

NSW Secondary Principals Council Response to Great Teaching, Inspired Learning Discussion Paper

October 2012

1. Inspired Learning

What knowledge and skills will our children need to thrive in the 21st century?

NSW students need to be provided with teaching and opportunities to develop the knowledge and skills of:

- gathering, synthesising and analysing information;
- thinking critically and asking the right questions;
- practical reasoning;
- being creative and turning that creativity into action;
- striving to understand other' perspectives and understand the entirety of an issue;
- holistic thinking;
- communicating effectively, often using technology;
- working autonomously to a high standard with minimal supervision;
- leading other autonomous workers through influence;
- working ethically, firmly based in both one's own society and the planet as a whole.

What makes a teacher inspiring?

While inspiring teachers take many forms, a teacher who inspires students and colleagues alike is likely to encompass:

- a passion for making a difference in the lives of children and young people;
- a desire to contribute positively to society;
- an innate desire for learning and genuine commitment to life-long learning;
- a deep understanding of the purpose of teaching as a holistic practice;
- a deep knowledge of and passion for their subjects;
- an ability to make their subjects relevant and significant;
- a deep knowledge of how to teach effectively and how students learn;
- personal qualities of approachability, creativity, being organised, ability to cultivate meaningful relationships with students and colleagues, integrity, fairness, ethics, empathy, compassion, being good natured and good humoured.

What should students expect from their teachers?

Students should expect their teachers to be inspiring, including all the qualities mentioned above.

In addition, teachers should:

- provide a supportive, safe and structure learning environment;
- cater for individual student learning needs;
- use prior student knowledge in developing their teaching and learning;
- provide meaningful, regular and timely feedback;
- understand that 21st century learning requires a broad variety of skill development, partly different from past experiences;
- be available and accessible;
- contribute to the learning opportunities for students beyond the classroom.



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What should parents expect from their child's teacher?

Parents should expect the same of teachers as for students.

In addition, they should have effective two-way communication with teachers and the school regarding their child's progress and welfare and school matters.

How can teacher, parents and student work together to raise expectations for student outcomes?

Expectations for student outcomes can be raised through an agreed charter of expectations, incorporating an understanding of the core value of learning. There must be a fostering of teachers', students' and parents' commitment to working together and building respectful relationships built on mutual respect and trust, and respect for teachers as professionals.

A school focus on individual growth in learning will also provide the platform for student achievement and an elevation in expectations for student outcomes.

What are the clear messages from Australian and International research about how to support the best teaching and learning practices in our schools?

Research in Australia and other successful OECD countries has indicated successful practices to enhance teaching and learning to include:

the society highly valuing education

the society highly valuing and respecting teachers and valuing teaching as a profession with the highest esteem;

creating a salary structure that indicates a high worth placed on teachers;

selecting the best quality people to be teachers in the first place, then investing heavily in their preparation;

extended internships of pre-teachers;

the value and importance of a culture of collaboration in developing teacher quality and enabling teachers to solve complex challenges;

providing teachers with support, time and resources to work collaboratively with colleagues;

ongoing quality professional development.

2. Initial Teacher Education

Entry requirements - ATAR and mandatory requirements into teaching courses

It is important that there is a much more rigorous system for entry into the teaching profession.

It is important that teachers are quality teachers. One of the prerequisites of a quality teacher is that their university entrance ATAR indicates that they are amongst the best and brightest.

Students entering the profession in NSW public schools should have attained a minimum ATAR of 80 for secondary education or equivalence. It is equally important for primary school education courses that the minimum ATAR entry should be high. Mature age students who have studied a university course that is not teacher education should have attained a Credit average or better in that course to enter a teacher education course.

English should be the only mandatory subject to have been studied at school by applicants as a prerequisite to secondary education course study. If an applicant is not entering a course to teach Mathematics, Science or Languages, there is no valid reason for these subjects to be prerequisites for a university course.

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There should be an additional assessment of applicants by way of an application and rigorous interview that focus on aptitude for teaching and an underpinning philosophy for education and teaching in Australian society. Psychometric testing also could be included.

Teacher education can be delivered at university through different models, which sit beside each other, with neither being the definitively better model. These include postgraduate courses in teacher education and courses that integrate the teacher education with the subject area throughout the degree.

In all teacher education courses, there must be an emphasis on sustained workplace experience in practicums and internships. Internships as part of teacher training have a history of success. There is strong evidence that the more exposure trainee teachers have to the workplace and working with experienced teachers, the greater their performance and the greater chance of retaining quality graduates.

How can we encourage more diversity in our teachers?

While the value of diversity in teaching is appreciated, the achievement of potential teachers is more critical. It is important that any potential teacher meets a minimum ATAR requirement of 80, in addition to satisfying the application and interview process.

Teacher scholarships have always been an effective way to encourage high performing students into the teaching profession, especially students from low SES or disadvantaged backgrounds.

Graduate interview processes to enter the teaching profession must be more consistent and rigorous across all universities and systems and aligned to teacher standards.

Should we limit the number of places in teacher education courses?

By raising the entry to an ATAR of 80, there would be a natural reduction in the number of places in teacher education courses sought and offered, hence alleviating the need to limit available places. There is currently an oversupply of graduate teachers in a few subject areas.

What can we do to improve the practical component of initial teacher education?

Teacher education students would benefit from having a more extended practicum earlier in the degree than is the current practice. There needs to be early intervention on pre-service teachers not meeting teaching standards by university supervisors. The graduate standard must be applied more directly and rigorously.

It is certainly preferable to have highly skilled teachers supervise practicums. A greater recognition of experienced, quality, supervising teachers through increased payment and time allocation to supervise and assist practicum students, as well as the availability of suitable professional learning, would enhance the number of teachers willing to supervise practicum students.

Should we limit the number of practicum placements to areas of workforce need?

Increasing the proportion of practicum placements in rural and remote locations and in metropolitan areas of need may result in an improved staffing situation in hard to staff schools.



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It, however, is unlikely to improve the quality of the practicum or the quality of the pre-teacher in developing their craft.

Building stronger partnerships between schools and teacher education institutions

It is desirable to further develop strong partnerships between schools and teacher education institutions. The provision of opportunities for the secondment of teachers to teacher education institutions, so high quality teachers are teaching potential teachers would strengthen these partnerships.

Do we have the right balance of requirements for preparing great teachers?

Teacher education courses must strike the right balance of requirements for teacher preparation, encompassing subject knowledge, the overarching aspects of quality pedagogy, a knowledge of the use of technologies students will bring to their learning and addressing the needs of all student groups.

Pre-teachers must be prepared to meet the needs of the diverse range of students in every class. Teaching is a complex and challenging endeavour. All teacher education courses must address what all teachers in schools need knowledge of, regardless of their teaching area. These include general quality pedagogy, the teaching skills related to teaching English as a second language (ESL), students with disabilities, special education, gifted and talented students, literacy, numeracy, Aboriginal education, and dealing effectively with behaviour management and student engagement.

Should we develop more explicit requirements for a range of specializations in teaching?

Refer to previous response.

What exit assessments might be desirable to ensure the quality of teaching graduates?

Pre-service teachers should have demonstrated consistently high performance, with a credit average on all practicums and course work. In addition to this, there should be an interview prior to completion regarding readiness to teach.

Should we require teacher education staff in universities to have recent and relevant teaching experience in schools?

University lecturers in teacher education should complete part of their professional learning requirements in schools in a career ongoing basis, rather than a one-off experience.

Teacher educators should be high quality teachers, therefore be subject to high level teaching practice processes and evaluation. As well as a peer evaluation, this could include feedback from their students.

3. Entry into the profession

What support do new teachers need?

New teachers can be assisted in their new appointment to teaching by an orientation to teaching in schools. This should be followed by a well organised school induction which includes orientation to the school, staff and parents, as has been developed by both DEC and individual schools.



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What models of professional learning are most suitable for early career teachers?

Early career teachers benefit from the same types of professional learning as more experienced teachers, including both internal and external to school professional learning courses, workshops and presentations. Teachers gain from collegial expertise sharing, classroom observation, mentoring and developing resources and programs with colleagues.

How can we strengthen induction and early career mentoring support for beginning teachers?

Refer to previous response.

How should we best address performance issues with new teachers?

Performance issues with new teachers are addressed through the accreditation process.

Should we make accreditation mandatory for all teachers and school leaders in the future?

Eventually all teachers will be accredited. With some teachers accredited and others not required to be, this results in some inequity in the profession. Whether all teachers and school leaders should have mandatory accreditation in the future is a matter to be addressed by negotiations between the relevant statutory bodies.

Should there be targeted re-entry short courses for returning teachers?

Teachers who return to the profession after three or more years absence should be required to undertake targeted re-entry short courses. The content of the courses should ensure that teachers have current knowledge of general NSW education policies and procedures, as well as current pedagogy and subject specific matter. These re-entry courses should be aimed at supporting returning teachers, not excluding them.

The courses could take the form of online courses and be completed as part of professional learning and a professional learning plan within TARS.

How do we make sure we get an even spread and diversity of teachers across NSW?

Attaining an even spread and diversity of teachers across NSW has been a long-term problem that is not readily solved. There is a need to have attractive incentives for teachers to go to harder to staff areas and schools. Financial packages to support such expenses as mortgages and car loans, subsidised billeting programs and sabbaticals may assist as part of an incentive program.

4. Develop and maintain professional practice

How can schools and school leaders be assisted to assure the quality of teaching in schools?

Maintaining and improving the quality of teaching in schools requires the investment of funds in the process. The provision of a reduction in face-to-face classroom teaching will facilitate time for the professional activities that can enhance the quality of teaching, namely, discourse between teachers, modelling best practice, action research, mentoring, classroom observations, peer reviews and support and professional learning.



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How do we support schools to build a culture of performance and development for all teachers?

The current consultation on the Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework will inform the implementation of strengthening a culture of performance and development for all teachers. This framework must be implemented authentically.

The incorporation into each teacher's workload time for professional learning, with reduced face to face teaching, will build on this framework. Time to undertake professional development should, in the main, not be in addition to the current teaching load, but accommodated by a reduction in face to face teaching.

Well structured professional learning for all staff, facilitation of collaborative teams and multiple sources of feedback to enhance individual professional development, along with nurturing the development of strong leadership at all levels, should form part of ongoing teacher professional development.

Should all teachers be required to demonstrate they have participated in professional learning that has kept their skills, knowledge and teaching practice up to date? Should all teachers be Institute accredited?

All teachers should be required to participate in professional learning to maintain their professional competence, with mandated minimum hours. Coupled with this, there needs to be an allocation of time and funding for this to happen so teachers can participate in authentic, meaningful and sustainable ways to develop their teaching knowledge, and professional learning is seen as a valuable and structured aspect of their work. Teachers should engage in professional learning that is relevant, collaborative and focused on developing their teaching and leadership skills.

There is a need for strategic professional development from pre-service to leadership.

The issue of whether all teachers should be accredited should be addressed by negotiations between the relevant statutory bodies.

How can we make sure that teacher professional learning has the greatest impact on student learning outcomes?

Teacher professional learning will have the greatest impact on student learning outcomes when:

- each teacher has a negotiated professional learning plan that is aligned to their school's targets;
- the plan considers the teacher's learning needs;
- the plan considers student learning needs;
- the plan aligns with the National Teaching Standards;
- and teachers and schools are given the time to enact the plan deeply and authentically to ensure it is of high quality.

School practice should align feedback from the school community to validate the effectiveness of teaching and student learning outcomes.

How can teachers get better access to the professional learning they need to achieve quality student learning?

Teachers will have better access to the professional learning that they need if there is :



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as a matter of priority, the maintenance of professional learning funding coupled with an increase in teacher release time;
support for collegial networks within and beyond the school;
relevant professional learning focused on quality teaching practice, such as that currently provided through PLLDD;
the maintenance of an online training presence of high quality;
the development of further quality online material and courses;
support for student data analysis;
the promotion of best practice and success across the system, also including this in preservice training;
targeted professional learning and action research within the school.

Teaching is complex. Teachers must be enabled to work in teams to ensure they have the deep and broad knowledge of diagnosing student knowledge, the deep knowledge of the progression of learning, understanding of successful teaching strategies and deep knowledge of the individual child's learning context. This knowledge can be developed by teachers having time in their teaching workload to collaborate with colleagues as a team.

How can we better support teachers to maintain currency with new technologies in order to support teaching and learning?

Teachers will maintain currency with new technologies related to their teaching and learning if there is improved access to materials, they are given time for learning, sharing and building teams of expertise in schools.

What is the best way to prepare teachers to become principals?

Before a teacher can successfully fulfill the role of the principal, they need to have extensive experience in school leadership, be leaders of learning and be able to demonstrate exemplary pedagogical practice and knowledge.

Many aspects of these skills and experience will be intrinsic to the teacher who seeks the requisite knowledge and experience to attain these skills for future principalship. In addition, systemic structures and support will assist teachers to prepare for the principalship. Structured, planned mentoring, shadowing and coaching should be part of the preparation process. Completion of NSW DEC PLLDD leadership course/ modules provide a good foundation. Accreditation/qualifications should be held by aspiring principals/leaders (such as Masters of Educational Leadership or possibly AITSL courses aligned to the National Principal Standard) before assuming the principal position.

How can we better address the issue of any teacher who is consistently not meeting the required standards?

If we get it right in the beginning - the selection of the best applicants for teacher education, high quality and relevant teacher education courses, school practicums that are instructive and supportive, quality teaching educators and a strong support structure in schools for new teachers, there should be little poor performance of teachers.

To sustain the meeting of required standards by all teachers:
place a greater emphasis on successful teaching practice in the early stages of a teacher's career;

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instill an expectation of teachers taking more responsibility for ensuring their own improvement; and provide more resources for schools to be able to support and manage processes.

When teachers continue to not meet the required standards:
simplify and streamline the process required for teacher improvement programs;
and consider the use of external assessors.

There must be mechanisms to ensure that the revised, streamlined process maintains the principles of procedural fairness and natural justice.

5. Recognise and share outstanding practice

How can we structure and support access to the higher levels of accreditation with the Institute of teachers so that this accreditation becomes a core element in building teaching careers and the status of the NSW teaching profession?

In the future it would seem that linking teacher accreditation to pay and promotion will embed accreditation in the building of teacher careers. However, the current cost of the accreditation process needs review so that it is more financially accessible.

Should teachers who successfully achieve the higher levels of accreditation be paid more, or those in disadvantaged communities or remote schools? Or teachers of subjects where there are skills shortages be offered additional incentives?

It is reasonable that teachers with higher levels of accreditation receive higher salaries.

In a profession built on collegiality and a public education sector built on equity, teachers should not be paid higher salaries for teaching in disadvantaged communities, rural and remote and hard to staff schools. Instead, these teaching positions should attract teachers by incentives and allowances.

It is absolutely not appropriate to distinguish teacher salaries according to subject area taught.

What can we do to encourage more teachers to undertake the higher levels of accreditation?

Teachers need to be convinced that higher levels of accreditation will in fact benefit their teaching and their students. They need to know that their participation will be properly supported, that the work will be interesting, engaging and appropriately delivered at the point of need.

Higher levels of teacher accreditation may be used as one way to support an application for promotion, among a variety of other evidence, qualification or experience.

What is the most reliable way to identify outstanding teaching?

The identification of outstanding teaching is diverse and complex. There is no one way to do this, nor can one parameter capture this. It is often a combination of observation, feedback, student educational outcomes, passion, collegiality, collaboration and a desire for continuous improvement.



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**What would be the best way to acknowledge and reward outstanding teachers?
What ways, other than financial rewards, could be used to recognize teachers' knowledge, skills and talents?**

Teachers should be acknowledged and rewarded for their knowledge, skills and talents by: extrinsic acknowledgment, respect and recognition at the school level and beyond; fellowships and sabbaticals to acknowledge teachers' best practice and to further enhance their own and the wider teaching community's expertise.

Any form of reward payments should only be linked to higher levels of accreditation/ qualification, with no quota system attached.

Should we provide incentives to encourage and support teachers to upgrade their qualifications, undertake further study and/or gain professionally relevant experience in industry?

Teachers should be provided with incentives to upgrade their qualifications or undertake further study in various forms.

What can schools do to create the conditions for recognising and sharing good practice?

Principals should be explicit in their expectations about the need to embrace ongoing learning and to model this, and have the capacity to provide time and embed professional learning in every teacher's daily work.

How can we encourage greater sharing of outstanding and innovative practice within and between schools?

We can encourage greater sharing of outstanding and innovative practice when we: embed collegial sharing of best practice within the school, learning communities and beyond; celebrate innovation and best practice by publishing achievement; strengthen curriculum networks, professional associations and leadership portfolios; and focus on continuous improvement through innovation and exemplary practice with adequate support from DEC.

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