AITSL — Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership Limited

Plan and implement effective teaching and learning

Effective planning is fundamental to successful teaching and learning. When teachers create engaging and well-structured learning experiences that capture students' attention they foster deeper understanding. Planning and preparation helps in managing classroom activities efficiently, ensuring that educational goals are systematically met.

Setting learning goals

Setting appropriate learning goals is crucial as it drives student motivation and achievement. To effectively set learning goals, teachers in Australia begin by understanding the individual needs and abilities of their students. This involves using assessment data to identify each student's current level of performance and areas for growth. A widely used approach in Australia is to use SMART goals to then set specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goals that are tailored to each student's needs. Involving students in the goal-setting process can also enhance their commitment and ownership of their own learning journey.

Teachers in Australia use a variety of strategies to support students in reaching their learning goals. Providing regular feedback and opportunities for reflection helps students stay on track and make necessary adjustments to their learning strategies. Teachers can also create a supportive classroom environment that encourages risk-taking and celebrates progress, no matter how small. By continuously monitoring and adjusting goals based on student progress, teachers ensure that the goals remain challenging yet attainable, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and high achievement.

"I also consider the cognitive load – what is the impact on the cognitive load of my students? When designing lessons, I want to ensure they are not overwhelmed and that we're enhancing learning rather than increasing stress. Inclusivity is also crucial, so I create an environment that supports and values diverse learning. Each lesson has to be multifaceted. I've found success in basing lessons around student interests, but there are also some non-negotiables. Some aspects can be tailored to their interests, while others cannot. I have to know my students, so any information regarding personal learning plans is essential before I start. Relationships are really important and often undervalued. Having a relationship with the students is crucial."

Lead Teacher - Secondary

Planning and sequencing learning programs

Planning and sequencing learning programs is essential for teachers to ensure that students eceive a coherent and comprehensive education. By carefully planning, teachers can ensure that each lesson builds on previous knowledge and skills, leading to a deeper understanding of the subject matter.

This structured approach helps students make connections between different concepts and apply their learning in various contexts. Furthermore, a well-sequenced program allows for the gradual introduction of more complex ideas, reducing cognitive overload and making learning more manageable for students.

Incorporating a variety of evidence based teaching strategies and resources is also crucial in planning and sequencing learning programs. By using a range of instructional methods, such as explicit teaching, collaborative learning, and technology integration, teachers can cater to different learning needs and keep students engaged. Regularly reviewing and updating the learning program based on student feedback and assessment data ensures that it remains relevant and effective. This continuous improvement process helps teachers create a dynamic and responsive learning environment that supports student success.

"I always consider what I want the students to know at the end of the unit or lesson, how I will check for their understanding, and what I am assessing. Then, I plan learning tasks that will scaffold the students to be successful. Even as a Year 7 teacher, it's important to know what's happening in the senior years and what students need to be prepared for, looking at the scope and sequence."

Highly Accomplished Teacher - Secondary

Selecting and using resources

Selecting and utilising a range of resources is vital for Australian teachers to enhance the learning experience and meet the diverse needs of their students. A variety of resources, including digital tools, physical materials, and multimedia content, can cater to different learning needs, making lessons more engaging and effective. By incorporating a wide array of resources, teachers can provide multiple perspectives on a subject, which helps students develop a deeper understanding and critical thinking skills.

To effectively select and utilise a range of resources, Australian teachers start by identifying the specific needs and interests of their students. This involves assessing the curriculum requirements and considering the best ways to present the content. Teachers often collaborate with colleagues and educational specialists to discover new and innovative resources.

"Many of my students thrive with hands-on activities like using math manipulatives. These tactile experiences transform abstract ideas into something they can physically engage with, fostering deeper understanding. By designing lessons tied to real-life scenarios, like using storytelling and project-based methods, I inspire curiosity and create more engaging and relevant learning experiences for students."

Lead Teacher - Primary

Effective classroom communication

Effective classroom communication is essential for teachers in Australian classrooms as it fosters a positive and productive learning environment. Clear and respectful communication helps establish trust and rapport between teachers and students, which is crucial for creating a sense of community and belonging in the classroom. When teachers communicate effectively, they can convey complex concepts in a way that is understandable and engaging for students. This not only enhances students' comprehension but also encourages active participation and collaboration, leading to a more dynamic and interactive learning experience.

To utilise effective classroom communication, teachers employ a variety of strategies. Verbal communication should be clear, concise, and adapted to meet the diverse needs of students. This includes using appropriate language, tone, and pace, as well as incorporating visual aids and multimedia resources to support understanding. Nonverbal communication, such as body language, facial expressions, and eye contact, also plays a significant role in conveying enthusiasm and engagement. Additionally, teachers can foster an open and inclusive classroom environment by encouraging students to ask questions, express their ideas, and provide feedback.

"Setting learning goals starts with collaboration. By helping students create SMART goals, we ensure their objectives are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound, providing them with clarity and a sense of purpose. Once a goal is set, I guide students in breaking it down into actionable steps. This approach makes the goal manageable and keeps students motivated by achieving small, measurable successes along the way."

Lead Teacher - Primary

Embark Progress

Evaluating and improving teaching programs

Evaluating and improving teaching programs is crucial for teachers to ensure high-quality education and better student outcomes. By systematically assessing their teaching methods, teachers can identify what works well and what needs improvement. This process helps in creating a more effective learning environment that caters to the diverse needs of students. Continuous evaluation also fosters a culture of reflective practice among teachers, encouraging them to adapt and innovate their teaching strategies to meet the evolving educational standards and student requirements.

To effectively evaluate their teaching programs, teachers (and schools) in Australia use a variety of methods. One approach is to gather both qualitative and quantitative data on student performance and engagement. This could include standardised test scores, student feedback, classroom observations, and self-assessment. Teachers can also collaborate with colleagues to share insights and strategies. By analysing this data, teachers can pinpoint specific areas for improvement and develop targeted action plans.

"I am always looking for professional development (PD) from contemporary scholars and universities around Australia, which release a lot of great PD on current practices and pedagogy. There are always new textbooks being released, which can be a great resource for teacher learning. I also engage in a lot of dialogue with other teachers and getting onto teacher networks to see what others are doing. This supports my practice significantly. At our school, we often have a 10 to 15-minute sharing session during staff meetings where a staff member shares what they've been doing."

Highly Accomplished Teacher - Secondary

Engaging parents and carers

Engaging with parents and carers is a key part of their role for teachers in Australia. When teachers can actively involve parents and carers in the educational process, it creates a supportive and collaborative environment that benefits students. Building strong, collaborative relationships with parents and carers requires ongoing effort and commitment. Teachers can create opportunities for parents to share their insights and feedback, ensuring that their perspectives are valued and considered in the planning and implementation of teaching programs. Schools support this engagement by establishing clear procedures and guidelines for effective communication and collaboration. By prioritising parent and carer engagement, teachers can create a more holistic and effective learning experience for their students, ultimately leading to better educational outcomes.

"We utilise digital means to communicate with parents. Where possible, we invite the community into the school to celebrate student achievements -through creative arts performances or special events. Communicating with parents can be challenging at times. We often contact them about negatives, but it's equally important to acknowledge positives. Using emails, letters, or school acknowledgment systems to share good news strengthens the relationship."

Highly Accomplished Teacher - Secondary

Take action: Inquiry-based learning

Watch AITSL's *In the Classroom* video to see how Olivia creates a safe, inclusive and vibrant learning environment using a range of teaching tools and visual prompts that encourage student participation during an inquiry-based classroom activity.