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WA Principals recognised at the 2016 John Laing Awards

Five Western Australian principals have been officially recognised for their dedication and commitment to education and professional development in the annual Principals Australia Institute, John Laing Awards 2016.

Ian Elder, James Danaher, Jenny Dougan, Elizabeth Smith and Matthew Osborne all received the John Laing Award for Professional Development from Principals Australia Institute at a special presentation in Perth today.

- **Ian Elder**, Principal Santa Maria College, has successfully mentored over 20 future leaders from his school who are now leaders in other schools across Perth.
- **James Danaher**, Principal Brighton Catholic Primary School has encouraged staff over his 20-year career as principal, to continue to pursue professional development opportunities to help better both themselves and their schools.
- **Jenny Dougan**, Head of Junior School, Perth College has been instrumental in helping to develop teachers and leaders in the Independent School sector.
- **Elizabeth Smith**, Associate Principal Joseph Banks Secondary College has established a professional learning community model that centres on the work of the college, student learning and teacher development.
- **Matthew Osborne**, Principal, Comet Bay Primary School was recognised for his long term vision for the school through planning and ongoing improvement to maximise teaching and learning opportunities.

Each of the recipients is an outstanding school leader and has made substantial contributions to education in WA through strategic senior leadership roles over a considerable time. These leaders have been responsible for working with other senior educators to develop capacity in government, Catholic and Independent schools.

The John Laing Awards acknowledge principals in every state and territory who demonstrate outstanding leadership in providing professional learning in schools. They celebrate the contribution principals make to support the professional learning and development of teachers and other school leaders.

“It is important to recognise and celebrate the role principals play in providing leadership and development in their schools and the wider community. Great schools have great leaders who inspire both their staff and their students every day. We are honoured to be able to run these awards every year, as they truly demonstrate the commitment made by our school leaders in educating students in primary and secondary schools across Australia.” said Paul Geyer, Chief Executive Officer, Principals Australia Institute.

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Set up in 2004, the Awards honour John Laing, a former Tasmanian school principal who worked for PAI (the then Australian Principals Association Professional Development Council). He was the motivating force behind the innovative initiative in the early 1990s to bring principals together for national professional learning projects and programs to support their role as school leaders.

More information about the 5 recipients are below. All are available for interview. Please contact Gianna in the first instance.

Click here for more information about the Awards:

<http://www.pai.edu.au/content/john-laing-professional-development-awards-2016>

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About Principals Australia Institute

Principals Australia Institute (PAI) is a leading national organisation providing quality professional learning, leadership development and principal certification to Australia's 9,500 school leaders. With an established network of locations in all capital cities and in regional areas, PAI delivers key programs to all schools and systems across Australia.

PAI also supports the social and emotional health and wellbeing of children in thousands of Australian schools through its delivery of the Australian Government-funded KidsMatter Primary and MindMatters programs.

Through its relationships and connections across the education sector, it assists school leaders to achieve the best possible outcomes for themselves, their staff and their students, through ongoing professional development and learning.

PAI provides leadership and advocacy to Government in the areas of school leadership, professional development and Australian Principal Certification to help raise the profile and reputation of principals in the community.

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Award Recipients

Ian Elder - Principal, Santa Maria College

Ian has provided outstanding leadership development and believes in “growing leaders, not followers.” Within the Catholic Secondary Schools in WA he has successfully mentored, coached and encouraged future leaders. There are 6 Principals and 14 Deputy Principals that Ian employed and worked with at a lower promotional level that are now leaders in other schools.

In 2015 Ian received a Fellowship of the Australian Council for Educational Leaders. The citation that commenced with the statement “For his exceptional leadership and his commitment and confidence in developing leadership in others.” A further comment was:

“Ian Elder is recognized as a person of great energy and a comprehensive knowledge of contemporary educational leadership. He is an innovative and ethical school leader, fostering commitment to strong pastoral care as well as consistently setting high expectations amongst both students and colleagues. He is visible in the school, is respectful and fair and inspires confidence and trust.”

Ian is a passionate leader and educator who looks for the good in all situations. His belief that every child can improve is known to all who work with him. Ian is recognized as innovative and is always seeking creative ways to improve educational offerings. In doing this he delegates responsibility and trusts others to take initiatives in the best interest of the College. Santa Maria College was one of 40 schools across Australia named by The Educator as “Innovative School 2015.”

One particular area of leadership that is often commented upon by parents is the content of addresses to student and parent groups. They appreciate the issues he selects to speak about – sometimes confronting – both informing the audience and challenging them. Ian inspires his staff and ensures he is present among them. He is approachable, supportive, understanding and responds to the concerns of staff, students and parents.

Some of his other achievements include:

- Established a process for performance development for all teachers titled GROW! This involved peer observations, online student surveys, goal setting, coaching and feedback. The leaders are trained in GROWTH coaching to lead their staff in their professional development. While AITSL standards are used, the GROW! process was collaboratively designed by the staff at Santa Maria College.
- Similar, to the above, the school has a LEAD! Process to support the ongoing professional development of College leaders. This process was also collaboratively designed by the Heads of Learning Areas and Senior Management and there is a formative review every three years.
- Both the GROW! and LEAD! initiatives focus on improving teaching and learning. The school did not want a model where an externally mandated appraisal system was imposed on them. These are usually more inspectorial in nature and can work against the culture of improvement that we desired. His teachers always hear the following comment from Ian “I can learn from the graduate and the graduate can learn from me.”

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About James Danaher - Principal Brighton Catholic Primary School

James Danaher has been a principal in Catholic Schools in WA for over 20 years. During this time, he has lead 3 metropolitan schools, single/ double/triple stream. He has been actively involved in the executive of CPPA-WA for a total of 11 years serving as treasurer and Vice President. He has been the WA representative on ACPPA, serving 4 years as treasurer.

James has long held the view that growing one's capacity to lead is first about identifying strengths and areas that can be improved. He has used his strength of character, outstanding interpersonal and organisational skills as his basis for school leadership and has complimented this with university study in the area of business management and educational leadership, acquiring a Master's degree in education and leadership and a diploma in business management.

James has made empowering others a significant goal in his leadership style. He has adopted school administration models that seek to identify those staff members within the organisation that have leadership potential and provided them with opportunity to develop either as assistant principals or curriculum leaders.

Many of James' staff members have gone on to be assistant principals in other schools or principals in their own right. Through James' role on the executive of CPPAWA, he has always been a strong advocate for funds to be spent by the principals' association to build leadership capacity through professional development.

Right from James' early days as a principal in a single stream school he has promoted student learning as core business and has been open to innovation based on quality research in determining how to best support teachers in his schools. Programs such as Reading Recovery, EMU (Extending Mathematical Understanding) and MiniLit have found their way into schools that James has led. He has invested significant funds into developing structures utilising the power of ICT to improve teaching pedagogy and learning outcomes for children.

He is a person with high moral principles and his integrity extends into all areas of his educational leadership. People working in his schools are accountable to the highest of standards as James himself models. He has developed internal structures to enhance and maintain teaching standards and has demonstrated an ability to plan for the future, enabling him to work with school boards in achieving significant school infrastructure developments throughout his principal career.

James has demonstrated a capacity in all his schools to inspire others. He is able to quickly form a vision for his schools and possesses an exceptional ability to convince others and get them on-board. Decisions made by James invariably lead to action, providing great example to anyone on his staff aspiring to work into leadership roles.

This is James' twentieth year as principal and throughout this time he has constantly encouraged his staff members to continue to upgrade their qualifications. In his previous school five staff members took themselves back to university to complete their master's degree, three of those colleagues are now Assistant Principals and two are curriculum leaders in their schools.

He has promoted staff members to complete various courses run by Catholic Education WA such as the Women in Leadership course. In his present school he has a number of staff members holding various leadership roles. Two staff members lead the staff in IT development and capacity building, two have written and lead the school through its Brighton CPS Growth Plan, one leads in the Brighton Maths Model and another leads Professional Learning Communities. Other staff members are running programs such as Seasons for Growth, NQS and QCS. Staff members responsible for running programs are given time out of class to work with their colleagues and organize meetings.

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Each year staff members are encouraged to pursue professional development opportunities in areas of personal interest and areas that meet the needs of the school. The needs of the school arise from the review of school data and also come from the various plans running in the school such as the Annual School Improvement Plan, Strategic Plan, Curriculum Plan and programmes such as NOS and Key Teacher. Staff members also participate in Whole School PD and each year five days are set aside for this purpose.

About Jenny Dougan - Head of Junior School, Perth College.

Jenny has been an active member of IPSHA since her appointment to Perth College in 2009. Her first Headship has been just one part of an extensive and varied career in education.

Jenny started as a Year 1 teacher at Lockridge Primary School in the early 1980s. She worked as a teacher and curriculum consultant with the Department of Education until 1998 when Jenny was appointed Literacy Consultant at the Association of Independent Schools, Western Australia.

She worked with teachers and leaders across the variety of independent schools throughout Western Australia. She also held a role as education researcher for the Department of Premier and Cabinet. Jenny has also worked as a lecturer at Curtin University.

Since joining IPSHA in 2009, Jenny has co-ordinated the K-3 Network where she facilitated the professional learning and networking of K-3 teachers from Independent Schools across Western Australia. She was a member of the IPSHA State Executive and part of the steering committee for the 2012 National Conference.

Jenny enjoys working with younger, enthusiastic teachers and potential leaders and supporting and mentoring them so they will stay in our profession. Her favourite place to be is still the classroom and she teaches a number of lessons every week.

Jenny looks forward to, within the next 10 years, retiring with her partner Chris to the great southern region to be a hippy and grow veggies, keep chooks, cook, bake bread and do some writing and travel.

About Elizabeth Smith - Associate Principal, Joseph Banks Secondary College

Liz has immense capacity to self-reflect, analyse actions, and set targeted plans for improvement for herself, her colleagues and the broader system. She has a laser like focus on improving the quality of teaching and outcomes for students through effective instruction in order to shape the learning of others.

Liz has used her own learning to embed high quality instructional leadership in all that she does. She is thirsty for new knowledge, skills and understandings and regularly undertakes personal professional learning to influence her practice, including studying the Master of School Leadership course here at the University of WA.

Last year, Liz travelled to the USA to attend courses delivered through McREL International in Denver and the ISTE conference in Philadelphia (centred on best practice in STEM education); to bring ideas, knowledge and potential contacts back to her school and the WA public education system.

She makes great use of her state, national and international contacts to provide insight, mentoring and current research based input, to her own development and the development of others. Given her personal contacts and networks, Liz is often the broker for individualised professional learning programs in schools, all of which are focussed on improving the quality of teaching and school leadership.

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Identified early in her teaching career as a potential leader, Liz was still a graduate when she was asked to take on her first leadership role as the Teacher in Charge of her Learning Area; and was then quickly identified as a system leader through her role as a Curriculum Improvement Officer, where she worked with school leaders to help analyse and review school improvement practices.

Liz has continued to influence others through her roles as a Head of Team, a district consultant and as a Deputy Principal. She has held significant roles in organisations including the Middle Schooling Association of WA, often represented WA teachers in national programs, such as the Quality Teaching Program; and frequently been called upon to present professional learning for schools and organisations.

In 2013, Liz was co-opted to the Western Australian Secondary Schools Executives' Association (WASSEA) Management Committee as a member of the Professional Learning Sub-committee, where she took on the role of Conference Convenor. Since then, Liz has become the public face of some outstanding educational conferences for public secondary school executives in Western Australia, with conference programs full of speakers and presenters who have positively influenced the practice of our colleagues.

At the centre of each conference program she organises, is her belief that “once off” professional learning does not necessarily change practice. In particular, Liz ensures that the keynote speakers she engages, are available for further work with WASSEA as an organisation, or with individuals, or groups of schools as requested.

Liz has influenced the growth of a variety of Professional Learning opportunities within our sector, including the popular "So you think you want to be a principal" sessions, aimed at providing insights, practical advice and mentoring to our principal class aspirants and embedding twilight aspirant sessions into each conference.

Currently, Liz is an Associate Principal at Joseph Banks Secondary College where she has been able to establish a Professional Learning Community model that centres the work of the college on student learning and teacher development. In this role, she is a regular contributor, influencing teachers and her colleagues through an innovative approach to professional learning which was used first to establish the new college and now to influence the network of schools to which it belongs.

Liz is well-respected at both the school and system level. She works to create an environment, where staff and students are encouraged to seek to improve, are able to take risks, and are urged to seek opportunities to grow. All of which she sees as vital aspects of her leadership responsibility.

Liz is extremely generous with her time and expertise; constantly mentoring and coaching colleagues to help them develop and grow. She believes in, and embodies, the philosophy that "leaders, should leave leaders, that leave leaders".

As an educational leader, consultant and presenter Liz demonstrates an ability to motivate others; a capacity to establish structures to support staff development and; a skill in developing positive learning environments for students.

From individual mentor to major conference convenor, Liz has a long and successful history of engagement, achievement and support in leadership and professional learning. Quite simply, she is outstanding.

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About Matthew Osborne - Principal, Comet Bay Primary School

Matthew Osborne has contributed considerably to the profession through his work with WAPPA and the Comet Bay Professional Learning Community.

He has worked collaboratively to conduct study tours through the school in Early Childhood from 2011-2016. Leaders and teachers on these tours are given an overview of the connected practice during WAPPA professional learning sessions, and then Matt generously takes the time to introduce his talented staff and the school's processes.

Hundreds of teachers and leaders have walked through his classrooms observing literacy and numeracy strategies across several year levels. The latest school review noting the following commendations:

- the Principal and leadership team for engaging in collaborative relationships within the Comet Bay Professional Learning Community to improve teacher curriculum delivery, staff connectedness, transitions and supporting the learning needs of students
- the Principal for strong, supportive leadership over time that is responsible for a staff culture of expectations of high standards, commitment to improving student learning and developing instructional practice with staff through access to quality professional learning and support
- the Principal for developing the long-term vision for the school through planning that drives and leads improvement while being responsive to changing circumstances to maximise teaching and learning opportunities.

Comet Bay primary school was nominated for school of the year in 2014.

His willingness to support his colleagues is highly professional. He shares his leadership journey readily, in a very transparent and reflective way, which is always met with professional regard by his peers. He has supported WAPPA initiatives by having staff participate in professional learning and trials. Most significantly to WAPPA's bright path initiative in collecting samples of writing for the data set.