



## Public submission made to the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools

Submitter: Catholic Education Western Australia  
Submitting as a: Peak body  
State: WA

### Summary

Research clearly shows that apart from the socio-economic status of the students and their families, the combined size effect of leadership and teaching on student achievement is compelling. Accordingly, CEWA advocates for a focus on leadership development in schools. A system approach to leadership development is important, not only from a sustainability factor, but also because high quality presenters and professional learning can be leveraged and leadership formation will best meet the needs of schools. Talent identification and quality recruitment should be a policy priority, recognising the impending shortage of experienced principals and that schools of the future will increasingly require different skills sets for leadership teams. This initiative will help to inform principal formation. Lessons from the business sector should also be considered. CEWA also notes the difficulty of attracting and retaining quality leaders to some non—metropolitan and (particularly) remote area schools and policy and funding settings should reflect this.

### Main submission

#### WHAT SHOULD EDUCATION SUCCESS LOOK LIKE FOR SCHOOLS/STUDENTS

What capabilities, skills and knowledge should students learn at school to prepare them for the future

In terms of school leadership, and any frameworks developed by AITSL and other organisations, the focus needs to be on effective instructional leadership. Many existing frameworks and leadership programs have a focus on organisational and management leadership, often to the detriment of recognising the principal as an educational leader. Leadership capabilities and skills also need to be developed as part of the school leadership team structure. That is, other leaders, including leaders, need to be acknowledged and included in leadership development where possible. This approach develops important attributes such as interpersonal skills,

collaborative practice empathy and a recognition that the principal acts as part of a team.

Leadership programs need to accommodate the different skills, capabilities and knowledge principals and leadership teams require at different stages of their career formation. This will vary for middle leadership; aspiring leaders; early principalships; and experienced leaders. Special consideration also needs to be given to special needs schools such as remote schools, CARE school and those with significant Aboriginal cohorts.

Any frameworks developed by government or related agencies also need sufficient flexibility to accommodate aspects of leadership that will be related specifically to religious based schools.

How should school quality and education success be measured

CEWA has implemented a number of processes which assist in developing and monitoring leadership effectiveness. This is in recognition that along with teacher quality, leadership is a significant determinant of student learning. Principal selection processes are rigorous and consider many of the aspects of the Australian Professional Standards for Principals. At Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA), principals are appointed to a school for a maximum of 12 years. After three years, the principal is involved in a thorough review process. After eight years in a school, the principal undergoes a further review. CEWA schools are also involved in a School Cyclical Review at least every five years. While this covers the full scope of a school's operation, leadership is an important focus of the review. The review is undertaken by a panel of experienced educators.

All schools are required to follow an Annual School Improvement Plan. The focus of this plan is on establishing targets for student achievement and other outcomes. The school, through its leadership, is held accountable to this plan.

CEWA carefully monitors student achievement through internal and external measures. For Years 1 to 11, these are mainly related to NAPLAN. For Year 12, data relating to certificated achievement and post-school destinations is used to measure school effectiveness and to support conversations with school leadership.

**WHAT CAN WE DO TO IMPROVE AND HOW CAN WE SUPPORT ONGOING IMPROVEMENT OVER TIME**

How could schools' funding be used more effectively and efficiently (at the classroom, school or system level) to have a significant impact on learning outcome for all students including disadvantaged and vulnerable students and academically advanced students

Key focus areas for funding in the area of leadership exist in two main areas. Firstly, talent identification is recognised as a priority. A significant proportion of school

principals are over 50 years of age and it is anticipated there will soon be shortages of quality leaders. Additionally there is a recognition that schools are far more complex operations than previously and that different skill sets and attributes are required. These are not necessarily provided by the 'seniority model' which is normally the promotion route for many schools.

Accordingly, CEWA is investing funds into an evidence-based talent identification project which will develop a range of instruments capable of identifying appropriate leaders, mainly at the principal level. While most aspirant principals will be identified within schools (and at different seniority levels) the tool will also be able to identify leaders from outside the school system.

The talent ID program will provide a clear basis for developing targeted professional learning to meet the needs of those identified. This also allows funding to be appropriately targeted, rather than more generic principal training and developmental frameworks. Principal leadership programs are important. The AITSL framework for principal induction and support program is useful although more individual and focussed programs are more appropriate. This especially applies to principals and aspirant principals at different stages of their career pathway. CEWA has found that it is important to provide differentiated programs for different categories, including, but not limited to, aspiring, newly appointed and experienced principals. Support programs also need to use a variety of delivery contexts including centrally organised, coaching and in situ at the school.

CEWA organises these programs as a system wide initiative and sees such an approach as being cost effective, sustainable and capable of securing high quality consultants and facilitators. The system approach also helps to assure high quality system leadership which can be transposed to all schools.

What actions can be taken to improve practice and outcomes. What evidence is there to support taking these actions As outlined previously, there is a strong existing evidence base, in both education and non education environments, that recruitment processes are fundamental to effective leadership. AITSL standards for principals is a well researched framework for leadership support and development but does not address recruitment and talent identification. As described above, CEWA is developing a process for talent identification based on international best practice.

There is also an extensive research base which indicates that leadership development is highly effective when developed in situ and/or with the school leadership team collectively.

Research also shows that coaching or mentoring is an effective leadership development strategy. Accordingly, CEWA uses School Improvement Advisors to assist schools with their school improvement agenda. An important part of the role

is to assist the principal in their leadership journey. This is particularly important for inexperienced leaders and those in non-metropolitan locations. Regional Officers perform this role in schools served by the regional offices in Bunbury, Geraldton and Broome.

What works best for whom and in what circumstances Effective leadership development and formation also needs to reflect the needs of the specific school community as well as the specific needs of the principal. For example leadership preparation for special purpose schools needs to be recognised as being quite different from mainstream schools. Examples include schools with high Aboriginal cohorts, CARE schools and remote and sole provider schools. Materials and leadership frameworks developed by agencies such as AITSL need to take account of these differences. Equally, funding to schools and systems needs to take account of the difficulties in supporting the formation of principals. In particular, for states such as Western Australia, loadings in funding are critical.

What institutional or governance arrangements could be put in place to ensure ongoing identification, sharing and implementation of evidence based good practice to grow and sustain improved student outcomes over time CEWA reiterates the importance of a system governance approach to all aspects of leadership development; identification; recruitment/ appointment; review; and support. This helps to assure quality professional learning and outcomes. Monitoring and quality assurance processes can be implemented at a system level. Equally, where regulatory accountability is required, system approaches are better placed to deliver this. Economies of scale and sustainability are also more achievable.

CEWA advocates stronger recognition of the importance of system approaches and supports a flexible approach to funding distribution that supports this.

How can system enablers such as targets and standards, qualifications and accreditation, regulation and registration, quality assurance measures and transparency and accountability provisions be improved to help drive educational achievement and success and support effective monitoring, reporting and application of investment CEWA advocates a strong support and accountability process in appointment; principal review; and other school accountability measures such as a Strategic Planning; School Auditing; Curriculum Planning; and School Cyclical Reviewing.

System enablers are possible in a system-led approach as described above. Targets and standards need to be built into support processes. This is done in principal appointment processes, principal review processes, school improvement processes, leadership talent identification processes, leadership formation and professional learning programs. As described above, CEWA implements a number of quality assurance programs at a system level. System level processes and responsibilities

also assure registration and regulatory compliance as required by Commonwealth and state agencies. Recognising that strong educational outcomes are dependent on effective leadership, system approaches represent a quality and cost effective model in this area. CEWA continues to advocate for education polices which support system approaches, recognising that the principle of subsidiarity is important.

Are there any new or emerging areas for action which could lead to large gains in student improvement that need further development or testing

Research worldwide shows that investment in the areas of school leadership and teacher quality will make the greatest difference to student achievement. CEWA encourages education policy making and funding allocations that support these areas. The work of AITSL is important in developing leadership quality frameworks and related resources. These should be guides to assist schools and systems rather than regulatory or accreditation frameworks. Partnerships between schools and tertiary institutions should be established to assist in developing quality leadership support. Similarly, industry partnerships should also be brokered. There is evidence that recruitment and talent identification processes in the private sector will be useful for leadership support in schools.

What are they and how could they be further developed • See above; projects such as this are new and nationally important

#### ARE THERE BARRIERS TO IMPLEMENTING THESE IMPROVEMENTS

If yes, what are they and how could these be overcome Education policy needs to be careful about over-regulating principal development processes; AITSL standards for Principals are a guide. The suggestion to accredit principals and emerging principals nationally may be unhelpful where these requirements are inconsistent with approaches currently being used in education systems. This is particularly so in religious-based systems.

Recruiting and retaining effective leaders in remote areas is a challenge. Government needs to support education systems to identify, train, support and retain principals in these locations. System approaches permit some cross-subsidisation as well as the possibility of secondments and mentoring/coaching.