Leadership Profiles

Profiles in Action
Trials of the Leadership Profiles

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Australian Institute
for Teaching and
School Leadership
Limited

Background

In December 2014, AITSL launched the Leadership Profiles (the Profiles), which provide support for, and elaborate on, the Australian Professional Standard for Principals (the Standard). Following the launch, AITSL supported the conduct of five trials as one means to monitor the uptake and impact of the Profiles.

Two major trials were conducted, involving:

- the Department of Education, Tasmania; and
- the Education and Training Directorate, ACT.

In addition, three minor trials were supported with:

- the Department for Education and Child Development, SA;
- the Tuggeranong Network of the Education and Training Directorate, ACT; and
- the Australian Council of Educational Leaders.

This report summarises the details and outcomes of those trials. It is designed to assist schools, principals, aspiring principals, system and sector leaders and others in understanding and using the Profiles. It is supplemented by three separate reports for aspiring principals, principals, and system and network leaders.

What are the Profiles?

The Leadership Profiles were developed by AITSL as part of a broader program to support the use of the Standard. They consist of a set of 80 statements showing a pathway for the development of the characteristics of highly-effective principals; those who create and lead effective learning environments. The Profiles build directly on the Standard.

The Profiles are provided in a Summary Table at the end of this report. Starting with the five Professional Practices of the Standard, the Profiles illustrate how each element of the Standard is developed over four stages. This developmental pathway sets out the increasing proficiency that a principal might be expected to demonstrate with greater experience in the role.

The Profiles will assist school leaders and others in understanding and using the Standard with greater precision and detail, through a shared, common language for describing the actions, behaviours and orientations characteristic of high-performing principals.
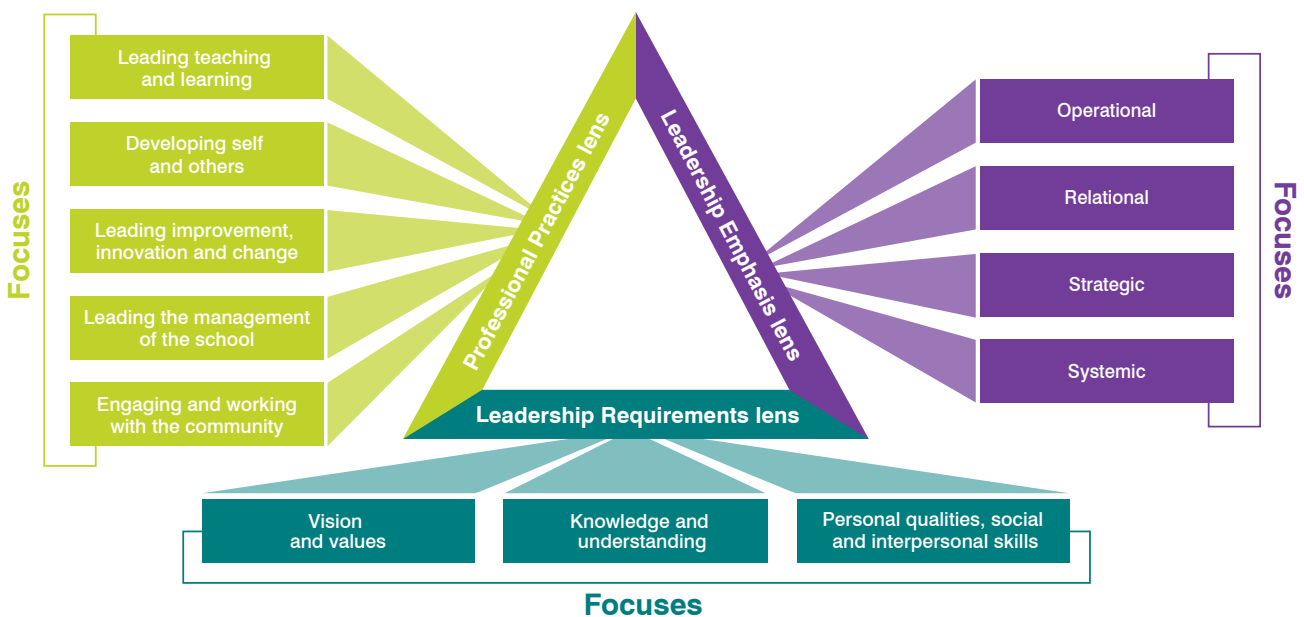
The leadership lenses, Professional Practices, Leadership Requirements and Leadership Emphasis, and the focuses linked to each lens.

One key element of the Profiles is that, using the Interactive Leadership Profiles, the component statements can be organised in different ways to reflect different perspectives. In each case the statements in the Profiles are the same, but they are arranged to reflect three different perspectives, or 'lenses' for viewing the Profiles:

- the Professional Practices lens, based on the five Leadership Practices of the Standard;

- the Leadership Requirements lens, which organises the Profiles around three components common to all effective leaders: Vision and values, Knowledge and understanding and Personal qualities, social and interpersonal skills; and

- the Leadership Emphasis lens, which includes Operational, Relational, Strategic and Systemic focuses, and assists school leaders in identifying what their priorities are and should be.

The Interactive Leadership Profiles also help users to find resources related to each statement and to download and print the chosen Profile.

How were the Profiles used in the trial programs?

Each of the trials used the Profiles differently. They illustrate the potential of the Profiles for use in tertiary education programs, principal induction, performance review processes, training and supporting the work of network leaders and support personnel, coaching conversations, and helping principals and aspirants identify their own capabilities. Beyond these formal trial purposes, participants identified a wide range of further uses for the Profiles. These are outlined elsewhere in this report.

In summary, each trial program used the Profiles as described below:

Department of Education, Tasmania	The Profiles and Standard provided the conceptual and content basis for the six-day THRIVE Principal Induction Program. This program involved 11 newly-appointed principals and four network leaders.
Education and Training Directorate, ACT	The Profiles were incorporated in the mid-cycle review of principal performance by system network leaders. A structured professional conversation based on the Profiles was added to the review process.
Department for Education and Child Development, SA	The Standard and Profiles were used as a basis for a new Graduate Diploma of Strategic Leadership. The Profiles are embedded throughout the course, developed by the University of South Australia.
Tuggeranong Network, Education and Training Directorate, ACT	The Profiles were used to develop a register of principal strengths. On the basis of identified strengths, the network grouped principals into professional learning communities which will develop projects in their areas of strength for other network members.
Australian Council of Educational Leaders	The Profiles were used in training 20 new Learning and Development Partners. AITSL trained the partners in the use of the Profiles for providing professional support to principals and other school leaders.

What did participants think of the Profiles?

Evaluations of each of the trials were conducted. In each case, participants were asked for their views of the Profiles and their uses. Throughout the trial process, and in all of the trials, participants offered consistently strong endorsement of the Profiles. The trials included principals and system leaders from all levels of schooling, beginning principals as well as experienced principals, and those from both regional and remote schools. Participants endorsed the Leadership Profile statements and their organising lenses as accurate and comprehensive descriptions of the principal's role. Each of the trials also supported the Interactive Leadership Profiles and their related resources.

One beginning principal endorsed their relevance for "keep(ing) me on track", whilst an experienced principal saw them as "covering everything I need them to cover". Among the comments made most frequently in discussing the quality of the Profiles were references to:

- their coherence and explicitness
- the clarity they provide around the leadership role of principals
- their value as a reference point both for current and future leadership roles
- the common language they provide about leadership
- their ease of use
- their role in providing additional detail on the Standard
- their role as a developmental continuum and progression pathway for principals
- their national status, which enables principals to place their leadership behaviours in a national framework, and to self-assess with increased rigour and consistency
- the quality of the resources linked to the statements in the interactive version
- the division into three lenses that provide a clear understanding of school leadership.

Profile

Practice description

"the missing sign-post"

How did participants think the Profiles could be used?

A significant proportion of principals involved in the trials or affected by them took the opportunity to use the documents in their work. They consistently reported that this was a valuable exercise, and that it generated benefits both for them and for those they worked with. This background, along with the trial experience, encouraged participants to identify a wide range of uses for the Profiles. This suggests that the Profiles have broad applicability, and that their relevance and ease of use assisted the identification of varying uses.

Principals and aspiring principals

School leaders strongly endorsed the value of the Profiles in helping them understand their roles better. One principal said they "provide a comprehensive leadership profile that acknowledges strengths and identifies improvement areas". Participants saw the Profiles as helping them identify how to use their time; one planned to use them "to ensure I balance the time of the principal". One clear opportunity was to use them as a stimulus and guide to professional conversations with members of leadership teams or those with aspirations to become principals. Principal participants commented that the Profiles:

- are a reference point for thinking about their leadership roles for both current and future practice

- assist with self-reflection on strengths and weaknesses

- help identify areas for development and plan for professional development

- provide a guide to coaching and mentoring

- provide a reminder about the need to focus on the strategic element of the role, not just operational demands

- can be used to balance a principal's allocation of time across different responsibilities, especially in early career stages

- can be used in professional conversations with deputy principals and members of leadership teams

- they provide a resource for preparing job applications.

What did participants think of the Profiles?

🍎 Schools

In addition to their specific role in supporting principals, there was a strong view that the Profiles would play a range of other roles in schools. One of the consistent responses from participant principals was their view that the Profiles would have key roles in improving school-level understanding of the principal role, and informing career planning and professional learning for other school leaders. Perhaps more surprisingly, given their focus on principals, they were also seen as a valuable contribution to school goal-setting. Participants felt that the Profiles:

- will assist staff and School Boards or Councils to better understand the work of principals

- can be used as a tool for principals and school leadership teams to develop future professional learning programs

- can inform and direct development of the school leadership team, and support coaching, mentoring and succession planning

- can guide principals and school leadership teams to develop focuses for future years

- support reflection on school improvement plans and the construction of new goals

- will be useful in leading change in schools.

Network leaders and support personnel

There was overwhelming support from both school leaders and network leaders for the view that the Profiles could be immensely valuable in improving support for principals from outside. There were many comments indicating ways in which they could add value to performance improvement processes, in providing a common language and in establishing a more objective and professional basis for discussion and judgment. Participants similarly saw value in their use in mentoring and coaching relationships. The benefits were not all one way; network leaders and those working to support school leaders saw the Profiles as a positive force for them in reflecting on and improving their own work. Participants observed that the Profiles:

- identify the practices, actions, beliefs and qualities required for continuous leadership growth

- will improve the quality of performance and development conversations by bringing a more specific, targeted and personal focus

- provide a basis for agreement between the network leader and principal about where the principal's performance is located on the continuum, making the process more objective and less idiosyncratic

- will improve accountability for network leaders

- will encourage network leaders to provide constructive feedback

- will guide performance development plan conversations with principals individually and in groups and bring consistency to these conversations

- provide a valuable reference point in working with new principals

- can identify principal growth points and pathways for support

- can frame coaching questions and provide focus in coaching conversations

- can assist network leaders in working with principals on career planning

- provide a basis for a principals' network to identify and use the strengths of members of the group

- can provide a tool to encourage new and experienced principals to reflect on current leadership actions and how they might develop to become more strategic and systematic in focus

- are a tool for network leaders to reflect on their own practice and inform goal setting for their performance development plans.

Education systems and sectors

System officials also saw benefits for education systems and sectors flowing from the Profiles. They provide a conceptual basis for the development of both formal and informal programs to support principals. As a tool for self-improvement, they maximise the long-term benefit of education and training programs for principals. They also set out a signposted career pathway that is consistent with how systems hope principals will develop; one senior system official described the Profiles as "the missing sign-post" for career development for principals. Profiles and the Interactive Leadership Profiles:

- provide a foundation for induction and training programs for principals

- enable principals to continue their professional learning beyond the scope and timing of formal programs

- because of their progressive and developmental nature, match the way systems and providers of professional learning see the career progression of principals

Providers of training and development

Participants also saw the Profiles as offering value to providers of training and development programs. They set a framework within which providers can develop programs, knowing that the documents have broad support and endorsement. They provide a strong basis for a better understanding of the role of the principal, and a resource for use in professional learning programs. This is because they:

- provide a conceptual and content foundation for graduate qualifications

- strengthen the understanding of the breadth and complexity of the school leader role for those undertaking graduate courses

- provide a resource for course participants to use in their workplaces.

How were the trials evaluated?

Each of the five trials was evaluated formally, and those evaluations provided most of the data discussed in this paper. The table below briefly describes the evaluation approaches used.

Department of Education, Tasmania	An external evaluator collected perceptions of the participants (principals, network leaders and the manager) through questionnaires, interviews and workshop discussion.
Education and Training Directorate, ACT	The evaluation was based on collected perceptions from participants (principals and network leaders) through individual interviews before and after the mid-cycle review.
Department for Education and Child Development, SA	The program manager and two course convenors provided detailed summary information to AITSL in a lengthy face-to-face interview.
Tuggeranong Network, Education and Training Directorate, ACT	The two principals who introduced the Profiles to the network were interviewed.
Australian Council of Educational Leaders	AITSL conducted an interview with a coach and their client.

Leadership Profiles - Professional Practices lens

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Focus — Taken from the Australian Professional Standard for Principals

Practice description

Profile — Developmental pathway: a principal's increasing proficiency

Focus	Practice description	Profile (increasing proficiency →)			
Leading teaching and learning	Principals create a positive culture of challenge and support, enabling effective teaching that promotes enthusiastic, independent learners, committed to lifelong 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.	Principals ensure the school values underpin and support high-quality inclusive practices and set expectations that all activities are focused on improving student learning outcomes. They keep up-to-date with and share current developments in pedagogy and student engagement with all staff. They lead staff and students in identifying and planning high-quality teaching and learning.	Principals prioritise creating and sustaining a student-centred learning environment. They motivate staff to keep their teaching practice current through use of research and new technologies. They develop a robust approach to reviewing the curriculum and pedagogy to ensure a consistently high-quality environment for learning. They develop a coaching culture that encourages honest feedback to and from students and teachers based on evidence.	Principals lead a school-wide focus on individual student achievement, implementing strategies that secure educational provision for all. They ensure that reflective practices, structured feedback, peer review and use of the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* lead to personal improvement of both students and staff. They systematically monitor and report on student progress and have interventions in place to reduce gaps in attainment. They communicate high aspirations and expectations for all, celebrate success and challenge underperformance.	Principals lead high aspirations in learning and inspire the same in students, staff and parents. They establish systematic methods for collecting and interpreting evidence to identify excellent teaching and learning, and share successful strategies with the school community. They encourage staff to contribute to education networks, supporting the learning of others and development of pedagogy. They model collaborative leadership and engage with other schools and organisations to share and improve practice and encourage innovation in the education system.
Developing self and others	Principals work with and through others to build a professional learning community that is focused on continuous improvement of teaching and learning. Through managing performance, effective continuing professional learning and feedback, they support all staff to achieve high standards and develop their leadership capacity. Principals support others to build capacity and treat people fairly and with respect. They model effective leadership and are committed to their own ongoing professional development and personal health and wellbeing in order to manage the complexity of the role and the range of learning capabilities and actions required of the role.	Principals promote the benefits of professional learning to all staff and ensure that their willingness and efforts to learn and improve are recognised. They develop and implement a personal and organisational vision that links all learning and development activities to better outcomes for students. They work with staff to identify and prioritise their professional learning needs based on any gaps between the requirements of their roles and their current knowledge, understanding and skills. They model personal and professional learning that is clearly linked to school goals and seek support from others as appropriate.	Principals seek leadership potential in others and provide opportunities for their development. They identify and implement professional learning opportunities with staff that are aligned with staff learning plans and school priorities. They consistently apply effective performance and development processes so that success is celebrated, underperformance addressed and competency challenged. They provide staff with regular and effective feedback on their performance, determining together how they can improve and remove any obstacles to learning.	Principals build capacity by creating a culture of empowerment, responsibility and self-directed research that leads to the development of a professional learning community. They model the importance of health and wellbeing, watch for signs of stress in self and others and take action to address it. They modify their leadership behaviour based on learning from experience and feedback from colleagues. They evaluate whether professional learning undertaken by self and staff has had the desired impact on students and has been shared with others.	Principals create challenging roles, responsibilities and opportunities for senior leaders that leverage and grow their talents. They build and sustain a coaching and mentoring culture at all levels in the school and have a system of peer review and feedback in place. They mentor other principals to support their growth and development and help them to address issues. They seek opportunities for professional growth through engaging in state, national and global educational developments.
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.	Principals identify the need for innovation and improvement that is consistent with the school's vision and values and is informed by student learning outcomes. They communicate the need for change to the whole-school community in an inspirational and logical way. They deepen their own knowledge and understanding of improvement strategies, leading change and innovation at a whole-school level. They engage and inspire staff to commit to evidence-based improvement, change and innovation that has a positive impact on student learning.	Principals develop a process and common language for change, which supports the implementation of the vision and strategic plan. They evaluate outcomes and refine actions as change is implemented, paying attention to social, political and local circumstances. They take account of the impact of change on others, providing opportunities for regular feedback so that change is owned by the school community. They distribute leadership and encourage staff to build consensus across the school community and to take individual responsibility for implementing change.	Principals maintain their values whilst adapting flexibly and strategically to changes in the environment, in order to secure the ongoing improvement of the school. They lead and implement the appropriate use of new technologies in all aspects of the school's development. They build a culture of trust and collaboration where change and innovation based on research and evidence can flourish. They embed collaborative and creative practices in the school, allowing everyone to contribute to improvement and innovation.	Principals embed a culture of continuous improvement, ensuring research, innovation and creativity are core characteristics of the school. They lead educational networks by trialling and exploring new ideas for the system, acting as a guide, coach and mentor to staff and colleagues. They evaluate the personal and organisational effects of change through regular feedback from stakeholders and evidence of impact on student outcomes. They develop an innovative and outward-focused role as a leader influencing school excellence across the system.
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 and 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.	Principals align management procedures and processes to the educational goals and the vision and values of the school. They ensure employment practices and decisions are consistent with legislative requirements. They allocate resources effectively to maintain the day-to-day operations of the school and evaluate impact on student outcomes and value for money. They clarify for staff the relationship between the school's vision and values and the operational tasks that support them.	Principals embed effective decision-making processes and build a cohesive leadership team. They analyse what data is important and plan how it should be used in the support of student learning outcomes. They make best use of technology to record, analyse and share information, to monitor progress against goals, and support new ways of working. They model exemplary professional behaviour and promote ethical standards throughout the school community.	Principals ensure resource management procedures are fully understood by staff who take collective responsibility for the smooth and efficient running of the school. They introduce best practice in human resource management to ensure the school can attract, retain and motivate all staff. They review and improve plans regularly with the school's governing body so that the school's vision can be realised. They use a consultative approach with students, staff and the wider school community to develop formal strategic plans.	Principals identify trends and influences that will have an impact upon the management of the school and plan for them. They review the effectiveness of processes and use of data to improve school performance. They share best management practice and use of resources with other schools and education networks. They embed a culture of review, responsibly and shared accountability to achieve high standards for all.
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 wider school community and the education systems and sectors. They develop and maintain positive partnerships with students, families and carers and all those associated with the wider school community. They create an ethos of respect taking account of the spiritual, moral, social and physical health and wellbeing of students. They promote sound lifelong learning from preschool through to adult life. They recognise the multicultural nature of Australia's 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.	Principals promote parental and carer engagement as a key aspect of raising the achievement of all students. They support the development of a strong school governing body that is truly representative of the community. They lead an inclusive curriculum and school culture that promotes understanding of and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and languages and other culturally and linguistically diverse communities. They build partnerships with the local community and external stakeholders so they are aware of the vision and values of the school and can contribute to its success.	Principals draw on expertise from other organisations to enhance and enrich the learning experience for students and their families. They encourage the community to use school facilities in order to strengthen community engagement with the school. They identify and implement strategies to meet the diverse needs of students and their families, challenge low expectations and close gaps in achievement for specific groups. They understand the strengths and needs of their communities, promoting high expectations and achievement for all.	Principals work with other agencies to support the health, wellbeing and safety of students and their families. They create specific strategies for hard-to-reach parents and carers, and explore the use of technology to deepen the engagement of parents and carers in student learning. They establish innovative processes to gather regular feedback from families and the local community that is systematically used to review school practices and inform decision-making.	Principals lead the school as an inclusive outward-facing organisation. They link with and provide support to other schools in effective community and family engagement. They draw on best practice nationally and internationally to embed a culture of inclusion and high expectations for all and take steps to tackle the effects of disadvantage on learning. They develop a mutually supportive, collaborative and trusting relationship with the community to ensure engagement in the life of the school. They collaborate effectively with other schools and agencies to promote an excellent education system in which all young people can thrive.

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