

**INDEPENDENT EDUCATION UNION OF AUSTRALIA**  
**Recognising Accomplished Teaching**



September 2007

**Background**

The Independent Education Union of Australia has long supported the recognition of accomplished teachers in schools. For two decades, the IEUA has argued for recognition arrangements that provide teachers with opportunities for more varied, fulfilling and better paid jobs and improvement in the educational opportunities and collegial support in schools

Such a package should involve a well supported program of teacher skill development – which the union views as a professional right – that is integrated into a democratically managed program of whole school development.

**Integrated Career Structure**

The IEUA believes that what is required in Australia is the development of an integrated career structure for teachers that is reflective of the work currently underway in Australia around accomplished teacher standards, including the work of teacher registration authorities and subject associations. Such a career structure requires a substantial commitment of resources by employers and governments. The integrated career structure should take into account the many phases in a teacher's career including early career, experienced, highly accomplished and leadership.

- The IEUA believes that appraisal of accomplished teachers must be on the basis of agreed criteria, and that the appraisal must be conducted fairly and impartially by trained personnel.
- The IEUA notes that international research reveals that quotas undermine the collaborative approach which characterises teachers' work. Teachers find themselves competing with colleagues which can

lead to an unproductive work environment and adversarial relationships among staff. Therefore any notion of arbitrary quotas should be rejected.

- The IEUA expects that an indication of genuine commitment to recognising accomplished teachers by employers and governments requires a commitment to ongoing funding for the plan.
- The IEUA notes that research evidence points to the success of any such initiative being dependent on the support of all who will participate or are affected. This includes teachers and their unions, employing authorities, administrators and the community. All these groups should therefore be included in the planning process.
- The IEUA rejects the notion of 'rewarding' teachers on the basis of student outcomes. The IEUA notes that such an approach has been tried and has failed in other countries. Further, such an approach undermines the collegial and supportive team environment critical for quality teaching and learning
- The IEUA also rejects the quite naïve notion of 'rewarding' teachers based on popularity or ranking measures as divisive, lacking in any objectivity and subject to patronage.

### **Framework and Standards**

The IEUA has long supported the concept of professional career pathways underpinned by the right to professional learning and the development of an objective framework that supports, encourages and focuses on teachers' professional development. Such a framework recognises not only the complex nature of the work undertaken by teachers but also the collegial, cooperative and supportive environment that is critical to the 'full' educational interests of students

The development of objective frameworks or standards must reflect recognition for commitment through professional learning, active engagement in the life of the school, as well as the teacher's commitment to and provision of opportunities in the learning environment of students. This reflects the community's expectations that a full and positive school experience provided by accomplished teachers for students is manifestly more substantial and broader ranging than the overly simplistic notion of

assessing teachers through student outcomes on the national testing benchmark agenda.

The IEUA notes and endorses key elements of the TeacherSolutions report by the Center for Teaching Quality ([www.teacherleaders.org](http://www.teacherleaders.org)) and in particular notes the following recommendations underpinning any scheme to recognise accomplished teaching:

- Get the base-pay system right
- Any scheme must be open to all; that is, no artificial cap or quota and not limited to subjects that are tested
- Recognition for relevant additional degrees and Professional Development
- Encourage collaboration
- Incentives for high need areas
- Include teachers in the development

### **Principles**

In this context the IEUA believes that the following principles are necessary in the development of any systemic approach to identifying and rewarding accomplished teachers.

#### ***The importance of accomplished teaching***

1. Student achievement depends to a large extent on the knowledge, skills and application of their teachers
2. Greater value needs to be placed on the work of teachers who attain accomplished teaching standards to provide significant incentives for all teachers to develop their professional practice.
3. If greater value is to be placed on good teaching, it is necessary to increase our ability to evaluate teacher performance in ways that are valid, reliable and fair.

#### ***Defining accomplished teaching***

1. Standards for defining accomplished teaching should be research-based, and subject to rigorous validation.

2. Standards for evaluating teacher performance should reflect the full scope of what teachers are expected to know and be able to do, and factors that are under their control.
3. The knowledge and skill underpinning effective teaching is sophisticated and complex – standards for accomplished teaching and methods for gathering evidence need to reflect this complexity.

### ***Assessing accomplished teaching***

1. Valid methods for evaluating teacher performance focus directly on evidence about what students are doing, learning and experiencing as a result of conditions for learning established by the teacher.
2. Systems for rewarding accomplished teaching should be based on high teaching performance standards, not on quotas. (It is in everyone's interest for all teachers to achieve high teaching standards)
3. Such systems have a different purpose from annual reviews of performance based on contractual duties that are the responsibility of employers: they are intended to support major stages of career advancement.
4. A valid system for assessing teacher performance does not narrow or distort the curriculum that teachers are expected to teach
5. Valid systems for assessing teacher performance require schools with conditions that enable teachers to teach as well as they can
6. Valid systems for assessing teacher performance take into account the context of specific teaching-learning environments

### ***Implementing systems for identifying and recognising accomplished teaching***

1. Governments, employing authorities, registration bodies, the teaching profession and their unions all need to be

involved in designing and implementing systems for identifying recognising accomplished teaching.

2. A system for identifying accomplished teachers needs to be administratively feasible, publicly credible, professionally acceptable, legally defensible and appropriately funded.
3. Systems for identifying teachers who attain high standards of teaching should be profession-wide and provide teachers with a widely-recognised portable certification.
4. Promotional positions need to be available in schools for teachers who are awarded professional certification to capitalise on their expertise and capacity for teacher leadership.
5. An effective system for rewarding accomplished teachers will require additional recurrent funding from governments.
6. Effective systems for identifying accomplished teachers provide incentives and information that lead to improved teaching practices

### **A general framework for teacher standards**

A general framework based on standards developed in collaboration with the profession, research based and verified should identify and support an integrated career structure for teachers.

The Ministerial Council of State and Federal Education Ministers (MCEETYA) has already proposed a National Framework for Standards including four career dimensions (Graduation, Competence, Accomplishment and Leadership) and describes the work of teachers through four categories (Professional Knowledge, Professional Practice, Professional Values and Professional Relationships.)

Based on the work of MCEETYA and the work in a number of jurisdictions in Australia to date, the IEUA believes that the following scaffold can be used to broadly describe the teaching career structure with an appropriate hierarchy of standards for each band.

Pre-service teacher education

Graduate teacher

Competent teacher

Accomplished teacher

Leadership

The IEUA notes the work of a number of State registration authorities on standards including the Queensland College of Teachers, NSW Institute of Teachers and the Victorian Institute of Teachers. The IEUA supports the continuing work of the State registration authorities and believes that it will be possible in time to develop a Nationally Consistent set of standards to describe and identify teachers across the various teacher career bands.

The IEUA notes that a number of industrial models that recognize accomplished teachers, based on a standards-based assessment process, already exist around Australia. These schemes include the 3 Band Model in a number of NSW Independent Schools; the Level 3 Classroom Teacher in Western Australia; Teacher of Exemplary Practice in the Northern Territory; Experienced Teacher (Level 2) classification in Victorian Catholic schools, Advanced Skills Teacher in Queensland Catholic schools and Advanced Skills Teacher in South Australia.

These schemes were developed in negotiation with the relevant union and based on standards developed in collaboration with the profession.

The IEUA supports the ongoing development and trialling of such schemes and the cooperation between various jurisdictions to ensure that best-practice models are known and shared.

Lynne Rolley  
Federal Secretary  
Independent Education Union of Australia  
120 Clarendon St, Southbank, VIC  
(03) 9254 1830  
[www.ieu.org.au](http://www.ieu.org.au)