



TEACHERS WHO CARE RATE HIGHLY WITH STUDENT FILM MAKERS

Our World Teachers' Day student film competition was a great success, attracting more than 200 entries from primary, secondary, P-12 and special schools.

The judging panel was very impressed by the authentic student voice present in the majority of films.

Their answers to the question 'What makes a great teacher?' were delivered with creativity and enthusiasm. A common theme was that a great teacher was one who helped students and truly cared about them.

The winning entries were announced by Institute Chairperson Susan Halliday on World Teachers' Day, 30 October 2009. Wonga Park Primary School won the P-6 category, while Padua College Rosebud was the winner in the 7-12 category.

Wonga Park's film followed the theme 'Secret Super Spies' as curious young secret agents went undercover in the classroom to investigate what a great teacher does. The Padua College entry followed an engaging young host as he humorously quizzed staff at his school about the qualities of a great teacher.

Institute Chief Executive Officer Andrew Ius visited both schools on World Teachers' Day to present their prizes: 10 iPod touch units for classroom use and individual book vouchers for the student film makers.

The eight highly-commended finalists were Ashburton Primary School, Christian College Junior School, Manchester Primary School, Sandringham Primary School, St Joseph's Primary School Brunswick West (Prep A and Prep S), Timbarra Primary School, Ringwood Secondary College and Wonthaggi Secondary College.

You can see the winning and highly-commended entries on our website <www.vit.vic.edu.au> (visit Newsroom, Latest News, 2009, October).

Each class which entered has been sent a special certificate of congratulations signed by Susan Halliday.

Photo caption Excited winners: Teacher Emma Gray and her students at Wonga Park Primary School were thrilled to receive their prizes.

Professional PRACTICE

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NEWSLETTER

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Pictured in the Malvern Central playground left-right: Kerry Clayton, Carly Waldron, Kylie Cooper and Sally Haddow.

A key step in the teacher's journey

A major milestone in a teacher's professional journey is the transition from provisional to full registration.

Professional Practice explores the process involved and the support provided by the Institute, and interviews the principal and three teachers from Malvern Central School about their experiences with the process.

Moving from provisional to full registration – the process explored

To be granted full registration a provisionally registered teacher (PRT) needs to demonstrate to the Institute, via a school based process, that they have met or exceeded standards of professional practice.

Details of these standards are available on the Institute website <www.vit.vic.edu.au> under 'Registered Teachers' then 'I am a Provisionally Registered Teacher'.

A vital part of the process is the recommendation meeting, where a PRT presents evidence of their professional practice to the principal of their school and a panel of their peers.

The panel considers the evidence and makes a recommendation that the new teacher be granted full registration or that their provisional registration be extended.

The Institute has located the recommendation process in schools, as it believes the school is best placed to understand the context of the teacher's practice. A PRT applies for full registration using the school's recommendation to support their application.

This process has significant benefits for the teacher and their school, providing a useful opportunity to discuss key elements of professional practice and review the teacher's development and achievements throughout the year.

The Institute runs a support program for PRTs and their mentors, and the 2010 Supporting Provisionally Registered Teachers program is currently being rolled out across Victoria, with seminars being held in key metropolitan and regional locations from February through to April.

For more information, please contact Rhonda McPhee, Manager, Professional Standards on 03 8601 5841.

The recommendation meeting – a teacher's perspective

Professional Practice recently visited Malvern Central School to interview the principal, Kerry Clayton, and three teachers who've just made the transition from provisional to full registration – Kylie Cooper, Sally Haddow and Carly Waldron.

Kerry, Kylie, Sally and Carly provided some valuable insights into the recommendation meeting and how it works in practice:

Kylie Cooper, Teacher, Malvern Central School

About Kylie

Kylie is now in her second year of teaching. As a graduate she came straight into the Malvern Central team, taking on the role of performing arts specialist. Kylie works with students from prep to grade two, designing a program that incorporates dance, music and drama. She finds watching the children grow and learn, especially through music, very fulfilling. Kylie's biggest challenge so far has been understanding exactly how a school operates.

Kylie's recommendation meeting

"I was a bit nervous going into the recommendation meeting but the panel was excellent and put me at ease straight away. I was allowed the freedom of speaking about any aspect of my unit of work and once I started, my confidence increased and the conversation flowed.

"The questions grew out of the conversation really naturally. I had a lot of support throughout the year and knew the panel well. I had confidence that they were there to support me.

"The interview was conducted in such a professional and relaxed manner, that in a matter of moments I was confident in my knowledge and professional practice. When the meeting was over, I was really proud of myself and happy that I was on my way to achieving full registration."

Sally Haddow, Teacher, Malvern Central School

About Sally

Sally's been teaching for three years – two years full time and one year as a casual relief teacher. She takes grades two and three and has a great deal of experience in working with young children, having been a kindergarten assistant and nanny before becoming a teacher. Sally loves seeing her students grow and develop. She says her biggest challenge is finding the best way to manage classroom behaviour, even though she believes she has good practices in place.

Sally's recommendation meeting

"Before the meeting, I was a little nervous, mainly because I didn't know what to expect. To prepare myself, I read through my collection of evidence which was all in my head anyway, because it was based on the work I had done with the two children I chose to focus on.

"The meeting itself wasn't difficult or stressful. I went through each section of my evidence and talked about my personal reflections on what I felt had worked well and the areas I'd like to improve on. After all, you can never be perfect, you will always make mistakes, but the main thing is to learn from them and do better in the future.

"Once the meeting finished, I felt relieved but I also had a sense of achievement, because it went well and everyone seemed very pleased."

Carly Waldron, Teacher, Malvern Central School

About Carly

Carly's a second year teacher whose subject is LOTE. She teaches Japanese language and culture to students from grade three to year eight. What Carly loves most about teaching is getting to know the students. She says the fact that she has each of her classes for just one hour each week makes it a bit harder to build rapport. Carly says that while a lot of students love LOTE, there are also many who don't, which makes behaviour management one of her biggest challenges.

Carly's recommendation meeting

"I prepared for the meeting by reading through my collection of evidence, reviewing lesson plans and samples of my students' work and looking over the analysis I had done.

"I was quite nervous, because I wasn't sure whether or not I would be asked questions, or if I would simply be talking. However there was no need for me to have worried, because I just had to talk about my work and show examples of it.

"After the meeting was over, I felt really good because there had been a lot of positive energy from everyone on the panel. I thought to myself 'that seemed to go well' and I was happy with what I had covered. My mentor told me I'd handled everything beautifully, which was a big relief."

Kerry Clayton, Principal, Malvern Central School

About Kerry

Kerry has spent the past 15 years in education as a primary school teacher and principal. Kerry's been Malvern Central's principal for just over a year. As a teacher, she enjoyed knowing she could support students to optimise their learning. Her biggest challenge was making a choice between all the potential learning experiences she could offer her students.

Kerry's outlook on the recommendation meeting

"I look on the recommendation meeting as a professional development opportunity for the teacher who's applying for full registration. It's not just a show and tell exercise, but a chance to articulate and examine their professional practice.

"My reason for being in this role is to develop other teachers and support them to be the very best they can be. And the recommendation meetings are an important part of that journey. For me, participating in those meetings is one of the nicest parts of my job.

"Each of the teachers is an individual and brings something unique to our school. I gain a sense of pride from knowing that they will be taking the profession further in the future."

"There was no need for me to have worried, because I just had to talk about my work and show examples of it."

Professional ethics: the foundation of quality teaching

Recognising that the ethical practice of teachers does not reside in codes alone, a group of teacher educators at Deakin and Monash Universities has initiated a research project that offers a framework for thinking about professional ethics.

The 'Professional ethics of English language teachers' project involves secondary school teachers from the south-eastern region of Melbourne. It aims to capture significantly different examples of how English language teachers negotiate the connection between professional standards, accountability and ethics. The research is, nevertheless, relevant to all teachers.

In the following article, Professor Brenton Doecke, Associate Professor Alex Kostogriz and Ms Bella Illesca, all of Deakin University, and Dr Graham Parr of Monash University, discuss their research, which began in 2009 and runs until the end of 2010.



Professional standards present an ideal that teachers sometimes feel is impossible to achieve in their day-to-day practice.

Worse, they can make teachers feel they are always judged against a set of 'dos and don'ts'.

The popular media certainly encourage people to judge what teachers do, and the My School website arguably exacerbates this situation, making teachers feel they are continually in the spotlight.

Faced with a situation where everyone seems to have an opinion about teaching, it can be difficult for teachers to feel confident about the decisions they make to meet the needs of young people in their care.

In this respect, professional standards, such as those formulated by the Victorian Institute of Teaching, can prove a valuable resource, allowing teachers to point to a shared set of values and beliefs to justify their decisions.

This leads to the subject of professional ethics, not simply as a code that sets limits to professional practice, but as a life-affirming responsiveness to others, to social and cultural differences, and to the multiplicity of abilities and needs of children in our schools.

Teaching is already situated in relation to others in that teachers are obliged to respond to their students. Everyone is saying 'Here I am!' – a call every teacher recognises and struggles to answer.

For at this level of responsiveness there are no codes of conduct that will unfailingly enable a teacher to make the right decision. How one acts ethically is played out fully only in relation to this particular student on this particular day.

Although the teachers participating in our research project share certain values and assumptions, they undoubtedly have very different teaching experiences, and their classroom practices are not necessarily transparent to professionals working in other educational settings.

The professional challenges they face at each site also vary greatly. The inquiry into the professional ethics of teachers has a distinctly collaborative nature. It involves observations, a joint construction of classroom practice accounts and group discussions by participating teachers.

This approach has generated a shared sense of the professional context in which the teacher is operating and an atmosphere of trust in which teachers are prepared to talk about their pedagogical practice and share their understanding of professional ethics.

The question that has been asked of the research data is not whether the lessons observed actually achieve the teachers' stated aims. But rather, the key question is how the teacher responds to the needs of the students

in their classroom, and the kinds of human sociability that are enacted through such practices.

Data analysed so far shows that teachers, as members of the profession, can draw up a code of practice. However, there is more to being an ethical professional than following rules.

Professional ethics inevitably come down to decisions made by individual teachers. They have to balance 'situated' or context-specific responses to students and colleagues with wider ideals of professional practice.

Hence, besides addressing the broader contexts of influence on the profession to develop codes of professional ethics, this project sheds some light on how teachers conceive of ethics in their local practices, particularly in the domain of classroom events.

This area of concern enables us to investigate the teachers' sense of responsibility and how they negotiate or make their decisions while responding to differences in the classroom and to the broader demands of a community.

The preliminary findings help us develop a notion of professional ethics which involves both professional obligation and moral decision-making.

The significance of this project lies in the development of a situated perspective on the professional ethics of teachers and in its participatory approach to research design and implementation.

These two features of the project ensure rich collaborative possibilities for rethinking the professional ethics of teachers relationally. They generate significant potential for intervention in debates over the standards of professional practice in multicultural and socially diverse classrooms.

Furthermore, this project emphasises the primacy of ethics in quality teaching. The urgent need to improve teaching is inseparable from raising an awareness of professional ethics as a foundation of respectful and responsible practice.

By emphasising the central role of recognition of, and responsiveness to, sociocultural difference, the project taps into teachers' understandings of ethics as an inseparable part of everyday relations.

The reconceptualization of ethics in this way engages directly with the needs of teachers, students and professional communities in times of major curriculum reform.

To educate young people ethically is to raise their awareness of social justice and responsibility, qualities made imperative in a multicultural and multivoiced society like Australia.

Authors Brenton Doecke, Alex Kostogriz,
Graham Parr & Bella Illesca

Legislation set to improve Institute efficiency and effectiveness

Introduced into the Victorian Parliament in December 2009, the Education and Training Reform Amendment Bill 2009 makes a number of important changes to the role, function, structure and operations of the Victorian Institute of Teaching.

The Bill includes the proposed first tranche of legislative amendments arising from the ministerial review of the Institute completed in 2008.

In delivering the second reading speech for the Bill, Education Minister Bronwyn Pike told Parliament the changes would improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Institute, with direct benefits for teachers, schools, children and their families.

In a key reform, the size of the Institute's governing council will be reduced from 20 to 12 members, a move designed to complement more streamlined decision making and deliver a more efficient service to teachers. Effective from the expiry date of the term of office of current councillors, the smaller council will bring the Institute into line with governance structures for other regulatory bodies.

Another important change will be to more strongly emphasise the role of the Institute as a regulator.

To help provide a more efficient registration service to Victorian teachers, renewal of registration will progressively happen every year, to coincide with the proposed common annual fee date. This process of annualised renewal is expected to be implemented from September 2011. However, for teachers already in a five-year renewal period, their registration will continue until the five-year expiry date.

And in a broadening of the Institute's current powers, with an expected proclamation date of 1 January 2011, the Bill gives the Institute power to investigate allegations below the level of serious misconduct and to impose a greater range of sanctions. These sanctions include that a teacher undertake specified further education or training and that a teacher's registration be cancelled for a period of time.

The Bill also grants the Institute power to initiate an investigation in relation to a registered teacher, under certain circumstances, without a complaint or formal notification. This will provide the Institute with greater capacity to investigate cases that it previously didn't have the power to look into.

New online services for teachers on the way

The Institute is updating its information management system and website. The changes are expected to be implemented later this year.

What will this mean for teachers?

Teachers and new applicants will have password access via a portal to a secure section of the Institute's website. You will be able to update your address and contact details online via your portal.

Many forms and applications can be submitted directly via the Internet, such as application for fee waiver, application for renewal of registration and application to move from provisional to full registration.

Some forms and applications will still need certified documentary evidence to be mailed to the Institute, but the actual application information can be submitted using your portal. This way you can be sure the details are entered correctly and there'll be no waiting while a staff member types these in for you, as is presently the case with applications for registration and consent forms for a national criminal history record check.

Not only but also . . .

In addition to their current password access, principals will be able to update their school's address and contact details. For schools, all online password communications will be via the portal – including recommendations for full registration.

Once the changes are fully implemented, through your portal you will also be able to:

- check past correspondence from the Institute
- receive Institute correspondence by email, rather than in hard copy, if you prefer
- register for Institute seminars.



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LATEST UPDATES

CRT connection

The Institute continues to support casual relief teachers (CRTs) in their professional learning, with full-day seminars being held across the state during 2010, free of charge to CRTs. Institute-supported CRT networks also meet regularly in local areas.

For details of first semester seminars and network leaders in your region, visit the Institute's website <www.vit.vic.edu.au>. Click on 'Registered teachers', then 'I am a casual relief teacher'.

You can also contact Dawn Colcott on 8601 5842 or <dawn.colcott@vit.vic.edu.au> for more details on how the Institute supports you.

Field Officer's note

Are we teachers 24/7? Do we stop being teachers when we leave the school grounds? Are we still teachers when we're at the MCG? What about when we are at a local restaurant?

These questions arise when Field Officers are talking with teachers about the Victorian Teaching Profession Code of Conduct, particularly Principle 1.5: *Teachers are always in a professional relationship with the students in their school, whether at school or not.*

A teacher may visit the local supermarket and find students from their school stacking shelves or at the checkout. A teacher may meet a parent who is also shopping in the supermarket and the parent may want to discuss an aspect of school life or their child's academic progress. Are teachers still teachers in all these circumstances?

A teacher may have a child at the school which employs them. The child invites their school friends for a 'sleep over' or to watch a DVD. Is the teacher a parent or a teacher in this situation?

Teachers should think carefully about the occasion and be aware of the potential consequences of any personal decisions they make.

A staff discussion around these issues can help teachers refine their thinking about the professional and ethical dimensions of their work.

A Field Officer is available to visit your school and hold a discussion based around the Code of Conduct at a staff meeting or professional learning session.

Contact Mary Walker on 03 8601 5845 or email her on <mary.walker@vit.vic.edu.au> to organise a date and time.

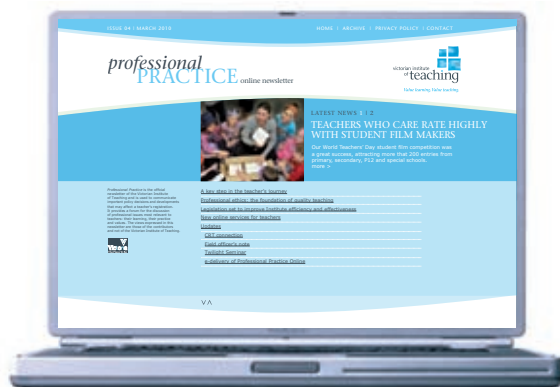
Twilight Seminar

Leading Melbourne clinical psychologist Dr Simon Crisp was guest presenter at the Institute's first Twilight Seminar for 2010, held on 25 February, titled 'A whole school framework for adolescent psychological health, safety and well being'.

The next Twilight Seminar will be held on 27 May. If you'd like to be included on the invitation list, please contact Valmai Lee at the Institute on (03) 8601 5849 or email <valmai.lee@vit.vic.edu.au>.

e-delivery of Professional Practice Online

About 25,000 teachers have opted for electronic delivery of *Professional Practice as Professional Practice Online*. The offer to choose electronic delivery remains open. Teachers who wish to take up this option should call 1300 888 067 or email <vit@vit.vic.edu.au>.



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