

What's happening with the Professional Development of School Leader Cs?

The following is a report on a Professional Learning survey of School Leader C members, conducted by the Assistant to the Secretary (Professional). Just 41 SLCs responded to the survey. The survey attempted to gain a picture of current access to learning for teachers in this first promotional step of the teaching service. The findings will inform Union training programs and advocacy for members with DET.

Most respondents had taught for some time before gaining promotion. Around half had been a L1 teacher for more than 10 years before becoming a SLC/L2. Many had also worked for between 5-10 years before promotion; but there were a small number of teachers promoted after 2 or 3 years.

Roughly a third of all those responding had been a SLC/L2 for less than 12 months, another third for between 1 and 3 years, and a third for 4 years or more. It's not clear if this is a representative sample or not; either there are many SLCs in the system with little experience in their positions, or new SLCs are more likely to respond to Surveys on PD, perhaps feeling the lack of training in their role. About equal numbers thought their access to relevant, engaging PD had stayed the same or increased over recent years. A small number said their access had decreased.

Respondents were asked what made PD worthwhile. Overwhelmingly, the most valued PD was PD which was relevant to classroom or SLC role, but particularly to classroom role. Networking with colleagues was valued, as were the chance to enhance one's learning or skills, the benefits of a good presenter and a hands-on approach.

There was very little agreement on the question of useful sources of PD in carrying out the SLC role. People nominated the Professional Pathways training, and the High School Development Program KLA sessions most often. More than one person nominated mentoring and coaching, collegial discussions and advice, leadership focused programs, JSC Panel training, Beginning Teacher Coordinator mentor training, MyClasses and the Executive Teacher Network activities. Individuals nominated Student Pathways training, AEU training, ACEL events, probationary report writing training, the Exec teacher modules at UC, ELO and LUAC training, etc – in fact a plethora of PD activities across the system.

The formal PD activities nominated suggest that the ability to lead one's faculty in terms of KLA area is important in high schools, while primary SLCs want to keep up with their special area of professional interest or expertise. The ability to properly supervise faculty members' Professional Pathways is clearly considered central to the SLC role. It's also clear that leadership, especially in terms of Beginning Teachers in the faculty, is important to SLCs. Informal PD through discussion, mentoring and networking is also considered valuable training for the role.

The variety and type of answers point to the two streams of a SLC's work – educational leadership and team coordination and management. It is likely that new SLCs are more confident in identifying the PD needed for educational leadership than they are in identifying the PD needed for their supervisory and management role. Schools have varying PD requirements regarding educational leadership; each school is likely to want to structure the PD of its SLCs in line with local school philosophy and programs.

In terms of the supervisory and management role of SLCs, the Union is aware of a variety of "advised" or "expected" PD which a SLC is invited to attend. Many of our respondents appeared to have little awareness of this PD beyond Professional Pathways supervision training. The Department may need to consider mandating essential PD for SLCs and require Principals/Deputy Principals to adopt a more

interventionist role in ensuring that all SLCs access this PD over a certain cycle. Teachers new to the SLC role require a more coordinated approach to their PD; the new role does not appear to just come naturally to a classroom teacher.

Respondents were asked to comment on the descriptors of the SLC role contained in the Professional Pathways document, in terms of training they had already received for various aspects of that role and their interest in future training. A summary of their responses follows:

Descriptor of SLC role	Have you had PD?	Do you need more PD?
Provide professional expertise on educational issues relating to strategies, programs, policy and curriculum.	2/3 said YES	Half said YES
Facilitate teams to achieve school/unit and system goals.	~ ½ said YES	More than ½ said YES
Members of the school leadership team, providing support to the principal.	2/3 said NO	Less than ½ said YES
Provide professional leadership and management through staff supervision and support.	~equal numbers said YES and NO	More than ½ said YES
Provide leadership and training in the use of information and communication technologies in schools.	~equal numbers said YES and NO	½ said YES
Work with school/unit leadership team to manage resources.	More than 2/3 said NO	½ said YES
Initiate and manage projects, informed by research, data collection and analysis.	2/3 said NO	Nearly half said YES

The table above suggests that little if any training is being accessed by SLCs in team leadership, managing of resources, or managing projects involving research and data collection.

Half the respondents had undertaken further study since completion of their teaching qualification. When asked what would make them consider doing additional formal study answers varied widely, but time allowance, DET payment of fees and higher pay for qualifications, were most often cited as incentives.

The survey sought to establish what training SLCs had for their particular role. 56% had trained or were expecting to train in Professional Pathways supervision; 13% had done Beginning Teacher Coordination training; 13% had done JSC Panel training; and lesser numbers had done training in supervising probationary/contract teachers, anti-sexual harassment training, mandatory reporting training, racial harassment training and restorative practices training. Fewer than half were aware of the online training available. Many cited lack of time as the major reason for not accessing online training, others preferred personal interaction when learning, to allow exploration of the issues. A small number said online training was useful and time efficient.

Of particular concern to the Union are the low numbers of SLCs having completed recent training in anti discrimination, harassment and mandatory reporting legislation, and the apparent low exposure to Panel training. This underlines the need for a checklist of training related to a SLC's role as a manager of people, processes and programs. Such training is vital. SLCs have a profound influence on the quality of the

experience of the workplace of Classroom Teachers/L1s under their supervision. Their training cannot be left to *ad hoc* choices made under time pressures in schools.

Over 80% of SLCs said they networked with colleagues. Within the school and at KLA/Professional Association meetings were the most common ways of networking with peers. A smaller number networked socially.

Respondents were asked a series of questions to establish their awareness of sources of PD funding. Two thirds said their school was aware of the professional Learning Fund and how to apply for funds. When asked whether their school had ever accessed the Fund, the biggest proportion did not know, nearly 1/3 said YES and nearly ¼ said NO. 86% said they had received PD money for training from within their school's own PD resources, indicating that most schools are attempting to give their SLCs PD opportunities. Two thirds of respondents had accessed money for PD from supervising pre-service teachers. Around 25% had not accessed PD money through taking pre-service students.

There were a number of SLCs who said they had never supervised a pre-service teacher and others who had, but regretted no longer being able to do so. The existence of SLCs without experience in supervising pre-service teachers is something of a problem, given the responsibilities of the SLC role towards Beginning Teacher supervision.

In a wide variety of general comments about PD, a number of respondents noted the lack of leadership training available. Many commented on being torn between attending to their role as SLC in the school and the desire to do training off site. The former responsibility tended to win out, with SLCs feeling guilty about taking time off to attend PD sessions. Time release for SLCs was suggested, as was reduction of workload.

In summary it would appear that training for those who step up into the first promotional rung of the teaching service needs to be coordinated centrally and in schools so that new SLCs are supported in learning the different facets of their role. While school will want to play the key role in making decisions regarding SLCs educational leadership learning and development, the Department needs to play the central role in organising and coordinating training for SLCs in their role as supervisors of personnel, processes and programs.

This first promotional level often has the closest interaction and hence influence on students and classroom teachers. Their training is a system imperative, not just for ensuring the harmonious and smooth running of schools, but also for ensuring the capabilities required by the system in future leaders of that system.

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