Definition

*Professional Learning* is the formal or informal learning experiences undertaken by teachers and school leaders that improve their individual professional practice, and a school’s collective effectiveness, as measured by improved student learning, engagement with learning and wellbeing. At its most effective, professional learning develops individual and collective capacity across the teaching profession to address current and future challenges. *(Australian Charter for the Professional Learning of Teachers and School Leaders, AITSL, August 2012)*

Rationale

In affirming the importance of teacher professional learning in improving student outcomes, this policy seeks to articulate the expectation that all teachers engage in professional learning, and to describe the characteristics of effective professional learning and of a high quality professional learning culture.

Purpose

Professional learning activities should:

- focus on improving student learning outcomes
- be embedded in the everyday practice of teachers
- be informed by the best available research
- be collaborative, and involve reflection and feedback
- be informed by data and evidence
- be clearly linked to the priorities and areas of focus outlined in the school improvement plan and the teacher’s personal professional plan
- link to the National Professional Standards for Teachers
- provide opportunities for staff to evaluate current practice and extend, develop and update their professional skills, knowledge and qualifications
- prepare staff for progression in their careers and enhance job satisfaction
- contribute to the development of a high quality professional learning culture
- be focused on innovative teaching and learning practices within the middle school environment

Guidelines

1. General

Professional learning activities will be provided for all staff, and will include the following:

- an induction programme for all newly appointed staff
- a full program of induction and support for newly qualified teachers, in line with BOSTES guidelines
- opportunities to work with colleagues to actively support each other to improve their teaching
- an ongoing program of professional learning provided at school and through the college via professional learning meetings, teams and staff development days
- access to information about courses, conferences and other staff development activities
- meetings and consultation with line managers and other appropriate staff
- guidance and support in completing professional learning plans and objectives
- access to coaching and mentoring
2. Types of Professional Learning

Professional learning can take many forms, and staff are encouraged to actively seek out different types of professional learning in working towards the priorities outlined in the school improvement plan and their own professional learning plans. Nonetheless, there is increasing consensus in the education community about what constitutes professional learning that is effective in bringing about improvement in teaching and learning across the school. Schools need to further develop as learning communities, with a clear focus on embedding professional learning into teacher's everyday work, and the provision of professional learning that is primarily school-based, school managed and focused on improving teaching practice. To this end, we seek to develop as a self-evaluating school with a strong emphasis upon school-based research and the sharing of best practice across teams and between staff. The activities that we wish to see will include:

- sharing feedback from lesson observations, teaching demonstrations, walk-throughs and instructional rounds, within and beyond the curriculum area
- ongoing professional learning at regular staff meetings that is relevant, collaborative and focused on school identified priorities
- feedback from staff who have engaged in professional learning activities such as external courses
- engaging in partnerships with higher education for the purposes of initial teacher training, research and continuing professional learning
- networking with staff with similar roles in other schools
- working on national and international projects
- counselling, coaching, shadowing and mentoring other staff
- sharing articles, and keeping up-to-date through reading books, articles and magazines
- working towards accreditation at the higher levels of accomplishment and lead

3. Responsibilities

All staff should:

- actively identify their own professional learning needs, through their professional learning plan, and provide information necessary for the management of professional learning
- take responsibility, along with their line manager, for ensuring that their professional learning plan is actively used
- participate in professional learning that is aligned to school, personal and DEC plans and priorities, and that is clearly linked to the National Professional Standards for Teachers
- participate in the evaluation of any professional learning activity they have undertaken. In their planning, staff should think clearly about the purposes of the activity and how it will impact upon their work in school. An evaluation form will be completed, and teachers will feedback on their activity to the school. Further activity such as producing resources or training of other staff will often be appropriate
- engage, where possible, in learning networks beyond the school

Executive staff and the Professional Learning Team should:

- recognise and celebrate the achievements and progress of all staff
- support and facilitate the sharing of good practice
- assist staff in identifying their professional learning needs
- encourage staff to keep up-to-date with educational developments
- raise awareness of and encourage participation in professional learning activities
- liaise with external providers concerning professional learning opportunities
- provide an induction program for new members of staff
ensure classroom observation is carried within a developmental framework
- ensure that professional learning is monitored and evaluated in relation to its benefits to students
- arrange an annual professional learning review meeting, and interim reviews as appropriate, to assist staff in achieving their career goals and objectives

4. Procedures

The Professional Learning Team
The Professional Learning Team meet fortnightly to review and discuss the provision of ongoing professional learning activities within the school, as well as to approve applications for funding of teacher professional learning and release for same. Membership of the Professional Learning Team is open to all staff wishing to participate.

Funding Professional Learning
Funds for professional learning activities will be administered centrally, in line with the school professional learning policy, to ensure that all staff receives appropriate training. Whilst we cannot guarantee the allocation of equal proportion of funding to each member of staff, the Professional Learning Team will seek to ensure that there is equitable, needs-based distribution of funding over time.

Applying for Professional Learning
Applications for professional learning and teacher release time is made to the Deputy Principal responsible for professional learning, who takes the application (Appendix 1: TPL Application) to the Professional Learning Team. Applications should be made in a timely manner with a minimum of two weeks’ notice, and following the process outlined in Appendix 2: Professional Learning Procedures. Staff should not enrol in external professional learning until approval is given.

Evaluation and Reporting
All staff participating in professional learning, whether it be internal or external, are expected to complete a thorough evaluation of the learning and provide this to the Professional Learning within two weeks of completing the learning. Where the learning is ongoing, more regular feedback and evaluation may be required. Additionally, staff will be expected to share their professional learning with staff at the regular school professional learning meetings.