



## Fact sheet 3: Improving post-school transitions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students – two-way learning and community engagement

Two-way learning is where both teachers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students grow in cross-cultural understanding and sensitivity.

Active two-way learning is dependent on ongoing relationships, understanding and respect between key representatives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and the broader community including school principals, educational staff, other students, local industry and employers.

Whole community involvement contributes to building a safe, respectful and inclusive learning environment that supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students achieve their full potential.

Provision of pedagogically sound, culturally sensitive and engaging learning approaches for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and recognition that many may be multilingual, particularly in remote communities, is important.

Approaches to teaching and learning for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students should take into account the learning needs and experiences of individual students, cultural contexts and provide opportunities for authentic learning.

In remote locations, attracting and retaining skilled teachers and trainers may be difficult. Staff turnover may result in students being taught by teachers with little experience of country and culture, and limited awareness of the strengths and knowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students bring. An induction program involving the school and local community which includes cross-cultural awareness/immersion is important.

Formal, structured two-way learning assists in reducing barriers for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Combined with community and industry engagement, post-school transitions for students are improved.

### Strategies schools can employ

- Acknowledge and value the knowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students bring and relate it to courses being undertaken.
- Build and maintain relationships with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities based on listening, understanding and respect. Communication can occur through informal meetings with families and communities, and formal processes such as partnership agreements.
- Involve local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities with school professional development and review processes in cross-cultural competency.
- Provide cultural induction for teachers before they begin working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- Collaborative professional development in cross-cultural competency for local employer and industry groups, and local community groups.
- Support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community input into finding locally appropriate approaches to dealing with challenges such as attendance, for example attendance rewards.
- Provide an active role for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff in schools and in liaison with family, community, employer and industry groups.
- Provide opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and communities to celebrate course completions and milestones.
- Identify and recognise the first language of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and provide additional linguistic support where needed.

