

Background

The most important factor impacting on student learning at school is the quality of teaching in the classroom. The calibre of person entering the teaching profession, the quality of initial teacher education courses, the experience gained during practicum, and the transition and induction received by the new graduate over his or her early years of teaching are all critical factors in achieving the best outcomes. Principals and school leaders have the responsibility for selecting staff, supporting beginning teachers and identifying mentors for pre-service teachers.

So that each child receives the best education possible consistent and high standards for initial teacher education courses need to be in place, attracting the best people to the teaching profession. As a result, principals and schools will have access to teachers who can provide quality teaching and learning for our students. Ultimately, students completing initial teacher education courses must be 'classroom ready' at the end of their teaching course.

The skills required for teachers to be 'classroom ready' include:

- high level communication skills (listening, interview, report writing, difficult conversations and professional conversations);
- skilled classroom management;
- effective teaching practices and ;
- rapport with students, parents and colleagues;
- professional conduct, positive attitude, integrity and ethics; and,
- parent engagement skills and strategies.

APPA believes principals need to be key participants in any implemented action resulting from the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group's *Action Now: Classroom Ready Teachers* report.

APPA's four key areas for action are:

Entry and Selection for Teacher Education Courses

1. Through a rigorous screening of applicants, universities, in collaboration with principals, should select students who are:
 - a. academically capable;
 - b. emotionally intelligent;
 - c. organised, dedicated, enthusiastic and conscientious;
 - d. morally and ethically principled; and,
 - e. respectful of, and communicate well with, both children and adults.
2. Applicants, no matter what educational background, need to be prepared for, and capable of, completing a rigorous and demanding initial teacher education course.
3. The involvement of principals in the selection of students contributes by:
 - a. providing a 'workplace' perspective to potential teacher education students;
 - b. building the collaborative relationship between the school and university; and,
 - c. offering universities constructive feedback on the success of current and previous graduates.

Course Content and Program

1. Clear and transparent accreditation processes are used to approve initial teacher education courses.
2. Courses must have a strong emphasis on the teaching of literacy and numeracy with the depth of learning required for students being educated and trained to teach the primary curriculum.
3. Course content must prepare graduating primary teachers who are capable of covering *all* areas of the curriculum with skill and knowledge.
4. Graduating primary teachers must have studied a major in at least one of the core primary curriculum areas. (This will enable principals to select teachers that can build capacity in the school across the key curriculum areas.)
5. Courses must also cover:
 - a. the diversity of explicit elements outlined in the Australian Professional Teaching Standards;
 - b. a range of successful and evidence-based pedagogical approaches;
 - c. the use of assessment data to drive teaching and learning;
 - d. modern and classroom targeted technologies;
 - e. curriculum mapping, integrated learning and lesson planning; and,
 - f. pastoral care responsibilities that include social and emotional support strategies.

Teacher Practicum

1. All pre-service teachers have the right to quality supervision from experienced and high level teachers who are familiar with the responsibilities associated with this role.
2. The integration of the teaching experience (practicum) relies on the support and willingness of principals to accept pre-service teachers. Conversely, the university must provide ongoing support to the school and supervising teaching team.
3. The practicum experience should total *at least 100 days*, be regular throughout each year of the course and must include an initial experience early Semester One of the course and a final placement of at least 6 weeks towards the end of the course.
4. Practicum placement should have the potential to develop into an ongoing arrangement whereby the initial teacher education student maintains an internship-style relationship with the school.
5. Placement of pre-service teachers with teacher supervisors is the responsibility of the school principal.
6. Supervising teachers have completed the AITSL *Supervising Preservice Teachers Program*.
7. The relationship principals and schools have with universities is critical and covers pre-service teacher expectations; clear structures supporting pre-service teacher, teacher supervisors and university supervisors; and, genuine, thorough and proactive feedback and communication.
8. Opportunities are provided for preservice teachers to undertake practicums in hard-to-staff schools across a variety of contexts including rural and remote settings.
9. APPA is positioned to provide practical advice and feedback on developing the framework for the practicum part of the teacher education course and in relation to innovative practicum options.

Transition and Induction

1. Universities should have graduate teachers 'classroom ready' upon completion of their course.
2. The standards required to be a 'classroom ready' teacher are explicit, measurable and provide accountability.
3. Principals, like systems, have a critical role in supporting new graduates in the school and classroom. Such support builds upon the skills and knowledge gained in pre-service training and includes encouragement and guidance for teachers to continue learning the 'art of teaching'.
4. Induction programs require skilled and committed mentors who work with, and support, new graduates in managing personal wellbeing, building a professional learning program, extending teaching pedagogy and meeting the demands of the classroom.
5. Induction should cover both 'induction into the school' and, just as importantly, 'induction into the profession'.