

# InSights

## Evaluation of the Implementation of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers

Interim Report 2 – 2014 Key Findings

April 2015



Evaluation of the  
Australian Professional Standards for Teachers



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
MELBOURNE

MELBOURNE  
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# Key findings

This report presents further analysis of the data gathered to date from the Evaluation of the Implementation of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers ('the Standards'). The key findings, based on interviews, workshops and a national survey of over 6,000 educators (including pre-service teachers, teacher educators, teachers and school leaders), are presented below.

## **A. Factors impacting implementation of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.**

### **1. Educators have good knowledge of, and are positive in their attitudes towards, the Standards**

- Seventy per cent of educators nationally indicated they have a 'fair' to 'expert' knowledge of the Standards
- Teacher educators' (93%) and school leaders' (88%) self-reported knowledge of the Standards is higher than that of other educator groups
- Pre-service teachers are the most positive toward the Standards and are more likely to implement them in the next six months<sup>1</sup> compared with other educators
- Over three-quarters of surveyed educators are positive towards the Standards and intend to implement them in the next six months.

### **2. Early career teachers are more positive towards the Standards**

- Teachers with five or less years of teaching experience have higher levels of prior use, positive attitudes and intentions to implement the Standards than teachers with over 26 years of experience.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Next six months' refers to the six month period starting from the date of the survey, Oct 2013 – March 2014

## **B. Impact of the Standards on teaching practice**

### **3. The Standards are perceived to be of benefit to the teaching profession**

- Nine out of ten school leaders (93%) and 78% of teachers believe that the Standards provide a common language for the teaching profession
- Large majorities of school leaders (93%) and teachers (81%) believe that the Standards are important for supporting the teaching profession
- Four out of five school leaders (80%) and 63% of teachers agree that the Standards will lead to increased student outcomes, broadly defined as student learning, engagement in learning and well-being
- Eighty-one per cent of teachers are confident in using the Standards, with 54% reporting they currently use them to inform their teaching

### **4. Teachers perceive the Standards to have less impact on their practice than other educators**

- Pre-service teachers perceive the Standards to be valuable to them and to have a greater impact on their practice when compared to other educators.
- Teachers are more likely to perceive implementing the Standards as 'hard work'. They are less likely to see impact on their practice as compared to other educators.

## **C. Support for engagement with the Standards**

### **5. Support measures are critical to successfully implementing the Standards**

- Teachers and school leaders are confident that other stakeholders (e.g. school leaders, regulatory authorities, professional learning/development providers) support implementation of the Standards, but less confident that they have the resources to support effective implementation
- Eighty per cent of school leaders agree that they provide feedback and appraisal to teachers about their practice based on the Standards, but only 43% of teachers report receiving such feedback
- More school leaders report that they collaborate with others in their school to implement the Standards when compared to teachers.

# Introduction

**T**his report on the Evaluation of the Implementation of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers is the second interim report produced by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL). AITSL has commissioned the Centre for Program Evaluation at The University of Melbourne and their partner, the Australian College of Educators, to conduct a three-year evaluation to assess the **usefulness, effectiveness** and **impact** of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. All evaluation activities, including data analysis, have been conducted by the Evaluation team at The University of Melbourne.

The first interim report of the Evaluation (AITSL 2014) presented initial findings from two major evaluation activities – the National Forum consisting of workshops and interviews in each State and Territory, and the National Survey, to which over 6,000 educators responded. This report builds on that analysis by further exploring three important questions:

- What drives successful implementation of the Standards?
- How do educators (pre-service teachers, teacher educators, teachers and school leaders) view the impact of implementing the Standards?
- What support is needed for effective implementation?

**The critical question for the teacher standards movement...is how the standards will be used, how universally they will be applied and how they may lead to stronger learning opportunities and more common sets of knowledge, skills and commitment across the profession.**

Darling-Hammond & Lieberman (2012)

## Progress of the Evaluation

The Evaluation methodology has been developed to provide a rich and accurate picture of the use and impact of the Standards on teaching practice. It does this by using a mixed methods approach, employing both qualitative and quantitative data to inform findings over the course of the Evaluation.

To date, three major data collection activities have been completed:

- The **National Forum**, consisting of interviews and workshops with high level stakeholders involved in implementing the Standards conducted in June-August 2013. There were 174 participants in these activities, which focussed on understanding implementation activity to that point and developing criteria for successful implementation. Documents were also collected at these forums, which provided further details about implementation activities planned and conducted.
- The **National Survey** conducted in October-November 2013, to which over 6,000 teachers, school leaders, pre-service teachers and teacher educators responded. This survey provided the majority of the data used in this report, and is described further in the box below.
- **Case studies** of over 55 schools and other educational organisations involved in implementing the Standards. The case studies will provide a richer picture of what successful implementation looks like. Field work for these was completed in the second half of 2014, and data analysis is currently underway.

One more data collection activity is planned:

- A second national survey to be conducted in March - April 2015. This survey will largely explore the same issues as the first survey, and will allow us to assess progress since 2013.

### The National Survey

The National Survey for this Evaluation was conducted in October-November 2013. The survey targeted four groups of educators:

- Teachers
- School leaders
- Teacher educators
- Pre-service teachers

Data presented in this report relate to those educators who completed the survey. The sample size allows us to be confident that the results are representative of the whole population of teachers (4,141 respondents) and school leaders (1,427 respondents). The samples for teacher educators (220 respondents) and pre-service teachers (214 respondents) are smaller, and the results should be treated with caution. Where this report refers to 'educators', it is referring to the results for all survey respondents, across the four groups.

The Evaluation is designed to inform implementation as it is happening. To achieve this, reports like this one are being produced as new data become available, to promote further debate on what can be done to ensure the implementation of the Standards has the maximum impact on student learning in Australian schools.

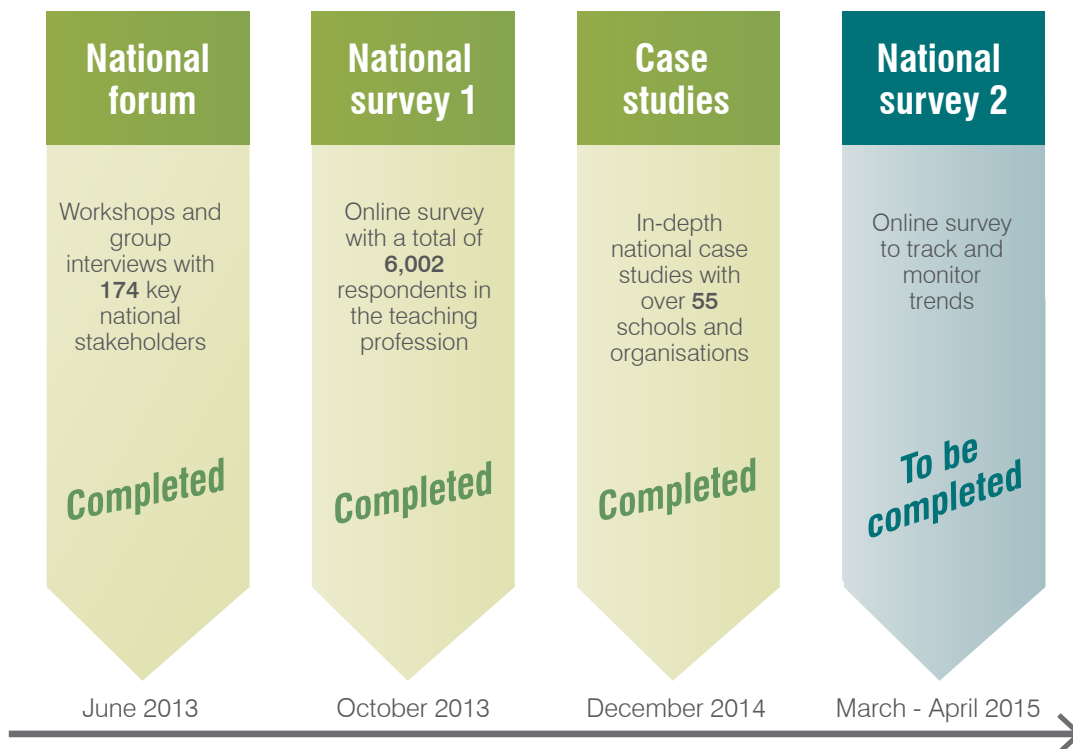


Figure 1: Stages of data collection

## What drives successful implementation of the Standards?

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen 1991) states that intentions are the most proximal predictor of behaviour. In other words, the stronger an individual's intentions, the more likely they are to carry out a behaviour. In the context of the Evaluation, this highlights the importance of understanding what lies behind educators' motivations to implement the Standards.

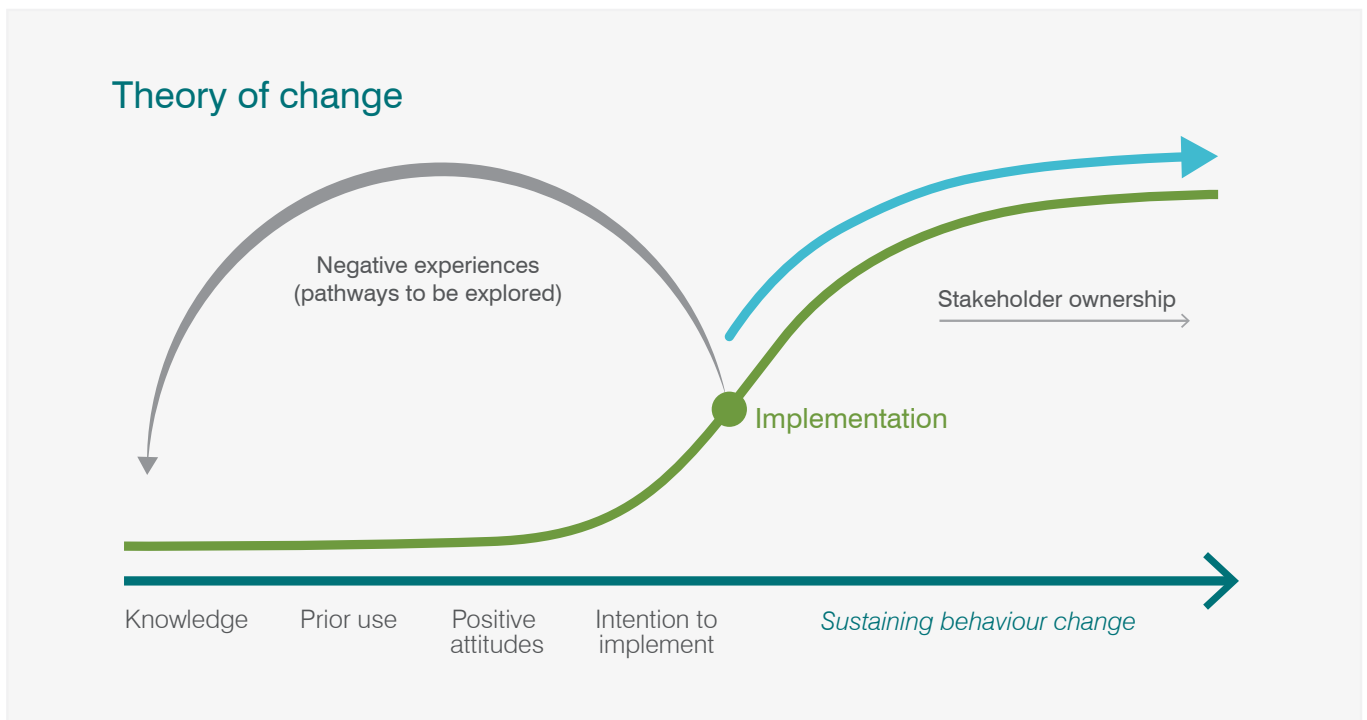
Survey data revealed four major factors driving implementation of the Standards. The Evaluation explored how these factors relate and influence one another to better understand educators' use of the Standards.<sup>2</sup>

- **Knowledge** refers to respondents' self-reported level of knowledge of the Standards
- **Prior use** refers to the use of any form of teaching standards prior to responding to the survey, including the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and other teaching standards, such as those previously used in individual States and Territories

<sup>2</sup> Structural equation modelling was used to investigate the causal relationships between these four factors to understand their relative strength of correlation.



- **Positive attitudes** refers to respondents' positive attitudes towards the Standards in general, including the perceived personal and profession-wide benefits of implementation and support received in implementing the Standards
- **Intention to implement** refers to respondents' reported intentions to use the Standards in the next six months and their view of the likely benefits of implementation.



**Figure 2: Implementation of the Standards life-course model**

The life-course model depicted above reflects the survey finding that high levels of knowledge and prior use of standards lead to positive attitudes, which in turn drives intentions to implement the Standards. This means that individuals who have knowledge of the Standards and have used teaching standards in the past expressed more positive attitudes towards the Standards. These individuals perceive the Standards as more valuable and as having more impact on their practice. Consequently, they have greater intentions to use the Standards.

The diagram above depicts the current state of implementation. On average, the teaching profession in Australia is at the point of beginning to implement the Standards. The data analysed below demonstrates that attitudes and intentions to implement are generally positive. The challenge now is to convert these good intentions into sustained behaviour change.

The theory of change is not a static process. Driving and resisting forces can shape educators' decisions to use the Standards in ways that support or hinder effective implementation in schools and organisations. It is important to understand these forces to ensure that educators have the adequate support to sustain use of the Standards to influence teaching and learning.

Implementation of the Standards is a complex process and different individuals and groups will not follow the neat course outlined in the diagram above. The diagram illustrates this by showing that negative experiences of implementation can take individuals or groups back to the beginning of the implementation journey, requiring knowledge and positive attitudes to be rebuilt. The survey data do not allow a detailed analysis of these pathways, and the case studies will illuminate them further.

## Context for implementation

Standards implementation is a shared responsibility. It also takes place in a complex national system, with different roles for Commonwealth, State and Territory governments, government, Catholic and independent education sectors, regulatory authorities and other stakeholders. The Implementation Ecology (Figure 3) illustrates the roles and relationships between diverse stakeholders at various levels of influence involved in the process of embedding the Standards in teaching practice.

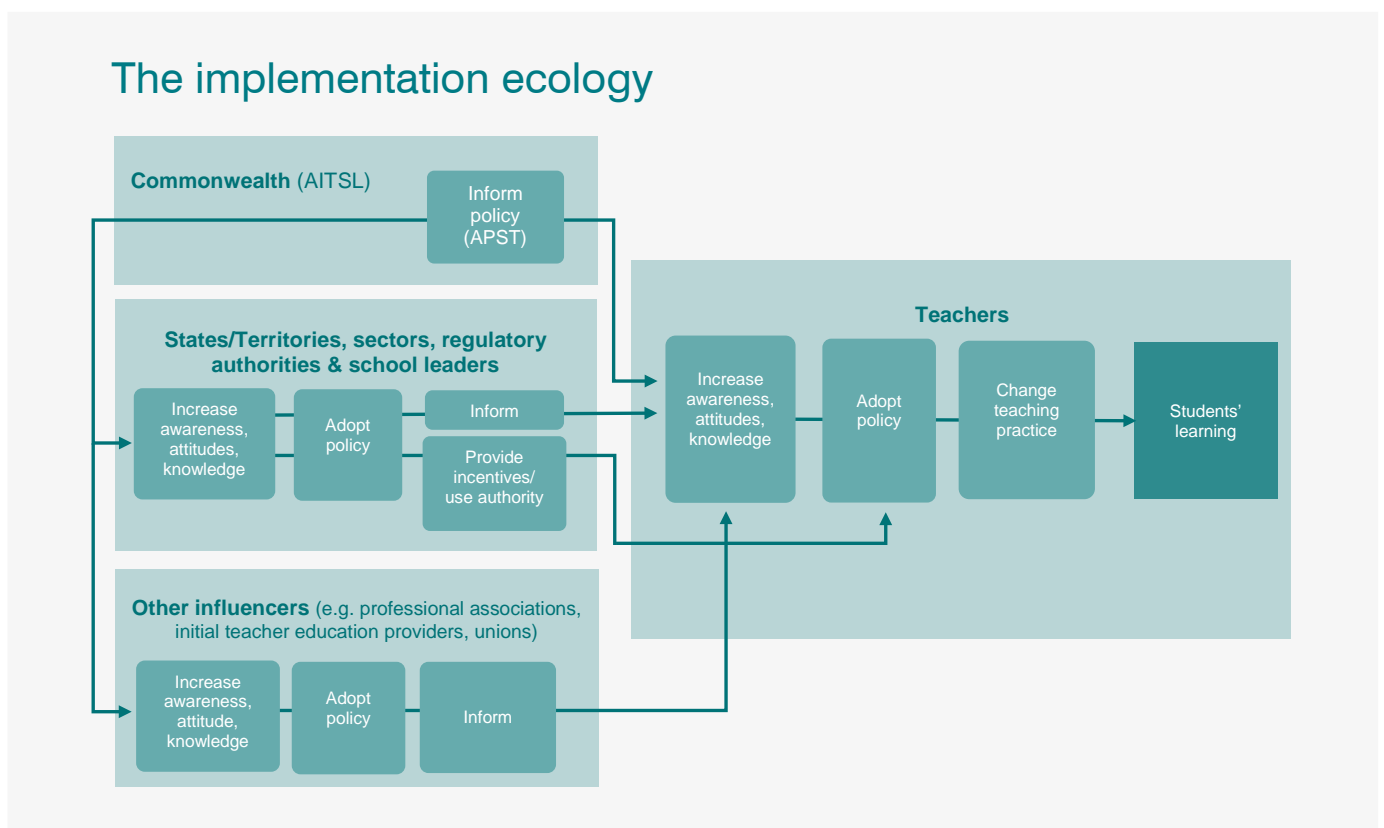


Figure 3: Implementation ecology (adapted from Schneider and Ingram, 1990)

This model suggests that implementation efforts should focus on building the capacity of teachers to use the Standards to improve their teaching practice. School leaders, in conjunction with other educational bodies and organisations, play important roles as change agents in this process. The model is designed to inform discussion about the roles that different stakeholders should play in supporting implementation in schools.



**Implementation of the Standards takes place in a complex and changing context. Success will require that all stakeholders support schools and teachers to implement the Standards in ways that improve teaching and increase teachers' impact on student learning.**

# Emerging results

## A. Factors impacting implementation of the Standards

Given the role of the Standards in developing professional practice, this first section of the report examines the relationships between the four core factors of knowledge, prior use, positive attitudes and intentions to implement.

### Finding 1: Educators have good knowledge of, and are positive in their attitudes towards, the Standards

The first Interim Report (AITSL 2014), based on data from the first National Survey, revealed the following:

- **Knowledge:** 70% of respondents reported that they have 'a fair amount' to 'expert knowledge' of the Standards
- **Prior use:** 61% reported that they have used the Standards since their implementation
- **Positive attitudes:** 82% agreed 'somewhat' to 'strongly' with a set of positive statements about the Standards
- **Intention to implement:** 78% reported that they intend to use the Standards in the next six months.

Further analysis of the survey data revealed four factors that drive the behavioural changes that result in the implementation of the Standards – knowledge, prior use, positive attitudes and intention to implement<sup>3</sup> (see Figure 2). Figure 4 below illustrates the mean values of these four factors by educator group.

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<sup>3</sup> One of these factors (knowledge) consists of responses to a single survey question about respondents' level of knowledge of the Standards. The rest are comprised of responses to multiple questions. All factors use a six point scale, except for 'Use' which employed a seven point scale. For the purposes of the analysis, these have been placed on a scale of 1 to 6, as most survey items used six-point Likert scales.

Figure 4 below shows that positive attitudes and intentions to implement the Standards are found across all educator groups. Pre-service teachers are most positive about the Standards and have the highest intentions to implement them in the next six months. In general, school leaders, teacher educators and pre-service teachers reported higher levels of knowledge, prior use, positive attitudes and intentions to implement the Standards than teachers. The level of positive attitudes and intentions to use the Standards are encouraging for effective implementation in schools and organisations.

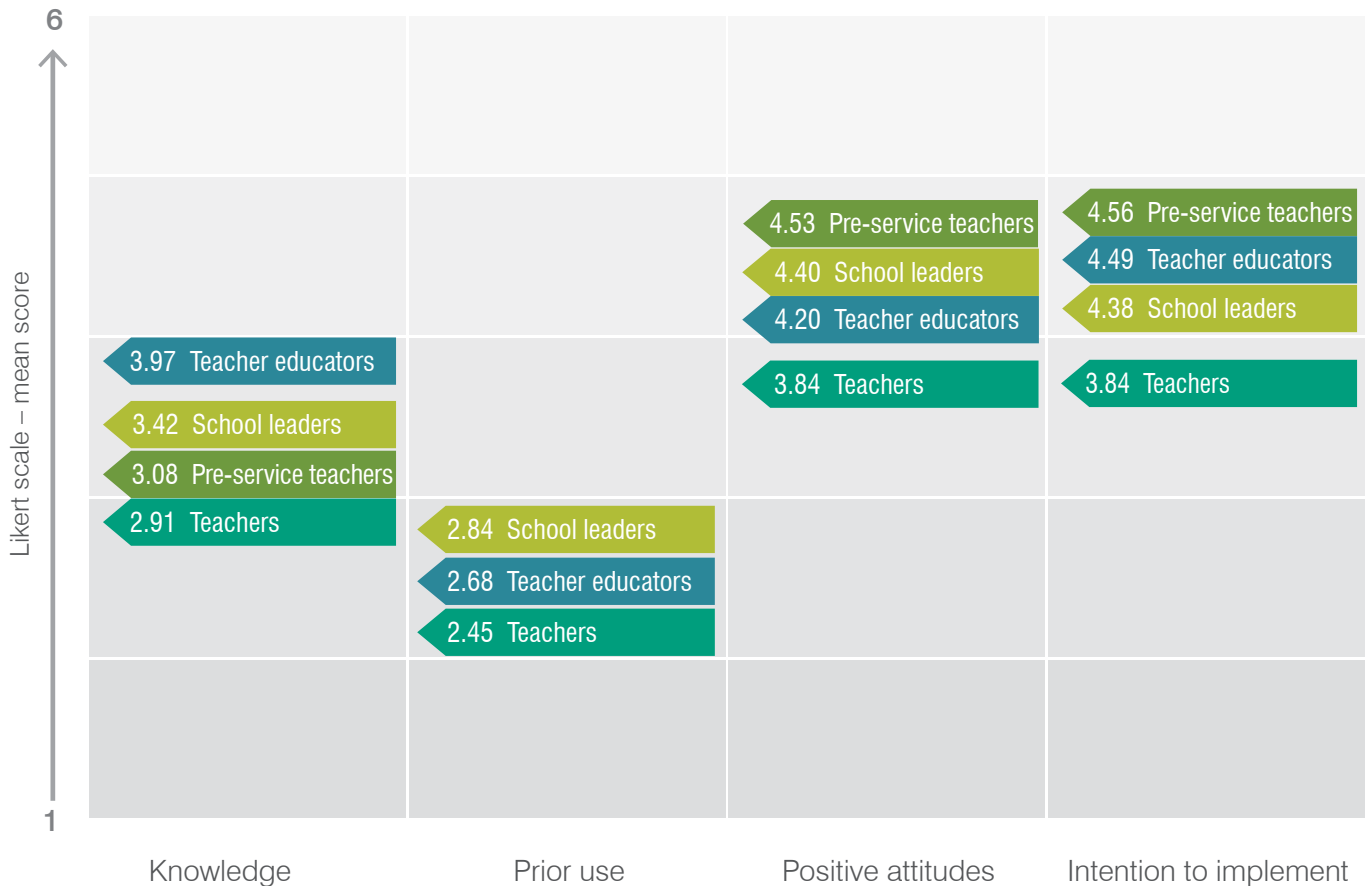


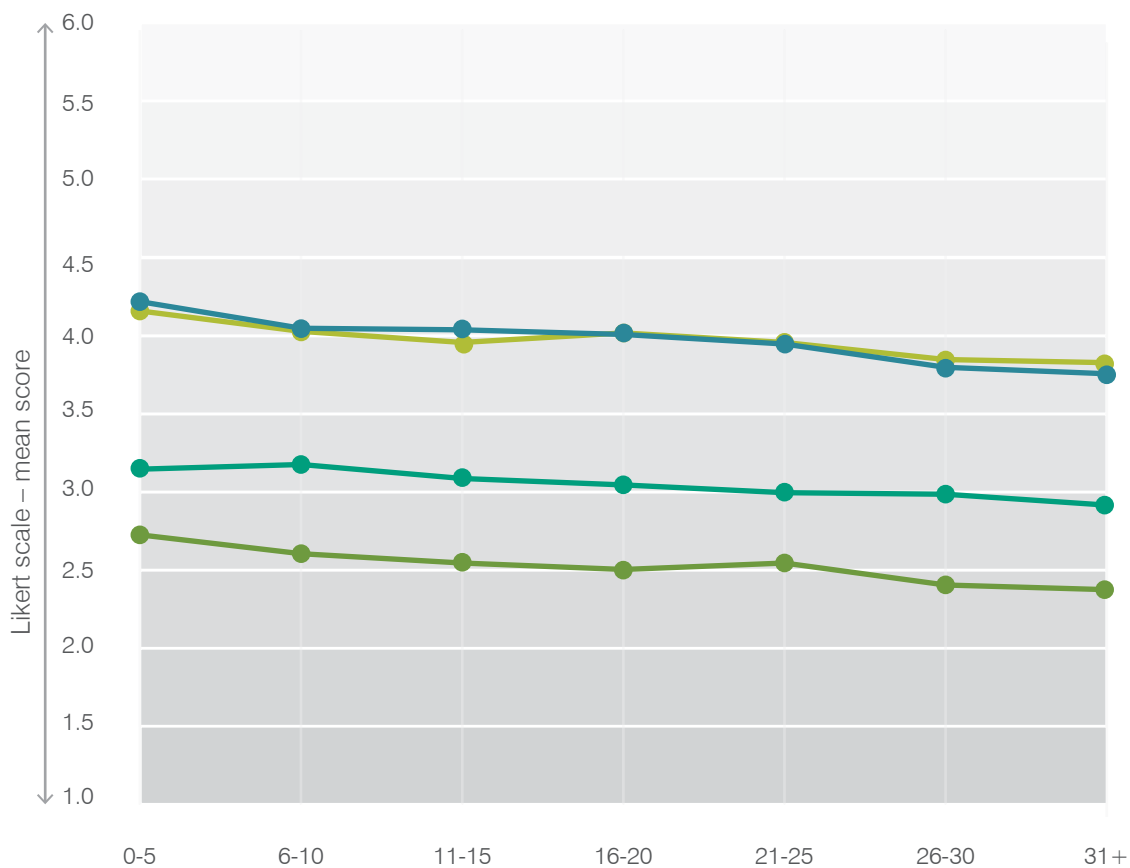
Figure 4: Factor mean score ratings by educator group.

**“We are in the early stages of connecting with the materials. So far [we are] very satisfied, and will use [them] much more into the future. I believe effectiveness is related to the diligence and prior knowledge of leaders who engage with the materials and use them to work with staff.”**

School leader, Queensland

## Finding 2: Early career teachers are more positive towards the Standards

The Evaluation explored teachers' perceptions of the Standards across the four factors by years of teaching experience. While the findings showed that all groups of teachers have somewhat positive attitudes and intentions to implement the Standards, there are variances between teachers of differing experience levels. Early career teachers (0-5 years) reported higher levels of prior use, positive attitudes and intentions to implement (but not higher levels of knowledge) than highly experienced teachers (more than 26 years). Research in teacher development has shown that teachers tend to experience enthusiasm and idealism early in their careers (Berliner 1987, 2009; Buchanan 2013). Early career teachers, fresh out of their teacher preparation programs, are more willing to try different ways of teaching as they develop their own teaching style.



Years of teaching experience	0-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26-30	31+
Knowledge	3.15	3.18	3.09	3.05	3.00	2.99	2.92
Prior use	2.73	2.61	2.55	2.51	2.55	2.41	2.38
Attitudes	4.16	4.03	3.96	4.02	3.96	3.85	3.83
Intentions to implement	4.22	4.05	4.04	4.01	3.95	3.80	3.76

Figure 5: Factor mean score ratings by years of teaching experience

It is important to note that these data are point-in-time only and do not follow a single group of teachers through their careers. However, the data do provide a snapshot of how teachers with various years of experience perceive the Standards at this stage of implementation. The data could suggest that use of the Standards will increase as more cohorts of beginning teachers who have used them during their initial teacher education enter the profession.

**“Professional development for both teachers and school leaders will be essential in this process as will be the sharing of effective practices across and between schools.”**

Professor Stephen Dinham, the University of Melbourne



**As we understand more about what drives successful implementation, it is encouraging that teachers have positive attitudes and intentions to implement the Standards. The findings also showed that early career teachers reported greater levels of prior use, positive attitudes and intentions to implement the Standards than teachers with more than 26 years of experience.**



**For the Standards to have an impact, they will need to be implemented by teachers. Yet the survey results show that school leaders currently have higher levels of knowledge, prior use, positive attitudes and intentions to implement the Standards than teachers. Addressing the disparity may require further systemic and school support to translate policy into practice.**

**It is therefore important to understand how school leaders can translate their high levels of knowledge, positive attitudes and intentions to implement into successful use of the Standards in their schools.**

**Given early career teachers' high levels of engagement, it will be interesting to follow the influence new graduates have on Standards implementation. Also of importance are the possible ways they can work in partnership with experienced teachers to drive change.**

## B. Impact of the Standards on teaching practice

Ultimately, successful implementation of the Standards will be defined by whether there are consequential changes in teaching practice that have an impact on student learning. The survey does not measure this directly, but provides insights into how educators view the impact of implementing the Standards. The survey questions examined in more detail here form part of the 'positive attitudes' and 'intention to implement' factors discussed above.

### Finding 3: The Standards are perceived to be of benefit to the teaching profession

Positive attitudes are an important driver of implementation, and beliefs about impact emerge as an important component of positive attitudes. Figures 6 and 7 below show the extent to which teachers and school leaders believe the Standards provide a common language for the profession, impact practice and lead to increased student outcomes. For both groups, there is significant agreement that the Standards are valuable to the teaching profession. The findings show that school leaders are slightly more optimistic about the impact of the Standards on the teaching profession than teachers.

#### The Standards provide a common language for the teaching profession



#### Teacher standards are important for supporting the teaching profession



#### Survey question

To what extent do you agree with the following statement: *Statements as in the chart adjacent.*

**Agree:** Percentage aggregate of 'somewhat agree', 'agree' and 'strongly agree'.

**Disagree:** Percentage z of 'somewhat disagree', 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree'.

\* Disagree

Figure 6: Impact of the Standards on the teaching profession



Eighty per cent of school leaders agree that the Standards will lead to increased student outcomes as compared to 63% of teachers. It is important to note that the data are based on respondents' perceptions and do not directly measure actual impact on practice.

### The implementation of the Standards will lead to increased school student outcomes

<b>School leaders</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>20%</b>
	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
<b>Teachers</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>37%</b>
	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>

#### Survey question

To what extent do you agree with the following statement: 'The implementation of the APST will lead to increased school student outcomes'.

**Agree:** Percentage aggregate of 'somewhat agree', 'agree' and 'strongly agree'.

**Disagree:** Percentage aggregate of 'somewhat disagree', 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree'.

**Figure 7: Positive impact of the Standards on student outcomes**

Figure 8 below compares teachers' perceived confidence in using the Standards and the degree to which their teaching is informed by the Standards. While a majority of teachers are confident in using the Standards, only half of the teachers reported that their teaching is informed by the Standards.

### I am confident that I could use the Standards to guide my practice

<b>Teachers</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>19%</b>
	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>

### My teaching practice is informed by the Standards

<b>Teachers</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>46%</b>
	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>

#### Survey question

Survey questions: To what extent do you agree with the following statements: Statements as in the chart adjacent.

**Agree:** Percentage aggregate of 'somewhat agree', 'agree' and 'strongly agree'.

**Disagree:** Percentage aggregate of 'somewhat disagree', 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree'.

**Figure 8: Influence on teaching practice**



**Teachers and school leaders perceive the Standards as important for the teaching profession as a whole and see the potential of the Standards to improve student learning outcomes. More than three quarters of teachers and school leaders feel that the Standards are important for supporting the profession.**

**A significant majority of educators believe that the Standards benefit them in their roles. The findings also show that whilst teachers are confident in using the Standards, a majority are not using them to inform their practice at this stage of implementation.**



**Whilst teachers have positive attitudes towards the Standards, findings show that they are less motivated to use the Standards at this stage of implementation. A possible reason for this is that the connection between the Standards and the work of teachers, student learning outcomes or school change, has not been made evident enough at this stage.**

**The Evaluation will further explore school uptake of the Standards through initiatives such as professional learning, performance and development, teacher registration, certification and other similar programs.**

## **Finding 4: Teachers perceive the Standards to have less impact on their practice than other educators**

In asking educators about their intentions to implement the Standards in the next six months, the survey sought to understand educators' expectations around the experience of implementation. Specifically, the survey asked for a response to the statement 'For me, utilising the APST to guide my practice in the next six months would be...'. Respondents were asked to answer this question on a six point scale, with only the top and bottom of the scales defined as follows:

- Hard work – Effortless
- Negative – Positive
- No impact – High impact
- Not valuable – Valuable

Overall, pre-service teachers had the highest mean scores across all these measures, with the exception of workload. Pre-service teachers are most positive about the Standards, perceive the Standards to be valuable and see the Standards as having a greater impact on their practice.

Teachers are more likely than other educators to perceive implementing the Standards as 'hard work'. While teachers also rated lower for the other three measures in figure 9 below, it is important to note these results were on the positive half of the scale.

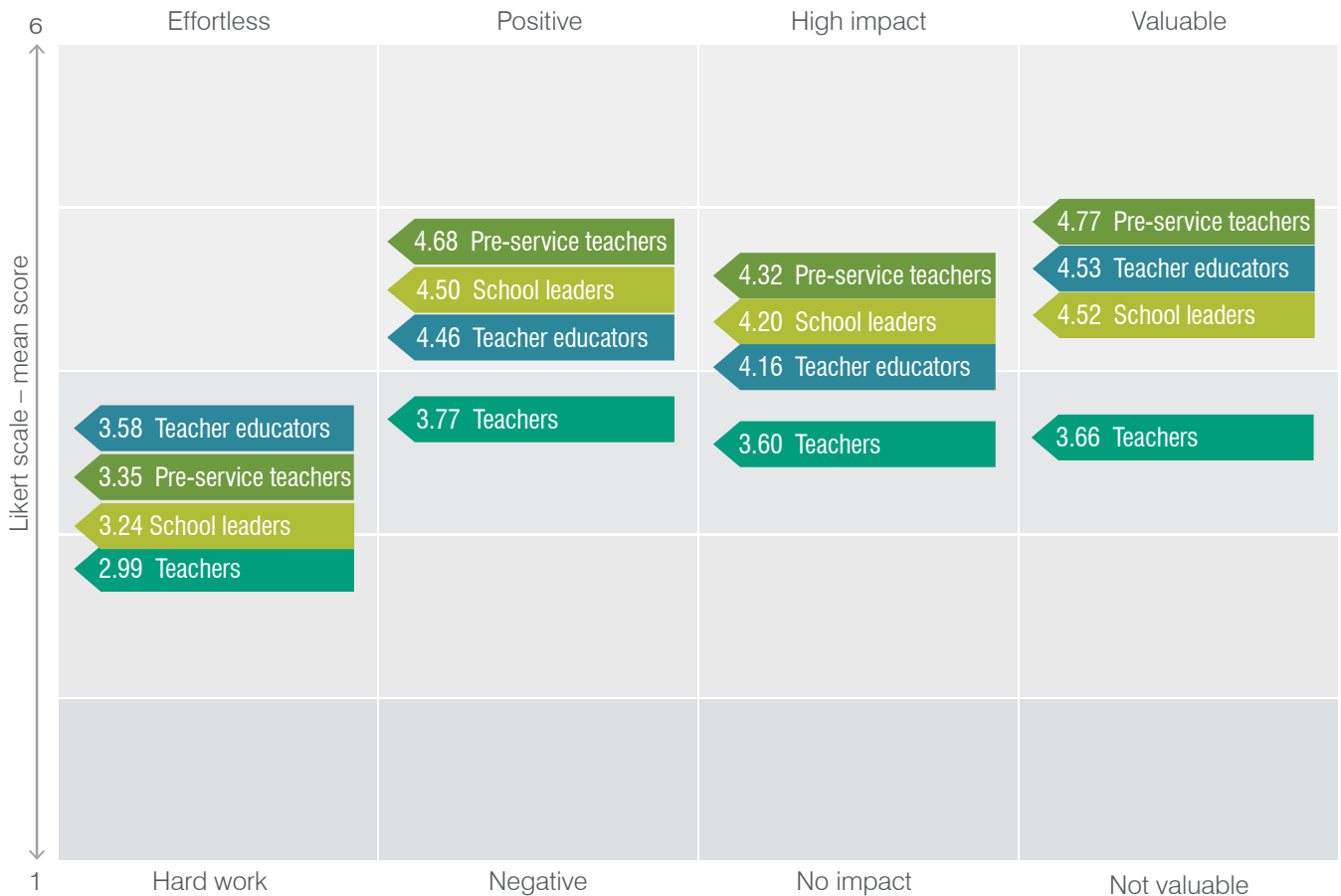



Figure 9: Mean score ratings on the attitude scale



**Pre-service teachers are more positive towards the Standards and perceive them to have greater impact on their practice than other educators. This raises the question of how we can sustain this level of engagement throughout their careers. Exploring pre-service teachers' motivations and support from teacher education programs may help answer this.**

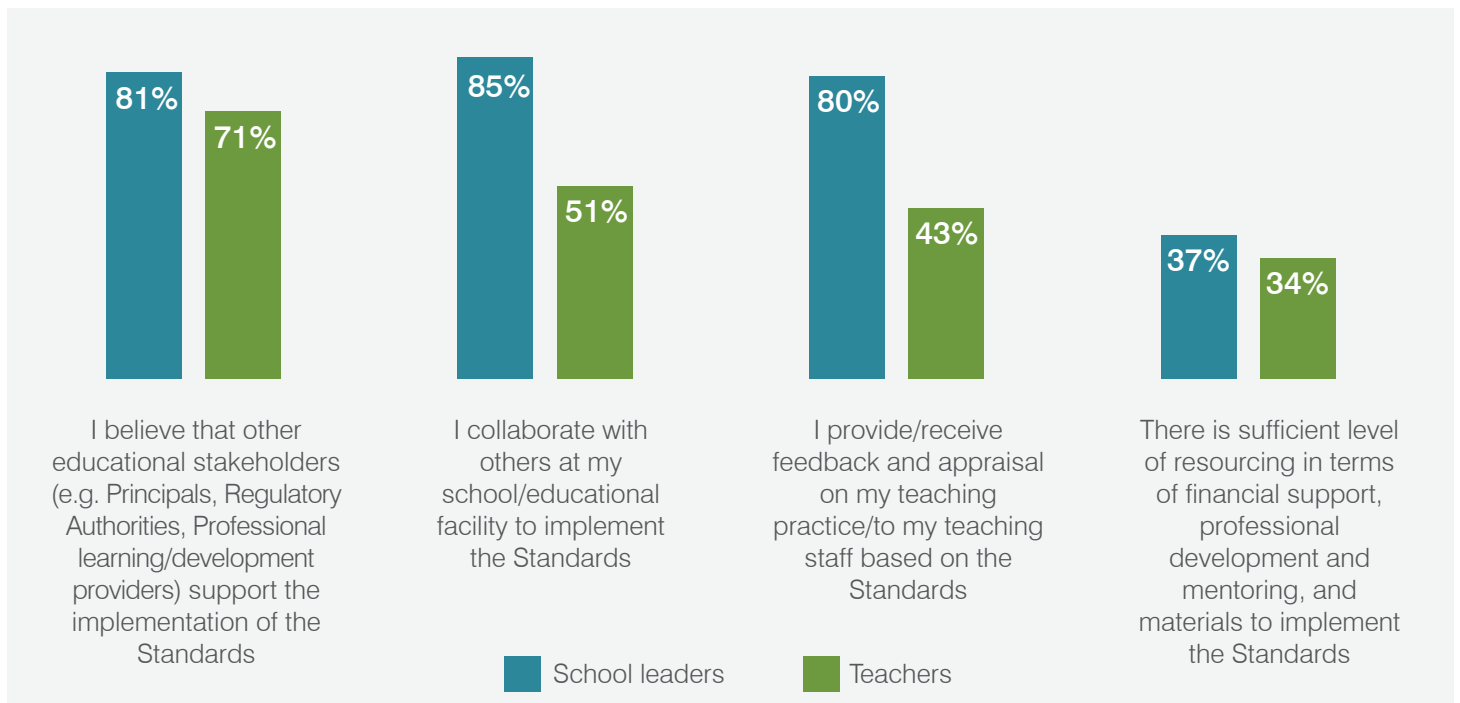
**Teachers are more likely to perceive implementing the Standards as 'hard work' and are less likely to see impact on their practice. It is important to consider how we can minimise the workload involved in implementing the Standards and help teachers see the impact and value of the Standards for their practice.**

## C. Support for engagement with the Standards

This section examines educators' views of the support they receive to implement the Standards.

### Finding 5: Support measures are critical to successfully implementing the Standards

Figure 10 shows school leaders' and teachers' perceptions of the support they provide/receive, and the level of collaboration they have experienced in implementing the Standards. Three types of support were examined – sufficiency of resources to implement the Standards, support from other educational stakeholders, and feedback and appraisal on teaching practice based on the Standards.



**Survey questions:** To what extent do you agree with the following statement: Statements as in the chart above. Percentages reported above are the aggregate of 'somewhat agree', 'agree' and 'strongly agree'.

**Figure 10: Support & collaboration with others to implement the Standards.**

Overall, educators are confident that other stakeholders such as regulatory authorities and principals, support implementation. High numbers of school leaders (85%) and smaller numbers of teachers (51%), report that they collaborate with others within their schools to implement the Standards, and that they provide or receive feedback and appraisal based on the Standards. Both teachers and school leaders are less confident that they have sufficient resources to implement the Standards.

Again, a gap is revealed in the data between the perceptions of teachers and school leaders. While 80% of school leaders report that they provide feedback and appraisal on teaching practice based on the Standards, only 43% of teachers reported having received such feedback and appraisal.

**“Leaders and leadership is one of the critical keys to keeping things moving along in schools.”**

System leader, South Australia

Research has shown that, in effective reform efforts, educators learn new things in the ‘setting in which they work’ (Elmore 2004). Understanding the dynamics within schools and the ways in which school leaders can support teachers to implement the Standards will be important themes of the case studies being undertaken for the Evaluation.



**Teachers and school leaders report that other educators support implementation of the Standards, but are less confident that they have the resources to support successful implementation.**

**School leaders in particular report that they collaborate within their own schools to implement the Standards, and provide feedback and appraisal based on the Standards. This focus on activities within the school is consistent with the research on effective professional learning for teachers. The findings also show that fewer teachers reported that they collaborate with others in their own school.**

**School leaders and teachers need to work together to ensure the Standards are fully embedded into the day-to-day life of the classroom.**



**It appears that existing support mechanisms have been more effective for school leaders than for teachers. Understanding how school leaders can work to support teachers to implement the Standards, and how they can be supported in this, will be important issues for the case studies to explore.**

## Conclusion

These emerging findings are encouraging at this stage of implementation although the discrepancy between school leader and teacher perceptions needs to be better understood. Overall, the data show that educators have positive attitudes and intentions to implement the Standards, an important predictor in sustaining the use of the Standards in practice.

The key aim of the Standards is to improve teacher quality. To achieve this, it is important that the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers are embedded in teacher practice and impact teaching and learning in schools and classrooms. However, at this stage of implementation, it appears that teachers perceive implementing the Standards as 'hard work' and are less likely to see impact and value for their practice as compared to other educators. It is important that school leaders work closely with teachers and support them in embedding the Standards in their practice.

Implementation of the Standards is a shared responsibility of the education profession. System and school leaders are key drivers in influencing teachers' use of the Standards in ways that support professional growth and career progression. It is therefore crucial to understand the role stakeholders play and how they can most effectively drive successful implementation of the Standards.

**“The Evaluation will continue to inform strategies to support effective implementation of the Standards, with a long term objective of improving student outcomes.”**

**Associate Professor Janet Clinton, the University of Melbourne**

## Next steps for the Evaluation

### **Case Studies – Lessons from Practice**

The Evaluation has conducted in-depth case studies at over fifty sites across Australia. The upcoming analysis of these case studies will surface deeper insights into how the Standards are being used in school communities and educational organisations.

### **National Survey 2 – 2015**

A second National Survey will be conducted in March - April 2015 and will again seek to understand implementation from the perspective of teachers, school leaders, pre-service teachers and teacher educators. The Evaluation will continue to track and review Standards implementation, engage the profession and disseminate evidence-based findings to inform implementation as it happens.

## Glossary

### **Standards**

The Standards refer to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (also referred to as the APST). The Standards were finalised by AITSL and endorsed in December 2010 by the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA), now known as the Education Council.

### **Teacher**

Teachers are school employees who spend the majority of their time in contact with students either in classes or on an individual basis; and are responsible for teaching the school curriculum. Inclusive of registered teachers in early childhood and other settings outside of mainstream schools.

### **School Leader**

School leaders are those in positions of authority such as: Principals, Deputy Principals and Heads of curriculum areas or departments (e.g. Head of English).

### **Pre-service Teacher**

Pre-service teachers are individuals currently enrolled in an initial teacher education program.

### **Teacher Educator**

Teacher educators are anyone who is involved in preparing individuals to become teachers through initial teacher education programs.

### **Educator**

Used to refer to the four groups asked to respond to the survey – teachers, school leaders, pre-service teachers and teacher educators.

### **Stakeholder**

Used in this report to refer to all parties with a role in implementing the Standards. In addition to educators, as defined above, this would include, for example, education departments, professional associations and teacher regulatory authorities.

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