Chapter 1

Becoming a Teacher

As a preservice teacher or an early career teacher you have chosen to enter one of the most satisfying, rewarding and important professions. This book has arisen from our experience over many years of helping those new to the profession adjust to the realities of working with students, parents/carers and colleagues in often very diverse contexts.

Key Topics

Meeting the central aims of the Australian Curriculum

All states and territories have their respective objectives that outline how they will provide high-quality outcomes for all students. Underpinning these objectives are two central goals developed in *The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (MCEETYA 2008):

Goal 1: Australian schooling promotes equity and excellence.

Goal 2: All young Australians become successful learners, confident and creative individuals and active and informed citizens.

The Australian Curriculum, established by Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), was designed to address these two goals, which are based on propositions that inform Australian Curriculum development. These propositions, outlined in *The Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Version 4.0* (ACARA 2012) include:

- that each student can learn and that the needs of every student are important
- that each student is entitled to knowledge, understanding and skills that provide a foundation for successful and lifelong learning and participation in the Australian community
- that high expectations should be set for each student as teachers account for the level of learning of individual students and the different rates at which students develop
- that the needs and interests of students will vary, and that schools and teachers will plan from the curriculum in ways that respond to those needs and interests.

These propositions highlight the key responsibilities of schools and teachers to the students and their families. In this book there are strategies to assist you to recognise and respond to the rewards and challenges of such responsibilities.

Meeting the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers

The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST), established and promoted by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), are:

1. Know students and how they learn.
2. Know the content and how to teach it.
3. Plan for and implement effective teaching and learning.
4. Create and maintain supportive and safe learning environments.
5. Assess, provide feedback and report on student learning.
6. Engage in professional learning.
7. Engage professionally with colleagues, parents/carers and the community.

As a preservice or early career teacher, you undoubtedly *know* about each Standard; however, the extent to which you have applied, utilised or practised that knowledge in the actual teaching–learning setting is problematic. It is not easy to gain such knowledge in the respective standard at the graduate level. This is because you have only limited school-based opportunities to experience, grow and be able to demonstrate to more experienced colleagues that you have reached a certain level of competency in a particular standard.

Authentic Teacher Assessment (ATA)/ Teacher Performance Assessment (TPA)

An Authentic Teacher Assessment (ATA), sometimes referred to as a Teacher Performance Assessment (TPA), is commonly undertaken towards the end of a Preservice Teacher Education course. Students are expected to demonstrate that they have met the APST at Graduate level.

In this book we provide you with guidelines to help you gain insights into the nature of the APST as they operate in the school and classroom context. We also include suggestions concerning how you, a preservice teacher, can most effectively demonstrate your developing competency in selected Standards as you prepare job applications, respond to interview questions and develop your professional portfolio. Throughout the book, you will see links to the APST. Furthermore, this support should help you as an early career teacher to take a more proactive role in an induction program offered in your first year of teaching.

Table 1.1 outlines the seven Standards for graduate teachers. It includes a range of strategies, including reflective practices, which are discussed later in the chapter in more detail, to help you come to a deeper understanding of what these Standards look like within a school setting.

Table 1.1   Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST)

1 Know students and how they learn	Proactive steps to meeting the Standard
1.1 Physical, social and intellectual development and characteristics of students	• What strategies does the school use to come to an understanding of the physical, intellectual and social needs of the students?
1.2 Understand how students learn	• Observe and record what structures or processes are in place in the classroom to cater for the learning styles and needs of students. • Revisit the constructivist notions of learning, as expressed in the work of Vygotsky, Piaget and others. • Describe what Vygotsky meant by the term 'Zone of Proximal Development' (ZPD). Use ZPD in describing a recent teaching experience. Note the example in your professional portfolio.
1.3 Students with diverse linguistic, cultural, religious and socio-economic backgrounds	• How does the school recognise and celebrate the diverse linguistic, cultural and religious background of students? • How do teachers incorporate the cultural diversity of students within their planning?

Table 1.1   Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST) (*continued*)

1.4 Strategies for teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students	• Discuss with a mentor teacher the challenges teachers face when presenting culturally sensitive issues to students (e.g. celebrating Australia Day). • What teaching practices have been found to successfully engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students? (See the article by Burgess (2019) referred to in Chapter 5.)
1.5 Differentiate teaching to meet the specific learning needs of students across the full range of abilities	• Collect and describe the nature and value of ongoing monitoring strategies used by teachers.
1.6 Strategies to support full participation of students with disability	• Read the Disability Standards for Education (Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment 2005), which were developed from the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth). • Familiarise yourself with the practical implications that arise for schools from this Act. • Meet with specialist teachers in the school, such as those responsible for Reading Recovery or other intervention programs. What are their roles and how do they work in collaboration with other staff?
2 Know the content and how to teach it	**Proactive steps to meeting the Standard**
2.1 Content and teaching strategies of the teaching area	• Consider the High-Impact Teaching Strategies (HITS) used by teachers across the school in selected curriculum content areas. (Refer to Chapter 5 for more on HITS.)
2.2 Content selection and organisation	• Collect examples of successful teaching–learning strategies you have observed or introduced and provide a short critique of their value. • Revisit your understanding and experiences of teaching a differentiated curriculum. Discuss with your mentor the key advantages and challenges of the approach. • Observe students working in collaborative groups. What skills and attitudes do students need to work successfully in this way?

2.3 Curriculum, assessment and reporting	• Demonstrate the relationships that exist between these five elements of any teaching–learning sequence:
	  – knowing the curriculum content
	  – knowing the ability of your students (pre-assessment)
	  – choosing appropriate strategies to teach content
	  – ongoing monitoring of both learning and teaching
	  – summative assessment.

2.4 Understand and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to promote reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians	• Investigate the opportunities given to students of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background to share aspects of their cultural identity.
2.5 Literacy and numeracy strategies	• Examine the formal and informal modifications made by staff to accommodate the needs of English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) students.
2.6 Information and Communication Technology (ICT)	• Familiarise yourself with the work of teachers who are recognised leaders in the use of ICT. Critique the value of such approaches (e.g. to bring about engagement and higher-order thinking).

3 Plan for and implement effective teaching and learning	Proactive steps to meeting the Standard
3.1 Establishing challenging learning goals	• When are learning intentions and success criteria established? Who is responsible for doing this? How are these recorded within planning documents and how are they presented to students? (See discussion concerning visible learning, learning intentions and success criteria in Chapter 4.)
3.2 Plan, structure and sequence learning programs	• Take part in a unit planning meeting and note how teachers break down the yearly scope and sequence overview into a term program planner, targeting specific areas of the curriculum.
3.3 Use teaching strategies	• Observe experienced teachers at work and note how they use a variety of questioning techniques to elicit students' understandings and encourage them to draw on prior learning. Also, note how quieter or disengaged students are encouraged to participate. • Observe and record interesting examples of the non-verbal strategies effective teachers use to capture student interest and maintain engaged learning.
3.4 Select and use resources	• Undertake an online search of relevant interactive resources, both Australian and international, that provide engaging teaching resources.
3.5 Use effective classroom communication	• Become familiar with the role of the teacher during oral language interactions with students. Consider the challenges that come when IRF is the dominant pattern of talk in the classroom; that is, **I** = **I**nitiation, **R** = **R**esponse, **F** = **F**eedback. (Wegerif 2013) • Go online to: *Teacher Talk: Whole Class or Small Group Discussions—The role of the teacher.* (State Government of Victoria, Department of Education and Training 2019c)
3.6 Evaluate and improve teaching programs	• Use Gibbs's Reflective Cycle (see the next section in this chapter) to reflect on feedback your mentor provided of a recent lesson you taught. • Attend a staff debrief and note how teachers evaluate the success or otherwise of programs recently taught.
3.7 Engage parents/carers in the educative process	• Examine the school's policy concerning having parents/carers working with students in the school program. How are parents/carers trained to become helpers, and what roles do they play? • What formal and informal programs and activities take place in the school that involve parents/carers? What are some of the legal implications of such involvement?
4 Create and maintain supportive and safe learning environments	Proactive steps to meeting the Standard
4.1 Support student participation	• What formal and informal strategies are used in the school to promote a culture of inclusiveness for all members of the school community? • Observe a weekly team planning meeting and become familiar with how teachers provide adjustments for students with particular needs.
4.2 Manage classroom activities	• Carefully consider the approaches used by teachers to organise and manage the movement of students within the learning space, distribute resources, introduce the lesson and supervise the ensuing activities.

Table 1.1   Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST) (*continued*)

4.3 Manage challenging behaviour	• Read the school's well-being and behaviour management policy. Talk to the well-being coordinator—the position title may vary—and discuss the formal and informal processes that are in place to support student well-being. What are the key strengths and challenges facing the implementation of such policies? • Discuss with your mentor the steps that are taken to establish and maintain school-wide and classroom behaviour management expectations. What part do students play in establishing and reviewing classroom management expectations?
4.4 Maintain student safety	• Read the school policies concerning Disaster Planning and critical incident procedures (Displan). Become aware of the implications of such policies for staff and students and the community more generally, if an emergency situation was declared. • Read and note the implications of the Duty of Care expectations for teachers. (Each state and territory has established Duty of Care policy expectations.) Talk to senior staff about the school's approach to duty of care in the course of a school day, both on and off the school grounds.
4.5 Use ICT safely, responsibly and ethically	• Examine the school's policy on ICT usage. What are the implications and challenges facing schools and parents/carers in the safe, responsible use of ICT?
5 Assess, provide feedback and report on student learning	**Proactive steps to meeting the Standard**
5.1 Assess student learning	• Discuss with your mentor the steps taken to monitor the progress of individual students. • Examine closely the assessment rubrics that are used by staff. How were these developed, who uses them and for what purposes (e.g. student self-assessment, peer assessment, teacher assessment)? How are such rubrics used in the moderation process? • Observe and note how experienced teachers introduce a variety of formative assessment strategies, during a lesson. What constitutes appropriate formative strategies for junior students, as distinct from senior student cohorts? What forms of summative assessment strategies are used by junior year level and senior year level teachers?
5.2 Provide feedback to students on their learning	• When and how do teachers assess student progress? • Reflect on the types of feedback (verbal or non-verbal) that are used in learning–teaching contexts to encourage student engagement, perseverance and direction in student learning.
5.3 Make consistent and comparable judgements	• Take part in a team moderation session. What are the key advantages and challenges of moderation?
5.4 Interpret student data	• Observe how groups of teachers analyse student data to plan future learning. • Develop a teacher appraisal questionnaire with students, which will provide you with feedback concerning your effectiveness. How might you use data drawn from completed surveys to improve your practice?
5.5 Report on student achievement	• Closely examine the school's reporting of student achievement procedures and practices. Consider both the systems adopted for reporting student progress and the nature of the information that is reported to parents/carers and the appropriate authorities. • Become informed of the steps the school takes to safely manage confidential and sensitive information regarding students and their families.

6	**Engage in professional learning**	**Proactive steps to meeting the Standard**
6.1	Identify and plan professional learning needs	• Become familiar with the nature and function of the professional portfolio. This can be done by accessing completed portfolios of recent graduates or by searching online for examples of both digital and hard copy portfolio formats. • Consider how your portfolio could be used to demonstrate your development towards the Graduate Level APST.
6.2	Engage in professional learning and improve practice	• Develop a reflective journal where you record detailed notes of professional development occasions, outcomes of your reflective practice exercises (see the next point), your reading, and staff or team meetings.
6.3	Engage with colleagues and improve practice	• Use Gibbs's Reflective Cycle to examine three recent teaching experiences, where you made changes to your practices based on: critical feedback from your mentor, your own reflection *in* action, and your reflection *on* action (after the teaching event). There is more information on this later in the chapter.
6.4	Apply professional learning and improve student learning	• Come to know and take advantage of the range of opportunities for professional development inside and outside the school setting, both online and at workshops. These might include subject associations, Teacher Union Professional Development (PD), zone networks, professional well-being courses and staff development days.
7	**Engage professionally with colleagues, parents/carers and the community**	**Proactive steps to meeting the Standard**
7.1	Meet professional ethics and responsibilities	• Read your state, territory or school system Code of Conduct or Code of Professional Practice. Reflect on the key ethical responsibilities of all teachers. What are the implications for you?
7.2	Comply with legislative, administrative and organisational requirements	• Read and reflect on all policies relating to child protection, mandatory reporting and duty of care. • Access and read the school's Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) procedures and expectations. Find out who is responsible for enacting the policy at the school.
7.3	Engage with parents/carers	• What expectations are currently in place to ensure appropriate written and spoken interactions are maintained between students, parents/carers and the community? • What are the implications of such expectations for you?
7.4	Engage with professional teaching networks and broader communities	• What are your expectations about becoming directly involved in community activities outside the school program in your first years of teaching? What personal, professional and ethical obligations will you be expected to meet? • What are the advantages and challenges of working collaboratively with fellow teachers? • Read the online article by Lauren Davis (2020) linked in the following Weblink feature.

Weblink

Teacher Collaboration: How to Approach it in 2020: https://bit.ly/KAV_TeacherCollaboration