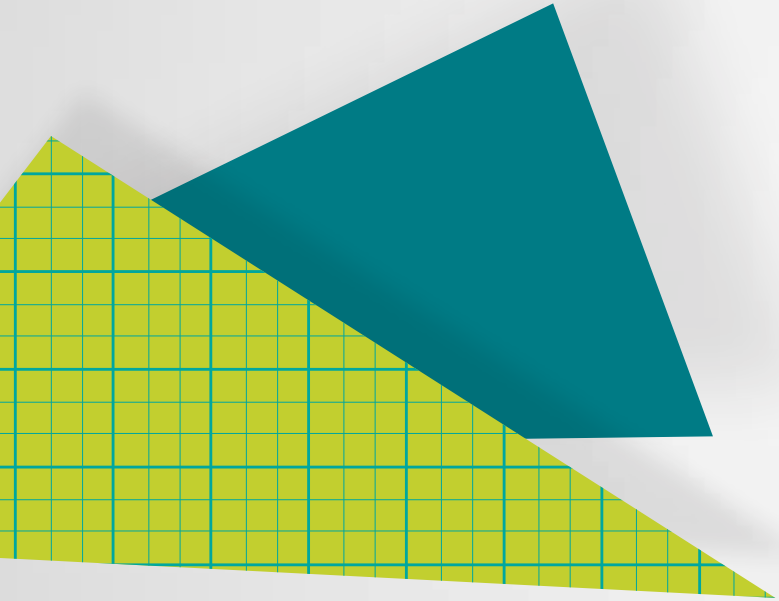
Looking at Classroom Practice

aitsl Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership Limited



This resource guide has been developed to support the work of school leaders, teachers and educators who work in and with schools across Australia. The guide is designed to enable the reader to select those section(s) that are of most relevance, or to read all sections in sequential order.

Contents

1 Classroom Practice

> *One never learns to teach once and for all. It is a continuous, ongoing, constantly deepening process.*[1]

INTRODUCTION

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) provides national leadership for the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments in promoting excellence in the profession of teaching and school leadership. AITSL is committed to the key principles of equity and excellence in the education of all young Australians to cultivate successful learners, confident and creative individuals and active and informed citizens.

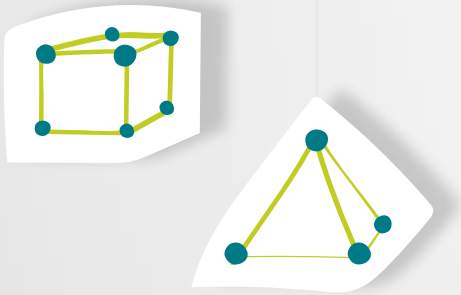
For the benefit of all Australian students, AITSL provides guidance and develops practical resources to help make good teachers and school leaders even better.

> Expertise in teaching is knowable and teachable. It can be described, supported by research, demonstrated, experienced, and known.[2]

Looking at Classroom Practice has been designed to introduce teachers and school leaders to the work that AITSL has undertaken to develop a support tool for improving classroom practice that is aligned to and grows out of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (the Standards).

By providing a validated and evidence-based tool that describes what practice looks like at increasing levels of sophistication, the Classroom Practice Continuum (the Continuum) will support teachers to observe one another and talk about their practice. The Continuum enables teachers to self-assess and reflect upon their practice and to seek feedback in order to improve and move to the next level of performance.

The primary focus of the Continuum is on the practice of teaching and how teachers improve their practice to impact on student learning, student engagement in learning and student wellbeing.



POLICY CONTEXT

The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers

Teachers share a significant responsibility in preparing young people to lead successful and productive lives. The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers reflect and build on national and international evidence that a teacher's effectiveness has a powerful impact on students, with broad consensus that teacher quality is the single most important in-school factor influencing student achievement.[3]

The Standards describe what teachers need to know and be able to do at four career stages. They provide a framework that articulates the knowledge, practice and professional engagement required across teachers' careers. The Standards provide a common understanding and language for discourse and inform the development of professional learning goals, self-reflection and self-assessment. The Standards are interconnected and interdependent.

In recognition of the importance of understanding what highly effective teaching looks like in the classroom and to support teachers to continuously reflect on their practice, work was undertaken to provide a greater level of detail about teaching practice than the Standards, Focus Areas and Descriptors articulate. This work had to support teachers to develop the confidence and ability to observe and be observed by their peers and to give and receive feedback about strengths and areas for improvement that could then inform the nature of professional learning required to move to the next level of practice on a continuum of increasing proficiency. It was not the purpose of this work to describe the totality of teachers' practice in the school setting, rather to articulate how teachers demonstrate what they know and can do *in the classroom*.

Consequently the Classroom Practice Continuum aligned to the Professional Practice Domain of the Standards was constructed. This Domain focuses on professional practices that can be directly observed in the classroom and around which evidence can be gathered.

The Standards describe *what teachers should know and be able to do at four career stages*; the Continuum was developed to describe *how well* teachers enact these practices at increasingly higher levels of proficiency within the Professional Practice Domain. The Continuum is one of a suite of tools designed to assist teachers and school leaders to engage with and use the Standards in practice that also includes: Illustrations of Practice (IoPs) which provide examples of teachers demonstrating particular career stage Descriptors across all three Domains of teaching; and the Teacher Self-Assessment Tool (Teacher SAT) which allows teachers to situate their current practice within the careers stages of the three Domains of the Standards.

The Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework and the Australian Charter for the Professional Learning of Teachers and School Leaders

Observation of teacher practice has been recognised as an essential element of all teachers' performance and development processes. This is made explicit in the Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework (the Framework).

> A powerful feature of a developmental approach is the clarification of what it means to 'get better' in an area of development. A continuum defines direction: it describes and illustrates development and so provides a framework for estimating individuals' current levels of attainment and for monitoring progress over time.[4]

The Australian Charter for the Professional Learning of Teachers and School Leaders (the Charter) also makes clear the importance of observation to improving the quality of teaching in schools. 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. An important part of effective professional practice is collecting evidence that provides the basis for ongoing feedback. Research shows observation of classroom practice, 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.

The importance of professional learning and the quality of the learning culture that is required to support the professional growth of all teachers is articulated in the Australian Charter. To be effective professional learning must respond to the requirements of teachers and school leaders for knowledge and skills that improve their practice for the benefit of students. School leaders have the primary responsibility to establish the conditions and create an environment in which professional learning and achievement flourish. As ongoing learning is considered to be central to the work of professional practitioners, the Continuum can be used to support and inform conversations about further learning within the context of the performance and development cycle.

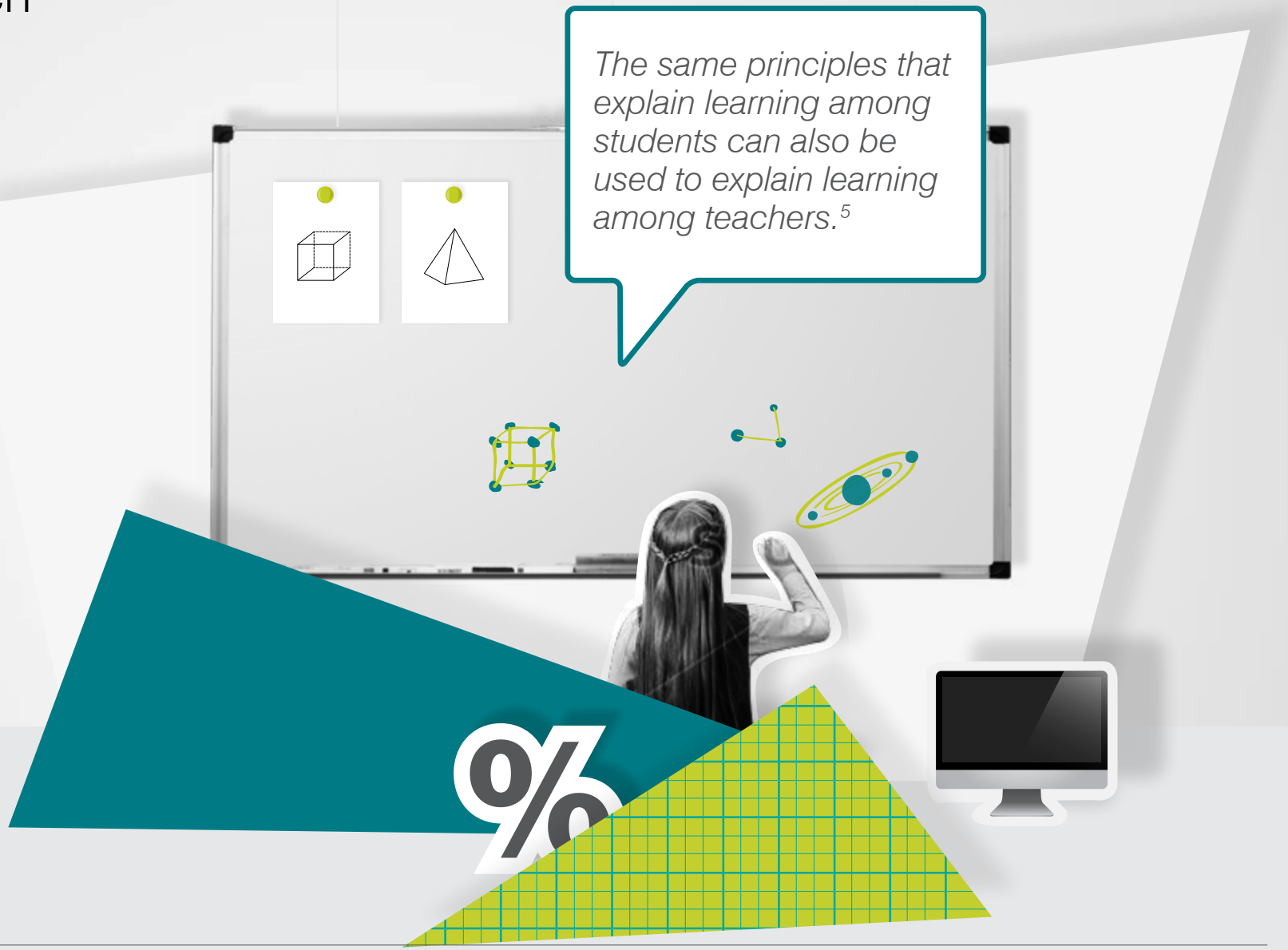
PEDAGOGICAL MODELS

The Continuum builds on and grows out of the Standards. The Continuum is not a pedagogical model but privileges the evidence base about those practices that have a high impact on student learning and achievement. Across Australia, educational jurisdictions have developed a number of different pedagogical models that inform their policies, practices and professional learning. Pedagogical models usually align with a particular pedagogical approach or learning theory. They are used to select and structure teaching strategies, methods, skills and student interactions for a particular instructional emphasis. Examples include: Victoria's e5 Instructional Model, which is a framework to inform conversations and guide the observation, critique and reflection of classroom practice, and the SA Teaching for Effective Learning (TfEL) framework which identifies the characteristics of effective teaching and learning to establish broad domains of teacher action and relevant pedagogy. Direct Instruction is also an instructional model that has been implemented in various schools within Australia.

The Continuum reinforces the research based practices and strategies that are evidenced in the pedagogical models used across Australia and internationally and that are also implicit in the Standards. This was intentional to ensure that the wisdom of practice, the research base around how people learn and those strategies that have an evidence based impact on student learning were present in the Continuum.

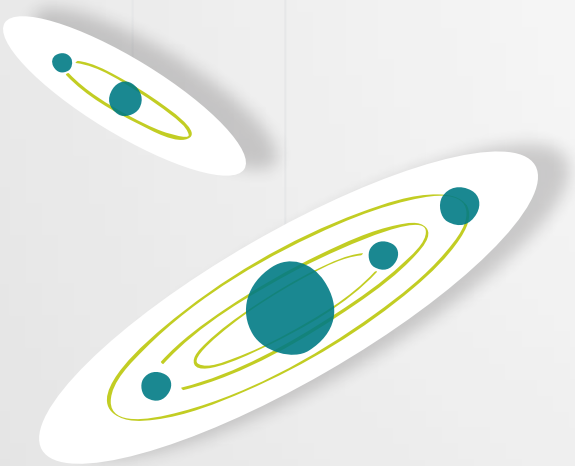
The Continuum provides the basis for self-reflection, feedback and direction for improvement at the individual, team and organisational level. It supports teachers to understand and talk with colleagues about their work and to engage in the kinds of conversations and collaborative work that encourages the sharing of knowledge and expertise.

2 Evidence Base and Research



THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CLASSROOM PRACTICE CONTINUUM

The concepts of ordered levels of understanding are fundamental to the improvement of teachers' professional skills. It is assumed that learning can be described and mapped as progress in the direction of qualitatively richer knowledge, higher order skills, and deeper understanding.[6]



A national Expert Teacher Group was established in 2013 to assist AITSL with the development of a classroom practice framework that aligned with the Standards. The group comprised sixteen expert practitioners nominated from the eight jurisdictions within Australia. All sectors and levels of schooling were represented, together with a range of disciplinary expertise. Professor Patrick Griffin from the Assessment Research Centre of the Melbourne Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne, was engaged to work on the project. Professor Richard Elmore from Harvard University also presented his work and thinking on Instructional Rounds and the observation of classroom practice to inform the work of the group.

Through a series of workshops during 2013, the Expert Teacher Group considered each Australian State and Territory's pedagogical framework as well as international teaching and learning frameworks and classroom observation practices and instruments. The group brought the knowledge of their jurisdiction's pedagogical framework and teaching practices to the task, along with their own disciplinary and pedagogical expertise.

This knowledge of practice, combined with relevant education and learning theory and theories of expertise, informed the development of indicators of teaching practice against the Focus Areas of the Standards. The group was provided throughout the year with a series of academic papers, research and readings that are included in the References section of this guide. The group was also engaged in viewing videos of local and international teacher classroom practice to ground, test and refine their thinking as the work developed.

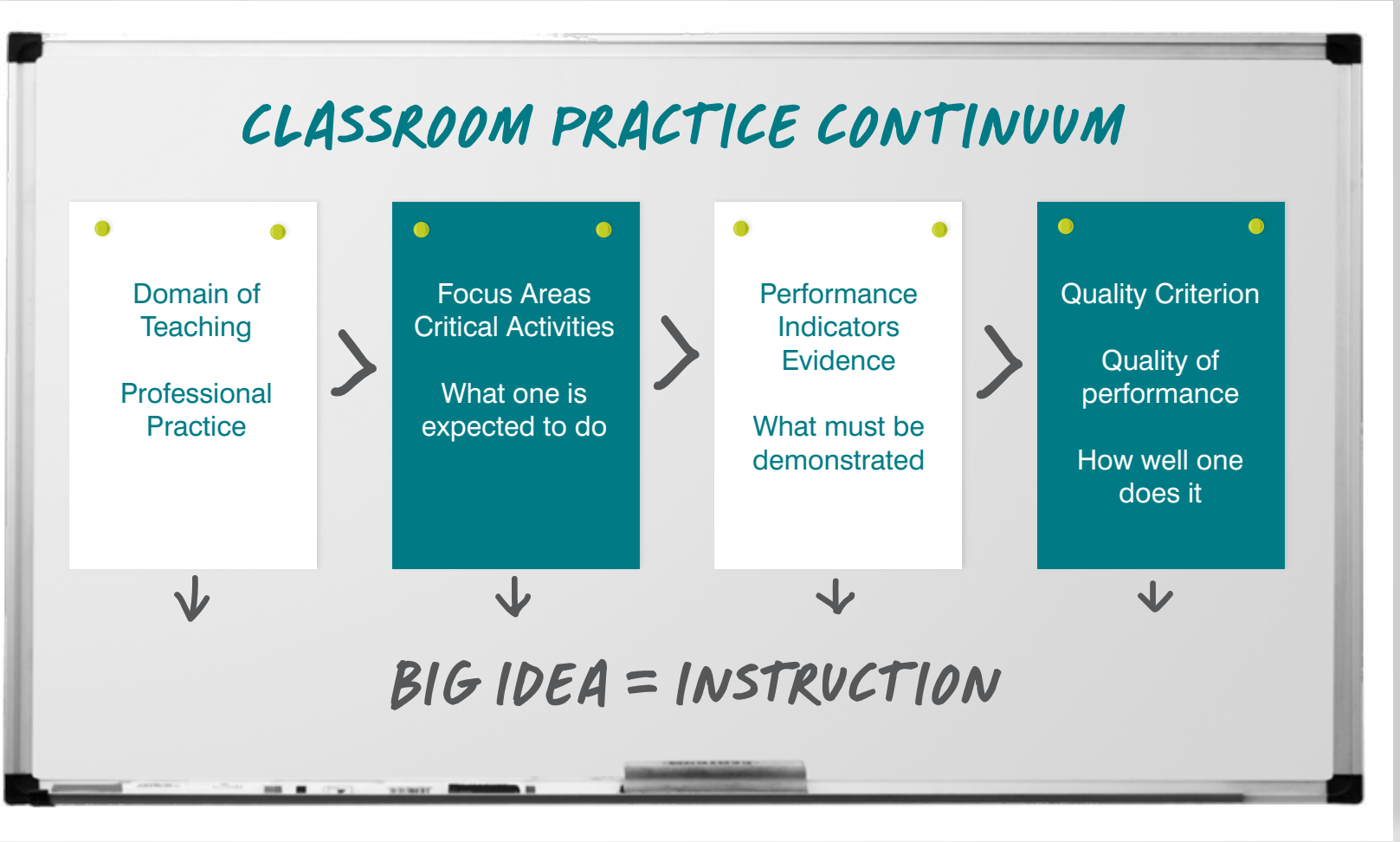
The Expert Teacher Group was guided and informed by Professor Griffin's methodology that is based on the learning theories of Rasch, Glaser, Vygotsky and Bruner. The group considered all of the Standards and reached a consensus to focus on the Professional Practice Domain. As this Domain focuses on teacher practice, it was deemed possible to identify directly observable evidence in the classroom. The Focus Areas and the Descriptors for Standards 3, 4 and 5 that comprise the Professional Practice Domain became the basis for developing performance indicators of classroom practice as they describe the critical activities performed by a teacher in the classroom.

The first stage of the work involved the identification of performance indicators. Performance indicators, as the name suggests, are *indicative* only. It was not necessary to identify all performance indicators for each Focus Area because there is no one correct sample that exclusively defines each Focus Area. However it was possible to identify a set of indicators that were generally agreed upon as representative and important in defining the Focus Areas.

> Evidence must be directly observable. Human beings can only provide four types of directly observable evidence of abstract learning. We can do things, say things, make or write things. It is from the things people do, say, make or write that we infer learning, emotions, knowledge, understanding and learning in general. The evidence must be adequate, authentic, appropriate and accurate.[7]

The Development of the Continuum

The Nature of Expertise



Validating the Quality Criteria

The second stage of the work involved the writing of quality criteria for each performance indicator to show how well a teacher demonstrates the behaviours. This stage of the work was informed by referencing learning theories that use developmental models of learning. This included Piaget, Bruner, Griffin and Callingham, Anderson and Krathwohl, Gagné, and Dreyfus and Dreyfus. The quality criteria specify varying levels of performance articulated in the form of ordered descriptions of proficiency. They represent a series of thresholds that differentiate between people in terms of their ability to demonstrate development. Quality criteria can illustrate increasing difficulty, cognitive demand, quality, elegance or sophistication. The combination of the critical activities, indicators and quality criteria represent the basis of the measurement.

A criterion describes the point at which we decide something changes from one state to another. The criterion is the threshold that defines the boundary between levels.[8]

The indicators and the quality criteria were reviewed and refined throughout the development process by the Expert Teacher Group and the Assessment Research Centre and then used as the basis for constructing a national classroom practice survey. The purpose of this survey was to determine the validity of the quality criteria, or the degree to which they approximated the expected levels of proficiency of teachers across Australia. Within the survey each Focus Area was represented by a number of questions that related directly to the indicators. **Respondents were asked to select the performance level that best described their performance**. A rating scale was used to record the outcomes. Additional questions were also posed about gender, school type, school size, teaching experience and location in order to determine whether there was any relationship between the variables and proficiency levels in the Domains.

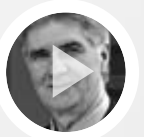
A total of 2561 teachers from across Australia completed the survey during two weeks of August/ September 2013. Participants came from every State and Territory, representing metropolitan, regional, remote and very remote areas. They came from all sectors, representing a range of school sizes, types and roles within schools. Given that approximately 1500 responses were required to validate the quality criteria, the response rate provided a strong empirical base for the Assessment Research Centre to conduct the validation using Rasch analysis to identify both teacher ability and the relative difficulty of the criteria. The results of this analysis clearly showed that the quality criteria differentiated between performances of increasing quality and described a series of performances such that each successive description implied a higher level of performance quality. The results also demonstrated that there was an adequate range of levels among and within the criteria; and differentiated between levels of teaching experience and responsibility within a school.

The survey results also highlighted that there is a steady rate of improvement amongst early career teachers. After this period the rate of improvement slows. It was inferred from this data that moving to higher levels of performance would require sustained and deliberate practice that was *developmental, goal directed and actively monitored*.

At the level of the individual, skill development involves periods of growth followed by periods of consolidation or even lack of growth. This uneven pattern was first documented in Bryan and Harter's classic studies of Morse code experts. They introduced the term plateau to describe periods when little development appeared evident despite extensive practice.[9]

A plateau in the curve means that the lower order habits are approaching their maximum development, but are not yet sufficiently automatic to leave the attention free to attack higher order habits. The length of the plateau is a measure of the difficulty of making the lower order habits sufficiently automatic.[10]

This data was presented to the Expert Teacher Group in order to begin the final stage of the process of writing the classroom practice levels. Clusters of quality criteria that were approximately at the same level of proficiency were identified along the continuum across the Professional Practice Domain. Using this method it was determined that six levels of proficiency linked to the four career stages of the Standards would comprise the developmental continuum.



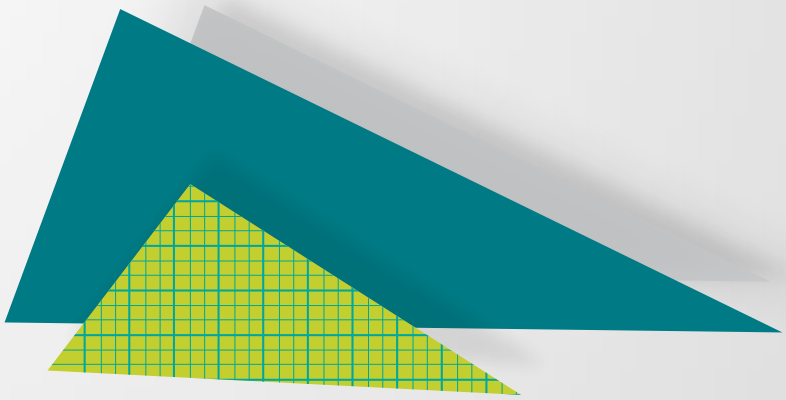
Patrick Griffin (1)

THE NATURE OF EXPERTISE AND EXPERT PERFORMANCE

The construction of the Continuum drew on a range of theories and research pertaining to the nature of expertise and expert performance. This enabled the Expert Teacher Group to test the levels that were developed and to recognise the changes that take place as a teacher develops their professional practice over time. In some disciplines there is still debate as to the appropriate criteria for the identification of experts. Two general approaches to the study of expertise involve the study of exceptional people in order to determine how they perform in a domain of expertise and secondly, to study experts in relation to novices. The latter approach assumes that expertise is a level of proficiency that novices can achieve and enables an understanding to be developed of how experts became that way so that others can learn to become more skilled.

Research has also been undertaken into the differences between experienced and expert teachers who are successful and not successful in gaining advanced voluntary certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards in the USA. Through an extensive examination of student tasks, classroom observations, teacher and student interviews and artefacts of instruction the research identified the most important dimensions that distinguished expert teachers from experienced teachers (Smith, Baker, Hattie & Bond 2008).

In 2003 Professor John Hattie published a paper titled Teachers Make a Difference. In this paper he described the findings from a review of the literature and a synthesis of over 500,000 studies of the attributes of expert teachers. Sixteen attributes were identified across five dimensions. The review provided the basis for evaluating the findings in over 300 classrooms in the USA working with teachers who passed and those that did not pass the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards tests of excellence of teachers. Hattie concluded that the three most important dimensions that effectively separated expert from experienced teachers were **Challenge, Deep Representation, and Monitoring and Feedback**. Hattie concluded that students taught by expert teachers exhibit an understanding of the concepts targeted in instruction that is more integrated, more coherent, and at a higher level of abstraction than the understanding achieved by other students. These findings are consistent with the practices articulated in the higher levels of the Continuum.



EXPERT TEACHERS

- Have deeper representations about teaching and learning
- Adopt a problem solving stance to their work
- Can anticipate, plan and improvise as required by the situation
- Are better decision makers and can identify what decisions are important and what decisions are less important
- Are proficient at creating an optimal classroom climate for learning
- Have a multi-dimensionally complex perception of classroom situations
- Are more context-dependent and have high situation cognition
- Are more adept at monitoring student problems and assessing their level of understanding and progress, and they provide much more relevant feedback
- Are more adept at developing and testing hypotheses about learning difficulties or instructional strategies
- Are more automatic
- Have high respect for students
- Are passionate about teaching and learning
- Engage students in learning and develop in their students self regulation, involvement in mastery learning, enhanced self efficacy and self esteem as learners
- Provide appropriately challenging tasks and goals for students
- Have positive influences on students' achievement
- Enhance surface and deep learning

(Hattie 2003)

Further research undertaken by Smith et al. in 2005 in the USA found that certified teachers developed and implemented, to a considerably greater degree than non-certified teachers, instructional plans and assignments aimed at fostering deeper student understanding. They concluded that certified teachers were demonstrably more intent on fostering in their students a level of understanding that is richer, more elaborated, and more meaningfully interconnected with related concepts. These findings were not restricted to particular grade levels or subject matter.

Work undertaken in 2013 by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC 2013) in the USA to support their Model Teaching Standards has been to craft developmental progressions of teaching practice that could be used as a support tool for teacher development. Improvement in practice is demonstrated in the following ways →

Practice ***moves towards*** scaffolding students' learning opportunities so that they are able to assume more responsibility for their learning and make better choices about their learning.

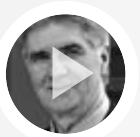
Practice ***moves towards*** helping learners see more connections and relationships and facilitates learning at higher levels, including evaluating and creating.

Practice ***moves from*** a focus on the teacher to a deeper focus on the individual learner, understanding his/her needs and an increasing ability to differentiate instruction to meet those needs. The focus moves from delivery of instruction to the impact of practice on serving learner needs.

Practice ***moves from*** reliance on the teacher alone to implement strategies to leveraging colleagues and the community to supplement practice, to advocating for learners, and to serving in leadership roles.

Practice ***moves from*** a limited repertoire of strategies to one with greater depth and breadth, including influencing technology in instruction and providing access to resources from around the world.

This body of research on expertise was referenced throughout the process of distinguishing between the levels of proficiency and assisted the group in developing a greater understanding of the changes that take place as a teacher moves from one level of proficiency to the next on the Continuum.



Patrick Griffin (2)

It also supported the emphasis on understanding the levels as an integrated performance rather than simply as discrete components that could be reduced to a checklist. Although the practices of expert teachers can be identified and analysed independently, it is important to consider the interrelationships among the practices. It is the integration of many practices that lead to effectiveness in the classroom. This approach was reinforced by Professor Griffin as the work developed.

It is important that the indicators are not released as a checklist. Checklists have an unfortunate habit of becoming a compulsory, exclusive and exhaustive list of what is required and what is important. It is also likely that a checklist of indicators would be interpreted such that behaviours and skills of teachers not included amongst the indicators would be regarded as unimportant. Checklists can become an unsatisfactory means of communicating pedagogical practice.[11]

3 Classroom Practice Continuum Overview

CLASSROOM PRACTICE CONTINUUM

The six levels that comprise the Continuum provide a rich description of teachers working at different levels of proficiency in the classroom. The behaviours identified demonstrate an integrated and holistic picture of teacher practice drawn from what is currently known about the way teachers perform in the classroom. It is therefore always a work in progress as new knowledge emerges from the research and wisdom of practice that furthers understanding about those practices that have the greatest impact on student learning.

Evidence based education thus relies on a combination of professional wisdom drawing on individual experience and consensus and empirical evidence-based research data. Both are needed, because professional wisdom supports adaptation to local circumstances and the idiosyncratic nature of the classroom, the school, the community and the region, while empirical evidence supports comparison of competing aggregate methods and generates cumulative knowledge that is normative in nature.[13]

1. The Continuum focuses on the Professional Practice Domain of the Standards.

   Standard 3
   Plan for and implement effective teaching and learning

   Standard 4
   Create and maintain supportive and safe learning environments

   Standard 5
   Assess, provide feedback and report on student learning

2. Two Focus Areas from each of Standard 3 and Standard 5 are not represented in the Continuum.

   Standard 3
   3.6 Evaluate and improve teaching programs
   3.7 Engage parents and carers in the educative process

   Standard 5
   5.4 Interpret student data
   5.5 Report on student achievement

   The decision was made not to include these Focus Areas as gathering observable evidence in the classroom would be difficult and other forms of evidence were deemed to be more relevant to these particular areas.

3. The classroom practice level statements are written in extended prose rather than individual statements against Focus Areas or Standards. The descriptions within each level are constructed in a logical sequence so that the reader can more easily follow what would be unfolding in the classroom over the course of a lesson or sequence of lessons.

4. The classroom practice level statements are not simply a list of discrete behaviours that should be ticked off in the classroom. This was deliberate because when teachers enter the classroom they draw on different kinds of knowledge and a range of strategies and tools when interacting with students. Whilst it is possible and potentially informative to follow particular behaviours across the levels to understand what differentiates them at different levels of sophistication, the classroom brings forth an integrated performance on the part of the teacher that demonstrates their level of instructional expertise across multiple capabilities.

The Standards and Focus Areas that Form the Continuum

Standard 3

Plan for and implement effective teaching and learning

3.1 Establish challenging learning goals
3.2 Plan, structure and sequence learning programs
3.3 Use teaching strategies
3.4 Select and use resources
3.5 Use effective classroom communication

Standard 4

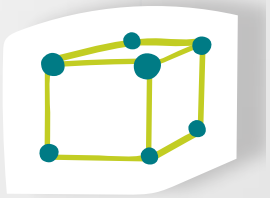
Create and maintain supportive and safe learning environments

4.1 Support student participation
4.2 Manage classroom activities
4.3 Manage challenging behaviour
4.4 Maintain student safety
4.5 Use ICT safely, responsibly and ethically

Standard 5

Assess, provide feedback and report on student learning

5.1 Assess student learning
5.2 Provide feedback to students on their learning
5.3 Make consistent and comparable judgements



What does a classroom practice level statement look like?

Level 1

The teacher organises and uses the available learning space and resources, including ICT, to support student learning in the planned learning activities. The teacher designs the activities to engage the diverse perspectives and needs of students and adapts the tasks to student readiness.

The teacher assesses students' prior knowledge by asking them to recall what they know about the content. They identify student misconceptions and attempt to address these directly. The teacher links the content of the current learning activities to past and future learning experiences. They represent the content in the same way to all students.

The teacher provides tasks for all students to practice skills and processes. They use a variety of question types to encourage students to discuss the main ideas. The teacher engages students in the use of relevant literacy and numeracy skills, together with relevant academic vocabulary that supports student thinking about key concepts in the content area.

The teacher explains the criteria that will be used to assess student work and to give feedback to students. They provide tools for students to assess their own work. The teacher provides corrective feedback to students in relation to particular tasks and advises them on where to next in relation to their learning goals. They develop students' capacity to differentiate levels of quality in assessing their peers' work.

The teacher communicates in ways that recognise students as individuals from diverse backgrounds. They model respectful interactions with students, including expressing interest in students' thoughts and opinions. They articulate learning expectations for all students.

The teacher states their expectations for students working productively and cooperatively in groups and develops students' abilities to participate in constructive discussions. They draw on a variety of strategies to manage and respond to student behaviour and identify key safety risks in the learning environment. The teacher refers to established rules to manage the learning environment. When students are using information and communications technology, the teacher refers to the school's ICT protocols.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES UNDERPINNING THE CONTINUUM

1. **The levels are hierarchical and sequential and represent a scale in which lower levels are generally precursors to higher levels.** It is not necessary to observe lower order indicators in order to observe higher order behaviours. The existence of higher order indicators implies the ability to demonstrate lower order indicative behaviour. The relationship is probabilistic but not causal. (Griffin 1993)

2. **The focus of the Continuum is on what teachers can do, rather than what they don't do, cannot do or cannot do well. It is not a *deficit* model.** The developmental model targets all teachers in terms of developing or enhancing skills. When the teacher's level of development is identified it is possible to target professional learning to support them to move to the next level. Vygotsky's theory of proximal development (ZPD) is as applicable for teachers as it is for students in terms of identifying where the student or teacher is ready to learn (Vygotsky 1978). It assumes that all teachers can learn and develop their expertise over time, given appropriate support.

3. **Learning is not linear and progression and regression are typical and dependent on contextual influences.** Not all elements of an individual teacher's performance progress along a continuum at exactly the same rate. Rather, a teacher's particular make-up of performances may vary with high proficiency in some areas compared to others. This has implications for making judgements about locating teachers at particular levels. Many teachers will find that their practice can be evidenced over two levels rather than one. The point is to identify where it best sits, given the evidence, so that there is direction for improvement. On balance judgements always take into account multiple sources of evidence and one observation of a teacher's practice would not provide strong evidence for making decisions where there were consequences attached. Certain professional experiences and supports may accelerate growth in particular areas, whilst a change in context may cause a temporary lapse in skill level until the new context is mastered. Context does matter. What may be required in terms of teacher knowledge and skill in one context may not be appropriate in another context with a different student cohort, staff profile, school community and range of supports.

4. Professional growth is supported and influenced by reflection upon experience, feedback and individual or group professional learning experiences. The Continuum provides the means through which self-reflection and feedback on practice can be supported. Increasing expertise in classroom practice is an ongoing process over time. It is not possible to reach high levels of performance without deliberate practice and targeted intervention. There is no empirically supported time frame that identifies how long it takes for a teacher to move through levels 1–6 of the Continuum.

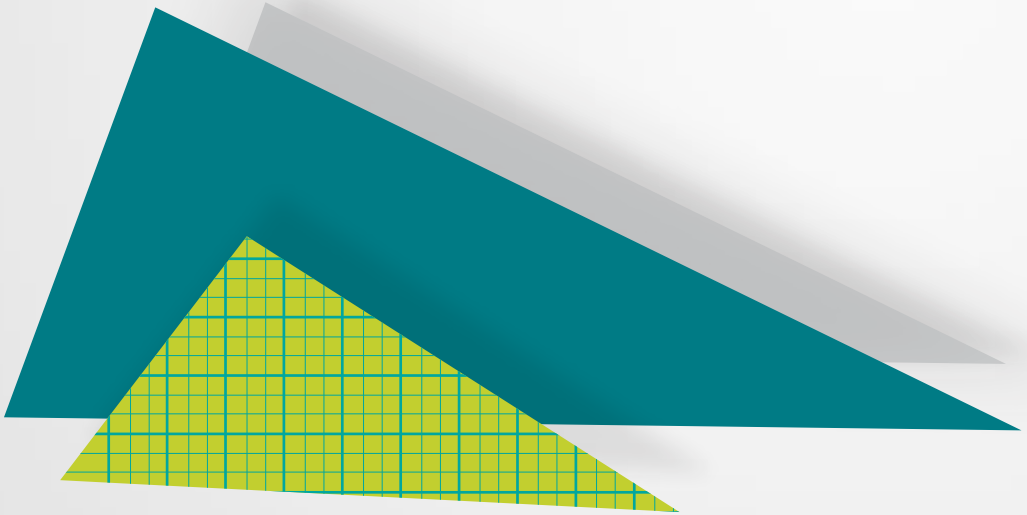
Vygotsky: Definition of Zone of Proximal Development

The zone of proximal development "is the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers." (Vygotsky 1978) As a learner gains new skills and abilities, this zone moves progressively forward.

CAREER STAGES OF THE STANDARDS

Gathering evidence is a process that requires a clear design, purpose, method of collection and interpretation and finally a way of informing stakeholders about the results.[14]

The development of the Continuum was predicated on the importance of its alignment and relationship to the Standards. As the Standards are being used across Australia by educational jurisdictions for graduation, registration and voluntary certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead teachers, and in local performance and development processes, it is important to understand the role of the Continuum in supporting these processes. The Continuum *only* focuses on one domain of teaching (Professional Practice Domain) whereas decisions that are made for the aforementioned purposes require a holistic and on balance judgement against all three domains of the Standards (Professional Knowledge, Professional Practice and Professional Engagement) at different career stages.



The six levels of the Continuum align with the career stages of the Standards within the Professional Practice Domain. The other 2 Domains of Professional Knowledge and Professional Engagement are not included in the Continuum.

Within the Professional Practice Domain the emphasis is on describing classroom practice only, not the role Highly Accomplished and Lead teachers play in supporting other teachers within their school. As such, additional evidence would be required if it was needed to demonstrate achievement of the Professional Practice Domain within performance and development or other formal processes.

The level descriptions are *guidance* for practice rather than *prescription*. Regardless of the process, multiple forms of evidence should always be used to ensure that the evidence required for any form of informal or formal evaluation or review is adequate, authentic, appropriate and accurate.

A major strength of the Continuum is that it provides the basis for developing consistency and accuracy in interpretations of classroom observations. Gathering objective, descriptive evidence of practice in the classroom becomes the first stage of the process. The second stage locates the evidence on the Continuum. The next stage engages teachers in conversation about the implications for their continued growth as professionals.

Level 1 demonstrates practices that should be evidenced at the Graduate career stage

Level 2 & 3 demonstrates practices that should be evidenced at the Proficient career stage

Level 4 & 5 demonstrates practices that should be evidenced at the Highly Accomplished career stage

Level 5 & 6 demonstrates practices that should be evidenced at the Lead career stage

4 Observation Support Materials

In this section we discuss the important elements of classroom observation that schools are encouraged to consider prior to implementation and how the Continuum can support observation practices and conversations about teacher development and growth.

The What and Why of Classroom Observation

We start with a definition of classroom observation and a discussion of the major purposes of classroom observation.

The Classroom Practice Continuum

We define what the Continuum is and what it is not and identify how it can support schools to successfully implement classroom observation. The role of school leadership is discussed in terms of using the Continuum to support conversations about teacher practice.

Classroom Observation Procedures

We discuss different observation procedures and illustrate how they can move from a focus on the individual teacher to a focus on school wide practices. A number of observation procedures are elaborated in terms of their purpose, focus, participants and structure.

Developing Observation protocols

We discuss the importance of establishing protocols for all aspects of the observation system. We provide examples of different observation methods and an elaboration of one method, including discussion about the importance of pre and post observation conversations.

Lessons Learned

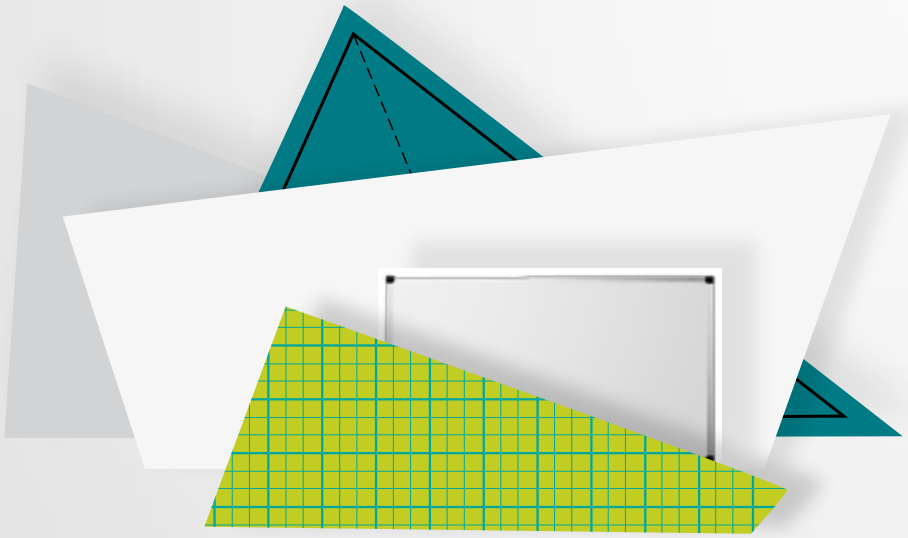
We provide an overview of lessons learned through the research about successfully implementing classroom observation systems. We conclude with a way forward for supporting quality teaching and learning in schools.

Let's reflect on your context

After each element of classroom observation is discussed there are a number of questions posed to stimulate your thinking, to focus attention on current practices in your school and to provide the basis for conversation with your colleagues. Reflection on your context is followed by an explanation of how the Continuum can support your school to successfully implement agreed processes and protocols to support the growth of all teachers and the quality of teaching in all classrooms.

THE WHAT AND WHY OF CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

Skilfully handled classroom observation can benefit both the observer and the person observed, serving to inform and enhance the professional skill of both people. Badly handled, however, it becomes counterproductive, at its worst arousing hostility, resistance and suspicion.[16]



What is Classroom Observation?

Classroom observation is the formal or informal observation of the teaching and learning activities and interactions occurring during instruction in a classroom or other learning environment. It generally requires the observer to gather data from the actual lesson and to discuss the evidence with and provide feedback to the observed teacher after the lesson. It is typically conducted by fellow teachers, school leaders, instructional specialists, or in some cases, by external assessors. Classroom observations may be conducted for short or extended periods of time, from a few minutes to a full class period to a whole school day. The purpose of the observation determines the methods of gathering data. The major aim of classroom observation is to improve teaching and learning.

The Australian Charter for the Professional Learning of Teachers and School Leaders states that professional learning will be most effective when it takes place within a culture where teachers and school leaders expect and are expected to be active learners, to reflect on, receive feedback on, and improve their pedagogical practice, and by doing so to improve student outcomes. There is broad consensus that the aim of professional learning is to increase individual and collective capacity in order to improve student outcomes. There is also agreement that different types of professional learning have differential impacts on teacher practice and student learning.

Effective professional learning strategies have well-articulated purposes that are focused on student learning, engagement and wellbeing and are derived from the analysis of student learning in classrooms and schools.

Classroom observation supports and reinforces the principles of effective professional learning by emphasising the importance of reflection and feedback on practice. It also demonstrates a powerful model of adult learning to students.

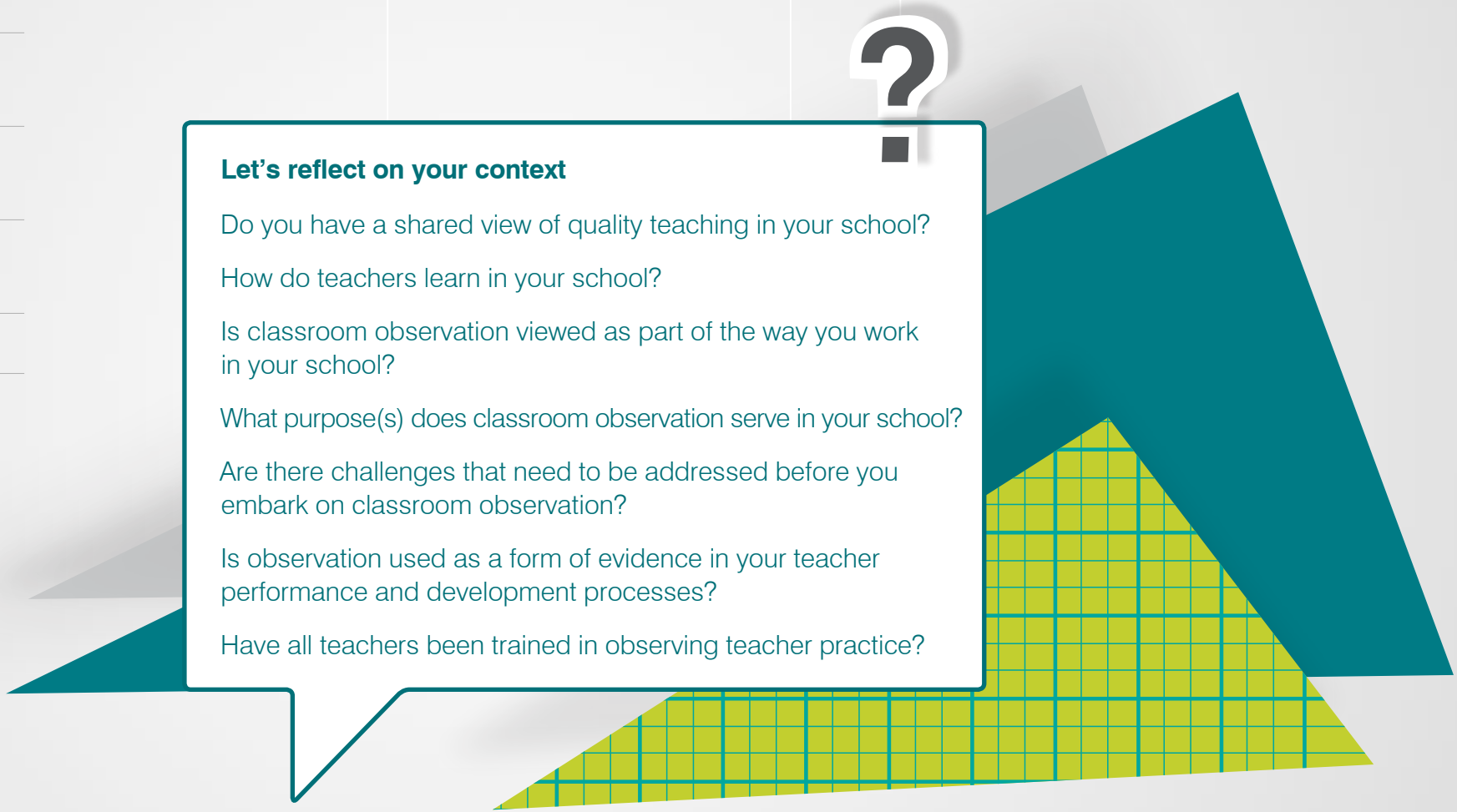
Classroom observation is recognised as an Essential Element in the Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework. As one source of evidence that can be gathered about a teacher's current level of proficiency is through observation of their practice, the performance and development process can assist teachers to make decisions about the type of professional learning that would enhance or improve their current practice. Ongoing formal and informal improvement focused feedback throughout the performance and development cycle supports the teacher to reflect on the impact of the professional learning on their practice and student learning.

What is the Purpose of Classroom Observation?

The education research base continues to grow and consequently influence and inform the work of schools, jurisdictions and governments about policies and practices related to teacher quality. Direct observation of practice is increasingly viewed as an important and integral component of professional practice because of its potential to support teachers to reflect on and improve their practice and student learning. The common purpose of all classroom observations is to improve the quality of teaching and learning. However it is important that any decisions that are made about what this might look like in a particular setting are thoughtfully considered. The purpose of the observation determines the methods of gathering data, the analysis and the use of the information.

Some of the major purposes of classroom observation identified in the research have been to be able to:

- describe quality teaching using a shared and precise language of practice
- improve teacher practice based on timely and accurate feedback
- inform professional learning at the individual, team, school and system level
- evaluate the fidelity or degree of implementation of particular interventions
- differentiate highly effective teachers from less effective teachers
- identify benchmarks for external accreditation
- improve initial teacher education programs including professional experience.



Let's reflect on your context

Do you have a shared view of quality teaching in your school?

How do teachers learn in your school?

Is classroom observation viewed as part of the way you work in your school?

What purpose(s) does classroom observation serve in your school?

Are there challenges that need to be addressed before you embark on classroom observation?

Is observation used as a form of evidence in your teacher performance and development processes?

Have all teachers been trained in observing teacher practice?

THE CLASSROOM PRACTICE CONTINUUM

The Continuum answers the question "What does it look like to improve my teaching practice?"

Throughout this guide to *Looking at Classroom Practice*, references have been made to the evidence base that underpins the Continuum and its intended purpose, focus and elements. Educators are encouraged to read all the sections of this guide to build an informed understanding of the purposes the Continuum does and does not serve.

The Continuum represents a developmental continuum of classroom practice. The six levels that comprise the Continuum provide a detailed description of teachers working at different levels of proficiency in the classroom. Each subsequent level illustrates a higher level of capability. The behaviours identified demonstrate an integrated and holistic picture of teacher practice drawn from what is currently known about the way teachers perform in the classroom. The descriptions within each level are constructed in a logical sequence so that the reader can more easily follow what would be unfolding in the classroom over the course of a lesson or sequence of lessons.

The focus of the Continuum is on what teachers can do and targets all teachers in terms of developing or enhancing skills. When the teacher's level of development is identified it is possible to target professional learning to support them to move to the next level. The levels are hierarchical and sequential. The presence of higher order indicators implies the ability to demonstrate lower order indicative behaviour.

The Continuum provides the means through which self-reflection and feedback on practice can be supported. Increasing expertise in classroom practice is an ongoing process over time. It is not possible to reach high levels of performance without deliberate practice and targeted intervention. There is no empirically supported time frame that identifies how long it takes for a teacher to move through levels 1–6 of the Continuum.

How to Use the Continuum

The Continuum provides the basis for developing consistency and accuracy in interpretations of classroom observations.

Stage 1

Requires observers to gather objective, descriptive evidence of practice in the classroom.

Stage 2

Requires the observer to locate the evidence on the Continuum. This can be done as part of a collaborative conversation with the observed teacher.

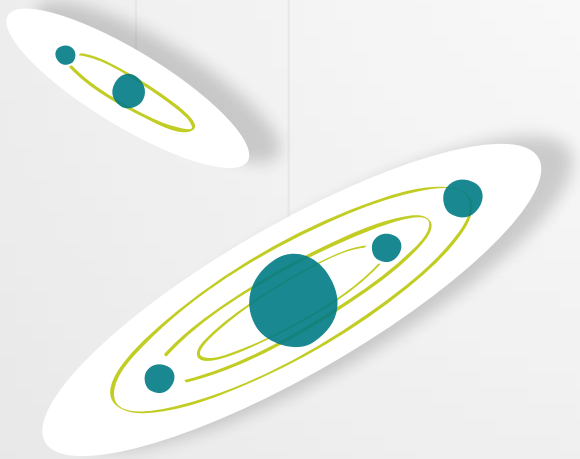
Stage 3

Requires teachers to engage in conversation about the implications for their continued growth as professionals.

What the Continuum is Not:

- The Continuum **is not a pedagogical model**. However it is built on and explicitly privileges the evidence base about those practices that have a high impact on student learning and achievement.
- The Continuum **is not a deficit model**. It focuses on what teachers can do, rather than what they don't do, cannot do or cannot do well.
- The classroom practice level statements **are not a list of discrete behaviours** that should be ticked off in the classroom. Classroom practice brings forth an integrated performance on the part of the teacher that demonstrates their level of instructional expertise across multiple capabilities.
- The Continuum **is not designed to be taken into the classroom to record evidence**. It is used as the basis for reflection after the observation is undertaken to locate the evidence collected.
- The classroom level statements are **guidance for practice rather than prescription**. The descriptions **are not a complete description** of everything a teacher would demonstrate at a particular level of proficiency, rather a generalised profile of what one would expect to see happening in the classroom.

- The Continuum **does not replace existing observation tools** or other methods used to collect information about teacher practice in the classroom. Rather it augments existing practices by enabling current practice to be situated on a common instrument that aligns directly to the Professional Practice Domain of the Standards.
- The Continuum **is not an instrument that can or should be the only source** of evidence for making judgements about teacher practice within performance evaluations. Multiple sources of evidence should always inform decisions made.



Summary

The Continuum supports teachers and school leaders to implement classroom observation through:

- developing a shared language for describing practice
- assisting teachers to self-assess their current practice
- using a common instrument for locating evidence of teacher practice
- providing a scaffold to support improvement focused feedback to teachers
- identifying levels aligned to the Standards' career stages for registration and certification processes
- constructing a staff profile of current practice through teacher self-assessments to identify teachers with expertise who can support, mentor or coach other colleagues.

The Role of Leadership

Using the Continuum to inform conversations about teacher practice.

The Australian Professional Standard for Principals (the Standard) defines the professional practices of principals and makes explicit the role of quality school leadership in improving student outcomes. The Standard is an integrated model that recognises that leaders share common capabilities and qualities that are expressed as three leadership requirements that are drawn upon within five areas of professional practice. Whilst the professional practices are detailed separately, they are always fully interdependent. *Leading teaching and learning* is identified as one of the professional practices particular to the role of the principal. Within this domain of learning principals have a key responsibility to develop a culture of effective teaching, for leading, designing and managing the quality of teaching and learning and for the achievement of valued student outcomes.

> Leaders cannot lead what they don't know.[17]

It is therefore essential if principals are charged with the task of leading the improvement of teaching practice that they must understand and be able to explain what quality practice looks like. By developing their own deep expertise about effective practice, principals are able to lead and guide professional learning, target and align resources, and engage in ongoing capacity building.

Leading conversations about teacher practice includes developing familiarity with, and an understanding of, the Continuum. This can be orchestrated in a number of ways. The Continuum is detailed and requires time to process and reflect upon as a tool to support individual and collective learning.

Leaders need to familiarise themselves with the Continuum prior to conversations with staff. The emphasis is on the levels, not the details. The objective is to gain, over time, an understanding and recognition of levels of performance rather than specific practices. The benefits of this approach enable staff to recognise teachers whose practice is at a higher level of performance than their own and to work with them to improve their own practice.

Conversations with Staff about the Continuum

1. Focus on a shared reading of the resource guide and then an unpacking of the six levels of the Continuum. Questions could be posed around *what changes as a teacher moves from one level to the next on the Continuum*? This could stimulate further conversation around the type of professional learning that is required to support staff in their performance and development processes.
2. Staff could be asked to self-assess their current practice and to locate themselves on the Continuum. This could be shared with a trusted peer or remain confidential.
3. Staff self-assessments could be provided to the leadership team to plot a staff profile. This would enable the leadership team to determine how teachers with greater expertise might support less experienced staff in particular areas or where targeted professional learning or external expertise might support the practice of all teachers.
4. Engage in an audit of existing practice within the school to determine how closely classroom practices align with the level descriptions.
5. Engage in conversations about how classroom observation is being used in different schools to support teachers and increase consistency of practice across classrooms. In many schools classrooms are open and peers observing each other is integral to the way they work. The diversity of schools realises different approaches, attitudes and beliefs about teaching that signal what practices are supported in a given context.

How Can the Continuum Support School Leaders' Work?

With the increased attention being given to observation, the Continuum provides an entry point for building staff capacity to objectively observe their peers in the classroom and then host post-observation conversations about where current practice would be situated on the Continuum. This approach, if used by all staff, calibrates individual observers' judgements to a common instrument and maintains the focus on what the teacher is doing, not what they cannot do or should have done differently. In this way the Continuum is perceived to be a positive tool to support growth rather than a punitive tool to identify shortcomings.

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION PROCEDURES

The purpose of classroom observation determines the observation procedures that are selected in any given context. What is most important is to be clear about how the procedures support the methods of collecting the relevant data and how this information is used to support and inform teacher development and/or teacher evaluation. A continuum of observation procedures could be constructed from formal to informal; from a focus on the individual's practice to a focus on whole of staff practice or from a focus on working by oneself to a focus on working with peers, school leaders or external experts.

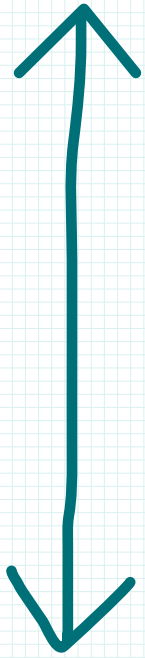
There is a range of ways that classroom observation can be structured and adapted within a school and indeed across schools to meet the particular purposes of different school contexts and their stage of development. **Some well-known observation procedures include Instructional Rounds, Learning Walks, Peer Observation and Videos of Practice, including self-observation and reflection.** There are also observation procedures that are designed in schools for internal teacher performance evaluation and by education systems for external assessment and certification purposes that generally comprise a focus on the individual and formalised arrangements for the collection and use of the data.

All observation procedures have a particular structure and focus. The selected procedure and purpose will determine who participates as an observer and who will be observed. Different procedures can involve leadership team members, external educators and teams of teachers or individual colleagues working together. The amount of time spent in individual classrooms varies depending on the purpose and focus of the observation. Briefing and debriefing sessions can be situated in a school wide instructional improvement process or for individual teachers, in terms of their next level of improvement.

The following continuum has been constructed to show how different observation procedures can range from a focus on the individual to a focus on the school and the collective practice of staff. It is important to remember that some of the procedures can be used for informal and formal purposes. For example in some schools Peer Observation is a collegiate activity where colleagues observe and are observed by each other to improve particular aspects of practice. In other schools Peer Observation is used as a form of evidence in teacher performance and development processes. Again in other schools it is used for both purposes. The same can apply to Self Observation: it may be used as a means of personal reflection on current practice or as the basis for conversation about improvement and professional learning in teacher performance discussions. Observation procedures that use the data collected as one form of evidence to inform decisions about performance outcomes, tenure, salary increments or external certification are situated at the top of the following continuum.

Observation Procedures: From a Focus on the Individual to a Focus on the School

Focus is on evaluation of the individual teacher's practice.



- National Teacher Certification – External Assessor
- Performance and Development Review
- Instructional Coaching
- Student Perception Data
- Peer Observation
- Self-Observation through Video of Practice
- Collaborative Inquiry
- Learning Walks
- Instructional Rounds

Focus is on analysis of whole of staff practice.

Let's reflect on your context

Do you want to work with other school leaders to draw on their expertise in observing and analysing classroom practice?

Do you want to gain a snapshot of current practice across your school?

Do you want to focus on a particular practice(s) the school has prioritised in the professional learning strategy?

Do you want teams of teachers to work together to observe and be observed by their peers?

Do you want individual teachers to be supported by instructional coaches?

Do you want individual teachers to self-assess their own practice?

EXAMPLES OF OBSERVATION PROCEDURES

1. Instructional Rounds (City et al. 2009)

You learn the work by doing the work.[18]

Purpose

Instructional Rounds is a practice designed to support improvement in teacher practice across the school by creating links between individual classroom practice and school-wide teaching practices. The Rounds process supports participants to develop common understandings of effective teaching and learning through the use of agreed protocols to observe classrooms and the collective analysis of data.

Focus

Instructional Rounds focuses on a *problem of practice* that has been derived from an examination of aggregated student data. The problem of practice is embedded in the work of the school and tied to a current school improvement challenge. Participants learn to identify patterns of practice across the school through the collection of evidence from multiple classrooms. This evidence forms the basis for predicting the next level of work for all teachers in the school.

Participants

A team comprising external principals and the host school leadership team or a team comprising the school leadership team and nominated teachers take part in the procedure.

Structure

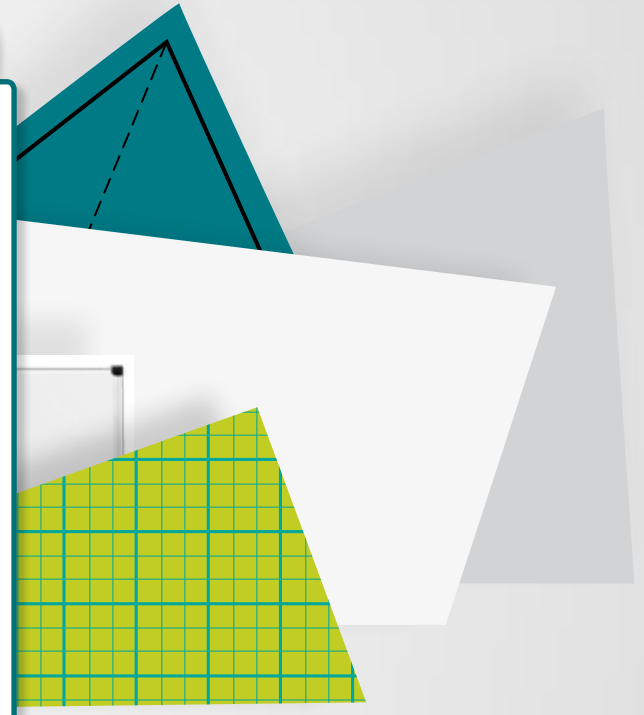
The team visits multiple classrooms in the school recording evidence related to the problem of practice. The team debriefs using a structured protocol to move from description of what they have observed in classrooms to an analysis of the evidence. The team then recommends the next level of work for teachers in the school. Teachers have access to the observational data at an aggregated level. The principal and any teachers involved decide when and how to share the data with the rest of the staff.

The Continuum provides a strong platform for locating the evidence collected and articulating what the practice looks like at a higher level of proficiency. Feedback is provided to staff and a professional learning strategy is developed to support teachers to engage in the new learning.

Let's reflect on your context

If the school has had no exposure to Instructional Rounds it would be advisable to develop an understanding of the critical components of this observation procedure prior to implementation. A number of books have been written that are easily accessible and identified in the References section of this guide. There are schools across Australia that have participated in Instructional Rounds and therefore have gained knowledge about the critical success factors.

A shared reading for the leadership team, teams of teachers or voluntary participants in a reading club is an effective place to start.



2. Learning Walks

Purpose

The Learning Walk is designed to obtain a 'snapshot' of the learning at the school level. It is designed to develop a shared vision of high quality teaching and student learning based on an instructional framework. One or more dimensions of instruction are selected that connect to the school's priorities.

Focus

The leadership team sets the focus for the Learning Walk. The focus is clearly communicated and linked to the school's professional learning strategy and school priorities. Evidence of the focus must be observable in classrooms. Selection of classrooms is determined at the local level and can be based on voluntary participation or staged participation.

Participants

A Walking Team is established. The Walking Team consists of 3–4 walkers with one nominated Lead Walker. Any staff member can take part in the Learning Walk. A member of the leadership team is always available to participate.

Structure

The Learning Walk begins with a pre-walk discussion to ensure participants have an understanding of the protocols and purpose, the focus of the walk, the classrooms to be visited and the date and time of the whole school feedback session. The walkers visit each classroom for 10 minutes. They observe and take notes on any evidence that links to the focus. Walkers may speak to students and teachers only if the learning allows for such interactions. When walkers leave each classroom, they meet for 5 minutes outside of the classroom to share observations that must be specific to the focus. At the end of the classroom visits, all walkers convene for a debriefing session. They share the observations collected and identify any patterns that may have emerged. Wonderings may then be formulated based on the evidence. Conclusions are not formed. The Lead Walker collates the evidence collected. Within one week of the Learning Walk, the collated evidence is shared with the whole staff to identify trends and inform future development.

The Continuum provides the instrument for calibrating and locating all the evidence collected across classrooms that can be presented to staff. Learning Walks have been implemented successfully in schools where all staff have clarity about their purpose, focus and protocols for participation. This type of observation practice can be effective in the early stages of a school's improvement strategy because it allows staff participating to develop skills in observation and identify a common focus for professional learning of staff.

Let's reflect on your context

Has your school considered implementing Learning Walks as a means of developing an understanding of an instructional framework or how particular teaching strategies that the school has identified as important are being enacted in classrooms across the school?

Learning Walks can start with voluntary participation and be located at a team, faculty, year level or sub school. Have you considered getting started with volunteers?

3. Peer Observation

Learning from each other.

> I did not realise that I was asking and answering all my own questions until the observer showed me his narrative account of what he had seen in my class. I wanted to get on with the lesson and get them writing. Now I think my students just waited each time I asked questions because they realised that I would eventually answer these same questions for them. After this class and the discussion I had with the observer, I realised the power of having another pair of eyes in the room to help me "see" better. I should also say that the observer was a trusted friend and this helped me a lot too.[19]

Purpose

The purposes of peer observation include the development of self-awareness of one's own teaching and the opportunity to gain feedback on one's teaching. The practice also supports the sharing of ideas and expertise and the discussion of challenges and concerns. Peers can provide an objective view of the practice, gather information that the teacher who is teaching the lesson might not otherwise be able to do and provide feedback on identified areas. It can also be designed to support the school's instructional framework by establishing a focus for peers to observe and be observed.

Focus

A teacher or other observer watches a lesson in order to gain an understanding of some aspect of teaching, learning or classroom interaction. Context will always determine the specific approach. This can range from a non-judgemental process involving two or more peers who mutually benefit from the dialogue that takes place to more formalised approaches that connect to teacher performance processes. The data gathered and process undertaken can also be used as evidence in teacher performance and development processes.

Participants

Those who wish to participate generally determine the choice of peers. For beginning teachers, observation provides an opportunity to see what more experienced teachers do when they teach a lesson and how they do it. However experienced teachers also benefit from observing their peers. It provides an opportunity to see how colleagues deal with many of the same challenges teachers face on a daily basis.

Structure

Different approaches to peer observation include:

Buddy system: Two colleagues agree to act as observer and observed. Roles are reversed at agreed times and focus is determined by the individual teacher.

Circus: Colleague A observes colleague B, colleague B observes colleague C, and so on around the group until they have all been observed. This process can be adapted for more people.

Teams of three: Each colleague is observed twice.

The Continuum aligns with the Standards so it becomes the common instrument for interpreting evidence and enabling peers to provide feedback on practice. Peer observation is an effective way for teachers to learn with and from their peers. However it is important that observation protocols are developed around this practice to ensure that the learning is maximised and all staff are referencing the school's agreed vision for quality teaching.

Let's reflect on your context

Do you have teachers already engaging in peer observation?

Has the practice supported these teachers to improve their practice?

What, if any, improvements to the process could be made to support all teachers in the school?

Is peer observation recognised in the school's performance and development processes?

4. Instructional Coaching

Learning alongside an expert who observes your practice and provides feedback.

> Not all practice makes perfect. You need a particular kind of practice—deliberate practice—to develop expertise. When most people practice, they focus on the things they already know how to do. Deliberate practice is different. It entails considerable, specific, and sustained efforts to do something you can't do well—or even at all.[20]

Purpose

The primary purpose of an instructional coach is to assist teachers to increase their effectiveness. Coaches must be able to help teachers identify areas for potential growth, practice strategies associated with those areas, and adjust their performance in response to feedback. Coaching facilitates opportunities to work alongside teachers in the classroom environment, observing practice, modelling skills and providing formative feedback. Across different school contexts and systems, coaching is seen as a high leverage strategy for developing teacher capability.

Focus

Discipline specific coaching, literacy and numeracy coaching across the curriculum and instructional coaching are prominent areas of development that are focused on in the context of the individual teacher's classroom. A teacher works alongside the coach in their own classroom, observing their practice and then being observed by the coach as they build a new practice into their repertoire.

Participants

School leaders can identify teachers who may benefit from expert coaching in a particular area or teachers can nominate to be involved as part of their professional learning plan. Sometimes the relevant expertise comes from external coaches or by utilising expert teachers within their own schools to work with individual teachers.

Structure

One on one coaching is implemented over a designated period of time and involves the coach and the individual teacher working together in the classroom. At the commencement of the coaching, school leaders play a role in setting expectations and reaching agreement about the feedback they will be provided with from the coach about the progress of the particular teacher.

The Continuum provides the basis for calibrating observations and assisting the teacher and coach to set goals for further development.

Let's reflect on your context

In your school context has coaching been used as a vehicle for improving teacher practice?

Has coaching changed attitudes within your school about teachers learning from experts in their own classrooms?

Have you evidence of the impact of coaching on student learning?

Has coaching in classrooms the potential to open up classrooms in your school and support classroom observation of all teachers?

5. Videos of Practice

Viewing practice from a distance.

Purpose

Videos have the advantage of capturing aspects of teaching practice that can:

- be viewed by multiple people or individuals
- be used for self-reflection and collective staff reflection on practice
- be used as evidence of practice in performance and development processes
- be used to train teachers in specific instructional strategies
- be used to train observers in classroom observation for a range of purposes.

Focus

Videos of teacher practice can be used to focus on specific aspects of teacher practice or whole lessons. The selection of videos is determined by the needs of the school. For example, a school may focus on developing staff capacity to objectively observe videos prior to undertaking observations across classrooms in the school. Another school might align the choice of videos with the instructional model they are implementing to draw attention to how particular strategies and interactions are enacted in the classroom.

Participants

The whole staff may be engaged in the viewing of videos as part of the school's professional development strategy or a team of teachers may choose to set up a video club to hone their skills in observation or to learn more about a particular instructional strategy, how to introduce new content or support the role of students in the learning process. Individual teachers may decide to video their own practice as the basis for self-reflection and analysis and as a source of evidence for their performance and development discussions. Learning from videos of teacher practice can stimulate substantive reflection and a critical stance towards instruction.

Structure

Example: Using videos with staff to locate teaching practice on the Continuum.

Videos of teacher practice can be used with staff to develop the capacity and confidence to locate classroom observations on the Continuum. It has been found that 15–20 minutes watching a video is desirable in terms of maintaining levels of concentration. In the first instance, videos of teacher practice from external sources are recommended in order for staff to learn to develop an objective stance towards describing practice.

1. **Provide staff with a rationale** for learning to observe classroom practice. This would include learning to see what is happening in the classroom and recording evidence objectively; withholding personal bias; only recording what is seen rather than what is not seen; and developing a consistent approach across the school in order to make valid, accurate and appropriate judgements about performance.
2. **Provide staff with a copy** of the Continuum. This will form the basis for calibrating evidence collected and locating it on the Continuum.
3. **Establish protocols** for watching the video. This should include instructions relating to what will be the focus of the observation; the need to observe and record independently; and the focus on learning rather than comparing with the observer's own practice.
4. **Selection of the video** to be viewed should include consideration of the content, context, and teacher's stage of development in order to align with the purpose of the learning experience.
5. **Recording observations** may begin with first level questions: What is the teacher doing? What is the teacher saying and to whom? What are the students doing? What are the students saying and to whom? What students' work is in evidence during the lesson? Focusing on a specific set of questions places the emphasis on observable evidence and makes the task manageable.

6. **When the video is finished use a protocol to gather the evidence**, rotating through all staff to ensure that everything written down is acknowledged. At any point in time when a member of staff provides an observation that others may view as a judgement, allow individuals to question the nature of the evidence seen in the video that warranted that particular statement. In this way a disciplined approach is developed, along with a language for describing the practice.

7. **When all the evidence has been presented ask staff to look at the Continuum.** Beginning with one of the levels, read through the profile asking staff whether evidence in the video substantiates the practice described in the level statement. Once one level has been addressed decide whether all the evidence is located at this level or whether staff should consider a higher level. This activity helps to build familiarity with the different levels of the Continuum at the same time as developing an ability to calibrate staff observations on the one instrument. Use this protocol each time a different video is viewed so that staff develop confidence in observing practice objectively and locating and aligning what they have seen with what is written in the level statements of the Continuum.

Let's reflect on your context

Have you considered using videos of practice to stimulate interest in classroom observation?

Have you considered offering staff the opportunity to take part in a video club where they regularly meet to develop their expertise in describing and analysing teacher practice?

Have you considered offering individuals or teams access to video cameras for their professional learning and performance and development processes?

Have you considered setting up a classroom as an observation room so that teachers can observe peers who are expert in particular strategies, skills or content areas?

Illustrations of Practice

AITSL has progressively built a collection of videos that are purposefully focused on the Standards. The Illustrations of Practice (IoPs) provide snapshots of teacher practice at different career stages and across different Focus Areas. The videos are complemented by commentary, contextual information and discussion questions. These videos can support teachers and school leaders to reflect on particular practices and identify the type of evidence that would be required to meet particular Standards. The IoPs include a range of disciplines, levels of schooling, career stages and contexts.

Formal Observations for Teacher Performance and Development Processes

> The formal appraisal of teachers usually requires at least some consideration of what they actually do in the classroom, rather than just a broad assessment of the generalities of their work. If appraisal is seen as nothing more than a legally required ritual that has to be enacted through clenched teeth, then the classroom observation part of it will be perfunctory and apologetic. But if it is regarded as a sustained process, as an essential part of professional life, not an unwelcome addition to it, then the appraisal of what happens in the classroom, especially self-appraisal, is an important element of keeping the school under review. (Wragg 2012, p.97)

Formal classroom observations use the data collected to inform performance and development conversations. They are generally used as one form of evidence to substantiate meeting the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. Formal observations can and do co-exist with informal classroom observations to engage individual teachers in ongoing dialogue, feedback and reflection on practice. Typically teachers are briefed at the commencement of the cycle in regard to the elements that are embedded in the school's performance and development processes, including the number of observations that will be undertaken. **Pre and post observation conferences are considered desirable to establish goals and to subsequently engage in collaborative dialogue about reflections on the lesson and goals for improvement.** Formal written summaries of the observations are signed by all parties and used as one measure in performance and development review meetings. Schools with an effective approach to teacher performance and development have a commitment to ongoing formal and informal feedback 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 performance and development goals.

The Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework

Essential Element: Evidence used to reflect on and evaluate teacher performance 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.

The Continuum supports these processes through its alignment to the Standards and its articulation of increasing levels of proficiency in classroom practice. The Continuum provides the platform for locating evidence, providing feedback and informing conversations about improvement. Within the performance and development review meetings teachers are able to discuss the evidence that would situate the teacher's practice at a particular level at that point in time.

Let's reflect on your context

In your current performance and development process, how is classroom observation used as a measure of teacher effectiveness?

How do you ensure that classroom observations undertaken by multiple observers are consistent across all staff?

How many times will formal observations be undertaken for individual teachers, given the number of staff and resources available?

What other measures will be used in the review process to complement observation of practice?

Have selected observers undertaken any form of training or professional learning to prepare them for the role?

DEVELOPING OBSERVATION PROTOCOLS

The use of protocols to guide and inform the way school leaders and teachers approach and use classroom observation is an important determinant of how successfully it will be implemented in the school context. Trust in people and processes is underpinned by consistent and agreed protocols and norms. Having determined the importance of observation in terms of student outcomes and staff performance and development it is necessary to agree upon the protocols that will be used to observe classrooms and the interactions that take place between staff and between teachers and school leaders.

Let's reflect on your context

Have you reached agreement in your school about how classroom observations should be undertaken?

What are the most important elements that should be discussed and agreed to before observation is introduced?

Can individuals and teams use different protocols for different purposes?

Do you use protocols for other purposes in your school?

Developing a Set of Protocols in Your School Context

The following questions provide a basis for reflecting on what you need to consider when developing protocols for classroom observation in your school. The answers to these questions will frame the protocols for how classroom observation is implemented in your context.

Orientation: Who, What, When, and How Long

- Who will observe me?
- Who determines the focus of the observation?
- How long will the observer be in my classroom?
- When will the observer come into my classroom?
- Will the observer talk to me before the observation?
- Will the observer talk to the students in my class?
- How many times will the observer visit my classroom?
- Will the observer have the discipline specific expertise?
- What will the observer do with the information they gather?
- Will the same observer visit my classroom over time?

Orientation: The How

- How will the observer collect information?
- Where will the observer place himself or herself in the classroom?
- Will the observer rate my performance?
- Will the observer use the same method as all observers in the school?
- Will the observer be looking for particular practices?

Debriefing: Making sense of what was seen

- When will we discuss what the observer saw in my classroom?
- How will we structure the conversation?
- Will I get a chance to talk about how I thought the lesson went?
- Will the conversation be private?

Action planning: So what/ Now what?

- What happens next?
- What if I need support to work on particular strategies?
- Can I work with another teacher who has expertise in these strategies?
- Do I have to document anything in my PD plan?
- Will I be held accountable for working on these strategies?
- Will the observer come back to check on my progress?

How can the Continuum support your work?

The Continuum provides the basis for developing consistency and accuracy in interpretations of classroom observations in the debriefing phase of the observation experience and the action planning phase in terms of what happens next. One of the most difficult areas that school leaders encounter in performance and development discussions is in the provision of feedback to teachers about their next level of development. The Continuum is designed to demonstrate the next level of performance for all teachers. It will provide valuable input into these conversations.

Observation Methods

Observation methods answer the question related to the how of observation: how will the observer collect information and what will be the focus? There is a range of methods in use and that are identified and elaborated on in the research. At one end of the spectrum is the open method and at the other end is systematic observation.

Open observation

There is no checklist or template used in this method. The observer records everything that happens in the classroom, using a blank sheet. The recommended approach is to record factual and descriptive information and to leave the interpretation until after the discussion with the teacher. There are challenges associated with bias and subjective judgements using this method but training can support the ability to describe what is observed objectively.

Focused observation

This method reduces classroom observation to a part of the lesson focusing on a particular aspect of the teaching. For example questioning techniques might be the area of focus or formative assessment of student understanding. This method is an effective way of learning more about a particular area of teaching that can benefit individuals and the whole school.

Semi structured observations

Semi structured observations are directly linked to a focused observation. Many aspects of a lesson can be recorded with a time log, such as teacher talk, student centred activities, length of each task, and the number of students off task for example. Tables presenting numbers and percentages of what has been the focus of the observation can become useful information provided to teachers.

Systematic observation

Systematic methods look at specific aspects of the teaching and have to be designed in advance by the teacher and the observer. Numerous analytic systems have been developed requiring the observer to be very familiar with the categories and criteria, and to be able to recall the number attributed to a particular category. For example teacher—student interactions can be categorised and numbers recorded to particular behaviours every three seconds. Categories can be recorded in tables or time line displays with the percentage of each type of interaction calculated. Quantitative methods are factual and non judgemental but the coding systems have to be learned and training is required. Checklists and category systems can provide a sequence of events that unfold in the classroom but they do not describe the quality of the events. The focus on particular activities also means that other information is not recorded.

Example: Open observation method

Learning to objectively observe classroom practice takes deliberate practice. Current research underlines the importance of observers engaging in sustained learning to develop their capacity to focus on the practice evidenced in the classroom, not the individual teacher. Professor Richard Elmore from Harvard University developed an open observation method that has been used widely to train observers. Observers in the classroom are required to describe what they see and hear in the classroom in the first instance. Second and third order questions provide a greater focus on the nature of academic work and the conditions of learning. All data collected should be based on evidence from the classroom observation.

Observation Method – Professor Richard Elmore

First Level Questions

1. What is the teacher doing?
2. What is the teacher saying and to whom?
3. What are the students doing?
4. What are the students saying and to whom?
5. What students' work is in evidence during the lesson?

Second Level Questions

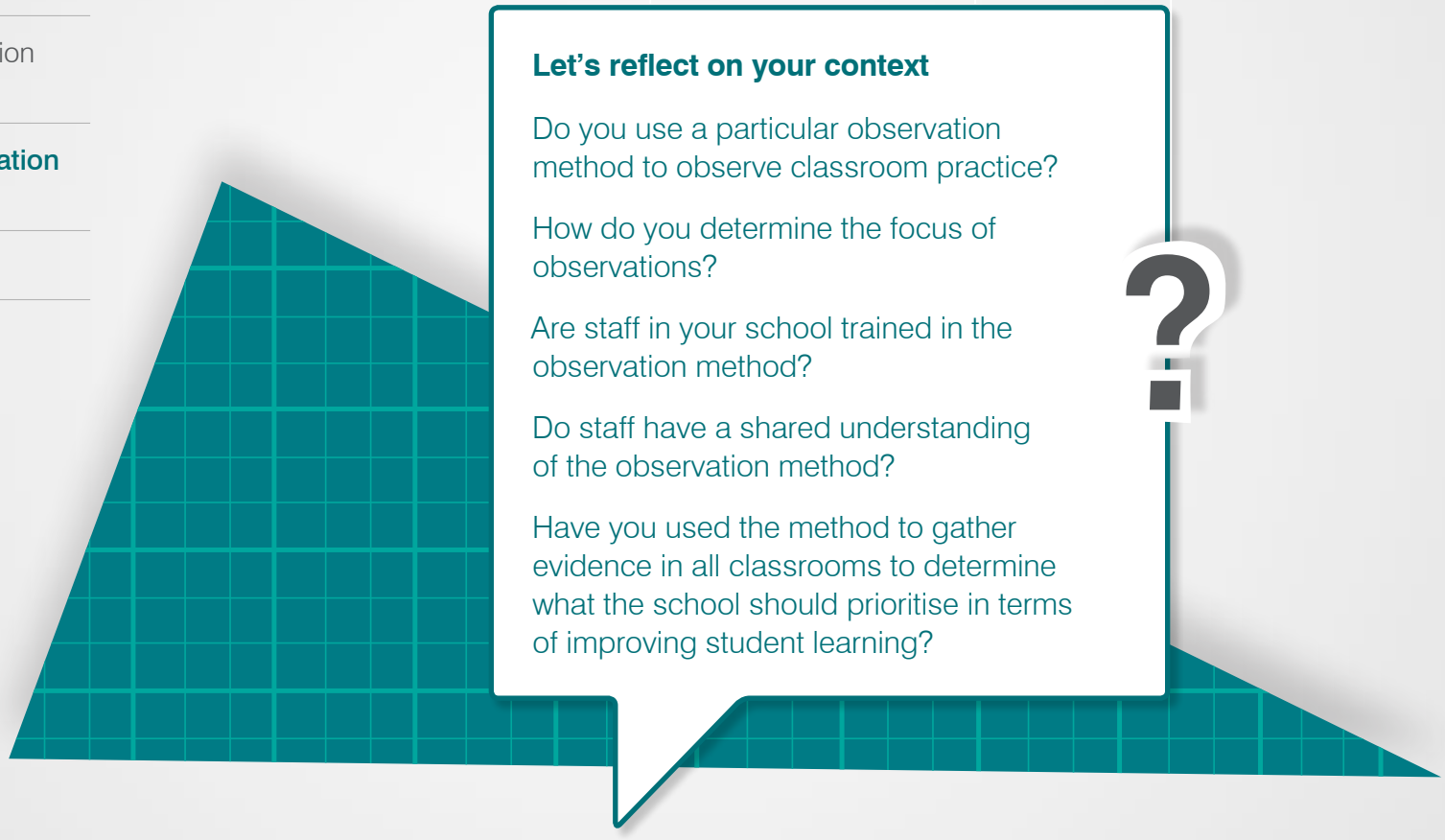
The nature of academic work

1. What evidence is there of student engagement in academic work?
2. What is the nature of that work?
3. What evidence is there of teacher assessment of student work?
4. What is the nature of that assessment?
5. If the student was to accomplish the task set by the teacher what would the student know and be able to do?
6. What evidence do you observe of whether and how students are accomplishing the task that the teacher sets for them? With what frequency in the classroom?

Third Level Questions

Conditions of learning

1. Using a taxonomy, how would you rate the level and frequency of academic work you observed in the classroom?
2. Where is the locus of control over learning in the classroom? Is it primarily with the teacher? – with the students?
3. What is the frequency of teacher talk, teacher initiated questions, student interactions, student preparation of work?



Let's reflect on your context

Do you use a particular observation method to observe classroom practice?

How do you determine the focus of observations?

Are staff in your school trained in the observation method?

Do staff have a shared understanding of the observation method?

Have you used the method to gather evidence in all classrooms to determine what the school should prioritise in terms of improving student learning?

Orientation and Debriefing for the Classroom Observation

Pre and post observation meetings are used in both informal and formal classroom observation of teachers. Schools will need to consider the importance, nature and purpose of these meetings in the context of developing their agreed protocols. The meeting is a vehicle for eliciting information about the upcoming observation and those areas that may not be directly observable. During the pre observation meeting, the teacher and the observer engage in a conversation about the upcoming lesson. The purpose of the observation will inform the questions that may be structured by the observer, or indeed the focus that has been selected by the teacher. If the formal observation uses a standards based template or checklist, then the areas identified are discussed. The Continuum is not used for this purpose. Rather it informs post observation conversations and action planning. Informal observations are generally viewed as an opportunity to learn together for the purpose of meeting the needs of all students hence an inquiry approach is emphasised. The purpose of the observation should always inform the nature of the questions framed for discussion.

Let's reflect on your context

Has your school reached agreement about the type of conversations that should take place pre and post observation?

Have staff had training in hosting these conversations and providing feedback to staff?

Who determines the focus of the conversation?

Do staff select who will host their pre and post observation conferences?

Who has access to the feedback provided to staff members?

How does the feedback inform an individual's professional learning?

Does the school have a method for gathering information about professional learning needs based on all conversations held with staff?

How Can the Continuum Support your Work?

Pre and post observation conferences can provide both the teacher and observer with an opportunity to learn more about practice and its impact on students. Agreed protocols ensure there is a shared understanding of the areas on which feedback will be provided, the format in which the feedback will be given, the use of the feedback and whether the information will be kept confidential. The Continuum supports these processes by locating practice on a common instrument and enabling the observer and the teacher to situate practice and identify the next level of improvement.

LESSONS LEARNED

Research to date has highlighted important lessons learned about the implementation of observation practices in the school context. This has included findings from the large scale Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) study undertaken in the USA and funded by the Gates Foundation. It is important therefore to consider all of the elements that schools should pay attention to prior to implementation.

Understanding your context

There are a number of ways that schools can utilise classroom observation as a means of improving teacher practice and student learning. The importance of understanding the needs of your school is the first step to ensuring alignment with the method and tools selected and minimising the factors that might negatively impact on the observation system implemented. Further reading, including this resource guide, will familiarise schools with the range of options available that can be implemented or adapted for your school context.

Be purposeful about your choice of an observational system

An understanding of your school's philosophy and goals will underpin any choices that are made about selecting the most appropriate observation system. Staff should feel confident that the teaching practices that are valued and identified in school goals are consistent with the types of behaviours that are privileged in the observation methodology.

Be proactive in developing a shared understanding of the observation system

Time needs to be allocated to developing an understanding of the observation instrument that is chosen by the school. An understanding of what an instrument can and cannot accomplish needs to be clearly communicated so that it provides a means of bringing all staff together and developing a shared vision of how observation supports quality teaching and learning in your context.

Be clear about how the observational data will be used

It is critical to develop an understanding of the inferences that are appropriate to make after the observational data has been collected. Research to date would suggest that gaining a sense of individual or program areas of strength and areas of challenge to guide professional learning would be an appropriate use of observational data. In this way support can be monitored to determine whether teachers are developing in particular areas.

Be committed to the agreed observation protocols

Protocols are important to maintain. They assist in developing consistency across classrooms and informing professional learning at the school, team and individual level. However providing a format that provides space for identifying any factors that may have impacted on the observation data reduces the chances of observers deviating from agreed protocols.

Be clear about the time commitment

Different observation systems require different amounts of time. The more times a teacher is observed the more stable an estimate of their practice is developed. In order that observations are reliable and valid a sufficient amount of time is required. Some observation practices used in schools focus on short periods of time in the classroom whilst others extend over longer periods of time. Practical considerations in relation to how much time is going to be committed are necessary, but the time allocation should align with the purposes of the approach selected.

Be aware of observer effects

The size of the school and the selected observation system will determine how many observers are required to go into classrooms. Rater bias is well documented and the more observers there are the greater the chance of variability across observers and with the selected instrument. To minimise variability observers should receive training on the instrument prior to engaging in any observations. Some instrument developers recommend the random assignment of observers to classrooms, rotating observers across classrooms and the simultaneous observation of classrooms by multiple observers. This is important in formal observations where the information is used within evaluation or review processes.

Be deliberate in your documentation

The data collected in classrooms should be documented along with any factors that might be considered relevant. This might include time of year, activity, discipline area, class size, or other contextual influences.

Be clear about the role of feedback

Teachers need to know more than '*you are doing a good job, keep it up*'. They require a balance of support and challenge to improve their practice over time. Observers should provide specific improvement-focused feedback at the same time as recognising and reinforcing teachers' strengths. Assisting teachers to reflect on the observational data collected and to understand the impact of their behaviours enables teachers to have greater insight into the relationship between their goals for student learning and their current practice. Giving specific feedback that promotes self-evaluation and leads to change requires an area of focus rather than an expectation that many different areas of practice can be addressed simultaneously. If teachers are to act on the feedback provided they would need to be able to give it the attention and focus required to bring about any change in practice. This observation – feedback process needs to be repeated a number of times so that what was discussed in the first observation is addressed in follow-up observations. In this way progress can be documented against goals and professional learning is attuned to the needs of the individual.

Be informed about how the Continuum can support your observation system

The resource guide provides detailed information as to how the Continuum should be used to support classroom observation and teacher development. It is also clear about how the Continuum should not be used. Given one of the most challenging aspects of classroom observation is to provide informed feedback to staff on the learning they can undertake to improve their practice, the Continuum provides the platform for situating current practice and informing conversations about improvement.

Let's reflect on your context

Reflecting on lessons learned about implementing classroom observations:

Do you understand your current context?

Have you been purposeful in your choice of an observational system?

Have you been proactive in developing an understanding of the observational tool?

Have you been clear about how the observational data will be used?

Are you committed to the agreed observation protocols?

Are you clear about the time commitment?

Are you aware of observer affects?

Are you deliberate in your documentation?

Are you clear about the role of feedback?

Do you have an understanding of the Continuum and how it should be used?

AITSL Resources

The following resources may support you to reflect on professional learning and performance and development processes within your school.

Professional Learning

- Discussion Deck - https://www.aitsl.edu.au/tools-resources/resource/discussion-deck
- Charter Stimulus Cards - https://www.aitsl.edu.au/tools-resources/resource/charter-stimulus-cards
- Professional Learning Animation - https://youtu.be/e6ZifjWftc8

Performance and Development Processes

- Engaging in P&D Resources - https://youtu.be/S3iw-gY8OyU
- Framework Activity Cards - https://www.aitsl.edu.au/tools-resources/resource/the-framework-activity-cards
- Getting Started Survey https://www.aitsl.edu.au/tools-resources/resource/getting-started-survey---how-do-i-perceive-performance-and-development-at-my-school
- Tips for collecting and documenting formal and informal feedback https://www.aitsl.edu.au/tools-resources/resource/tips-for-collecting-and-documenting-feedback
- How can I initiate ongoing formal and informal feedback? https://www.aitsl.edu.au/tools-resources/resource/how-can-i-initiate-ongoing-formal-and-informal-feedback-illustration-of-practice

- How can I support effective peer feedback in my school? https://www.aitsl.edu.au/tools-resources/resource/how-can-i-support-effective-peer-feedback-in-my-school
- How can I ensure I get the most out of my goal setting? https://www.aitsl.edu.au/lead-develop/develop-others/build-a-professional-growth-culture
- Framework Animation? https://www.aitsl.edu.au/tools-resources/resource/the-framework-animation
- Framework Overview video https://www.aitsl.edu.au/tools-resources/resource/the-framework-overview

Classroom Observation Videos

- Classroom Observation Strategies https://www.aitsl.edu.au/lead-develop/develop-others/classroom-observation/classroom-observation-strategies

The Way Forward

When Australian Education Ministers signed the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians in 2008, they signalled a commitment to work with all school sectors and the broader community to improve educational outcomes for all young Australians. The Declaration recognised the centrality and importance of teachers and school leaders in achieving these goals.

Excellent teachers have the capacity to transform the lives of students and to inspire and nurture their development as learners, individuals and citizens. They provide an additional source of encouragement, advice and support for students outside the home, shaping teaching around the ways different students learn and nurturing the unique talents of every student.[21]

AITSL is committed to supporting teachers and school leaders to grow their expertise to support this vision for all young Australians. The Classroom Practice Continuum is a resource that should provide impetus for conversations in schools that include a focus on how teachers improve and develop their expertise over time and the type of environments that promote and sustain their learning and growth. As Dr John Bransford eloquently states:

> As learners we are always on the edge of our own expertise.[22]

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THE EXPERT TEACHER GROUP

The development of the Continuum was realised through the collaborative efforts of members of the teaching profession who comprised the Expert Teacher Group. AITSL acknowledges their willingness to share their expertise and time to co-construct a resource that will support teachers, school leaders and schools to improve their professional practice for the benefit of all students throughout Australia.

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Name	Jurisdiction	Current Role
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Angela Pope	Victoria	Primary Teacher
Amanda Clarke	Victoria	Leading Teacher, Maths/Science, Director of Curriculum/ Secondary
Clinton Chiumello	Victoria	Leading Teacher, Director of Learning, Humanities/Secondary
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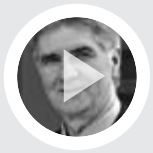
Shane Cleaver	Tasmania	Secondary Teacher
Hanna Kenworthy	Tasmania	Head of English, Secondary

6 The Continuum

Individual talent once developed must be shared. A working community of learners is not only constituted of diversely capable members, but its members engage in the kinds of dialogue, peer instruction, conversations and collaborative work that permit knowledge to be transmitted and shared among the group members. [23]



Patrick Griffin (3)

Australian Professional Standards For Teachers
Professional Practice Domain: Classroom Practice Continuum

LEVEL 1

The teacher organises and uses the available learning space and resources, including ICT, to support student learning in the planned learning activities. The teacher designs the activities to engage the diverse perspectives and needs of students and adapts the tasks to student readiness.

The teacher assesses students' prior knowledge by asking them to recall what they know about the content. They identify student misconceptions and attempt to address these directly. The teacher links the content of the current learning activities to past and future learning experiences. They represent the content in the same way to all students.

The teacher provides tasks for all students to practice skills and processes. They use a variety of question types to encourage students to discuss the main ideas. The teacher engages students in the use of relevant literacy and numeracy skills, together with relevant academic vocabulary that supports student thinking about key concepts in the content area.

The teacher explains the criteria that will be used to assess student work and to give feedback to students. They provide tools for students to assess their own work. The teacher provides corrective feedback to students in relation to particular tasks and advises them on where to next in relation to their learning goals. They develop students' capacity to differentiate levels of quality in assessing their peers' work.

The teacher communicates in ways that recognise students as individuals from diverse backgrounds. They model respectful interactions with students, including expressing interest in students' thoughts and opinions. They articulate learning expectations for all students.

The teacher states their expectations for students working productively and cooperatively in groups and develops students' abilities to participate in constructive discussions. They draw on a variety of strategies to manage and respond to student behaviour and identify key safety risks in the learning environment. The teacher refers to established rules to manage the learning environment. When students are using information and communications technology, the teacher refers to the school's ICT protocols.

Australian Professional Standards For Teachers
Professional Practice Domain: Classroom Practice Continuum

LEVEL 2

The teacher explains the lesson structure, including timeframes for learning activities. The teacher selects a range of resources that are relevant to the goals and content of the lesson and organises the learning environment to support individual learning needs. They design learning interactions that engage the diverse perspectives of students. They advise students about the procedures to be followed to engage in and complete the learning tasks during the allocated time. The teacher describes what quality work looks like and illustrates this by drawing attention to the success criteria.

The teacher represents concepts of the discipline in multiple ways to all students. They use stimuli to elicit prior knowledge and to clarify students' current understanding. The teacher draws on students' interests to make connections to the learning activity. They explain the reason for the use of particular strategies to assist students to organise information.

To reinforce and consolidate relevant skills, the teacher varies the type of practice students engage in during the lesson. The teacher monitors students' understanding and skill development against the learning goals and notices when students need additional assistance or extension. They organise opportunities for students to articulate what they have learned and to say which learning strategies have been most effective for them.

The teacher supports students to apply their literacy skills to different concepts and uses vocabulary and academic language that is clear, correct and appropriate for students. The teacher uses a range of questioning strategies that are designed to encourage students to use different ways of thinking about the content. Strategies are inclusive of all students.

The teacher demonstrates how assessment rubrics are aligned to specific criteria to make judgments about progress and how they support students to provide peer feedback that progresses their learning. The teacher
establishes learning routines with students that are linked to learning expectations.
Communication is direct, repeated, specific and positive. The teacher monitors the students' use of ICT and responds to breaches.

Australian Professional Standards For Teachers
Professional Practice Domain: Classroom Practice Continuum

LEVEL 3

The teacher discusses the connections between learning goals, learning activities and assessment requirements with students. They identify connections between students' interests, experiences and backgrounds and the learning activities. The teacher articulates student misconceptions and addresses the knowledge and skills required by the students to address them. They adjust the lesson structure in order to maximise learning opportunities for students.

The teacher provides information through multiple modalities and selects a range of resources that are relevant to the goals and content of the lesson. They enable students to challenge their own perspectives in relation to the experience of others. The teacher adjusts pacing and interaction during instruction to enable all students to understand the content and participate productively in the lesson. The teacher designs individual and/or group activities to suit particular purposes. They support students to set goals for group behaviour and participation, and to monitor and self-assess their achievement of these goals.

They use a variety of methods to scaffold students' use of academic language enabling students to engage in and express complex thinking. They create opportunities for students to employ a range of forms of communication that address various purposes. The teacher explains their own thinking while modeling specific strategies for thinking about learning, in order to develop students' metacognitive skills. The teacher uses a variety of assessment activities to help students assess their progress. They support students to provide peer feedback that progresses learning, aligned to the success criteria.

The teacher encourages interaction between students and between teacher and students about the key ideas of the topic. They support students to think critically by independently developing questions, posing problems and reflecting on multiple perspectives. They model strategies for dialogue and reinforce positive and responsible learning behaviours. The teacher maintains the focus on learning tasks by redirecting challenging behaviour. The teacher implements safe practices by modeling, reinforcing and maintaining safety protocols in the learning environment.

Australian Professional Standards For Teachers
Professional Practice Domain: Classroom Practice Continuum

LEVEL 4

The teacher designs activities to assist students to see relationships across disciplines by making connections between curriculum materials in the content area and related perspectives from another content area. They encourage students to evaluate resources including human and ICT to support their own learning. To maximise each student's progress, the teacher may use multiple entry points, which provide opportunities for all students to engage in the learning activity.

The teacher creates learning routines with students that are linked to learning expectations. They design activities that provide opportunities for students to develop academic vocabulary through oral and written construction and support them to apply their numeracy skills to different concepts. The teacher focuses practice on specific skills and processes in response to individual needs. They use conversation topics that generate thinking and that encourage students to justify and provide reasons for their responses to questions. The teacher helps students build on their peers' understanding by teaching the skills of reflective listening, paraphrasing and questioning.

The teacher aligns assessment strategies to learning goals and adjusts the learning tasks to student readiness. The teacher prompts, listens actively and monitors and adjusts instruction to ensure alignment with success criteria. They integrate multiple sources of evidence to inform their own assessment judgments. The teacher checks student understanding while modeling specific strategies for thinking about learning. They provide feedback on how students monitor and regulate their actions to achieve learning goals and develop procedures for students to collaboratively evaluate and adjust peer assessment processes to identify next steps for growth.

The teacher explicitly teaches social communication skills, with the aim of developing respectful interaction in whole group and small group discussions. They support students to hold each other to account for each student's contribution to the group's outcomes. They attend to students' verbal and non-verbal cues and respond to individual behaviour. They require students to be responsible for safe practices.

Australian Professional Standards For Teachers
Professional Practice Domain: Classroom Practice Continuum

Level 1
Level 2
Level 3
Level 4
Level 5
Level 6

LEVEL 5

The teacher uses a range of strategies to determine students' prior knowledge. They use this evidence to provide students with the opportunity to engage with challenging learning goals. To address misconceptions, the teacher constructs the required scaffolding with reference to domain-specific learning progressions. The teacher shares responsibility with students for establishing and reinforcing agreed learning expectations and refers to agreed routines.

They help students make sense of connections within and between curriculum areas by applying knowledge from more than one discipline to understand a concept or set of concepts. The teacher encourages students to use a range of perspectives to deepen their own understanding and supports them to identify personal connections with what they have learned. They provide students with choice in the selection of learning activities based on agreed learning goals and a variety of opportunities to apply their literacy skills to particular tasks. They support students to use strategies to maximise the opportunities for learning.

The teacher provides feedback on how students monitor, direct and regulate their actions to create products, complete tasks and achieve learning goals. They explain the relationship between the assessment method, the learning objectives and the nature of the evidence required to make decisions about progress and performance.

Transitions are student managed and efficient, maximising learning time. The teacher's pacing of the lesson gives students enough time to intellectually engage with the concepts and consolidate their understanding. The teacher demonstrates and encourages respect for all students' questions, ideas and ways of thinking.

The teacher asks students to support their contributions with evidence, pressing them for accuracy and reasoning. They give students time to grapple independently with the demanding aspects of open-ended tasks. The teacher asks students clarifying questions to enable student talk to predominate over teacher talk. The teacher involves students in adapting the learning space to support everyone's learning. They model strategies for students to manage their own safe and responsible use of ICT.

Australian Professional Standards For Teachers
Professional Practice Domain: Classroom Practice Continuum

Level 1
Level 2
Level 3
Level 4
Level 5
Level 6

LEVEL 6

The teacher supports students to use evidence, including prior learning experiences, to personalise their learning goals and align them with the curriculum standards. The teacher designs challenging tasks that require students to generate knowledge and elaborate upon information. They explain the taxonomy used to structure the learning activity and to inform the assessment criteria so that students understand the intellectual demands of the task.

The teacher makes students responsible for establishing deliberate practice routines to support their learning. They provide students with a choice of learning activities based on agreed learning goals that apply discipline-specific knowledge and skills including literacy and numeracy skills in gathering, analysing and presenting work. The teacher supports students to use different representations to develop their understanding of particular concepts and ideas. They develop students' communication skills in disciplinary and interdisciplinary contexts by creating meaningful opportunities to employ a variety of forms of communication that address different audiences and purposes.

The teacher supports students to develop their own questions that lead to further inquiry. They engage students in generating and evaluating new ideas and novel approaches, seeking inventive solutions to problems and developing original work.

The teacher develops procedures for students to individually evaluate and adjust their thinking about learning. They provide students with the opportunity to reflect critically on the strategies they have used to complete the learning task. The teacher tailors assessment criteria to monitor student progress towards complex task completion. They use a variety of methods to scaffold students' use of academic vocabulary to express complex reasoning.

Responsibility for designing group arrangements that are appropriate to particular learning goals and purposes is negotiated between the teacher and the students. The teacher supports students to critique one another's ideas in order to increase the intellectual rigour of the conversation. The teacher holds students accountable for implementing and monitoring ICT protocols.

Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership Limited

ISBN: 978-0-9874004-9-9.