

Position Paper for the NSW Secondary Deputy Principals Association Teaching and the Other Role of a Secondary Deputy Principal in NSW DET Schools

Background:

In 2005 the NSW Secondary Deputy Principal Association conducted an extensive welfare survey of deputies from across the state. In early 2006 a report on the analysis of the survey was published with 6 recommendations. The analysis and recommendation have been discussed with DET at State, Regional and School Area levels with some positive actions resulting.

Recommendation 3, “Teaching and the Role as DP” was; “Further data to be collected to provide detailed information about the specific criteria used to determine the allocation of teaching duties of secondary DPs. The data should also inform of the impact of teaching on the changing role and other duties of the DP and vice versa.”

Recommendation 6, “Occupational Health of DPs” stated “Further data to be collected to provide detailed information about the nature, causes and extent of physical, emotional and psychological ill-health of secondary DPs and its relation to the changing role and allocated duties of DPs. Strategies should be implemented to identify these casual relationships of work-related ill-health, and to reverse their negative effects.”

A survey was commissioned by the State Congress of the NSW Secondary Deputy Principals Association. The survey was completed by 300 DPs at its State Conference in September 2006. While this survey was in relation to Recommendation 3 the results provided some valuable information with regard to Recommendation 6.

Of the 300 respondents;

- 11 were in High Schools with 3 Deputy Principals,
- 230 were in High Schools with 2 Deputy Principals,
- 43 were in High Schools with 1 Deputy Principal and
- 16 were from Central and Community Schools.

Findings

1. Time Taught: - While presently schools are staffed on a .5 teaching allocation (i.e. 560 minutes of teaching per week) for Deputies it was found that;
 - 40 (13.3% of respondents) did not have a teaching role and
 - On average the other Deputy Principals in high schools taught for 298 minutes per week while Deputies in central schools taught on average 446 minutes per week. These reductions in the teaching loads of Deputies have mainly come from the Whole School Allowance or the Total School Staffing or a combination of these two (71.3% of schools). The other 15.3% of schools have funded the reduction in teaching loads through the use of special programs in the schools.
2. The survey did not provide a clear statement from the deputy principals as to whether a secondary deputy should or should not have a teaching role in the school. Of the 300 deputies surveyed 140 (46.7%) believed that the Deputy should have a teaching role, 121 (40.3%) believe that the role of the deputy should be non teaching while 13% were undecided saying it depends on the context of the school.
3. Of those deputies who thought that a deputy should have a teaching role, they believed that on average 202 minutes per week should be the required teaching time.
4. In the analysis of the data, comments from those deputies who thought their role should have a teaching role, those believe that it should not and those who were undecided were considered

separately. It was found that there were no discernable differences in the responses between the three groups.

5. The findings about the advantages and disadvantages of a deputy having a teaching role were as follows:

Advantages:

- Connection with pedagogy, curriculum and assessment (51.3%),
- Connection to students (44%),
- Modelling to staff best practice, professional development and discussion (33.3%),
- Credability with staff (29%),
- Respite from the rest of the job/sanity saver/escape from the office (28.3%),
- Get to know students better and build relationships (20.7%),
- Grass level work/why I am a teacher/I love it (16.3%)

Disadvantages

- Conflict of time and role between crisis management/urgent welfare and discipline issues and teaching (54%),
- Lower quality of lessons due lack of preparation time, interruptions and lateness to class, missed classes and other calls on your time (49%),
- Urgent welfare/administration/Professional development matters delayed (45%),
- Time taken away from professional development, strategic planning, welfare, supervision and communication with parents (43.3%),
- Not available for students, staff and parents who feel unsupported (31%),
- Sheer size of the DP role/ the job seems infinite/ overload/increased stress levels/tiredness/seen as "Mr Fix it" (28.7%),
- Time constraints make you reactive to issues and not proactive (10.3%)

6. The average number of days that the Principal is out of the school was reported from the survey as being 1.1 days per week. (i.e. 22% of the time a Deputy Principal is relieving as Principal). This result was consistent across all types of schools. 12 deputies reported that their Principal was so rarely away from the school they ranked zero days per week absent. However 54 (18%) recorded that their Principal was away 2 or more days per week.

In the Principals' bulletin dated 25/5/06, Principal's survey results indicated that since the restructure of the Department 77% of Principals reported that their time out of their school had increased (40%) or considerably increased (37%). For Term 1 2006 they responded that on average they were out of the school 1.6 days per week.

The deputies reported that impact of the regular absence of the principal from the school was;

- Having to do both roles results in increased pressure and stress due to extra workload and juggling of priorities, increased time constraints and delays in decisions been made(49.7%),
- Students in the Deputy Principals' classes suffer due to poor quality of lesson preparation and increased number of classes missed or late to and interruptions while teaching (35.3%)
- Other duties of the Deputy role suffers more than teaching (24%),
- Casuals taking the Deputy's classes increasing relief costs which are borne by the school (12%)
- 9.3% reported that the disruption was minimal.

Recommendations:

Recommendation 1:

That the NSW Secondary Deputy Principals' Association commence discussion with DET with regard to a reduction in the allocated teaching load of a secondary deputy principal from 0.5 to zero.

Recommendation 2:

That the NSW Secondary Deputy Principals' Association enter into discussion with the NSW Secondary Principals' Council and the NSW Teachers Federation with regard advice and their support for the reduction in the teaching load of a secondary deputy principal from 0.5 to zero.

Recommendation 3:

That the NSW Secondary Deputy Principals' Association commence discussion with DET about the Occupational Health and Safety issues highlighted by the survey with regard to stress levels regarding the conflict of the teaching role and the ever expanding welfare, administrative, strategic planning and professional development roles of the deputy principal.

Recommendation 4:

That the NSW Secondary Deputy Principals' Association form a Reference group with a maximum of five members, including the President of the Association, to implement the above recommendations.