

Middle Leader Standards Self-Reflection: Quick Start Guide

A fact sheet to support current and aspiring middle leaders to self-reflect against 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 that are designed to be used developmentally to improve the capability of middle leaders and provide a clear pathway for progression.

For those using the Middle Leader Standards to develop their own capabilities, the first step is to self-reflect against the Standards.

What is self-reflection?

Self-reflection is a deliberate process of analysing your practice and challenging your assumptions. It involves using insight and feedback about yourself as a leader to change future actions and decisions to improve your leadership impact.

Why is self-reflection important?

Middle leader roles are inherently complex. They involve working in high trust relationships with others to improve teaching and learning, responding to changing circumstances, and collaboratively solving complex problems while building a team.

Developing the knowledge, skills and dispositions needed for effective middle leadership involves planning, practice and perseverance, and is strengthened with intentional self-reflection as part of a continuous cycle of growth and development.

Self-reflection is critical for middle leaders because it:

- improves the quality of your decisions
- identifies mismatches between how you intend to behave and how you actually behave
- strengthens your leadership identity
- increases your impact.

Self-reflection is critical to effective middle leadership. It has a dedicated focus area in the Middle Leader Standards:

Focus Area 2d: Self-reflection - The ability to intentionally reflect on own biases, values and perspectives to gain greater insight about oneself as an individual and leader and to seek feedback to engage in a continuous cycle of growth and development.

How do the Middle Leader Standards support self-reflection?

The Middle Leader Standards articulate a continuum of increasing capabilities to guide your development as a middle leader. This staged progression supports self-reflection by clearly identifying the capabilities you need to develop to improve teaching practices across your team.

The Middle Leader Standards provide a clear pathway to guide your leadership development, and a common language for all Australian middle leaders and aspiring middle leaders to discuss leadership practice and professional growth aspirations with each other, mentors and line managers.

Understanding the enabling and core standards



Figure 1 – The interconnection between the two groups of standards

Standards 1 and 2 of the Middle Leader Standards are the enabling standards. These underpin your leadership practice across the core standards.

Standards 3-6 of the Middle Leader Standards are the core standards. These represent the core business of middle leaders, to improve teaching and learning to maximise the progress and achievement of all learners.

As you identify examples of your practice within the core standards, consider how the enabling standards contributed to your effectiveness. Reflect on how one or more focus areas from Standards 1 or 2 supported your actions in that context.

The integrated nature of middle leadership means that the enabling dispositions, knowledge and skills are woven into the work of the core standards.

How do I self-reflect using the Middle Leader Standards?

Self-reflection against the Middle Leader Standards can be completed at any time, but is ideal as you begin a new performance and development cycle.

You can use the self-reflection tool available online, or follow the steps below:

- You will need a copy of the [Middle Leader Standards](#), a quiet place and some time to reflect.
- Identify which focus areas are relevant to your current role – remember not all focus areas apply to all middle leader roles.
- Map yourself against each role-relevant focus area of the Middle Leader Standards by choosing which level best matches your current capability.
- Consider those focus areas that reflect your current strengths and those which reflect areas for development.
- Identify one focus area from the core standards (Standards 3-6) that you think would be most important to develop and improve your leadership impact. For example, you could:
 - build on existing strengths or develop capabilities which are important to your role
 - focus on areas for development aligned with your school improvement responsibilities.
- Consider which capabilities will best support you to lead improvement of teaching and learning.
- Identify one focus area from the enabling standards (Standards 1 & 2) which will help improve your practice in the core focus area you have chosen.
- Once you have identified a core standard and an enabling standard and the relevant capabilities, use your reflections to shape goals for your professional growth.



Instructional Leader

"In my role I work with staff to implement evidence-based teaching strategies to strengthen classroom practice. I'm going to focus my reflections and development goals on Standard 5 as a starting point. I'm looking to strengthen 'collaborative practice' (5c) across the school, drawing on Standard 2, 'building relational trust' (2c).



Welfare coordinator

"In my role I support student engagement and wellbeing, working directly with students and teachers across the school. I am going to focus on Standard 6 as a starting point, as I'm looking to strengthen how I 'ensure a safe, supportive and orderly learning environment' (6a), drawing on Standard 1, 'perseverance and resilience' (1d)."

What next?

After your self-reflection, it is important to seek feedback on your performance from a range of sources. Have a professional conversation with your line manager, mentor or a colleague and seek their feedback on your self-reflection and the goals you have identified for your professional growth. Try to stay open-minded and curious as you seek and receive feedback.

Revisit your self-reflections and professional growth goals regularly to check how you're progressing.

Effective middle leaders modify their leadership behaviour based on feedback received from multiple sources, including parents/carers and students.

As you self-reflect consider:

- *Which core Standards feel most relevant to my current role as a middle leader?*
- *Where do I see these core Standards showing up in my everyday practice?*
- *How are the enabling Standards helping me to lead more effectively?*

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), How to guides: reflection, <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/teach/improve-practice/how-to-guides/reflection>

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>

AITSL (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership) (2026), Leading through Standards 2: Elaborations and scenarios that define practice: Self-reflection, <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/middle-leadership/enabling-knowledge-self-reflection.pdf>