

NSW Department of School Education

Aboriginal Education Policy

**To promote the educational achievements of
Aboriginal students.**

**To educate all students about Aboriginal
Australia.**

**Aboriginal Education Unit
NSW Department of School Education**

MINISTER'S STATEMENT

The first policy for Aboriginal education in New South Wales was released in 1982 and focused on the advancement of Aboriginal communities and appreciation of Aboriginal cultures and societies by other Australians.

The values and philosophy of Aboriginal education and cultures have continued to be promoted in school communities throughout New South Wales with particular emphasis being placed on early childhood education as the real foundation of social and emotional development for children and of literacy and learning.

The New South Wales Government recognises the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG) Inc as the principal source of community based advice on Aboriginal education. This advice is provided at local, regional and State levels and ensures that Aboriginal community views are reflected in educational policies.

New South Wales Government policies continue to work towards achieving improved learning outcomes for Aboriginal people. The New South Wales Government is committed to achieving Reconciliation and recognises that appropriate education is fundamental to this process.

The central theme of this policy is to promote educational achievements by Aboriginal students in the context of educating all students about Aboriginal Australia.

This policy statement provides a comprehensive set of outcomes, as well as performance strategies, to guide all Department of School Education staff, schools, students and their communities in achieving the overall goals for Aboriginal education. To ensure successful implementation of this policy, schools will be required to report annually on the progress made towards achieving the stated goals.

I commend the Aboriginal Education Policy to you and trust that all teachers will find ways in which they can apply its principles and strategies in their teaching and learning programs.

John Aquilina, MP
Minister for Education and Training

DIRECTOR-GENERAL'S STATEMENT

The Department of School Education is committed to promoting the educational achievements of Aboriginal students and to enhancing the knowledge and understanding of all students about Aboriginal Australia.

There is an urgent and compelling need to improve educational outcomes for Aboriginal students to a level comparable with those of the school population generally. The public schools of New South Wales have a key responsibility for achieving equitable outcomes. This improvement can only be achieved with the support of Aboriginal communities.

In developing the policy, the Department strengthened its partnership with Aboriginal communities throughout New South Wales. To achieve this, the Department worked closely with the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Inc which ensured that the views and aspirations of Aboriginal parents and community members are reflected in the policy.

All levels of the Department will be required to provide a report on the progress made towards achieving the goals of the Aboriginal Education Policy. That information will then form the basis for reporting in the Department's Annual Report. To ensure the successful implementation of the policy, the Department will develop support materials which will be released each semester.

The Aboriginal Education Policy complements other policies and initiatives implemented by the Department. At the same time the policy maintains consistency with NSW Government policies and commitment to implementing recommendations of major national reports.

As we focus on events in NSW at the turn of the century, this policy becomes an important tool for achieving Reconciliation with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians. I seek your involvement in ensuring its effective and successful implementation.

Ken Boston
Director-General of School Education

NSW ABORIGINAL EDUCATION CONSULTATIVE GROUP INC

PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT

"Aboriginal education is not only the appropriate education of Aboriginal students but also must involve the education of all Australian students about Indigenous Australia. Participation and outcomes of Aboriginal students will improve when Indigenous cultures, history and contemporary issues are integral to the curriculum for all students."

NSW AECG Inc. 1995

The NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Inc (NSW AECG Inc) believes that social justice and Reconciliation are fundamental to achieving change in Australian society and improving outcomes for Indigenous students. Social justice must involve appropriate recognition of Indigenous Australia. Schools have a critical role in promoting this recognition. Aboriginal studies for all students will make a major contribution to the wider community understanding of Indigenous issues which is essential to achieve Reconciliation.

Aboriginal students have a right to an education free from all forms of prejudice and racism that gives them the skills for full participation in Australian society. At the same time, they have an inherent right to an education that reinforces our unique cultural identity.

Despite the 1982 Aboriginal Education Policy, and many successful initiatives addressing some of the education needs of Indigenous students, there is still inequity in NSW schools.

Change is needed to achieve equity for Aboriginal students. Attitudes and practices throughout the Department of School Education need to reflect greater knowledge and understanding of the cultural background, home language and socio-economic contexts of Aboriginal students. This can only be achieved through more effective partnerships.

Within the New South Wales public school system, Aboriginal education is a corporate responsibility of the whole Department of School Education. This is emphasised by the focus areas: Aboriginal students; Aboriginal communities; and, all students, all staff, all schools.

Making this policy work will depend upon the participation of Aboriginal communities as equal partners with the Department. This partnership will be essential to achieving equitable outcomes for Aboriginal students, as well as to implementing Aboriginal studies in all schools.

In this spirit of partnership and negotiation, co-operation will be necessary across all areas of education and Government to ensure that programs meet the needs of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, and that resources are allocated according to agreed criteria and priorities.

It is incumbent on the Department of School Education to ensure the full and successful implementation of this policy to achieve the goals of social justice and equity for all students in NSW. The NSW AECG Inc expects and trusts that all schools and the Department of School Education at all levels will willingly embrace the principle of negotiation and full partnership with Aboriginal communities.

Linda Burney
President
NSW AECG Inc

ABORIGINAL STATEMENT

“Being Aboriginal has nothing to do with the colour of your skin or the shape of your nose. It is a spiritual feeling, an identity you know in your heart. It is a unique feeling that may be difficult for non-Aboriginal people to understand.”

Linda Burney, 1994

“Aboriginality is not just a physical manifestation of Aboriginal identity, but includes a combination of cultural heritage, spirituality and an intrinsic link with the land.”

Years 7-10 Aboriginal Studies syllabus

Aboriginal cultures and communities are unique to Australia and diverse in nature.

It is critical that schools are places where Aboriginal students feel a sense of belonging. Aboriginal students have the right to be Aboriginal and to express their own unique cultural identity. Schools and all levels of the Department must respect this.

Aboriginal English is the home language of most Aboriginal students. Recognition and valuing of Aboriginal English is essential for the appropriate education of Aboriginal students, and most particularly, literacy acquisition.

The Department of School Education has the obligation to meet the needs of Aboriginal students. The whole school system therefore is responsible for the education of Aboriginal students, not only through special programs or Aboriginal funding, but through all programs.

Consultation with the local community is critical in developing appropriate programs for Aboriginal students.

There must be negotiation of all Aboriginal Education policies and programs with Aboriginal communities through the NSW AECG Inc.

TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER STATEMENT

Torres Strait Islander cultures and communities are unique to Australia and as diverse in nature as Aboriginal cultures.

Torres Strait Islander students have the right to be respected as a distinct Indigenous group within Australia. Torres Strait Islander students must be considered separately, but not separated from the Indigenous peoples of Australia.

This policy has been written with a specific focus on the educational needs of Aboriginal students. Where schools have Torres Strait Islander students enrolled, consultation with local Torres Strait Islander communities is critical.

Negotiation with the Torres Strait Islander Corporation NSW parents and local Torres Strait Islander communities will ensure the development of appropriate programs for Torres Strait Islander students. These negotiations will also promote learning about the Torres Strait Islands by all students within the framework of this policy.

RATIONALE

Equality is one of the democratic values that underpins the NSW public school system. All students are equally entitled to the conditions most likely to lead to successful experience and completion of schooling. For this to be achieved it is necessary, on grounds of fairness or equity, to take account of the fact that all students are unique, and that their differences must be taken into account in designing education programs. These differences include those arising from ethnicity; language and culture; socio-economic circumstances; sex; geographical location; and particular disabilities.

The first Aboriginal Education Policy in 1982 contributed to improvements in retention and educational outcomes for Aboriginal students. Successful partnerships have changed the way curriculum is developed and delivered in schools and increased the involvement of Aboriginal people in school activities.

Much more needs to be done if Aboriginal students are to achieve outcomes comparable with the school population as a whole. In addition, there is a need for all Australians to understand Aboriginal Australia and its past as a basis for Reconciliation and a future characterised by social justice and communality.

This policy builds on the goals of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy and replaces the 1982 NSW Department of School Education's Aboriginal Education Policy.

This policy statement reflects the views and values of Aboriginal people on education and is designed to promote educational achievements for Aboriginal students and to educate all students about Aboriginal Australia.

The Aboriginal Education Policy is also informed by developments in state and national education and training policies and reports on Aboriginal issues. These highlight the importance of literacy skills for Aboriginal students in gaining the necessary foundation for their continuing education and training, and for knowledge of Aboriginal Australia to be integrated into all school curricula.

Monitoring the delivery and outcomes of Aboriginal education programs and educational services to Aboriginal students is fundamental to the achievement of equity and social justice.

The Aboriginal Education Policy provides a framework for taking up this challenge. The focus of this policy will be the delivery of quality teaching and learning programs in schools for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students alike, and the development of strategic initiatives.

PRINCIPLES

The following basic principles underpin the Aboriginal Education Policy:

- Aboriginal students have an entitlement to appropriate and adequate resources, recognising the effects of past inequities, to enable them to achieve educational outcomes from schooling that are comparable with those of the rest of the student population.
- Aboriginal communities are entitled to negotiate the decisions that affect their children's schooling through active partnership with the Department of School Education (DSE) at all levels.
- Aboriginal students are entitled to high quality, culturally appropriate education and training programs as a foundation for lifelong learning.
- All students are entitled to learn about Aboriginal Australia, understanding that Aboriginal communities are the custodians of knowledge about their own cultures and history.
- Aboriginal students are entitled to feel safe and secure in expressing and developing their own identity as Indigenous people within schools and the wider society.
- Aboriginal students are entitled to participate in a system which is free of racism and prejudice.

FOCUS AREAS

The policy has three focus areas:

- * Aboriginal students
- * Aboriginal communities
- * All staff, students and schools.

It is through a meaningful partnership with communities that Aboriginal education for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students will be enhanced in NSW.

GOALS

The goals of this policy are comprehensive in order to take account of the complexity of the issues involved and of the ways in which they interconnect; and of the differences among schools and communities. Making progress towards these goals is the responsibility of all personnel within the Department of School Education.

Curriculum, teaching and assessment programs will be challenging and culturally appropriate.

Schools will have a supportive learning environment.

Aboriginal Communities and the Department of School Education will become partners in the whole educational process.

All Department of School Education staff and students will have a knowledge and understanding of and respect for Aboriginal Australia.

Focus Area: ABORIGINAL STUDENTS

CURRICULUM, TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT PROGRAMS WILL BE CHALLENGING AND CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE

- **Outcomes** are set out in relation to each of the policy goals, indicating priority areas for action to achieve these goals.
- Against each outcome is a list of **performance strategies** as guides to action. The list is not exhaustive and schools will need to adopt and, where necessary, devise, strategies that are appropriate to their own circumstances.
- The policy also indicates areas within the system with **responsibility** for action.

OUTCOME	PERFORMANCE STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBILITIES		
		State Office	Districts	Schools
Educational outcomes for Aboriginal students P-12 are enhanced so that they are comparable with those of the rest of the student population.	Increasing access to pre-school education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> through budget priorities and priority placements. through Aboriginal community involvement in educational service delivery and evaluation. through setting targets for employment of Aboriginal staff in DSE pre-schools. 	*		*
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	Improving levels of literacy and numeracy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> through targeting resources on transition to school and early literacy programs. through preparing Reading Recovery teachers to work with Aboriginal students and communities. through accepting and valuing Aboriginal English and developing teaching programs which use it as a teaching tool. through providing intensive literacy and numeracy programs with accompanying resources including Aboriginal content and perspectives for use at all stages of schooling. through researching appropriate methodology and content across all key learning areas. 	*	*	*
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	Expanding opportunities for Gifted and Talented Aboriginal students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> through developing criteria to identify these students and developing and implementing specific programs designed for them. 	*		*
	Ensuring access to the full range of curriculum areas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> through equitable placement of Aboriginal students in primary and secondary classrooms. through the development of equitable student placement procedures. through improving opportunities for Aboriginal students to access vocational education, training and employment programs. 		*	*
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Focus Area: ABORIGINAL STUDENTS

CURRICULUM, TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT PROGRAMS WILL BE CHALLENGING AND CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE

OUTCOME	PERFORMANCE STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBILITIES		
		State Office	Districts	Schools
Teaching and learning programs reflect the diverse needs of Aboriginal students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of targeted research programs relating to the teaching practices most appropriate to improve the learning skills of Aboriginal students. Development and implementation of statewide training and development programs to focus on effective teaching and learning strategies to meet the needs of Aboriginal students. 	* *		*
Culturally appropriate teaching strategies and assessment methods are implemented.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acceptance of and provision for Aboriginal English in culturally appropriate teaching and assessment programs. Development of culturally relevant assessment tools for distribution to all schools. Incorporation of knowledge from Aboriginal communities in teaching and learning programs. Involvement of Aboriginal parents, community and caregivers in evaluation of educational programs, processes and practices. Monitoring all forms of assessment to ensure fairness to Aboriginal students in both content and process. 	* * *	*	* * *
Aboriginal languages are maintained, revived and reclaimed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teaching and resourcing of Aboriginal languages as part of the Languages Other Than English key learning area and community languages program. Research into application of technologies to the teaching and learning of Aboriginal languages. 	* *		*

Focus Area: ABORIGINAL STUDENTS

SCHOOLS WILL HAVE A SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

OUTCOME	PERFORMANCE STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBILITIES		
		State Office	Districts	Schools
Support services are inclusive of the needs of Aboriginal students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raising awareness amongst Aboriginal communities of the range of support services for students. Recruitment and training of Aboriginal staff to provide support. Deployment of staff with skills to maximise the response to Aboriginal student needs. Improving educational programs for Aboriginal students particularly in Community Care Schools and support units. Provision of educational services to cater for the needs of Aboriginal students with disabilities. Development of culturally appropriate teaching resources for Child Protection. Raising awareness in Aboriginal communities of the Anti-Racism Policy and Grievance Procedures. Monitoring attendance and suspension rates of Aboriginal students to target appropriate support. Research to identify and develop effective programs to support completion by Aboriginal students of a full secondary education or its equivalent. Extending homework centres, mentor and peer tutoring programs for Aboriginal students. Implementing programs that enhance the skills of Aboriginal students, eg leadership, peer mediation. 	*	*	*
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In co-operation with Department of Health, specific health issues affecting the education of Aboriginal students are addressed through DSE programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaboration with the Department of Health to address the health issues of Aboriginal students. Co-operation with screening and treatment programs to address the needs of Aboriginal students with Otitis Media. Implementation of effective teaching strategies for Aboriginal students with Otitis Media. Identification of and action to address other health needs of Aboriginal students. Implementation of drug education programs which are relevant to Aboriginal students in their communities. 	*	*	*
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Focus Area: ABORIGINAL STUDENTS

SCHOOLS WILL HAVE A SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

OUTCOME	PERFORMANCE STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBILITIES		
		State Office	Districts	Schools
DSE staff demonstrate awareness of all relevant issues affecting Aboriginal students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To inform DSE personnel about Aboriginal history, cultures and languages, Aboriginal English, social justice, Reconciliation and health issues. Negotiation with higher education authorities to include compulsory Aboriginal education units in pre-service teacher training. Adaptation of special education and student welfare programs to meet the cultural needs of Aboriginal students. Monitoring the effects of these programs, including suspension, attendance and discipline policies, on students' educational and behavioural outcomes. Regular information for staff on their responsibilities in implementing the Anti-Racism Policy and Grievance Procedures. 	<p>*</p> <p>*</p> <p>*</p> <p>*</p> <p>*</p>	<p>*</p> <p>*</p> <p>*</p> <p>*</p> <p>*</p>	<p>*</p> <p>*</p> <p>*</p> <p>*</p> <p>*</p>
Aboriginal people <i>are</i> employed at all levels of the Department of School Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of a comprehensive Aboriginal employment strategy in full consultation with the NSW AECG Inc. eg: Early Childhood Education staff School Counsellors Secondary Teachers Curriculum Advisers Careers Advisers Development of appropriate procedures to ensure appropriate and adequate representation of Aboriginal community members on selection panels for positions identified for Aboriginality. 	<p>*</p> <p>*</p>		
Targeted resources and programs provide for the educational needs of Aboriginal students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring global budgeting and resourcing procedures to ensure Aboriginal students have equitable access to core funding. In schools with Aboriginal students, arranging for representation of their interests in school finance decision-making. Monitoring outcomes data, eg Basic Skills Test HSC results to assist in targeting appropriate resources to Aboriginal students. Expansion of vocational pathways to improve access of Aboriginal students to employment, training and further education. Research into ways new technologies can be used to meet the learning needs of Aboriginal students. 	<p>*</p> <p>*</p> <p>*</p> <p>*</p>	<p>*</p> <p>*</p>	<p>*</p> <p>*</p> <p>*</p> <p>*</p>

FOCUS AREA: ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES

ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES AND THE DEPARTMENT OF SCHOOL EDUCATION WILL BECOME PARTNERS IN THE WHOLE EDUCATION PROCESS

OUTCOME	PERFORMANCE STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBILITIES		
		State Office	Districts	Schools
Aboriginal people are empowered to become active partners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of strategies to support active membership on education committees by Aboriginal people including provision of inservice programs for Aboriginal people on the roles, issues and responsibilities of School Councils. Involvement of Aboriginal people in the planning, delivery and evaluation of educational services P-12. Involvement of Aboriginal staff in school management. Participation by school and district DSE representatives in local and regional AECG meetings. Development of community awareness programs involving parents, students and teachers to promote higher retention. 	<p>*</p> <p>*</p> <p>*</p>	<p>*</p> <p>*</p> <p>*</p>	<p>*</p> <p>*</p> <p>*</p>
The knowledge held by Aboriginal communities is recognised and valued.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The cultural knowledge and expertise of Aboriginal communities is recognised and valued. Development of guidelines for ensuring that Aboriginal community members have equitable access to forms of remuneration available for consultancy, advisory and other related services to school programs. Collaboration by DSE staff with local Aboriginal communities, especially with Elders, in the development and delivery of cross-cultural awareness programs. 	<p>*</p> <p>*</p> <p>*</p>	<p>*</p>	<p>*</p>
Educational policies and programs are developed in consultation with Aboriginal communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Negotiation with Aboriginal communities through the NSW AECG Inc. in the writing of policy documents. Development of accountability procedures on Aboriginal education initiatives in consultation with the NSW AECG Inc. Involvement of Aboriginal staff, Aboriginal communities and NSW AECG in providing and analysing data at all levels of the DSE. Development of streamlined reporting procedures for providing information to AECG Inc and Aboriginal communities. 	<p>*</p> <p>*</p> <p>*</p> <p>*</p>	<p>*</p>	<p>*</p>

Focus Area: ALL STAFF - ALL STUDENTS - ALL SCHOOLS

ALL DSE STAFF AND STUDENTS WILL HAVE KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF AND RESPECT FOR ABORIGINAL AUSTRALIA

OUTCOME	PERFORMANCE STRATEGIES	RESPONSIBILITIES		
		State Office	Districts	Schools
Knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal Australia is evident in all schools and throughout the public school system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoting, recognising and celebrating National Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders' Week. Recognising the talents and achievements of Aboriginal staff, students, parents and community members. Promoting and implementing <i>The Whole School Anti-Racism Project</i> in all schools. Promoting the process of Reconciliation and Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation activities throughout the Department of School Education. 	* * *	* * *	* * *
Policies and programs reflect the views and aspirations of Aboriginal Australia.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Including Aboriginal issues in induction programs for newly appointed staff. Developing and delivering a statewide program of training and development about Aboriginal content and perspectives in school curriculum. In collaboration with higher education institutions, negotiating the completion of Aboriginal Studies units as an employment requirement for teachers in NSW public schools. Implementing training and development programs for policy writers, program developers and administrative staff about Aboriginal views and aspirations. 	* * *	* *	*
All students participate in Aboriginal studies programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development, implementation and evaluation of effective teaching and learning programs, to ensure participation by all students in mandatory Aboriginal studies units P-12. Preparation of and provision to schools of curriculum support materials containing Aboriginal content and perspectives complementing existing syllabuses. Development of culturally appropriate teaching resources in negotiation with the NSW AECG Inc. Incorporation of Aboriginal content in curriculum programs across all key learning areas. Targeting of resources to promote effective teaching of Aboriginal content across key learning areas. 	* * * *		* * * *

MONITORING, REPORTING AND REVIEW

Schools and state office directorates are required to report progress in implementing the Aboriginal Education Policy.

Effective procedures for monitoring, reporting and review are an integral part of the Aboriginal Education Policy. The procedures for a five year cycle set out below are in addition and complementary to the system wide collection of a range of data on educational outcomes. This cycle will provide for:

- schools and state office directorates to become familiar with and committed to the Aboriginal Education Policy, and to incorporate it in their own plans;
- a full three-year period for the development of long-term strategies consistent with the time required for gains to be made;
- a comprehensive assessment at the end of this time of progress made in achieving the goals of the Aboriginal Education Policy.

Schools and state office directorates will report as follows:

Year 1 (1996)	steps taken to integrate planning for the achievement of policy goals in their overall planning consistent with Department of School Education priorities.
Years 2 to 4 (1997-99)	strategies being implemented, outcomes achieved and implications for the future.
Year 5 (2000)	a summative report on the effects of the five year cycle of policy implementation. This report will inform a review of the Policy for the next five years (2001-2005).

Each year, reports from schools and other areas of the DSE will be consolidated in a report for consideration by the Director-General's Advisory Group on Aboriginal Education (DGAGAE).

- The DGAGAE will then prepare an overview for submission with the report to the Director-General.
- The Director-General will submit the overview and the full report to the Minister for Education and Training.
- The Director-General will present the report to the AECG Inc as a basis for formal discussion.
- It will be included in the Department of School Education Annual Report.
- The DSE will make the report available to the NSW AECG Inc for distribution to Aboriginal communities.