Every school day in Queensland 325,000 primary students continue their learning journeys in over 12,000 state school classrooms.

Members of the Queensland Association of State School Principals – the leaders of our state primary schools – support and guide this vital endeavour.

We believe that if we work together at every level, school, home, community, state and federal governments, we can ensure that every state school is a great school.
“Every child should have access to the best possible education, regardless of where they live, the income of their family or the school they attend.”

David Gonski, Chair, Review of Funding for Schooling expert panel
Primary schools are places of curiosity and discovery, enthusiasm and inspiration, collaboration and engagement. In our classrooms and playgrounds, children acquire the academic and social foundations that set them on the path to realise their life's potential.

Yet in Australia the primary years, in particular Years 3 to 6, remain the lowest funded per capita of all compulsory year levels. Recent increases in direct to school funding were welcomed and have made a considerable difference; schools need certainty about this funding into the future.

To fully support the learning needs of all students, Queensland primary schools require increased long-term, direct to school funding that is sector blind and based on need.
State schools in Queensland cater for the overwhelming majority of children with disabilities and with significant learning needs. These include those whose family, social, or economic circumstances hinder their ability to learn at school, their social development and their wellbeing.

A comprehensive suite of wrap-around services must be available in primary schools to support students with intellectual, physical, emotional and social needs. A focus on the whole child – to support academic achievement, wellbeing and social development – requires increases in the number of guidance officers and student support positions in primary schools.
School leaders applaud the provision of dedicated learning technology support staff in every school to assist with the maintenance and reliability of school networks. To enable every primary school student to fully engage with the opportunities provided in the digital age, our schools urgently require increased resourcing for hardware, improved bandwidth and infrastructure.

Increases to maintenance funding were recently welcomed by school leaders. Now is the time to recognise that today’s primary schools increasingly require more specialised facilities including music rooms, arts and language centres, and science laboratories. This would complement the State Government’s resourcing of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) specialists in primary schools – an investment in 21st century learning for the leaders of tomorrow.
Professor John Hattie's research shows that the single variable that has the largest effect on student success is teachers working together to maximise their impact. Leading Australian researcher Ben Jensen reported after his inquiry into high performing education systems that:

“While these systems are quite different, the key to all of them is that collaborative professional learning (teachers working with other teachers to improve curriculum, instruction, school climate, etc.) is built into the daily lives of teachers and school leaders.”
Queensland’s primary school leaders welcome recent increases in curriculum coordination time to support teacher collaboration, and further call for the curriculum leadership model in place in our secondary schools to be extended to our primary schools. When Year 7 students moved to secondary schools in 2015, the resourcing model resulted in a curriculum leadership position being created for every 100 students. The same students had not benefited from these positions in their primary schools.

Head of Learning positions are needed in every primary school to support and enhance effective teaching and learning in every Queensland classroom.
“The principal is the nerve centre of school improvement. When principal leadership is strong even the most challenged schools thrive.”

Educational researcher, Michael Fullan
Dr Philip Riley’s ongoing Australian Principal Health and Wellbeing Survey reveals that rising administrative workloads and responsibilities have had a significant impact on school leader wellbeing.

Administrative support in primary schools must be increased to a level that allows school leaders to focus on their key role: leading teaching and learning.

Dr Riley’s study also signals that the incidence of threats of violence towards school leaders is extremely high and rising. In 2016, 44 per cent of survey participants reported verbal or physical threats. Actual physical violence against school leaders is also rising, with one in three reporting assaults. This is 8.6 times the rate at which the general population experiences violence.

School leaders applaud the State Government’s “Respect our Staff, Respect our Schools” program and recent investment in school leader wellbeing.

This critical area needs to be an ongoing focus.
The research also indicates that, as our principals retire, other senior teachers are not prepared to undertake the school leader role. **To ensure state school communities across Queensland attract and retain the best possible leaders, remuneration levels and conditions must set a benchmark that leads the nation.**

We must ensure that:

- school complexity levels are recognised in school leader remuneration, taking into account school contexts which are characterised by compounding complexities including rural or remote, significant transience, multicultural enrolments, single administrator situations, low socioeconomic status, number of Indigenous students, students with disabilities or significant learning needs;
- the highly complex role of small school principal is remunerated at a level above other curriculum leadership positions;
- all deputy principal positions are remunerated at the same level.

Dr Riley recommends that opportunities be provided for school leaders to engage with professional support networks and professional learning on a regular basis. This must be both encouraged and facilitated.

Let's also ensure that time is provided for leaders to focus on their own wellbeing, through opportunities for networking, sharing, sabbaticals and personal health options, already the norm in many systems.
“Let’s work together at every level – school, home, community, state and federal governments – to ensure that every Queensland state school is a great school.”

Queensland Association of State School Principals
QASSP is the Queensland Association of State School Principals. QASSP members are the leaders of state primary schools in Queensland. Together, we strive to achieve our vision of "Outstanding leaders; world-class schools".

In turn, QASSP offers its 1300 members collegiality and service, advocacy on the issues that make a difference, and leadership learning to strengthen the profession.