

Me, myself, I

First contact with my school

Prior to commencement

Every school setting is unique and requires active investigation by new staff. Prior to commencement, you should:

- review the school website
- make contact with your new school as soon as possible to introduce yourself to the school's leadership team, and if possible, arrange a visit to meet one of the members of the team
- ask about opportunities for further pre-commencement visits to familiarise yourself with the school environment, meet staff and potentially be involved in school planning processes. Having your 'first day' before your first day is a huge advantage
- determine the nature of your teaching duties, for example, year level/s, class size/s, timetable, subjects and work programs
- request a copy of the school's induction booklet, if the school has one
- request a copy of the school map so that you can orientate yourself with the physical layout of the school. In the secondary school setting, it is especially important that you know where your classrooms are in relation to each other so that you can allow for this when moving between classes
- access your classroom/s prior to commencement, if possible, to set up your teaching furniture, classroom displays, posters and desk. Check with your mentor or one of the leadership team for details
- meet the support staff.

Key questions

The school principal's first impression of you may be gained through a face-to-face meeting or over the phone. In either case, how you communicate and present yourself is essential for building a positive image. Be well prepared with a list of questions, information to share about yourself, and a pen and paper to take notes.

Use the frequently asked questions (FAQs) below to help uncover some of the information you will need to know about your new school and new career, and make your induction a smooth process.

FAQs first phone call

You may like to seek answers to these questions. Remember, your phone manner should be professional and friendly.

- Can I visit/access my classroom before the student-free day?
- What time should I arrive on the student-free day?
- Is there a program for the student-free day?
- Where should I park on the first day?
- If I am ill, who should I call?
- Who is my supervisor? Should I make contact with this person prior to the first student-free day?
- Will I have a teaching partner? Can I contact this person?
- When will I receive my class timetable?
- What are my school's expectations regarding how I plan?
- Where can I access syllabus documents/curriculum plans and subject/unit work programs?
- Will I have a mentor?

FAQs first face-to-face meeting

Locations

- Where is my classroom/s located?
- Where is my staffroom?
- Where are the staff amenities (e.g. toilets and eating facilities) located?
- Where will I meet my students on the first day?
- Where will my students eat lunch? (primary)
- Is there a map of playground areas?
- What do I do if I am sick or suffer an injury at school?

Equipment and facilities

- Do I need a key/security code to access my classroom?
- Do I need to keep my classroom/staffroom locked if there's no-one in there?
- Do I need to organise a sufficient number of chairs, desks or other items for my classroom?
- Will the furniture in my room cater for the differing needs of students?

Procedures

- What is the first week program for my students? (secondary)
- How do I obtain a class roll/s?
- How do I correctly mark my roll/s?
- How often am I required to mark and submit my roll/s?
- What is the school policy for students entering/leaving my classroom?
- What are the rules relating to the playground?
- In the event of an emergency in the playground or my classroom, who is my first point of contact?
- What is the school-wide procedure for recording student behaviour incidents?
- Is there an in-school communication system?
- How do I access daily notices?
- What are the procedures for communicating with parents?

- What is the Responsible Behaviour Plan for Students?
- What is the school assessment policy?

Timetables, meetings and calendar of events

- What are the school hours/class times/lunchbreaks?
- Will I have a form class in addition to my timetabled classes? (secondary)
- Will I have playground duty?
- When, where and how often do assemblies take place?
- When and where do staff meetings take place?
- Are there beginning teacher meetings that I attend as part of my induction?
- When do specialist lessons commence? (primary)
- Is there a school calendar?
- Are there any upcoming events/excursions relevant to my year level/subject areas?
- Will there be a parent information evening, and what are the content areas for this meeting?

Resources

- Am I able to obtain a copy of the class book list/s?
- Are students issued with textbooks or resource hire materials?
- Where are resources such as stationery and art materials located?
- Where can I access resources relevant to my subject area? (for example, musical instruments, sporting equipment, laboratory equipment, video cameras)
- How does borrowing through the Resource Centre occur?
- How do I book computer/library rooms for my classes?
- How do I access the phone, photocopier and the internet?
- How do I arrange to have an Education Queensland email username and password?
- How do I gain access to OneSchool?

Moving to a new community – rural and remote placements

Starting a new job and moving house can be a stressful experience. However, the experience of relocating to a rural or remote area, especially for those who have lived only in metropolitan or larger provincial centres, can also be an exciting opportunity.

It is essential that you are well prepared and informed about where you will be living. To prepare for your relocation, you should access information from the internet about your school and local community. Local government authority websites often provide photos of local communities and surrounding areas, as well as information about sporting and community organisations or activities.

To view local government websites, access the Local Government Association of Queensland website at www.lgaq.asn.au/portal/dt

You can find links to school websites through the Education Queensland website at www.education.qld.gov.au/directory/phone

When you know the date and time of your arrival in your new community, contact your school's principal to let him or her know.

It is important for you to be willing to get to know your new community and to join in with the various local activities (social, cultural and sporting) on offer. Many communities hold events in the lead-up to the commencement of school. Being involved with your community can provide you with invaluable knowledge about your students and their families. In a small community, the community can impact on the school just as much as the school can impact on the community. Be sure to ask your principal, buddy teacher or mentor when and where events are taking place.

Partners for Success – Identified Indigenous Schools

Teaching in a *Partners for Success* – Identified Indigenous School is described as the experience of a lifetime. If you are taking up the challenge, you will receive specific information with your appointment package from Education Queensland's Indigenous

Schooling Support Unit located in the Far North Queensland region. Their teams will provide you with all the information you will need about the process and the different communities. This is done through targeted face-to-face induction activities and resources that you will access before you arrive in your school location. Visit the website for the latest details and reference information at www.issu.com.au – look for the menu option 'Teaching in a remote community'.

The mandated curriculum for Identified Indigenous Schools is *Bound for Success*. This is in line with the Queensland Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting (QCAR) Framework.

For more information, consult Quality Teachers in *Partners for Success* – Identified Indigenous Schools on the Education Queensland website at www.education.qld.gov.au/schools/indigenous/educators/quality-teacher-index.html

Relocation preparation

Urban and rural areas

- Read all appointment information and documentation thoroughly. You should receive an information package including entitlements for officers on appointment and a guide for making relocation arrangements, including flights and uplifts if required.
- Review the school website and contact the principal before the school year ends. (Schools in many rural and remote areas close one week before other schools in the rest of the state.)
- Investigate the local government authority website.
- Search for photos of town and local areas.
- Identify how to travel to your location, remembering to check public transport options, road conditions and accessibility during seasonal changes.
- Search/ask for details of local facilities and services, including banking, medical and retail.
- Attend organised induction program activities. These may be school-based or organised systemically.

Remote and Indigenous areas

- Read all appointment information and documentation thoroughly. You should receive an information package including entitlements for officers on appointment and a guide for making relocation arrangements, including flights and uplifts.
- If you are appointed to a remote Identified Indigenous School, you will be required to attend three stages of RAIS (Remote Area Incentive Scheme) Induction, including a Graduate Teacher workshop. Details on these induction workshops are available at www.learningplace.com.au/deliver/content.asp?pid=32710
- Indigenous communities have significant restrictions on your ability to possess or carry alcohol in and out of the community. Investigate the relevant Alcohol Management Plan at www.mcmc.qld.gov.au/community/search/restricted.php
- If you are appointed to a centre where teacher accommodation is available, you will need to apply for teacher accommodation. The form is available from the Local Accommodation Officer (LAO) at the school site. You will be informed of temporary accommodation entitlements, should you require them.
- If you are driving to your new school centre, check your vehicle has been serviced, is in good working order, and is suitable to make the journey. Let someone know where and when you are travelling, including expected arrival time. Always check seasonal considerations and road conditions.
- Carry a basic car toolkit for emergencies, for example, first aid kit and drinking water.
- Plan your journey to allow time for rest and unavoidable emergencies.
- Track your kilometres for either tax or removal reimbursement, and keep all receipts for costs incurred.
- Investigate mobile coverage with your phone provider, locate petrol stations and shops, and keep receipts for any accommodation.

Administration essentials

Forms

It is important to ensure that school records such as the Staff Details form and Commencement Advice form are completed. You will need to present a copy of your Queensland College of Teachers Certificate of Registration and Teacher Registration card to the relevant administration staff member on your first day.

Getting paid

Complete the Commencement Advice form immediately as this form activates your pay and confirms your appointment to Education Queensland. You will need to provide your tax file number and bank details on the form.

Most employees receive their fortnightly salary through electronic funds transfer (EFT) into the bank of their choice. Pay slips are forwarded to schools. This slip details the relevant award, classification, year, standard fortnightly salary, any allowances, gross and net salary, and all fortnightly deductions.

Probation

All new teachers employed in Education Queensland undergo an eight-month probation period. The probation period assists the department to understand your skills, knowledge and abilities and to provide support in areas identified as requiring further development. It is also a significant aid to an employee in planning and setting career and developmental goals. The Probationary Teachers: Interim Report will be completed in your third month of teaching. The principal will then complete a Final Report in your sixth month, recommending satisfactory or unsatisfactory completion of probation. This is a confidential document and only authorised personnel will have access to its contents. Teachers receive a letter of Confirmation or Termination of Appointment at the end of their eighth month.

Schools have different ways of gathering information about how you are going. You may be asked to provide lesson or unit planning. Your teaching may even be observed by your Head of Department or Head of Curriculum. While this may be nerve-racking, remember that this is done to support you, not ‘check up’ on you.

The report completed for you to gain full registration with the Queensland College of Teachers (QCT) is quite separate from your probation reports and is described below.

Registration

Registration represents formal acknowledgment of your membership of the teaching profession. It means that you have met the professional requirements for entry into the profession in Queensland, including the attainment of approved qualifications, and that you have been assessed as *suitable* to teach.

The QCT was established in 2006 as a statutory authority, funded by teachers, with responsibilities including:

- promoting the importance of teaching as a highly valued and ethical profession
- regulating entry to, and ongoing membership of, the teaching profession in Queensland in terms of professional capabilities and *suitability* to teach
- maintaining and strengthening public confidence in the profession.

The registration processes of the QCT are guided by the *Professional Standards for Queensland Teachers* and the *Professional Standards for Teachers*.

The Standards provide benchmarks for attaining full registration in Queensland.

While you are provisionally registered, you will work with the QCT *Professional Standards for Queensland Teachers*. Once you have obtained full registration, you will transition to work with Education Queensland’s *Professional Standards for Teachers* and use these as a foundation to maintain your registration.

To obtain full registration, a provisionally registered teacher must teach for one year (defined as 200 days or 1000 hours) in a school (or certain other approved

settings), and demonstrate achievement of the *Professional Standards for Queensland Teachers* in their daily teaching. On completing a *Provisional to Full Registration Recommendation Report*, your principal will make a recommendation to the QCT about your progression to full registration. The QCT makes the final decision to grant or not grant full registration. Refer to the Provisional Registration Fact Sheet or the QCT website at www.qct.edu.au for more information.

Salary packaging

Salary packaging is available to all Education Queensland employees covered by enterprise agreements. This allows salary to be taken as benefits before tax, offering the potential to increase your after-tax income. For more information, please contact RemServ on 1300 30 40 10 or visit www.remserv.com.au

Superannuation

As a new employee, you will have a QSuper Accumulation account opened for you. Contributions to the account commence automatically in your first pay fortnight and are shown on your pay slip as a deduction from your salary.

The standard contribution rate is 5 per cent of your base salary. When the standard contribution of 5 per cent is made, Education Queensland also contributes 12.75 per cent of your gross salary to your account. Should you choose not to contribute at this rate, you can elect to reduce your contributions down to as low as 2 per cent of your salary and receive the corresponding lower level of employer subsidy. Alternatively, you can make voluntary contributions in addition to your standard contribution, and subsequently receive higher levels of employer contributions.

QSuper will forward you a Welcome Package which will provide further information on your Accumulation account, as well as additional information regarding other superannuation and investment options available. If you require further clarification or advice, you may contact QSuper via the internet at www.qsuper.qld.gov.au, email qsuper@qsuper.qld.gov.au or telephone 1300 360 750.

Professionalism

Queensland Public Service Charter

As public servants, teachers make a commitment to the people of Queensland to carry out their duties to the highest professional standards in order to bring about a fairer, sustainable and better future for all Queenslanders. These commitments are set out in the Queensland Public Service Charter available at www.opsc.qld.gov.au/index.shtml

Code of Conduct

The Public Service Code of Conduct and the department's Standard of Practice set the context of our work, including how that work is to be performed, and how we should conduct our relationships with others. The Code and Standard of Practice provide direction and guidance on our responsibilities as employees, and how we should use the powers and discretion that come with our official position. They also establish standards for our conduct and performance that are consistent with attaining the mission and objectives of the department. All employees have an obligation to become familiar with the Code of Conduct and Standard of Practice at www.education.qld.gov.au/corporate/codeofconduct and to fully understand their responsibilities in relation to their behaviour.

Right to Information Act 2009 and Information Privacy Act 2009

To promote the release of significant, appropriate and accurate Queensland government information to individuals and the general public, the Right to Information Act and the Information Privacy Act came into effect on 1 July 2009. Right to Information and Information Privacy concepts and explanations are available on the DET Right to Information website at www.deta.qld.gov.au/right-to-information/

In collecting, storing, accessing, amending, using or disclosing people's personal information, Information Privacy principles must be adhered to. New penalties apply to the inappropriate — and now illegal — disclosure of personal information from January 2010. The new legislation adds to teachers' responsibilities for the management of student information under section 426 of the *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006*.

Section 426 is a confidentiality provision that prohibits unauthorised recording, use and disclosure (including giving access to) of personal information about past, present and prospective students of state schools gained by DET employees, and employees of state schools who have gained access to the information in an official capacity.

Talk to your principal if you are unsure about the use and disclosure of personal information of students in your school.

Your school has an Administrative Access Policy where details of teachers' responsibilities are set out.

Ethical behaviour

As a registered teacher and an employee of Education Queensland, and therefore the government, you are bound by the Public Service Code of Conduct, the department's Standard of Practice and the Queensland College of Teachers Code of Ethics to conduct yourself ethically in all your dealings both inside and outside the school. There are also many legal issues surrounding your employment, and it is imperative that you uphold the law to ensure your good standing. Consider how your actions reflect on you personally and professionally. For example, the school telephone system may be used for calls pertaining to your work and your students. Some schools allow personal calls to be made through the school, but payment may be required. The taking of personal calls and the use of social networking at work is strongly discouraged. Mobile phone use should not occur during class time.

Teachers should also consider the implications of their personal social networking habits and contact with students.

Duty of care – student protection

Teachers have a duty of care for all students at all times, including during organised school events. The department's Student Protection Policy sets out the department's expectations of employees to ensure that students are not subject to harm and that they are protected from harm. Every school- and TAFE-based employee must clearly understand their obligations to report instances of harm to students.

It is the teacher's responsibility to provide for the physical, social, cultural and emotional wellbeing and physical safety of students while at school, and to enhance their overall development towards effective citizenship and responsible adulthood through participation in timetabled, non-timetabled and planned extracurricular activities.

Teachers must ensure that students are appropriately supervised at all times throughout the school day. Students are never to be left alone in class time, without the supervision of a registered teacher. Punctuality for playground duty is vital, as students must also be supervised at break times.

Professional conversations

The department is committed to supporting you to keep learning and doing the best job you can throughout your career. Consequently, the *Developing Performance Framework* has been established to provide you and all employees of the Department of Education and Training with a process, supported by tools and resources, that provides a guide as to how to have professional conversations and what to talk about with your supervisor to build a shared understanding of:

- what is expected of you in your role
- how your work contributes to the achievement of your team, work unit or school, and the department
- how you can work towards and achieve your career aspirations
- the types of support and professional development available to help you to further develop the capabilities you need to carry out your work and take steps towards your career aspirations.

The resources associated with the *Developing Performance Framework*, such as the *Professional Standards for Queensland Teachers* (for provisionally registered teachers) and the *Professional Standards for Teachers* (for fully registered teachers), provide a great point of reference for you to engage in professional dialogue to identify your teaching and professional development needs.

In addition to the professional dialogue that takes place as part of your developing performance conversations with your supervisor, informal collegial conversations are a good way of building your understanding of your role and growing your capabilities. Teachers continually learn from each other, regardless of how long they have been teaching. You have an important role to play in bringing fresh perspectives and your own individual approach to the teaching profession. It is also important that you gather ideas and experience from various sources while you develop your own philosophy of education. If you pose a question, you may hear a number of answers to this question. You can then choose the answer that suits you, your situation and your philosophy. Take note of information shared with you, make an effort to try new things, and be open to suggestions. Any conversations that you have can provide an opportunity to learn and grow.

Additionally, joining online communities and discussion lists is another avenue for engaging in professional conversations. There are many available, some of which you may have been part of during your university studies. It is advisable that you use appropriate etiquette in your online discussions. The Learning Place at www.learningplace.com.au hosts a large number of discussion lists devoted to a wide range of topics.

Finally, professional associations play a significant role in supporting teachers at all stages of their careers. The Joint Council of Queensland Teacher Associations lists the large number of teacher associations to which you may wish to subscribe.

For more information, visit www.jcqa.qld.edu.au

Creating a welcoming environment

Your teaching space is the equivalent to an office for approximately 30 people or, for secondary teachers, up to 150 people. When there are as many people as this sharing the space, it needs to be organised. Members of the public who enter your room see a physical representation of your organisational skills. The space needs to be bright, airy, well laid out and tidy, with plenty of storage. The position of your desk should allow you to have a clear view of all areas of your classroom, and should allow you to greet students, other staff and parents as they enter. For more information on this topic, see the 'My teaching space' section of this toolkit.

Dress code

As a teacher, members of the school community will look to you for knowledge, guidance and support. The way you present yourself has a huge impact on your credibility and the confidence people have in you and your abilities. You are a professional, and your style and deportment should reflect this. When meeting you for the first time, people appraise you in a matter of seconds. When it comes to developing productive relationships that need to last for a number of years, these few seconds are vital. Your school may have its own dress code that you will need to follow, or it may also have a uniform that staff are invited to wear. Purchase of this uniform may be a tax deduction.

Clothing worn at your school should be appropriate to the tasks you are undertaking. As a teacher, you should be a role model for the correct dress code and expected behaviour of students. For example, in practical areas such as science and industrial technology and design, enclosed footwear should be worn. Also, if you are teaching outside or on playground duty, you should wear a hat.

Using your voice effectively

Your voice is crucial to your role as a teacher, and one of your most valuable tools. It is important that you know how to use your voice effectively, and that you take proactive steps to prevent voice strain. Think about whether you use your voice more often than you need to and whether you are using your voice as efficiently as you can.

Strategies that you can use to prevent or minimise voice strain include:

- using gesture and other non-vocal signals to gain students' attention
- speaking at a quieter level during certain classroom activities
- speaking to your class only when students are quiet — refuse to speak over any background noise
- considering the layout of your classroom — be mindful to stand in a place in the classroom that will make it easier for students to hear you without straining your voice
- planning the day so that you build in voice rest periods, where you do not need to talk
- drinking water frequently throughout the day
- being conscious of your posture and breathing when speaking (back straight, head up and chin level with the ground)
- sipping water, swallowing or yawning whenever you feel the urge to cough or clear your throat
- sucking on a sweet, but avoiding medicated lozenges, which may irritate your throat further
- consciously suppressing the urge to cough or clear the throat.

Coughing may be a symptom of an acute throat infection. It is important to take particular care of your voice if you have an acute infection by seeking medical advice.

A more comprehensive list of strategies to prevent voice strain and reduce any symptoms of voice strain can be found at www.education.qld.gov.au/health/docs/voice-strain.doc

Checklist

This checklist is designed to:

- make preparing for your role as easy as possible
- familiarise you with the policies and procedures that impact on your role
- support your initial planning
- set plans in motion for your personal and professional development.

My employer — performance and accountability

Discuss interim report at three months	<input type="checkbox"/>
Discuss final report at six months	<input type="checkbox"/>
Discuss the QCT Provisional to Full Registration Recommendation Report form and process for progressing to full registration	<input type="checkbox"/>
Develop an individual professional development plan using the <i>Developing Performance Framework</i> as a guide for professional conversations and the <i>Professional Standards for Queensland Teachers</i> as a framework	<input type="checkbox"/>
Seek informal reviews and feedback	<input type="checkbox"/>

Me, myself, I

Fill in Commencement Advice and other necessary forms	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provide emergency contact details and any other relevant information to administration staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
Obtain a copy of your class timetable	<input type="checkbox"/>
Read school priorities/visions/goals/expectations	<input type="checkbox"/>
Obtain a copy of the school's induction booklet	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tour the school and obtain a copy of the school's map. Look for available car parks, resource locations and staffrooms or classrooms for staff you will need to have contact with. Understand the way rooms are numbered	<input type="checkbox"/>
Discuss job expectations and goals — use the <i>Developing Performance Framework</i> to guide you in this	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clarify additional duties or committee involvement	<input type="checkbox"/>
Obtain room keys and any security codes	<input type="checkbox"/>
Obtain computer network login details, internet and email access	<input type="checkbox"/>
Log in to OneSchool and request access	<input type="checkbox"/>
Find photocopier and fax and how to access other services such as laminating	<input type="checkbox"/>
Obtain room cleaning details and end of day process	<input type="checkbox"/>
Organise tea, coffee and refreshments	<input type="checkbox"/>

My school

Who's who at the school

Meet school leadership team	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clarify your line supervisor	<input type="checkbox"/>
Meet support and ancillary staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
Meet a mentor or buddy teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Organise times to meet with mentor
- Meet with Smart Classrooms Coordinator
- Meet staff in your teaching area
- Meet relevant district staff such as Advisory Visiting Teachers
- Understand process for using volunteers in your classroom
- Identify opportunities for community involvement

School procedures

- Understand the Responsible Behaviour Plan for Students
- Clarify the procedures for documenting and recording student incidents
- Clarify the procedures and expectations for using the OneSchool application
- Read purchasing policy
- Read excursion policy
- Clarify hours of duty
- Clarify marking the roll/absentees, use of codes and when the roll is to be returned to the office
- Obtain whole school timetables — specialist lessons, sport, assembly and support times
- Obtain bell times and rules for moving around the school
- Identify playground duty areas and your responsibilities
- Discuss lunchbreak procedures
- Read emergency procedures — fire, bomb, lockdown — and check that the procedures are displayed in your classroom
- Identify out of bounds areas
- Obtain a copy of the school's assessment policy (for secondary)
- Clarify booking procedures for shared resources such as the computer lab, library, multimedia room
- Obtain information about the textbook hire scheme (for secondary)
- Locate first aid kit and guidelines for dispensing medication
- Locate cash collection

Internal communication

- Note meeting times
- Ask about communication procedures — daily or weekly notices, newsletters, student notices
- Locate pigeonholes, ensure you are connected to the intranet set up to communicate within school between staff
- Obtain staff directory and telephone numbers
- Seek guidance on using the telephone system
- Find out how to call in sick
- Obtain a copy of the school calendar of events

External communication

- Seek copies of parent newsletter from the school
- Seek copies of any parent letters relating to your class
- Visit the school website

My teaching space

- Request access to general supplies and items such as whiteboard markers and erasers
- Find out how to borrow resources from the resource centre
- Find out how to borrow or access equipment for art and sport
- Clarify protocols for borrowing and using information and communication technology resources
- Find out how you can access additional furniture if you need it
- Find out about setting up and managing your virtual classroom through the Learning Place

My students

- Obtain the curriculum documents/materials/school programs/textbooks you need to begin planning
- Clarify school planning expectations and collaborative planning processes
- Clarify school assessment and reporting processes
- Obtain information about the school-initiated programs
- Obtain any preferred planning templates
- Identify student learning needs and adjust planning and teaching strategies as required
- Obtain details of your class allocation/class list
- Review your students' profiles in OneSchool
- Obtain student folios and assessment data from previous years
- Clarify school/faculty policy on recording and storing student assessment folders
- Clarify planning expectations for relief teachers when ill

Commitment to professional development

- During your *Developing Performance Framework* conversations, use the Queensland College of Teachers *Professional Standards for Queensland Teachers* to plan professional development for the year and take up opportunities that meet the goals of the plan
- Join or create networks
- Observe lessons of other teachers, particularly in your year level or subject area
- View other classrooms
- Ask about your probation requirements
- Participate in curriculum design, planning, assessment and reporting
- In Early Years, engage in early childhood philosophy and pedagogy through the *Early Years Curriculum Guidelines* and diagnostic and reporting frameworks of the Early Learning Record (Prep) and the Year 2 Diagnostic Net Continua (Years 1–3)
- Become familiar with Education Queensland policy, particularly Code of Conduct and student protection
- Subscribe to *Teaching Learning Connect*

Connecting with people

Effective listening

Effective communication is the key to being an effective educator. As a teacher, your ability to develop rapport, communicate your expectations and instructions, and ask probing and clarifying questions is closely aligned with your ability to listen to students.

Effective listening is integral to effective communication. Although we expect a large percentage of students' time to be spent listening, we often do not teach students how to listen, even though other forms of communication such as reading and writing are explicitly taught in classrooms. Listening also needs to be taught if we are to value meaningful communication with people. There are many resources available to assist you to provide guided practice for students in listening. You can access these resources through the Learning Place Curriculum Exchange resource centre for teaching strategies at www.learningplace.eq.edu.au/cx/resources

Teacher qualities that school communities appreciate

This is a comprehensive list of the qualities that you should be demonstrating throughout the course of your work. A good teacher displays:

- good communication skills
- professionalism
- organisation
- commitment
- motivation
- respect
- dependability
- dedication
- lifelong love of learning
- passion
- enthusiasm
- empathy
- knowledge
- compassion
- creativity
- innovation

- appreciation for diversity
- fairness, firmness and flexibility
- willingness to listen
- open-mindedness
- a sense of humour
- patience
- collegiality
- willingness to take risks
- support for others.

Meeting people for the first time

The first visit to your school is an ideal opportunity to meet staff, and to familiarise yourself with the school's surrounds and resources. While you may have a mentor to help you settle in and assist in your induction, the best way to discover what you don't know is by talking to current staff who can quickly provide valuable information. Take the time to talk to and build rapport with support staff — they often have great experience and wisdom to share and can prove to be a great source of help and guidance.

The partnerships you create with other staff members are the foundation of your most important network of colleagues — your school network. Within different school settings, there are key teaching positions such as Heads of Departments (HODs), Heads of Curriculum (HOCs), subject-specialist teachers, teacher-librarians and Advisory Visiting Teachers (AVTs). Discovering your colleagues' areas of expertise may provide you with an easy way to get support when needed.

Getting involved

Getting involved in your school community in as many ways as you can is a great way to meet and work with staff and students you may not normally work with in your day-to-day teaching. Extracurricular activities such as sports, clubs, music ensembles, drama productions and musicals allow you to immerse yourself in the school culture and show your commitment to your students and school. Some schools may have a social club for staff members; social club events provide opportunities to build on the professional relationships you have with the staff at your school.

Professional partnerships and networks

Professional associations and networks enrich the professional lives of teachers by promoting knowledge related to particular disciplines. They can be subject area or focus group specific, and provide a source of quality professional development for employees throughout all career stages.

The Learning Place website at <http://staff.learningplace.eq.edu.au> provides Education Queensland staff with access to a range of online communities, collaboration tools, resources, and staff and student learning environments. These online spaces give teachers opportunities to network, share strategies and experiences, meet online, participate in online discussion, increase awareness of issues, and access a wealth of online teaching resources.

The Aspiring, Beginning, Establishing, Returning and Supply Teachers professional community supports teachers new to the profession. This professional community also supports more experienced teachers who are interested in mentoring and sharing their wealth of knowledge and understandings about their work in schools. Visit the site at www.learningplace.com.au/en/beginningteachers

The Beginning and Establishing Teachers' Association (BETA) assists in maximising the effective induction of beginning and establishing teachers. The association also supports schools in providing induction programs, and aids teachers in establishing networks of support in their local area. Contact BETA through its website at www.beta.asn.au

Queensland Teachers' Union

Membership of the Queensland Teachers' Union (QTU) is optional; however, 96 per cent of teachers choose to be members of the QTU. The union acts as a representative of teachers in public education facilities throughout Queensland and offers a variety of services to members, including:

- the negotiation of salaries and condition improvements with Education Queensland through enterprise bargaining
- the support of teachers in a range of professional contexts via the regional organisers
- the Legal Assistance Scheme

- an information and advisory service
- a grievance service
- the *Queensland Teachers' Journal*
- the *QTU Professional Magazine*
- *flare* — an e-newsletter for new and beginning teachers
- access to Teachers' Union Health
- access to Members Equity
- the Union Shopper.

Additionally, the QTU provides its members with access to the Queensland Teachers' Assist Desk (QTAD). QTAD is a help desk designed to assist members with simple, quick advice over the phone or via email in relation to pay, leave and other general working conditions. You can call 1300 11 QTAD (1300 11 7823) to speak with the QTAD staff, or email qtad@qtu.asn.au.

For additional membership information, access the QTU website at www.qtu.asn.au

Staffroom interactions

Your staffroom can be a place of sharing and support. Even though you may be extremely busy, it is important that you invest time and energy into staffroom conversations as they help you establish a rapport with your colleagues and can lead to new ideas and provide a variety of perspectives to help solve problems. Engage yourself in these conversations as your ideas are equally valuable, but be mindful of confidentiality around the personal information of students. Also, the staffroom can be a place of relaxation and reprieve. Even if you think you don't have time, give yourself a short break! You'll feel refreshed and ready to get back to class.

It is important that you learn to 'read the vibe' of your staffroom and contribute accordingly. Sometimes, your staffroom will be noisy and jovial, while at other times, it will be quiet and studious. It is important to remember that above all, the staffroom must be respected as a space for teachers to do their work and to recharge.

Staffrooms may have facilities such as a microwave, fridge and instant hot water. Come prepared with your own refreshments to begin with. If you like drinking tea or coffee, check what systems are in place for contributing to the milk, or tea and coffee supplies. This will help you be prepared for your first week.

Parent partnerships

An effective way to influence how students in your class approach school and their learning is to develop positive and productive partnerships with their parents or carers. Ultimately, parents want their children to be safe, happy and successful at school. Parents appreciate being kept informed about their child's progress in class. Getting parents to work with you in terms of their child's progress and behaviour in class is advisable, as when parents and teachers are working together to send the same message, there is potential for greater impact. Keep in mind the diverse cultural, social and economic backgrounds from which the students come. Before contacting parents, check the school's procedures to ensure protocols are met.

Using the phone and email to keep parents updated

The phone and email are useful tools to provide current feedback. Students know you are on top of things when they find out you have been communicating with their parents. Here are some suggestions for communicating with parents:

- Contact parents if you would like to 'check in' regarding a student's progress or behaviour, or about social or emotional issues.
- Remember to contact parents to pass on positive news, not just negatives.
- Have a list of points to discuss to help you guide and focus a conversation if you are calling.
- Prepare first! Tell the parents who you are and where you are from — expect that you aren't the only teacher their family has contact with, so be specific. For example, 'Hi, it's James here from Cunnamulla State School — Heather's teacher ...'. This way it is clear which teacher is calling about which student.
- Record the discussion or email in OneSchool as per school expectations (advise parents you will be making this note in the records).

Please note that you should only use the school phone or Education Queensland email address, not your personal phone or email address, to make calls to parents.

Managing difficult conversations

Many issues arise out of miscommunication. However, some difficult conversations can be about sensitive issues for the student or the parent. Liaise with your leadership team for support and advice.

Here are some ideas to help you through those more difficult conversations with parents:

- Keep an open mind.
- Remain calm and non-emotive. Stick to the facts!
- Where you are given prior notice of a meeting or discussion, take time to prepare by gathering relevant notes and documentation, organising your thoughts and clarifying facts.
- Be accepting of difference — you don't have to agree with their parenting styles to admit they have a point, and they don't have to agree with your teaching style to admit you have a point.
- Acknowledge the feelings of both the student and the parents.
- Consider the parents' point of view and what they might be hearing at home. Clarify points of difference in what they have heard and what really happened.
- Convey your observations and understanding of the facts and provide specific examples.
- Balance the discussion with positive feedback.
- Consider possible solutions and seek suggestions from the student or parent.
- Restate facts throughout the conversation to ensure everyone is in agreement.
- Give parents a chance to speak. If they are angry, they will usually calm down — especially if they can see that you are willing to listen. That said, the conversation must be respectful.
- Keep your supervisor informed.
- Ask your supervisor to join the meeting or observe the phone conversation.
- Discuss your concerns with the student's previous teachers, the student's other teachers and teachers of the student's siblings to get some background information. For example, if things have been happening at home and the parent is stressed, then you may become an outlet for the stress.
- By the end of the meeting or discussion, make sure that a decision has been made about what will happen next and that everyone is aware of their roles.

- At the end of the meeting or discussion, document what occurred and any actions that arose in OneSchool.

Hints

- Check the school's procedure before contacting parents. Some schools require you to discuss the issue with the administration team before parent contact is made. Review school expectations for recording parent contact in OneSchool.
- Ensure that you record incidents involving students in OneSchool. Include specific detail in this documentation. This way, parents can see that you are keeping factual, accurate records concerning their children.
- Be open with parents about when you are available to talk. If the issue seems like something that can't be solved right there and then, suggest a mutually convenient time to give the parents and the issue the attention they deserve.
- Acknowledge the differing values and beliefs that exist in your relationships with parents.
- Be aware of the different types of families and custodial arrangements that exist in our society.
- Write short, effective notes to send home, and keep a copy for the student file.
- Evaluate each student's organisational abilities and whether or not they will remember to give their parents any school notes. Negotiate with these parents to set up a system. Whatever the system, everyone has to be happy with the plan or it won't work.
- Remember that the stress that you sometimes feel in your job is replicated in the homes of the students you teach where their parents may be stressed as well. Think of things to communicate to the parents that might go a long way towards making them feel happy about the job you are doing with their children.