ASEPA

Teacher Education Expert Panel Submission

The Australian Special Education Principals Association

Matthew Johnson (Matthew Johnson ASEPA and SEPLA President)

Matthew.johnson@det.nsw.edu.au

The Australian Special Education Principals Association (ASEPA) was established in 1998.

ASEPA is the peak national organisation representing school based special education principals and leaders in Australia.

ASEPA has developed from the Australian Federation of Special Education Administrators (AFSEA). AFSEA was formed as an outcome of the inaugural national conference of special education leaders in Adelaide in November 1997.

The body was incorporated in 2001. ASEPA parallels similar peak bodies such as the Australian Primary Principals Association and the Australian Secondary Principals Association. The unique patterns of education service delivery to students with disabilities and special educational needs requires ASEPA to represent special education leaders across all sectors of schooling including early intervention, primary and secondary.

Teacher Education Expert Panel Discussion Paper.

The Teacher Education Expert Panel (the Panel) was established to provide advice on key issues raised at the Teacher Workforce Shortage Roundtable and in the preceding Report of the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review (released in February 2022).

The Panel will provided advice on four reform areas:

1. strengthen ITE programs to deliver confident, effective, classroom ready graduates
2. strengthen the link between performance and funding of ITE programs
3. improve the quality of practical experience in teaching
4. improve postgraduate programs to attract mid-career entrants

ASEPA feedback.

The Australian Special Education Principals Association is extremely concerned that there is simply no mention of students with disabilities or complex needs within any of the discussion papers or discussion points raised. All four points above must include the need for ITE preparation for working with student diversity and those students with disability and complex needs.

Considering that students with disabilities make up a significant and growing population across all schools and sectors and that ITE students consistently state that they are not prepared for the range of abilities in Australian classrooms this is a major consideration that must be addressed as a matter of urgency.

The diversity of students in Australian classrooms requires teachers to be prepared to engage with students who are culturally and linguistically diverse and have specific learning difficulties or disabilities. Initial teacher education programs must ensure pre-service teachers learn to apply evidence-based theory to their teaching strategies to cater for the distribution of abilities in every classroom. Teachers need to analyse and evaluate their impact on learning and adjust their practice to best meet the needs of their students.

Raising student learning outcomes requires teachers to be equipped with the pedagogical knowledge that will allow them to effectively address the learning and development needs of all students in their class.[1] Rather than over-relying on a particular approach to teaching and learning, teachers must be able to personalise learning, assess student progress and have the ability to select appropriate strategies for teaching and learning.[2] Pre-service teachers must also develop the skills to know when and how to engage expert intervention and resources for their students.

A growing body of research acknowledges that teachers need a broad range of skills and strategies to maximise the learning of diverse student populations. The

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[1] Ingvarson, L. and Rowe, K. (2007), Conceptualising and Evaluating Teacher Quality: Substantive and Methodological Issues, p.2
[2] Hattie, J. (2009), Visible Learning – A Synthesis of Over 800 Meta-Analyses Relating to Achievement, p.245

National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy, for example, identified compelling evidence that teachers need a comprehensive repertoire of strategies and approaches and need to know how to select and apply those strategies to meet individual learning needs.[3]

University-School Partnerships Both the alternative pathways model described above and traditional university-based ITE programs employ strategies to attract the 'right' sort of teachers into the profession. The focus on quality in ITE has gained prominence and is the focus of Australia's current review into Quality Initial Teacher Education[4].

Some ITE programs are specifically designed to recruit, prepare and graduate effective, well-prepared, and quality teachers to take up positions in hard to-staff settings. Overall, a central feature of improving all three areas of need in these schools – attraction into the profession, preparation of quality teachers, and teacher retention – are genuine and sustainable partnerships between universities and schools (Zugelder & Shelton, 2020)[5].

When teachers take up employment in hard-to-staff schools they are most effective when they are well-prepared by evidence-based training, hold practical knowledge of the context of their students' lives, and are invested in their work (Glasswell et al., 2016)[6]. The teachers most likely to take up employment (and stay) are those who have spent prolonged periods of time in traditionally hard-to-staff settings, such as LSES schools, before they find themselves in front of a class (Perryman & Calvert, 2020)[7].

[3] National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy (2005), p.37
[4] https://www.dese.gov.au/teaching-and-school-leadership/resources/research-initiatives-prepare-and-supply-workforce-hard-staff-schools
[5] Zugelder, B. S., & Shelton, D. M. (2020). Addressing the teacher recruitment and retention dilemma in rural settings: Preparing teachers for rural poverty. In H. Greene, B. Zugelder, & J. Manner (Eds.), Handbook of research on leadership and advocacy for children and families in rural poverty (pp. 319-343). IGI Global. http://doi:10.4018/978- 1-7998-2787-0.ch015
[6] Glasswell, K., Singh, P., & McNaughton, S. (2016). Partners in design: Co-inquiry for quality teaching in disadvantaged schools. The Australian Journal of Language and Literacy, 39(1), 20–29.
[7] Perryman, J., & Calvert, G. (2020). What motivates people to teach, and why do they leave? Accountability, performativity and teacher retention. British Journal of Educational Studies, 68(1), 3–23. https://doi.org/10.1080/00071005.2019.1589417

Dawson and Shand (2019)[8] explain the importance of prolonged block placements or internships as a strategy to attract teachers to these schools. They believe the more familiar a teacher is with their setting the less likely they are to experience culture shock.

There are many benefits to school-university partnerships but one issue that is regularly raised is the gap between enthusiastic graduate teachers who generally begin with high aspirations and the disillusionment that sometimes takes place when teachers begin their teaching careers. Although some reports lay responsibility on ITE programs in terms of needing to better prepare their graduates to be realistic about what they will encounter (Green et al., 2018)[9], others cast their eye on schools that fail to transition, support, and induct new teachers in an effective way. These schools may appear to graduates as not demonstrating the best practice they learned at university and may not always seem to new teachers to be operating to best serve historically disadvantaged families and students (Kearney, 2021)[10].

Mentors and school leaders often express feeling discouraged when they are not empowered within their positions to make change within what they believe is a conservative institution (Rowlands et al., 2020)[11]. When school leaders and teachers are genuinely embedded in the communities in which they teach, the evidence is that they are more satisfied with their jobs, feel more committed to their students and families, and stay in the professional longer (Thomas et al., 2020; Ellis et al., 2016)[12].

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[8] Dawson, V., & Shand, J. (2019). Impact of support for preservice teachers placed in disadvantaged schools. Issues in Educational Research, 29(1), 19–37.

[9] Green, C., Eady, M., & Andersen, P. (2018). Preparing quality teachers. Teaching and Learning Inquiry, 6(1), 104–125. https://doi.org/10.20343/teachlearninqu.6.1.10

[10] Kearney, S. (2021). The challenges of beginning teacher induction: A collective case study. Teaching Education (Columbia, S.C.), 32(2), 142–158. https://doi.org/10.1080/10476210.2019.1679109

[11] Rowlands, J., Blackmore, J., & Gallant, A. (2020). Enacting leadership professional development and the impediments to organizational and industry change in rural and regional Australia. Gender, Work, and Organization, 27(6), 1269–1284. https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12480

[12] Rowlands, J., Blackmore, J., & Gallant, A. (2020). Enacting leadership professional development and the impediments to organizational and industry change in rural and regional Australia. Gender, Work, and Organization, 27(6), 1269–1284. https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12480

There is some consensus on the value of university-school partnerships as a mechanism for recruiting and retaining quality teachers, particularly through longer block placements or internships that familiarise and prepare future teachers for hard-to-staff schools.

Multi-faceted benefits flow from increased opportunities for school leaders and university Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programs to work more collaboratively. The project documents several examples where strong partnerships between hard-to-staff schools and individual Initial Teacher Education programs produced long lasting and tangible impact via:
• co-designed mentorship for early career teachers,
• experiential on-the-ground professional learning opportunities for preservice-teachers,
• targeted employment opportunities for graduate teachers.

The crucial role leaders and mentors play in supporting teachers' feelings of belonging to a school-based community of practice and feeling professionally and personally supported. The interviews included numerous anecdotes of the importance to teachers of belonging to a personal and professional community of practice and how this contributed to the degree teachers felt supported at critical times. For teachers in these hard-to-staff settings, there appears to be a clear correlation between job satisfaction and feelings of agency within their own classrooms, in school-based decision making and feeling connected to other education/teacher professional networks. Feeling connected significantly increases teachers' sense of well-being and likelihood of either accepting or continuing a position within a hard to-staff school. Benefits include:
• teachers' sense of well-being, including their sense of being valued by the school,
• teachers' professional knowledge, and hence their confidence, enhanced by being part of professional networks,
• at least partly overcoming the isolation of teaching in remote and or regional settings,
• improved career prospects for school leaders and teachers who experience expeditious career trajectories and promotion.

While mentoring is perceived as key in supporting teachers in hard-to-staff schools, the consistency and quality of mentoring varies. The research unearthed a degree of tension created by repeat cycles of large numbers of inexperienced teachers arriving at the start of each school year. A number of those interviewed noted, not only the high demand for mentors required to support these new teachers, but also the varied quality of mentoring available in some settings. School leaders would benefit therefore by:

· some form of additional professional development in terms of the selection, training, and support of mentors,

· mechanisms that empower or reward quality mentors through acknowledging the workload implications of the role.

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Preparing effective teachers[13] – integration of theory and practice.

In relation to what teachers need to teach and current related concerns the Advisory Group found: - There are concerns that initial teacher education programs include content not informed by evidence.

- Teacher education programs are not consistently equipping beginning teachers with the evidence-based strategies and skills needed to respond to diverse student learning needs.

- Providers are not preparing pre-service teachers with the knowledge and skills to use assessment data to inform and improve their teaching practice.

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[13] https://www.dese.gov.au/teaching-and-school-leadership/resources/action-now-classroom-ready-teachers-report

- Beginning teachers need a solid understanding of subject content, pedagogy and pedagogical content knowledge.
- Primary and secondary pre-service teachers should be adequately prepared to use a range of evidence-based strategies to meet student learning needs, particularly in literacy and numeracy.
- There is growing interest in requiring primary teachers to have a specialisation, particularly in science, mathematics or languages other than English.
- Beginning teachers need to be able to effectively engage and communicate with students and their families, particularly in relation to learning progress.

In relation to the provision of professional experience the Advisory Group found: - Schools, school systems and higher education providers face challenges in ensuring a sufficient number of professional experience placements of appropriate timing and length are available for all pre-service teachers.
- Early and regular professional experiences are regarded as providing the best opportunity for preservice teachers to demonstrate the practical application of what is being taught, and to assess suitability to teaching.
- The quality of professional experience is limited by a lack of integration of theory and practice, and by a lack of integration of the work of providers and schools. - Supervising teachers should have the training and skills required to effectively supervise and assess professional experience placements

Assuring classroom readiness.

In relation to classroom readiness the Advisory Group found: - Pre-service teachers are not consistently assessed to determine whether they have achieved the Graduate level of the Professional Standards at program completion. - Teacher employers are dissatisfied with the classroom readiness of initial teacher education graduates. - The Graduate level of the Professional Standards needs to be reviewed regularly to equip beginning teachers to meet the demands of contemporary school environments. - There is limited integration of assessment between on-campus and in-school learning. - Stakeholders advocated for strengthened assessment of pre-service teachers to establish readiness for the profession. - Innovative models for assessment of classroom readiness are increasing but have not been widely implemented. - Consistent and transparent

graduate assessment against an agreed benchmark is a key feature of profession entry requirements both internationally and in comparable professions in Australia. Supporting beginning teachers through induction In relation to supporting beginning teachers the Advisory Group found: - There is no profession-wide approach to supporting teacher development in the important early years in the classroom. - The quality and quantity of induction support varies across states and territories, sectors and schools. - Employers and schools are not consistently offering effective support for beginning teachers through their transition to proficiency and full registration. - Stakeholders have identified a need for improved support for beginning teachers, including mentoring by highly skilled teachers. - There is concern that induction support is inadequate for beginning teachers in temporary employment and in 'hard to staff' schools. - Effective induction is critical to successful transition into classroom teaching practice. It includes structured mentoring, observation and feedback. - High-performing and improving education systems demonstrate a commitment to structured support for beginning teachers in their transition to full professional performance and in doing so, build and sustain a culture of professional responsibility.

Reform of initial teacher education in Australia[14]

The Australian Government established the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group (Advisory Group) to provide advice on how initial teacher education programs could be improved to better prepare new teachers with the practical skills needed for the classroom. This review grew out of two clear propositions: that improving the capability of teachers is crucial to lifting student outcomes; and that the Australian community does not have confidence in the quality and effectiveness of new teachers. Action to enhance the capability of Australian teachers and assure public confidence in those delivering school education must begin when teachers are first prepared for the profession.

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[14] https://www.dese.gov.au/teaching-and-school-leadership/resources/action-now-classroom-ready-teachers-report

In examining initial teacher education and formulating its recommendations, the Advisory Group was guided by a number of fundamental principles.

First, the preparation of new teachers is a shared responsibility. Initial teacher education needs to be delivered through close integration of the work of higher education providers, school systems, teacher employers and schools across all sectors. Second, the community must have confidence that the benchmarks and processes that assure the quality of programs will drive improvement and will be rigorously applied. Third, initial teacher education must embrace the use of evidence – from program design and delivery through to the assessment of program and graduate outcomes. Finally, transparency in initial teacher education is needed to support accountability and inform public confidence.

In conducting its work, the Advisory Group maintained that providers need to retain the flexibility to design and deliver diverse and innovative programs. However, they must demonstrate that their programs are high quality, have a positive impact on student learning and respond to the needs of schools and employers.

Research and international practice.

Internationally the accreditation of initial teacher education programs is recognised as an effective mechanism for raising and maintaining the quality of programs. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) sees accreditation as a way of ensuring that initial teacher education is evaluated, reviewed and debated on an ongoing basis.[15]

Improving initial teacher education can be encouraged by raising accreditation requirements, with a focus on program outcomes.

Korea has recently focused strongly on quality assurance for initial teacher education. From 2010, Korea strengthened its national evaluative system for

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[15] McKenzie, P., Santiago, P., Sliwka, P. and Hrioyuki, H. (2005), Teachers Matter: Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers, pp.112–113

initial teacher education to be more comprehensive and have greater consequences for programs and providers[16].

The Korean Educational Development Institute was given responsibility for the evaluation of all teacher education programs and the providers that deliver them. Evaluations involve self-evaluation reporting combined with interviews, observations and data collection, and include a focus on program outcomes. Evaluation results are made public and programs that perform poorly risk having student places limited.

In the United States, the Council for the Accreditation of Education Preparation (CAEP) introduced accreditation standards as part of their response to improving the quality of teacher preparation[17]. The CAEP accreditation standards are 'based on evidence, continuous improvement, innovation, and clinical practice, to ensure that accredited providers are preparing educators that are classroom-ready and demonstrably raise learning for all students'.[18] The standards ask institutions to provide evidence of their impact on pre-service teachers and their students, and CAEP accredits programs on the basis of the supporting evidence.

The United States National Council on Teacher Quality developed a ranking system to assess teaching programs and provide information to the public about the quality of teacher education programs. This has produced an information source that may be useful to providers in making decisions about improving their programs and to prospective students in selecting their provider.[19]

Some top-performing school systems focus on academic ability for recruitment to initial teacher education by selecting entrants from the top cohort of school leavers; however, they are also increasingly using additional measures to assess suitability for a career in teaching.[20] For example, after recruiting from the top

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[16] Jensen, B., Hunter, A., Sonnemann, J. and Burns, T. (2012), Catching up: Learning from the Best School Systems in East Asia, p. 61

[17] Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (2013a), CAEP Accreditation Standards
[18] Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (2013b), New Accreditation Standards Adopted to Ensure Quality in Educator Preparation
[19] National Council on Teacher Quality (2014), 2014 Teacher Prep Review
[20] Barber, M. and Mourshead, M. (2007), pp.16–19

performers, countries considered to be delivering world-class educational outcomes now 'rigorously screen students on other qualities they believe to be predictors of teaching success, including perseverance, ability to motivate others, passion for children and organisational and communications skills'.[21]

Preparing effective teachers – integration of theory and practice

Initial teacher education must prepare graduates with in-depth content knowledge and a solid understanding of teaching practices that are proven to make a difference to student learning. To equip new teachers with the skills to apply this knowledge and understanding in the classroom, theory and practice in initial teacher education must be inseparable and mutually reinforced. Program content must be evidence based and must prepare beginning teachers to effectively address diverse student learning needs, understand how to use research and assessment to inform practice and lift student outcomes, and communicate effectively.

Professional experience placements are crucial to the development of new teachers and must provide strong opportunities to integrate theory and practice. Pre-service teachers undertaking professional experience must also be supported to continually reflect on and adjust their own practice. Close working relationships through effective partnerships between teacher education providers and schools can produce mutually beneficial outcomes. However, it is clear that providers, schools and school systems are not working effectively together in the delivery of professional experience, and that not all programs are providing new teachers with the practical skills they need to be effective teachers.

Initial teacher education programs must prepare new teachers to keep up to date with the latest developments in their academic subjects and in the practice of teaching.[22] To maintain up-to-date, evidence-based teaching practices through

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[21] Auguste, B., Kihn, P. and Miller, M. (2010), Closing the Talent Gap: Attracting and Retaining Top-Third Graduates to Careers in Teaching, p.9

[22] British Educational Research Association and Royal Society for the Encouragement of the Arts, Manufacturing and Commerce (2014), Research and the Teaching Profession: Building the Capacity for a Self-improving Education System, p.11

their career, pre-service teachers must be equipped with the capacity to investigate what is and is not effective in their own practice.[23] This approach is evident in internationally high-performing systems such as those of Finland and Singapore.

Finland favours a 'teacher-as-researcher' approach. Through this model, teachers are trained to reflect on and analyse their work, think scientifically and adjust their teaching continually.[24] To graduate from the Masters-level program required for initial teacher education, primary teachers must prepare an academic or scientific thesis in pedagogy, and secondary teachers in an academic discipline.

Singapore's explicit focus in its reforms of curriculum, assessment, and teaching has been to develop a creative and critical-thinking culture in schools by overtly teaching and assessing these skills and creating an inquiry culture among teachers.[25] Teachers are supported to conduct action research on their teaching and to continually revise their teaching strategies in response to what they learn. This focus on research and evidence is supported by the qualification and skill levels of staff within teacher education providers in both countries. In Finland the university staff who deliver initial teacher education are generally required to hold a Doctoral or other postgraduate degree.[26] At Singapore's National Institute of Education, 78 per cent of staff members hold Doctoral degrees and 19 per cent Masters degrees.[27]

Integrating theory and practice

Beginning teachers in Australia consistently rate professional experience as the most useful part of their initial teacher education,[28] and submissions to the Advisory Group identified professional experience as crucial to the development of pre-service teachers' professional skills and abilities.

[23] 48 ibid, p.18
[24] Tatto, M. (2013), The Role of Research in International Policy and Practice in Teacher Education, p.7
[25] Darling-Hammond, L. (2013), Developing and Sustaining a High-Quality Teaching Force, p.49
[26] Finnish National Board of Education
[27] National Institute of Education, Singapore
[28] 97 Australian Secondary Principals Association (2007), Beginning Teachers Survey Report, p.16

Professional experience provides a critical link for integrating theory and practice.

Despite the acknowledged importance of professional experience, almost all stakeholders highlighted concerns about this component of current teacher education programs. The relationships between higher education providers and schools are not considered adequate to manage the complexities of professional experience or to effectively integrate professional experience with course work and theory. Submissions called for better integration and stronger links between providers, school systems, schools and supervising teachers.

Current practice in professional experience

Professional experience may include internships, observations, supervised practicum or community placements, all of which should be designed to provide an opportunity to apply acquired knowledge to real-life teaching situations. Pre-service teachers should be exposed to a wide range of school-based tasks during this time, from delivering the curriculum and managing students in a classroom to working as part of a school community.

There are examples in Australia of strong professional experience opportunities achieved through close relationships between providers and schools. The Queensland University of Technology's School Community Integrated Learning pathway is offered to final-year Bachelor of Education (Primary) preservice teachers.[29] Participants volunteer at a school one day

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[29] Queensland University of Technology submission

per week during each semester and three days per week during university break. This leads into the formal four-week professional experience placement and continues throughout the year. By spending dedicated time in a focus classroom, which becomes their class during the placement, pre-service teachers have the opportunity to be involved in the development of students over an extended period of time. Participating pre-service teachers also experience being a part of a school community by joining in extra-curricular activities such as sports days, fetes, meetings and professional learning days.

International studies have shown that high-performing and improving education systems have moved the initial period of teacher education from the lecture theatre to the classroom, allowing teaching skills to be built more effectively and earlier in the course.[30]

For example, the school system in Boston, USA, introduced a one-year teacher residency program in which pre-service teachers spend four days each week in school; in England, two-thirds of a one-year teacher education program is spent on teaching practice; and Japanese pre-service teachers spend up to two days a week in one-on-one coaching in their classrooms during their first year of initial teacher education. The OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) reports that to build teacher capacity it is important to ensure that, during initial teacher education, pre-service teachers have several sufficiently long periods of teaching practice in a variety of schools.[31]

There were strong suggestions that professional experience needs to commence earlier in the course, allowing pre-service teachers to be exposed to a wider variety of experiences as well as having the opportunity

[30] Barber, M. and Mourshed, M. (2007), How the World's Best-Performing School Systems Come Out on Top, p.28

[31] 3 OECD (2014), TALIS 2013 Results: An International Perspective in Teaching and Learning, p.201

to determine whether they are suited to teaching. Early practical experience in the training of medical students has been found to make students more confident in their knowledge, demonstrate the practical relevance of the theory being learnt, improve student ability to relate to patients and understand their professional role, and motivate students by reminding them of the reasons for their career choice.[32]

Early and regular professional experiences are regarded as providing the best opportunity for pre-service teachers to demonstrate the practical application of what is being taught, and to assess suitability for teaching.

Integrating academic and professional learning

A clear message provided to the Advisory Group was the need for better integration and stronger links between course work and professional experience, as well as a shared understanding between providers and schools of the development of the graduate attributes over the duration of initial teacher education.

Linking theory and practice

Addressing the apparent disconnection between theory and practice was identified by submissions as a key to improving professional experience. This echoes the concern about the weak link between theory and professional experience identified in the 2007 Top of the Class report.[33]

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[32] Littlewood, S., et al. (2005), Learning in Practice – Early Practical Experience and the Social Responsiveness of Clinical Education: Systematic Review, p.388

[33] House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training (2007), Top of the Class: Report on the Inquiry into Teacher Education, p.2

Research indicates that pre-service teachers who participate in professional experiences linked to course work are better able to understand theory and to apply the concepts they are learning in their course work to support student learning. Internationally, better-performing systems have been found to have integrated professional experience into their teacher education programs.[34] A study of seven exemplary teacher education programs in the United States identified that a common feature of these programs was the provision of teaching opportunities (professional experience) carefully interwoven with course work.[35]

The Victorian government is working with schools and universities on partnership arrangements to strengthen the connection between practice and theory, including establishing teaching academies of professional practice. Each teaching academy (comparable to a teaching hospital) will include a leading school, a network of other schools and at least one university.[36]

One potential benefit of closer partnerships is for providers to maintain the currency of their knowledge of school operating environments to inform program design. Provider staff roles should include school based work for relevant staff to maintain classroom practice, support evidence-based practice in schools and ensure a better connection between teaching practice and ongoing educational research. The University of Canberra, for example, has seconded a number of high-performing teachers to work as clinical teaching specialists in its initial teacher education programs.

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[34] Barber, M and Mourshed, M. (2007), p.29
[35] Darling Hammond, L. (2006a), Constructing 21st-Century Teacher Education, Journal of Teacher Education 2006 57: 300 p.305
[36] Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (2013), p.11

The Down South initiative established by the Canberra campus of the Australian Catholic University immerses pre-service secondary teachers in schools.[37] The partnership brings together university academics, school staff, pre-service teachers and secondary school students to create a dynamic community of practice for professional experience, teaching, learning and research. The pre-service teachers are given opportunities to engage in authentic learning experiences that reflect the reality of the everyday classroom across a range of school settings.

Effective supervision and mentoring

The most effective professional experience is not only aligned and developed with course work but also supervised by effective teachers in collaboration with providers.[38] International benchmarking of best practice has identified that staff leading and supervising professional experience in schools should be exemplary teachers who have undertaken focused training for their roles.[39]

One analysis of Australian and international settings identified that best practice for effective delivery of professional experience involves partnerships between higher education providers, schools and supervisors that establish a common understanding of what constitutes highly effective teaching practice and operate through seamless integration of the work of staff in the two settings.[40]

Submissions to the Advisory Group highlighted a lack of quality assurance and a lack of structured training for supervising and mentor teachers to ensure they have the necessary skills to supervise, provide support and

[37] The Office of Joy Burch, MLA, submission
[38] Cooper, J. and Alvarado, A. (2006), Preparation, Recruitment, and Retention of Teachers, p.15
[39] Caldwell, B. and Sutton, D. (2010), Review of Teacher Education and School Induction: First Report – Full Report, p.129
[40] ibid, p.9

feedback, and assess professional experience placements. Stakeholders reported that supervising teachers are often selected to supervise professional experience placements based on the length of their teaching service. The Highly Accomplished and Lead levels of the Professional Standards offer a clear framework for identifying the teachers who are most skilled to fulfil the role, but there is scope for AITSL to further elaborate how the Professional Standards can inform selection and training of supervising teachers.

Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group: Action Now: Classroom Ready Teachers December 2014[41]: Recommendations In the area of professional experience, the Advisory Group recommends that:

1. Higher education providers deliver integrated and structured professional experience throughout initial teacher education programs through formalised partnership agreements with schools.
2. Higher education providers guarantee that sufficient placements of appropriate timing and length are available for all pre-service teachers.
3. Higher education providers ensure pre-service teachers have early opportunities to assess their suitability for teaching, including through exposure to the classroom.
4. Higher education providers ensure staff delivering initial teacher education are appropriately qualified, with a proportion having contemporary school teaching experience.
5. Systems/schools be required to use the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers in identifying highly skilled teachers to supervise professional experience, and work with higher education providers to ensure rigorous, iterative and agreed assessment of pre-service teachers.

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[41] https://www.dese.gov.au/teaching-and-school-leadership/resources/action-now-classroom-ready-teachers-report

6. The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership develop guidelines to ensure supervising teachers have the skills required to be effective in the role.
7. School leaders actively lead the integration of pre-service teachers in the activities and culture of their school.

Providers should be required to consistently and rigorously assess the classroom readiness of their preservice teachers against the Professional Standards. They should collect robust evidence that helps preservice teachers produce a Portfolio of Evidence to substantiate their readiness for teaching and application for provisional registration. Provisional teacher registration should be granted only if a graduate has demonstrated their teaching capability against the Professional Standards.

Rigorous assessment of classroom readiness needs to involve providers and schools working in partnership throughout initial teacher education programs. This includes determining the pre-service teacher's ability to effectively integrate theory and teaching practice and assisting them to collect supporting evidence.

The consultation demonstrated clear support for reforming the way pre-service teachers are assessed to determine achievement of the Graduate level of the Professional Standards. Suggested reforms include more integrated assessment of professional experience, the use of sophisticated assessment tools to provide evidence of classroom readiness, and closer alignment of assessment to the Professional Standards. Assessment of pre-service teachers should not be one-dimensional or occur at a single point in time but should address the complex interaction between providers, schools, program content and the Professional Standards.

Research and international practice

The transition between graduation and full registration as a teacher can play a crucial role in determining how well and for how long beginning teachers will teach.[42] Participating in comprehensive teacher induction programs can have a positive impact on a teacher's commitment and attitude to the profession and on teacher retention.[43] Beginning teachers who receive structured induction programs are more likely to undertake ongoing professional development activities.[44] They also perform better at aspects of teaching such as keeping students on task, using effective student questioning practices and demonstrating successful classroom management.[45] Importantly, there is a correlation between induction and enhanced student achievement,[46] with evidence that beginning teachers who receive mentoring support deliver higher student achievement.[47]

Internationally induction practices vary, even among the world's best performing education systems.[48] Common elements include a structured, consistent approach to supporting beginning teachers and an emphasis on mentoring by skilled and experienced teachers.

Special education and professional standards in Australia – making the connections and implications for initial teacher education programs.

[42] Buchanan, J. Prescott, A. Schuck, S. Aubusson, P. Burke, P. and Louviere, J. (2013), Teacher Retention and Attrition; Views of Early Career Teachers, p.115
[43] Ingersoll, R.M. and Strong, M. (2011), The Impact of Induction and Mentoring Programs for Beginning Teachers: A Critical Review of the Research
[44] OECD (2014), p.105, Table 4.11
[45] Ingersoll, R.M. and Strong, M. (2011)
[46] Bartlett, L. and Johnson, L. (2010), The Evolution of New Teacher Induction Policy: Support, Specificity, and Autonomy, as cited in Kearney, S., Understanding the Need for Induction Programmes for Beginning Teachers in Independent Catholic Secondary Schools in New South Wales (2010), p.5
[47] Rockoff, J. (2008), Does Mentoring Reduce Turnover and Improve Skills of New Employees? Evidence from Teachers in New York City; and Glazerman et al (2010), Impacts of Comprehensive Teacher Induction: Final Results from a Randomised Controlled Study
[48] Hay Group (2013), Building the Right Foundation: Improving Teacher Induction in Australian Schools, p.22

In Australia, all jurisdictions must follow the Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Commonwealth of Australia, 2006)[49]. These standards clarify for education providers their responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act (Commonwealth of Australia, 1992). Public education and Catholic and independent systems each have their own approach to providing special education services, and different nomenclature is [50]often used to describe these services. However, all Australian states and territories maintain special education support in both regular schools and special schools. The proportion of students recognised with a disability in Australian schools increased from 2.6% in 1998 to 4.8% in 2009 and virtually all of that increase was confined to regular classes (Dempsey, 2011)[51]. In NSW, 12% of the school population was identified as having special needs in 2011. In addition to disability, these special needs included students with learning difficulties, behavioural disorders and language or communication delay (NSW Department of Education and Communities, 2013a)[52].

The Way Forward in the Development of Professional Standards for Australian Special Education Teachers

Based on the experience of AITSL in developing standards for regular classroom teachers, it is reasonable to assume that there is good potential for developing a generic set of professional standards for Australian special education teachers. Generic professional preparation standards are best developed first before considering specialised standards in areas such as hearing and vision impairment. There are substantial commonalities

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[49] Commonwealth of Australia. (2006). Disability Standards for Education 2005. Retrieved from http://education.gov.au/disability-standards-education

[50] Commonwealth of Australia. (1992). Disability Discrimination Act 1992. Retrieved from http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/consol_act/dda1992264/

[51] Dempsey, I. (2011). Trends in the proportion of students with a disability in Australian schools, 2000–2009. Journal of Intellectual & Developmental Disability, 36, 144–145. doi:10.1080/13668250.2011.573777

[52] NSW Department of Education and Communities. (2013a). Learning and support. Retrieved from http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/studentsupport/programs/lrngdifficulty.php

within the limited Australian work already conducted in identifying essential general special education teaching skills, and that these skills align with standards currently in operation in the UK and the US. Notwithstanding the above, the validation of professional standards for Australian special education teachers will be a complex and likely time-consuming process. Although smaller in scope than the development of standards for regular class teachers, developing standards for Australian special education teachers demands consideration of the diversity of roles these teachers play, the variation among the settings in which they work, and the broad range of students' needs and abilities. Such teachers continue to work in special schools, in separate support classes in regular schools, and in the regular classroom.

Special education teachers may be appointed to work with students with additional needs ranging from learning difficulties, to diagnosed disability, and to behavioural problems and emotional disturbance. Furthermore, special education teachers are expected to regularly interact with a wide range of interested parties, including parents and caregivers, colleague teachers, and outside specialists. Another consideration in the complex process of standards development is the extent of stakeholder involvement in the validation process.

To counterbalance this complexity in the validation process the well-established procedures for standards development used by AITSL (2012) and by the Council for Exceptional Children (2010) could serve as helpful guidance. For example, there may be synergies in the use of the existing AITSL framework for regular teacher standards with the development of standards for special education teachers. The current AITSL standards are grouped into the three domains of professional knowledge, professional practice, and professional engagement, and seven standards are embedded in these domains. In addition, the seven standards comprise 35 focus areas. On face value, there are intuitive similarities in the

relevance of these domains to special education settings. Some existing AITSL focus area statements at the proficient level capture the role of special educators (e.g., 'Use effective verbal and non-verbal communication strategies to support student understanding, participation, engagement and achievement' [p. 6] and 'Manage challenging behaviour by establishing and negotiating clear expectations with students and address discipline issues promptly, fairly and respectfully' (AITSL, 2012, p. 8)[53].

Nevertheless, other focus area statements do not readily transfer to the specialised knowledge and skills required to support students with significant learning difficulties or moderate to severe levels of intellectual, physical or sensory disability. For example, the statements 'Apply knowledge and understanding of effective teaching strategies to support students' literacy and numeracy achievement' (p. 4) and 'Understand and participate in assessment moderation activities to support consistent and comparable judgements of student learning' (p. 10) do not address the complex and specific instructional strategies that are needed by many students with a disability. In addition, some roles undertaken by Australian special education teachers (e.g., the individualised planning process, inclusive approaches, and evidence-based practice methodologies) are not adequately captured in current AITSL standards.

Once developed, Australian special education professional standards should be evaluated across a diversity of special education settings. As AITSL is presently doing with standards for regular class teachers, it will be important to check on the usefulness of special education standards and the relationship between the use of the standards and issues

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[53] Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL). (2012). Australian professional standards
for teachers. Retrieved from http://www.teacherstandards.aitsl.edu.au/

such as school improvement and student outcomes. Such evaluation will assist in ensuring that special education professional standards make a positive contribution in enhancing the quality of teaching for the over 10% of the Australian school student population with additional needs (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2005)[54].

In conclusion, we have briefly reviewed in this paper the professional standards for special education teachers in the UK and the US. Although such standards are yet to be developed in Australia, a useful foundation exists in this country (in the form of past research with special education teachers and recommendations on professional skills from some public education providers) that may serve to guide the next steps in the Australian validation process. An example of one such step is additional empirical research to examine the relevance of potential generic professional skills to a wide range of special educators who work in a variety of different settings. That work might logically extend to examining the relationship between potential professional skills and a range of variables (e.g., teacher disposition and school climate) related to desired school and student outcomes. Ultimately, the speed of development of professional standards for Australian special education teachers will be almost entirely dependent on the enthusiasm of our profession to demand such standards[55].

The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers

Teachers and school leaders recognise the benefits of having national standards for the profession. The Teacher Standards create a framework for initial and continuous professional development throughout a

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[54] Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. (2005). Attracting, developing and retaining
effective teachers - final report: Teachers matter. Retrieved from http://www.oecd.org/edu/school/attractingdevelopingandretainingeffectiveteachers-finalreportteachersmatter.htm
[55] Ian Dempsey and Kerry Dally (2014). Professional Standards for Australian Special Education Teachers. Australasian Journal of Special Education, 38, pp 1-13 doi:10.1017/jse.2014.1

teacher's career. The standards define what effective teaching looks like, how it is demonstrated in the classroom, and most importantly, how it ensures student learning.

To support the implementation of the Teacher Standards AITSL has developed various tools and resources including:

- Teacher Self-Assessment Tool
- Case studies of practice
- Illustrations of practice videos
- Evidence-informed guides.

Limitations in the wording of The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers

Stakeholders noted the importance of language in inclusive education. There were varying opinions amongst stakeholders as to how specifically the Teacher Standards (and the other frameworks including in this project) should reference the DSE. It was also noted by stakeholders that exemplary policy does not necessarily lead to exemplary practice and support is necessary to assist teachers and principals to make the required connections and implement policy in classrooms and schools.

During consultation, stakeholders reflected on to what extent the wording of the Teacher Standards meets the objectives of the DSE, particularly in relation to providing reasonable adjustments for students. Reasonable adjustments is defined as *"actions taken to enable students with disability to participate in education on the same basis as other students while balancing the interests of all parties"* DESE 2005). Stakeholders drew attention to specific wording in the Teachers Standards that focuses on ensuring full participation of students with disability.

There was acknowledgment however, that in places, the Teacher Standards were open to varying interpretations and as a consequence

there are opportunities to provide further clarity regarding teacher obligations.

The term "reasonable adjustments" is a central tenet of the DSE and was agreed by stakeholders as being a point of contention for schools, teachers and parents due to a lack of clear understanding about the meaning of the concept in practice. The DSE requires teachers to make decisions about what is a reasonable adjustment. Stakeholders acknowledged that this requires teachers and school leaders to have skill and understanding of procedural fairness, which involves being transparent in actions, providing opportunity for voice, and being impartial in decision making.

Stakeholder feedback highlighted a need for comprehensive guidance on how teachers, principals, parents and carers should discuss reasonable adjustments especially within the context of when there are challenges, for example, if a student has complex needs or there is disagreement as to what modifications and adjustments are required to enable the student's participation. Specific suggestions from stakeholders included the development of elaborations that describe indicators against the standard descriptors to provide further clarity of the DSE and its implementation in schools.

Given the ambiguities around key terms within inclusive education, particularly reasonable adjustments, stakeholders also recommended the development of an accompanying glossary as a tool to support the framing of the Teacher Standards within the context of inclusive education.

The standards and frameworks are the basis of Initial Teacher Education, teacher registration and career progression. Stakeholders noted that the while the standards reference legislative responsibility more broadly, they do not refer to specific legislation associated with the DDA and DSE. Directly linking these areas to the focus of the DSE, might centre on the

prohibition of disability-based harassment and victimisation of students with disability within school environments, processes, and communities. While the majority of stakeholders did not suggest a wholesale review of the Teacher Standards is required to better meet teacher obligations under the DSE, a future review of the Teacher Standards is likely to occur in order to ensure they continue to be current and fit-for-purpose. This would be an opportunity to make any wording changes to better reflect changes in legislation, evidence and practice.

Limitations in the implementation of The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers

At the heart of the DSE is the need for ongoing adjustments and consultation. It was acknowledged by stakeholders that the key to this consultation is the relationship between the school/teachers and the student's parents and carers, which may be mediated by the parents' and carers' confidence in the education profession and belief that the collaboration and consultation being undertaken is genuine.

Stakeholders consistently reported that while the requirement for consultation when making reasonable adjustments may be implied within the Teacher Standards more explicit explanation is required to elaborate best-practice expectations for how to undertake effective consultation. Undertaking effective consultation can be a challenge for teachers as they must be skilled and confident in being procedurally fair and collaborative. Stakeholders recognised that parents and carers have the need to discuss their child's education and not "be blocked out" of important decisions that affect their child's learning. Stakeholders also reported hearing that parents and carers would appreciate greater transparency from teachers and school leaders about the decisions made regarding their child's education. Stakeholders emphasised that teachers could learn collaborative consultation skills "on the job" provided they have the guidance and backing of their principal who, ideally, has experience with

undertaking effective consultation. Stakeholder consultations also outlined how workload issues can influence the quality of adjustments being provided to students and suggested that additional leadership release time could be used to better support teachers in meeting obligations and the needs of students.

Embedding the Graduate and Proficient career stages into workforce planning, professional learning, and the registration and deployment of teachers has been a key focus of jurisdictions since the launch of the Teacher Standards. In contrast, implementation of the Highly Accomplished and Lead career stages has not been as coherent, and, although all Education Ministers agreed to a national process to certify teachers at these career stages in 2012, numbers of certified teachers are low and there are few formal leadership pathways or positions available to those that have been certified. The better utilisation of Highly Accomplished and Lead (HALTs) as mentors and leading school professional learning related to inclusive education was repeatedly raised during consultation. 15

The standards and procedures for accreditation of initial teacher education programs in Australia

The accreditation of programs is designed to ensure that programs include content that reflects changes in practice and legislation.
For example, a stage one accreditation submission requires providers to demonstrate in Program Standard 1.1 where each of the Graduate Teacher Standard Descriptors are taught, practised and assessed. This means that each provider must, for example, include evidence that preservice teachers:

6.1 Demonstrate broad knowledge and understanding of legislative requirements and teaching strategies that support participation and learning of students with disabilities.

As such, providers submitting new programs must describe content that demonstrates students will have broad knowledge and understanding of the revised DSE, as legislation that sits under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992.

Most current programs are moving to stage two accreditation. A program being submitted for stage two accreditation is required to provide evidence of changes to the program including changes to content. Changes are based on evidence gathered from the 1*Plan for demonstrating impact* which is a requirement of each stage one submission.

1 The Plan for demonstrating impact describes the preservice teacher performance and graduate outcomes measures that will be collected, reported and relied upon to demonstrate the impact of a program during and at the end of an accreditation period: AITSL 2020, *Guidelines for the accreditation of initial teacher education programs in Australia,* AITSL, Melbourne.

Program Standard 2.2 requires program development, design and delivery take account of contemporary and emerging developments in education. As such, any changes to relevant legislation, including the DSE, should be captured under this program standard.

Limitations in the implementation of the Standards and Procedures
Stakeholders identified that there are a range of structural issues under the current Standards and Procedures that lead to inconsistency in the

application of the graduate teacher standards within programs. This variation can be attributed to a range of factors including:

- eight different authorising environments all operating under specific legislative frameworks
- each TRA having different perspectives on their roles and obligations in relation to the accreditation of programs including specific jurisdictional requirements that are additional to the national accreditation standards.

These issues and their relationship to implementation of the DSE are canvassed below.

Co-ordination of program changes with accreditation submission schedules

There is a general obligation for all providers to update program content to reflect legislative change such as the amendments to the DSE through a range of compliance requirements including the Standards and Procedures. However, there is no uniform process for reporting and scrutinising specific changes to programs.

Programs are accredited for a period not exceeding five years under the national accreditation procedures. During the accreditation period, a provider must notify their TRA of any program changes they wish to make to an accredited program. Following notification, the TRA will determine if the change can be addressed through annual reporting or whether it needs to be notified formally in writing to the TRA. The TRA will then determine whether the changes may be made to the program under its current accreditation or whether the changes are significant and require an application for accreditation stage one or two to be submitted.
In relation to national legislative change such as the DSE, the current arrangements do not support a nationally consistent approach. It may be appropriate to require all ITE providers to notify TRAs formally when

program changes are underway and complete, following national legislative change(s).

Depth of interrogation of accreditation submissions

Accreditation panels are not required to complete a comprehensive analysis of programs to assess whether programs include updated legislative content. This includes the effect of changes to legislation on program content or changes to what is considered effective practice. For example, stakeholders raised during consultation that some programs are being taught using the medical model of disability which is considered outdated. In addition, there will be variation in the approach taken by individual providers to incorporating updated content, which undermines national consistency. 17

Specifying content requirements in ITE

There is no national requirement to specify the level and type of content to be included in programs in relation to inclusive education. Such a mandate does exist in some jurisdictions for example, NSW requires providers who are submitting programs under program standard 4.32 to include: *Relevant areas of discipline knowledge, curriculum and pedagogical studies for inclusion in an undergraduate program requiring a minimum of 1 EFTSL (eight units) of study and a minimum of 40 days professional experience with students with a disability which will normally be undertaken in two educational setting.* This requirement is accompanied by indicators describing the specific discipline knowledge content.

Maintaining currency of knowledge and skills by ITE academic staff

The currency of the knowledge and skills of ITE staff was raised by stakeholders during the consultation as an issue, specifically that some providers were teaching outdated practice and that program content is being delivered by lecturers who either do not have experience of working with students with a disability or do not have recent classroom experience. The Standards and Procedures do not include detailed specifications regarding the qualifications, skills and knowledge of academic staff. Responsibility for the quality of staff in higher education providers is established under the *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011* (TEQSA Act). Stakeholders suggested that there needs to be a requirement for ITE teaching staff to confirm and maintain their classroom currency in relation to their knowledge of teaching students with disability and inclusive education which would contribute towards ensuring appropriate preparation of pre-service teachers. Further to this, stakeholders raised the importance of pre-service teachers having the opportunity during their placements to be exposed to positive practice demonstrated by an experienced knowledgeable teacher in working with students with a disability and their families.

The TEQSA Act has a range of objectives to quality assure and regulate higher education in Australia. The Act incorporates the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021*. The HES Framework outlines the core characteristics of the provision of higher education and includes specific requirements relating to staffing. These requirements are set out in HESF Domain 3: Teaching and are not discussed further here. The Quality Initial Teacher Education Review was launched on 15 April 2021 and has two points of focus; attracting and selecting high-quality candidates into the teaching profession and preparing ITE students to be effective teachers. Stakeholders frequently referred to the Review and this

project will consider the Review's findings and recommendations if they are released before this project concludes.

Stakeholders proposed that sample ITE program outlines could be developed which specify discipline knowledge content to be applied in the design of new programs or included in existing programs to ensure ITE programs include up-to-date evidence-based practice on inclusive education. The outlines would support providers to include current content in their programs and enable preservice teachers to graduate from programs with knowledge of their legal obligations under the DDA and DSE. Most importantly, there would be a nationally consistent approach to the inclusion of content that prepares preservice teachers to meet the needs of a diverse range of learners.

As well as providing a comprehensive and consistent approach to inclusive education across all programs, the outlines would guide accreditation panels in the assessment of programs.Stakeholders generally thought that alignment between the Teacher Standards and the DSE was strong but suggested that further support was needed for teachers and school leaders especially in regard to examples of best practice provision of reasonable adjustments, including the consultation process. Given the need for educators to possess strong, practical skills in consulting with students and their families, and then implement agreed reasonable adjustments, stakeholders emphasised several areas where guidance material could be produced to better elaborate the requirements of the Teacher Standards, and obligations under the DSE including:

- Working with families – conducting genuine consultation with transparent, measurable and monitorable outcomes

- Providing reasonable adjustments particularly for students with complex needs

- Giving space for student voice and ensuring students participate in the consultation process

Stakeholders acknowledged that the process of reflecting on and developing teaching practice takes time and while the Teacher Standards form a strong foundation for this work to occur, stakeholders also noted that continuous professional development should occur outside formal performance and development processes.

Stakeholders also raised that it is not only school leaders who guide reflective practice discussions in schools and that these conversations are often held between colleagues. Effective mentoring enables teachers to reflect on their practice and to question what they do as they go about their teaching.

Mentors are skilled teachers who are committed to supporting another teacher. A skilled teacher is not defined necessarily by years of experience, but by learner outcome success. Many skilled teachers could be operating at a Highly Accomplished or Lead level, either having achieved another form of formal recognition of their skills, or without having undergone any formal process (AITSL 2020). It was suggested by stakeholders that the development of parallel standards focused on mentoring would provide a core framework for accountability and quality.

ASEPA will vigorously advocate for students with disbailties to be at the forefront of any review into ITE and the strengthening of supports for teachers to be able to be prepared for Australia's modern and diverse classrooms. The Disability Discrimination Act and various state and territory legislation must be considered in any deliberations or discussions. Many of our students with complex needs have no voice of their own and cannot advocate for themselves. Any mature and fair education system

would surely have these students at the start and the heart of any work to prepare our teacher workforce for now, and into the future.

Matthew Johnson, April 19, 2023.

National President – ASEPA

Convenor – Coalition of Australian Principals - CAP

Representative General – International Confederation of Principals – ICP

NSW President – Special Education Principals and Leaders Association -SEPLA

Australian Primary Principals Association APPA – National Council Member