



ENHANCING PRINCIPALS' QUALIFICATIONS

Many education systems around the world are engaged in initiatives to re-examine how their school leaders are chosen, educated and supported.

The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) in the United States has launched an initiative entitled Vision 2021. Its purpose is to develop an understanding of the factors shaping the future of teaching and education leadership, and to envision how the NAESP and its members can meet the challenges they will encounter. More information can be found at www.vision2021.org.

England's National College of School Leadership introduced a principal qualification in 2004 that is now mandatory for all school leaders. The system is facing large-scale retirements among school heads that is being seen as an opportunity to encourage principals to focus on becoming leaders of teaching and learning.

Scotland has developed the two-year Scottish Qualification for Headship program of coursework, experiential learning and mentoring. At the centre of the program is the recently revised Standard for Headship which describes the role's key purpose and the professional competencies needed to be successful.

Ontario is undergoing its own exercise in determining how change is affecting the role of the principal and how the education system should respond.

The Ministry of Education established a leadership institute in 2005 to improve leadership at every level of education. Its initiatives include a framework and an action plan for developing

effective leadership in schools and boards. More information is available online at www.edu.gov.on.ca where you can follow the links to Leadership.

The College is also doing its part. We are responsible for the content of the Principal's Qualification Program (PQP) and are revising the guideline that providers use to develop the PQP. The last time the guideline was revised was in 2001.

Practising principals offer insights about the strengths and weaknesses of PQP content that are grounded in current practice. We hope you will share your views with us by filling out the survey on our website at www.oct.ca → Additional Qualifications → Schedules and Guidelines.

Although some participants in the recent teachers' qualification review suggested that the practicum should be lengthened, the governing regulation has been revised without changing that aspect of practice teaching.

However, other issues with the practicum are still open for review. Some members have told us that the PQP practicum needs to be more closely connected to real on-the-job challenges that practising principals face.

We have heard that the PQP has not kept pace with the changing role of the principal. It should reflect the shift in emphasis away from the principal's role as a manager towards the principal as an instructional and ethical leader.

Some have told us that the PQP should take a more holistic approach that would encourage principals to develop and employ knowledge, skills and strategies that respond to Ontario's complex and unique educational context.

Others have pointed out that a review of the PQP guideline needs to occur on a more frequent basis.

“ *The principal is a dynamic, challenging and highly influential figure in our educational system.* ”

Do you have opinions on these issues? We would like to hear them or your opinion on other factors relevant to principal preparation.

Revising the PQP guideline to satisfy the needs of participants who will work at every level, in all systems and in both languages requires that all voices are heard. You are the voices of the Catholic system and it is important that you give us your input.

Besides the survey, which will be distributed at all PQP College presentations, we are also holding information and focus group sessions with PQP instructors and providers, with the principals' organizations, with the faculties of education and with members in other parts of the province including aboriginal and French-language sessions.

We are keeping in close touch with the Ministry of Education's work and reviewing what is happening in the other jurisdictions mentioned.

Once we have collated all this input, a writing team made up of representatives of the College and our education partners will

develop a draft guideline for early next year.

The principal is a dynamic, challenging and highly influential figure in our educational system. The collaborative development of the PQP guideline will build on this and help to support a vision of strong local leadership that will serve Ontario students well into the future.

The survey is available at www.oct.ca → Additional Qualifications → Schedules and Guidelines and contains links to the current PQP guideline.

We look forward to hearing from you.

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