



NSW Department of Education

The Case for Change:

A Briefing on Rewarding Excellence in Teaching

September 2022

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Executive summary

Public education in NSW has an unwavering focus on excellence and the continuous improvement of the quality of teaching and learning to prepare young people for rewarding lives as engaged citizens (Strategic Plan 2020–23).

The Rewarding Excellence in Teaching project has been formed to deliver to two key aims:

1
To leverage the skills of highly effective teachers to strengthen teaching practice across our system, for the benefit of every student.

2
To create a more attractive career path for classroom teachers, while raising the status of the profession. We want to attract more people into teaching, and we want our students to have continued access to quality teaching from great teachers who might otherwise leave the classroom.

There is an opportunity to leverage highly effective teaching practice to strengthen teaching and learning across the NSW public education system. Evidence shows that improved sharing of teacher expertise can raise student achievement, and that high-performing education systems work to strengthen the quality of instruction, including through supporting teachers to share their expertise. While sharing of highly effective teaching practice happens every day in our schools, the Rewarding Excellence in Teaching project will consider what extra system-level supports might strengthen current approaches. This could include consideration of what professional learning might best support teachers to share expertise; how system-level support or coordination could help organise schools' access to effective sharing of practice; and where the need may be greatest (noting the equity gap for students experiencing educational disadvantage).

This project is not about rewarding NAPLAN results, nor is it about 'performance pay'. It is about developing a long-term plan to recognise and build on the great teaching practice that is happening in NSW public schools every day.

This project also involves building a strong career pathway through which highly effective teachers could choose to remain in the classroom while also sharing their expertise. At present, highly effective classroom teachers who aspire to progress their careers – while teaching their own classes – have few options other than formal school leadership roles.



For those whose greatest contribution may be in the classroom, there is an opportunity to create more choice and a stronger trajectory for career and income growth. Evidence shows that limited career and income growth affects attraction to teaching as a career, and that improved prospects for income growth could lift the attractiveness of the profession.

Creating more attractive options for highly effective teachers to stay in the classroom also matters for student achievement: quality teaching makes the biggest difference to student outcomes of any factor in the school environment.

The Rewarding Excellence in Teaching project will review approaches in other Australian as well as international jurisdictions – acknowledging the significant differences between international systems and ours – and will also draw on the lessons from past initiatives. In particular: selection criteria need to be transparent and defensible, with reference to well-understood standards of teaching excellence; careful consideration is needed of how roles will fit into existing school structures; any application process must be considerate in the burden it imposes on teachers; teachers in these roles must be provided with the supports necessary to succeed; and we need to carefully consider the role of principals in identifying their school's needs and shaping roles.

This Briefing Paper sets out key issues for the policy design process: defining excellence; identification or selection processes; supporting our best teachers to support others and do the best for our students; pay and conditions; and system design considerations. System design considerations may include: whether, in the long term, new classifications may be needed; the relationship of any new roles to existing roles; and the interaction with the national architecture for education, including the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* developed by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL).

What happens in our classrooms involves great skill and is critical to our students' learning and their future. Our staff engage in highly effective teaching in many different contexts: in Bourke and North Sydney; in selective schools and comprehensive schools; in small and large schools; and in Environmental Education Centres and in Schools for Specific Purposes. Our approach needs to acknowledge this. As we build a more attractive career path, we want to recognise and reward that quality work and leverage highly effective teaching practice to help strengthen teaching and learning across the state.

The project is currently in the policy work and stakeholder engagement stage, with Professor John Hattie as expert advisor. This Briefing Paper helps to begin the engagement process by laying out the case for change and lessons taken from both other work as well as other jurisdictions and sectors.

Following the release of this Briefing Paper, the project will undertake targeted engagement that will inform the development of a range of policy options. This work will then be taken to full public consultation later in 2022 to inform how best to create a stronger career path for classroom teachers that strengthens practice across the system.



Introduction

In June 2022, the NSW Premier announced a proposal to recognise excellence in classroom teaching, and in August 2022 the Minister for Education announced that the project proposal could include the creation of roles to recognise outstanding classroom teachers with higher salaries.

The NSW Department of Education has been strengthening excellence in teaching through a range of recent initiatives (see Attachment A), including projects that leverage highly effective teaching practice in our schools. This has included:

- Assistant Principals, Curriculum and Instruction (from 2022) do not teach their own classes, but work shoulder-to-shoulder with primary school classroom teachers to support evidence-based teaching and assessment in literacy and numeracy.
- The Best in Class initiative (from 2020) created tailored roles for approximately 70 teachers who achieved outstanding student results. They deliver professional learning to teachers across the system, while still teaching their own classes.
- NSW pays higher salaries to teachers accredited as Highly Accomplished (who work collaboratively to improve their practice and the practice of colleagues); and Lead Teachers (exemplary teachers who represent their school and the teaching profession in the community in NSW). Known collectively as HALTs, these teachers receive a salary increase upon accreditation of approximately 6.5%, to \$117,060 per annum.

Rewarding Excellence in Teaching aims to build on this momentum as part of a longer-term trajectory of projects to enhance teaching quality. This includes NSW's 2012 adoption of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (the Standards), used by the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) to moderate teacher accreditation and for the accreditation of HALTs.

This Briefing Paper sets out the case for change. It notes that expert bodies have recently recommended project in this area: both the NSW Productivity Commission (2021) and the Grattan Institute (2020) have proposed classroom teacher career progression models, including competitive and rigorous selection processes; the opportunity to mentor colleagues and support the broader school system; and additional pay. This project will carefully consider these recommendations, along with the input of a wide range of experts and professional bodies and stakeholders including teachers, schools, principals, parents and students.



Building the Rewarding Excellence in Teaching ‘vision’

We have started talking with teachers, principals, university experts and professional associations about the opportunities this project presents. By seeking diverse views as well as finding shared beliefs and understandings, we are seeking to build a shared vision for this project. An emerging vision, drawing on the evidence set out in this Briefing Paper and our early engagements, includes:



We develop a clear and shared understanding of what highly effective teaching looks like.



We leverage highly effective teaching practices to strengthen teaching and learning for all students, including those who experience educational disadvantage.



In recognising and rewarding highly effective teaching via a stronger career path, the status of teaching as a profession is lifted; and teaching is seen as an attractive career path by more people, including high achieving graduates.

We want to build a shared understanding of the opportunities we could create if we give high-quality teachers a stronger career pathway within the classroom. This could mean more opportunities for highly effective teachers to share their skills and collaborate; more opportunities to build on our strengths in teaching and learning; and more opportunities to invest in and build expertise that stays inside the school gate.

The case for change





1

There is an opportunity to leverage highly effective teaching practice to strengthen teaching and learning across the system.

This project creates an opportunity to strengthen the implementation of highly effective practice in all our schools. The work will also explore opportunities to build on existing supports for changes to the K-2 and 3-10 curricula.

The literature suggests that recognising teacher expertise amplifies highly effective classroom practice (Willis et al. 2022; Yan & Walker 2020). Hattie has found that, if teacher expertise can be modelled and shared more uniformly, student achievement in every class in the school would be consistently raised (Hattie 2003). One key feature of high performing education systems is that they work to strengthen the quality of instruction—including through professional development that enables teachers to learn from each other and gain an understanding of best practice (Barber & Mourshed 2007). Some of the practices by which highly effective teachers are said to contribute to system-wide instructional improvement include structured collaboration in designing and implementing subject-specific professional learning and acting as ‘change agents’ by implementing new learning into their own and others’ classrooms (Cravens & Wang 2017; Yan & Walker 2020).

A further opportunity lies in building centralised support from the department to enable teachers to more readily share highly effective practice. While sharing of practice happens every day in our schools, the Grattan Institute argues that top teachers are under-utilised in sharing their expertise (Goss & Sonnemann 2020). There is an opportunity to increase the impact of highly effective classroom teachers by strengthening system-level support. Supports could include professional learning to help highly effective teachers develop the skills to effectively share their practice. For example, effective sharing of practice may require less a description of *what* a teacher does but *how they think* about what they do (evaluative thinking) (Rickards, Hattie & Reid 2020), in order to support the application of effective practice to other classroom contexts. Teachers may need support to develop this skill. Other forms of system support

could include building on centralised support for schools to access teachers with specialist expertise. We will explore how the right level of departmental support and coordination could contribute to building system excellence.

In considering how best to leverage highly effective teaching to strengthen practice across the system, any role design will have to build on the importance of collaboration to teachers’ professional learning (McIntyre 2013; Gore 2018) and the concept of ‘collective teacher efficacy’, which has been found to significantly influence student achievement. This requires high trust among teachers, having a focused narrative on the common understanding of impact and progress, having an imperative to share data (such as assessment data and practices) and ensuring high levels of evaluative thinking in interrogating and interpreting every student’s learning. There is also an important role for school leaders, and system-level support, in creating the conditions for a strong, collaborative culture within and between schools. This project provides an opportunity to support teachers to enhance teaching quality consistently, and collegially, across all NSW public schools.

We will also need to consider how best to leverage the skills of highly effective teachers to benefit all of our students, including those who experience educational disadvantage. High quality teaching is found right across our State, from the schools with the highest to lowest levels of educational disadvantage. However, an ‘equity gap’ persists in educational results between regional students and their metropolitan counterparts (CESE 2020), Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, and between students in the highest and lowest socioeconomic groups (NSW Department of Education 2021). There are opportunities to build on our current strengths in teaching practice. Bringing highly effective teachers together to assist in developing, demonstrating, and enhancing optimal teaching across schools can play a critical role in building the capacity of all teachers, strengthening all students’ access to high quality teaching.



2

There is an opportunity to increase the attractiveness and status of the profession by creating a stronger career path for great teachers who want to stay in the classroom.

NSW classroom teachers have limited options to progress their careers without taking on formal school leadership roles.

NSW has some of the best teachers in the world. However, in order to secure higher pay and career progression, talented teachers often leave the classroom and move into other roles, typically in school leadership (Burns & McIntyre 2017).

Teacher starting salaries in NSW compare well with other professions and jurisdictions: a graduate teacher in 2022 earns \$73,737 p.a. [noting that salaries increase each year (NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet, 2022)]. But public school teacher salaries become less competitive over a teacher's career (Goss, Sonnemann & Nolan 2019). Growth in a classroom teacher's salary in NSW is based on a combination of accreditation and tenure. Once a teacher is accredited as 'Proficient', the main differentiating factor in classroom teachers' pay is how many years they have been teaching. A teacher typically reaches the top of the 'Proficient' band seven years after they start teaching, earning \$109,978 p.a. as a Band 2.3 teacher. Most classroom teachers' salary progression stops here – about eight to ten years into their career – while the salary progress of peers in other professions keeps rising

well into their 30s and 40s (Goss, Sonnemann & Nolan 2019). From this point, the main ways classroom teachers can access higher salaries are through:

- Instructional specialist roles – in primary schools only – as an Assistant Principal, Curriculum and Instruction;
- School leadership roles such as Assistant Principal, Head Teacher or Deputy Principal, with school and educational leadership functions including people management, people development and supporting collaboration (noting that Assistant Principals and Head Teachers typically spend the majority of their time in their own classrooms);
- Corporate roles in the department (for example as non-school based teachers)
- Gaining HALT accreditation (explored further below).

Apart from HALT accreditation, these leadership or instructional roles come with a substantial decrease in classroom time. Leadership roles also come with a formal responsibility to lead others. Figure 1 below shows the promotion pathways available to classroom teachers.

NSW teacher career map

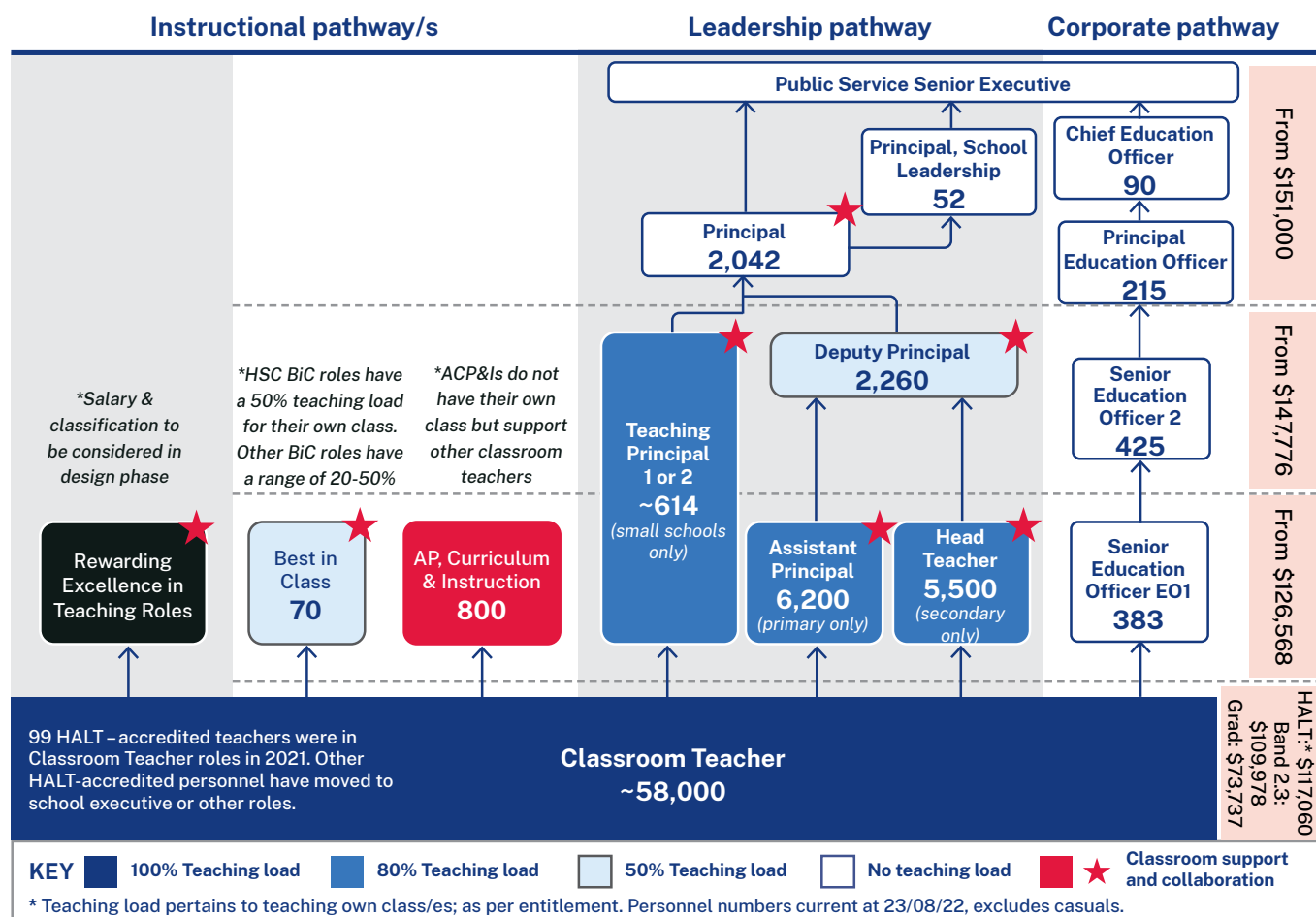


Figure 1: Pathways to promotion for NSW classroom teachers

The only way for a public school teacher to receive a substantial pay rise in NSW while staying in the classroom, without moving to a formal school leadership role, is to undertake Highly Accomplished or Lead Teacher (HALT) accreditation, which currently sees a salary increase of approximately \$7,082, or 6.4%, to \$117,060 p.a. To date, achievement of HALT accreditation has represented a very small share of classroom teacher career growth; over the period 2005 to 2022, fewer than 200 teachers employed in NSW public schools have been accredited as HALTs, with just over 50 of these teachers still working as classroom teachers (Band 3). However, the NSW Government has committed to streamline the HALT accreditation process to increase the number of HALT teachers to at least 2,500 by 2025. The interaction of any project with a boost in HALT accreditations will be a key issue during the policy design process.

The vast majority of NSW public school classroom teachers who progress beyond Band 2.3 take on formal leadership roles, or no longer teach their own classes

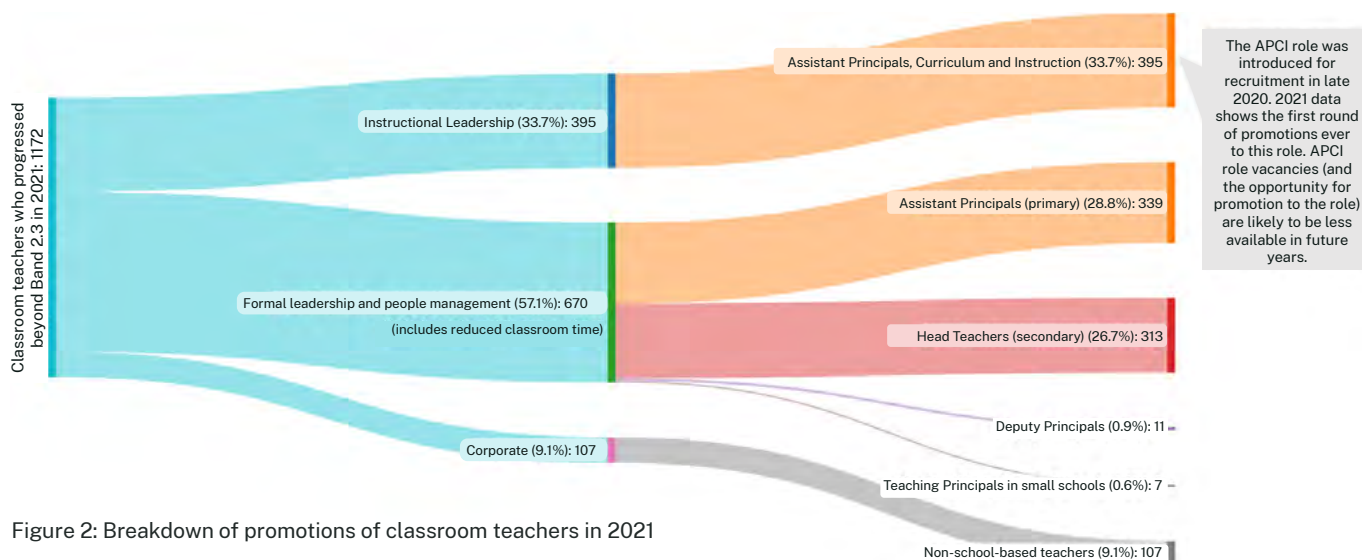


Figure 2: Breakdown of promotions of classroom teachers in 2021



Limited career and income growth for classroom teachers affects attraction to teaching roles

A key feature of high performing education systems is that they ensure teaching is attractive to quality candidates, which is linked to the status of the profession (Barber & Mourshed 2007). Teachers are highly motivated by intrinsic and social factors, such as the joy of teaching, intellectual fulfilment and the opportunity to make a difference for young people. These are often more important than extrinsic motivations such as professional status and pay (OECD 2022; Watt and Richardson 2008). Intrinsic motivations to persist with classroom-based careers can be impacted by obstacles to achieving career goals (such as leadership aspirations) and a desire for career diversity, amongst other factors (Lazarides, Watt & Richardson 2020).

Nevertheless, salary remains an important factor in attracting and retaining teachers, including offsetting the opportunity cost of choosing teaching over higher paid careers (Morris et al. 2020). Limited career progression opportunities, and the relatively flat pay scale for NSW classroom teachers are key reasons why more people (and specifically “high achievers”) do not enter the teaching profession (Goss, Sonnemann & Nolan 2019). Jurisdictions that offer a special career path for teaching experts, including mentoring and development, see more first-choice preferences for teaching as a career (OECD TALIS 2018; Goss, Sonnemann & Nolan 2019). The Grattan Institute and the NSW Productivity Commission have each argued for the creation of specific, higher-paid roles for expert teachers. Gallop (2021) also argues for the need for stronger career paths for expert teachers, recommending building HALT accreditation into career paths for teachers which could be linked to promotion processes, and supported by effective professional learning and leadership.

What sort of income growth for highly effective teachers could make a difference to the attractiveness of teaching as a career? The Quality Initial Teacher Education Review found that increasing the top salary to \$130,000 would increase the probability of young high achievers choosing teaching by approximately 13% (Department of Education, Skills and Employment 2022). And the Grattan Institute has recommended ‘Instructional Specialist’ roles (to be occupied by 5–8% of teachers who work to improve teaching within their schools) should be paid \$140,000 p.a. (Goss, Sonnemann & Nolan 2019). The Grattan Institute also recommends that 0.5% of teachers should occupy Master Teacher roles, supporting Instructional Specialists across networks, paid \$180,000 per annum.

Diverse and flexible career pathways that offer income growth and the opportunity to stay in the classroom could lift the prestige and attractiveness of the profession (DeClercq, Watt and Richardson 2022). While teachers are frequently ranked among the most trustworthy and ethical professions (Ipsos 2021; Roy Morgan 2021), many stakeholders have called for measures to lift the status of teaching (Department of Education, Skills and Employment 2022). The proportion of high-achieving school leavers choosing teaching has fallen by nearly one third from 2006 to 2019 (Department of Education, Skills and Employment 2022), and in NSW, ITE enrolments overall have declined by almost 30 per cent from 2014 to 2019 (NSW DoE Quality ITE Review Submission 2021). In a survey of young high achievers (ATARs above 80) carried out by the Grattan Institute, alternative career choices were ranked higher than teaching for reasons including high earnings potential and recognition and reward for good performance (Goss, Sonnemann & Nolan 2019). OECD research on “teacher professionalism” (2022) suggests that career progression is one promising area of focus to improve the profession’s status.

The Rewarding Excellence in Teaching project aims to create opportunities for progression within the classroom that let teachers stay connected to the classroom. It presents an opportunity to build a more attractive pathway, ultimately supporting the NSW Government Teacher Supply Strategy, which aims to see to more teachers in classrooms across the state.



Creating more attractive options for highly effective teachers to stay in the classroom matters for student achievement

While many factors affect student achievement (particularly socio-economic status and other factors outside the school gate), teaching quality is the largest in-school contributor to student outcomes. Quality teaching makes a bigger difference than any other factor in the school environment (Hattie 2003). The Productivity Commission has similarly found that “[t]eacher effectiveness is the single most influential ‘in-school’ factor for student outcomes”, as determined by both teacher quality (the attributes of an individual teacher) and quality teaching (effective teaching practices) (Australian Government Productivity Commission 2022).

Australia’s variance in student results is greater between different classrooms in the same school than it is between different schools (Ainley, Macaskill & Thomson 2022). The various factors influencing outcomes are overlapping and interactive, making it difficult to analyse the precise effects of any one factor (Stronge 2013). Hattie estimated (2003) that differences between schools explained 5–10% of the differences between the achievement of students, while 30% of the variation in achievement can be explained by differences in teaching quality (with 50% of the variance explained by differences between students themselves, and 5–10% of variance in achievement attributable to their homes).

Given the importance of quality teaching to student achievement, creating a more attractive classroom career trajectory for those highly effective classroom teachers who want to remain in the classroom could lift student achievement.



Case Study

Technical expertise vs leadership career pathways in other professions

Several other professions have avenues to promote expert practitioners who do not want to go into management roles. For example, in Germany, Bosch pioneered expert career tracks from the late 1970s to help retain talented employees who were not interested in management. Similar approaches are seen in some law firms – for legal experts who are less interested in the business development responsibilities of a partner – and technology companies, for technical specialists. These approaches recognise the need to retain talent in roles where the employee can make their best contribution – which may not be in management or leadership.





Approaches to rewarding excellence in teaching: other jurisdictions and other sectors

High-performing education systems identify highly effective teachers and deliberately organise the sharing of their expertise among teachers within and across schools (Burns & McIntyre 2017).



Case Study

Australia

In Australia, there is a range of approaches to rewarding highly effective teaching. **Victoria's** Learning Specialist roles are 5-year positions aimed at high-performing teachers who want to stay in the classroom (VGSA 2017). These teachers work with others to improve their practice and currently earn up to \$122,037 p.a (Victoria State Government 2022). **Western Australia's** Level 3 Classroom Teacher role aims to reward exemplary teachers, and those in this role earn up to \$122,185 p.a (Government of Western Australia, undated). They are assessed against a state-based competency framework, with roles negotiated at school level subject to high level principles such as a focus on collaboration and sharing teaching practice. **South Australia** currently has Advanced Skills Teachers but will phase out this role from next year (Personal communication, South Australian Department of Education, 19 September 2022), while the Northern Territory pays generous allowances (on top of base salary) to teachers who achieve Highly Accomplished or Lead accreditation (further detail is at **Attachment B**).

In the non-government sector, **Sydney Catholic Schools** has Instructional Specialists, whose role includes spreading best practice in their own schools, and Master Teachers, who support best practice across multiple schools [Sydney Catholic Schools (undated)].

Several overseas jurisdictions have well-established career pathways for expert teachers. While the NSW context is very different to these jurisdictions, there will be lessons to learn from international models.



Case Study

Singapore

In Singapore – which has some of the world's highest achieving students based on the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) testing (PISA 2018) – high-performing classroom teachers can pursue one of three career tracks: leadership (25% of teachers), teaching (15% of teachers), and senior specialists (1% of teachers) (National Institute for School Leadership 2019). The Teaching Track provides multiple levels of additional seniority for teachers with excellent subject, pedagogical and assessment knowledge. With an initial pay increase of approximately 20%, Teacher Track teachers maintain their classroom practice, while also mentoring and supporting junior teachers and those who need support. This has led to many more teachers staying in the classroom but also working with other teachers in their schools, and across schools, to participate in professional learning, to enhance the impact of teaching and to support others to advance their careers.

Once Singapore's classroom teachers decide they are ready (often after about five years of teaching) they can choose their track. Progression relies on performance assessments by supervisors and school leaders through the Enhanced Performance Management System (EPMS), through which all teachers' performance is graded.



Case Study

Washington D.C.

Washington D.C.'s Leadership Initiative for Teachers (LIFT) provides a five-stage career ladder for high-performing teachers to stay in the classroom: including Distinguished Teacher and Expert Teacher stages, reserved for the highest performers. Progression is based on attaining Effective/Highly Effective Ratings using the IMPACT teacher evaluation system (which includes reference to observations, student achievement data and student surveys). In Washington D.C., the majority of teachers teach in high-poverty schools; Advanced, Distinguished and Expert Teachers who do so are eligible for service credits that increase their base salary (e.g. a base salary increase of USD 28,000 for Expert Teachers).

A review concluded the Washington D.C. system is achieving many of its goals, including improved professional growth for teachers and increased retention for high-performing teachers (District of Columbia Public Schools 2021). The review also found room for improvement, so Washington D.C. is rolling out changes to better support teacher growth, minimise stress associated with the performance system and mitigate bias in evaluation (District of Columbia Public Schools 2022).



Lessons learnt from past initiatives

As mentioned in the introduction to this Briefing Paper, NSW has demonstrated excellence in collaborative teaching with the creation of the Assistant Principal, Curriculum and Instruction and the Best in Class roles. We will continue to build on this with the recent announcement to expand the number of HALTs to 2,500 by 2025. However, some historical attempts at creating higher roles for outstanding teachers have not had sustained success in NSW and beyond. In particular, in early engagement many stakeholders referred to the Advanced Skills Teacher (AST) project that ran from 1990 to 1995. We have a lot to learn from these previous models.



Case Study

Advanced Skills Teachers (1990–1995)

NSW implemented the Advanced Skills Teacher (AST) classification in 1992 (Weppler 1993). Between 1987 and 1990, Australian unions, employers and governments negotiated an historic decision to include three new classifications of AST in the industrial award restructure. NSW defined an AST as ‘a classroom teacher who provides educational leadership and guidance to classroom teachers’ (NSW Department of Education 1992). In the national framework, AST 1 was considered as ‘extra pay for better work’, whereas AST 2 and 3 were defined as ‘positions with work-related tasks’ (Ingvarson & Chadbourne 1996). NSW only ever implemented AST Level 1. The selection process for ASTs in NSW was largely school-based: principals appointed Level 1 ASTs, subject to the confirmation of the service requirement by regional officers, and then negotiated specific AST roles and responsibilities aimed at meeting specified school needs (Weppler & Bourke 1993).

Some key lessons drawn from the AST initiative which will inform the policy design of Rewarding Excellence in Teaching in NSW include:

- Defined, well understood, and accepted standards of teaching excellence are important. For example, Ingvarson & Chadbourne (1996) suggests that the standards used in the AST initiative were too generic (not specific to subject or student stage), creating a difficult task for selection panels and leading to inconsistencies in implementation across schools. (The AST initiative was implemented well before the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* were adopted in NSW, which occurred in 2012, or the NSW Teaching Standards, which were introduced in 2004.)
- Any selection process needs to be transparent and defensible, and an effective plan and budget is needed to support the process of evaluating applicants for the role; the AST initiative underestimated the time and resources needed. Where used, the composition of any selection panel should strike the balance between contextual understanding and consistent, state-wide moderation (Ingvarson & Chadbourne 1996).
- Any new roles should be carefully designed, and consideration should be given to how any new roles will fit into current school structures (Ingvarson & Chadbourne 1996).
- b. There remains some lack of clarity and understanding for all stakeholders, including teachers, principals, and Directors, Educational Leadership around what the higher-level Standards look like in a variety of learning contexts (NSW Department of Education 2020).
- c. Self-nominating, voluntary selection processes for identifying candidates could be improved by the use and interpretation of data (NSW Department of Education, 2020).
- d. It will be important to consider how intensive and burdensome any process is for teachers to undertake to access any new career path (AG NSW 2019). For example, NESA’s updated HALT Policy project, launched in 2022, has significantly reduced the demand involved in the accreditation process.
- e. It will be important to consistently provide the necessary support to allow highly effective teachers to succeed. For example, access to support for Highly Accomplished candidates has been unequal because of the random distribution of HALTs across the state. This in turn creates bigger asymmetries in the distribution of HALTs, making systematic, strategic responses difficult (NSW Department of Education, 2020).
- f. A ‘hub and spoke’ model by which pedagogical leaders provide support to a network of schools is worth consideration. The deployment of Highly Accomplished teachers (or equivalent) in Centres for Excellence (C4Es) was highly successful as a way of building the capacity of other teachers. In the C4E context, Highly Accomplished teachers provided the hub and spoke schools with new opportunities of professional learning. Much of the success of the C4E capacity-building has been attributed to the role(s) of HALTs (SiMERR, 2015).
- g. A review of past approaches suggests there is an opportunity to consider carefully how principals might be best involved in identifying their school’s needs (as supported by evidence) and in helping to shape roles, identify candidates and support them in working with other teachers to realise the aims of the role.
- h. There is a need to provide clarity about the purpose and responsibilities of the role and the related success criteria.

To further inform the Rewarding Excellence in Teaching policy, we have also reviewed the following initiatives.

- Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher (HALT) accreditation (2012–present);
- Centres for Excellence (a project under the Improve Teaching Quality National Partnership, 2009–2013);
- The Mastery of Teaching project (2018–2020).

For an overview of each initiative, with a full list of lessons learnt for each, see **Attachment C**. This includes:

- a. Selection criteria need to be transparent and defensible. Early engagements suggest that some past projects resulted in a lack of confidence in how candidates were chosen, which affected how teachers in these roles were perceived by their peers.

Key issues for the policy design process

The case for change is clear. Below, we outline key issues for the policy design process. We will be talking to key stakeholders about these questions in the coming weeks and months as we develop policy options, prior to a full public consultation.



Case Study

Measuring performance at a metropolitan Sydney school

One metropolitan school uses an approach to measuring performance developed in collaboration with staff. Teacher practice is evaluated against two to three standards that the teacher has chosen to focus on, through a minimum of twice-yearly observations. This approach allows for a conversation about strengths and opportunities for improvement and provides greater insight to support teachers in refining their practice.



The key issues we need to work through include:

Defining excellence



- How we might define what highly effective teaching looks like, including ways to recognise the collaborative nature of teaching as a profession, and the best use of our existing frameworks (e.g. School Excellence Framework and the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*).
- How best to recognise the quality teaching that our staff practice in many different contexts, subjects, types of schools and student populations.

Identification or selection processes



- How to identify practitioners of highly effective teaching practice – whether selection is initiated through self-nomination, or an alternative selection process – and if through a selection process, through what combination of local and principal input or external selection.
- Determining how our approach to performance development might support the identification of highly effective teachers.
- How much we ask of teachers in terms of time, effort and cost in order to identify practitioners of highly effective teaching practice without deterring ‘quiet achievers’ or creating a burdensome process.
- Determining the eligibility criteria that should be in place, if any – such as current salary band, particular credentials, or other pre-conditions.

System design considerations



- Considering, in the longer term, whether new classifications may be required.
- Considering the place for any new career path in relation to existing roles in our system – such as HALTs, existing leadership roles, Assistant Principals (Curriculum & Instruction), Non-School Based Teachers and Best in Class teachers.
- Considering how these roles relate to the national architecture for education, including the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers developed by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL).

Supporting our best teachers to support others, and do the best for our students



- Designing the role to help teachers support effective teaching practice throughout the system, while keeping these teachers primarily in the classroom in roles that do not involve people management, supervision or additional administrative responsibilities.
- How best to recognise the collaborative nature of teaching as a profession and support collaborative work when developing new roles.
- Determining whether any new roles should be allocated to particular schools or across schools and on what basis (e.g. student need, equity considerations).
- Considering what support, including what professional learning, highly effective teachers may need to help strengthen practice across the system.
- How those in school leadership roles can, through strong people development and management skills, help highly effective teachers identify their best career pathway and develop their potential, while contributing to student outcomes.
- What to call these teachers, particularly as they take on new roles.

Determining pay and conditions



- Determining the salary for any new role – providing an opportunity to access a higher salary while remaining connected to the classroom. We will need to consider the need to keep leadership roles attractive, the potential for leveraging existing roles in our system, reducing overlap with current leadership roles, and the Minister’s announcement of much higher salaries, while holding true to the NSW Government’s intent for this project.
- Determining the length of time for which any new roles should be offered.

If you have feedback on whether these are the right issues for us to consider, please share your thoughts with the department’s project team at rewardingexcellenceteam@det.nsw.edu.au.

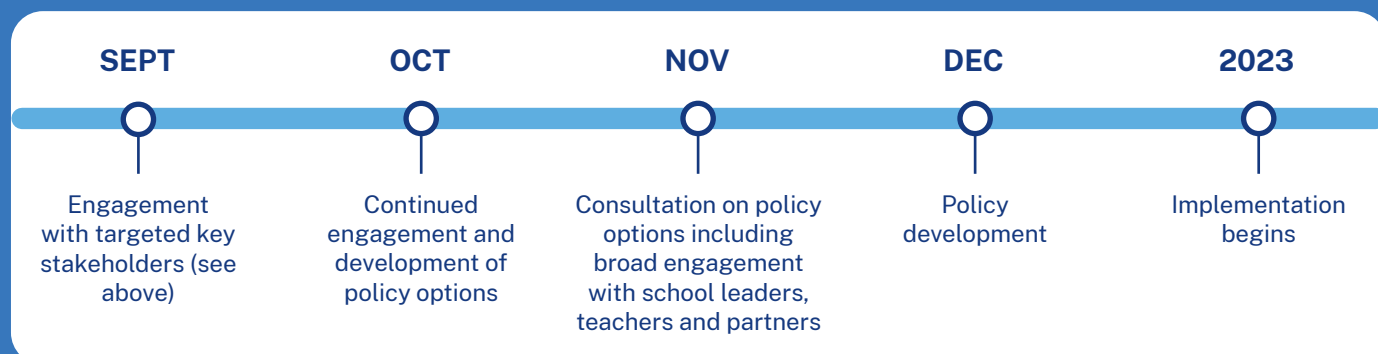




Next steps

The department is working with the project's academic advisor Professor John Hattie to design policy options for consultation, with a view of commencing implementation in 2023.

Key Engagements held to date



Attachment A

NSW Department of Education excellence agenda

The department is committed to pursuing excellence and providing high quality educational opportunities for all students. Key initiatives, beyond those referred to in the body of this Briefing Paper, that are critical to the department's excellence agenda and complementary to the Rewarding Excellence in Teaching project, include:

- The **School Excellence in Action** (2016) cycle is a process of continuous reflection that the school community regularly undertakes as the school strives for school, student and teacher improvement. The **School Excellence Framework** (v2 released 2017) supports all NSW public schools in their pursuit of excellence by clearly describing the key elements of high-quality practice across the three domains of learning, teaching and leading.
- The **School Success Model** (2021) is the department's whole-system, evidence-led project approach to focussing on school improvement, lifting capability through the design of new system support and sharing best practice across the system. This model offers three types of support to schools; universal self-service support including access to resources on the Universal Resources Hub; targeted guidance in the use of universal resources; and strategic support – intensive support delivered by specialists in collaboration with school leadership.
- The **Best in Class** initiative (from 2020) created tailored roles for approximately 70 teachers who achieved outstanding student results. They deliver professional learning to teachers across the system, while still teaching their own classes.
- As part of the School Success Model project, the ground-breaking **Ambassador Schools** (2021) project identifies schools achieving exceptional academic success, so their methods can be studied and applied to other schools across the state. Ambassador Schools have been selected based on high performance compared to similar schools across a range of measures in line with the School Success Model, such as NAPLAN reading and numeracy targets, expected growth, attendance and HSC performance.
- The **NSW Curriculum Review and Project** (2020) confirmed that teachers want more time to teach core content in depth. The new curriculum is attuned to how important the classroom is to improving student outcomes. The department has prioritised more time for teaching by reducing the hours teachers spend on extra-curricular topics, issues and compliance requirements.
- Through the **Quality Time** Project (from 2021), teachers are freed to have more school time to focus to the core work of teaching, leading and supporting students by simplifying, modernising, and reducing administrative processes. The department is also managing the overall “ask” of teachers, and limiting new initiatives, through our **Consolidated School Schedule** (2016). There is also ongoing work to review and reduce what has previously been considered ‘business as usual’ activity in our schools.
- The School Leadership Institute (SLI) has been pioneering work on aspiring and formal “Middle Leaders” (including but not limited to Head Teachers and Assistant Principals), recognising the impact of school leaders who are positioned between teachers and senior leaders, and whose leadership is different to that of principal leadership. SLI commissioned the **Formal Middle Leadership in NSW Public Schools** report (2020) which includes innovative research on the nature and needs of middle leadership. SLI has also developed the **School Leadership Identification Framework** (2021).
- The department has renewed Professional Experience Agreements (2022–2024) for **Professional Experience Hubs** with the 12 NSW universities that provide most NSW initial teacher education placements in NSW public schools. The Hubs showcase high quality professional experience practice and provide a more consistent and coordinated approach between for placing pre-service teachers for professional experience.
- Recently, NSW took a paper on the work underway to streamline the national HALT process, while maintaining the robust standards, to the national Education Ministers Meeting in August 2022. Elevating the teaching profession will be a priority area in the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan.

Attachment B

Approaches to rewarding excellence in teaching in other states and sectors



Case Study

Victoria

Victoria's Learning Specialist role is a 5-year (renewable) position aimed at providing a career pathway for highly skilled teachers who want to stay in the classroom and work with other teachers to improve their practice. Their role includes including teaching demonstration lessons, observing and providing feedback to other teachers and facilitating school-based professional learning (VGSA 2017). The role also includes mentoring and coaching other teachers. Learning Specialists are paid up to \$122,037 p.a. - the same as Leading Teachers, who have management and supervisory responsibilities and who coordinate staff and curriculum. The Victorian government sector does not currently participate in national teacher (HALT) certification.

Victoria has also recently appointed nine **Master Teachers** across eight disciplinary areas to lead the development and implementation of the **Teaching Excellence Project (TEP)**. Master Teachers have been selected from across the sector based on success in their field, and capacity to support professional learning design and student achievement. The one-year professional learning project is a key initiative of the new **Victorian Academy of Teaching and Leadership** and supports highly skilled teachers from across the state to build their capacity for exemplary teaching.



Case Study

South Australia

South Australia's award classification for **Advanced Skills Teachers (ASTs)** will be discontinued from next year. There is no fixed term, and the classification was developed 'to recognise and reward highly skilled teachers who wish to pursue their professional career in the classroom'. From May 2022, teachers in this classification could earn up to \$126,212. There has been a small number of ASTs in South Australia, with a maximum of 300 across the state currently.

In South Australia, a teacher does not automatically receive a pay rise after gaining HALT accreditation; higher remuneration is attached to specific HALT roles, which were originally embedded in category 1–3 schools (with higher levels of educational disadvantage). This has now been revised so that HALT roles are available in all schools. The South Australian Department for Education is also developing a specific role description for these HALT roles, with the main differentiator from other classroom roles being the provision of release time, which is to be spent coaching or mentoring colleagues (Personal communication, South Australian Department of Education, 19 September 2022).

Attachment B



Case Study

Western Australia

Western Australia's (WA) Level 3 Classroom Teacher project aims to acknowledge and reward exemplary teaching practice. A teacher wishing to apply for Level 3 application goes through two stages:

- A written portfolio with supporting evidence and referee statements;
- Facilitating and participating in reflective practice sessions with peers.

Applicants are assessed against Phase 3 of the Competency Framework for Teachers, a state framework developed in 2004, which draws upon the national standards as well as standards developed by national teaching associations for English, Mathematics and Science, in consultation with teachers, the Australian Education Union and stakeholders.

Level 3 teachers earn up to \$122,185 p.a. Roles and responsibilities are negotiated at the school level, in accordance with some high-level principles e.g., there should be a focus on collaboration and sharing teaching practices, not administrative tasks. HALT certification is not currently offered in WA government schools.



Case Study

Northern Territory

The **Northern Territory** pays generous allowances to Highly Accomplished Teachers (for example the most senior classroom teacher without educational administration duties as at 11 October 2020 would earn \$110,496 plus \$11,725 p.a. on Highly Accomplished accreditation) and Lead Teachers (\$24,551 p.a. as at 11 October 2020) (Fair Work Commission 2018), who are in a 'designated classroom teacher position' (the allowance is suspended in periods of undertaking higher duties outside the classroom).



Case Study

Sydney Catholic Schools

Sydney Catholic Schools has instructional specialist and master teacher roles. Instructional specialists work within their own schools by modelling and spreading best practice and building collective teaching quality through co-teaching, feedback, reflection and goal setting. Master Teachers improve practice across multiple schools by collaborating with and supporting Instructional Specialists; and developing and delivering professional learning linked to in-school support [Sydney Catholic Schools (undated)].

Attachment C

Lessons learnt continued

There have been multiple initiatives introduced in NSW in recent decades that have sought to recognise and reward highly effective teaching. A timeline of initiatives is set out below at Figure 3.

We seek to learn from past and present initiatives with ‘instructional leader’ or ‘expert teacher’ roles

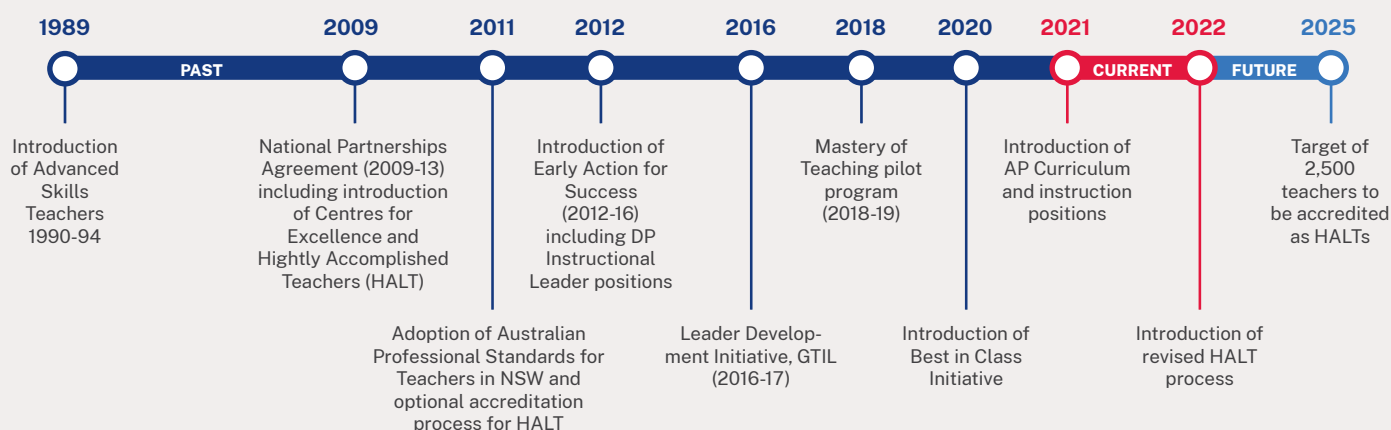


Figure 3: A timeline of past initiatives in NSW

Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher (HALT) accreditation

Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher accreditations are two voluntary levels of accreditation based on the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*, which NSW adopted in 2012. The accreditation is nationally recognised. In NSW, NESA manages the processes for accreditation. Since 2018, all teachers must be accredited at Proficient level to teach in NSW (and to be eligible for HALT accreditation).

While the HALT accreditation process is robust, there are some known issues:

- A review in 2020 found that further support is required to ensure that aspirant candidates, principals, referees and Directors, Educational Leadership better understand how the higher-level standard descriptors look like, in practice, in a variety of contexts (NSW Department of Education 2020).
- Access to support for Highly Accomplished candidates is unequal because of the random distribution of HALTs across the state. This in turn creates bigger asymmetries in the distribution of HALTs, making systematic, strategic responses difficult (NSW Department of Education 2020).
- There are misconceptions about the intensive nature of the HALT accreditation process, undertaken over three years, as found in a Departmental survey of the existing HALT cohort (AG NSW 2019). This Briefing Paper acknowledges the work done in the NESA's updated HALT Policy project, launched in 2022, which has reduced the demand involved in the accreditation process significantly. Moreover, NESA is continuing to work with the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AISTL) to review the HALT process.
- When HALTs have been placed in a defined role, they have proved effective in lifting the practice of their peers, per the Centre for Excellence initiative below.

Attachment C

Centres for Excellence (a project under the Improving Teacher Quality National Partnership, 2009–2013)

The Centres for Excellence (C4E) initiative of the *Smarter Schools National Partnership on Improving Teacher Quality* commenced operation in NSW government schools in 2010. By 2011, there were a total of 35 schools operating as C4Es, with these ‘hub’ schools linked to a cluster of schools, extending the benefits to about another 150 schools. The NSW model concentrated resources that already existed in some government schools, such as university partnerships, mentoring and initial teacher education professional experience placements (Wasson 2011). C4E schools shared high-quality practice and had HALTs who modelled high-quality teaching for colleagues. This initiative largely ended with the end of the National Partnership funding.

The C4E initiative had reported success, demonstrating that highly effective teachers could build the capacity of their peers:

1. Evaluation of the C4E project demonstrated that C4Es were successful in achieving improved teacher capacity and improved the quality of teaching in hub and spoke schools.
2. Principals, by a strong majority, indicated that the C4E initiative provided new opportunities for teacher professional learning and for pedagogical leadership. One of the most successful aspects run in the C4Es was the focus on classroom practice based on the NSW Quality Teaching Framework.
3. Principal feedback also highlighted that Highly Accomplished Teachers in this model had increased teachers’ capacity to use data to inform programming and teaching at both class and group level. The informed programming allowed for increased differentiation of teaching for struggling students.

Attachment C

The Mastery of Teaching Project (2018–2020)

The Mastery of Teaching Project aimed to increase the number of teachers across the state who achieved a Highly Accomplished accreditation. The project sought to overcome some of the known barriers within the HALT accreditation process. The project had a two phased structure to select and support teachers to achieve HA accreditation:

- Phase 1 (six months): Comprehensive identification and selection of candidates to undergo the Highly Accomplished accreditation. Identification and selection processes involved principals, Directors, Educational Leadership, HALTs, and an expert state level panel.
- Phase 2 (12 months): Currently accredited HALTs provide direct and structured support to identified teachers, to gather and select evidence of their HA teaching practice for successful submission of HA accreditation.

The department reviewed the pilot of the Mastery of Teaching project in 2019 and 2020. Lessons learned included:

- The identification of HALT candidates required strengthening. As such, a ‘whole-school’ data component was added to the process, focusing on the teacher’s impact on their sphere of influence (Eval, 2020)
- There was a need for more effective ways to better match observers to nominated teachers (AG NSW, 2019).
 - While intensive interpersonal support to teachers seeking higher level accreditation was effective, it is an unsustainable model that is too resource heavy and difficult to scale up.
 - Targeted support for principals, DELs and coaches/mentors is critical to keeping applicants on track. Some DELs and HALT coaches expressed frustration at the lack of communication and transparency from applicants.

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