



Rural Professional Experience Program

Extended induction



Table of contents

Introduction	3
Testimonials	4
1. Personal and professional preparation	6
2. Starting the placement	8
3. During the placement	10
4. After your placement	18

Introduction

Congratulations on your successful placement in the Rural Professional Experience Program

This document has been developed to support you in establishing and managing your rural professional experience placement. Use it in conjunction with the induction information provided on the [pre-service teacher webpage](#) and information available from the Teacher Education Partnership Team.

The department acknowledges the traditional owners and custodians of country throughout NSW and their continuing connection to land, waterways, culture, lore and community.

We pay our respects to Elders past, present and future.

Testimonials

"The staff have been very supportive. I feel comfortable asking not only my mentor, but anyone in the staffroom for help. Teachers in other faculties have been very friendly and accommodating in allowing me to observe their lessons. The principal has been very friendly and welcoming."

**Alahna, Coonabarabran High School
(2020 placement)**

"I think the experience was very valuable to have insight into the differences in community and school when comparing to city schools. The organisation was really seamless."

**Alex, Bingara Central School
(2021 placement)**

"It was definitely the most enjoyable and best learning experience I've had on a placement."

**Samuel, Balranald Central School
(2020 placement)**

"Being in 3/4S has been an incredible opportunity for me to learn and grow as a teacher. The students have all been very kind and patient as I continue to improve and have welcomed me into the school community. The experience they have provided me with will help me as I continue learning and I hope to return and teach rural in the future."

**Kate, Narrandera Public School
(2021 placement)**

"The placement was amazing and I wouldn't change it. Please send more students to Warialda Public School. I could not fault it. Communication with the department was second to none."

**Elizabeth, Warialda Public School
(2021 placement)**





1. Personal and professional preparation

As you will soon learn, living in a rural community is very rewarding. A rural professional experience placement will provide you with a unique opportunity to experience working in a rural setting, hopefully encouraging you to consider rural teaching as a longer-term career option.

The **Regional Development Australia Program** can provide you with the latest community information and career opportunities at your destination for you (and your family). Once you are on the main page, scroll down and find the region your school is in. Then you can visit the specific regional website for the area to find out more about the town.

For example: If your placement is at Broken Hill, Ivanhoe, Menindee, Silverton, Tibooburra, White Cliffs or Wilcannia, visit the **Far West NSW** page.

This opportunity will be a personal and professional development experience for you. The rural school you are teaching in will benefit greatly from your skills and expertise. The NSW Department of Education has a **Rural and Remote Education unit** and **Rural and Remote incentive package** that are designed to attract and retain quality teachers and leaders to rural and remote schools.

Make your first contact through email

The NSW Department of Education would have electronically introduced you to your placement school. Follow up with a personal email to your supervising teacher and Cc the principal into this. Introduce yourself and confirm a few details like placement dates and university requirements. Ask about school hours, staff meeting times, any specific dress code requirements, units of work you will be responsible for and anything they would like you to prepare for your first week. In this email tell them about your professional experience goals and briefly explain your intended travel plans. You may like to finish off this email by asking if there is a suitable time for a phone conversation.



Individual Professional Development



Request to join some of the **'Statewide Staffrooms'** that have been designed for Early Learning, Primary, Secondary, Literacy and Numeracy and Specialist Teachers.



There are also a range of **Facebook groups** and **online support websites** where staff share ideas and ask questions. Scroll through and read the wealth of information in the existing posts.



Spend time looking at the **Centre for Education and Statistics and Evaluation (CESE)** site. It is your go-to place to review research that has been summarised into an educational context for teachers and school leaders. This information will inform your practice and help you understand the students and how they learn. For example, develop your knowledge and understanding on how trauma impacts on student learning and review the evidence-based **trauma informed practices** that work in schools and classrooms.



Small schools are very different to large schools, so **start thinking about the breadth of each syllabus**. For example, if you are programming for a multi-stage class in a small rural school, ask for a copy of the scope and sequence in your initial email. You can then use that scope and sequence to inform your focuses. Stand back and take a look at the big picture first, you will notice that there are similar threads from K - 6 (and 7 - 10), take notice of the changing verbs. It is also a good idea to join the multi-stage & small school classes Facebook group. This private group is designed for K - 6 teachers and pre-service teachers working in multi-stage and small schools in Australia.



Familiarise yourself with your host school by going online and looking at their **current school plan** and the **latest annual school report**. This will allow you to get a feel for the school.



2. Starting the placement

Get to know the students, school and local area

Be mindful that you are new to a community. Take time to gain an understanding of your new location, the school, the wider community and your colleagues.

Some suggestions to introduce yourself include:

- an introduction in the school's newsletter or Facebook page;
- attending a Parents and Citizens' Association (P&C) meeting;
- contacting the Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG) and asking if you could attend a meeting; or
- with your supervisor's and principal's support, send a letter home to class parents and carers that supports the pedagogy of story sharing. Outline the nature and duration of your visit, including some of your own background interests and hobbies.

We encourage you to read the school newsletter view the school website and join local community Facebook pages to discover what events are taking place at the school and in the local community during your placement. For example, some students completed a placement during the **Broken Heel festival** so they were able to bring appropriate clothing to wear. Sometimes it might be a local sporting team playing in a grand final so you can bring a jumper in the local team colours to support that team.



Getting to know each student and how they learn is a crucial aspect of your role as a teacher.

Strong Start, Great Teachers

Strong Start, Great Teachers has eight key practices that support teachers in the classroom. Trialling these practices with the support of your supervisor will improve student engagement. There are a range of fantastic resources available to assist teachers in their preparation, such as the **Teaching for Inclusion** website which offers practical suggestions for preparing and delivering an appropriate and engaging curriculum.

If you are planning for a multi-stage class, keep your programming simple, you do not necessarily need to plan activities for all grades. Try grouping your students according to ability (or progressions) instead of year groups. Plan for students to have opportunities for intensive learning, consolidated drills and skills, small group work as well as independent learning activities. Many small schools will already have set literacy and numeracy sessions in place where all students complete the same topic at the same time. E.g. all students K - 6 do addition during that session.

During your observation period, look at what the school (not just your classroom) already has in place and become familiar with their programs. Recognise the value of websites like **Inquisitive** which are designed to save teachers' time.

The **Disability Standards for Education (Pre-Service Teachers) Training** is free professional learning designed to help you understand and uphold your legal obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA) and the Disability Standards for Education 2005. These lessons focus on ways to provide fair access to education for students with disability. As 20% of students in NSW public schools present with complex learning needs, and 97% of these students learn in mainstream classrooms, it is important to develop a deep understanding of how best to cater to all students within your classroom and plan for success. Discuss all learning matters with your supervisor and ask to view the learning profiles of all students. The NSW Department of Education offers additional resources to support your **understanding of students with disability and additional needs**.



Get to know your students. At the NSW Department of Education, we believe every student should be known, valued and cared for.

3. During the placement

High Potential and Gifted students

The High Potential and Gifted Education Policy is about supporting equity as well as excellence in our rural and remote schools. The policy promotes engagement and challenge for all students, including high potential and gifted students across four domains of potential – intellectual, social-emotional, creative and physical.

As with students in major metropolitan centres, high potential and gifted students are not a homogeneous group. Optimal learning environments where students feel supported and encouraged to achieve personal **excellence** in their learning, will ensure that all students including high potential and gifted students have the opportunity to achieve their best. Teaching and learning experiences should be supported by **research** into effective practices for facilitating high achievement and **talent development**. **The High Potential and Gifted Education section of the Education website** offers a range of advice, tools and resources.

Options for students in rural and remote areas can include:

- effective strategies such as appropriate **assessment and identification**, **differentiation**, **acceleration** and **grouping**;
- **enrichment and extra-curricular programs**;
- online programs and virtual classrooms that provide more advanced learning such as **DART** and **Aurora College**;
- accessing local expertise and using the **community as a resource**; and
- **connecting** high potential and gifted learners with like-minded peers and mentors.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

Aboriginal culture and communities are diverse across NSW. To support the teaching and learning of Aboriginal students in your classroom, look for professional learning run by the Regional Aboriginal Education team who can develop your knowledge based on the local context. This professional learning is offered online (courses scheduled on MyPL each term) and face-to-face in schools. Some of these courses include; Aboriginal Education Policy, Turning Policy into Action, Aboriginal Histories and Culture, Welcome to and Acknowledgement of Country, Aboriginal Pedagogies and Engaging with Aboriginal Students, Families and Communities.

With advice from your supervisor, talk with the schools' Aboriginal community when implementing 'Our Ways - **Effective Practices in Aboriginal Education**' into your planning for success. The way we use the different lenses can change in different settings as each local **AECG** has different outcomes, targets and goals they are working towards. This framework is a great starting point as it provides eight ways to support Aboriginal students in their journey to achieving their potential.

Aboriginal students in NSW public schools have a Personalised Learning Pathway (PLP), which is developed with the student, their parents/carers and their teachers. Using the information in the PLP is an effective tool for increasing student engagement in the classroom and ultimately improving student learning outcomes and educational aspirations.

English as an Additional Language / Dialect students

26% of the Australian population are born overseas. Our English as an Additional Language/ Dialect (EAL/D) students are another very diverse group. Many are learning English as a third or fourth language. This group of students also incorporates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who do not speak Standard Australian English. On **this page** you will find resources and information to support EAL/D students and students from refugee backgrounds particularly with the development of their literacy and numeracy skills. Some further examples of **best practice classroom strategies** that support an inclusive curriculum where diversity is valued and celebrated includes the use of bilingual books and texts which represent diversity through stories and illustrations and increasing the use of visual stimuli.



It is important to maintain a work/life balance while being prepared to assist with extracurricular activities.

Understand how best to support your students



Some students can be time poor as they may also be working or supporting other family members. For example, during harvest their workload will increase. As their teacher, still maintain high expectations by offering these students flexibility, choice in assessment and continue to use a variety of teaching and learning activities.



All students benefit from scaffolding. Using a step by step approach to build students' knowledge also supports inclusive practices. Always apply the theory around the 'zone of proximal development' when planning your lessons.



Constantly speak and write in plain language so everyone understands the concepts being taught and they know what success looks like. Explicitly teach the students your classroom expectations, noting that if a child doesn't know how to meet our expectations, we need to teach them, just as we teach reading, subtraction and swimming.

Living and teaching in one community

When teaching in a rural location, you are also living in the same community. For teachers, small communities can accentuate their visibility and lack of anonymity. Discuss with your supervisor how they manage **duty of care** outside of school and be aware of the **code of conduct**, at all times maintaining confidentiality.

For example, formal and informal conversations about student learning needs and welfare concerns can only occur in a professional environment and any other work-related matter should not be discussed in any public venue.

Understand that staff in country schools may be related to many people in the town and that staff members can also have their child at your placement school. We recommend that all parent teacher conversations are supported and arranged through your supervisor. These conversations should be informal and unstructured during a practicum placement even if the parent is a staff member.

While on your placement you still need to maintain a work/life balance while being prepared to assist with extracurricular activities.



Be prepared to have fun, enjoy the experience and jump in with both feet.

Travel and safety

Driving on country roads will present different challenges than driving in the city.

- Road conditions can change quickly and driving with your lights on all day is recommended.
- There are a range of sites that can provide you with advice and tips for **driving safely on country roads** and what you should do when livestock or **native animals are on the road**.
- You need to be extra vigilant at twilight as many native animals are active around this time. If you don't have a bull bar, don't risk driving at night.
- After a full day of teaching you need to be aware of the **early warning signs of fatigue** especially if you are planning on driving long distances.
- Knowing how to **change a flat car tyre** can save you hours of waiting around on a deserted back road with possibly no phone reception for assistance.



Getting the most out of your rural placement

Experience

Experience as many school, social and cultural events within the community as possible during your stay. **Destination NSW** and 'Our Regional NSW' Facebook pages are good starting points to find out what events are taking place during your placement. Sourcing a welcome pack from the **local council** tourist information centre can also provide you with ideas.

Visit the **Western Area Health** website to make yourself aware of the health services available. If you have special dietary requirements you might need to see if you can buy these foods in that local community before you go.

If you attend a regular religious service each week, check if you can locate this service on the **Regional Development Australia program** specific regional site.

Seek support

Knowing and using your personal and professional support networks is a vital tool in maintaining your wellbeing while on placement. The **Employee Assistance Program** (EAP) has a range of tools and resources to support department employees. All graduate teachers in a permanent or temporary position, during their first 12 months of employment can access the tailored support service for **new teachers**.

If you need to access support from your local GP, you will be able to do so through an arranged phone consultation. If you're in need of urgent medical or mental health support, please seek help right away, by contacting one of the following services:

- Triple zero (000), or your closest hospital emergency department
- Lifeline 13 11 14
- Beyondblue 1300 22 4636



Create

Creating new professional relationships is an important feature when joining any new worksite. Meeting as many colleagues in the school and visiting their classroom is a wonderful starting point. At each school the principal and the professional experience co-ordinator will also offer you support. Accessing organised events that are specifically targeted to your career stage provides opportunities to meet with future colleagues. For example, the **Future Teachers Conference** by the NSW Teachers Federation supports networking and increases your knowledge about critical issues within the NSW public education community. Each university will have a contact person for you. Find out how to contact them and what health services are available to teacher education students during their practicum placement.

Lesson planning

Apply a backward mapping approach and plan a sequence of lessons as this can save time and maximise your students' academic progress. A **sequence of lessons** can refer to a curriculum unit or a sequence of learning experiences aimed at producing a particular learning objective, goal or intention.

By using the information received in your introductory email, start preparing and always aim to have your planning completed one week in advance. This will allow plenty of time for your supervisor(s) to give meaningful feedback and suggested adjustments.

Use a **range of assessment strategies** to monitor student learning and to help you manage your time. Organise your lessons to allow time for formative and peer assessment and think about how different software can help you collect this data during the lesson.



4. After your placement

Consider rural teaching opportunities

One of the objectives of this program is to provide you with a unique opportunity to experience teaching in a rural setting, hopefully encouraging you to consider rural teaching with the NSW Department of Education upon graduation. Rural and remote NSW offers a variety of amazing schools where you can enhance your teaching career, receive a range of **incentives**, enjoy a number of lifestyle benefits and make a real difference. You can register to hear about vacant positions via the department's **Teach NSW JobFeed** or by maintaining contact with your host school.

Congratulations on successfully completing your Teacher Education Training and welcome to the department. We have resources that will support, guide and orientate you during your first two years of teaching. So, start your beginning teacher induction journey here. As a beginning teacher you deserve a quality induction program in your first critical years of teaching. Our program is structured, comprehensive and school-based. Strong Start, Great Teachers (SSGT) will also provide your new school with the induction support to achieve this. When you're ready, there is also teacher quality support for understanding and implementing the teaching standards, accreditation advice and accredited professional development courses available.

Career opportunities

Pre-service teachers can be offered teaching opportunities at the end of their placement. To ensure you are ready to teach, please initially apply for conditional **NESA Accreditation** and then apply for an interim approval to teach with the NSW Department of Education. Interim approval is valid for 12 months and can begin in your final year of study.

Please contact the NSW Department of Education with any feedback on your experience via email at ProfessionalExperience@det.nsw.edu.au



Working with the NSW Department of Education

With nearly 100,000 employees working in schools and offices throughout the state, we can offer you a rewarding and far reaching career trajectory.

You will enjoy a wide range of social, wellbeing and professional benefits.

As a teacher with the NSW Department of Education, you can access:



Purpose

Make a difference in the lives of students, families and the community



Career growth

Opportunities and varied pathways for leadership and professional development



Workplace benefits

Career enhancing programs and initiatives



Community

A culture of professional support and belonging to the wider community

Connect with us



Please contact the NSW Department of Education with any feedback on your experience via email at ProfessionalExperience@det.nsw.edu.au