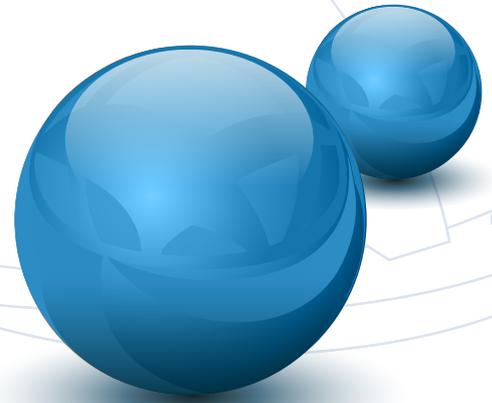# Quality educational leadership recognised through Australian Principal Certification

Australian
Principal
Certification
Program

Quality educational leadership recognised through Australian Principal Certification

There is widespread agreement that our society needs to place greater value on the important and complex work of teachers and principals (Productivity Commission 2012). Whether that happens will depend in large part on our capacity to develop standards for successful practice and rigorous methods for identifying those who meet them.

Our ability to recognise and value quality professional work depends on our ability to evaluate it.

Principals Australia Institute

The Australian Principal Certificate is to be awarded by Principals Australia Institute (PAI) as the not for profit independent professional body that works on behalf of principals in Australian schools.

PAI, in consultation with Australian principals and key stakeholders, is designing the Australian Principal Certification Program to promote widespread implementation of effective professional practice consistent with the latest research.

What is Australian Principal Certification?

Australian Principal Certification is recognition of a principal's demonstration of the Australian Professional Standard for Principals (the Standard). Prepared by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) on behalf of Australian Ministers for Education, the Standard sets out what principals are expected to know, understand and do to achieve in their work. It is presented as an integrated model that recognises three leadership requirements that a principal draws upon within five areas of professional practice.

Australian Principal Certification is recognition of the Australian Principal Standard in action.

PAI's extensive consultation process during 2013 and the early part of 2014 has confirmed that the Australian Principal Certification Program will:

- provide the professional and public recognition of principals who demonstrate the Standard

- be based on a principal's presentation of evidence of the three leadership requirements within the five areas of professional practice defined in the Standard

- use rigorous and quality-assured methods to assess evidence aligned with the Standard

- affirm the significance of principals taking professional responsibility and accountability for the Standard

- provide a significant reference point for principals in their professional learning and ongoing development.

Why is Australian Principal Certification important?

Educational research for over 25 years has demonstrated the strong positive correlation between quality school leadership and improved student outcomes.
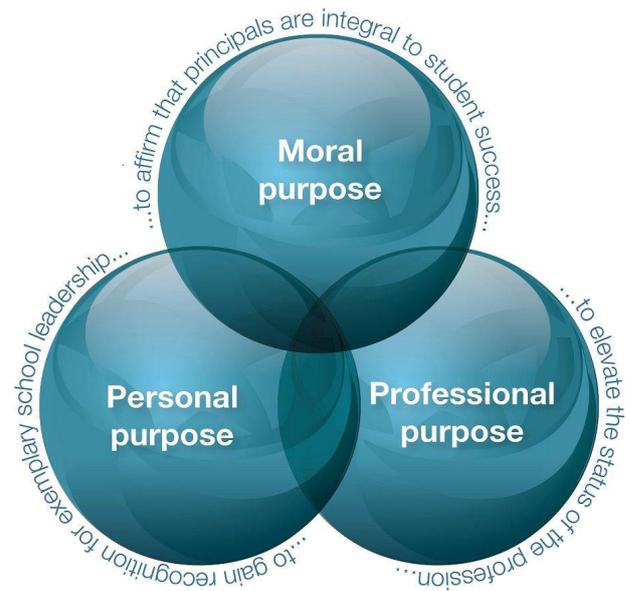
The improvement of educational outcomes depends not only the development of standards for successful practice, but even more importantly on the use of rigorous methods for identifying those who meet the standard.

Australian Principal Certification is an endorsement, based on the provision and evaluation of evidence, that a member of the principal profession has attained accomplished practice in accordance with the Standard.

Certification is the way most professions drive continual improvement in their members' practice; in their own and in the public interest. The development of a publicly credible certification system is a defining credential of a profession.

Why engage in Principal Certification?

Australian Principal Certification affirms the importance of quality education leadership and strengthens the unique role of principals to improve the quality of learning and teaching in schools. It is recognition of the Standard in action.

...to affirm that principals are integral to student success...

...to elevate the status of the profession...

...to gain recognition for exemplary school leadership...

Moral purpose

Personal purpose
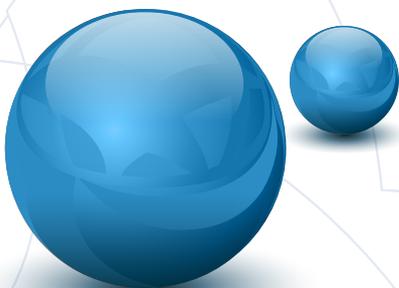
Professional purpose

What is distinctive about Australian Principal Certification?

Principal Certification is distinct from principal performance management. Performance management is appropriately part of an employing authority's system for managing the performance of its employees. Principal Certification instead focuses on the profession's recognition of a member who demonstrates its professional Standard.

Principal Certification is distinct from an eligibility requirement for appointment as a principal. The definition of requirements for appointment as a principal is the separate and appropriate responsibility of employing authorities. Principal Certification instead focuses on the profession's own recognition of a principal's demonstration of the Standard.

Principal Certification is distinct from a qualification that is awarded by an organisation or institution on completion of a course or a defined set of study requirements. Studies and qualifications, such as a university diploma

or degree, are valuable in their own right and contribute to a principal's professional learning. Principal Certification focuses directly on the Standard for the profession as its reference point.

Principal Certification is managed not by others, but by the profession itself. It is managed by the profession, for the profession and for the ultimate benefit of the community.

Research on principal evaluation

Research consistently indicates the importance of school principals in establishing the conditions and cultures that lead to better teaching and learning (Leithwood et al. 2004; Robinson, Lloyd and Rowe 2008; Robinson 2010; Wahlstrom et al. 2010; Louis et al. 2010).

Despite years of research on principal evaluation, it has not been easy to establish valid and reliable methods for distinguishing principals who have attained high performance standards from those who, as yet, have not.

International evidence suggests that it is difficult to implement high quality assessment processes solely within the context of managerial accountability (OECD 2013).

The work of principals is complex and methods for capturing relevant evidence of effective leadership and assessing and evaluating it need to reflect that complexity.

However, this is rarely possible in the context of traditional models of performance management and appraisal of principals (Clifford and Ross 2011; Davis et al. 2011).

Therefore, it is appropriate that Australia examines the development of an independent, stable and professionally credible system for recognising principals who can implement what research shows to be successful leadership practices.

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