Irymple South Primary School
Performance & Development Culture
Accreditation Application 2007

Irymple South Primary School is in a rural location ten kilometres from Mildura. The school is the only physical building denoting the Irymple South area. The school’s 225 students are drawn from surrounding horticultural properties and low density housing. The teaching staff of 17 includes several part-time teachers. There are four teachers who have 25 to 30 years teaching experience, two with twenty years experience, seven with 12 years experience, three with 6 years experience and one graduate teacher with two years experience. There is little teacher movement between district schools and many teachers have limited teaching experience outside Irymple South PS.

In the past three years the school has experienced a period of significant change, with a new principal and leading teacher appointed. There has been a greater focus on working in collegiate teams and developing school-based professional learning programs for teachers. Formal structures for team planning have been implemented and their weekly planning meetings are another key professional learning opportunity for teachers. Teachers now learn through action learning projects, supported by Network staff and school team leaders.

Irymple South Primary School has developed a strong performance and development culture over the past three years and has been at the forefront of a number of key teaching and learning initiatives within the Sunraysia Mallee Schools Network. Our aim has been to move from ‘good to great’.
Element 1: Induction

The induction program commences at Irymple South PS upon application for advertised positions. All applicants are provided with a copy of the School Charter/Strategic Plan and Annual Implementation Plan. This provides applicants with an understanding of the school community, our purpose and values and the school’s educational goals before they apply for a position at the school.

New appointees are provided with a detailed induction program. They meet with the Principal and are given a tour of the school and surrounds and initially introduced to key staff members with whom they will be working. A detailed staff handbook is provided outlining programs and procedures. An orientation of the school office and staff facilities, including the use of photocopiers and other equipment, is provided by the Business Manager. New teachers undergo a familiarisation program of the Library facilities and the ICT manager provides a familiarisation of the school’s ICT facilities. A staff ICT manual is given to all staff members, and this is regularly updated.

New and returning teachers are also briefed by the school’s Leading Teacher (Leader in Learning). The Leader in Learning meets with new teachers to bring them ‘up to speed’ on key school programs and updates them on the major professional learning previously undertaken within the school. New appointees are included in forward planning meetings and professional learning at the end of the previous year. The aim is to establish strong teaching teams.

A comprehensive mentoring program has been established and is aligned with VIT and DE&T guidelines. First year graduate teachers are provided with a mentor. The graduate teacher and the mentor are each provided with an additional hour’s Administration and Planning Time (APT) each week to allow for regular meetings. A core team of four mentors has been established and each member has completed the VIT mentor training program in 2005 or 2006. Graduate teachers undertake the VIT registration process for provisionally registered teachers. The school has encouraged the provisionally registered teacher to take two years to complete this process, to ensure it is comprehensive and rigorous. The mentor, unit coordinator and teaching team colleagues are all used to support the development of a graduate teacher.

Returning staff members meet with the Leader in Learning to update their knowledge of new initiatives and school programs instigated during their absence from the teaching profession. They are also teamed with a teaching partner to provide mentoring support. Depending on the length of the period of absence, this mentoring process may closely resemble the process for a beginning teacher if necessary.

New and returning staff members are supported through a number of initiatives. All teaching teams meet for one hour each week with the Leader in Learning (pedagogical leader). This role is separate to the unit coordinator role. These meetings are used as a cycle of team planning for teaching, learning and assessment. Moderation of student work and teacher assessment is included. The weekly meetings are professional learning, related directly to the daily work of each group of teachers. Unit and teaching team meetings are held separately to deal with incidental planning of programs and
events. These are led by an experienced unit coordinator, who provides additional support to new and returning staff.

New and returning teachers are provided with access to professional learning to update their knowledge and skills, particularly in school wide programs. Establishing a pattern of regular professional dialogue is another key element in the performance and development culture at Irymple South. Ongoing and purposeful dialogue about teaching and learning is strongly encouraged, not just in team and whole school meetings, but in daily interactions between teachers. The professional dialogue throughout the school is the most important aspect of any new teacher induction process. New teachers are encouraged to have a strong voice at meetings and this is considered an important part of their professional growth.

At the commencement of the teaching period, the student profiles are a valuable tool in providing new teachers with an immediate snapshot of each student and their learning. These profiles, along with a school wide assessment schedule, were established over the past two years as part of the school’s assessment and reporting reform. New teachers are given release time to analyse the assessment data provided, so that it can be used to inform their teaching and learning programs.

Those teachers moving to a new teaching unit are provided with mentoring to assist them in the change of teaching level. They are always teamed with a teaching colleague who has previous experience in the teaching area. They are supported with relevant professional learning to ensure they have a comprehensive understanding of the teaching and learning programs at that level. Much of this is provided within the school, but may also involve participation in external professional learning programs, followed by assisted and monitored classroom implementation.

The induction program is regularly reviewed, with feedback sought from new and returning teachers on the effectiveness of the program and changes are implemented for the following year where appropriate. Future mentoring needs are determined as part of the school’s end of year staffing planning and implemented accordingly. The staff handbook is updated annually.

**Evaluation**

The results of the PDCQ indicate that all new and returning teachers were provided with an effective induction program. The results in all sections of the Induction Element of the PDCQ were 100%.

The school’s provisionally registered teacher has gained full registration and the quality of her presentation to the panel was outstanding, indicating the quality and the power of the induction process. The student outcomes data from our graduate teacher’s class indicate that she has become a highly effective teacher. Similar student outcomes data has been achieved in the classes of all new and returning teachers. Parent Opinion survey data indicates high levels of satisfaction with all teachers.

**The following documentation is attached to support this application:**

- Irymple South PS Staff Handbook - Table of Contents
- Excerpt from Provisionally Registered Teacher’s VIT Registration presentation
Element 2: Use of Multiple Sources of Feedback on Teacher Effectiveness for Individual Teachers and Teams of Teachers

Irymple South Primary School has a significant focus on Formative and Summative assessment; the use of assessment ‘of’, ‘for’ and ‘as’ learning. The work of Black and William has been used extensively to inform and direct development of a pedagogy that values the students at the centre of all assessment. Assessment is a key element in the provision of feedback to teachers on their effectiveness and the effectiveness of the teaching teams in which they work.

Multiple sources of feedback are used to improve teaching and learning programs within the school. A systematic assessment schedule has been established across the school where assessment of learning is translated into Assessment for Learning. Formal assessment of student learning is scheduled for half way through the year (around June), then again at the end of the year in November. This formal school collected data is strategically used with all teachers in February and July as Assessment ‘for’ future teaching and learning.

Strategic analysis of data has occurred throughout the school where individual teachers and teams of teachers analyse class and individual feedback data to establish individual learning plans for all students and class learning plans for cohorts of students.

Teams of teachers meet weekly throughout the year with the Leader in Learning to strategically plan assessment opportunities for all students. Particular emphasis is placed on planning opportunities for assessment ‘as’ learning and assessment ‘of’ learning. Individual teachers and teams of teachers moderate their assessment tasks and use this process, and the data obtained, to plan future teaching and learning activities and to plan inclusive, regular assessment opportunities. VELS standards and progression points have been used extensively in the moderation process with all staff.

AIM data has been analysed and discussed with the whole staff. Individual students, cohorts of students and teaching strategies have been identified as priority areas for both teacher and student learning. Reading Recovery data and P-2 Benchmark Reading data is also used strategically with teachers to inform future learning and teaching programs and to stimulate discussion about the needs of the students in the school.

Student assessment of themselves as learners has been an integral part of our feedback data at Irymple South Primary School. All students in the school regularly reflect using various forms of reflection. Formal reflection journals are used by all students on a regular, ongoing basis. Teachers also receive feedback from students through the use of regular and timely reflection in all areas of the curriculum.

Teachers throughout the school have received feedback from other teachers sitting in on their classes. Teachers in the school have observed the Reading Recovery teacher in action in the Reading Recovery program and the SELL program where small groups of students in Years 3, 4 and Prep have worked with the Reading Recovery teacher in a small group intervention program. The P-2 teachers have worked with an international Literacy expert, observing best practice in Early Years.
Literacy and observing each other teaching in a regular, structured teacher learning program. These observations formed the basis for professional discussion about ‘best practice’ teaching and learning strategies in P-2. Irymple South Primary School is also involved in an exciting Coaching pilot program called T.O.T.A.L (Teachers Observing Teaching and Learning) which involves two classroom teachers training to become coaches. They will work within the school to enable teachers to observe others teaching, as an ongoing professional learning experience. Teachers in Years 3-6 have also worked with a district educator in an innovative reading program called F.A.B. (Friends and Books) in a model of teacher learning that involves new learning, professional dialogue, planning for teaching, observing the teaching and learning and reflection after teaching and observing.

Teachers have received formal feedback from their students through the Student Attitudes to School survey. Data from this survey has been analysed and discussed and goals for school improvement have been identified to be incorporated into the Annual Implementation Plan. P.O.L.T. surveys have been administered to students and teachers and data is being collated to drive the implementation of POLT strategies throughout the school. Feedback has also been obtained, discussed and reflected upon from student forums led by the Network Project Officer for Student Wellbeing. This was used to determine student attitudes to welfare and discipline issues in the school.

Classroom teachers are provided with regular attendance reports for their students and strategies are discussed at weekly staff meetings for supporting families with attendance concerns.

Parent feedback is provided via the Parent Opinion Survey each year and parent feedback was a key component of the School’s Year of Review in 2006.

**Evaluation**

The survey results indicate that 100% of teachers have received feedback from colleagues based on discussing samples of student work in the past two years, reflecting the school’s planning processes which incorporate moderation of assessment. Teachers at Irymple South PS have meaningful professional conversations around student learning. Most teachers indicated they had received feedback from other teachers sitting in on classes, data from students about their assessment of themselves as learners, feedback about students’ learning outcomes and objective feedback from parents. A culture of seeking and using feedback exists and teachers are now able to separate the personality from the performance when giving and receiving feedback.

Some teachers indicated they had received little or no formal feedback from students. Opportunities for formal student feedback will be addressed in planning for 2007, ensuring the formal opportunities established for feedback for classroom teachers is extended across the school.

**The following documentation is attached to support this application:**

- Student Data Profile summary sheet
- 2006 AGQTP Final Report
Element 3: Customised Individual Teacher Development Plans

All teachers were included in reviewing the school’s performance and development process in late 2005. Teachers were asked the following questions:

- What do you believe is the purpose of the teacher P&D process?
- What do you want to achieve from the process?
- What should the teacher P&D process provide for the school?
- What should the teacher P&D process provide for students?

The school used this teacher feedback to develop a teacher performance and development process for 2006 which has clear links to the school’s goals, teacher goals, teacher professional learning and individual teacher roles and responsibilities. The new P&D proforma developed by the school incorporates DE&T requirements with the school’s identified needs. Individual Teacher Development Plans are developed as part of this process.

The school has moved from a ‘top down, principal focused P&D process to a small team collegiate model. Teachers now work in collegiate groups of four or five to develop and review their individual performance plan. The Principal and/or Leader in Learning is a member of each collegiate team. In this model teachers are working together to improve teacher practice and student learning outcomes. The model is one of continuous growth and rejuvenation for all teachers and the school has aimed to make the process meaningful for those teachers at the ‘top of the scale’. The teacher professional learning goals will lead to improvement of teacher knowledge and skills.

Clear guidelines are provided for teachers on the development of their plans and a weekly staff meeting was allocated at the beginning of the school year to assist teachers in the process. Each individual teacher’s goals are linked to the school’s goals for the year. The interconnection between the School Strategic Plan, the Annual Implementation Plan, the principal’s Performance and Development plan and every teacher’s P&D plan ensures common goals and that all members of the teaching team are focused on improved outcomes for students. Each teacher’s goals are directly related to student learning and the teacher professional learning needs required to achieve this, are a key focus of the process. An action implementation plan is used by each teacher to assist in the achievement of their goals.

The teacher performance and development process runs from February to November each year for all staff. Individual increments are processed as they become due. Teachers meet in February to reflect on their teaching and develop their professional learning goals for the current year. The members of their collegiate team support them in this process by providing feedback and engaging in professional dialogue. The group meets again early in Term 2 to finalise plans and ensure all sections of their plan are completed. The teams meet again mid year and the final meeting of the cycle is a chance for each teacher to celebrate their learning and growth, as well as an opportunity to reflect on areas for further improvement. It aims for continuous growth of members of the teaching profession. Improving pedagogy will improve student learning outcomes for all students.
Evaluation

All teachers indicated in the survey that they have an individual teacher development plan, developed with the support of guidelines provided by the school and that the school ensured their plan was up to date. This reflects the benefit of developing a detailed set of guidelines and allocating staff meeting time for teachers to begin writing their plans. The use of small, collegiate teams also ensures collective responsibility for the thoroughness of the process. 100% of teachers indicated that their plan was informed by their own analysis of teaching in relation to a set of teaching standards and 92.9% of teachers agreed their plan was informed by feedback about the learning outcomes of students. The allocated weekly teaching team meetings have provided an opportunity for teachers to do this and to use their reflection and analysis of student outcomes to determine student learning needs. This is then used in the teachers’ professional development plans to drive their own future learning.

100% of teachers agreed that their plan was aligned with what they really needed to increase their effectiveness as a teacher and that their plan was aligned with the school’s priorities for improvement. 92.9% of teachers agreed the school had supported the implementation of their plan. The school has used multiple data sets and exhaustive processes to determine the school’s priorities and the successful alignment of teachers’ development plans demonstrates the success of the staff consultation process in developing those priorities. All teachers indicated that the school has assisted in the development of the plan and that opportunities for professional learning in this school will have a positive effect on their career prospects. The changes implemented in the past three years mean all teachers have greater opportunity to access effective professional learning and that the professional learning is relevant, engaging and meaningful.

28.6% of teachers have indicated that they have received little or no feedback from surveys of students in their class to inform their Individual Development Plan. Some teachers, including specialist teachers, have not yet had an opportunity to receive formal feedback from students via surveys. This will occur in 2007, when component mapping and student surveys will be completed for all teachers as part of the school’s continued implementation of PoLT.

35% of teachers indicated their Individual Development Plan was informed only to a minor extent by feedback from colleagues. Feedback from colleagues for specialist and support teachers will also be an area of focus in 2007. The team planning established for classroom teaching teams has proven very effective and needs to be extended to include specialist and support teachers.

The following documentation is attached to support this application:

• Irymple South PS Staff Performance and Development Process Guidelines excerpt
• Individual Teacher’s Professional Learning Goals Action Implementation Plan

Element 4: Quality Professional Development
There are many formal and informal forums within the school where teachers learn with and from each other. This learning occurs at an individual level, at team level and at a whole school level. Teachers are encouraged and supported to become reflective learners. “The ultimate goal of any staff development effort is the transfer of new learning to the teacher’s active repertoire.” (Burke & Baldwin, 1999) Professional learning at Irymple South is based on the 7 Principles of Highly Effective Professional Learning and is supported by significant budget allocations to fund teacher release for peer observations, coaching and team planning.

The school’s meeting structure has been designed to minimize the discussion of administration tasks in meeting time. The school’s weekly staff meeting is therefore a professional learning meeting. Professional learning occurs in a variety of ways at these meetings. The focus for all meetings is to foster a community of teachers who see themselves as learners, learning together. Learning occurs together through: reflecting, reading professionally, talking, challenging, questioning, sharing, planning and developing a deep understanding of Teaching and Learning. Learning is done in partnership with colleagues: in pairs, small teams and in collaboration with the whole staff. The focus for professional learning is directly related to student learning.

Weekly team meetings are timetabled in school hours for teams to meet with the Leader in Learning for planning, teacher learning, teacher conversation and moderation. These are a valuable forum for teacher professional learning and communication. Each unit also has a common lunchtime free from yard duty responsibilities, when they can meet to pursue unit based professional learning.

School Data is used strategically with the staff to identify the needs of the student, thus forming the focus for future teacher professional learning. Individual teacher performance and development plans are linked directly to the needs of the students. Teachers work in action learning teams and their work is student centred. The development of knowledge and skills is achieved through classroom implementation of teacher learning and the use of modelling and coaching to support this. Beverly Showers reported (1990) that 80% of teachers who had received coaching implemented new strategies, versus only 10% who received instruction without follow up coaching.

Two school based coaches are being trained to work in a coaching capacity with teachers in the school. This coaching initiative (TOTAL – Teachers Observing Teaching and Learning) is about teachers who are involved in regular, structured classroom observation and peer coaching. The TOTAL coach will understand the many models of professional learning and be able to select appropriately, according to teacher learning needs. TOTAL coaches will develop the skills and understanding to facilitate effective Professional Learning Teams. ‘This team will foster openness, dialogue inquiry and risk-taking. But their main purpose will be to cultivate a “Learning Community” within their own schools.’ (TOTAL Teacher Professional Leave application)

A successful Teacher Professional Leave application has resulted in 30 days leave per participant to support the implementation of the TOTAL project. Most of those days will be used to release the
participating teachers to work in a coaching capacity within the school, thus providing powerful professional learning for the coaches and teachers.

The school has been successful in gaining AGQTP (Australian Government Quality Teaching Program) funding in 2005 and 2006. The 2005 project examined strategies for ‘Building an Effective Learning Community’ and focused on establishing a school climate of collaboration and effective teamwork amongst teachers. The 2006 project was based on ‘Literacy Learning in Years Prep -2’ and involved an international Literacy consultant working with Prep – 2 teachers on developing powerful teaching and learning in infant Literacy classes. Julie Zrna facilitated teachers in observing others as a valuable tool for teacher feedback, teacher conversations and future teacher learning.

Many professional learning opportunities are facilitated by staff within the school. In-school professional learning is a powerful way to ensure sustainability and that the individual needs within the school are addressed. District educators are also used to facilitate and work with teams of teachers to develop innovation and ways for teachers to learn together. Several teams have worked with district educators on a range of projects including: Habits of Mind, Critical Literacy and FAB (Friends and Books). This professional learning always involves reading, discussion, reflection, trialling of new initiatives in classrooms and more reflection. Independent consultants have also been employed to work with teams of teachers within the school. Teacher professional learning at Irymple South is interwoven in all that we do and is part of every teacher’s daily work. It is structured and purposeful and teachers no longer attend a random selection of professional learning unrelated to school priorities.

**Evaluation**

The school’s Staff Opinion Survey has demonstrated strong improvement in Professional Learning and Curriculum Coordination over the past three years. These two areas were the lowest on the survey in 2004 and the years prior, indicating the need for a school focus in this area. The results of the survey are evidence of the successful strategies implemented to support the professional growth of teachers. Improved VELS student outcomes data also supports those strategies.

The survey results indicate that 100% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed with almost all statements related to quality professional development. 6.7% of teachers surveyed only slightly agreed that professional learning outcomes provided by the school resulted in increased understanding about linking assessment to the teaching and learning cycle and allowed them to access and use materials more effectively. The overall results are a strong endorsement of the school professional learning plans and the initiatives implemented within the school to improve teacher professional learning.

**The following documentation is attached to support this application:**

- Sample from 2006 School Professional Learning Plan
- 2006 Staff Opinion Survey summary
Element 5: Performance & Development Culture

The school has a clear vision and there is a common understanding of this vision by all staff. The development of the school vision has been a shared process, giving all teachers ownership. Improving outcomes for all students is our core purpose and all members of the school community; parents, students and teachers, share responsibility for the learning of our students. Irymple South Primary School has involved all members of our learning community in developing a continuous cycle of improvement, which is student centred. The school undertook a Negotiated Review in 2006 and all members of the school community were included in the feedback process including, students, parents, teachers, and School Support staff.

In implementing Flagship Strategy 1, teachers have explored our educative purpose:

- What is powerful to learn? (VELS)
- How do we know it has been learnt? (Assessment Advice)
- What is powerful learning and what promotes it? (Principles of Learning & Teaching)

At Irymple South we have fitted all the pieces of the jigsaw together and supported the implementation of the Blueprint strategies through the development of a performance and development culture. A learning community has been developed over the past three years that is alive with dialogue, reflection, assessment and planning. All teachers are drawn into the intellectual conversation that occurs in a variety of forums; informal, workshops, unit meetings, staff meetings and staffroom conversations.

The school’s data sets are used to determine the learning needs of students and teachers. All data sets are shared and detailed analysis of data is used to identify priorities. The development of whole staff ownership and collective responsibility for school data has been a key factor in the development of a performance and development culture. The school professional learning program is then focussed on the identified needs.

Communication is a key priority in the school, particularly due to the high number of part-time employees. A number of effective communication strategies have been implemented including a daily staff bulletin and staffroom noticeboard; distribution to all staff of minutes from leadership team meetings and staff meetings; a teacher buddy system and distribution online of key documents. This has allowed weekly staff meetings to focus on professional learning.

The school has been involved in a number of key educational initiatives in the Sunraysia Mallee Schools Network, including the (MYASS) Middle Years Assessment project, the TOTAL (Teachers Observing Teaching and Learning) project, FAB (Friends and Books) and the Habits of Mind Action Learning project. The teacher learning from the MYASS project has been implemented across the school and has supported the school in the successful introduction of the New Student Report Card in 2006. The school has established an innovative assessment and reporting program and we have been asked to share our learning journey with other Network schools.
Teaching teams are developed using a balance of experience and youth. By using the expertise and knowledge of experienced teachers, new teachers are supported in building their own child focused teaching and learning programs; driven by student outcomes data.

Staffing decisions reflect the process of continuous growth and rejuvenation for all teachers, with teachers being supported to transfer to new teaching areas after an extended period on one area of the school. This encourages the professional and personal growth of teachers and through the processes established as part of our performance and development culture, extensive support is able to be provided to teachers new to a teaching area.

Professional reading and professional dialogue are recognised as key elements in our performance and development culture. Over the last three years, professional reading has become an accepted practice among teachers at the school and the teacher dialogue it generates is a significant improvement. ‘Conversation, in short, is a powerful locus of culture-making, and a tool like Generative Conversations is an important culture-maker and a way of integrating work and learning…’ (Learning At Work, David Perkins et al 2005) We have become a learning community where students and teachers are constantly thinking, talking and learning collaboratively.

A number of key initiatives have been introduced over the past three years. Every new initiative has been provided with extensive support to ensure its successful implementation. The school has progressed at a steady pace in implementing the reform and has ensured that each stage is embedded before progressing to the next implementation step. The performance and development culture created at Irymple South is based on solid knowledge, skills and understanding. We have aimed to build leadership capacity within the school, thus ensuring the sustainability of the culture.

**Evaluation**

The survey results again strongly support the existence of a performance and development culture at Irymple South PS. For the majority of statements all or most teachers agreed or strongly agreed. No teacher disagreed with any statement. This reflects the successful implementation of the school’s strategies. A powerful induction program for new and returning teachers is supported by a teacher professional learning program that allows teachers to build their knowledge and understanding of how children best learn. Resources have been provided to support the elements of a performance and development. As each new initiative has been introduced during the past three years, teachers have been provided with scaffolding to ensure its successful implementation. Considerable professional change and growth has occurred and the leadership team have supported teachers and taken time to embed each new initiative in our daily practice. Staff Opinion and Parent Opinion survey data supports the existence of a P&DC at Irymple South PS. Our teachers believe their jobs provide them with professional stimulation and growth and have a sense of continuous professional development.

**The following documentation is attached to support this application:**

- 2006 Staff Opinion Survey - Leadership Module summary
- 2006 Parent Opinion Survey