

# Evaluation insight: positive impact of the Principal in Residence initiative

## Introduction

The **Principal in Residence (PiR)** initiative was established by the Victorian Academy of Teaching and Leadership (the Academy) to strengthen the interface between the Academy and Victorian schools. It engages experienced principals to contribute to the Academy's strategic goals through professional learning design, leadership development, and sector engagement.

Key aims include:

- strengthening the Academy's alignment with sector needs
- leveraging principal expertise to enhance professional learning and resources
- enhanced career pathways for principals to contribute to system improvement.

The Academy undertook an evaluation to assess the **effectiveness, impact, and appropriateness** of the PiR initiative.

## Key findings and recommendations

### Effectiveness and impact

The evaluation found that the PiR initiative has delivered **strong outcomes** across 5 key areas:

#### 1. Contribution to Academy impact

PiRs are integral to the Academy's ability to deliver on its legislated objectives and functions. Their expertise directly influences the quality and credibility of professional learning programs, resources and the Academy as an integral part of the education system in Victoria.

#### 2. School and system improvement capability

While in the role, PiRs have demonstrated growth in:

- understanding of system-level policy and practice
- pedagogical depth and instructional leadership
- coaching and facilitation skills
- advocacy for the profession.

These skills enabled PiRs to lead change more effectively and influence improvement within and beyond their schools once they finish in the PiR role.

#### 3. Principal development and pathways

The initiative positively influenced career progression. Most PiRs moved into more senior leadership positions (including system leadership) roles or returned to school leadership roles with renewed confidence and insight.

#### 4. Amplifying Expert Teachers in Residence

PiRs play a pivotal role in supporting and managing Academy **Expert Teachers in Residence**, who largely lead the Teaching Excellence Program. PiRs act as mentors and challenge partners to maximise the impact of Expert Teachers in Residence.

#### 5. Principal reinvigoration and retention

The initiative has supported a number of principals to re-engage with their professional purpose, helping retain talent in the education system.

### Appropriateness of the initiative

The evaluation assessed the appropriateness of the initiative and identified the following findings:

#### 1. Role clarity

Clarity around the role and expectations (both of the individual and collective) has continued to improve as the Academy matures.

#### 2. Accessibility

There are opportunities to enhance the accessibility of the role, noting there has been a limited number of principals from Victoria's growth corridor areas, lower ICSEA<sup>i</sup> rated schools and those of diverse backgrounds. Principals from rural and regional areas would benefit from a greater understanding of work location flexibility.

#### 3. Exposure and awareness

Some networks across Victoria have limited awareness or knowledge of the PiR opportunity. There are opportunities to work closely with the 3 sectors to more actively promote the initiative.

#### 4. Leveraging the experience

The Academy could work in partnership with peak bodies and the 3 sectors to better leverage the knowledge, skill and experience gained by PiRs on their movement into other leadership roles or return to school.

### Conclusion

The **PiR initiative has matured into a high-impact program** that supports leadership development, strengthens system-wide collaboration, and contributes directly to the Academy's objectives. PiRs play a critical role in mentoring educators, informing professional learning and resources, and modelling sector leadership.

Ongoing refinement—particularly in role clarity, access, and promotion around the opportunity—will support broader participation and amplify the initiative's benefits across the Victorian education system.

The Academy will consider these findings in its planning and looks forward to working with relevant stakeholders to continue to build on the success of the initiative.

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<sup>i</sup> ICSEA - Index of Community Socio-educational Advantage