



**ACT**  
Government  
Education

# GREAT TEACHERS BY DESIGN

A systemic approach to ensuring highly effective teachers in Canberra public schools





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teachers in Canberra public schools



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Enquiries about this publication should be directed to Media and Communications Telephone 6205 9423

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Telephone: Canberra Connect 132 281



## Minister's Message

ACT schools have a proven track record in providing a quality education that meets the needs and aspirations of children and young people in the Canberra community. Our results can be attributed to our passionate and highly skilled educators and the parents and carers who nurture, support and help their children meet educational goals every day.

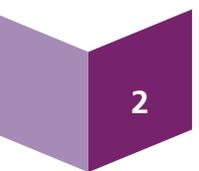
Although our schools are leading the nation in educational achievement, we cannot be complacent. Our commitment is to continue to strive for even better outcomes for all our students. This means looking for better ways to teach, better ways to inspire, and better ways to connect through partnerships with students, their families and the broader community.

Great teachers in every classroom in Canberra's public schools won't happen by chance. We are designing a system where improved professional engagement, knowledge and practice mean that all students in Canberra public schools will benefit from quality teaching – not by chance but by design.

The strategies and approaches outlined in *Great Teachers by Design: A systemic approach to ensuring highly effective teachers in Canberra public schools* are based on evidence from research and practice. They build on the innovative and high calibre work already underway in Canberra's public schools to inspire students, change young lives and foster a love of learning that will open doors to the future.

I commend this document to educational leaders across the ACT and look forward to working with the ACT community to ensure our students have the knowledge and skills necessary to become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed global citizens.

**Shane Rattenbury MLA**  
Minister for Education



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# Introduction: the importance of great teachers

It is clear that great teachers make a difference. However, great teachers in every classroom in Canberra's public schools won't happen by chance. In the Education Directorate, we aim to ensure that the best teachers enter our workforce, and that they are supported to develop their expertise and skills over the course of a rewarding career.

A quality education equips children and young people to become citizens with inquiring minds and dispositions, who become active, competent and thoughtfully critical members of our society and our complex world. <sup>2</sup>

Great teachers already work in Canberra's public schools. One of Australia's national objectives is to achieve among the top five countries in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) by 2025. <sup>3</sup>

PISA results indicate that the ACT public school system is one of the highest performing systems in Australia. <sup>4</sup>

While the ACT out-performs all other Australian educational jurisdictions, we have set ourselves the goal of doing even better.

Within the National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), mean comparisons between ACT schools and similar schools in other jurisdictions suggest that there is room for improvement in the ACT.

High performing students require extension, students who achieve in the mid-range need to be supported to perform at higher levels, and low-performing students require additional support to achieve quality outcomes. Students from less advantaged backgrounds also require additional support to reach their potential. <sup>5</sup> The performance gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and non-Indigenous students also remains.

System-wide improvement in student outcomes requires an explicit improvement agenda grounded in evidence from research and practice and measured, in part, by improvements in student outcomes in systematic and national assessments. <sup>6</sup>

In the ACT, our challenge is to improve educational achievement for all students, irrespective of their background, circumstances or the school they attend.

A systemic approach to reflection, discussion and action by principals, teachers and school leaders is aimed at ensuring that all students benefit from highly effective teaching – not by chance but by design.

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*Fundamentally the most powerful way to think about a teacher's role is for teachers to see themselves as evaluators of their effect on students*

*Hattie et al 2014* <sup>1</sup>

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*...students do well when they have a series of very good teachers – not by chance but by design.*

*Hargreaves and Fullan 2012* <sup>7</sup>

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# Our intent: use evidence to challenge ourselves

The impact great teachers have on students' cognitive, affective, social and behavioural outcomes outweighs the effect of every other factor outside of family background, including education programs or policies.<sup>8</sup>

This impact is so significant that even a 10% increase in teacher effectiveness would lift the achievement of Australia's education systems, resulting in improved economic growth at the national level and substantial benefits for society and individuals.<sup>9 10</sup>

Great teachers collaborate with colleagues, use data to find out what their students know and what they need to know, challenge and set high expectations for their students, employ evidence-based practices, monitor and evaluate learning, engage with parents and strive to improve student outcomes across all domains.<sup>11</sup>

In developing Great Teachers by Design we have drawn heavily on the work of Andy Hargreaves and Michael Fullan detailed within *Professional Capital: Transforming Teaching in Every School* (2012). We highlight their focus on the importance of students having a series of high quality teachers, because over time, that makes the most difference.

According to Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) *students do well when they have a series of very good teachers – not by chance but by design.*

Students taught by a great teacher can learn in six months what students taught by a less effective teacher will take a year to learn.<sup>12</sup> This effect is cumulative; students taught by a succession of high-performing teachers will progress three times as fast as those placed with less-effective teachers.<sup>13 14</sup>

Conversely, when students are not exposed to high-performing teachers, the effects endure for years and students find it very difficult to recover in their learning.<sup>15 16</sup>

Effective school leaders 'create cultures of high expectations, provide clarity about what teachers are to teach and students are to learn, establish strong professional learning communities and lead ongoing efforts to improve teaching practices.'<sup>17</sup>

Teachers are a school's greatest resource and as a consequence improving teacher effectiveness ensures the best return on the investment for our students.

The evidence base within this publication supports the development of great teachers to improve student outcomes in Canberra public schools.

Each section contains key actions that will drive improvement in teaching and learning in Canberra public schools.

School leaders are encouraged to use the alignment with the AITSL Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and the Questions for reflection and discussion at the end of each section to engage with teachers about their professional practice

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*In the ACT every child, young person and adult will benefit from a high quality, accessible education, childcare and training system.*

*Every student will learn, thrive and be equipped with the skills and attitudes to lead fulfilling, productive and responsible lives.*

*Our highly educated and skilled community will contribute to the economic and social prosperity of our city and the nation.*

ACT Education Directorate  
**Strategic Plan 2014-17**<sup>18</sup>

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# Our frameworks for improvement

Sound research and evidence about great teaching underpins the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, the National School Improvement Tool and the ACT Teacher Quality Institute (TQI) quality assurance frameworks.

## Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership Standards

Across the world, high performing education professional systems clearly articulate the standards and capacities required of great teachers. These standards are embedded throughout the school and education system.<sup>19</sup>

They encompass strong subject matter knowledge, pedagogical skills, capacity to respond to student diversity, the importance of effective collaboration with colleagues, and the capacity to engage in ongoing development.<sup>20</sup>

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (the Standards) are the benchmarks that guide professional practice, engagement and growth. They describe the essential elements of teacher quality in the ACT.

In 2014, an interim evaluation of the implementation of the Standards reported that teachers, particularly early career teachers, have a good knowledge of, and are positive in their attitudes towards the Standards.

Further, teachers and school leaders believe that the Standards are of benefit to the teaching profession.<sup>21</sup>

The AITSL Standards are referred to throughout this document as a key reference point for teachers and school leaders in the drive for improvement and enhanced student outcomes.



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*The critical question  
... is how the  
standards will be used,  
how universally they  
will be applied and  
how they may lead  
to stronger learning  
opportunities and  
more common sets of  
knowledge, skills and  
commitment across  
the profession.*

*Darling-Hammond and  
Lieberman 2012<sup>22</sup>*

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# People, Practice and Performance: School Improvement in Canberra Public Schools - A Framework for Performance and Accountability

In the ACT we have embedded the domains of the National School Improvement Tool into our *People, Practice and Performance: School Improvement in Canberra Public Schools - A Framework for Performance and Accountability*. The tool was informed by 'research into the practices of highly effective schools and school leaders' <sup>23</sup> and has been designed to support schools in their school improvement planning and practices.

Each Section of Great Teaching by Design references the alignment to the ACT approach to school improvement embedded within the *People, Practice and Performance: School Improvement in Canberra Public Schools - A Framework for Performance and Accountability*.

PEOPLE	
<b>Effective partnerships</b>	• School-community partnerships
	• A culture that promotes learning
<b>Strategic management of resources</b>	• An expert teaching team
	• Targeted use of school resources
PRACTICE	
<b>Effective teaching and learning</b>	• Systematic curriculum delivery
	• Differentiated teaching and learning
	• Effective pedagogical practices
PERFORMANCE	
<b>An evaluation culture</b>	• An explicit improvement agenda
	• Analysis and discussion of data

# ACT Teacher Quality Institute

The ACT Government established the ACT Teacher Quality Institute (TQI) to ensure rigorous processes for teacher registration, and measures that enhance teacher quality throughout each teacher's career.

*The Education Directorate works with TQI to improve teacher quality by:*

- integrating the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers into teacher performance and development through the Annual Professional Discussion
- facilitating quality assured professional learning for teachers
- rewarding Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers.

Together, the *TQI Code of professional practice and conduct for ACT teachers* and the Directorate's *Teachers' Code of Professional Practice* <sup>24</sup> ensure accountability and promote community confidence in the teaching profession.

## Code of professional practice and conduct for ACT teachers

*The purpose of this Code is to state the principles that guide teacher practice and conduct. It enables the profession to affirm its public accountability. It promotes community confidence in the teaching profession.*

In our professional practice we as teachers will always demonstrate

**Integrity** - personal and professional integrity

**Respect** - respect for others

**Responsibility** - acceptance of responsibility for our contribution to the profession and through it to the community.

We demonstrate **integrity** by

- displaying professional behaviour and practice appropriate to the role of a teacher
- creating and maintaining professional relationships with students, parents and carers, colleagues and the community
- maintaining standards of professional and personal conduct consistent with community expectations and complying with this code and other professional codes.

We demonstrate **respect** by

- dealing with students honourably, fairly and impartially
- communicating appropriately with students, parents and carers, colleagues and other people
- showing consideration to other people for cultural, ethnic, religious and personal differences.

We demonstrate **responsibility** by

- maintaining our professional knowledge, practice and engagement
- demonstrating commitment to the education and wellbeing of students
- behaving at all times lawfully, courteously and in ways that enhance the standing of the teaching profession.

Authorised by the ACT Parliamentary Council.





# Recruitment, support and recognition

International research demonstrates that high performing education systems recruit high quality candidates, support their development as effective instructors, and build career structures that reward great teaching. <sup>26 27</sup>

The ACT Education Directorate is responsible for recruiting, developing and sustaining a quality teaching workforce in Canberra's public schools. We continue to achieve this by recruiting the best teachers, supporting their development, and recognising and rewarding outstanding classroom practice.

The Directorate is committed to recruiting the best graduates and to keeping our best teachers in our classrooms by recognising and rewarding them through salaries based on expertise, performance and achievement of standards throughout their career. This aligns with approaches used by high performing education systems across the world. Countries with high-performing education systems align their teacher professional standards with career path structures and ensure rewards are based on performance. <sup>28</sup>

## Recruitment

### Graduate pathways into education

To maintain a quality teaching workforce, the Directorate uses the AITSL Standards as a guide to recruit the best graduates to public education.

Candidates who have demonstrated outstanding achievement, competence and commitment as undergraduate teachers are recruited into ACT public schools. These teachers demonstrate personal literacy and numeracy skills in the top 30% of the population.

In the ACT we have strong partnerships with tertiary teacher training providers and continue to work closely with local universities to ensure graduates achieve the required standards.

The Directorate also works with universities at the post-graduate level in programs such as the Masters of Teaching and Teach for Australia, both of which provide highly qualified graduates from other disciplines with pathways into teaching.

Teacher quality is not only determined by the effectiveness of teachers, but also by the environment in which they work. Great teachers will not necessarily reach their potential in settings where the appropriate support, or sufficient challenge and reward are not provided. <sup>29</sup>

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*The quality of a school system rests on the quality of its teachers.*

*McKinsey and Company 2007* <sup>25</sup>

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## Support

### Partnerships with universities

The Directorate works in partnership with universities to support pre-service teacher education programs.

Practicums in public schools provide undergraduate education students with essential practical experiences and skills that align with the theory and research presented in their university course.

### New educator support

The Directorate supports beginning teachers to develop quality teaching practices within a professional teaching service through:

- induction
- New Educator Coordinators at each school
- a New Educator Support Program which provides resources over three years for additional professional learning
- reduced teaching hours to facilitate coaching and mentoring during the first year of teaching
- probation and teacher registration assessment processes.

### Teacher Appraisal

The Directorate is committed to ongoing improvement of our appraisal and feedback processes, based on the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership's (AITSL) Professional Standards.

To enhance the Directorate's performance and appraisal processes, teachers in ACT public schools will be provided with written feedback twice a year from 2016, and be encouraged to provide each other with feedback on their performance, with reference to the AITSL Standards.

### Professional Pathways

*Professional Pathways* supports the continuous improvement of performance through effective goal setting and evidence-based feedback. Teachers participate in annual development of professional goals, followed by mid-cycle and summative reviews of progress towards achieving them. Teachers are encouraged to self-evaluate their teaching practice, and use the Standards as a guide to improvement.

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*How teachers are selected, developed and supported throughout their careers has a strong impact on the performance of students.*

*Andreas Schleicher 2014* <sup>30</sup>

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## Annual professional discussions

The annual professional discussion enables classroom teachers and their principal and/or supervisor to reflect on and discuss their current performance and professional responsibilities. Discussions include a focus on career development and planning of continuous improvement and professional growth for every teacher.

ACT teachers have the opportunity to build capability in various roles across the system through annual transfer opportunities between schools or to central office positions. Teacher transfer links closely with both individual professional development and organisational growth, and builds a vibrant, highly skilled workforce.

Teacher transfer, through a merit-based selection process, balances the skills, aspirations and career plans of the individual, with the requirements of schools and the system. Principals and School Network Leaders consider the requirement for teacher transfer, and the connection to career development and system growth, in a formal way each year through annual professional discussions.

## Recognition

The Directorate supports educators and rewards outstanding teachers by recognising:

### *Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers*

Teachers who achieve certification at the Highly Accomplished Teacher and Lead Teacher standards are awarded an additional salary increment or equivalent.

### *Executive Teacher Professional Practice*

Executive Teachers Professional Practice are exemplary classroom teachers recognised through promotion to the School Leader C classification within the classroom. The Executive Teacher Professional Practice leads highly effective pedagogy through demonstrating exemplary teaching practice and coaching, mentoring and team teaching with colleagues at their schools.

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*If all teachers  
accept the need to  
improve practice...  
we will be able to  
prepare our students  
to thrive in the  
impossibly complex,  
unpredictable world  
of the 21st Century.*

*Dylan Wiliam 2012* <sup>31</sup>

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# Great Teachers by Design

Greater understanding about the central role of great teachers in improving student outcomes has generated an evidence base of the most effective strategies for building teacher capacity.<sup>32</sup> The Great Teachers by Design framework provides school leaders with a range of evidence-based strategies and key actions to support and develop great teachers, and improve educational outcomes for all students.

Teachers and school leaders are encouraged to use this design framework to inform school improvement plans, programs and practices. The elements of the design framework are not mutually exclusive; teachers and school leaders should look for opportunities to integrate and align the strategies and key actions outlined below to develop a coherent approach that suits their context.

*Each section:*

- includes key actions to support improvement in teacher effectiveness
- highlights the relevant AITSL Standards
- Identifies links to *People, Practice and Performance: School Improvement in Canberra Public Schools - A Framework for Performance and Accountability*

*and is*

- accompanied by a series of discussion questions to assist school leaders and teachers to reflect on and improve practice.



# Great teachers collaborate

## Key Action:

We will strengthen collaboration between teachers and across schools with a focus on improving student outcomes.

Along with *Respect, Integrity and Innovation*, *Collaboration* is a key ACT Public Service value and central to achieving the goals and priorities articulated in the ACT Education Directorate's Strategic Plan 2014-17.<sup>34 35</sup>

The Directorate is committed to strengthening collaboration within and across schools, and to enabling teachers to share innovative practice in professional learning communities, including online collaborations.

High performing systems around the world recognise and support systems that enable great teachers to collaborate and learn from each other.<sup>36 37</sup>

The AITSL Australian Professional Standards for Teachers affirm that teaching is a collaborative profession.<sup>38</sup>

Teachers who collaborate share many benefits; they not only become better teachers, but renew their enthusiasm for teaching and build capacity within and across schools.<sup>39</sup>

Collaboration provides opportunities where many aspects of practice can be reconsidered through open and honest reflection.<sup>40</sup> Systems benefit when great teachers collaborate across schools.

This is more than just sharing good practice; it is a commitment to make the learning from one school available to the whole system to increase capacity and benefit all students.

Research demonstrates that the most effective school leaders find ways to enable great teachers to work together within and across schools.<sup>41</sup> They recognise that planning, teaching and reviewing practice with other great teachers is central to the development of the professional knowledge of practice.<sup>42</sup>

It is essential for great teachers to work in professional groups to evaluate their impact on student learning, critique each other's impact and form professional judgements about how best to influence the learning of all students in their class.<sup>43 44</sup>

Building collaboration and strong professional communities at the school level enables all teachers to improve their practice, leading to improved outcomes for students.<sup>46 47</sup>

Partnerships with multidisciplinary colleagues within and beyond schools and with cross-government agencies also strengthen a school's capacity to best meet the needs of students.

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*Building new and collaborative cultures within and across schools builds individual and especially collective capacity to improve instruction linked to student needs and achievement. This work is driven by the moral imperative of raising the bar and closing the gap for all students, and doing so for the whole system – not just for some schools, but for all students...*

**Michael Fullan 2011**<sup>33</sup>

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*Active collaboration, in which teachers learn from each other through team teaching, joint research projects and classroom observation and feedback, has a positive impact on students.*

**Ben Jensen 2014**<sup>45</sup>

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## Professional Learning Communities

Professional learning communities are committed to improving the learning of every student.<sup>49</sup>

Professional learning communities engage in embedded and ongoing collaborative cycles of inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve.<sup>50</sup>

*Effective professional learning communities share the following characteristics:*<sup>51</sup>

- a focus on teaching and learning
- individual and collective belief in and support for the profession
- an emphasis on problem- or issue-based learning
- high expectations and accountability
- strong leadership within and outside of the group
- effective overall dynamics.

New and emerging technologies provide contemporary and innovative opportunities for teacher collaboration. Online professional communities enable teachers to share ideas, resources and examples of practice, solutions are 'crowd sourced' and quality assurance occurs through peer review and iteration.<sup>52</sup>

## Questions for reflection and discussion

1. How do we encourage teachers to collaborate and share ideas, planning and resources at our school?
2. What opportunities do we provide for teachers to observe, coach and mentor colleagues to build capacity and improve practice across our school?
3. How do we facilitate professional communities focused on improving the impact of teaching in our school?
4. How do you facilitate collaboration between multi-disciplinary professionals who share your interest in addressing the academic, emotional, social and other needs of your students?

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*Effective teaching is both a science and an art, and much of the art and professional wisdom reside in classroom and staffroom. When teachers teach using evidence-based practices and collaborate by engaging with data about the effects, they synthesise these two important sources of pedagogical expertise.*

**A Shaddock 2014**<sup>48</sup>

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*Collaborative practices shift the drive for change away from the centre to the front lines of schools, helping to make system improvement self-sustaining.*

**Mourshed et al 2010**<sup>53</sup>

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<b>An evaluation culture</b>	• An explicit improvement agenda
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*Collaboration can help to break down those barriers and encourage learning about what we do, how and why.*

*J Loughran 2010* <sup>54</sup>

### *AITSL Standards*

- 3.3 Use teaching strategies
- 3.4 Select and use resources
- 3.5 Use effective classroom communication
- 3.7 Engage parents/carers in the educative process
- 4.1 Support student participation
- 4.2 Manage classroom activities
- 4.3 Manage challenging behaviour
- 4.4 Maintain student safety
- 6.1 Identify and plan professional learning needs
- 6.2 Engage in professional learning and improve practice
- 6.4 Apply professional learning and improve student learning
- 6.3 Engage with colleagues and improve practice
- 7.1 Meet professional ethics and responsibilities
- 7.4 Engage with professional teaching networks and broader communities

# Great teachers use data and evidence

## Key Action:

We will use data and evidence to identify individual students' learning needs and develop effective programs for all students.

Top performing school systems recognise that they cannot improve what they do not measure.<sup>56</sup>

The *National School Improvement Tool* highlights the importance of systematically collecting and analysing student outcome data to support instructional improvement in each school, differentiation in classrooms and improved student achievement.<sup>57</sup>

In addition to its prominence in the AITSL standards, the model for professional practice for Australian Principals indicates that gathering and analysing data are essential components of educational leadership.<sup>58</sup>

Research demonstrates that when teachers systematically engage with data, they foster the development of thriving learning communities and evidence-based school cultures.<sup>60 61</sup>

*This results in improved:*

- student learning
- teaching practices
- school performance and capacity.

In Canberra public schools, great teachers have high expectations for the achievement of all students. They know that collecting and interpreting data allows them to find out what their students know and what they need to know to make progress.<sup>62 63</sup>

Effective teachers gather a range of qualitative and quantitative data about their students' learning. They use multiple sources of evidence to profile students' learning, including information derived from system assessments, standardised tests, classroom-based rich assessment tasks, individualised assessments, student self-assessments and attendance and behaviour data.<sup>64</sup>

Cross referencing or 'triangulating' a range of data validates teacher judgement and provides a more complete picture of student learning.<sup>65</sup>

This information supports teachers to identify students' strengths and gaps in their learning, consider what success looks like and make important adjustments to their teaching to address the learning needs of all students.<sup>66 67 68</sup>

Great teachers have a mind frame in which they see it is their role to evaluate their effect on learning.<sup>69</sup>

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*Only a laser-like focus on student achievement data will enable us to put FACES on the data so that we can improve instruction for all our students – our ultimate vision – our moral imperative.*

*Sharratt and Fullan 2012*<sup>55</sup>

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*The teaching profession as a whole is strengthened when rigour and integrity form the basis of what we understand to be good learning and teaching.*

*Whitby 2009*<sup>59</sup>

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The cycle of continuous formative assessment is at the heart of effective teaching.<sup>70</sup>

Formative assessments are designed to make students' thinking visible to permit the teacher to understand students' preconceptions and design instruction accordingly.<sup>71</sup>

Assessment is formative when evidence about student achievement is elicited, interpreted and used by teachers, and students, to make decisions about the next steps in instruction. These decisions are likely to be more effective and better targeted than decisions made in the absence of the data collected.<sup>73</sup>

Research demonstrates that strengthening the practice of formative assessment results in significant, and often substantial, improvements in student learning. This is true for students of all ages and abilities, and across a range of learning areas.<sup>74 75</sup>

Formative assessment processes are enhanced by professional discourse about evidence, collaborative analysis and discussion of data, and engaging with colleagues to improve teaching practices.<sup>76 77</sup>

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*It is critical that teachers learn about the success or otherwise of their interventions: those teachers who are students of their own effects are the teachers who are most influential in raising students' achievement.*

**Hattie 2009**<sup>72</sup>

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*For that conversation to be successful, evidence is required; and if evidence is to go beyond the anecdotal, then good data is essential.*

**Barber 2012**<sup>78</sup>

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## Questions for reflection and discussion

1. What opportunities are provided at our school for teachers to collaborate in the analysis of student achievement data?
2. What data is collected at a whole-school level to inform teachers' understanding of students' learning and progress? How is this data recorded?
3. How do teachers at our school address gaps in students' learning?
4. What types of formative assessment are used in our school to provide students with authentic and timely feedback?

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### *AITSL Standards*

- 3.6 Evaluate and improve teaching programs
- 5.1 Assess student learning
- 5.2 Provide feedback to students on their learning
- 5.3 Make consistent and comparable judgements
- 5.4 Interpret student data
- 6.3 Engage with colleagues and improve practice

# Great teachers engage in professional learning

## Key Action:

We will facilitate and support effective and high quality professional learning for teachers.

Schools and education systems that perform well on international measures of student performance give teachers time for ongoing professional learning and reflection.<sup>80</sup>

The Directorate is committed to facilitating evidence-based and quality assured professional learning design to improve teaching and enhance outcomes for all students.

Professional development, in the traditional sense, is associated with some form of up-skilling in relation to new things teachers are expected to do or deliver. In this sense, professional development is about implementing change in schools and classrooms, based on decisions made elsewhere.<sup>81</sup>

Professional learning is different. Essentially, professional learning carries an expectation that teachers bring expertise and that change is a result of working with and/or by teachers to enhance teaching and improve student learning.<sup>82</sup>

Recognition of the power of professional learning to improve teachers' practice and positive impact on student outcomes has never been greater.<sup>83 84</sup>

Effective professional learning is not periodic or intermittent, rather continuous and integrated.<sup>85</sup>

Effective teacher professional learning programs that focus on continual improvement in teaching and learning are a key strategy for improving student achievement.<sup>88 89</sup>

Most effective teacher professional learning occurs over a period of time, involves external experts where required, deepens teachers' knowledge and extends their skills, and, most critically, challenges teachers' discourse and conceptions about learning and teaching.<sup>89</sup>

Research on the characteristics of effective professional learning indicates that teachers need to be active agents in analysing their practice in relation to professional standards and standards for student learning.<sup>90</sup> Research also highlights the pivotal role of the principal as the key leader and participant in teachers' learning and development.<sup>91</sup>

*The features of professional learning that have an impact on student learning typically feature:*

- mentoring and coaching based on classroom observation and the provision of timely feedback on an ongoing basis
- collaborating to analyse student achievement data and devise strategies to improve each student's learning
- collaborating to plan and monitor learning programs based on evidence about how students learn best.<sup>92 93</sup>

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*...part of professional learning must involve discovering new ways of seeing situations, testing out alternative approaches and learning to see practice from not only a teacher's but also a learner's perspective.*

**Loughran 2010**<sup>79</sup>

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*Professional learning leads to enhanced pedagogical expertise and therefore improves the quality of student learning.*

**Loughran 2010**<sup>86</sup>

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## Questions for reflection and discussion

1. What opportunities are provided at our school for teachers to engage in professional learning to improve the impact of their teaching?
2. How do we ensure teachers' strengths, expertise and knowledge are recognised and shared at our school?
3. How do we support teachers at our school to evaluate and enhance the impact of their teaching?
4. How do we use whole-school data to inform areas for professional learning?

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*Teaching is not just a matter of doing, it is about the doing informing the practice and how that doing is captured, reflected on, deconstructed and reconstructed in a genuine effort to learn from experiences.*

*Loughran 2010*<sup>94</sup>

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### *AITSL Standards*

- 3.5 Use effective classroom communication
- 3.6 Evaluate and improve teaching programs
- 4.2 Manage classroom activities
- 4.3 Manage challenging behaviour
- 4.4 Maintain student safety
- 6.1 Identify and plan professional learning needs
- 6.2 Engage in professional learning and improve practice
- 6.4 Apply professional learning and improve student learning
- 7.4 Engage with professional teaching networks and broader communities

# Great teachers engage in and with research

## Key Action:

We will increase opportunities for teachers to engage in and with research.

Across the world, and in every domain, successful organisations are transforming the ways in which they build the capacity of their employees. This includes a reorientation towards knowledge creation, as well as the acquisition of knowledge and skills.<sup>95</sup>

Teachers in high performing education systems continually reflect on and update their knowledge and professional behaviour and give due attention to evidence-based practices, that is, what works and what doesn't.<sup>96</sup>

At times there is a perceived gap between the theory (the 'knowing') and practice (the 'doing') of teaching.

Bridging the perceived gap between theory and practice is important so that the complexity of teaching and learning can be examined and analysed, the outcomes of which inform more effective practice.<sup>97</sup>

Great teaching can be viewed as a learning process that combines theory and practice in ways that build expertise.<sup>98</sup> For great teachers, there is value in recognising, articulating and expanding their knowledge of practice.<sup>99</sup>

Teaching and research, like theory and practice, should not be seen as separate entities; it is difficult to see how teaching can be improved without a research tradition that is accessible to and affects great teaching.<sup>100</sup>

The value of teacher research is that what teachers know, need to know and are able to do is understood very differently when examined from the teacher's perspective.<sup>101</sup>

There are important questions about teaching and learning that can only be articulated and examined by teachers. This kind of research generates meaningful specialist knowledge that is immediately applicable in practice.<sup>102</sup>

Teacher researchers are primarily concerned with the impact of their teaching on students' learning. In conducting research, teachers uncover new and insightful ways of understanding pedagogy and quality teaching.<sup>103</sup>

Not all teachers or schools will design and conduct their own research projects, but everyone can engage with research. This means being a discerning user of research by verifying that a particular research-based approach is actually improving student outcomes.

*Teachers engaging in and with research describes a range of activities such as:*

- literature reviews
- peer to peer observations
- analysis of data
- small scale group enquiries
- school wide investigations
- thematic studies by inter-school research cooperatives
- participation in large scale longitudinal studies.

The Directorate is committed to providing increased opportunities for all teachers to engage in a research-rich system of school based professional learning. Teachers engaging with and conducting research have the capacity to actively engage with new knowledge and professional learning focused on the evidence-base for improved practice. <sup>104</sup>

## Questions for reflection and discussion

1. How do we support teachers at our school to reflect on and incorporate evidence-based practices?
2. How do we encourage, share and celebrate innovative and effective practice at our school?
3. How do we promote, encourage and support teachers to engage in research at our school?

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*It is this ability to identify with the problems, issues and concerns of other teachers in similar situations that is an initial allure in teacher research because of the possibility that new ideas and approaches to teaching and learning might be gleaned from someone else's work. In doing so, we might then be better able to adapt, adjust and apply that in our own practice – to find or develop something that will work in class tomorrow.*

**Loughran 2010** <sup>105</sup>

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PEOPLE	
<b>Effective partnerships</b>	• School-community partnerships
	• A culture that promotes learning
<b>Strategic management of resources</b>	• An expert teaching team
	• Targeted use of school resources
PRACTICE	
<b>Effective teaching and learning</b>	• Systematic curriculum delivery
	• Differentiated teaching and learning
	• Effective pedagogical practices
PERFORMANCE	
<b>An evaluation culture</b>	• An explicit improvement agenda
	• Analysis and discussion of data

### *AITSL Standards*

- 1.1 Physical, social and intellectual development and characteristics of students
- 1.2 Understand how students learn
- 1.3 Students with diverse linguistic, cultural, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds
- 1.6 Strategies to support full participation of students with disability
- 2.1 Content and teaching strategies of the teaching area
- 2.5 Literacy and numeracy strategies
- 5.4 Interpret student data
- 6.2 Engage in professional learning and improve practice
- 6.3 Engage with colleagues and improve practice
- 6.4 Apply professional learning and improve student learning



# Great teachers use the Quality Teaching model

## Key Action:

We will use the Quality Teaching model to improve classroom practice and enhance student learning.

High performing systems around the world focus on improving the capacity of great teachers as a key strategy for improving student achievement.<sup>107</sup>

Great teachers are keen observers of their own behaviours, as well as the behaviours of others. It is in this way that teachers consciously develop strategies and approaches to enable high quality teaching and powerful student learning.<sup>108</sup>

Great teaching is characterised by practices such as intellectual challenge, support for learning, linking and relevance, and sensitivity to diversity, to name a few, all of which extend the practice of teaching and effective learning beyond the subject matter alone.<sup>109</sup>

Research demonstrates that, for many teachers, 'knowledge of practice' is very difficult to talk about. However, this discussion and reflection is very important as it allows the theoretical perspectives that underpin teachers' practice to emerge.<sup>110</sup>

The reflective practitioner understands the importance of language as a basis for their professional knowledge of practice because it is crucial in shaping expertise and illustrates how such expertise draws on theory and practice in complementary rather than exclusive or contradictory ways.<sup>111</sup>

The Quality Teaching model is a powerful framework for enacting a research-based, clinical approach to teacher development, and a mechanism for teachers to initiate professional conversations and provide powerful feedback, ensuring consistency in productive practices and strong collegial support for teachers at all stages of their careers.<sup>112 113 114</sup>

A substantial body of research linking pedagogical practices to improved outcomes for all students supports each of the three dimensions of the Quality Teaching model.<sup>115</sup> These dimensions are *intellectual quality, a quality learning environment and significance*.

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*The quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers.*  
**McKinsey and Company 2007**

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### *The three dimensions of the Quality Teaching model*

Each of the three dimensions of the Quality Teaching model is comprised of six elements (see Appendix A).<sup>116</sup>

There is compelling evidence that the Quality Teaching model has a significant impact on the quality of teaching, the level of productive collaboration among teachers and improvements in student outcomes, including narrowing equity gaps for Aboriginal students and students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds, within and across schools.<sup>117</sup>

The Directorate is committed to the continued use of the Quality Teaching model to support great teachers and to improve outcomes for all students.

## **Questions for reflection and discussion**

1. How do teachers at our school use the Quality Teaching model as a reflective tool, and to initiate professional conversations and feedback?
2. How do teachers at our school use the Quality Teaching model to improve the impact of their teaching?
3. What systems are in place at our school to support continual improvement in practice for teachers at all stages of their career?

PEOPLE	
<b>Effective partnerships</b>	• School-community partnerships
	• A culture that promotes learning
<b>Strategic management of resources</b>	• An expert teaching team
	• Targeted use of school resources
PRACTICE	
<b>Effective teaching and learning</b>	• Systematic curriculum delivery
	• Differentiated teaching and learning
	• Effective pedagogical practices
PERFORMANCE	
<b>An evaluation culture</b>	• An explicit improvement agenda
	• Analysis and discussion of data

### *AITSL Standards*

- 1.2 Understand how students learn
- 1.3 Students with diverse linguistic, cultural, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds
- 1.4 Strategies for teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- 1.5 Differentiate teaching to meet the specific learning needs of students across the full range of abilities
- 1.6 Strategies to support full participation of students with disability
- 2.1 Content and teaching strategies of the teaching area
- 2.2 Content selection and organisation
- 2.3 Curriculum, assessment and reporting
- 2.5 Literacy and numeracy strategies
- 3.2 Plan, structure and sequence learning programs
- 3.3 Use teaching strategies
- 3.6 Evaluate and improve teaching programs

# Great teachers actively seek and respond to feedback

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*The most powerful single influence enhancing achievement is feedback.*

*John Hattie 2009* <sup>118</sup>

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## Key Action:

- Teachers will increase their effectiveness through promoting student voice and actively seeking and responding to student feedback.
- We will provide all teachers with high-quality feedback, based on the AITSL Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, to improve their performance.

In addition to reflecting on their own performance, critically reflective teachers actively seek feedback from others, especially their students and their colleagues. Engaging with contemporary research also enables great teachers to strengthen their teaching practice.

Brookfield notes that while self-reflection may be the foundation for reflective teaching, it is essential to engage more actively with the student experience in order to 'teach more responsively'. <sup>120</sup>

Research demonstrates that regular constructive feedback about performance is a key component in improving teacher quality and improving student achievement. <sup>121</sup>

According to 2013 TALIS data, 97% of teachers in Australia reported being formally appraised and 54% reported that they were assigned a mentor to support improved practice. <sup>122</sup> However, almost half of these teachers stated that the appraisal and feedback systems had little or no impact on their teaching. Most believed that the appraisal and feedback process was primarily an administrative exercise and detrimental to their job satisfaction. More than two-thirds agreed feedback was not based on a thorough assessment of their teaching, and a similar proportion did not believe that the best-performing teachers at their school received the greatest recognition.

Furthermore, while 80% of school leaders report providing feedback to teachers based on the AITSL Professional Standards for Teachers, only 43% of teachers report receiving such feedback. <sup>123</sup>

High quality feedback supports great teaching and improved learning outcomes for students. Feedback should be 'structured explicitly as a continuous professional learning opportunity' that enables teachers to work on improving student outcomes. <sup>124</sup>

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*Schools exist primarily for the benefit of students and students should have a voice in shaping school culture, policies and practices.*

*Shaddock, Packer, Roy 2015* <sup>119</sup>

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*Feedback is most effective when:*

- the focus is kept clearly on improving student outcomes
- feedback is related to clear, specific and challenging goals
- attention is on the learning rather than the person
- teachers engage in continuous, independent learning
- feedback is mediated by a mentor in an environment of trust and support
- the school's leadership promotes a culture of professional learning and support.<sup>125</sup>

Hattie and Timperley<sup>126</sup> suggest that effective feedback provides answers to three questions:

***Where am I going?***

***How am I going?***

***Where to next?***

Further, they argue that effective feedback operates at four levels: the task, process, self-regulation, and self levels.<sup>127</sup>

The Directorate is committed to providing quality feedback to teachers based on the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership's (AITSL) Professional Standards.

## Questions for reflection and discussion

1. What strategies do teachers in our school use to actively seek, listen and respond to student feedback?
2. What opportunities are provided for teachers in our school to receive relevant, ongoing and timely feedback on their professional practice?
3. Is feedback valued by teachers at our school? How do we know?
4. How do we ensure feedback provided to teachers at our school is focussed on improving the impact of their teaching?
5. How do we use universal data to measure the impact of improved teaching?
6. How do we support the establishment and maintenance of positive professional relationships, and a safe environment for providing teachers with feedback at our school?
7. In what ways are the AITSL Professional Standards integrated into our school's teacher appraisal and feedback processes?

*A great teacher knows me.  
They know me as a person  
and how I learn.  
Harry (Year 6)*

*A great teacher is someone  
who cares about me and  
the work I do.  
Freya (Year 2)*

*You know you have a great  
teacher when they make  
learning seamless. By that  
I mean you don't actually  
realise that the learning  
is tough, you are just  
completely engaged in that  
space. They make teaching  
an art!  
Jessica (Year 12)*

PEOPLE	
<b>Effective partnerships</b>	• School-community partnerships
	• A culture that promotes learning
<b>Strategic management of resources</b>	• An expert teaching team
	• Targeted use of school resources
PRACTICE	
<b>Effective teaching and learning</b>	• Systematic curriculum delivery
	• Differentiated teaching and learning
	• Effective pedagogical practices
PERFORMANCE	
<b>An evaluation culture</b>	• An explicit improvement agenda
	• Analysis and discussion of data

### *AITSL Standards*

- 1.5 Differentiate teaching to meet the specific learning needs of students across the full range of abilities
- 3.5 Use effective classroom communication
- 3.6 Evaluate and improve teaching programs
- 4.1 Support student participation
- 5.4 Interpret student data
- 6.2 Engage in professional learning and improve practice
- 6.3 Engage with colleagues and improve practice

# Great teachers engage parents

## Key Action:

We will strengthen parental engagement in schooling.

Strong parent-community-school ties are an essential support for school improvement. <sup>128</sup>

Many of the strategies articulated in the Directorate's Engaging Schools Framework to strengthen teaching and learning are contingent on connections with communities, and best supported by a whole-school approach to building an engaging school culture. <sup>129</sup>

Great teachers build and sustain respectful relationships and positive partnerships with students, parents and their community. These partnerships and connections between the most important environments in which young people learn have the potential to enhance learning and success. <sup>130 131</sup>

Parental engagement consists of partnerships between families and schools to raise parental awareness of the benefits of engaging in their children's education and supporting them with the skills to do so. <sup>132</sup>

The ACT Government and the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) have collaborated in a parental engagement project - an Australian first. One outcome is the ACT definition of parental engagement that will shape the way ACT schools engage parents.

## ACT Definition: Parental engagement in learning

*Parental engagement* involves partnerships between families and schools to promote children's learning and wellbeing.

*Parental engagement* recognises the important role that parents and teachers both play in children's learning and development. It is most effective when focused on developing positive attitudes in children towards learning and education, building their motivation and confidence as learners and fostering their enjoyment of learning.

### Parental engagement involves:

- family-led learning focused on high aspirations for children, shared reading, a positive environment for homework, parent-child conversation, a cognitively stimulating home environment and support for social and emotional wellbeing.
- family-school partnerships that encourage positive parent-teacher relationships, communication about children's progress, and engagement in the school community, while equipping parents to effectively support and encourage their children's learning and wellbeing.

Positive parental engagement in school education enhances students' academic success and wellbeing, and strengthens students' learning experiences in the home and in the community.<sup>133 134</sup>

For example, one study found that schools with strong family engagement were four times more likely to improve students' reading over time and ten times more likely to increase student learning gains in mathematics.<sup>135</sup>

There is an important distinction between involving parents and engaging parents in their child's education.

Parent involvement refers to parent participation in formal and informal activities at the school, such as attending parent group meetings, running a stall at the school fête or volunteering at the canteen.

Parental engagement refers to the broader role parents play in supporting their child's schooling and academic achievement.

Parental engagement recognises the important role that both parents and teachers play in children's learning and development. Although involvement in school activities is beneficial in many ways, especially in facilitating relationships between parents and teachers, how parents support children's learning at home has a bigger impact on academic outcomes than participation in school-based activities.

The early years of schooling provide the first opportunities for parents to learn about effective ways to engage in their child's formal education. For this reason it is important that, from the beginning, parents are invited to participate as partners in their child's schooling.<sup>137</sup>

Involving parents may fulfil an important community building and social function; however the key to facilitating positive change in a child's academic attainment is engaging parents.<sup>138</sup>

## Questions for reflection and discussion

1. How do teachers build positive relationships with parents and families in our school?
2. What opportunities are provided at our school for parents to engage in their children's learning?
3. How do teachers at our school establish regular contact with parents, and provide updates on students' learning and achievements?
4. How does our school help parents to support their children's learning at home?

*A great teacher is inspiring, caring and a great model of lifelong learning.  
Rhys (parent)*

*A great teacher is someone who sees the whole child, not just what the child needs to learn.  
Julie (parent)*

*A great teacher is reflective. They know how to change the way they teach to meet all needs.  
Laura (parent)*

*A great teacher loves teaching and teaches children to love learning.  
Jose (parent)*

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*The importance of the relationship between teachers and parents/carers cannot be overemphasised. Research indicates that parent/carer and family involvement in their child's learning is associated with reduced challenging behaviour.*

*Shaddock, Packer, Roy 2015<sup>136</sup>*

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PEOPLE	
Effective partnerships	• School-community partnerships
	• A culture that promotes learning
Strategic management of resources	• An expert teaching team
	• Targeted use of school resources
PRACTICE	
Effective teaching and learning	• Systematic curriculum delivery
	• Differentiated teaching and learning
	• Effective pedagogical practices
PERFORMANCE	
An evaluation culture	• An explicit improvement agenda
	• Analysis and discussion of data

*Family, schools and community partnerships are redefining the boundaries and functions of education. They enlarge parental and community capacity; they create conditions in which children learn more effectively. In these ways they take education beyond the school gates.*

**Emerson, Fear, Fox, Sanders 2012** <sup>139</sup>

### *AITSL Standards*

- 1.3 Students with diverse linguistic, cultural, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds
- 1.4 Strategies for teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- 1.6 Strategies to support full participation of students with disability
- 2.4 Understand and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to promote reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians
- 3.7 Engage parents/carers in the educative process
- 5.5 Report on student achievement
- 7.3 Engage with the parents/carers
- 7.4 Engage with professional teaching networks and broader communities



# Appendix A

## The dimensions and elements of the Quality Teaching model <sup>140</sup>

### The Quality Teaching model

The Quality Teaching model has three dimensions which represent classroom practices that have been linked to improved student outcomes. These three dimensions are:

#### 1. Pedagogy that promotes high levels of intellectual quality.

*Intellectual quality* refers to pedagogy focused on producing deep understanding of important, substantive concepts, skills and ideas. Such pedagogy treats knowledge as something that requires active construction and requires students to engage in higher-order thinking and to communicate substantively about what they are learning.

#### 2. Pedagogy that establishes a high quality learning environment.

*Quality learning environment* refers to pedagogy that creates classrooms where students and teachers work productively in an environment clearly focused on learning. Such pedagogy sets high and explicit expectations and develops positive relationships between teachers and students and among students.

#### 3. Pedagogy that generates significance by connecting students with the intellectual demands of their work.

*Significance* refers to pedagogy that helps make learning more meaningful and important to students. Such pedagogy draws clear connections with students' prior knowledge and identities, with contexts outside of the classroom, and with multiple ways of knowing or cultural perspectives.

Each of the three dimensions of the Quality Teaching model is comprised of six elements. These elements are presented in the table below.

ELEMENTS	Intellectual quality	Quality learning environment	Significance
	Deep knowledge	Deep understanding	Background knowledge
	Deep Understanding	Engagement	Cultural knowledge
	Problematic knowledge	High expectations	Knowledge integration
	Higher-order thinking	Social support	Inclusivity
	Metalinguage	Students' self-regulation	Connectedness
	Substantive communication	Student direction	Narrative

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