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Australian Institute
for Teaching and
School Leadership
Limited

Professional Standards
for Middle Leaders

Acknowledgement of Country

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands, sea countries, and waterways from across Australia. We pay our respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and living cultures; and to Elders past and present.

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Foreword from AITSL

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) welcomed the partnership with the Queensland Department of Education to research, develop, validate and trial new standards for middle leaders within schools and early childhood education settings. The new *Professional Standards for Middle Leaders* (Middle Leader Standards) have been created to recognise the complexity and importance of the role of middle leaders across Australia.

There are a diverse range of middle leader roles across Australia, and each middle leader has the potential to directly shape teaching quality and improve student learning and wellbeing. Middle leaders are crucial to the effective functioning of our schools. The new Middle Leader Standards identify the key capabilities required to be effective and will form a useful guide for ongoing leadership development.

Just as middle leaders serve as a vital linchpin between senior school leaders and classroom teachers, it is AITSL's hope that the new Middle Leader Standards will bridge the gap between the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* and the *Australian Professional Standard for Principals.*

AITSL commends the Queensland Department of Education for leading this important work. We look forward to the results of implementation in Queensland and continuing our collaboration to support middle leaders in the significant work they do every day for all learners in their state.

Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership

May 2024

Foreword from the Queensland Department of Education

Middle leaders play a crucial role in our schools, leading and supporting both students and colleagues to learn and achieve great outcomes. Their unique roles balancing teaching responsibilities with leadership and management have not been fully represented within the suite of Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and Principals – until now. The release of these *Professional Standards for Middle Leaders* is an important milestone that recognises the contributions middle leaders make to the success and vitality of Australian schools.

We are proud of Queensland's lead role in partnering with AITSL to develop these professional standards in a way that will make them as useful as possible for all middle leaders – regardless of which Australian jurisdiction or sector they work within.

Grounded in research and informed by practice, the Middle Leader Standards were built in consultation with the profession. Middle leaders take on many different kinds of roles in our schools, these Standards have been designed to be used lexibly, and support this rich diversity.

The Middle Leader Standards can be used to guide reflections and new conversations about what it means to be a middle leader. This may include goal setting, providing feedback and identifying areas for professional learning and the development of expertise.

The Middle Leader Standards also highlight career pathways and transitions for teachers aspiring to take on middle leadership roles, or aspiring to become principals.

We encourage you to become familiar with the Standards and to use them to support the middle leaders in your systems and schools.

The release of these Standards provides us with an opportunity to reflect on the significant contributions of middle leaders. Thank you for the role you play in supporting students to learn and to realise their potential.

Queensland Department of Education

May 2024

Preamble

Who are middle leaders?

Middle leaders are qualified teachers who hold recognised management and leadership responsibilities within schools or early childhood education settings, usually in addition to their teaching responsibilities (Grootenboer et al., 2020).

There are a wide range of roles which sit between the work of teachers and the work of senior school leaders and are considered, to be middle leader roles. These include leading learning areas, year levels, curriculum, administration, and those in wellbeing and pastoral roles. Other middle leader roles include coordinating specific projects or initiatives within the school. AITSL research suggests that at least 90% of Australian middle leaders hold teaching roles, in addition to their leadership and management responsibilities (Australian Teacher Workforce Data (ATWD), 2023).

Why Standards for middle leaders?

Standards for middle leaders highlight the key leadership capabilities of middle leaders.

Effective middle leaders recognise that the overarching goal of school improvement is to improve outcomes for all students, including rates of progress, levels of achievement and wellbeing. They have a very important leadership role in the school achieving this important improvement goal.

By working in collaboration with others (Lipscombe et al., 2023), and in high-trust relationships (Edwards-Groves & Grootenboer, 2021), their closeness to classrooms means that they are well positioned to address the core school business of leading improvement in teaching and learning (AITSL, 2023; Grootenboer et al, 2020). Middle leaders are instrumental in leading staff development and performance, change and strategy (Denobile et al., 2024), and establishing collaborative cultures both within their team and more widely within the school community (Edwards-Groves & Rönnerman, 2013; Lipscombe et al., 2020).

It is estimated that approximately 19% of the Australian teacher workforce is comprised of middle leaders, with 66% of leaders in schools identifying themselves as middle leaders (ATWD, 2023). This forms a powerful group of people who can lead improvement in teaching and learning. Middle leaders working shoulder to shoulder with classroom teachers is a very effective way to improve teacher capability (Sharratt, 2019).

Those middle leaders in a formal leadership position who lead a team of teachers in curriculum delivery are likely to be in a strong position to improve teaching and learning and foster a positive, inclusive learning culture. Improving student learning by developing evidence-based, practice-focused professional learning for teachers is an important responsibility of middle leaders.

However, while improvement is a key aspect of the work of middle leadership, middle leaders have a range of other responsibilities. The *Professional Standards for Middle Leaders* (Middle Leader Standards) identify the important leadership capabilities of middle leaders and those capabilities most likely to be shared across roles. These capabilities enable middle leaders to meet their leadership responsibilities, working as a leader and as part of the school leadership team, directly collaborating with the principal and other senior leaders. The Middle Leader Standards provide a clear focus for middle leaders and spotlight their important role as key agents in improving student progress and achievement.

Middle leaders who lead a team of early childhood professionals will find additional support in the National Quality Framework, specifically Quality Area 7 of the National Quality Standard (NQS).

What is the purpose of the Standards?

The Middle Leader Standards have been constructed to assist the development of current middle leaders' knowledge, skills and dispositions. They are also useful for the development of aspiring middle leaders and those aspiring to principalship. They are intended to be used developmentally to improve the capabilities of middle leaders and to provide a clear pathway of progression in this stage of their career. In particular, the Middle Leader Standards are intended to:

- establish high expectations for the capability and development of the critical role of middle leaders.
- clearly articulate the capabilities which are required for middle leaders to effectively build teams, learning cultures and improve teaching and learning.
- inform system provision of professional learning specific to the needs of middle leaders.
- enable middle leaders to both self-assess and be provided with clear feedback about their current capability to inform their development plans.
- raise the profile and importance of the role of middle leaders in achieving state and national goals for the improvement of teaching and learning.

How do middle leaders contribute to improving learning through supporting improvement in wellbeing, behaviour and inclusion?

Supporting teachers to improve learning and wellbeing is an important responsibility of middle leaders. Aligned with Australian policy positions, the Middle Leader Standards consider learning and wellbeing as closely linked and integral to successful school improvement. Sustained learning improvement does not occur in the absence of student wellbeing, AITSL (2022) considers wellbeing as crucial to academic achievement.

The importance of student wellbeing is clear. According to the Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO, 2023), a positive sense of belonging at school has fundamental benefits for students, including feeling valued, finding the curriculum interesting and relevant, and feeling capable of succeeding at school. Improved learning outcomes have been associated with some components of student wellbeing such as a sense of belonging. Reciprocally, improving teaching and learning has been shown to have a positive impact on wellbeing.

Middle leaders support teachers to create safe, supportive and orderly learning environments where teachers can teach well and students can engage with and succeed in their learning. Relationships are an important component of classroom management (AITSL, 2021). Middle leaders encouraging positive connections between teachers and students can lead to positive attitudes towards school, higher academic results and regular attendance (AERO, 2023). The links between behaviour and learning are also well documented: focused classrooms that minimise disruptive behaviour maximise students' on-task learning time (AERO, 2021).

Middle leaders foster the wellbeing of students by supporting teachers to create an inclusive learning environment. In 2015, the then Australian Government Department of Education and Training defined inclusive education as meaning that 'all students are welcomed by their school in age-appropriate settings and are supported to learn, contribute and participate in all aspects of school'. Inclusive education practices ensure that students with disability have equal opportunities to access and participate in education on the same basis as students without disability (AITSL, 2024). Inclusive education also recognises members of the school community come from various social, cultural, linguistic, socio-economic, religious backgrounds and are of many identities and all abilities (Queensland Government, Department of Education, 2024).

Using the Middle Leader Standards

Are the Standards applicable to all middle leaders?

The Middle Leader Standards are intended to be inclusive of all middle leader roles. However, unlike the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* and the *Australian Professional Standard for Principals* **not all standards will apply to all middle leader roles.** Additionally, some capabilities will apply more strongly to some middle leader roles, than others.

All six Middle Leader Standards are applicable to the work of any middle leader with responsibility for leading aspects of teaching and learning. Those middle leaders who line-manage and lead a team of teachers who deliver curriculum will be able to locate their practice in all six of the Middle Leader Standards. Those middle leaders who do not lead a curriculum team will find support for their development in at least four of the Middle Leader Standards - Leadership dispositions, Leadership knowledge and skills, Enhancing understanding and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and Effective management.

The Middle Leader Standards cover the key capabilities for middle leader roles and development. Middle leaders may demonstrate different levels of capability across different focus areas, recognising the diversity of experience they may bring to middle leadership.

In terms of the educational leadership pipeline, the Middle Leader Standards represent a developmental perspective for fostering leadership capabilities throughout middle leaders' professional careers. For those who aspire to principal positions, an ideal pathway to principalship can be to provide middle leaders with sustained and successful experience in leading a team of teachers to improve their teaching practice. Such experience would enable an aspiring principal to demonstrate the development of their practice against all six Middle Leader Standards.

How do middle leaders use the Standards?

Within schools, the Middle Leader Standards may be used in a variety of ways to inform leadership capability development. These include:

Self-Reflection	Feedback	Professional Learning	Targeted Capability Building
Effective leaders engage in self-reflection to monitor and increase their impact. The Middle Leader Standards support self-reflection through the articulation of a continuum of increasing capabilities to guide development. The staged progression supports self-reflection by clearly identifying the capabilities which need to be developed to optimise improvement in teaching practice. It is recommended that the results of self-reflection are best shared through professional conversations and do not need to be evidenced through the production of additional written documentation.	Effective middle leaders seek and provide feedback. When feedback is targeted, accurate, actionable and practice-focused, it is known to have a significant impact on improving practice (AITSL, 2024). The Middle Leader Standards provide an evidence-informed, nationally validated set of standards against which the practice of middle leaders can be formatively considered. The Middle Leader Standards provide transparent and clear benchmarks against which advice can be formulated and discussed in learning-focused professional conversations. The shared language and common understandings of the key work of middle leaders afforded by the Middle Leader Standards, enhances the cohesion of the profession. The provision of feedback on leadership practice can be successfully achieved through a professional conversation.	High-quality professional learning has a cycle of improvement at its core, designed to facilitate sequential, practice-focused improvement of the capabilities of the learner. The Middle Leader Standards set clear expectations about the knowledge, skills and dispositions which middle leaders require to be effective in their leadership. Current and aspiring middle leaders will begin their professional learning cycle by using evidence to analyse their current practice informed by the capabilities articulated in the Middle Leader Standards. Once they have identified an area for development, they will seek input from more expert colleagues or through access to external expertise, to deepen their knowledge, skills and dispositions. They collaborate with those more expert colleagues, perhaps in a mentoring relationship, to apply that new information in their practice.	The explicit nature of the Middle Leader Standards enables middle leaders to clearly identify areas which may need development. Middle leaders are encouraged to begin with some self-reflection on the Middle Leader Standards and then to seek feedback on their middle leadership capabilities from a more expert colleague or senior leader. Ideally, only a few key focus areas should be the target of cyclical development over a reasonable period of time. Middle leaders should also seek opportunities for high-quality professional learning in areas which align with the needs they have identified through the Middle Leader Standards. Expert guidance and feedback should support the application of their learning into leadership practice.

Using the Middle Leader Standards

How are the Standards organised?

The Middle Leader Standards are organised into two groups. The first group is referred to as the enabling standards because they enable the successful demonstration of leadership practice in the other standards. The integrated nature of leadership means that the enabling dispositions, knowledge and skills are woven, in contextually appropriate ways, into the work of the core standards. That is why it may be appropriate when considering the Middle Leader Standards for formative purposes, to start with the core standards and then, based on the evidence of practice gained from that consideration, draw conclusions about the level of capability reached on the two enabling standards.

There are two enabling standards:

1. Enabling dispositions

2. Enabling knowledge and skills

The second group of standards represent middle leaders' core business, which is to improve teaching and learning to maximise the progress and achievement of all learners. Accordingly, these are known as the core standards.

3. Enhancing understanding and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

4. Coordinating high-impact teaching and learning

5. Leading improvement in teaching practice

6. Managing effectively
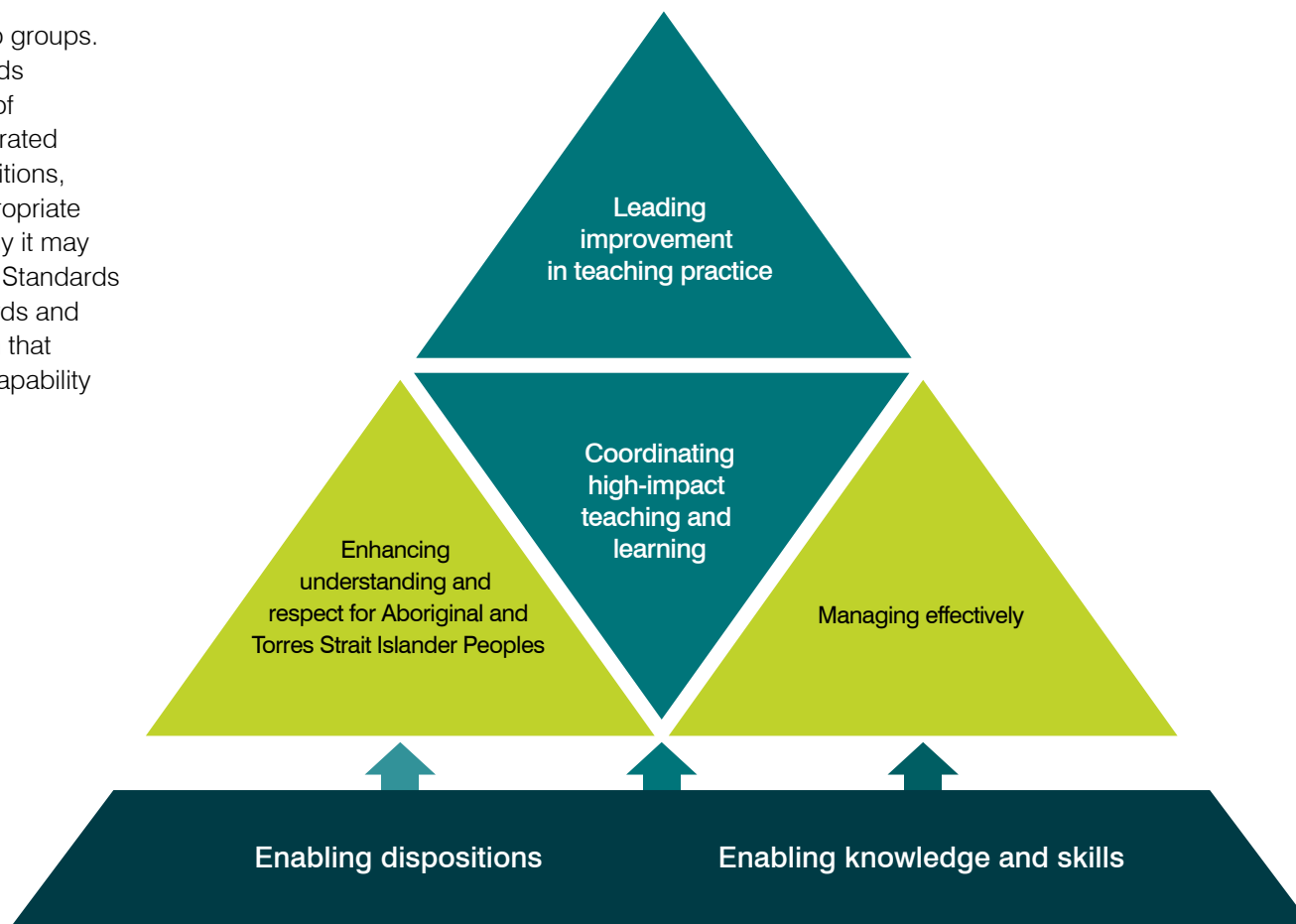
Figure 1: The interconnection between the two groups of standards

Which Standards have the greatest impact on improving student progress and achievement?

While all six standards are important, underpinning research suggests it is two of the core standards – Leading improvement in teaching practice and Coordinating high-impact teaching and learning – that are most likely to have the greatest impact on improving student progress and achievement.

Given the different contexts in which middle leaders work, any one of the core standards may be the main focus of their practice at any given time.
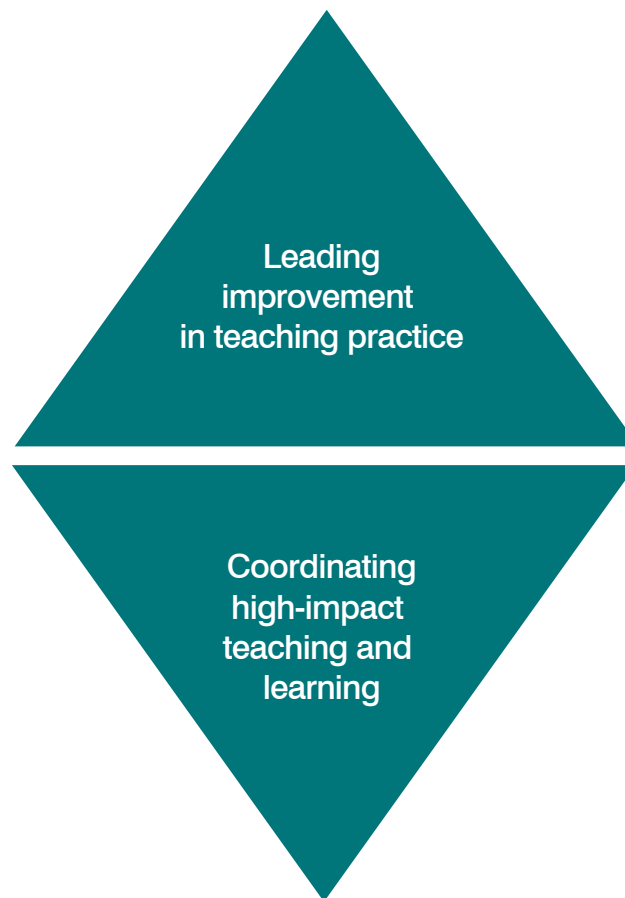
Figure 2: The two core standards which are most likely to have the greatest impact on improving student progress and achievement

Leading improvement in teaching practice

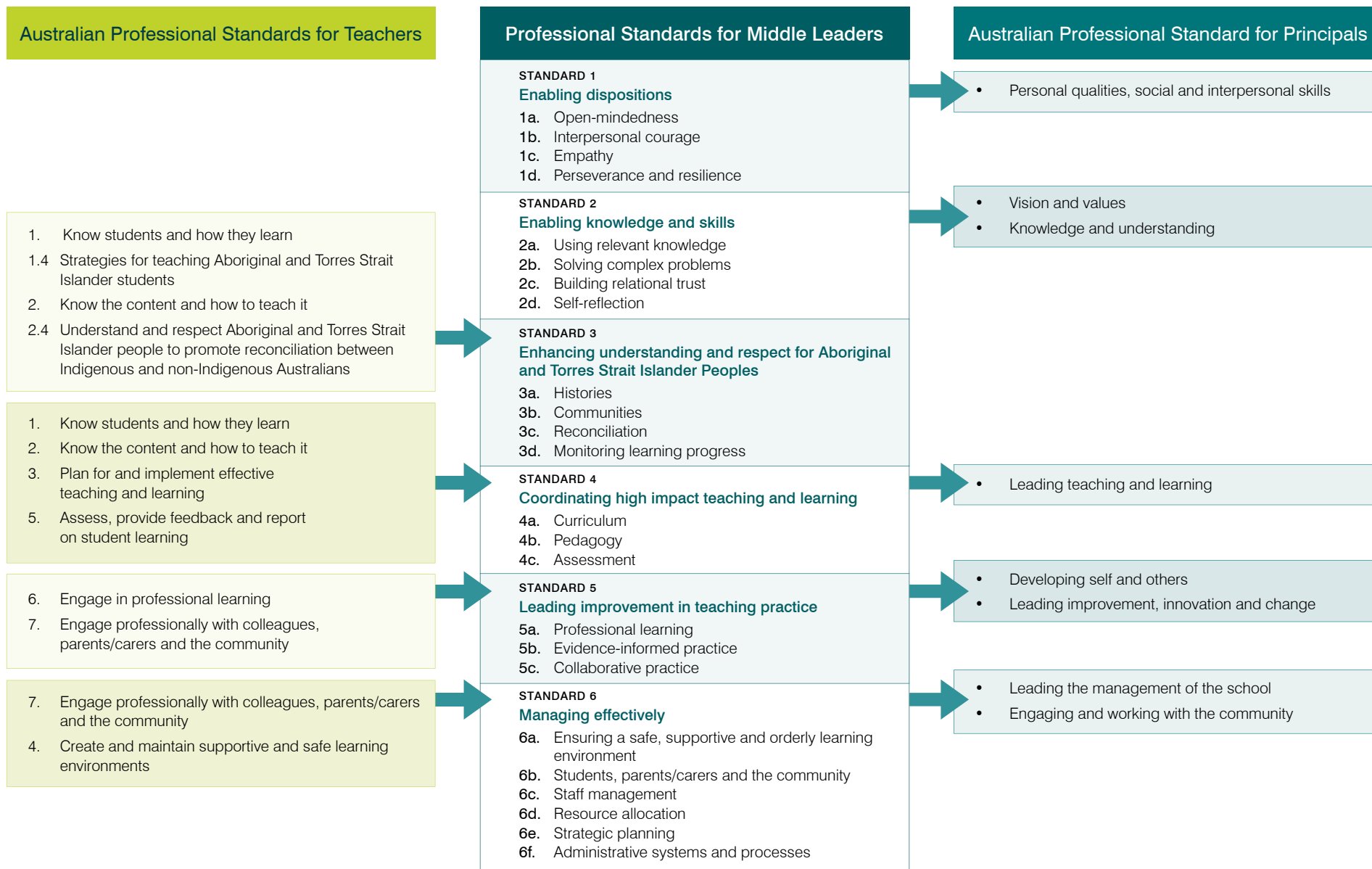**Coordinating high-impact teaching and learning**

How is the content in each Standard organised?

A purpose statement describes the overarching purpose of each standard. A range of focus areas identify the important elements within each standard. Focus area descriptions assist the reader to understand the meaning of each focus area in relation to expectations of middle leaders. Individual focus areas have capabilities expressed at 3 levels. Capabilities, or, in some cases, sets of capabilities are described for each level of capability within each standard and relate to a particular focus area and level of leadership development. These capabilities amplify in leadership expectation across the three levels of leadership within a focus area.

How do these Standards relate to the Teacher Standards and the Principal Standard?

AITSL consultation with key stakeholders in 2020, identified a leadership gap between the two existing sets of National Standards. Furthermore, consultation identified that the Australian Professional Standard for Principals, while broadly covering the work of Deputy Principals, did not address the leadership demands of middle leaders. The *Professional Standards for Middle Leaders* have been designed to articulate with the *Australian Professional Standard for Principals* and the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers to close the identified leadership gap. The articulation between Lead career stage and the Middle Leader Standards means that middle leaders whose development is being guided by the Middle Leader Standards will also be building aspects of their teaching practice at Lead, should they wish to seek higher certification. The following diagram broadly outlines the developmental continuum created by the Middle Leader Standards.

Unlike the Teacher Standards, the proficient level of capability is considered a starting point for middle leadership development with the majority of middle leaders working beyond this level.

Australian Professional Standards for Teachers	Professional Standards for Middle Leaders	Australian Professional Standard for Principals
	STANDARD 1 **Enabling dispositions** 1a. Open-mindedness 1b. Interpersonal courage 1c. Empathy 1d. Perseverance and resilience	• Personal qualities, social and interpersonal skills
1. Know students and how they learn 1.4 Strategies for teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students 2. Know the content and how to teach it 2.4 Understand and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to promote reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians	**STANDARD 2** **Enabling knowledge and skills** 2a. Using relevant knowledge 2b. Solving complex problems 2c. Building relational trust 2d. Self-reflection	• Vision and values • Knowledge and understanding
	STANDARD 3 **Enhancing understanding and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples** 3a. Histories 3b. Communities 3c. Reconciliation 3d. Monitoring learning progress	
1. Know students and how they learn 2. Know the content and how to teach it 3. Plan for and implement effective teaching and learning 5. Assess, provide feedback and report on student learning	**STANDARD 4** **Coordinating high impact teaching and learning** 4a. Curriculum 4b. Pedagogy 4c. Assessment	• Leading teaching and learning
6. Engage in professional learning 7. Engage professionally with colleagues, parents/carers and the community	**STANDARD 5** **Leading improvement in teaching practice** 5a. Professional learning 5b. Evidence-informed practice 5c. Collaborative practice	• Developing self and others • Leading improvement, innovation and change
7. Engage professionally with colleagues, parents/carers and the community 4. Create and maintain supportive and safe learning environments	**STANDARD 6** **Managing effectively** 6a. Ensuring a safe, supportive and orderly learning environment 6b. Students, parents/carers and the community 6c. Staff management 6d. Resource allocation 6e. Strategic planning 6f. Administrative systems and processes	• Leading the management of the school • Engaging and working with the community

Early childhood teachers may also like to consider how these Standards align to the Approved Learning Frameworks and Quality Area 1 of the NQS.

A continuum of increasing leadership capabilities

Proficient Capabilities

Middle leaders demonstrating practice at this level bring a predominantly operational and relational focus to their leadership work to improve student learning and wellbeing. They focus on developing and maintaining positive relationships and work effectively within the systems and structures operating in their sphere of influence. They use their educational knowledge or access to expertise to provide teaching and learning advice to the teachers within their sphere of influence to facilitate improvement. They will often draw on other middle leaders for advice and support as they develop their capabilities from this level. Unlike the Teacher Standards, proficient capabilities represent a beginning point in capability development with most middle leaders working beyond this level.

Accomplished Capabilities

Middle leaders demonstrating practice at this level build on their proficient capabilities by bringing a strategic focus to their work, evaluating impact, setting goals, and monitoring implementation to strategically effect improvement. They build trust while collaboratively leading others in solving challenging problems to improve student learning, behaviour and wellbeing. Within their sphere of influence, they model the development of their own knowledge and skills as educators and access expertise, where required, to strategically develop the teaching capabilities of other staff. They collaborate with other middle leaders and teachers to seek collective improvement in teaching capability for themselves and those people within their sphere of influence. They work collaboratively to improve their own leadership capability and the leadership capability of others.

Expert Capabilities

Middle leaders demonstrating practice at this level build on accomplished capabilities by initiating and leading improvement within the school and in their area of responsibility. They are recognised within and beyond the school as an expert middle leader, who is knowledgeable, courageous, and successful in collaboratively establishing policies and routines that improve student learning and wellbeing. They may mentor other middle leaders or aspiring middle leaders. They work at a systemic level to build networks beyond the school to improve the teaching and leadership capabilities of a wider range of people. Within the school they may lead other middle leaders to improve their leadership practice through the provision of feedback in, for example, a coaching-mentoring relationship. Beyond the school, their expertise may be recognised through roles in, for example, professional teaching associations or syllabus and examination committees. In this external context, expert middle leaders may work with other education experts at the system, state, territory or national levels. They consult with their principal (as appropriate) to connect with the wider school community to build relationships that are responsive to the needs of the local context.

Enabling Standards

Standard 1: Enabling dispositions

Purpose

A disposition is an enduring character trait which shapes perceptions, motivates behaviours and is learned throughout life. The selected dispositions describe ways of being that enable middle leaders to reflect on their practice, and be effective leaders who can build teams and collaborate with others to solve complex problems. Using these dispositions, middle leaders demonstrate ways of being that enable excellent leadership practice. The focus areas described within this Standard have been selected due to their particular relevance to the work of leading educational improvement.

Focus Areas	A continuum of increasing leadership capabilities		
	Proficient Capabilities	Accomplished Capabilities	Expert Capabilities
1a: Open-mindedness The ability to lead with an open-minded and curious disposition. Being consistently willing to examine and revise their own beliefs by listening to differing points of view from students, colleagues, principal and other senior leaders and the school community, and use evidence to check and modify their own beliefs.	1. Regularly review their practice and beliefs by considering different points of view from students, staff, principal and other senior leaders, the school community and reliable evidence. 2. Implement legislative and policy requirements and be willing to listen to suggestions for improvement in approaches to implementation.	3. Support others to examine their practices and beliefs by considering different points of view in light of relevant evidence. 4. Maintain a clear stance on formal processes such as policies and codes of conduct while being willing to act on constructive criticism of own interpretation and implementation of policy.	5. Cultivate an open-minded and curious culture by developing rigorous thinking in themselves and their colleagues. 6. Seek and respond to critical feedback in a non-defensive manner so that decisions are revised, if needed, in an open-minded and principled way.
1b: Interpersonal courage The ability to take risks to challenge school and team norms, cultures and practices that prevent improved student learning and wellbeing.	1. Exercise courage in a set of situations, which are judged as low risk and central to own responsibilities. Exercise leadership in such situations by respectfully and clearly communicating their concerns.	2. Communicate their concerns by speaking with clarity, confidence and respect to school community members across a range of individual, team, school and community situations. 3. Able to face and reduce personal fears by reflecting on and rehearsing respectful and clear communication of concerns. Seek feedback about the effectiveness of own communications.	4. Demonstrate an unwavering commitment to the goal of improving the learning and wellbeing of students by respectfully challenging and enhancing school norms, cultures and practices. 5. Seek frank feedback about the effectiveness of decisions and act upon the feedback received. 6. Display levels of personal courage necessary to engage in difficult conversations that are required to improve student progress and achievement.

Focus Areas	A continuum of increasing leadership capabilities		
	Proficient Capabilities	Accomplished Capabilities	Expert Capabilities
1c: Empathy The ability to listen carefully and remain sensitive to another's perspectives and emotions by setting aside any pre-conceived judgements and demonstrating genuine care about the lives, learning and wellbeing of their students, colleagues and school community.	1. Display genuine empathy by listening deeply to the needs of others and being astutely aware of their feelings and thoughts. 2. Show care by demonstrating sincere interest in the needs, hopes and aspirations of staff and students.	3. Carefully check rather than assume the accuracy of their perception of others' emotional states. 4. Apply a caring, sensitive and non-judgmental lens when helping others work through emotionally challenging situations.	5. Work to consider the perspectives of others by setting aside any pre-judgements about their feelings and actions. Recognise both expressed and unexpressed emotions of others. 6. Avoid over empathising in ways that sacrifice teaching and learning or that create emotional overwhelm for the leader.
1d: Perseverance and resilience The ability to persist until a problem is solved despite failures and setbacks. The ability to sustain their energy under pressure and adapt well to change.	1. Recognise that it may take several conscious attempts before problems can be resolved. 2. Regulate emotions, stress and reactions during challenging situations.	3. Persevere to achieve an improvement goal despite being faced with obstacles or difficulties or when initial approaches are not working. 4. Make judicious, evidence-based and public decisions about when to persist and when to revise or abandon an improvement strategy. 5. Recognise that it may take several conscious attempts to resolve difficult and complex problems.	6. Model perseverance and commitment to improvement goals by leading staff through initial setbacks and challenges. 7. Lead by demonstrating a persistent commitment to the improvement goal rather than to a particular strategy for achieving the goal. 8. Model resilience by publicly acknowledging setbacks and then providing a positive and energising response to the situation.

Enabling Standards

Standard 2: Enabling knowledge and skills

Purpose

Middle leaders draw on, and support others to develop clusters of knowledge and skills to solve problems of teaching and learning while building trust with those involved. The enabling knowledge and skills describe *the how* of effective school leadership and are enablers towards building a culture of learning across the school. This standard describes middle leaders leading with a strong sense of who they are, what they know and do and how they draw on their knowledge and skills to help all students achieve.

Focus Areas	A continuum of increasing leadership capabilities		
	Proficient Capabilities	Accomplished Capabilities	Expert Capabilities
2a: Using relevant knowledge The ability to use and source knowledge to enhance the attainment of improvement goals.	1. Support teachers by demonstrating sufficient educational knowledge to identify problematic practice and guide the search for more effective evidence-based strategies. 2. Use knowledge to present ideas in confident and open-minded ways.	3. Use substantial educational knowledge to solve complex problems that prevent the attainment of improvement goals. 4. Use educational knowledge to explain and debate viewpoints with those who have diverse or contrary views.	5. Use a rich repertoire of educational knowledge to generate and debate hypotheses about the school-based causes of, and solutions to problems of teaching and learning. 6. Model the importance of checking high-quality research evidence before adopting new programs or initiatives. 7. Make explicit opportunities during problem solving to deepen teachers' and leaders' educational knowledge.
2b: Solving complex problems The ability to lead the analysis and resolution of complex problems related directly to teaching and learning. Work through problems collaboratively, systematically, and iteratively.	1. Support teachers by demonstrating evaluative capacity, drawing on evidence and multiple perspectives, including the ability to identify and prioritise problems. 2. Recognise when a 'quick fix' approach is inappropriate and prevent or interrupt such an approach when needed. Support teachers by inquiring into factors preventing teaching and learning progress.	3. Adopt a systems perspective to problems and explain why a problem has been made a strategic priority. 4. Collaboratively identify and analyse the causes of teaching and learning problems and identify solutions that directly address the causes.	5. Develop a collaborative and systematic process for using data to identify, analyse and resolve complex teaching and learning problems. 6. Lead by building staff capability to use a systematic process of collaborative problem solving, including inquiry into causes, identifying solution requirements and then settling on solution strategies. 7. Gain agreement on how to use data to monitor the implementation and impact of the solution strategies.

Focus Areas	A continuum of increasing leadership capabilities		
	Proficient Capabilities	Accomplished Capabilities	Expert Capabilities
2c: Building relational trust The ability to build and sustain a culture of trust in which teaching and learning improvement is shared, well supported and competently led.	1. Listen carefully to others, especially when they disagree. 2. Build trust by making principled decisions and acting with integrity. 3. Establish a supportive team culture based on trust that fosters a shared commitment to teaching and learning improvement.	4. Continually build and sustain high-trust relationships that are based on established competence as a leader and teacher, and respectful treatment of all members of the school community. 5. Build and maintain a network of supportive-challenging relationships to serve educational purposes within and beyond the school.	6. Lead through clear and direct disclosure of reasons for own points of view and through sincere invitations for students, staff, parents/carers and school community to express their points of view. 7. Lead the repair of low trust relationship in situations that are within their sphere of influence. Build the trust required to make difficult issues discussable.
2d: Self-reflection The ability to intentionally reflect on own biases, values and perspectives to gain greater insight about oneself as an individual and leader and to seek feedback to engage in a continuous cycle of growth and development.	1. Consistently take deliberate and active steps to understand themselves, their capabilities, areas for improvement, beliefs, values, feelings and work-related goals. 2. Regularly reflect on own biases, values, and perspectives. 3. Seek feedback about own performance from staff and reflect on personal strengths and areas for growth. Use this knowledge to set goals that can lead towards improvement and are aligned with organisational strategic goals.	4. Promote the benefits of self-reflection to teachers and ensure that their willingness and efforts to learn and improve are recognised. 5. Demonstrate active and regular opportunities to learn, unlearn and relearn practices and perspectives through a process of critical reflection. 6. Seek feedback to understand their performance from a range of sources, reflect upon the feedback and change their practice as a result.	7. Reflect deeply on own practice and regularly modify leadership behaviour based on learning from experience and feedback from colleagues and others, including parents/carers and students. Demonstrate strong evidence that their practice is more effective as a result of the feedback through ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

Core Standards

Standard 3: Enhancing understanding and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

Purpose

Middle leaders have a professional responsibility to ensure they are culturally responsive, and that the curriculum supports all learners to engage in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, living cultures and contemporary impacts of colonisation. They are reflexive in practice, both by self-reflecting and taking actions to improve. They consider how their interactions with others reflect their own beliefs and change them where required.

Middle leaders ensure culturally safe, high-quality learning environments free from discrimination and racism. With the principal and other school leaders, they actively identify Elders and leaders who can act as valued advisors to school leaders even in schools where there are few or no identified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. They understand that quality relationships with community are crucial in achieving reconciliation and successful outcomes for all students, so they build and nurture these relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities over time. When demonstrating capabilities across the Standards, middle leaders should specifically consider and plan for the potential impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who are members of the school community.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students should experience rich cognitively complex ideas in all curriculum areas and highly effective teaching. Middle leaders should ensure there is a continued and constant focus on the impact of teaching to ensure students are accelerating in their learning. In collaboration with the principal and other school leaders, they critically evaluate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learning data, schooling processes and strategic plans, and inquire into how any other aspects of schooling may impact and/or create barriers for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Focus Areas	A continuum of increasing leadership capabilities		
	Proficient Capabilities	Accomplished Capabilities	Expert Capabilities
3a: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories Promoting opportunities for all students to truthfully learn about and respect complex Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, living cultures and contemporary impacts of colonisation.	1. Demonstrate cultural responsiveness informed by a deep understanding and respect for the histories and living cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in their area. 2. Continually educate themselves on those histories and their intergenerational impacts on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, including languages, cultures, and worldviews.	3. Lead teaching colleagues to identify evidence-based resources and teaching materials that include the accurate history of communities from their local area. 4. Emphasise the importance of student wellbeing that recognises historical legacies such as, intergenerational impacts on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Embrace reflexive opportunities to learn and engage with communities, their languages, cultures, and ways of understanding the world.	5. Emphasise the importance of this cross-curriculum priority and promote the incorporation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, histories, and contemporary contributions into curriculum across all learning areas. This includes leading the integration of contemporary impacts of colonisation into lesson plans and teaching materials.

	A continuum of increasing leadership capabilities		
Focus Areas	Proficient Capabilities	Accomplished Capabilities	Expert Capabilities
3b: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities Modelling teaching that validates respect for and builds positive relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and leaders even where there are few or no identified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Understanding and appreciating the privileges, roles and responsibilities of living and working on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lands and convey this to all staff and students.	1. Understand and develop positive relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, local to the school where possible. 2. Actively research local community protocols and languages and engage community members in the educational process, valuing their input, and collaborating to support all student learning.	3. Work collaboratively with other school leaders to identify local Elders and leaders and create and maintain positive, reciprocal and meaningful relationships with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. 4. Foster active community engagement in educational processes, including co-designing the implementation of curriculum to explore local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives and languages. 5. Draw on other school leaders' and teachers' demonstrated expertise in this area and obtain critical feedback and teaching evaluations.	6. Demonstrate proactivity, respect, cultural sensitivity and a genuine commitment to understanding and addressing the complex issues of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, wellbeing and the challenges faced by these local communities. 7. In consultation with the principal, encourage all teachers and other staff to engage with Elders and leaders to build positive, reciprocal relationships.
3c: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous reconciliation Promoting practices and attitudes that support reconciliation by dismantling biases, stereotypes, and promoting anti-racism strategies in educational settings.	1. Proactively promote reconciliation and encourage teachers to pursue reconciliation resources, workshops, seminars and other professional learning opportunities to learn about issues of bias, stereotypes, and racism in education, and their implications for teaching, learning and leadership. Align reconciliation actions with any existing school plans.	2. Model and manage anti-racism best practice by challenging inappropriate comments, stereotypes, or discriminatory behaviour exhibited by students, staff and the wider school community. Ensure integrity when implementing anti-racism and other relevant policies, taking effective action aligned to policy when racism occurs.	3. Lead the use of student voice and other data to monitor and discuss progress towards an inclusive, anti-racist school culture. 4. Advocate and lead effective work towards dismantling racism within the whole school by actively challenging institutional racism. 5. Advocate for the incorporation of diverse external perspectives, guest speakers and counter-narratives to support a whole school approach to challenge racism.
3d: Monitoring learning progress Monitoring the learning progress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to better guide and support them in their learning so that they will achieve their full potential. This should be completed in conjunction with using evidence-based teaching strategies and applying insights from cognitive science and other research on how students learn to optimise systematic deep learning through effective pedagogical practices. This is directly related to Standard 4, focus area 4b.	1. Work with teachers to specifically monitor learning progress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. 2. Optimise deep student learning using evidence-based teaching strategies. 3. Connect teachers with experts in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education, to identify other opportunities for teacher learning to facilitate enhanced student learning outcomes.	4. Using evidence from student progress monitoring, collaborate with experts in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education and teachers to identify any classroom barriers to student learning and collaboratively design actions with classroom teachers which will address identified barriers for students. 5. Review existing processes to regularly collect and collaboratively analyse evidence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student progress to refine teaching practice and enhance processes to improve.	6. Working with other leaders, use critically evaluated student learning data to reflect on how to enhance outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. 7. Use this information to advocate for improvement to school processes or plans so that they more effectively address barriers to the learning progress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Core Standards

Standard 4: Coordinating high-impact teaching and learning

Purpose

Middle leaders can have responsibilities for coordinating the delivery of quality programs of instruction to build students' content knowledge and skills with high expectations of student progress and achievement. Practices within this standard align curriculum, pedagogy and assessment to meet learner needs and maximise learning progress for all learners. In demonstrating the practices described in this standard the middle leader will draw, in particular, on deep knowledge of evidence-based teaching practices combined with educational insights from cognitive science and other research on how students learn. They will also draw on their knowledge of curriculum content, progressions and assessment to enable student learning progress to be monitored and improved over time.

Focus Areas	A continuum of increasing leadership capabilities		
	Proficient Capabilities	Accomplished Capabilities	Expert Capabilities
4a: Curriculum Providing a clear, structured and knowledge-rich curriculum with high expectations of systematically building students' content knowledge, skills and understandings to enable learning progress for all students.	1. Ensure that prescribed curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment are explicitly represented in teaching and learning programs. 2. Support teachers to develop programs/unit plans that reflect a knowledge-rich, high expectation curriculum, enabling deep learning inclusive of all learners. 3. Establish appropriate record keeping processes to document systematic curriculum delivery and assessment. 4. Ensure parents/carers of students with identified needs are consulted in any adjustments made to curriculum delivery.	5. Lead teachers to establish processes that ensure alignment between prescribed curriculum for a year or band level, curriculum in teaching learning programs, level of curriculum taught to students and the curriculum assessed. 6. Lead the design of collaborative processes to ensure that teaching colleagues share a comprehensive understanding of required content and skills. 7. Establish processes to ensure that the detail of the curriculum in programs/unit plans is responsive to the needs and contexts of all learners, so that there are equitable learning opportunities for all students, with multiple opportunities for students to learn challenging content. 8. Lead teaching staff to understand that different learner groups bring different experiences to education and establish processes that consider how all students can be supported to learn through the design of effective teaching and learning programs.	9. Lead initiatives, such as moderation of student work, that evaluate and improve teachers' knowledge of content and its appropriate sequencing, to continuously improve the quality of teaching to maximise the outcomes inclusive of all learners. 10. Lead the cyclical review of teaching-learning programs and their implementation using a wide variety of sources including evidence of students' deep learning to improve program effectiveness in promoting student learning.

Focus Areas	A continuum of increasing leadership capabilities		
	Proficient Capabilities	Accomplished Capabilities	Expert Capabilities
4b: Pedagogy Prioritising the use of effective, evidence-based teaching strategies and application of insights from cognitive science and other research on how students learn, to optimise systematic deep learning through effective pedagogical practices.	1. Support teachers to develop the required depth of understanding of evidence-based teaching strategies and educational insights from cognitive science and other research on how students learn, to plan and implement effective teaching in order to enhance learning progress and wellbeing for all learners. 2. Enable the use of effective digital technologies to enhance teaching and learning. 3. Ensure that teachers understand that all students need to be provided with learning opportunities which are intellectually challenging, irrespective of student's learning starting point.	4. Lead the development of processes in which teachers strategically collaborate to embed effective, evidence-based strategies, applying insights from cognitive science and other research on how students learn. 5. Support teachers to refine their pedagogical practice through processes such as expert modelling, observation, and feedback, drawing on the use of evidence of student learning. 6. Lead a team culture with high expectations for all students' progress and achievement and in which all students are challenged in their learning.	7. Initiate and lead processes to enable collaborative monitoring and evaluation of individual student and year level cohort progress and achievement in curriculum learning areas to inform adjustments to teaching practice. 8. Keep up-to-date with evidence-based research about teaching and learning, engage in educational networks to share and source those teachers or teacher-leaders with demonstrated, high-impact, evidence-based pedagogical expertise who will support the collaborative review and improvement of teaching practice.
4c: Assessment Ensuring a program of assessment which provides timely and valid data to enable student learning progress to be monitored to inform teaching and continued learning.	1. Support teachers to develop a program of regular assessments for formative and summative purposes that is regularly reviewed to ensure it sets high expectations of achievement and aligns clearly with the prescribed curriculum and the learning of students. 2. Ensure that teachers regularly collect and interpret assessment data, analyse it for learning impact, and use identified gaps to inform teaching decisions.	3. Initiate the collaborative development of a range of assessment strategies that enable teachers to determine students' learning progress, identify learning needs and enable the provision of effective feedback for teaching and learning. 4. Model effective practice in the moderation of students' work.	5. Lead the collaborative review, refinement and interpretations of assessment strategies and moderation activities to determine their effectiveness in gauging student achievement, learning progress and the provision of effective feedback. 6. Develop the capacity of others to lead assessment moderation activities which ensure consistency of teacher judgment.

Core Standards

Standard 5: Leading improvement in teaching practice

Purpose

Leading improvement through collaboration and teamwork is central to the work of middle leaders. Middle leaders are often key to implementing the school's instructional improvement agenda, using their understanding of research evidence about improvement combined with their deep knowledge of school data. They work collaboratively with staff to implement actions to improve teaching and learning and cultivate a sense of collective efficacy. Middle leaders have a strong focus on continuous professional learning for themselves and their staff, with a focus on supporting classroom implementation of evidence-based practice. They provide support and challenge through provision of constructive feedback while collaborating with staff to improve practice and amplify impact which may occur through a model of mentoring, coaching and professional inquiry.

Focus Areas	A continuum of increasing leadership capabilities		
	Proficient Capabilities	Accomplished Capabilities	Expert Capabilities
5a: Professional learning Increasing teachers' capacity to improve student progress and achievement in all targeted areas of their development through a culture of continuous professional learning.	1. Source and make available professional learning for self and teachers based on evidence of student and teacher needs, drawing on external relevant expertise where required and evidence-based approaches and strategies. 2. Align staff professional learning with school and other required improvement priorities. 3. Model and build staff belief that all students can make excellent learning progress and encourage staff to have high expectations for student learning, behaviour, and wellbeing. 4. Provide regular feedback to staff on their teaching practice and develop processes to collaboratively evaluate the impact of practice on student learning.	5. Embed a culture of continuous professional learning where teachers collaborate to apply evidence-based teaching strategies, and new professional knowledge and skills to their teaching practice. Ensure teachers then use evidence of student learning to evaluate the impact of their strategies and make further refinements to their teaching practice. 6. Establish processes with other leaders to identify teachers with demonstrated, relevant expertise, and enable these teacher-experts to develop the capabilities of identified teachers through feedback and challenge.	7. Lead the establishment of data-informed processes to evaluate the impacts of professional learning on change in participating teachers' practice and improvements in their students' learning progress and achievement in all targeted areas of their development.

Focus Areas	A continuum of increasing leadership capabilities		
	Proficient Capabilities	Accomplished Capabilities	Expert Capabilities
5b: Evidence-informed practice Embedding the use of data and research evidence to support continuous improvement.	1. Support staff to access, collect and interpret a range of student data and research evidence to inform teaching decisions and evaluate learning progress and achievement, and wellbeing for individual students and student cohorts.	2. Establish regular opportunities for staff to use a range of point-in-time and longitudinal evidence and other relevant student data to collaboratively engage in deep discussions about student learning and wellbeing. Use this student evidence-base to engage in deep discussion to inform planning for continuous improvement.	3. Lead the establishment of practices and processes which support the consistent use of student data and research evidence to challenge assumptions and inform decisions and actions at a team and individual level about what and how to teach.
5c: Collaborative practice Leveraging collaborative practice to monitor and improve the impact of teaching on student learning and wellbeing.	1. Establish an understanding of the impact of collaborative practice in improving student progress and achievement. 2. Provide opportunities for teachers to engage in regular collaboration including through joint planning, development of assessment tools and moderation of assessment tasks.	3. Establish structures and processes to enable regular, high-trust and high-challenge collaboration between teachers. Use these processes to support continuous improvement in teaching practice through collaborative professional inquiry into their teaching practice, based on implementation and impact of evidence-based strategies, and application of relevant knowledge, on student learning progress. 4. Create opportunities to discuss and resolve barriers to effective collaboration. 5. Build a shared understanding and commitment to working together to improve the impact of teaching on student learning and wellbeing.	6. Lead the development of systems to evaluate both the implementation and impact of collaborative practice on improving student learning progress and achievement and wellbeing. 7. Establish collaborative professional inquiry in which evidence of impact is shared within and across teams and schools to scale up success. 8. Develop the capacity of staff to initiate discussion and resolution of barriers to effective collaboration.

Core Standards

Standard 6: Managing effectively

Purpose

Middle leaders use their management knowledge and skills to optimise processes, systems and resources to enable a clear focus on improving student learning. Middle leaders work strategically in their sphere of influence to lead the implementation of the school's strategic agenda by planning and scheduling implementation strategies. They identify evidence-based team strategic goals and establish mechanisms for accountability, negotiating the adoption of these goals with the principal and other senior school leaders. They provide advice and information to the principal and other senior leaders and share insights from the staff they lead and from collected evidence about the effectiveness of operational and strategic matters.

Middle leaders implement required policies and processes ethically and transparently, ensuring procedural fairness. Middle leaders implement performance and development processes and performance management processes to maximise staff performance. Middle leaders ensure staff and student routines are fit for purpose and consistently implemented to prioritise instructional time. Middle leaders strategically and transparently manage resources to meet the priority goals of their school and the diverse needs of their students. They increase the time available to teachers by leading the use of technology to enhance teaching and learning and streamline administrative and record keeping systems and processes. Middle leaders recognise teaching staff as the single most powerful in-school influence on student learning and ensure a safe, supportive and orderly learning environment where all students are included and diversity is valued.

Focus Areas	A continuum of increasing leadership capabilities		
	Proficient Capabilities	Accomplished Capabilities	Expert Capabilities
6a: Ensuring a safe, supportive and orderly learning environment Creating an inclusive environment where teachers can teach well, and students can engage with and succeed in their learning.	1. Build an inclusive learning culture by modelling inclusive practice and building deep understanding of the diverse learning, social and behavioural needs of the full range of students. Develop teachers' use of evidence-based inclusive practices such as tiered interventions. 2. Support teachers to have high expectations of student behaviour and to implement evidence-based practices for positively and proactively supporting respectful student behaviour through explicitly teaching expected behaviours.	5. Ensure evidence-based systems are in place to recognise and respond appropriately to support the wellbeing of staff and students. 6. Strategically provide differentiated support to build the capacity of staff to create a safe, supportive and orderly learning environment, by identifying and leveraging teachers with expertise in behaviour management to collaboratively develop the capabilities of others.	8. Lead evaluation processes which use quantitative school data and qualitative data from a range of stakeholders including teachers, specialist school staff, students, parents/carers to determine the safety, supportiveness, sense of belonging, and orderliness of the learning environment for students and staff over extended time periods and use this information to plan improvements.

	A continuum of increasing leadership capabilities		
Focus Areas	**Proficient Capabilities**	**Accomplished Capabilities**	**Expert Capabilities**
6a: Ensuring a safe, supportive and orderly learning environment (continued)	3. Develop teacher understanding and use of evidence-based behaviour management strategies and model their use. 4. Implement relevant behaviour and work, health and safety policies and processes consistently, fairly and equitably, while responding agilely to different circumstances.	7. Set high expectations of professional staff conduct and design support systems to assist staff to consistently meet those expectations.	9. Use research and school evidence about student behaviour and wellbeing to challenge and test assumptions about what does and does not work in managing student behaviour. 10. Balance case and incident management of student behaviour with strategic reviews of school policies and procedures.
6b: Students, parents/carers and the community Building productive relationships with students, parents/carers and the community to enhance student learning and wellbeing.	1. Promote the importance of student, teacher and parent/carer partnerships in achieving learning and wellbeing goals and celebrating success. 2. Recognise and value diversity within the school community and create an inclusive culture to support student, parent/carer and community engagement. 3. Ensure interactions with students, parents/carers and the community are caring, respectful, culturally aware and focused on the learning and wellbeing of students.	4. Set and maintain high expectations for staff interactions with students, parents/carers and the community to promote student learning and wellbeing. 5. Support staff to demonstrate empathy, open-mindedness and cultural awareness in their interactions and challenge behaviours which hinder relationship development with students, parents/carers and the community.	6. Initiate and lead processes to evaluate team culture and the status of relations with students, parents/carers and the community to inform plans for improvement.
6c: Staff management Managing implementation of required policies, procedures and processes in an ethical, transparent manner, ensuring procedural fairness so that staff have clarity about expectations and mechanisms of support in their workplace.	1. Enact processes to onboard and mentor-coach new staff and early career teachers. 2. Model a positive, caring, inclusive culture and relationships of mutual respect while ensuring compliance with policies and procedures. 3. Provide opportunities for staff to receive training to develop an understanding of policies and procedures. Provide feedback to improve staff alignment with policies.	6. Use performance and development processes or where required performance management processes to scale up success and identify areas for staff improvement, in order to ensure their strategic development. 7. Challenge staff practices, beliefs or behaviours which do not align with policy-based expectations, while maintaining a relationship of trust.	10. Work collaboratively with other leaders to establish evidence-informed processes to review and improve management processes and the implementation of common policies. 11. Develop the capacity of others to organise and lead productive team meetings which support the advancement of a collaborative improvement agenda. 12. Address workload issues by considering reform to systems and processes within the team.

Standard 6: Managing effectively

Focus Areas	A continuum of increasing leadership capabilities		
	Proficient Capabilities	Accomplished Capabilities	Expert Capabilities
6c: Staff management (continued)	4. Establish a culture of shared accountability by clearly identifying staff policy accountabilities, roles and responsibilities and collaboratively developing transparent systems to support staff to meet them in a timely manner being aware of workload. 5. Organise and lead efficient team meetings by circulating an agenda and requirements for meeting preparation, with actions recorded and allocated to staff responsible. Communicate routine administrative items digitally, outside meeting times.	8. Plan and coordinate the work of a team by strategically delegating leadership responsibilities after consideration of staff capabilities, aspirations, areas of interest and expertise. Provide clear expectations of responsibilities. Agree upon timelines and establish transparent supervision procedures to support staff in managing their leadership responsibilities. 9. Organise and lead productive team meetings which advance a collaborative improvement agenda. Proactively manage workload issues for staff, in collaboration with the principal and other senior leaders where required.	
6d: Resource allocation Strategically managing resources in a fair, inclusive and transparent manner that meets the diverse learning needs of students and monitor its impact. Resources may include staff, budget, teacher and student time, teaching materials, and technology.	1. Interpret and use evidence to monitor students' needs and target resources towards evidence-based strategies to improve student progress and achievement. 2. Ensure effective allocation of resources to support learners with additional needs. 3. Strategically allocate resources to support the implementation of school strategic plans, through a transparent, objective process where staff can see alignment of allocation to key improvement goals. 4. Engage with digital technologies to streamline administration and enhance learning improvement through an approach which is targeted, integrated and purposeful.	5. Collaboratively establish processes to monitor the alignment of resource allocation to strategic planning, so that the resources are used optimally to enhance the learning of all students. 6. Develop a culture in which teaching expertise is seen as a resource and is used to support collaborative improvement of teaching practice. 7. Implement strategies to develop and retain expert teachers. 8. Demonstrate organisational agility in planning by responding quickly to changes in context and need. 9. Seek opportunities to prioritise instructional time when decisions are being made about the scheduling of events or processes. 10. Work collaboratively with the principal and other school leaders to optimise the deployment of technologies for streamlining administration and enhancing learning, using evidence.	11. Establish evidence-informed and collaborative processes to review the impact of resource allocation on the diverse learning needs of students. 12. Lead the transparent reallocation of resources away from lower priority uses to new, higher priorities by discussing the need for change and managing staff expectations. 13. Use evidence-informed and collaborative processes to review the impact of digital technologies and consider future needs in conjunction with principal and other leaders.

Focus Areas	A continuum of increasing leadership capabilities		
	Proficient Capabilities	Accomplished Capabilities	Expert Capabilities
6e: Strategic planning Using clear structures and collaborative procedures to determine goals, and develop, execute, monitor and evaluate plans for improving teaching and learning.	1. Lead staff to collaboratively plan how to implement those aspects of the school strategic improvement plan that lie within own area of responsibility. 2. Ensure that the improvement agenda is 'narrow and deep' and has adequate timeframes for staff learning through iterative problem-solving efforts. 3. Lead team in using data to collaboratively identify goals and strategically plan to address student learning needs specific to own area of responsibility and not addressed by the school strategic improvement plan. 4. Liaise with the principal to prioritise implementing plans to achieve these team-identified, teaching and learning improvement goals, in line with agreed strategic priorities. 5. Encourage staff to take collective responsibility for the achievement of school strategic improvement plan goals and additional team goals required to meet the needs of identified student groups.	6. Lead staff to develop processes that will assist them in sustaining implementation of improvement strategies until goals are achieved. 7. Systematically guide teaching staff to implement the improvement plan. Provide feedback and prioritise collaborative support to staff who would benefit from additional assistance with implementation. 8. Provide feedback to principal and other senior leaders about progress and challenges in meeting improvement goals.	9. Lead staff to design mechanisms to collect and review the thoroughness of implementation of improvement strategies. 10. Lead staff to use data on implementation to review its success and make necessary adjustments. 11. Collaboratively review evidence of impact to inform future goal setting and problem solving.
6f: Administrative systems and processes Implementing effective and streamlined administrative and record keeping systems and processes including through available technology.	1. Ensure team administrative and record keeping systems are fit for purpose. 2. Support staff to maintain accurate records, by ensuring they have the required skills to operate administrative systems and that they understand legislative and policy requirements. 3. Collaboratively develop procedures that make clear expectations for optimal staff use of administrative and record keeping systems.	4. Establish processes to enable an agile response to improve team administrative and record keeping systems. 5. Monitor consistency of implementation of processes and inquire respectfully into reasons for variable practice.	6. Lead processes to evaluate the effectiveness of established administrative and record keeping systems and processes to ensure they are streamlined and meet the needs of all users. 7. Lead a collegial problem-solving process to improve ineffective administrative routines.

Acknowledgements

Development of the Standards

Development of the Middle Leader Standards involved research, expert advice, broad consultation, a national validation process, national impact assessment, and a trial of draft Standards across Queensland.

A comprehensive literature review provided a wide research base for the development of these Middle Leader Standards. It gathered information from both academic papers and international and national practice. The literature review was published on the AITSL website in September 2023. Multiple feedback points and meetings with the expert panel guided the drafting of the Standards. Some of the language and content of the Middle Leader Standards was informed by the ACER School Improvement Tool, 2023, since it is an evidence-informed resource, used by schools.

Extensive national stakeholder consultation also assisted the development of the Middle Leader Standards. Representatives from a range of employers, professional associations and unions across Australia were invited to provide feedback about the Middle Leader Standards. This information assisted in optimising relevance, clarity and usefulness across contexts.

The Middle Leader Standards were extensively validated by the profession using a national online process. 940 educators across Australia provided feedback during the psychometric validation. This provided statistically significant, detailed insights which enabled adjustments to the Middle Leader Standards to ensure that they were clear, relevant, useful and fit for purpose.

An implementation trial was conducted across more than 82 Government, Catholic and Independent schools in Queensland, and an external evaluation of the trial found that nearly all participants considered the Middle Leader Standards to be useful and relevant for developing middle leadership capabilities.

An impact assessment was commissioned to understand the potential positive impacts and unintended consequences of introducing the Middle Leader Standards. A series of interviews with 23 key stakeholder groups revealed that the positive intention of the Standards aligned with the likely impacts of their introduction. It revealed not only the need for the Middle Leader Standards, but a desire for middle leaders to be acknowledged for the important roles they play in schools.

The *Professional Standards for Middle Leaders* were first published in May 2024.

References

Statement about references

In 2023, AITSL conducted a thorough review of national and international literature relating to middle leadership – both theory-based and original research. This Middle-leadership literature review and document analysis: Exploring middle leaders' profession and practice underpinned the development of the Middle Leader Standards and includes an extensive list of references. The references below were particularly important for the drafting of the Middle Leader Standards.

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