



Fact sheet 4: Improving post-school transitions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students – cultivating aspiration, self-esteem and belonging

A student's perception of his or herself and how this is supported through school experiences is a key influence on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student engagement and attainment.

Focusing on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' cultural and personal strengths can heighten their academic and career expectations and enhance greater engagement with schooling.

Respecting and nurturing the aspirations of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is an important way to break down barriers and increase confidence and self-esteem.

There is also evidence Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students experience racism, racial stereotyping, lower teacher expectations and a lack of acknowledgement of their country and culture. These experiences should be counteracted with experiences of positive recognition and value.

A learning focus built on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student interests and aspirations is important in cultivating self-esteem.

A strong focus on career development and career education, including raising and informing the aspirations of individual Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, their families and support networks is vital. Students should make informed decisions regarding vocational learning and VET including having an awareness of employment opportunities, and labour market shortages/demands.

Strategies schools can employ

- Actively recognising and celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural identity and pride including through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership programs.
- Actively developing and implementing approaches to support reconciliation across the school communities to address discrimination at all levels in schools.
- Cross-cultural professional development training for all education staff and local employers involved with the provision of vocational learning and VET.
- Engaging with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members and providing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with access to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mentors and role models, including role models who are successful in one or more vocational areas.
- Helping individual Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students identify their goals, strengths and aspirations which are then reflected in individual student career plans.
- Providing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with opportunities to achieve success in courses often and early to build self-esteem.
- Focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' strengths and support individual students to identify personal skills and interests.
- Link Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student skills and interests with vocational learning, including embedding vocational learning and VET within the broader curricula.
- Where possible, ensure courses are accessible and include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student supports including access to community and country where appropriate.
- Encouraging the inclusion of the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures cross-curriculum priority* in daily practice across all curriculum areas.

