Guidelines for the Induction of New School Leaders in Australia

December 2023

Acknowledgement of Country

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land, sea countries and waterways from across Australia. We honour and pay our respects to their Elders past, present and future.

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Introduction

New school leaders work in a dynamic and changing environment and need to be well prepared to succeed. Induction into school leadership begins when leaders are newly appointed to their role. This is a period when more intensive support is required to assist them to successfully make the transition from the classroom to effective leadership. Some leaders may be stepping from one leadership position into another, but for others this represents their first step into a leadership role. Those new to leadership are demonstrating a full set of leadership capabilities for the first time. Irrespective of their previous experience, different contexts and roles often require leaders to demonstrate some leadership capability sets more than others.

Induction into school leadership is a shift in professional identity and a time of new capability development. It is where a teacher's focus shifts from direct classroom responsibilities to a broader focus within the school, often managing both. At the start of a new leadership role, new skills may include learning how to support and mentor teachers and understanding how to implement particular elements of whole-school improvement plans. Leadership induction is most effective when it takes place within a school culture where teachers and leaders expect to be active learners, who reflect on and refine their practice in order to improve student outcomes. Further information about culture and development processes is described in the Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework and the Australian Charter for the Professional Learning of Teachers and School Leaders.

There are known effective strategies for leadership induction outlined within these guidelines, including formal training and processes, mentoring, coaching and access to networks. It is not expected that all leadership induction processes are the same, but it is important that a high-quality induction is implemented. The implementation of programs may need to be adapted to suit varied education contexts.

Regardless of context, employer representatives (whether at a system, sector or school level) should provide new school leaders with the time, capacity and support to focus on the practices most likely to improve student learning.

The *Guidelines for the Induction of New School Leaders in Australia* (new leader guidelines) provide advice on what leadership induction is, why it matters and the conditions and focus areas for leadership induction. It also outlines strategies for supporting induction and the roles played by various individuals and organisations in managing and supporting induction processes.

The new leader guidelines are intended for use by those responsible for supporting leadership induction, including system leaders, leaders in schools (including senior leaders as well as new leaders themselves) and in some cases school boards or governing bodies. They inform leadership induction practices in current policy documents and professional learning activities. They aim to provide a consistent structure to assist new school leaders as they navigate through necessary induction processes, initiate networking channels of support and reflect upon learnings specific to their school context.

These guidelines are written in the context of the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability (the Report) which notes an estimated 20% of students with disability attended primary or secondary school[1]. In relation to inclusive education, the Report highlights article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities that "Australia has obligations to recognise the rights of people with disability to education" (Commonwealth of Australia 2023). The Report notes that teachers with disability should be employed and that all teachers and professionals should be appropriately trained to support students with disability. In particular, the Report recommends amendments to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers to take into account the knowledge and skills required to teach and support students with disability.

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1   'National Report on Schooling data portal', Assessment and Reporting Authority Australian Curriculum, web page, 2020.

These guidelines are intended for new school leaders working in schools, or early childhood settings within a school. AITSL acknowledges the different contexts of standalone early childhood settings, and that these guidelines may require adaptation according to these contexts.

What is leadership induction?

The term 'leadership induction', for the purpose of the new leader guidelines, refers to a planned process or program where a newly appointed leader is supported while they transition to a new leadership role for the first time or transition to a new leadership context. Induction processes can include coaching, mentoring and induction programs, and participating in leadership professional learning activities. Induction should represent a substantial commitment to learning on the part of the new school leader and those who support them.

The average time to transition, or effectively lead in a school is approximately 6 to 12 months; though it may vary (Cruz-Gonzalez, Rodriguez, Segovia, 2021). The first 3 months are a critical time for new school leaders to understand their specific context and to create the networks they need to succeed. Following a period of induction, a new school leader moves towards a process of ongoing professional learning, performance feedback and development to support their continuous learning and growth.

Those newly appointed in a variety of school leadership positions often use elements of the Australian Professional Standard for Principals (Principal Standard) to develop and support teaching that maximises their impact on student learning. They start to shift their thinking from a high-level operational approach to a relational focus to improve student learning, behaviour, engagement, and wellbeing. They use their teaching knowledge and expertise to provide advice to teachers within their sphere of influence. During this transition process, new school leaders focus on developing and maintaining positive relationships and most often draw on other school leaders where possible, including middle leaders, for support.

Why does leadership induction matter?

The more leaders focus their influence, learning, and relationships with teachers on the core business of teaching and learning, the greater their likely influence is on student outcomes (Robinson, 2007), demonstrating a potential effect size of 0.42, or more than a year's worth of growth for a year's input. This growth comes from leaders' capacity to lead teaching and learning effectively; therefore, new school leaders need support through induction to have the expertise to drive improved outcomes for students.

As new school leaders transition to this new identity, they encounter a shift in perspective and responsibility which requires an advanced set of skills and knowledge. They require support to manage the complexities and unique challenges of the role to be an effective school leader. Without training and guidance from employers and senior leaders, new school leaders may struggle to understand their responsibilities and expectations of their role. Effective induction processes can have a range of positive impacts on the professional development of a new school leader. They provide a strong foundation by:

- increasing clarity in the roles and responsibilities for both the new school leader and school community

- supporting and promoting self-efficacy

- building connections with new professional teams and the wider community

- tailoring professional learning opportunities through consultation with experienced leaders, mentors or coaches.

Research indicates that effective leadership induction is formalised, structured, embedded in daily practice and contextually relevant. The focus is on maximising the impact on student learning and addressing both the personal and professional demands of the role. The process of induction is most effective when delivered in settings with a strong learning culture and is part of an ongoing process of monitoring and evaluation.

New school leaders are more likely to feel a sense of belonging and can work to their full potential if they are well-informed by members of the school leadership team. Schools implementing effective induction processes can lead to increased commitment and job satisfaction for new school leaders.

A comprehensive induction process can allow new school leaders to better understand the teachers, students, and community they are working with and can support staff retention in complex environments.

What are the conditions for effective leadership induction?

There are established effective induction strategies; however, these strategies may need to be adapted according to context. Good leadership induction conditions include an environment where teachers and leaders are empowered, maintain a professional mindset, and have self-efficacy and autonomy in their roles.

The school's culture should encourage a commitment to professional learning, collaboration, and evaluation of effective practice. Employers should ensure working conditions allow teachers and leaders to have time to focus on student needs, take care of their own wellbeing and access professional learning opportunities, both for themselves and for staff.

What is the focus of leadership induction?

Induction aims to develop capabilities in leadership, school management and whole-school improvement with attention to student learning outcomes, including the following four focus areas.

Professional practices

New school leaders require skills to provide advice, seek feedback and understand how to access information on effective practice relevant to their role and context. They need to gather evidence of their impact and schedule time to reflect, examine and analyse their practices to identify strengths and areas for improvement, informed by relevant research. They must seek evidence-informed professional practices and know how to translate research into practice to support their own continued development. Furthermore, new school leaders require the skills to transfer their knowledge to implement high-quality teaching and learning outcomes for students.

The knowledge and skills involved in school leadership are considerable. New school leaders need to acquire new skills at the beginning of their leadership role to understand how to support and mentor teachers, develop their strategic and relational understandings of whole-school improvement planning, and maintain a level of management within their sphere of influence. Some of these skills include cultivating:

- a productive school culture

- effective leadership capabilities and dispositions such as building relational trust and interpersonal courage

- leadership skills such as management, conflict resolution and strategic thinking needed to effect and monitor change in realising school goals

- business acumen skills related to risk management, governance and financial management

- data analysis beyond the classroom to support whole-school reviews.

Roles and responsibilities

New school leaders should be supported in understanding their leadership identity, a self-concept based on attributes, beliefs, values, and social motivations which are used to define themselves in their professional role. Every new school leader establishes a leadership identity, consolidating their knowledge of good leadership, how to develop positive relationships with peers and the community and building their understanding of effective teaching and learning to improve student learning. New school leaders need to conceptualise an understanding of their own leadership style. They do this by observing others, and instead of mirroring the leadership style they observe, they adapt and build their own style through informed decision-making and experience.

Leadership transition is a state of significant change in professional identity from teacher to leader and requires ongoing support. New school leaders must understand what is expected of them, both in the school setting and more broadly. There are different expectations and greater responsibilities, which are often more complex than the work of classroom teachers. They may require clarity in understanding their role in accordance with their sphere of influence. New school leaders may be drawn to elements of the 5 professional practices of the Principal Standard to contextualise their specific roles and responsibilities. This can include:

1	*Leading teaching and learning*; having a key responsibility for designing and managing the quality of teaching and learning across the school.
2	*Developing self and others*; building a professional learning community that is focused on the continuous improvement of teaching and learning.
3	*Leading improvement, innovation and change*; leading school improvement initiatives focusing on critical understanding of the science of learning to improve student outcomes.
4	*Leading the management of the school*; managing risk and optimising the school's financial, human, and physical resources in line with the school's vision and goals.
5	*Engaging and working with the community*; creating a safe, purposeful, and inclusive learning environment with the capacity to develop respectful relationships with key stakeholders within the school community.

Relationships and wellbeing

New school leaders face unique challenges and needs when transitioning into a leadership role, such as 'being accountable to a range of stakeholders with conflicting requirements' (Irvine & Brundrett, 2019), managing constant changes and 'feelings of isolation and a need for support, especially in the form of mentorship' (Bush, 2018; Jensen 2017, Sutcher, 2017). These feelings can stem from responsibilities associated with the role, coupled with the need to respond to new expectations, form new relationships, and operate in a position of ambiguity. Educational leadership roles require personal dispositions, including perseverance and resilience as well as interpersonal capabilities, such as building relational trust to work within a supportive culture.

When transitioning into a school leadership role for the first time, many new school leaders are likely to be juggling leadership and teaching simultaneously. Employers need to ensure that new school leaders can access networks both locally and more broadly to support their wellbeing needs and to effectively meet the expectations of their role. Other practices employers should consider to support the wellbeing of new school leaders include:

- providing access to caring and supportive relationships in a school community where staff feel respected, valued, and supported

- creating a school culture where staff are actively involved in decision-making processes and recognised for their efforts

- collaborating with others to identify clear expectations and establish common goals

- creating opportunities where staff can support and improve their own emotional wellbeing (Lester, Cefai, Cavioni, Barnes, Cross, 2020)

- monitoring the competing demands the new school leader is expected to meet and ensure that adequate release time and support is provided.

It is important that new school leaders take responsibility for their own wellbeing to enable them to build the skills and attributes required to support the wellbeing of others, aligned to the cultural values set within the school context.

> "Activities which require interpersonal skills, such as networking, managing others, and developing individual wellbeing are crucial to the teacher's success" (Hudson, 2012; Wertzberger, 2022).

Workplace and community orientation

Effective induction practices must situate new school leaders within their environment. This could be a new school setting or acquiring a new leadership role in their current school setting. Effective induction requires employers to provide access to a workplace orientation and in some cases an introduction to the school setting. Induction processes should include supporting new leaders' understandings of Country and community protocols for engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in all contexts.

Successful new school leaders, particularly those entering a new school community for the first time, rapidly gather information about the context, including the school's history, culture, current performance, and strategic directions. This process enables them to establish key relationships, communicate priorities, and start building their professional identity to lead within their sphere of influence.

Employers must support new school leaders in their understanding of formal requirements such as policies and compliance requirements, and informal leadership strategies that include cultural and interpersonal considerations. These can include:

- formal requirements including legislative and policy requirements, compliance requirements, and school practices and procedures
- operational expectations such as communications protocols, identifying relevant community members and allied health professionals
- cultural expectations, such as connecting with and understanding informal expectations of colleagues and members of the school community.

Which strategies can be used?

A range of strategies and actions should be employed to support new school leaders as they transition to their roles. Induction should not be a burdensome process or seen as an additional compliance task for new school leaders. Induction should ease the process of transition by prioritising collegial conversations over unnecessary documentation and complementing a new school leader's professional growth as they move into more complex roles with greater responsibility. Support should be offered by employers by allowing new school leaders the time, capacity, and support to engage in induction processes.

Formal training and processes

Leadership induction should be formalised through a coherent and planned approach. Induction programs are particularly valuable to prepare and shape initial school leadership practices, providing new school leaders with access to networks that enable them to share challenges and learn from others.

These programs should provide a combination of theoretical and practical knowledge, combined with opportunities for self-reflection. They should cover technical information such as key policies, systems and timelines and include the opportunity to apply and build new knowledge in practical situations.

Planning induction programs needs to consider the allocation of time required for new school leaders to successfully orientate into their new leadership role.

Current new leadership training programs in Australia typically occur over a 6 to 12 month period, with participants engaging in a combination of:

- hybrid workshops (virtual or face to face – up to 5 full days)

- weekly self-directed learning (up to 16 hours across the induction period)

- peer learning group contributions (up to 8 hours across the induction period)

- school improvement project participation, including developing understanding and application of change leadership through the implementation of a school-based improvement initiative (up to 16 hours across the induction period)[2] .

Employers should offer a range of support services to new school leaders prior to, or at the beginning of their induction period, so they are aware of what is available to them within their school context.

Mentoring and coaching

Mentors and coaches play a vital role in leadership training and induction.

New school leaders may be able to access mentors from within their school and/or externally from various networks. A mentor can be described as a 'knowledgeable, experienced, highly effective teacher who works with or alongside a less experienced colleague'[3]. Further, the act of mentoring can be described as a 'structured relationship with clear planning for the type of support sought and the goals of the relationship'.

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2   Create: Middle Leaders, Victorian Academy of Teaching and Leadership, Victoria, 2023.

3   Practical guide: Mentoring, AITSL, 2020

Highly successful mentoring is described as 'practice-focused' with an expert who is 'intent on improving practice'. They are therefore selected based on a set of prerequisites, qualities and expertise, and there are resources to support the process. Mentors themselves also need support to ensure the quality and expectations required of mentoring is equitable and understood. External mentors can provide a safe environment for new school leaders to ask questions and access support, drawing on different perspectives and experiences.

Coaching is a professional learning strategy which uses questioning and conversation to support professional growth. Coaching is a process where the coach is not necessarily an expert in a technical field such as teaching, but expert in the coaching process. The strategy encourages new school leaders to take responsibility for their own development, set goals, take action, and grow.

Both mentoring and coaching can provide the following benefits:

- Assistance in developing emotional intelligence and how the leader's attitudes and behaviours impact their interactions with others
- Personalised growth and development through tailored learning plans and the development of goals
- Challenge assumptions and cultural biases to enable a more open mindset.

Where coaching or mentoring is not available to new school leaders in their local context, they need to be supported to access opportunities through online networks.

Networks and communities of practice

Communities of practice provide both interpersonal and professional relationships that are invaluable to new school leaders. These allow teachers to form high-quality relationships, which enhances their job satisfaction. Through collective efficacy and collaborative inquiry, communities of practice establish a sense of belonging and shared mission, working to uplift each other through adherence to shared goals and values while contributing to professional growth and development (Lampert et al., 2021; Mason & Matas 2015).

Peer groups can allow new school leaders to:

- develop a collaborative mindset and learn with and from others
- share ideas and problem solve
- form shared values and mission
- mitigate feelings of isolation associated with taking on a leadership role and view leadership as a communal commitment
- develop both individual and collective professional identity.

Leadership induction in regional and remote contexts

Teachers and leaders in regional and remote contexts face complex challenges that are unique to or exacerbated by their geographical location. Small staff sizes mean leaders have additional responsibilities or may be teaching across multiple year levels and subject areas. Leaders report that their role often extends to pastoral care because of the lack of systematic access to support services in regional and remote areas (Heffernan & Pierpoint, 2020). As a support person within the community, school leaders are often facilitators of access to health care, social services, legal support, employment support and mental health care. Some school leaders are also responsible for overseeing issues such as teacher housing.

These unique challenges and additional responsibilities mean quality induction processes for new school leaders in regional and remote contexts are particularly important. Investment in the following strategies help new school leaders as they enter these roles.

- *Adequate preparation and understanding* prior to starting in their role to alleviate any unrealistic expectations, particularly for teachers beginning their leadership role in a new community.

- *Targeted professional learning* might include, for example, professional learning based on developing cultural responsiveness, understanding stereotypes, how to work in the community and how to address language barriers. AITSL's Indigenous Cultural Responsiveness Toolkit can be used to support critical reflections on assumptions, attitudes, beliefs and biases in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, histories, language and culture. The resources can be used in conjunction with broader school policies to help create culturally responsive, safe and welcoming workplaces.

- *Strong peer groups and communities of practice* support professional learning and promote wellbeing through collective efficacy, collaborative inquiry and psychological safety. This can be challenging so it is helpful to build relationships from an early stage with stakeholders in the school community including staff, students and parents and carers to support this process. It is essential that induction practices help to build resilience through processes such as mentorship and informal social induction.

- *Community embedment* relates to supporting the development of new school leaders' sense of belonging to a wider community. When new school leaders become active citizens of their community and work to genuinely embed themselves in the communities in which they teach, the evidence is that they are more satisfied with their jobs, feel more committed and stay in the profession longer (Lampert, 2021). It is, however, also important to set boundaries to maintain a personal and professional position within these relationships.

> "As a regional and remote school leader you are more than just an educator but an important figure in the community and people's lives." (Eacott, Niesche, Heffernan, Loughland, Gobby & Durksen 2021)

Acknowledging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Country in induction for new school leaders

Induction processes should include supporting new school leaders' understandings of Country and community protocols for engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in all contexts. It is the responsibility of new school leaders to know the Country and context on which they are leading teaching and learning irrespective of an educational setting location. New school leaders should identify and learn about Country as part of their induction process, particularly if starting their role in a new school environment. The induction process needs to include cultural responsiveness, an opportunity for new school leaders to understand and respect histories and living cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in their area. Induction processes should also include understandings of how to create a culturally safe and inclusive school environment, modelling leadership that validates respect for and builds positive relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and students.

The following components can be used to support new school leaders engage with and understand various protocols that exist when engaging with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members and identify and learn how to engage with Country.

Whose Country am I on?

"Country is the term often used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to describe the lands, waterways and seas to which they are connected. The term contains complex ideas about law, place, custom, language, spiritual belief, cultural practice, material sustenance, family and identity". (AIATSIS n.d.)

Australia comprises many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations and groups with their own customs, cultures, and languages. New school leaders can access resources from the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) to identify, learn and connect with the Country they are living and working on.

Languages

In regional and remote settings, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities may speak multiple languages and dialects, including local and traditional Languages, Aboriginal English, Kriol, Creole, and English.

Whether Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages are primary languages in a new school leader's community or not, it is important new school leaders understand the connection and importance of language and the protocols of using language in the local area and facilitate support for teachers across the school to strengthen their understandings.

Community protocols

There are different protocols for engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and community members in all contexts. Community protocols and engagement practices vary across different nations. It is important to identify and form relationships with key community members to support community engagement and to understand ways of working.

Understanding these community protocols and building relationships are essential to new school leaders to both teach effectively and support new teachers by embedding community protocols and ways of working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in recruitment and early career teacher induction processes.

It is always recommended to speak to Elders and leaders, community members and esteemed locals, including education support staff, to ask questions in seeking best practices. Some examples of community protocols that may require clarification, particularly in remote communities, are:

- the requirement to be welcomed to Country before working in a community

- identifying places that may be prohibited for people who are not Traditional Custodians

- how community protocols and dynamics may influence how families engage with each other.

Engagement with the community is a long-term commitment that should play a role in all teaching practices and school policy areas.

Leadership induction for new principals

In most cases when a teacher makes the shift into leadership for the first time it will be into a middle leadership role, however this is not always the case. Some new school leaders may be stepping into a principal role as their first experience in a formalised leadership role. Principals are school leaders with a distinct leadership role that is broad, complex, and evolving. They have significant responsibility for ensuring high-quality teaching and continuous progress for supporting student learning.

Employers are responsible for ensuring that effective induction provides newly-appointed principals with theoretical and practical knowledge to shape their early experience in the role. The process goes beyond clarifying rules, regulations, processes, and expectations to providing an introduction to school culture, community and relationship-building. It should be embedded in daily practice, occur over an extended period, consider context, and focus on skill development and inquiry into practice. It should align with processes for ongoing, standards-based performance and development, and provide access to networks and relationships with system professionals and line managers.

All principals need to continually update their skills and knowledge. Cultivating a learning mindset is a priority for the ongoing development of effective principals. Newly-appointed and experienced principals must have meaningful and effective adult learning experiences that:

- are linked to school improvement processes and student learning needs

- are differentiated based on the assessments of individual needs

- provide ongoing opportunities for feedback and reflection, as well as time to action next steps

- offer guided learning through action research, job-embedded learning and intentional practice.

These experiences might include:

- mentoring and coaching provided by suitably qualified or trained individuals

- working with a network of colleagues to address a shared problem or challenge

- attending professional learning seminars and workshops

- participating in formal executive leadership programs

- undertaking growth-based performance appraisal and professional development planning.

When induction and ongoing development are based on the Principal Standard, school leadership expectations are clear and strong guidance can be provided for new and experienced leaders.

Evaluating your Principal Preparation Programs: A Practical Guide (AITSL, 2016) sets out an evidence-based approach to assessing the impact of such initiatives. The guide supports the evaluation of impact of principal preparation programs and can assist with the continual improvement of provision.
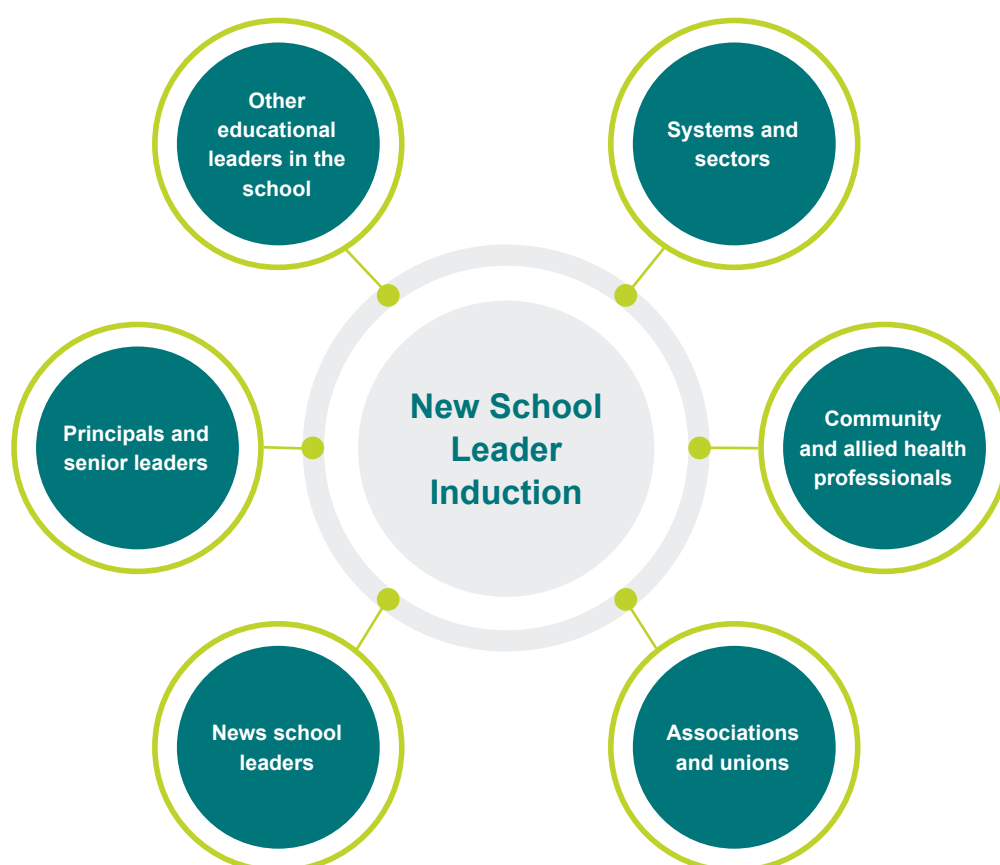
Induction programs are just one approach to principal preparation. Internships, shadowing, and acting principal roles, where substantial support is provided, also offer valuable principal preparation experiences through highly relevant, job-embedded professional learning.

Who should play a role in leadership induction?

New school leadership induction is a shared responsibility. Key partners on a local level include new school leaders themselves, other senior leaders including the principal and the school community. Systems and sectors play their specific roles, with support provided by principal associations, unions and professional learning and training providers who specialise in leadership programs.

The following groups have a critical role in new school leader induction.

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        Other                              Systems and
      educational                            sectors
     leaders in the
        school

                    New School
  Principals and      Leader          Community
  senior leaders     Induction      and allied health
                                      professionals

       News school                 Associations
         leaders                    and unions
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Principals and senior leaders

The pathways to leadership are varied. Principals, along with other senior leaders, play an important role in supporting teachers. This role is outlined in the Principal Standard, which sets the expectation that principals and senior leaders will support all staff to build their leadership capacity. Principals and senior leaders understand their position as a role model for emerging leaders and aspiring principals.

When principals, along with their senior leadership team, understand and value their role in leadership development, they become key enablers for developing future leaders. They should be supported to prioritise the development of leadership within and beyond their schools. To make sure this happens, current principals and school leaders should be provided with targeted professional learning, and the expectation for leadership development should be built into their performance and development goals.

To support the induction of new school leaders in their school, principals and senior leaders can:

- model effective leadership
- offer opportunities for targeted professional learning experiences to build knowledge and skills
- share advice and expertise in system, sector or principal association publications
- help connect new school leaders with effective local and broad networks.

Other educational leaders in the school

Depending on the size and location of the school, other middle leaders may play a direct role in supporting the induction of new school leaders. Leaders foster a strong learning culture in their schools as the foundation for good induction. These leaders may play a role in establishing professional relationships, and if they are new to the school, help new school leaders understand the culture, practices, and expectations of the local setting.

Systems and sectors

Systems and sectors may deliver the policy, program, resourcing, and evaluation frameworks that enable new school leaders to benefit from comprehensive, structured, and effective induction or leadership development programs. These professional learning opportunities may also provide new school leaders with learning experiences and opportunities to network and build their expertise.

Conditions for effective leadership induction, from a systematic perspective, should involve creating opportunities for support such as access to professional learning, or time release for the new school leader to step out of the classroom in the lead up to or in the initial stages of their role to engage in school leadership professional learning.

New school leaders need to receive strong wellbeing support from their education system and employer. Jurisdictional systems and sectors are committed to supporting teacher and leader wellbeing and are implementing a range of supports to facilitate improved wellbeing outcomes. Strategies to prioritise the wellbeing of leaders require government and non-government employers to take note of relevant research, consult with their site-based and regional leaders, and commit resources to effectively implement health and wellbeing strategies.

Employers also support educational leaders through coaching, residential programs, and opportunities for sabbaticals to study and investigate leadership in other settings. They play a pivotal role in providing supports, for instance mentorship programs and training modules.

New school leaders

New school leaders, including principals, are active agents in their own induction. In addition to fully engaging in any induction process and meeting the expectations of the school or education setting, they seek additional experiences, engage with professional networks, identify their own learning requirements, and take responsibility for ensuring that their induction meets their needs. This requires engaging in self-reflection, identifying learning needs and setting goals with coaches and/or mentors.

Good induction processes include challenging assumptions about teaching and leading, and actively seeking expertise from colleagues and networks. It also requires committing to continuous learning and improvement, embedding self-reflection to build upon leadership practice and maximising opportunities for positive impacts on students, teachers, and the school community.

Community and allied health professionals

School leaders play an important role in meeting responsibilities and obligations within the Disability Standards for Education (DSE) 2005, that caters for diverse educational needs of students with disability. It is important for new school leaders to understand their individual roles, obligations and responsibilities to educate teaching and non-teaching staff of school-wide strategies, policies and initiatives that support inclusion of students with disability.

The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability (2023) recognised the significant role school leaders, particularly school principals play in creating conditions for inclusive education. The Report highlights the need for all teachers and leaders to understand disability rights and strategies for teaching diverse learners and have access to people with specific disability expertise.

Teachers and school leaders are often required to consult with the student with disability, their guardian/s and associates and allied health professionals or community groups to identify strategies that best support the student's needs.

As part of the induction process, it is important new school leaders can develop the skills to engage with community networks and model effective strategies with teaching staff to ensure that students with diverse needs receive ongoing support.

Associations and unions

There are a number of professional associations new school leaders can access, which provide valuable information and professional support. These associations may be subject-specific or centred around educational leadership. They provide current information about curriculum and policy developments and offer useful and practical professional development programs. Importantly, they provide new school leaders with access to networks of experienced and expert leaders. Professional associations provide new school leaders with support and collegiality outside of their employer environment.

Unions represent the industrial interests of teachers and school leaders, as well as providing professional support to their members and advocacy for the profession. Unions provide current information about working conditions including teacher awards and industrial agreements. New school leaders can attend conferences and undertake professional learning opportunities organised by their union to support their knowledge and understanding of induction.

Induction for new school leaders forms a valuable component of developing a new professional identity that shifts focus to the broader responsibilities within the school. The induction process includes a commitment to ongoing professional learning and continually improving leadership capabilities individually and by leading others. Effective induction ensures new school leaders will have the time, capacity and support to maximise their impact on student learning and address the complexities and demands of the role.

Resources to support new school leaders

- Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies

- Australian Professional Standards for Teachers

- Australian Professional Standard for Principals

- Disability Standards for Education: Leadership Guidance Resources

- Evaluating your Principal Preparation Programs: A Practical Guide

- Indigenous Cultural Responsiveness Toolkit

- Interactive Leadership Profiles

- Leadership Reflection Tool

- Leadership Scenarios

- 360 Reflection Tool

- School leadership in rural and remote contexts: Video case studies and guide to stepping into the role

- Spotlight: Middle Leadership in Australian Schools

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