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Australian Institute
for Teaching and
School Leadership
Limited

Submission to the Senate Inquiry

Teaching and learning - maximising our investment in Australian schools

October 2012

Introduction

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) welcomes the Senate Inquiry into teaching and learning (maximising investment in Australian schools) and the important issues raised in the terms of reference.

There is now considerable international and national evidence that the major in-school influence on student achievement is the quality of classroom teaching (see the reviews by (OECD, 2005); (Dinham, Ingvarson & Kleinhenz, 2008); and (Jensen, 2010)). Effective teaching lifts student performance and improves school completion rates.

There are substantial social and economic benefits realised by improving students' achievement, and raising the quality of teaching is a key strategy for achieving these benefits (OECD, 2009a). The most important lesson from countries that have been successful in achieving high scores in international testing is their investment in the preparation and development of high-quality teachers, while at the same time elevating the status of the entire profession (Paine & Schleicher, 2011).

Jensen (2010) argues 'improving teacher quality has a significant impact on student outcomes. The benefits of high performing education systems which retain young people in learning and skill development longer has a bearing well beyond the education system. Enhanced student outcomes will result in greater workforce productivity, substantial economic benefits for individuals and the nation, as well as numerous other advantages a better education affords individuals and society. Increasing teacher effectiveness is thus perhaps the single most profound economic transformation open to Australian governments'.

This submission highlights the important levers for improving the quality of teaching and school leadership including the current challenges facing employers, systems and sectors, regulatory authorities, teacher educators, the profession itself and national bodies. In doing so it outlines progress to date and identifies potential additional actions.

It is important to acknowledge that individual jurisdictions and sectors have come from different starting points and are at different stages in implementing national initiatives. AITSL recognises there is a range of work occurring within jurisdictions and across sectors, and also by the other 'national architecture' organisations, to help teachers create and maintain an optimal learning environment.

AITSL's role in the national education architecture

AITSL came into being on 1 January 2010 as part of the newly introduced 'national architecture'. It was established by the Commonwealth Minister on behalf of the Ministerial Council on Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA) to provide national leadership for the Commonwealth and State and Territory governments in promoting excellence in the profession of teaching and school leadership.

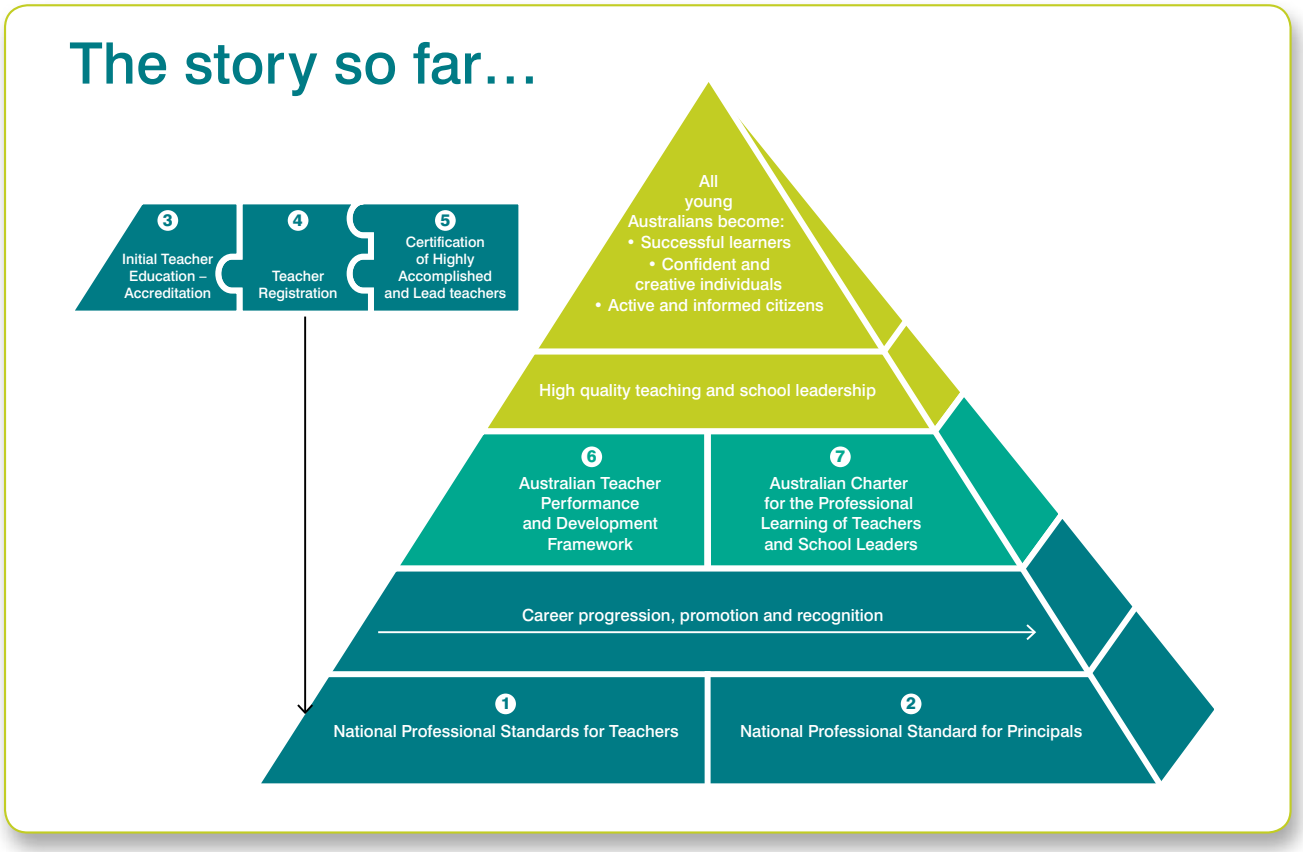
AITSL is funded by the Commonwealth under the National Partnership Agreement on Improving Teacher Quality (COAG, 2008). The National Partnership Agreement is part of a national framework to achieve the objectives, outcomes and targets for schooling under the COAG participation and productivity agenda; the National Education Agreement (COAG, 2008); and the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (MCEETYA, 2008).

The role of AITSL is located in this National Partnership Agreement as part of a suite of system wide reforms which specifically aim to address the significant challenges associated with lifting and maintaining the quality of the teaching workforce in Australian schools. The National Partnership Agreement targets critical points in the teacher lifecycle that relate to the attraction, training, placement, support, development and retention of quality teachers and leaders.

The expectations of AITSL are set out in its Letter of Expectation from the Australian Government Minister and endorsed by SCSEEC (March 2012, see: aitsl.edu.au). The work plan of AITSL reflects the desired outputs of the National Partnership Agreement including:

- Implementation of the N*ational Professional Standards for Teachers*, including development of evidence based resources
- Supporting the implementation of the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan*, in particular through the *National Professional Standards for Teachers*
- Work with higher education institutions and other providers of teacher education courses towards implementing a national approach to accreditation of initial teacher education
- Work with jurisdictions, sectors and regulatory authorities to develop a nationally consistent teacher registration process
- Consult extensively with jurisdictions and other key stakeholders to develop, trial and validate a process by which teachers can undertake voluntary certification at the highly accomplished and lead levels
- Develop a national framework for teacher development and performance
- Work with the Early Childhood Development Working Group, Australian Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs Senior Officials Committee (AEEYSOC) and the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA)
- Continue to undertake the function of designated assessing authority under the Migration Regulations 1994
- Provide national leadership and direction to support the development of aspiring and practising principals
- Support the Empowering Local Schools initiative through ensuring national access to high quality professional development for principals aligned with the *National Professional Standard for Principals*
- Maintain and evolve the Clearinghouse website, established to provide easy access to current research and information on effective school leadership development strategies
- Continue development of an Australian Charter for Professional Learning of Teachers and School Leaders.
- Continue to develop and implement the *Leading Curriculum Change* Flagship Professional Development project.
- Continue to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education by building links with the work of key stakeholders through other projects such as *Stronger Smarter* and *More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers.*
- Administer the annual Australian Awards for Outstanding Teaching and School Leadership on behalf of the Australian Government
- Engage with national and international research to support innovation and best practice within the teaching profession.

Figure 1: Key areas of reform undertaken by AITSL to support the National Partnership



As illustrated in Figure 1, AITSL has taken a significant leadership role in seven key areas of reform under the National Partnership. It is these deliverables which make the work of AITSL relevant and significant to the scope of this Senate Inquiry into Teaching and Learning, with particular reference to:

a) the effectiveness of current classroom practices in assisting children to realise their potential in Australian schools;

b) the structure and governance of school administration - local and central - and its impact on teaching and learning;

c) the influence of family members in supporting the rights of children to receive a quality education;

d) the adequacy of tools available for teachers to create and maintain an optimal learning environment;

e) factors influencing the selection, training, professional development, career progression and retention of teachers in the Australian education system; and

f) other related matters.

The terms of reference of the Inquiry go to the heart of the COAG reform agenda and progress in implementation of the Teacher Quality National Partnership, in which AITSL plays a key role.

a) The effectiveness of current classroom practices in assisting children to realise their potential in Australian schools

High quality teaching is essential to assisting children to realise their potential in Australian schools. The quality of teaching and school leadership is determined not just by the quality of the teachers – although that is clearly critical – but also by the environment in which they work (OECD, 2005). Able teachers will not necessarily reach their potential in settings that do not provide appropriate support or sufficient challenge and reward.

Policies aimed at producing quality teachers and school leaders need to ensure:

- clear and rigorous standards exist that define expectations and against which practice can be measured
- appropriately skilled and trained people are recruited and selected into the profession and at each career stage
- high quality preparation, induction and personalised support, including coaching and mentoring at every transition point and career step including pre-service education
- action by leaders to create the conditions and a culture that supports and values professional learning
- access to multiple opportunities to engage in rigorous and relevant professional learning and the investment of time and resources in professional development by individuals, teams, schools, networks and systems
- appropriate remuneration, recognition and opportunities for career progression
- regular review and management of performance and the provision of specific and timely qualitative and quantitative feedback.

AITSL recognises that a range of classroom practices can be effective in assisting children to reach their full potential. Rather than specifying in detail particular classroom practices, AITSL's role is to provide an evidence based framework that supports teacher quality, in particular through consistent national standards.

Internationally, nationally and locally, education systems are developing professional standards for teachers to attract, develop, recognise and retain quality teachers (OECD, 2009).

The *National Professional Standards for Teachers* (The Teacher Standards), endorsed by Education Ministers in December 2010, provide an opportunity for members of the education profession - irrespective of sector, level of schooling, geographic, economic or social context or jurisdiction - to describe the professional practice of an effective Australian teacher and to make it accessible and meaningful to others. This has been an important foundational step in the Australian teacher quality reforms.

The Teacher Standards reflect and build on national and international evidence that a teacher's effectiveness has a powerful impact on students. The Teacher Standards and their descriptors represent an analysis of effective contemporary practice at four career stages - graduate, proficient, highly accomplished and lead (AITSL, 2011a). The stages reflect the continuum of a teacher's developing professional expertise from undergraduate preparation through to being an exemplary classroom practitioner and a leader in the profession.

In addition to defining the expectations of teachers at these career stages, the *Teacher Standards* provide a basis for protecting and assuring the quality of the teaching workforce. They provide a framework for continuing professional development and offer a baseline for:

- assessing, accrediting and supporting the quality of pre-service teacher education programs
- determining the professional requirements for registration to practice
- assessing and recognising excellent practitioners
- ongoing review of and feedback on practice

The *Teacher Standards*, therefore, should increasingly become integral, both directly and indirectly, to the provision of high quality teaching and the decisions teacher employers make in delivering education in Australian schools.

The Teacher Standards underpin the formal processes associated with the profession – accreditation and registration – as well as the voluntary processes of certification. They also underpin the continuous improvement of professional practice at each stage of a teacher's career.

The Teacher Standards also form a basis for effective teacher performance and development, which typically occurs in a cycle which provides structure for appraising, developing and refining teaching practice, and recognises the entitlement of teachers to receive feedback and support.

The challenge is now to ensure the Teacher Standards are adopted promptly and implemented effectively so that they are readily and easily used by teachers and those who support, lead and employ them for both improvement and quality assurance purposes.

This will require ongoing resources to illustrate and support the Teacher Standards in ways that are meaningful to teachers. Incentives for teachers, schools, sectors and systems to actively use and engage with the Standards will also be key, including a clear commitment by employers, sectors and systems to the importance and value of the Standards.

In 2011 AITSL collaborated with a range of peak body stakeholder groups to develop the first suite of supporting materials for the Standards. These can be found on the AITSL website at **teacherstandards.aitsl.edu.au/Illustrations**

b) The structure and governance of school administration – local and central – and its impact on teaching and learning

School leadership plays a key role in shaping the environment in which teachers work and students learn. Students' academic achievement, self-concept and engagement in learning are shaped by teacher and school practices that are influenced by school leadership (Anderson, M., Gronn, P., Ingvarson, L., Jackson, A., Kleinhenz, E., McKenzie, P., Mulford, B & Thornton, N, 2007); (Leithwood, 2004). Recent research by the OECD also confirms that effective school leadership plays a key role in improving school outcomes by influencing the motivations and capabilities of teachers as well as school climate (Pont, 2008).

Leaders contribute to student learning through their influence on other staff, organisational capacity and educational focus. Consequently there needs to be clarity around the work school leaders are expected to do and how they can best be supported to retain an emphasis on improving student learning.

This is particularly significant in the context of the Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments' focus on autonomous schools. The *Empowering Local Schools* initiative will require principals to have the capability to use their greater independence in decision making effectively to drive and lead school improvement. While there is evidence that most countries that performed well in PISA had substantial autonomy (OECD, 2004) (2009), without the training and confidence to use this increased authority and flexibility well, school leaders may fail to realise the potential of this reform.

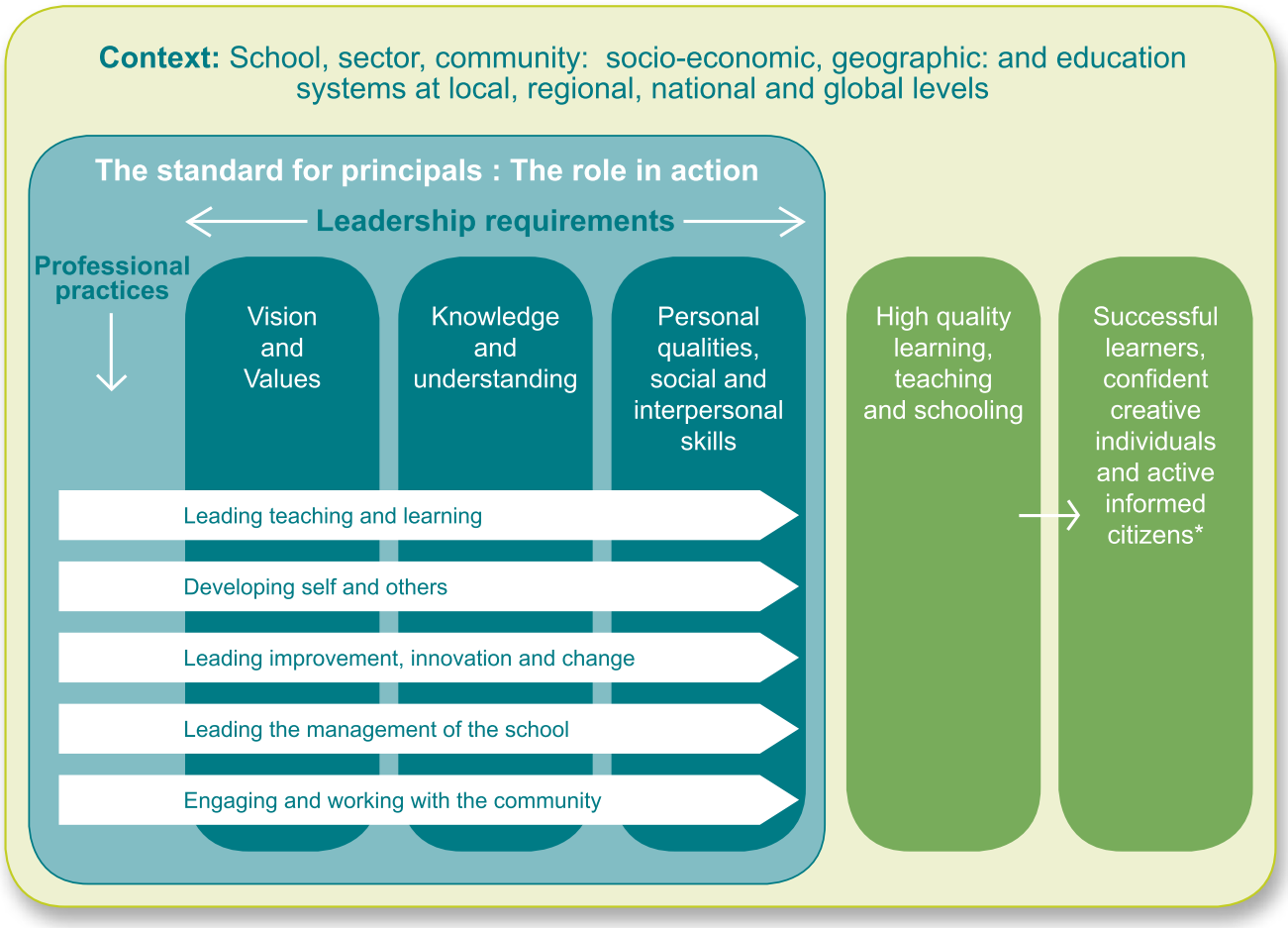
The *National Professional Standard for Principals* (the Principal Standard), endorsed by Ministers in July 2011, sets out what principals are expected to know, understand and do to achieve their work. The Principal Standard has been developed through active consultation and tested by the profession (Dinham S, 2011).

The Principal Standard, like the Teacher Standards, is a foundational reform in the drive to improve teacher and school leader quality. It describes the professional practice of principals in a common language and makes explicit the role of quality school leadership in improving learning outcomes. It is a content standard designed to assist in attracting, developing and supporting aspiring and practising principals by providing a framework for professional learning and a guide to self reflection, self improvement and the management of self and others.

While the Principal Standard has been very well accepted and already used in schools and systems across the country, awareness and uptake is in its first stage. The development and commitment of resources to support the use of the Principal Standard by aspiring and practising principals in a variety of contexts will be key to realising the benefit of this reform, as will be active promulgation and adoption of the Principal Standard by systems and sectors.

A particular emphasis should be given to using the Principal Standard as the basis for developing well considered and systematic programs to support the development and preparation of aspiring leaders as well as programs that ensure all beginning principals have access to coaching and mentoring. Comprehensive principal preparation and personalised and targeted support for emerging leaders is recognised as having greatest impact on leadership quality (Barber, 2010).

Figure 2: National Professional Standard for Principals



Other AITSL initiatives that support school leaders include:

- Stronger, Smarter Leadership module - In 2010–11, AITSL funded the Stronger Smarter Institute to develop an online Stronger, Smarter Leadership module to enhance teachers' leadership skills and confidence to lead change in schools to improve the outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.
- Empowering Local Schools Initiative - AITSL has responsibility for supporting the Australian Government's Empowering Local Schools initiative by providing national access to high quality professional development for principals. AITSL has developed a national Flagship Professional Learning Program: Local Leadership to complement the Empowering Local Schools initiative. The program provides principals with professional learning, supports communities of practice and strengthens the provision of research and evidence around school environments with increasing empowerment.
- The School Leadership Clearinghouse (the Clearinghouse) aims to support the development of the knowledge and skills of aspiring, emerging and practicing school leaders. Re-developed in mid 2012 to increase functionality and accessibility; the interactive, online tool, has two key functions: a research repository and community resource database. The research repository includes a selection of searchable research citations linked to the *National Professional Standard for Principals* where relevant. The community resource database allows users to access a repository of resources and materials including professional development opportunities. In mid October 2012, there were 926 registered users of the Clearinghouse.

c) The influence of family members in supporting the rights of children to receive a quality education

AITSL recognises the importance of family members supporting the rights of children to receive a quality education. Quality teachers and school leaders engage with parents and carers and the wider community to ensure children achieve their full potential.

AITSL's focus on teacher and school leader quality links well with initiatives such as these. Both the Teacher Standards and the Principal Standard support the importance of engagement with parents, carers and the community.

Standard 7 of the Teacher Standards describes effective practice across four stages of a teacher's career in engaging professionally with colleagues, parents/carers and the community. Focus area 7.3 - engage with the parents/carers, describes strategies for working effectively and sensitively with parents and carers at graduate career stage, through to identifying, initiating and building on opportunities that engage parents/carers in both their own child's progress and the educational priorities of the school at the lead career stage.

Engaging and working with the community is described as one of five professional practices for school leaders in the Principal Standard. The Principal Standard outlines a vision for inclusion and for maintaining positive partnerships with students, families and carers.

d) The adequacy of tools available for teachers to create and maintain an optimal learning environment

AITSL provides a range of tools to support teachers and school leaders to improve their practice. The tools are developed in consultation with the sector and are targeted to assist teachers and school leaders to understand and implement the *Teacher Standards*, the *Principal Standard*, the *Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework* and the *Australian Charter for the Professional Learning of Teachers and School Leaders.* The tools also support formal processes associated with the profession including registration and certification.

AITSL also recognises the important work being undertaken within jurisdictions and across sectors, and also by the other 'national architecture' organisations, to help teachers create and maintain an optimal learning environment.

AITSL is committed to developing and modelling powerful innovative practice that will deliver significant impact to achieve success.

AITSL's commitment to innovation is driving new opportunities to support practices that will transform teaching and school leadership across Australia. Through projects that challenge boundaries, infuse technology and highlight exemplary practice, AITSL is modelling to the profession new possibilities and ways to think differently about how to achieve success. For example:

- Teacher Feature is an interactive online exchange for teaching professionals to share their thinking and explore motivations in their work. Created to inspire excellence, this site currently has uploaded examples of shared insights from practicing teachers.
- The Australian Awards' Professional Learning Sabbaticals have created outstanding opportunities for online interaction with award winners as they investigate new ideas for rich and dynamic professional learning in a broad international field of practice. This unprecedented access has generated significant positive response and feedback from across the profession.
- Leading Curriculum Change is an example of a national innovative model in professional learning delivery. The online design enables access to educators to have national professional conversations, irrespective of their locations across Australia and at flexible times that promote easy user-friendly accessibility. Over 2484 educators are currently enrolled as participants.

- AITSL has created and continues to add to the Illustrations of Practice, an online bank of authentic examples of teaching practice aligned to the Teacher Standards. The Illustrations of Practice bring the Teacher Standards to life and are a valuable resource for use in multiple contexts for practicing teachers and leaders. They offer a diverse insight into how the Standards look in practice and set benchmarks of expectation for high quality teaching practice in diverse contexts from across Australia.

e) Factors influencing the selection, training, professional development, career development, career progression and retention of teachers in the Australian education system

Initial teacher education

Research prepared for the Business Council of Australia (BCA) proposes that where rigorous standards underpin teacher education programs the quality of graduates improves and consequently positively impacts the productivity of the workforce (Dinham, S., Ingvarson, L & Kleinhenz, E, 2008).

The Standards and Procedures for the Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education Programs in Australia (the Program Standards) build on and complement the *Teacher Standards.* They were approved by MCEECDYA in April 2011. It is now a requirement that all initial teacher education programs be accredited against these nationally agreed standards. The Program Standards outline what constitutes quality initial teacher education, to guide and quality assure the development and delivery of initial teacher education programs. Programs previously accredited under state and territory standards and procedures will maintain their current accredited status until it expires, after which they will need to be reaccredited against the national requirements.

The national accreditation standards and processes will support teacher educators in making explicit links between program content and pedagogy and the graduate standards, and in sharing 'best practice' to improve the relevance and quality of pre-service programs.

Top of the Class (2007) and other reports and research have emphasised the need to strengthen the quality and availability of the practical in-school experiences provided for students during initial teacher education programs. The Program Standards require that teachers supervising and supporting student teachers during the professional experience component of programs should be suitably trained. AITSL is currently working with school partners to develop *Principles for effective professional experience placements and school partnerships* (ITE PEP Project) to provide this support.

It is also important to ensure diverse pathways into teaching are encouraged, that these pathways meet the rigour of the agreed Standards and that data about the impact of these reforms in pre-service education is collected and published.

Performance and Development

At the 14 October 2011 MCEECDYA meeting, Council agreed that AITSL would develop a national framework for teacher development and performance to form part of the Reward Payments for Great Teachers initiative. Teacher performance has been shown to improve when the following conditions are present:

- Opportunities for teacher self-reflection and objective setting
- Regular classroom observation and provision of constructive feedback from their school leader, as well as their peers
- Frequent feedback on classroom performance as an ongoing dialogue, not a once a year discussion
- Shadowing, coaching and mentoring from peers and leaders
- Opportunities to contribute to and engage in teamwork, collaboration and action learning with other teachers to obtain the best possible outcomes for students (Hay Group, 2012).

According to OECD research, Australian teachers report that they are not receiving the effective feedback they require:

- 63% of teachers believe that appraisals of their work are done purely to meet administrative requirements
- 61% of teachers report that teacher appraisal has little impact on the way they teach in the classroom and provides them with little or no idea of how to improve their performance (OECD Reviews of evaluation and assessment in education: Australia, 2009).

Australia has been identified as the fourth lowest of 23 developed nations in recognising teacher effectiveness. Current teacher evaluation processes often do not identify effective teaching (Jensen, 2009).

AITSL has worked closely with key education stakeholders to develop the *Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework* (the Framework). The Framework outlines the critical factors for creating a performance and development culture in schools, including essential elements that should be present in all Australian schools.

It was endorsed by Education Ministers at the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood (SCSEEC) on 3 August 2012. The Framework has been informed by evidence-based research, expert advice, and national mapping and analysis of existing performance and development practices across Australia and a nation-wide consultation process.

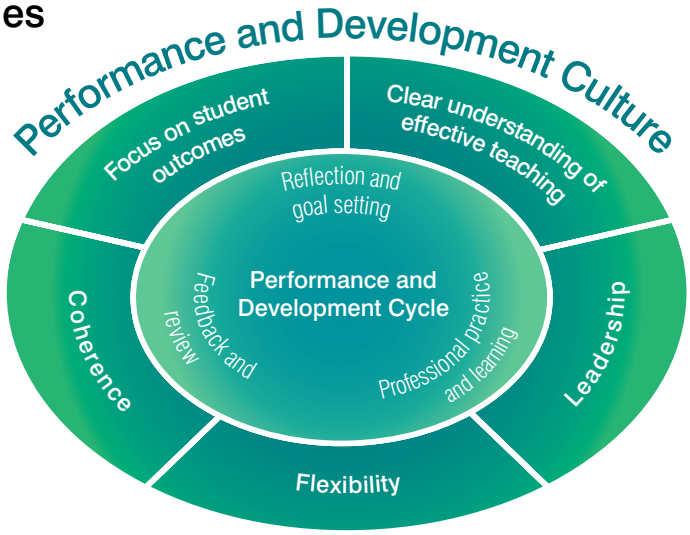
The Framework also describes the processes associated with teacher performance and development which typically occur in a cycle. These provide a structure for appraising, developing and refining teaching practice and recognise the entitlement of teachers to receive feedback and support. The performance and development cycle includes reflection and goal setting, professional practice and learning, and feedback and review.

Implementation of the Framework is now the basis of national consultation with teachers and school leaders through teacher employers and principal associations. This consultation is identifying existing best practices and exploring the issues involved in implementing the Framework in Australian schools.

It is important to ensure there is support available to principals and school leaders as they go about their work of leading the implementation of a strong performance and development culture in their schools. It is the understanding of this in the first instance, and then the knowledge to lead it in the second instance, which will, once undertaken at the local level, drive and inform whole system change. The work of every school principal is integral to this system change.

Figure 3: A culture of performance and development

> Focus on student outcomes
> Clear understanding of effective teaching
> Leadership
> Flexibility
> Coherence



Professional Learning

Research on effective teaching demonstrates that good teachers continue to develop expertise throughout their careers and that all teachers benefit from mentoring, feedback, supportive leadership and targeted professional learning (OECD, 2005); (Dinham S. I., 2008).

However, the quality of support and professional learning available to teachers and school leaders is highly variable. The OECD's TALIS survey indicated that Australian teachers were in the lowest quartile of participating countries in terms of the average number of days of professional learning experienced by teachers in the previous twelve months (OECD, 2009). While Australian teachers generally value their professional learning experiences, they have identified a number of unmet needs in areas such as methods for assessing student learning and development, and making more effective use of computers in student learning (McKenzie et al, 2008). The recent OECD review has recommended better alignment of professional development with teaching standards and career development (Santiago et al, 2011).

Dinham (2008) argues the major challenge to improving teacher quality lies not so much in identifying the features of effective teaching, but in developing structures and approaches that ensure widespread use of successful teaching practices: to make best practice common practice.

Professional learning is fundamental to improving the quality of the workforce of the school. It has become a national imperative to build a sustained commitment to, and culture that recognises and promotes, the central role of professional learning in:

- building the performance and capability of teachers and leaders to continually improve their professional practice and consequently outcomes for all Australian school students
- contributing to the confidence and ability of teachers and school leaders to apply their knowledge and skills flexibly and creatively in response to different and changing contexts
- supporting the recruitment, development and retention of high quality, effective teachers and school leaders.

Professional learning that engages all teachers and school leaders at every stage of their career is an essential component of a high achieving education system and is most effective when it is underpinned by rigorous standards of practice for teachers and school leaders.

Professional learning that has most effect is self-directed and relevant; collaborative; and future focused. This is particularly true when it is part of a broader school workforce recruitment, development and retention strategy (Caldwell, 2010); (Dumont, 2010); (General Teaching Council for London, 2011)); (Learning Forward, 2011).

This commitment to ongoing professional learning is required not only to maintain, but to elevate, Australia's position as a high achieving education system (OECD, 2011).

A culture of learning underpinned by high quality opportunities and a universal expectation that all teachers and leaders are actively engaged in their own development and that of others will result in the improved professional practice of individuals and collective improvement in the practices of teams and networks of teachers and school leaders.

The *Australian Charter for the Professional Learning of Teachers and School Leaders* (The Charter) was endorsed by Education Ministers at the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood (SCSEEC) on 3 August 2012, it:

- affirms the importance of learning in improving the professional knowledge, practice and engagement of all teachers and school leaders to achieve improvement in student outcomes
- articulates the expectation that all teachers and school leaders actively engage in professional learning throughout their careers
- describes the characteristics of a high quality professional learning culture and of effective professional learning, to assist teachers, school leaders and those who support them to get the most from their professional learning.

The Charter will nurture a nation-wide, high-achieving and vibrant professional learning culture:

- underpinned by the *Teacher Standards* and *Principal Standard*; and
- alongside the *Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework.*

Research also sheds light on the specific characteristics of high quality professional learning. Professional learning will be the most effective when it is:

- Relevant

Professional learning will be most engaging for adult learners and have the greatest impacts on practice when it assists teachers and school leaders to address and adapt to the challenges they face in improving student learning, engagement with learning and wellbeing.

- Collaborative
  - Collaboration has a powerful effect in magnifying and spreading the benefits of professional learning and adds a new and valuable dimension to the learning undertaken by individuals.
- Future Focused
  - Effective professional learning seeks to develop teachers and school leaders who are adaptable and able to deal with new and unexpected challenges.

Figure 4: The Charter in action

Recognition of Quality Teaching

Research has demonstrated that teacher quality varies widely, both from teacher to teacher and over time as teachers develop their expertise throughout their career (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

Processes for recognising and rewarding quality teachers need to be improved to help retain teachers and as a mechanism to encourage and identify excellent teachers, who through their practice and leadership improve student achievement and contribute to school and system reform. Such teachers influence and provide models and leadership for less experienced and less capable colleagues, and in so doing help raise the overall performance of the teaching workforce.

Current pay systems do not encourage the best teachers to remain in the classroom and many excellent practitioners move to leadership positions or leave the profession to increase their earnings. The OECD report *Education at a Glance* highlights the limited spread of pay available for teachers, including in Australia, where a teacher at the top of the scale earns only 1.49 times the salary of a beginning teacher. The report points out the most able teachers are paid the same salary as the least able (OECD, 2012).

While the importance of valuing, recognising and remunerating excellent teachers is widely supported, the process of identifying highly effective teachers is challenging. Teachers' work is diverse and complex, and undertaken across a variety of contexts (Dinham, 2008). Fair and accurate evaluation of teacher performance is therefore difficult to determine objectively (OECD, 2011).

All Ministers for Education endorsed a process for national certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead teachers on 20 April 2012 at the Standing Council of School Education and Early Childhood (SCSEEC). Certification is a key component of the National Partnership on Improving Teacher Quality which commits all governments to national consistency in certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead teachers and is an important element in a broader teacher quality strategy that develops, recognises and supports excellent practitioners. A national approach to voluntary certification based on the *Teacher Standards* will ensure that teachers, in every system and sector, have access to a rigorous and transparent process that recognises Highly Accomplished and Lead teachers and is portable throughout Australia.

Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead teachers has three primary purposes:

- recognise and promote quality teaching
- provide an opportunity for teachers to reflect on their practice
- provide a reliable indication of quality teaching that can be used to identify, recognise and/or reward Highly Accomplished and Lead teachers.

It is important as Australia moves to a national process of certification of highly accomplished and lead teachers that sufficient time and resources are devoted to ensuring assessment is based on common standards, which clearly define what quality teachers know and do, and are directly linked to their capacity to teach (Darling-Hammond, 2010). A variety of measures of effective teaching need to be used and 'they must be based on aspects of teaching that excellent teachers recognise as characteristic of their practice' (Gates Foundation, 2010).

The *Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers: Principles and processes* were developed following extensive national consultation. This included written submissions from peak state, territory and national bodies, focus groups with teachers and school leaders, targeted meetings and think tank workshops that brought together national and international experts in this area.

Premiers and Chief Ministers from all jurisdictions except Victoria and Queensland have signed the Rewards for Great Teachers National Partnership, which commits them to the implementation of national certification in 2013. Whether national certification will be made available to teachers in Victoria and Queensland is yet to be determined.

f) Other related matters

At the heart of the educational reform agenda is the Melbourne Declaration which commits all governments to the proposition that 'improving educational outcomes for all young Australians is central to the nation's social and economic prosperity and will position young people to live fulfilling, productive and responsible lives'.

The National Partnership provides the opportunity to achieve real gains in meeting this national commitment by making an investment in teacher quality that, if managed well and sustained, has the potential to increase participation, strengthen productivity, increase economic growth and achieve individual aspirations and potential. While employing authorities have direct responsibility for their respective workforces, the establishment of AITSL has enabled the quality of teaching and school leadership to be considered and further developed in an integrated, informed and consistent way across Australia.

The emerging reform agenda requires time, resources and commitment to ensure that each component is implemented, consolidated and expanded. There is more to be achieved but a foundation for further reform and improvement in the quality of the schools' workforce has been established.

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Further information
Telephone: +61 3 9944 1200
Email: info@aitsl.edu.au

Melbourne | Brisbane | Canberra

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