

Developing a professional mindset



How to use this workbook

This workbook is part of a series designed to encourage teachers to continually reflect on their practice by developing a deliberate inquiry mindset. The focus is on improvement of practice and student outcomes through both informal and formal situations. For example, it may guide self-reflection, self-inquiry and discussion with colleagues, as well as support local performance and development processes and external processes such as certification.

Workbooks in this series are:

- ◆ Working with the Standards
- ◆ Developing a professional mindset
- ◆ Demonstrating impact
- ◆ Recognising exemplary teachers

This workbook, 'Developing a professional mindset', encourages you to continue to grow as a professional in order to improve the outcomes for your students. To effectively reflect on your practice is a learned skill and the key to continual improvement. You can establish a mindset of reflection through exploration of your teaching philosophy, your roles within and outside the classroom and developing trusted relationships with colleagues. The journey through this workbook will assist you to receive feedback on your practice and improve and develop effective relationships with colleagues.

This series of workbooks can be used individually, or as stimulus for discussion with colleagues. Each PDF is editable and responses can be typed directly into the document when prompted. To use this feature you must save the document to your computer and have Adobe Acrobat Reader installed. A free download is available from: <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat.html>. Please note, direct editing may be unavailable on some mobile devices.



Acknowledgment

This workbook series stems from the development of the national Certification Assessor Training Program. The content for this Program was developed in partnership with the National Research Centre of Science, Information and Communication Technology and Mathematics Education for Rural and Regional Australia (SiMERR) based at the University of New England and Certifying Authorities in Australian States and Territories. The content selected for this workbook series has been modified and elaborated in order to provide a set of comprehensive resources that are tailored to the needs of all teachers and school leaders.

The ability to articulate what it is that you actually do as a teacher on a daily basis, and the capacity to reflect on your practice are learned skills. Effective teachers are able to do this objectively which allows them to continually improve their practice, continue to develop and grow as professionals and continually improve outcomes for students.

Effective teachers possess a variety of skill sets that just seem to appear magically. I'm willing to bet that at the core of each developed skill lays a chamber that holds remnants of reflection. Most likely, the effective teachers that we know and admire are those who learned how to be extremely reflective somewhere along the way. They're the kind of teacher who repeatedly self-questions. The cycle of planning, teaching, and reflecting runs continuously through their veins, grounding their practice. They value the reflective phase of the cycle and see it as a means of growth that leads to effective teaching and student success. They repeat this cycle again and again until objectives are met.

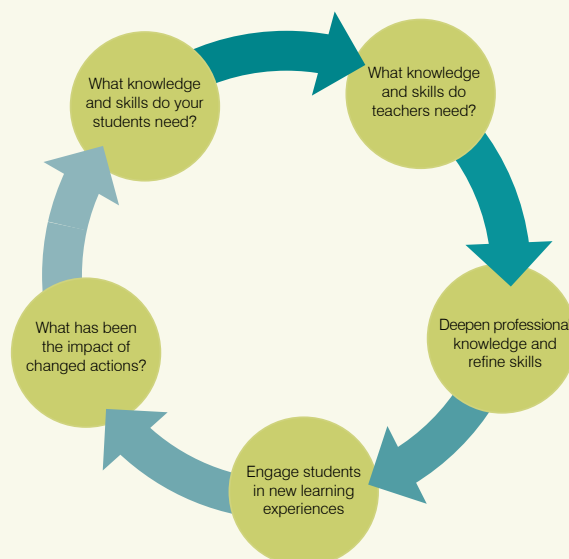
The whole truth of the matter is that effective teachers aren't born with "it." The "it" of an effective teacher is developed through the reflection process over a period of time (Monteiro 2013, para 5).

There are a variety of ways to reflect on your practice and many questions you can ask yourself about your practice.

To reflect on your practice, it is necessary to use an effective process, and have the correct mindset and guidance. According to Timperley et al. (2008), teachers must use a process of inquiry and systematic knowledge building to learn more effective teaching practices. Hattie and Timperley (2007) outline the following three questions that a learner must be able to answer to undertake effective formative assessment:

- ◆ Where am I going?
- ◆ How am I doing?
- ◆ Where to next?

A cycle of teacher inquiry and knowledge building to promote valued student outcomes is represented in the following diagram. You can use this to reflect on your practice, and as a framework for working through the content of this section.



Adapted from: Teacher professional learning and development by Helen Timperley (2008)

What does it mean to be a professional?

As a teacher you are a professional, just like doctors, lawyers, architects and so on, and you are also a member of a profession. So what does this actually mean?

According to Shulman (2004), professionals are those who are educated with and utilise bodies of knowledge to serve others. He describes professions as having “practice rooted in bodies of knowledge that are created, tested, elaborated, refuted, transformed, and reconstituted in colleges, universities, laboratories, libraries, and museums.” (Shulman 2004, p. 14). Importantly, Shulman recognises one of the challenges for members of a profession is “*learning from experience...[and] from contemplation of their own practice*” (p. 15).

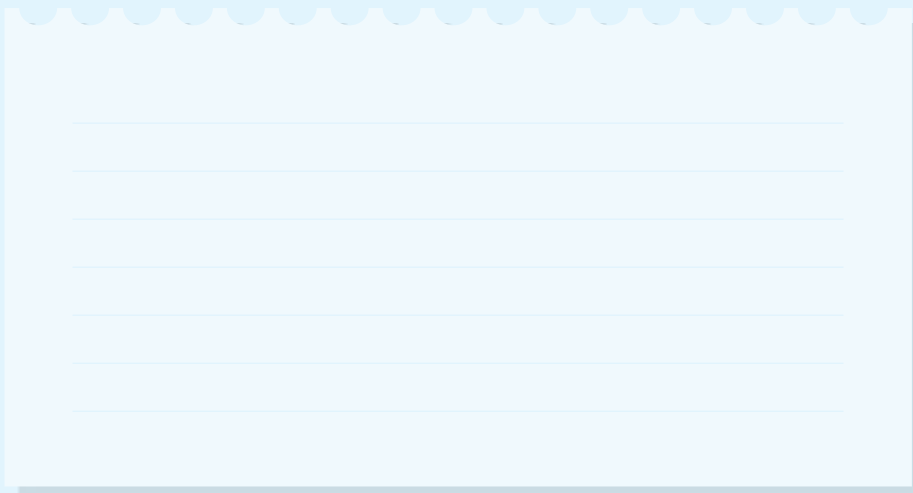
What this means for you, as a member of the teaching profession, is that it is your responsibility to share with colleagues, to learn from others, and to embrace lifelong learning. To increase your professional knowledge and enable yourself to grow as a professional, you must be able to continually reflect on your practice. Reflection is the key to growth, development and improving outcomes for your students. Developing a mindset around this should be a focus for you as a professional.

Over to you

Consider the following quotation:

We know from experience that there is not a widely shared view of what constitutes quality instruction – not among teachers, principals, or school district leaders. We think this poses a fundamental and challenging issue for educational leaders and policy makers. Without a shared understanding of what we mean by quality instruction, we have no basis from which to mount an improvement effort (Fink & Markholt 2011, p. 5).

- ◆ Do you agree with this statement? Why/why not?
- ◆ How do you define quality instruction?
- ◆ What evidence would you put forward to support your point of view?



What do I believe about learning?

The questions below are aimed at prompting your thinking about yourself as an educator, and what you believe about the ways young people learn. They encourage you to think about your teaching philosophy, teaching approach or teaching style, depending on which terminology you prefer, and what makes you the teacher that you are. The role of learning theories and how you structure the learning for your students are key elements within this process.

- ◆ Do you have a theory about how students learn?
- ◆ What is the relationship between learning theories and practice?
- ◆ What knowledge and skills do you need in order to impact upon student learning?
- ◆ What is the importance of prior knowledge in the learning process?
- ◆ What does your management of resources and design of the learning space reveal about how you think students learn best?

It is easy to fall into the same patterns and neglect to look at things from different perspectives. Your answers to the above questions may have you thinking and questioning what you do each day in your role as a teacher. These are just a few questions you may want to ask yourself and you will be able to think of many more.

What is my teaching philosophy?

Your teaching philosophy is possibly something you have not thought about since you trained to be a teacher. You might like to talk to your colleagues both in your school and beyond about what their teaching philosophies are, and you might also like to search the internet to see some examples. Remember that your teaching philosophy will grow and develop as you evolve as a practitioner and it should be grounded in pedagogical theory.

In thinking about and documenting your teaching philosophy you might like to use the following questions to frame your thinking:

- ◆ Why did you become a teacher?
- ◆ What makes you teach the way you do?
- ◆ How do the Standards influence your development as a teacher?
- ◆ What is the role of the teacher in the learning process?
- ◆ What is the role of the students in the learning process?
- ◆ What have been the most significant influences on your practice as a teacher?

Over to you

Review your teaching philosophy and the pedagogical theories in which it is grounded. What is the value in sharing and discussing your teaching philosophy and practice with colleagues?

Once documented you can use your teaching philosophy to help you reflect on your practice, develop applications for a new position or promotion, or as the basis for performance and development discussions. In what other ways might you draw on your teaching philosophy?



How do I reflect on my teaching?

You can also reflect on a particular lesson rather than focus on your whole role as a teacher. You can do this by yourself, or to enrich the reflection you may like to have a [coaching conversation](#) with a colleague. Some questions you might like to use for the reflection include:

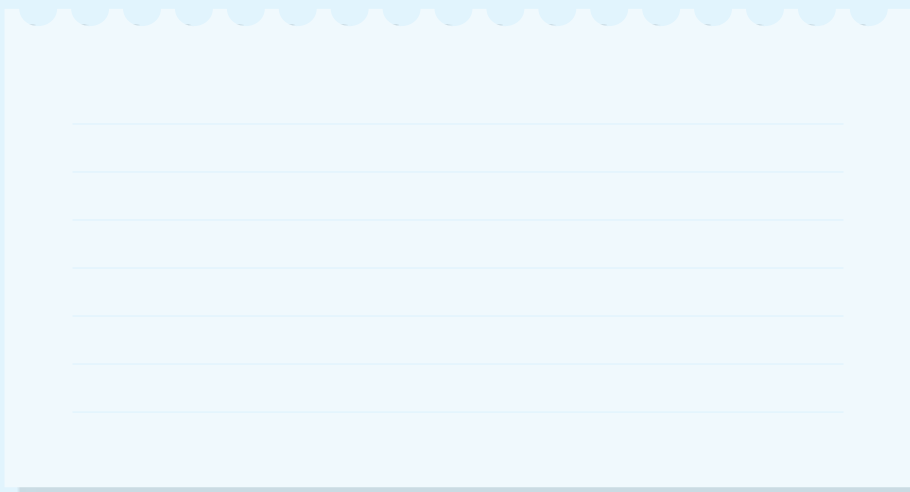
- ◆ How did you feel about this lesson?
- ◆ What were the strengths of this lesson?
- ◆ What strategies worked well with your students?
- ◆ How did your lesson meet the learning objectives?
- ◆ What did you observe about your students during this lesson?
- ◆ When were your students most engaged?

- ◆ How did your students react to the lesson and is it what you expected from them?
- ◆ What evidence do you have to show that the students learned?
- ◆ How did your method of assessment provide information about the level of student understanding?
- ◆ Which part of the lesson felt most challenging? For you? For the students?
- ◆ Did you do anything differently to what you had initially planned?
- ◆ What aspects of the lesson might you do differently next time?
- ◆ What could you do to enhance the lesson and maximise the learning of students?
- ◆ Is there anything specific about your teaching that you want to improve?
- ◆ Do you have a mentor/critical friend to support you as you continue with planning for instruction?
- ◆ Did you use student data to inform the lesson development?
- ◆ Do you gather feedback from your students during this lesson to inform future practice?

(adapted from Marzano Research Laboratory 2012)

Over to you

You may also think about how reflecting in this way enables you to learn about your teaching practice. What conclusions can you draw and how may this impact on your practice?



How do I reflect on other aspects of my role as a teacher?

A teacher's role involves much more than just spending time in a classroom. It also includes conversations with parents/guardians, taking on positions of responsibility, providing extra help for students, mentoring a colleague, and going to school camp, to name just a few. Think about the following questions in relation to your own practice:

- ◆ How often do you speak with parents/guardians? Would you like to speak with them more often? If so, how could you facilitate this?
- ◆ What is the focus of your conversations with parents/guardians? Is this a two-way conversation?
- ◆ How do you ensure that students receive the extra help that they need?
- ◆ What extracurricular activities are you involved in?
- ◆ How do you help to professionally develop your colleagues?
- ◆ Why do you help to professionally develop colleagues?

Undertaking a self-assessment can be very powerful. A free online [self-assessment tool](#) (SAT) based on the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers is available and this enables teachers at all career stages to reflect upon their practice.

All of the questions and suggestions so far are to encourage you to dig deeper about who you are as a teacher, critically reflect on your practice and make a conscious decision to be an active learner and really think about what it is that you do each and every day.

Why would you want to do this? Because the only way to improve is to make a concerted effort to do so. Reflection is the key to improvement, and your ongoing growth and development as a professional will depend on your ability to reflect on your practice. To assist you there are tools available, including through your employer and the [Teacher Toolkit](#).



Self-Assessment Tool

www.selfassessment.aitsl.edu.au

Who can help me improve and reflect on my practice?

Having reflected on your own teaching philosophy and practice in a variety of ways, establishing a critical friend and developing this relationship will enable you to gain further insight into your practice from a different perspective. A critical friend is someone who can be with you on the journey to help you develop and grow and continually improve your professional practice.

A critical friend is:

a trusted person who asks provocative questions, provides data to be examined through another lens, and offers critiques of a person's work as a friend. A critical friend takes the time to fully understand the context of the work presented and the outcomes that the person or group is working toward. The friend is an advocate for the success of that work (Costa & Kallick 1993 p. 50).

Put some thought into who could be a critical friend for you, remembering that you have access to a variety of networks, both within and external to your school. You may have multiple critical friends who can help you to improve different aspects of your practice. Some examples include: curriculum leader, principal, network member and colleague from another school. What is important is that you develop a mindset of reflection and you work to further yourself as a professional to improve your individual practice, the practice of others and that of the teaching profession.



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