

Aboriginal Education Policy

Turning Policy into Action

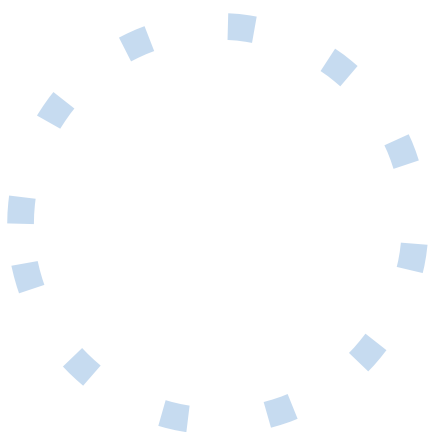
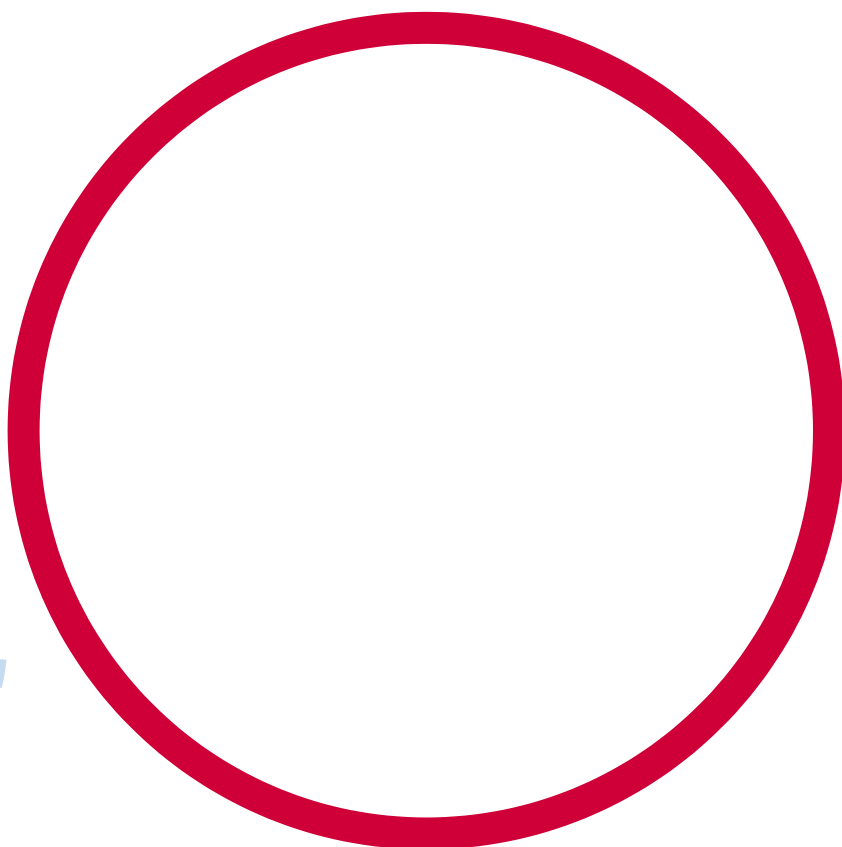
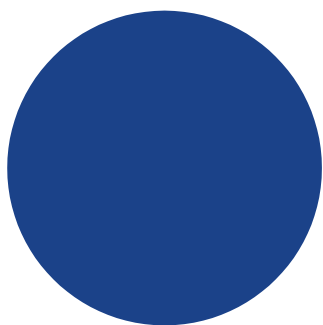


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Acknowledgements

The NSW Department of Education acknowledges:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the First Peoples of Australia
- Aboriginal Elders past and present who have provided the foundations upon which the *Aboriginal Education Policy* is based
- the significant contributions made to the Policy by the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Inc., Aboriginal parents and community members as well as staff in all sectors of the Department.

In referring to Aboriginal people, the *Aboriginal Education Policy* refers inclusively to all Aboriginal Australians and Torres Strait Islander people.

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Introduction

The *Aboriginal Education Policy* was introduced in November 2008 and was developed with the intent that it would be a living, organic and dynamic document.

The purpose of this document is to support the implementation of the Policy across the Department.

Responsibility for enacting the Policy rests with **all** Departmental staff. It is expected that the Policy will underpin and inform planning, teaching practice and approaches to educational leadership in all educational settings.

The Policy:

- defines the NSW Department of Education commitment to Aboriginal education and training across all areas of public education in NSW
- prioritises Aboriginal education and training as the core business of all Departmental staff
- sets the goal ‘that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students will match or better the outcomes of the broader student population’
- requires the Department to provide Aboriginal cultural education for all staff
- requires the Department to provide education about Aboriginal Australia for all students
- requires close collaboration with the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Incorporated (NSW AECG), local AECGs and local Aboriginal communities
- fulfils a commitment to review the Aboriginal Education Policy 1996 (Schools) made in response to the Aboriginal Education Review of 2003 which was reported on in 2004 (*The Report of the Review of Aboriginal Education, Yanigurra Muya: Gangurrinyama Yaarri Guurulaw Yirringin.gurray Freeing the Spirit: Dreaming an Equal Future*).

The Policy’s implementation is continuous and ongoing given the nature of education and training which each year sees:

- a new cohort of students begin their formal education
- a new cohort of teaching graduates embark on their careers and
- new educational leaders take up their positions

Guiding elements for effective implementation

The Department must focus on:

- establishing, building and strengthening relationships with Aboriginal people and communities
- providing, in partnership with Aboriginal people and communities, education and training which promotes quality teaching, is engaging, and is culturally appropriate and relevant
- promoting education and training as a lifelong pursuit; to ensure Aboriginal people are better equipped to secure meaningful and rewarding employment and to lead healthy, fulfilling and successful lives.

The Policy highlights the need for all staff to focus on three guiding elements for its effective implementation:

- Relationships
- Engagement
- Ongoing Learning

The Policy should be implemented:

- within the planning and day-to-day work of each school and workplace and
- in partnership with the NSW AECG Inc., local AECGs, local Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal organisations.

Key planning documents for implementation of the Policy include:

- The *Partnership Agreement* between the Department of Education and

Communities and the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Inc.

- the *Aboriginal Human Resources Development Plan 2012-2017*.
- *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy 2015*.

The Department recognises the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Incorporated as the peak community advisory body to the Department on Aboriginal education and training at all levels and in all stages of planning and decision making.

Implementing the Policy

Reflecting and Planning

When implementing the Policy, principals and workplace managers should:

- ensure planning and practice is aligned to the Policy
- provide all staff with the opportunity to discuss the Policy's implications in the context of their role and their workplace
- provide community members with the opportunity to discuss the Policy's importance and how they can contribute to its implementation. It is important to make contact with local or regional AECGs.

Integrating the Policy into Everyday Business

Key Questions:

- What is our rationale for Aboriginal education and training?
- What have we achieved to date?
- How do we learn from and celebrate our achievements?
- What is our plan for sustaining our partnerships with our community?
- How are relationships, engagement and ongoing learning embedded in our planning and practices?
- How will we use our learnings to sustain and, where relevant, strengthen what we are doing and/or change our efforts to increase our impact?

The **Reflect/Plan/Act** guide at the end of this document lists good practice strategies and actions to support effective Policy implementation.

Policy Implementation and Accountability

Key deliverables to be reported include the extent to which *Aboriginal Education* local implementation processes are:

- developed in partnership with local and regional AECGs or, for those schools without a local AECG, local Aboriginal community members
- fully integrated into and embedded in planning
- regularly reviewed and their effectiveness evaluated.

The Department's school planning and reporting documentation requires principals to:

- exercise responsibility to develop a school plan in consultation with the school community
- report in the school plan the involvement of the school community, including the local Aboriginal community, in developing the plan
- report to the school's community and to the Department on the implementation of the school plan, its effectiveness and achievements
- document in the school plan the way the school manages additional equity funding, including loadings for Aboriginal students
- develop improvement measures in the school plan that will be used to demonstrate the performance of students attracting additional equity funding, including Aboriginal students
- report to the community, through the annual school report, progress and achievements in terms of outcomes for students for whom equity funds were allocated, including Aboriginal students.

The school self-regulation tool supports principals to monitor and report on the implementation of the *Aboriginal Education Policy*.

To enable Aboriginal students to succeed, it is imperative that the *Aboriginal Education Policy* is fully and consistently implemented in every school.

It is important that every school with Aboriginal students should:

- prioritise the educational outcomes and wellbeing of Aboriginal students
- establish and maintain effective, respectful and collaborative relationships with Aboriginal parents/carers and community members

- should actively involve Aboriginal parents/carers and AECG members in educational decision-making.

It is vital that all schools:

- ensure that staff are provided with on-going opportunities to access Aboriginal cultural education through professional learning and career development opportunities
- students develop deeper understandings of Aboriginal histories, cultures, languages and perspectives.

Building Competencies in Aboriginal Cultures

<p>The Policy Mandates</p>	<p><i>‘Aboriginal Cultural Education through professional learning and career development experiences for all staff’</i></p>
<p>Cultural Competencies</p>	<p>Cultural competence refers to an ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures and socio-economic backgrounds. Competencies in Aboriginal Cultures are those knowledges and skills that are required to engage respectfully with Aboriginal peoples in all settings in order to build and maintain relationships and continually improve service delivery.</p>
<p>Enabling learning pathways to build Competencies in Aboriginal Cultures</p>	<p>Pathways are a flexible learning approach based on individual needs and understandings in the context of ongoing life-long learning.</p>
<p>Ensure professional learning for all staff to build competencies in Aboriginal cultures</p>	<p>Under <i>The School Success Model</i>, all schools are responsible for planning and providing professional learning for all staff, including in Aboriginal education, as mandated by the <i>Aboriginal Education Policy</i>. There are numerous courses, workshops and training sessions available to build competencies in Aboriginal Cultures.</p> <p>In accordance with the Department’s <i>Partnership Agreement</i> with the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group, all schools are strongly encouraged to work with their local AECG to implement <i>Connecting to Country</i>.</p> <p><i>Connecting to Country</i> provides participants with the opportunity to experience aspects of local Aboriginal culture, learn about local Aboriginal history and establish relationships with members of the local Aboriginal community.</p> <p>For more information contact the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Incorporated state office on 9550 5666. Their website can be accessed at www.aecg.nsw.edu.au.</p>
<p>Engaging Australian Professional Standards for Teachers 1.4 and 2.4</p>	<p>Professional learning to build competencies in Aboriginal Cultures addresses the focus areas of <i>Australian Professional Standards for Teachers</i> including 1.4 (Strategies for teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students) and 2.4 (Understand and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to promote reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians).</p>

Reflect > Plan > Act Guide

There are many different approaches to planning and many ways of documenting plans to suit local needs. The table below, which is in effect, a *Reflect > Plan > Act Guide*, is intended to prompt reflections and planning on key issues which can be incorporated into local processes and formats.

Excellence in Learning		
Suggested actions related to the Policy	What do we already do?	What are we going to do?
Maximise Aboriginal student learning through identifying and analysing data (SCOUT, attendance etc.) to plan individualised and differentiated learning to ensure the achievements of Aboriginal students match or better the outcomes of all students.		
Ensure appropriate assessment and reporting practices are used consistently to monitor Aboriginal students' learning outcomes across the curriculum.		
Ensure the learning needs of Aboriginal students are met through an integrated approach to quality teaching, curriculum and assessment.		

Focus on early intervention and prevention to ensure Aboriginal students are supported throughout their learning.		
In collaboration with parents/caregivers, develop, implement and regularly monitor each Aboriginal student's Personalised Learning Pathway (PLP, formerly known as Personalised Learning Plan) to ensure their engagement, wellbeing and aspirations are met.		
Plan and promote school practices to support the cognitive, emotional, social, physical and spiritual wellbeing of Aboriginal students resulting in improved educational outcomes, positive behaviour and more effective engagement.		
Create learning environments where Aboriginality, identity and the diversity of Aboriginal cultures are valued, respected and promoted to ensure Aboriginal students are attending, engaged and achieving.		
Celebrate and acknowledge Aboriginal cultural events and significant dates to build the knowledge and understanding of all students about Aboriginal histories and cultures.		
Recognise and communicate Aboriginal student achievements to parents/caregivers, their extended families and the wider community.		

Excellence in Teaching

Suggested actions related to the Policy	What do we already do?	What are we going to do?
<p>Undertake ongoing professional learning to increase knowledge about how to support the identity and diversity of Aboriginal students and how they learn. For example, participate in <i>Connecting to Country</i>, a professional learning experience developed and delivered by the AECG, and connect with your Principal Network's Aboriginal Education and Engagement Team.</p>		
<p>Participate in professional learning that is aligned to the school plan and the learning needs of Aboriginal students.</p>		
<p>Participate in Aboriginal cultural education in partnership with their local Aboriginal community.</p>		
<p>Identify and share resources to support the development and professional learning of Aboriginal staff</p>		
<p>Ensure teachers know their Aboriginal students and understand the importance of their identity and extended family connections.</p>		

Exhibit high expectations for each Aboriginal student.		
Utilise evidence-based teaching strategies to improve learning outcomes for Aboriginal students.		
Plan for and implement effective teaching, learning and assessment for Aboriginal students.		
Implement quality teaching practices for Aboriginal students across KLAS.		
Ensure all students learn about Aboriginal culture, histories and experiences. Work with local AECG and community to develop Aboriginal content across KLAS.		
Ensure every Aboriginal student has a PLP that is developed in genuine partnership with Aboriginal students, their parents or carers and teachers.		

Identify and address the individual needs of every Aboriginal student including gifted and talented students, disengaged students and students needing additional learning support.		
Ensure Aboriginal students are supported through key transition points.		

Excellence in Leading

Suggested actions related to the Policy	What do we already do?	What are we going to do?
<p>Actively monitor the implementation of the <i>Aboriginal Education Policy</i> and national and state priorities for Aboriginal education.</p>		
<p>Support career and leadership development opportunities for Aboriginal staff.</p>		
<p>Endorse at the local level the <i>Partnership Agreement</i> between the Department and the NSW AECG. This can be done by having the school principal and local/regional AECG president: (i) agree to the principles of respect, commitment, collaboration and accountability in order to improve educational and training outcomes for Aboriginal learners and (ii) sign a copy of the <i>Partnership Agreement</i>.</p>		
<p>Develop, maintain and strengthen effective engagement between schools and local/regional AECGs, Aboriginal communities, Aboriginal organisations, Elders and key agencies as partners in education and training. Ensure Principal, school executive or teachers regularly attend local AECG meetings, where local AECGs are established.</p>		

<p>Lead planning, people and processes to achieve collaborative decision making between schools and Aboriginal parents, extended family and local AECGs. Ensure open and transparent communication about school planning, funding and Aboriginal student outcomes.</p>		
<p>Build and support a culture of high expectations and community engagement, resulting in improved educational outcomes for Aboriginal learners.</p>		
<p>Use resources strategically to improve Aboriginal student outcomes.</p>		
<p>Build partnerships with key local stakeholders so that opportunities and resources are identified to provide relevant and timely support for individual students and families.</p>		
<p>Work with government and non-government agencies, local and regional AECGs and Aboriginal community organisations, to ensure all Aboriginal students are supported through key transition points and throughout their learning including post school pathways.</p>		

<p>Establish an Aboriginal education advisory committee (if not established) led by a school executive member.</p>		
<p>In partnership with the local Aboriginal community, create and promote a school environment that respects and values local Aboriginal cultures and protocols.</p>		
<p>Regularly report to partners – to Aboriginal parents, caregivers and families, local AECGs.</p>		
<p>Recognise, communicate and celebrate Aboriginal student achievement with Aboriginal parents, their extended families and the wider community.</p>		

Community Partnerships Planning Guide

How are we going to work with the local and/or regional AECG, Aboriginal people, Aboriginal organisations and Aboriginal communities to:

- ensure Aboriginal education is core business for all staff and to plan for success for all Aboriginal students
- increase competencies in Aboriginal cultures for all staff and educate all students about Aboriginal Australia, and
- connect people through partnerships that make a difference to accelerate progress in bridging the achievement gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students?

Find out more about the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Inc. from their website: www.aecg.nsw.edu.au

Document History

The first *Aboriginal Education Policy*, released in 1982, focused on the advancement of Aboriginal communities and an appreciation of Aboriginal cultures and societies by other Australians.

A decade later, this landmark policy was reviewed to make the policy relevant to schools with small numbers of Aboriginal students.

The 1996 *Aboriginal Education Policy* had three focus areas:

- Aboriginal students
- Aboriginal communities
- All staff, students and schools.

Many Aboriginal communities and a range of staff made significant contributions to the development and implementation of this policy.

In October 2003, the NSW Government announced a review of the effectiveness of the provision of Aboriginal education and training for Aboriginal students in New South Wales. The Aboriginal Education Review raised concerns about the consistency with which the *Aboriginal Education Policy* had been implemented and recommended that the *Aboriginal Education Policy* be updated in partnership with the NSW AECG Inc.

As a result, the Aboriginal Education Policy was updated as an action within the *Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy 2006-2008*. Extensive consultations and feedback on the draft were supported by the Department and the NSW AECG Inc. Feedback was received from 189 group and individual submissions. More than 1,000 people were involved.

Main changes to the Policy, since the previous version, include:

1. This policy applies to all sectors of public education and training and all Departmental employees.
2. The policy articulates the Department's commitments to Aboriginal education and training in response to the Aboriginal Education Review.
3. Specific actions to be undertaken to respond to the 71 recommendations of the Aboriginal Education Review were specified in the *Aboriginal Education Strategy 2006-2008*.
4. Specific responsibilities for staff are included.

5. Monitoring occurs through the Director, Aboriginal Education and Community Engagement.
6. The policy complies with the format now required for all Departmental policies.