What Works. The Work Program

The What Works materials are based on a three part analysis of the way teachers and schools generally work to improve outcomes for Indigenous students.

- Building awareness
- Forming partnerships
- Working systematically

The website (www.whatworks.edu.au) provides resources to support all of these.

This Workbook is the central support for targeted, systematic action.

The ‘School and Community: Working Together’ series supports the development of partnerships between schools and their Indigenous communities.

The ‘Core Issues’ series includes

- Core Issues 1: Setting Up For Success suggests ways in which schools might best be set up to maximise success for Indigenous students.
- Core Issues 2: Reducing Suspensions explores positive alternatives to suspension and ways they can be implemented in schools.
- Core Issues 3: Literacy explores questions about what it means to develop genuinely effective literacy.
- Core Issues 4: Numeracy tackles important questions about the meaning and importance of numeracy.
- Core Issues 5: Engagement discusses attendance, participation and belonging.
- Core Issues 6: Boarding looks at current practice in this small but growing area of Indigenous education.
- Core Issues 7: International Perspectives is a report of the DEST/OECD seminar held in Cairns in May 2007.

All these and other print materials are available for download through the ‘Publications’ link on the website, where you can also sign up for What Works eNews, to keep in touch with the What Works project.

Experienced What Works consultants are available free of charge to work with schools on the materials.
Welcome

We recognise the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the traditional custodians of the land in which we live and work.

As a profession, teachers in this country have a proud record of achievement.

At the beginning of the 20th century we didn’t have the near-universal basic literacy that we have today. In 1950, fewer than half of the Australian population had any secondary education, whereas today in excess of 75 per cent participate to the end of Year 12.

The school curriculum has expanded, professional knowledge has grown and expectations have risen. But it is the work of teachers that has been responsible for delivering these huge strides.

Today we face another challenge. Perhaps 15–20 per cent of the population miss out on the benefits that formal education provides. This matters, and it matters to us all.

The challenge for educators today is to provide success at school for those who are still missing out. And Indigenous young people are significantly over-represented in this group. (See some facts about this on p 5.)

Take action!

The What Works materials are all about helping people in schools take systematic action to improve outcomes for Indigenous students. Nothing else.

They are not about ‘professional development’ for teachers (unless it leads to action). They are not about background reading (unless it leads to action). They are not about sharing experience (unless it leads to action).

The Workbook that you are holding in your hands can support that action but it’s not meant for cataloguing and placing on a shelf in the library either. It’s supposed to be written in, carried around, referred to, shown and shared. If it gets dog-eared, that’s great because that’s how it was meant to get.

It contains a series of tools and ideas to assist planning for improved outcomes for Indigenous students. You could work through the tools one after the other, or you could pick and choose. You could download them and modify them to suit your local needs. You could use them in conjunction with the website www.whatworks.edu.au, where you will find more detail and lots of examples of the action other people have taken.

You could also contact the What Works National Office to discuss having a facilitator visit your school to assist you to work through the materials. (See back cover for contact details.)

But please. Take action!

The time for making improvement a reality is now.
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Reconciliation of the Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples of Australia is not a moment or a single event. It requires a larger change in attitudes and practices.

Education, in its broadest sense, is the primary way in which this will be achieved.

Formal education and training will play a crucial role. We all have responsibilities to help ensure this process is successful.
Some facts

Closing the gap

We today take this first step by acknowledging the past and laying claim to a future that embraces all Australians. … A future where we harness the determination of all Australians, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to close the gap that lies between us in life expectancy, educational achievement and economic opportunity.

— from the Prime Minister’s Motion of Apology to Australia’s Indigenous Peoples, House of Representatives, 13 February 2008

More Indigenous Australians are succeeding at school than ever before, but we still have a long way to go to close the gaps. That’s why we need to take action now. Here are some details about where we've come from and where, as a country, we believe we need to go.

■ In the 2008 ABS Census, nearly 152,000 Australian school students identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people. This compares with 106,628 students ten years ago, an increase of more than 40 percent.

■ Preschool education has become more accessible to young Indigenous children and more than 40 percent of preschool age children participate. This is still significantly below the participation level of non-Indigenous preschoolers.

■ There were generally no significant changes in Indigenous Year 3, 5 and 7 students’ performance against the national benchmarks for reading, writing and numeracy between 1999 (2001 for Year 7 students) and 2007. A substantially lower proportion of Indigenous than non-Indigenous students in all year levels achieved the national minimum standards for reading, writing and numeracy in 2008.

■ The retention rates from the beginning of secondary schooling (Years 7 or 8) to Year 12 of Indigenous students have shifted from under 10 percent in 1970 to 47 percent in 2008. The number of Indigenous school students enrolled in Year 12 has doubled since 1999. In 2008, there were 4779 Indigenous school students enrolled in Year 12, compared with 2206 enrolled in 1999. But the proportion of Indigenous students completing Year 12 is still half that of non-Indigenous students.

■ The very first Aboriginal tertiary students at Australian universities began graduating in the early 1960s. In 2008 there were over 8400 Indigenous students enrolled in university courses. However, in 2006 Indigenous people aged 20–24 years attended university at about one-fifth the rate of non-Indigenous people (5 and 24 percent, respectively) and attended Technical and Further Education (TAFE) at about two-thirds the rate of non-Indigenous people (5 and 8 per cent, respectively).

■ During the past five years many schools have introduced Indigenous language, culture and history programs to improve education outcomes for Indigenous students and to improve all students’ knowledge and appreciation of Indigenous peoples and cultures. But, despite policy and other forms of encouragement, many have not.

See also the national targets on p 22 of this Workbook.

Sources
What Works for students


Taken together with other research, policy and practice over time, the findings of that report indicate that to be successful, Indigenous students need

- cultural recognition and support;
- the development of requisite skills (literacy and numeracy); and
- adequate levels of participation.

These aspects appear elsewhere in these materials in various forms and are not completely separable for two reasons.

First, success is genuinely derived from a partnership of the parties to the educational process — student, family, community, institution. Cultural support, recognition and acknowledgment can only be achieved by active and effective relationships between Indigenous communities and those who work in schools. Both parties have a role to play. The development of requisite skills will evolve from teachers’ high expectations of students and the skill and, especially, the sensitivity with which teachers approach their work. Support, even in limited forms from home, will aid this process. Adequate levels of participation will only be achieved by active encouragement from home and the provision of a welcoming and accepting climate in the school.

Second, comprehensive approaches are essential, and all three of the above components must be present. Students will not, for example, get maximum benefit from an excellent literacy program unless they attend school regularly. It is also true, however, that attendance in itself is not enough — students need to be engaged by quality teaching when they are at school. And the whole schooling process requires the support of the community.
We today take this first step by acknowledging the past and laying claim to a future that embraces all Australians. ... A future where we harness the determination of all Australians, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to close the gap that lies between us in life expectancy, educational achievement and economic opportunity.

— from the Prime Minister’s Motion of Apology to Australia’s Indigenous Peoples, House of Representatives, 13 February 2008
The brief

The task, for Indigenous students as a group, is to improve

- levels of literacy and numeracy; and
- rates of school completion and successful participation in post-school options.

And both of the above must be underpinned by

- respect for students’ cultures, and partnerships with carers and community.

These are the outcomes that will make a difference in their lives and ultimately in their communities. These are the outcomes in which, as a group, there is a ‘gap’ between Indigenous students and their non-Indigenous counterparts. You can see some data about this on p 5. Now is the time to close the gap.

Literacy and numeracy

The number one priority is to improve Indigenous students’ levels of literacy in English and numeracy. This is the core work of teachers, and they are skilled in it. We must ensure that the best possible pedagogical knowledge and proven approaches are brought to bear.

Of course literacy and numeracy are not end points, because beyond them, paths are open to all sorts of fields of knowledge and employment. That’s why they are so important.

School completion

Apart from literacy and numeracy, school completion depends on engaged participation in school. Teachers know that student engagement is the key to participation, and hence to the completion of the joint task of teaching and learning.

Respect for culture, and partnerships

Be careful, though, because teachers apply their knowledge and skill in particular contexts. In the case of Indigenous students, teachers’ work must be pervaded by knowledgeable and sensitive respect for Indigenous peoples and cultures. Without that, a teacher’s work is likely to be much less effective.

Such respect is itself a prerequisite for the sorts of partnerships with carers and the Indigenous community that can boost participation and engagement. That will in turn improve other outcomes.

No-one suggests that these partnerships are easy. We have a shared history, sometimes these relationships can be very taxing for all concerned. However without genuine partnerships, the road ahead will be very difficult.

Teachers probably weren’t trained in this kind of communication, but we know it can be done. It’s a challenge, but the necessary qualifications are not rare:

- goodwill, sincerity and a willingness to learn;
- a confident and firm belief in the value of what is being done;
- a certain amount of energy, courage and persistence;
- a commitment to success; and
- a focus on long-term goals and the will, and ability, to find a way to get there.
Be cautious in your assumptions, and take care not to

- generalise from the worst case and make that a universal proposition.

Remember that generalising and stereotyping are among the serious afflictions suffered by Indigenous peoples. It should also be remembered that, as the case studies in these materials illustrate, even in the most challenging of circumstances, many students do succeed.

- fall into the trap of finding reasons why nothing can be done.

Sometimes it is very easy to find reasons why nothing can be done. In some settings, there is a range of very real issues. Finding reasons why nothing can be done leaves all involved in a disposition of waiting — waiting for infrastructure to be put into place, waiting for the right moment and the ideal circumstances when it will all come together, so that then we can move forward.

We know there is no panacea for improving outcomes for Indigenous students, but in circumstances that will never be ideal there are obvious opportunities for making significant incremental gains, right now. Teachers know this and it is at the heart of a lot of their work.
1. Getting started

These materials are based on a three part analysis of the way teachers and schools generally work to improve outcomes for Indigenous students.

- Building awareness
- Forming partnerships
- Working systematically

Read more about this in ‘What Works for school educators’ on p 51.

To get started, you can begin the suggested activities in the following pages. Or you might need to look at some of the ‘Building awareness’ resources on the What Works website. There you can find a range of comments from people with extensive experience of working in settings with Indigenous students.

www.whatworks.edu.au > Building awareness > Comment from experience

You could also look through the What Works case studies. There are lots of examples of people taking action to improve outcomes in settings right across the country.

www.whatworks.edu.au > Case studies

You might build awareness in other, local ways. Spending time informally with Indigenous community members could be a good start. It could lead to informal partnerships.

www.whatworks.edu.au > Forming partnerships > Conversations, Relationships

If your school is in a position to pursue more formal partnerships with your Indigenous community, then you might want to look at the What Works materials about that, and the accompanying publications.

www.whatworks.edu.au > Forming partnerships > Formal partnerships

Remember that these things are not an end in themselves; they are steps towards improving outcomes for Indigenous students.

Don’t forget to turn these pages and take action!
2. Taking stock

The current state of your practice

Many schools have found the checklist opposite to be a useful way to assess where they are in relation to Indigenous education. (The spidergram on following pages provides another approach.)

In the checklist there are four boxes next to each item. Checking one of the first three will help you to assess where you are now. Check the fourth if you think this issue is something you could and should be working on.

We have found that schools that can respond positively to almost all the questions are those where Indigenous students are succeeding in greater numbers.

Use the checklist in whatever way suits you.

Some possibilities:

- Fill it in as individuals and then compare and discuss answers.
- Work on it in small groups and then compare and discuss answers.
- After working on it as a school staff, consult the local Indigenous community about the outcomes.
- Work on it separately with local Indigenous community members and school staff and then compare answers. Consider why there are differences.

A slightly different version of the checklist that might be more appropriate for use with Indigenous parents and community members can be found in the What Works publication Conversations, relationships, partnerships: A resource for school staff.

www.whatworks.edu.au > Publications > Partnerships publications

The items checked in the fourth column should give you some ideas about action that you can take as you work through the rest of this Workbook.
## Checklist

<table>
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<th>General</th>
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<tr>
<td>Have you specifically (and sensitively) investigated the backgrounds, aspirations and needs of your Indigenous students?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you know their families and carers on a friendly basis?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are processes in place for liaising and maintaining regular contact with members of local communities?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you have easy access to local data about achievement, retention and attendance of your Indigenous students?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you have specific targets in place for students’ success and have you implemented means for their achievement?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does each Indigenous student have a Personalised Learning Plan (PLP)?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are teachers, students and parents (or carers) all involved in the PLP process?</td>
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<tr>
<th>Acknowledgment, recognition and support of Indigenous cultures</th>
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<tr>
<td>Are provisions in place for non-Indigenous staff to learn about Indigenous cultures in general and local Indigenous cultures in particular?</td>
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<td>Is there a recognisable Indigenous ‘presence’ in the school in terms of teaching and employed support staff, guests to the school and other support personnel?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does the school recognise and express its respect for the cultures of its Indigenous students?</td>
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<td>Are the ways it does so acceptable to and appreciated by local Indigenous community members?</td>
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<th>Developing skills</th>
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<td>Is intensive support available for students whose skills in reading and writing Standard Australian English (SAE) and numeracy are below conventional levels?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are procedures in place for testing for hearing or vision impairment and responding to any problems?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is regular use made of the life experiences and knowledge of students to make connections with other curricular content?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are Indigenous cultures represented in an accurate and relevant way in the curriculum?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are there consistent opportunities available for students to work cooperatively?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are learning activities varied (for example, via the use of ICTs)?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are learning activities related to students’ learning strengths?</td>
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<th>Attendance and participation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Where regular attendance and consistent participation are problems,</td>
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<tr>
<td>do you have an individual ‘case management’ process in place?</td>
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<tr>
<td>are Indigenous peers, mentors or members of staff used to support individual students?</td>
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<tr>
<td>have you worked with key members of the local community to discuss possible strategies that might change the situation?</td>
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Spidergram: an outline of your current program

Use the ‘spidergram’ process to show all the initiatives you have that relate to your Indigenous students.

The example below is adapted from one developed in a Tasmanian school, and is only partially filled in.

1. Create a spidergram for your school. Use the one opposite, or a larger sheet of paper. Make up your own headings and/or modify those in the example.


2. When you have finished, try to include the name of the responsible staff member or members in each list.

3. Then try to include particular Indigenous students in each list. If you have large numbers of Indigenous students in your school this might be more difficult, but find a way to be able to display which students are most involved and which might be missing out.

4. Discuss the completed spidergram, note any gaps you find, for particular students or in particular programs. You can refer back to these to help you make sure your work is appropriately targeted.
The What Works publication *Core Issues 1: Setting Up For Success* describes how schools commonly organise themselves when they set out to improve outcomes for Indigenous students.

And just while you’re there...

- What is the name of the traditional Indigenous custodians of the land where you are?

- What language(s) did/do they speak?

- Where did/do their lands extend?

- Who were the neighbouring peoples?

- Are any Indigenous words used to name local features — electorates, municipalities, areas, streets, geographical features? What do they mean or refer to? Who can you ask about these matters?

- In your area, what are the main historical events associated with the arrival of non-Indigenous peoples?

- What are the main local Indigenous organisations? What have they been set up for? What are their main issues and concerns currently?

- Can you think of the names of six nationally historically important Indigenous people? Who lived before 1850? Between 1900 and 1950?

- Who are some prominent local Indigenous people? What are their roles?

- Are there local Indigenous painters, dancers or other artists? Who are they and where can you see their work?

- Forget for a moment about people involved in sport. Can you name ten well-known contemporary Indigenous people? What are they known for?

- Who designed the Aboriginal flag and when? What is the significance of its features?

- What does the Torres Strait Islander flag look like? What are its features intended to capture? Who designed it?

(The answers to the last two questions can be found inside the back cover.)
3. Goals and targets

What changes would we like to see in student outcomes as a result of this planning process?

Ask yourself this question. Everybody wants to see improvement in schools, but the evidence suggests (and we strongly believe) that it happens best when it is a personal and professional commitment of those teachers and others doing the work.

Before reading this section, you might want to have a look at the section about data on p 20. Otherwise, just use it for reference as necessary.

What is a goal?

A goal is a general statement about what you want to achieve in student outcomes.

Suitable goals are things like:

- To improve the levels of literacy of our upper primary Indigenous students.
- To increase the numbers of Indigenous students graduating from Year 11.
- To improve the outcomes of our Indigenous students in NAPLAN tests.

Some would say, that a statement like ‘To improve the attendance of Indigenous students’ cannot be a goal, because it isn’t related to students’ educational outcomes. Rather, it is about participation levels. Given the centrality of concerns about attendance in many locations, however, we think that participation goals are appropriate, provided they are not the only goals and provided that you always focus on the improved learning outcomes you expect as a result.

Make sure that at least one of your goals relates to educational outcomes.

Don’t try to set too many goals. If you try to deal with any more than three goals at a time you are likely to spread your attention and energy too thinly.

Goals like the above require some knowledge of baseline data. In other words, how would you know you needed to improve if you didn’t know where you were starting from? Notes about data in general and baseline data in particular are on p 20.

Goals of the AEP

Three relevant goals of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (AEP) are:

- To provide adequate preparation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children through preschool education for the schooling years ahead.
- To enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander attainment of skills to the same standard as other Australian students throughout the compulsory years of schooling.
- To enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to attain the successful completion of Year 12 or equivalent at the same rate as for other Australian students.

Source: AEP, endorsed by all states and territories in 1989.

The AEP is now 20 years old, but still relevant. You will recognise the alignment of these goals with those of the Brief (p 9). You can see all 21 goals of the AEP on p 52.
Defining goals

If you don’t have general goals in mind, start the activity below at Step 1 to help you develop them. If you already have your general goals in mind, go directly to Step 2 and write them in the space there. Then go on to Step 3.

Always remember that the overarching goals are improved outcomes for Indigenous students.

**Step 1:** First of all, try not thinking about ‘problems’, either yours or those of the students. Try thinking about how it would be in your school if all students were achieving at the levels you would like them to achieve.

What would be different? Don’t just think about the outcome itself, think about all the smaller things that go together to make that outcome possible.

Imagine that a new teacher walks into the school at the beginning of the year and is told that students are achieving highly. In the first few weeks, what would they notice about school organisation and people’s behaviours that contributed to the students’ success?

Discuss this scenario, and then complete the following sentence stems (each sentence stem is likely to have multiple endings):

If all students were achieving highly in our school, then the school would (or teachers would)…

If all students were achieving highly in our school, then they would…

If you need to, devise your own additional sentence stems for this step. They should begin with ‘If all students were achieving highly in our school, then...’

**Step 2:** Now consider only the cohort of Indigenous students. Some of them might already be high achievers, but for those who aren’t achieving as highly as you would like, discuss the factors you have identified above and turn them into goals. Refer again to ‘What’s a goal?’ opposite.

Choose up to three goals, and write them in the space below.

Goal 1

Goal 2

Goal 3

**Step 3:** If your goals are not directly related to student achievement, then check that you really believe that their achievement would actually mean improved outcomes for your Indigenous students. When you are happy with your goals, transfer them to your ‘Plan’ on p 44–49.
Some ideas about data

What are data?
Data are qualitative information, such as observations and perceptions, as well as quantitative information derived from sources such as test scores. Data can be collected, for example, from surveys, from tests, from roll books, from teacher judgements and from collected opinions or formal assessments. Provisions related to privacy and the safeguarding of personal information should, of course, be carefully observed.

What are they for?
In this case — to give you a clear idea about how you’re going, to provide an effective basis for discussion and analysis of action and its results, and to help you set targets for your work.

What can you collect data about?
You can collect data about anything, and you can waste a lot of time doing so. Don’t do that — concentrate on a limited number of well formulated performance indicators that can be reliably and fairly easily evidenced.

What is a performance indicator?
A performance indicator is a measure of performance, according to the targets you have set.

What is an instrument?
An ‘instrument’ is the tool used to collect data. Surveys are instruments; a form for summarising attendance data is an instrument; NAPLAN is an instrument; a list of questions you ask people is an instrument.

What are baseline data?
Baseline data are a measure of where you are before you take action. Whatever performance indicator you choose, it is vital to know how students are going according to that indicator at the beginning of the process. Otherwise, how would you know what improvement has happened over time?

What are completion rates, progression rates and retention rates?
Completion rates are the percentages of students who complete a course or year of study.
Progression rates are the percentages of students who complete one school year and enrol in the next — such as Year 5 to Year 6 or Year 10 to Year 11.
Retention rates are the percentages of students who remain at school after a number of years — such as Year 7 to Year 12. (Strictly speaking, these are best described as apparent retention rates due to factors like students changing school, re-entrants and students repeating years.)
What is a target?

A target is a specific ‘what by when’ statement of how you will measure achievement of a goal.

So if a goal is “to increase the numbers of Indigenous students graduating from Year 11”, then a suitable target might be “to have 95% of Indigenous students graduating from Year 11 in 2010”.

A target does not pretend to describe everything about the related goal or the educational process itself. It is merely an indicator of success.

Why set targets?

Setting targets for achievement has not been a widespread practice among educators in the past. Some teachers thought they were too limited, given the complex nature of the educational endeavour. Some were suspicious about the uses to which data might be put. Others felt that available data-collection instruments were not reliable enough.

All these arguments have a point. However, we think targets can help you remain engaged and focused on what you want to achieve. At the same time, they are a way to deal with that bane of teachers’ lives: the inability to define the outcomes of their work.

What makes a good target?

- A good target is directly related to a goal.
  If you can’t see the direct connection, your target is unlikely to be appropriate.

- A good target focuses on the main things without pretending to be comprehensive.
  The best targets relate directly to improvements in educational outcomes. Other targets (about attendance or participation, for instance) can contribute to that.

- A good target is reasonable and within reach.
  In some cases a 25 percent improvement over the course of a year will be a reasonable target; in others, perhaps 5 percent. You’ll have to work this out for your own situation. But remember that targets are about what you think you can achieve if you try.

- A good target is expressed simply and refers to a measurable performance indicator.
  Examples of performance indicators are on p 24–27.
National targets

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) has agreed to six ambitious targets to ‘close the gap’ of Indigenous disadvantage. You can see that three of them are directly related to education.

- To close the gap in life expectancy within a generation.
- To halve the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five within a decade.
- To ensure all Indigenous four year olds in remote communities have access to early childhood education within five years.
- To halve the gap in reading, writing and numeracy achievements for Indigenous children within a decade.
- To halve the gap in reading, writing and numeracy achievements for Indigenous children within a decade.
- To halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a decade.

Source: COAG Communique 2 October 2008 (our emphasis).

In 2010, the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA) will be releasing its current, nationally agreed ‘Indigenous Education Action Plan’. Refer to it for the full range of targets and performance indicators at www.mceecdya.edu.au/.

The COAG targets above are large scale and important.

In some settings they might seem far off, but one of the purposes of the What Works materials is to help you break those targets down into smaller steps. After all, isn’t that the way we teach? We try to break down, or scaffold, learning into small, achievable chunks. In the same way, we can take action to close those gaps in education.

You will own the process you develop here. You can develop your own, shorter-term targets that will contribute to the large national targets.

Defining targets

Before defining targets you need to decide on a performance indicator, an instrument and you need to collect baseline data. (see p 20) These are essential first actions. Later, you will outline the other actions required.

Discuss and make notes about possible data sources and targets (related to each goal).

Look carefully at the advice about targets on p 21 and be sure to set targets that are challenging but achievable.

You could try using the formula:

\[
\text{[What proportion] of [which students] will [do what] by [when].}
\]

When you are happy with your work, transfer the results to your ‘Plan’ on p 44–49.

Some examples are on p 24–27.
**Define your targets**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal 1</th>
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<tr>
<td>■ Performance indicator</td>
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<tr>
<td>■ Instrument</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>■ Baseline data</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>■ Target</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Goal 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>■ Performance indicator</td>
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<tr>
<td>■ Instrument</td>
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<tr>
<td>■ Baseline data</td>
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<tr>
<td>■ Target</td>
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<tr>
<th>Goal 3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>■ Performance indicator</td>
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<tr>
<td>■ Instrument</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>■ Baseline data</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>■ Target</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Some examples of goals and targets

Here are some examples of how schools have used the approach outlined in this Workbook. The purpose of these is to illustrate the use of data sets rather than strategies: approaches to strategies can be found in the next section.

You should read all of these examples critically and note that these are not the only issues you can work on in this way. Perhaps you can do better in your own setting.

Example 1. Long term targets using NAPLAN data

You will be familiar with NAPLAN (National Assessment Program — Literacy and Numeracy). It is the current basis for assessing student achievement in literacy and numeracy across Australia.

A primary school believed its Year 3 Indigenous students could do a lot better in literacy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>To improve literacy levels of a group of Year 3 Indigenous students.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Performance indicator</td>
<td>The percentage of this particular cohort of students who are below national minimum standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrument</td>
<td>NAPLAN Reading and Writing assessments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseline data</td>
<td>Of the Year 3 Indigenous students, 40% were assessed as being in NAP Band 1 (below the National Minimum Standard) in Reading and 54% as being in NAP Band 1 in Writing (below the National Minimum Standard).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target</td>
<td>When the same cohort of students is in Year 5, to 1. Reduce the percentage below National Minimum Standard in Reading to 15%; and 2. Reduce the percentage below National Minimum Standard in Writing to 20%.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Things to think about:

- Be careful about the time frame you use for targets based on NAPLAN data. It is generally not possible to measure changes to student achievement reliably on tests like these over short periods of time.
- In this example, how could you establish and monitor, over the two years, whether students were on track towards the targets?
- These targets look demanding, but are only a step towards ‘closing the gap’. How do you decide whether you are setting realistic but challenging targets?
- How would you deal with the fact that it is likely that some of the cohort of students will leave the school over the two years while some others will join?
- Note that you can use NAPLAN data to make statements like ‘80% of our Year 3 Indigenous students are above minimum standards in Numeracy this year, whereas only 65% were last year’. But this information can only be said to show improvement if the two groups of students are similar, and in settings with small numbers of Indigenous students this is unlikely to be the case. On the other hand, in parts of the country where the cohort of students is large and stable, targets of this kind can and should be set.
- NAPLAN produces a wealth of data that can be used to set targets in other ways.

More details about the NAPLAN are at www.naplan.edu.au/.
Example 2. Shorter term attendance targets

A group of secondary school teachers felt that some Indigenous students were not achieving as highly as they could because they were missing too much school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>To improve the attendance of Year 10/11/12 Indigenous students.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Performance indicator</td>
<td>The attendance rate of Year 10/11/12 Indigenous students (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrument</td>
<td>School attendance records.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseline data</td>
<td>Term 1 attendance rate was 78/82/83%.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target</td>
<td>Term 3 attendance rate of 90% at each level.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Things to think about:

- We are not told the actual numbers of students at each level. What effect would it have if you knew whether numbers were small or large?
- These targets are not about actual student achievement. It is assumed that better attendance will lead to higher achievement. Would it be realistic to look for better achievement at the end of this process?
- If you think that you could identify improved achievement at the end of the process, how would you do so?
- If you think you couldn’t, when and how do you think you would be able to show a link between improved attendance and achievement?

Dealing with data that are not strictly comparable

When you are looking at data that relate to the same group of students, comparisons are relatively straightforward. However, in important areas like school completion rates, things are a little more complicated – each year it is a different group of students who do or don’t complete school.

If, for example, you want to improve retention rates to Year 12, then be very careful about comparing this year’s group of students with last year’s. Similarly, be careful about comparing attendance rates in Year 4 this year with attendance rates in Year 4 last year. These groups may not be, in the jargon, ‘alike’. If your sample is large and homogeneous (such as in a school with close to 100% Indigenous students, from a settled community), then the comparisons above might be valid; otherwise they probably aren’t.

We think it is often best to focus on individuals and work out from there. In settings where Indigenous students are a small minority, this is certainly the case. So if you have, say, six Indigenous students in Year 11 and you want to set targets about their completion of Year 12 it is best to make a qualitative assessment (based on interviews, teacher knowledge and so on) of how many would be likely to complete Year 12 if things went on as they are. Then you could set a higher target than that, and take appropriate action to achieve it. There would probably be no point in comparing the school completion rates of those six students with the other small group that was in Year 11 last year.
Example 3. Shorter term engagement targets

A Year 4 teacher felt that her Indigenous students were not engaging with the activities they were doing in class, so she set out to improve that situation. There were six Indigenous students in her class. To monitor the situation, she and an Indigenous Education Worker (IEW) devised a simple survey of students that could be administered by the IEW. It used a 1 (low) to 3 (high) scale to measure engagement in eight different aspects of a student’s day.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>To improve the engagement of Year 4 Indigenous students with their work in class.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Performance indicator</td>
<td>The number of students reporting at least six out of eight ‘high’ ratings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrument</td>
<td>Student engagement survey.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseline data</td>
<td>When the survey was administered for the first time, two of the six students reported at least six out of eight ‘high’ ratings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target</td>
<td>By the end of the term, five out of six students will report at least six out of eight ‘high’ ratings.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Things to think about:

- How would the teacher know whether the target was challenging but realistic?
- Again, this target is not about actual student achievement. How does it relate to achievement, and how will the teacher judge its success in those terms?
- Do you think this is a useful or practical way to measure student engagement?

It’s not just a matter of blindly collecting data, it’s a matter of interpreting the data you have.

— Curriculum Coordinator, Victoria.
Example 4. School completion target

A secondary school in a predominantly Indigenous community believed that too many students were dropping out during Year 12.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>To improve the school completion rates of our Indigenous students who begin Year 12.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>◼️ Performance indicator</td>
<td>Completion rates of Indigenous students who begin Year 12.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◼️ Instrument</td>
<td>School records.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◼️ Baseline data</td>
<td>Comprehensive data are only available for the past three years, but it is known that no more than 60% of students beginning Year 12 have completed the year in that time. Anecdotal evidence suggests that earlier completion rates were even lower.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◼️ Target</td>
<td>This year, 80% of the Indigenous students who begin Year 12 will complete it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Things to think about:

◼️ It is assumed here that the cohort of students this year is similar to that of previous years. (Otherwise it makes no sense to compare them.) How can you establish whether this assumption is justified or not?

◼️ What could you do in terms of targets if you decided the cohorts were not similar?

◼️ What does ‘school completion’ say about student achievement?

◼️ This example only considers students who ‘begin Year 12’. What other data could you look at to get a more complete picture of what happens to all students who begin school at age four or five?

The goals and targets you are setting here need not be restricted to your What Works planning. They can and should also flow into parts of school strategic plans, such as literacy plans, and to your own professional learning plans.

When this happens there is likely to be a strong alignment between intentions and actions.
4. Strategies

By now, you have set out some goals and targets. You are sure of your baseline data and you know what you are trying to achieve.

Strategies are about how you are going to get there.

None of what is written in your plan on p 44–49 is set in stone. You might find reasons to change things as you work on your strategies. However, try to stick to your guns once you have decided on your strategies and actions to be taken.

There are many ways to look at strategies. It is worth taking account of several considerations at the start.

- As professional teachers, you already know about a variety of strategies. Don’t ignore your professional knowledge and think you have to come up with outrageously innovative ideas. Good practice remains good practice.
- At the same time, if you keep doing the same thing you will keep getting the same result. Consider how that might apply in your setting.
- Remember that comprehensive approaches are essential. It’s no use having an excellent literacy program if students are not attending school. Equally, if students are attending, quality programs are required for progress to be achieved. (More about this analysis is in ‘What Works for students’ on p 7.)

The ‘Stronger Smarter’ philosophy

Dr Chris Sarra of the Stronger Smarter Institute has articulated five key strategies fundamental to improved outcomes for Indigenous students.

- Acknowledging, embracing and developing a positive sense of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity in schools.
- Acknowledging and embracing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership in schools and school communities.
- ‘High expectations’ leadership to ensure ‘high expectations’ classrooms with ‘high expectations’ teacher/student relationships.
- Innovative and dynamic school models in complex social and cultural contexts.
- Innovative and dynamic school staffing models, especially for community schools.

Which of these can you, as a group of school educators, influence?


Dare to Lead

For principals and school leaders, Dare to Lead (www.daretolead.edu.au) provides a network of support to assist them in implementing strategies to improve outcomes for Indigenous students.
Deciding on strategies

1. First, pool your collective professional knowledge and experience by discussing and defining approaches that you know have been successful in other settings or at different times. Make notes in the space below.

2. Then, think about where else you might go, or who you might ask, to find out about other successful strategies. This may lead to a short research task, but can lead to other possible strategies for your list.

3. Use the pointers, leads and thinking points on the following pages (p. 31–41). Most of these are meant to be suggestions for further investigation rather than fully filled-out strategies. We hope they give you some useful starting points.

4. You may want to look at the case studies on the What Works website. There are over 50 of them organised according to a set of headings that you might find useful. They illustrate examples of good practice, and suggest approaches that might be useful.

   [www.whatworks.edu.au > Case studies]

5. Now discuss and decide on appropriate strategies. Write the strategies in your plan on p. 44–49.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Possible strategies: GOAL 1</th>
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<th>Possible strategies: GOAL 2</th>
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<th>Possible strategies: GOAL 3</th>
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‘I thought that if we chipped away step by step, we could actually achieve some amazing things. It was about small steps to start with...’
—Principal, Western Australia.
Scaffolding strategies

Just as you would try to break down student activities into small steps, so you should break down your ideas about strategies into a set of actions.

Think of all the actions needed to implement a strategy, and list them in your plan on p 44–49. Check to make sure nothing is left out.

We have provided a set of other associated attributes of each action. Where necessary, these are explained further below.

- **Personnel: Who is involved?**
  Define exactly who will be doing each action. Agree on this, and make it as explicit as possible.

- **Resources: What do you need?**
  Write down everything you need. If there is something you need that is not immediately on hand, work out how you are going to get it.

- **Responsibility: Where does the buck stop?**
  We suggest that this process will work best if someone is nominated to oversee the whole process and keep everyone else on track. It doesn’t have to be someone usually in authority, although it can be. Our experience suggests that it is easy for priorities to get lost in the busy lives of schools, and this is one way to guard against that.

- **Start and finish dates: When will this happen?**
  Just as your targets are partly defined by ‘when’ they will be met, it makes sense to specify a timeline for starting and finishing the set of actions that contribute to your strategy as a whole.

- **Data collection: How and when do you use your data collection instrument?**
  You will not have something to fill in about this for every action. Just make sure you do define clearly when data is to be collected.
Think about individual students first

One strong message of these materials is to start with individual students.

Even where there is no whole school plan this is a strategy that has frequently paid dividends for all concerned; it is within the power of any teacher as an individual to implement.

The planning process outlined in this Workbook (defining appropriate goals and setting targets) can be applied as readily to individuals as it can to groups.

In a way, we are talking about aspects of ‘case management’. This term did not originate in the field of education. However, it finds ready application there because teachers are already used to dealing with the individual needs of students.

National policy about personalised learning

Recommendation 5.5:

Ensure that schools, in partnership with parents/caregivers, deliver personalised learning to all Indigenous students that includes targets against key learning outcomes and incorporates family involvement strategies.


Personalised Learning Plans (PLPs)

One aspect of case management that has become a national focus is the idea of a ‘Personalised Learning Plan’, which was the subject of a recommendation by the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment and Youth Affairs (above).

States and territories have their own formats and procedures for these plans, so please refer to those. Here are some salient points to bear in mind.

- PLPs work best when they are focused not on rectifying a particular issue like attendance, but on students’ longer-term aspirations and goals. This increases the level of seriousness and suggests that education has purposes which are not out of reach.

- Think carefully about manageability. There is a temptation to want to include everything you can possibly think of in a learning plan. It is no good developing a complicated system that will fall into disuse quickly. As always, focus on the main objectives and ensure sustainability.

- As in other planning, break action down into achievable steps, so that everyone involved can see where it is going and know where it is up to.

- Make sure that parents and carers are involved. They are partners, and their active role can also be specified in the planning. Be as detailed as possible about this. Similarly, ensure that regular communication with parents and carers is specified, and don’t assume that asking parents to come to the school is necessarily the best procedure. Get advice from the people themselves.

- Document the whole process in a straightforward, accessible way.
We looked at attendance data, and we said, right, what should it be? And we case-managed individuals and we case-managed issues, and we’re monitoring them as we go.

—Secondary principal, South Australia.

Make sure that student achievement is rewarded and celebrated.

Don’t let a successful planning process be a one-off. Play a role in the transition to the next school year or stage.

In situations where transience or mobility of students is a fact of life, establish ways of sharing information across schools. (This does, of course, require the consent and agreement of the student and his or her carers.)

If there is no standard format in your setting, here are some headings for you to start to devise your Personalised Learning Plan.

- What are the student’s aspirations?
- What does he or she need to do to achieve them?
- What could be an area of improvement now?
- What is an appropriate goal now?
- Who needs to be involved?
- What will your strategy be?
- What is the timeframe?
- How will you monitor progress?
- How will you discuss and record progress?
- How will you celebrate and reward achievement?
- What do we do next?
Development of skills

Over the years, a considerable amount of attention has been paid to ideas about learning styles which might be specific to Indigenous students. However, the general principles of good education seem to apply as widely to Indigenous students as they do to any others.

Research and experience have consistently confirmed the centrality of skills in literacy in Standard Australian English (SAE) and numeracy to success in formal education — for all ages and across learning area boundaries. These must be given the highest priority.

Some of the biggest challenges come in contexts where few, if any, students have English as a first language and where there are few social or economic demands for its use. But a more common need is the requirement for code-switching to modify dialectal variations of English to make it more ‘correct’ in school terms. Success comes from acknowledging and accepting dialectal differences and teaching the variations in SAE explicitly. This is an essential alternative to describing students’ everyday language use as ‘bad’ or ‘incorrect’.

While we do not advocate particular approaches to literacy and numeracy, we do strongly believe that only established, proven techniques should be used. These matters are too important to be dealt with in any other way.

Similarly, ensure that credible tests are used to assess student progress. NAPLAN has already been mentioned, but a range of other instruments is available in literacy and numeracy. If you are not sure about these, refer to professional associations or appropriate consultants in your local jurisdiction.

The What Works materials include two relevant publications: Core Issues 3: Literacy and Core Issues 4: Numeracy.

www.whatworks.edu.au > Publications > Core Issues

The What Works website has a variety of case studies.

www.whatworks.edu.au > Case studies > Literacy/Numeracy
Some proven strategies to consider:

- Providing intensive individual or small group support for students whose skills in reading and writing Standard Australian English (SAE) and numeracy are below conventional levels.
- Teaching features of SAE explicitly and, where relevant, defining and explaining its differences from students’ dialectal forms of English.
- Establishing and maintaining high expectations of success, by explaining what you are trying to achieve together, how you intend to get there, what a ‘good result’ will look and be like.
- Showing students how what they are learning is useful, and bringing ‘real life’ examples into the classroom.
- Translating high expectations into achievable steps, ‘scaffolding’ them and teaching them specifically. Successful achievement of developmental steps should be noted, celebrated and, where relevant, accredited, promoting a sense of competence and mastery.
- Providing opportunities for students to work cooperatively as well as individually.
- Expanding the range of media through which learning occurs and increasing its level of ‘practicality’ (using ICTs, relevant excursions, visits to workplaces and so on).
- Making regular use of the culture, life experiences and knowledge of students to make connections with other curricular content.
- Arranging for the presence and example of Indigenous teachers and other education workers in the classroom.
- Using teaching materials that deal with Indigenous cultures in an accurate and relevant way as a conventional part of the content of the curriculum. Increasing the cultural relevance of curricula requires getting to know students and their cultures better, and being sensitive to their capacities and interests.

Are there such things as Indigenous learning styles?

Here are some short extracts from a longer article on the What Works website:

There is no gene, or set of genes, which define culturally- or racially-based ‘learning styles’. Ways of learning are derived from ways of life and how adults and other people, including peers, in the immediate context ‘teach’ … Culture is shaped by a multitude of circumstances and influences …

Children learn best when their diversity of experience in home and community is recognised and built upon …

The Aboriginal Ways of Learning Project [Hughes, P, More, A J and Williams, M (2004) Aboriginal Ways of Learning, Indigenous College of Education and Research, University of South Australia, Adelaide] suggested that there were patterns in the strengths that Aboriginal students showed in the ways in which they learned.

However, they concluded that there was not just one set of strengths, just as there is not just one Aboriginal culture or one stereotypical Aboriginal student. So, from this point of view, identifying individual students’ learning strengths and engaging them can be seen as important for Indigenous students, just as it is for all other students.
Cultural recognition and support

Respect for and understanding of Indigenous cultures are fundamental prerequisites for improving the levels of achievement of Indigenous students. Success will not be achieved without recognition of the cultural factors which may impact on that success; nor will it occur without the consent, approval and willing participation of those involved.

Making institutions more ‘culturally-friendly’ in genuine terms is not just a matter of flying the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags although, who knows, that might be a starting point. It is a lived experience that will produce ‘strong’ forms of cultural inclusion if it has at least the three central elements.

The establishment of good personal relationships and mutual trust

Racial harmony is hardly universal in this country, and relationships operate against a larger background of cultural misunderstandings, unmet promises and dispossession.

It must not be forgotten what a personal process education is for all concerned. Good communication, genuine negotiation and predictability and consistency are based on the quality of personal relationships. The significance to success of good personal relationships between the institution and people in the local Indigenous community cannot be over-emphasised.

Flexibility

Where cultural values differ in significant ways, all parties involved need to be flexible.

One of the major impediments to the educational success of Indigenous students is an unwillingness by school personnel to modify any arrangements — pedagogical, structural, organisational — on the basis that success must be achieved in precisely the same way, and by precisely the same means, as other students. There must be some room to move at the edges of this process. Minor modifications can make major differences.

Localisation

The problems of delivering Western-style formal education in remote communities have been widely discussed, and sometimes as though they represent the realities across the board.

The vast majority of Australia’s Indigenous people do not live in remote communities. They live in the towns and cities of the eastern seaboard and the south-west. More than half live in New South Wales and Queensland, most in urban settings. They come from different family groups and may or may not have strong traditional links with the area in which they live. They may be deeply urbanised with life styles which are very similar to those of non-Indigenous Australians.

Educators must be clear about the wishes of local communities and must solicit advice and support which will be effective in context. There are many different routes to the same goals; and contextual factors (personnel, place and history among them) count for a great deal.

Don’t make assumptions. Find out.
HAVE YOU TRIED?

Are provisions in place for non-Indigenous staff to learn about Indigenous cultures (particularly local Indigenous cultures)?

Have you tried …

- including relevant cross-cultural awareness programs in your professional development program?
- inviting Indigenous speakers to talk with students and staff?
- taking tours guided by community members to important local cultural sites?
- ensuring that new teachers have easy access to reading material about local Indigenous history and culture?

Is there a recognisable presence of Indigenous adults in the school?

Have you tried …

- employing Indigenous teachers, education and other workers?
- ensuring that all of them have opportunities for professional development related to the actual nature of their work?
- maintaining one or more defined positions for Indigenous parents or community representatives on your school council or board?
- establishing arrangements (that they appreciate) for welcoming Indigenous parents and carers when they come to the school?
- offering Indigenous members of the community a space in the school for their own use?

Does the school recognise and express its respect for the cultures of its Indigenous students?

Have you tried …

- displaying local Indigenous art and artefacts or other public signs and symbols (such as the flags, murals, posters, charters, land rights information) that Indigenous people appreciate and that are a sign of the institution’s acknowledgment?
- including a ‘Welcome to Country’ from appropriate Indigenous Elders to open formal school ceremonial occasions like speech nights, presentations or assemblies?
- arranging visits by or excursions to Indigenous dance or music performances?
- auditing courses to ensure that they include appropriate Indigenous perspectives?
- reviewing library resources related to Australia’s Indigenous peoples for their coverage and adequacy?
- offering courses of study of one or more Indigenous languages, offering courses of study about Indigenous languages or, where relevant, providing learning materials in the students’ own languages?

Where they are desired by Indigenous students, are arrangements in place to develop a sense of cultural support and connectedness between them?

Have you tried …

- offering Indigenous students a space in the school for their own use?
- developing ICT-based networks of contact and support for your Indigenous students with students in other locations?
- inviting Indigenous speakers to talk to students and staff?
Participation and engagement

Woody Allen once said: ‘90 per cent of success comes from turning up’. Or perhaps he said it was 80 per cent. Nobody is exactly sure. And he might have been joking anyway.

While we can’t give you a precise figure we certainly agree with this masterpiece of understatement from a South Australian teacher, who said that ‘it’s difficult to teach someone to read and write when they are not there’.

All teachers know that consistent attendance and engaged participation are powerfully linked to success in education. We also know that attendance is a matter only really resolved through schools and parents or carers working in partnership.

There are three focal points for work to engage Indigenous students and encourage high levels of attendance.

**Preschool and school entry**

Getting used to ‘doing school’ is harder for some students than others. A good start may not lead to a good finish, but it’s much better than a bad start.

Current work to expand provision of preschool in Indigenous settings is a most positive development and should lead to smoother transition to school for Indigenous children.

**Transition to secondary school and adolescence**

It is in the early years of secondary school that many Indigenous students are ‘lost’ to formal education. This is where engagement and a valued purpose for continuing are vital.

**The upper secondary years**

Clear pathways are required to ongoing education, training or employment. When other contemporaries have already left school, it can be difficult to retain focus.
Where there are problems, try these strategies.

- Investigate the causes of absence.
- Work with key members of the local Indigenous community to discuss possible strategies that might improve the situation.
- Make efforts to
  - establish closer and less formal personal relationships between teachers and students (especially secondary settings)
  - provide a more informal and less regimented climate
  - provide students with opportunities to negotiate work
  - teach so that success can be regularly and obviously achieved.
- Increase the level of contact between students and Indigenous peers, mentors or members of staff in order to support individual students.
- ‘Manage’ students on a case-by-case basis through
  - home visits and other forms of community liaison
  - personal contact and consistent follow-up where absence occurs
  - personal planning and goal-setting
  - some work-related studies and experiences for older (age 14/15 plus) students
  - support with academic work
  - links (actual and/or electronic) with other students in similar situations
  - counselling and mediation where problems are occurring
  - developing a plan with the student(s) concerned connecting the role of education with any longer term aspirations they may have and laying out clearly what is required to get to their goals (See also p 32.)

It is clear that schools must get direction and help on these issues from respected members of Indigenous communities. Encouragement and support from those people is vital.
Partnerships with Indigenous communities

Most of the material available on the What Works website is about the process of developing fairly formal partnership agreements between schools and their Indigenous communities. Even if you are not in a position to be part of such a ‘large’ partnership, there are other kinds of interpersonal partnership that make important contributions. Sometimes these are vital in situations where Indigenous students are a small minority.

Partnership between teacher and student

Any teacher knows that a kind of partnership is involved in working with a particular student. When things are working well, so is the tacit agreement between teacher (‘I respect you and agree to help you learn as best I can’) and student (‘I’m here to learn and will cooperate with you to do so’). When things are not working well, one or other side of those statements is probably not true.

All other partnerships contribute to this fundamental, productive working arrangement.

Non-Indigenous staff may sometimes take the view that they ‘treat them the same as any other student’; that is, any other non-Indigenous student. Sometimes, where the level of pastoral care and interest is high, that will work, but often it won’t. There is no substitute for an informed understanding of students’ backgrounds, in both the particular and broad senses.

Partnership between teacher and parent or carer

Similarly, there can be a partnership between a teacher or teachers and an individual student’s parents or carers. These informal partnerships might arise from deliberate efforts by either party, or might develop from informal contacts made outside the school, perhaps at sporting events or shopping centres. Don’t ignore these valuable opportunities to begin conversations. Who knows? They may become important partnerships. Remember (but don’t assume) that Indigenous parents may have had schooling experiences that were negative and relatively brief and their children may be breaking new ground by staying on at school. Be sensitive to this.

Partnership between teacher and Indigenous worker

Another important type of partnership occurs in the school, between teachers (who are most often non-Indigenous) and Indigenous workers. This relationship can assist many Indigenous students become engaged in school work. It has been said many times that the Indigenous workers are the people who were in the community before most teachers came and will be there long after most teachers have moved on. So they are the people who can help make the right connections.

It is beyond the scope of this Workbook to go into great detail about the important topic of partnerships. More advice is available via the What Works website, and in the What Works partnerships publications, which exist as separate sets for Indigenous communities and for school staff.

www.whatworks.edu.au > Publications

In the end, though, it’s always about people getting on and working together — and that’s everyone’s responsibility.
Try these strategies.

- Spend time informally with Indigenous community members.
- Look through the What Works partnerships publications, as a school staff.
- Work on the What Works partnerships materials for Indigenous communities with representatives of the community.
- Ask parents and other community members about their preferences for ways of liaising and maintaining regular contact on issues related to education.
- Work together on a plan such as this Workbook contains.

It is sometimes unrealistic to expect Indigenous parents or carers to participate in Western-style meetings or parent–teacher nights. The level of formality (derived from cultural conventions) may be off-putting. Don’t forget that many Indigenous parents do not have positive memories of their own time at school, so it is hardly surprising that school premises are not always their first choice for a meeting place.

The best advice is always to find out what the preferences of your local community are.

www.whatworks.edu.au > Forming partnerships > Publications > Partnerships publications

‘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.’
5. Celebrations

‘Each student does an IEP [Individual Education Plan] a couple of times a term, which we can go back and look at, depending on what it is that they are working on that day. The kids really take ownership. So they say what the work is, what their goal is, what it is they want to achieve, who’s going to help them, they set a timeframe to work within and they say how we’re going to celebrate it.’
— Teacher, Western Australia.

‘The week will culminate with a celebration barbecue where students will be displaying their work and we’re hoping the Koorie families will take up the kids’ invitation to come. We’ve got to try and take those opportunities to have the families in to celebrate what’s been achieved, rather than just for student management issues.’
— Secondary Principal, Victoria.
Success is infectious. If you can get this far, you might be able to get further. Why not?

Hard work and achievement should be rewarded and celebrated, along the way and at the end of the process. Everyone appreciates and enjoys this, and you know how to do it already.

But just to remind you of a few approaches, you could try the following.

- Have short-term rewards for students (especially younger students) who meet short-term targets.
- Distribute certificates or prizes at community gatherings (not necessarily at school).
- Have successful students present their work to groups of parents in a supportive setting.
- Ask community members how they would like to mark success, and follow their advice. Remember that formal occasions may not be their preference.
- Ask students what they think is fair and reasonable.
- Devote part of a school assembly to celebrating success.
- Think about marking success in ways that will encourage groups of students to encourage each other to succeed.

Make some notes below about possible celebrations and rewards associated with each of your targets, and when you’re happy with them transfer them to your plan on p 44-49.
### Your plan – Goal 1

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<th>Goal</th>
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Your plan – Goal 2

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Celebrations
Baseline data

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## Your plan – Goal 3

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**Goal**

**Performance indicator**

**Celebrations**
Baseline data

Target

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What Works for school educators

These materials are based on a three part analysis of the way teachers and schools generally work to improve outcomes for Indigenous students.

- Building awareness
- Forming partnerships
- Working systematically

All of these things need to happen, but we know that they happen in different ways in different contexts. Certainly, it is not a discrete three-step process. ‘Building awareness’ and ‘forming partnerships’ will often be happening at the same time as targeted, systematic work is going on to improve outcomes.

The evidence is that they do all need to happen.

**Building awareness**

The starting point is building awareness of the issues. In some settings, awareness might already be high, while it isn’t in others. Without genuine awareness of the issues, the foundation for effective work is not in place.

In the end, all education solutions are about people and their personal and professional attributes — and attitudes. We know this. Longer term achievements in schools rely on the ideas and attitudes that are embedded in principals and managers, teachers, Indigenous Education Workers and others.

[www.whatworks.edu.au > Building awareness](http://www.whatworks.edu.au)

**Forming partnerships**

*Partnerships are vital to Indigenous students’ success at school.*

However you look at it, responsibility for improving educational outcomes must be a shared one. That can happen when Indigenous families become more familiar with, confident about and engaged in the work of schools. In turn, schools become more knowledgeable about, engaged with and respectful of the backgrounds, lives and aspirations of their Indigenous families.

[www.whatworks.edu.au > Forming partnerships](http://www.whatworks.edu.au)

**Working systematically**

The education of Indigenous students suffers from ad hoc and sporadic efforts which might work well for a while and then go off the boil. A teacher with a particular commitment and interest might leave. Funding might be withdrawn from a program. A policy might be squeezed off the list to be attended to.

What gets prioritised gets done. This means having in place a policy and a plan to implement that policy. We know this, and we know that such procedures work. The substantial quality of education in this country hinges on this knowledge.

This Workbook provides an outline for the process.

[www.whatworks.edu.au > Working systematically](http://www.whatworks.edu.au)
The goals of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (AEP)

Involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in education decision making

1. To establish effective arrangements for the participation of Indigenous parents and community members in decisions regarding the planning, delivery and evaluation of preschool, primary and secondary education services for their children.

2. To increase the number of Indigenous people employed as education administrators, teachers, curriculum advisers, teachers’ assistants, home-school liaison officers and other education workers, including community people engaged in teaching of Indigenous culture, history and contemporary society, and Indigenous languages.

3. To establish effective arrangements for the participation of Indigenous students and community members in decisions regarding the planning, delivery and evaluation of post-school education services, including technical and further education colleges and higher education institutions.

4. To increase the number of Indigenous people employed as administrators, teachers, researchers and students’ services officers in technical and further education colleges and higher education institutions.

5. To provide education and training services to develop the skills of Indigenous people to participate in education decision-making.

6. To develop arrangements for the provision of independent advice for Indigenous communities regarding education decisions at regional, State/Territory and national levels.

Equality of access to educational services

7. To ensure that Indigenous children of preprimary age have access to preschool services on a basis comparable to those available to other Australian children of the same age.

8. To ensure that all Indigenous children have local access to primary and secondary schooling.

9. To ensure equitable access for Indigenous people to post-compulsory secondary schooling, to technical and further education, and higher education.

Equity of educational participation

10. To achieve the participation of Indigenous children in preschool education for a period similar to that for all Australian children.

11. To achieve the participation of all Indigenous children in compulsory schooling.

12. To achieve the participation of Indigenous people in post-compulsory secondary education, in technical and further education, and in higher education, at rates commensurate with those of all Australians in those sectors.

Equitable and appropriate education outcomes

13. To provide adequate preparation of Indigenous children in preschool education for the schooling years ahead.

14. To enable Indigenous attainment of skills to the same standard as other Australian students throughout the compulsory schooling years.

15. To enable Indigenous students to attain the successful completion of Year 12 or equivalent at the same rates as for other Australian students.

16. To enable Indigenous students to attain the same graduation rates from award courses in technical and further education, and in higher education, as for other Australians.

17. To develop programs to support the maintenance and continued use of Indigenous languages.

18. To provide community education services which enable Indigenous people to develop the skills to manage the development of their communities.

19. To enable the attainment of proficiency in English language and numeracy competencies by Indigenous adults with limited or no education experience.

20. To enable Indigenous students at all levels of education to have an appreciation of their history, cultures and identity.

21. To provide all Australian students with an understanding of and respect for Indigenous traditional and contemporary cultures.
The Aboriginal flag

The Aboriginal flag was designed in 1971 by Harold Thomas, a Luritja man from Central Australia.

The flag is divided horizontally into equal halves of black (top) and red (bottom), with a yellow circle in the centre. The black represents the Aboriginal people — past (ancestors who were the first people of this land), present and future. The yellow represents the sun, the giver of life and of light and warmth. The red represents Mother Earth from whom all life and spirituality have come.

The flag is a powerful symbol that unifies Aboriginal people across Australia.

The Torres Strait Islander flag

The Torres Strait Islander flag was designed by 15 year-old Bernard Namok of Thursday Island and accepted by the Island Co-ordinating Council on behalf of all Torres Strait Islander people. The flag was first flown at the Torres Strait Cultural Festival at Thursday Island in May 1992.

The environment, and its relationship to the masses of land to the north and south of the Torres Strait, is reflected in the design, together with the history and cultures of the Torres Strait Islander people.

The green upper and lower panels represent the land. The blue panel represents the waters of Torres Strait. The black lines represent the Indigenous people of the Torres Strait. The white feathered dhari (headdress) symbolises all Torres Strait Islander people. The white of the star represents peace. The five divisions of the Torres Strait region are depicted in the five-pointed star: Eastern Islands; Western Islands; Central Islands; Waibene (Thursday Island), Nunapai (Horn Island), Muralag (Prince of Wales Island), Kiriri (Hammond Island); and Northern Peninsula Area, mainland Torres Strait Islanders. The star, used in navigation, is an important symbol for the seafaring Torres Strait Islander people.
What Works. The Work Program

The What Works materials are based on a three part analysis of the way teachers and schools generally work to improve outcomes for Indigenous students.

- Building awareness
- Forming partnerships
- Working systematically

The website (www.whatworks.edu.au) provides resources to support all of these.

This Workbook is the central support for targeted, systematic action.

The ‘School and Community: Working Together’ series supports the development of partnerships between schools and their Indigenous communities.

The ‘Core Issues’ series includes

- Core Issues 1: Setting Up For Success suggests ways in which schools might best be set up to maximise success for Indigenous students.
- Core Issues 2: Reducing Suspensions explores positive alternatives to suspension and ways they can be implemented in schools.
- Core Issues 3: Literacy explores questions about what it means to develop genuinely effective literacy.
- Core Issues 4: Numeracy tackles important questions about the meaning and importance of numeracy.
- Core Issues 5: Engagement discusses attendance, participation and belonging.
- Core Issues 6: Boarding looks at current practice in this small but growing area of Indigenous education.
- Core Issues 7: International Perspectives is a report of the DEST/OECD seminar held in Cairns in May 2007.

All these and other print materials are available for download through the ‘Publications’ link on the website, where you can also sign up for What Works eNews, to keep in touch with the What Works project.

Experienced What Works consultants are available free of charge to work with schools on the materials.