

Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework



The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) has been working closely with key education stakeholders to develop the *Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework* (the Framework). The Framework outlines the critical factors for creating a performance and development culture in schools, including essential elements that should be present in all Australian schools.

In developing the nationally consistent approach to teacher performance and development, AITSL consulted with all state and territory education employers, Catholic and Independent school authorities, teacher regulatory authorities, peak national bodies, including teacher unions and principal associations, and practising teachers and principals.

The Institute's responsibility to lead this work is outlined in its Letter of Expectation from the Commonwealth Minister for Education.

The *Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework* was endorsed by Education Ministers at the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood (SCSEEC) on 3 August 2012.

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership was formed to provide national leadership for the Commonwealth, state and territory governments in promoting excellence in the profession of teaching and school leadership with funding provided by the Australian Government.

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ISBN: 978-0-9872351-6-9

Reprinted: 2018

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The importance of teacher performance and development

Australia has a high performing education system that fares well on international comparisons. This has been achieved in large part through the efforts of highly skilled and motivated teachers and school leaders over generations. However, the rest of the world is not standing still. The *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* makes clear that Australia aspires not to be among the best in the world, but to be the best.

It acknowledges the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century, and provides two simple, but powerful goals to guide Australian education:

<h2 style="margin: 0;">Goal 1</h2> <p style="margin: 0;">Australian schooling promotes equity and excellence.</p>	<h2 style="margin: 0;">Goal 2</h2> <p style="margin: 0;">All young Australians become:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • successful learners • confident and creative individuals • active and informed citizens.
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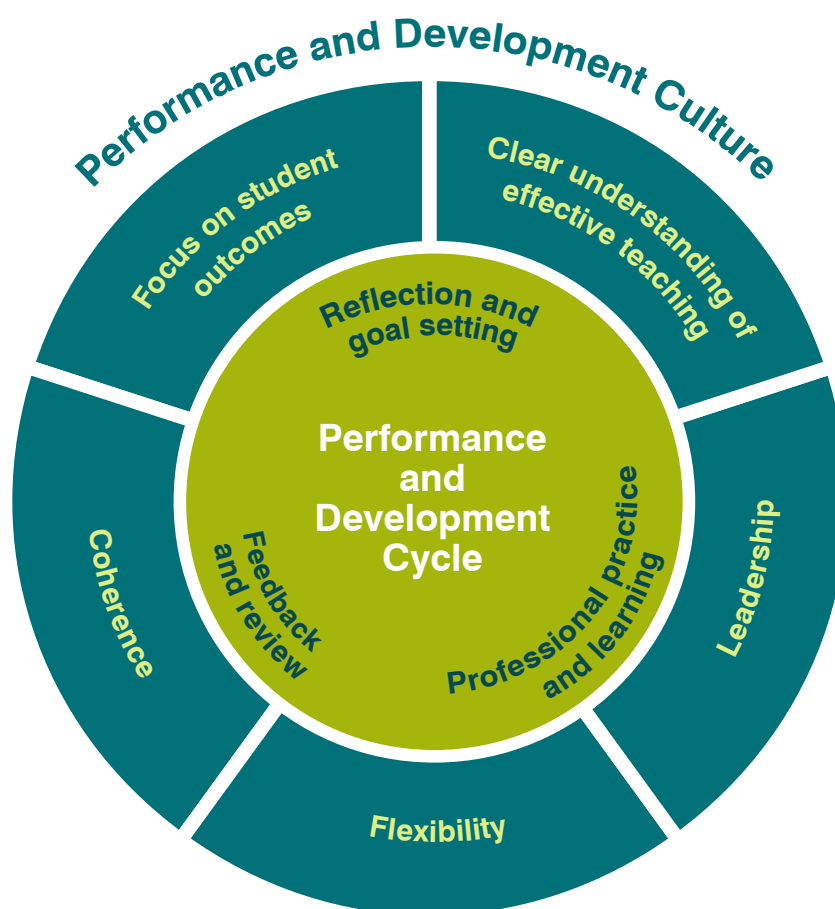
In seeking to achieve these goals, there is no more important endeavour than further improving the quality of teaching in Australia. Nationally and internationally, there is unequivocal evidence that the quality of teaching is the most significant in-school factor affecting student outcomes. There is also strong evidence that better appraisal, coaching and feedback leading to targeted development can improve teacher performance. In Australia, there are schools that have outstanding performance and development practices and have seen tangible improvements in the quality of teaching as a result. However, in aggregate, Australian teachers report that they do not always get the feedback they need to improve. In an OECD survey, 63% of Australian teachers report that appraisal of their work is largely done to fulfil administrative requirements.

The *Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework* (the Framework) calls for the creation of a performance and development culture in all Australian schools. A performance and development culture is characterised by a clear focus on improving teaching as a powerful means of improving student outcomes. In particular, it requires that teachers: know what is expected of them; receive frequent, useful feedback on their teaching; and access high quality support to improve their practice. This Framework aims to promote genuine professional conversations that improve teaching and minimise the risk that administrative and bureaucratic requirements will become the focus.

The *Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework* highlights what is required to build a comprehensive and effective approach to high performance and development. It outlines the characteristics of a successful system, and the culture that needs to be in place for sustained improvements to occur in schools. It describes the characteristics of an effective performance and development cycle, including the elements of the cycle that are essential for success and should be implemented in all Australian schools.

A culture of performance and development

Research is unambiguous in showing that a successful approach to effective performance and development relies on creating a strong and supportive culture in a school. Formal performance and development procedures are important, but excessive attention to process is a common feature of less successful approaches. It is therefore important to focus on the factors that need to be in place for a performance and development culture to flourish.



A focus on student outcomes

Improving teaching is not an end in itself. It is directed at improving outcomes for students. It is important that this focus infuses any approach to teacher performance and development. This is not an argument for simplistic approaches that tie evaluation of teaching directly to single outcome measures. It is, however, a call for everything that teachers do, and that is done to support them, to be linked to increasing the positive impact of teaching on students. This Framework defines student outcomes broadly to include student learning, engagement in learning and wellbeing, and acknowledges that these can be measured in a variety of ways.

A clear understanding of effective teaching

To focus on improving teaching, it is necessary to have a clear vision of what effective teaching looks like. Australia now has *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (the Standards), which outline what teachers should know and be able to do at four career stages. These Standards present a comprehensive picture of the elements of effective teaching organised around the domains of professional knowledge, professional practice and professional engagement.

The *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* provide a broad picture of the work of teachers. Schools, and individual teachers within them, are unlikely to be focusing on all areas of the Standards at once. Rather, the Standards should be seen as providing the basis and a common language for coming to a shared understanding of what effective teaching looks like in a particular school at a particular time. This understanding of effective teaching will be shaped by the school's context and priorities.

Leadership

Research is clear not only on the importance of school leadership in improving school performance, but also on the critical role of leaders in creating a culture of performance and development. The *Australian Professional Standard for Principals* makes clear the role of the principal in leading teaching and learning, developing him or herself and others, and leading improvement in a school. All these elements are central to a performance and development culture.

While it is acknowledged that principals have a central role, a performance and development culture cannot be driven by one person alone. Leadership must come from all levels, from those with and without formal leadership positions.

A truly effective approach is characterised by a shared commitment to improvement and an acceptance that teachers have a powerful role to play in each others' development, as well as their own.

Flexibility

All schools are different, and need to respond to their unique contexts and histories. Schools vary widely in their existing approaches to teacher performance and development. It is clear that effective implementation takes into account starting points, and that the sequencing of change will be different in different situations. This Framework describes the elements of an effective approach to teacher performance and development, but acknowledges that these elements will look different in each school.

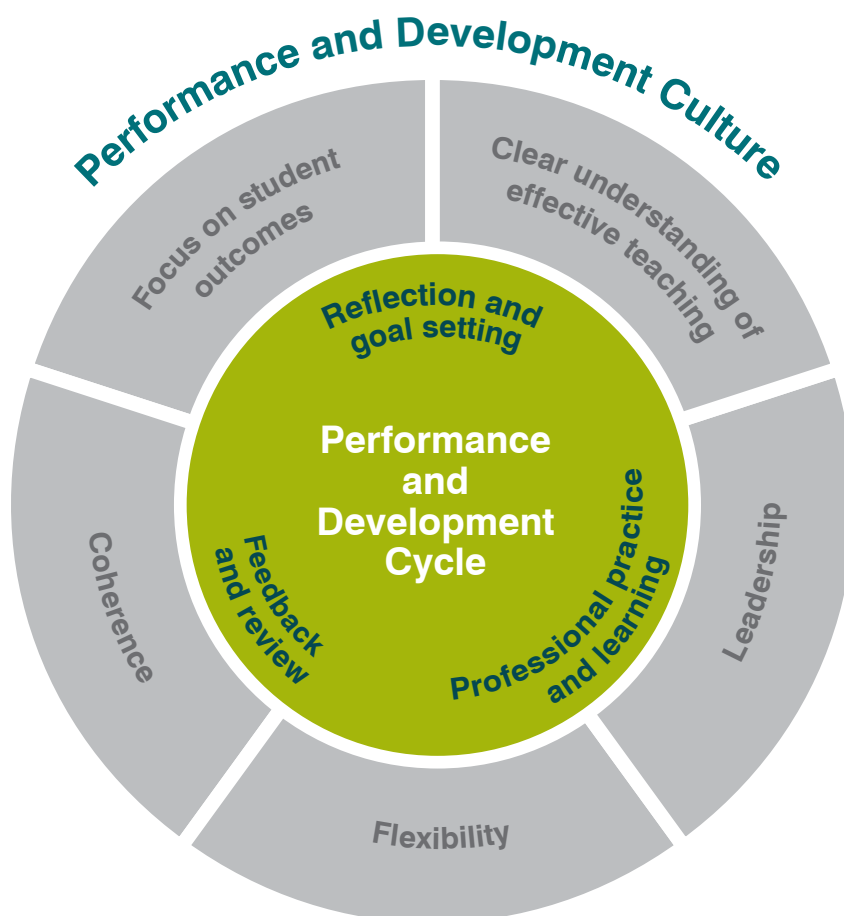
Coherence

It is important that performance and development processes in a school fit with other arrangements in which schools, teachers and school leaders are involved. Performance and development processes and teacher goals should reflect the overall approach to teaching and learning within a school, and should be consistent with the school plans. It is important that teachers and school leaders experience performance and development as something that ties together the various activities they are engaged in, rather than a separate and additional process. Alignment to school plans and school-wide approaches to professional learning are particularly important.

Performance and development cycle

The processes associated with teacher performance and development typically occur in a cycle which provides a structure for appraising, developing and refining teaching practice, and recognises the entitlement of teachers to receive feedback and support. The components of the cycle are interwoven, will not necessarily occur in order, and may take more or less time depending on circumstances. However, the cycle provides a useful way of thinking about the process, and assists in identifying its important elements.

Within the performance and development cycle, there are four elements that are essential to an effective approach. These have been distilled from the research, practitioner advice and an analysis of current good practice. While these are necessary, they will not by themselves be sufficient to gain the maximum benefit from this process. However, it is important to be clear about common requirements and the minimum level of support that all teachers can expect in Australian schools. This section of the Framework describes the components of the cycle, and the four essential elements that should be present in all Australian schools.



Reflection and goal setting

The cycle begins with setting goals. To engage purposefully in performance appraisal and development a teacher, with the support of the principal or delegate, must clearly articulate agreed goals based on the school's shared view of effective teaching, derived from the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*. These will include goals related to a teacher's impact in and beyond the classroom. Goals should take into account the teacher's own reflection on their teaching practice informed by evidence and feedback, the school strategic plan, and goals or priorities set by and for teams of teachers within the school. Goals should be designed to be measurable and should have a clear link to the types of evidence to be used as a basis for feedback and reflection. A teacher's goals should be regularly reviewed and adjusted as circumstances change. Goals should address both teacher performance and teacher development.

Essential element: All teachers have a set of documented and regularly reviewed goals related to both performance and development, and ways of measuring progress towards them, that are agreed with the principal or delegate.

Professional practice and learning

Performance and development goals form the basis for subsequent action to change and improve teaching practice. An effective approach to improving practice will include a conscious effort to collect and reflect on evidence that provides insight into the effectiveness of teacher practice, and informs growth and access to high quality professional learning. This should occur in a context of frequent formal and informal feedback.

An important part of effective professional practice is collecting evidence that provides the basis for ongoing feedback, reflection and further development. The complex work of teaching generates a rich and varied range of evidence that can inform meaningful evaluations of practice for both formative and summative purposes. Potential sources of evidence include:

- evidence of the impact of teaching on student outcomes
- direct observation of teaching
- evidence of the teacher's impact on colleagues and the school as a whole
- student feedback
- peer/supervisor feedback
- parent feedback
- teacher self-assessment
- evidence of participation in professional learning and teacher reflection on its impact.

This is far from being an exhaustive list. However, it does represent the breadth of evidence most often cited in the international research on teacher effectiveness.

There are some forms of evidence that are particularly important in reviewing teacher performance. Evidence of student learning directly captures the outcomes of teaching, and must have a central role. Research shows observation of classroom teaching, linked to timely and useful feedback that focuses on improvement, is a particularly useful tool for teacher development, and is the most commonly used form of evidence across OECD countries. Beyond the classroom, evidence should also demonstrate a teacher's impact on colleagues and the performance of the school.

Engaging in high quality professional learning is a major strategy for improving teacher practice. An effective approach to professional learning is described in the *Australian Charter for the Professional Learning of Teachers and School Leaders*. The Charter:

- affirms the importance of learning in improving the professional knowledge, practice and understanding of all teachers and school leaders to achieve improvement in student outcomes
- articulates the expectation that all teachers and school leaders actively engage in professional learning throughout their careers
- describes the characteristics of a high quality learning culture and of effective professional learning, to assist teachers, school leaders and those who support them to get the most from their professional learning.

Based on research, the Charter identifies effective professional learning as being relevant, collaborative and future focused. It identifies the importance of a learning culture within a school, and emphasises that professional learning should be based on changing teacher practice to meet student needs. Consistent with this focus, access to professional learning opportunities should be negotiated to take into account the priorities and resources of schools.

Essential element: All teachers are supported in working towards their goals, including through access to high quality professional learning.

Essential element: Evidence used to reflect on and evaluate teacher performance, including through the full review described below, should come from multiple sources and include as a minimum: data showing impact on student outcomes; information based on direct observation of teaching; and evidence of collaboration with colleagues.

Feedback and review

Schools with an effective approach to teacher performance and development have a commitment to ongoing formal and informal feedback and coaching built into their culture. Timely, frequent and improvement focused feedback supports teachers' efforts to improve their practice, guides choices about professional learning, and informs reflection on and revision of performance and development goals.

Even in a context of frequent informal feedback, it is important to create space for a full reflection on a teacher's performance against all of their performance and development goals, conducted using multiple sources of evidence gathered during the review period. This most often takes the form of a formal performance and development review. Such a review should include the provision of verbal and written feedback that provides a basis for reflection on practice to inform further improvement during the next cycle.

Essential element: All teachers receive regular formal and informal feedback on their performance. This includes a formal review against their performance and development goals at least annually, with verbal and written feedback being provided to the teacher.

The importance of implementation

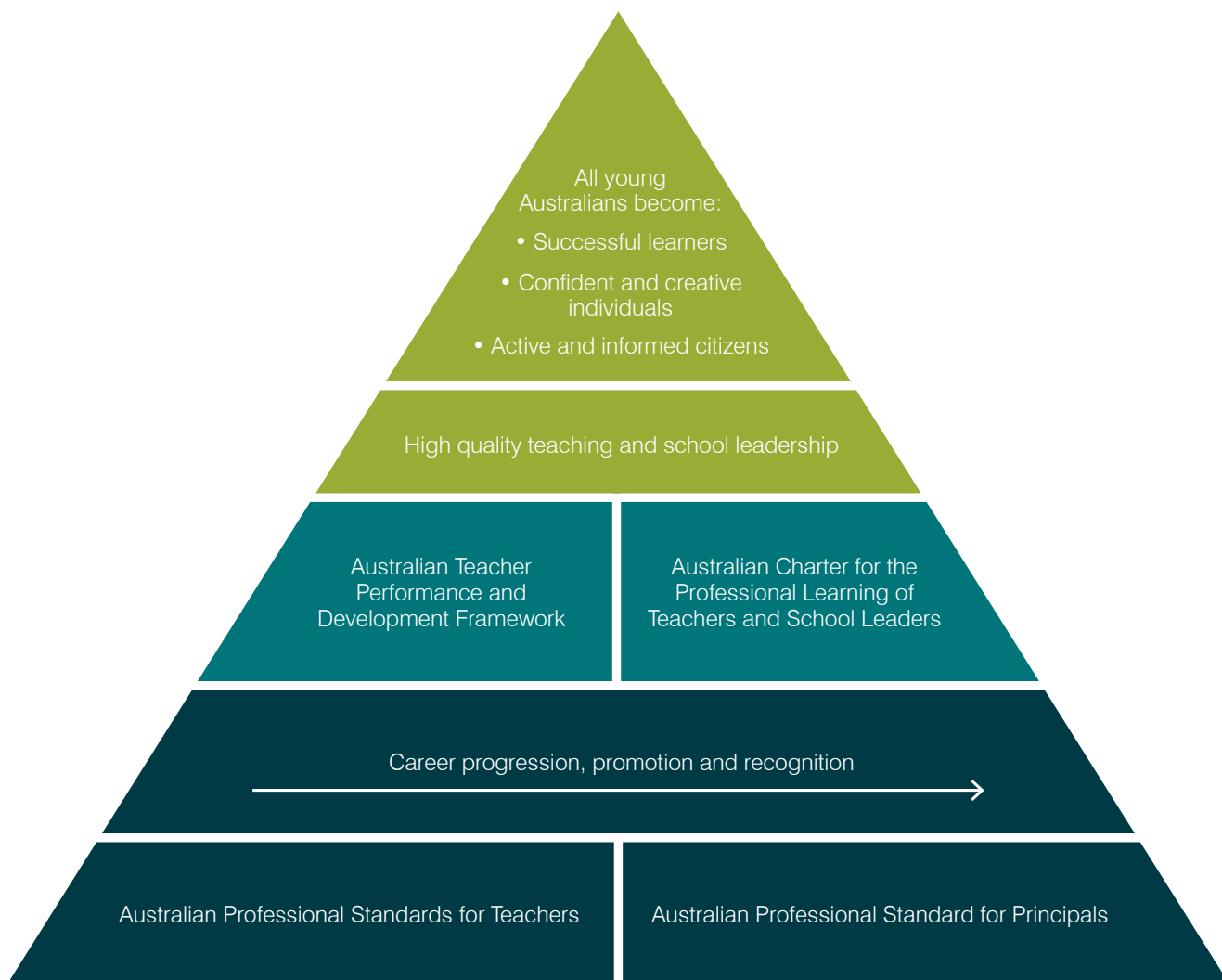
Research suggests that designing a performance and development framework, and even designing the details of an approach at the school level, are not the main factors in achieving sustained improvement. Rather, it is in the ongoing work of implementation and culture change that the real challenge lies. For this Framework to have an enduring impact, a strong commitment from, and extensive support for schools, groups of schools, teachers and school leaders will be critical.

The sustained effort required will be easier to generate if performance and development is well aligned with other policies and processes at the national, jurisdiction, system and school level. Performance and development should support the career progression of teachers, including through formal processes such as promotion and certification as a Highly Accomplished or Lead teacher. For example, many schools and systems have aligned the probationary and performance and development systems applying to graduate teachers with the evidence requirements for these teachers to make the transition from provisional to full registration. This reduces the burden on these teachers, and provides a more coherent and visible path through the career stages outlined in the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*. Performance and development processes may also identify teachers who are underperforming against the requirements of their position, or against the requirements for continued registration. Underperformance will then be managed through separate processes which are negotiated industrially.

Teacher performance and development in context

Monitoring and evaluation will be critical to the sustained and successful implementation of this Framework. Efforts to improve teacher performance and development will benefit greatly from the capacity to share experiences and from rigorous research on how best to create and sustain an effective performance and development culture.

Improving teacher quality through a performance and development culture is important work that is worth doing. It is also a collective responsibility. The next step is for all involved in Australian education to take a deliberate, structured and long-term approach to building a culture that provides a satisfying and challenging environment in which all Australian teachers can improve their practice and the outcomes their students achieve.



The evidence base for this Framework

To assist in the development of this Framework, AITSL has examined background papers prepared specifically to inform the Framework, and Australian and international research on performance and development. Major supporting evidence includes:

Bertani, A & Stoelinga, S 2012, *Expert meta-analysis of key international research findings improving teacher effectiveness and teacher quality*. Independent paper prepared for AITSL to support the development of the *Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework*.

Boston Consulting Group 2012, *Effective implementation of performance and development in schools*, Independent paper prepared for AITSL to support the development of the *Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework*.

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Jensen, B & Reichl, J 2012, *Implementing a performance and development framework*, Grattan Institute, Independent submission. The Grattan Institute independently prepared this report and was not commissioned by AITSL.

Marshall, G, Cole, P & Zbar, V 2012, *Teacher performance and development in Australia: A mapping and analysis of current practice*, Paper prepared for AITSL to support the development of the *Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework*.

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Acknowledgements

The *Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework* was endorsed by Education Ministers at the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood on 3 August 2012.

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About AITSL

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership was formed to provide national leadership for the Commonwealth, state and territory governments in promoting excellence in the profession of teaching and school leadership with funding provided by the Australian Government.

AITSL works with the education community to:

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set and maintain standards to promote excellence in teaching and school leadership	lead and influence excellence in teaching and school leadership	support and recognise excellence in teaching and school leadership.

To find out more about AITSL and its work please visit aitsl.edu.au.

Contact AITSL

Requests for further information and queries regarding the *Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework* should be directed to info@aitsl.edu.au.

