National standards

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) is now calling for feedback from the profession on its draft national teaching standards. The standards specify the proficiency, skills and knowledge expected of graduate, proficient, highly accomplished and lead teachers in terms of professional knowledge, professional practice and professional engagement.

It’s likely the graduate and proficient levels will be tied to existing teacher registration or accreditation, which remains a state or territory responsibility, with the highly accomplished and lead teacher levels to be open to all teachers.

According to the AITSL draft document, the set of standards ‘provides a structure within which professional associations can align their descriptions of teaching practice. It is expected that existing teaching standards, as well as future work in this area, will complement the capabilities described in (the AITSL)...standards.’

The Council of Australian Governments national partnership agreement on improving teacher quality includes the creation of nationally consistent teacher registration and certification of accomplished and lead teachers, as well a national system for the accreditation of pre-service teacher education courses. Public consultation on the draft standards closes on 21 May.

LINKS:
www.atra.edu.au or www.mceecdya.edu.au

Schools funding review

JULIA GILLARD HAS PROMISED A TRANSPARENT AND DATA-DRIVEN REVIEW OF SCHOOLS FUNDING, AND SHOWN AT THE SAME TIME JUST WHAT A SHREWD POLITICAL PLAYER SHE IS. STEVE HOLDEN REPORTS.

The whisper has been around for some time, and Commonwealth Minister for Education Julia Gillard finally made it clear: her school funding review would rely heavily on data published on the My School website that includes results gathered through National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), information on student intake and school location, and as the minister added, information soon to be added on school income.

‘Later this year when the My School website is updated with the results of the 2010 NAPLAN assessments, you will see a breakdown of each school’s income and the sources of that income,’ she said. ‘Through the My School website we have for the first time developed a national index of socio-educational advantage for every school in the country that allows us to compare apples with apples when we are talking about education,’ Gillard said in a speech at the Sydney Institute last month. ‘What is truly important about this data is that it allows us, as a community, to debate what schools need in a way that is fully informed by the facts and the evidence.’

Gillard guaranteed that no school would be worse off as a result of the review. ‘This is not about taking money away from schools,’ she said. ‘No school will lose a dollar of funding – in the sense that their school budget per student will not reduce in dollar terms.’

She also committed to announcing any school new funding arrangements in 2011, before the beginning of the next funding agreement for the quadrennium 2013-16.

In a neat move, the minister also pledged to ‘confront vested interests,’ saying she expected the Commonwealth Opposition to ‘start an irresponsible, untruthful fear campaign trying to scare schools by saying they will lose money.’ She didn’t refer directly to another ‘interest,’ despite the decision by the Federal Executive of the Australian Education Union (AEU) last month to impose an immediate moratorium on administering NAPLAN tests, but it’s a good bet that her use of My School to underpin her school funding review will render the AEU’s position untenable.

‘Public education advocates believe that because the system uses the average costs of public education as its base, every win for public education flows to non-government schools and public education can never make up ground,’ she observed. If ‘public education advocates,’ whoever they may be, want a win out of the forthcoming review, they may have to accept My School first.

That’s shrewd.

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Produced by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), 2010
Good sorts for sports

QUEENSLAND’S CURRENT AND FORMER STATE OF ORIGIN CHAMPIONS ARE HELPING INDIGENOUS STUDENTS TO SUCCEED IN SPORT AND SCHOOL.

Current and former Queensland State of Origin legends are showing Indigenous students that the passion and determination they display in their sport can be used to improve results in school through a not-for-profit organisation called Former Origin Greats (FOGs). The aim of the FOGs sports champions is to use their sporting profile and connections to make a difference in the lives of Indigenous students.

The FOGS initiative is part of the Achieving Results Through Indigenous Education (ARTIE) pilot program, funded by the Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), to support the academic, cultural and sporting achievements of Indigenous secondary school students in six Queensland schools this year, with plans to expand into more schools next year.

Students at Bundamba State Secondary College and nearby Ipswich State High School, Beenleigh SHS and nearby Marsden SHS, Redbank Plains SHS in Brisbane’s outer south-west and Woodridge SHS in Brisbane’s outer south are now working with high-profile athletes, including swimmer Jessica Schipper, rugby league legend Allan Langer and athletics champion Patrick Johnson, through mentoring, classroom and sports team visits, cultural workshops and camps, and online tutorials and podcasts.

ARTIE promotes active participation in school subjects, high levels of school attendance, improvement in literacy and numeracy, responsible behaviour at school or when representing the school, personal growth and a positive work ethic.

ARTIE director and former Australian netball captain Vicki Wilson said the program will produce results. ‘These ARTIE students have a fantastic opportunity to improve themselves in a number of ways,’ Wilson said. ‘Through the support of DEEWR, we’re confident that this program will be a success.’

Commonwealth Minister for Sport and Youth, Kate Ellis, said the government’s investment of $4.5 million over four years will enable the schools in the program to use sport as a great motivator and a powerful tool. ‘Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth have a passion and talent for sport,’ Ellis said, ‘and FOGs is harnessing that to motivate students to stay in school.’

Pictured, ARTIE mentor, swimmer Jessica Schipper, with students from Marsden State High School.