

Strengthening harmony and building resilience in school communities

Advice for schools

2023

Acknowledgement of Country

The NSW Department of Education acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands where we work and live. We celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to the lands and waters of NSW.

We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging and acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that contributed to the development of this resource.

Strengthening harmony and building resilience in school communities

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Introduction

Australia is one of the world's most culturally diverse nations and there is a strong commitment at all levels of government to promote and enable equity, community harmony and social cohesion in our educational institutions.

The [2019 Alice Springs \(Mparntwe\) Education Declaration](#) outlines the commitment of Australian governments to improve the educational outcomes of young Australians and support every student to live a full, productive and responsible life. The Declaration aims to achieve two goals:

1. The Australian education system promotes excellence and equity.
2. All young Australians become confident and creative individuals, successful lifelong learners, and active and informed members of the community.

In NSW, our government school communities reflect the social, cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity of the state. More than one third of our students come from language backgrounds other than English, including overseas and Australian born, and approximately 9 per cent of students identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. Students are from a range of socio-economic backgrounds, speak over 200 different languages, and hold a range of religious and spiritual beliefs.

In such a diverse context, NSW government schools have an important role to play in building community harmony through acknowledging and respecting the cultural diversity of their school communities and developing students' intercultural understanding and sense of identity as Australians.

Schools contribute to the building of a democratic, just, and equitable society by assisting students to become active and informed citizens who are able to appreciate diverse perspectives and think deeply and logically about contemporary national and international world issues.

In addition to moral and educational imperatives for enabling students to contribute to the maintenance of a just and harmonious Australian society, there are important legal and policy responsibilities for schools in ensuring that the learning and working environment is inclusive and free from racism and other forms of discrimination. Commonwealth and State laws protect individuals from discrimination on a number of grounds and a range of government policies and mechanisms promote social inclusion, multiculturalism and equity in public services and provisions, and in the broader community. These laws and policies provide the context for related Department policies and have implications for practices and provisions in NSW government schools.

Using these materials

Building community harmony involves action at a number of levels, through: whole school policies and programs; inclusive teaching and learning programs; and collaboration with students, parents and community members and other relevant stakeholders.

This information has been produced and adapted from a variety of sources reflecting work undertaken across the NSW public education system as well as by individual schools. It draws upon and reflects the excellent work being carried out in the areas of student wellbeing and behaviour as well as within anti-racism, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, multicultural and values education.

These materials provide advice to schools on how to build and maintain harmony and enhance greater social cohesion within the school community. This includes advice on appropriate actions to take if community disharmony occurs and how to support and build the resilience of students who may be adversely impacted by local and/or international incidents.

Use of these materials is a matter for individual schools and the suggested strategies should be adapted by schools to suit their local context.

Building and maintaining school community harmony

A harmonious school community is essential to supporting student wellbeing and behaviour and ensuring that productive and effective teaching and learning is able to take place. School community harmony is created by establishing a culture of inclusion, where all students and their families feel welcome and accepted, and all students connect, succeed, and thrive.

School community harmony is founded on the attitudes, beliefs, behaviours, and values that promote positive relationships and reduce the likelihood of discord developing. A cohesive school community is built through (1) whole school programs that promote respect and create a sense of community within and beyond the school, (2) teaching activities that develop intercultural understanding, challenge prejudice, teach critical thinking, integrity, and personal responsibility, as well as enhance resilience and develop help seeking skills, and (3) fostering a sense of belonging and responsibility through student leadership and parent/carer engagement.

In considering their approach to building community harmony, schools should refer to the following key policies. These policies are available on the department's [Policy library](#).

- [Aboriginal Education](#)
- [Anti-Racism](#)
- [Bullying of Students – Prevention and Response](#)
- [Child Protection – Responding to and reporting students at risk of harm](#)
- [Controversial Issues in Schools](#)
- [Inclusive, Engaging and Respectful Schools](#)
- [Mentoring Students](#)
- [Multicultural Education](#)
- [Out of Home Care in Government Schools](#)
- [Religious Education](#)
- [Student Behaviour](#)
- [Student Welfare](#)
- [Values in NSW Public Schools](#).

Whole school programs and initiatives

Knowing your school community

Suggested strategies:

- ensure accurate enrolment data is collected and maintained for each student, including Aboriginality, language/s spoken at home, country of birth of student and parents, education background, proficiency in English language as well as visa sub-class and date of entry for new arrivals
- use enrolment data, and additional information as required, to identify the specific needs of students and families, including cultural and/or religious needs, English language support required for students and/or families, and the need for specialist support to facilitate student learning and wellbeing
- develop a profile of the school community, including students from diverse socio-economic, cultural, linguistic, and religious backgrounds and ensure that all staff are aware of the diversity of their school community
- plan and implement whole school programs and initiatives that reflect and meet the needs of the school community
- be aware of changing patterns of school enrolments, including backgrounds and needs of recently arrived students, and adapt programs and support in response
- acknowledge and demonstrate respect the cultural, linguistic, and religious backgrounds of students and their families
- establish partnerships with communities represented in the school, including links with relevant community organisations and representative bodies
- recognise and use the cultural knowledge of the school community to determine culturally appropriate and relevant whole school strategies for building community harmony
- be aware of local, national and/or international tensions, crises, and incidents of disharmony reported in the media and monitor school community relations for potential impact.

Promoting inclusion and belonging

Suggested strategies:

- promote the core values of NSW Public Schools, particularly the values of respect, responsibility, integrity, cooperation, fairness, and care through school communications and activities
- implement strategies that promote a diverse school workforce
- ensure staff are aware of how to respond to anti-social and extremist behaviour
- display 'welcome' signs and other relevant information in inclusive and positive language, including in relevant school community languages
- actively engage with parents/carers about their child's learning and wellbeing
- ensure parents/carers representing the diversity of the school community are included in the development of school processes, procedures, practices, and parent/carer resources
- include authentic strategies for Aboriginal education, multicultural and anti-racism education, community harmony and social and cultural inclusion in the school's Strategic Improvement Plan
- ensure the school implements the Welcome to Country & Acknowledgement of Country: Guidelines and Protocols for NSW Public Schools and TAFE NSW Institutes
- fly the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags alongside the Australian flag where appropriate and in accordance with government protocols
- ensure staff complete mandatory Aboriginal Cultural Education training
- encourage staff to undertake professional learning in Aboriginal, anti-racism and multicultural education
- promote national events which encourage Reconciliation and develop an understanding of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures including National Sorry Day (26 May), National Reconciliation Week in May/June, and NAIDOC Week in July
- promote the teaching of community languages, including Aboriginal languages
- promote school community harmony throughout the year through inclusive and accessible events which promote peace and positive community relations
- recognise and support events of cultural and religious significance to all groups represented in the school community
- implement whole school programs which promote intercultural understanding such as a cultural exchange program with another school or involving community groups in assemblies and other forums
- provide opportunities for students and staff to learn about cultural diversity in authentic and relevant ways through co-curricular activities and the celebration of events such as Harmony Day
- provide opportunities for learning about the refugee experience on World Refugee Day (20 June) and during National Refugee Week in June.

Anti-racism education

Suggested strategies:

- ensure that your school has a trained Anti-Racism Contact Officer (ARCO)
- promote the Anti-Racism Contact Officer (ARCO) role so that the school community knows who the ARCO is and what they do
- ensure that all staff complete the mandatory Anti-Racism Policy Training
- provide professional learning for all staff which builds deep understanding of the nature and impact of racism and develops skills in addressing racism in the learning environment
- provide all teachers with information on available resources that support anti-racism education
- develop a whole school anti-racism strategy in consultation with students, staff and school community
- ensure the school community knows how to report incidents of racism and that staff know how to address racism if it occurs
- implement programs that build students' understanding of racism and skills in responding to it
- monitor and keep records of the number of complaints of racism and their resolution
- ensure all students and the school community know and understand the department's complaints handling procedures
- join the Anti-racism education Statewide staffroom.

Student wellbeing

Suggested strategies:

- review the school's student wellbeing programs to ensure that they reflect the Student Welfare Policy, the Wellbeing Framework for schools, the Inclusive Education Policy, the Student Behaviour Policy and Procedures, and support the learning and wellbeing needs of all students
- ensure that the school has an Anti-bullying Plan with identified strategies for dealing with incidents of bullying, consistent with the Bullying of Students Policy- Prevention and Response and in consultation with the school community
- participate in National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence activities each year
- develop strategies for countering discriminatory attitudes and behaviours in consultation with the school community
- ensure students and all members of the school community are aware of their rights and responsibilities under the Anti-Racism Policy and anti-discrimination legislation
- develop and implement a School Behaviour and Support Management Plan that is underpinned by the care continuum in consultation with the school community and in line with the Student Behaviour and the Inclusive Education for students with disability
- develop canteen and uniform policies in consultation with the school community to ensure that they are inclusive and respectful of the cultural and religious practices observed by students and their families
- support students to successfully manage transitions, including making transitions to and between schools, as well as from school to work or further education
- ensure that student support networks are in place and known by all students and make this information available in community languages
- monitor students for signs of unhappiness, isolation, withdrawal, or emotional distress and take the initiative in providing support and involving parents/carers as required
- provide access to school counselling service where appropriate
- provide specialised, early intervention programs and support for newly arrived migrants and refugee background students where required
- have in place support strategies which address the specific needs of individual students that may arise from living arrangements, family circumstances, cultural, linguistic, and religious background, disability status or healthcare needs.

Student leadership

Suggested strategies:

- establish peer support programs to assist newly arrived students from migrant and refugee backgrounds in their transitions through schooling in NSW
- provide students with opportunities to share their thoughts and opinions about their education and wellbeing in culturally safe and inclusive environments
- promote student voice in school planning and evaluation processes
- provide opportunities for students from all backgrounds to take part in leadership development programs and demonstrate leadership in school activities
- ensure processes for appointing students to leadership positions, including Student Representative Council positions, are inclusive and enable equitable participation by all students
- develop student leadership opportunities that promote anti-racism, social and cultural inclusion, and community harmony
- provide opportunities for students to identify and respond to issues of local, national, and global concern including community harmony, human rights and humanitarian affairs
- develop mentoring initiatives that encourage and support students from diverse cultural, linguistic, and religious backgrounds to actively participate at school and in the broader school community
- encourage student participation in activities which promote intercultural understanding and community harmony such as the Multicultural Perspectives Public Speaking Competition
- implement and promote strategies for the safe and anonymous disclosure of information of disharmony within the school and/or the broader community
- establish links with community and youth organisations and community liaison officers, including bilingual and multicultural youth workers, to support students at risk
- promote an ethos of community service and civic responsibility with the student body and through links to the wider community.

Teaching and learning programs

Inclusive curriculum and pedagogy

Suggested strategies:

- review current teaching practice to ensure it is culturally inclusive and reflective of the local context
- encourage teachers to use resources and activities that reflect diverse perspectives; encourage critical thinking and empathy; and build on students' life and learning experiences
- provide professional learning for teachers that develops their knowledge of culture and diversity and skills in culturally inclusive pedagogy and differentiating the curriculum to meet the diverse needs of students
- recognise cultural and religious events of significance for students and take these into account when planning teaching and learning activities
- model behaviour which shows respect for diversity and promotes a sense of belonging and shared identity amongst students
- maintain high expectations of all students
- build a culture of respect and encourage positive interactions between students and address prejudice and racism when it occurs
- provide explicit support to accommodate the particular needs of students, including learning, literacy, numeracy and English language support.
- implement explicit teaching and learning activities that promote intercultural understanding, accurately reflect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, and develop understandings of racism and its impact
- encourage the use of a range of strategies, including drama techniques and peer teaching, to develop students' abilities to recognise and appropriately respond to incidents of racism.

Intercultural understanding

Suggested strategies:

- integrate intercultural understanding across all curriculum areas, where possible providing opportunities for students to explore Australian diversity and identities
- encourage teachers to use resources available to support the teaching of democracy, civics and citizenship, global citizenship, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and multicultural education
- provide opportunities for students to explore Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia as cross-curriculum priorities
- encourage interfaith understanding by providing opportunities for students to explore the diversity of spiritual traditions, practices, and expressions within the school community
- invite community leaders from a range of backgrounds to speak to students in class, assemblies or in other forums
- encourage teachers to promote values that underpin and support community harmony across curriculum areas and through whole school activities
- provide staff with information on available intercultural understanding teaching resources
- provide professional learning for all staff to learn about the histories, cultures, and family practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, culturally and linguistically diverse families and other groups in the community.

Engaging parents/carers and community members

Consultative decision-making

Suggested strategies:

- create a community engagement team to facilitate family and community engagement strategies – see [Opening the school gate: Engaging migrant and refugee families \(PDF 2.6MB\)](#) or [Opening the school gate online resource](#) and [Building relationships with Aboriginal families in schools](#)
- provide both formal and informal opportunities for parent/carers to meet school staff, build their understanding of the school and celebrate and contribute to their child's learning
- use positive language that affirms the important role of parents/carers as partners in their child's learning
- promote democratic and inclusive practices across the school and in classrooms by offering training and support in decision-making practices to staff, parents/carers, students and members of the school community to enable them to actively engage in decision-making related to the whole school community
- use the [School Assessment Tool – Reflection Matrix](#) of the [Family School Partnership Framework](#) to investigate level of engagement in school activities and decision-making processes by parents/carers from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds and develop strategies to encourage greater participation and collaboration where necessary
- ensure meaningful consultation and collaboration with parents/carers and community members from different cultural backgrounds in school planning and evaluation processes
- encourage parents from all backgrounds and communities to become involved in school-based and other parent/carer consultative forums and committees including the P&C and [NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group \(NSW AECG\)](#)
- provide [interpreters](#) where required to facilitate the participation of parents/carers with limited English proficiency in meetings about their child's learning, wellbeing and behaviour and in consultative decision-making processes
- build the capacity of the whole school community through the implementation of community harmony building activities
- provide opportunities to draw on the skills and knowledge of the school community in order to build intercultural understanding and promote mutual respect within the school.

Encouraging participation

Suggested strategies:

- create a welcoming environment for parents and community members from all cultural backgrounds through the use of multilingual signs, regular meetings and allocation of parent meeting spaces
- provide information in accessible formats and school community languages
- conduct surveys, focus groups, consultations, morning or afternoon teas to ask parents/carers how they would like to participate at school
- provide opportunities for parents/carers and members of the community to assist in the classroom or other activities such as assemblies, excursions, celebrations or sports carnivals
- provide staff with professional learning opportunities that equip them with skills to interact positively with parents and community members from all cultural backgrounds
- encourage and sustain parents/carers' participation in the P & C and other school initiatives by organising inductions sessions and providing ongoing training and support
- nominate staff or a team to lead whole school community harmony and engagement strategies
- provide language supported parent information sessions, including targeted workshops, on assessment, reporting and curriculum and strategies for supporting student's learning
- provide additional support for newly arrived parents and families including information on schooling in NSW public schools and links with settlement and other support services
- draw upon the expertise of parents and community members to support student learning.

Effective communication

Suggested strategies:

- investigate the forms of communication that are preferred by parents/carers and use these methods in culturally appropriate ways to communicate with the school community
- initiate and maintain regular communication with parents/carers
- provide parents/cares translations of key department documents in relevant languages
- ensure that interpreters are used for interviews and meetings with parents/carers, as required
- ensure staff know how to access and use interpreters and translated documents to communicate effectively with parents/carers.
- apply for the Community Language Allowance Scheme payment for front office staff who use their community language skills to provide information to school community members.

Responding in the event of community disharmony

In times of community discord, national or international crises, students and their families will be impacted to varying degrees and in different ways.

How they are affected will depend on:

- their emotional and community ties to the groups impacted
- their personal beliefs about the issues raised
- their own resilience and active support networks
- the community's reaction and response and
- how the events, and the communities involved, are represented in media reports.

Differing opinions about the causes of community discord, personal concerns about persecution and injustice, and fears about physical or verbal repercussions can engender strong emotional reactions among staff and students. This can have a significant impact on the learning and wellbeing of students and staff.

Schools should pay special attention to students who:

- may feel anxious and isolated, including those who may be new
- have limited social networks
- are members of community groups involved in the discord or have ties to communities linked to national or international crises and events.

It is critical, in times of community distress, to create a supportive educational environment for members of the school community who may be feeling alienated or vulnerable.

Managing the schools response – advice for principals

In the event of an incident of community disharmony or in times of crises, principals should consult with staff with relevant expertise in wellbeing, trauma informed practice, and multicultural education in determining how to best engage with the community, and support students and their families.

The principal should:

- convene a staff meeting to provide relevant information and discuss a planned school response
- encourage staff to systematically monitor students for signs of distress or changes in behaviour
- encourage staff to remain neutral when supporting students by providing factual information
- arrange, where possible, for appropriately trained staff, including the [Refugee Student Counselling Support Team](#), to support students and staff as required
- provide students the opportunity to ask questions and express their feelings in a safe and supportive environment
- remind students of the support available, such as the school counsellor, [Anti-Racism Contact Officer](#) (ARCO), Student Support Officer, class teachers and how they can help
- reassure students that the school is a safe environment and that all will be supported
- establish processes that allow students to anonymously and discretely express concerns to staff
- send a note home with students and/or post a message on the school website and social network platforms outlining the school's response and the support available for students, see [Letter to parents regarding recent community events](#) for translated sample letters to parents/carers advising of the steps taken by the school in the event of community disharmony.
- remind staff to look after their own wellbeing and of the support available from the [Employee Assistance Program](#) (EAP) 1800 060 650
- provide staff the opportunity and a safe space to debrief
- review events with staff and discuss the plan for the ongoing management of issues.

Supporting students

It is important not to make assumptions about how individual students or groups of students will react to incidents of community disharmony or local, national, international crises. However, there are some behaviours that students commonly exhibit in response to such events:

- anxiety associated with a loss of a sense of security and safety
- behaviours which indicate a triggering of a previous trauma
- re-emergence of previous behavioural and engagement concerns
- increased sensitivity to issues of justice and equity
- withdrawal or acting out
- conflict with peers
- feeling angry and expressions of anger.

Staff should:

- be sensitive to the feelings and reactions of all students
- provide support and reassurance that their school is a safe place to be
- remind students of the support structures available to them at school.

Key messages about community harmony

In the event of community disharmony, the key messages to be delivered to support students are:

- violence and harassment will not be tolerated in our school community
- prejudice and discrimination can be overcome
- with support, students can be helped to manage the situation.

Appropriate actions to reinforce key messages and build resilience

Key message	Suggested actions for school staff
<p>Violence and harassment will not be tolerated</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school must be a safe place to carry out its core business of teaching and learning • All people should be treated with fairness, respect and dignity • Groups of people should not be judged by the actions of a few members of that group • Anger is a normal reaction to conflict • Violence and harassment are illegal, contrary to school policy and will not be tolerated • Violence always generates resentment • Vengeance and justice are not the same 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure all members of the school community are aware of their rights and responsibilities under the Anti-Racism Policy and racial discrimination legislation • promote whole school programs which promote harmony, inclusion and belonging • ensure fair and consistent application of the School Behaviour Support and Management Plan • ensure the school has a trained Anti-Racism Contact Officer and promote their role to the school community in language • identify positive role models from members of diverse cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds.
<p>Prejudice and discrimination can be overcome</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • model acceptance, compassion and understanding • include strategies to promote community harmony and counter racism in the school's strategic improvement plan • implement inclusive teaching practices • explore and mitigate fears in relation to other communities • avoid stereotyping people, countries, cultures and religions • learn and teach about diverse faiths and cultures • provide accurate, relevant and useful information in developmentally appropriate language • promote critical assessment of facts and opinions in media reports.
<p>With support, students can be helped to manage the situation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • maintain routine and predictability • provide a stable environment with clear expectations, rules and consequences • provide opportunities for positive interactions and experiences through peer support, mentoring and cultural exchange programs • promote careful attention to family and friendship networks • encourage students to maintain their normal range of recreational activities, where possible • encourage students to talk to their families and friends.

Facilitating student discussions

Should teachers decide to hold class discussions about unfolding events of community disharmony or crises, it is imperative that they establish protocols that emphasise and create a safe space and foster a sense of community and connectedness:

- all members of the group have the right to speak and respectfully share their views
- all members of the group must listen to other members with respect
- all members must express their views in ways which demonstrate respect for others and which do not insult, stereotype, denigrate or incite hostility towards other groups
- all members have a right to their own views, and different and opposing views should be respected and acknowledged
- everything shared during the discussion is confidential and should not become playground 'gossip'.

If the discussion results in an argument, or members of the group are feeling unsafe or anxious, or if members do not abide by the established protocols, the discussion should be stopped.

During discussions, it is imperative that teachers:

- centre and value the voices and views of students from the affected communities
- keep to known facts, and
- ensure that students are aware of the people within the school they can go to if they wish to discuss how they may be feeling in more detail.

Teachers should conclude discussions with a positive message about student safety, and the importance of working together to overcome any community division that may arise.

Following are some suggested discussion starters for teachers

Key message	Suggested phrasing
<p>Setting parameters and acknowledging distress</p>	<p><i>“I understand that this is an issue that we all might feel very strongly about...”</i></p> <p><i>“We might feel differently about it because we have different experiences of discrimination. This could be because we’ve had friends suffer discrimination or we’ve been the victim ourselves.”</i></p> <p><i>“Our opinions about this issue are affected by our experiences, the reactions of our family and friends, and the media.”</i></p>
<p>Encouraging students to talk</p> <p>Students can be encouraged to talk by reassuring them that they have a right to hold their own views while respecting those of others.</p>	<p><i>“We need to be careful that feelings are not being hurt by what we say here, so no blaming or accusing others.”</i></p> <p><i>“Many of us find it difficult to talk about discrimination and what it’s like to be a member of a group being discriminated against or blamed for discriminating. We may be afraid that if we say something others may put us down or use what we say against us. It’s important that we listen and respect the right of others to hold different or opposing views, as one of the ways that discrimination keeps its power is by making us afraid to speak up against it.”</i></p>
<p>Encouraging students to challenge prejudice or walk away</p> <p>The teacher should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • emphasise that discrimination is not acceptable and won’t be tolerated in the school • encourage students to speak out against discrimination, and not to participate in activities that could lead to community disharmony. 	<p><i>“If you see someone stirring up trouble, you should not be part of it. You can challenge their prejudice and let everyone know you won’t be part of it. If you feel you can’t speak up and challenge them, then you should walk away and let someone in a position of authority know.”</i></p>
<p>Concerning/ Personal disclosure</p> <p>The teacher should ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • they are aware of their <u>Child Protection</u> responsibilities • they make time for students to appropriately discuss personal matters • they refer students making disclosures to the appropriate school-based support person and facilitate access to this support. 	<p><i>“What you’re saying is pretty personal to you, perhaps it would be better if you told me more about that later today.”</i></p> <p><i>“I’m sorry to hear that. I think it would be a good idea for you to speak to...”</i></p>
<p>Seeking help</p> <p>Class discussion is likely to heighten already strong emotions for some students. Teachers should provide information about where to go for help and support.</p>	<p><i>“We have talked about a lot of sensitive issues here today and I appreciate all your contributions and sharing. Remember that in the school you can go and speak with ... if you feel that you need to discuss these issues further.”</i></p>

Strategies for supporting students

Issue	Suggested strategies
Routines	Try to maintain routines and predictability.
Acknowledgement of the situation	Acknowledge that some students and/or staff may be feeling very distressed and worried.
Reassurance	Assure students that the school is a safe place and demonstrate this by taking action to redress any discrimination that occurs within the school.
Reports of racism	If a student discloses issues of racial harassment, bullying or discrimination, connect them with the school's <u>Anti-Racism Contact Officer</u> (ARCO).
Student backgrounds	Be aware of, and sensitive to, students' family, cultural, religious and language backgrounds, as well as students' individual circumstances.
Understanding	Be understanding of students' wellbeing needs and be flexible in accommodating the needs of individual students,
Listen	Be willing to listen to what students have to say. Opinions will be varied, so it is important not to take or appear to take sides.
Quiet time	Set up a safe place where students can go if they need some time away from the classroom and/or peers.
School work	Be flexible around the completion and submission of homework and assignments.
Instructions	Ensure that classroom instructions are understood by all students. Additional clarification may be necessary because some students may be distracted.
Counselling support	If a student appears particularly distressed, or you have concerns for a student, speak to the school counsellor to organise support which may include group work or referral to other agencies where appropriate.
Additional support	<p>Seek additional specialist support if required:</p> <p>Within the school: the wellbeing team, School Learning Support Officers, <u>Student Support Officers</u>, Aboriginal Education Officers, and School Community Liaison Officers.</p> <p>Outside the school: <u>Multicultural Education team</u>, Incident Report and Support Hotline (IRSH), <u>counselling and psychology services</u>, youth workers, community organisations and other relevant government and non-government agencies.</p>

Re-engaging the school community

Following any incident of community disharmony that has affected the school, and after immediate action has been taken to support students, a school will need to take steps to address the consequences of community conflict to re-engage the school community and re-build community harmony.

The impact of the community conflict on the school and the wider community will need to be carefully analysed to ensure that appropriate measures are put in place, and further escalation of the impact is avoided. It is advisable that the school consult with the wider school community to determine a plan of action to move the school and the community forward.

Schools are encouraged to refer to the range of strategies outlined in Section One to re-build community harmony. Activities could include peer mediation, conflict resolution through restorative practices, and school community forums. Should there be a need for restitution or reconciliation between members of the school community, this process should only be undertaken in consultation and with the full co-operation and support of parents/carers and relevant community leaders.

Schools will need to develop a range of appropriate measures to respond to behaviours that disrupt their school community harmony. These will be documented in the School Behaviour Support and Management Plan developed in consultation with parents/carers and the school community.

Re-engagement of the school community and re-building community harmony is a long-term process. Sensitivities that have been heightened by the conflict may take a considerable time to resolve. Staff should remain vigilant and be on the lookout for situations where such sensitivities may rise again so that they can respond in a timely and constructive manner.

Resources

Professional learning

[Aboriginal Cultural Education – Let’s take the first step together \(Mandatory\)](#)

[Community Engagement: Module 1 – Understanding community engagement](#)

[Community Engagement: Module 2 – Whole school approach](#)

[Community Engagement: Module 3 – Planning, implementing and evaluating](#)

[Culturally Inclusive Teaching and Learning](#)

[Engaging culturally and linguistically diverse communities](#)

[NSW AECG: Engaging Aboriginal communities](#)

[School Excellence – Authentic community engagement](#)

Policies

The Department of Education policies and their support documents below are available at the department’s [Policy library](#). Regularly visit the policies website to ensure you have the most up-to-date documents.

- [Aboriginal Education](#)
- [Anti-Racism](#)
- [Bullying of Students – Prevention and Response](#)
- [Child Protection – Responding to and from reporting students at risk of harm](#)
- [Complaints Handling](#)
- [Controversial Issues in Schools](#)
- [Multicultural Education](#)
- [Religious Education](#)
- [Student Behaviour](#)
- [Student Welfare](#)
- [Values in NSW Public Schools.](#)

Websites

- [All Together Now](#)
- [Australian Human Rights Commission](#)
- [Behaviour Support Toolkit](#)
- [Bullying. No Way!](#)
- [Community Language Allowance Scheme](#)
- [Cultural Exchange NSW](#)
- [Harmony Week](#)
- [Health and Safety](#)
- [Inclusive, Engaging and Respectful Schools Hub](#)
- [Interpreting and translations](#)
- [Kids Helpline](#)
- [Legal issues Bulletin 57 – Responding to anti-social and extremist behaviour](#)
- [Racism. It Stops with Me](#)
- [Racism. No Way!](#)
- [Reach Out](#)
- [Reconciliation Australia](#)
- [Refugee Council of Australia](#)
- [Roads to Refuge](#)
- [Together for Humanity](#)
- [Translated Documents for NSW Public Schools](#)
- [United Nations](#)
- [United Nations Refugee Agency](#)
- [Values in NSW Public Schools](#)
- [Welcome to Country & Acknowledgement of Country: Guidelines and protocols for NSW Public Schools and TAFE NSW institutes](#)

