



Submission to
the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review

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Please indicate your name if an individual, or your organisation name if you are responding on behalf of an organisation

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The Australian Council of State School Organisations is a peak community organisation and the
One voice for every child in public education

Do you wish your submission to be treated as confidential?

No

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF STATE SCHOOL ORGANISATIONS
SUBMISSION TO THE
QUALITY INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION REVIEW

The Australian Council of State School Organisations (ACSSO) is the one voice for every child in government education in Australia. As an organisation, ACSSO welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Quality Initial Teacher Education (ITE) Review.

ACSSO believes that all Australian governments, and the nation, should give the highest priority to the maintenance of an education system which gives importance to:

- a) equity of social, political, and economic opportunity for all Australians
- b) personal development and the fulfilment of the aspirations of individuals
- c) appreciation and acceptance of the values and viewpoints of others
- d) the development and survival of Australia as a nation both locally and globally, in terms of technology, security and environment
- e) proper participation in world citizenship
- f) the development of sustainable resources and practices for the benefit of Australia and other nations
- g) Australian participation in global understanding and the removal of national, religious, and racial intolerance and discrimination in all its possible forms and expressions.

To achieve this, ACSSO holds that the quality of education is closely related to the quality of teachers.

The selection of potential teachers, their training, further development and professional attitudes and standing are vital factors in the quality of school education.

Among the qualities to be looked for and developed in teachers are enthusiasm, imagination, acceptance, empathy, sensitivity and perceptiveness, and affinity with young people and an ongoing desire to pass on their learning to younger generations. Teachers need to be able to build and sustain positive relationships with their students, the families of their students, their colleagues, and the community in which they serve. Many of our more successful teachers come to their initial training with valuable prior learning and experiences.

ACSSO believes that education is a partnership between the home and school. Teaching is most successful when the teacher has the ability to ensure that the delivery of content is contextualised to bring relevance to the learner.

The contribution of teachers in developing a collaborative school community is a key aspect of effective schooling, and teachers should recognise that the school is an integral part of the community and must promote the active engagement of families.

Family engagement must be integrated within the pre-service training¹. Universities must develop in their students the purpose and value of sharing the funds of knowledge possessed by all parties to inform their practice and to cater for the individual needs of their students. A core unit within Initial

¹ Dr Debbie Pushor states that family engagement should identify roles, particularly the role of the parent as distinct from other family members. Australia is yet to define clearly, to this end ACSSO uses the term "Family engagement" assuming that the roles are clearly distinguishable

teacher education must be that of a family engagement strategy which must include the skills to develop effective relationships. Research has indicated that one of a beginning teacher's greatest fears is meeting with parents. The Family-School Community Partnerships Bureau² discovered, when delivering their Parent Engagement workshops to beginning teachers, that less than 1% of teachers had experienced any professional learning in relation to engaging with families in either their preservice or first years of teaching.³ When teachers feel comfortable communicating, they can gain insights into students' strengths, challenges, achievements, or concerns.

Teachers should be given the compacity to identify, understand and draw on community resources. They should be able to work cooperatively with families and other significant adults within organisations within the community, to enable them to improve the students' outcomes. *Freebody (Peter) and Freebody (Kelly)* (2001) developed a [Community Inquiry Framework](#)⁴, that assists beginning teachers or teachers new to a school to audit and understand the community they serve. As a component of the ITE practicum opportunities to practice and demonstrate these skills should be made available, and relevant feedback provided.

Teachers share a responsibility to develop the potential of students in all aspects of education and they should see their students as individuals and develop with them, relationships of mutual respect and dignity.

It is ACSSO's position that teachers should have acquired a high level of knowledge and skill, an ability to communicate effectively, an awareness of humanity and of the natural world, and an understanding of society and its workings.

ACSSO believes that it is the personal connection and relationship that teachers develop with students and their world, that will help raise their intrinsic motivation to learn. We know that when students feel interested and are engaged in their work, they will develop a love of learning that will benefit them for their entire lives.

Therefore, the conditions of teaching must be such that it enables them to foster and promote professional attitudes, responsibilities, and status in the teaching service.

ACSSO supports the requirements of teacher registration that mandates ongoing professional learning. We believe professional learning should support teacher growth and be relevant to the needs of the individual teacher. ACSSO believes that the additional support for neophyte teachers in the form of mentorship and targeted professional learning is essential.

It is ACSSO's position that all pre-service programs of teacher education should require graduates to be well prepared in the following (in no particular order) areas:

- a) Engaging with families
- b) Trauma informed practice (outstanding content is being delivered at the University of Tasmania by Elspeth Stephenson to Initial Teacher Education program)
- c) Understanding of brain development
- d) Ability to adjust and adapt content to allow accessibility for all students.

² Family-School Community Partnerships Bureau was a Commonwealth funded project lead by Australian Council of State School Organisations and partnered with Australian Parents Council. The project produced a number of resources and research articles including the Family School Partnership Framework

³ Further resources, articles, documents, and video clips can be found at the end of this submission

⁴ Community Inquiry Framework <https://www.cese.nsw.gov.au/evaluation-repository-search/teachers-researching-communities-final-report>

- e) Pedagogical practice (nature of children and adolescents and their development; learning, teaching and evaluation processes; social, cultural, institutional, and political context of education; language and arts)
- f) human relationships knowledge (awareness of self; counselling; interpersonal and group skills)
- g) teaching practice
- h) knowledge of relevant curriculum trends
- i) processes for development of school-based curriculum
- j) In respect of teaching subject learning:
 - i. teachers of Year 11 and 12 students must have academic qualifications to at least second year tertiary level in subjects relevant to the curriculum areas in which they are teaching and must have taken one of their subjects at third year tertiary level
 - ii. teachers of middle years students must have academic qualifications to at least first year tertiary level in subjects relevant to the curriculum areas in which they are teaching
 - iii. all primary teachers should have the capacity to teach effectively in all areas of the curriculum as well as any specialist areas in which they may have qualifications.

We know that knowledge is changing and evolving. Teachers must be prepared to not always be the 'fount of knowledge' but the facilitators of learning, enquiry, critical thinking, and creativity.

In respect of teaching practice, we would recommend:

- a) pre-service teachers should have the opportunity (as a minimum) to be placed in schools for periods of at least six months per year under the direct supervision of an experienced teacher, based on the 'internship model'
- b) the role and functions of supervising teachers (school-based teacher educators) should be recognised as one requiring different knowledge and skills additional to those of classroom teacher
- c) federal funding should be provided specifically for additional professional learning, to permit current supervising teachers to develop and upgrade their knowledge and skills in that role. This professional learning should be recognised with an appropriate micro-credential.

The most effective teachers set no limits on students and believe everyone can be successful

unknown

ACSSO believes that improvement in the status and conditions of the teaching profession will result in the appropriate students being attracted to teacher education courses.

In respect of entry to pre-service teacher education courses, candidates should be counselled at point of entry, so that they develop an understanding of their own aptitude for teaching.

ACSSO believes that the ATAR should not define entry to teaching. Universities should develop entry requirements that also include identification of personal aptitude, recognise, particularly in the case of mature entries, prior knowledge and experiences and should also consider the learning needs of the candidate. Universities need to consider, as a priority, a more inclusive set of criteria and practice to ensure that candidates are suitably matched to the profession.

ACSSO believes that effective teachers can be seen, heard, and sensed. They engage in dialogue with students, colleagues, and parents, and consistently demonstrates respect, accessibility, and expertise.

The task of the excellent teacher is to stimulate 'apparently ordinary' people to unusual effort. The tough problem is not in identifying winners: it is in making winners out of ordinary people

K PATRICIA CROSS

ATTRACTING HIGH-QUALITY CANDIDATES INTO ITE

The preparation, recruitment, and retention of teachers is interrelated, but it is ACSSO's position that there is no policy framework in Australia that links them together in a consistent fashion that is correlated to national and state/territory educational goals and standards.

Although the challenges of implementing a policy framework that links teacher preparation, teacher recruitment, and teacher retention are great, ACSSO believes these challenges must be met.

Recruiting quality people into the teaching profession is a problem due primarily to the low status of teaching in Australia and the lack of appeal, found in the profession. Those currently in the profession have added to this issue. Too many teachers are currently in the media, social media, and other avenues espousing about being over worked, under paid, undervalued, and subject to violence. The marketing of the profession itself, by itself, is nothing less than a self-fulfilling prophecy

The teaching profession in Australia must compete with the companies that have sophisticated human capital systems, designed to support their employees. As a result, ITE faces obstacles to recruiting and retaining committed and diverse talent.

A major factor in continuing education for many young people is the cost. Students who fund themselves through university not only find the funding of much needed resources an issue but also the work/school/life balance a struggle, even if they still live at home with their parents.

This can be compounded for single parents, those who wish to advance to careers, like teaching, which provide greater income, the more flexible working environment with chance for advancement. Without additional family support for childcare, money, or housing this also can become stressful and often unreachable.

For career changers, (people already in the workforce are highly valued for the additional experiences they add to the classroom content), how do they change careers and keep financially afloat? We value the life and work experiences they bring but for many it requires full time study for up to four years. This is a significant loss of income coupled with a HECs debt, and if they choose part time it also adds to the pressure of work, family and study balance. ACSSO believes that institutions should review their criteria for entry along with adopting a fairer policy that allows advanced standing and recognised prior learning for their work, particularly if it has relevance for the subject area they will be teaching in.

Case example: ACSSO learned of a mature age male who had managed a laboratory for in excess of 25 years who still was required to complete a Bachelor of Science and Bachelor of Teaching with no advanced standing. The person possessed a Biological Technician Certificate, had worked in Veterinary Vaccines and was a Reptile Curator at a Wildlife Park prior to spending 25 years managing a NATA registered Materials Research Laboratory leading mix design for roads and asphalt on projects such as the Sydney Harbour Tunnel and the Hong Kong Airport. This person commenced

teacher training at the age of 44yrs and began teaching at 48years. Despite the fact that he received a scholarship for three of the four years of study, he would not “break even” (that is recoup lost salary and pay back HECs debt) until the age of 62.

It is also evident that promotion is rare amongst individuals who are older. Whilst not openly stated, education often favours younger classroom teachers.

ACSSO has anecdotal evidence that suggests that teachers to whom teaching was not their first career bring to the classroom firsthand experiences from their specialty subject that makes learning contextual. Their “field knowledge” adds reality to the narrative of the subject area.

Although enough teachers graduate from ITE programmes each year, teacher shortages exist in part because graduates either do not enter teaching, or a significant number of those who do enter leave within three to five years. The support for beginning teachers should be seen as an extension of their pre-service training, and resourcing needs to be enhanced in this area.

Temporary contracts and the casualisation of the workforce have led to a considerable number of qualified teachers exiting the teaching profession.

To overcome this shortage, as well as to address the issue of bringing greater diversity and quality into the teaching profession, ACSSO believes that a variety of strategies need to be employed.

Some of the challenges in developing these strategies ACSSO believes include:

- Aligning teacher preparation with the needs of diverse learners, content standards, and contemporary classrooms
- Ensuring that all new teachers participate in quality induction and mentoring programmes
- Addressing working conditions so that schools become learning communities for both educators and students
- Designing incentives for increasing the diversity of the teaching force and for teaching in critical shortage areas.
- Ensuring, in this unpredictable world, that new teachers are equipped with the skills for different modes of delivery e.g., online learning
- Development of incentives to recognise and reward classroom teachers who take on additional responsibilities beyond that of their colleagues.

When looking at the diversity of the teaching workforce there would be no greater recruitment strategy for Indigenous ITE students than to have young Indigenous school children being taught by Indigenous teachers.

*Education is not the learning of facts,
but the training of the mind to think*

Albert Einstein

ACSSO acknowledges that the under-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the teaching profession has been the subject of many discussions. ACSSO believes that Indigenous teachers (and schools with Indigenous students) have the opportunity to provide transformative change, not just in the Indigenous students, but in the entire student population and their families. The ripple effect will eventually reach out into the community and beyond.

Tackling the recruitment of Indigenous ITE students we need to recognise that many Indigenous students are still suffering from the intergenerational impact of an education system that did not address their educational needs. Educators should all be aware that the home life of Indigenous students can be (as it can with all students) very different from that of students from more mainstream families. The worldviews, home language, protocols, and life experiences of Indigenous (or any) students – even of the very youngest – are not left at the door when they enter the school.

Similarly, this can be said for students who learn differently – the entry requirements and university delivery of the pre-service course is not adapted to be inclusive for those who do not learn in accepted mainstream mode.

We are aware that completion rates are falling, University of Sydney identifies it as low academic ability of students. Whilst ACSSO believes that the ATAR should not define academic ability, what other measures are in place to define suitability and more importantly, what are the attitudes and resourcing of universities to support students who are finding university a challenge. Do they actually practise what they teach? What adjustments and adaptations are implemented to allow students of differing learning abilities and styles to access the course?

The review states that teacher candidates are selected into ITE (academically and non-academically) and assessed on their classroom readiness through standardised assessments. This becomes problematic as historically marginalise students traditionally score lower on these tests and standardised measures oversimplify what quality looks like in diverse contexts. This limits the potential of attracting a diversity of teachers that reflect the diversity in our Australian classrooms.

When addressing the recruitment of ITE students, it is acknowledged that the higher education market is full of talent and recruitment strategies need to be targeted and strengthened to ensure that ITE captures the market. Teacher recruitment needs to be a strong, well-planned and effective strategy that can help it stand out from the competition. ACSSO believes that the niche for attracting the best talent to teaching is in creating a (supported) reputation that teaching is somewhere candidates want to devote their lives. It is important to assure the aspirant teachers of long-term career growth in a profession that is valued by the Australian community.

PREPARING ITE STUDENTS TO BE EFFECTIVE TEACHERS

Effective teaching is an issue of national concern, but in recent years, focus on the effectiveness of programs to produce high-quality teachers has sharpened. However, what has been undertaken has proven to be ineffective and, in some instances, has been a catalyst for teachers to leave the profession. Anecdotally ACSSO understands that the administration required, and subject offerings have created additional burdens but limited change to teaching practice. ACSSO believes that there needs to be revision around the administrative requirements to both encourage teachers to participate and alleviate the administrative trivia currently linked to participation.

ACSSO acknowledges and continues to support the work of AITSL. The standards for teaching have provided a useful tool for the support of teachers in their registration and ongoing professional learning. As stated previously we do feel that the administrative requirements surrounding their registration and professional learning are onerous but would recommend some reduction or simplification of the processes.

ACSSO believes that often some of the key standards are overlooked or the requirements are minimal. We feel that many could be strengthened, in particular we refer to standards (3.7 and 7.3) concerning engagement with community and families.

Ensuring the quality and success of teacher education programs requires comprehensive assessment tools. It is ACSSO's understanding that the three most commonly employed data sources for evaluating teacher preparation programs include:

- Teaching observations (by supervisor and peers).
- Satisfaction surveys from graduates, employers, parents, and F-12 pupils in the teachers' classrooms.

- Pupil growth both on standardised tests and in self-worth and confidence.

ACSSO supports the notion of a national registration for all teachers. Currently teachers are required to be registered by their jurisdiction's institute and the requirements vary. We believe this not only assists the teacher if moving between jurisdictions but adds a level of consistency to quality and expectations.

A question ACSSO has is, how do we prepare ITE students to be effective teachers when it would appear that researchers, policymakers, and administrators cannot agree on the traits that encompass what the system has come to deem an "effective" teacher?

The transformative power of a successful teacher is something almost all of us have experienced and understand on a personal level. Some of us were particularly fortunate, and we had numerous outstanding teachers who made school an exciting and interesting place. We recognise those teachers as having possessed a passion for the subjects that they taught and genuine care for the students with whom they worked. They inspired us to play with ideas, think deeply about the subject matter, take on more challenging work, and even pursue careers in a particular field of study.

Regrettably, the failure of the Australian education system to meet national expectations, as well as the failure of school reform efforts to alter this picture, has increasingly turned the focus of school improvement to teachers. ACSSO recognises the important role that teachers play in student achievement. Given the vital position of teachers in student success, the question becomes, are teacher preparation programs doing their part to produce teachers that are successful in the classroom?

If we want to provide teachers with the skills that offer the best chance for success in the classroom, ACSSO is convinced that you must start with the premise that the skills we teach should derive from the best available evidence on what works. The newly formed evidence institute, Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) will be a valuable resource for beginning teachers. Its aim is to help improve teacher confidence in the classroom.

It is ACSSO's position that highly developed interpersonal skills, effective communication skills, enthusiasm and knowledge of content, pedagogical knowledge, and the willingness to use a range of teaching strategies skilfully, characterise more successful teachers.

ACSSO believes the following are some of the key qualities of effective teachers:

- Are caring, fair, respectful and empathetic
- Hold high expectations for themselves and their students
- Dedicate extra time to instructional preparation and reflection
- Maximize instructional time via effective and engaging classroom management and organisation
- Enhance instruction by varying instructional strategies, activities, and assignments
- Present content to students in a meaningful, connected, and relevant way that fosters understanding
- Monitor students' learning by utilizing pre- and post-assessments (utilising a variety of modes), providing timely and informative feedback, and revisiting material to students who did not achieve mastery
- Demonstrate effectiveness with the full range of student abilities in their classrooms, regardless of the academic diversity of the students.

Any teacher whose name can be remembered ten or twenty or fifty years later with appreciation could be described as both memorable and effective, but it is difficult to define these traits.

So why does the quality of ITE matter? Because regardless of how well a program is designed, it is only as effective as the people who implement it.

ACSSO believes that the best teachers have real world experience, training is not enough on its own. Parents have experienced the difference in the perceptions of someone who has always been in education and never known anything else as their primary driving force, compared to someone who left formal education at the end of their own studies and then came back to it to share their experiences teach others. The saying “went to school, left school went to university then went back to school” has a degree of reality in many of our teachers.

A programme that demonstrated some success previously, was the *Teacher Release to Industry Programme*. As a professional development programme, it could be revisited to ensure that university teacher educators and indeed all teachers are required to experience “real world” conditions (in classrooms and industry) at least once every ten years, to link education and industry. ACSSO believes this is especially significant as it focusses the participant on real world professional development, enhances the value of interdisciplinary perspectives and helps maintain a work-life balance.

Teach for Australia is another program that has enjoyed some success – with a focus on supporting the teacher through a paid traineeship. Some evaluation and refinement of that program to include key areas of effective teaching would further support teacher shortages.

The [Innovative Initial Teacher Education \(Innovative ITE\)](#) in Victoria allows people with a bachelor’s degree who would like to change careers access to accelerated study options. The ITE students in the programme receive a salary or scholarship while studying.

If ITE effectiveness is important, (as parents, we believe that it is critical) and if personnel are necessary for effective ITE, then a conceptually sound and properly implemented evaluation system for ITE education personnel is also essential.

We all fail at times, but Universities in Australia should be doing more to help ITE students in practical ways to get back on track or to choose an alternative path. The Australian government, through the Higher Education Standards Framework, should encourage and support this.

A great teacher makes learning enjoyable and relevant with engaging lessons that are pivotal to a student’s academic success. Some students who face other challenges may communicate that through misbehaviour, truancy, or disengagement – these students depend on an engaging and empathic teacher. The teacher who makes their classroom an exciting environment for learning will hold the students’ attention, and students learn best when they are challenged, engaged, and interested. It is part of motivating students, which may not be easy, but which can benefit students immeasurably in the long run.

*The students who challenge their teachers the most,
need their teachers the most*

Unknown

FURTHER RESOURCES TO ENHANCE ITE

- ACSSO is currently working with *Together for Humanity* to produce an online course for beginning teachers on *Family Engagement Practices*. This course comprises six (6) one-hour modules. It will also include a pre-course and post-course survey to enable the beginning teacher to examine their understanding and progress.
- ACSSO has produced a resource *Family Engagement Circle* which has been identified as a suitable resource for lead teachers to walk staff through. It is an interactive PDF that can be worked through on its own or as a face to face workshop that is linked to <http://www.familyengagementcircle.org.au/>. This particular resource was presented by ACSSO personnel at the Family Engagement Conference in Cleveland, Ohio in 2018 and referred to regularly by Professor Karen Mapp from Harvard University in her presentations
- ACSSO has on its website a series of tools and resources with support for Family Engagement that can be found [here](#) and also [here](#)
- Our member organisation Parents Victoria also has produced a number of fantastic short videos featuring Dr Debbie Pushor from the University of Saskatchewan

[Insight for Teacher Educators - Beliefs and Assumptions](#)

[Insight for Teacher Educators - Development of a Curriculum of Parents](#)

[Insight for Teacher Educators - Parent Engagement in Teacher Education Programs](#)

- Parents Victoria has also produced this fantastic resource with regard to Relationship-based education (RbE) <https://www.parentsvictoria.asn.au/online-library1/conference-presentations/conference-2019/295-relationship-based-education/file> and is currently working on a platform with practical tools, tips and resources
- Many teacher education programs at universities across the country engage in a short presentation by the jurisdiction's state parent organisation to students in their final year. As an organisation we will always welcome the opportunity for this to occur, but we would like to make it clear that it is not a satisfactory replacement for an integrated unit or set of units on Family/Parent Engagement
- Parents Australia is a subsidiary of ACSSO that has an extremely valuable set of resources and videos <http://www.parentsaustralia.com/index.php/family-engagement>