

# National Professional Standard for Principals

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## Introduction

The Standard has been developed by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) in consultation with the profession, systems and sectors to promote excellence in the profession of teaching and school leadership.

The Institute's responsibility to lead this work is outlined in its Letter of Expectation from the Commonwealth Minister for Education.

AITSL was formed to provide national leadership for the Commonwealth, state and territory governments in promoting excellence in the profession of teaching and school leadership with funding provided by the Australian Government.

The Standard is a public statement which sets out what principals are expected to know, understand and do to achieve in their work. It is represented as an integrated model that recognises three leadership requirements that a principal draws upon within five areas of professional practice.

Pilot studies have tested the exposure draft of the Standard from early February to May 2011. The outcomes of the pilot studies, which were designed to test the authenticity, usefulness and value add of the Standard, have informed its finalisation and will shape the implementation strategy.

There are currently around fifty sets of leadership standards and capability frameworks that have been designed and developed in Australia. This national content standard acknowledges and draws on the valuable work that has already been done. Its primary focus is to provide a national framework for use in all schools and education systems.

## Purpose

The **National Professional Standard for Principals** has been developed to define the role of the principal and unify the profession nationally, to describe the professional practice of principals in a common language and to make explicit the role of quality school leadership in improving learning outcomes. It will assist in attracting, developing and supporting aspiring and practising principals.

It is a content standard and will be used to lead learning by:

- providing a framework for professional learning
- guiding self reflection, self-improvement and development
- guiding the management of self and others.

The strength of the standard will be in its implementation through ownership and engagement by the profession. It is a dynamic aid to reflection and development that will evolve over time.

## The Crucial Role of the Principal

The role of the principal of a school in the twenty first century is one of the most exciting and significant undertaken by any person in our society. Principals help to create the future. Principals are responsible and accountable for the development of children and young people so that they can become ‘successful learners, confident creative individuals and active informed citizens’<sup>1</sup>.

They believe in ‘the power of education to make a difference to the lives of individuals and to society’<sup>2</sup> now and in the future.

Principals are the leading educational professionals in the school. They inspire students, staff and members of the community to continuously enhance the learning of all.

Principals network and collaborate with a wide range of people to secure the best possible learning outcomes and wellbeing of all students. They are skilled at establishing and maintaining professional relationships and structures.

Principals are able to embrace uncertain, complex and challenging contexts and work with others to seek creative and innovative solutions that support quality outcomes for all.

The **National Professional Standard for Principals** (the Standard) sets out what principals are expected to know, understand and do to achieve excellence in their work. It takes full account of the crucial contribution made by principals in:

- raising student achievement at all levels and all stages
- promoting equity and excellence
- creating and sustaining the conditions under which quality teaching and learning thrive
- influencing, developing and delivering community expectations and government policy
- contributing to the development of a 21st century education system at local, national and international levels.

Research and a substantial and evolving body of knowledge inform the leadership requirements and the professional practices that are at the core of the Standard:

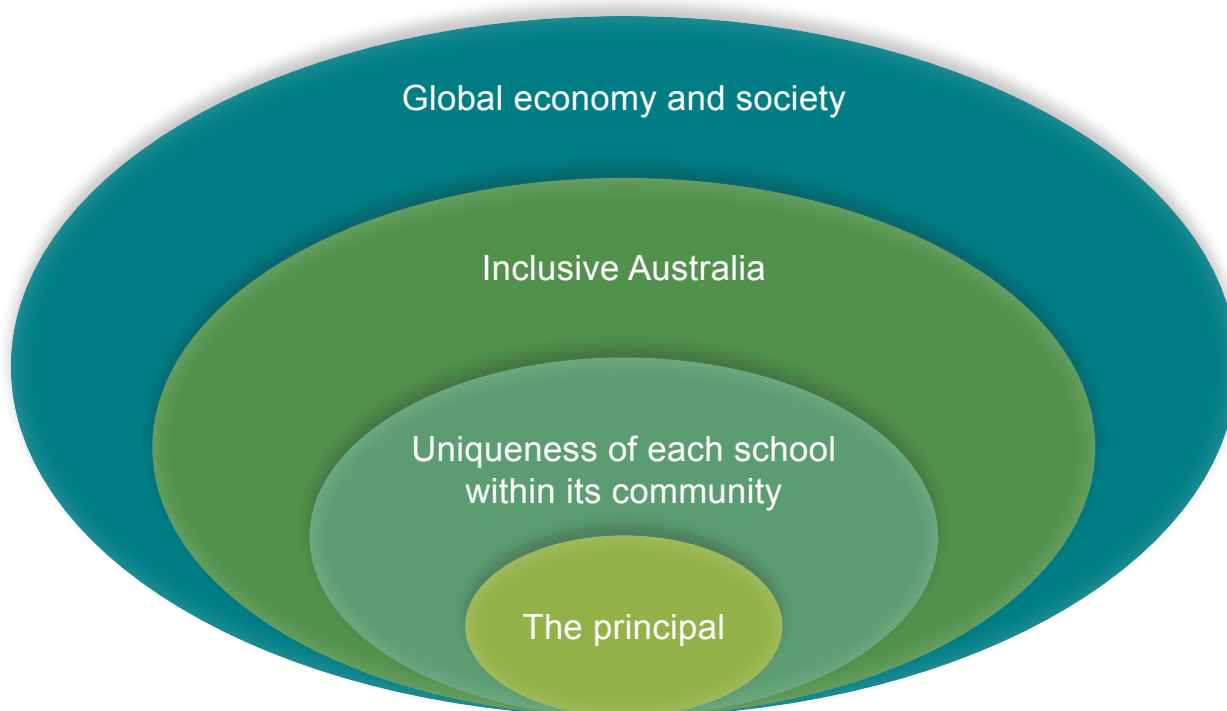
- leadership must be responsive to the diverse nature of Australia’s schools, contextualised and learning-centred
- the practices and capabilities of leaders evolve as leaders move through their careers
- leadership is distributed and collaborative with teams working together to accomplish the vision and aims of the school led by the principal
- almost all successful leaders draw on the same repertoire of basic leadership practices and behaviours. Some key personal qualities and capabilities explain a significant amount of the variation in leadership effectiveness.

1 The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (December 2008)

2 The Charter for the Australian Teaching Profession (April 2008)

## The principal in context

The principal works in a complex, challenging and changing environment leading and managing the school of today ever conscious of the needs of tomorrow.



### Uniqueness of each school within its community

All schools sit within their own distinct community respecting the local ethos, culture, history, vision and values and providing all students the opportunity to excel.

### Inclusive Australia

All principals have the responsibility to work with the members of the school community to ensure a knowledge and understanding of the traditional rights, beliefs and culture of our Indigenous peoples.

All students in all communities, including Indigenous, multi-cultural and multi-faith communities, across metropolitan, rural, regional and remote Australia have the right to education which ensures they become creative, confident, active, informed learners and citizens. This same right extends to students at risk and those of differing needs and abilities.

### Global economy and society

The world is rapidly changing with people becoming increasingly interconnected and interdependent. Education has a central and critical role in developing in all individuals the knowledge, understanding, skills and attributes to be successful citizens in the 21<sup>st</sup> century world.

The interplay between the local, national and international environments is the context in which the principal works.

## The National Professional Standard for Principals

The Standard gives expression to the leadership, educational and management requirements and practices of principals. The Standard is an integrated model that recognises all good leaders share common qualities and capabilities, which are expressed as three leadership requirements. Principals draw upon these three leadership requirements within five areas of professional practice.

The Standard acknowledges the challenging and changing context in which principals work and the diverse settings and variety of situations which they face on a day-to-day basis. The Standard provides a model against which principals can match their knowledge, qualities, experiences and skills to determine their strengths and areas for development. It is 'The Standard' rather than 'Standards', as it is integrated by nature reflecting the complexity of the role and shared ideals. The Standard is applicable to principals irrespective of context or experience. What will vary is the emphasis given to particular elements of the standard as principals respond to context, expertise and career stage.

The Standard is based on three leadership requirements:

- vision and values
- knowledge and understanding
- personal qualities and social and interpersonal skills.<sup>3</sup>

These requirements are enacted through the following five key professional practices:

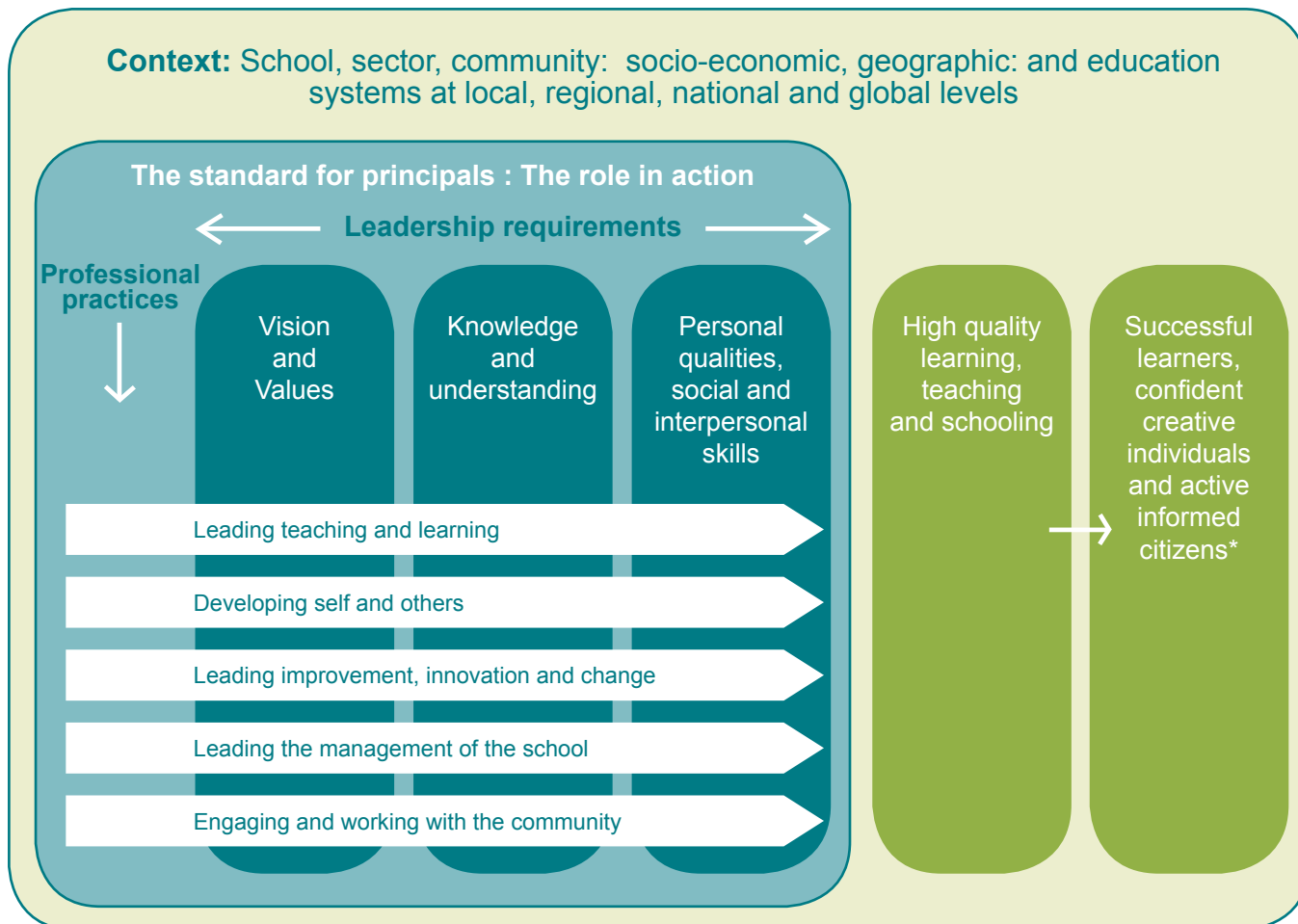
- leading teaching and learning
- developing self and others
- leading improvement, innovation and change
- leading the management of the school
- engaging and working with the community.

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<sup>3</sup> Leadership requirements in other standards and the literature are expressed as capabilities

# The National Professional Standard for Principals – an integrated model<sup>4</sup>

## Excellence in school leadership



Although the leadership requirements and professional practices of principals are detailed separately, it is important to emphasise that they are always fully interdependent, integrated and with no hierarchy implied. How that works will reflect the individual contexts in which different principals work.

In all professions there are leadership requirements for those in senior roles. What differs between professions is the context in which leaders work and what they do. Those preparing to take up the role of principal as well as practising principals need to consider how to engage with and develop the essential elements within the leadership requirements and professional practices that make up the Standard.

<sup>4</sup> All elements of the model are interdependent and integrated, no hierarchy is implied.

\* The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians

## The three school leadership requirements

Principals are required both to lead and to manage. Leadership develops shared vision, inspires and creates commitment and embraces risk and innovation. Management develops systems, which limit uncertainty, even out differences and improve consistency and predictability in delivering educational services.

### Principals lead and manage through:

- vision and values
- knowledge and understanding
- personal qualities and social and interpersonal skills.

### 1. Vision and values

Principals lead the development of the vision of the school. They are committed to the learning and growth of young people and adults guided by fairness, ethical practice, democratic values and lifelong learning. Principals understand, lead, mediate and serve the best interests of the community. This resonates through the strategic vision, school culture, traditions and positive ethos they seek to promote across the school. They insist upon high standards and foster respect across the whole school community.

- Principals model “learning for life” through their own professional practice and promote it actively in their interaction with students, staff, families and carers and the wider community.
- Principals inspire and motivate children and young people, staff and the school community and its partners and set high standards for every learner, including students, staff and self.
- Principals behave with integrity underpinned by moral purpose. They model values and ethical perspectives in relation to their own and the school’s practice and organisation. They promote democratic values including active citizenship and inclusion.

### 2. Knowledge and understanding

Principals understand the practice and theory of contemporary leadership and apply that knowledge in school improvement. Principals are well versed in the latest research and developments in pedagogy, curriculum, assessment and reporting and student wellbeing. They have knowledge of relevant national policies, practices and initiatives as well as relevant federal and state legislation, agreements and policies. They understand the implications of child safety, health and wellbeing, human resource management, financial management and accountability and other legislative and policy requirements in relation to serving their community and broader society.

- Principals have a current knowledge and understanding of research into teaching, learning and child development and how to apply such research to the needs of the students in the school. This includes the management of performance in the school and strategies to improve practice.
- Principals apply knowledge and understanding of current developments in education policy, schooling and social and environmental trends and developments to improve educational opportunities in the school. Principals work collaboratively with their school boards, governing bodies and others to achieve this.
- Principals apply knowledge and understanding of leadership and management concepts and practice to deliver with others effective strategic leadership and operational management.

### 3. Personal qualities and social and interpersonal skills

This requirement recognises the importance of emotional intelligence, empathy, resilience and personal wellbeing in the leadership and management of the school and its community. Principals regularly review their practice and implement change in their leadership and management approaches to suit the situation. They manage themselves well and use ethical practices and social skills to deal with conflict effectively. They are able to build trust across the school community and to create a positive learning atmosphere for students and staff and within the community in which they work.

- Principals are able to define challenges clearly and seek positive solutions, often in collaboration with others. They know when decisions are required and are able to use the available evidence and information to support, inform and communicate their decisions.
- Principals can communicate, negotiate, collaborate and advocate effectively and relate well to all the school's community. They are good listeners and coaches, clear in responding and able to give and receive feedback.
- Principals take account of the social, political and local circumstances within which they work. They continuously improve their networking and influencing skills.

## The Five Professional Practices of Principals

While leadership requirements are common to all leaders there are five professional practices particular to the role of the principal.

1. Leading teaching and learning
2. Developing self and others
3. Leading improvement, innovation and change
4. Leading the management of the school
5. Engaging and working with the community

### Model of Professional Practice

The leadership model of professional practice is cyclical. It involves the principal, working collaboratively with others, planning and acting, reviewing and responding.



#### Plan and Act

Assess and diagnose a given situation develop a plan, allocate resources and implement the plan consistent with the vision and values of the school.

#### Review

Collect and analyse data and make decisions.

#### Respond

Consider how to consolidate the implementation or determine what to change or alter how decisions are made.

# Professional Practices

## 1. Leading teaching and learning

Principals create a positive culture of challenge and support, enabling effective teaching that promotes enthusiastic, independent learners, committed to life-long learning. Principals have a key responsibility for developing a culture of effective teaching, for leading, designing and managing the quality of teaching and learning and for students' achievement in all aspects of their development. They set high expectations for the whole school through careful collaborative planning, monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of learning. Principals set high standards of behaviour and attendance, encouraging active engagement and a strong student voice.

### Plan and Act

Place learning at the centre of strategic planning and make sure that there is a diverse and flexible curriculum that is supported by creative, responsive approaches to teaching together with an effective learning environment. Convert the strategic planning into action in the classroom and in designing and delivering learning. Develop educational strategies to secure equity of educational outcomes to enrich the school as a learning environment for its students, families and carers and the wider community.

### Review

Implement an effective learning and assessment framework that uses data, benchmarking and observation to monitor the progress of every child's learning. Provide a consistent and continuous school-wide focus on individual students' achievement.

### Respond

Celebrate and promote good performance and challenge underperformance at all levels. Promote effective teacher intervention, corrective action and follow-up. Working through distributed leadership implements strategies in order that all students can achieve to the best of their ability and become engaged in their own learning.

## 2. Developing self and others

Principals work with and through others to build a professional learning community that is focused on the continuous improvement of teaching and learning. Through managing performance, effective continuing professional learning and regular feedback, they support all staff to achieve high standards and develop their leadership capacity. Principals support others, build capacity and treat people fairly and with respect. They model effective leadership and they are committed to their own ongoing professional development and personal health and well being in order to manage the complexity of the role and the range of learning capabilities and actions required of the role.

### Professional practices

#### Plan and Act

Provide effective planning, allocation, support and evaluation of work undertaken by others, ensuring clear delegation of and accountability for tasks and responsibilities. Develop and maintain effective strategies and procedures for staff induction, professional learning and performance review. Set personal targets and take responsibility for their own development.

#### Review

Review, evaluate and support staff – providing access to coaching and mentoring to achieve high standards. Regularly review own practice. Make certain that individual and team accountabilities are clearly defined, understood and agreed.

#### Respond

Recognise and celebrate the achievements of individuals and teams. Foster trust and release creativity by developing leadership in others, building teams and working co-operatively to achieve school goals and build the capacity of the future workforce. Recognise and appreciate a variety of talents and approaches to problem-solving and task completion. Take appropriate action when the performance of others is unsatisfactory.

### 3. Leading improvement, innovation and change

Principals work with others to produce and implement clear, evidence-based improvement plans and policies for the development of the school and its facilities. They recognise that a crucial part of the role is to lead and manage innovation and change to ensure the vision and strategic plan is put into action across the school and that its goals and intentions are realised.

#### Professional practices

##### Plan and Act

Work with the school community to promote and sustain school improvement informed by school effectiveness research. Lead and facilitate through teams the necessary innovation and change to reflect changing demands on and expectations of the school and use project management to foster both efficiency and effectiveness in achievement of goals. Take a strategic role in the development and implementation of new and emerging technologies to enhance and extend teaching and learning experiences.

##### Review

Develop quality assurance and review strategies to demonstrate the need for and effectiveness of innovation and change to secure improvement. Ensure the vision for the school is shared, clearly understood and acted upon effectively by all.

##### Respond

Motivate and work with others to foster creativity, innovation and the use of appropriate new technologies to achieve excellence. Demonstrate personal commitment to continuous improvement using problem solving, creative thinking and strategic planning. Use appropriate leadership styles sensitive to the stage, growth and development of the school.

### 4. Leading the management of the school

Principals use a range of data management methods and technologies to ensure that the school's resources and staff are efficiently organised and managed to provide an effective and safe learning environment as well as value for money. This includes appropriate delegation of tasks to members of the staff and the monitoring of accountabilities. Principals ensure these accountabilities are met. They seek to build a successful school through effective collaboration with school boards, governing bodies, parents and others. They use a range of technologies effectively and efficiently to manage the school.

#### Professional practices

##### Plan and Act

Within the framework established by employing authorities/school boards manage available resources to support effective learning and teaching. Ensure budgets are integrated and aligned with learning priorities. Create an organisational structure that reflects the school's values, and enables the management systems, structures and processes to work effectively in line with legislative requirements.

##### Review

Monitor and evaluate the deployment of people and resources to support the implementation of school policies and strategic plans within agreed budgets. Continuously review the range and quality of all available resources. Evaluate the use of resources to improve the quality of education and learning outcomes for all students.

##### Respond

Manage the school's human, physical and financial resources effectively and efficiently to achieve the school's educational goals and priorities. Attract, develop, retain and deploy staff appropriately and manage their workload to achieve the vision and aims of the school.

## 5. Engaging and working with the community

Principals embrace inclusion and help build a culture of high expectations that takes account of the richness and diversity of the school's wider community and the education systems and sectors. They develop and maintain positive partnerships with students, families and carers, and all those associated with the school's broader community. They create an ethos of respect taking account of the intellectual, spiritual, cultural, moral, social, health and wellbeing of students. They promote sound life long learning from pre-school through to adult life. They recognise the multicultural nature of Australian people. They foster understanding and reconciliation with Indigenous cultures. They recognise and use the rich and diverse linguistic and cultural resources in the school community. They recognise and support the needs of students, families and carers from communities facing complex challenges.

### Professional practices

#### Plan and Act

Develop strategies to ensure educational opportunity including countering discrimination and the impact of disadvantage. Engage with families and carers, and partner, where appropriate, with community groups, agencies and individuals, businesses or other organisations to enhance and enrich the school and its value to the wider community. Develop and maintain structures for effective liaison and consultation.

#### Review

Make sure learning experiences for students are linked to the wider community and invite and facilitate the community's participation in student learning. Actively seek feedback from families and carers and the wider community about the quality of learning and their ambition for education.

#### Respond

Create and maintain an effective partnership with families and carers to support and improve students' achievement and personal development. Contribute to the development of the education system by sharing effective practice, working in partnership with schools and others to develop integrated provision. Co-operate and work with relevant agencies to protect and support children and young people.

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