

**NSWPPA Position Paper**

**Merit Selection Procedures for Executive and Principals**

**P.O. Box 810 Surry Hills NSW 2010**

**Office: Room 483 Level 5 Building 10 UTS Broadway Campus**

**235 Jones St., Ultimo NSW**

**Phone: 02 8399 3141 Fax: 02 8399 3307**

**Website: www.nswppa.org.au**

The NSW Primary Principals’ Association (NSWPPA) is a professional association for Primary Principals of Public Schools throughout New South Wales with a membership of over 1800 Principals.

**Background:**

This NSWPPA submission details key policy and procedural issues and recruitment methodology, such as attraction, assessment and merit selection.

Merit is the foundation for recruitment. The methodology used to select school leaders’ impacts on the quality and quantity of the candidature.

In this era of constant reform, principals need to be able to manage, and lead at high levels of complexity in instructional leadership and policy implementation.

Changes in promotion methodologies over the last thirty years have resulted in a number of unintended consequences for both the leadership density of the principalship / executive and placed the department at potential risk.

Merit selection procedures have not been significantly reviewed since Brian Scott led the Schools Renewal: A Strategy to Revise Schools within the New South Wales State Education System in 1998. The review proposed major changes in the NSW State School System and set out a Schools Renewal Strategy, which involved the devolution of greater control to schools including budgets, staffing, management and increased community involvement.

Reforming and adopting best practice Merit Selection recruitment processes has the capacity to improve the quality of school leadership that contributes to,

* improvement in student learning
* reduction of Principal turn-over and improved wellbeing, and
* Decline in system risk-management exposure.

The NSWPPA recognises that as with any recruitment selection practice, adopting best practice carries with it associated time and costs. These time and costs are:

• The recruiting team’s time spent on administering and executing the selection best practices

• The costs associated with developing a strong understanding of what constitutes best practice, such as training, through the DoE.

After extensive research and data analysis of Principal surveys, the NSWPPA supports:

* Explicit early identification of leadership potential by principals supervising executive staff referring executive with higher leadership potential to the DoE Leadership Institute.
* Detailed succession system level planning that requires an appraisal of anticipated needs, a clearly outlined plan with measureable objectives, and a new set of criteria based on the Australian Principal Standards.
* Long term mentoring programs and coaching provided to recognised candidates with the on-the‐job training that is essential for success in a new leadership role.
* Effective transition periods involve overlap in order to ensure school and system agendas continuity and provide continued support for the new Principals / executive.
* Effective succession plans clearly define the assessment standards against which new and experienced administrators are measured.

The NSWPPA continues to support the following key principles:

1. The Director, as leader of the School Recruitment process for Principals.
2. Principals, leading the School Recruitment process for executive and teachers.
3. Retaining the central appointment (incentive transfer, nominated transfer, or principals in special education settings) processes.
4. An executive or Principal has the right for transfer on compassionate grounds
5. Schools for Specific Purposes (SSPs) represent unique educational settings that require specialist skills and experience.

The NSWPPA acknowledges the worth of many features of the previous promotions list system. The NSWPPPA recommends that any review of Merit Selection procedures include:

* That all candidates are validated ‘on-the-job’ by a Director Educational Leadership prior to application, through a negotiated industrial process;
* The line manager/s of candidates are consulted by the Director as to the work of the candidate over a period of time at the school;
* Clear and comprehensive role statements for all executive and principal positions based on the Australian Principal Standard that were accessible to all candidates before they applied for promotion; and
* A review of processes to appoint identified suitably qualified candidates and attract quality applications from outside the DoE.

The NSWPPA recommends the following elements of the NSW Department of Education Comparative Assessment (1990-91) system. This process drew on the numbers of people who were already placed on existing Promotion Lists and allowed them to apply for school positions at an appropriate level, in response to advertisements placed by school-based panels.

These are:

1. Accreditation and or qualification prior to progressing to applications for principal positions.

2. Comparative interviews of interested executive and principals for vacant positions.

**The case for reform**

At present, there is some prerequisite training for applications to principal and executive positions. First time principals complete the School Leadership and Management Credential before, or within 12 months of their appointment.

* Current merit selection involves a proforma application, a list of referees and a possible interview. This has resulted in a greater variance in capability levels of people filling school leadership roles.
* Impact of the current principal classification system has seen a majority of primary principal positions classified at P2 and P3 levels. There are limited options for promotion to P4 and P5 positions. This has significantly reduced the number of primary principals applying for vacant positions.

**Data:**

Data highlights the low level of applications to principal / executive positions. At 60% + the proportion of internal appointments is so high as to indicate that the process tends to favour internal applicants.

For the 2017 year,

* Metropolitan areas had 1364 applications for 165 principal positions
* Provincial areas had 718 for 136 principal positions,
* In remote areas 37 applications for 12 positions
* In very remote areas there were and 20 applications for 5 positions

For executive positions advertised in 2017 there were,

* 9044 applications for 997 metropolitan executive positions (inclusive of AP, DP, HED positions)

In rural and remote areas there were;

* 2521 applications for 446 executive positions advertised in provincial areas, 73 applications for 23 positions advertised in remote areas and 44 application for 11 positions in very remote areas (inclusive of AP, DP, HED)

NSW PPA survey data from 464 principals highlighted;

* + Strong agreement with updating online software and replacement of TALEO
  + Limit to length of CV in merit selection
  + Replacing the General Selection Criteria with prior training or credentials.
  + Recruitment process including observation of performance in current position. This could link to the PDP process.
  + A principal at the same level be included in the selection panel along with community representation.
  + Formal mentoring included prior to and post appointment

The NSWPPA supports procedures for principal identification, mentoring and transition. These include:

* Early identification of leadership talent.
* All principals, executive and teachers, are a part of a career ladder to help identify those who have potential to be promising leaders across the system.
* Aspiring principals participate in fully funded leadership training programs. These may include courses provided by the NSW DoE Leadership Institute and PPA Art of Leadership.
* Mentoring is a structured aspect of all promotion positions prior to and after appointment.
* Career pathways for teachers not wanting to become school leaders but enhance their classroom practice and responsibility have been developed in the Highly Accomplished Teacher position.
* The NSWPPA support exploration ofpsychometric testing oraptitude testing as part of revised Merit Selection processes for school staff.
* Criteria for merit selection must be based on teaching and learning. Merit selection will require demonstration of knowledge, experience and expertise in educational leadership.

**The NSWPPA recommendations:**

**Prerequisites prior to application**

* The selection criteria for principal positions reflect the Australian Professional Standard for Principals and the NSW Department of Education principal role statement.
* A prerequisite competency should be required for applications to principal and executive positions. Efficiency confirmed by applicant’s supervisor included in competency.
* Training and mentoring programs to assist the development of leadership and management skills for aspirational school leaders.

**Interviews**

**Panel Composition**

* Training for referees and panel members.
* Selection panel comprise DoE supervisor as convener, principal or executive at the same level, community representative from P&C or specific school community information collected by panel convenor, staff representative.
* Transparency in all procedures.
* Best practice guidelines for writing criteria.
* Guidelines for referees and appropriate feedback to applicants.

**Curriculum Vitae**

* Six page limit for CV and application.
* Standards based criteria for filling vacant positions.
* Specific criteria only since applicants already meet perquisites.

**Post Interview**

* Ongoing support- mentor linked to successful applicant for 12 months.
* Ongoing training – negotiated with supervisor.

**Software / Tools**

* Easy to use / Functional

**Phil Seymour**  
NSWPPA President   
**Mob**: 0412 673 378  
**Email**: pseymour@nswppa.org.au

**References:**

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Geoff Scott for NSWPPA, Feb 2017

Shaping Strong Principals in Singapore: Success by Design