

# ACER Portfolio Project

**TEACHING FIELD: Primary**  
**LEVEL: Highly Accomplished**

## **ENTRY 4: Building professional community**

The ACER Portfolio Project focuses on the research and practical challenges involved in developing valid and feasible methods by which teachers can demonstrate how they meet the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers at the highly accomplished level. Entry 4 is one of four portfolio entries for primary teachers.

## **ENTRY 4: Engaging colleagues in a project to improve teaching and learning in your school**

Highly accomplished primary school teachers are knowledgeable and skilled classroom practitioners. They have a deep knowledge and understanding of students and the range of factors that can affect their learning. They also have a deep understanding of curriculum related to the context of their teaching; and they effectively draw on their extensive pedagogical content knowledge to facilitate learning. They know that the learning environment and the availability of resources, including access to professional learning, affect the quality of teaching and the progress of their students.

Highly accomplished teachers are leaders in their professional communities. They maintain high ethical standards and support colleagues to use principled judgement in all school and community contexts. They are problem-solvers and team builders who work with colleagues purposefully and collaboratively to build the educational capacity of their school. They plan for professional learning by accessing and critiquing relevant research, and they are innovative and creative in their thinking, in their use of resources and in the way they engage with their colleagues, students and the wider school community. They understand the fundamental importance of reliable evidence from multiple sources to inform decisions and actions.

Highly accomplished teachers understand the internal and external challenges and factors that affect the provision of high quality education and are strategic in response. They initiate discussions and mobilize colleagues to implement programs and projects that are directed towards improving the quality of teaching and learning in their schools and /or school clusters. They are able to evaluate gains in their own and colleagues' professional learning resulting from such activities and are able to identify intervention strategies that might be necessary to sustain, or continue to build, capacity. they are mentors and agents of change.

Highly accomplished teachers make strong and responsive connections, virtual and real, with professional networks and associations; they build productive links with the wider community to raise awareness and develop relationships that help to improve education outcomes for themselves and their students. They communicate effectively and respectfully with colleagues and others, share resources and ideas, and invite critique and discussion of their own practice. They are adept at aligning professional teaching standards, curriculum requirements, the attitudes of students and their progress to identify the professional learning needs of themselves and their colleagues.

## Overview

Highly accomplished teachers regularly contribute to their professional community and significantly improve the quality of teaching and learning in their school. This portfolio task invites you to initiate and manage a project designed to improve teaching practice and learning opportunities for students in your school or cluster of schools. In your entry you will report on the planning and progress of your initiative. You will describe how you engaged and led colleagues in collaborative activities that contributed to their professional growth and led to significant improvement in learning opportunities and/or outcomes for students. You will also show what you learned about yourself as a teacher leader.

To complete the entry you need not occupy a formal leadership position in your school (although you may well be in such a position and are not excluded from completing this entry on that score).

The guidelines below will help you to show how under your guidance and leadership, teachers in your school or cluster of schools, under your leadership, collaborated in an initiative to improve student learning or student welfare. Your project might be in a particular curriculum area like mathematics, or it might have a cross-curricular focus such as developing literacy across the curriculum, or it could be in an area related to student welfare.

It is expected that your project<sup>1</sup> will run over *at least* one semester (preferably, a whole year or more); time enough to show evidence of implementation and impact on practice. You will need to undertake and document the required portfolio activities *as you are engaged in the project*. Your documentation of these activities will provide evidence to support your certification in the relevant areas of the Highly Accomplished level of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.

**Summary of requirements** (Specific details for each requirement are provided in Part 3).

Your portfolio will include:

1. **Contextual information** about your school or school cluster. (1 page)
2. A written description of your project that shows how you:
  - 2.1 Identified the need for the project (2 pages)
  - 2.2 Planned for the changes (2 pages)
  - 2.3 Implemented the change strategies (2 pages)
  - 2.4 Reported and reflected on outcomes (2 pages)

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<sup>1</sup> 'Project' or 'initiative' should be interpreted broadly as any identifiable effort over time to improve professional practices and student learning opportunities and/or student learning outcomes

3. **Artefacts** (e.g. planning documents, meeting notes), that provide supporting evidence of (a) your effective engagement and leadership of the project and (b) the progress and impact of the project.
4. **A video recording** (Max. 10 minutes) that illustrates how you have engaged and led a group of teachers in a project to improve teaching and learning in your school or school cluster.

### How is the entry designed and why?

This entry is designed to offer you the opportunity to show how you address standards at the highly accomplished level of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, particularly Standards 6 and 7. As well as demonstrating your knowledge and proficiency in the areas covered by these standards, you will have the chance to show your command of the Australian Curriculum, and your capacity for teacher leadership.

The Design Framework for this portfolio entry task has three components:

1. The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers;
2. The Australian Curriculum;
3. Research into teacher leadership and collaborative work. (*links*).

### Australian Professional Standards (APST) Relevant to Entry 5

In this entry you will provide evidence in relation to the following standards in the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers at the highly accomplished level.

Standard 1: Know students and how they learn

Standard 2: Know the content and how to teach it

Standard 3: Plan for and implement effective teaching and learning

Standard 4: Create and maintain supportive and safe learning environments

Standard 5: Assess, provide feedback and report on student learning

**Standard 6: Engage in professional learning**

**Standard 7: Engage professionally with colleagues, parents/carers and the community**

The focus of this portfolio task is on standards 6 and 7, but your entry may also provide evidence in relation to standards 1-5. For example, if your project is about engaging colleagues in developing new ways to assess students' learning, Standard 5 will be a focus. Or, if you choose to lead colleagues in a project that involves developing new teaching skills, Standard 3 will be a focus. (*link*).

### Australian Curriculum Standards relevant to Entry 5

If you choose to lead and manage a project in a particular curriculum area, you will demonstrate deep understanding of the curriculum in that area at the

appropriate level(s). Your entry will also show deep understanding of the 'General Capabilities' in the Australian curriculum. (*link*).

### **Research into collegiate leadership exercised by teachers**

There is extensive research on teacher leadership. For this entry you are asked to make reference to research that has helped you to understand how teachers can successfully engage and lead colleagues in projects that are designed to build teachers' capacity and improve students' learning or welfare. You will select and describe a small number (e.g. 2-4) of research studies that have informed and influenced your approach to engaging and leading colleagues in your project. (*links*).

## **Guidelines for preparing your Portfolio Entry**

In this portfolio entry you will tell the story of how you initiated and managed a collaborative project to improve some aspect of teaching and learning or student welfare in your school or school cluster. Readers of the entry will be looking for clear and convincing evidence of your engagement with and leadership of colleagues in initiating and implementing a project that met an important need, and led to improved professional practices that improved learning opportunities for students. You should ensure that your project description does not make it possible for judges to identify your school or any of its members.

Your entry should be no more than ten pages long (single spacing, 12 point font). Artefacts (no more than 5 pages or equivalent) should be attached.

### **What needs to be provided in the entry?**

#### **1. School context**

Provide an *outline* of the characteristics of your school and the wider community that gives an overall context for your entry.

- 1.1 Type of school, its location (rural/remote/urban), jurisdiction; year levels (primary, secondary, F-12); single/multi-campus, co-ed/single sex boys/girls [*use drop-down boxes*]
- 1.2 Total school enrolment, number and size of classes
- 1.3 Mandated curriculum requirements.
- 1.4 Demographic composition and characteristics of the school and wider community, for example: cultural, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds, diversity of language, integration of students with disabilities.

#### **2. A description of how you engaged and led colleagues in the project**

## 2.1 Identifying the need

- **What need did your project aim to address?**

Provide a brief, introductory overview of your project, identifying the area in which you and a small group of your colleagues decided to initiate and implement it, and the students whom it was intended to benefit. The APST at the Highly Accomplished level provide examples of areas where initiatives may be undertaken. Data about current levels of student performance or welfare or behaviour may be useful in identifying the need or the purpose of your initiative. Evidence about current school programs and teaching practices may also help you in identifying an area where collaborative action is needed. (Summaries of data of evidence used in identifying the need should be attached.)

- **What did your analysis of the effectiveness of current programs and practices or student performance show?**

Provide a brief summary of relevant information and data as a justification for your project, based on a collaborative analysis of aspects like current level/s of student performance or participation, and/or current teaching practices in relation to teaching standards.

## 2.2 Planning for change

In this section you will describe the plan for your project, including a rationale for your strategy and explanation of how it would make a significant difference for the defined group of students. Ensure that you cite the relevant research that you drew upon. [Documents/artefacts produced in the course of the project (e.g. project plan, meeting notes, extracts from a diary, correspondence) that provide supporting evidence of your leadership, as well as implementation and monitoring of the project, should be attached to this section]

- What were the goals and targets for your project, including key milestones?
- Outline how your project plan was integrated with existing school policies and practices.
- What were the actions and steps you took to support implementation of the change?

Describe how you made provision for managing the change process effectively, including creating a shared purpose, creating and sharing knowledge, inviting and receiving feedback and building supportive relationships, shared leadership and professional learning opportunities among people involved in implementing the project.

- How did you ensure that members of the project group were actively involved, e.g. by planning to delegate certain tasks?

- What research did you use in developing your plan?

Summarise two or three examples of research, including research on teacher leadership, that you found useful in developing your plan. Describe how the research supported your strategy to address the identified need.

- What steps did you include in your plan for monitoring the project and evaluating the success of the change effort?

Describe the assessment tools and data collection methods you chose for monitoring the progress of your initiative and its effects on staff collaboration, teaching practices and student opportunities to learn.

### **2.3 Implementation (no more than two A4 pages)**

In this section you will describe how your leadership and management actions facilitated the implementation of your project. Please address the following:

- How did your project work out?

What happened? Describe briefly the main events that occurred during the implementation of your project.

- What factors helped or hindered the implementation of the project?

Make reference, for example, to actions or events that affected the quality of collaboration and joint work that took place among your colleagues over the course of the project and the extent to which your plan was implemented.

- How did you respond to these factors as they arose?  
Describe the leadership, organisational, professional learning and pedagogical capacities you developed and drew upon to support the progress of the project. Mention any findings that emerged from the monitoring of the project's progress that led you to amend your plan.

- How did you foster the creation and exchange of knowledge to support the implementation of the change effort?

Describe ways in which your project promoted the development of a professional learning community among your colleagues. Mention any steps you took to promote awareness of relevant research, to share their expertise, or to document the knowledge that participants were creating from their own experiences in the project.

### **2.4 Reporting and reflecting on outcomes**

In this section you will provide evidence, based on an analysis of information and data you have collected over the course of the project that the change effort under your leadership led to improved professional practices and improved learning opportunities for students. You will also briefly describe how you communicated your findings and experiences to

colleagues and other members of the school community. Please address the following:

- *What evidence do you have that your project has led to, or is likely to lead to improved professional practices among your colleagues and/or improved learning opportunities or outcomes for students?*
- Reflect on the impact of the project, identifying the ideas and actions that proved to be most effective in achieving success, and any unexpected outcomes. Support your reflections with relevant evidence and an analysis of its significance.
- *Reflect on what you would recommend to sustain and extend the change effort you led.*
- *Provide a brief account of how you reported the findings and outcomes of your project to teachers, parents and carers and other members of the school or cluster community (a) during the course of the project (b) at the conclusion of the project? Include any relevant feedback and how it was acted on.*

### **3. Artefacts (maximum 5 pages)**

Artefacts provide evidence of your accomplishment in the form of authentic documents/materials. Examples may include: extracts from project planning documents; data summaries; extracts from a diary written during the course of the project; meeting notes, correspondence.

### **4. Video clip of a meeting taken at any point in the project's implementation (maximum ten minutes)**

The video will provide evidence of your skills in leading a group discussion. Viewers will be looking for evidence that you:

- Have a clear agenda for the meeting and move it forward effectively
- Include all members in the discussion and value their contributions
- Establish a friendly yet efficient group dynamic in which all group members show respect for each other's views
- Effectively respond to any problems or difficulties
- Arrive at, or move towards a positive conclusion

## Summary of evidence requirements

Components of portfolio entry	Summary description	Limits
1 School context.	Provides contextual information about your school or school cluster.	1 page
<b>2. Description of the project including:</b> <b>2.1 Identification of the need for the project.</b>	Brief introductory overview of the project that states how and why the need was identified and includes a summary and analysis of relevant information and data.	2 pages
<b>2.2 Planning for change</b>	Description of rationale, goals, relevant research, actions and steps for implementation including plans for monitoring progress and steps taken to ensure involvement by all members of project team. Include supporting evidence of your involvement and leadership in the form of artefacts (e.g. planning documents, meeting notes, diary extract).	2pages
<b>2.3 Implementation of change strategies</b>	Description of how the project worked out, including your thoughts on how you promoted the development of professional community and learning among your colleagues.  Include supporting evidence in the form of a 15 minute video clip of a meeting of the project team taken at any stage during the implementation of the project. The clip will exemplify how you have engaged and led colleagues to strengthen professional community and meet project aims.	3 pages
<i>2.4 Reflecting and reporting on outcomes</i>	Your reflections on outcomes of the project identifying your actions that proved to be most effective in (a) strengthening professional learning and community among your colleagues and (b) achieving the aims of the project.	2 pages
3. Artefacts	Documents/material used in the planning and implementation of the project	10 pages
4.Video recording	Video clip of a meeting of the project group that provides evidence of your leadership skills	10 minutes

Note: Total page length of the written commentary should not exceed 12 pages. When completed, each of the components will be uploaded to a website. Guidelines for uploading will be provided later.

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### How will my entry be assessed?

Assessors will be looking for clear and convincing evidence that you have initiated and managed a project that strengthened professional community activity in your school or cluster and significantly improved learning opportunities and/or outcomes for students. Assessors will be looking for a coherent description of the project with clear links between its four stages. You will need to demonstrate close analysis of the need or problem your initiative aimed to address and how this informed your conceptualisation and practical development of the project. This will lead to a description of how the project was implemented and monitored, together with insightful interpretation of and reflection on its outcomes.

Assessors will be looking primarily for evidence that (a) you have increased the level and quality of professional community activity, and (b) that a significant improvement in professional practices and student learning opportunities and/or student learning outcomes in your school has eventuated from your project.

Further details about the assessment process can be found the Evaluation Guide for Portfolio Entry 4. ([Link](#))