

Draft Professional Standards for Teaching School Geography

Cultivating geographical imagination and understanding

Accomplished geography teaching engages students in the classroom and in the field and is built on substantive knowledge of the discipline. It involves deep understanding of geography teaching, continual planning, evaluation and renewal of professional practice.

Category statement	Standards statement
Knowing geography and geography curriculum	<p>Accomplished geography teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• know the breadth and depth of the academic discipline including its concepts, skills, values and understandings;• assist students to understand that geography draws from the physical sciences, the social sciences and the humanities;• understand current curriculum documents and know the reasons for curriculum change;• locate geography within a wider educational context, making connections with other curricula and co-curricula areas.
Fostering geographical inquiry and fieldwork	<p>Accomplished geography teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• encourage students to carry out a range of geographical inquiries, from structured to more open ended and active investigations, from prearranged problem solving and open ended discovery to negotiated inquiry. Through these inquiries, students identify topics, generate questions, evaluate the quality of evidence, process and analyse data, select presentation methods to communicate the research findings effectively, think creatively about geographical issues, propose individual or group action in response to the research findings and, where appropriate, take such action;• make judgements about the essential skills, processes and values that students need to develop to carry out meaningful and ethical geographical inquiries;• support students to undertake inquiry in the field, to select and use fieldwork tools and techniques, ranging from simple purpose-built equipment to digital and video cameras, GIS and environmental sensors, appropriately, safely and efficiently.

<p>Developing geographical thinking and communication</p>	<p>Accomplished geography teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promote an understanding of both physical processes and human activities and how they relate to each other in place, space and environments; • assemble the many strands of geography, providing multiple resources for the further development of geographical thinking by students; they set this comprehensive knowledge in contemporary contexts, opening the way for significant interconnections to be made; • support students to think spatially and use maps, visual images and new technologies, including geographical information systems (GIS), to obtain, present, analyse and evaluate information; • use case studies to give support to the subject's breadth and depth; • encourage students to recognise their personal geographies and to use these lived experiences as an entry point to understanding the complexities of the contemporary world, seen through events and issues arising at personal, local, national and global scales; • tell 'stories' which have real world contexts, whether they are based on the teacher's own life experiences, the teacher's own personal geographies or others' narratives and in so doing they make visible their geographical thinking.
<p>Understanding students and their communities</p>	<p>Accomplished geography teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • build bridges between the sophisticated understanding of the teacher and the developing understanding of the student; • bring an enriched understanding of students because of their particular sensibility to students' communities; they are alert to the spaces and places students occupy so that they can incorporate students' personal geographies into learning sequences, drawing clear connections with students' prior knowledge and identities, from the local community and beyond; • enhance student learning by using students' multiple ways of knowing and other background elements such as their social and cultural perspectives ; • enrich learning by incorporating particular insights into the local community, as a social network of interacting individuals, groups and social interests, in space, to establish relevance and connection and incorporate these resources into the curriculum.
<p>Establishing a safe, supportive and intellectually challenging learning environment</p>	<p>Accomplished geography teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • foster dynamic and challenging learning environments characterised by mutual trust, equity, risk taking, independence, interdependence and collaboration; they create conditions for students to question, rather than accept without further thought, complex geographical ideas and issues; • design teaching strategies specifically for different backgrounds, learning preferences, and dispositions of their students;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • generate and communicate to the students a ‘need to know’ and their own high expectations, thereby promoting study of the complexities of place, space and environments; • facilitate students’ responsibility for learning, to foster students’ ability to take initiatives; in so doing they affirm the students’ capacities as active participants in their own learning.
<p>Understanding geography teaching – pedagogical practices</p>	<p>Accomplished geography teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have current and extensive understanding of geographical education processes — pedagogical content knowledge; they select, adapt and create field specific and general teaching approaches and resources to support deep understanding of place, space and environments and they justify their choices about planning and teaching; • promote geographic inquiry, through which information is gathered from a variety of sources, including fieldwork, libraries, the internet and digital media, official agencies and print media; • use fieldwork and outdoor learning as a key practice to develop students’ data collection, analysis and evaluative skills to deepen their understanding of place, space and environments; • systematically introduce and develop a range of cartographic, statistical and graphical geographical tools and skills that enable students to think and communicate geographically, including making and interpreting maps, and a range of other representation collectively described as graphicacy and teach students to critically evaluate maps and other forms of representation.
<p>Planning, assessing and reporting</p>	<p>Accomplished geography teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • design their curriculum in such a way as to spark an interest amongst all students, an appeal that is active, contemporary, enlivening and sustained; • plan and continually monitor their students’ learning, using a wide range of formal and informal assessments methods; • prepare assessment for learning recognising the positive achievements of students and indicate the directions for improvement; • conduct summative assessment which is made available to students and care-givers; • use assessment methods that are appropriate, valid and reliable; in reporting students’ achievements and difficulties, they employ a variety of procedures, ensuring they use clear and accurate language that is suitable for the intended audience; • employ diagnostic assessment to inform their own teaching and student understanding.

<p>Progressing professional growth and development</p>	<p>Accomplished geography teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • place students at the centre of the learning experience while they continue to learn and develop as teachers; acknowledging that the greater the teacher learning, the more students learn as well; their focus is on critically applying their learning to improve student achievement; • recognise that the subject of geography is dynamic and evolving and therefore seek opportunities to further develop their disciplinary knowledge base; • commit themselves to learning formally, and to critically reflecting on their experiences both within the classroom and more widely, through travel, from literature and the arts and through engagement with professional learning communities.
<p>Learning and working collegially</p>	<p>Accomplished geography teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • build a culture of professional improvement by learning from and with their fellow teachers as well as learning from research; supported by the professional and school community, they create the conditions for teachers to teach each other, support their peers, and deepen their knowledge about their students and their subject; • play an active role in their professional associations, promoting professional learning and talking publicly about their practice and involvement in facilitating learning for other teachers; • engage actively as members of their professional and wider community and work collegially with fellow teachers to improve their teaching and enhance student learning; they create conditions for the growth of open and collaborative school cultures whereby parents and community members can play a dynamic role in supporting student learning about the world; • distribute and share their teaching expertise towards the continuing construction of a professional knowledge base for school geography; • communicate educational ideas and promote geographical education towards contributing to the resilience and renewal of their professional field.

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The draft of these standards is now complete. The next step in the process to develop standards for teaching school geography is to seek feedback from Australian teachers. The draft can be accessed at www.agta.asn.au

The writers and facilitators of the final draft welcome your feedback and ask that you use the online survey facility www.agta.asn.au to respond to the document by 12 March 2010. Emailed and telephoned replies are also welcome.

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