with experts in education who can contribute to the network's objectives
- > **connect** your networks with relevant government agencies, businesses and others who have an interest in great student outcomes.

### Integrator

Maintains information-sharing relationships with other networks across the state.

#### This means your SEIL could:

- > **foster** relationships with other networks to share experience and expertise according to needs
- > **support** communication channels within the network.

### Facilitator

Focuses on enabling collaboration between your network's members and stimulates interest within our network to ensure member engagement.

#### Your SEIL could assist you to respectfully:

- > **build** trust between members by helping them to address outstanding issues

### Challenge partner

Helps your network members to challenge each other to improve performance, and continually challenges the entire network's performance.

#### This means your SEIL could:

- > **support** the evolution of a network from an emerging collegiate and information sharing focus, to a culture of transparent results and practice
- > **source** professional development that enables challenging conversations in a spirit of reciprocity and professional trust.

### Conduit

Acts as a bridge between the central office and your network, enabling a two-way flow of information and feedback to align and recognise your network's efforts and achievements.

#### This means your SEIL could:

- > **help** your network interpret the implications of new policies or changes
- > **share** your network's successes and feedback to central office for broad dissemination and sharing.

