



# Know the content and how to teach it

Research confirms that teachers with strong content knowledge can create more meaningful and relevant learning experiences, which enhances student motivation and achievement. Teachers must not only master the subject matter but also know how to present it in ways that are accessible and engaging for students.

Understanding and applying knowledge of content and teaching strategies is essential for teachers in Australia. This ensures that teaching activities are engaging and effective, catering to the diverse needs of students. Teachers in Australia use a variety of teaching strategies that are evidence-based and proven to enhance student learning outcomes. These strategies include explicit teaching, feedback, and differentiated instruction, which help in making the content accessible and interesting for all students. By continuously updating their knowledge and skills, teachers can create a dynamic learning environment that fosters student engagement and achievement.

*“Students need to know the reason why they’re doing something. For example, when teaching maths, students often ask, “Why do I need to know this?” So, lessons must have real-life components. Once you show students the reasons for learning something, it becomes easier for them to understand and engage. Real-world connections are really important because they help with identifying the “why” behind what we’re learning. A student-centred approach, student-led discussions, and project-based learning are methods I use; students love those. Reflection and feedback at the end of each lesson are also essential. I always encourage the kids to pull out their reflective diary and spend a couple of minutes reflecting on the lesson. Multiple exposures to concepts through varied approaches help consolidate learning.”*

Lead Teacher - Secondary

Organising content into coherent, well-sequenced learning and teaching programs is another critical focus for Australian teachers. This involves structuring learning in a way that builds on students’ prior knowledge and progressively develops their understanding. Effective content organisation helps in creating a logical flow of lessons, making it easier for students to grasp complex concepts. Teachers use various planning tools, such as unit plans and lesson sequences, to ensure that the content is delivered in a structured and systematic manner. This approach not only enhances student learning but also supports teachers in managing their instructional time efficiently.

Designing and implementing learning and teaching programs using knowledge of curriculum, assessment, and reporting requirements is fundamental for teachers. The Australian Curriculum provides a framework that outlines the essential knowledge, skills, and values that students need to acquire. State and territory curriculum and school authorities are responsible for the implementation of the Australian Curriculum in their schools, in line with system and jurisdictional policies and requirements. Teachers can use the resources provided by their curriculum authority and school to develop comprehensive teaching programs that also include formative and summative assessments to monitor student progress. Regular reporting to parents and stakeholders ensures transparency and assists in identifying areas where students may need additional support. This systematic approach to curriculum, assessment, and reporting helps in maintaining high educational standards and improving student outcomes.

*“Ultimately, content knowledge is foundational. Teaching methods may involve trial and error, but mastery of the material remains the cornerstone of effective teaching.”*

#### Highly Accomplished Teacher – Secondary

Teachers in Australia are expected to integrate First Nations perspectives into their teaching practices and curriculum. Promoting understanding and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures, and languages is crucial for reconciliation. This may include collaborating with local communities and incorporating culturally relevant materials and activities. By providing opportunities for students to learn about and respect First Nations cultures, teachers help foster a more inclusive and respectful school environment. This approach not only benefits Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students but also enriches the learning experience for all students.

Literacy and numeracy are foundational skills that are critical for students’ academic success and future opportunities and a key focus for teachers in Australia. Teachers use a range of evidence based strategies to enhance students’ literacy and numeracy skills. These strategies are often tailored to meet the diverse needs of students, ensuring that all learners can achieve their full potential. By prioritising literacy and numeracy, teachers help students build the skills necessary for lifelong learning and success.

Integrating Information and Communication Technology (ICT) into learning and teaching programs is essential in today’s digital age. ICT enhances the learning experience by making content more relevant and engaging for students. Teachers in Australia use various digital tools and resources to support teaching and learning, such as interactive whiteboards, educational software, and online collaboration platforms. By incorporating ICT into their teaching practices, teachers can create more interactive and personalised learning experiences. This not only helps in developing students’ digital literacy skills but also prepares them for the demands of the modern workforce.

*“I love dialogue with the students. I do a lot of warm-up activities to get them talking and thinking. For example, I might use an image on the board or a photo app where students guess the location and year. These activities encourage discussion and provide a safe space for students. When they share back to the class, they can say ‘my group’ instead of ‘I think,’ which reduces potential embarrassment or awkwardness. Adolescents are still developing self-confidence, and the classroom and peer structure can be daunting. “Small group work and pairs are effective, but some students prefer to work independently. Being flexible with learning design and providing various opportunities helps. Using technology, such as screen sharing on boards, provides variety. Some students love technology, while others don’t, so offering a variety helps everyone participate.”*

#### Highly Accomplished Teacher - Secondary

##### Take action: Literacy

Watch [AITSL's In the Classroom video](#) to see how Dean uses an explicit approach to teaching literacy concepts, using visual tools to gather observations and check student understanding. He shares the whole school approach to improving student literacy.

