

Australian Professional Standard for Principals and the Leadership Profiles



Acknowledgement of Country

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Please cite this publication as:

Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership 2014, *Australian Professional Standard for Principals and the Leadership Profiles*, AITSL, Melbourne.

ISBN 978-1-925192-59-9

First published 2015

Revised 2019

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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.

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Introduction

Since 2011, the *Australian Professional Standard for Principals* (the Standard) has provided a public statement setting out what school principals are expected to know, understand and do to succeed in their work. The Standard is an integrated model that recognises three Leadership Requirements that a principal draws upon, within five areas of Professional Practice.

The *Leadership Profiles* (the Profiles) have since been developed and validated by the profession to describe each of the Leadership Requirements and Professional Practices in more detail.

The Profiles, developed directly from the Standard, are presented as a set of leadership actions that effective principals implement as they progress to higher levels of proficiency. Principals and aspiring principals can use the Profiles to help them grow and develop as school leaders.

The most effective leaders see learning as central to their professional lives. This document, the *Australian Professional Standard for Principals and the Leadership Profiles*, guides school leaders on their learning pathway. It will empower school leaders across the country to develop and support teaching that maximises impact on student learning.

“High-performing principals are not just born, but can be made.”

– Linda Darling-Hammond



Purpose

The Standard and the more detailed Profiles create and promote a shared vision, clarity of understanding and a common language around effective and high-impact school leadership. They draw on effective leadership practice both locally and internationally and are informed by research into what makes great principals.

The Australian Professional Standard for Principals

The Standard sets out what principals are expected to know, understand and do to succeed in their work and ensure their leadership has a positive impact. 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 on 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, evolving body of knowledge inform the Leadership Requirements and the Professional Practices that are at the core of the Standard and show that:

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

The Leadership Profiles

The Profiles build upon the Standard by describing the Leadership Requirements and Professional Practices of principals in greater detail. The Profiles are presented as leadership actions that principals implement on their pathway to higher levels of proficiency. Principals can use the Profiles as a guide to become a better leader.

In this way, the Profiles provide a comprehensive developmental framework for current and aspiring principals.

The Profiles help aspirants, current principals and those who support them by:

1

Promoting learning and growth

The Profiles are designed to help understand practice and impact in relation to context as well as for planning the next stage of development. The progressive statements that make up the Profiles enable principals to review, reflect, learn and grow.

2

Acknowledging the dynamic nature of school leadership

All successful principals draw on a repertoire of practices performed consistently well. The way leadership practices are applied changes according to career stage, capability and context. The Profiles allow principals to review their current practices, recognise their strengths and focus effort where development is most needed.

The crucial role of the principal

The role of the principal of a school in the 21st 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'¹.

They embody the power of education to make a difference to the lives of individuals and to society, now and in the future.

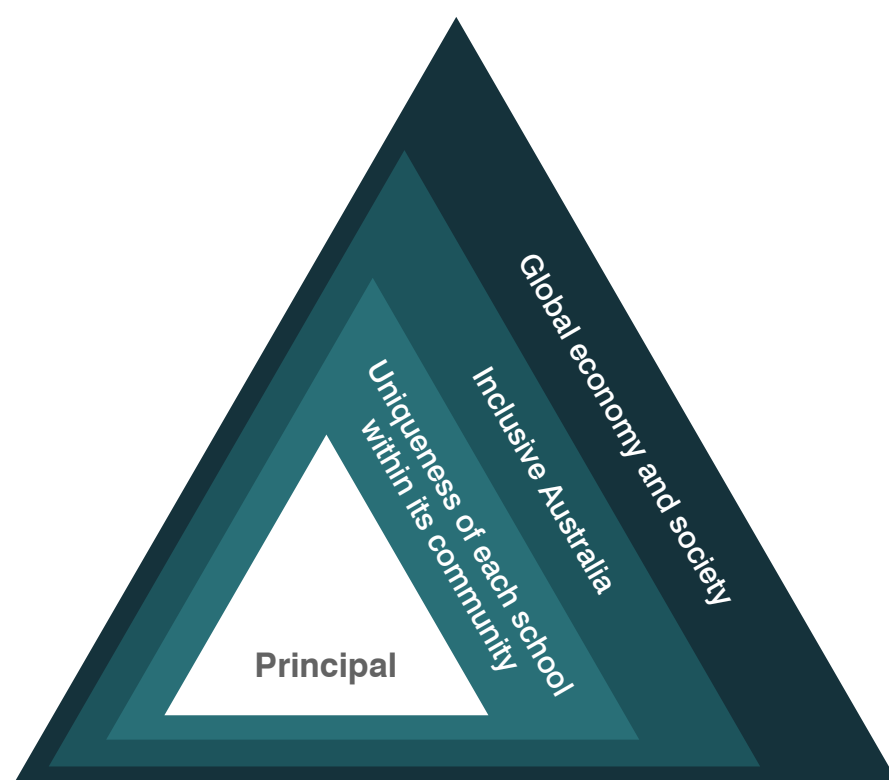
Principals are the leading educational professionals in the school. They inspire students, staff and members of the community to continuously enhance the learning of all and they continually strive to understand and improve their impact.

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 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.



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

Uniqueness of each school within its community

All schools sit within their own distinct community. Their local ethos, culture, history, vision and values influence the way in which opportunity to excel is provided to all students.

Inclusive Australia

All principals have the responsibility to work with members of the school community to ensure a knowledge and understanding of the traditional rights, beliefs and culture of Australia's 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 an education that 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, economies and environments becoming increasingly interconnected and interdependent.

Education has a central and critical role to develop in all individuals the knowledge, understanding, skills and attributes to be successful citizens.

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

How to learn and change as a leader

Principals acquire leadership capabilities in many ways, both formal and informal. Importantly, they learn by leading, reflecting on their practice and inviting feedback from others. Principals need to have a clear awareness of their own strengths and development needs, and model the importance of investing time in professional learning.

Learning leaders challenge the status quo and seek continuous improvement. They are knowledgeable about and engage in research, and encourage others to do the same. They fuse learning and development with daily professional practice.

A critical determinant of the success of the school is the quality of its principal. Learning to lead is at the heart of a principal's daily practice and great leaders never stop learning.

Learning leaders:

- are driven by the desire to see every student in their school excel
- have high aspirations for learning that inspire staff, students and the community
- establish an environment that provides opportunities for all staff to learn and improve together
- are constantly reflecting on their own leadership and impact.

Learning leaders and the Leadership Profiles

The Profiles are designed to guide reflection on current practice and enable users to turn daily experience into leadership insights. They will help leaders gain a deeper understanding of their leadership strengths and focus on their next stage of development. The Profiles promote inquiry and the use of evidence by encouraging leaders to ask often: 'What's happening here and why?' 'What impact am I having?' 'How can I become more effective?'

Learning for change

Using the Profiles to become a better leader requires changes to behaviour. Understanding the complexity of achieving behaviour change is important. Familiarity with the general principles of behaviour change will help school leaders as they strive to advance their learning and development.

The behaviour change model described on the following page outlines the steps and stages to accomplish behaviour change. However, it is acknowledged that movement along the continuum is rarely straightforward and linear.

Model of behaviour change



Gaining awareness

Gaining an awareness of the personal benefits associated with making a change is the vital first step towards changing behaviour. The Profiles provide a detailed description of the principal role, enabling school leaders to develop increased awareness and knowledge of the areas in which they could change to improve their leadership effectiveness.

Strengthening attitude

At the next stage, an individual's attitude towards change plays an important role in influencing the likelihood of a change in behaviour. Attitudes and confidence to change determine the will to change. The stronger the intention, the more likely it is that change will occur.

Building knowledge

Effectively building knowledge about how to understand, prepare for and take the next steps towards achieving a desired change increases the likelihood of the change occurring. Strategies for school leaders to build this knowledge should focus on understanding the nature of the desired change, reducing the barriers and blockers, considering how to manage the consequences of the change, and developing a plan of action.

Taking action

At this stage, an individual is required to take action to first perform and then maintain the change. This requires significant effort and persistence. By drawing on trusted relationships and networks, gaining positive support and reflecting on progress, a school leader can improve and sustain attempts at behaviour change and maintain the determination to continue.

Achieving behaviour change

Behaviour change occurs when the action eventually becomes automatic. At this stage the desired outcomes have been achieved and school leaders will see that their capabilities have grown. Practice is essential to maintaining the change.

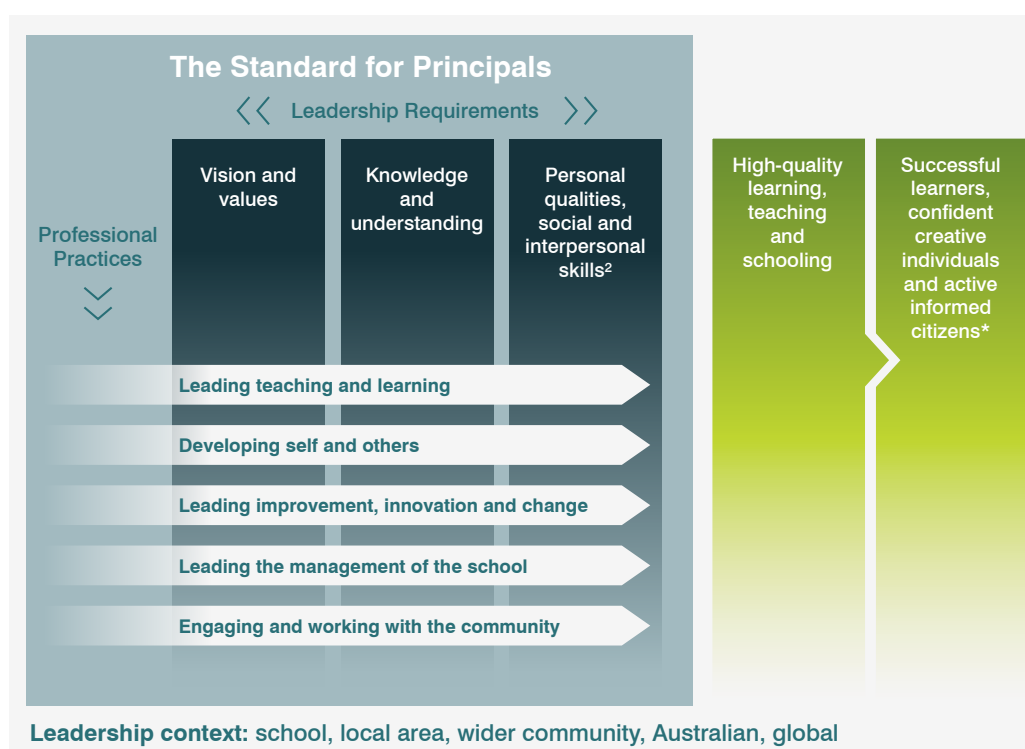
The Australian Professional Standard for Principals

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 'Standard' rather than 'Standards', as it is integrated by nature, reflecting the complexity of the role and shared visions.

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, capability and career stage.

The Standard is based on three Leadership Requirements which are enacted through the following five key Professional Practices, as shown in the following diagram.



The Standard details the Leadership Requirements and Professional Practices of principals separately. It is important to emphasise they are always fully interdependent, integrated and with no hierarchy implied. These requirements and practices will be reflected in the individual leadership contexts in which different principals work.

Although contexts differ, in all professions there are particular leadership expectations for those in senior roles. For those preparing to take up the role of principal, as well as current principals, it is important to consider ways of engaging with and developing an understanding of those expectations through the Leadership Requirements and Professional Practices of the Standard.

² Leadership requirements in other standards and the literature may be expressed as capabilities.

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

The Leadership Profiles

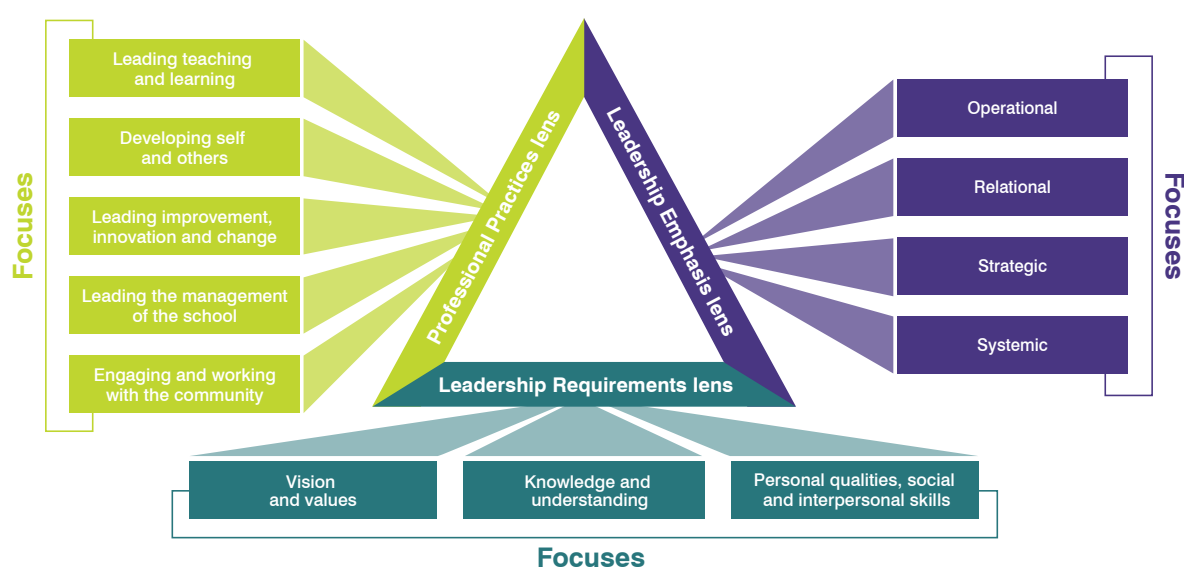
The Profiles build upon the Standard by describing each of its Professional Practices and Leadership Requirements in more detail. The Profiles are presented as leadership actions that improve student learning and support excellent teaching practices.

They recognise the important factors of career stage, capability and context, and the influence these factors have on leadership actions.

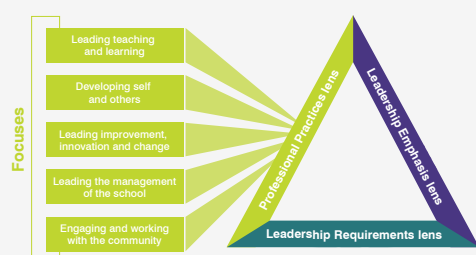
How are the Profiles organised?

The Profiles are a set of statements validated by the profession that describe the leadership actions of principals as they progress to higher levels of proficiency.

The set of statements are arranged for principals to view through three leadership lenses – the Professional Practices lens (linked to the Standard’s five Professional Practices), the Leadership Requirements lens (linked to the Standard’s three Leadership Requirements) and a third lens, the Leadership Emphasis lens (which focuses on broader leadership contexts that principals deal with). The following diagram illustrates each lens and its related focuses. The next section of the document describes the Profiles linked to each lens.



The leadership lenses, Professional Practices, Leadership Requirements and Leadership Emphasis, and the focuses linked to each lens.

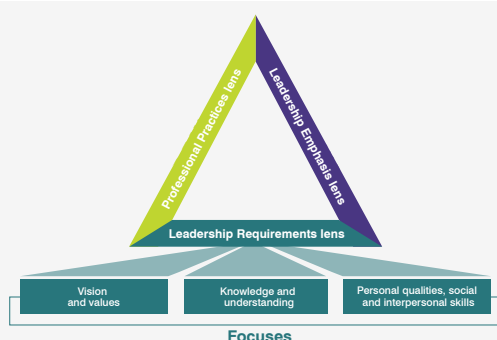


Professional Practices lens

Focuses:

- 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

The Professional Practices lens organises the set of statements to form Profiles that describe the Standard's five Professional Practices at increasing levels of proficiency.

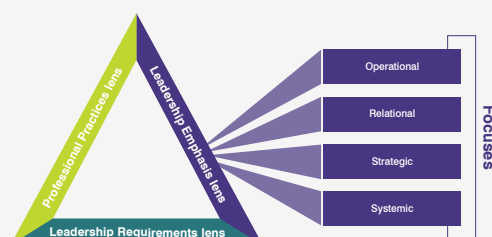


Leadership Requirements lens

Focuses:

- Vision and values
- Knowledge and understanding
- Personal qualities, social and interpersonal skills

The Leadership Requirements lens organises the same set of statements to form Profiles that describe the Standard's three Leadership Requirements at increasing levels of proficiency.



Leadership Emphasis lens

Focuses:

- Operational
- Relational
- Strategic
- Systemic

The Leadership Emphasis lens organises the same set of statements into four focuses. Because a school leader's actions are contingent on the context in which they operate, these statements describe the emphasis and do not form a progressive Profile.

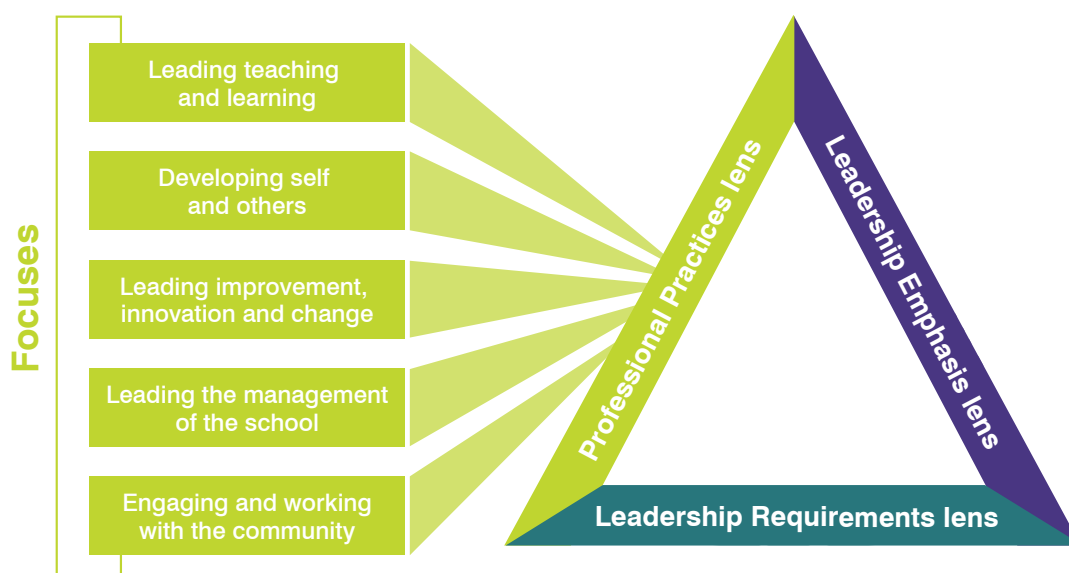
Each focus describes a principal's actions as they lead with an operational, relational, strategic or systemic emphasis. The emphasis a principal chooses to apply in their leadership practice reflects their career stage, capability and context.

Go online to explore the Leadership Profiles:

- use the Interactive Leadership Profiles to view and download the Profiles through the three leadership lenses
- view and download recommended resources and tools aligned to the Profiles that can support your professional growth
- complete the Self-Assessment Tool, then use the planning tool to identify opportunities for growth using the Profiles.

Visit <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/leadership-profiles> to get started.

The Standard's five Professional Practices and their Profiles



The Standard describes five Professional Practices particular to the role of the principal:

- 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

Each of these Professional Practices is looked at in detail in this section.

You can view the Leadership Profiles through the Professional Practices lens in the following ways:

- 📖 within the Professional Practices section, pages 14–18 of this document
- 📄 through the Summary Table at the end of this document and online – [aitsl.edu.au/leadership-profiles](https://www.aitsl.edu.au/leadership-profiles)
- 🖥️ through the Interactive Leadership Profiles – <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/leadership-profiles/interactive-profiles>.

Professional Practice: Leading teaching and learning

Description

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.

Leading teaching and learning Profile

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.

Developmental pathway: a principal's increasing proficiency

Professional Practice: Developing self and others

Description

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.

Developing self and others Profile

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 complacency 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.

Developmental pathway: a principal's increasing proficiency

Professional Practice: Leading improvement, innovation and change

Description

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.

Leading improvement, innovation and change Profile

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.

Developmental pathway: a principal's increasing proficiency

Professional Practice: Leading the management of the school

Description

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.

Leading the management of the school Profile

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 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, responsibility and shared accountability to achieve high standards for all.

Developmental pathway: a principal's increasing proficiency

Professional Practice: Engaging and working with the community

Description

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.

Engaging and working with the community Profile

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.

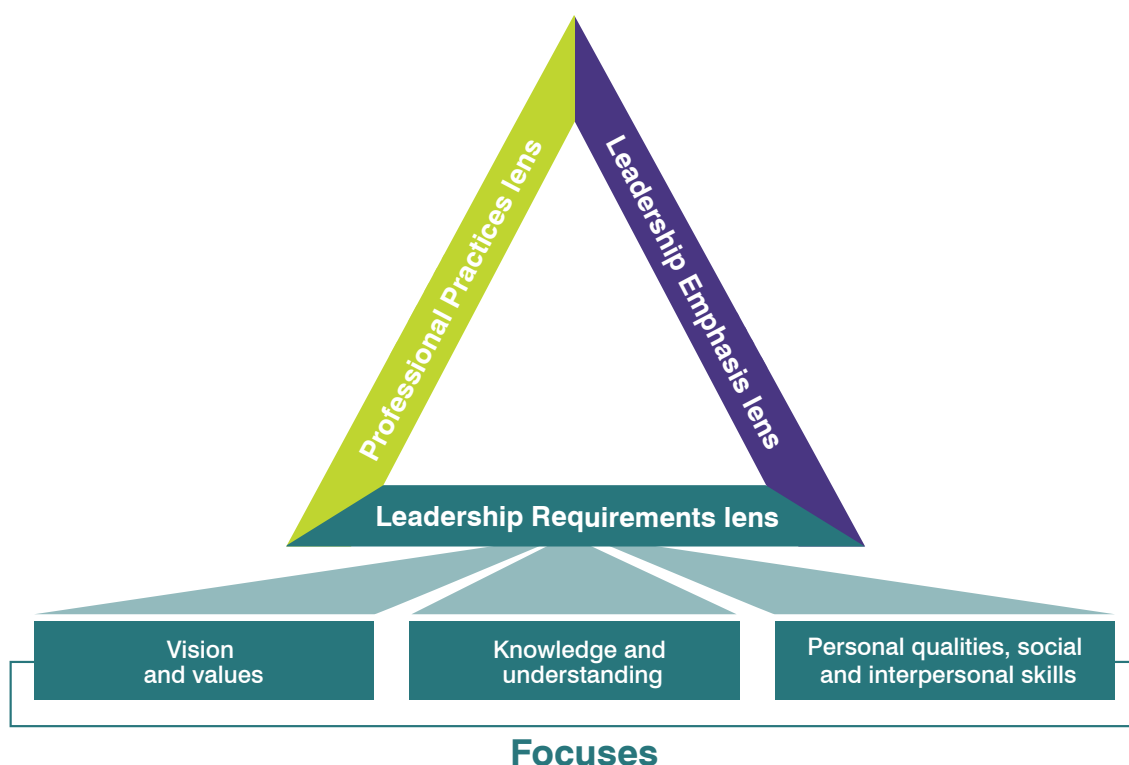
Principals draw on expertise from other organisations to enhance and enrich the learning experience for students and their families. They encourage the community to use school facilities in order to strengthen community engagement with the school. They identify and implement strategies to meet the diverse 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.

Developmental pathway: a principal's increasing proficiency

The Standard's three Leadership Requirements and their Profiles



The Standard describes three Leadership Requirements common to all leaders including principals:

- Vision and values
- Knowledge and understanding
- Personal qualities, social and interpersonal skills.

The following section describes each of the three Leadership Requirements. For reasons of brevity, the Profiles for each Leadership Requirement are not included in the following section of the document. Instead you can find them online at <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/leadership-profiles>.

You can view the Leadership Requirements lens online through the Interactive Leadership Profiles – <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/leadership-profiles/interactive-profiles>.

Leadership Requirement: Vision and values

Description

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.



Leadership Requirement: Knowledge and understanding

Description

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.

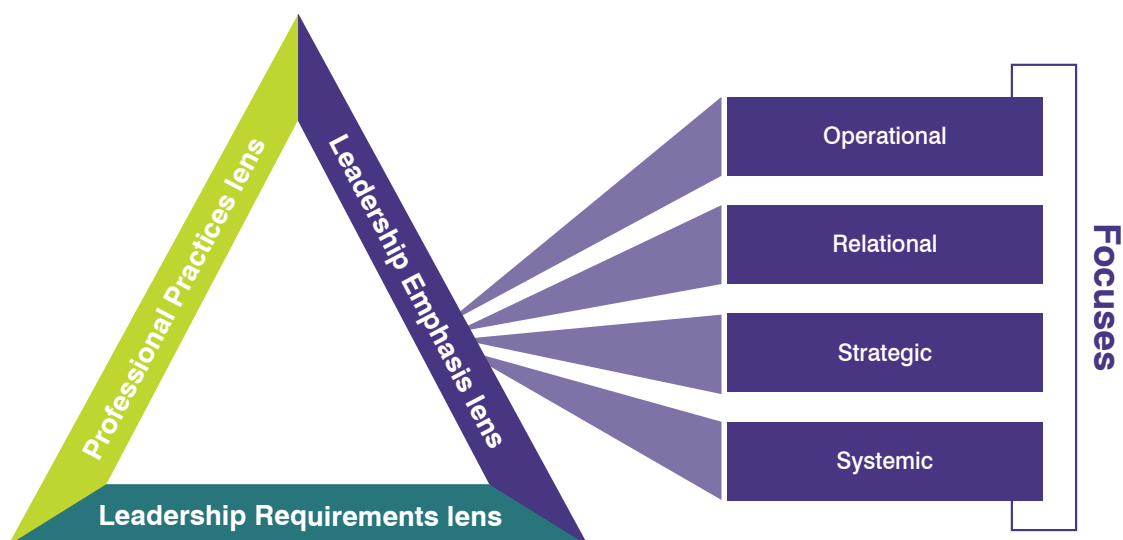
Leadership Requirement: Personal qualities, social and interpersonal skills

Description

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 in 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.

Leadership Profiles through the Leadership Emphasis lens



In addition to the Professional Practices and Leadership Requirements of the Standard, the Profiles provide a view of practice through a third lens, Leadership Emphasis:

- Operational
- Relational
- Strategic
- Systemic

The Leadership Emphasis lens reflects the dynamic nature of the school leadership context. Leaders' actions and leadership style depend on the context in which they operate, with multiple factors influencing their leadership emphasis. This lens enables principals to locate and understand their practice according to their career stage, capability and context. Principals are more likely to draw on an operational emphasis at the beginning of their leadership and move through the range of emphases to apply a more systemic leadership emphasis as their experience, skills and knowledge grow.

However, that is not always the case because context often affects the choice of leadership emphasis. Changed circumstances, such as appointment to a new school or implementation of a new policy directive, demand that leaders suit their leadership to their situation. Effective principals will apply the appropriate leadership emphasis that a school context demands.

The following section describes each focus of the Leadership Emphasis lens. For reasons of brevity, the Profiles for each focus are not included in this document. Instead, they can be found online at <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/leadership-profiles>.

Operational	Principals leading with an operational focus tend to concentrate on the communications, organisation and resource management required within the school to maintain the smooth and effective running of day-to-day operations.
Relational	Principals leading with a relational focus tend to concentrate on consultation and feedback, in order to establish, develop and enhance relationships with students, staff, community and other stakeholders, both internal and external to the school, to ensure a shared culture and vision.
Strategic	Principals leading with a strategic focus are deliberate about optimising relational, organisational and management thinking to effect and monitor change, in order to realise short and long term school goals.
Systemic	Principals leading with a systemic focus objectively assess their own and the school's effectiveness, and work to build networks, collaborate with educational groups, and make connections beyond their own school and system to influence and lead educational impact.

You can view the Leadership Emphasis lens online through the Interactive Leadership Profiles – <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/leadership-profiles/interactive-profiles>.

How school leaders and the wider education sector can use the Profiles

Self-reflection

The most effective leaders prioritise their own growth and development. Some of the most powerful learning will occur through day-to-day experience. However, those leaders who reflect on their actions and impact, and seek out others from whom they can learn, will make the most progress in increasing their leadership effectiveness.

Principals who continually learn and adapt are more able to manage the complexity of leading 21st century schools. Leaders can use the Profiles to assist them to reflect on their skills and abilities and plan their growth.

Professional growth

The most effective principals learn continuously and have conversations with others about their performance and the performance of the school. Leaders can use the Profiles to:

- provide a basis for a professional learning and development conversation
- develop a personal profile which acknowledges strengths and defines objectives and goals for growth
- guide the choice of professional learning activity that will best support their own development.

Professional learning programs

Professional learning can take many forms – formal to informal, local to international, single one-off programs to ongoing enquiry, personal to group. Leaders can use the Profiles to:

- audit their own learning needs and create professional learning opportunities focused on building specific expertise
- develop programs to implement with a coach or mentor
- work with colleagues and/or networks to develop shared professional learning programs
- identify and showcase effective leadership practice for use in professional learning.

Selection and recruitment

Appointing a principal can be a daunting task for local governing bodies. They may only do it once in their tenure. The Standard and Profiles provide a guide for them to know the demands of the principal role and enables them to make more informed decisions around their leadership selection task. Leaders can use the Profiles to:

- help the school community and those on interview panels understand the role of the principal
- design position descriptions, selection questions and interview exercises for leadership recruitment processes.

Talent development and succession

Growing the next generation of leaders by motivating, inspiring and deliberately building leadership capacity in others is one of the most important roles of school and system leaders. Leaders can use the Profiles to:

- assist aspiring principals to understand the depth and breadth of the leadership role
- provide a framework for targeted leadership development opportunities for aspirant principals
- provide a basis for coaching and mentoring of aspirant principals.

Performance review

Using the Profiles as the basis of performance review for school leaders ensures a transparent developmental focus. It will enable systems and sectors to align with the Leadership Requirements and Professional Practices of the Standard to improve the performance of their school leaders. This will assist to:

- link a system's strategic organisational objectives for school leadership to the Standard and Profiles
- enhance coherence and clarity around system and sector leadership understandings and expectations
- connect performance reviews and related professional learning plans with the Standard and Profiles.

Go online to explore the Leadership Profiles

- use the Interactive Leadership Profiles to view and download the Profiles through the three leadership lenses
- view and download recommended resources and tools aligned to the Profiles that can support your professional growth
- complete the Self-Assessment Tool, then use the planning tool to identify opportunities for growth using the Profiles.

Visit <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/leadership-profiles> to get started.

Focus

Practice description

Taken from the Australian Professional Standard for Principals

Profile

Developmental pathway: a principal’s 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 complacency 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 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.

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 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, responsibility 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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Requests for information and queries about this document can be sent to info@aitsl.edu.au

AITSL has a range of useful tools and resources available on our website for teachers and leaders. You can also subscribe to our e-newsletter to have the latest news and resources delivered straight to your email inbox.

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AITSL is funded by the Australian Government