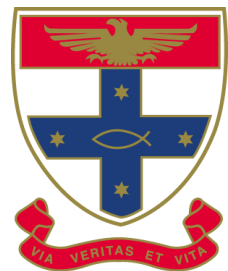


PROFESSIONAL LEARNING POLICY



**St. Francis Xavier College
Berwick, Beaconsfield & Officer**
Ratified by Board of Management December 2001
Revised August 2005
Ratified by College Board September 2005
Amended November 2008
Ratified by College Board December 2008
Amended March 2011
Ratified by College Board March 2011

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING POLICY

VISION AND MISSION STATEMENT

St. Francis Xavier College is a Catholic community that is educative and supportive. We have a clear purpose: the development of a person of competence, conscience and compassion formed in the Christian tradition; one who is guided by a sense of hope and self-belief and who will be of service in the world. We recognise God's presence in our lives by celebrating and pursuing personal excellence and by living courageously with optimism and respect for all.

WHAT IS PROFESSIONAL LEARNING?

Professional learning refers to all training and development opportunities, formal and informal, individual and shared, that provide opportunities for professional discourse, interaction, practice, reflection and analysis. Professional learning can occur face-to-face, online or through other modes of delivery.

RATIONALE

Catholic Ethos: Since it is vital for the effectiveness of the Catholic school community that all the members understand its purpose and mission, principals and teachers need to be accredited to teach in a Catholic school. To achieve this goal the Diocesan Catholic Education Offices and the existing associations of principals and staffs are asked to cooperate in the formulation of five-year plans for schools which would incorporate the following ways:

- school-based in-service activities
- diocesan and regional seminars
- formal courses.

This policy draws on knowledge of professional learning practices gained from current research. It recognises that the participation of teams and individuals in workplace learning and in the wider professional context are keys to developing quality professional practice.

The research asserts that, in order to be effective, teachers need a deep understanding of their subject area, knowledge of how students learn specific subject matter and a range of strategies and practices that support student learning. The research also affirms that engaging teachers in high quality professional learning is the most successful way to improve teacher effectiveness (Greenwald, Hedges & Laine 1995; Guskey & Huberman 1995; Elmore & Burney 1997; Hawley & Valli 1999; Elmore 2002).

Furthermore, teaching is a dynamic profession and, as new knowledge about teaching and learning emerges, new types of expertise are required by educators. Teachers must keep abreast of this knowledge base and use it to continually refine their conceptual and pedagogical skills. The field of inquiry that has had most significance for teachers and teaching is that of how students learn.

This policy recognizes that for renewal of registration with **VIT** teachers must complete 'a minimum amount of professional development activities within a given timeframe'. Details can be found on the VIT website.

The Seven Principles of Highly Effective Professional Learning (DEET 2005)

The College recognises and supports the following principles of Professional Learning:

1. Professional learning is focused on student outcomes (not just individual teacher needs).
2. Professional learning is focused on and embedded in teacher practice (not disconnected from the school).
3. Professional Learning is informed by the best available research on effective learning and teaching (not just limited to what they currently know).
4. Professional Learning is collaborative, involving reflection and feedback (not just individual inquiry).
5. Professional Learning is evidence based and data driven (not anecdotal) to guide improvement and to measure impact.
6. Professional learning is ongoing, supported and fully integrated into the culture and operations of the system – schools, networks, regions and the centre (not episodic and fragmented).
7. Professional Learning is an individual and collective responsibility at all levels of the system (not just the school level) and it is not optional.

The College

- includes the need for on-going Professional Learning in its 'Vision, Mission and Strategic Plan' under the following headings:
 - Enhancing the Catholic Nature of our School
 - Promoting Effective Teaching and Learning
 - The Community Nature of our School
 - Strengthen the Leadership in our School
- recognises that the individual and the school share responsibility for promoting, planning, implementing and evaluating professional learning
- expects individuals to engage in ongoing professional learning
- encourages all Learning Area Leaders to develop Professional Learning Plans that take into account the needs of individuals, faculties and College
- fosters a culture that values and supports professional learning
- promotes attendance at accreditation courses in accordance with the requirements for teaching in a Catholic School in the Sale Diocese
- supports the ongoing religious formation of staff
- ensures all staff and Learning Areas have equal access to professional learning
- encourages teaching and non-teaching staff to keep their skills and expertise up to date by attendance at regular professional learning activities, outside and within school hours. These will be subject to discussion at Annual Review Meetings
- recognises and respects the expertise of staff.
- is responsive to the systemic, national and state agendas for education
- provides opportunities for individuals to develop an integrated Professional Learning Plan that links the needs of the school and the needs of the individual
- permits, where possible, more than one person to attend significant external professional learning sessions
- brings, where possible, professionals to the College to deliver professional learning activities.

Expectations

- Staff who wish to attend Professional Learning activities are required to
 - complete an application form, have it signed by the relevant Learning Area Leader/Line Manager and submit it to the Deputy Principal - Mission for approval.
 - If approved by the DP - Mission, the application is then submitted to the Campus Management Team to take into account Campus needs before giving final approval.
 - justify and report on any outcomes of the activity.
- LALs/Line Managers are required to develop coherent Professional Learning Plans for their teams so that individual needs are aligned with LA needs, Curriculum Goals and College priorities.
- LALs/Line Managers are required to ensure membership of relevant professional associations, and make journals, etc. available to members of their teams.
- Attendance at Learning Area annual conferences should be rotated so that everybody has the opportunity to participate.
- Informal learning situations and peer support systems (both within the College and in conjunction with other schools) are encouraged as legitimate forms of professional learning.
- Learning Area/Team meetings should include professional learning activities.

Responsibilities

The Deputy Principal: Mission will identify priority areas, individual and group learning needs, and set goals for professional learning that will:

- improve students' learning
- improve teacher effectiveness
- set high standards
- promote continuous staff learning
- enhance staff intellectual and leadership capacity.

Individual teachers are responsible for keeping a record of their Professional Learning activities in line with VIT requirements.

The Deputy Principal - Mission is responsible for reviewing this policy every 3 years.