

Diversity the key to improved performance in schools

18 September 2019

A new evidence summary released today by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) highlights the benefits of championing a diverse school leadership workforce in Australia.

The report *Spotlight: Diversity in School Leadership*, points out that improved diversity in schools leads to a range of benefits, including helping teams work smarter, increasing innovation, and improving performance.

The report supports calls for school systems and sectors to take active steps towards increased quality and diversity within their leadership pools.

AITSL CEO Mark Grant said: “We know that an effective school leadership strategy that is focused on increasing the diversity of future leaders has considerable benefits. This is true for all leadership roles, in all geographical locations from rural and remote to metro areas.”

Workplace research shows that diversity in the teaching workforce can lead to improved outcomes for students academically and in their personal wellbeing.

The report shows that while diversity among school students is broadly representative of the Australian population, the profile of teachers and school leaders does not currently match Australia’s gender and cultural diversity.

The report found that more than 70 per cent of school teachers in primary and secondary schools are female, with male teachers making up just 18 per cent of primary school teachers, and 40 per cent of secondary teachers.

In terms of cultural diversity, while almost 25 per cent of Australian students come from homes where a language other than English is spoken, only 9 per cent of primary and 11 per cent of secondary teachers speak a language other than English at home.

Also, while almost 6 per cent of Australia’s students identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, only 2 per cent of Australian teachers identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, and an even smaller proportion of those are in leadership positions.

“We know that diverse leadership teams improve performance, increase innovation, and generate creative approaches to problem solving,” Mr Grant said.

“It would be a tremendous boon for the education sector if teachers and leaders truly represented all of our community demographics, like different cultural and societal backgrounds, or individuals who identify as having a disability. Improving diversity in schools begins with increasing diversity in Initial Teacher Education (ITE). As ITE students are the teachers and school leaders of the future, there needs to be just as much focus on diversity in this group as on the current teaching and school leadership workforce.”

“Today’s report highlights the importance of increasing the diversity in our schools. Leadership teams need to put a stronger focus on ensuring they reflect the broader community in their schools. One way this can be done is with recruitment processes that are better targeted to under-represented groups to achieve the broadest possible pool of high quality suitable candidates.”

The Diversity in School Leadership Spotlight report can be [found on the AITSL website \(https://www.aitsl.edu.au/spotlight-diversity\)](https://www.aitsl.edu.au/spotlight-diversity)

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Notes for Editors - *The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) provides national leadership for the Australian, State and Territory Governments in promoting excellence in the profession of teaching and school leadership. AITSL is funded by the Australian Government.*