

Mentoring aligned to the Middle Leader Standards

A fact sheet to guide mentors of current or aspiring middle leaders in using the Australian Professional Standards for Middle Leaders

Introduction

The [Australian Professional Standards for Middle Leaders](#) (Middle Leader Standards) are a national voluntary set of standards designed to be used developmentally to improve the capability of middle leaders and provide a clear pathway for progression.

This fact sheet outlines practical ways mentors can use the Middle Leader Standards to develop the capability of current and aspiring middle leaders within existing mentoring relationships and practices.

There are many different types of middle leaders (eg. Head of Department, Pastoral Care leader, Year Level Coordinator) with varying roles and responsibilities. This fact sheet is designed to help mentors supporting current and aspiring middle leaders across various roles and contexts.

How can mentors use the Middle Leader Standards?

Mentors can use the Middle Leader Standards to guide focused, evidence-informed professional growth conversations about middle leadership practice and provide targeted feedback. The Middle Leader Standards support mentors to identify strengths and areas for development, set clear goals, and strengthen a middle leader's impact on leading improvement in teaching and learning.



Initial self-reflection and feedback

Ask your middle leader to reflect on their practice against the focus areas of the Middle Leader Standards (refer to the [Self-Reflection Quick Start Guide](#)).

- Note that the enabling standards (Standards 1 and 2) are demonstrated through leadership practice in the core standards (Standards 3-6) and should not be considered in isolation.
- Discuss the outcomes of the self-reflection with your middle leader. You might:
 - ask what surprised them
 - explore which focus areas align with their role
 - identify strengths and areas for growth.
- Provide feedback where needed. For example: *"I'm curious about how you assessed this focus area. What evidence supports that judgement?"*



Set professional growth goals

- Support your middle leader to set 1–2 targeted professional growth goals aligned to the Middle Leader Standards.
- Consider selecting:
 - one focus area from the core standards (Standards 3–6)
 - one focus area from the enabling standards (Standards 1 and 2) (to strengthen the demonstration of practice in the core standard focus area).
- Plan to work towards these goals over a sustained period (e.g. one or two school terms).
- Identify opportunities to provide feedback and encourage reflection on progress.



Identify relevant professional learning

- Use insights from the reflection, goal setting, observations and feedback to assist your middle leader to plan targeted professional learning.
- Consider:
 - what capabilities need to be developed
 - what learning opportunities will best support this development.
- Where appropriate, include access to external expertise to strengthen learning.
- Consider whether there is any development you may need (as a mentor) to support your middle leader.



Develop leadership practice through mentoring conversations

- Establish regular meetings with your middle leader.
- Regularly review progress towards goals during mentoring conversations, using a coaching structure where relevant.
- Ask open-ended questions to challenge and expand thinking and decision-making.
- Explore which capabilities are being demonstrated by your middle leader.
- Discuss what could be done differently to increase capability.
- Remember to check in informally with your middle leader as well. A simple “*How is it going?*” can help build psychological safety and open opportunities for coaching.



Guide evidence collection

- Support your middle leader to gather evidence of their practice and impact, focused on their professional growth goals. Examples may include:
 - staff feedback
 - parent/carers or student feedback
 - student data
 - student work samples.



Model and observe practice

- Model effective practice by inviting your middle leader to observe and reflect on your leadership in action.
- Observe your middle leader's practice, where appropriate, and provide feedback on how their actions align with the Middle Leader Standards.

Key takeaway

Effective mentoring is deliberate, focused and sustained. The Middle Leader Standards help ensure conversations are targeted, grounded in practice, and lead to meaningful action. This supports middle leaders to refine their leadership and strengthen their impact on teaching and learning.

Where can I find out more?

For related resources on the Middle Leader Standards visit <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/lead-develop/teachers-who-lead/middle-leadership-standards> or scan the QR Code below.



References

AITSL (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership) (n.d.), Improve with our coaching resources, <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/lead-develop/develop-others/coach-others/coaching-resources>

AITSL (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership) (n.d.), Mentoring, <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/teach/improve-practice/practical-guides/mentoring>

AITSL, (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership) (n.d.) Enhance professional conversations, <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/lead-develop/develop-others/coach-others/professional-conversations>