Aboriginal Education Strategy
2019-2029

CONSULTATION DRAFT
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This is a 10-year strategy guided by our vision and the principles essential for Aboriginal children and young people to achieve growth and success. The document outlines the goals and objectives, the department has committed to delivering. It will be supported by a strong action plan and an implementation framework to ensure success into the future. Building a confident and capable, culturally inclusive workforce is essential to the success of this strategy.

**Vision**

Each Aboriginal child and young person is a proud and confident learner, and achieves at their highest potential

**Principles**

These principles will guide the implementation of this strategy across our schools, preschools, children’s centres and services across South Australia. We will be courageous, innovative and focused in implementing new initiatives informed by, and co-designed with Aboriginal people.

1. **Highest expectations** – We will have the highest expectations for Aboriginal children and young people’s achievement.
2. **Accessibility and responsiveness** – We will create culturally safe and inclusive learning environments. Our staff will help identify opportunities for growth and respond to the barriers for Aboriginal children and young people.
3. **Culture and identity** – We will acknowledge and value Aboriginal knowledge, wisdom and expertise, including that of our existing Aboriginal staff, and adopt local approaches to teaching histories, cultures and language.
4. **Community engagement** – We will hear, seek and respect Aboriginal voices and encourage parent, carer, family and community participation in our services.
5. **Accountability** – We will be transparent and accountable for improved outcomes and use allocated resources to achieve growth and development for Aboriginal children and young people.

Note: We use the term ‘Aboriginal’ to refer to people who identify as Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, or both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. This term is preferred by Aboriginal South Australians and the department.
Strong identity, high achievement, positive futures: our approach

The strategy promotes a child-centered approach to learning, which considers how a child's development is affected by their social relationships and the world around them.¹

Through culturally responsive service delivery and teaching to the strengths of the child, cultural knowledge, experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles make learning outcomes more relevant to and effective for Aboriginal children.²

The diagram signifies the Aboriginal child surrounded by the essential elements for a successful educational journey. The child is strengthened by their family, culture, language, identity and belonging. The child is supported by the strength of family and community and the influence of leaders and educators (including teachers and early childhood educators). They influence the child's learning experiences, demonstrated by the child's learning success in the early years, throughout schooling and into future pathways.

Understanding the landscape

Aboriginal people are the First Australians and have the oldest continuing cultures in human history. South Australia is home to more than 50 Aboriginal language groups, each with distinct beliefs and cultural practices. Aboriginal people have the right to access education that respects and promotes their right to enjoy and express their own culture and use their own language.3

The Australian Curriculum recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures as a cross-curriculum priority, and that learning in this area benefits both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.4

There are approximately 11,000 Aboriginal children and young people across our schools and preschools, and 20% of these children have a verifiable disability.5 Aboriginal South Australians are a young and growing population, with about a third aged between 0 and 14 years. Approximately half of Aboriginal South Australians live in metropolitan Adelaide.

Education is a compelling social determinant of health and future life expectancy for Aboriginal people.6 Aboriginal children and young people have made significant gains in some areas over recent years, but there is more work to be done to ensure every Aboriginal South Australian can enjoy the lifelong benefits of a quality education.

The first 1000 days of a child’s life is a unique opportunity to develop the foundation of optimal health, growth and development. Increasing access to quality early childhood learning and development services for all Aboriginal children is essential.

Preschool attendance affects how ready children are to transition to primary school. Nearly 100% of Aboriginal 3 and 4-year-old children are enrolled in preschool,7 however attendance is not high. Developmental vulnerability in any area is a strong predictor of future school and wellbeing outcomes. Australian Early Development Census data indicates that nearly half of Aboriginal children in their first year of school were vulnerable in 1 or more areas measured.

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3 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Article 14 and the Coolangatta Statement, 6 August 1999
6 Education is a social determinant of health and future life expectancy. Department for Health, The Social Determinants of Health, June 2013
7 Department for Education Term 3 Preschool Data Collection, Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2014, ‘Estimates and Projections, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians,’ 2001 to 2026, cat. no. 3238.0
The school years are a critical time to develop quality teacher and student relationships and to engage with families and communities to support student learning, school transitions and participation.

Student retention rates to year 12 and the completion of the South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE) are improving. The number of Aboriginal students completing their SACE has increased from 238 in 2013 to 386 in 2017.

As of 2017, the year 8 to 12 student retention rate for Aboriginal students was 65% compared with 50% in 2013, which shows that more Aboriginal people are remaining at school until year 12. The downside however, is that 35% of Aboriginal young people left school early and therefore were not in a position to complete their SACE.\(^8\)

While Aboriginal employees represent 2.5% of the department’s workforce, the proportion of Aboriginal people who are teachers and leaders is lower. This is another area for us to focus our efforts.

This strategy is about sharpening our focus to ensure all Aboriginal children and young people are successful learners and highly skilled for their future.

\(^8\) Attendance Strategy for Government Preschools and Schools 2017 to 2020 (South Australia)
How this strategy is structured

The strategy follows the child’s life journey. Our goals expand across the early years, into schooling and are followed by pathways to success beyond school. The strategy highlights the importance of empowering parents, carers, family and community, as well as being a culturally responsive organisation that supports Aboriginal children and young peoples’ education and development.

Regular attendance at preschool and school is essential to building a good life. By achieving our goals and strengthening our enablers, we will lift school attendance for Aboriginal children and young people.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GOALS</th>
<th>OBJECTIVES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal children develop foundations for success in the early years</td>
<td>• Health and developmental services are provided to Aboriginal children and families in accessible and culturally welcoming locations. • Aboriginal children access and participate in quality early childhood learning and care. • Aboriginal children and their families have in place the foundations for learning as they transition from early childhood services to school. • Aboriginal families and communities are active participants in the governance of child and parent centres.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal children and young people excel at school</td>
<td>• Aboriginal children achieve growth in their learning, including literacy and numeracy skills at or above their year appropriate level. • The curriculum is reflective of the identity, language and culture of Aboriginal peoples. • Pedagogy is culturally responsive through a student-centred approach to teaching. • Comprehensive, quality learning plans are developed to support student achievement and transitions through engagement and discussion with schools, families and Aboriginal children and young people. • Aboriginal children and young people demonstrate Aboriginal cultural pride and knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal young people on pathways to success</td>
<td>• Aboriginal young people engage with, participate and achieve in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) as potential pathways to industries of the future. • Aboriginal young people are supported to make successful transitions to educational and employment pathways, through relationships between education providers, industry and Aboriginal communities. • Aboriginal young people successfully complete their South Australian Certificate of Education and/or vocational education qualifications. • Aboriginal young people develop their cultural identity, knowledge, experience, life skills, confidence and resilience necessary to transition from school into future pathways.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Goal – Aboriginal children develop foundations for success in the early years

We will work together with parents and community to provide Aboriginal children with quality learning and development experiences, enabling a strong foundation for the transition to school.

A child’s earliest environment, learning and development experiences are critical to the way in which a child’s brain develops. Nurturing, support and growth in the early years are important for Aboriginal children to develop the foundations for success in education, work and life.

Positive gains made in the early years will have lasting developmental and educational benefits. Research has shown that Aboriginal children who attend preschool for at least 1 or more years are better able to successfully transition to and achieve better results at school than those who did not attend.

We are committed to supporting access to high-quality early childhood education and care experiences for Aboriginal children and their families which are culturally appropriate, holistic and build upon the strengths of Aboriginal cultures. These experiences will be complemented by supporting and engaging families in their child’s learning and development planning.

Objectives

1. Health and developmental services are provided to Aboriginal children and families in accessible and culturally welcoming locations.

2. Aboriginal children access and participate in culturally informed quality early childhood learning and care.

3. Aboriginal children and their families have in place the foundations for learning as they transition from early childhood services to school.

4. Aboriginal families and communities are active participants in the governance of child and family centres.

10-year goal

Aboriginal children’s skills in language, cognition, emotional, social and communication skills and overall health and wellbeing support them to succeed in their first year of schooling.
Goal – Aboriginal children and young people excel at school

Aboriginal children and young people are culturally secure, successful learners and have the essential skills in literacy, numeracy, creativity and innovation ready for their future.

Literacy and numeracy skills are a foundation for every child and young person’s ability to engage across the curriculum. Together with social and communication skills, these provide the basis for successful engagement both within and outside the school community.

Identity, belonging, culture and history are a source of strength and resilience for Aboriginal people. A strong, culturally appropriate education helps keep culture strong and enhances learning and participation.

We will have high expectations of Aboriginal children and young people and through teaching to each student’s unique strengths we will promote achievement and increased wellbeing.

Objectives

1. Aboriginal children achieve growth in their learning, including literacy and numeracy skills at or above their year appropriate level.
2. The curriculum is reflective of the identity, language and culture of Aboriginal peoples.
3. Pedagogy is culturally responsive and developed through a student-centred approach to teaching.
4. Comprehensive, quality learning plans are developed to support student achievement and transitions through engagement and discussion with schools, families and Aboriginal children and young people.
5. Aboriginal children and young people demonstrate Aboriginal cultural pride and knowledge.

10-year goal

Aboriginal children meet the same standards of achievement for literacy and numeracy as non-Aboriginal students.
Goal – Aboriginal young people on pathways to success

Aboriginal young people transition to further study, training and employment with the knowledge and skills to be successful and active participants in their community.

A young person’s path to lifelong health, wellbeing and economic prosperity is strengthened through pride in cultural identity and academic success, particularly in their senior years of schooling.

Achieving a senior secondary certificate has significance for many students ‘to the way they imagine themselves as students, as family members, and as members of the community’.completion of the South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE) and vocational qualifications will increase future educational and employment options for Aboriginal young people.

Our schools will support all Aboriginal young people to achieve at their highest potential so they can pursue further studies, training and employment and become active community members able to maintain emotional, intellectual, physical and spiritual wellbeing.

Objectives

1. Aboriginal young people engage with, participate and achieve in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) as potential pathways to industries of the future.

2. Aboriginal young people are supported to make successful transitions to educational and employment pathways, through relationships between education providers, industry and Aboriginal communities.

3. Aboriginal young people successfully complete their South Australian Certificate of Education and/or vocational education qualifications.

4. Aboriginal young people develop their cultural identity, knowledge, experience, life skills, confidence and resilience necessary to transition from school into future pathways.

10-year goal

All Aboriginal students enrolled in South Australian Certificate of Education, achieve their SACE or vocational education qualification at the same rate as non-Aboriginal students.

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9 The SACE Board of South Australia’s Aboriginal Education Strategy 2017 to 2020
Achieving our goals

Our goals and objectives for Aboriginal children and young people are supported by 2 fundamental areas informed by Aboriginal voices.

1. Empowering Aboriginal communities to develop the culture and identity of their children and young people

We recognise the significant role that Aboriginal families and communities play in the confidence and success of children and young people. We will improve family and community satisfaction through our reconciliation processes and create successful outcomes for Aboriginal children and young people.

We will work collaboratively towards successful education outcomes. Creating opportunities for active involvement in community and cultural life, enhancing culturally responsive learning, and reflecting the aspirations of Aboriginal communities for their children. We will focus on improving family and community satisfaction through reconciliation processes and create successful learning outcomes for Aboriginal students.

We will:

- create mechanisms for families and communities to engage in the teaching of Aboriginal cultural knowledge and language within education settings
- engage and encourage families to be active participants in their child’s health, development and learning
- listen and respond to Aboriginal voices when they contribute to educational decisions
- provide an opportunity for all children and young people to interact and engage with Elders and community members in a respectful way
- implement governance structures that include and empower local communities.
2. Building a strong, culturally responsive organisation

We will become a culturally responsive organisation with all services respectful and relevant to the cultural and linguistic needs of Aboriginal children and young people. The department will be strengthened by collaboration, engagement and learning environments that respect the culture, first languages, knowledges and experiences of Aboriginal people.\(^{10}\)

High-expectation relationships that teachers and school leaders develop with students, peers, parents and community can improve educational outcomes. The relationship a student has with their teacher is an influential force in their ability to achieve in the classroom.\(^{11}\)

Through professional development and opportunities for collaboration and engagement in learning environments that respect the culture, first languages, knowledges and experiences of Aboriginal people, we will ensure our teachers are well equipped to build relationships.

We will value the cultural knowledges, community connections, linguistic diversity and wisdom of our Aboriginal workforce as an asset to a culturally responsive organisation and to the meaningful engagement of Aboriginal families and communities.

We will:

- be culturally responsive through our policies and services
- develop a strong, sustainable Aboriginal workforce
- develop the confidence and capability of our workforce to develop high-expectation relationships with Aboriginal students, families and communities
- develop our capability to design and implement strategies responsive to local community and the linguistic background and histories of Aboriginal students.

\(^{10}\) Including strengthening the implementation of focus areas 1.4 and 2.4 of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and the leadership professional practice 5: ‘engaging and working with the community’ of the Australian Professional Standard for Principals

\(^{11}\) Stronger, Smarter Institute, High Expectation Relationships – A Foundation for Quality Learning Environments in all Australian Schools, 2014
Key focus areas for reform

Our goals and objectives for lifting outcomes for Aboriginal children and young people will be achieved by delivering on reforms and improvements in key focus areas:

Teaching practice and curriculum delivery

Transform the delivery of curriculum through strengthening Aboriginal input, and valuing and respecting Aboriginal knowledge, language, culture and histories to ensure high achievement for Aboriginal children and young people. Our pedagogy will encompass the foundation of knowledge that Aboriginal children and young people bring with them and use their cultural repertoire in the learning environment. They will experience high quality teaching of the curriculum that challenges them intellectually, supports and resonates with their cultural identity and empowers them to achieve success throughout school, in further study and in the workforce.

Languages

Strengthen and reinvigorate the study of Aboriginal languages in schools, preschools and children’s centres, maintaining strong active languages and rebuilding revival languages. Recognise the linguistic rights of Aboriginal children and students, incorporating and building upon home languages through family and community engagement. Strengthen English proficiency for Aboriginal children, particularly those who have an Aboriginal language as their first language.

Engagement and governance

Engage Aboriginal parents, families and communities as keepers of knowledge to support culture and identity development of all learners, and to be active participants in their child’s learning journey, and the governance of education services.

Workforce development

Build the capacity of our Aboriginal workforce and support all teachers and leaders to become culturally responsive through knowledge and community connections, ensuring that we deliver culturally appropriate services to children, families and communities. We will develop our people to work together to strengthen the learning and life outcomes for Aboriginal children and young people.

Funding policy

We will review funding and accountability measures to ensure Aboriginal targeted resourcing reaches Aboriginal learners who need extra support, so they achieve their highest potential. Where appropriate, funding and accountability, will adapt to align with the policy objectives of this Strategy.

Aboriginal governance, service design and delivery

Aboriginal inclusivity and perspectives in the governance, design and delivery of our services optimises Aboriginal outcomes at the local level. Through understanding, valuing and embedding Aboriginal service standards within our local partnership structures we can build the capacity of our services to meet the educational needs of Aboriginal children and young people.
Implementation and accountability framework

This strategy’s implementation and accountability framework will ensure we are accountable, transparent and responsive to progressing learning and development outcomes for Aboriginal children and young people.

Commitment to implementation

We will engage with teachers, leaders and support services to drive action locally. Implementation plans will set out key actions and milestones which can be monitored and supported through our accountability mechanisms, using feedback, evaluation and evidence to adjust our approach and continually improve.

Accountability to external stakeholders

We will seek expert Aboriginal advice about improving learning outcomes for Aboriginal children and young people. Our accountability will be strengthened by engaging Aboriginal people who are external to the department and who have expertise in education, child development, culture and community.

Strengthening our internal accountability

We will strengthen our internal accountability for funding and performance outcomes through our school improvement model, which will provide an extra mechanism to support the growth and development of Aboriginal children and young people. The Senior Executive Group of the department will oversee and monitor progress against this strategy at a system, partnership and school level.

Transparency to community

We will provide opportunities to share outcomes with community. We will publish this strategy, our implementation plans and public progress reports on our department’s website. We will work in partnership with the South Australian Aboriginal Education and Training Consultative Council (SAAETCC) to engage with the community as we review and develop future implementation plans in continuous improvement cycles.

Research and development

Throughout the implementation phase we may identify challenges and new areas of work that we will endeavour to explore and address through research and development.
Goals, measures and indicators

As a department we aim to achieve growth and progress for all children and young people. We will set and track milestones for Aboriginal children and young people.

High-level measures and indicators will support the monitoring of progress of this strategy. Additional measures will be developed to support actions and implementation.

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<tr>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>What we will measure</th>
<th>Indicators of success*</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal children thrive in the early years</td>
<td>Preschool attendance</td>
<td>Percentage of Aboriginal children attending preschool</td>
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<td>On school entry assessment 2019 onwards</td>
<td>Under development</td>
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<td></td>
<td>AEDC – every 3 years</td>
<td>Percentage of Aboriginal children developmentally vulnerable in 1 or more domains Percentage of Aboriginal children developmentally vulnerable in 2 or more domains</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Literacy and Reading Assessment year 1 and 2</td>
<td>Percentage of Aboriginal children reading at an age-appropriate level</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Phonics screening check – 2018 year 1</td>
<td>Percentage of Aboriginal children able to phonically decode at age-appropriate standard</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Universal home visiting (parent and child assessment)</td>
<td>Percentage of Aboriginal babies and children receiving appropriate health and developmental health checks 0 to 8 weeks, 6 to 9 months, 12 months, 18 months to 2 years and preschool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal children and young people excel at school.</td>
<td>NAPLAN years 3, 5 and 7 reading, writing and numeracy results</td>
<td>Percentage of Aboriginal children progressing and achieving at or above their year-appropriate level</td>
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<td>NAPLAN assessment participation</td>
<td>Percentage of Aboriginal children participating in NAPLAN testing</td>
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<td>PAT M and PAT R tests in schools</td>
<td>Percentage of Aboriginal children demonstrating the expected achievement in PAT M and PAT R tests</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aboriginal young people on pathways to success</td>
<td>NAPLAN year 9 results</td>
<td>Percentage of Aboriginal children progressing and achieving at or above their year-appropriate level</td>
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<tr>
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<td>NAPLAN assessment participation</td>
<td>Percentage of Aboriginal children participating in NAPLAN testing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Retention years 10 to 11 and 11 to 12</td>
<td>Percentage of Aboriginal children still at school between years 10 and 11 and from years 11 to 12</td>
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<td></td>
<td>SACE and International Baccalaureate (IB) completion</td>
<td>Percentage of Aboriginal young people undertaking and completing SACE or IB</td>
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<td>SACE or IB subject selection</td>
<td>Percentage of Aboriginal young people with mathematics and/or science subjects as part of their SACE or IB</td>
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<td></td>
<td>VET completion</td>
<td>Percentage of Aboriginal young people undertaking and completing VET (AQF Cert I and II, AQF Cert II and above)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overarching measures/indicators</td>
<td>Wellbeing and engagement indicators</td>
<td>Selected results for the Wellbeing and Engagement Collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attendance / absence</td>
<td>Rates of school attendance and absence</td>
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</tbody>
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