

Reconciliation in Education – Key Messages

Strong examples of reconciliation in education tend to:

- Address all five integral and interrelated [dimensions of reconciliation](#) – historical acceptance; race relations; equality and equity; institutional integrity; and unity – recognising that these dimensions do not exist in isolation, and that the state of reconciliation in Australia will only ever be as strong as its weakest dimension.
- Recognise the relationship and yet distinctions between ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education’ and ‘reconciliation in education.’ That is, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education is focused primarily on supporting educational opportunities and outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Reconciliation in education can encompass pedagogies and practices for supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student’s learning, but is further focused on engaging all students, staff, and indeed all members of the educational community with the importance of reconciliation, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, histories and cultures.
- Recognise that reconciliation in education, and meaningfully incorporating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content and perspectives into curricula, applies not just to subject specific areas in which ‘Indigenous studies’ is taught, but to all areas of study.
- Appreciate that reconciliation is everybody’s business, and for everybody’s benefit, and should be driven in a whole-scale sense (e.g. not only in the classroom/curriculum but also around the educational environment and with the wider community).
- Focus not just on the importance of students’ learning, but also on the importance of continued professional learning of teaching staff. Sometimes, this can also involve processes of [‘un-learning’ and ‘re-learning.’](#) given some of

the inappropriate or inadequate ways Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and contributions have historically been taught.

- Draw on a strengths-based approach – that is, don't focus exclusively on “close the gap”-type targets but also recognise the successes and continued potential of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and contributions in shaping educational (and wider) outcomes.
- Genuinely embed reconciliation actions into everyday practice, rather than reserving them for special events or as extra-curricular activities.
- Be aspirational and ambitious but also honest and humble, recognising that institutional integrity should generally trump innovation.
- Have the potential to reciprocally and responsively inform, wider internal strategy/protocol documents (such as Inclusion, Anti-Racism and/or Indigenous Education Strategies and contextualised Cultural Protocol documents).
- Demonstrate an active awareness of the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identities, histories, cultures and perspectives both within and across communities.
- Recognise that reconciliation in Australia is about more than celebrating multiculturalism, diversity and inclusion generally, or promoting human rights and equal opportunities on a broad level. It is essential to highlight the particular place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia's reconciliation journey, and explicitly point to the significance of recognising and respecting the histories, cultures and contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians as part of our shared national story and identity.
- Be founded on a commitment to building long-term, ‘transformational’ rather than short-term ‘transactional’ [relationships with the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community](#) (involving deep and ongoing conversations, consultations and collaborations with local community members).
- Appreciate that the ways in which we talk about reconciliation can be just as important as the ways in which we ‘walk’ together in reconciliation, and thereby demonstrate a meaningful attention to [respectful and inclusive language and terminology](#).