

The National Professional Standards for Teachers: Standard 6 and 7 Reflective Commentary and Action Plan

The National Professional Standards for Teachers states that teachers should engage in professional learning. This includes engaging with colleagues to seek feedback to improve your teaching practice. During my practicum there were many reflective moments and a lot of feedback given to me from my mentor teacher and supervisor. There are a couple of critiques provided by my mentor teacher on the website that show some recommendations and commendations provided by my supervisor. My mentor teacher and I also had lengthy conversations about what I could improve on and one technique he wanted me to concentrate on was the 'funnel' technique.

I also made sure I talked to other teachers who taught the same classes for other subjects to compare which students respond well to the lessons. The comparisons were interesting in how students conducted themselves in different subjects depending on which subject and which teacher.

Regularly talking to other practicum students was interesting and beneficial in giving each other ideas. For example I regularly talked with another practicum student and she was having a little trouble engaging a handful of students to complete any work and I had the same problem. What we decided to do was research strategies to encompass such students and we did our required research project on it. The strategies we used were taken from a brilliant journal article (the reference can be found on the website) called "Strategies That Differentiate Instruction".

Feedback from multiple colleagues is very important to me as it allows me to grow as a teacher and provides opportunity for external ideas to be gained. That is the most valuable thing about team work is that the more minds you have the more ideas you have and therefore more opportunity to be successful. The school is one big team and everyone's opinion is valid. Helping each other and constructively criticising one another is a good step in improving the quality of teaching and learning in a school.

The National Professional Standards for Teachers states that teachers engage professionally with colleagues, parents/carers and the community. I had few opportunities to engage with parents as my mentor teacher dealt with them. I did send some letters of concern home to parents for students underperforming in any of their tests but most other situations were dealt with by my mentor teacher. Some parents phoned about the letter of concern but most parents did not and lots of these parents did not go to parent and teacher interview. I found it a little disconcerting at the lack of response from parents. There may be reasons for the lack of response such as communication difficulties. Not all people find it easy to talk to others or there may be a language barrier or there may even be a communication barrier.

An example of an interaction with parents involved a female student in my class who I had given detention for chewing gum in class and then the girl's misbehaviour kept escalating throughout the lesson. The student was obviously distressed by the lesson as the next day we received a phone call from the mother asking about the situation and he explained what had happened and justified the consequences given to the student to the mother. She was happy with the justification and the situation ended there. This is an example of engaging with the parent and although I did not physically speak to the parent I was a part of the ordeal. This relationship with parents is good as it shows both parties being actively involved for the student.

I have thought to myself that I can improve on communication with parents. Teachers are usually busy teaching during school hours and it is hard for parents to contact them. Therefore I have put some thought into providing after hour communication via email and so on to keep communication lines open when it may be more convenient for both parties. An idea I have had is to give contact details including phone and e-mail to each parent as to provide easy contact instead of the parents contacting the school to try and get a hold of me. Obviously I want to still separate home and work and not give out personal details of mine and so the phone and e-mail account will be strictly for professional use. I will have this ready to use before school starts in 2013.

Another idea I have had is to set up a website that parents can see exactly what the students are learning at school and the types of activities they are completing in class. This can get parents involved in their child's learning and keep them up-to date on their child's progress. It can also provide information on the forever changing curriculum and show parents what students are required to learn at their year level. This interaction with parents could potentially be a good basis for building positive relationships. I want this website to be functional by midway through 2013.

As a teacher I met professional ethics and responsibilities; complied with school policies; maintained a professional relationship with students, colleagues and parents; and was able to work effectively and confidentially with parents with my mentor teacher. This can be seen in the 'Professional Internship Final Report'. I enjoyed working with my colleagues and they have offered their assistance in the future if I need some advice on anything. This is was a particularly successful practicum for building a network of people I can call for assistance if the time arises.