



Victorian Principals Association

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VPA Position Paper

Principal Support

The Victorian Principals Association (VPA) is concerned about the level of ongoing support for, and professional recognition of, Victorian Government Principal Class Officers (PCO).

Purpose

The VPA recognises the excessive workload expected of PCOs and advocates for greater support for them, especially when newly appointed or when in a highly complex situation.

Background to the VPA Position

The VPA position has been determined in the following context:

- Respect and treatment of PCOs within schools
- Inequality amongst Victorian schools in terms of support and resourcing
- New PCOs are not currently supported as they should be in a new role
- The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) fails to recognise and take steps to reduce the excessive workload of Principals
- Regional Directors (RDs) administering PCOs with unattainable and unrealistic goals and expectations, can contribute to both the excessive workload and resultant health problems
- Accomplishing excellence within schools requires structures that support leaders and this is inadequate in Victorian schools
- Principals face a unique set of complex issues on appointment to a new school, as all schools operate in different contexts and community expectations regardless of location

VPA Position

The VPA advocates for:

- Regular analysis by the DEECD of the factors that contribute to excessive workloads for PCOs and of procedures to reduce these stress factors
- The DEECD to develop a Community Code of Practice to provide moral and administrative support for school leaders
- The creation of expectations at a DEECD level regarding the positive treatment and support of PCOs and staff
- An increase in the human factor from region down. For example, RDs to visit schools and congratulate PCOs on new appointments
- PCOs to be recognised and respected more as professionals within the system and in community
- Raise the profile and professional role of Principals within the wider community
- Recognition and support for PCOs who are appointed to schools that face difficult or extreme issues and situations
- A dramatic improvement in new PCOs accessing high quality and ongoing professional development

- Utilise highly credentialed retired Principals as mentors for new PCOs and Acting Principals
- The provision of an 'expert' Principal onsite and fulltime to support new PCOs for at least the first three months of an appointment to be negotiated with the PCO and in the context of the school
- A bank of such experts, who are not working elsewhere as a fulltime Principal, to be established to support Principals
- A focus on succession planning for leadership development
- All schools to have access to a Business Manager as a minimum in-school support base
- Support and encouragement to Principals to help offset increasing workload demands by the employment of Principal administrative assistants fulltime for all primary schools
- Rapid response support for cases of social media or other media breaches or abuses that have the potential to affect the personal and/or professional reputation or performance of Principals
- The removal of technical burdens and red tape that interfere with educational leadership
- Additional SRP funding that is sufficient to employ specific administrative support for responsibilities associated with OH&S and facilities management

References

Phillip, R (2012), *The Australian Principal Health & Wellbeing Survey 2011 Interim Report*, Monash University, http://www.vpa.org.au/image/bqam/Principal_Health_Wellbeing_Survey_Presentation.pdf

Department of Education & Training (2004), *The Privilege and the Price: A Study of Principal Class Workload and its Impact on Health and Wellbeing*, Published by the Victorian Department of Education and Training, Australia