

Rebuilding relationships and deepening understanding between central office and schools

The Department of Education launched the School Experience Program in Term 3, 2023. As part of the program, all new central office employees are required to spend a week in a local primary or high school at the start of their employment. The department's senior executives also spend a week in schools during Education Week.

The program was initiated by the department's Secretary, Murat Dizdar, to strengthen relationships and deepen understanding between the central office and schools. The program offers participants a valuable opportunity to experience the day-to-day operation of a school, gain a better understanding of the practical impact of policies on school-based colleagues, and learn how best to support them.

Program participants watch lesson planning and delivery in action, assist in classrooms, and take part in administrative tasks and staff meetings. They also observe day-to-day activities such as playground duty and excursions.

Donna's experience

Donna Wilcox, Executive Director, Employee Relations was one of the first executives to participate in the program. She spent a week immersed in activities at Orange Public School. She said:

“The main purpose of the program is so office support staff can actually understand how important our teachers are. It’s a perspective that I really, really needed for my job. You always know what teachers do, but what I hadn’t fully appreciated was how hard they work and how many different things they do on top of their classroom duties. It’s given me a good context and perspective, so when I’m back in my office, I’ll be making decisions with an eye to the time I spent at the school.”

One hundred and thirty-two central office employees had participated in the program as at November 2023. Feedback from post-visit surveys shows that all participating schools strongly agree that the program helped the employee who visited their school to gain an understanding of the complexity of school operations.

The School Experience Program is being expanded to all executive directors for Term 4, 2023 and then all existing central office staff in 2024.