What works best in practice

Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation

NSW Department of Education
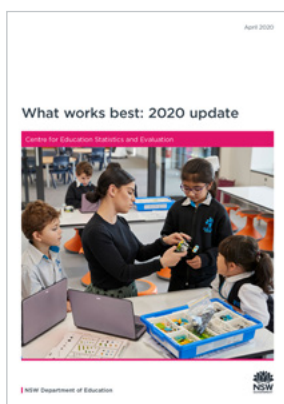
More information

Read more about the evidence base
in What works best: 2020 update
on CESE's website:

www.cese.nsw.gov.au/publications

Table of contents

Introduction

This resource is designed to assist teachers to implement the evidence-based 'What works best' themes in What works best: 2020 update (Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation 2020). It is intended to be a practical resource that provides strategies to support teachers translate theory into practice and supports the NSW Department of Education school improvement strategy.

The eight themes in this guide – high expectations, explicit teaching, effective feedback, use of data to inform practice, assessment, classroom management, wellbeing and collaboration – provide a framework for teachers to connect students with the curriculum and to improve student achievement and skills. When all teachers in all classrooms implement effective teaching practices consistently, all students have access to teaching and learning that improves their outcomes.
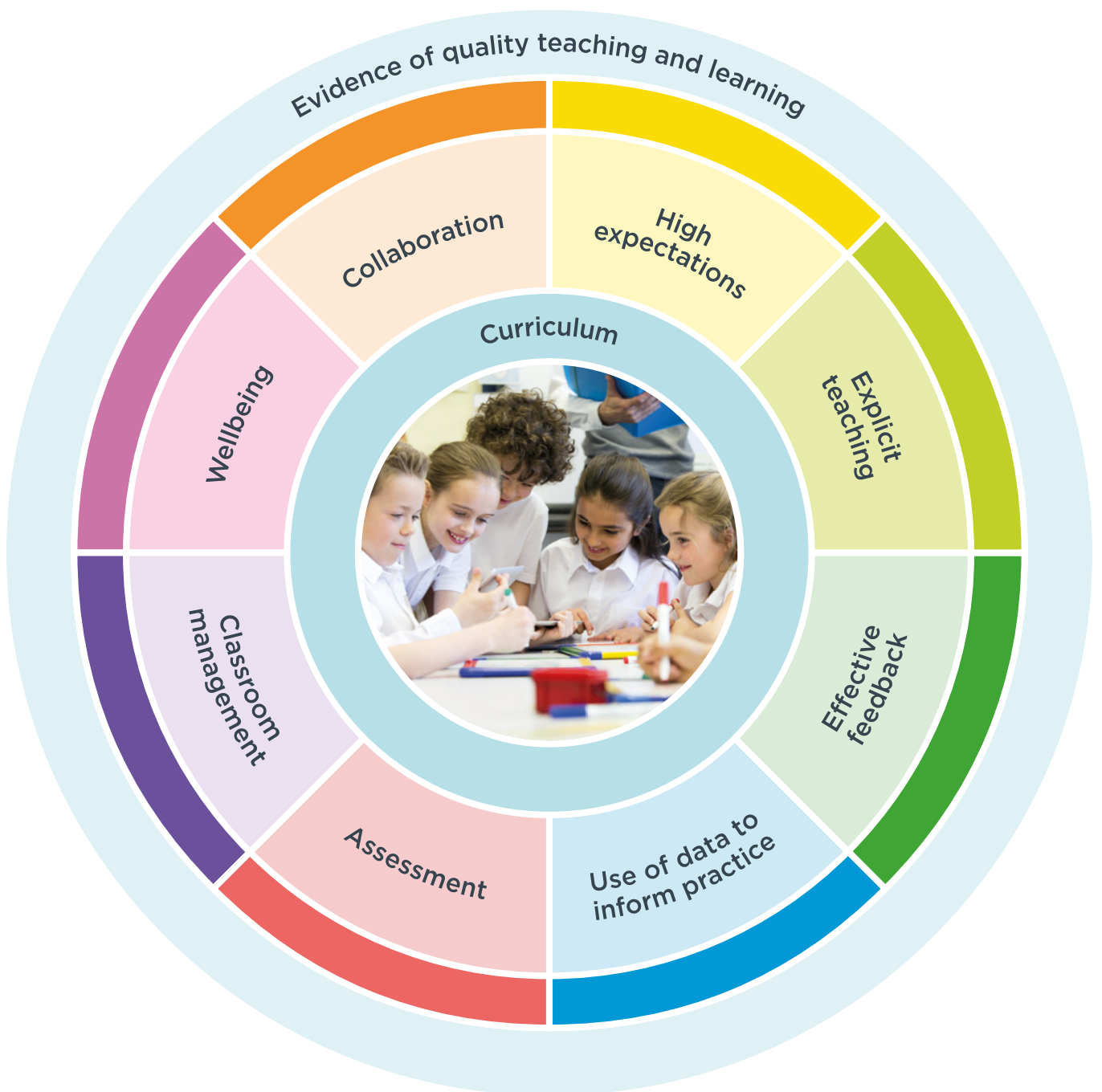
For teachers: Implementing What works best

The strategies contained here are not an exhaustive list of what works for every teacher and every student in every context. Rather, they are drawn from teaching practices grounded in a sound and consistent evidence base to increase student achievement. The student, classroom and school context in which the strategies are being used should also be considered. Adjustments or adaptations may need to be made during implementation to most effectively address student needs.

When reflecting on their practice and evidence of their students' learning, teachers should ask:

1. Why did I choose this strategy?

2. How well did I deliver it?

3. What difference has it made?

For principals: Setting up for whole-school success

The teaching strategies in this resource are most effective when implemented as planned, whole-school approaches to improving student outcomes. To implement these strategies effectively across the whole school, school leaders and principals need to:

- decide on actions the school will take to improve in the areas identified through the School Excellence Framework self-assessment and consider how the school will maintain key practices to ensure ongoing performance

- provide a framework for implementation across the school to promote an expectation of consistent use of evidence-based strategies in the classroom

- determine the systems, resourcing and other conditions necessary for successful implementation.

The School Excellence Framework supports school leaders to ensure that consistency, expectations and assumptions are aligned across all teaching and learning at school, and there is strong alignment between the Framework and the themes of What works best.

What works best	School Excellence Framework

What works best

1. High expectations
2. Explicit teaching
3. Effective feedback
4. Use of data to inform practice
5. Assessment
6. Classroom management
7. Wellbeing
8. Collaboration

School Excellence Framework

Learning

Learning culture	Wellbeing	Curriculum	Assessment	Reporting	Student performance measures
1	6 7	1 5 6	3 4 5	4	1 4

Teaching

Effective classroom practice	Data skills and use	Professional standards	Learning and development
2 3 4 6 8	4	2	8

Leading

Educational leadership	School planning, implementation and reporting	School resources	Management processes and practices
8	4		

1. High expectations

When teachers hold high expectations of their students, they know their students well, value them as learners, and understand how to support their learning. In the classroom, teachers promote high expectations of their students when they differentiate instruction, provide individualised feedback and engage in ongoing and meaningful classroom interactions, in order to challenge their students and encourage continuous improvement.

Teachers' beliefs about their students influence how they teach and interact with them. This can affect students' confidence and motivation, which in turn impacts learning and achievement. High expectations matter at all stages of schooling from early childhood through to the end of secondary school. All students deserve to experience and benefit from high expectations.

Australian Professional Standards for Teachers

- Professional knowledge: 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 2.1, 2.4
- Professional practice: 3.1, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 4.2, 4.3, 5.1, 5.3

Practical strategies for teaching and learning

The strategies below outline ways teachers can develop and sustain a culture of high student expectations. It is important to consider these strategies within the unique contexts of each classroom and the whole-school environment.

Consistently challenge all students to learn new things

- Use regular formative assessment to understand students' strengths and areas for improvement, and provide a variety of meaningful learning opportunities that cater to the full range of understanding and abilities in the classroom.

- Provide increasingly more complex tasks that consider the prior knowledge and ability of each student, and ask challenging questions that require deeper thinking and problem solving.

- Provide students with quality examples and exemplars of responses and learning tasks. Work with students to unpack why one response is better than others by interrogating the differences in the standard required to reach higher grade levels.

- Pitch each lesson at the right level for students in the class. Use student data to inform the expected standard.

- Model goal setting and work with students to co-develop goals that are relevant, specific, measurable, challenging and achievable, and aligned to their individual needs.

Establish clear and consistent expectations for learning and behaviour

- Work with students to establish and explain classroom rules, routines and expectations for behaviour that fit within the whole-school classroom management policies. For example, design checklists that students can use to monitor their behaviour.

- Have only a few classroom rules that contribute to a positive learning environment, as it can be difficult for students to remember a long list of rules. Use visuals to help students understand the rules and remember classroom expectations.

- Model appropriate behaviours in the classroom, such as being punctual, showing respect for other students and school property and coming to every lesson prepared.

- Provide clear and concise learning intentions and success criteria at the beginning of each lesson and unit of work to establish expectations early in the learning process. These learning intentions can be taken from the syllabus. Ensure that students have a visual reference point, such as on the board, in their workbook or electronically, where they can easily find the learning intentions, success criteria, activities for the lesson and key instructions.

- Ensure that all students in the class and across year groups know that their learning goals can be realised when they work hard. This can be done by emphasising how a student's effort has contributed to their improved performance.

- Create the expectation that every minute of every lesson is important and valuable. This can be done by utilising all classroom time efficiently and by avoiding the temptation for too many 'end of term' or 'Friday afternoon' classroom activities. For example, start all lessons promptly, teach to the end of every lesson, facilitate smooth transitions between activities and establish clear classroom procedures to avoid unnecessary disruptions.

Guide and support students towards meeting expectations

- Create a positive classroom environment characterised by supportive, collaborative relationships and frequent student-teacher classroom interactions. For example, positive interactions can be facilitated by encouraging students to offer insightful or interesting observations on the work of their peers.

- Create a safe space where all students feel comfortable taking risks, making mistakes and asking questions to clarify their thinking. This can be done by facilitating and modelling classroom expectations about how to be a respectful, responsible and collaborative class member.

- Provide clear and specific feedback that identifies the next step and skills needed for students to improve.

Explicit teaching

Effective feedback

Use of data to inform practice

Assessment

Classroom management

Wellbeing

Collaboration

- Use the same scaffolds and metalanguage across a faculty in secondary school to ensure consistency in the language used with students and to set clear expectations for all students. For example, in English this could be an agreed paragraph scaffold. In mathematics, it could be a requirement that all students show their working out in a consistent way from the start of Year 7.

Engage with parents and carers to encourage them to hold high expectations of their children

- Regularly inform parents and carers of their child's progress and learning goals as well as learning expectations. Communication methods with parents and carers can include meetings in person, phone/video calls, emails and online apps.

- Provide parents and carers with positive feedback. Take the opportunity to make 'good news' calls, and do not only make contact to report student misbehaviour.

- Invite parents and carers to view their child's work regularly and discuss their goals, either in person or online, to help them understand and appreciate the expectations the school has of their child. For example, regular open classroom time can be scheduled in primary schools. In secondary schools, open days can be used to display student work and give parents and carers additional opportunities to meet in person with their child's teachers.

- Partner with parents and carers to support their child's learning at home. Provide parents and carers with advice, tools and information about how students learn. For example, advice to parents and carers could include explaining the importance of establishing routines and time-defined tasks which are broken up by short breaks when students are studying at home.

Reflection questions

- What do high expectations look like and feel like in my classroom? What would my students say?

- How do my students know what I expect of them?

- How do I know if students understand my high expectations of them?

- How do I know if students have high expectations of themselves?

- How do I model to students that I have high expectations of myself?

- Which of these strategies am I already using, and which could I adopt? How can I do this?

Resources

- Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation 2020, Supporting high academic expectations, NSW Department of Education

- Hattie, J 2013, Visible Learning for teachers: Maximising impact on Learning, Taylor & Francis Ltd, London

Explicit teaching

Effective feedback

Use of data to inform practice

Assessment

Classroom management

Wellbeing

Collaboration

Case studies

Aldavilla Public School

Aldavilla Public School attributes much of its success in improving outcomes for students to a focus on high expectations. The students are constantly reminded that they can be whatever they want to be. One way that high expectations are encouraged at Aldavilla Public School is through goal setting. Students are expected to have attainable learning goals that they are working towards, and staff are constantly encouraging students to push themselves to reach their next goal. The school also fosters high expectations through establishing consistent and explicit policies and expectations. For example, Aldavilla has behaviour expectations that are common across the school with every class following exactly the same behaviour management system. Student-teacher relationships are also prioritised as a means to foster high expectations. All teachers make an effort to get to know the students and demonstrate that they care about their students. This can be as simple as knowing who a student's siblings are or asking questions about what they did on the weekend.

Trangie Central School

Setting high expectations has played a major role in changing the school culture in Trangie Central School. Under the principal's leadership, and with the support of staff, high expectations for students, staff and the community have become the norm. A culture of high expectations has been built through the concept of respect; that is, respecting yourself, peers, teachers, family and the physical environment. The principal explained that building this culture was difficult initially, with some students resistant to change, but the school's perseverance has been rewarded. Trangie's culture of high expectations across every classroom has contributed to improvements in student behaviour, happiness levels and academic results.

> **"** I see how hard my teacher works – in terms of how much they plan the lesson and provide detailed feedback… I can see how much my teacher cares about my learning that it makes me feel like I should care just as much. **"**
>
> — Student
> Georges River College
> Oatley Senior Campus

High expectations

Explicit teaching

Effective feedback

Use of data to inform practice

Assessment

Classroom management

Wellbeing

Collaboration

2. Explicit teaching

Explicit teaching is when teachers clearly explain to students why they are learning something, how it connects to what they already know, what they are expected to do, how to do it and what it looks like when they have succeeded. Students are given opportunities and time to check their understanding, ask questions and receive clear, effective feedback about aspects of performance.

Explicit teaching practices draw on research about how students effectively take in and retain information, and how they then use that knowledge and understanding to solve problems, pose questions, and synthesise and justify their reasoning.

Australian Professional Standards for Teachers

- Professional knowledge: 1.2, 1.3, 1.5, 1.6, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6
- Professional practice: 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5

High expectations

Explicit teaching

Effective feedback

Use of data to inform practice

Assessment

Classroom management

Wellbeing

Collaboration

Practical strategies for teaching and learning

The strategies below outline ways teachers can implement explicit teaching. It is important to consider these strategies within the unique contexts of each classroom and the whole-school environment.

Prepare for explicit teaching

- Plan the scope and sequence of lessons from the syllabus to systematically build student understanding of skills, concepts and content knowledge. Consider the order of lesson delivery and the amount of content to be delivered in each lesson to create achievable steps for students to progress towards mastery.

- Use a range of data from different types of assessment to plan, modify and deliver lessons to meet the learning strengths and needs of students, and to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of lessons.

- Review prior learning before beginning new or more complex learning to identify and build on what students already know. For example, at the beginning of a unit of work use formative assessment to assess previously covered skills, concepts or content knowledge, so that lessons can be adjusted or paced to students' skills and knowledge and effective differentiation put in place.

- Reflect on the balance of teacher-directed, teacher-guided and student-directed learning within a lesson and across a unit of study. Provide more explicit teaching opportunities earlier in units of study and plan for the transition to guided practice and individual activities once students have gained confidence and mastery.

Explain, model and guide learning

- Explain to students what they will be learning and be clear about the purpose and relevance of all tasks. Clearly explain the success criteria and check for student understanding.

- Provide visual lesson outlines, including the learning intentions, the activities or key instructions and the success criteria for the lesson. Keep the lesson outline visible on the board or an online platform throughout the lesson.

- Remind students to refer to the visual lesson outline as required to assist students to stay focused and on task.

- Work through examples of new or more complex learning, explaining the steps, connections or concepts, and check for student understanding regularly. Complete worked examples in 'real time', rather than showing students pre-prepared solutions or responses, and regularly provide opportunities for all students to ask questions to clarify their thinking.

- Provide opportunities for guided, and then independent, practice as students gain proficiency and understanding of concepts and skills and progress towards mastery.

- Use high-quality exemplars, containing detailed annotation, that explain the success criteria. Exemplars could come from students in a previous cohort, or be written each year by classroom teachers.

- Use and explain the language of the syllabus to increase students' familiarity with the vocabulary so students can unpack assessment questions and understand exactly what they are being asked to do. This could include providing students with a glossary at the beginning of a lesson sequence and spending time over this sequence to unpack the vocabulary.

Monitor student progress and check for understanding

- Ask students challenging questions, such as 'why, why-not, how, what-if, how does X compare to Y, and what is the evidence for X?' to deepen knowledge and check for understanding.

- Frequently use formative assessment, such as asking for verbal, written or visual responses from all students during activities or tasks, to monitor their levels of understanding.

- Provide specific feedback based on the success criteria and give students opportunities to reflect on and apply the feedback to improve their work. For example, ask students to re-write or re-attempt responses that have been identified through annotations on their work.

- Regularly review student learning records to inform differentiation and future direction.

High expectations

Explicit teaching

Effective feedback

Use of data to inform practice

Assessment

Classroom management

Wellbeing

Collaboration

Reflection questions

- How do my students know what they are learning, why they are learning it, and when they have been successful?

- How do I show students what to do and how to do it while providing opportunities for them to be active in their learning?

- How do I know if I am providing students with too little or too much support?

- How do I know if students understand concepts and skills and can apply them to unfamiliar problems and tasks?

"Every lesson has a learning intention, what we're trying to learn and how we're going to achieve it … Then you might have specific mini learning intentions for specific kids. Yours is punctuation, yours is capital letters after full stops. That's where you get to the nitty gritty … at the end, we see if we have achieved our learning intention? No? How can we change it? What can we do the next day?"

— Teacher
Fairfield Heights Public School

Case studies

Whalan Public School

Whalan Public School uses an initiative called the Whalan 5 to centre classroom time on students' learning experiences. This involves teachers focusing on specific learning intentions, success criteria, goal-setting and feedback, in a structured way. Teachers explicitly check that students are engaged, actively learning and able to self-assess their progress towards mastery by asking five questions:

1. What are you learning today?
2. Why are you learning this?
3. How will you know you have learnt it?
4. How can you improve?
5. How are you an expert learner?

Northern Beaches Secondary College Balgowlah Boys Campus

Explicit teaching in English at Northern Beaches Secondary College Balgowlah Boys Campus involves teachers using a simple sentence scaffold to teach students the skills needed to produce high-quality written responses. The success of this scaffold relies on students employing an increasingly sophisticated range of language to explore syllabus content and concepts, and teachers asking carefully considered questions to check for understanding and modify their teaching as required.

High-quality exemplar responses, which are written by the school's teachers for every unit of work for English across Years 7 to 12, create a consistent faculty standard. This provides a common foundation upon which students are given guided practice constructing high-quality written responses, using 'fading' scaffolding that transitions from teacher instruction to student autonomy, along the lines of: 'I do it; we do it; you do it together; you do it alone'.

Resources

- Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation 2017, Cognitive load theory: Research that teachers really need to understand, NSW Department of Education

- Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation 2017, Effective reading instruction in the early years of school, NSW Department of Education

- Martin, A & Evans, P 2018, 'Load reduction instruction: Exploring a framework that assesses explicit instruction through to independent learning', Teaching and Teacher Education, vol. 73, pp. 203-214

- Sherrington, T 2019, Rosenshine's principles in action, John Catt Educational Ltd, Suffolk

High expectations

Explicit teaching

Effective feedback

Use of data to inform practice

Assessment

Classroom management

Wellbeing

Collaboration

3. Effective feedback

Effective feedback provides students with relevant, explicit, ongoing, constructive and actionable information about their performance against learning outcomes from the syllabus. Feedback to a student about aspects of performance or understanding can be provided by a teacher, peer, or through self-reflection.

There are two elements that are required for a teacher to provide effective feedback. The first is knowing where students need to get to (the learning outcome) and the second is finding evidence of where students are at (through assessment and observation).

Australian Professional Standards for Teachers

- Professional knowledge: 1.2, 1.3, 1.5, 1.6, 2.3, 2.5, 2.6
- Professional practice: 3.3, 5.1, 5.2, 5.5

High expectations

Explicit teaching

Effective feedback

Use of data to inform practice

Assessment

Classroom management

Wellbeing

Collaboration

Practical strategies for teaching and learning

The strategies below outline ways teachers can provide their students with effective feedback. It is important to consider these strategies within the unique contexts of each classroom and the whole-school environment.

Reflect and communicate about the learning task with students

- Acknowledge students' process or effort, either verbally or in the comments made on students' work. For example, 'I can see the effort you've put in. Your original method didn't work, but you kept trying different approaches and you were able to solve the problem.'

- Reflect on previous performance and effort with every student. For example, allocate five minutes every lesson to meet with one or two students to discuss their progress.

- Highlight to students areas for improvement and explain why improvement is needed. This can be done by setting clear learning intentions, helping students understand where they are right now in comparison to their learning intentions and what they need to do to get there.

Provide students with detailed and specific feedback about what they need to do to achieve growth as a learner

- Use a combination of feedback strategies (for example, feedback about the task and feedback about the process of the task) to provide students with information that is timely and directly connected to the learning intentions and success criteria.

- Consider different ways of delivering feedback. For example, making a sound or video recording as a way of giving individual feedback to a student may mean you can deliver more feedback in the same amount of time.

- Provide students with feedback that goes beyond simply identifying what they are doing well, or not doing well.

- Provide actionable steps so that students can improve their learning process and enhance their understanding and performance on the task. For example, refer students to a resource, chapter, or practical problem to help them practice, refine their understanding, or construct their work. Or create learning tasks requiring students to re-write responses to accommodate feedback, or attempt a similar task with a different question.

- Provide feedback that encourages students' self-regulation. For example, 'You already know the key features of the opening of an argument. Check to see whether you have incorporated them in your first paragraph'.

Encourage students to self-assess, reflect and monitor their work

- Facilitate opportunities for students to reflect on and self-grade assessments. This can be done by explicitly demonstrating how students can: reflect on the quality of their work against the success criteria, assess the extent to which they have met their goal and revise accordingly, identify areas for improvement and make the improvements.

- Use rubrics, marking guidelines and work samples to support students with self-assessment. This could include breaking down the rubric or marking guidelines into language that is more appropriate and accessible for students, so that they can self-assess their work.

- Give students time to review and refine their work, and provide additional opportunities to practice and refine their skills. For example, students can be asked to submit a practice response to a draft assessment or exam question. Students can then be given quality feedback they can use to improve their work before the assessment task.

- Scaffold any longer pieces of work with indications of when each section should be completed in order to meet the submission deadline.

- Use regular short quizzes to help reinforce the need for independent revision and study. For example, online e-learning tools can be used to create short quizzes that students can take once they feel confident with their level of mastery. Students' responses can be used as a progress update to provide feedback on their learning in a topic or unit.

Ensure that students act on feedback that they receive

- Provide targeted feedback in a timely manner so students have opportunities to action and apply the feedback.

High expectations

Explicit teaching

Effective feedback

Use of data to inform practice

Assessment

Classroom management

Wellbeing

Collaboration

- Support students to engage with feedback and encourage them to look beyond the grades they receive. For example, delay giving students marks on assessment tasks until they have reflected on the feedback.

- Assist students to undertake the steps that were outlined to them to help improve their performance. For example, feedback on written tasks can be actioned by giving students time to re-write their responses based on the feedback that they received.

Reflection questions

- What opportunities for feedback do I provide to individual students and the whole class?

- How do I know if students have understood my feedback?

- How well do my students reflect on their work and detect their errors?

- How do I know if students have acted on my feedback?

- How does my feedback link to the identified learning intentions and success criteria?

Resources

- Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership 2017, Feedback, viewed 1 April 2020 <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/teach/improve-practice/feedback>

- Black, P & Wiliam, D 2010, 'Inside the black box: Raising standards through classroom assessment', Phi Delta Kappan, vol. 92, no. 1, pp. 81-90

- Brooks, C, Carroll, A, Gillies, R & Hattie, J 2019, 'A matrix of feedback for learning', Australian Journal of Teacher Education, vol. 44, no. 4, pp. 14-32

- NSW Education Standards Authority, Effective Feedback, viewed 12 March 2020 <https://www.educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/portal/nesa/k-10/understanding-the-curriculum/assessment/effective-feedback>

- Wiliam, D & Leahy, S 2015, Embedding formative assessment: Practical techniques for K-12 classrooms, Learning Sciences International, West Palm Beach, Florida

Case studies

Homebush West Public School

At Homebush West Public School, students are given a feedback checklist for each activity that they complete. The feedback checklist breaks down what the students need to undertake to complete the activity. For example, a narrative writing checklist outlines what the student needs to do for the planning, orientation and the complication and resolution stages of their narrative. The checklist prompts students through questions such as 'have I used descriptive words like verbs, adverbs, adjectives and onomatopoeia when: planning setting, creating characters, visualising the start, designing complication and plotting events and resolution?' Before moving on to the next stage of their narrative writing (from planning to orientation), students use the checklist to reflect and check if they have completed each step on the list. Students also ask a peer to give them feedback – students are encouraged to use the 'two stars and one wish' (two positives, one constructive) or 'feedback sandwich' (positive, constructive, positive) methods to give peer feedback. The teacher also checks students' work against the checklist and gives them feedback on the steps that were not completed well and how they can improve their work.

Georges River College Oatley Senior Campus

At Georges River College Oatley Senior Campus, English teachers recognise that providing students with effective feedback in a timely manner is redundant if students do not engage with the feedback. Therefore, all English teachers at the school dedicate classroom time to helping students understand the purpose of feedback and encouraging them to look beyond the grades they receive. English teachers at the school delay giving students marks on assessment tasks until after they have reflected on the feedback, which involves submitting a written response about how the feedback will help them improve their work. This strategy helps students understand the formative nature of formal assessment tasks and how high-quality feedback supports optimal HSC performance.

Students at the school often use their own previous assessment work, or that of peers, as templates in subsequent lessons to re-work and continuously refine their skills, based on feedback.

> **"** I don't want a teacher to tell me 'good job'. I want to know what I didn't do well and how to improve it. **"**
>
> — Student
>   Sefton High School

High expectations
Explicit teaching
Effective feedback
Use of data to inform practice
Assessment
Classroom management
Wellbeing
Collaboration

4. Use of data to inform practice

Teachers use data to check and understand where their students are in their learning and to plan what to do next. Effective use of data helps teachers understand which students are progressing at an appropriate level in response to the teaching approaches in their classroom, and how they could best adjust their practice to drive improvement for all students in their class.

Data can be quantitative (information that can be reduced to a set of numbers, from which averages, counts, percentages or totals can be obtained) or qualitative (information that tends to include thoughts, observations, feelings, opinions and/or experiences). Common sources of data on student learning include formal examinations, standardised tests, class tests, assignments, work samples and classroom observations and questioning of students.

Australian Professional Standards for Teachers

- Professional knowledge: 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 2.5

- Professional practice: 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.6, 5.4

High expectations

Explicit teaching

Effective feedback

Use of data to inform practice

Assessment

Classroom management

Wellbeing

Collaboration

Practical strategies for teaching and learning

The strategies below outline ways teachers can use data to inform their practice. It is important to consider these strategies within the unique contexts of each classroom and the whole-school environment.

Regularly dedicate time to using data effectively

- Make collecting and using data a routine and regular part of teaching practice.

- Engage in collaborative analysis of data with colleagues. For example, meet regularly to consider evidence of learning by individual students, classes and whole year or stage groups.

- Put systems and structures in place to record data that has been collected. For example, data walls can be used to display the growth and achievement of every student and build collective teacher responsibility for all students' learning.

- Prioritise professional learning in effective and efficient use of data. For example, CESE's online resources, such as Using data with confidence and The Educator Calculator can be used to help improve data skills and confidence. Scout resources can help with understanding how to interpret and use student data.

Collect meaningful data

- Collect and use meaningful data from all stages of the learning process that provides information on 'where to next?'

- Use a variety of formal and informal methods to collect student data. For example, formal examinations, in-class quizzes, teacher observation, feedback forms and summative and formative assessments.

- Use consistent methods when collecting data between classes and over time so that comparisons of student progress are accurate. For example, faculty or stage teachers can work collaboratively to ensure consistency of teacher judgement activities through blind marking, corporate, or double marking sampling.

- Collect a variety of information about each student's learning. For example, information about academic performance, progress and wellbeing.

- Respect students' privacy by letting them know why information about their learning is being collected and how it will be used. Handle sensitive data carefully, store it in a secure location and only provide access to staff who are authorised to use it.

Analyse the data to monitor student learning and progress

- Monitor and reflect on the progress of every student to identify strengths and gaps in learning. This could include creating, regularly updating and reflecting on individual student learning profiles.

- Make connections between different data sources to build up a rounded picture of each student. This can be done by triangulating internal data (such as the results of in-class assessments) and external data sources (such as NAPLAN) to give a clearer and more accurate picture on student learning.

- Compare student data across years or classes to identify wider trends by using resources such as Scout or Results Analysis Package (RAP).

Make teaching decisions based on data analysis

- Use data to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching practice and moderate practice to meet the learning needs of students across the full range of abilities. This can be achieved by identifying needs of individual students through data analysis and differentiating teaching accordingly to provide additional support or opportunities for extension.

- Work with and support colleagues to use a range of data to improve individual and collective teaching practice by modifying teaching programs and implementing classroom strategies as part of an ongoing improvement cycle.

- Use data to evaluate individual learning programs to inform new goals for student learning or adapt existing goals to ensure that all students are challenged and successful. For example, summative assessment data might be used to highlight individual student strengths and weaknesses (such as spelling or comprehension) that can help refine learning goals.

High expectations

Explicit teaching

Effective feedback

Use of data to inform practice

Assessment

Classroom management

Wellbeing

Collaboration

Reflection questions

- What types of data do I use to identify my students' learning needs, develop learning targets and monitor their progress?

- How do I use data to identify strengths and areas of development of a class or cohort?

- How often do I use student learning and wellbeing data to monitor and adapt my practice?

- How do I know when my teaching is working or not working for different students?

- How do I know I am using data effectively?

Resources

- Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation 2020, Using data with confidence, NSW Department of Education, viewed 1 April 2020 <https://www.cese.nsw.gov.au/publications-filter/using-data-with-confidence-pl>

- State of New South Wales (Department of Education) 2020, Scout, viewed 1 April 2020 <https://education.nsw.gov.au/about-us/educational-data/scout>

High expectations

Explicit teaching

Effective feedback

Use of data to inform practice

Assessment

Classroom management

Wellbeing

Collaboration

Case studies

The Ponds School

The Ponds School is a purpose built School for Specific Purposes. All students have a moderate or severe intellectual disability. The school collects student data in the areas of communication, literacy and numeracy using the University of Melbourne's Students with Additional Needs (SWANs) online assessment tool. This data is displayed and analysed, using a whole-school data wall in line with the school's Visible Learning initiative. At the whole-school level, data is used in conjunction with student attendance data, Positive Behaviour for Learning data and personalised learning plan data to inform school planning and drive continuous improvement in learning. At the classroom level, teachers are able to use this data in conjunction with classroom-based assessments, such as records of learning and observations, to identify student growth, inform future planning and programs, adjust programs in response to changing student needs and identify students who are in need of additional support.

All students have a personalised learning plan, with three goals developed in collaboration between parents and carers, students, teachers, school learning support officers, therapists and other key stakeholders. These goals include being safe and caring, a lifelong learner and a valued member of the community. Each goal has five steps to success and are displayed on Bump Up Walls that make the goals and learning visible to students, teachers and parents and carers. Students receive feedback and are involved in the ongoing assessment of these goals through regular interactions with the Bump Up Wall with their teacher. Teachers report that the visual element of the Bump Up Walls enhances students' focus on their goals and positively impacts classroom management.

Concord High School

The mathematics faculty at Concord High School analyses their HSC data each year and uses the results to inform their Stage 4, Stage 5 and Stage 6 programs. The head teacher of mathematics explained: "We have a really good look at the questions students got wrong and we try to reprogram based on things that the kids have got wrong. For example, our students were struggling with significant figures in the HSC so we've now brought significant figures into Year 7. That means they have six years where they can see that they can round to significant figures, and now it hasn't been an issue". Improved HSC results on significant figures has supported the school's decision to introduce this concept in the Year 7 program and then give students repeated practice applying the concept in the Years 8 to 10 programs.

Some of their reprogramming involves changing the order of topics. "Our students were doing really badly with probability. We had a look at our programs and probability was something we were doing at the end of every year, so we've moved it around a little bit so they are seeing it earlier in some years", says the head teacher of mathematics. This gives students more opportunities to apply their knowledge and understanding of these concepts throughout the year.

> " The effective use of data to inform and guide 'where to next' with explicit teaching and learning programs is paramount to the individual growth of every student. Most important is taking the time to triangulate various sources of data to help teachers and leaders develop a full understanding of the specific learning needs of every student. This builds a collective responsibility across grades, stages, teams and schools for every staff member to own the learning and growth of each and every child. "
>
> — Principal,
>   Allambie Heights Public School

High expectations

Explicit teaching

Effective feedback

Use of data to inform practice

Assessment

Classroom management

Wellbeing

Collaboration

5. Assessment

Student assessment refers to the variety of methods that teachers use to evaluate, measure, and document the academic readiness, learning progress, skill acquisition, or educational needs of students. These include formal examinations, standardised tests, class tests, work samples and analysis of student portfolios, as well as the informal questions, teacher judgements, and observations that occur in classrooms. It is only through effective assessment that teachers can know if learning is taking place.

Student assessments can be formative or summative. Formative assessments occur during the learning process to give teachers feedback about student progress. Summative assessments occur at the end of a course of study or period of time and indicate student achievement level against curriculum standards or other defined learning objectives.

Australian Professional Standards for Teachers

- Professional knowledge: 2.3
- Professional practice: 3.6, 5.1, 5.3

High expectations

Explicit teaching

Effective feedback

Use of data to inform practice

Assessment

Classroom management

Wellbeing

Collaboration

Practical strategies for teaching and learning

The strategies below outline ways teachers can use assessment to improve student learning. It is important to consider these strategies within the unique contexts of each classroom and the whole-school environment.

Make student assessment a part of everyday practice

- Regularly provide students with opportunities to demonstrate what they know and can do in relation to the learning intentions and success criteria of the unit of work.

- Develop and apply a variety of assessment methods each lesson to check for students' understanding and inform what should be taught next. These could include asking open-ended questions, conducting quick written quizzes, or asking students to summarise lesson content or complete a written test.

- Ask students challenging questions that prompt them to deepen their thinking and articulate their reasoning. Listen carefully to their responses to understand the source of any errors or misconceptions.

- Use assessment as an ongoing opportunity to provide feedback to support each student at their point of challenge. Feedback should be specific and forward-focused, with an emphasis on how students can improve their learning.

Use assessment to provide students with learning opportunities

- Regularly dedicate time to making sure assessment creates learning opportunities for students and that it serves a greater purpose than evaluating performance.

- Explain the purpose of assessment to students to help them look beyond the grades they receive.

- Use assessment to provide students with opportunities to reflect on their progress to inform future learning goals. This can be achieved by providing students with annotated work samples that explicitly show the features of novice work, compared with more proficient work and very proficient work. Students can then determine the level of their own work and which features need to be incorporated in order to achieve the next level of proficiency.

Design and deliver high-quality formal assessment tasks

- Work with colleagues to develop and deliver assessment tasks that assess the intended learning outcomes from the syllabus, ensuring that the tasks are accessible to all students. Accessible tasks are designed to enable all students to demonstrate their learning, regardless of gender, physical ability, cultural background or geographical location.

- Work with and support colleagues to evaluate the effectiveness of each teacher's assessment methods. Focus on validity, reliability, objectivity and inclusiveness. Also consider clarity, syllabus focus, structure and differentiation.

- Create rubrics that clearly describe what students need to do to succeed and the various levels of proficiency students should attain.

- Clearly explain when and why students are being assessed, and how the task relates to learning outcomes from the syllabus.

- Mark assessment tasks consistently and objectively against the syllabus. This can be achieved by collaborating with colleagues across stages, teams and faculties to develop standards of performance against the assessment rubric and by organising assessment moderation activities.

- Make time after every assessment task to give students timely and relevant feedback that they can use to improve their performance in future tasks.

Carefully structure group assessment activities to ensure that students are supported, challenged and able to work together successfully

- Be clear and transparent about the reason for using group assessments.

- Design group assignments that require each group member to participate fully. This can be achieved by ensuring that all members of the group are required to contribute in order to complete the task. For example, problems should be complex enough that an individual would find it difficult to achieve the task

in the time given, and questions should require multiple perspectives for a thorough answer.

- Clearly define each student's role in the group, ensure each group member is accountable for their contribution and work with students to resolve any group dynamics issues that arise.

- Set clear expectations about the quality of the task to be completed, the steps required and the time needed to achieve success.

Reflection questions

- How do I know where students are up to in their learning and what needs to be taught next?

- What types of questions do I ask to check student understanding of a concept, or grasp of a skill?

- How do I structure group assessment activities to support, challenge and enable students to work successfully together?

- How do I know if an assessment task clearly assesses the intended learning outcomes and is accessible to all students?

- How do I structure group assessment tasks to ensure responsibilities are evenly distributed and students are accountable for their work?

- How do I check that assessment tasks are marked and scored consistently and objectively?

- Why do I need to know where my students are with their learning and what do I provide to address their individual learning needs?

- How do I facilitate opportunities for my students to reflect on and express their thoughts about the assessment tasks and the assessment process?

Resources

- Black, P & Wiliam, D 2018, 'Classroom assessment and pedagogy', Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice, vol. 25, no. 6, pp. 551-575

- Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation 2015, Re-assessing assessment, NSW Department of Education

- Sharratt, L 2018, Clarity: What matters most in learning, teaching, and leading, Corwin, Thousand Oaks, California

High expectations
Explicit teaching
Effective feedback
Use of data to inform practice
Assessment
Classroom management
Wellbeing
Collaboration

Case studies

Blue Haven Public School

Teachers at Blue Haven Public School use formative assessment to provide feedback to students at the point of error, measure student progress, differentiate teaching and plan next steps. Teachers assess student learning in a variety of ways, from informal question-and-answer activities and observation of student work, to more formal pre- and post-topic testing and benchmarking with readers.

Sefton High School

At Sefton High School, to mark student assessments, the English faculty uses corporate marking for every assessment across all year groups. This highly structured marking process has been an effective way to ensure consistency across the faculty, draw on the faculty's collective expertise and build the capacity of all teachers. The corporate marking process at Sefton High School loosely follows the HSC marking process. It begins with pilot marking, discussions about the marking criteria and the standard of student responses.

Once a consistent standard has been established, all student papers are placed into a single pile and teachers mark papers at random in the same room. English teachers at Sefton High School consider these marking sessions to be one of the most effective professional learning activities because it promotes meaningful professional dialogue. The faculty's early-career teachers also like this marking system because having all teachers complete marking from a single pile removes the pressure to work faster. During each marking session the course coordinator makes notes of what has been discussed and distributes this to all teachers.

"It is important for schools to make clear decisions about what is important to know; what is important to do; and what is important to value. It is important for class teachers to design tasks where they know what they are asking students to do and then, when delivering the lesson, whether the students were doing what was planned. They know this best when short cycle formative assessment is built into lesson design and is seen as underpinning the summative assessment that usually comes at the end of a period of learning. The use of clear learning intentions in lesson design that describe what is to be done with what content, supported by explicit success criteria that students understand...is made even more effective when students can explain and demonstrate that they have met the success criteria."

— Principal
Rooty Hill High School

High expectations

Explicit teaching

Effective feedback

Use of data to inform practice

Assessment

Classroom management

Wellbeing

Collaboration

6. Classroom management

Classroom management is a broad term for a range of practices and strategies used by teachers to build quality relationships with each of their students and foster a safe, positive and stimulating learning environment. Well-managed classrooms maintain a positive classroom climate that maximises effective learning time and encourages on-task positive learning behaviours, where disengagement and disruptions are addressed in a timely and appropriate manner.

The most effective classroom management approaches combine preventative and responsive strategies. Preventative classroom management strategies create positive environments that support students to engage in learning, be on-task and display positive learning behaviours. Responsive classroom management strategies aim to positively redirect students to meet classroom expectations and routines when they show behaviours that may impact their own and other students' learning.

Australian Professional Standards for Teachers

- Professional knowledge: 1.2, 1.3, 1.5

- Professional practice: 3.5, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5

High expectations

Explicit teaching

Effective feedback

Use of data to inform practice

Assessment

Classroom management

Wellbeing

Collaboration

Practical strategies for teaching and learning

The strategies below outline ways teachers can manage their classrooms effectively. It is important to consider these strategies within the unique contexts of each classroom and the whole-school environment.

Develop high-quality student-teacher relationships

- Invest time in getting to know students, including knowing their interests, strengths, attitude towards learning and aspirations. For example, at the beginning of the school year, each student could be asked to write down their interests and what they would like to achieve in the year. This can form the basis for a one-to-one discussions.

- Look for opportunities to engage positively with students. Take the time to have positive interactions in non-classroom settings such as in the playground, at sport or co-curricular activities.

- Encourage student voice by asking students for their feedback on lessons and other aspects of school life. This can be done through surveys or informal conversations. Act on their suggestions where appropriate to show students that their opinions are valued by their teachers and school.

- Reflect on own behaviour, emotions and thoughts when interacting with students. For example, minimise behaviours that could be potentially negative, such as sarcasm.

Provide structure, predictability, and opportunities for active student participation in the classroom

- Take time at the start of a school year to teach rules and routines explicitly in a way that is specific and easy to understand. Small lists of rules and routines with few steps will make it easier for students to remember them. Use visual cues such as posters, checklists and signs to reinforce expectations for classroom behaviour and refer back to these visual cues.

- Provide consistent rules and predictable outcomes so students can take responsibility for their learning.

- Scaffold and support students to understand task requirements by clearly communicating the content and goals of the lesson. For example, lesson learning intentions can be displayed prominently in the classroom and explained at the beginning of each lesson.

- Transition smoothly between lesson activities by providing clear guidance and using pre-arranged signals, such as a bell, a countdown timer, or a pre-recorded piece of music, to indicate when a transition is about to occur.

- Give explicit task directions, check students understand what is required and provide timely feedback.

- Frequently provide opportunities for individual students, groups and the entire class to respond to questions that encourage them to think about what they are learning.

Actively supervise students to keep them on task

- Move around the classroom, scanning for signs of on-task or off-task behaviour.

- Acknowledge appropriate behaviours. Use verbal and non-verbal acknowledgements to let the student know that the behaviour was noticed and appreciated.

- Offer assistance or extension that addresses the strengths and needs of students who may otherwise passively disengage or become disruptive.

Respond to disengagement and disruptive behaviours and support students to re-engage in learning

- Remain calm and identify why a student is disengaged or being disruptive.

- Give verbal and non-verbal corrective feedback in a consistent, fair and respectful manner. Non-verbal corrective feedback can include moving closer to the student, making eye contact and using gestures.

- Ensure the corrective feedback is proportionate to the level of disengagement or disruptive behaviour displayed.

- Ensure the student understands the reason for the corrective feedback. For example, once the student has corrected their behaviour and there is an appropriate point in the lesson, speak quietly and privately with the student to follow up on the corrective feedback and explain why it was given.

- Have a clear escalation path for persistent misbehaviour and share this with the class to make sure expectations and consequences are clear.

High expectations

Explicit teaching

Effective feedback

Use of data to inform practice

Assessment

Classroom management

Wellbeing

Collaboration

Reflection questions

- How do I know if students are actively engaged in their learning?

- How do I know if students understand classroom rules and routines, and how can I ensure that they do?

- How well-structured are my lessons?

- What does a well-managed lesson look like in my classroom?

- Do the students in my class understand the purpose of the lesson?

Resources

- Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation 2020, Classroom management – creating and maintaining positive learning environments, NSW Department of Education

- State of New South Wales (Department of Education) 2020, Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL), viewed 1 April 2020 <https://pbl.schools.nsw.gov.au/>

High expectations
Explicit teaching
Effective feedback
Use of data to inform practice
Assessment
Classroom management
Wellbeing
Collaboration

Case studies

Rooty Hill High School

Rooty Hill High School has a 'Raising Responsibility' behaviour chart in every room. Students identify whether they are 'above the line' or 'below the line', based on a visual representation of a smiley face, meaning they have been responsible for their own positive behaviour, or a sad face, which means an adult needs to step in to assist with their behaviour. The system is easy for students to use and understand, despite being underpinned by more complicated educational theory, software and systems thinking.

As the system is embedded in a whole school approach, new teachers also benefit as they do not need to immediately understand the evidence and practice that sits behind the system in order to implement it. As the principal describes, when new teachers come to the school, all they have to do initially is to 'follow the recipe'.

Penrith Valley School

Every day at Penrith Valley School (School for Specific Purposes, Behaviour Disorder) is planned systematically from drop off to pick up, including transitions between classes, lunch and recess breaks, and student assemblies. For example, students at Penrith Valley are never left unsupervised, or solely in the care of a school learning and support officer (SLSO), between lessons. There are designated areas within the school where each group of students waits for their next teacher to arrive. Clear procedures are also in place for when students misbehave and serious or critical incidents occur.

Penrith Valley's routines are explained in a 'daily routine' document and 'day sheet' that staff use to ensure a consistent approach across the school. Providing consistent rules and predictable outcomes enables students to take responsibility for their actions and to begin regulating their emotional responses. This consistent approach leads to calmer classrooms, where students are spending more time on-task, and teachers are spending more time teaching.

> "I like it when it is quiet in class when I really need to think and read. But it is also good to talk with my friends when we work together. The teacher tells us whether we should be quiet or talk and that helps us know what to do."
>
> — Student
>   Tarrawanna Public School

High expectations

Explicit teaching

Effective feedback

Use of data to inform practice

Assessment

Classroom management

Wellbeing

Collaboration

7. Wellbeing

Student wellbeing is a broad term that encompasses many dimensions including cognitive, social, physical and spiritual wellbeing. Schools support wellbeing through practices that promote social, emotional, behavioural and intellectual engagement, and by fostering positive relationships across the school community.

Supporting student wellbeing in a school is the responsibility of all staff. Practices and initiatives that support student wellbeing are most effective when they promote a supportive environment across the whole school.

Australian Professional Standards for Teachers

- Professional knowledge: 1.2, 1.3, 1.5, 1.6
- Professional practice: 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5
- Professional engagement: 7.3

High expectations

Explicit teaching

Effective feedback

Use of data to inform practice

Assessment

Classroom management

Wellbeing

Collaboration

Practical strategies for teaching and learning

The strategies below outline ways teachers can promote student wellbeing. It is important to consider these strategies within the unique contexts of each classroom and the whole-school environment.

Select and develop strategies to proactively teach healthy coping strategies, resilience and self-regulation

- Model healthy coping strategies in the classroom, such as engaging in positive self-talk, discussing issues as they arise, asking for help and managing time effectively.

- Support the development of self-regulation skills, such as naming and understanding emotions, physical regulation of the stress response, and encouraging students to de-escalate emotional responses and maintain focus in stressful situations.

- Establish mentoring programs that identify strengths and success as well as build resilience. A teacher mentor can work with students to build strategies that foster resilience and self-regulation and can help students feel that they have an adult at school that they can turn to for support and advice.

Initiate strategies to build a positive learning environment in the classroom characterised by supportive relationships and regular contact with each student

- Focus on opportunities that allow students to confidently build relationships with their new peers and teachers and become accustomed to school routines.

- Establish opportunities for the development of student voice to encourage students to feel connected to their learning. For example, ask for student feedback, conduct surveys, listen to self-evaluations and encourage suggestions. Communicate changes based on this feedback to show students that their opinions and experiences have been considered and are valued and important.

- Check in with students regularly. This can be a quick chat to see how they are going, if they are understanding and following different lessons or topics.

- Encourage students to express any areas of confusion or concern during lessons. Act on this information to support students to develop as learners.

Target support for different phases of student development and for students who may be at risk

- Identify signs of student disengagement that may be reflective of underlying wellbeing issues and record behaviour or wellbeing concerns.

- Design and implement additional support to vulnerable students in class and other school activities to assist them in feeling safe and supported at school. This can be done by working with a student and their parents and carers to create and regularly review a personalised learning plan, which includes individualised strategies to support their learning and wellbeing.

Use collaborative strategies and share with staff across the school, the school community, and other agencies as required, to support the wellbeing of students

- Share information about student wellbeing appropriately with relevant staff.

- Showcase student progress and achievements to ensure that all students are known, valued and cared for across the school.

- Demonstrate responsiveness in all communications with parents and carers to provide support for students both at school and at home.

- Discuss students' progress with parents and carers to establish partnerships built on trust and respect. Communication must work both ways so that all sources of support (school staff, specialist staff, parents and carers) for a student are kept informed and can act in a student's best interests at all times.

- Initiate and take responsibility for implementing health, safety, child protection, and school and Departmental wellbeing policies. Consult with other agencies as required in response to identified wellbeing needs of students.

Reflection questions

- How do I interact with each student in my class to get to know them?

- How well do I model healthy coping strategies and encourage students to self-regulate?

- How do I provide opportunities for students to develop and express their voices during lessons?

- How do I know if my students know who they can turn to when they need help to overcome and cope with setbacks?

Resources

- Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation 2020, Supporting students' sense of belonging, NSW Department of Education

- Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation 2020, Supporting advocacy at school, NSW Department of Education

- Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation 2015, Student wellbeing, NSW Department of Education

- Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation 2020, Trauma-informed practice in schools: An explainer, NSW Department of Education, NSW Department of Education, viewed 1 April 2020

- State of New South Wales (Department of Education) 2020, Anti-bullying, viewed 1 April 2020 <https://antibullying.nsw.gov.au/>

- State of New South Wales (Department of Education), 2020, Health, safety and wellbeing, viewed 1 April 2020 <https://policies.education.nsw.gov.au/policy-library/policy-groups/whs-and-wellbeing?refid=285789>

- State of New South Wales (Department of Education) 2020, Wellbeing framework for schools, viewed 1 April 2020 <https://education.nsw.gov.au/student-wellbeing/whole-school-approach/wellbeing-framework-for-schools>

High expectations
Explicit teaching
Effective feedback
Use of data to inform practice
Assessment
Classroom management
Wellbeing
Collaboration

Case studies

Liverpool West Public School

Liverpool West Public School supports vulnerable students in their school, many of whom have come from refugee backgrounds, by providing opportunities for siblings to enter special transition classes together. This helps to maintain familial support structures as students commence school, allowing them to confidently build relationships with their new peers and teachers and become accustomed to school routines before they enter their more typical, age-based classes.

Cecil Hills High School

At Cecil Hills High School, the year advisors for Year 7 play a leading role in laying the foundations for a positive wellbeing culture at the school through a carefully planned and implemented transition program. This program, which begins when students are in Year 5, increases the likelihood of a smooth transition from primary to high school. Transition activities include year advisors visiting the school's three feeder primary schools, future students participating in 'sample high school' lessons at Cecil Hills, conducting question and answer sessions, and buddy mentoring.

Year advisors also work directly with staff at each feeder primary school so they can plan appropriately for the needs of all students before they commence Year 7. This plays a key role in creating optimum conditions for learning in the transition to high school.

"The basic tenet is that kids can't learn well and teachers can't teach effectively without a good wellbeing structure. They've got to be safe, they've got to be content, happy, feel that they're attended to and case managed when they have difficulties … from that basis we built a very successful wellbeing structure."

— School executive
Prairiewood High School

High expectations

Explicit teaching

Effective feedback

Use of data to inform practice

Assessment

Classroom management

Wellbeing

Collaboration

8. Collaboration

Teacher collaboration involves teachers working together to achieve a common goal through the sharing of evidence-informed practices, knowledge and problem solving. Effective collaborative practice improves teacher quality.

Collaboration is most successful when it is frequent and ongoing, either through formalised communities of practice or as part of a school culture that promotes and values the sharing of ideas and advice in non-threatening, encouraging ways. Effective collaboration requires teachers to recognise their own expertise and feel comfortable in offering it, while also being open to accepting the advice and feedback of others.

Australian Professional Standards for Teachers

- Professional knowledge: 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 2.6
- Professional practice: 3.2, 3.3, 3.6, 3.7, 4.3, 4.5, 5.3
- Professional engagement: 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 7.1, 7.3, 7.4

High expectations

Explicit teaching

Effective feedback

Use of data to inform practice

Assessment

Classroom management

Wellbeing

Collaboration

Practical strategies for teaching and learning

The strategies below outline ways teachers can engage in effective collaboration. This is not an exhaustive list. It is important to consider these strategies within the unique contexts of each classroom and the whole-school environment.

Seek professional learning opportunities to share and gain expertise in evidence-based teaching practices

- Draw on the collective expertise of teachers within the school through regular discussion and peer review of programs, assessment and interpretation of data.

- Work with colleagues to use class, cohort and school data to inform co-planning such as lessons and assessments.

- Use external expertise to identify and implement best practice models.

- Actively participate in professional networks and professional learning communities that focus on continuous student improvement and share any professional learning.

- Take opportunities to gain expertise that will inform teaching practices, for example HSC marking.

Regularly participate in structured lesson observations that focus on how different teaching approaches impact on student learning

- Open classrooms to other teachers and be prepared to analyse each other's strengths and areas for improvement.

- Observe the lessons of highly accomplished or lead teachers in the school to develop a better understanding of what works and what can be adopted.

- Give and receive feedback that discusses the effectiveness of strategies observed during the lesson.

- Act on the feedback received to refine and improve teaching and learning.

Regularly dedicate time throughout the school year for working with colleagues to plan, develop and refine teaching and learning programs

- Put in place processes to share ideas, practices and resources and use them on a regular and ongoing basis. For example, dedicate time in faculty or stage meetings for staff to share classroom success and how they know it has enhanced student learning.

- Share and develop ideas and resources within and beyond the immediate school context. For example, share lesson resources, worksheets, booklets, teaching programs and other classroom resources.

- Initiate and engage in ongoing professional dialogue and debate in the context of mutual trust, collective growth and collective efficacy.

Work in partnership with colleagues to achieve shared collaboration goals

- Pursue opportunities to participate in decision making with school leaders. For example, participate in school self-assessments. This can help ensure a more accurate and balanced judgement of current school practice and identify areas for improvement and ways to improve.

- Partner with non-teaching school staff, such as school counsellors, to identify student needs and improve learning outcomes. For example, partner with non-teaching staff to strengthen individualised learning plans that focus on improving student outcomes.

- Seek out 'partner' schools where stages or faculties can connect and share ideas, resources and professional learning.

High expectations

Explicit teaching

Effective feedback

Use of data to inform practice

Assessment

Classroom management

Wellbeing

Collaboration

Reflection questions

- What expertise and skills can I contribute to my colleagues and my school?

- How can I identify external experts to work on particular aspects of my practice?

- How do I share ideas, practices and resources within and beyond my school?

- How do I use structured lesson observations as a professional learning opportunity?

- How can I find time to plan, develop and refine teaching and learning programs with colleagues?

- How do I know if I am effectively working in partnership with colleagues?

Resources

- Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, Disciplined Collaboration in Professional Learning, viewed 1 April 2020 <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/tools-resources/resource/disciplined-collaboration-in-professional-learning>

- Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation 2015, High value-add schools: key drivers of school improvement, NSW Department of Education, viewed 1 April 2020

- Donohoo, J 2016, Collective Efficacy: How Educators' Beliefs Impact Student Learning, Corwin, Thousand Oaks, California

- State of New South Wales (Department of Education) 2020, Quality Teaching Rounds, viewed 1 April 2020 <https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/professional-learning/quality-teaching-rounds>

High expectations

Explicit teaching

Effective feedback

Use of data to inform practice

Assessment

Classroom management

Wellbeing

Collaboration

Case studies

Taree West Public School

Taree West Public School fosters trust and interdependence among staff by getting teachers of the various learning stages to take their Relief from Face-to-Face (RFF) time together and do their professional learning as a group. The rationale is that if stages spend a lot of time working together as a group, they will feel motivated to help each other learn and give their best to the students, and this feeling will translate across the entire school. As the principal explained, 'they identify as groups and then we identify as a school.' For half a day every fortnight, the stages participate in a professional learning course that takes place either in the school's learning centre, or in classrooms when there is a need for practical demonstrations.

With the school's focus on improving practice, teachers evaluate their own and others' teaching practice, then discuss ways to improve based on what is learnt at the workshops. The principal sees this peer evaluation as crucial for ensuring that staff are actually improving as a result of professional learning, rather than just attending workshops without changing their practice.

Mimosa Public School

The staff of Mimosa Public School work collaboratively to develop their collective understanding of current research and educational practices. Professional Learning for staff is grounded in continuous improvement of quality teaching practices and developing consistency and focus across the whole school. There is a collaborative culture of learning among the staff and everyone is committed to learning with and from each other. The staff has worked hard to develop their understanding of best practice in assessing student achievement and understanding of where students are at with their learning and where they are heading to next. There is a collective understanding that everyone is responsible for every learner within and across the school.

The teachers take collective responsibility for student progress and engage in professional dialogue on a regular basis both formally and informally to ensure progress for all students is well informed and clearly understood. The importance of a team approach to understanding the needs academically, socially and emotionally for every child is paramount to the success of each student's schooling experience. The establishment of a Data Wall has helped to ensure all staff share and accept responsibility and accountability for knowing every learner in the school.

“ We have a lot of teachers who have marked the HSC … They come back from marking and elaborate on what they learnt with us … The teachers learn from each other. This year all of the Year 12 English teachers were able to go away to mark and have that experience and cover all the levels of English. ”

— Student
    Coonabarabran High School

High expectations

Explicit teaching

Effective feedback

Use of data to inform practice

Assessment

Classroom management

Wellbeing

Collaboration

Terms and definitions

Assessment

Methods or tools that evaluate, measure, and document the academic readiness, learning progress, skill acquisition, or educational needs of students.

Blended learning

Instruction that combines online, classroom and face-to-face education where teachers use the delivery forms that are accessible, fit for purpose and best serve their students.

Classroom

A physical or virtual space where students learn.

Conceptual understanding

Understanding of core principles and the relationships among them.

Cohort

Students who are grouped by year level or class.

Curriculum

The subjects and other content comprising a course of study that are taught, learned and assessed.

Equity

To be fair or impartial. In schools this means making sure every student is provided with what they need to be successful to increase students' conceptual understanding, skills and knowledge. Equity is not equality, which occurs when every student is treated the same way.

Data

Measurements or observations that are collected as a source of information.

Evidence-based practice

Teaching strategies and behaviours that are based on and backed up by the best available evidence.

Formative assessment

A type of student assessment that occurs during the learning process. Formative assessment aims to give teachers feedback about student progress so that instructional approaches, teaching materials, and academic support can be modified accordingly and feedback can be given to the student.

General capabilities

General capabilities is a term used in the Australian Curriculum to describe a set of seven skills that encompass student knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions. General capabilities are demonstrated when students apply knowledge and skills confidently, effectively and appropriately in complex and changing circumstances.

Learning intentions

Statements created by the teacher that clearly describe what the teacher would like students to know, understand and be able to do by the end of a learning period or unit.

Learning outcomes

Clear and specific statements that describe what students are expected to demonstrate at the end of a defined stage of learning.

Literacy

Literacy involves the interpretation and use of language confidently for learning and communicating in and out of school and for participating effectively in society. It involves students listening to, reading, viewing, speaking, writing and creating oral, print, visual and digital texts, and using and modifying language for different purposes in a range of contexts.

Mathematical literacy

The capacity to formulate, employ and interpret mathematics in a variety of contexts. Mathematical literacy includes reasoning mathematically and using mathematical concepts, procedures, facts and tools to describe, explain and predict phenomena. Mathematical literacy assists individuals to recognise the role that mathematics plays in the world and to make the well-founded judgements and decisions needed by constructive, engaged and reflective citizens.

Numeracy

Numeracy involves the use of mathematics confidently across all learning areas at school and in students' lives more broadly. It involves students recognising and understanding the role of mathematics in the world and having the dispositions and capacities to use mathematical knowledge and skills purposefully.

Peer assessment

A method of assessment in which students evaluate each other's work according to a set of criteria and offer feedback for improvement. Successful peer assessment takes time and practice.

Pedagogy

Methods employed by teachers that allow learning to take place. Pedagogy is context dependent and incorporates knowledge of how students learn in particular subjects.

Qualitative data

Non-numerical information that may come from open-ended questions, observations, work samples, pictures, audio or other sources.

Quality teaching

Effective instruction by teachers that facilitates learning and student growth through use of best practice.

Quantitative data

Any information that can be reduced to a set of numbers, for example, where something is counted, measured or assessed.

Reading literacy

The capacity to understand, use, evaluate, reflect on and engage with texts, in order to achieve one's goals, develop one's knowledge and potential, and participate in society.

Rubric

An evaluation tool, set of guidelines or criteria used to promote the consistent application of learning expectations, learning objectives or learning standards.

Scaffolding

Teacher support that is designed to provide the assistance necessary for students to accomplish tasks and develop understandings. Support is gradually removed when it is no longer needed in order to move students towards greater independence in their learning

School Excellence Framework (SEF)

A statement of what is valued as excellence for NSW public schools, both now and into the future. All schools have areas of strength and opportunities for improvement. The Framework identifies quality practice across the three key domains of education — learning, teaching and leading — to help schools plan and monitor strategies for ongoing improvement.

School improvement

When gains in teaching and learning occur as a result of the whole school community working together to change school practices.

Scientific literacy

The capacity to engage with science-related issues and with the ideas of science, as a reflective citizen. A scientifically literate person is willing to engage in reasoned discourse about science and technology, which requires the competencies to explain phenomena scientifically, evaluate and design scientific enquiry, and interpret data and evidence scientifically.

Student growth

The long-term progress a student makes as they develop more advanced knowledge, deeper understanding and more sophisticated skills.

Student self-assessment

A method of assessment in which students evaluate their own work according to a set of criteria and reflect on how their work meets success criteria.

Student voice

The views of students on their own schooling and learning. Student voice helps us to understand learning from the perspective of the learner.

Success criteria

The measures used to determine whether, and how well, students have met the learning intentions.

Summative assessment

A type of student assessment that occurs at the end of a course of study or period of time and indicates a student's achievement level against learning outcomes. It gives teachers the information they need to make accurate, consistent judgements about a student's learning progress over time in relation to curriculum standards or other defined learning objectives.

Syllabus

An outline of the requirements for teaching and learning in various subjects for particular stages of students' learning. Syllabuses outline curriculum content in relation to the knowledge, skills, understanding, values and attitudes students are expected to learn within a given stage of learning.

Unit of work

The intended teaching and learning for a particular class for a specified period of time.

Whole school

The individuals, groups and organisations that make up the school community, including students, parents and carers, teachers, leaders, support and administrative staff, and community members and organisations.

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