

# PROFESSIONAL CONVERSATIONS

Throughout the Professional Experience placement we ask that the Preservice Teacher (PST) be supported by a regular cycle of professional conversations.

## PROFESSIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

The mentoring relationship between the PST and their Mentor Teacher (MT) is a supportive workplace partnership, providing feedback on personal performance in the context of career and personal development. Regular meetings should provide opportunities for reflection on and exploration of a variety of experiences, issues and potential actions, based on presentation of evidence.

## PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK

The attached template has been developed in consultation with a cross-sectoral group of teachers, preservice teachers and staff from the Australian Catholic University and the University of Canberra, for use in Professional Experience placements as part of an AITSL funded, ACT TQI pilot project.

The template is a framework for professional conversations between preservice teachers and their mentors in the context of professional placement. It is a flexible, open document to be used in a variety of circumstances including initial discussion, regular or specific feedback meetings and formative and summative feedback sessions. Prompt questions are provided for guidance only and are not prescriptive.

Effective feedback should:

- Be based on explicit prior agreement about the scope of the feedback and the relationship
- Provide opportunities for personal reflection and sharing ideas rather than giving advice
- Focus on behaviour rather than personal qualities
- Relate to specific times/situations rather than abstractions or generalizations
- Include a clear statement of the intended outcomes/behaviours/action plans.

## PLANNING

It is important to set the scene or clarify the context of any specific professional conversation. Consider and keep a record of:

- Date and time:
- Participants:
  - Preservice Teacher
  - Mentor Teacher
  - Other e.g. University staff? Other teachers?
- Focus of conversation:
  - Initial planning meeting
  - Lesson planning meeting
  - Feedback on a specific lesson or series of lessons
  - Mid-placement formative review (interim feedback)
  - Summative review meeting (final report)

## GENERAL CONVERSATION STARTERS

### TEMPLATE FOR PROFESSIONAL PLACEMENT CONVERSATIONS

#### General conversation prompts

What were the highlights for you?

What worked well? Why?

Did you achieve what you set out to do?

What were the challenges? Why?

What have you learned?

Which tasks/activities have you valued?

What skills/competencies have you observed?

How did you know...?

What did you observe....?

What would you like to focus on for the next lesson/observation/review discussion?

What can we work on together?

What evidence will you provide to demonstrate improvement?

What might be the consequences (of any suggested options or strategies)?

What circumstances or issues might impact on your plan for teaching and learning?

**REFLECTION: HIGHLIGHTS, STRENGTHS, CHALLENGES, EVIDENCE**  
Professional Knowledge

**Possible prompts for the Mentor Teacher**

Do you feel all learners are achieving to the best of their abilities?

What links are you seeing between the theory and research you are doing at university and the practice in the classroom?

Are you feeling confident with the content?

Do you think you gauged the content level and its relevance appropriately?

Do you feel you covered an appropriate amount of content e.g. too much or too little?

Were there specific strategies you feel worked well in achieving your learning outcomes? E.g. the modelled, shared, guided, independent writing cycle

How did your use of ICT enhance your lesson?

How do you know you achieved your learning outcomes?

**Possible prompts for the Preservice Teacher**

How do you know what to teach this year level? What curriculum documents do you use to help guide your planning?

How did I go with meeting the learning needs of the EAL/D/ ATSI learners in the class?

What did you feel were the effective parts of my interaction and planning for them?

Which learning theories and principles inspire you and inform your teaching?

How do you choose strategies to match your teaching purpose and the different learners in the class?

What formative assessment strategies do you use and how do you use information collected to inform your teaching?

**OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT/IMPROVEMENTS, GOALS, ACTION PLAN**  
Professional Knowledge

**Possible prompts for the Mentor Teacher**

What adaptations could you make to your teaching plans to meet the needs of EAL/D/ATSI/children with learning difficulties learners?

What resources do you need?

What skills do you still need to develop so you can meet the needs of all learners?

What strategies can you implement in the future to ensure full engagement of all students?

What changes could you make in the future to improve the learning sequence and strengthen scaffolding?

What skills and knowledge would enhance your assessment procedures to better inform your future teaching?

**Possible prompts for the Preservice Teacher**

What resources does the school suggest for working with Aboriginal and TSI children/EAL/D children with disabilities?

Where do you go for help and advice to build your knowledge of different learners' needs or new content?

What suggestions have you got to ensure I pitch my teaching at the right level for the students?

What strategies work for you when you are sequencing lessons and scaffolding learning for a diverse group of students?

What resources are there to help me understand what outcomes are reasonable to expect from students at this year level?

Did I integrate technology appropriately or could you suggest better ways to do this?

Was my questioning effective? Did I use both open and closed questions?

**REFLECTION: HIGHLIGHTS, STRENGTHS, CHALLENGES, EVIDENCE**  
Professional Practice

**Possible prompts for the Mentor Teacher**

How did the resources you used enhance the learning experience?

Which communication strategies worked best to engage the students?

What were the effective elements in the planning and implementation of the learning experience?

What strategies are you using to ensure the learning is scaffolded e.g. within a lesson or across a sequence of lessons?

What strategies worked best for managing student behaviour?

Were your assessment strategies effective? How do you know?

How did you provide feedback to your students?

**Possible prompts for the Preservice Teacher**

What elements of my teaching practice are effective?

From your perspective which behaviour management strategies worked well to provide a safe and supportive learning environment?

What changes do you suggest I could make?

How do you feel the students responded to the learning sequence?

Did I choose the most appropriate assessment strategies and was my feedback instructive to the students' learning?

**OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT/IMPROVEMENTS, GOALS, ACTION PLAN**  
Professional Practice

**Possible prompts for the Mentor Teacher**

What are some of the causal factors in your success that could be transferred into strategies for improvement?

What needs to work better in the future?

What would you do differently next time?

What could you do to make things more successful next time?

What resources will you need...?

What strategies could you implement in the future to improve classroom management?

What communication strategies might support student engagement?

**Possible prompts for the Preservice Teacher**

What communication strategies do you find effective?

What classroom management strategies have worked best for you?

Have you ever...?(e.g. challenging behaviours/circumstances)

What advice do you have about moderating assessment tasks and making good use of assessment data?

What is the school policy in relation to assessment and reporting?

How do you organise your assessment data to inform teaching and reporting?

**REFLECTION: HIGHLIGHTS, STRENGTHS, CHALLENGES, EVIDENCE**  
Professional Engagement

**Possible prompts for the Mentor Teacher**

Explain how this reflection has made you aware of areas of professional learning you would like to pursue?

What improvements have you seen in your own teaching practice?

Could this learning experience have been improved by further collaborating with ....(e.g. Librarian, classroom teacher etc)

Did you feel confident working with other professionals to assist with student learning needs? (e.g. TA, outside agencies, specialist teachers)

**Possible prompts for the Preservice Teacher**

Where do you feel my gaps are in relation to professional engagement?

What improvements have you seen in my teaching practice?

Did I make effective use of the parent helpers/Teacher Assistant?

**OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT/IMPROVEMENTS, GOALS, ACTION PLAN**  
Professional Engagement

**Possible prompts for the Mentor Teacher**

What skills and knowledge do you feel you need to develop in order to feel confident working with other professionals to assist with student learning needs?

What strategies and sources do you have for asking for help in your teaching?

What plans do you have for your ongoing professional learning?

What administrative and organisational activities do you feel you need to continue to develop skills and knowledge about? E.g. planning meetings, excursion organisation, parent-teacher nights

Which school policy and legislative areas would you like to build understanding of?

**Possible prompts for the Preservice Teacher**

Where can I go to enhance my professional learning in relation to....

Can you recommend any professional learning networks/associations? What do you think their benefits are?

Are there members of staff you recommend I visit to observe and discuss their expertise on.....

What administrative and organisational activities could I assist with to ensure the continued development of my professional skills? E.g. planning meetings, excursion organisation, parent-teacher nights

Tell me about your experiences with parents