



# Working as a School Consultant

## *Four opportunities for school consultants...*

*You can:*

- 1. Become a member of a Consultants' Practice Group*
- 2. Complete the course Learning to be a Consultant*
- 3. Participate in a program of Coaching, Observation and Practice*
- 4. Create a Regional, District, or Cluster Training Program: Negotiate a tailored program of professional learning to meet the specific needs of your group of school consultants.*



**Redgum**  
consulting



# Working as a school consultant

School consultants are in a unique position to support and assist schools to deal with the complexities of teacher change, school development and the ever-changing relationships between schools and the wider community. The work of school consultants requires sound knowledge of the education system as well as an ability to work at all levels of the system.

**But it also demands much more than this.**

Working with a range of schools from a position outside the school requires more than a working knowledge of current curriculum reform. Consultants need to be able to win and maintain the trust of a wide range of people in a range of different schools and at quite difficult school cultures. They need to be able to influence the way people think about their work, without being there on a daily basis. They need to be able to transfer knowledge and skills in a way which strengthens, rather than diminishes, individuals', teams', schools' capacities for undertaking their own self-evaluation, planning and improvement.

Navigating a course through these varied and shifting school situations requires a special range of skills for school consultants. Perhaps the most important of these is the development of the habit of reflection – being able to reflect on their own work. This does not happen just because the consultant is a caring person or a good motivator.

To fully develop the skill of critical reflection, school consultants need a theoretical framework for their work which gives their own actions meaning and coherence, and which gives them a way of thinking critically and analytically about the service they are providing.

A valuable theoretical framework will enable school consultants to effectively:

- contract roles and tasks with schools
- learn to observe schools as social organisations
- provide productive feedback to schools as a 'critical friend'
- take on and move between the quite different roles of group facilitator, trainer, consultant, mentor and coach

The underlying skill required to successfully carry out these tasks is the school consultant's ability to be a skillful process manager – that is, someone who does not rely simply on information-power for credibility, but whose work focuses and builds on the way people in schools manage the process of their own change and development.

Process management skills are best learned through a combination of insight, experience and practice.

Optimal learning of these process skills can be gained by:

- observation of and de-briefing with experienced practitioners in a range of situations
- supervised practice in the consulting role
- regular, facilitated, critical reflection on experience, both personal and collegial
- study of critical readings
- trials of appropriate models and tools for working with schools

**An information-oriented workshop or one-off conference presentation on 'school consulting', no matter how insightful or practical, cannot provide consultants with the process learning they need if they are to be effective external facilitators. Contemporary research shows that an action learning approach is highly effective in developing process skills. Action learning enables consultants to develop their practice knowledge, through repeated cycles of action and critical reflection, with the aid of a collegial group and professional facilitation.**

# Four programs for School Consultants

In order to increase the effectiveness of school consultants' work, the following professional development programs are recommended. They are not sequential and may be taken singly or as a package, (discounts apply)

You can:

1. Become a member of a Consultants' Practice Group
2. Complete the course Learning to be a Consultant
3. Participate in a program of Coaching, Observation and Practice
4. Create a Regional, District, or Cluster Training Program: Negotiate a tailored program of professional learning to meet the specific needs of your group of school consultants.

These programs are offered by Redgum Consulting, a consulting company with a wide range and depth of experience in working with schools. Redgum also has expertise in the design of professional learning programs which enable people to focus and direct new action in their work supported by structured reflection and skilled help from others.

## 1. Consultants' Practice Group (CPG)

**This program offers a unique opportunity to work with school consultants from a range of backgrounds and districts. Consultation and supervision will be on actual school cases...applying the theory to real life problems.**

A CPG provides varied opportunities for participants to improve their own consulting practice, supported by a network of their colleagues.

The group (5 to 10 members) will meet each month, for 10 months, for 3 hours. In working on their own issues group members will provide mutual support and build useful frameworks for putting new skills into practice.

This form of professional activity has an impact at many different levels; individuals are required to reflect critically on their real work; the group strengthens both its knowledge and understanding of each person's situation and its willingness and ability to build effective practice in the network; and schools benefit from the wider range of strategies, confidence and insights gained and practiced by the consultants.

**Location:** Given sufficient numbers we are happy to negotiate a local setting for the workshop site.

**Cost per participant:** \$1100 (including GST)

*Coffee and afternoon tea will be supplied.*



## 2. Learning to be a Consultant

**This program is for those who want a more intensive grounding in approaches to school consulting.**

This course can be developed in the following ways:

- a. As a 5-day action learning course completed in one term, either as 5 single spaced day-long workshops or begin with a 2-day workshop, involve a mid-term 1 day workshop and finish with a 2-day workshop.
- b. As a 5-day intensive residential course.

Maximum group size is 15.

### The Course

The early stages of consulting with a school  
The school as a living human system  
Understanding groups  
Observing, diagnosing, and intervening in a school  
Understanding teacher and school change  
Identifying, taking up and acting out key roles  
Working in and with difficult situations  
The final stages of a contract  
Bringing it all together

### Assumptions

**This program assumes the following:**

1. The participants will more clearly define the focus areas prior to the training itself.
2. There will be a commitment to fully engage in the action learning tasks required between workshops.
3. The learning will be in the group and be experiential. The work will be a mix of theory, discussion and practice. Opportunities for practice will be provided.
4. Strategies and processes used in the group will be evaluated for use by participants in their own work.
5. Some form of supervision (where necessary by phone or email) between face to face workshops is desirable.

**Location:** Given sufficient numbers we are happy to negotiate a local setting for the workshop site.

**Cost per participant:** \$1100.00 per person including GST.

## 3. Coaching, Observation and Practice

**This program develops a better understanding of what you do in your school consultants role and builds confidence to trust your instincts in different situations.**

It provides opportunities to work with a coach — to think, reflect and define your own role.

Individuals will work with a coach over a period of one school term.

In that time, they will have two opportunities to observe their consulting coach at work and give feedback, and one opportunity to be observed while in a work situation and to get feedback. There will also be a further three 1-1 coaching sessions to create and begin to implement an individual development plan negotiated in the coaching sessions.

Times will be negotiated to suit the work programs of both the consultant and the coach.

**Cost per participant:** \$1650 including GST.

## District or Cluster Training Program

**This program focuses on building the local consulting team — building habits of mutual peer support and critical reflection for the district's work with schools.**

Unique programs for teams can be negotiated and arranged to suit specific local needs. Time, content, purpose, costs are all negotiable.



## Program Leaders

### John Hogan

John has developed the Classroom Observation and Peer Support Program over the past 6 years. In that time he has run the program in a range of schools. He has extensive experience, expertise and training in consulting with organisations and community groups, facilitating planning, action learning, reflective practice and group work, leading groups and managing projects in educational settings, supporting leaders through coaching and supervision, conducting research and evaluation, curriculum development and implementation and in the provision of professional development and training courses. He works with organisations, groups and individuals as they engage with change through his business Redgum Consulting Pty Ltd. He is Chair of the Board and a National Coach for the Australian National Schools Network. The ANSN aims to connect teachers and schools around new ideas and rethinking their work. He is a director with the Big Picture Company (Aus) that has a focus on developing small high schools by design. He was a Commonwealth Relations Trust Fellow at the Institute of Education, University of London in 1993/94. He has a Certificate of Group-work Leadership (1991) and Certificate of Supervision (2002), Perth, Wasley Institute and completed courses in Group Dynamics and Consultancy (1998), and Workplace Observation (2000), Melbourne, Australian Institute of Socio-Analysis (AISA). Prior to becoming a private consultant John worked for the Department of Education in WA for 25 years in a range of roles including being a central office superintendent, a senior policy officer, a district office consultant, Head of Department (Mathematics), Year Coordinator, Alternative Year 11 Coordinator but mainly as a mathematics teacher.

### Marie Finlay

Marie Finlay is an educator, facilitator, coach and storyteller. An experienced facilitator of adult learning she has worked in a variety of organizations at both state and national level. She is a skilled facilitator with a depth of knowledge in group process. She has worked in this capacity across a broad client group and a wide range of issues including academic leadership with ACT/NSW Universities. She has worked as a teacher, lecturer and facilitator in primary, secondary and tertiary education. She has worked in both the public and private systems. Her experience encompasses establishing a centre for gifted students, coordinating the Managing Student Behaviour Program, facilitating a collegial group of superintendents and professional development for teachers and principals. She has researched Barriers to Promotion for Women in Education, and issues for Women in Education

working in country areas. She consulted and facilitated the Women in Leadership program for ECU. She has a certificate in Group work Leadership from the Wasley Institute (88), a Diploma in Ontological Coaching and Certificate IV in Workplace Assessment. She continues to participate in supervision with the Wasley Institute.

### Steve Miolin

Steve is a secondary school teacher from Western Australia with 26 years experience. He has both participated in and led Classroom Observation and Peer Support programs. During the past 4 years he has delivered Classroom Management & Instructional Skills training programs to experienced and new teachers. In that time he has continued to teach. He has observed hundreds of lessons and given feedback to teachers about their successful application of the skills learnt in the workshops. Steve's priority is classroom teaching and a commitment to training that recognises and respects the complexity of the work teachers do. As well as extensive and recent classroom teaching experience he has worked in various administrative positions including a short time as Principal and 3 ½ years as Deputy Principal at Manjimup Senior High School. Prior to that, he worked across a district, coordinating and delivering a range of professional development programs. Steve has extensive experience in group facilitation, organizational alignment, role clarification, coaching and behavioural change.

### Geoff Stewart

Geoff's school consulting work has focused on helping teachers and leaders to step back from their work, individually and in teams, to make more informed judgments about their situations and the actions they want to take. Geoff is an experienced classroom teacher and school leader. He has had recent training and experience as a facilitator in Classroom Observation and Peer Support programs in schools, and in the Classroom Relationships Project dating back to the 1980's. He was the chief writer of the WA Education Department's resource kit, *The Reflective Teacher*, published in 2003 and was a facilitator in the SCOPE project (self-directed action learning for teachers) in the mid-1990's. During the last fifteen years, Geoff and his family have spent periods working on Australian and international development projects in South and South-East Asian countries. Geoff has been a member of various school, curriculum and staff development project teams in the Western Australian government schools system. For ten years, he was a teacher and Head of Department (English) in Western Australian schools.

# Working as a School Consultant

## Expression of interest

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Position \_\_\_\_\_

Workplace \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Fax \_\_\_\_\_

/ /

Email \_\_\_\_\_


Date \_\_\_\_\_

I am interested in finding out more about:

- Consultants' Practice Group
- Learning to be a Consultant Course
- Coaching, Observation and Practice

**Contact John directly to negotiate a unique program suited for local needs.**

**When completed, please return this form by post to the address below or fax to 08 9433 3178**

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