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Who would accept working for no pay in a school? Student teachers deserve to be paid for their teaching practicums

With half of all student teachers failing to finish their teaching degree, we need a major rethink on how our next generation of teachers can be better supported to complete their studies and stay in the teaching profession.

Addressing the causes of historically low teacher graduation rates requires a broad suite of reforms; however, one obvious solution is to pay trainee teachers for practical placements.

It's a no brainer – no one expects to work for free.

Costs of living remain at near 30-year highs. Unsurprisingly, student teachers tell us that 'placement poverty' is a [major reason why so many are forced to drop out of studies](#). Denied an income other than Austudy, which is about 50% below the poverty line, they also incur out-of-pocket transport costs, parking expenses, and in some cases, short-term accommodation bills.

While students are denied financial support for their practicum, they also often struggle to obtain other part-time work due to the time commitment and location of their allocated school placement.

School placements are vital to develop classroom skills and practical teaching experience. They can be challenging times as new teachers prepare for a highly complex profession; we need to do much more to support successful placements and keep teachers in the classroom.

The first step is to provide financial support to education students undertaking their placement. It will help reduce financial stress that is driving so many teachers away from schools at the very first hurdle. The Federal Government's current consideration of funding such payments is welcome news.

But this is just part of the answer, [initial teacher education \(ITE\) programs](#) must better prepare teachers for the reality of the modern classroom.

School employers [must also play their part by ensuring paid time](#) for new teachers to participate in professional mentoring, along with the provision of reduced teaching loads to ease the spiralling work demands being imposed on teachers the minute they land in their first teaching job.