



Increasing our impact

AITSL Strategic Plan 2019–2022

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Foreword

“We’re setting an ambitious plan to secure a high-quality education system, where the learning of Australian children comes first. We will achieve this by improving the level of teacher expertise, building strong leadership in our schools and early childhood settings, and ensuring that all of us involved in education can evaluate our impact and make decisions based on what is proven to work best.

“Building on our early success in creating a common understanding of what quality teaching looks like, we will continue to work with governments, education leaders, teacher education providers and the profession across Australia to ensure that teaching expertise and effective leadership is understood, valued and prioritised.”

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Hattie".

Laureate Professor John Hattie
vChair

AITSL Strategic Plan 2019–2022: Overview

AITSL’s strategic plan is based on its Guiding Principles and structured around clear Focus Areas, Actions and Goals.

Vision

Australia has a high-quality education system in which teachers and leaders have the greatest impact on the educational growth and achievement of every learner.

Mission

Promoting excellence so that teachers and leaders have the maximum impact on learning in all Australian schools and early childhood settings.

Guiding principles

Our Guiding Principles describe how we go about our work and what values we serve in its conduct.

Every child experiences a quality education.

Graduate teachers are well-prepared to teach when they enter the profession.

Improving professional practice is central to maximising impact on learners.

Leadership is a team effort at all levels.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education needs are understood, respected and supported in all actions.

Evidence and knowledge drive our decisions and we evaluate and learn as we progress.

Focus Areas

Actions

Goals

Placing impact of initial teacher education, teaching and leadership at the centre of our work

Building, enhancing and sustaining effective teaching and leadership at every level

Advocating for quality and rigour in the design and implementation of national policies, tools and resources

Supporting the professional education community to make evidence-based decisions

Affirming the status of the profession

- Promote and support implementation of the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* and the *Australian Professional Standard for Principals* in partnership with jurisdictions to increase their impact
- Strengthen leadership engagement, broaden participation in leadership and enhance the capability of aspiring and emerging leaders
- Consult with the Indigenous community and stakeholders to identify services to benefit Indigenous teachers and teachers of Indigenous students and studies
- Play a key role in national initiatives to support quality teaching and leadership
- Promote Australian Curriculum-mapped formative and diagnostic tools to better enable teachers and leaders to understand more clearly their impact and support individual learner progress
- Strengthen the evidence base about the teaching profession, sponsor research and support the use of evidence in decision making and professional practice
- Drive and support improvement of excellent initial teacher education (TEMAG)
- Develop and implement a strategy to affirm the status of the teaching profession and seek to enhance teacher professionalism through all projects and initiatives
- Provide accurate and efficient skills assessments for teacher migration to Australia
- Strengthen collaboration and cooperation with stakeholders and all educators
- Use new technologies to enhance and strengthen AITSL’s capacity and capabilities
- Consolidate and strengthen our resource base and use resources efficiently to maximise our impact

Strengthened capability and a shared commitment to professional growth

Use of evidence to inform practice and improve learner outcomes

A valued profession

What we know...

Australia has laid the foundations to have a truly world-class approach to improving teaching and leadership. Research demonstrates that educational systems around the world make teaching a valued, evidence-informed profession by:

- building a shared vision that makes improving teacher quality a national priority – this requires an active process of consensus building, with teachers being active agents for change
- attracting a large number of highly qualified entrants into initial teacher education, and ensuring they are well prepared to impact on the learning of young people
- redesigning education settings to be places in which teachers will be treated and see themselves as professionals, with incentives and support to continuously improve their professional practice and, as a result, the performance of learners
- creating a leadership development system that develops leaders at all levels to manage and promote learning for all
- basing approaches to teaching and leadership on strong evidence – at the system, school or early childhood setting and individual teacher levels
- embedding evidence-informed professional learning in teachers' and leaders' daily work and professional learning, focused on changing practice, and involving observation, feedback and evaluation.

In systems with highly effective policies and practices – where there is professional ownership of practice with accompanying responsibility and accountability – public confidence in the teaching profession is high and enjoys a high status.

To achieve similar success in Australia, our national conversation on education needs to focus on those factors that are most likely to create a significant impact on learning, not the many distractions that seek our attention. This focus on what matters must begin with the factor that is the greatest in-school influence on outcomes – a professional, evidence-informed teaching and leadership workforce that understands and improves its own impact on learning.

The next steps for Australia...

Since the establishment of AITSL in 2010, Australia has implemented reforms aimed at improving what teachers know, do and care about, and how leaders support the teaching process and build a culture of learning. These reforms build on the previous and ongoing work of States and Territories, and achieving national agreement has been a significant breakthrough.

Key initiatives to date have included the development of the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* and the *Australian Professional Standard for Principals*. These documents provide clear, detailed, nationally agreed definitions of what it means to be an outstanding teacher or leader, and a road map in each case for getting there. A rich body of resources has been developed to provide examples of best practice, as well as to support teachers and leaders to improve their practice. Current, aspiring and emerging leaders have been the focus of substantial resource development and support.

Both sets of standards and their accompanying resources have been taken up by education agencies, schools and early childhood settings. These are the foundations on which a better understanding of the profession is being built.

In addition, significant reform of initial teacher education is underway. Following the release of the *Action Now: Classroom Ready Teachers* report of the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group (TEMAG), work is under way to strengthen course accreditation, improve candidate selection, enhance professional experience, improve assessment of graduates and to provide better research and evaluation about course effectiveness and higher-quality workforce data. These initiatives are designed to ensure that every pre-service teacher is ready for the classroom or early childhood setting on graduation.

These are highlights within a broad program of development and support. AITSL has been a key player in leading national improvement in teaching and leadership to achieve maximum impact on learning. However, the success to date, and the outstanding quality of practice of many Australian teachers and school leaders, should not lead us to assume that the task is complete. Although these achievements are important, there is still a great deal to do. The goals and initiatives outlined in this strategic plan will play an important role in meeting the challenges ahead.

Goal: Strengthened capability and a shared commitment to professional growth

Maximising outcomes for learners is a shared national goal and, in an effort to achieve this, there has been substantial financial investment in Australian education. Despite all the work that has been done, and some outstanding pockets of success, outcomes for learners are not yet improving at a rate that meets our national goals or aspirations.

AITSL will therefore focus on placing the impact of initial teacher education, teaching and leadership at the centre of our work. We have much still to do and AITSL will continue to work in partnership with systems, sectors and the profession in all jurisdictions to achieve our goal.

To have maximum impact, teachers and leaders require support to continuously improve their practices through ongoing opportunities for professional growth. Australia's current performance in this area is variable.

Despite outstanding practice in many schools and early childhood settings, a proportion of early career teachers do not receive formal induction. Where induction is provided, practices sometimes require improvement to enhance participants' knowledge and teaching skills.

As teachers progress through their careers, it is important that they are encouraged to increase their expertise and impact, and are acknowledged for doing so. Many high-performing systems have roles for Highly Accomplished and Lead teachers, who combine excellence in their own classrooms and education settings with broad influence on the practice of their colleagues. The Highly Accomplished and Lead career stages of the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* capture this broader impact, and certification at these career stages offers formal acknowledgement of the expertise of our best teachers.

These challenges extend into leadership. It is recognised globally that the role of the principal has changed substantially over the last 20 years, from a managerial position to one that has expanded to include a sharper focus on learning, heightened community expectations and implementation of a range of policy reforms. In Australia, increasing principal autonomy has also broadened the responsibilities of leaders, making their role more challenging.

Perhaps reflecting these changes to roles and responsibilities, many Australian principals report feeling underprepared for the role and some beginning principals may still be developing the necessary knowledge, skills and leadership abilities. Given the influence that effective leaders have on student outcomes, it is vital to ensure individuals moving into principal positions are thoroughly equipped for the role.

Programs in place and plans to support and extend the implementation of the *Australian Professional Standard for Principals* will strengthen the confidence and capacity of both beginning and experienced principals.

To support strong career paths for teachers and leaders, AITSL will focus on building, enhancing and sustaining effective teaching and leadership at every level of the education system. This requires a coordinated approach, and a strong, clear narrative about the development of expertise over the course of a career.

Across the nation, we do not know currently how many teachers are teaching or where; we do not know what the current national workforce looks like, or what our national future requirements are; and we do not know the impact on educational outcomes of being unable to provide suitably skilled teachers in particular subject areas or across locations and sectors. We must fill these gaps to enable us to manage the quantity and quality of teaching in our schools and early childhood settings. Effective workforce planning depends on a detailed understanding of the many factors affecting teacher supply and demand in Australia. Imbalances in supply and demand are costly for both learners and the wider community. The initial teacher education and teacher workforce data strategy will progressively fill these data gaps.

Goal: Use of evidence to inform practice and improve learner outcomes

The nationally agreed policies developed by AITSL are all founded in a strong evidence base, as well as through a collaborative approach to developing policies, tools and resources. AITSL works across jurisdictions, consulting with schools and early childhood settings, systems, sectors, higher education providers, professional associations, and other agencies. This partnership approach is the basis on which the organisation has been able to achieve significant progress in supporting the quality of teaching and leadership.

Australia now has a strong policy framework for improving teaching and leadership, within which jurisdictions and sectors have developed their own approaches reflecting local priorities. However, the best policy framework is only as effective as its implementation.

A major focus for AITSL in the next phase of our work is advocating for quality and rigour in the design and implementation of national policies, tools and resources.

AITSL will take a strong role in ensuring the fidelity of implementation of those key national policies that support our efforts to improve the quality of teaching and leadership.

The use of evidence at all levels of the system is a feature of high-performing education jurisdictions. Australia has a strong commitment to evidence-based policy and practice, but there are some important gaps in our knowledge and much work to do on successfully implementing these evidence-based policies and practices.

In schools, and early childhood settings too, education professionals need to use evidence to inform decision making and to target teaching approaches. This is a key basis for causing learning to happen and improving learner outcomes. However, there is international recognition that the education sector has difficulty mobilising knowledge and translating evidence into practice.

We need to emphasise assessment as feedback to inform teaching, which is the means by which teachers can best focus on and understand student growth. Formative evaluation assists teachers to use their adaptive expertise to make sound decisions about the teaching approach required.

AITSL will work with the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) and Education Services Australia (ESA) to develop a tool to support understanding of student learning and the actions required for growth. The proposed tool will provide on-demand information about individual learning needs and progress, which will then inform teacher practice by revealing the strategies and tasks that are having greatest impact in their classrooms and education settings.

To improve the use of evidence, AITSL will focus on supporting the professional education community to make evidence-based decisions at all levels, from national workforce planning to the decisions individual teachers make in their own classrooms and early childhood settings.

Goal: A valued profession

Australia has teachers and leaders who are the equal of any in the world. They excel in a demanding, important and rewarding profession. Yet our public debate does not always reflect this reality, and there is evidence of the difficulties in attracting entrants to initial teacher education and in encouraging teachers to aspire to leadership positions.

All the actions contained in this plan are designed to further the professionalisation of teaching and leadership, which will contribute to improving its status. However, this will not necessarily be enough in itself, and all stakeholders in education should make conscious efforts to acknowledge what is good in our education system.

AITSL will focus on affirming the status of the profession. We will seek opportunities to celebrate professionals' expertise and impact. We will ensure that our public statements are based on respect for the work of teachers and leaders, and that our work focuses on enabling further improvement.



Priorities for future work

Some priorities for future work emerge from this brief account. The areas that clearly require sustained attention are:

improved preparation and induction of teachers and leaders as they begin and progress through their careers

provision of stronger standards-based support for the development of quality teaching and leadership across Australia's schools and early childhood settings, and through the career life cycle

strengthening the profession and establishing its status as a high quality provider of critical services in a modern society and economy

building on existing success to consolidate and extend national initiatives

use of research into the characteristics of outstanding Australian practice and high performing education systems in designing support for teachers and leaders

collection and analysis of adequate data about the professional workforce to enable effective research, decision making and program implementation

the provision of tools to teachers to enable them to collect and use formative and diagnostic evidence about individual learner achievement in pedagogical interventions

As a Commonwealth Government Agency, AITSL will act and use resources prudently, effectively and with maximum impact.

