

Principal Selection Panel Member Handbook



CONTENTS

SECTION 1: ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY OF PRINCIPALS	3
Introduction	3
The Context	5
Defining the Principal Role.....	6
Principal Selection Criteria	7
SECTION 2: MERIT AND EQUITY IN RECRUITMENT.....	9
The Selection Panel.....	9
Merit and Equity – A Summary	10
Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Requirements	11
Conflict of Interest	12
SECTION 3: RECRUITMENT PROCESS FROM VACANCY TO SELECTION	13
Recruitment Process.....	13
Recruitment Matrix.....	13
Screening and Short-listing.....	14
Assessing Applications Against Capabilities as well as Experience	14
Interview.....	15
Reference Checks	17
Reporting	19
Notification to Applicants.....	19
Individual Selection Report	19
SECTION 4: BEHAVIOURAL INTERVIEWS.....	20
The S. A. R. Technique.....	20
Question Types.....	20
Hints for Developing Questions.....	20
Behavioural Interview Questions.....	21
SECTION 5: OPTIONAL SELECTION TOOLS	31
Why would a selection panel choose to use another tool in the selection process?	31
Optional Selection Tools.....	31
SECTION 6: WHAT HAVE WE COVERED?	33
FURTHER ASSISTANCE	34

ACTIVITIES

	Activity 1	4
	Activity 2	5
	Activity 3	8
	Activity 4	10
	Activity 5	12
	Activity 6	14
	Activity 7	16
	Activity 8	23
	Activity 9: Skills practice – writing behavioural questions	24
	Activity 10: Behavioural interview responses	25
	Activity 11: Skills practice – appropriate questions	27
	Activity 12: Skills practice – probing questions	28
	Activity 13	32

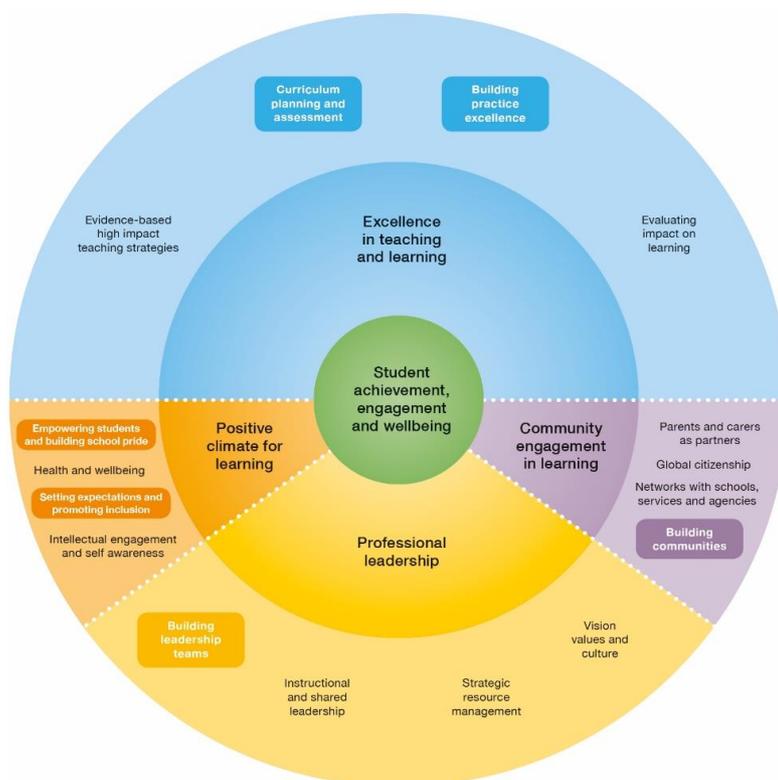
SECTION 1: ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY OF PRINCIPALS

INTRODUCTION

A defining feature of education and training provision in Victoria is its unique devolved delivery environment. In this context the Department of Education and Training (the Department) has described the critical success factors that will position Victoria for success and the priorities that will frame the work of the organisation.

The core task of the principal is to lead and manage ongoing efforts to improve teaching and school staff practice, school performance and ultimately outcomes for students. The elements of school improvement to which principals apply their leadership and management capabilities are clearly outlined in the Framework for Improving Student Outcomes (FISO).

Fig: FISO Improvement Model



Professional leadership is identified as one of the four state-wide priorities in the FISO Improvement Model and has the second largest impact on student outcomes in the school, behind teaching quality.

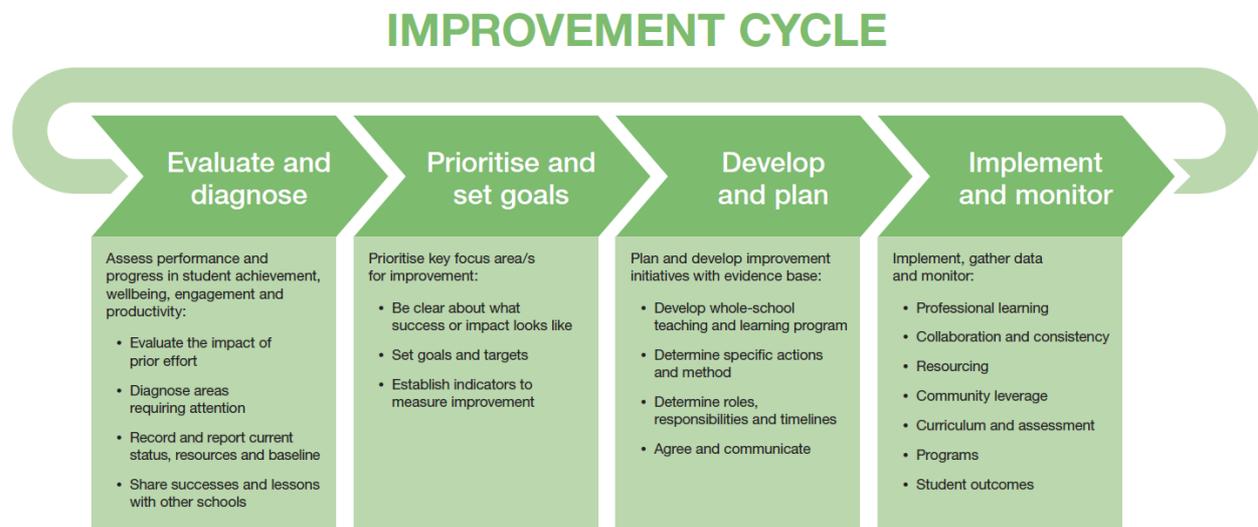
Effective school leaders:

1. Understand the core purpose of schools
2. Develop and shape a compelling vision that sets the direction for their organisation and guides their practice
3. Develop people
4. Support and monitor the learning and growth of effective teachers that fosters powerful teaching and learning for all students
5. Design organisational structures and processes that align with the school's vision and values and that encourage teachers to reflect on and improve their practice.

Strategic resource management is a critical factor in school improvement. Effective leaders are able to embrace uncertain, complex and challenging contexts and work with others to seek creative and innovative solutions while ensuring integrity. They respond strategically to opportunities in the external environment for the benefit of the school community.

Principals use the FISO Improvement Cycle to combine robust evidence with effective inquiry processes; highlight the school's areas of strength and the areas of existing practice that need improving; and plan the right improvement strategies.

Fig: FISO Improvement Cycle



Principals play a lead role in evaluating the school's performance against their 4-year School Strategic Plan (SSP) and Annual Implementation Plans (AIPs), which is tested and validated through a school review. The school review report informs the development of the next SSP.

The SSP outlines the strategic direction for the school, setting four-year goals and targets and key improvement strategies. AIPs monitor yearly progress against these and includes actions, success criteria and evidence of impact.

The Department has the responsibility to protect and provide for the welfare and safety of students and staff and to maintain the security of resources and assets by requiring and maintaining high standards of professional behaviour and conduct from employees. In order to meet its responsibilities, the Department must be satisfied that only those who meet the highest standards of integrity and suitability are employed. In addition, the Secretary (or delegate) must be satisfied that the prospective employee is suitable for child-connected work.

Activity 1

Effective leaders

What does effective leadership mean to you?

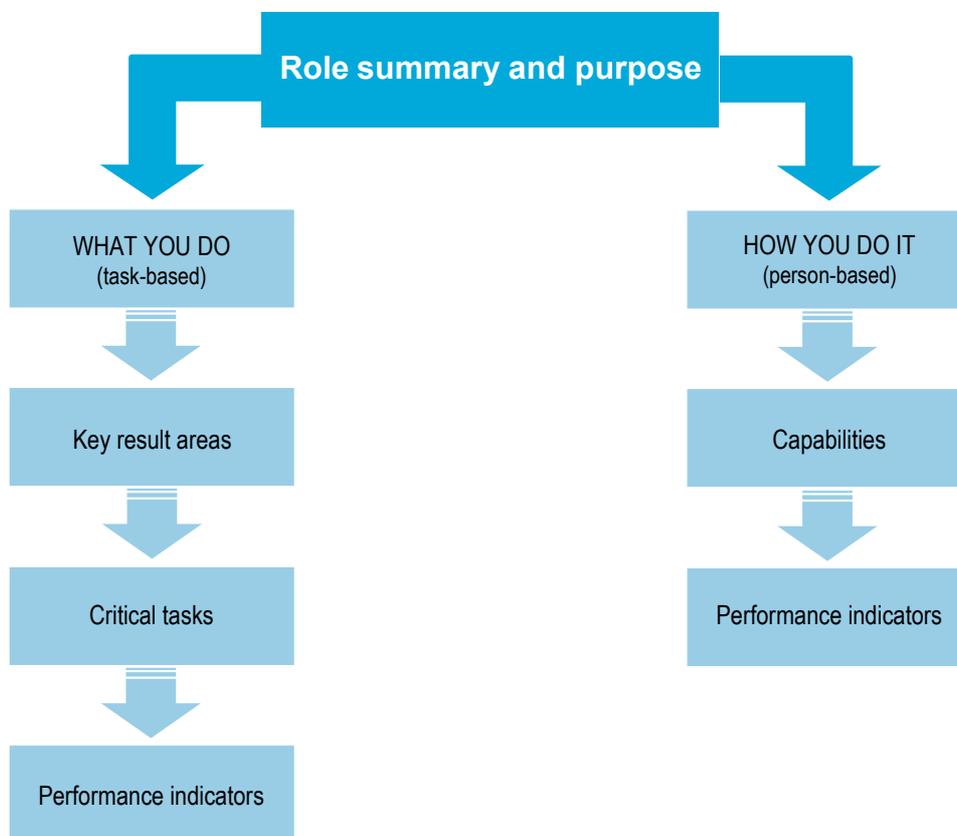
Describe an effective leader with whom you have worked.

DEFINING THE PRINCIPAL ROLE

HOW CAN WE CLEARLY DEFINE THE ROLE?

Clarify what you want

Prior to conducting any applicant assessment techniques, it is important to be clear about the most appropriate person you want to recruit for your school community.



The role itself

It is essential to understand the capabilities required for success in the role and how they are evidenced in practice. Success can mean different things for different roles. For example, teacher capabilities may include knowing how students learn, knowing the content they teach, having the ability to plan and assess for effective learning and using a range of teaching strategies. School leaders will need to be able to think and plan strategically, advocate for all students, shape pedagogy and sustain partnerships and networks.

What you do

Having regard to the role and responsibilities of the position, define what evidence would indicate that applicants have the capabilities to effectively perform the role.

How you do it

This is where capabilities and performance indicators are defined as clearly as possible. What behaviours and values are important to perform this role effectively? This process is sometimes completed by considering what an effective leader would demonstrate.

Team fit

In considering the indicative behaviours that are linked to effective performance in the role, you should also consider the size, dynamics and profile of the existing school staff. For example, when recruiting a principal to a school where there has been significant conflict within the school community, it would be important to look for capabilities that develop relationships and the individual and collective capacity of all people within the school.

A good understanding of the role is the key

Remember that behaviour is not determined solely by the person. The context (e.g. a particular workplace) may also influence how a person will behave. Consider your own behavioural style – Do you feel you act differently at home and work? With close friends or people you are meeting for the first time? Working on something you enjoy doing or completing a routine part of your role?

Whilst behavioural interviews can help us predict a person's tendency to behave in certain ways, some specific aspects of behaviour will be difficult to predict without adequate knowledge of the potential work context.

PRINCIPAL SELECTION CRITERIA

Selection criteria are designed to help make the most accurate match between the requirements of a position and the skills of an applicant. Six selection criteria have been developed based on the professional practices in the Australian Professional Standard for Principals. In addition, a community criterion may be included. School councils are encouraged to include a criterion informed by the specific context and leadership needs of the school.

The selection criteria are as follows, with the first six criteria being mandatory.

Vision and values

Demonstrated capacity to create a shared vision, define and gain acceptance of school goals and set and communicate expectations for effective performance.

Teaching and learning

Demonstrated ability to manage the quality of teaching and create a positive culture of challenge, support and collaboration.

Improvement, innovation and change

Demonstrated capacity to produce and implement clear, evidence-based improvement plans and policies and lead innovation and change.

Management

Demonstrated capacity to ensure that the school's human, physical and financial resources are efficiently allocated and managed.

Development

Demonstrated capacity to create a professional learning community that is focused on the continuous improvement of teaching and learning, supporting all staff to achieve high standards and commitment to their own learning and wellbeing.

Engagement

Demonstrated capacity to develop positive relationships with students, parents/families and the local community and participate in and contribute to system-level activities.

Community criterion (optional)

The addition of a community criterion provides an opportunity for the school council (or committee if there is no school council) to frame a criterion informed by the specific context and leadership needs of the school.



Activity 3

For each leadership selection criteria, consider what effective performance would look like to you.

Leadership criteria	Examples of a strong demonstration of this leadership criteria
<p>Vision and values</p> <p>Demonstrated capacity to create a shared vision, define and gain acceptance of school goals and set and communicate expectations for effective performance.</p>	
<p>Teaching and learning</p> <p>Demonstrated ability to manage the quality of teaching and create a positive culture of challenge, support and collaboration.</p>	
<p>Improvement, Innovation and Change</p> <p>Demonstrated capacity to produce and implement clear, evidence-based improvement plans and policies and lead innovation and change.</p>	
<p>Management</p> <p>Demonstrated capacity to ensure that the school's human, physical and financial resources are efficiently allocated and managed.</p>	
<p>Development</p> <p>Demonstrated capacity to create a professional learning community that is focused on the continuous improvement of teaching and learning, supporting all staff to achieve high standards and commitment to their own learning and wellbeing.</p>	
<p>Engagement</p> <p>Demonstrated capacity to develop positive relationships with students, parents/families and the local community and participate in and contribute to system-level activities.</p>	

SECTION 2: MERIT AND EQUITY IN RECRUITMENT

THE SELECTION PANEL

The selection panel is responsible for assessing the merit of applicants and making a recruitment recommendation. Each member of the panel is equally responsible for ensuring the confidentiality, impartiality, fairness and timeliness of the merit selection process.

In order to make an assessment and a recommendation, the panel needs to obtain sufficient information about each applicant's merit.

Confidentiality

Panel members must maintain confidentiality throughout the selection process. It is inappropriate to discuss the deliberations of the panel with anyone other than a panel member. The signing of a 'confidentiality statement' is mandatory at the outset of the selection process.

Composition and skills of a panel

A selection panel for principal positions consists of people who:

- understand the requirements of the role
- have the skills necessary to make the assessment
- have no conflict of interest, actual, potential or perceived, arising from the selection process
- are familiar with the Department's merit selection process
- understand the principles of equal employment opportunity.

Merit and equity

The Department, and therefore selection panels, operates under merit and equity principles. It is vital that you understand the difference between merit and equity and how they each impact on the selection process.

Why?

It is in the best interest of all parties to follow a merit-based selection methodology as it leads to the appointment of the best applicant for the position, ensures openness and transparency, and allows greater confidence in the outcome of the selection process.

What is merit?

Merit is defined as 'the capacity of the person to perform particular duties, having regard to the person's knowledge, skills, qualifications and experience and the potential for future development'.

The assessment process is chosen to suit the circumstances of the vacancy and the environment in which it operates and, in most cases, is carried out by a panel.

The merit assessment process generally includes the following steps:

- applicants, taking into account the responsibilities of the job, provide written evidence of their qualifications, skills, knowledge and experience, which demonstrates their claims against the selection criteria contained in the job description
- the panel considers applications and obtains as much other information about applicants as they require to make an informed assessment
- when the panel has gathered sufficient information, they evaluate the evidence to determine who, in their judgment, has established the greatest capacity to do the job.

Tip: Focus on the quality of the experience, not the quantity of experience.

It is important to think carefully about the relevant personal abilities/capabilities you are looking for.

What is equity?

Treating people equitably means treating them appropriately.

It is a common misconception that treating people equitably means treating them all the same.

Equity is defined as “not treating people in the same way but rather in a fair and flexible way”.

Tip: For consistency in assessment, the same selection process should be applied to all applicants. Additional steps may need to be used to distinguish between closely matched applicants.

Applicants should be asked the same set of questions, to ensure consistency and to assist in making a fair comparison based on merit. However, it is acceptable to probe or ask follow-up questions of an applicant if a particular issue or concern emerges in the course of the interview.



Activity 4

Below are some interview questions. Which of these do you consider can be asked of applicants at interview?

Interview question	Can be asked	Cannot be asked
1. Will the needs of your children impede your ability to undertake the principal role?		
2. As the newly appointed principal of this school, what do you hope to achieve in the first year?		
3. How do you demonstrate a commitment to managing your own wellbeing and that of others?		
4. Is there any reason why you may not be able to do everything that is required of the principal role?		

MERIT AND EQUITY – A SUMMARY

Definition	The benefits
<p>Merit</p> <p>The capacity of the person to perform particular duties, having regard to the person’s knowledge, skills, qualifications and experience, and the potential for future development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leads to the appointment of the best applicant for the position Ensures openness and transparency Leads to greater confidence in the selection process Adds to the validity and reliability of the recruitment process
<p>Equity</p> <p>Treating all applicants in a fair manner in the process of assessing their suitability for a given role. Not treating in the same way but rather in a fair and flexible way.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensures all applicants feel they have been given an opportunity to present themselves in the best possible light Ensures the selection panel feels it has treated people appropriately Adds to the validity and reliability of the recruitment process

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY (EEO) REQUIREMENTS

Unlawful discrimination is any practice which makes distinctions between individuals or groups so as to disadvantage some and advantage others. Questions NOT to ask include questions regarding:

- Age
- Breastfeeding
- Employment activity
- Gender identity
- Disability
- Industrial activity
- Lawful sexual activity
- Marital status
- Parental status or status as a carer
- Physical features
- Political belief or activity
- Pregnancy
- Race
- Religious belief or activity
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- An expunged homosexual conviction
- Personal association (whether as a relative or otherwise) with a person who is identified by reference to any of the above attributes
- ANY information not seen to be of direct relevance to the applicant's ability to perform in the role.

Intention to discriminate is not relevant under anti-discrimination law.

Complying with equal opportunity principles is not just lawful, it is best practice. The right person for the job is the one with the right skills, capabilities and qualifications. There are two forms of discrimination:

1. Direct discrimination

Means treating, or proposing to treat, another person less favourably on the basis of an attribute covered by EEO law, regardless of the discriminator's motive and whether they are aware of the discrimination or consider the treatment less favourable.

2. Indirect discrimination

Means imposing or intending to impose an unreasonable practice, requirement or condition that can only be complied with by a higher proportion of people without the attribute. Awareness of the discrimination is irrelevant. Whether a requirement is 'reasonable' depends on all the relevant circumstances of the case, including the consequences of failing to comply with the requirements, cost of alternatives, and the financial circumstances for the person imposing or proposing to impose the requirement.

Discrimination in the rapport building phase

Whilst the rapport building stage of an interview is important, we need to remember not to raise topics which later, the applicant may perceive as discriminatory. For example, many applicants may speak about their children and their busy lives. If we enter into a detailed discussion around this topic, the applicant may later argue that they have not been successful because the panel felt they did not have the available time to commit to the role. This happens in a very small percentage of cases, however it has occurred and we therefore need to remain aware of these issues.



Activity 5

From a practical point of view, there are some aspects of a person's background that we may be interested in exploring but from a legal point of view we cannot ask about, as it may be deemed discriminatory and against the principles of merit and equity.

How would you address the following two situations in an interview situation?

1. We know the applicant has a child and we want to know whether it will affect their ability to do the job because the role involves travel.
2. If someone has a disability, will it affect his or her ability to do the job?

Note your answers below.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

- What constitutes a conflict of interest?
- If a conflict of interest exists, how is this managed?
- Is this declared to the chairperson/panel members?
- Do you withdraw from the process?
- Do you withdraw if you are the only expert?
- How do you ensure the process is transparent?

Panel members are to avoid any actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest in the selection process including the selection decision. A conflict may arise where it could be reasonably perceived that a panel member is influenced by the private interest of facilitating employment (for example the employment of a family member). Where there could be a perception of possible favouritism and bias, to mitigate the risk, the panel member should remove themselves from the selection process and/or selection decision.

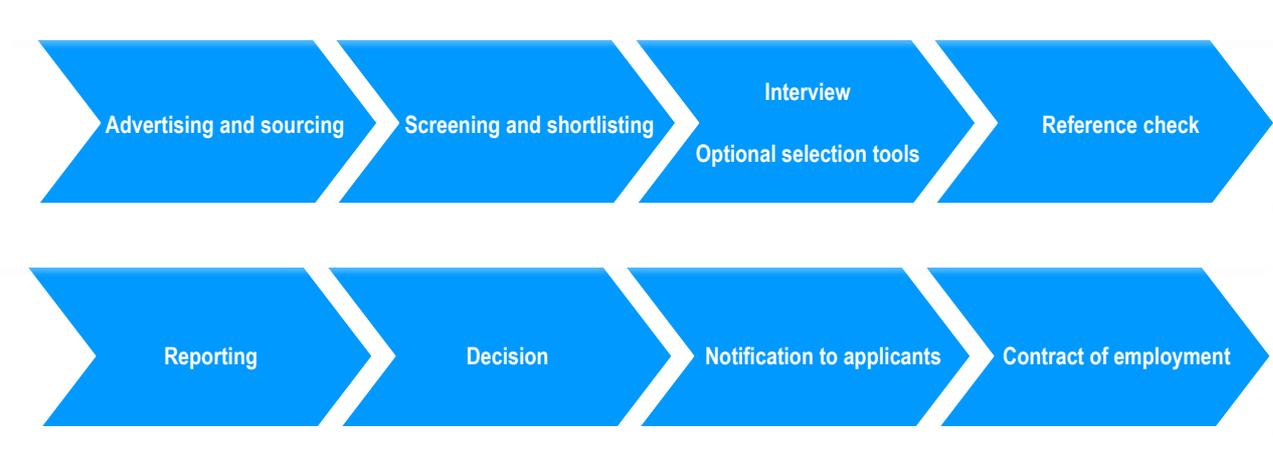
SECTION 3: RECRUITMENT PROCESS FROM VACANCY TO SELECTION

RECRUITMENT PROCESS

Once the selection panel has been established, members of the panel are provided with the

Instructions to principal selection panel.

Whilst there is a range of processes involved in the recruitment of principals which represent best practice for the selection of these applicants, we will focus on the aspects that are relevant to the panel. It is important however, that some members of the panel are familiar with all the steps in the process to ensure questions from applicants can be managed effectively.



RECRUITMENT MATRIX

Creating a recruitment matrix can assist the selection panel ensure that all aspects of the role are covered and that the type of measurement being used is appropriate to what is being measured.

Selection criteria	Application	1 st interview	2 nd interview	Reference check
Vision and values				
Teaching and learning				
Improvement, innovation and change				
Management				
Development				
Engagement				
Community criterion				

Attracting applicants (Unique to the role)

If you look hard enough, you will generally find that all jobs have something that sets them apart, something that is unique to the role, school or community. It could be any, or a combination, of the following:

- Opportunity to make a difference in children’s lives
- Location of the school
- Work environment
- Access to resources
- The team they will be working with
- Opportunity to add value
- Salary package
- Career prospects.



Activity 6

Make notes about why someone would like to work as a principal in both metropolitan and regional areas.

SCREENING AND SHORT-LISTING

This vital stage of the process needs to be carefully managed, in accordance with merit principles in particular. Applicants who are both short-listed and not short-listed need to have been assessed against the selection criteria. Evidence should be able to be provided to all applicants as to the reason for their success or otherwise.

The chairperson of the selection panel is responsible for distributing the applications to the selection panel.

When short-listing, the panel should consider both evidence of behaviour consistent with the selection criteria and the applicant’s potential to acquire new skills.

ASSESSING APPLICATIONS AGAINST CAPABILITIES AS WELL AS EXPERIENCE

What is capability?

The word capability carries two meanings. First, it is described as the quality of being capable, that is, of being able to do things.

The second meaning of capability is that of an undeveloped faculty or property, a condition capable of being turned to use.

In its first sense, capability refers to the capacity to perform the work of the profession; capability is both necessary for performance and enables performance. In its second sense, capability can be said to provide a basis for developing future competence, including the possession of the knowledge and skills deemed necessary for future professional work

<i>In the past</i>	people were generally recruited on skills and experience only. This worked when unemployment was high.
<i>Now</i>	people recruit on skills and experience as well as capabilities and behaviours. Research suggests many organisations are selecting someone who fits the culture, has the right 'attitude' and behaviours with less experience, rather than selecting someone with more experience but the wrong 'attitude' and behaviours. The adage used in recruitment circles worldwide is that:

“Employees are hired on skills and fired on personality.”

INTERVIEW

In this section, we will discuss interviewing generally. In the next section, we will focus specifically on the behavioural interview technique.

It is the role of the selection panel to develop a set of questions based on the selection criteria. These questions should be written in such a manner that they are capable of assessing each applicant's ability to demonstrate performance in those criteria. There should be a consistent 'bank' of questions, particularly behavioural questions, created for the specific principal position. All applicants should be provided with the opportunity to respond to these questions. Specific questions may be asked of some applicants to clarify experiences or to probe for further information from their application. It is not possible for these questions to be consistent across all applicants.

What defines a good interview?

It is not just the questions that define a good interview; it is also the way the interview is handled by the interviewer.

Applicants are becoming increasingly well informed in seeking roles and employers which not only suit their experiences and capabilities, but also their needs in relation to work/life balance, family issues etc. As such, the interview has become a forum not only to gather more information about an applicant but also to promote your school.

As an example, in an interview, an applicant may take into consideration their:

- future career path
- perception of your school
- perception of the selection panel.

More and more, applicants are asking questions at interview relating to:

- professional learning opportunities
- performance management
- work/life balance
- flexible work arrangements
- parental leave
- community focus
- colleagues
- stability.

If you have found your 'perfect' applicant, it may be one of these factors that influence their decision to accept your job offer!



Activity 7

When interviewing, list the advantages you might use to promote the principal role at your school.

Prior to any interview:

- understand the job and capability requirements
- create a series of standard questions linked directly to the job requirements
- know the applicant's resume and application well and make notes about areas to clarify/question
- prepare behavioural interview questions (if applicable).

How to make an applicant feel relaxed:

- be on time – if the selection panel is running over time, let the applicant know and apologise
- be friendly and engage in small talk prior to the interview
- thank the applicant for attending the interview
- introduce the panel members and explain their role in the interview
- explain format, structure and duration of the interview.

Remember that applicants are deciding whether they want to work for you just as much as you are trying to decide whether to select them. You have only about an hour to make a good impression on the applicant.

Be prepared

Look confident when greeting the applicant. Outline the interview structure. First, give a brief description of the role and outline the specific duties. Have your questions and the applicant's resume at hand. Clearly articulate the job description and the school's mission.

Establish rapport

Introduce the panel members and make the applicant feel welcome. Extend professional courtesies, offer applicants a glass of water, and ask them if they had difficulty finding the meeting place. Communicate to the applicant that they will have the opportunity to ask you questions also.

Employ effective listening skills

Don't interrupt the applicant when they are answering questions, unless they are providing a behavioural response and you have indicated that you may interrupt from time to time. Give the applicant your full attention and do not make assumptions about the applicant. Watch for non-verbal signals. Be sure your tone of voice is appropriate and professional.

Avoid stereotyping

Holding beliefs about people that place them in categories lessens the chance of interaction and diminishes the potential for recognizing and accepting differences. Stereotypes affect what a person thinks and believes about others, as well as how she or he behaves toward them. As an example, this applicant completed their studies at X University; therefore they must be a strong applicant.

Halo effects

If the previous applicant was very good - or very bad - this can radically influence your rating and perception of the applicant you are presently interviewing. This is the 'halo effect'. It is like having to give a speech at a wedding - just AFTER the best speaker in the room has spoken. Your speech may be very good but people will subconsciously judge it against what they have just heard.

Follow the 80/20 rule

Don't talk too much. Selection panel members should talk only about 20% of the time and listen the remaining 80% of the time. Allow applicants to talk about their skills and qualifications during the interview.

In the next section, covering behavioural interviews, we will focus on writing questions based on the selection criteria.

Managing a panel interview environment

Applicants typically perceive panel interviews as more confronting. It is important that the applicant understands the interview agenda. This should include:

- an introduction of everyone on the panel including their name and their role on the panel
- confirmation of who on the panel will 'run' the interview.

REFERENCE CHECKS

Reference checks are a vital part of the selection process and are a valuable way to both elicit new information about an applicant and confirm information obtained through the application or interview process.

It is good practice for all panel members to be present when contacting referees and for contact to be made by talking to the referees. Personal contact with referees allows the panel to explore and clarify information and to verify the comments made.

The selection panel is required to inform applicants at or after interview of any non-nominated referees that may be contacted.

When considering unfavourable comments provided by a referee, the panel needs to determine the merit of the comments. In each case, the panel will make a judgement about whether to seek an alternative source of information.

Where an applicant nominates a panel member as a referee, any referee comments made by that panel member should be documented in the same way as other referee comments. Any prior knowledge of an applicant by a panel member (whether nominated as a referee or not) must be considered as though it were a referee comment.

Referee reports must remain confidential.

HOW TO CONDUCT A REFERENCE CHECK

During the interview

Check that the references supplied are in fact the correct references, i.e. what the applicant's working relationship with the referee was. For each position, ask what was the title and name of the person they reported to and see if these names correspond to referees they have supplied on their resume. If they do not, ask why.

Prior knowledge

Members of the selection panel may know or have knowledge of one or more of the applicants. Rather than only disclosing this knowledge as fact in a statement to the panel, members contribute their perspective so that the panel develops a richer understanding of a particular applicant's knowledge, skills and behaviors. Prior knowledge statements should be treated on the same basis as referee reports.

How to prepare for a reference check

- Have a clear understanding of what you want to achieve with the reference check.
- If you sit in a noisy area, move to somewhere quieter so that you will not be disturbed.
- Obtain a thorough understanding of the applicant's duties while employed at the referee's workplace.

- Ensure that the applicant has advised the referee that you may call.
- List any additional questions you may have from the interview.

Calling the referee

When calling the referee, confirm their title and pronunciation of their name.

When put through to the referee, don't launch straight into the reference check.

Explain:

- The purpose of your call and where you are from.
- Their name was given to you by the applicant.
- Ask if they are free to talk - if not organise a specific time to call back.
- Check and gain their consent to continue.

Begin by verifying details of past employment on the applicant's resume.

Examples:

- Month/year started and finished
- Reason for leaving
- Title/position on leaving (as well as initial position)
- Formal qualifications obtained while working
- Salary and benefits (if recent)
- Where the applicant was previously employed
- Where the applicant worked after (if known).

Confirm the applicant's leadership capabilities, in particular any capabilities that the applicant would need to be able to demonstrate at the principal level. If the referee is not qualified to assess the applicant's leadership ability, this should be noted. If the applicant was not rated highly, the specific areas in which they did not demonstrate capability should be noted if all other areas were satisfactory.

Find out what the referee thought were the applicant's strengths and weaknesses. People feel more comfortable discussing positives rather than negatives, but try to get a balanced picture. Ask questions about the applicant's interpersonal skills, and how they got along with staff/peers/senior managers and whether they were liked and respected.

Run through the questions on the reference check form, but also ask any other questions which you consider are appropriate to clarify experience and capability. Ask 'open ended' questions; try not to ask questions that require a yes/no answer. Never settle for yes/no answers. If you consider the referee is holding something back, probe for more information. Listen for pauses, hesitation and how things are said. A contradiction or intonation may provide you with a sense of how the referee really feels about your applicant. Press for an answer that satisfies your curiosity.

Always conclude with 'Is there anything else I should know about the applicant?' This may lead to information about a strength or weakness which left a lasting impression on the referee.

What happens if the referee does not want to provide a reference?

If the referee answers 'No' to providing a verbal reference, you may consider asking the following:

1. 'I understand that you have declined, can you provide the reason for not providing the verbal reference?'
 - Policy?
 - Not prepared to give verbal reference?
 - Other (please specify)?
2. 'Would you be willing to provide a written reference? This allows you to take full control of what information you provide us regarding (the applicant's) capabilities'.

Once reference checks have been conducted, the selection panel should assess the applicants against the selection criteria, using a rating system.

REPORTING

A report must be prepared on completion of the assessment and ranking of applicants (Principal selection panel report).

Where the selection panel is not able to either reach agreement or a majority recommendation, the panel should report to the school council that it was unable to recommend any applicant.

The school council will then consider the recommendation of the selection panel.

NOTIFICATION TO APPLICANTS

All applicants for a principal position may seek and are entitled to feedback on their application and/or performance from the selection panel. It is recommended that the selection panel agree on a process for providing feedback to unsuccessful applicants prior to commencing the selection process. This may include nominating one panel member to manage requests for feedback. Selection panels should agree on the wording of such feedback prior to reporting to the school council. The short-listed applicant's individual selection report should provide assistance for preparing such feedback.

Detailed feedback on the application and or performance at interview should not be provided until after the conclusion of the review process.

INDIVIDUAL SELECTION REPORT

The selection panel should ensure that an individual selection report is prepared for all short-listed applicants. Short-listed applicants may request a copy of their individual selection report from the chairperson of the selection panel once the selection decision has been announced.

Each report should contain the position title, the names of persons contacted for referee comment, comments relating to each of the selection criteria and the date of the preparation of the report. It is vital that the referee reports are consistent for each applicant and provide an accurate, rather than selective, reporting of that comment. As such, information should be recorded and reported verbatim wherever possible.

SECTION 4: BEHAVIOURAL INTERVIEWS

THE S. A. R. TECHNIQUE

This questioning technique will assist you to structure your questioning to elicit behavioural information.

S	SITUATION / TASK <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Describe a situation when...• What led to the situation?• Who was involved?• What was the problem?• What caused you to...?• What were the circumstances surrounding...?
A	ACTION <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What strategies did you use to achieve your goal?• Why did you decide on that course of action?• Were there any obstacles?• How did you overcome them?• How did you react?• Describe how you did that.• What did you say?
R	RESULT <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What was the outcome?• What happened in the end?• What would you do differently next time?• How did it work out?• What feedback did you receive?

QUESTION TYPES

In a selection interview, time is of the essence. Interviews should be designed to gather information specifically relevant to the position.

As such, it is important to examine the types of questions asked in your interviews. By identifying the information you need to obtain from the interview, it will become evident that some questions will be more useful than others will.

HINTS FOR DEVELOPING QUESTIONS

- Use the applicant's resume, application and responses to the selection criteria to consider how their experience may be explored further. For example, if an applicant has been a leading teacher, you may ask them about a challenging experience they had in this role.
- Explore further the applicant's responses to the general opening questions. Initial questions about their interest in the role or their reason for undertaking study may provide examples upon which to base behavioural questions. For example, if an applicant mentions that they studied human resources because they felt they had strong communication skills, use this later as a 'lead-in' to probe further about this capability.

- In the same way, previous examples given to behavioural questions may provide ideas for other behavioural questions. For example, if an applicant describes a project that demonstrated their time management skills, you may discover that the project involved working under pressure. You could then ask them a behavioural question relating to the project to explore their ability to work under pressure.

'Unfocused' questions can also yield valuable information about a range of capabilities. For example, you could ask the applicant about a 'high point' or major success he/she has experienced. Use this as a starting point to focus further behavioural questions on this issue.

BEHAVIOURAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Once you have completed the introduction and review of past performance stages of the interview and have a better idea of the applicant's experiences, you may commence asking more targeted questions. The objective of this stage is to obtain very detailed behavioural descriptions of incidents that have required the demonstration of particular capabilities.

The interviewer's role is to lead people to provide 'short stories' by probing for:

- information about the situation, and who was involved
- the applicant's feelings, thoughts, and motives
- the action demonstrated by the applicant
- the outcome of the situation.

Before launching into the behavioural interview stage of the interview, let the applicant know that you will be asking more specific questions about their previous experiences.

Tell them you will be asking them to provide information about previous situations they have been in which illustrate their skills, rather than how they might approach a situation generally.

A range of question types can be asked at interview including:

1. **Closed** Answered with a yes or no
e.g. Are you an effective leader?
2. **Open** Invites a more detailed response
e.g. How would your colleagues describe you?
3. **Probing** Seeks more information about a point made to an open question
e.g. Can you tell me more about why you enjoy the leadership aspects of your role?
4. **Leading** Invites an obvious response
e.g. Can you cope under pressure?
5. **Behavioural** Seeks out specific information about how the applicant acted in a specific situation
e.g. Tell me about a time you had to manage more than one task at the same time
What was the situation?
Who was involved?
What was the result?
6. **Hypothetical** Asks the applicant to respond to a question in the likely way they may behave, however there is no evidence that this is how they will actually behave or have behaved in the past
e.g. If a teacher did not perform well in their role, what would you do?

In order for the behavioural interview to be performed at its optimum, it needs to be based on capabilities.

Capability is the capacity to perform the work of the profession; capability is both necessary for performance and enables performance.

Capability can also be said to provide a basis for developing future competence, including the possession of the knowledge and skills deemed necessary for future professional work.

Sample behavioural interview questions

Capability	Behavioural question
Thinks and Plans Strategically	<p>Describe a time when you had competing priorities and a tight deadline to meet.</p> <p>Probe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What was the situation?• What did you do?• How did you feel?• What was the outcome?
Shapes the Future	<p>In your current role, describe how you have added value or recognised an opportunity to impact change in your organisation.</p> <p>Probe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What was the action you took and what was the outcome?
Aligns Actions With Shared Values	<p>We all tend to have issues with some people we work with. Can you describe a time when you had an issue/disagreement at work?</p> <p>Probe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What was it?• What did you do?• How did you feel?• What was the outcome?
Focuses on Achievement	<p>Describe a time when you were faced with a challenge at work that you required your team to work through.</p> <p>Probe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What was the challenge?• What actions did you take?• Were these actions effective?
Promotes Inquiry and Reflection	<p>Tell me about a recent issue you had to deal with. What sources of information did you use to identify the issue?</p> <p>Probe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Walk me through the steps on how you handled these particular issues• What would you do differently next time?
Develops Relationships	<p>From time to time, we all have to deal with challenging behaviour at work. Tell me about a situation like that, that you have experienced.</p>
Develops Individual and Collective Capacity	<p>Describe a time where you have been required to work in a team to achieve a specific outcome.</p>

These are general example questions. It may assist you in the next activity to first consider where these areas relate to the selection criteria. Then, you may be able to use some of these questions as a guide.



Activity 8

Using the selection criteria, define each one in terms of behaviour. An example of a community criterion has been added. How would you define this criterion in terms of behaviour?

Selection criteria	Behaviour
Vision and values	
Teaching and Learning	
Improvement, innovation and change	
Management	
Development	
Engagement	
Community criterion (e.g. An outstanding capacity to ensure the delivery of a comprehensive and challenging 7-12 learning environment in a rural community)	



Activity 9: Skills practice – writing behavioural questions

Use your understanding of the selection criteria to write a behavioural question for each criterion. Remember to use the S.A.R methodology.

Selection criteria	Behavioural question
Vision and values	
Teaching and Learning	
Improvement, innovation and change	
Management	
Development	
Engagement	
Community criterion Eg An outstanding capacity to ensure the delivery of a comprehensive and challenging 7-12 learning environment in a rural community.	



Activity 10: Behavioural interview responses

1. Can you tell me about a time you found yourself under pressure at school?

"I have a very senior role so I'm under pressure every day. What I do is try to prioritise my work to make sure I have everything completed by the end of the day. If I think there is too much to get through, I talk to my colleagues and ask them to help me to prioritise."

Q. Is this a behavioural response? Why/Why not?

2. Can you describe a situation in which you met a parent for the first time? How did you go about developing rapport with the parent?

"Well, to develop rapport with someone, obviously I would try and find something I had in common with them so we had a topic of conversation. If that doesn't work, I try and make small talk about the weather or the football because most people are interested in those things."

Q. Is this a behavioural response? Why/Why not?

3. Tell me about a time when you coached a teacher.

“There was an occasion about six months ago where a new staff member started at the school. I am a leading teacher, so I was asked to coach the new teacher in her student management skills. It went really well; after three months her student management skills were fantastic. She received a great performance review and she thanked me for the extra effort I had put in to coach her.”

Q. Is this a behavioural response? Why/Why not?

4. Can you give me an example of a time when you set clear expectations for a teacher to follow?

“Yes. In my current role as assistant principal of Able Primary School, I had one teacher about whom I received a number of complaints from parents. These complaints were typically about the teacher not getting back to the parents to follow up on concerns they had raised about their children. I organised a meeting with the teacher and suggested a number of methods he could use to manage his time more effectively and ensure he responded to parents when he said he would. Over a period of two weeks, the teacher put one of these techniques into place, which involved allocating an hour at the end of each day to talk to parents, and he commented that he was finding it much easier to respond to parents regarding their concerns. I even received positive feedback from some of the parents about this teacher’s change in behavior!”

Q. Is this a behavioural response? Why/Why not?



Activity 11: Skills practice – appropriate questions

- Decide which question will give you the most predictive information.
 - Circle the best choice.
- 1. Which question is best to learn about the applicant’s ability to demonstrate leadership capabilities?**
 - a. What is your leadership style?
 - b. Describe your experience in conducting meetings and leading a group.
 - c. Describe a time when you had to make a difficult decision that impacted your school.
 - 2. Which question is best to learn about the applicant’s ability to demonstrate effective human leadership?**
 - a. What made you an effective teacher?
 - b. Would you describe yourself as a team player or an individual achiever?
 - c. Give an example of a time when you had to consider different points of view when making a decision.
 - 3. Which question is best to learn about the applicant’s ability to develop relationships?**
 - a. Tell me how your students/parents would describe your leadership ability.
 - b. Walk me through a situation that was difficult for you to manage due to parents not supporting you.
 - c. If a parent didn’t agree with your approach on a particular issue, how would you influence him/her to agree with you?
 - 4. Which question is best to learn about the applicant’s ability to advocate for students?**
 - a. Have you ever gone out of your way to help a student with particular learning needs?
 - b. Give me an example of a time you have worked with students or parents from language backgrounds other than English.
 - c. What did you learn this year that will make you a better teacher/leader next year?



Activity 12: Skills practice – probing questions

- Read the following applicant responses to behavioural questions.
 - Circle the question you feel is the best follow up or probing question.
- 1. Applicant: “I’ve always wanted to be a principal.”**
 - a. Describe the last time you were in the position of leading others.
 - b. What makes you a good principal applicant?
 - c. What have you done to prepare yourself for a principal role?
 - 2. Applicant: “I tried absolutely everything I could to salvage the school’s attempt to implement a new language course for senior students.”**
 - a. What might have worked better?
 - b. Walk me through the steps you took as you tried to salvage the situation and what happened at each step.
 - c. What were the most successful aspects of the initiative?
 - 3. Applicant: “I handled the conflict well, both teachers calmed down.”**
 - a. Why were they in conflict?
 - b. Did you feel nervous or anxious whilst the conflict was happening?
 - c. What did you do to calm them down?

What if someone is struggling to think of an example to your behavioural question?

When an applicant has been asked a behavioural question they often need time to think about their response. Allow them this time and explain that they have time to think of an example that preferably occurred in the last 12 – 18 months. This ensures they can remember the situation clearly enough to provide good behavioural examples.

If an applicant is finding it difficult to answer a question, ask the same question in another way and try to relate it to their experience. If they are still struggling to understand, you might like to suggest areas of their background where they can look. If they are still unable to provide an example, then move onto the next behavioural question and come back to that question at the end.

Probing questions

When asking probing questions, ensure you ask enough to be completely clear about the situation the person is describing - their actions, the timeframes and whether or not the capability was demonstrated. If you are at all unclear, ask more questions to clarify.

Interrupting the interview

Often we do not want to interrupt someone when they are speaking as we have been brought up to be courteous and polite. However, in a behavioural interview time is finite. Inform the applicant at the beginning of the interview that you may interrupt them to keep the interview on track and within the timeframes that you have for the interview.

Behavioural interviewing questions answered.

How do we know if an answer addresses the capabilities? It is important that you recognise a ‘good’ versus a ‘poor’ answer to a question throughout the interview. This will enable you during the interview to probe for further information, and after the interview to determine the suitability of the applicant.

To assist in analysing the quality of answers, it is useful to ask the following questions:

- Which capability does the answer address (an answer may provide evidence of more than one capability)?
- Does the answer satisfy each of the S. A. R. components?
- What other information is required? What additional probing questions need to be asked?

You may also find it helpful to use the following note-taking format:

Situation	Action	Result

If notes are taken in this form, it becomes much easier to recognise where the additional information is required.

Rating Capabilities

It is important to summarise the behavioural evidence in the form of a rating. A rating scale such as the one below will assist you in comparing the applicant across the various examples they provided. It will also allow you to create an overall summary of the interview, which will assist you to compare applicants for the same role.

LEVEL OF BEHAVIOUR DEMONSTRATED			
DEFICIT		ASSET	
1	2	3	4
POOR	BELOW AVERAGE	COMPETENT	STRONG

This is a 4-point rating scale for two reasons. Firstly, there is no middle ground which interviewers tend to favor. Interviewers must make a decision about whether the response worked in favor of the applicant or against the applicant. Secondly, a 4-point scale is preferable for inter-rater reliability issues, particularly on a selection panel where there are a number of people who must ultimately agree on one rating.

The following table allows for a summary to be drawn from the interview:

Capability	Rating
Vision and values	
Teaching and Learning	
Improvement, innovation and change	
Management	
Development	
Engagement	
Community criterion	

red
0 - 5

yellow
6 - 14

green
15 - 20

Interview guides

Many organisations create pre-prepared interview guides. An example of a behavioural interview guide which you may like to use as a template follows.

Capability:	Uses contextual understanding to inform decision-making.
Question:	Tell me about a time you had to alter your own priorities with little notice due to changing demands?
Look for:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Making the most of challenging or unfamiliar environments. Being able to 'think on your feet' and work in a variety of situations. Willing to alter priorities and adapt own strategy.

Situation	Action	Result

LEVEL OF BEHAVIOUR DEMONSTRATED			
DEFICIT		ASSET	
1	2	3	4
POOR	BELOW AVERAGE	COMPETENT	STRONG

SECTION 5: OPTIONAL SELECTION TOOLS

WHY WOULD A SELECTION PANEL CHOOSE TO USE ANOTHER TOOL IN THE SELECTION PROCESS?

In collecting information to explore the capacity of the applicant to be an effective principal, it may be appropriate for the panel to consider other assessment methods. Some of the reasons for adding to the selection tools used may include:

- A number of applicants who are very close and all performed well at interview. Therefore additional selection tools may be required to differentiate between the applicants.
- The panel may consider that it did not gather enough information or the type of information it needed at first interview.
- The panel may have generated a number of additional questions in its deliberations after the first interview and may want applicants to respond to these questions.
- The principal role and particular school may require a certain skill set, for example the role may involve a great deal of public speaking, therefore the panel may request that applicants make a presentation to the panel.
- The principal role may require a particular skill set, for example experience dealing with students and parents from language backgrounds other than English. The panel may ask applicants to make a presentation that outlines their capability and experience in this area.

OPTIONAL SELECTION TOOLS

A range of other selection tools may also be used by the selection panel provided the use of the selection tool(s) is applied consistently to all applicants or short-listed applicants as the case may be. Examples of the selection tools that might be considered by a selection panel are outlined below.

Second interview

The selection panel may decide to conduct a second interview for a range of reasons. For example, the outcome of the first interview may indicate that it is difficult to differentiate between quality applicants. The second interview meets this need and allows the panel to tailor more specific questions or focus on particular criteria.

Presentation to the selection panel

A presentation to the selection panel is a tool that provides supplementary information relating to skills that are difficult to assess in other ways. It also samples behaviour that can be used to predict future performance in similar work situations. Presentations are one example of simulated work tests. Other examples include written work, in-basket exercises, role-plays and computer tests. These tests have high reliability and content validity since they are a sample of the actual work performed on the job.

Informal meeting with the selection panel

After the interview process concludes and prior to a recommendation being made, the preferred applicant is invited to meet with the panel informally at the school. This social interaction allows the panel to observe behaviours that may not necessarily be evident during a formal interview situation. As the role and responsibilities of school leaders require a high level of personal and social interaction, this meeting assists the panel in considering the applicant's suitability for their particular context.

Use of external recruitment agency

In addition to identifying quality applicants during the application stage the advantage of contracting a search firm reduces the time spent by the selection panel in short-listing applicants, however it can be costly. Whilst some search firms short-list for the internal interview process others provide a rank order of applicants. In either case, the selection panel remains responsible for ranking the applicants and making the recommendation to the school council.

SECTION 6: WHAT HAVE WE COVERED?

At the end of the principal selection panel training, panel members should have an understanding of the following issues and concepts:

- The Victorian context for leadership and school improvement
- The difference between 'task-based' and 'person-based' skills
- The selection criteria
- The selection panel composition
- Merit and Equity – what are the differences?
- EEO requirements – direct vs indirect discrimination.
- An understanding of the recruitment process
- How to conduct a reference check
- The S.A.R Technique
- Behavioural vs Probing questions
- Optional selection tools.

FURTHER ASSISTANCE

Further information, advice or assistance on any matters related to principal selection is available by:

- accessing the A-Z topic list on [HRWeb](#),
- using the [related topics](#) list; or
- contacting Schools People Services on 1800 641 943.

Further information regarding:

- the Framework for Improving Student Outcomes (FISO) is available at: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/educationstate/Pages/outcomes.aspx>
- conflict of interest is available at: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/workm/Pages/Conflict-of-Interest.aspx>
- the Australian Professional Standard for Principals is available at: <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/lead-develop/understand-the-principal-standard>