

NSW Secondary Principals' Council



Aboriginal Education Position Paper

Ratified: November 2018

Purpose

The purpose of this Position Paper is to present an agreed NSW Secondary Principals Council (NSWSPC) statement of position, principles and beliefs about Aboriginal Education. The Position Paper has also been written to support principals in their leadership of Aboriginal Education by identifying areas requiring action by the NSW Department of Education (The Department).

Preamble

The NSWSPC acknowledges the leadership and vision of many people within the Department and in particular those Aboriginal officers in the field and in the Aboriginal Education and Community Engagement Directorate who continue to champion the successes and needs of our First Peoples.

Although there is widespread good will and intentions and despite numerous policies and programs, the undeniable evidence is that there continues to be unacceptable gaps in the opportunities and outcomes for many Aboriginal people (see notes 2 & 3).

The NSWSPC encourages those in leadership positions within the Department and our governments to make the courageous decisions needed so that this generation leads the extinguishing of the gaps in educational and life outcomes for many Aboriginal people. The NSWSPC acknowledges the complexity as well as the importance of this task.

Statement of Principles:

The NSWSPC:

- Acknowledges the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (NSWAECC) as the peak consultative body at state, regional and local levels.
- Recognises that consultation with local Aboriginal people is essential.
- Acknowledges the principles of recognition and self-determination as critical to the process of reconciliation.
- Promotes strength-based, high-expectations relationships as well as actively challenging low expectations, negative stereotypes, biases and deficit models of thinking.
- Recognises the importance of ensuring appropriate human and financial resourcing, as well as sound measures of impact to achieve successes in Aboriginal Education.

Statement of Beliefs

The NSWSPC believe that:

- A commitment to the OCHRE4 principles of "Opportunity, Healing, Choice, Responsibility and Empowerment" will lead to greater success for all of our students.



- It is essential that all members of the Department of Education demonstrate strong leadership and a vigorous commitment to the success of Aboriginal Education outcomes in NSW.
- Aboriginal students are entitled to the same opportunities and outcomes as all students.
- All students are entitled to have an understanding of Aboriginal histories, cultures, languages and ways of learning.
- Aboriginal people should be proportionally represented across the NSW Department of Education at all levels.
- All members of the Department must demonstrate cultural competency.
- Developing deep connections with local communities, with local cultures and with country is beneficial for all students.
- Wherever possible, local understandings and connections should be embedded in the curriculum.

Recommendations

The NSWSPC recommends that the Department:

- Gives significance to the importance of Aboriginal Education in its Strategic Plan.
- Develops an organisational 'Statement of Excellence' in Aboriginal Education.
- Develops a comprehensive plan to "Close the Gaps".
- Develops a clear organisational structure to ensure both policy and operational support for schools.
- Includes an Aboriginal workforce development strand as part of its Leadership Strategy, with clear accountability measures.
- Includes Aboriginal Cultural Awareness Training as a requirement for employment with the Department.
- Ensures that all staff induction programs include a comprehensive local Cultural Awareness program.
- Ensures that resources and professional learning are provisioned to increase teachers' confidence and competence in delivering Aboriginal perspectives.
- Supports the development and extension of local Aboriginal language strategies.

SPC Position

The NSWSPC is committed to working in partnership with the Department and other organisations to achieve these recommendations and the key targets in Aboriginal Education.

Notes and references:

1. To be consistent with the DoE Aboriginal Education Policy protocol, the term "Aboriginal" in this paper, refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island peoples.
2. The 2018 Closing the Gap Report (<https://closingthegap.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/ctg-report-2018.pdf?a=1>).
3. CESE data presented to the NSWSPC Aboriginal Education Conference 2017.
4. OCHRE: https://www.aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au/pdfs/OCHRE/AA_OCHRE_final.pdf
5. DoE Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2018-2022

