



Aboriginal Strategy

2013-2016



Government of South Australia
Department for Education and
Child Development



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From the Minister for Education and Child Development



When a young person feels safe, supported and has a sense of belonging they are more likely to want to go to school. They are more likely to learn and reach their potential.

For far too long many Aboriginal young people have not felt safe, supported or that they belong. This has been reflected in student retention, SACE completion and literacy and numeracy rates.

This is not acceptable.

While the gap between Non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander is closing, more needs to be done.

This document sets out a vision for Aboriginal children to achieve and excel – and the steps we need to take to make it a reality.

The first priority, Readiness for School, is the foundation. By connecting Aboriginal children and families with education and support services as early as possible, they are better placed to overcome issues including those related to health and wellbeing which negatively impact a child's ability to learn.

Young people who aim high and feel part of a welcoming and supportive environment are best placed to finish school and go on to lead fulfilling lives.

Schools which are inclusive and committed to helping every student to achieve are more successful and sustainable.

Communities where people are supported to learn and reach their potential are among the most prosperous.

This Strategy sets a clear path towards a brighter future for Aboriginal children and young people – and us all.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Jennifer Rankine'.

The Honourable Jennifer Rankine MP
Minister for Education and Child Development

From the Chief Executive



This new strategy is designed to improve educational experiences and outcomes for South Australia's Aboriginal students in seven key priority areas.

Our strategy is based on the six domains of the national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010-2014:

- Readiness for school
- Engagement and connections
- Attendance
- Literacy and numeracy
- Leadership, quality teaching and workforce development
- Pathways to real post-school options.

'Aboriginal employment' forms a seventh domain due to the very specific strategies needed to achieve a closer alignment between the representation of Aboriginal children and students in government preschools and schools, and the representation of Aboriginal employees in our department.

For Aboriginal learners to have access and success in public education, employment and civic life, it is important that they successfully acquire literacy and numeracy skills.

Successful completion of Year 12 or an equivalent qualification is the most significant factor in providing young people with access to further education, employment and their associated benefits. These benefits are known to include better health outcomes, personal happiness, prosperity and civic participation.

Our strategy aims to ensure that all Aboriginal children and young people will achieve their full potential. Achieving the targets of the strategy will require significant and focused effort and collaboration across government and non-government agencies, communities and families.

Through the strategy, we commit to improving education outcomes for Aboriginal children and young people in South Australia.

A stylized, handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tony Harrison'.

Tony Harrison
Chief Executive
Department for Education and Child Development



Readiness for school

Children's early learning experiences underpin their sense of identity and wellbeing, as well as providing the foundation for confidence and success in learning at school and throughout their lives.

The key strategies and programs identified in this domain aim to ensure the participation of all Aboriginal children in culturally inclusive, high-quality early childhood education programs that nurture their social, emotional, physical and cognitive development.

These programs support strong relationships with children and families, based on a respect for diversity and a commitment to high achievement for every child. They also identify processes to help children and families in the transition to school.

Targets

- Increased proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children participating in quality early childhood education and childcare services
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students perform at equivalent or better rates to other students when assessed for numeracy and literacy skills before starting pre-school.

Key strategies

- Providing supported access to low or no cost preschools for all Aboriginal children, including those in remote areas
- Continuing appropriate resourcing of current policy that provides for early entry to pre-school, whereby all Aboriginal children are entitled to attend preschool for up to four sessions per week from three years of age
- Fully implementing the Australian Government's Universal Access national partnership, whereby all four-year-old Aboriginal children can access up to 15 hours a week of preschool education
- Closely collaborating with other agencies and regional office staff to assess Aboriginal children with hearing, speech or language difficulties and implementation of early intervention strategies that will improve development and learning
- Developing collaborative arrangements with health and welfare agencies to expand the Learning together program and other community engagement programs that support and promote attendance, family literacy and an increased understanding of child development
- Targeted additional resources and professional development for preschool staff in locations of highest need to support high quality and culturally and linguistically inclusive curriculum and teaching
- Consulting with families to develop individual learning plans for all Aboriginal children to support learning, engagement and transition to schooling processes
- School entry assessment for all Aboriginal children and implementing early intervention strategies, where needed, in consultation with families
- Providing 'cultural competence' training for all staff in preschools and schools to promote respectful, productive relationships with Aboriginal families, based on high expectations for children's learning.



Engagement and connections

Learning outcomes for Aboriginal students are greatly improved when schools and preschools establish partnerships and connections with Aboriginal families and communities. There are strong links between the academic success of Aboriginal students, positive cultural identity and culturally supportive school environments.

The key strategies in this domain aim to strengthen the engagement and confidence of Aboriginal students and families in schooling through relationship building, professional learning and curriculum delivery that takes into account the diversity of Aboriginal cultures in South Australian communities.

Targets

- More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students involved in learning that is personalised, productive and challenging
- Active partnerships between preschools, schools and Aboriginal families that foster engagement and connection.

Key strategies

- Providing 'cultural competence' training for all staff in preschools and schools to promote respectful, productive relationships and partnerships with Aboriginal families
- Sustained, high-quality professional development for leaders, teachers and other relevant staff in the implementation of the Early years learning framework and Australian Curriculum, with a focus on respect for the diversity of Aboriginal histories and cultures, both traditional and contemporary, in South Australia
- Developing an individual learning plan for all Aboriginal children and students as a practical working document that underpins challenging and interesting learning experiences and enables students, teachers and families to work together to achieve the best possible learning outcomes
- Developing school and community partnership agreements in 'focus schools', and practical strategies in all schools and preschools to meaningfully engage families in education and decision-making
- Continuing to implement specific programs and initiatives that promote family involvement such as Learning Together, Aboriginal Family Literacy and the Aboriginal Turn Around Team (ATAT)
- Increased emphasis on positive communication between preschools, schools and families to celebrate achievement and success and build confidence in both students and families
- Aboriginal representation at all levels of decision-making within the department
- Continued development of formal partnerships with South Australian Aboriginal language groups in order to promote a community-led approach to the teaching of Aboriginal languages for all students in government schools, together with associated professional learning and materials development.



Attendance

Regular attendance at school is universally acknowledged as a fundamental and very significant factor in successful learning. Improved learning outcomes for Aboriginal students are inextricably linked to improved attendance rates.

The key strategies in this domain highlight the importance of school-community partnerships in developing a shared responsibility and commitment to high attendance rates. Prompt communication with students and families in cases of irregular attendance is vital. Research demonstrates strong links between a welcoming school environment, challenging and culturally inclusive curriculum, strengthened cultural identity and improved attendance. Effective data collection and analysis at the state-wide, regional and local levels will contribute significantly to improved accountability and forward planning.

Targets

- Attendance rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are equivalent to non-Aboriginal student attendance rates
- All compulsory school-aged Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are enrolled in school
- Higher retention rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students progressing from one year of schooling to the next.

Key strategies

- Engagement with Aboriginal families through the development of individual learning plans that explain the relationship between regular attendance, challenging and culturally responsive curriculum and successful learning outcomes
- School/community partnerships in 'focus schools' that acknowledge regular attendance as the basis for engagement and achievement
- Working together in 'focus schools' with families of Aboriginal children and students to develop an attendance strategy that includes targets for improved attendance and that can be readily identified in school plans
- Appropriate goal setting and communication with individual students on the part of teachers, Aboriginal community education officers, leaders and mentors, together with prompt and effective intervention where there is a pattern of non-attendance
- Implementing the Aboriginal Cultural Studies R-10 resource to strengthen cultural identity and improve the attendance and retention of Aboriginal students
- Timely and consistent communication with Aboriginal families about non-attendance by preschool or school staff, with support from regional office staff where needed
- Monitoring of attendance patterns of Aboriginal students through the Student Support System – Indigenous (SSS) to enable early intervention strategies to be implemented in collaboration with students and their families
- Continued development and use of the SSS to record the attendance and achievement of all Aboriginal students and inform analysis and planning at state-wide, regional, school and pre-school levels
- Practical systems in place, at regional and local levels, to identify and address the reasons for non-attendance of groups of students and individual students
- Regional and local data regarding attendance to be a focus in planning and performance development discussions between line managers and all relevant staff.



Literacy and numeracy

Sound skills in literacy and numeracy are essential for success in all learning areas at school, further study, employment and participation in our society. Literacy and numeracy development must be a key priority for Aboriginal children from preschool to senior secondary education, within every learning area and in the context of a broad and challenging curriculum.

This domain contains strategies that support strong school leadership and a whole-school focus on literacy and numeracy, together with family engagement and targeted additional resources for individual students and groups of students requiring support.

Targets

- Halve the gap in reading, writing and numeracy achievement between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and non-Aboriginal students by 2018
- Higher participation and achievement rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) and the South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE).

Key strategies

- Creating opportunities and structures in preschools and schools for educators and families to discuss and share resources that support partnerships and engagement in children's literacy and numeracy development
- State-wide emphasis on a whole-school approach to improved literacy and numeracy, with a focus on professional development to deliver balanced, sustainable literacy and numeracy programs based on a range of approaches and teaching methods proven to work with Aboriginal students
- Priority for intensive professional development in literacy and numeracy for teachers in 'focus schools'
- Continuing and extending a range of Principals as literacy leaders programs, with priority given to leaders in 'focus schools'
- Reshaping of the Aboriginal education teacher (AET) role to include a specific focus on working with Aboriginal students and relevant colleagues to significantly improve literacy and numeracy outcomes
- Flexible use of additional resources including mentors, tutors and AETs to deliver support for Aboriginal students, particularly in literacy and numeracy
- Liaising with intensive English language centres to develop specific programs for Aboriginal students for whom English is a second or foreign language
- Exploring an expanded school year in designated remote and hard-to-staff schools with high Aboriginal enrolments to provide intensive support and enrichment programs for students
- Literacy and numeracy attainment and requirements to be a key focus in the development of individual learning plans and personal learning plans, and to inform all counselling and mentoring of Aboriginal SACE students.



Leadership, quality teaching and workforce development

The quality, commitment and confidence of leaders and teachers significantly contribute towards the level of engagement and achievement of Aboriginal students.

Recent studies indicate that many teachers want improvements in pre-service education and professional development to assist their work with Aboriginal students and families. High expectations for Aboriginal students must be accompanied by specific knowledge and skills that inform classroom practice.

The key strategies in this domain aim to build the capacity and confidence of leaders and teachers in the areas of 'cultural competence', design and delivery of culturally responsive curriculum and teaching methods that are effective with Aboriginal students. They also acknowledge the need to provide practical incentives and targeted additional resources to attract, retain and support high quality leaders and teachers in remote and other hard-to-staff schools and pre-schools.

Targets

- More professional development hours in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education including principals and teachers undertaking culture and language training
- Better retention of leaders and teachers in hard-to-staff sites with high enrolments of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Key strategies

- Targeted training in 'cultural competence' provided to leaders, teachers and other relevant staff, with priority given to focus schools and other sites with high enrolments of Aboriginal children and students
- Promotion of high expectations for Aboriginal students and community engagement by system, regional, preschool and school leaders
- Professional development programs that help leaders to lead improvement in the learning outcomes of Aboriginal students through performance development discussions, planning and review processes
- A clear focus on improving outcomes for Aboriginal students in all professional development associated with the implementation of National Standards for Principals and Teachers
- Targeted face-to-face and online training in the Aboriginal Cultural Studies Reception to Year 10 Resource as part of the implementation of Australian Curriculum
- Identifying and funding key incentives to attract and retain leaders, teachers and support staff in hard-to-staff and remote schools and pre-schools, including improved access to appropriate housing and health services, financial incentives, priority for professional development and flexible leave arrangements
- Appointing experienced, expert leaders and teachers to remote and other designated hard-to-staff sites in targeted supernumerary positions to coach and mentor beginning leaders and teachers
- Access to mentors for all newly appointed staff in hard-to-staff schools and pre-schools.



Pathways to real post-school options

Successful completion of Year 12 or an equivalent qualification provides young people with improved access to employment, further study and life choices.

Unemployment rates are twice as high for adults aged 20 to 24, who have not completed senior secondary education, than for those who have. Schooling outcomes affect every aspect of a student's future quality of life: health, happiness, relationships, prosperity and community participation.

This domain is underpinned by the principle that all Australians, including Aboriginal people are entitled to the full range of social benefits and lifestyle choices associated with successful education.

Key strategies support improved school attendance and retention, together with a very deliberate focus on much higher expectations and achievement for Aboriginal students. The strategies are primarily focused on working with students at school. Students and families will be supported with career counselling and advice about study and work options.

Target

- Halve the gap in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Year 12 attainment or equivalent attainment rates by 2020.

Key strategies

- Intensive communication with Aboriginal secondary students and their families from Year 8 onwards about subject selection that will lead to South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE) completion, with appropriate documentation in students' individual learning plans and personal learning plans
- Early intervention within classroom settings to provide additional support in literacy, numeracy and other key learning areas to build students' confidence, knowledge and skills
- Continuing to monitor and report individual student outcomes through the *Keeping them on track* initiative (which supports the achievement of the Closing the Gap target of 90% SACE completion (or equivalent) by 2020) to provide clear information to Aboriginal students, families and educators about education and vocational training options, with an emphasis on successful completion of the SACE
- Implementing a specific professional development program and advisory service in relation to supporting Aboriginal students in the SACE for teachers, other relevant educators, Aboriginal students and their families
- Co-ordinated, high-quality mentoring and tutoring that supplement and support Aboriginal students' learning, with flexibility for schools to ensure sustained support for individual students
- Expanding the *Enter for success* initiative to provide Aboriginal students and families with access to the government preschool, primary or secondary school of their choice in South Australia
- Expert pathway counselling for Aboriginal students and their families, with high expectations for SACE completion and clear explanations regarding the full range of pathways including apprenticeships, traineeships, vocational education and training (VET) options, South Australian Aboriginal Sports Training Academy programs, flexible learning options and youth engagement initiatives
- A focus on mainstream achievement and maximising school-based engagement and support for Aboriginal students, including those undertaking community-based and VET programs
- Access to Work About centres to support the transition of Aboriginal students into further study, employment and industry-based training.



Aboriginal employment

The South Australian and Australian governments have both made significant commitments to increasing the number of Aboriginal educators.

Target 53 of South Australia's Strategic Plan aims to achieve at least 2% representation of Aboriginal people across all classifications and agencies in the public sector. A national workforce strategy will be developed by the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood. The strategy will help improve the ratio of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to students. In 2011, the Australian Government launched the *More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers initiative* (MATSI), with the goal of attracting and retaining more Aboriginal teachers.

Current South Australian research indicates that Aboriginal students' motivation and academic achievement are improved by culturally responsive curriculum and relationships, as well as contact with more Aboriginal teachers and staff.

This domain aims to honour State and Australian Government commitments in achieving a closer alignment between the representation of Aboriginal students and Aboriginal educators. The key strategies focus on promoting the full range of career pathways in education and child development to Aboriginal secondary students and community members as well as providing scholarships and targeted professional development to build capacity and support the career aspirations of current Aboriginal employees.

Target

- Attract, retain and support the career aspirations of Aboriginal employees to make progress towards an improved ratio of Aboriginal staff to students, with at least 2% representation across all classifications, consistent with Target 53 of South Australia's Strategic Plan.

Key strategies

- Providing personalised support, quality career advice and role modelling for Aboriginal secondary students to promote the full range of career pathways in the department
- Promoting DECD teaching scholarships and traineeships to Aboriginal secondary students and their families, and to Aboriginal undergraduates and TAFE students considering a career in education
- Supporting Aboriginal community education officers and Aboriginal early childhood workers, school services officers and Public Sector Act employees who wish to undertake a career in teaching
- Quality mentoring programs for Aboriginal teachers to build capacity in all aspects of teaching
- Establishing a leadership register and two leadership scholarships annually to release Aboriginal teachers to work with outstanding leaders in preschools and schools
- Recruitment and professional development of Aboriginal 'cultural instructors' to support the delivery of the Aboriginal Cultural Studies R-10 resource
- Recruitment and professional development of Aboriginal language and cultural specialists to support the delivery of Aboriginal language programs
- Establishing specialist networks for Aboriginal staff in all employment categories to promote professional development opportunities and provide priority of access to accredited courses
- Regular and effective performance development processes for all Aboriginal employees, with an emphasis on building capacity and providing practical, personalised support for career aspirations
- Recognising and celebrating the achievements of Aboriginal employees, through annual conferences, DECD award ceremonies and forums at the regional and local level.

