

A burning desire to make a difference

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for Teaching and School Leadership**

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Our Profession - Our Future

A statement about professional standards from the directors of Teaching Australia – Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership

**For further information on developments,
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www.teachingaustralia.edu.au or call 1800 337 872

Teaching Australia was established as the national body for the teaching profession with funding provided by the Australian Government under the Australian Government Quality Teacher Programme.

*innovative, creative and
forward thinking teaching*



A statement about professional standards from the directors of Teaching Australia – Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership

The development of national professional standards is one of the important areas of our work as directors of Teaching Australia.

Teaching Australia has been established to be the national body for the teaching profession, promoting quality teaching and school leadership for the benefit of all Australians. As a strong unifying body acting in the interests of teachers and school leaders, we are working to bring greater recognition and acknowledgement of the high quality of the teaching profession in Australia.

This document sets the scene for the teaching profession to engage in the development of national professional standards.

What are professional standards?

Professional standards are the articulation of what a profession believes its members should know and be able to do, based on values, the experience of highly regarded practitioners and research in the field.

Professional standards are aspirational and dynamic, guiding expectations about the knowledge, understanding and values of teachers and principals. They serve the interests of members of the profession as a tool for self-reflection and professional learning. They are not intended for use in performance management.

Like other professions, teaching is based on the specialised knowledge and skills of its members - skills developed and refined throughout the professional lives of teachers and school leaders.

Standards play an important unifying role for a profession, raising its status and public esteem. The hallmark of any profession is the capacity to define its own standards of professional practice – these are the foundation for public confidence in any profession.

Why is Teaching Australia interested in the development of national professional standards?

By pursuing the development of national professional standards, Teaching Australia offers teachers and principals the opportunity to come together as members of a single profession, irrespective of specialisation, sector, jurisdiction and level of schooling.

These national professional standards will build on the work of the many professional associations that have already developed their own standards. Teaching Australia is uniquely positioned to work with the teaching profession to further develop standards of professional practice.

National professional standards for teachers and school leaders defined by the profession serve three important purposes:

1. providing inspiration to aspiring teachers and principals, clarifying the expectations of the profession about the practice of our most accomplished members;
2. offering guidance to members of the profession seeking to improve their professional practice through self-reflection, professional learning and other methods of personal development; and
3. increasing public recognition of the quality of the profession and understanding of the complexity and rigour of the work of teachers and principals.

National professional standards will send a strong message about the profession to the community, raising public confidence and promoting teaching as a desirable career. They will serve a different purpose from standards developed by employers which may inform employee selection, promotion and/or performance assessment within particular jurisdictions.

What will national professional standards do for you?

National professional standards developed by the profession for the profession will set out a guiding vision for professional practice with a strong futures orientation and provide a context for on-going professional conversations about future practice relevant to changing student needs.

At some time in the future, the teaching profession may decide to develop accreditation or certification processes based on these standards. Some professional teaching associations already use standards for accrediting their members' professional learning. Teaching Australia believes that decisions about the development of systems of accreditation related to professional standards should rest with the teaching profession itself.

Our initial interest in standards is primarily in highly accomplished teaching and school leadership. We plan to develop a framework for professional standards that provides for interlinked sets of standards to capture the leadership roles of principals, the forms of leadership exercised by accomplished teachers and areas of professional specialisation.

Development of standards by the profession for the profession will build commitment both to those standards and to the professional values and principles that underpin them.

Where to from here?

Teaching Australia has already initiated conversations in the profession about a Charter for the Teaching Profession, which would define the principles, values and beliefs that characterise the practice of teaching.

Teaching Australia recognises the role of state and territory teacher registration and accreditation bodies in determining minimum standards for employment as a teacher. We are developing a

national system of accreditation for pre-service teacher preparation programs which could guide the further development of graduate teacher standards.

Nationwide conversations about professional teaching standards facilitated by Teaching Australia have commenced, with a national conference on advanced teaching standards held in August 2005 and a national forum on school leadership standards held in November 2005.

The task of developing national professional standards will take some time. Teaching Australia is at present examining latest national and international developments and later in the year will produce a first paper for open discussion by the profession outlining possible ways forward. Practising teachers and principals will be invited to participate in extended discussions, debate and drafting, defining the scope and architecture of national standards, exploring the connections and inter-relationships with existing standards and ultimately defining the scope and content of national professional standards.

The process of developing national professional standards will bring together many teachers and principals throughout Australia, mainly through their professional associations, irrespective of their sector or specialised interests.

The opportunity to work towards national professional standards for the teaching profession is a defining moment for Australian teachers and principals. As a profession, the opportunity to gain greater self-direction lies in our own hands – in the strength of the profession and in the commitment of individual teachers and principals. Together we will address the as yet unanswered questions about both the process of developing the national professional standards and the substance of the standards themselves.

May 2006