



Quality teaching in NSW public schools

Information for parents, caregivers and the community

What is the Quality teaching in NSW public schools: Discussion paper?

The discussion paper called *Quality teaching in NSW public schools* has been sent to all government school teachers in NSW. The paper offers helpful advice on teaching and communicating with young people in the classroom. It is designed for use across all subjects to improve the learning outcomes of students from Kindergarten to Year 12. The paper was developed by Dr James Ladwig and Professor Jennifer Gore from the University of Newcastle. It is based on the best current national and international research into quality teaching but also builds, most importantly, on what teachers know and value, and many do already in terms of quality teaching practice.

Principals and school executive are using this resource as a starting point for discussions with teachers and the community about teaching practice in their schools. Teachers are using the model outlined in the paper as a way of thinking about what they do in the classroom and how they can improve what they do to achieve better learning outcomes for their students.

Feedback about using this model will be collected over time. If necessary, changes can be made to it in order to further improve the quality of teaching in government schools.

What is pedagogy?

The discussion paper uses the word “pedagogy” when referring to teaching. Pedagogy is defined as “the art and science of teaching”. It is more about how teaching is done rather than what is taught, although the two are inter-connected. Pedagogy is about the teaching and learning activities teachers use and how they assess their students’ progress.

What are the key features?

The research into quality teaching has shown that there are three main features of classroom practice that are linked to improved student learning outcomes. They are:

- teaching that promotes high standards of **intellectual quality**
- teaching that promotes a **quality learning environment**
- teaching that develops and makes clear to students the **significance** of their work.

Teaching that focuses on these three features has a positive effect on students’ learning. It engages and challenges students and leads to better educational outcomes.

What does intellectual quality mean?

Teaching that focuses on producing deep knowledge and understanding of key ideas and skills has **intellectual quality**. Deep knowledge of a topic is gained by focusing on a small number of key ideas and having an understanding of the links between these ideas.

Students are asked to analyse and evaluate information, being aware that there are many ways of looking at a problem and various ways of achieving a solution. Then they are asked to talk, in depth, about these ideas with their teacher and classmates.

What is a quality learning environment?

In a **quality learning environment** teachers have high expectations that their students will achieve good results. They explain clearly to students the quality of work they are expected to produce and give students some choice of learning activities.

In a classroom where students and teachers treat each other with respect, and where students are involved in work that interests them and are encouraged by their teacher and their classmates, learning is enhanced and misbehaviour is uncommon.

What does significance mean?

The best teaching links new lessons with what students already know. This may be from things they have learned previously in school or what they know from their lives outside school and in their family. Teachers include viewpoints and understanding from different cultures in lessons. Teachers demonstrate that different types of knowledge are valued and legitimate.

Teachers explain the purpose of learning a particular topic or skill. This is important because it makes learning relevant to students and the world in which they live. Teachers ensure all students are included, and have input into the teaching-learning process. Students are clear about why they are studying a particular topic.

What can I do at home to help?

The approach is all about teaching students to think, not just recite facts. It is about engaging and encouraging students. While the main focus of the quality teaching paper is on the classroom, parents can do a lot to help. Some useful starting points are:

- Challenge your child with problems and help them work out solutions.
- Encourage your child to investigate, to question, and to analyse situations.
- Show your child how an idea connects to your heritage.
- Have long conversations where you ask your child to explain how they came to know something.
- Expect the best.

How do I find out more?

- Attend a meeting at your school where *Quality teaching in NSW public schools* is being discussed. Participate in ongoing forums and discussions.
- Ask your school for a copy of the *Quality teaching in NSW public schools: Discussion paper*.
- Visit the web site at: www.curriculumsupport.nsw.edu.au and go to the quality teaching page. Here you will find a copy of the discussion paper, information about the research on which the approach is based and other resources.



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