

Improving the Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students Within Catholic Education Tasmania

Literature Review



Authors

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This Literature Review was published for the Catholic Education Office, Tasmania by:

Deakin University, Centre for Research for Educational Impact (REDI), 75 Pigdons Rd, Waurn Ponds, 3216, Australia,

in conjunction with

The University of Tasmania, Peter Underwood Centre for Educational Attainment, Private Bag 07, Hobart, Tasmania 7000, Australia.

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ISBN: 978-0-7300-0254-3 (e-Book)

ISBN: 978-0-7300-0255-0 (Print)

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Cover Image: The cover displays an image of the Gondwanan rainforest in the Tarkine wilderness, North West Tasmania. We see this as an image of hope, the sun shining through the trees, illuminating what is there and inspiring us to think about what might be possible.

<https://pixabay.com/photos/weindorfers-forest-walk-tasmania-2365608/>

We acknowledge and pay respect to traditional land ownership.

This literature review has been prepared on the lands of the Mouhennener/muwinina at nipaluna and the lands of the Wurundjeri and Boon Wurrung.

We are committed to enabling all of our students and staff to respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges, culture and values.

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We pay our respects to the traditional custodians, their Elders, past, present and future of this land on which we work. Catholic Education Tasmania (CET) is committed to honouring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's unique cultural and spiritual connections and the rich contribution they bring to our schools. Along with governments across Australia, we affirm the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to maintain languages and cultures and acknowledge their deep cultural associations with the land and water.

Introduction

Under Aboriginal educational jurisdiction, Indigenous children have long been successful in education for forty thousand years or more. It is only in the last 200 years of colonisation that Indigenous failure has occurred (Rigney, 2002, p. 74).

This literature review is being conducted for Catholic Education Tasmania by researchers from Deakin University and the University of Tasmania seeking solutions to the complex and diverse issues that impact upon Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student success. The literature review has two sections: This first section reviews the theoretical underpinnings of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student success at school, and the second section is an annotated bibliography of case studies that illustrate examples of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student success at school. The annotated bibliography includes case studies of Tasmanian examples and examples from elsewhere.

In recent times the discipline-specific focus on well-being, literacy and numeracy has turned to interdisciplinary pedagogy approaches that seek to make connections to student-learning across the curriculum. These approaches often have a focus on the whole person, and position learning in the context of caring for the individual student and the responsibilities that the school community have to them. Learning of specific skills may come with programs and approaches that do not always foreground this care and responsibility (Doecke & Kostogriz, 2013).

This approach to responsibility and care is clearly embedded in the CET Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy (2018), setting the agenda for Tasmanian Catholic Schools. The commitment to 'honouring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's unique cultural and spiritual connections and the rich contribution they bring to our schools', frames Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members as critical resources of cultural knowledge. In affirming the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to maintain languages and cultures and acknowledging their deep cultural associations with the land and water, CET calls for schools:

to ensure that [they] simultaneously enable a right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to enact the curriculum through languages and cultures while providing non-Indigenous students with a

deeper and more complete education. The deep cultural associations with land and water position Country as an integral part of the curriculum. These deep cultural associations are found in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures cross-curriculum priorities of the Australian Curriculum about Country, people and culture, which forms the basis of a culturally safe school.

The care of and responsibility for students is the foundation of the CET ethos, and upholds the commitment to make schools culturally safe. Cultural safety is more than “a checklist approach” to inclusion and diversity. It empowers and enables individuals to contribute to their own achievement of positive outcomes and ‘requires that all human beings receive services that take into account all that makes them unique’ (Bin-Sallik, 2003, p. 21). Cultural safety is integral to student well-being, which itself is connected to improvements in student outcome.

Timing of this Review

Always was, always will be

This literature review began in 2020 and was completed in 2021 in pre-treaty Australia. During this time reconciliation was unfinished business and there was no treaty in Australia. These arrangements impact the sovereign rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Tasmanian Catholic Schools.

Institutionally, the Australian Catholic Church has been working towards Reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholics and extending this reach into their communities more broadly. This work has situated other Catholic institutions, such as schools, within a framework that is directly positioned to work for community engagement and sovereignty. The Catholic Church has made considerable progress on reconciliation conceptually working through the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council (NATSICC). NATSICC has positioned the Australian Catholic Church in a strong position to advocate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. For instance, there is a well-articulated position on the necessity to change the date of Australia Day, endorsing Fr. Richard Leonard SJ's suggestion for the 27th of May.

The 27th of May would commemorate the day that:

‘Australia voted to grant citizenship to our people and to remove us from under the Fauna and Flora Act’.

(NATSICC, 2019, n.p.)

NATSICC also advocate that a true history of Australia educational program should accompany this change of date and be taught by every Catholic school in Australia. They suggest that:

This true history need not be a wholly negative process designed to promote guilt in non-Indigenous Australia but an authentic representation of the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, both in the settlement of Australia and in society today. For the sake of our children, we need to look forward and move forward' (NATSICC, 2019)

Most non-Indigenous teachers were not educated in the true histories of Australia when they were at school, so being exposed to the truths for the first time is part of this national project (Herbert, 2019).

The sovereign rights of Indigenous Australians are reflected in the theme of NAIDOC week in 2020, *Always was, always will be*. While there are no contracts, no treaties, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have never ceded their rights to the land, the sea and the air (Treaty '88 Campaign, 1988). Schools can be sites that challenge assumed ceding of Sovereign Rites of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community that they serve. Student success will have a better chance of being fully realised when these sovereign rights are normalised and enacted daily by teachers in their school. Given this unfinished business, teachers face the challenging task of upholding the sovereign rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students while the broader Australian community plays catch up.

Adding to the demand on teachers to achieve success with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students is the complexity of schools that are each located in specific histories and places in post-colonial Australia. Rose (2017) has looked at super-complexity in higher education and this is a useful concept for teachers to draw upon to understand how the work of teachers and Aboriginal Teacher Assistants requires them to negotiate the paradoxes and diversity awaiting them in the classroom. They are not alone in this quest. As Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders transition into school, many of them face similar complexities and disruptions as they negotiate the cultural interface of the institution of school. Unlike teachers, students aren't paid to perform these negotiations and often wonder what the purpose might be. A key component of the literature review is the professional responsibilities that teachers have to fully engage in making classrooms culturally safe.

This literature review has been developed to support teachers realising this social justice agenda that upholds the rights of Australia's First Peoples. As NATSICC (2017) propose:

It is now time that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous people come together to right the wrongs of the past and build a new relationship on a foundation of understanding, compassion and respect.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Success: The Ten Supports

Approach to the Review

The case studies of student success illustrate evidence-based interventions and educational programs to improve the outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students that have been trialed in Tasmania, mainland Australia and with First Nations students internationally where relevant (i.e., countries such as New Zealand and Canada). In shaping this review, we are cognisant that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are some of the most researched people in the world (Martin & Mirraboopa, 2003). It is logical to draw heavily on previous research to elucidate student success. While we are aware much of this research comes from outside of Tasmania, in the case study examples we have seen how this framework holds true for the Tasmanian context.

Lowe et al. (2019) conducted a series of systematic reviews addressing the question, 'What are the issues affecting the underachievement of Indigenous students in Australia and how can research inform solutions to the complex and inter-related issues needing to be addressed?' (p. 213). This project was a cross-institutional collaboration between thirteen Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars. The authors of the project completed ten systemic literature reviews to develop a response to the question. Through their synthesis of these literature reviews, Lowe et al. defined 'improved learning outcomes' not only in terms of national assessment results and Federal Government *Closing the Gap* targets, but also by community and parental involvement in ways that connect students to forebears and Elders (Harrison & Skrebneva, 2020).

The Ten Supports

In this review, we begin with the findings of Lowe et al. (2019) which focus on improved learning outcomes and re-orientate them to develop a model that can be used in schools to focus on supports for student success. In this review we have a broad

understanding of success. As Peacock et al. (2020) identify, 'success is considered to be more holistic from an Indigenous perspective in comparison to the typical Western counterpart, given the former's valuing of culture, community and Country (as opposed to the possession of health, wealth and status)' (p. 1). Returning to the issue of super-complexity, we note that these ten supports are not operating independently of each other, and when they are all in place, they work together towards successful student outcomes. In the review we argue that student success is premised on teachers taking a plural approach to their practice. We borrow a premise from Luke and Freebody's *Four Resources Model of Literacy* of each support being "necessary but not sufficient" (Luke, 2000, p. 8). That is, that they are necessary but not sufficient in and of themselves for supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student success in school. There is no hierarchy to this model, which is why we have (like Lowe et al. 2019) presented it in a circular diagram. However, as you read through this paper and think about the model, you will note the ways in which the supporting structures held within each category work together to uphold the educational rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Figure 1 shows our reworking of Lowe et al. (2019), with the ten supports which frame Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student success in this literature review. Each of these supports are not mutually exclusive and we have categorised the literature under the support where we think it best fits. Some literature is included in more than one support.



Figure 1: The Ten Supports

Working for Community Engagement and Sovereignty

Settlers in the clearing must be confronted with their own foreignness, and with a resurgent Indigenous sovereignty with the power to recognise, admit, deny, or erase the Settler belonging in that space.
 (Baker & Battell Lowman, 2016, p. 207).

We have broadened Lowe et al.'s "Community Engagement" to "Working for Community Engagement and Sovereignty" in this model of the Ten Supports. This change reflects the responsibility that schools have to Indigenous communities, manifested through respectful relationships of community engagement and the ongoing struggle we all have to uphold the sovereign rights of Indigenous Australians. When we appreciatively and respectfully invite Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members in to schools, we advocate and ally for Indigenous recognition.

Ideally schools would be combining the agendas of community engagement and Indigenous recognition to have deep conversations around Indigenous governance as 'Community engagement and empowerment lie at the heart of genuine partnerships' (Lloyd, 2020, p.3). Through relationships with parents and caregivers, teachers can explore deeper understandings of the strengths and resources located in the community.

Not only do we need to create a basic and fundamental understanding of Indigenous communities at a policy level, we need to move beyond the legacy of colonisation to incorporate the richness, complexities, strengths and knowledges of Indigenous peoples and communities to benefit students in all Australian classrooms (Shay and Lampert, 2020, p.14).

We have identified the following three strategies for enacting sovereignty through community partnerships: a rights-based approach, respectful partnerships and teacher support.

A Rights Based Approach

Australia is a signatory to the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (United Nations General Assembly, 2007). This declaration recognises the right of Indigenous families and communities to retain shared responsibility for 'the upbringing, training, education and well-being of their children, consistent with the rights of the child' (United Nations, 2007, p.3). This positions schools with a responsibility to work with Indigenous families and communities to engage their children and young people in successful educational experience. Article 18 states that:

Indigenous peoples have the right to participate in decision-making in matters which would affect their rights, through representatives chosen by themselves in accordance with their own procedures, as well as to maintain and develop their own Indigenous decision-making institutions.

This positions schools and educational systems with the responsibility to arrange institutions in ways that welcome decision-making by members of the Indigenous community. This is beyond just including Indigenous community members in the school; it begins with upholding the sovereign rights of Indigenous Australians in the governance structures of the school. While reconciliation in Australia is unfinished business, schools have a responsibility to model what a reconciled Australia might be.

Respectful Partnerships

Herbert (2007) outlines that partnerships may involve hearing agendas that do not align with the current institutional arrangements at the school, and that this can be challenging. However, she describes that, 'partnership means you have made an unwritten agreement to hear me out, to listen to what I have to say, in good faith and

to reflect upon what I have to say, within the framework of your own understandings' (p. 47). Atkinson (2001) explains the meaning of *dadirri* from the language of the Ngangikurungkurr people of the Daly River area of the Northern Territory as 'inner deep listening and quiet still awareness' (p. ix). She calls for an ethics of professional care that is based on the concept of *dadirri*, and the ways of being in the presence of the other that *dadirri* encompasses. Non-Indigenous teachers and school leaders coming from the institutional positioning of schools might need time to practice their inner deep listening and quiet, still awareness when meeting members of the local Indigenous community.

In their analysis of policies and case studies in the New South Wales context, Steinberg et al. (2012) identified how respectful community relationships are strongly linked to good teaching practice. They write:

It is important to restate that developing supportive and mutually cooperative relationships between the school and the local Aboriginal communities is a central feature of good practice. It is about acknowledging and recognising local Aboriginal histories, cultures and knowledge(s). It means making real and meaningful connections and linking back to how and what is taught to students. This includes reaching out in a positive manner, making meaningful connections and working in a collaborative way with Aboriginal families to develop and foster parental support for regular school attendance and improved learning outcomes of their children at school. All of this cannot be achieved without a high level of teacher involvement and commitment to Aboriginal education (p.151)

The strategy of developing strong community partnerships enables students to share what Moll et al. (1992) describe the "funds of knowledge" that children and young people bring to school. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students this can connect their home lives to their experience with the curriculum and enable teachers to connect experiences in school to their learning at home. This reinforces parents and caregivers as important teachers to the children and young people in their care.

Teacher Support

Price (2012) identifies the two ideas—of reaching out to the families and communities and the schools themselves being ready for the students as conditions which enable any program or initiative to move forward and achieve success. In her analysis of programs and plans seeking to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander's educational results, she found that 'we see little in whole-of-school plans that 'reaches out' to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities. Although there is an emphasis on 'school readiness' for children, it is rare that there is evidence of schools being ready for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' (p. 16). Price concludes that these programs are targeting students and their families to resolve problems when little work has been done to resolve the biases and understandings that non-Indigenous teachers and school leaders bring to the profession. Teachers need to feel fully supported to do relationship building work with the members of the parents and caregiver community.

Pedagogic Practices

“Pedagogic Practices” span from somewhat standardised instrumental approaches to more inclusive contextualised pedagogies. Pedagogic Practices often become the sites of contestation where approaches and methods become pitted against each other in the educational literature. In terms of supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student success, teachers’ work in the classroom is complexified by the competing and often contested demands placed upon them. Partington (1998) identifies that ‘no simple solution’ exists to educational reform as the cure-all for Indigenous education and advocates for teachers to take a critical approach to their pedagogy to challenge structures that normalise underperformance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. In this review we outline the elements of culturally responsive pedagogies (CRP) as a way to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student success. We do this using evidence from academics who have used CRP to demonstrate improved student outcomes and community engagement with schools.

In their systematic literature review, *Toward a Culturally- Responsive Pedagogy*, Morrison et al. (2019) focused on studies that discuss improving the educational experiences of Aboriginal and Torres-Strait Islander students. They explained that CRP has broader application:

...it is argued that under the current conditions of super-diversity in Australian classrooms, culturally responsive pedagogy offers a hopeful approach to improving the educational experiences of all students (p. v).

They argue that, in the current context of super-diversity in Australian classrooms, CRP offers a pedagogy for all students. Morrison et al. (2020) identify the five main elements of CRP as:

- high expectations,
- quality relationships,
- diversity as an asset,
- connection to students’ life worlds, and
- socio-political consciousness.

It is important to note that for non-Indigenous teachers developing their culturally responsive pedagogical practices that ‘Cultural responsiveness should be a long-term and often deeply personal endeavour’ rather than simply introducing new curriculum materials and check lists of content (Morrison et al., 2019, p. 48).

High Expectations

There is a long history of linking high teacher expectations to improve student outcomes. Sarra et al. (2020) argue that educators have low expectations for Aboriginal students generally across Australia. Rose (2012) highlights how teachers

enact racism through “cotton wool” where teachers “go soft” on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with negative effects on ‘codes of discipline, standards of work, grading, professional distance and acceptable boundaries of school culture’ (p. 71). He states, ‘we receive less than the highest quality service delivery or feedback and may be lured into accepting meagre and mediocre standards’ (p. 71). Benign racism enacted by non-Indigenous teachers can be manifested in the limited promotion of high expectations by non-Indigenous teachers towards Indigenous students. Price (2012) argues that this was not always the case and cites examples from the early colonisation of Australia where Aboriginal people became scholars in one generation. The valuing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures in the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Declaration (2019) is predicated on high expectations for Indigenous students.

High expectations are linked to other success factors involving quality relationships with students and community. Sarra et al. (2020) articulate:

We propose that when a school environment is underpinned by high-expectations relationships, this provides the basis for educators to develop quality relationships with their students, robust and dialogic environments with colleagues that are conducive to high expectations pedagogy, and strong relationships with parents and carers that will optimise support for students' educational efforts and aspirations. These positive educational attributes work to ensure that the school's vision for a high-expectations educational agenda is supported and owned across the whole school community (p. 33).

In their research they contend that high expectations require teachers to, understand their personal assumptions, create spaces for dialogue and engage in challenging conversations (Sarra et al. 2020).

Peacock et al. (2020) compared teacher and parent attitudes towards Indigenous student completions of secondary school. This investigation drew on the *Longitudinal Study of Indigenous Children*. Of concern was their finding that the results suggested that while parents maintained high expectations of their children, teacher's expectations declined significantly over secondary school. Their paper concludes with the suggestion that it is important for teachers and parents to develop relationships and better communication between each other. To confront the lowered expectations that teachers have, Peacock et al. suggest improvements in school systems and teacher professional learning. This learning will help to create an educational environment where teachers confront unconscious biases they may have which lead to lower expectations of Indigenous students.

Kaye Price appeals to every graduate teacher:

What we, as Indigenous people, ask of you as teachers of our children is to have high expectations and demonstrate your belief that they can and will succeed. We ask you to honour our cultures, languages and world views; to commit to including things Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander in the curriculum; to share good practices with each other and the wider community. We ask you to acknowledge that you may have limited knowledge about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and to develop partnerships with those who know more; to increase parent and caregiver participation within the school; and – critically – to assess the outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students as a key performance indicator of your teaching program and your teaching (Price, 2012, p. 178).

Quality Relationships

All good pedagogy is based on quality relationships. Bishop et al. (2007) describe a relational pedagogy evidenced by Māori students having success when their teachers focus on placing the learner in the centre of their teaching. Martin (2008) identifies the importance of connecting ways of knowing, being and doing and by putting students at the centre of a learning experience where their knowledges are linked ontologically to their experience. Sarra (2020) reminds us that, 'students are far more likely to challenge themselves when they believe their teachers care about them as human beings and believe in their potential' (p. 40).

Diversity as an Asset

Space must be created in the... minds, hearts, and hands of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people if we are to ever eliminate the challenge of Indigenous engagement in schooling (Gorringe, 2011, p. 34)

Re-framing student diversity as a strength and asset in the classroom context is a key pedagogic practice. When diversity is positioned as a strength, teachers can design lessons which are based on the wealth of resources that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students bring to the classroom. This is more than simply including everyone but teaching from a space where diversity is valued for its own sake. This aligns with strength-based approaches to learning where teachers welcome resources that students bring to the classroom. Strength-based approaches assume that children are already active learners before they come to school, and that what they have learned from their family is valuable. Fogarty et al. (2018) identified that 'strength-based approaches to pedagogy recognise 'the capacities and abilities that Indigenous learners bring to the classroom, rather than focusing on reductive deficit discourses and

narratives of lack that currently dominate policy settings' (p. 192). When students are encouraged to bring their cultural identity to school, which includes understandings of language and culture, this creates a sense of belonging that informs learning across the curriculum. Shay (2017) identifies that the flexi school system provides opportunities to build on students' strengths in ways that are more open than what is traditionally offered in mainstream schooling. To support teachers working with student diversity both the school structure and the teacher's own agency benefit from extra supports.

Gale, Mills and Cross (2017) describe the importance of maintaining connection to the dominant whilst simultaneously valuing diversity as a classroom asset. They call for teachers to have the valuing of diversity as a deep belief in order to build a socially inclusive pedagogy, reminding that 'this must be done while also providing access to, and enabling critical engagement with, dominance' (p. 7). In the context of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education this dominance includes understandings of sovereignty and the need to uphold Indigenous rights. An examination of Indigenous recognition comes from a different perspective from inclusive education. When Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are part of inclusion agendas, their sovereign rights seldom travel with them. The sovereign rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be the foundation of the whole school system. Recognition of Country in which the schools are located should not be bounded by agendas of inclusion, they should come after this recognition. It is important that we prepare Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students for whatever field of endeavour they choose to enter.

Connection to Students' Life Worlds

Connecting new learning to students' prior knowledge is a tenet of successful teaching as teachers scaffold learning from the known to the unknown (Vygotsky, 1978). Effective pedagogies both connect and extend students, as students are stretched beyond their life worlds in educative ways (Wrigley, Lingard & Thomson, 2012).

Connecting to students' life worlds requires the development of professional relationships with them. Craven (2011) suggests that teachers of Indigenous students should have 'not only a sound understanding of learning theory but an intimate knowledge of the learners, including their prior experiences, home background within a cultural, social and environmental setting, and preferred learning styles' (p. 290). This can also be achieved through individual learning plans. The Victorian Department of Education and Training have incorporated Individual Education Plans in their ten-year education plan for Aboriginal students (Department of Education and Training, 2016). The plans document individual students' learning and provide a mechanism for teachers, students and caregivers to come together to discuss the child/young person's learning.

Socio-Political Consciousness

Developing a socio-political consciousness is integral to Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP). Ladson-Billings (2014), who framed CRP in 1995, laments that in many schools CRP has become devoid of a socio-political consciousness. 'The idea that adding some books about people of color, having a classroom Kwanzaa celebration,

or posting “diverse” images makes one “culturally relevant” seem to be what the pedagogy has been reduced to’ (p. 82). In her review of the ways in which CRP has been used, she suggests CRP is “remixed” to “culturally sustaining pedagogy” (Paris, 2012). This approach pays heed to the actual structures in place in classrooms—connecting with students through their culture is not enough, particularly when the relationships, and what Ladson-Billings (2014) describes as being used to ‘hook students only to draw them back into the same old hegemonic, hierarchical structures’ (p. 82). She also points to work (in the US context) with First Nations students that has reframed CRP into ‘culturally revitalizing pedagogy’ (McCarty & Lee, 2014). McCarty and Lee research the socio-political consciousness work at two plurilingual schools with the ‘the desire to heal forced linguistic wounds and convey important cultural and linguistic knowledge to future generations [anchoring] the school curriculum and pedagogy’ (p. 117). They acknowledge that teachers enter an emotional space when they do socio-political consciousness teaching. This often involves ‘love, loss, empathy, compassion, and pain ... as they confront personal histories of linguistic shame and exclusion and attempt to reconcile those histories with the goals of emancipatory practice’ (p. 117). As teachers do this work, they liberate Indigenous students from stereotypes of social futures bound by essentialist cultural identities, to workforce participation in areas where Indigenous Australians are under-represented.

Teacher Agency

Priestley, Biesta & Robinson (2015) reconceptualise agency as an ‘emergent phenomenon – as something that is achieved by individuals, through the interplay of personal capacities and the resources, affordances and constraints of the environment by means of which individuals act’ (p. 19). Lowe et al. (2019) worked with the concept of the importance of “Professional Learning” in the original diagram that they built from their literature review. For teachers to develop a deeper understanding of student success, we have developed this into “Teacher Agency”. The Literature Review team made this choice based on the CET support for schools working with communities to develop site-based programs to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. In the framing of this work, the CET is providing the space for individuals to work in communion with each other to support success and develop their professional knowledge as a team. Agency involves intentionality and the possibilities of enactment and exercising of choice (Priestley et al., 2015). Teacher agency takes into account the local arrangements that contextualise each teacher’s professional learning and is enabling of enactment. Nevertheless, the research on teacher professional learning around Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students provides some important directions for schools aiming to improve student success.

Building Teachers’ Cultural Awareness

There is evidence that professional learning for teachers around the impact of racism and cultural awareness has a positive impact on student learning. Vass et al. (2019) argue that ‘more explicit and concerted inclusion of building cultural awareness and anti-racism dimensions into professional learning are required if meaningful improvement is to be achieved in the delivery of services such as a good quality education for Indigenous learners’ (p. 357). Teachers need opportunities to engage in learning that positions them as teacher-allies in the learning they do from members of

the Indigenous community to generate pedagogical transformations in their practice (Ritchie, 2012). Professional learning opportunities can be embedded in projects that seek to develop Indigenous governance and respectful community relationships.

Unpacking Dispositions to Develop Trustworthiness

A review of AITSL standards 1.4 and 2.4 found that teachers did not understand why they should take a responsibility to access professional learning opportunities that seek to improve their professional knowledge and skills in teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (Ma Rhea et al., 2012). The researchers argue that teachers should approach professional learning as part of their commitment to a rights-based approach to their teaching in the interest of developing trustworthiness with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their families. Teaching practices for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students will improve when teachers know how to practice their craft of engaging students in the curriculum and also why they are doing it.

Moreover, a stronger presence of Indigenous epistemologies/methodologies, when coupled with the genuine involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers in professional learning research is associated with improved outcomes in terms of both the learning of the educators and the students in their classrooms. This is because issues to do with power, interculturality and race are more likely to be meaningfully addressed in both the professional learning and the research practices (Vass et al., 2019, p.358). Improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learning opportunities can be a site of teacher agency that is interlaced with ways of engaging students in the curriculum while providing teachers with an experience that can reposition them on the structural inequalities, such as racism and stereotyping, prevalent in Australian society.

Purposeful Understandings of Literacy

"Literacy" is a frequent measure used by systems to determine school success. We have reworked this to "Purposeful Understandings of Literacy", positioning the framing of literacy as shifting beyond easily measured skills and capacities to thinking through literacy practices as purposeful and embedded in broader social goals and practices (Barton & Hamilton, 1998, p. 8).

Understanding the Histories of Language in Tasmania

In Australia literacy is almost always perceived and conducted in "English", and is part of the subject English (rather than the subject title of "Language Arts" which is often used in North America. Before the invasion and colonisation of Australia there were many different nations and more than 250 different languages (including 800 dialectal variations). In their Handbook of Australian Languages, Crowley and Dixon (1981) identify that the exact number of languages spoken in Tasmania before colonisation is hard to calculate. This is due to the scant documentation of the languages spoken in Tasmania happening amidst the attempted genocide and introduced diseases after invasion.

Negotiating Literacy Policy

Literacy pedagogy is embroiled in political debates around best practice in teaching. Literacy is often the site of bitter and divisive arguments between different ideological standpoints. In their analysis of literacy education policy for Indigenous Australians, Fogarty et al. (2018) describe the ways in which literacy becomes a symbolic site of contestation:

Literacy programs form a crucial component of Indigenous education; however, approaches to literacy education are not developed in a vacuum. Practitioners and researchers working in Indigenous education soon come to realise it is a politically fraught and controversial space at the sharp end of debates. Beyond the day-to-day practice and pedagogy of literacy education at the 'chalkface', is a broader symbolic domain in which Indigenous education is connected to highly contested issues of socioeconomic development, Indigenous identity, social justice and good governance (p. 185).

Literacy Pluralism

One way around these contested approaches to literacy is to be more plural and inclusive of the different approaches that claim to achieve student success. This plural approach to literacy has been previously highlighted in our initial framing of this document and underpins the *Four Resources Model of Literacy*. Luke and Freebody (1999), developers of this model, wrote:

The key concept in the model is, necessity and not sufficiency – each one is necessary for literacy in new conditions, but in and of themselves, none of the four families of practice is sufficient for literate citizens/ subjects. (p. 7).

Through a historical analysis, Luke and Freebody (1999) argue that literacy refers to a 'malleable set of cultural practices that are shaped and reshaped by different, often competing social and cultural interests' (p. 5). To develop and maintain an understanding of texts, they proposed a model that outlines four roles of literacy to develop and maintain an understanding of texts (Freebody & Luke, 1990). These roles are outlined below in Table 1.

Table 1: Four Roles of the Reader from (Freebody, 2007)

Role's Name	Focus	Examples
	Knowing about and using the nature and contents of the relationship of spoken sounds in the language to the graphic symbols used to	Sound-letter correspondences, phonemes relevant to English, punctuation, decoding the elements and structural

Code-breaker	represent those sounds, and basic visual aspects of textual formatting	compositions of pictures and graphic displays, hotlinks on web pages
Text-participant	Knowing about and using the meaning patterns operating in the written texts, participating in the ongoing construction of the text's meaning as a collection of propositions	Participating in the stated and unstated patterns of information that hold the text together, including vocabulary knowledge, and capitalising on syntactic knowledge to build a representation of the significance and implications of a text
Test-user	Knowing about and using the social and cultural functions of various kinds of reading and writing practices, building into a repertoire of purposeful and effective communications	The form–function relationships of various genres and the sociocultural, positional expectations associated with different kinds of written and visual communications
Text-analyst	Knowing about and using the cultural and ideological bases on which texts are written and put to use to mobilise opinion and standardise interpretation	How texts differentially position readers, and how they use various sociocultural categories, evident in linguistic and visual media, to constrain interpretation and influence the reader

The table above illustrates the ways in which the four roles of the reader work together, and every person needs to access all of these practices to fully understand and engage with the texts that they read.

The case studies demonstrate where Aboriginal and Torres Strait student successes have been achieved in literacy and these successes can be backwardly mapped onto these roles. It is important to note that literacy approaches that work across the range of roles to develop the full repertoire of practices for students enable students to achieve not only basic literacy skills, but to be able to move into further studies and higher education. For students to have full civic and personal social futures realised, they need access to a plurality of practices that can be applied across different social and textual contexts (New London Group, 1996).

In previous sections of this review, we have identified the need for teachers to act professionally and make contextual education judgements. Some of the programmatic packaged pedagogical models of literacy don't allow for contextual professional judgements for student differentiation to be made (Gannaway, 2019). If every student is to be treated individually, professional conversations around the relative merits of standardised literacy programs and practices should be had. These plural approaches recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander success requires teachers to have the ability to critique programmatic approaches to literacy that seem to be a silver bullet.

Purposeful Understandings of Numeracy

Numeracy is a foundational component of school education. At its most basic, '... to be numerate is to use mathematics effectively to meet the general demands of life at home, in paid work, and for participation in community and civic life.' (AAMT, 1997, p. 10). The Australian Curriculum definition also includes 'students recognising and understanding the role of mathematics in the world and having the dispositions and capacities to use mathematical knowledge and skills purposefully' (ACARA, 2017). Others authors have expanded this further, noting that numeracy underpins formal mathematics, and this in turn is an important foundation needed for innovation in the 21st century (e.g. Brown, Watson, Beswick & Fitzallen, 2006). This expansive definition is very helpful when designing authentic and meaningful numeracy activities in the classroom.

In 2000, the Federal Government released a position paper, *Numeracy, A Priority for All: Challenges for Australian Schools* (DETYA, 2000), that sparked a large number of projects that investigated effective strategies for teaching and learning of numeracy. This has included specific attention on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (e.g. *Make It Count*), as well as projects focussed on early and middle years, and state-based projects. In addition to this later work, that of Frigo (1999) continues to be valuable. These evidence-based projects provide teachers with key strategies for effective teaching that can be applied in classrooms.

Create an Aspirational, Inclusive and Supportive Environment for Learning Numeracy

An environment with high expectations, and support for students to achieve them, is fundamental to productive learning. This provides opportunity for safe exploration of new concepts, of appropriate challenge, and accepts the need to 'try, fail and try again' as a natural part of the learning process. Frigo advocates for 'a supportive environment in which Indigenous students feel confident as learners and risk-takers' (1999, p. 1).

An important component of any numeracy program is to understand that there are multiple ways in which a problem can be approached and solved. Each approach is equally valid, and allows students to construct the knowledge in ways that are meaningful to them. The Threshold Concept literature (Meyer & Land, 2005) advocates for new, previously inaccessible concepts to be accessed through an exploration of

multiple approaches such as: working with peers, explaining thinking and using active/hands-on strategies to work through problems (Olaniyi, 2020; Thornton, 2020). Opportunities for supported practice of numeracy should be purposefully designed. Consideration of setting practice for homework needs to be balanced with a full understanding of the potential impacts of students experiencing difficulty without support being available.

Build the Language of Numeracy and Numerical Thinking

'Early literacy skills are intertwined with the acquisition of early numeracy skills, particularly at the informal numeracy and numeral knowledge phases'. (Purpura, & Napoli, 2015, p. 197).

Language is important in numeracy and mathematics, not only through the discipline specific terminology, but the importance of being able to explain numerical thinking and explore numerical ideas. The work on developing these skills should start early. A foundation for numeracy and mathematics, 'Count, Group and Compare', is one of the key concepts identified in 'The Basics' (Boston Basics, 2020). These five parenting/caregiver behaviours designed through research to give children the best possible start in life (The Basics Tasmania, 2019). This builds early mathematical language and introduces natural discussion of mathematical concepts such as: bigger, smaller, more, less.

It is critical to recognise the importance of language, in concert with numbers and symbols, in designing learning experiences. From Frigo's work with Indigenous students, she also notes that the language required for mathematics learning 'can be a very complex issue for Indigenous students, given their diverse backgrounds and language needs' (1999, p. 1). She contends that mathematics classrooms should encompass 'positive, non-threatening, language-rich environments' (p. 1).

Language can be used to explain mathematical thinking very productively in the classroom to explore concepts, solve problems, and for the teacher to uncover areas of misconception or confusion (e.g. Stacey, 2006).

Use a Range of Strategies to Engage Students in Learning and Exploring Concepts

The need to employ a range of strategies to meet the learning needs of a diverse range of students is well established, and this is of particular relevance to Indigenous students (DEST, n.d., Frigo, 1990). However, it is important that teachers feel confident to draw on and implement a range of strategies that can respond to student need and interest, whilst being clearly linked to learning goals. This will include the need for differentiation within the classroom, and provision of appropriate challenge (Sullivan, 2011). Opportunities for professional learning and collaborative planning can assist in innovation of teaching (and assessment) practice.

The use of open-ended questions and problems, and mathematical inquiry can be powerful in achieving these aims. The reSolve materials produced by the Australian Academy of Science and the Australian Association of Mathematics Teachers promote

'structured and purposeful investigations of mathematical and realistic contexts'. This project is based on three principles of excellent maths teaching; that tasks are purposeful; they are inclusive and challenging and classrooms have a knowledge-building culture (AAS, 2020).

Developing meaningful and productive relationships between the students and community can achieve the purposes of making the knowledge of Elders available to young people and enabling young people to strengthen their cultural identity. Matthews (2012) describes successful work that has used this strategy of working with Elders. He identifies the need to adequately resource this, noting the long hours of work that community members do in such programs both inside and outside of school hours and the tendency to assume that this is unpaid work.

Connect in Meaningful Ways

Connections to everyday life, and across the curriculum, should be integral to the teaching and learning of numeracy, not merely a vehicle to encourage engagement. To this end, the importance of numeracy to other areas of the curriculum has been well documented with many useful practical examples that can be drawn upon by teachers (e.g. Goos, Dole & Geiger, 2012; Goos et al, 2015; Sullivan, 2011). Explicit articulation of where numeracy or mathematics aids understanding in other curriculum areas is particularly helpful in building an understanding of the fundamental importance of 'being numerate'.

There are also resources available that have been specifically designed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, connecting to their own familiar contexts. Once again, the work of Tracy Frigo (1999) is notable, however it was importantly accompanied by a clear imperative to ensure that educators of Aboriginal and Torres Strait students are involved thus promoting activities that are truly inclusive and not tokenistic (Frigo, 1999). Sarra et al. (2011) identify that the YUMI Deadly Maths is based on a realisation that mathematics itself is an abstraction from every life. Sarra et al. describe that the usefulness of mathematics is enabling people to solve their problems, which immediately situates it in the local culture and context. It is important that the teaching of mathematics is embedded in the rich and dynamic culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Involve Parents and Carers as Partners

As such an integral component of an education program, numeracy in some ways, is a distant second to literacy. The importance of 'being literate' is not debated, and low literacy levels can be stigmatised, and purposefully hidden. In contrast, lack of achievement in mathematics can often be cast as a 'badge of honour' (Jones, 2019). Negative attitudes towards mathematics, and/or anxiety about mathematics is commonly encountered, and accepted across the community. In particular, parental attitudes can influence both student attitude to, and confidence in, mathematics (Soni & Kumari, 2017).

Parents and caregivers are therefore powerful allies in the teaching of numeracy, if they can provide encouragement, build aspiration and convey the message that numeracy

is important. For Indigenous students, parents can be partners in innovative ways, as described below:

Teachers need to investigate for themselves issues such as:

- How do numeracy issues intersect with their Indigenous students' lives?
- In what contexts do they occur? What sorts of mathematics do they entail?
- What choices or options are made to understand, express and represent the numeracy elements of these situations?
- How do people choose to use mathematics? For what particular purposes is mathematical thinking and representation used?
- What are the processes by which numerate decisions are made?

For these tasks, the help of Indigenous education aides and workers, families and other members of the community and the students themselves is essential. It is one of the many ways of putting some flesh of substance on the bones of an effective partnership.

(DEST, n.d., p. 9)

Connectedness

We have reworked issue of "Remote education" into the support of "connectedness". While the term "remote" is often used in documentation to indicate geographical distance from urban centres and facilities, "remote" describes a Settler perspective of Country, and one that is city-based. If this place is your Country, where you live and belong, it is the centre of your world and not remote to you. CET acknowledges all their schools are on places that always were and always will be Aboriginal Land. The sovereign claims Aboriginal people have to land where these schools are located problematises the Settler terminology of "remote" in the rural locations in Tasmania. Connectedness on the other hand emphasises the supports that help to overcome the factors that underpin disadvantage. Connectedness underpins a notion of Country and symbolic importance of place that locates all knowledge and being from which learning experiences emanate. We have identified the following three aspects of connectedness that lead to student success.

Engaging with Indigenous Knowledge Systems

Respecting the diverse relationships Aboriginal and Torres Islander students have to Indigenous Knowledges provides them with a sense of connectedness to support their learning success. Karen Martin's Quandamooka world view is premised on the relatedness between Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing. Quandamooka is based on a relational ontology where 'connections are restored, relatedness reciprocated and maintained' (Martin & Mirraboopa, 2003, p. 208). She describes the importance of this connectedness.

Relatedness is contextual, and evolves as it is maintained because, or in spite, of relatedness to conditions that are not just physical or spatial

but equally historical, intellectual, emotional, social, and political. Thus, Aboriginal worldviews decree that it is relatedness to these elements, and not the elements in themselves, that holds and affords agency. It is this coming to know the world, to understand relatedness to the elements in that world, and how one is related to these elements underscores Aboriginal worldviews. Thus, creating a community of learners involving Aboriginal students requires the teacher to have a substantive knowledge about the nature of relatedness so as to understand responses, actions, and thinking. Recognition will thus provide the space for Aboriginal students to work in ways that assist them to learn (Martin, 2008, p. 61).

We acknowledge that there are many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander worldviews that are each inclusive of multiple lifeworld identities. Paradies (2016) warns against essentialising Indigeneity to avoid 'imprisoning Indigeneity into a fixed, frozen category of being' (p. 11). Teachers need to be receptive to a range of positions on the connectedness that Martin has outlined above. While there is a range of standpoints on connectedness, Paradies (2016) points out that it is important that teachers distinguish Indigeneity from disadvantage and marginality, and thereby avoid making specific cultural and physical beliefs that can lead to non-Indigenous people constructing dichotomies about Indigenous students.

Enhancing Connectedness through the Formal Curriculum

Since the British colonisation of Australia, Aboriginal students have been significantly disadvantaged by an Anglo-European schooling system that requires them to leave their cultural assets at the school gate. After a decade of collective government failure to 'close the gap' on education outcomes for Indigenous students, urgent work is needed to inform the curriculum and pedagogical reform of state and federal jurisdictions. (Morrison et al., 2019, p. v).

As the gap in educational outcomes is often measured through literacy and numeracy, these discipline areas have become a symbolic representation of the entirety of the curriculum, even though the testing regimes used to measure progress tend to focus on basic skills that do not represent the full disciplines of the Language Arts and Mathematics. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have the right to full success through connectedness to the formal curriculum.

Policies of deficit and disadvantage tend to construct the failure of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students as normal. While the *Closing the Gap* initiative has a strong focus on literacy and numeracy in the curriculum, teachers are charged with the responsibility of connecting the students to all discipline areas of the curriculum. In this way teachers are speaking back to deficits in policies where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are located as the problem rather than the post-colonial structures where the problems originate (Sarra, 2020).

The Australian Curriculum Cross-curriculum Priority Area of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures identifies that 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' family and kinship structures are strong and sophisticated' (No. 8). This is despite the historical attempts to undermine this connectedness between people, culture and place. The priorities also note that, 'The significant contributions of Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in the present and past are acknowledged locally, nationally and globally' (No. 9). This provides a mandate, not just for educating Aboriginal students but supporting future global leaders and leaders in all aspects of work that currently have an under-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Parkinson and Jones (2019) analysed a sample of Aboriginal people's desires and the Australian Curriculum, concluding:

If the Curriculum is to be in a position to respond to the desires and aspirations of Aboriginal people, conservative undertones have to be re-evaluated and replaced by more progressive ideals that take into account the different ontologies and epistemologies of Aboriginal students, and their education needs and values. The complexity of each community must be communicated and recognised, as well as the competing and complimentary discourses parents and carers draw upon to form their aspirations for their children. (Parkinson & Jones, 2019, p. 94).

Enhancing Connectedness through the Informal Curriculum

Connectedness can also be enhanced through the dispositions and orientations of the classroom teachers. Rose (2012) reminds us of the importance of the ways in which teachers' ways of being, their openness and their connection to students send strong messages through the informal curriculum:

It is often not so much what is taught but how it is taught. The cultural markers that young people are exposed to in the classroom, which infuse the environment, are influenced as much by the informal or hidden curriculum, as by the formal one.

The 'informal curriculum' includes the amount of time that the educator gives a particular topic; or non-verbal signs of approval or disapproval; or the cultural background of the teacher who allows only one world view. It includes the practitioner's beliefs about equity meaning to 'treat everyone the same' or 'treat everyone differently – to create a level playing field'. Other cultural markers, which are conceptual dichotomies, include optimism and pessimism, inclusion and exclusion, and issues of identity and ethnicity. It is in the informal curriculum that many perspectives relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues are exchanged (p. 77-78).

Deep cultural awareness and respect on the part of teachers can assist non-Indigenous teachers to connect more deeply with their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

students. Even if a non-Indigenous teacher has no Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in their class, their work through the informal curriculum can have a positive impact on the success of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by creating a space of connectedness that can work to bring more non-Indigenous Australians in as cultural allies. Rose (2012) advises teachers need to develop at least a 'baseline understanding of issues in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity, demography, philosophy, cultures, knowledge and value systems relevant to where you live and teach' (p. 78). Importantly, he highlights that aspects of teachers' own school learning might be incorrect or need to be realigned. This is an important process for educators to undertake, as many of us learnt incorrect "facts" in our own schooling that whitewashed over the massacres and true histories of Australia. Non-Indigenous teachers need to face this personally in order to connect with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and ensure that teachers 'neither covertly nor overtly exhibit any of the by-products of the 'silent apartheid' (p. 78).

Cultural Safety and Well-Being

We have broadened 'racism', identified by Lowe et al. (2019), to supports of "Cultural Safety and Well-Being". As we noted in the introduction to this review, it is important that schools are places of cultural safety as well-being underpins success across discipline areas. To support the cultural safety and well-being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, school programs can focus on healing the legacies of colonisation that have deleterious effects on their student success.

Cultural Safety

Cultural safety marries a positive understanding of individual cultural identity with professional practice. As noted by Bin-Sallik (2003):

Cultural safety extends beyond cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity. It empowers individuals and enables them to contribute to the achievement of positive outcomes. It encompasses a reflection on individual cultural identity and recognition of the impact of personal culture on professional practice. (p. 21)

Typically, Australian schools have been based on models of education that did not recognise the importance of Indigenous Knowledge Systems. As a result, schools were places of cognitive imperialism where Eurocentric thoughts stripped away the Indigenous students' wealth and dignity (Battiste, 2000). This means the timing, spaces and practices in the schools are rarely places of safety for students who bring their Indigenous world view into the classroom.

Culturally safe schools often engage in processes of decolonising space, time, pedagogies and institutional arrangements to make it more inviting for Indigenous students to enter. Safe school environments represent culture in schools in positive ways and recognise the importance of foregrounding Aboriginality identity (Donovan, 2015).

Well-Being

Aboriginal health means not just the physical wellbeing of an individual but refers to the social, emotional and cultural wellbeing of the whole Community in which each individual is able to achieve their full potential as a human being thereby bringing about the total wellbeing of their Community. It is a whole of life view and includes the cyclical concept of life-death-life (National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, 2010, p. 5-6).

Well-being includes aspects of individual health such as physical or psychological health. Wellbeing also involves the interconnections among community, spirituality and Country (Gee et al., 2014; Marrup-Stewart et al., 2019).

The *National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Mental Health and Social and Emotional Wellbeing 2017-2023* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2017) outlines nine guiding principles drawn from previous research examining holistic and whole-of-life approaches to understanding health (see for example: Social Health Reference Group, 2004; Swan & Raphael, 1995). The guiding principles are health as holistic, right to self-determination, cultural understanding, kinship, human rights, racism and stigma, strengths, diversity, and trauma and loss. Not all of these guiding principles will apply equally in every school, but they are useful signposts for supporting wellbeing. These guiding principles align with wellbeing dimensions supported in the research literature.

In their review of school trauma-informed practice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and youth, Miller and Berger (2020) acknowledge that, despite being based in appropriate evidence-based psychological and neuroscientific theory, current Australian research continues to lack evaluative rigour. Research suggests that less than 10% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-oriented wellbeing programs are comprehensively evaluated (Hudson, 2016) and where evaluations are undertaken, many do not include proper measurement (Department of Finance and Deregulation, 2010). Miller and Berger go on to say that 'despite the extensive research that underpins the unique history of trauma and ongoing disadvantage among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, very little research addresses the particular needs of this group of students and their teachers' (p. 43).

In 2020, Dudgeon et al. produced a report for the Australian social service agency Lifeline. The report's focus is adeptly summarised in its title, *Wellbeing and Healing through Connection and Culture*. Importantly for the discussion here, cultural safety and its connection to wellbeing are interlinked and considered inseparable. A robust and positive cultural identity is considered central to developing and sustaining wellbeing (Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care [SNAICC], 2012), particularly in relation to challenges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people face, such as discrimination and racism, in Australian society today (Price & Dalgeish, 2013). This foregrounds the right to self-determination (Dudgeon et al., 2017) and

highlights a necessity to hear from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people about how they conceptualise and experience culture.

The resonant message from research undertaken to date is that, policy and practice remain under development in the area of wellbeing promotion involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people. In their international review of the research literature compiled for Beyond Blue, Bainbridge et al. (2018) found 'no publications that provided best-practice evidence of policies, programs or services that have been effective in improving social and emotional wellbeing for Indigenous people' (p. 7). As such, *the National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Mental Health and Social and Emotional Wellbeing 2017-2023* should be used by schools to inform future ways of working.

Leading Whole School Initiatives

Because "school leadership" often focuses on the specific structural roles in schools, such as Principals and Vice-Principals, and the CET focus is on a whole-of-system approach, we have modified the support to "leading whole-school Initiatives". When we contextualise the leading of school reforms and programs to support student success, everyone in the school can play a leadership role. Indigenous education workers have been found to be integral in leading initiatives that make Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students feel welcome and safe in schools. Whole school initiatives have been identified as successful in bringing about sustained cultural change in schools. School leaders play an important role in setting the tone for student success that is mediated throughout the school where everyone plays a leadership role. We have identified four distinct aspects of leading whole school initiatives for student success.

Unpacking Whiteness

Whiteness is above all a system of imposed normality. Its operation creates pale, blue-eyed winners, and the rest of us. Whiteness goes way beyond skin colour to include language, accent, customs, religion, gender relations...it defines what's seen as normal, and by putting some of us outside that box, allows discrimination and hatred to flourish. And in the nature of the most entrenched ideas, it is invisible to white people themselves. But if you're white, imagine this: you wake to a world where only one in ten Australians are white. The Constitution and all the other laws are written in Bundjalung. The teachers of your children, the shopkeepers, the cops, the bankers, your neighbours, are all black people, who speak English (their second language) poorly if at all. It's a world where most white people are unemployed, there are white ghettos, and where white people who die in custody had it coming. Where "White Studies" is a fringe subject at university, not like the serious studies of History (Indigenous history, that is) and Aboriginal Science. Where whites who succeed are held up as an example to their people, and those who don't are simply confirming the low expectations that

the majority hold for your lot. Where you see faces unlike your own all day every day in positions of power, and you know the jails are full of white criminals and misfits. Where you see what is done daily to white people, and you protest, but where all too often you hear the standard, ingrained, meaningless reply,

"I'm not prejudiced against white people, but..." (Lucashenko, n.d.)

Aboriginal writer, Melissa Lucashenko articulates that the theory known as "whiteness" goes 'way beyond skin colour'. Whiteness refers to the invisible set of entrenched ideas that shape institutions and the way that they serve the marginalised. It is important that leadership sets the agenda for institutional reform by disrupting practices within their schools that reproduce marginalisation.

Identifying Indigenous Education Workers as Leaders

Wilkinson (2019) found that in a strong relationship between an Indigenous Education Worker (IEW) and a non-Indigenous principal that they learnt from each other. The principal developed increased understanding and appreciation of their responsibility to be culturally understanding and to appreciate the important role that IEWs play in supporting student success. The Indigenous education worker increased their self-efficacy and understandings of leadership. Such a positive leadership team addressed racism, supported student belonging to the school, and increased Indigenous parental engagement in the school (See Figure 2).

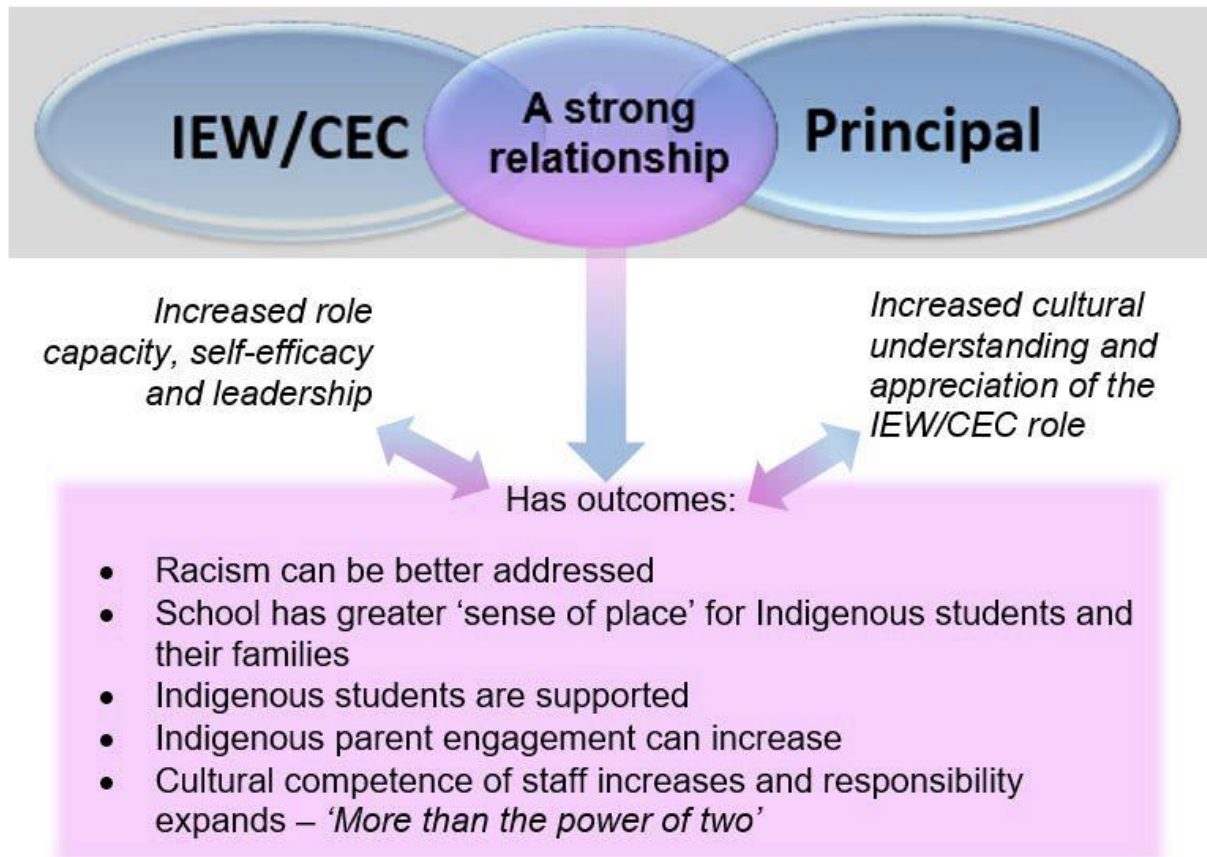


Figure 2: From Wilkinson, 2019, p. 303.

This relationship became what Wilkinson terms 'More than the power of two', focussing on her analysis of the positive outcomes when the Indigenous Education Workers and the principal are considered joint leaders in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander initiatives in the school. The outcomes in Figure 2 are testament to the results of a collaborative leadership strategy. A feature of respectful relationships in school leadership is the growth of this ethic of care by other staff towards the community and students. She describes that:

Over time, as they undertook their work together, more staff were beginning to want to become involved in the work of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education in their schools. This was significant and expanded the IEW/CEC and principal relationship to something as more than the power of the two (p. 302).

Leaders who form genuine partnerships with Indigenous Education Workers not only support student success but build respectful parental relationships with the school community. Leadership of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander initiatives becomes a whole school responsibility where principals are modelling respectful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and the broader community.

Leading with Profound Understanding

School leadership based on respectful relationships with “profound understanding” was found to be highly significant in the successful “What Works Programme”. This program was designed to support schools’ engagement in the planning and execution of programs to improve educational outcomes for Australian Indigenous students. Leading whole school initiatives implicitly includes their methodologies of ‘building awareness, forming partnerships and working systemically’ (National Curriculum Services, 2010, p. 11).

It was evident that school leadership, in particular the principal, performs a critical role in achieving improved Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student outcomes. Each leader’s strategy, emanating from a core belief in her/his students’ learning capacity and valuing their cultural identity, has been to guide, support, direct and sustain improvement in whole-school practice and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student outcomes (National Curriculum Services, 2012, p.17)

A school leader’s understanding of the importance of cultural understanding, respectful relationships and connecting to policy initiatives was integral to the success of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at school.

Leading de-colonisation agendas

School leaders play an important role in supporting teachers to decolonise their practices and cultural biases when teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

School leadership plays a critical role in determining a narrative in schools that inspires self-reflection on individual bias, the historical legacy of colonisation, and cultural hegemony in Australia. For this to occur, teachers must have support mechanisms to allow personal growth, to develop strategies to interrupt negative and incorrect assumptions of Indigenous students and communities, and the capacity to acknowledge they can let go of the perception of being the expert and recognise the expert status of the learner. School and system leaders must be supported to persist with what makes a difference to student outcome’ (Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership [AITSL], 2020, p.19).

School leaders support teachers in their own becoming as they unpack their beliefs and understandings that inform the content they teach to their students.

Curriculum

The curriculum mediates past, present and future ideological agendas associated with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures. Pinar (2012) describes how the school curriculum communicates what we chose to remember about the past, what we believe about the present, what we hope for the future” (p. 30). The curriculum

plays an important role in documenting the kinds of learning we want for young people to realise their aspirations. What we choose to remember about the past is of particular importance to overcome the perpetual amnesia (Martin, 2013) many non-Indigenous Australians have towards Australia's past. In the context of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education, Harrison et al. (2020) note that 'we have at least two quite distinct discourses, one that focuses on outputs and job readiness, and another that privileges active and informed citizenship' (p. 243).

Curriculum is considered to be a factor of student success because it is one of the most powerful texts that informs teacher practice. We use the category of "curriculum" to span from national curriculum documents such as the Australian Curriculum through to curriculum design at a local level. In the Australian context the curriculum is serving two purposes. Firstly, it is realising aspirational goals in Australia's national interests. Secondly, it provides a framework for inclusion for students who have traditionally been marginalised by national interests. The Australian Curriculum cross-curriculum priority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures has the potential of broader impact when teachers and students walk together to recognise the knowledges and ways of learning of the First Peoples of this land as a strong foundation for the entire nation's learning (Verran, 2013). Our reading of the literature identified four ways that curriculum is linked to student outcomes.

Understanding Curriculum as Ideology

The curriculum plays an important part in the current stage of Australia's history in how Indigenous recognition, treaty and reconciliation are negotiated by teachers in the classroom. Green (2018) in his English curriculum investigations raises questions about how knowledge should be taught and why this knowledge? (p. 7). Educators cannot step apart from their ideological positioning to answer these questions. If, as discussed earlier, all Catholic schools in Australia adopted the curriculum suggestions from NATSICC to change the date of Australia Day to the 27th of May, this would have a profound impact on the positioning of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students within the schooling system whilst simultaneously educating non-Indigenous students about the true histories of Australia. The approach the schools take towards celebrating January 26th is symbolic of understanding the ideology behind the current curriculum.

Re-positioning Indigenous Knowledges in the Curriculum

The structure of the Australian curriculum contains a complex cultural interface. Historically the Australian Curriculum was and still is based on settler knowledges. 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures must always inhabit a subordinate position to those disciplines and learning areas that make up the pre-existing framework (Maxwell, 2014, p.71). Indigenous Knowledges and the ontological relationships Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders students have towards people and Country are often fractured in the way knowledge is constructed and mediated through the curriculum.

Critiquing Legacies of Settler Privilege

We found many stories from prominent Indigenous educators where the curriculum contributed to them feeling threatened and disenfranchised as an Indigenous learner

in school (See, for instance the stories at the beginning of each chapter of Price, 2012). Older curriculum materials tend to contain a lot of racist positionings and incorrect facts about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (Price, 2012). When this information is mediated by teachers without critique it contributes to what Marika (1999) calls an 'intellectual terra nullius', where people are not aware of the true histories and rich intellectual tradition in Australia.

Co-Constructing Curriculum with Elders

When curriculum is constructed by Indigenous Elders, there is evidence of engagement and ownership of learning by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Where resources have been made in collaboration with community elders who have control over the process (Price, 2012), this destabilises the white supremacy of the Australian Curriculum (Maxwell, 2014). There are many examples in the literature of research about Learning on Country curriculum that privileges Indigenous knowledge as an embodied relational experience supporting diverse opportunities for student growth and belonging. These are listed in the case studies.

Equality of Access Across the Curriculum

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, the curriculum is more than embedding the cross-curriculum priorities across the learning areas. It is also about access to and engagement with high quality learning opportunities to engage students in future study and workforce participant in jobs and civic roles where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are underrepresented. Rose (2012) also advises strongly against parallelist programs from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students as they are often

short-term, inadequately resourced, ill-conceived and poorly evaluated; more alarmingly, their superficial consultation with the community is generally second rate. Despite the very best intentions, in the law of unforeseen consequences, parallelist programs can exclude Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from core learning activities, making them once again fringe dwellers in the real estate of the classroom (p. 73).

Parallelist programs have been widely critiqued for these reasons in the past, such as former practices in removing students studying English as an Additional Language or students with disabilities from the classrooms. Even though many of these programs are positive in intent, Rose describes that:

Some examples of these parallelist programs can be seen in leadership programs, English literacy programs and other curriculum offerings which cause Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to be rejected from mainstream programs as 'programs for them' exist. This essentially erodes the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to partake of the full range of offerings. (2012, p. 73)

Respect for Country, Culture and Languages

Our title "Respect for Country, Culture and Languages" adds to the original ideas of Lowe et al. (2019) which was 'culture and languages'. Our understanding of respect is grounded in upholding the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. As noted by Morrison et al. (2019), 'Australia has an obligation to uphold the rights of Aboriginal peoples to an education that is culturally and linguistically appropriate and that does not aim at, or result in, involuntary assimilation' (p. 57). Added to this is the obligation to respect Country and place, which is an inherent part of the Australian Curriculum.

A wide diversity exists among Indigenous people just as among non-Indigenous people. Across Australia, differences exist in relationships, links with the land, language, occupations, class and gender (Partington, 1998, p. 2). Some parents and communities might have a powerful desire for a language and culture program while some see the primary purpose of schools is to give access to the dominant discourses of powerful texts and social futures. All parents and caregivers have the right to expect outcomes will be met across all domains of student success. We organise this section of the review around respecting the above four concepts.

Country as a Symbolic Belonging

There is a growing body of research that links Country as a pedagogical concept to teaching all students about Aboriginal histories and cultures, as well as belonging to their Country (Harrison & Skrebneva, 2020). Country is seen as a living entity having more rights than people. 'Country is the basis of Indigenous ideology and it specifically constitutes and is constituted by the relationship between memory, life and culture, which are embedded in land (Country)' (Martin, 2013, p.187). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students will have a range of positions towards their relationships to Country where their school is located. The respect for relationships between Country and the broader school community is symbolic of respectful learning communities in the school.

Keddie (2014) has found the benefits for developing student identities from learning with Elders on Country include 'interactions reflect the collectivity and interconnectedness' (p. 68). The evaluation of the Learning on Country in the Northern Territory has returned the following benefits for students: attendance and retention of students for highly engaged cohorts; pathways to employment; intergenerational transfer of knowledge; and engaging the wider community in schooling but teachers in the program did not always know what Learning on Country was or what it could be (Fogarty, Schwab et al., 2015). This research on the benefits of a place-based curriculum with Indigenous Elders from urban and remote contexts provides convincing evidence for a broader understanding of student success beyond standardised tests results.

There is a growing body of evidence that a deep respect for Country places non-Indigenous Australians on a pathway to decolonising their practice. In his articulation of the cultural invasion of Yuin Country, McKnight (2015) suggests that 'Decolonising' and re-culturalising western 'progressive thought' (human/male centred) through listening to

Mother Earth has the potential to liberate people from colonial intrusions on Aboriginal knowledge, ways of knowing and learning (p. 287).

Culture as an Interface

Indigenous educators warn strongly against essentialising the culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Nakata (2012) identifies the brutality in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture has been/is invaded by settler Australians, and the ways policies do not acknowledge the politics of this dispossession:

We didn't just lose our culture. It was taken from us very aggressively. By westerners. Could I suggest that such a description (of policy) of Aboriginal and Islander cultures tends to fudge the brutality of the same colonial process that now seeks to disguise its interventions behind a cloak of apolitical, scientific, culturally unbiased liberalism?
(p. 90).

Nakata's idea of cultural interface is premised on contested knowledge spaces that work off different understandings of knowing and being in the world. He writes that:

We participate in these ways of viewing, being, and acting in the world, often in quite contradictory, ambiguous, or ambivalent ways. We subscribe with varying degrees of commitment, both in time and space, to various positions depending on the moment, depending on what experiences, capacities, resources, and discourses we have to draw on, according to what is at stake for us, or our family, or our community, and so on, and according to past experiences, current realities, aspirations, and imagined futures. (Nakata, 2007, p. 10)

This means that the ways of understanding knowledge through both Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge systems simultaneously are often difficult for non-Indigenous teachers to understand. On the other hand, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to be successful it is assumed that they understand the inconsistencies and paradoxes between knowledge systems. Research identifies the importance of strong role models to scaffold learning and cultural identities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at school (Sarra et al., 2020).

Respect for palawa kani

Tasmanian Aborigines did not grow up speaking our language as a first language – there is no shame in that. As a consequence of the devastating impacts of invasion and colonisation on every aspect of our lives, we have had to deliberately and arduously restore our language to its spoken life. After two decades, Aboriginal people of all ages can now speak palawa kani, the language of Tasmanian Aborigines, and children learn it from an early age.

Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre (Nd. palawa kani, the only Aboriginal language in lutruwita today).

The Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre (TAC) has done extensive work on Tasmanian Aboriginal language. The original Tasmania languages were decimated through the colonial violence towards the Aboriginal people. TAC writes:

Between 8 and 16 separate languages could have been spoken here originally; we will never really know. Some tribes had been wiped out by contact sicknesses even before full scale invasion and the languages continued to die away with the people.

There are no living speakers of the original Tasmanian languages and spoken records of the original sounds are limited to a few sounds (that can only just be heard) which were spoken by Fanny Cochrane Smith on the 1899 record on which she sang traditional songs.

palawa kani means 'Tasmanian Aborigines speak', and the ownership and use of this language is governed by the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre in lutruwita (Tasmania) today. palawa kani uses word lists and recordings languages in Tasmania before colonisation to reconstruct the language through 'a rigorous process by which linguists and language workers recover the original sounds and meanings of the words of a language from all the recorded versions of the words' (Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre n.d., para, 19). The languages from across Tasmania and adjacent channel islands were all consolidated into the one language:

Participants in community workshops of 1993 and 1994 understood that the remnants of each of the original languages were not enough to revive any single one of them, but that one language could be retrieved from the records of them all. This mirrored the way in which the families of the survivors of the invasion, from wherever they all now lived throughout Tasmania, had since coalesced into one statewide Aboriginal community; and the language remembered in families from both the Bass Strait Islands and Channel areas also shows that a 'mix' of words from several original languages had been used from at least the start of Robinson's 'Mission' and then throughout the Wybalenna period. (Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre, n.d., para 19).

The construction and utilisation of palawa kani is one element of a broader cultural politic working to strengthen the status, authenticity, and presence of the Tasmanian Aboriginal people (Berk, 2017). The Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre have developed a protocol for use of the language. They encourage place names to be used widely and teachers are invited to use these in schools. Australia Post is promoting people to use the local Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander place name in addressing letters across Australia.

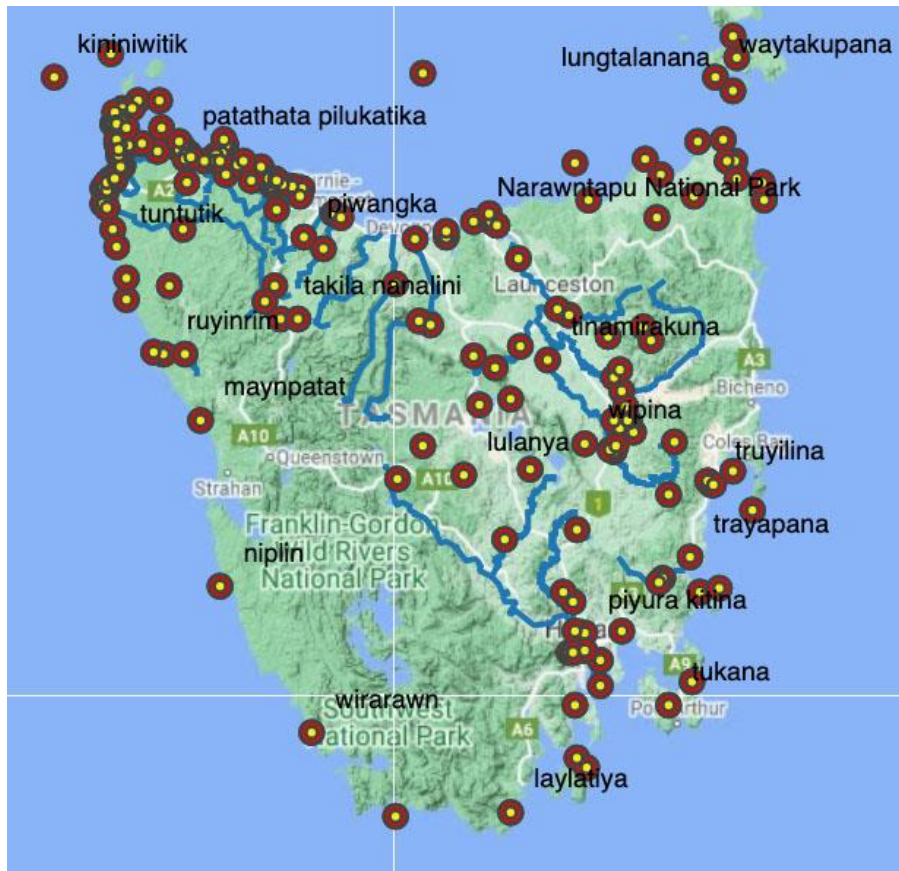


Figure 3: palawa kani place names (Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre, nd).

Outstanding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Literature

English has become a global language through both colonisation and the resultant situation where speaking and writing English enables access to power and social success (Crystal, 2003). There is a strong traditional of high-quality Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander writing across all literary forms and contemporary Australian literature has a significant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander presence. For instance, Australia's most prestigious literary prize, the Miles Franklin Award, has been won by Indigenous authors: Kim Scott in 2000 for *Benang: From the Heart* and again in 2011 for *That Deadman Dance*, Alexis Wright in 2007 for *Carpentaria*, Melissa Lucashenko for *Too Much Lip* in 2019, and Tara Jane Winch for *The Yield* in 2020. Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders students to develop an enhanced repertoire of linguistic skills in the language of power, English, also enables these children and young people to become more powerful outside school. Studying Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander writers in school normalises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander literary excellence in the student population.

In Australian schools more and more Indigenous authors are being studied. There are many successful Aboriginal writers who have written outstanding work for study, including these prize-winning authors. Of particular note in recent years is the text, *Growing up Aboriginal in Australia* (Heiss, 2018) which has been taken up in many secondary schools because of the highly literary and compelling coming of age stories

from inspiring Indigenous people who provide excellent role models for all young people in Australia.

Conclusions

In this review we have described ten supports that lead to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student success at school. These supports are based upon broad definitions of success. Six themes emerged from this review, where the ten supports are seen as interconnected.

Recognition of the Sovereign Rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People

Prime Minister Paul Keating recognised in his Redfern Speech (1992) that problems associated with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples start with non-Aboriginal Australians. He stated:

It begins, I think, with the act of recognition. Recognition that it was we who did the dispossessing. We took the traditional lands and smashed the traditional way of life. We brought the diseases. The alcohol. We committed the murders. We took the children from their mothers. We practised discrimination and exclusion.

It was our ignorance and our prejudice. And our failure to imagine these things being done to us. With some noble exceptions, we failed to make the most basic human response and enter into their hearts and minds. We failed to ask - how would I feel if this were done to me?"

Teachers are charged with the complex task of bridging the sovereign rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with educational opportunities that will empower everyone to end the legacies of colonisation.

A Plural Understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student Identity

The literature described in the ten supports is based upon a strong understanding that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students bring multiple identities to the classroom. All students have the right not to be stereotypes or boxed into identities they should perform or aspire to, by teachers. Through dialogue with their caregivers and engaging student voice, teachers can come to know each individual student's strength that leads to student success.

Complexity and Paradoxes

Throughout the literature review we have described practices that may appear to be paradoxical. Some practices may appear to colonise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students into the dominant ways of institutional power. While reconciliation is unfinished business, Indigenous knowledges struggle to hold currency in institutional practices. There is a paradox for students to understand and enact the dominant discourses that, by design, marginalise Indigenous knowledges. Parents and caregivers may see diverse purposes in school which would see teachers working across these

paradoxes in their classroom. The work of upholding high expectations across diverse purposes of schooling is complex.

Re-Contextualising Success from Elsewhere

After reading the literature review teachers might question the relevance of research from elsewhere to their particular school. While this literature review acknowledges the importance of local contexts and work with local people, an important aspect of successful teacher practice is recontextualising successes from contexts beyond their school for their individual classroom. This involves making professional judgements on their feet as they work in the moment, in a dynamic way with their class. Schön (1983) describes this as "reflection-in-action" (p. 61). Successful teachers take time to reflect on their work (reflection-on-action). Engaging with research that describes success beyond their own situation can enable teachers to extend their repertoire of practices and make choices that are informed by previous successes. The literature review contains many stories where teachers are in dialogue with other teachers and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in enacting their aspirations for their children. These relationships inform the recontextualisation from which good pedagogy emerges.

Difficult Dialogues

Nakata (2017) coined the term "difficult dialogues" after reflecting on his experiences in analysing programs that educate predominantly non-Indigenous pre-service teachers about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures in a higher education context. He writes:

We will continue to imprison our own emancipation agendas if we do not open up the space for the difficult dialogue vitally needed to get us to another place, to a fresh beginning, to a reinvigorated Indigenous standpoint for recalibrating a fresh approach to liberating ourselves from colonial predicaments (p. 7).

Student success depends upon teachers taking up the challenge to negotiate the 'complex convergences of Indigenous and Western systems of thought and understanding to take future scholarship forward' (p. 7). In order to liberate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from colonial legacies, difficult dialogues are needed in education so that non-Indigenous teachers can decolonise their teaching practice. Teacher agency is related to how willing teachers are to engage in these complex convergences as much as it is about students having the opportunity to critically negotiate these.

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