



Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives in schools

P–12 School Guidelines
for Administrators and Educators
a building block in Partners for Success



Queensland Government
Department of Education and the Arts

Queensland the Smart State

Acknowledgments

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- *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early Childhood Education Policy*
- *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early Childhood Teacher's Handbook* (1992)
- *Draft Pre-School to Year Twelve Guidelines and Framework and Companion Booklet* (1995).

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The Partners for Success unit within the Curriculum Branch of Education Queensland initiated this document to support teachers and schools to successfully integrate Indigenous perspectives within the curriculum.

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- District Community Education Councillors (DCECs)
- Community Partnerships Officers (CPOs)
- Central Office staff
- Indigenous Education and Training Alliance (IETA) staff.

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Rationale

It is vital to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives within school practices. It is essential to help develop a greater understanding of the histories, cultures, values, beliefs, languages, lifestyles and roles of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Such perspectives need to include all aspects of Australia's history, from before colonisation to the present day.

A better understanding of, and respect for, Indigenous¹ cultures develops an enriched appreciation of Australia's cultural heritage, and can lead to reconciliation. This is essential to the maturity of Australia as a nation and fundamental to the development of an Australian identity.

The need for embedding Indigenous perspectives is based on the premise that increased understanding is needed to build corporate knowledge within Education Queensland that is responsive to the needs of an important client group.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students represent over 7 per cent of the total student population. It is essential to equip the school workforce with appropriate cross-cultural skills, knowledge and understanding to cater for these students. Culturally inclusive curriculum will enable all Education Queensland employees to implement effective cross-cultural communication practices in the department. This will ensure a supportive learning and working environment for all Indigenous people in Education Queensland.

Improving educational outcomes for Australia's Indigenous peoples is a major priority for education both nationally and within Queensland. For Indigenous students, providing Indigenous perspectives within the curriculum is fundamental to strengthening identity and self-esteem. It is well documented that a strong sense of identity and good self-image has a direct positive impact on educational outcomes.

This guide offers strategies for administrators and teachers to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives across all areas of school practice giving all students access to a balanced educational curriculum. It is designed to challenge mindsets and, in so doing, broaden worldviews to ensure that students and staff are capable of examining their beliefs, values and actions in new ways.

By embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives throughout the school, students will:

- develop respect for different cultural values and beliefs
- appreciate the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures as part of Australian heritage
- understand the effects of European settlement
- understand the effects of Government policies, both federal and state, on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

¹ The term 'Indigenous' is used throughout this document for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. 'Indigenous Australia' is a term used to describe Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia. 'Indigenous' means 'first', and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the first peoples of Australia.

- be aware of contributions made by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to Australian society
- have the skills to recognise prejudice and racism, and the ability to counter them
- be aware of and empathise with the natural environment of Australia.

This will allow Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to develop their sense of identity and pride in their culture, as well as building knowledge and understanding of their cultural heritage, thus contributing to developing a positive self-concept.²

By incorporating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives into school practices, we can better ensure that the curriculum:

- is culturally inclusive valuing all cultures and backgrounds
- is uniquely Australian, celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander society as fundamental to our heritage
- provides a balanced representation of all Australian peoples, stories, beliefs and practices
- helps to develop the knowledge and understandings needed by all Australian children
- is relevant to the learning needs of all Australian students (Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, long-term residents and new migrants)
- promotes equitable outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

² From Department of Education and Children's Services, South Australia website www.aboriginaleducation.sa.edu.au/pages/Educators/perspectives/

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives: A national and state priority

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives are an important component of Australia's history and cultural heritage.

Teaching about Indigenous cultures and perspectives has been identified nationally as a key component to ensuring improved outcomes for Indigenous peoples in Australia. One key reason is that it leads to understanding and mutual respect between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

The report of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody³ remains the most comprehensive survey of Indigenous law and justice issues, including the underlying causes which bring Aboriginal people into excessive contact with the justice system.

The findings of the Royal Commission and its recommendations have been widely publicised since their release in May 1991.

The recommendations include:

- Educating for the future:
That curricula of schools at all levels should reflect the fact that Australia has an Aboriginal history and Aboriginal viewpoints on social, cultural and historical matters. It is essential that Aboriginal viewpoints, interests, perceptions and expectations are reflected in curricula, teaching and administration of schools.

In April 1999, State, Territory and Commonwealth Ministers of Education met as the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA)⁴ in Adelaide. At that meeting, Ministers endorsed a new set of National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century. The new goals were released in April 1999 as the *Adelaide Declaration* on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century.⁵

One of these goals states that:

Schooling should be socially just, so that:

- 3.1 students' outcomes from schooling are free from the effects of negative forms of discrimination based on sex, language, culture and ethnicity, religion or disability; and of differences arising from students' socio-economic background or geographic location*
- 3.2 the learning outcomes of educationally disadvantaged students improve and, over time, match those of other students*
- 3.3 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have equitable access to, and opportunities in, schooling so that their learning outcomes improve and, over time, match those of other students*

³ For more information on Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody and its recommendations see: www.naa.gov.au/publications/fact_sheets/fs112.html

⁴ For more information on MCEETYA see: www.mceetya.edu.au/mceetya/

⁵ National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century: www.mceetya.edu.au/mceetya/nationalgoals/index.htm

3.4 all students understand and acknowledge the value of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures to Australian society and possess the knowledge, skills and understanding to contribute to and benefit from, reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians

MCEETYA also released *The National Statement for Languages Education in Australian Schools*⁶ in 2005. It emphasises the need for education to focus on developing inter-cultural understanding. This involves the integration of language, culture and learning to help learners to know and understand the world around them. This National Statement also identifies that:

Australian Indigenous languages have a unique place in Australia's heritage and in its cultural and educational life. For Indigenous learners, they are fundamental to strengthening identity and self-esteem. For non-Indigenous learners, they provide a focus for development of cultural understanding and reconciliation.

State Policy and Strategies

Partners for Success is Education Queensland's major policy framework addressing the education needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students throughout the state.

As part of the school planning process within *Partners for Success* all schools are required to complete a *Partners for Success* component as part of their School Annual Report and Operational Plan (SAROP). As part of this process schools will outline strategies and resources allocated to increase the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives across the curriculum and/or the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies programs.⁷

The four priority action areas of *Partners for Success* that contribute directly to improved education and employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are:

- attendance
- retention and completion
- literacy attainment
- workforce and leadership in Indigenous culture.

The following table aims to assist administrators and educators with implementation of these four priority action areas, outlining key ways to embed Indigenous perspectives within all school practices.

⁶ National Statement for Languages Education in Australian Schools. National Plan for Language Education in Australian Schools 2005-2008: For more details see What's New on MCEETYA website: www.mceetya.edu.au/mceetya/default.asp?id=12170

⁷ *Partners for Success*: School Information Kit 2003-2004 pg 17. To download documents see: www.education.qld.gov.au/students/jnt-venture/atsi/success/. For more information see: www.education.qld.gov.au/tal/curriculum_exchange/teachers/pfs/ www.ieta.ash.org.au/deliver/content.asp?pid=333

Priority Action Areas	Key ways to implement
Attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure the curriculum is relevant to Indigenous students and respects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge. • Develop strong partnerships between schools and communities.
Retention and completion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and deliver engaging and culturally inclusive curriculum in responsive learning environments. • Develop targeted strategies across Education Queensland and in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
Literacy Attainment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop teaching practices that explicitly teach Standard Australian English and that meet the developmental needs of individual Indigenous students. • Understand your students, and the knowledge — including language and literacies — they bring to the classroom with them.
Workforce and Leadership in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide professional development for all Education Queensland employees in Cultural awareness using <i>Crossing Cultures</i> resources. • Encourage employment of Indigenous people across all areas of Education Queensland. • Provide appropriate support, professional development and career pathways for all staff.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives

Perspectives are ways of viewing the world — people, places and things and their inter-relationships. Different viewpoints are formed by individual experiences, learning, cultural beliefs and values.

Indigenous perspectives are particular ways of knowing and doing. When embedded within an educational institution, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives influence:

- organisational frameworks
- culturally inclusive teaching, learning and assessment practices
- curriculum content and delivery
- balanced representations
- culturally and community inclusive environments
- employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff
- a model for reframing individual cultural frameworks.

Indigenous perspectives include the ways of knowing and doing for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples, from pre-contact⁸, contact, post-contact, through to today. They are diverse, complex and multi-layered.

Indigenous perspectives have a great deal to offer the Queensland Environmentally Sustainable Schools Initiative (QESSI).

The mission of QESSI is designed to establish a network of environmentally sustainable schools that demonstrate curricula connections and environmental action based on ecological sustainable development principles. QESSI's vision is for all schools in Queensland to be Environmentally Sustainable Schools. For more details see:

www.education.qld.gov.au/schools/environment/outdoor/qessi.html

As stated in *Educating for a Sustainable Future: A National Environmental Education Statement for Australian Schools* (2005). Curriculum Corporation. Victoria:

The nature of Indigenous Australia's relationship with the environment provides many examples of sustainable use of the limited resources of the Australian landscape. (www.deh.gov.au/education).

There are a number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge frameworks developed that support the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives within Queensland. These Indigenous knowledge frameworks consider the histories and experiences, cultures and communities, values and beliefs, languages, knowledges and relationships that make up Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander views of the world and their interactions within it.

⁸ 'Contact' refers to the periods of time of the first exchanges and experiences took place between European explorers and settlers and Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people throughout Australia.

These are discussed further in:

- *Holistic Planning and Teaching Framework*
www.ieta.com.au/deliver/content.asp?pid=1386
- *Indigenous perspectives in the Arts* – including Country, My Country and Aboriginal knowledge framework
www.learningplace.com.au/defaultqa2.asp?orgid=31&suborgid=193
- *Mura Gubal Gedira: Torres Strait Cross Cultural Framework*
www.ieta.ash.org.au/deliver/content.asp?pid=333

Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives within a school environment is a multi-faceted process that can involve community skills, attitudes and beliefs as well as educational programs, curriculum and service delivery methodologies and organisational structures (see figure 1 p.11).

This process does not represent a simplistic step-by-step approach to incorporating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, but rather a realistic approach which considers all elements in relation to each other.

Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives Within the Whole School Community

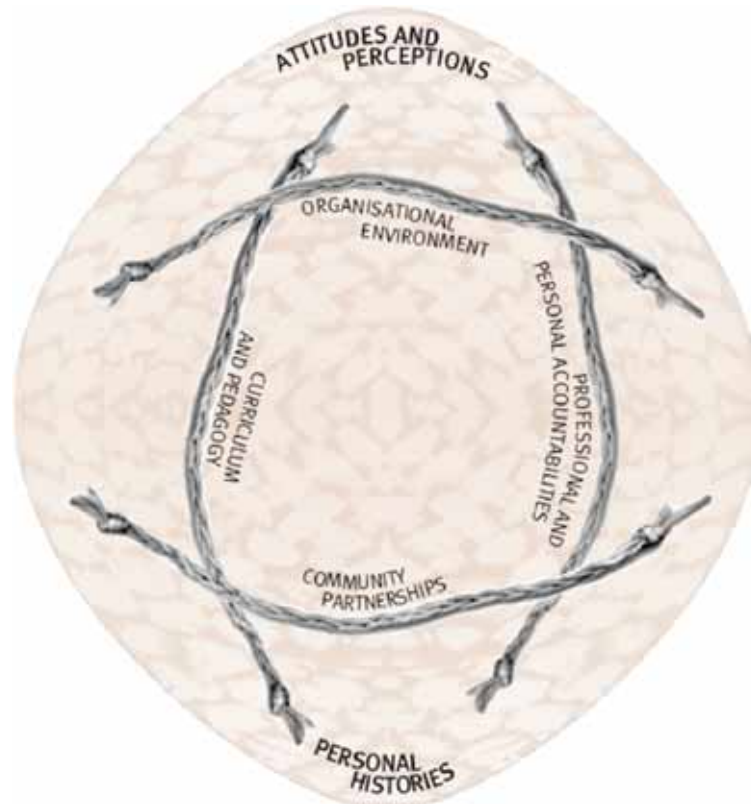


Figure 1

Appropriate inclusion of Indigenous perspectives within the whole school environment requires processes and practices to be embedded within four distinct areas of the school, which will be described further in this document:

1. personal and professional accountability
2. organisational environment
3. community partnerships
4. curriculum and pedagogy.

Through a focus on each of these four areas, Indigenous perspectives can be embedded into the whole school structure, forming an integral part of the school's philosophy and practice.

This will enable the four priority areas of *Partners for Success* to be advanced in schools:

- attendance
- retention and completion
- literacy attainment
- workforce and leadership in Indigenous culture.

Questions to guide the process of embedding Indigenous perspectives in schools

This series of questions is aimed to guide the embedding process within the school. It is based on a commitment to all four areas of the school as mentioned. It is a good place for schools to start to initiate their planning process as a school community.

Organisational environment	Community partnerships	Personal / professional accountability	Curriculum and pedagogy
<p>What changes in the school environment would assist in the delivery of this unit?</p> <p>What barriers may I face in embedding this knowledge into my curriculum?</p> <p>In what ways will I need the school to support the involvement of Indigenous people within this unit of work?</p> <p>What similar units have this school and other schools attempted? What can I learn from them?</p> <p>Are there any sensitive issues that administration may need to know about?</p> <p>Will I need an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person to work with my class at any point during this unit?</p> <p>What will inhibit Indigenous engagement</p>	<p>What community issues or concerns may arise through the content of this unit?</p> <p>Who do I need to consult before I start to plan this unit?</p> <p>Are there any sensitive issues that the community may need to know about?</p> <p>What Indigenous knowledge of the community needs to be collected, recorded and used in the unit?</p> <p>Are there any community events that will link with this unit?</p> <p>What best practices or knowledge frameworks exist within my local community or other Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander communities</p>	<p>What do I know about Indigenous people within this content area?</p> <p>What attitudes and perceptions do I hold about Indigenous people and this knowledge area? Where do these beliefs come from?</p> <p>What do I need to know about Indigenous people within this content area? How can I increase my knowledge?</p> <p>What do my learners know about Indigenous people within this content area?</p> <p>What attitudes and perceptions do my learners and their families hold about Indigenous people and this knowledge area? Where do these beliefs come from?</p> <p>What do my learners need to know about Indigenous people within this content area?</p>	<p>What Indigenous perspectives are missing from our current work programs and units?</p> <p>Where can the dominant paradigms be challenged and balanced within our programs or units?</p> <p><i>Planning</i></p> <p>What is the role of the Indigenous perspective within this unit?</p> <p>What declarative knowledge (<i>content with Indigenous knowledge or perspectives</i>) will be learnt in this unit?</p> <p>What procedural knowledge (<i>process knowledge of how something is done within an Indigenous community e.g. protocols</i>) will be learnt in this unit?</p> <p>What Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander resources will I need to support this unit?</p> <p>What outcomes do students need to display at the end of this unit?</p> <p><i>(KLA outcomes and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander</i></p>

Organisational environment	Community partnerships	Personal / professional accountability	Curriculum and pedagogy
<p>within this unit?</p> <p>What training might Indigenous community members or IEWs need to support my unit?</p> <p>What school processes will I use to protect the intellectual property rights of Indigenous people who are working with me?</p> <p>Where can I find assistance within the department for checking whether the Indigenous knowledge presented in this unit is culturally appropriate?</p> <p>How will the success of this unit be shared, promoted and publicised?</p>	<p>from around Australia?</p> <p>Who from the Indigenous community will be involved with the planning, delivery and evaluation of the unit?</p> <p>What role will Indigenous students, parents and IEWs have in the planning, delivery and evaluation of the unit?</p> <p>How will I establish and maintain contact with Indigenous people during this unit?</p> <p>What protocols will need to be observed during the planning, delivery and evaluation of the unit?</p> <p>Will the outcomes of the unit benefit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people or the local community?</p>	<p>What strategies will I use to combat negative attitudes towards Aboriginal people or Torres Strait Islanders within this unit?</p> <p>How will I make the classroom environment suitable for sharing personal attitudes and perceptions?</p> <p>What attitudes and perceptions may staff have towards this unit or the knowledge learnt within this unit?</p>	<p><i>knowledge outcomes)</i></p> <p>How will I assess attitudes and perceptions of students and student learning?</p> <p><i>Planning and Delivery</i></p> <p>How will the declarative and procedural knowledge be taught? What varied ways will I use to reinforce it?</p> <p>What do I know about preferred learning styles of the students in my class?</p> <p>How will students demonstrate their learning?</p> <p>How will I ensure that the Indigenous knowledge learnt is refined and extended by students within the class?</p> <p>How will students use the Indigenous knowledge meaningfully in the classroom context, community and in the future?</p> <p><i>Planning and Delivery and Evaluation</i></p> <p>How will I document my pedagogical processes?</p> <p>How will students document their processes and share successes with the community?</p> <p>How will I ensure that the unit was culturally appropriate and successful?</p>

Personal and Professional Accountabilities

Each individual has a different set of beliefs, values and knowledge. Education Queensland employees are professionally accountable for providing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives within their curriculum and pedagogical practices for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. It is important that teachers and administrators commit to take on leadership roles within their school environment to ensure that Indigenous perspectives are woven into the fabric of the school environment.

Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives within the whole school requires the reframing of both curriculum and pedagogical practices. This also implies the reframing of the beliefs, values and knowledge of individual staff members, and the attitudes and perceptions of staff, students and community as groups.

Including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives within curriculum and pedagogical practices should challenge teaching staff to examine their own perspectives first. It invites teachers and education workers to consider their own background and experiences and to position their perspectives and attitudes in relation to their story within Australian histories.

This process is also known as *unpacking whiteness*⁹. This term is given to the study of what it means to be privileged on the basis of physical appearance, 'white' and of belonging to dominant mainstream culture. These cultural perspectives are 'unpacked' and reassessed through the process of unpacking whiteness.

It's important to recognise that this process is ongoing and that each journey is personal and different. Administration may need to allocate time, resources and other support to enable teachers to explore this new area. Unpacking personal histories in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories may produce strong and conflicting emotions such as guilt, anger, mistrust, denial, sadness, mourning, excitement or joy.

This process involves developing a deep personal understanding of:

- attitudes and perceptions held about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
- underlying values and beliefs, and how they have developed into attitudes and perceptions; and
- the implications these have in influencing the way one teaches.

Teaching staff should be able to see where and why Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives have been skewed or omitted, and how and what they can do to rectify this.

All Australians have shared histories. Examining one's own perceptions allows individuals to acknowledge and respect the impact Australian histories have on the different positions that people take within Australian society today.

⁹ For more information on 'Unpacking Whiteness' see: www.whiteprivilege.com/definition/

It is important for administrators to monitor this process appropriately and assist in combating negative attitudes and perceptions as they arise and enhance the opportunities for positive actions to occur.

The following key strategies will help school staff to undertake this personal and professional journey successfully:

- Be aware of the motivations for developing and implementing Indigenous perspectives within school practice including curriculum and pedagogical practices.
- Understand and work with community protocols.
- Understand the contexts of a diverse range of texts, for example: human, symbolic, media based, written, audiovisual, visual, oral and personal experience.
- Develop techniques for critical evaluation of texts that consider:
 - the author's perspective and background whether Indigenous or non-Indigenous
 - appropriateness of terminology
 - authenticity, authority and ownership.
- Challenge stereotypes and beliefs about Indigenous people¹⁰.
- Recognise that Aboriginal people are distinctly different from Torres Strait Islander people, and that within these two distinct groups exists a complex mix of many language groups. Each has their own individual belief systems, languages and dialects, lore and relationships to the land, seas or waterways.
- Acknowledge the impact that past and current government policies have played in shaping Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies.
- Understand the impact of colonisation.
- Recognise the influences of the media.
- Understand the non-Indigenous students within the school and the historical relationships of these students and their families with local Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people. Colonisation involves colonisers and those colonised, and the repercussions of this need to be considered. It is particularly important to research the local history from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives, to ensure that a sensitive and balanced representation of a combined local history is presented.

It is important to take time to work carefully through historical issues as they arise. For some students and school staff, for instance, the realisation that their families were personally involved in the dislocation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from their lands can be quite disturbing.

¹⁰ A good place to start to challenge some generally held beliefs about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: www.austlii.edu.au/au/special/rsjproject/rsjlibrary/parliamentary/rebutting/

Organisational Environment

This section outlines best practices for embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in the school's organisational environment.

Human resources

Employing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff is central to embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives within the organisational environment of the school.

Schools will need to consider the following strategies:

- Employ Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders in many roles including: teacher aides, community education counsellors, cultural consultants, guest speakers, artists in residence, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education coordinators, teachers and community members to enable best outcomes for students.
- Include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and communities in school planning and pedagogical processes, curriculum delivery, evaluation and reporting. This can be encouraged through a variety of formal and informal settings and experiences to meet the needs of the local community and context.
- Provide professional development for all teaching staff to participate in activities to develop greater understanding and knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education issues and perspectives.¹¹

Strategies that will guide the employment of Indigenous staff include:

- Actively identify positions for, and recruit, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander staff by working with:
 - Indigenous community organisations to promote and disseminate advertised positions
 - Learning and Engagement Centres (LECs) and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander units within Education Queensland to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are informed of vacancies existing within schools
 - regional HR personnel to recruit suitable applicants. For example contact Regional Office
 - Wal Meta, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Public Sector Employment Development unit. This unit works with Government agencies to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people achieve equity with non-Indigenous Australians in terms of employment and economic status.¹²
- Support professional development for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and offer career pathways in all areas.

¹¹ Contact IETA for details on cultural awareness training: www.ieta.ash.org.au/deliver/content.asp?pid=428

¹² For more information on Wal Meta see: www.wal-meta.qld.gov.au/

- Establish community partnership training programs to train individuals within school priority areas (e.g. supporter reader, supporter writer, THRASS¹³), which will ensure the school can access suitably trained Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.¹⁴

School environment

The school environment considers the day-to-day organisational structures and operations within the school. Factors such as timetables, resources, facilities, professional development and program flexibility all impact on embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives within schools.

Best practices that support embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives through the whole school environment include: excellent communication, including an open door policy; flexible programs and timetables; appropriate resources, supported by professional development and accountability; shared resources and facilities; and proper attention to intellectual property issues. These practices are explored in more detail as follows:

- **Communication:** Good communication between schools and Indigenous communities is the key to embedding Indigenous perspectives throughout the whole school environment. Many schools have established an Indigenous Education Committee (IEC)¹⁵ to assist in incorporating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives within the curriculum and school programs. Schools can ensure that the Indigenous community is aware of the school's programs and special events by posting newsletters and flyers at local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations, and ensuring that Indigenous Education Workers (IEWs) and community liaison officers are invited to school staff meetings. A community noticeboard within the school can also open up good communication between the community and school.
- **Open door policy:** Maintaining an open door policy where parents and community members can drop in and be a part of the class and schooling environment will enhance relationships with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. An open door policy promotes unity within the whole school community.
- **Timetable flexibility:** Timetable constraints can often impede the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives within the school environment. Flexibility is needed to enable timetables to align with local Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community events or cultural speaker's

¹³ THRASS is Teaching Handwriting Reading and Spelling Skills. It is a whole-school phonics program for teaching learners of all ages about building blocks of reading and spelling. For more information see: www.thrass.co.uk/

¹⁴ Community Development Employment Program (CDEP), programs offer training and access to Indigenous people who are looking for full-time work and on-the-job training opportunities.

¹⁵ Indigenous Education Committees (IEC's) may consist of Indigenous community members, IEWs, teacher and staff representatives and a member of the administration. IECs should play a role in making recommendations for the allocation of school and Commonwealth funding. However, its key functions could be to assist in the communication between school and community and to establish effective partnerships for the delivery of programs and disseminating information between community and school.

availability. This allows staff to work more closely with Indigenous communities, and respects different perspectives and priorities.

- **Program flexibility:** Program flexibility offers non-Indigenous staff the ability to adjust and redevelop work programs and support materials to ensure Indigenous perspectives are embedded within school practices. From an administrative perspective, curriculum mapping provides a good indication of the explicit nature of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives within current work programs. Indigenous perspectives are complex, and dynamic; pedagogy and curriculum should be flexible and responsive to community needs.
- **Resources:** Relevant and appropriate teaching and curriculum materials will be required. These must be identified in the resource allocation of school budgets. Learning and Engagement Centres based in Inala and Townsville have libraries and resource centres with a wide variety of artefacts, books, videos, DVDs, posters, computer programs, puzzles, dolls, games or magazines. Librarians can also provide advice about the purchase of these materials.¹⁶ All students should have access to these resources.
- **Professional Development:** Staff training (in-service and pre-service) is crucial to the school's ability to embed Indigenous perspectives. Cross-cultural training is a key element in the professional development of staff¹⁷. This cannot be delivered as a 'one off' induction; but rather a series of professional development activities conducted over a period of time. It should also be followed up with hands-on curriculum redevelopment and unit writing.¹⁸ School administrators can ensure that annual professional development in this area is offered to all staff.
- **Professional Accountability:** Attitudes and perceptions will impact on the way Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are taught, and on how Indigenous perspectives are incorporated across the school. Administrators should conduct, monitor and review agreed goals regularly, including teaching and learning practices. A process will be required to collect and collate data regarding student performance as well as an evaluation tool to measure students' outcomes.
- **Community/School resource sharing:** Education Queensland provides key resources and facilities that many community people have limited access to. The whole school community can negotiate to collaboratively share libraries, computer facilities, rooms and sports grounds. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations also have resources (human and physical)

¹⁶ For registration and online catalogue of Learning and Engagement Centre libraries go to: www.education.qld.gov.au/information/service/libraries/atsi/ For contact details see: www.education.qld.gov.au/information/service/libraries/atsi/contacts.html

¹⁷ See IETA's cross-cultural training package: www.ieta.ash.org.au/deliver/content.asp?pid=333.

¹⁸ Team approaches to curriculum planning ensures the sharing of ideas and the combating of misinformed attitudes. Some schools have started *learning circles* for staff which are effective if informed staff members are involved within the facilitation of the learning circle program. (*Reconciliation Australia - Walking Together Kit* can be found in *Reconciliation Resources* on Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation Archives website: www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/IndigLRes/car/)

that can benefit schools, particularly with the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives.

- **Facilities:** Facilities can be developed throughout the school to assist in making the school a welcoming environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and community members. Outdoor classrooms, learnscapes¹⁹ and trails provide avenues for Indigenous students and parents to participate and feel welcome within the school without being restricted to the classroom environment. Outdoor classrooms also enable bush foods and native gardens to be integrated into the school setting. Allocated rooms²⁰ for Indigenous Education Workers (IEWs) and community members, which include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander murals and public art works might also be considered. These facilities can provide 'talking points' for staff, students and community and add to valuing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander contributions.
- **Intellectual Property:** A crucial ethical issue is: '*Who owns the information about Indigenous cultures and histories gathered by students or staff and shared by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within the school community?*' Both traditional lore relating to ownership of cultural knowledge, and Commonwealth copyright laws should be observed. Cultural information provided by Indigenous people is usually their intellectual property and owned by those community people. Similarly, it is important that administrators are aware of research conducted by students within Indigenous communities, to ensure that the ethical and moral obligations of the staff and students are maintained. Appropriate methods of storing information need to be established. When students interview, film, or record an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community or individual, the school must ensure that the appropriate copyright and permission forms have been completed, labelled and filed appropriately along with the primary and secondary source material collected.²¹

The following websites provide information in relation to intellectual property:

- Valuing art, respecting culture: Protocols for working with Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander visual Arts and Craft sector:
www.visualarts.net.au/nv/articles/value.pdf.
- Towards a protocol for filmmakers working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Content and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities:
www.afc.gov.au/downloads/pubs/protocols.pdf

¹⁹ Learnscapes are places where a learning program has been designed to permit users to interact with an environment. They may be natural or built, interior or exterior and may be located in schools, near schools or beyond schools, may relate to any one or many key learning areas and must be safe and accessible. For more information see: www.learnscapes.org/

²⁰ Many schools within Queensland host an Indigenous hub, unit or centre (or a community centre) within the school environment. This centre becomes a special place for many people within the school and offers a safe location for students and community to gather and plan events or discuss ideas or issues.

²¹ Prior to the commencing of a research project, negotiation needs to take place, with the relevant stakeholders on how the products will be edited and used. This process needs to be closely monitored by administrators in the school.

Other actions that can have a positive impact on the organisational environment include:

- Advocate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives as part of the implementation of the *Partners for Success* strategy across the school community.
- Enrol the support of heads of departments, deputy principals and principals.
- Acknowledge Traditional Owners at events. See welcome to country guidelines online:
www.det.nsw.edu.au/media/downloads/dethome/yr2005/welcomecountry.pdf
- *Explicitly* detail Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives within work programs, unit designs, assessment tasks and lesson plans.
- Create opportunities for staff to share best practices in embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives.
- Include community events into school calendars and newsletters. E.g. World Indigenous Peoples Day, Mabo Day, NAIDOC and other local events.
- Develop an accountability framework to measure targets set in relation to the four priority areas of *Partners for Success*.
- Develop an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander showcase award for students and teachers showing reconciliation strategies in their work.

Community Partnerships

Developing strong community partnerships between the local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community and school staff is vital in embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives across the school and within curriculum and pedagogical processes. Schools will 'not leave the starting blocks' without effective local partnerships and consultation.

Local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities offer a wealth of knowledge: traditional learning; cultural and spiritual knowledge; protocols and community processes; special events and contemporary responses to colonisation and current Australian society.

Working closely with local communities not only provides teachers with opportunities to form relationships based on trust, but also empowers community members to engage with schools from their own perspectives. These partnerships are central to successfully developing and implementing embedding strategies, and for evaluating how well Indigenous perspectives have been embedded.

Best practices for administrators and educators in developing and sustaining community partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community include:

- keeping up to date with events hosted by local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations and advertising these in notices or newsletters
- including annual Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander events (local, regional and national) on the school's calendar

- ensuring that students and staff learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations, locally and nationally, as a component of the core teaching program
- developing and disseminating a list of local community organisations
- supporting the development of units of work and school programs around community needs
- ensuring local communities are involved in the explicit teaching of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander protocols, and respect for country
- establishing community/school protocols for sharing both cultural and school information
- engaging Indigenous people in the planning, implementation and evaluation of units and school projects, particularly those of cultural sensitivity or diverse viewpoints
- establishing an Indigenous Education Committee (IEC) with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives to progress Indigenous perspectives within the school
- creating areas within the school that promote community involvement e.g. allocated rooms
- establishing learning circles²² within the school community
- inviting local Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community members to open special events (specifically traditional owners)
- ensuring that there are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander representatives on selection panels and that a question relating to Indigenous perspectives is asked at interview for all new positions in the school
- devising projects in consultation with Indigenous people, which enable schools to 'give back' to the community. For example, community training such as:
 - oral histories projects
 - local community newspapers
 - computer training
 - project planning and managing
- developing processes for interschool sharing of best practices for embedding Indigenous perspectives within the school environment²³.

If there are currently no Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in close proximity to the school area, look beyond the local community. It may be necessary to develop relationships with Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander communities from a near-by town. These relationships with neighbouring communities will often draw on knowledge from schools' local area and assist in locating traditional owners or former community members from the school district.

Education Queensland contact points are:

²² A learning circle is a small group of people who meet regularly to discuss and learn about issues that concern them, their community or the wider community. For more details see: *Reconciliation Resources on Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation Archives* website: www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/IndigLRes/car/

²³ Centres of Excellence are identified schools that have marked improvements in one of the four key priority areas within the *Partners for Success Action Plan 2003-2005*. See: www.education.qld.gov.au/students/jnt-venture/atsi/success/html/psce.html for details.

- Indigenous Education Workers (IEWs) and Community Education Consultants (CECs) in schools, districts or regions.
- District Community Education Councillors (DCECs), Community Partnership Officers (CPOs) in Regional and District offices.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Learning and Engagement Centres:
 - Inala: servicing Southern Queensland
Ph: (07) 3371 5066
 - Cairns: servicing far North Queensland
Ph: (07) 4044 5626
 - Townsville: servicing North Queensland
Ph: (07) 4775 6055
 - Nambour: servicing Wide Bay and Sunshine Coast
Ph: (07) 5470 8924
 - Rockhampton: servicing central Queensland
Ph: (07) 4938 4942
- Partners for Success unit in Central Office:
Ph: (07) 3237 0070

Indigenous Coordination Centres (ICCs) can also be contacted through: www.oipc.gov.au/tools/contact.asp#3 for assistance to engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander expertise with some local knowledge. The Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy might also be helpful: www.datsip.qld.gov.au

It is important to consider the influence of the native title process, traditional ownership of country and knowledge, language boundaries and their associated lores. Often there is confusion around these issues that can lead to a breakdown of relationships. Schools will benefit from understanding the family relationships within the local Indigenous community, and their particular associations to country where the school is located and to their traditional lands.

The reactions of both Indigenous communities and non-Indigenous communities to these issues should be considered and sensitively negotiated, remembering that the role of schools is to provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives within the curriculum, with particular emphasis on local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Understanding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander protocols

Understanding and respecting Indigenous protocols is essential for establishing and developing partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and community members.

Basic protocols include:

- making introductions
- establishing open communication
- building positive relationships.

Schools need to consult their Indigenous Education Workers (IEWs), or other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, about how to engage with key Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Respecting local protocols will assist in successful collaborations to teach particular content areas, and make arrangements about how and when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are involved in the planning, delivery and evaluation of curriculum programs.

Relationships developed between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people are guided by community protocols and developed through trust and respect.

Below are some useful resources for exploring Indigenous protocols prior to working within the local community. It is important to understand that protocols will differ from one community to another. Although similar protocols exist between all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, specific protocols related to the local area may also exist.

Useful Resources

- Protocol guide for working with Aboriginal communities in Queensland: www.datsip.qld.gov.au/pdf/Protocols.pdf
- Protocol guide for working within the Torres Strait Region: Mina Mir Lo Ailan Mun: www.datsip.qld.gov.au/pdf/minamir.pdf
- Protocol guide for working within a school environment: www.whatworks.edu.au/
www.natsiew.nexus.edu.au/lens/teachingandlearning/index.html

Curriculum and Pedagogy

Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives demands a whole school approach and involves a reframing of both curriculum and pedagogical practices.

Explicit teaching of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies or content about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and events is one way to bring Indigenous perspectives into the curriculum. The Queensland Studies Authority (QSA) specifies *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies* as a core curriculum focus for students to gain a deeper appreciation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures or histories. The Queensland Board of Senior Secondary School Studies' *Year 11 and 12 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies* course is a distinct studies unit, which can be found at:

www.qsa.qld.edu.au/yrs11_12/subjects/atsi/index.html

Although Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies are important, it is imperative that these units are not seen as the *only* way to incorporate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives within the curriculum. These perspectives need to be embedded within the pedagogical practices of the whole school environment. Within the classroom this involves a balance between the *content* and *processes* developed within the curriculum and pedagogical approaches. Appropriate content and processes provide learners with an opportunity to experience Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives at a variety of levels within the school environment.

Curriculum that offers learners an understanding of Indigenous knowledge frameworks as a perspective enables students to gain a greater appreciation of Indigenous people and their own personal relationships with them.

Involving Indigenous people in planning, delivering and evaluating units of work will assist in the inclusion of their perspectives within the curriculum. They provide a rich resource.

Working with a variety of people from the community, as well as a diverse range of other people and resources as often as possible, will ensure that students are accessing a wide variety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives and viewpoints on issues.

There are many models for providing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives within the curriculum. Critical to this process are the ways that students develop attitudes and perceptions, and the need for both staff and students to understand *themselves* before they can understand others. Attitudes and perceptions that may inhibit or enhance learning in these perspectives.

The *Curriculum Exchange* provides a variety of approaches to applying Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge frameworks within curriculum and pedagogical processes:

- *Holistic Planning and Teaching Framework*
www.ieta.com.au/deliver/content.asp?pid=1386
- *Indigenous perspectives in the Arts* – including Country, My Country an Aboriginal knowledge framework
www.learningplace.com.au/defaultqa2.asp?orgid=31&suborgid=193
- *Mura Gubal Gedira: Torres Strait Cross Cultural Framework*
www.ieta.ash.org.au/deliver/content.asp?pid=333

It is best for teachers and administrators to establish suitable frameworks for themselves in partnership with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives are relevant to the needs of the students within the school.

How do we teach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives?

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives should be presented to all students. *How* we teach these perspectives is based on an understanding of *why* we teach them.

Teachers are often overwhelmed by the extent of possibilities that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives offer to a curriculum. They can gain confidence by recognising that their role is more one of facilitation, as opposed to being the experts. This pedagogical approach can frame and support a teacher's development and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues.

The inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives within the school (Preparatory to Year 12) should align closely with existing initiatives offered within Education Queensland.

- Indigenous Education and Training Alliance (IETA) www.ieta.ash.org.au/ can provide schools with:
 - cultural awareness training: *Crossing Cultures* introductory package: *It's Everybody's Business* — available online 2006
 - training in the use of *Holistic Planning and Teaching Framework* www.ieta.com.au/deliver/content.asp?pid=1386
 - *Mura Gubal Gedira: Torres Strait Cross Cultural Framework* www.ieta.ash.org.au/deliver/content.asp?pid=333
 - Online courses: www.ieta.ash.org.au/deliver/content.asp?pid=2380
- building community partnerships: www.ieta.ash.org.au/deliver/content.asp?pid=989
- support for teaching Indigenous students e.g. band scales training www.ieta.ash.org.au/deliver/content.asp?pid=2324
- 'What Works' program: www.whatworks.edu.au/

Training is also provided by IETA:

www.ieta.ash.org.au/deliver/content.asp?pid=2327

Learning and Engagement Centres (LECs) offer support to schools and districts in the implementation of the *Partners for Success* policy in the following areas:

- Teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- Supporting teachers in implementing this document
- Developing appropriate protocols for establishing contact and partnerships with the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

LECs can be found at:

- Inala: servicing Southern Queensland
Ph: (07) 3371 5066
- Cairns: servicing far North Queensland
Ph: (07) 4044 5626
- Townsville: servicing North Queensland
Ph: (07) 4775 6055
- Nambour: servicing Wide Bay and Sunshine Coast
Ph: (07) 5470 8924
- Rockhampton: servicing central Queensland
Ph: (07) 4938 4942

Where do I start?

Creating a successful program that incorporates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in a school curriculum requires the teacher to work through a variety of stages and phases. These phases involve the teacher's own learning journey and their individual role within the four key embedding areas:

1. personal / professional accountability
2. organisational environment
3. community partnerships
4. curriculum and pedagogy.

The first three areas of the embedding process are so closely intertwined with *curriculum and pedagogy* it is not possible to separate them from the core business of teaching and learning. Working through all of these areas will assist

teachers in developing a greater understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives²⁴.

The strategies used to embed Indigenous perspectives within the curriculum are seen as part of a *cycle of learning* for staff, students, and the school community. Implementation is not a linear process, which can be followed step by step; rather it is a holistic approach to the way of working within the school and community (see figure 2).

It is both the *content* and the *processes* used within the classroom that will embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives. Each of the areas will need to be continually revisited during teaching as teachers change schools, change roles, change student cohorts and review different content and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge frameworks.

A Cycle of learning — Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives in Curriculum and Pedagogy.

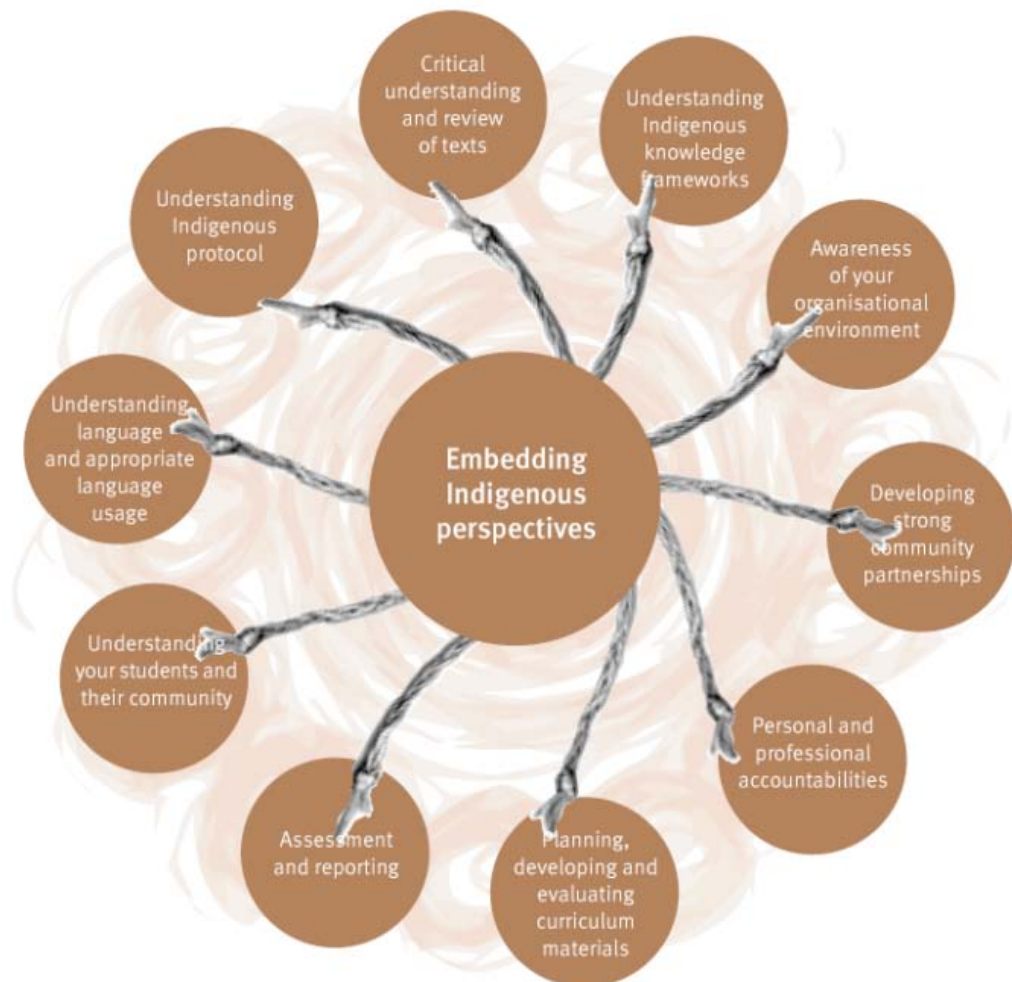


Figure 2

²⁴ The *What Works* workbook and website is designed to help teachers in understanding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education and provides a great place to start www.whatworks.edu.au/3_3.htm.

Embedding Indigenous perspectives involves looking at the many areas that impact upon the *curriculum and pedagogy* of the school. With time the interconnections of these areas will become apparent, and like all areas of life, learning will be continuous and evolving.

The following guides, strategies and resources will also assist in embedding Indigenous perspectives within the curriculum, and making suitable adjustments within pedagogical processes to embed these perspectives within the teaching approach.

Understanding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and knowledge frameworks

Fundamental to introducing Indigenous perspectives into the curriculum is the recognition that there are two distinct Indigenous Australian cultures: Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people.

There are many similarities between these two cultures, such as the importance of *Country and Seas*, and the interconnections between these with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity. This is the basis of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and cultural frameworks. It is what connects Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Place, time, language and people are important curriculum considerations when analysing events and stories of Australia's past.

It is important, however, to recognise that there are also many differences between these two culture groups, such as languages, traditions, customs, and histories. The cultures, languages and histories of Torres Strait Islander people are markedly different to those of Aboriginal people. Also, with each culture, there are many countries²⁵. Each Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander country contains its own set of lores, unique language, stories and traditions. This gives a rich diversity of Aboriginal cultures and Torres Strait Islander cultures with sophisticated and complex kinship and social structures.

Exploring various *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge frameworks* from around Australia will assist in understanding the diversity within the beliefs held by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of Australia.

First contact of Europeans and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within Australia spans over 200 years. Although there are commonalities between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in regard to their experiences of contact and colonisation, the experience of this impact can differ²⁶.

²⁵ 'Country' is the term used throughout Indigenous Australia to name the place where a person or a group belongs. This 'belonging place' reflects the cultural structure of Indigenous Australia. It is in fact more like Europe than its occupiers have recognised, with a collection of countries with different languages and distinct cultural variations within a recognisably common base.

From *Aboriginal English — A cultural study*. By JM Arthur. Oxford University Press. 1996

²⁶ 'Too Many Captain Cooks' by Alan Tucker. Omnibus. 1995. Visual representation with stories of the many histories of first contact for Indigenous people throughout Australia.

For other resources relating to colonisation of Australia see:
www.k6.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/hsie/resourcelist/k6hsie_s2_britcol.html

Understanding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge systems and perspectives will increase teachers' understanding of the shared histories between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples of Australia.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge considers both traditional and contemporary cultural practices, and contexts. It is important too, that teachers develop their understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge from a variety of sources, and sensitively include this diversity within the classroom.

Some useful resources to explore Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge frameworks include:

- *Holistic Planning and Teaching Framework*
www.ieta.com.au/deliver/content.asp?pid=1386
- *Indigenous perspectives in the Arts* – including Country, My Country an Aboriginal knowledge framework
www.learningplace.com.au/defaultqa2.asp?orgid=31&suborgid=193
- *Mura Gubal Gedira: Torres Strait Cross Cultural Framework*
www.ieta.ash.org.au/deliver/content.asp?pid=333

Schools will have to consider the influence of the native title process, traditional ownership of country and knowledge, language boundaries and their associated lores, and any confusion around these issues or breakdown of relationships in the local communities. These issues should be considered and approached sensitively in the school environment, remembering that there will be a large range of reactions to any single issue.

Teachers need to understand the family relationships within the local Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander communities, and their particular associations to country where the school is located and to their traditional lands.

It is not the role of the teacher to be involved in deciding which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language group will be represented within the curriculum. Rather, the teachers' role is to provide Indigenous perspectives within the curriculum, with particular emphasis on local Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Understanding your students and their community

Knowing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community is knowing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students within the school.

Knowing and understanding Indigenous students' individual background and attitudes to Indigenous issues is important in embedding Indigenous perspectives into the curriculum.

It is also important to understand the non-Indigenous students within the school and the historical relationships these students and their families have had with Indigenous people from the local area. Some issues may be quite sensitive and need to be addressed sensitively and carefully. It is important for teachers and students to value the process of sharing history in our country, and understand how past histories impact on contemporary society.

MindMatters is one professional development program that can provide support for schools' communities confronting sensitive issues that may arise through this process. This is a national program that supports Australian secondary schools in promoting and protecting the mental health of members of school communities. It is presented as a whole school approach that aims to enhance the development of school environments where young people feel safe, valued, engaged and purposeful. Social and emotional wellbeing have been linked to young people's schooling outcomes, their social development, their capacity to contribute to the workforce and the community and to reducing the rate of youth suicide.

Each state and territory has a dedicated web page within *MindMatters* and publishes a schedule of free professional development activities.²⁷

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children do not use Standard Australian English (SAE) as their first language. For some, SAE may be a second, third or fourth language/dialect.

Australian Standard English is the language in which fluency is required for schooling purposes and is the language of instruction in Education Queensland schools. However, it is important to respect the home language of students and to adapt classroom experiences appropriately to cater for the knowledge that learners bring to the classroom with them.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, particularly in some remote areas in Queensland, may speak traditional language(s) as their first (or 'home') language(s). Others will speak new language varieties such as Torres Strait Creole, Cape York Creole(s), Kriol and Aboriginal Englishes. These are spoken throughout Queensland in remote, regional and urban settings, and can vary from one region to the next.

Aboriginal English is a dialect of English with a distinct set of rules. Identifying the differences between Aboriginal English and Standard Australian English is important both for teachers and for students, to allow them access to the English of mainstream Australia and the language of instruction in the classroom.

Torres Strait Islander children may use Torres Strait Islander Creole at home. Their use of English may reflect some of the grammar and syntax they are familiar with from their home language.

It is important that teachers recognise and acknowledge the child's home language or dialect. Designing flexible programs that take account of the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander student's cultural background, language, knowledge and experiences will help these students to succeed in the education system.

Best practice for teaching English language in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australian contexts requires:

- Identifying students' home language and Standard Australian English (SAE) needs (e.g. Making the Jump²⁸)

²⁷ Access your Queensland *MindMatters* page here: www.cms.curriculum.edu.au/mindmatters/

- Contextualising and scaffolding oral language learning meaningfully (e.g. Walking Talking Texts)
- Understanding English language structure (e.g. Making English Work²⁹, *Making the Jump*)
- Tracking students' language learning (e.g. Bandscales³⁰, *Making the Jump*)³¹.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups across Australia are moving towards regaining control over their knowledge through language to influence and facilitate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge systems and cultural and spiritual worldviews.

Schools and teachers can play very important roles in the maintenance and revival of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages through integrating and implementing Indigenous language programs in schools.

This can be done by:

- developing local language curriculum programs
- facilitating language revival and maintenance programs
- developing networks with publishing and illustrating organisations to support language curriculum programs
- translating accurate information about Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander languages
- learning about aspects of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander languages, preferably local, that impact on learning.

A network of language centres operating across Australia services Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language programs. For further details see the FATSIL website at: www.fatsil.org/LC.htm

Understanding oral traditions

Oral traditions in Aboriginal society exist in a number of interwoven forms. Oral histories are the principal historical records of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples and should be regarded as valid historical documents. This may represent a change in perspective for many teachers and administrators.

Oral traditions may include:

- Stories of early contact with colonists;
- Stories which relate to the Ancestral Beings, creation and the law;
- Stories of true life events;
- Biographical stories of individuals; and
- Cultural obligations, expectations and traditional practices.

²⁸ *Making the Jump* is a handbook for teachers of students who speak a Creole or an Aboriginal English. It provides a theoretical base to help teachers understand the languages involved and a variety of practical classroom strategies for the teaching of Standard Australian English as a second language / dialect.

²⁹ Making English Work is a professional development program offered by IETA to assist educators in explaining the structures of Standard Australian English (SAE) to Indigenous students. See: www.ieta.ash.org.au/default2.asp?orgid=1andsuborgid=3andtm=1 for more details.

³⁰ Bandscales for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Learners is an assessment tool for students with English as a second language. www.education.qld.gov.au/students/evaluation/monitoring/bandscales

³¹ Professional Development in these programs is available from IETA: www.ieta.ash.org.au

Oral traditions substantiate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives about the past, present and the future. Oral communications and histories have been supported via various mediums such as message sticks, rock and sand art, body painting, song, dance, on artefacts, canoes, masks and carvings.

More contemporary histories and events are being expressed through the visual and performing arts, songs, multi-media facets such as computers, CDs, radio, film, TV and literary expositions including prose, poetry, plays and other means of scriptwriting.

Critical understanding and review of Texts

Historical texts and education materials may present dominant cultural views of Indigenous people and events within Australia. It is important to be aware of any myths, distortions and stereotypes they present.

These viewpoints and textual representations need to be critiqued and analysed within the classroom context, for students to gain both an appreciation of the need for developing critical literacy skills and deeper understanding of Australia's Indigenous past and present.

It is imperative that teachers develop a critical understanding of texts and review these completely prior to using them within the classroom. 'Texts' include all written, verbal or visual stimuli.

Critiquing of text and literature involves considering:

- origin of authors or editors
- the time, context and intention of the text
- author perspective and/or bias
- choice of language
- accuracy of facts and descriptions
- presentation of sacred and personal Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and its appropriateness
- stereotypical representations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and events
- balance of the representations of historical events
- exclusions of critical information
- involvement of Indigenous people within text
- Eurocentric viewpoints.

The original *Draft P–12 guidelines and framework for the teaching of Aboriginal Studies and Torres Strait Islander Studies in Queensland schools* provides a framework for critically analysing texts.³²

It is equally important to consider the ways in which Indigenous people are represented through language in the classroom. Adjusting terminology within the classroom is important, as it provides students with a model of appropriate language and terminology when describing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and events.

³² These draft documents (1995) can be found in LEC libraries.

A terminology list to guide teachers in the appropriate use and avoidance of terms is also available in the *Draft P–12 guidelines and framework for the teaching of Aboriginal Studies and Torres Strait Islander Studies in Queensland schools*. It is most important to consult with the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community when deciding on appropriate terminology to use within the school curriculum.

Supporting personal and professional accountability through pedagogy

A whole range of attitudes towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues will arise through the process of embedding Indigenous perspectives into the curriculum. School staff will be confronted with their own, the students' and the community's attitudes, beliefs and stereotypes about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australia and its histories. This may be challenging and can feel uncomfortable at times. But remember that being uncomfortable³³ in this moment may mean that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are never uncomfortable within your school or classroom again in the future.

These factors may take time to work through with the school community. However, by using correct protocols as well as involving the non-Indigenous community in all stages of the process, dealing with this range of attitudes and beliefs in sensitive ways has the potential to enhance educational outcomes for all students.

Pedagogy can create ways to reveal negative beliefs about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It is important to present strategies to assist students to change these beliefs. Learning circles, small group responses, role-play and individual reflections provide effective ways to share beliefs within a variety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives. While embracing cultural integrity, teachers should maintain the curriculum and achieve a balance of contemporary and historical contexts.

A good place to start implementing Indigenous perspectives is from the content areas that teaching staff are most confident with. It is also important to facilitate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to assist with this process in the first instance.

Because teaching Indigenous perspectives is a relatively recent consideration in some schools' curricula, it is important for teachers to develop their own personal rationale for teaching this and applying the pedagogical processes that enable Indigenous perspectives to be embedded in their classroom practices. It is vital to convey the importance of this aspect of the curriculum on a professional level to both students and parents.

Cultural Awareness is a necessary component for all Education Queensland employees to participate in.

³³ There are avenues for support in this process. *MindMatters* (see p 41) is one such program. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander focus on *MindMatters* can be found at: www.cms.curriculum.edu.au/mindmatters/

For more information contact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Indigenous Education and Training Alliance (IETA): www.ieta.ash.org.au/default.asp or your local Learning and Engagement Centre (LEC).

Awareness of the organisational environment

The school organisational environment may often hinder embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives within classrooms. Timetables, resources, facilities, professional development and program flexibility are all factors that can impact on the successful delivery of Indigenous perspectives.

It is important for teaching staff to discuss their intentions with school administrators to ensure the allocations of appropriate resources and support are provided to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives into the curriculum³⁴. In addition, it helps for teachers to *explicitly* detail Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives within work programs, unit designs, assessment tasks and lesson plans.

Planning, implementing and evaluating the curriculum

The most visible part of implementing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in the school is the curriculum content and assessment areas. However, it is often difficult to see what 'goes on behind the scenes' in implementing and maintaining a culturally appropriate curriculum. This document has shown how organisational environment, community partnerships and professional accountability work together to support *embedding* Indigenous perspectives in school.

Whatever approaches to teaching Indigenous perspectives within the classroom are adopted, they cannot be considered to be embedded into the curriculum unless they are consistently and explicitly found within the teaching practice and content.

Historically, negative relationships and understandings about Indigenous people have often impeded the embedding of their perspectives into the curriculum.

Being able to develop positive attitudes and perceptions about Indigenous people and their knowledge is central to being able to embed Indigenous perspectives within the curriculum and pedagogical practices.

Decisions need to be made regarding explicitly teaching Indigenous perspectives as:

- an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies unit and/or
- *key components* within a general unit of study and/or
- the *model for learning knowledge* within a general unit of study³⁵

³⁴ See Organisational Environment section of this document p. 11.

³⁵ This could be any of the Indigenous Knowledge frameworks see p. 10.

Assessment and reporting

Assessment and reporting are an important part of implementing Indigenous perspectives across the curriculum at a classroom, school and system level and need to be an ongoing part of the evaluation process.

Assessment

Assessment is used to determine the learning that has occurred as a result of the teaching program.

Since Indigenous perspectives aim to develop positive attitudes towards Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people and their unique cultures, assessment strategies used should enable students to demonstrate their understanding of the knowledge, skills, attitudes and processes presented in the teaching and learning program.

Assessment should:

- determine the knowledge and understanding of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage
- determine students' knowledge of Australia and Australian society
- determine students' ability to take an active and sensitive part in school life
- determine how students understand and value Australia's cultural diversity
- determine a personal journey of attitudes and perceptions
- determine development of the skills of investigation, participation and communication
- determine thinking skills and complex reasoning processes.

Some steps to consider to ensure assessment is as fair as possible include:

- have clearly stated criteria for assessing learning outcomes so students know what is expected of them
- match assessment to what is taught and vice versa
- use multiple and varied assessment tools
- ensure that students understand how to do the assessment tasks
- engage and encourage students throughout the learning process
- use rubrics to assist in interpreting assessment results consistently
- evaluate the outcomes of assessment used through revising and / or refining the assessment tool, the pedagogy used, or both.

Also, when designing assessment tasks for Indigenous students it is imperative that teachers and schools consider the specific language and literacy needs of students, as well as the specific issues around culturally fair assessment.

It is important to ensure that tasks and questions do not discriminate on grounds of familiarity with contexts and language.

Approaches to culturally fair assessment³⁶ may include strategies for designing test questions that:

- are less dependent on verbal and linguistic knowledge
- do not rely on culture-specific background knowledge
- may measure a number of skills or abilities rather than a single one
- vary in format and response.

It may be necessary to adjust the procedures or style of the administration of testing or other forms of assessment for students where English is a second language or dialect.

Reporting

Reporting is about communicating information about students' results to a variety of audiences.

These will include:

- students, for feedback on their learning
- parents, for reliable, regular and easy-to-read reporting
- teachers and schools, for information about student achievement to plan for further learning experiences
- school authorities, who require data related to whole groups of students to inform system-level planning³⁷.

It is imperative then that teachers collect evidence of student learning that can be used for multiple reporting purposes.

When reporting on Indigenous perspectives, schools and teachers should consider:

- the extent to which students have met their needs and interests through the school programs
- the ways students demonstrate respect for their culture and the culture of others
- students' skills in thinking critically about social issues of cultural significance
- the ways students apply their cross-cultural knowledge and understanding.

When reporting students' progress to Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander parents, Elders and communities it is important to consider:

- that it is done in educational and meaningful ways
- the importance of cultural sensitivity in commenting on students' performance
- approaching Indigenous Education Workers (IEWs) and support personnel to seek their assistance in transmitting information where appropriate
- the most efficient and appropriate form of reporting to meet the needs of teachers, parents and communities.

³⁶ Culture-fair assessment. A fair assessment is one in which students are given equitable opportunities to demonstrate what they know. Culture-fair assessment takes into account different ways of thinking and different learning styles that may vary by culture.

³⁷ From Queensland Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting framework (QCAR): www.education.qld.gov.au/qcar/

School Community Learning Journey

School communities should continually reflect on how successfully they embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives.

One simple way of achieving this is to view it on a continuum ranging from 'Tokenistic to Embedded' across the school. Regular review of the place of the school and the teaching and learning program on this continuum will assist in identifying strengths and weaknesses within the embedding practice.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspective continuum

Schools can determine where they currently sit on this continuum and discuss, plan and implement strategies that will assist them to continue to move toward the 'embedded' end of moving from Uninformed to Embedded.

Uninformed			Aware		Engaged			Embedded	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Uninformed:

- introducing only exotic aspects of the culture
- tourist souvenir-type snapshot e.g. through food and dress only,
- stereotypical activities that do little to change thinking e.g. considering only traditional Indigenous ways of doing.

Aware:

- acknowledging the need to do something, but not knowing what
- knowing that there are things to consider but unsure of process or content
- accessing this document and making decisions about where to start.

Engaged:

- developing discrete units of work
- discussing options with teaching colleagues
- involving students in integrated activities
- involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teacher aides, Community Education Counsellors (CEC) and other people or resources more effectively.

Embedded:

- genuine partnerships that allow for strong representation of Indigenous perspectives
- integrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives through and across the majority of learning experiences.