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Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework

Consultation proposal

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DRAFT

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The importance of teacher performance and development

Internationally, there is unequivocal evidence that the quality of teaching is the most significant in-school factor affecting student outcomes. There is also strong evidence that better appraisal and feedback leading to targeted development can improve teacher performance. Yet Australian teachers report that they do not always get the feedback they need to improve. In an OECD survey, 63% of Australian teachers report that appraisal of their work is largely done to fulfil administrative requirements. This framework aims to promote genuine professional conversations that improve teaching and minimise the risk that administrative and bureaucratic requirements will become the focus.

If Australia is serious about improving student outcomes, we must improve teaching. And to improve teaching, we must support Australian teachers in their desire to grow and develop and to receive useful feedback on their performance. The imperative to focus on teacher performance and development could not be clearer.

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

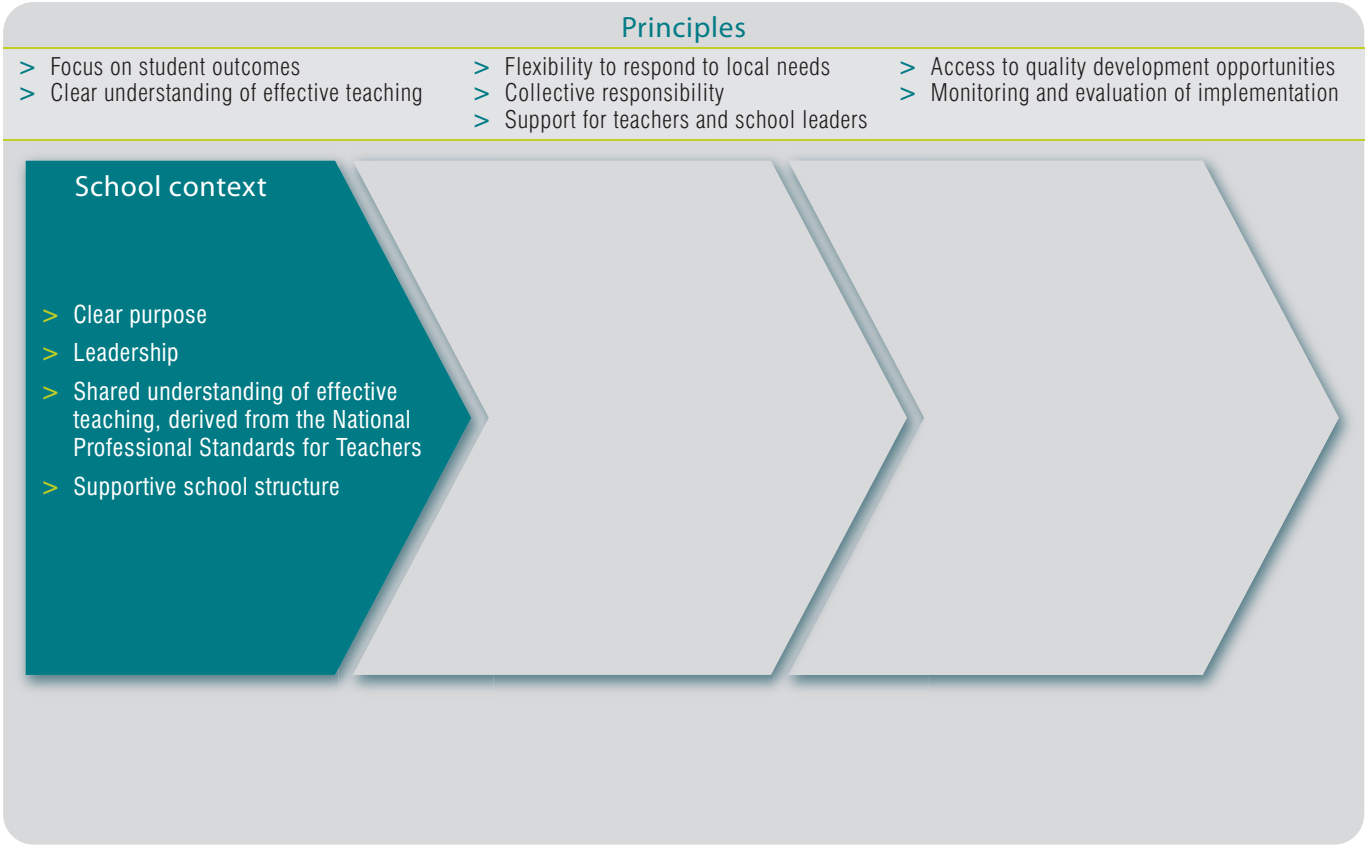
Principles of effective performance and development

There are some important principles that should guide the implementation of this Framework in schools across Australia. These provide guidance in making the difficult decisions involved in implementation, and have also guided the development of the Framework itself. The principles are:

- **A focus on student outcomes.** Like everything we do in education, an improved approach to performance and development is designed to improve student outcomes. Making student outcomes central to the performance and development framework will allow individual schools to focus on the things likely to have greatest impact. A clear and well understood purpose also helps to build and maintain commitment to the long-term process of changing culture.
- **A clear understanding of what effective teaching is.** The *National Professional Standards for Teachers* are a powerful and nationally agreed statement of what constitutes effective teaching in Australia. They define the standard expected of all registered teachers, and provide a road map for improvement above this level. They provide a basis for professional conversations within schools to develop a shared understanding of what effective teaching means in a particular context.
- **Flexibility to respond to local needs.** All schools are different, and each will have different strengths and weaknesses when it comes to creating a culture of performance and development. Implementation of this Framework will need to take into account these different contexts and starting points.
- **Collective responsibility.** An effective approach to performance and development cannot be achieved by selected individuals within a school. Rather, it is characterised by a shared commitment to improvement and an acceptance that teachers have a powerful role to play in each others' development, as well as their own.
- **Support for teachers and school leaders.** Changing the culture within and across schools is difficult work, and will take time. It is not realistic to expect that all change is generated at the school level, or that all teachers and school leaders will begin with the skills required to make this shift. Effective support must be provided.
- **Access to quality development opportunities.** If performance and development is to lead to real improvements, the focus must be on targeted development for each teacher in a school. Identifying priorities for improvement is not enough without access to support that allows teachers to improve.
- **Monitoring and evaluation of implementation.** As this Framework is implemented, it will be important to understand what is happening in schools across the country, what works and what needs to change. There must be clear accountability for improving the quality of teacher performance and development.

With these principles in mind, the following sections describe elements of an effective approach to teacher performance and development.

A supportive school context



Clear purpose

Performance and development is about creating a culture of professional improvement, feedback and growth within a school, with the ultimate aim of improving student outcomes. It can only operate effectively in a climate where there is a clear, shared and sustained focus on student learning, and on quality teaching as the means to achieve this, and where teachers are provided with the support they need to grow as professionals. A clear purpose is critical to maintaining the required focus on performance and development.

Leadership

School leadership is essential to creating this culture and to effective performance and development more generally. The principal has overall responsibility for creating a culture of performance and development in a school. However, leadership must come from all levels within a school, and principals and other school leaders are entitled to support to implement performance and development in their schools.

Shared understanding of effective teaching derived from the National Professional Standards for Teachers

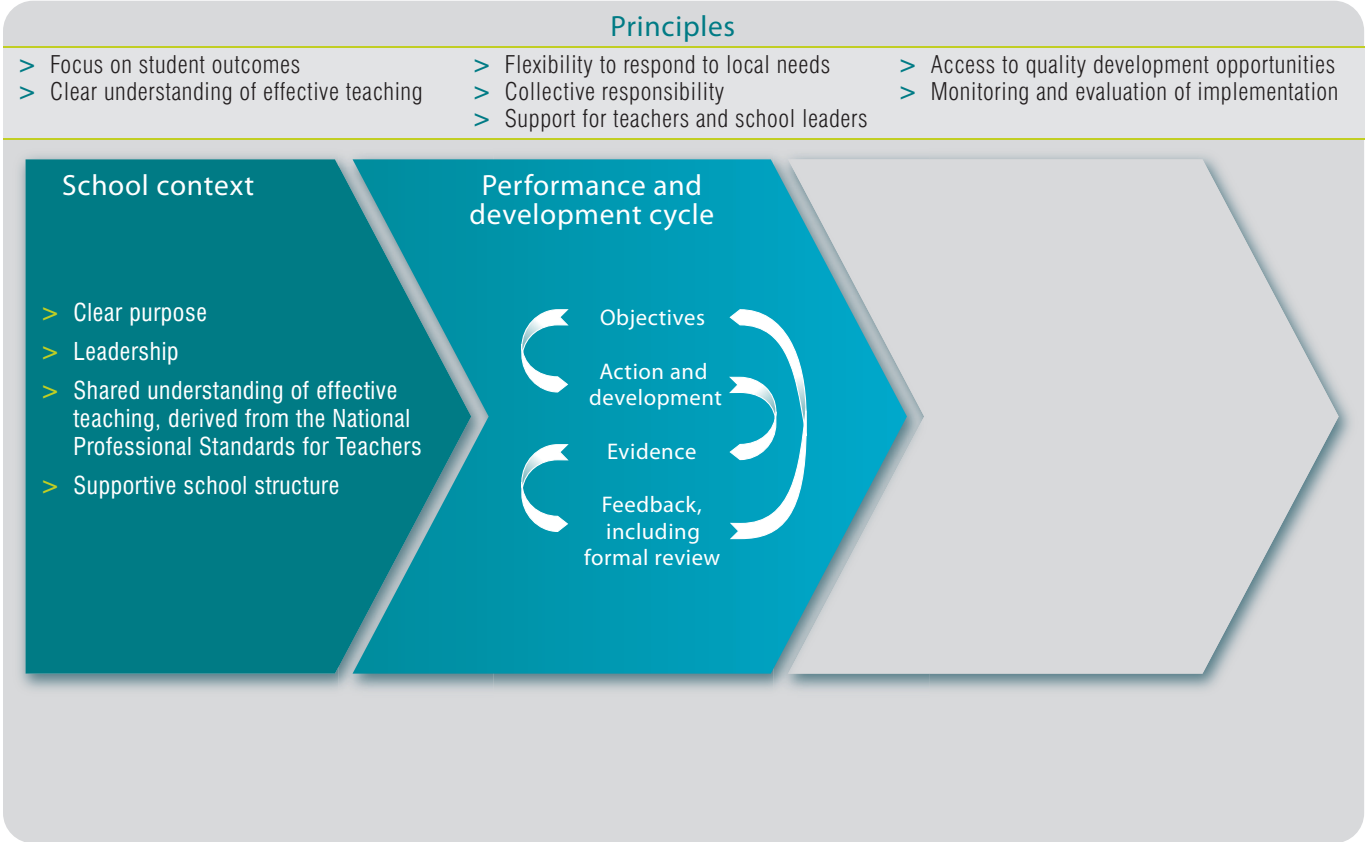
To focus on improving teaching, it is necessary to have a clear vision of what effective teaching looks like. Australia now has *National Professional Standards for Teachers*, which outline what teachers should know and be able to do at four career stages. These Standards present a comprehensive picture of the elements of effective teaching covering the three domains of professional knowledge, professional practice and professional engagement. The Standards, at the proficient career stage, also describe the level of performance that teachers must maintain to remain registered and that provisionally registered teachers are working towards to gain full registration. Linking performance and development processes to the teacher Standards reinforces the expectation that all teachers will perform to an appropriate standard.

The *National Professional Standards for Teachers* provide a common language for coming to a shared understanding of what effective teaching looks like in the context of a particular school. This understanding of effective teaching will be shaped by the school's context and priorities, as articulated in its plan.

Supportive school culture

Armed with a clear purpose and a shared understanding of effective teaching, the challenge is to create a school culture that focuses on improvement in teaching and learning, in a climate of trust, collaboration and ongoing feedback. This goes beyond a focus on improving the teaching of individuals, to a collective responsibility for improvement of teaching in a school, and alignment of these improvement activities with the school's plan. It is only within this professional culture that a focus on teacher performance and development can deliver its full benefits.

Performance and development cycle



Performance and development occurs in a cycle which provides a focus for appraising, developing and refining teaching and recognises the entitlements of teachers to receive feedback and support. Elements of the cycle are interwoven, will not necessarily occur in order, and may take more or less time depending on circumstances. However, the cycle provides a useful way of thinking about the process, and assists in identifying its important elements.

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

Objectives

The cycle begins with setting objectives. To engage purposefully in performance appraisal and development a teacher, with the principal or delegate, must clearly articulate agreed objectives based on the school's shared view of effective teaching, derived from the *National Professional Standards for Teachers*. These will include objectives related to a teacher's impact in and beyond the classroom. Objectives should take into account the teacher's own reflection on their teaching informed by evidence and feedback, the school plan, and goals or priorities set by and for teams of teachers within the school. Objectives should be designed to be measurable, and be clear about the evidence to be used to measure them. Following formal review, and over time, a teacher's objectives should be adjusted.

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

Essential element: All teachers have the opportunity to regularly revise their objectives.

Action and development

The teacher then takes action to ensure they meet expectations as described in the *National Professional Standards for Teachers* and achieve their objectives, by delivering on agreed outcomes, making changes to teaching practice and undertaking development to support these changes. While changing teacher behaviour is ultimately the mechanism for making improvements to teaching effectiveness, it must be supported by access to quality development opportunities, as well as by regular feedback and coaching. Identifying priorities for improvement is not enough without access to support that allows teachers to improve.[1] Development opportunities will be negotiated to take into account the priorities and resources of schools and groups within the school, as well as individual needs, reflecting the principle of collective responsibility for improvement.

Essential element: All teachers have the opportunity to deliver against their agreed objectives, identify their development needs and negotiate support to take action to meet them.

Evidence

As a teacher takes action to improve their teaching, they will collect and consider evidence against the agreed objectives, deliverables and performance measures. Judgements about the effectiveness of teaching, whether they arise from self-reflection, are used as a basis for improvement or result from formal assessment of performance, have greatest validity when based on multiple sources of evidence. There are a wide range of sources of evidence that can be used in evaluating teacher performance, including:

- Evidence of the impact of teaching on student outcomes
- Direct observation of teaching
- Evidence of the teacher's impact on colleagues and the school as a whole
- Student feedback
- Peer/supervisor feedback
- Parent feedback
- Teacher self assessment
- Evidence of participation in professional learning and teacher reflection on its impact.

This is far from being an exhaustive list.[2]

Multiple forms of evidence provide a richer and more useful perspective on teaching than a narrow focus on one or two measures. However, there are some elements that are particularly important. Evidence of student learning directly captures the outcomes of teaching, and must have a central role. Research shows observation of classroom teaching, linked to timely and useful feedback that focuses on improvement, is a particularly useful tool for teacher development. Beyond the classroom, evidence should also demonstrate a teacher's impact on colleagues and the performance of the school.

Essential element: Evidence used to 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 of collaboration with colleagues to achieve school goals.

Feedback, including formal review

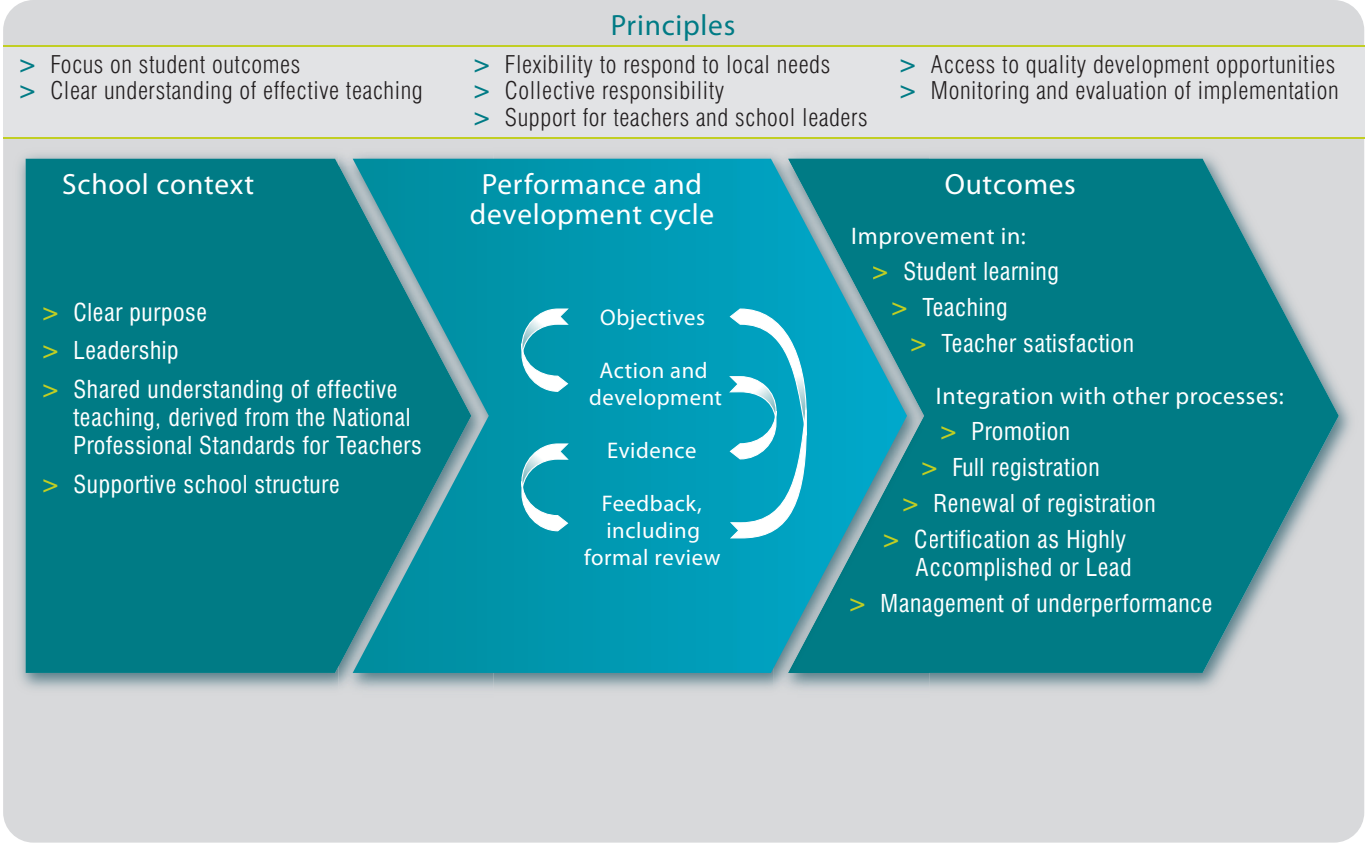
Schools with an effective approach to teacher performance and development have a commitment to ongoing formal and informal feedback and coaching built into their culture. Timely, frequent and improvement focused feedback is a powerful tool for teacher development. A formal performance review is an important source of feedback, and allows space for a full reflection on all of a teacher's objectives, conducted on the basis of multiple sources of evidence, including the essential sources of evidence outlined above. A formal review should include the provision of written feedback that should serve as the basis for developing new objectives. A strong approach will combine these formal reviews with structured and informal provision of feedback.

Feedback and formal review processes may also identify teachers who are underperforming against the requirements of their position, or against the requirements for continued registration. Underperformance will then be managed through separate processes which are negotiated industrially.

Essential element: All teachers receive regular formal and informal feedback on their performance. This includes a formal review against their objectives at least annually. The review is conducted by the principal or delegate and includes written feedback being provided to the teacher.

1. AITSL is currently conducting a national conversation on a *Draft Australian Charter for the Professional Learning of Teachers and School Leaders*.See http://www.aitsl.edu.au/professional-learning/professional-learning.html for more details.
2. Material to support the implementation of the *Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework* will include guidance and tools for teachers and schools to collect evidence of teacher performance from multiple perspectives.

Outcomes of teacher performance and development



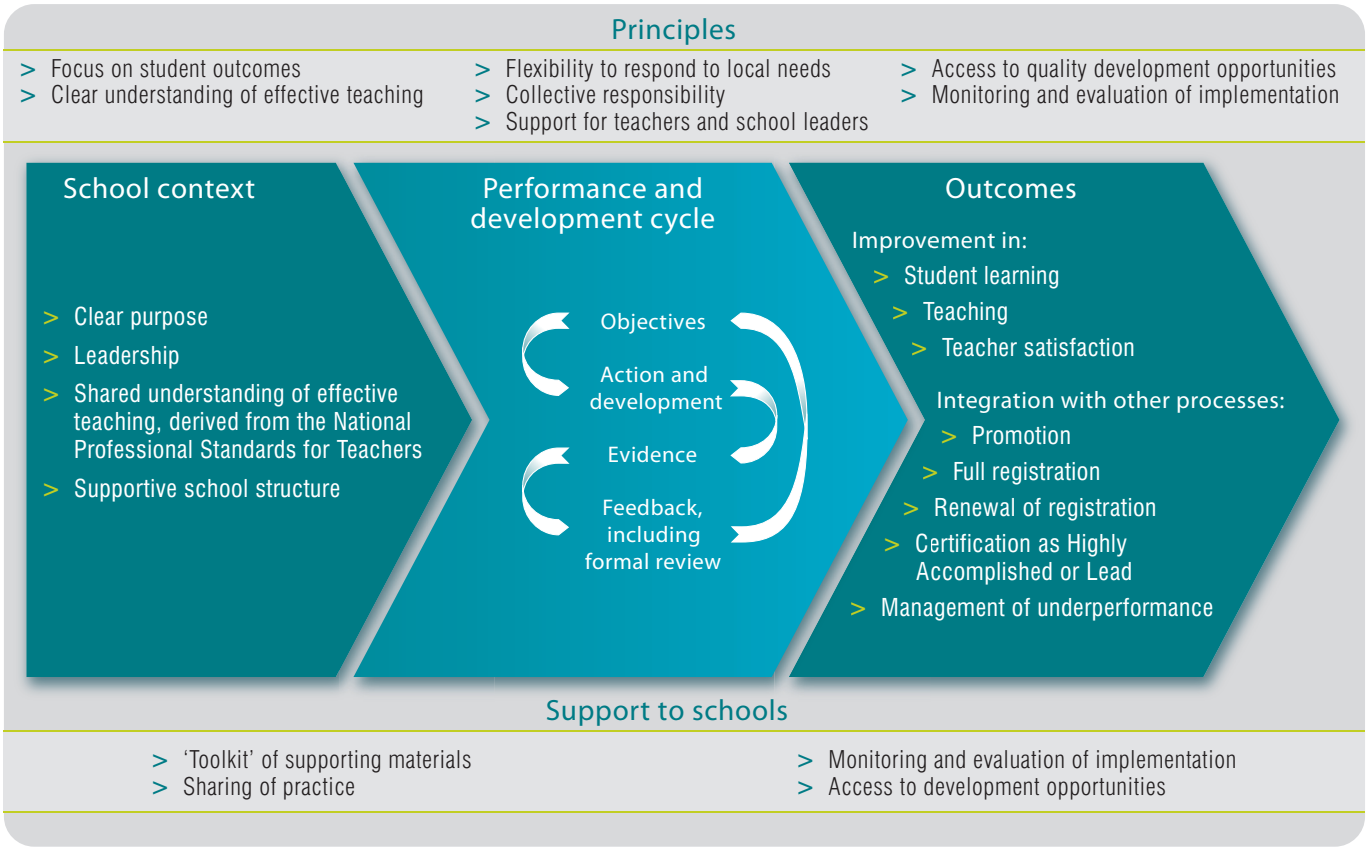
Improvement

There is strong evidence that the ultimate outcomes of an improved approach to teacher performance and development will include improved student learning, improved teaching and greater teacher satisfaction. Teachers are motivated by doing the best for students, and will be more energised and satisfied where they see clear improvements in their own effectiveness. Ultimately, this serves the purpose outlined in the *Melbourne Declaration*, that all young Australians become successful learners, confident and creative individuals and active and informed citizens.

Integration with other processes

There are other, more immediate results from the performance and development process. Approaches to improving teacher performance and development will work best when they are integrated with other processes relating to teacher practice and teachers' careers. Performance and development processes may assist teachers to decide whether they are ready to apply for promotion, or for certification as a Highly Accomplished or Lead teacher, and produce evidence that can be used to support such an application. Participation in performance and development processes will also support beginning teachers move to full registration, and already registered teachers to renew their registration. Performance and development processes will also identify underperformance, and must relate to processes designed to manage underperformance.

Support to schools



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

Schools, teachers and school leaders will be at very different points in their efforts to implement and/or sustain teacher performance and development. Support for implementation can be seen as a 'toolkit', where schools and individuals will have access to the support they need to meet their own priorities, when they need it.

There is also an important role for monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of this Framework. Efforts to improve teacher performance and development will benefit greatly from the capacity to share experiences and from rigorous research on what works in this area.

What happens next?

This Framework is now the subject of consultation with the Australian education community. The consultation will focus on how the Framework itself can be refined, and what support is required to deliver its full potential.

As part of consultation on this Framework, AITSL is interested in identifying what support can usefully be provided at the national level. From the research conducted to date, some possibilities include:

- Advice and support for school leaders and teachers around giving and receiving useful feedback. This may include professional learning programs
- Guidance on conducting effective classroom observations, including observation templates
- Examples of templates and tools for various aspects of the formal performance and development cycle, such as individual plans and forms of evidence
- Support and professional learning for teachers and school leaders in mentoring and coaching other teachers
- Tools for schools to assess their own progress in implementing teacher performance and development, and to identify the next steps to take their performance to the next level
- Forums for sharing ideas and experiences, and accessing the wealth of material that has been developed worldwide to support these processes.

For details on the consultation, and to join the discussion on these issues, please visit www.aitsl.edu.au
Feedback can also be emailed to performance@aitsl.edu.au

The time is right for Australia to make a major improvement in our approach to teacher performance and development. There is clear evidence that this will deliver improved teacher performance and satisfaction, and improved student outcomes. We encourage you to get involved in the next stage of this important work.

The evidence base for this Framework

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

- Hay Group 2012, Growing our potential: *Hay Group's view on implementing an effective performance improvement and development framework for teachers*, Hay Group. Independent paper prepared for AITSL to support the development of the *Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework*.
- Jensen B & Reichl J 2012, *Implementing a performance and development framework*, Grattan Institute. Independent submission. The Grattan Institute independently prepared this report and was not commissioned by AITSL.
- Boston Consulting Group 2012, *Effective implementation of performance and development in schools*. Independent paper prepared for AITSL to support the development of the *Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework*.
- Marshall G, Cole P and Zbar V 2012, *Teacher performance and development in Australia: A mapping and analysis of current practice*. Paper prepared for AITSL to support the development of the *Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework*.
- Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) 2011, *Building a high quality teaching profession: Lessons from around the world*, background report for the International Summit on the Teaching Profession, OECD publishing, http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/internationaled/background.pdf
- OECD 2011, *Improving teacher quality around the world: The international summit on the teaching profession*, paper prepared for the International Summit on the Teaching Profession: New York 2011.
- Santiago P, Donaldson G, Herman J & Shewbridge C 2011, *Reviews of evaluation and assessment in education: Australia*, OECD publishing.

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