



Leaning into leadership - middle leadership

Middle leadership in Australian schools refers to the roles and responsibilities that lie between classroom teachers and the senior leadership team. Middle leaders play a crucial role in implementing the school's vision and strategies at the departmental or team level. They are responsible for leading both teaching and learning within their areas, developing and implementing strategies for improvement, and ensuring that educational goals are met.

Middle leadership

Middle leadership in the Australian school context involves taking on additional formal responsibilities in addition to a teaching role and responsibilities. It involves being a role model for new teachers, providing guidance, and supporting colleagues in professional growth to improve their teaching practice. Middle leaders act as a bridge, translating senior leadership

directives into practical actions and supporting their colleagues in achieving these objectives. There are a diverse range of middle leader roles across Australia, and each middle leader has the potential to directly shape teaching quality and improve student learning and wellbeing. Middle leaders are crucial to the effective functioning of Australian schools. For many, middle leadership is a career goal, for some it is an important step towards becoming a school principal.

Examples of middle leadership roles in Australian schools

There are a wide range of roles which sit between the work of teachers and the work of senior school leaders and are considered, to be middle leader roles. These include leading learning areas, year levels, curriculum, administration, and those in wellbeing and pastoral roles. Other middle leader roles include coordinating specific projects or initiatives within the school. Some examples of middle leadership roles include:

Head of Department: This role involves leading a specific subject area, such as Mathematics, Science, or English. Heads of Department are responsible for curriculum planning, overseeing teaching practices within their department, and supporting their colleagues in delivering high-quality education.

Year Coordinator: Year Coordinators focus on the pastoral care and academic progress of students within a particular year group. They work closely with teachers, students, and parents to ensure that students receive the support they need to succeed both academically and personally.

Head of Curriculum: Curriculum Coordinators oversee the development and implementation of the school's curriculum across various subjects. They ensure that the curriculum aligns with educational standards and meets the needs of all students. This role often involves collaborating with teachers to develop innovative teaching strategies and resources.

Becoming a middle leader

To be able to apply for middle leadership roles, a teacher typically needs to demonstrate strong teaching skills, a deep understanding of their subject area, and the ability to lead and inspire others. Professional development is essential, and aspiring middle leaders should seek out opportunities to enhance their leadership skills through courses, workshops, and mentoring programs. Additionally, gaining experience in various school initiatives and taking on additional responsibilities can showcase a teacher's readiness for a leadership position.

Schools also play a significant role in supporting teachers who aspire to become middle leaders by providing structured pathways for career progression, such as leadership training programs and opportunities for shadowing current middle leaders.

"Your first port of call would be either your Direct Line leader or your principal and make your intentions clear that this is a pathway you want to take and ask for those opportunities. Draw upon your allies and champions within the school to help you find these opportunities. Volunteering is also fantastic. Schools run on volunteer hours, so there are always lots of opportunities for collaborative projects with people within your faculty or other faculties. Look for these opportunities, and if they don't exist, that might be a sign that you can be the leader to establish them."

Highly Accomplished Leader – Primary & Secondary

Take action: Professional Standards for Middle Leaders

"Middle leader standards provide a clear framework for identifying growth strategies across various leadership dispositions, offering a structured approach to leadership."

Highly Accomplished Teacher - Secondary

Find out more about the new Professional Standards for Middle Leaders, developed by AITSL in partnership with the Queensland Department of Education. Grounded in research and informed by practice, the Middle Leader Standards were developed in consultation with the profession.

These professional standards are a developmental tool to provide clarity about effective leadership to help middle leaders improve their impact by developing their leadership capabilities.

Explore the [Middle Leader Standards](#) to support your middle leadership development.

The Queensland Department of Education's website provides [resources](#) linked to the Middle Leader Standards.

