



Australian Government

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

School and community: **working together** What Works. The Work Program

Improving outcomes for Indigenous students

INFORMATION FOR INDIGENOUS PARENTS AND COMMUNITIES

Engagement: the big issue

We want kids to come to school, and when they are there to be interested and involved. We want them to be there, to feel comfortable and to enjoy the experience as much as possible. In other words, we want them to be engaged.

For students to be engaged is important for doing well, and for feeling good about themselves as learners and as people.

The questions in this pamphlet are to get you thinking and talking. Ask yourselves and the students:

-  What is the situation now?
-  What can we do to make it better?

CONVERSATIONS > RELATIONSHIPS > PARTNERSHIPS > YOU CAN'T HAVE A PARTNERSHIP WITHOUT A RELATIONSHIP, AND YOU CAN'T HAVE A RELATIONSHIP WITHOUT A CONVERSATION. YOU'VE GOT TO HAVE THE CONVERSATION. EVERYTHING STARTS HERE...

Get thinking and talking

Do you think getting an education is valuable? Why?

- How do you get the idea over to kids that education is valuable and important for their future?
- Do they have some success with their school work most days? Do they think it's fair dinkum success, the same as applies to other kids?
- Has anyone talked to them about the sorts of things they might like to do when they grow up and education's role in that goal? Do they know what it will take for them to get where they want to go?
- Do they know any Indigenous kids who have finished Year 12 and gone on to university or TAFE? Have they had any contact with other role models who can help them think about their futures?

Is going to school the 'normal' thing for our kids to do?

- If not, how do we make it 'normal'?
- Is it what their friends do? In looking for solutions to poor attendance and low levels of interest, should we be thinking about groups of kids rather than individuals?

Is going to school something they can enjoy?

- Is being at school for our kids stimulating and fun? What do they look forward to most? Can we turn that into better learning?
- Do they learn things at school that seem to be about them and their lives where they can sometimes be the expert?

- Do they feel safe and comfortable at school?
- Is there someone in particular at school who looks after and supports our kids?

Are there practical things that make going to school difficult?

- Do they have to look after other kids or family in school hours? What can be done to help out in that case?
- Is transport an issue?
- Are health issues causing problems?
- Do they need to be fed in the mornings to help them concentrate?
- What other agencies should be involved in thinking about and helping with these issues?



Above: Aboriginal mentor, Mick Hayden, with Year 8 students at Merredin Senior High School (WA); right: Students at Mildura Primary School (VIC).



attendance >
participation >
belonging

together they describe
how we want our kids to be
engaged in learning



**What Works.
The Work Program**

This pamphlet is part of the *School and Community: Working Together* series of publications which can be downloaded from www.whatworks.edu.au.

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