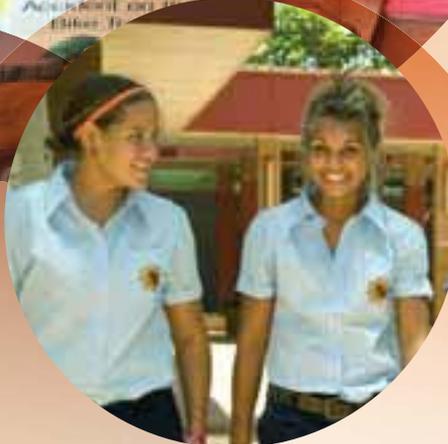


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Public education



Aboriginal Education Plan

for WA Public Schools
2011–2014



Department of
Education

From the Minister

There is an ongoing imperative at local, state and national levels to address the educational disadvantage of Aboriginal people.

Western Australia has led the development of the national *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010–2014* which was agreed by MCEECDYA Ministers for implementation across all Australian jurisdictions. The national agreement has informed this *Aboriginal Education Plan for WA Public Schools 2011–2014*.

The focus is on school-led responses to meet the needs of Aboriginal students in six key areas:

1. readiness for school
2. attendance
3. literacy and numeracy
4. pathways to real post-school options
5. engagement and connections
6. leadership, quality teaching and workforce development.

We know there is significantly lower achievement in remote and very remote areas compared to the metropolitan area. While the overall attendance rate for Aboriginal students has shown some improvement, this remains a significant barrier to learning for many students.

Public schools, in partnership with communities and other agencies, have the capacity to achieve greater success in addressing the educational disadvantage experienced by many Aboriginal students.

I have no doubt that teachers in every public school across the State share the same ambition and expectations for the learning of Aboriginal students as they do for all students.

Equipped with well-designed and targeted support programs, those teachers can help to improve the attendance, accelerate the learning outcomes and increase the retention rates of Aboriginal students.

We must develop new approaches to address the diverse needs of Aboriginal students in urban, regional and remote areas. This is a long-term commitment through whole-of-government initiatives and strengthened connections with communities and other agencies at local and system levels.

Closing the educational performance gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students will contribute significantly to improving the life opportunities of Aboriginal people.



Dr Elizabeth Constable MLA
Minister for Education

From the Director General

There is an urgent and compelling need to strengthen our capacity to close the performance gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in our schools.

I acknowledge the considerable work undertaken to date by schools to support Aboriginal young people to realise their potential. Some important gains have been made in Western Australian public schools:

- The number of Aboriginal students undertaking Year 12 programs and achieving a Western Australian Certificate of Education has increased.
- The number of Aboriginal students participating in academic pathways and achieving university entrance has increased.
- There is a notable reduction in the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal student performance in Year 3 reading, and punctuation and grammar; and Year 7 reading, spelling, and punctuation and grammar from 2008 to 2010.

Although these are positive achievements, we still have disproportionate numbers of Aboriginal students not meeting national minimum standards in literacy and numeracy. Despite our best efforts, we have only seen small, incremental changes rather than the significant improvement we need.

This plan, consistent with Classroom First, aims to help schools develop and implement innovative local solutions to enable Aboriginal students to achieve success.

Over the next four years, we will monitor progress closely and report on our success in each of the six key areas. I expect all principals to incorporate this plan into their own planning and accountability processes.

As educators, we can have a powerful influence on the learning and lives of Aboriginal people. By working with Aboriginal parents/caregivers, families, communities and other agencies, we can accelerate progress and bring about constructive change.

Most of all, the difference will be made in schools. This plan rightly asks for our best professional effort to close the performance gap. I am confident all staff will join with me to meet this challenge.



Sharyn O'Neill
Director General

Planning context

The Australian Government, together with state and territory governments, has committed to collaborative and coordinated action across a number of key areas: early childhood, schooling, health, economic participation, healthy homes, safe communities, and governance and leadership.

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) has set ambitious targets to address disadvantage.

The targets relating to Aboriginal education are to:

- ensure all Indigenous four year olds in remote communities have access to early childhood education within five years
- halve the gap for Indigenous students in literacy and numeracy within a decade
- at least halve the gap for Indigenous students in Year 12 attainment or equivalent attainment rates by 2020
- halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a decade.

The national *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010–2014* provides a coordinated guide to the commitments of state and territory governments through COAG. It identifies strategic priorities, with a particular focus on closing the gap in outcomes for Aboriginal students.

The action plan incorporates commitments outlined in national partnership agreements between the Australian Government and states and territories, and builds on *Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005–2008*.

The *Aboriginal Education Plan for WA Public Schools 2011–2014* is aligned with the key directions of COAG and the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010–2014*. It also advances the Classroom First Strategy and incorporates recommendations from recent reports impacting on the schooling sector. The plan provides targeted programs for Aboriginal students, and supports local innovation in schools and the development of positive community partnerships.

Our goal for Aboriginal students

Aboriginal students are confident and successful learners who complete their schooling with the knowledge and skills to access further education, training and employment.

When this goal is met, schools will have implemented local solutions that:

- create a culture of high expectations, and nurture in Aboriginal students a strong sense of identity as successful learners and as Aboriginal Australians
- empower Aboriginal parents/caregivers to support their children's learning and attendance, and participate in decisions about their learning
- facilitate strong early learning foundations for Aboriginal students in collaboration with families, communities, other government agencies and non-government organisations
- increase attendance of Aboriginal students
- maintain strong partnerships with training providers, government agencies, non-government organisations, industry and Aboriginal communities to increase student access to further education, training and employment
- incorporate Aboriginal perspectives as an integral part of learning programs
- acknowledge and celebrate Aboriginal days of significance
- allow racism to be dealt with decisively and with sensitivity
- enable monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of their programs in closing the performance gap for Aboriginal students.

Schools will work together in networks to develop and implement local solutions. It is essential that the diverse needs of Aboriginal students in urban, regional and remote areas are addressed.



Innovation: the key to success

Two major strategies will empower schools to develop contextually and culturally appropriate innovations to close the performance gap for Aboriginal students.

Focus Schools

Focus Schools are schools with high proportions of Aboriginal students with the greatest need and where efforts should be focused to make the greatest difference. All states and territories have identified Focus Schools as part of a national strategy under the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010–2014*.

Focus Schools are supported to:

- analyse data from the Australian Early Development Index to identify priorities for community-based early childhood development
- develop targets, implement whole-of-school approaches to the teaching and learning of literacy and numeracy, and monitor and report on progress
- develop outreach strategies to connect with early childhood education and care, health, welfare and community services at both local and system levels
- implement evidence-based attendance strategies, and monitor and report on progress
- negotiate formal partnership agreements with Aboriginal families and communities.

Aboriginal Network Schools

Schools with high proportions of Aboriginal students will be given the opportunity to be part of a network of schools that will have the freedom to work outside normal constraints. These schools will have increased scope to work with their communities using locality-based strategies to close the performance gap for Aboriginal students.

The Aboriginal Network Schools strategy brings together a number of key elements from the most successful local initiatives. The power of this strategy comes from mobilising local initiatives and moving on several fronts at once.

At its core is the understanding that, for significant progress to be made, concerted, coordinated action needs to be taken at the school, family and community levels. Different contexts will need different approaches, and schools may explore different schooling models or challenge current policy and legislative constraints.

Celebrating success, sharing research and applying effective evidence-based solutions will encourage fresh approaches and improvements in other schools and communities.

Aboriginal Network Schools will have the capacity to:

- operate with greater flexibility and autonomy
- partner with non-government organisations for support services delivered through schools
- use advocates to build Aboriginal engagement with and ownership of local initiatives
- increase Aboriginal governance and engagement by developing school–community partnership agreements
- use incentives to attract and retain high quality leaders and teachers
- access new professional learning related to teaching students for whom English is a second language/dialect (ESL/ESD)
- build professional networks with cross-sectoral partners.

Accountability

Schools will incorporate the key focus areas of this plan into their planning. Schools will set local targets for improvement in relation to system targets. Where performance is not reaching the levels required, schools will evaluate the effectiveness of their strategies and adjust strategies if necessary.

The system will monitor all targets on a school-by-school and aggregated basis. This information will be provided to regions and schools to inform continued planning and implementation of local strategies.

Note: All targets in this plan are consistent with targets in the national *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010–2014*.



Key focus areas

To close the performance gap for Aboriginal students, schools will focus on six key areas.

1. Readiness for school

Children's learning experiences in the early years play a crucial role in setting the foundations for learning throughout life. About half of all Aboriginal children now start Year 1 without the developmental foundation necessary for educational success.

Participation in culturally inclusive, high quality early childhood education programs can help Aboriginal children get the best start in life. These programs build on the rich cultural, linguistic and conceptual skills that Aboriginal children bring to their schooling experiences.

Schools will be assisted to work with families, communities, other government agencies and non-government organisations to support early learning development in the years before Kindergarten and Pre-primary. This will be aimed at achieving better attendance and engagement in early learning programs, and higher rates of readiness for Year 1.

Targets

- Increased proportions of Aboriginal children participating in early childhood education.
- Performance by Aboriginal children equivalent to or better than other children in school on-entry assessments.

Key strategies

- Work with other agencies to implement integrated care and early learning programs and centres, and ensure appropriate screening of children before Year 1.
- Assess on-entry readiness of Aboriginal children and implement case management for those assessed as not ready.
- Provide all four-year-old Aboriginal children with access to 15 hours a week of Kindergarten.
- Provide additional Kindergarten and Pre-primary facilities in areas of need.
- Provide early learning curriculum support materials and early intervention strategies in schools.
- Provide practical assistance to parents/caregivers to help them engage in their children's learning and development, particularly for children up to four years old.

2. Attendance

Regular attendance remains one of the most significant factors in achieving success in learning. Research shows that students must attend school at least 90 per cent of the time to gain maximum benefit from their learning. Low levels of literacy and numeracy are often directly related to poor attendance.

To succeed in this area, education providers need to develop a better understanding of the complex factors influencing attendance. Strong partnerships with local communities to support schools to develop safe and culturally inclusive environments – with curriculum and pedagogy that embed cultural perspectives – are key factors.

Schools will be helped to develop and implement innovative strategies to increase attendance of Aboriginal students. Case management and collaboration between Aboriginal families and school communities will be encouraged, as attendance is the responsibility of parents/caregivers and a concern for the whole community.

Targets

- Attendance rates for Aboriginal students equivalent to non-Aboriginal students.
- Increased retention rates for Aboriginal students.
- Increased progression ratios for Aboriginal students from one year of schooling to the next.
- All compulsory aged Aboriginal students enrolled in school.

Key strategies

- Implement a Statewide attendance strategy, with support for schools and families.
- Develop partnership agreements articulating mutual obligations and expectations of families and schools in relation to school attendance.
- Implement programs in partnership with other agencies to increase the resilience, health and wellbeing of Aboriginal students.
- Introduce a case management approach for identified students, and improve interagency partnerships.
- Focus all staff, including Aboriginal and Islander Education Officers, on addressing issues related to attendance.



3. Literacy and numeracy

Mastering the basics of English literacy and numeracy is essential to participation in contemporary Australian society. Ensuring that Aboriginal students achieve and go beyond these basics is one of the most effective ways of enabling their participation and broadening their life choices and options.

Literacy and numeracy skills, knowledge and understandings are essential for success across all learning areas at school and in vocational education and training, leading to improved employment options and life outcomes.

Educators need to have high expectations for Aboriginal students, and to focus on success for every child. Effective school leaders support teachers in this endeavour, developing processes to ensure program quality with demonstrated student progress and achievement.

School staff will be supported to develop a better understanding of the needs of ESL/ESD Aboriginal students. Schools will be encouraged to implement strategies to engage Aboriginal students in learning that results in measurable improvements in literacy and numeracy.

Targets

- Halve the gap in reading, writing and numeracy achievement between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students by 2018.

Key strategies

- Focus school resources and effort on improving Aboriginal students' literacy and numeracy learning outcomes, especially in the early years.
- Provide individualised and group tuition for Aboriginal students not meeting national minimum standards in literacy and numeracy.
- Provide professional learning for staff to cater for the literacy learning needs of Aboriginal students who require ESL/ESD support.
- Increase Aboriginal student participation rates in NAPLAN.
- Provide case management for those Aboriginal students not meeting national minimum standards in literacy and numeracy, and implement targeted interventions.

4. Pathways to real post-school options

Successful education can lead to employment and economic independence, and form the basis for intergenerational change by providing individuals with the skills to participate fully in society and work, allowing them to determine their own futures.

Aboriginal students' attainment of the Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE) or certificate II qualifications ensures greater access to training, further education and employment and, in turn, improved life choices. Evidence shows that young Australians who do not complete Year 12 or equivalent are less likely to have the same opportunities as those who do.

Aboriginal students need to have the opportunities and sufficient resources to support their participation in real post-school options. The development of self regulation and social responsibility enables students to participate positively in higher education, training or work.

Schools will be empowered to provide individual support to Aboriginal students to lift their rates of attainment of the WACE or certificate II qualifications to match those of all students. Support will also be targeted to increase the number of Aboriginal students gaining direct entry to university.

Targets

- Halve the gap in Year 12 attainment between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students by 2020.

Key strategies

- Increase access to school-based accredited training for Aboriginal students in Years 10 to 12, including apprenticeships and traineeships.
- Provide targeted case management and expand support for high achieving Aboriginal students, and for those at risk of leaving school early.
- Provide engagement programs and flexible schooling options for Aboriginal students to meet their learning needs.
- Provide career development services for Aboriginal students and their families.
- Provide case management and mentoring for Aboriginal trainees to link them to employment services.



5. Engagement and connections

Schools that work with families and communities can better support the education of Aboriginal students. These partnerships establish a collective commitment to have high expectations of Aboriginal students and foster learning environments that are culturally safe and supportive.

Schools will be encouraged to develop school–community partnership agreements to guide effective two-way approaches and enable authentic engagement and connection.

Targets

- Active school–community partnership agreements in place in Focus Schools and Aboriginal Network Schools.

Key strategies

- Build relationships that empower Aboriginal parents/ caregivers to participate in their children’s learning.
- Provide culturally inclusive resources and training packages to ensure greater understanding and respect for Aboriginal people, cultures, customs, histories and languages.
- Focus the Aboriginal and Islander Education Officer program on supporting strategies within the *Aboriginal Education Plan*.
- Develop school–community partnership agreements in Focus Schools.
- Ensure Aboriginal representation in key decision-making processes.

6. Leadership, quality teaching and workforce development

It is important for all Aboriginal students to be taught by high quality teachers in schools led by effective and committed principals who contextualise the curriculum to best cater for the needs of their students and communities.

Effective professional learning is paramount to ensure all educators are well prepared to teach Aboriginal students. Building a well qualified workforce of Aboriginal educators is important to sustain rigorous programs and develop culturally inclusive learning environments.

Schools will be empowered and supported to develop appropriate school-wide approaches to teaching and learning that cater best to their local contexts. Professional development of Aboriginal staff is critically important to build sustainable improvement in schools.

Targets

- Increased number of Aboriginal staff in schools.
- Increased retention of principals and teachers in schools with high enrolments of Aboriginal students.

Key strategies

- Implement leadership programs for principals to increase their capacity to improve learning outcomes for Aboriginal students.
- Increase professional development opportunities in Aboriginal education, and cultural and linguistic competency training for principals and teachers.
- Increase flexibility in attracting, retaining and deploying staff in schools with high enrolments of Aboriginal students.
- Provide targeted funding and support to staff working in remote locations and schools with large numbers of Aboriginal students who are considered to be at risk.
- Implement a career action plan to increase the employment of, and career pathways for, Aboriginal people in public education.





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