ConnectED System leaders 24 May, 2024

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NSW Department of Education
education.nsw.gov.au

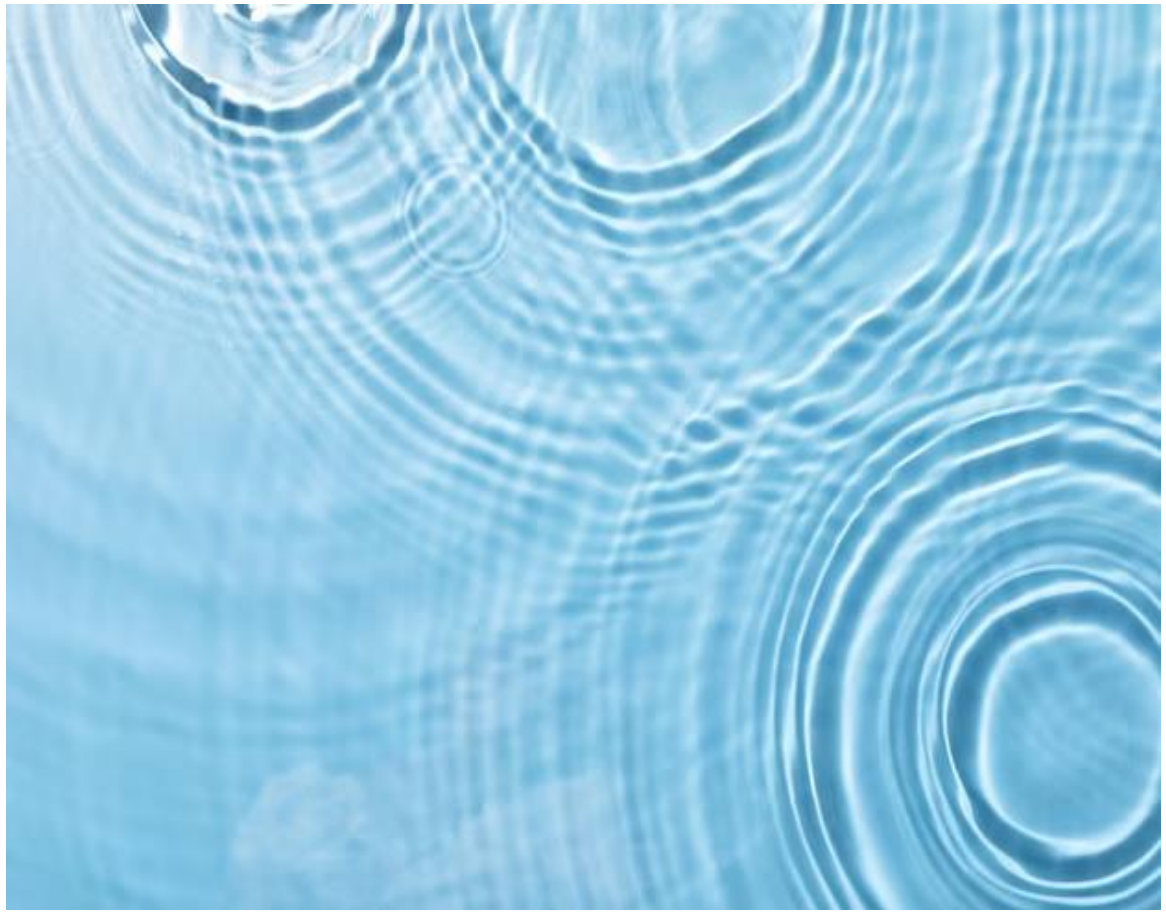
Questions to consider:

- ✓ What does our own research say about middle leaders in NSW public education?
- ✓ How can middle leaders continue to strengthen their leadership development?
- ✓ How has the School Leadership Institute responded and what are our next steps?

"If we truly believe that leadership is about growth of self and others, then we must start with ourselves. Amid the complexity we nurture our own learning and commit to maintaining that journey.

We also need to enable others who are leaders to learn about their own leadership, so they can have agency over it and can experience a real sense of self-efficacy as leaders in enabling the growth of others."

Grift, (2020)



Setting the Context

NSW Public Schools

- Second largest school system in the world
- **2,214** schools ranging in size from 2 to over 2,000 students
- Provision of education for **791,435** students including:
  - **9%** Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
  - **38%** Language background other than English
  - **25%** in rural and remote schools

NSW Government schools

1,232 Metropolitan Sydney
584 Inner regional
346 Outer regional
52 Remote/very remote

New South Wales Department of Education

56%
Assistant Principals

Comprised of Assistant Principals of:

- key learning stages
- curriculum and instruction

52, 036 teaching staff

5% principals

4% deputy principals

19% middle leaders

(including 175 senior psychologists)

44%
Head Teachers

Comprised of Head Teachers (faculty leads) of:

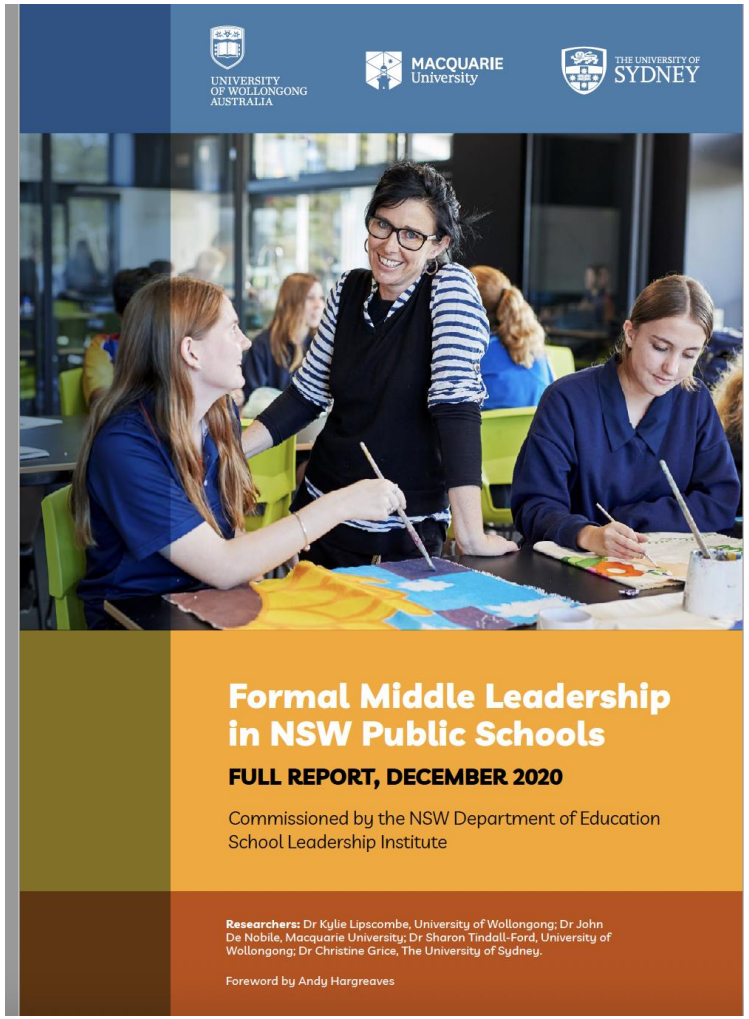
- curriculum areas
- wellbeing
- administration
- whole school teaching and learning

The Formal Middle Leadership in NSW Schools Report

The Survey

7751 middle leaders across 1697 NSW public schools:

- 2608 responded (34% response rate)
- Quantitative & Qualitative Items

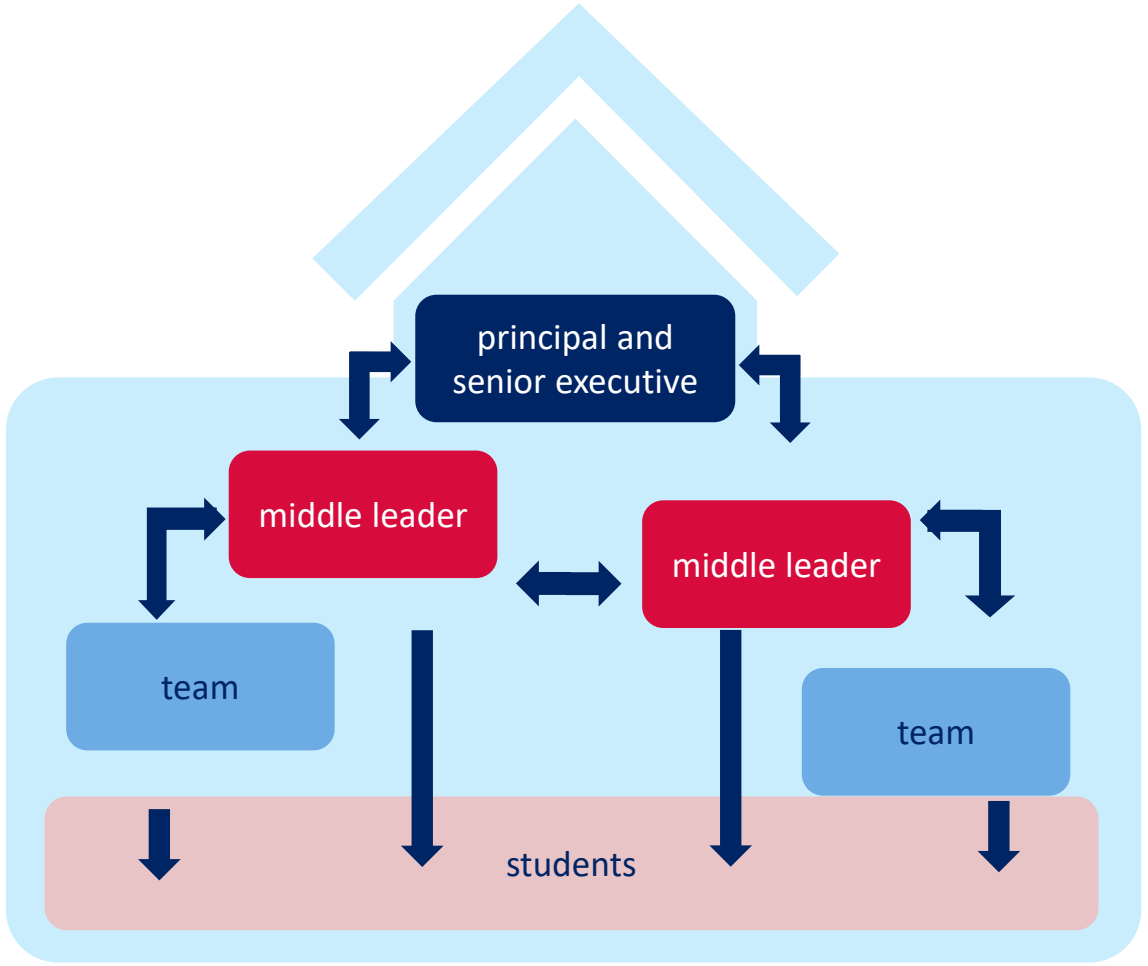


Middle leaders matter

The importance of middle leaders

‘Leading from the middle regards those in the middle not just as a mediating layer that connects the bottom to the top, but as expressing and addressing the heart and soul of leadership at its core…leading from the middle is not just a level or a tier. It is the heart, the soul, the backbone, and the guts of leadership.’

Andy Hargreaves (2020)



Findings

Which teachers are being appointed to formal middle leadership positions?

- 74% female
- 64% between ages 41 - 60
- 92% 10+ years teaching experience
- 65% 0–9 leadership experience
- 39% new (0–5 years) to role

Top Tasks across the Roles

Tensions between administration and ‘leading'

“I do more administration than I teach or prepare lessons.”

“A lot of the roles performed by middle management require a delicate balancing act between teaching and administration. Much more of my time is being taken up with administration and compliance processes.”

Findings

What are the roles and responsibilities formal middle leaders are enacting?

- **Seven roles**: Developing staff, Student-centred, Administration, Organising people, Curriculum-centred, Supervising staff, Leading learning and change
- **Most frequent roles:** Supervising staff, Student-centred roles, Curriculum-centred roles
- Head Teachers (High school) appeared to be engaging in administration more than Assistant Principals (Primary school).
- **Additional roles:** External liaison, Staff wellbeing, Parent liaison, Leading extra-curricular, Relieving higher duties

Top Tasks across the Roles

Performance / Supervision

Supervising Staff Members

Answer	%	Count
1 Not at all	1.12%	28
2 Rarely	1.36%	34
3 Sometimes	6.46%	161
4 Frequently	25.10%	626
5 Very frequently	65.96%	1645

Monitoring the Performance of Staff

Answer	%	Count
1 Not at all	1.32%	33
2 Rarely	2.53%	63
3 Sometimes	13.23%	330
4 Frequently	39.88%	995
5 Very frequently	43.05%	1074

Discussing aspects of work with staff

Answer	%	Count
1 Not at all	0.64%	16
2 Rarely	4.45%	111
3 Sometimes	31.21%	778
4 Frequently	41.44%	1033
5 Very frequently	22.26%	555

Findings

What perceived impacts are middle leaders having on student learning?

Constraints:

- administrative requirements
- workloads
- time
- student welfare and behavioural issues
- school leadership
- teacher colleagues.

Enablers:

- develop and maintain positive respectful relationships with colleagues
- students, parents and the community
- modelling excellence and expecting excellence in teaching and learning from others within their schools.

Findings

What are the professional needs and preferences of formal middle leaders?

- **33%** no or limited leadership professional development
- **5%** postgraduate leadership degrees
- **49%** sought feedback on their leadership from colleagues very frequently/frequently

Topics of need:

- Leadership of teaching and learning
- Managing conflict
- Staff performance
- Administration

Discuss: 5 minutes
What are the implications of these findings for you in your leadership context?

Findings

What are the leadership trajectories and aspirations of formal middle leaders?

Becoming a middle leader

- 34% in relieving roles prior to appointment
- 10% identified by senior leaders and encourage to apply

Aspirations for senior leadership

- 47% senior leadership

Support needed for senior leadership

- professional learning
- mentoring
- job shadowing
- Interview processes.

The Middle Leader Role Description

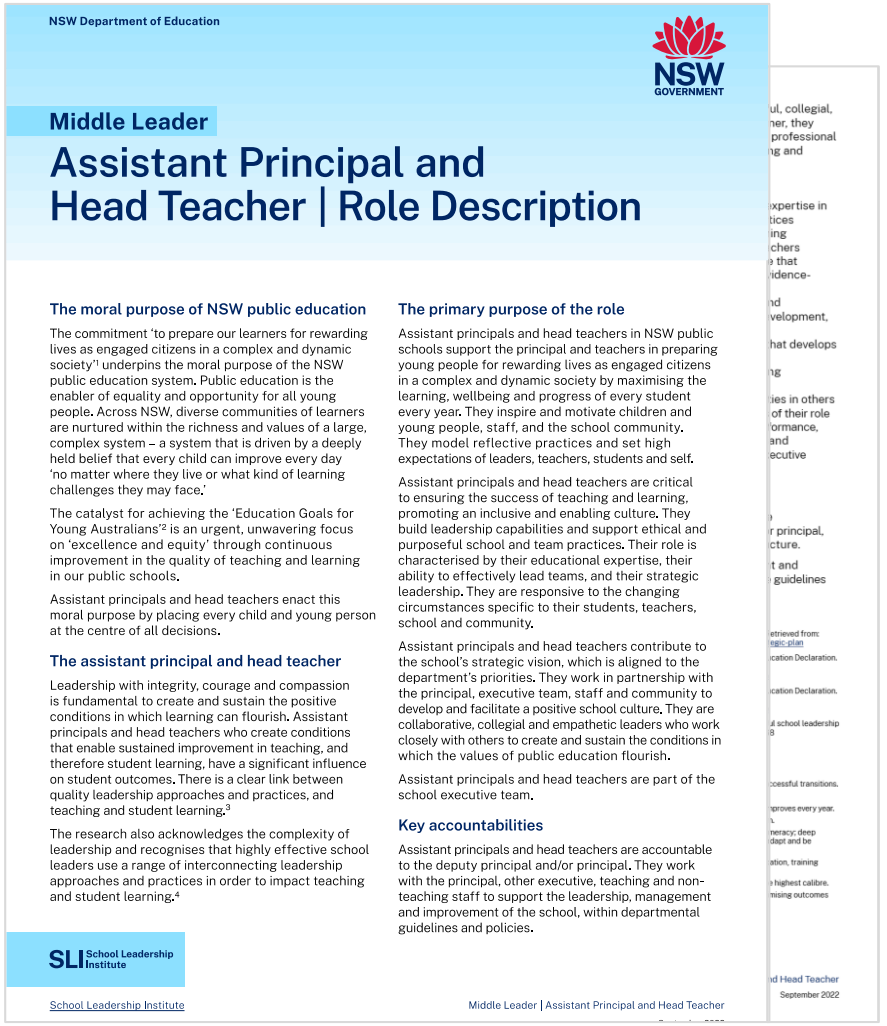
The middle leader role description is aspirational and provides assistant principals and head teachers with the opportunity to develop and deepen their practice.

It provides:

clarity and consistency

context and commitment

confidence and competence



NSW Department of Education

NSW GOVERNMENT

Middle Leader

Assistant Principal and Head Teacher | Role Description

The moral purpose of NSW public education

The commitment 'to prepare our learners for rewarding lives as engaged citizens in a complex and dynamic society'[1] underpins the moral purpose of the NSW public education system. Public education is the enabler of equality and opportunity for all young people. Across NSW, diverse communities of learners are nurtured within the richness and values of a large, complex system – a system that is driven by a deeply held belief that every child can improve every day 'no matter where they live or what kind of learning challenges they may face.'

The catalyst for achieving the 'Education Goals for Young Australians'[2] is an urgent, unwavering focus on 'excellence and equity' through continuous improvement in the quality of teaching and learning in our public schools.

Assistant principals and head teachers enact this moral purpose by placing every child and young person at the centre of all decisions.

The assistant principal and head teacher

Leadership with integrity, courage and compassion is fundamental to create and sustain the positive conditions in which learning can flourish. Assistant principals and head teachers who create conditions that enable sustained improvement in teaching, and therefore student learning, have a significant influence on student outcomes. There is a clear link between quality leadership approaches and practices, and teaching and student learning.[3]

The research also acknowledges the complexity of leadership and recognises that highly effective school leaders use a range of interconnecting leadership approaches and practices in order to impact teaching and student learning.[4]

The primary purpose of the role

Assistant principals and head teachers in NSW public schools support the principal and teachers in preparing young people for rewarding lives as engaged citizens in a complex and dynamic society by maximising the learning, wellbeing and progress of every student every year. They inspire and motivate children and young people, staff, and the school community. They model reflective practices and set high expectations of leaders, teachers, students and self.

Assistant principals and head teachers are critical to ensuring the success of teaching and learning, promoting an inclusive and enabling culture. They build leadership capabilities and support ethical and purposeful school and team practices. Their role is characterised by their educational expertise, their ability to effectively lead teams, and their strategic leadership. They are responsive to the changing circumstances specific to their students, teachers, school and community.

Assistant principals and head teachers contribute to the school's strategic vision, which is aligned to the department's priorities. They work in partnership with the principal, executive team, staff and community to develop and facilitate a positive school culture. They are collaborative, collegial and empathetic leaders who work closely with others to create and sustain the conditions in which the values of public education flourish.

Assistant principals and head teachers are part of the school executive team.

Key accountabilities

Assistant principals and head teachers are accountable to the deputy principal and/or principal. They work with the principal, other executive, teaching and non-teaching staff to support the leadership, management and improvement of the school, within departmental guidelines and policies.

SLI School Leadership Institute

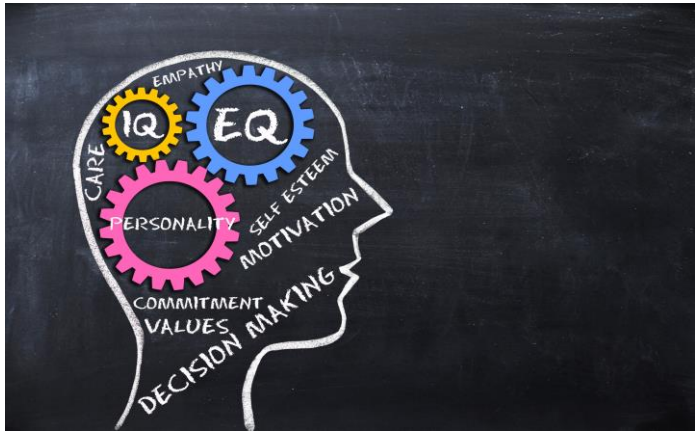
School Leadership Institute

Middle Leader | Assistant Principal and Head Teacher

The 4 key leadership drivers – self-paced and facilitated modules

Collaborative culture

Leading learning

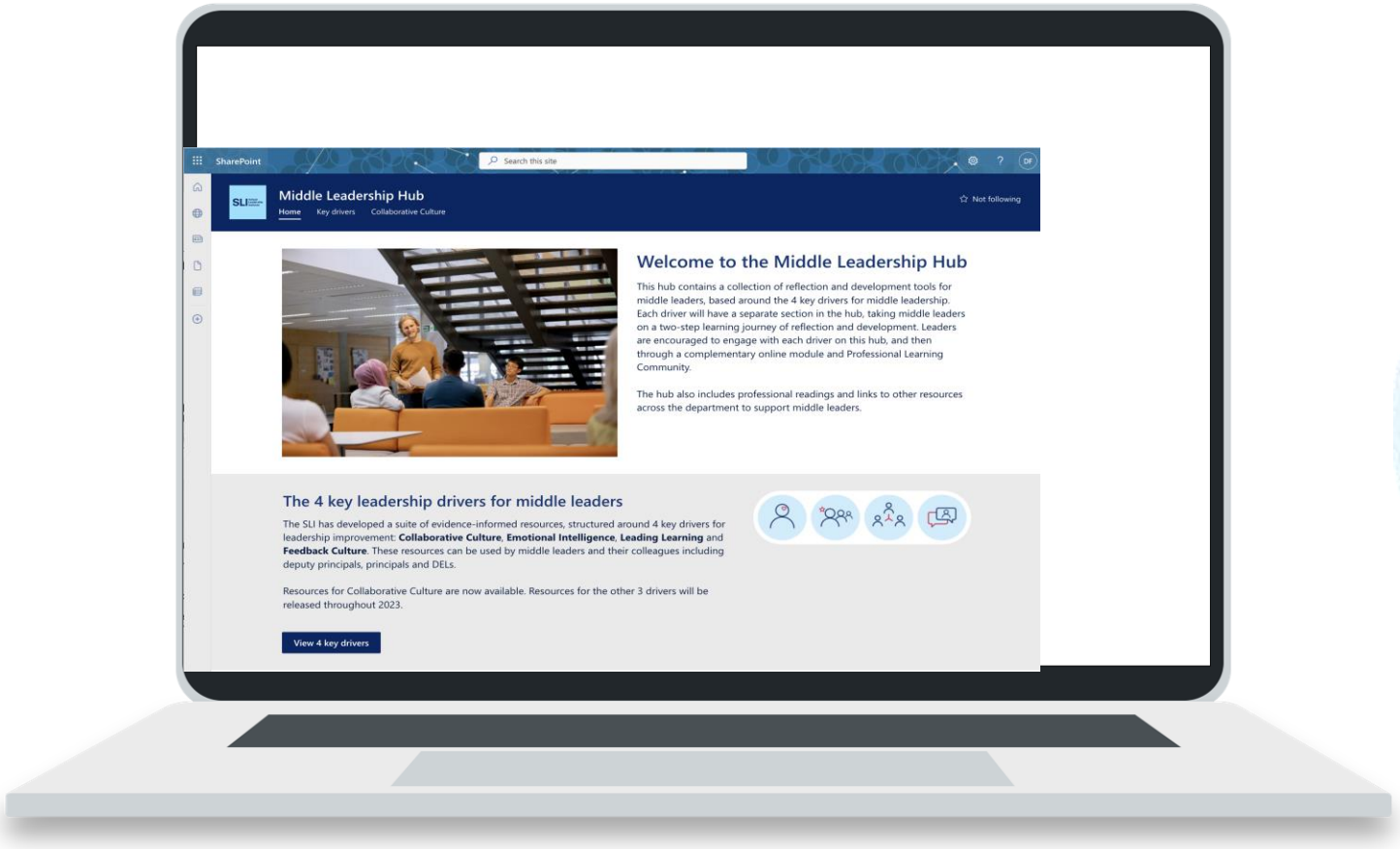


Social and emotional intelligence

Feedback culture

Middle Leadership Hub

Resources to support leadership development



hub

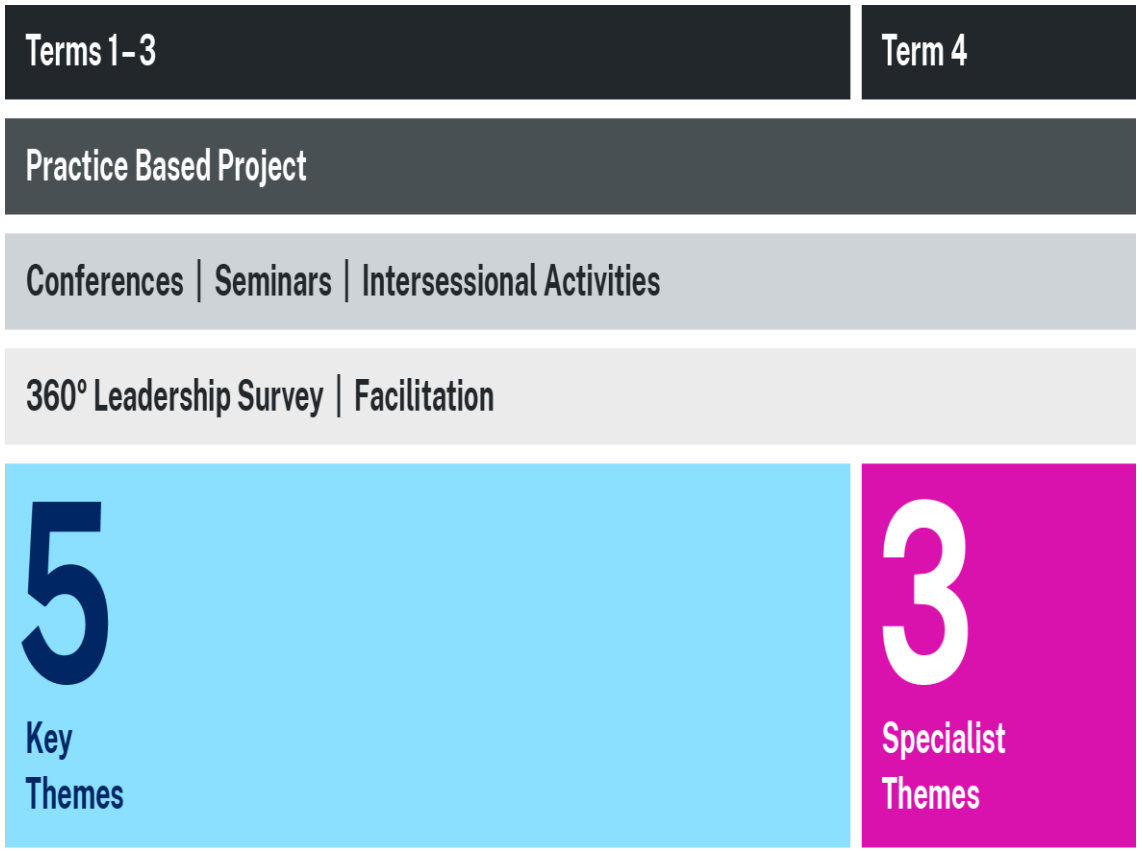
Middle Leadership Development Program

Formal School Middle Leadership in New South Wales Schools: Research, Development and Evaluation

The NSW DoE Middle Leadership Development Program (MLDP)

Program Themes

Cohort 2



Key Themes

- Belonging
- Identity
- Influence
- Improvement
- Leading High Performing Teams

Specialist Themes

- Leading Aboriginal Education
- Leading Pedagogy and Assessment
- Leading Staff Performance and Development through Coaching

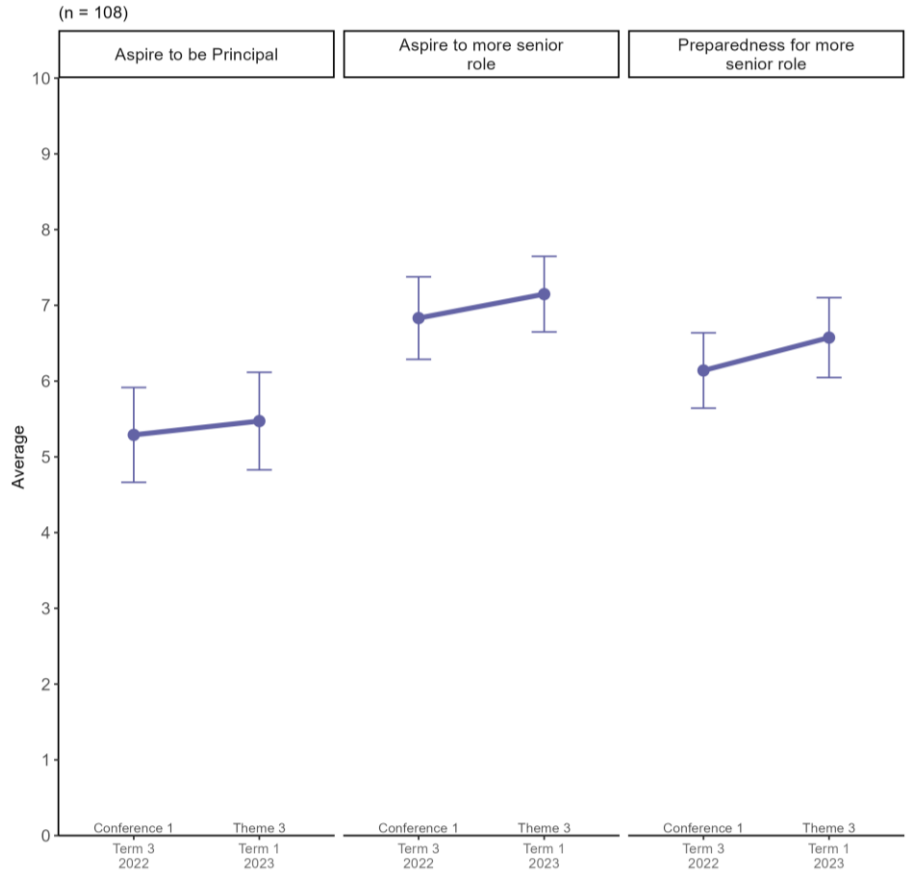
Middle Leadership Development Program

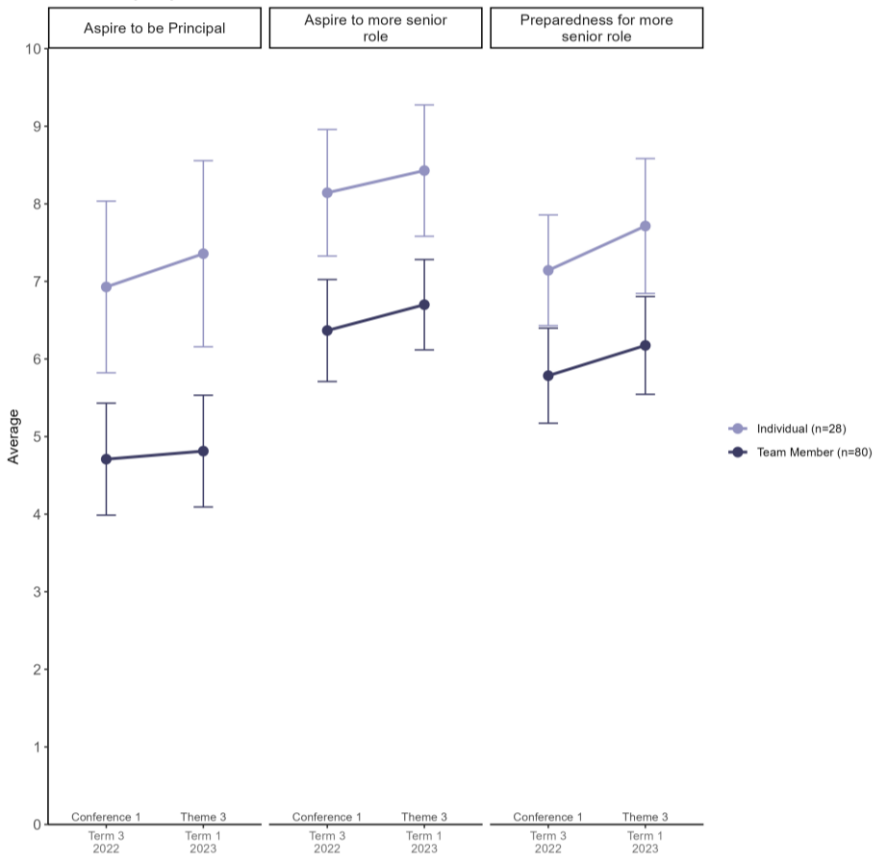
Formal School Middle Leadership in New South Wales Schools: Research, Development and Evaluation

Evaluation of the NSW DoE Middle Leadership Development Program (MLDP)

Analysis

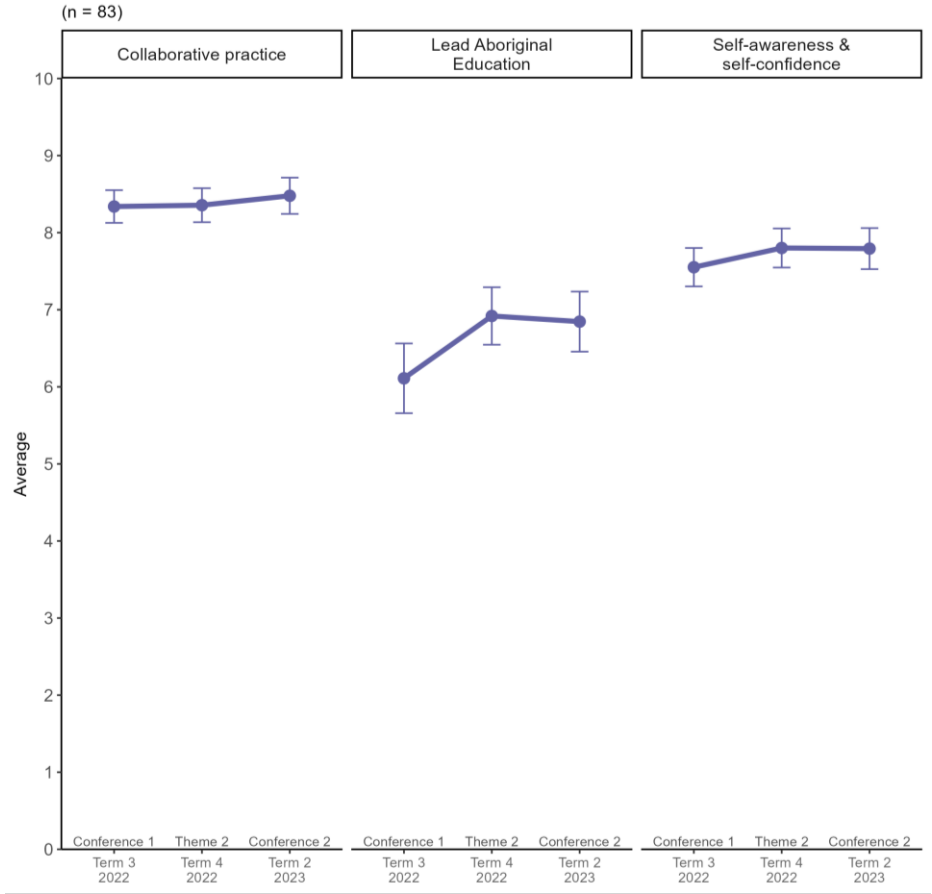
Leadership aspirations

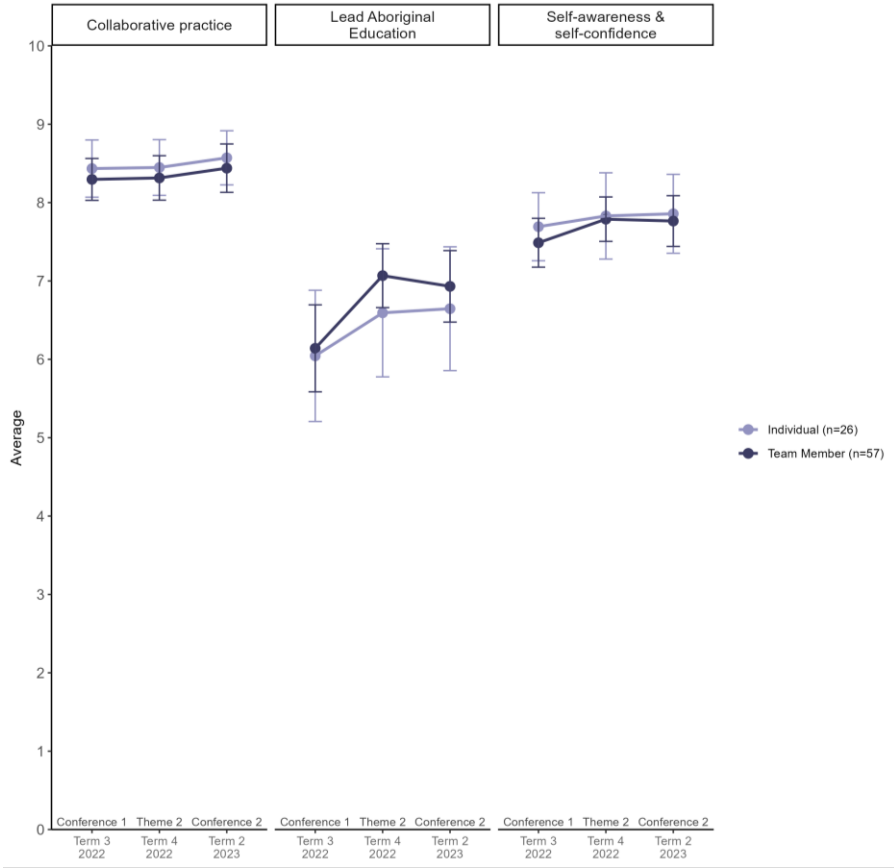




Analysis

Leadership efficacy



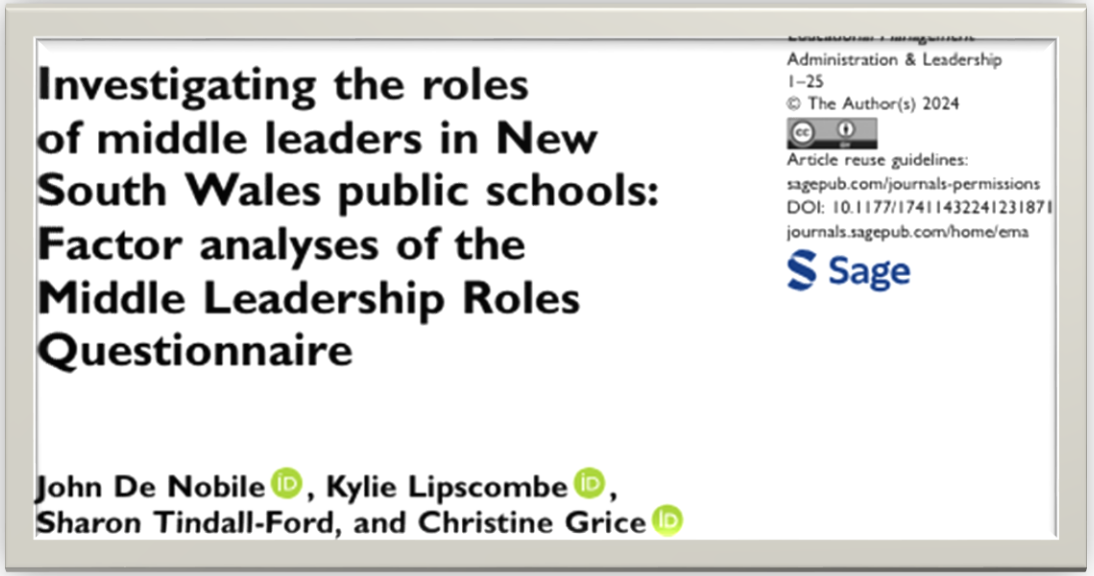


Phase 2 of the Middle Leader Report (2024)

Based on further investigation into data from our Middle Leaders survey, a validated 7 factor model for middle leader roles and responsibilities has been developed:

1. Managing students
2. Administration
3. Organising
4. Managing curriculum
5. Supervision
6. Staff development
7. Leading learning and change.

Researchers found differences between the ways secondary and primary middle leaders experience their roles.



Phase 2 of the Middle Leader Report (2024)

Focus: Middle leadership Identification, Appointment & Aspirations

Researchers: Lipscombe, Tindall-Ford, Grice & Denobile

Aim: To examine the factors middle leaders attribute to their appointment as a middle leader, and the aspirations and influences to aspire for senior leadership positions.

Method: Analysis of 3511 survey responses from NSW public school middle leaders

Significance:

a survey of over 500 school staff, including principals, middle leaders, teachers, and HR/support staff in Australian schools reported that a large scale leadership shortage is a leading threat in the national education system with participating middle leaders being one of the most highly reported group reporting negative feelings about their work and the culture of their workplace (Peoplebench, 2023).

Phase 2 of the Middle Leader Report (2024)

Opportunity for the NSW DoE

Advancing an understanding of the trajectory from teacher to middle leader to senior leader may support school systems, policymakers, schools, school leaders and teachers to better identify, support and develop teachers across their career stages in order to ensure a sustainable school leadership identification and appointment pipeline, empirically based upon the aspirations of middle leaders themselves.

Where are we now?

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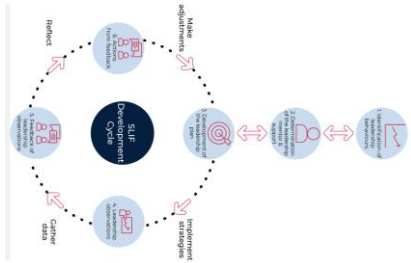
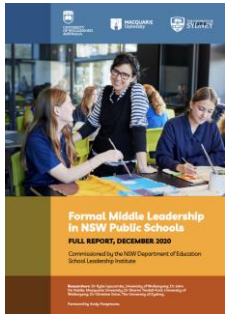
SLI School Leadership Institute

Holistic Approach

Research: Leadership Identification



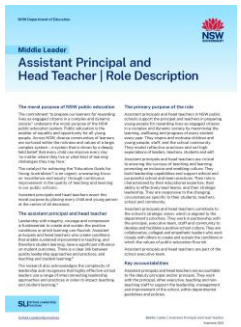
School Leadership Identification Framework



Research: Middle Leadership

Middle Leadership Induction

Selection based synchronised PD Middle Leadership Program + Senior Leader Facilitators



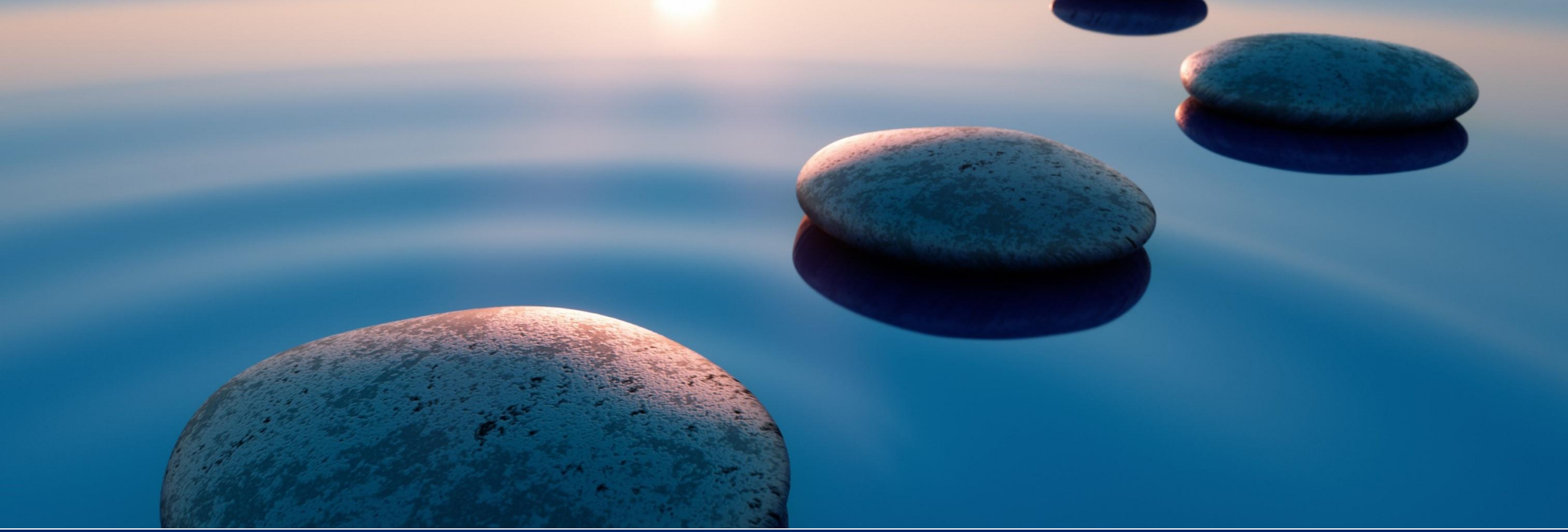
Middle Leader Role Description

Role Description Webinars

Middle Leadership Podcast

Online freely available asynchronised middle leadership modules

System Leadership in Middle leadership



Where to next?

NSW Department of Education
education.nsw.gov.au

Senior Leadership – Aspiring Principals Leadership Program

A 12-month learning program that develops the leadership capabilities of senior leaders (assistant and deputy principals) and helps lead school improvement.

NSW Department of Education
education.nsw.gov.au

Senior Leadership – Aspiring Principals Leadership Program (SL–APLP)

Participants analyse their current practice, develop new learnings and reflect on the impact of their leadership actions by leading an inquiry in their context guided by the School Leadership Institute Leadership for Learning frameworks.

Underpinned by three frameworks

NSW SLI Leadership Mindsets

NSW SLI Leadership for Learning Analysis

NSW SLI Leading Inquiry for Improvement

64 hours accredited at Lead for participants through MyPL

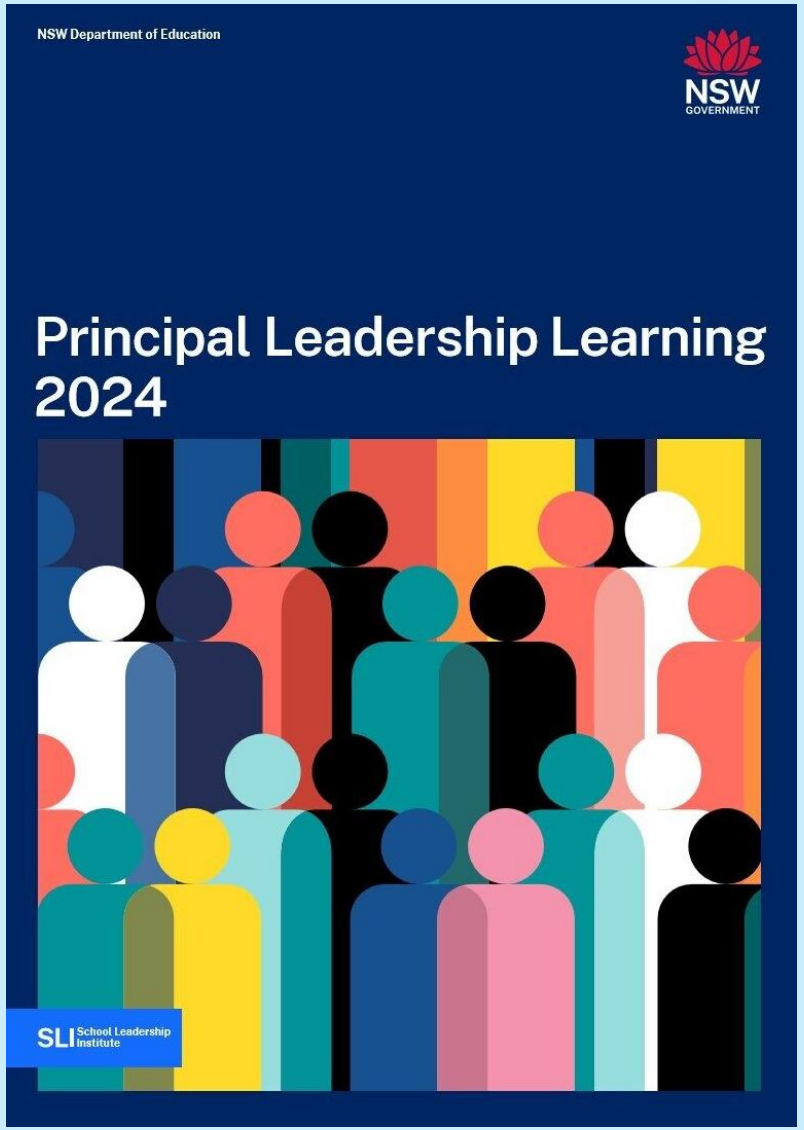
Principal Leadership Hub - Access to all SLI resources for all leaders

A one stop portal to the SLI's Principal Leadership Learning Program and other resources

Principal Leadership Learning (PLL) 2024

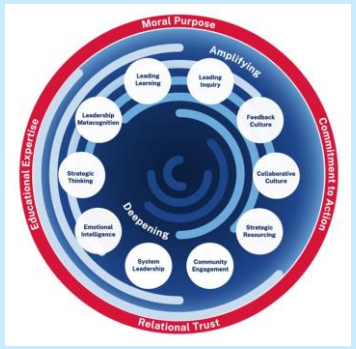
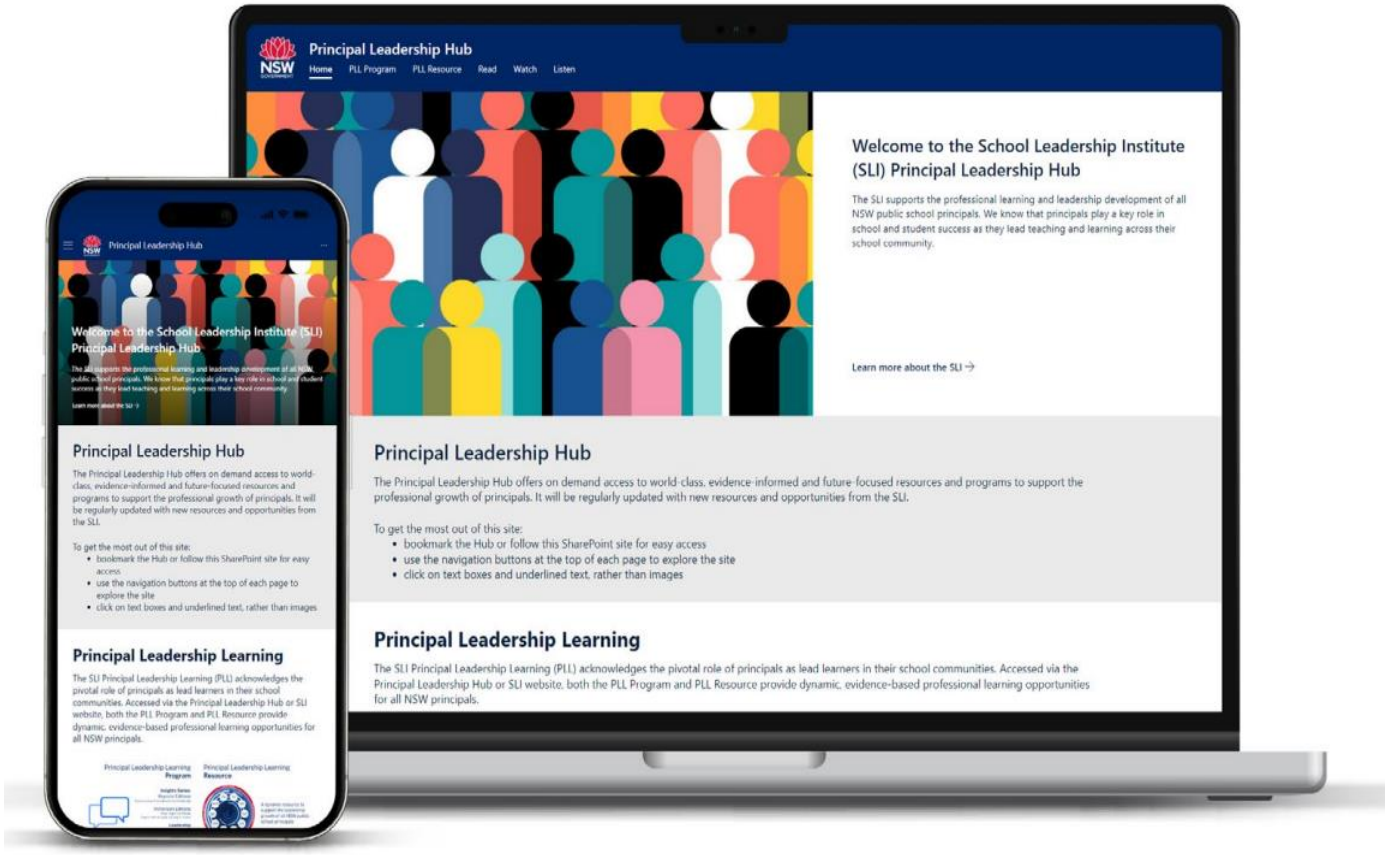
Acknowledging the pivotal role of principals as the lead learners in their school communities.

Together the PLL Program and PLL Resource provide dynamic, evidence-informed professional learning opportunities for all NSW public school principals, relieving principals and Directors, Educational Leadership.



PLL | Program & Resource

Live and on-demand



‘…sustained over time, anchored to practice, uses active learning strategies and is coherent with other learning activities.’ Leithwood et al