



Professional Standards for Accomplished Teaching of School Geography

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Purpose

These standards establish a framework for geography teachers to reflect individually and collectively on their professional practice and engage in continuing inquiry into their own teaching. They provide aspirational goals for teaching as the standards are written to describe highly accomplished geography teaching. They articulate common and distinctive elements of the specialised practice of geography teaching as an alternative to generic standards. The standards are designed to offer a basis for planning professional learning and are supported by the professional learning website www.geogstandards.edu.au

Overview of the Standards

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, continual planning, evaluation and renewal of teachers' professional knowledge and practice.

1. Knowing geography and geography curriculum
2. Fostering geographical inquiry and fieldwork
3. Developing geographical thinking and communication
4. Understanding students and their communities
5. Establishing a safe, supportive and intellectually challenging learning environment
6. Understanding geography teaching – pedagogical practices
7. Planning, assessing and reporting
8. Progressing professional growth and development
9. Learning and working collegially

1. Knowing geography and geography curriculum

Accomplished geography teachers:

- 1.1 know the breadth and depth of the academic discipline including its concepts, skills, values and understandings
- 1.2 assist students to understand that geography draws from the physical sciences, the social sciences and the humanities
- 1.3 understand current curriculum documents and reasons for curriculum change
- 1.4 locate geography within a wider educational context, making connections with other curricular and co-curricular areas

2. Fostering geographical inquiry and fieldwork

Accomplished geography teachers:

- 2.1 encourage students to carry out a range of geographical inquiries, from structured to more open-ended and active investigations, from prearranged problem-solving and 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
- 2.2 make judgements about the essential skills, processes, understandings and values that students need to develop to carry out meaningful and ethical geographical inquiries
- 2.3 support students to undertake inquiry in the field, and to select and use fieldwork tools and techniques appropriately, safely and efficiently. Tools may range from simple purpose-built equipment to digital and video cameras, GIS and environmental sensors.

3. Developing geographical thinking and communication

Accomplished geography teachers:

- 3.1 promote understandings of physical and human processes, structures and patterns and their interdependence in place, space and time
- 3.2 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
- 3.3 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
- 3.4 provide students with varied contexts through which to construct a deep understanding of geographical concepts and use case studies to give support to the subject's breadth and depth
- 3.5 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
- 3.6 share narratives with students which have real world contexts, whether they are based on the teacher's own life experiences or others' narratives and, in so doing, they make visible their geographical thinking.

4. Understanding students and their communities

Accomplished geography teachers:

- 4.1 creatively link their sophisticated geographical understandings with the diverse and developing geographical understandings of their students
- 4.2 bring an enriched understanding of students to the classroom because of their particular sensibility to students' diverse communities. They are alert to the spaces and places that students occupy so they can incorporate students' personal geographies into learning sequences, drawing clear connections with students' prior knowledge and identities from the local community and beyond
- 4.3 enhance student learning by using students' multiple ways of knowing and other background elements such as their social and cultural perspectives
- 4.4 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.

5. Establishing a safe, supportive and intellectually challenging learning environment

Accomplished geography teachers:

- 5.1 foster dynamic and challenging learning environments characterised by mutual trust, equity, risk taking, independence, interdependence and collaboration; they create conditions for students to question complex geographical ideas and issues, rather than accept them without further thought
- 5.2 design teaching strategies specifically for the different backgrounds, learning preferences and dispositions of their students
- 5.3 generate in students a 'need to know' attitude and communicate their own high expectations, thereby promoting study of the complexities of place, space and environments
- 5.4 facilitate students' responsibility for learning and foster their ability to take initiatives; in so doing they affirm students as active participants in their own learning.

6. Understanding geography teaching – pedagogical practices

Accomplished geography teachers:

- 6.1 have current and extensive understanding of geographical education processes, including 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
- 6.2 promote gathering of information for geographic inquiry from a variety of sources, including fieldwork, libraries, the internet, digital and print media
- 6.3 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
- 6.4 systematically introduce and develop a range of cartographic, statistical and graphical tools and skills that enable students to think and communicate geographically. This includes making and interpreting maps, and a range of other representations collectively described as graphicacy. They teach students to critically evaluate maps and other forms of representation.

7. Planning, assessing and reporting

Accomplished geography teachers:

- 7.1 design curriculum to develop geographical thinking in their students in such a way as to spark an interest among all students – an interest that is active, contemporary, enlivening and sustained
- 7.2 plan and continually monitor their students' learning, using a wide range of formal and informal assessment methods
- 7.3 prepare assessment for learning, recognising the positive achievements of students and indicating directions for improvement
- 7.4 conduct summative assessment which is made available to students and care-givers
- 7.5 use assessment methods that are appropriate, valid and reliable; in reporting students' achievements and areas for improvement, they employ a variety of procedures, ensuring they use clear and accurate language that is suitable for the intended audience
- 7.6 employ diagnostic assessment to inform their own teaching and student understanding.

8. Progressing professional growth and development

Accomplished geography teachers:

- 8.1 continue to learn and develop as teachers, acknowledging that the greater the teacher learning, the more students learn as well
- 8.2 recognise that the subject of geography is dynamic and evolving and therefore seek opportunities to further develop their disciplinary knowledge base
- 8.3 commit themselves to learning formally and to reflecting critically on their experiences both within the classroom and more widely, through travel, from literature and the arts and through engagement with professional learning communities.

9. Learning and working collegially

Accomplished geography teachers:

- 9.1 build a culture of professional improvement by learning from and with their fellow teachers as well as learning from research
- 9.2 engage actively as members of their professional and wider community and work collegially with fellow teachers to improve their teaching and enhance student learning. In so doing, 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
- 9.3 distribute and share their teaching expertise towards the continuing construction of a professional knowledge base for school geography
- 9.4 communicate educational ideas and promote geographical education, contributing to the resilience and renewal of their professional field.

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The Standards were developed through videotaping and interviewing accomplished geography teachers and their students at work in government and non-government schools in Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia. The process then involved consultation with the profession across Australia. Overall, the purpose of the project was to develop a dynamic set of subject specific standards for teaching school geography in Australian schools, which built on a platform of classroom practice, for the purpose of enhancing teacher professional learning.



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For more information about
the GEOGstandards project
please visit the website:
www.geogstandards.edu.au