



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

Improving outcomes for Indigenous students

INFORMATION FOR INDIGENOUS PARENTS AND COMMUNITIES

Teachers and teaching

- What are good teachers like?
- What can you expect of teachers?

There are almost 300,000 school teachers in Australia, so you can expect them to vary. Teachers are not all the same; and neither is their work.

All teachers do more than just teach. They contact parents, organise excursions, run sports days, keep records, liaise with other schools, give out locker keys, supervise play in the yard, organise fundraising activities and working bees, and so on. Many teachers take on work tasks that are not strictly part of their job.

Listed in this pamphlet are characteristics of teachers working with Indigenous students who are exceptionally good at their work. This pamphlet also explains what you can reasonably expect of your child's teacher.

Teaching is a hard job that not everyone can do. It is helpful to remember this when you're having dealings with teachers.

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...

What are good teachers like?

They know and care about each one of their students

To learn well, students have to like and trust their teachers. This happens when their teachers

- value their students first as people and then as learners. This is obvious in their body language and tone of their voice as well as in their actions. They listen carefully when students speak. They enjoy their company;
- believe they can make, and are making, a difference for all their students. They tell their students frequently about the high expectations they have for their success;
- have a very good understanding of the lives of their students. They make an effort to ask about students' lives outside school. They respect and make an effort to understand differences in their students' cultures;
- keep their word. This applies to promises such as going on trips, being allowed to do enjoyable things, marking homework, following up on requests or giving a message to another staff member. They also keep their word about discipline.

They are energetic and work hard

These teachers are well prepared for their classes. They put a lot of effort into lesson preparation, feedback and marking, room displays, extra support and activities outside the classroom.

They share responsibility for learning with their students

- These teachers see themselves as learners and they expect to learn from their students. They like learning and expect their students to enjoy it too.
- They make efforts to share responsibility with their students for what is happening.
- They welcome student feedback. They take it as an opportunity to improve their work.

They expect and require behaviour which allows all students to learn

- These teachers spend time setting up rules for the class with the students, with agreed consequences for when those rules are broken, and stick to both the rules and the consequences.
- They do not expect silence or that students will not talk to each other

or that they won't ask questions. But they consistently expect that students

- get to class on time and begin work immediately;
- do not disrupt and put other students down in any way;
- are polite and well mannered;
- keep noise to a reasonable level and keep movement around the class appropriate to the task;
- do their best work and complete work which is set; and
- respect their own and other people's property.

They are proud of their school and work to make it good

- These teachers feel part of the school and actively promote pride in the school. They don't see their job as just being a classroom teacher. They participate in committees and meetings, sport and social activities.
- They are loyal and supportive of other teachers.
- School rules and expectations are actively promoted and enforced. These teachers are serious about their responsibilities for checking on punctuality, attendance, behaviour and out-of-class activities.

You have a right to expect that your children's teachers will...



Teacher Claire Kelly with her students at St Joseph's, Wyndham (WA).

- make an effort to get to know your children and their backgrounds;
- have high expectations of your children succeeding at school, and that they will act as though these high expectations can be met;
- be well prepared and will work to the best of their ability to help your children learn;
- set homework, check that it is done, mark it and return it to students promptly;
- always treat your children fairly;
- follow up any absences and lateness and let you know about them;
- let you know if things are going wrong and ask for your help to make things better;
- be positive but honest when they talk to you, and make an effort to use language that is clear and that you can understand; and
- give you ideas about how you can help your children learn.

