What Works. The Work Program
Improving outcomes for Indigenous students

The Guidebook

www.whatworks.edu.au
This Guidebook is one element of What Works. The Work Program.

It will work best if you have access to the other elements

- digital materials contained on the CD-ROM in this book,
  and on the website www.whatworks.edu.au, and
- The Workbook.

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What Works.
The Work Program

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Credits can be found on page 34
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Reconciliation of the Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples of Australia is not a moment or a single event. It requires a larger change in attitudes and practices. Education, in its broadest sense, is the primary way in which this will be achieved. Formal education and training will play a crucial role. We all have responsibilities to help ensure this process is successful.

The Fundamentals

*If outcomes for Indigenous students are to be improved*

- **they must be given respect**
  
  Self respect and respect from others is more basic to learning than any other factor. The high incidence of terms like ‘self esteem’, ‘self-confidence’ and ‘pride’ in successful work on improving outcomes for Indigenous students is no accident. They are starting points for becoming an effective learner — more fundamental than literacy and numeracy skills — and there is much ground to be made up here.

- **their cultures and the relevant implications of those cultures must be respected**
  
  Cultural dispossession is a terrible thing. It can reduce people to shadows, a state of near invisibility. In the situation of Indigenous students, the case is clear. Aspects of their cultures must be recognised, supported and integrated in the processes of education and training, not just for their own success, but for the general quality of Australian preschools, schools and training institutions.

- **they must be taught well**
  
  Reports of successful practice could be read as lengthy descriptions of good teaching practice; not especially exceptional, but applied with commitment and a determination to achieve success for all involved. Good relationships, trust, flexibility, individual concern and problem-solving, perseverance, thoughtful observation and careful investigation of ‘best’ teaching strategies and possibilities, knowledge of students’ backgrounds: that is what good teaching is. This is what teachers can do.

- **and they must participate consistently.**
  
  As evidence has demonstrated so emphatically, the business of improving outcomes is a shared task. Regular attendance and consistent participation are key ingredients by which improved outcomes will be achieved. In some cases, additional support and encouragement from school personnel, from parents and carers and from other members of communities will be essential for this to occur.

A platform for marked and significant improvement in outcomes for Indigenous students is beginning to emerge. The structural and cultural impediments are not as strong as they have been in the past.

The time for making improvement a reality is now.
Welcome

As a profession, teachers in this country have had great successes, achievements on a massive scale, of which we can be proud.

These achievements have provided near universal basic literacy. This wasn’t always the case. A great leap forward occurred in the second half of the 19th century; and it was teachers who were responsible. Closer to the present and within the career lifetimes of many teachers working today, another giant stride occurred. In 1950 fewer than half of the Australian population had any secondary education. Today around 75 percent participate to the end of Year 12. The school curriculum has expanded, professional craft knowledge has grown and expectations risen to accommodate and provide for a vast new cohort of students. Teachers have been responsible.

A training system has been established which effectively provides many hundreds of thousands of students annually with the contemporary vocational skills required for effective participation in the workforce. Teachers are at the heart of this process.

But another step, just as challenging, is required. About 20 percent of the population miss out on the benefits that formal education and training provide. This matters to us all. It has been reliably suggested that more than 90 percent of students who fail to successfully complete Year 10 will be dependent on government welfare support for the rest of their lives — not good for them, and not good for the health and well being of our society.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are significantly over-represented in this group.
The background

**What Works. The Work Program** is a set of materials for those working in education and training institutions — part of the national effort designed to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

It provides some information about that effort and, more importantly, provides advice and information about how improvement can be achieved and gives examples of contemporary cases where this is occurring.

It consists of three elements: this Guidebook, a set of digital materials and a Workbook. These are meant to be used together but each has its own function.

*The Guidebook* provides an overview of the materials and most of the key points. If you would rather stay clear of the digital world, it will get you started. However, it will also help you navigate and work with the digital materials and it repeats some of the material they contain.

The *digital materials* have been used to store and provide access to a larger body of resources, much of which has been drawn from case studies of successful practice. The CD-ROM will work where Internet access is problematic. The essential difference is that the website can be updated. This CD-ROM also contains a PowerPoint presentation which will introduce the materials for professional development purposes, as well as the means of making it work.

*The Workbook* is meant to be used as a workbook. It provides an outline for taking action along with some ideas and tools for doing so. A version of this can be found in the digital materials.

In short — *The Guidebook* for background, the **digital materials** for stories and examples, *The Workbook* for direction.

Where has it come from?

**What Works. The Work Program** is a Commonwealth-funded offshoot of the Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Programme’s Strategic Results Projects (IESIP SRPs, see below, page 11).

It has been developed with the support and collaboration of senior Indigenous Education administrators from across Australia, and many other people involved with initiatives in Indigenous education in schools and TAFE institutions. It works in close harmony with the ‘Dare to Lead’ program mounted through the cross-sectoral Australian Principals Associations Professional Development Council (the APAPDC). Those directly concerned are listed in the credits at the back of this book.

What is it for?

It is designed to help you as teachers and administrators working in education and training to learn and, more importantly, to *take action* in your own settings.

We know that the most effective action takes place institution-wide in order that there is consistency evident in directions, practices and attitudes. But we also know that it is within the power of all individual teachers to make a difference to the lives of the students with whom they come into contact. Successful action which leads to improvement *on any scale* is a gain.
Who is it for?

People who work in Australia’s education and training institutions.

Action doesn’t always begin with the boss — the principal, the team leader, the unit manager. But all the evidence suggests that effective action is eventually led and supported by the boss. So it is intended as a reference point and support for ‘bosses’ in education and training institutions across Australia.

But it is also, very specifically, for teachers. There are thousands of non-Indigenous teachers in Australia who have had little or no contact with Indigenous people. There are likely to be just as many who, when confronted by the task of teaching Indigenous students, are unsure where to start or how to seek support. There are others who have some experience but would like to do better. What Works. The Work Program is for all these groups.

Your school or training institution may not have Indigenous students enrolled. It is still important that your students develop an informed understanding of Australia’s Indigenous peoples and their cultures, and of the importance of the reconciliation process. You will still find interesting material here. It is an education we all need.

Indigenous students may be present, as they are in many hundreds of Australian schools and training institutions, in small numbers. In cases like this, it is possible that these students and their needs can be squeezed out, lessening their chances of success. It is common that this ‘just happens’ in the busy-ness of school life and the wide range of matters which require attention rather than as a result of overt racism, although, unhappily this still exists in some quarters and must be constantly challenged. Indigenous students should not be left to ‘tough it out’ on their own. They must be offered appropriate support and assistance to help them achieve as well as they can.

Your school or training institution may have a majority or a complete enrolment of Indigenous students, in which case there will be other issues to confront. They may be matters as disparate as access to continuing education, high and regular staff turnover, language or cultural issues. Some of the assumptions about schooling which non-Indigenous Australians treat as conventional are likely to be challenged.

In any of these cases, a job remains to be done — a job which is widely varied, challenging, long term and, in the final analysis, enriching for us all. It is not an option to consider after everything else is done. It is at the top of the list.

What Works. The Work Program contains information which we hope you find useful in pursuing the task.

What’s in this booklet?

The next section provides some summary information about the current national effort. This may be well known to you and you will certainly have been sent some of the documents referred to. But it may be useful for quick reference.

The third section (page 11) provides a Framework for thinking about action. It is derived from a number of sources including the outcomes of the IESIP SRPs which are briefly described here. The three pillars: cultural recognition, acknowledgment and support; the development of skills; and consistent and engaged participation.

The fourth section (page 21) describes some of the main considerations in the design and construction of these materials. Finally, there is some advice about using them (page 25), with particular attention to the use of the digital material.
The national effort

Our people have the right to a good education. Our children need the skills, experiences and qualifications to be able to choose their futures. Our communities need young people coming through with the education and confidence to be effective leaders. We need young people who can be advocates for our people, able to take their place in Australian society and still keep their culture strong.


The facts

Over the past 30 years, despite some public perceptions to the contrary, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians have made a great deal of progress in education and training.

• Participation in early childhood and primary schooling has improved dramatically.
• Year 12 retention rates have shifted from under 10 percent to about 38 percent in 2000.
• In 1964, Dr Kwementyaye* Perkins, became one of the first Aboriginal graduates of an Australian university, gaining a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Sydney. In 1998 there were just under 7,800 Indigenous students enrolled in university courses.
• The participation rates of Indigenous 15–24 year olds in vocational education and training have actually reached levels about the same as those for other Australians.

However there is still a long way to go. On average, Indigenous Australians …

• are less likely to get a preschool education
• are well behind mainstream rates in literacy and numeracy skills development before they leave primary school
• have less access to secondary school in the communities in which they live
• are likely to be absent from school two to three times more often than other students
• leave school much younger
• are less than half as likely to go through to Year 12
• are far more likely to be doing bridging and basic entry programmes in universities and vocational education and training institutions
• obtain fewer and lower-level education qualifications.

‘It is clear that more needs to be done to improve our people’s educational opportunities. It is also clear we need to ensure that Indigenous Australian young people succeed in schooling and have the skills to enjoy a more secure economic, social and cultural future.’

— The NIELNS ‘Ambassadors’

(* This term is used in preference to the name used when living.)
Commitments to action

Ministers of Education

All State and Territory Governments and the Commonwealth Government work at a national level through the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (otherwise known as MCEETYA). MCEETYA recognises that Australia’s Indigenous people are ‘the most educationally disadvantaged group in the community’ and has undertaken a number of collaborative activities, particularly in the last decade, to address the educational needs of Australia’s Indigenous people. These activities include the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (1989) and the National Goals for Schooling in the 21st Century (1999). Copies of these documents are included in this guidebook.

At their meeting in March 2000, MCEETYA considered the Report of its Taskforce on Indigenous Education. The Taskforce identified a number of issues that are impeding the achievement of educational equality.

- There are lingering perceptions in some quarters of the Australian community that the gap in educational outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian students is ‘normal’ and that educational equality for Indigenous Australians is either not achievable, or if possible, only achievable over a long period of time (i.e. decades or generations).
- There is often a systemic lack of optimism and belief in educational success for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
- Education of Indigenous students is often not regarded as an area of core business in education systems.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers and education workers are often denied access to facilities and services that other teachers and education workers take for granted and which are ensured by legislation.
- Initiatives that develop more effective models of education which build on, replicate and sustain progress in the achievement of equitable educational outcomes for Indigenous students often fail to be implemented systemically and/or at the local level.
- While there is a widespread acknowledgment of a close relationship between low levels of Indigenous educational outcomes and poverty, health, housing and access to government services and infrastructure, mechanisms to address cross-portfolio issues for Indigenous students are lacking.

In March 2000, MCEETYA agreed to undertake a third phase of work to accelerate progress on these issues. This work includes the promotion and implementation of:

- a statement of principles and standards for educational infrastructure and service delivery
- a model for more culturally inclusive and educationally effective schools, and
- a framework for developing more efficient and effective cross-portfolio mechanisms.

The statement and the model, together with the MCEETYA Taskforce report and discussion paper, have been published and circulated. If you do not have a copy, you can download a copy from: <http://www.curriculum.edu.au/mceetya/taskforce/task2217.htm>.

In July 2001, MCEETYA endorsed four information papers that address issues in Indigenous health, early childhood, education of teachers, and pathways transition. These papers are available from your education system and you can download copies of these papers from the electronic materials.
The National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy

The National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (2000–2004) was endorsed for action by all Commonwealth, State and Territory Education Ministers. Launched by the Prime Minister in March 2000, this Strategy’s objective is that:

**Indigenous students should achieve in English literacy and numeracy at the same levels as other young Australians.**

Education providers are encouraged to address six key elements in an integrated way.

1. Achieving attendance
2. Overcoming hearing, health and nutrition problems
3. Increasing pre school experience
4. Getting good teachers
5. Using the best teaching methods

The Strategy makes it clear that our schools must be places where all Indigenous Australians feel welcome and secure, and schools must understand and acknowledge Indigenous Australians’ cultural ties and traditions, particularly moving around to access family and land.

The full details of the strategy are contained in a booklet which is in wide circulation and also on the website: <http://www.dest.gov.au/schools/publications/subject.htm#Indigenous_Education>.

The National Vocational Education and Training Strategy

*Partners in a Learning Culture: Australia’s National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy for Vocational Education and Training* enunciates a vision for a vocational education and training system which ‘renews and shares an Indigenous learning culture with all Australians in a spirit of reconciliation, equity, justice and community economic development and sustainability’.

The vision is for:

- cultural affirmation and community choice; enabled by
- equal opportunity and affirmative action; leading to
- flexible delivery, equitable outcomes and lifelong learning; resulting in
- community economic development and sustainability; contributing to
- reconciliation and justice in Australia.

These goals, it is suggested, will be achieved by:

- increasing involvement of Indigenous people in decision making about policy, planning, resources and delivery
- achieving participation in VET for Indigenous people equal to that of the rest of the Australian community
- achieving increased culturally appropriate, and flexibly delivered training, including use of information technology, for Indigenous people, and
- developing closer links between VET outcomes for Indigenous people and industry employment.

For further information, have a look at this website: <http://www.itis.edu.au/partners.pdf>.
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Principals’ Associations

On the 16th June 2000, at a conference conducted by the Australian Principals’ Associations Professional Development Council, the four peak Australian Principals’ Associations made a commitment to:

• work together to develop a public statement, underpinned and motivated by the desire for true reconciliation, that recognises and acknowledges the importance of Indigenous education as the highest priority for each association

• recognise that it is the responsibility of all schools to work to improve the educational outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

• lobby university Vice Chancellors and Deans of Education nationally in order to influence the nature of pre-service education in this regard

• include the National Indigenous Literacy and Numeracy Strategy on the agenda of each peak association in the immediate future with the intention of progressing this matter with a range of actions.

Further advice is available on this website: <http://www.apapdc.edu.au>.

The Australian Primary Principals Association recently reported on a survey of its members to find out how to improve Indigenous student learning outcomes. The resulting report, *Partnering a Better Future* (2000), pointed out that the general level of interaction between schools and the local Indigenous communities needs further work if Indigenous student learning outcomes are to improve. Most schools surveyed had little if any interaction with their Indigenous communities.

The APPA survey also found that consulting with the local Indigenous community on the purpose and goals of education was critical in promoting positive relationships and shared understanding of school goals and the value of education. A copy of this report is available at <http://www.appa.asn.au/~appa3/page1.html>.
The goals of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy

Involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in education decision-making

1. To establish effective arrangements for the participation of Indigenous parents and community members in decisions regarding the planning, delivery and evaluation of preschool, primary and secondary education services for their children.

2. To increase the number of Indigenous people employed as education administrators, teachers, curriculum advisers, teachers’ assistants, home-school liaison officers and other education workers, including community people engaged in teaching of Indigenous culture, history and contemporary society, and Indigenous languages.

3. To establish effective arrangements for the participation of Indigenous students and community members in decisions regarding the planning, delivery and evaluation of post-school education services, including technical and further education colleges and higher education institutions.

4. To increase the number of Indigenous people employed as administrators, teachers, researchers and students’ services officers in technical and further education colleges and higher education institutions.

5. To provide education and training services to develop the skills of Indigenous people to participate in education decision-making.

6. To develop arrangements for the provision of independent advice for Indigenous communities regarding education decisions at regional, State/Territory and national levels.

Equality of access to educational services

7. To ensure that Indigenous children of pre-primary age have access to preschool services on a basis comparable to those available to other Australian children of the same age.

8. To ensure that all Indigenous children have local access to primary and secondary schooling.

9. To ensure equitable access for Indigenous people to post-compulsory secondary schooling, to technical and further education, and higher education.
Equity of educational participation

10. To achieve the participation of Indigenous children in preschool education for a period similar to that for all Australian children.

11. To achieve the participation of all Indigenous children in compulsory schooling.

12. To achieve the participation of Indigenous people in post-compulsory secondary education, in technical and further education, and in higher education, at rates commensurate with those of all Australians in those sectors.

Equitable and appropriate education outcomes

13. To provide adequate preparation of Indigenous children in preschool education for the schooling years ahead.

14. To enable Indigenous attainment of skills to the same standard as other Australian students throughout the compulsory schooling years.

15. To enable Indigenous students to attain the successful completion of Year 12 or equivalent at the same rates as for other Australian students.

16. To enable Indigenous students to attain the same graduation rates from award courses in technical and further education, and in higher education, as for other Australians.

17. To develop programs to support the maintenance and continued use of Indigenous languages.

18. To provide community education services which enable Indigenous people to develop the skills to manage the development of their communities.

19. To enable the attainment of proficiency in English language and numeracy competencies by Indigenous adults with limited or no education experience.

20. To enable Indigenous students at all levels of education to have an appreciation of their history, cultures and identity.

21. To provide all Australian students with an understanding of and respect for Indigenous traditional and contemporary cultures.

Note:
A framework for action

It is necessary to have a framework for thinking about and shaping action which might be effective for improving outcomes for Indigenous students. This section of the Guidebook is intended to provide a resource for that purpose.

There is a powerful consistency in views expressed over time through research, policy and practice about ways and means of doing better. (They appear, for example, in the goals of the relevant National Policy on the preceding pages.)

They have had varying emphases at different times and places. Work to combat racism is an example. The inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies in the curriculum is another, which evolved into the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives across all areas of learning. Encouragement of participation in decision making has been a long-standing issue. But these are means to an end, and that end is success in conventional terms for Indigenous students.

The IESIP Strategic Results Projects

As noted, this project evolved from work conducted on the IESIP Strategic Results Projects (SRPs). With many other sources, they have provided an evidence base for a framework for action.

The report about the SRPs, *What works? Explorations in improving outcomes for Indigenous students* and its summary form *What has worked (and will again)* are in wide circulation. This short summary is included here for those who have not encountered them.

What were they?

In December 1997, the Commonwealth launched a series of Strategic Results Projects (SRPs) related to education and training for Indigenous students.

Around $13 million was provided to State and Territory government and non-government preschool, school, and VET sectors for a range of short (one year), sharply-focused initiatives related to literacy, numeracy, vocational education and other areas of education and training delivery.

Those submitting for projects were asked to address the question — *What changes to education and student support delivery practices will result in improved Indigenous student learning outcomes within a relatively short period of time?*

There were 83 SRPs, focusing on a wide range of topics (and, frequently, more than one) including:

- home to school transition
- transition from the primary to secondary years
- supporting students in the secondary years
- older students re-entering education and training
- student mobility
- building skills in early childhood education
They ranged in scale from small single-site operations to large systemic initiatives. Thirty-one projects operated at more than one site (approximately 320 sites across Australia in total) ranging from inner urban areas of capital cities to remote outback areas. Approximately 3,800 students were directly involved.

The work was not conducted in ‘exceptional circumstances’, meaning carefully controlled and favourable situations. It was carried out in ‘normal’ preschools, schools and training institutions, under conventional conditions.

The strategies adopted could not be generally described as innovative or unusual, although, in context, they may have been both. The results were achieved by people working more intensively with strategies that are widely familiar, that could be described as conventional good practice and that are readily portable to other similar contexts.

One of the initiative’s distinctive features was that each project was required to set targets for achievement, and to establish baseline data from which results could be measured. Each project reported in these terms.

What were the results?

- The general objective of the SRPs was achieved. Providers of education and training did, in fact, ‘demonstrate that improving Indigenous student learning outcomes can occur in a relatively short space of time through concerted efforts’, across a very broad range of projects in varied locations and contexts.

At the time of writing the report final performance data were available for 60 of the projects. Forty-one of these (68 percent) achieved or exceeded their targets. Eleven (18 percent) either achieved or exceeded one or more of their targets but not the complete set, or achieved them at one or more sites but not at one or more other sites. Project work was continuing at six of these sites, with the expectation that further gains will be made.

Eight of the 60 projects (13 percent) did not achieve their contracted goals, but five of these achieved what they actually set out to do (eg, the development of courses, programs or teaching materials).

- The results were achieved in areas closely aligned with national targets for Indigenous education. The major emphases were: improved attendance rates, improved grade progression and completion rates; improved rates of secondary completion and articulation to further study or training; participation and completion rates in vocational education and training; and acquisition of skills in literacy in Standard Australian English and numeracy.

Levels of achievement were evenly spread across these topics; that is, there were no particular areas of success or failure. Location factors appear to have had little impact on levels of project achievement, although there were a small number of cases reported where students at more remote sites in the same project did not achieve the same level of improvement as students at sites that were less remote.
• The project performance targets ranged in levels of ambition. The largest group, however, established benchmarks for improvement in performance or participation which were in line with local, state/territory or national rates for non-Indigenous students, reflecting the core goals of the national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy.

• There were many project outcomes unrecorded by the formal performance indicators. They are very diverse, but their dominant theme was the evident growth in self-confidence and engagement among the students involved.

The central messages

• Through concerted effort, it is possible to significantly improve Indigenous student learning outcomes.

• The SRP’s results were achieved by people working more intensively with strategies that are widely familiar, could be described as conventional good practice, and are readily portable to other similar contexts.

• The things that did matter were clear targets and monitoring processes, adequate resources but, above all, a firm belief in the prospect of success and a will to make it occur.
Key strategies for improvement

Before turning to strategic solutions, it is important to note the nature of the problems Indigenous students might confront in achieving success.

The problems

We know why Indigenous students don’t succeed as well as other Australians in education and training. This list from an article by Dennis McInerney in the *Australian Journal of Education* outlines them clearly.

... the comparatively recent introduction of English language, literacy and Western education to Aboriginal peoples; the pedagogic inexperience and cultural unpreparedness of teachers for working effectively in Aboriginal education; lack of continuity of education due to rapid teacher turnover in Aboriginal settings; low and irregular attendance of Aboriginal students; lack of parental understanding of and commitment to formal education; lack of role models in our community and in the media embodying positive education and career pathways for Aboriginal peoples; the downward spiralling cycle of poverty, unemployment, and social disintegration; health problems tied to inadequate housing and economic circumstances; differences in learning styles; cultural resistance; entrenched prejudice impacting on all spheres of life and entrenched institutional racism; low expectations on the part of teachers and policy-makers in education and training (1991: 155).

There are obviously background contextual issues which need to be addressed. One author notes the difficulty of separating ‘educational issues from problems of individual and community health, housing and sanitation, employment and economic independence, and the social and cultural alienation which pervade these [Aboriginal] communities’ and suggests that they need to be tackled concurrently (Tomlinson, 1994).

There are two issues here which emerge consistently in discussions.

The first is generalising from the worst case and making that a universal proposition. It should be remembered that generalising and stereotyping are among the serious afflictions suffered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It should also be remembered that, as the case studies in these materials illustrate, even in the most challenging of circumstances, some students do succeed.

The second is that it is very easy to find reasons why something can’t be done. One which crops up frequently is — no employment opportunities, so why go to school? And it is an issue, a real issue, but there are other important reasons for becoming educated besides getting a job.

Finding reasons why nothing can be done in education leaves all involved in a disposition of waiting — waiting for infrastructure to be put into place, waiting for employment to pick up, waiting for the right moment and the ideal circumstances when it will all come together, so that then we can move forward.

The information that can be drawn from these case studies and the SRP’s work suggests a different way of looking at the issue: *there is no panacea for improving outcomes for Indigenous students, but in circumstances that will never be ideal there are obvious opportunities for making significant incremental gains, right now.*

There is a third issue which has deeper implications and is less easily resolved. There are parts of the country where, at the least, the cultural orientation of communities does not sit comfortably with the nature and demands of conventional formal education. It is outside the range of this work to reflect on forms of education which might be derived explicitly from more traditional Indigenous cultures and that have outcomes which do not appear in the relevant official documents.
It might appear that the choice of whether or not to participate in mainstream education and training is illusory. It is legally required to certain ages, and even in remote communities it is an accepted, and in many cases well-enjoyed, part of growing up. It does provide access to employment and the material advantages that ensue, and it is a choice made by several hundreds of thousands of Indigenous Australians in all parts of the country. And yet the choice is also made to not participate, because school may be a site of failure and of constant battles with non-Indigenous authority.

The decision about what sort of education is right for their children must, finally, be left to Indigenous parents and communities.

**The solutions**

If students are going to succeed, the minimum requirements, reflected in national targets, are:

- skills which are fundamental to succeeding. In Australian schools these include literacy in Standard Australian English, and numeracy
- consistent attendance, which is frequently based on the sense of security, comfort and confidence they have in school or training environments
- consistent engagement, which is frequently based on realistic and meaningful challenge and a sense of capacity to rise to that challenge. This also means completion of required work.

If education and training are going to have a purpose which gives meaning to the effort required, they must provide accessible pathways to futures which are valued in further education, training or employment.

The three central avenues for action which recur are:

- cultural recognition, acknowledgment and support
- the development of requisite skills, and
- adequate levels of participation.
These three factors are not separable for two reasons.

First, success is genuinely derived from a partnership of the parties to the educational process — student, family, community, institution. Cultural support, recognition and acknowledgment can only be achieved by active and effective relationships between Indigenous communities and those who work in schools and training institutions. Both parties have a role to play. The development of requisite skills will evolve from teachers’ high expectations of students and the skill and, especially, the sensitivity with which they approach their work. Support, even in limited forms from home, will aid this process. Adequate levels of participation will only be achieved by active encouragement from home and the provision of a welcoming and accepting climate in the institution.

Second, holistic approaches are essential. The absence of any of these three components will seriously impair the likelihood of progress. For example, it will be fruitless to have an excellent literacy program if students are not attending school. Equally, if students are attending, quality programs are required for progress to be achieved.

**Cultural recognition, acknowledgment and support**

Respect for and understanding of Indigenous cultures are fundamental prerequisites for improving the levels of achievement of Indigenous students. Success will not be achieved without recognition of the cultural factors which may impact on that success; nor will it occur without the consent, approval and willing participation of those involved.

Making institutions more ‘culturally-friendly’ in genuine and thorough-going terms is not just a matter of flying the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags although, who knows, that might be a starting point. It is a lived experience that has at least three central elements.

The establishment of good personal relationships and mutual trust

Racial harmony is hardly universal in this country, and relationships operate against a larger background of cultural misunderstandings, unmet promises and dispossession.

It can also be forgotten what a personal process education and training is for all concerned. Good communication, genuine negotiation and predictability and consistency are based on the quality of personal relationships. The significance to success of good personal relationships between institution and community personnel cannot be over-emphasised.

Flexibility

Where cultural values differ in significant ways, all parties involved need to be flexible. One of the major impediments to the educational success of Indigenous students is an unwillingness by school and training personnel to modify any arrangements — pedagogical, structural, organisational — on the basis that success must be achieved in precisely the same way, and by precisely the same means, as other students. There must be some room to move at the edges of this process. Minor modifications can make major differences.
Localisation

There are many different routes to the same goals; and contextual factors (personnel, place and history among them) count for a great deal.

The problems of delivery of Western-style formal education and training in remote communities have been widely discussed, and sometimes as though they reflect the realities across the board. But the vast majority of Australia’s Indigenous people do not live in remote communities. They live in the towns and cities of the eastern sea-board and the south-west. More than half live in New South Wales and Queensland, most in urban settings (nearly 20 percent in Sydney and Brisbane alone). They come from different family groups and may or may not have strong traditional links with the area in which they live. They may be deeply urbanised with life styles which are very similar to those of non-Indigenous Australians. Educators and trainers must be clear about the wishes of local communities and soliciting advice and support which will be effective in context.

Attention to these three factors produces ‘strong’ forms of cultural inclusion.

The development of skills

Over the years a considerable amount of attention has been paid to ideas about learning styles which might be specific to Indigenous students. Some of those which are best-validated are mentioned below. However the general principles of good education seem to apply as widely to Indigenous students as they do to any others.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A framework for action</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Good education</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• assumes all learners can and will succeed</td>
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<tr>
<td>• makes its demands clearly known</td>
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<tr>
<td>• includes explanations of the purpose and value of what is being learnt and efforts to ensure that they have meaning for the student</td>
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<tr>
<td>• accommodates variations in pace, and pays special attention to the needs of students who don’t get it first time, and</td>
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<tr>
<td>• includes a level of intensity and manageable challenge.</td>
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Focusing effort

Research and experience have consistently confirmed the centrality of skills in literacy in Standard Australian English (SAE) and numeracy to success in formal education and training — for all ages and across learning area boundaries.

Some of the biggest challenges come in contexts where few, if any, students have English as a first language and where there are few social or economic demands for its use. But a more common need is the requirement for code-switching to modify dialectal variations of English to make it more ‘correct’ in school terms. Success comes from acknowledging and accepting dialectal differences and teaching the variations in SAE explicitly. This is an essential alternative to describing students’ everyday language use as ‘bad’ or ‘incorrect’.
Content
There are many different ways of finding culturally relevant ways of teaching content and skills which are common across the country.

In terms of content there is an increasing range of texts and courses which reflect Indigenous students’ life experiences and aspirations, but it is always true that increasing the cultural relevance of curricula requires getting to know students and their cultures better, and being sensitive to their capacities and interests.

Teaching practice

Intensity: Smaller class sizes, work with small groups and individuals, and thoughtfully-constructed grouping practices that provided for re-entry to mainstream classes are likely to have a significant impact.

Achievable steps: High expectations of success need to be translated practically into achievable stages that are explicitly taught. Planning on an individual basis of what is to be achieved in terms of skills, and how, is another approach to the same end. Successful achievement of developmental steps should be noted, celebrated and, where relevant, accredited, promoting a sense of competence and mastery.

Working cooperatively: Working cooperatively (as opposed to individually) in conventional classroom situations is a factor which figures prominently in research related to preferred learning styles of Indigenous students.

Expanding the range of media through which learning occurs and increasing its level of ‘practicality’: Examples in the case studies range from taking, or being taken by, young children on bush trips to older adolescent students working on building sites. There is a strong indication that this is one of the significant issues in the value accorded to arts education and the use of information and communication technologies.

The contribution of the presence and example of Indigenous teachers and other education workers to the development of students’ skills must be noted. Where these ‘school’ skills are seen and reinforced as being valuable, they are far more likely to be regarded as such and more likely to be acquired.

Participation
Regular attendance is an ongoing issue, but there are three key points for focusing on issues to deal with participation:

- school preparation and entry
- the first few years of secondary school, and
- pathways to further education, training or employment from the middle years of secondary schooling.

Context has an important influence on these issues. While remote communities may have high levels of mobility among students, they also often report very high levels of attendance during the primary years in schools which can be defining points of community infrastructure. However, if young people wish to continue their education they are likely to need to seek it elsewhere. Access is the issue.

In rural areas and cities where Indigenous students are more likely to be a minority group, the central issue is departure during the secondary years. Several factors appear to be at work: the loss of the pastoral intimacy which is characteristic of primary schooling; skill levels stretched past coping and hence an ever growing record of academic failure; an increasing incidence of confrontations about behaviour; impatience with the passive nature of much schooling coupled with influence from peers who have already left school; encounters with more aggravated forms of racism; and a curriculum which becomes more abstract and less obviously relevant to the lives of students.
School entry  
Where there is access to pre-schooling, the factors which appear to pay dividends are ‘familiar faces, familiar activities’: the presence of Indigenous staff or assistants; good communication with parents, coupled with opportunities for parent involvement in ways parents find useful and enjoyable; and well-established personal relationships and a climate which is ‘culture-friendly’.

Attendance  
There is a very strong correlation between students’ achievement and attendance levels. Common sense also suggests that attendance is the first and fundamental requirement in achieving success in education or training. Little can or will happen without it.

Case management — or ‘dedicated customised support’ as it has been described — is one solution which has worked. This includes home visits and other forms of community liaison; an emphasis on personal contact with consistent follow-up where absence occurred; personal planning and goal-setting; some work-related studies and experiences; support with academic work; linkages (actual and/or electronic) with other Indigenous students in similar situations; and counselling and mediation where problems were occurring. The underlying theory relates to developing and supporting student motivation and developing in them a sense of what may be possible.

The use of alternative settings that, for a part of the week, become a ‘home’ for the students involved has also been used successfully.

Engagement  
Attendance is a crucial matter; productive engagement when attending is as important.

The strategy of increasing the level of contact between Indigenous adults (not necessarily teachers) and young people in education and training settings has proven value. This has occurred through extensive use of mentoring, but also by reducing class sizes and/or providing intensive one-to-one or small group tutoring. The usefulness of information technology as a tool for fostering engagement has also been noted.

Other strategies used to try to rectify this problem have long been familiar.

• The establishment of closer and less formal personal relationships between teachers and students.
• The establishment of a more informal and less regimented climate.
• The provision of a larger role for students in negotiation of work.
• Teaching so that success can be regularly and obviously achieved.

It is clear that schools and training institutions must get direction and help on these issues from respected members of Indigenous communities and from the influence of encouragement and support coming from those communities operating as a whole.
The ideas behind the nature of these materials

The design of these materials is based on a series of ideas about the features of effective education and training for Indigenous students, coupled with notions about how education and training institutions function and how the people who work in them might be helped to improve performance.

They are designed, not just for general interest or expanding professional knowledge, but for taking action.

The structure

In terms of taking action there are three main themes which, from all available evidence, appear to occur in this sequence.

- Building awareness
- Forming partnerships, and
- Working systematically.

All need to be in place.

Building awareness

The starting point is building awareness of the issues. This will not be appropriate in all cases. There may already be a high degree of consciousness present. But until there is, the foundation for effective work is not in place.

In the end, all education and training solutions are about people and their personal and professional attributes — and attitudes. This is a theme which recurs constantly.

Schools and training institutions are very busy places with a multitude of demands coming from many different sources — the students, their carers, community groups, staff, institutional order and arrangements, administrators located outside the school and governments. These demands are sometimes in conflict; and even when they aren’t, choices have to be made which are the responsibility of school personnel.

In this context priorities can be fluid and over-ridden by the demands of the moment. Longer term achievements rely on ideas and attitudes which are embedded in principals and managers, teachers and other working personnel. They will be the product of past experiences, a sense of what is right and what should be done and, in the end, a sense of possibility … and practicality.

In such circumstances what personal professional qualities are useful?

- A capacity and willingness to solve problems as they arise on a case-by-case basis.
- A high level of attention to the interpersonal aspects of student motivation.
- An ability to see past the idea or the process to the person, while still remaining focused on longer term goals.
- Energy and perseverance.
- A confident and firm belief in the value of what is being done.
- And, a determination to succeed — to ‘find a way’.
These materials are founded in the belief that these are not rare qualities in Australia’s teaching workforce.

**Forming partnerships**

Education and training institutions exist to serve their communities. This self-evident fact is recognised in the partnerships personnel working in them seek to make, sometimes with civic organisations, businesses or sporting and other special interest organisations, very frequently with the parents and carers of their students.

This happens everywhere, as a matter of course. Without the confidence of the community, difficulties will inevitably emerge.

In the case of education and training for Indigenous students this is particularly important.

Their parents and carers have often had experiences of schooling which have been negative and sometimes relatively brief. New ground is consistently being broken in education and training by young members of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families — a challenge in any circumstances. There are new habits to be acquired. Education and training institutions have their own types of arrangements and customary ways of doing things which might be taken for granted, but they **do** have to be learnt. Apparently conventional taken-for-granted things, like finding out where and how you get your lunch, what a locker is for, what bells mean, managing timetables, selecting subjects and planning courses of study have to be dealt with.

Indigenous students are most commonly in minorities, often quite small, in schools and training colleges which means that it can be easy to overlook their particular needs. Non-Indigenous staff can sometimes take the view that ‘they treat them the same as any other student’, that is, any other non-Indigenous student. Sometimes, where the level of pastoral care and interest is high, that will work; and often it won’t. There is no substitute for an informed understanding of students’ backgrounds, in both the particular and broad senses.

It has been noted above that: success will not be achieved without recognition of the cultural factors which may impact on that success; nor will it occur without the consent, approval and willing participation of those involved. Genuine partnerships are the way to resolve this issue.

Elsewhere in the materials, we note that this is the hard part of taking action. But it should also be noted that it can be the most rewarding and enriching for all concerned. It is an essential step.

The materials provide a wide range of ideas and examples for making partnerships a success.

**Working systematically**

The education and training of Indigenous students suffers from ad hoc and sporadic efforts which might work well for a while and then go off the boil. A teacher with a particular commitment and interest might leave. Funding might be withdrawn from a program. A policy might be squeezed off the list to be attended to.

What gets prioritised gets done. This means having in place a policy and a plan to implement that policy. Responsibilities need to be assigned, targets established, and progress towards their achievement monitored. Strategies need to be thought through and, professional development, where necessary, and resources provided.

We know this, and we know that such procedures work. The substantial quality of education and training in this country hinges on this knowledge.

**The Workbook** provides an outline for this process.
The ideas behind the nature of these materials

‘Teacher friendliness’

Good professional development

The principles of good professional development differ little from those of good education generally.

- A good (professional) education makes its demands clearly known.
- It includes explanations of the purpose and value of what is being learnt and efforts to ensure that they make sense to the learner.
- It provides a series of well-structured steps relevant to the competence and background knowledge of the learner.
- It searches across a variety of strategies for those to which learners will respond.
- It provides a maximum of explicit guidance and modelling.
- It provides opportunities for practice, and consistent useful feedback.
- It accommodates variation in pace, and pays special attention to the needs of learners who don’t get it first time.
- It includes a level of intensity and manageable challenge.
- It assumes all learners can and will succeed.

We have tried to follow our own advice.

Practicality

A recent study of teacher professional development (PD 2000:Australia published by DETYA) confirmed what has long been thought — that teachers like a practical bent to their professional development.

This is not an exclusive process. They also like to deal with substantial ideas and analyses, especially new ones that might help them think about and improve their work … and they like to know what’s going on. But above all they do like to be able to ‘take something away and try’ in their own classrooms. There is a good deal of material for this purpose in The Work Program.

Telling, showing and modelling, and working together

There are three ways of teaching and, at this level of generality, probably only three — telling, showing and modelling, and working together.

‘Telling’ on its own may work for some learners, but it is not a very efficient way of teaching. Step-by-step listing of what to do often runs into the rugged rocks of variations in context. It is also not a very respectful way to treat the professional knowledge and experience of those who are doing the work.

At one level, these materials do provide a recipe which will work, a recipe which has been well-rehearsed all over the country in a wide range of education and training settings. That has given these materials the structure alluded to above.

But at another level, there is a lot of room to move. There are many routes to the same goals and, in the end, there must be a deep reliance on the professionalism — the sense of personal responsibility and efficacy — of individual school and training personnel. But they need support which is useful.

On the core topics, an effort has been made to extract and define the key messages that should guide action.
The next process has been to illustrate those messages through case studies (see below) or other pertinent information which is intended to show ‘how they did it there’ — so that there are starting points for you to take action where you are, and also to build the sense of possibility that is crucial to success. This is the showing/modelling element of the materials.

This leaves working together, the most productive form of learning and essential for taking action. You will be doing that at your own site. The Workbook is designed to help with this purpose. Value will always be found in forms of collaboration with other education and training institutions which provide you with students or to which they might graduate.

Groups of teachers in differing locations working together on the same issues, sharing information, ideas and strategies is obviously productive. Stay alert to such opportunities. We hope that use is made of ‘Your Turn’, the interactive element of the website, that new case studies are added and that use is made of the chatlists which are accessible through that arena.

Case studies

Case studies have some things in common with travel guide books. They are subject to the perspectives of the sources of information and their writers; they are about what is, or was, happening at a point in time. They may be influenced by aspirations rather than realities. They can’t possibly provide a global picture of a situation with all the factors in place and visible.

There are plenty of examples of case studies intended to inform and inspire educational practice and they may all suffer from those features. Schools, after all, are complex places, full of varying stories and subject to constant change.

BUT we are confident that at the time of writing the case studies in these materials represent solid information which has led to success for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. We have used visits and interviews, formal documents and research, and in some cases artefacts of student work to try to build rich pictures which are still to the point and illustrate action other teachers and schools have taken.

To accommodate some of the difficulties mentioned above, education and other case studies are frequently ‘anonymised’. So they come from ‘Smithtown High’ and ‘Main Street Primary’ with ‘John’ and ‘Mary’ telling the stories. For reasons of authenticity, and with the permission and collaboration of those involved, we have chosen otherwise. We would like you to appreciate that these are real people in real circumstances.

The sources for the case studies have been schools and other organisations involved in the IESIP Strategic Results Projects, other ideas provided by people who administer Indigenous education and training in various parts of the country and schools showcased through the APAPDC’s ‘Dare to Lead’ program and our own ‘What Works’ workshops.

For reasons of time, manageability and representativeness of context, we have been selective about those included. We have no doubt that there are many other sites which could provide valuable stories and hope people take future opportunities to add their own to the website.

For the purposes of the materials, their useability and potential impact, we have grouped the cases by major themes. As you work through them you will notice other consistent underlying themes emerging — the presence of Indigenous workers, partnership arrangements, cultural recognition, whole school action, various management practices and so on. These themes, their fundamental place and relationship are noted and explained in more detail in The Workbook and in the digital materials. Stay alert to them, and remember that effective and successful education and training is a complex business with many factors involved.

Finally, those who helped in providing the case studies are noted in the credits. We owe them a huge debt of gratitude. We were never disappointed, and often thrilled to experience first hand the quality of endeavour and commitment as well as the sheer professional skill of this sample of Australia’s teachers.
Using the materials

Using the materials as a whole

As mentioned, this Guidebook provides some background and explanatory information. The Workbook is a ‘stripped back’ support for action. You can write in it, you can copy pages and use them. You can expand or revise the templates to make them suit your purposes. You can answer the questions, tick off the checklists and so on. It is not something for the shelves. It is meant to be carried round, referred to, shown and shared. We hope that it might become dog-eared and tattered — sure signs of use.

The digital materials are intended to provide ideas and examples. They also repeat some of the material contained in The Guidebook and contain a version of The Workbook.

The way you use them will depend on your circumstances. They are not designed to fit a series of step-by-step sessions, but they could be used that way.

Their use will begin by someone in a school taking them up and deciding that something can and has to be done. There will be a meeting, formal or informal, to discuss the issues they present. This will be a good time to turn to The Workbook. Someone or a group of people will scan the digital materials to see if they are going to be any use. They might bookmark particular parts to go back to or for others to look at.

Then it will be matter of getting formal, setting about thinking and planning together about what you are going to do. At this stage, work over the materials to see what will be of most use, note suitable sections and put them into a shape that works for you in your situation. Think in the medium term, say, over the course of a year. Don’t expect results immediately. This is a steady process. Stability and sustained effort are just as important in learning processes as they are in taking action.

Once you’ve got a ‘shape’, you could build the materials into your professional development program as a whole staff activity, or use them for research and direction to support your work. As you take action, they will remain as reference points for theory, practice and direction.
Using the digital materials
(the website www.whatworks.edu.au and the CD-ROM)

1. Our First Priority
What's this site about?
'We are the Indigenous peoples of Australia',
Background, Credits

2. A Matter of Urgency
Good News: 'The Day the Postie Came…'
The Facts … a long way to go
Commitments to action: Ministers of Education, National Indigenous English Language
and Literacy Strategy, Principals' Associations, Australian National Training Authority

3. Taking Action
Very Important Points
Building Awareness
A conversation about building awareness
The 'Doors': Stories of beginning points
Analysing the issues: three tools for analysis
Extending your knowledge: resources

Forming Partnerships
The Karama PS Handbook
Knowing your students, their families and their communities
Indigenous people on site
Communities and networks for students
Recognising and acknowledging students' cultures and heritage
Case studies: Immanuel College, Darlington Public School, 'As I Remember', Nidja
Noongar Boodjar Noonook Nyininy, the Ganai project, Narrabundah Primary School.

Working Systematically
A sequence of steps and advice for working systematically (as in The Workbook)
Case studies: Kormilda College, Badu Island State School, Bourke Public School,
The Muri School

4. Topics

Student Health
Case study: Hearing and Literacy
MCEETYA Taskforce Paper

Improving outcomes in Literacy
Case studies: 'Deadly Ways to Learn', the Kimberley Literacy Project, Scaffolded approaches,
Salisbury North PS, the Literacy Links projects

Improving outcomes in Numeracy
Case studies: the AAMT Project, the INISSS project

The Early Years
Case studies: Why Aboriginal people use early childhood services …’, NSW Transition
project, Condobolin Pre-School Centre MCEETYA Taskforce Paper

The Middle Years
Case studies: Karama PS, Courallie HS, Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture, New England
Institute of TAFE

The Senior Years
Case studies: Secondary Pathways Project, Gumala Mirnuwami Education Project

Vocational Pathways
Case studies: Booroongen Djugun, Dreamtime Cultural Centre, Tharawal Land Council,
the Djigay Centre MCEETYA Taskforce Paper

5. Your Turn
How to use them

We know that Australian teachers are comparatively computer-literate. But we don’t know how people use digital materials for professional development purposes and we’re not sure that anyone else does either. It is possible that it is a very individual process.

However, we can tell you how the materials are planned for use, and that is at least once in the sequence shown on the opposite page. This sequence appears to be important but we know that some users will already be a good distance along it.

But if you work through the materials as a whole they will provide a thorough perspective on what can be done, how some people are doing it and what you might do yourself.

Making the site work for you

To use the digital materials online you will, of course, need a computer with access to the Internet. If you are working from a CD-ROM, you will need a computer with a CD-ROM drive. Your monitor resolution should be 800 X 600 or better.

You don’t need to be a computer expert. You just need to be familiar with basics such as how to use the mouse and how to navigate using Internet browsers.

System Requirements: Windows or Macintosh, Internet Explorer or Navigator, version 4 or better. In several places, the Macromedia Shockwave Player is required. It is available free to download from the link on the What Works. The Work Program website or Macromedia at: <http://sdc.shockwave.com/shockwave/download/>

The ‘continue’ and ‘back’ buttons

The ‘continue’ button looks like this:

The ‘continue’ button takes you through the materials according to the suggested sequence. If you don’t see a ‘continue’ button you are viewing a page which (while it may be important) branches off from the suggested sequence. The ‘back’ button takes you back to the last page you viewed.

Hyperlinks

As you probably know, you move from one page of the site to another, through the use of hyperlinks. (The ‘continue’ and ‘back’ buttons are simple examples of hyperlinks.)

On this site, other hyperlinks looks like this: hyperlink
When you click your mouse on the hyperlink, it will take you to a new page. Sometimes, a small 'popup' screen will appear in front of the original page. These popup screens usually provide additional information at some point in the text. To close a popup screen, just click your mouse on the 'close' button, which looks like this:

Sometimes hyperlinks can take you outside this site, to other Internet sites. When you click your mouse on such a hyperlink, a new window will open on top of What Works. The Work Program. When you have finished looking at the 'new' site, just close its window. (Of course, if you are working from a CD-ROM and have no Internet access, then these sites will not be available to you.)

The site map
Most pages in the site provide access to a site map. If you want to go to a particular part of the materials, using the site map can be a quick way of getting there.

The search facility
The site provides a search facility, which can also be used at any time to help you find a particular part of the materials.

A further use, however, is to locate pages within the site which relate to a particular topic. If, for example, you search using the word 'literacy', the search will produce a list of documents related to that topic.

Using ‘Bookmarks’ or ‘Favourites’
As you work with these materials, you might find that some pages are particularly important to you, in your setting. Or, if you are working through the suggested pathway, you probably won’t be doing it all in one sitting. When you come back to the work, how will you get back to where you were?

In either of these cases, you can use the ‘Bookmarks’ or ‘Favourites’ functions in your browser to make a note of any page you want to remember. Then it will be simple to return to it when you want to. (This only works, of course, if you are coming back to the same computer! If you use a different computer you might need to use the site map or search facility to get back to the page you want.)

Printing pages from the site
At any time, you can use the ‘print’ button of your browser to print the page you are seeing on your screen. (You must, of course, be connected to a printer!)

The format of the result will vary according to a number of factors, including the particular browser you are using.

There are particular and obvious reasons, however, for wanting to print particular pages, such as planning documents and discussion papers. Many of these have been designed to allow you to download them to your computer. You can then save them and print them at your leisure or use them as you like in your work.
Pages such as these are available in ‘pdf’ (portable document format) or ‘rtf’ (rich text format) versions and buttons to get them look like this:

‘pdf’ documents open with software such as Adobe Acrobat which is available free to download from the link on the **What Works. The Work Program** site or Adobe at: <http://www.adobe.com/support/downloads/main.html>

‘rtf’ documents can be opened with typical word processing software such as Microsoft Word or Word Perfect.

The advantage of both of these formats is that they allow you to produce a clean, formatted version of documents no matter what kind of computer or browser you are using.

**Health and safety considerations**

Finally, remember that whenever you are working on a computer it is good practice to make sure you are seated correctly, with the keyboard and monitor set at an appropriate height for you.

It is also important to take regular breaks away from the computer. Walking and stretching exercises are highly recommended.
Using the *PowerPoint* presentation

The CD-ROM in this package contains the first version of the digital materials which are also available on the website.

It also contains a *PowerPoint* introduction to the materials with a focus on *The Workbook*. This has been included as a result of suggestions made during trialing procedures. The people who suggested the idea had in mind the support that this sort of presentation could offer when introducing the subject to a whole staff group and/or community members and other partners.

**To make it work**

You must have a *PowerPoint* application installed on your computer. The presentation will not work without that. You must also have a drive which will accept CD-ROMs. Most contemporary computers will have this in an obvious position.

If you’re working on a Mac — insert the CD, double click the CD icon, double click the PowerPoint folder, then double click ‘Whatworks.ppt’.

If you’re working with Windows (or ‘PC’) — insert the CD, double click on ‘My Computer’, double click on the CD icon, double click the PowerPoint folder, then double click ‘Whatworks.ppt’.

**Making presentations**

If you are going to use it for a presentation, you will need

- a computer screen which is visible to all members of your audience (an upper limit of four or five usually), or
- the right sort of projector, correctly linked to the computer driving the CD-ROM, which will provide an image for a screen.

It has no sound so you will need to decide if you are going to watch it silently (possible but you can do better), read the text as it appears (never particularly satisfactory and often annoying to other participants) or talk about the text on each screen briefly on the basis of your reading of *The Guidebook* and *The Workbook* or your familiarity with the digital materials.

The script is included below to indicate what it contains and to help you plan how you might use it. It can be modified to suit your particular purposes by anyone who knows how to construct a PowerPoint presentation.
The Script

Screen 1
An Introduction to WHAT WORKS. THE WORK PROGRAM
© Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training, 2002

Screen 2
What Works. The Work Program is a set of support materials designed for people working in education and training.
It is part of the national effort to improve educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Screen 3
What Works. The Work Program has three components.
- The Guidebook
- Digital materials, and
- The Workbook

Screen 4
The Guidebook provides some general background and reasons why improvement in this area is a matter of urgency.
- It also provides an overview of the materials and many of the key points they contain.
- Finally it includes information about their development and use.

Screen 5
The digital materials have been used to store and provide access to a large body of resources.
- They include nearly forty case studies of successful practice, stories and pictures of teachers and students working in real situations.
- They also define the key messages for success in a range of relevant areas
- They’re on this CD and they’re on the Web.

Screen 6
The Workbook is designed to help you develop a plan for taking effective action, and contains ideas and tools for doing so.
The rest of the presentation will take you through it briefly.

Screen 7
A plan is just a piece of paper until it’s thought about, discussed and worked on. The Workbook will help you do that.

Screen 8
What’s the task?
As simply as possible:
The task, for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, is to improve:
- their levels of literacy and numeracy, and
- their rates of school completion and successful participation in productive training.
To do each of these things levels of attendance and engagement must be increased.
How is that to be done?
The evidence suggests that there are three general strategies. The first two are —
• building foundation academic skills, and
• encouraging engaged participation.
The third — knowledgeable and sensitive respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
and their cultures — pervades the other two.

But you need to examine your own context.
To help you do this The Workbook contains
• a checklist to review the current state of your practice, and
• some guidance for clarifying and focusing your effort.

And you will need to ensure that a partnership with your community is established.
Experience provides a consistent message —

> *Success will not be achieved without recognition of the cultural factors which may impact on that success; nor will it occur without the consent, approval and willing participation of those involved.*

This process is not always easy, but it is often rewarding and enriching for all concerned.

How do you develop effective partnerships?
The digital materials contain lots of ideas about this, but they provide a consistent starting point —

> *Get to know your students and their families well.*

That’s the foundation of an effective partnership.

Next, it is important to be clear about what it is you’re trying to achieve.
The Workbook takes you through the nature of goals and targets, their differences and why they’re important.

How will you know how you’re going?
Data matters.
As a school principal contributor to The Work Program, says: ‘We’ve collected data over a number of years and we’ve shared that. I think it’s been one of the most powerful things that have happened in the school here.’

The Workbook will help you with
• some basic information about data
• what you can collect data about
• how you can collect it
• and how you calculate results.
You can use the calculators provided in the digital materials to do this for you.
It also gives some examples to help you think about how you might want to do it.
Okay. Now what are you going to do?

Goals are an end point. Targets describe what you are trying to achieve specifically. And Strategies are how you achieve your goals and targets.

How does The Workbook help with strategies for action?

First, it provides some general advice.

- Think about individual students and the nature of your local circumstances.
- At the same time think holistically about all the issues that might be in operation.

Then it has some practical ideas which have worked elsewhere for what you might do about

- cultural respect, recognition and support
- developing skills, and
- increasing levels of participation.

In the digital materials you will find ideas about

- Building awareness
- Forming partnerships, and
- Working systematically

and also matters related to these specific topics.

- Student Health
- Improving Outcomes in Literacy
- Improving Outcomes in Numeracy
- The Early Years
- The Middle Years
- The Senior Years
- Vocational Pathways

By this stage, you’ll have a plan and be ready to get moving.

Success IS achievable.

The case studies prove that beyond doubt. Remember — any gain is an improvement.

And don’t forget to celebrate successes.
Credits

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