



Engage in professional learning

Engaging in professional learning is vital for teachers in Australia. Professional learning refers to any learning experience that improves teachers' knowledge, skills, and practice, ultimately leading to better student outcomes. Continuous professional development assists teachers align their practices with contemporary educational standards, ensuring high-quality education for their students.

Identifying and planning professional learning needs

There is a strong performance and development culture in Australian schools. A performance and development culture is characterised by a clear focus on improving teaching as a powerful means of improving student outcomes. Specifically, it requires that teachers: know what is expected of them; receive frequent, useful feedback on their teaching; and access high-quality support to improve their practice.

For migrant teachers new to Australian classrooms, the first step in professional development is working with your school leader to identify your professional learning needs. By reflecting on current and contemporary teaching practices, you will be able to determine areas where you want to increase your knowledge and broaden your expertise. Using self-assessment tools and feedback from colleagues to identify your strengths and areas for further development is an important step in helping you to consider your needs.

In Australia, school leadership plays a crucial role in collaborating with teachers to develop their performance and development plans. School leaders work closely with teachers to set clear, achievable goals aligned with the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. Additionally, school leaders help identify professional development opportunities tailored to individual teacher needs, fostering a supportive environment where teachers can thrive.

“Good professional development, for me, is attending conferences or professional learning beyond my school community. Networking is invaluable, especially with Australia’s vast range of school settings—primary to senior campuses, K to 12 schools, and schools addressing specific needs. It’s important to enter those communities where different postcodes come together. Cross-sector collaborations are just as invaluable.”

Highly Accomplished Teacher - Secondary

Engaging in professional learning and improving practice

Australian teachers engage in professional learning through a variety of formal and informal experiences designed to enhance their professional practice and improve student outcomes. These learning activities are guided by the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, which provide a framework for teachers to develop their skills and knowledge across different career stages. Professional learning can include activities such as professional conversations with colleagues, observing other teachers, workshops, seminars, online courses, and collaborative activities for e.g. professional learning communities (PLCs).

One key aspect of professional learning for Australian teachers is the emphasis on reflective practice. Teachers are encouraged to continuously reflect on their teaching methods and student outcomes, using

this reflection to inform their professional development goals. This reflective practice is often supported by school leaders who provide feedback and facilitate professional dialogue among teachers. By engaging in reflective practice, teachers can identify areas for improvement and seek out targeted professional development opportunities that address their specific needs and the needs of their students.

“By collaborating, I can move beyond my isolated world. I only know about my context—my students and classrooms. Learning what’s happening next door or across the school is crucial, as some colleagues have great successes, and others are trying things that may not be working.”

Highly Accomplished Teacher - Secondary

Applying professional learning and improving student learning

Research consistently shows that effective professional development that is implemented within teaching practice leads to better student performance. This continuous application of professional learning ensures that teachers remain adaptable and responsive to the evolving needs of their students, ultimately fostering a more dynamic and successful learning environment.

Engaging in regular reflection assists teachers to effectively apply professional learning. Reflecting on what works and what doesn’t in the classroom allows teachers to make informed adjustments and improvements. Additionally, collaborating with peers through professional learning communities or informal discussions can provide valuable insights and support. By sharing experiences and strategies, teachers can collectively enhance their instructional methods and address common challenges.

“We base feedback on various elements around the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, looking at different descriptors like differentiation and inclusivity. In my school we do a lot of pair and team observations, with people working in triads and observing each other regularly. After the observation, I ask for feedback on specific areas for improvement. I need someone to point out my blind spots, like why I asked certain questions or missed supporting some students. We have an instructional coach in school, and we video ourselves teaching. You learn so much from observing your own practice. You can observe others’ practice, your own practice, and get feedback from students and colleagues, this helps you become a better educator.”

Lead Teacher – Primary & Secondary

Take action: Professional Learning Communities

[Watch AITSL’s *In the Classroom* video](#) to see how with the implementation of professional learning communities, teachers and leaders can review and refine their inclusive teaching and learning practices to ensure all students have equal opportunities to access and participate in education.

