What Works. The Work Program

Improving outcomes for Indigenous students

The Workbook

www.whatworks.edu.au
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 Roodjar 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 Mirnuwarni Education Project

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

5. Your Turn
Go for it. Take action.

This Workbook is a ‘stripped back’ support for action.

It is intended for use in conjunction with the Guidebook and the digital materials (the website and the CD-ROMs). The Guidebook will provide some useful background in print form. The digital materials, which include a version of this material in electronic form, will fill out the picture with examples and additional detail.

It provides a number of ideas and tools to help you to achieve improved outcomes for Indigenous students. It is quite likely that you will be able to modify and improve on them for use in your own context. We hope you do.

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 consider the proposed ideas.

Use it at meetings or inservice programs for planning, acting and monitoring progress.

It is not something for the shelves. It is meant to be carried round, referred to, shown and shared.
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The Brief

What is the task?

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.

That’s the task.

You have three general strategies.

Skills  1. To develop useful academic skills in ways you currently know how.
Participation  2. To encourage engaged participation in ways which are well established.
Partnerships  3. A third — knowledgeable and sensitive respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their cultures — pervades the other two.

You will not leave the starting blocks without effective local partnerships. Genuine partnerships are not easy to foster. That is the hard part.

Most of the rest will be as straightforward as other work in education and training.

You have three focal points, all stemming from the intersection of school culture with the cultures of students.

1. School entry. Getting used to ‘doing school’ is harder for some students than others. A good start may not lead to a good finish, but it’s much better than a bad start.

2. Transition to secondary school and adolescence. It is in the early years of secondary school that most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are ‘lost’ to formal education. These are the most challenging years for many students. A valued purpose must be found for continuing.

3. The senior secondary years: clear pathways are required to ongoing education, training or employment.

Qualifications:

- A commitment to succeeding.
- A certain amount of courage and persistence.
- A will, and an ability, to find a way.

Clarify your context

What are the four or five key features of the context you are working in?

You might like to discuss these with people from outside the immediate school community as well as the staff group.

When they’re clear, write them into your plan on page 42.
The purpose of an institution-wide (‘whole school or college’) approach is to provide a coordinated way of improving the educational outcomes of your school’s Indigenous students.

The power of individual good teaching is well recognised but it is significantly more effective if it is part of an agreed and planned approach by all the staff of a school/institution, based in good pedagogy and evaluated.

- Are you as a leader actively involved in supporting and promoting the effort?
- Have the nature and purposes of the intended actions been made well known and efforts been made to establish joint ownership across the whole staff?
- Have clear, realistic but challenging targets for improvement been developed?
- Have action plans been developed which define tasks, assign responsibilities and establish timelines?
- Have the resources necessary to support the change process been provided?
- Has assistance, where required, from sources beyond the school been sought and provided?
- Is data about what is really happening within the school being collected and used as a basis for monitoring progress?
- Are successes, on any scale, noted and celebrated?
Your Preparation
What do you need to think about?

Getting started
From the digital materials, download, read and discuss the following:
• The conversation between Rosemary Cahill and Glenys Collard. (The path is Taking Action > Building Awareness > A Conversation.) Think about what contribution you would make to that conversation.
• The views expressed by experienced educators behind the ‘Doors’. (The path is Taking Action > Building Awareness > The ‘Doors’.) Answer the ‘Think and talk’ questions which come after the ‘Doors’.
• The MCEETYA task force paper on Indigenous student health. (The path is Topics > Student Health.)
• The MCEETYA task force paper on effective learning. (The path is Topics > The Early Years.)

How well are you doing?
The checklist on pages 4 and 5 has been found a useful way to assess the state of your practice. Aspects of it will recur and be explained elsewhere in these materials.

You will find four boxes next to each item. Checking one of the first three will help you to assess where you are now. Check the fourth if you think this issue is something you could and should be working on.

Compare your responses with those of other members of your staff, working group, parent community.

Where are they the same? Where do they differ? Why?
A checklist: The current state of your practice

If you can answer most of these questions positively, you’re doing well.

**General**

- How aware are you of your Indigenous students? How much do you know about their backgrounds, aspirations and needs? □ □ □ □
- In the case of students entering or exiting the school/institution, do you know where they have come from or are going to? Are arrangements in place for receiving or passing on information that would help support effective teaching and learning? □ □ □ □
- Are good personal relationships established between staff and the students and their families? □ □ □ □
- Is there a degree of flexibility, responsible but considerate, applied to arrangements for students’ education/training? □ □ □ □
- Are processes in place for liaising and maintaining regular contact with members of local communities on issues related to education/training? □ □ □ □
- Do you have specific targets in place for students’ success and have you implemented means for their achievement? □ □ □ □

**Acknowledgment, recognition and support of Indigenous cultures**

- Are provisions in place for non-Indigenous staff to learn about Indigenous cultures in general and local Indigenous cultures in particular? □ □ □ □
- Is there a recognisable Indigenous ‘presence’ in the school or institution in terms of teaching and employed support staff, guests to the school and other support personnel? □ □ □ □
- Does the school or institution recognise and express its respect for the cultures of its Indigenous students in ways that are acceptable to and appreciated by students and other members of local communities? □ □ □ □
- Where they are desired by students, are arrangements in place within the school/institution or with other schools/institutions to develop a sense of cultural support and connectedness with other Indigenous peers? □ □ □ □
- Are there opportunities for students to learn an Indigenous language or languages? □ □ □ □
Developing skills

- Do your students have any hearing or vision impairment? Where such impairments exist, are procedures in place to help rectify or alleviate them? Have teaching processes been modified to take account of them?
- Is intensive support available for students whose skills in reading and writing Standard Australian English (SAE) and numeracy are below conventional levels?
- Are the features of SAE taught explicitly and, where relevant, its differences from students’ dialectal forms of English clearly defined and explained?
- Is regular use made of the life experiences and knowledge of students to make connections with other curricular content?
- Are teaching materials that deal with Indigenous cultures in an accurate and relevant way a conventional part of the content of the curriculum?
- Does the curriculum provide opportunities for cultural reference and expression?
- Are there consistent opportunities available for students to work cooperatively?
- Are lots of ways and media for learning conventionally employed?

Attendance and participation

Where regular attendance and consistent participation are problems,

- have you worked with key members of the local community to discuss possible strategies that might change the situation?
- do you have an individual ‘case management’ process that has been developed with the help of the student, his or her parents/caregivers and the teachers/trainers concerned, that can be readily applied, and that allows for possible modifications of conventional institutional arrangements?
- are Indigenous peers, mentors or members of staff used to support individual students?
- has a plan been developed with the student(s) concerned connecting the role of education and training with any longer term aspirations they may have?
Clarify your focal points

What are the issues you are trying to resolve?
(How do you know? What is the evidence? What data do you have?)

Brainstorm and list some possible responses.

What resources do you have at your disposal now?
People
Ideas


Programs and funding


Learning materials


And just while you’re there ...

- What is the name of the traditional Indigenous custodians of the land where you are?
- What languages/s did/do they speak?
- Where did their lands extend?
- Who were the neighbouring peoples?
- Are any Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander words used to name local features — electorates, municipalities, areas, streets, geographical features? What do they mean or refer to?
- In your area, what are the main historical events associated with the arrival of non-Indigenous peoples?
- What are the names of the main local families today?
- What are the main local Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander organisations? What have they been set up for? What are their main issues and concerns currently?
- What’s ATSIC? What is it responsible for?
- Can you think of the names of six nationally historically important Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people? Who lived before 1850? Between 1900 and 1950?
- Forget sportsmen and women. Name ten well-known contemporary Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people and what they are known for?
- Who designed the Aboriginal flag and when? What is the significance of its features?
- What does the Torres Strait Islander flag look like? What are its features intended to capture? Who designed it?

[The answers to the last two questions can be found inside the back cover.]
Your Partners and Workers
Who is involved?

Forming a partnership

Effective partnerships are built on knowledge, familiarity and equality among the partners. They are also built on good communication, understanding of roles, effective negotiation, consistency and stability. Every partner has a role to play in ensuring they work.

These sorts of partnerships are likely to be complex and affected by factors of which, despite your best efforts, you are unconscious — signs, symbols and histories that are understood as important by some participants and not others.

These can be located in language, arrangements and time, place, and social climate.

Accommodating these issues begins with a genuine smile, enquiring of the other partners what they’d like and what that means to them, explaining what you’re up to, and honestly and openly figuring out together what suits — that can work.

Get to know your students and their families. That is the foundation of an effective partnership.

Have you tried ...

• developing a profile for each of your Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander students?

Filling out a form is not developing a relationship; but it may lead to or be a prompt for one. This process should be seen as an opportunity for a personal yarn or a series of yarns rather than an administrative task.

Many education and training institutions keep student profiles as a matter of course. The template included on page 11 has been derived from one such case. It may provide some points which are helpful.

Note that some issues may require handling with high levels of sensitivity. Get advice and help from an Indigenous staff member or community representative in regard to the right protocols and to build your own awareness of relevant issues.

• establishing a process for sharing information about students moving school?

Mobility is a fact of life for some Indigenous students, is likely to remain so and should be accepted as such. It is culturally characteristic that children and young people will sometimes move between relations living in different parts of the country. Frequent movement is also characteristic of groups in the population as a whole which are struggling economically.

Consider action to improve the continuity of information about and programs offered to transient students. If you know the student’s destination, with the consent and agreement of the student and his or her carers, a copy of the student profile could be forwarded to that school along with a portfolio of other relevant information. A copy should also be given to the student and/or his or her carers.

The portfolio could include:

• a photo of the student, with their name and year level
• up-to-date samples of his or her work
• any additional test score or assessment information which is relevant
Have you tried ... (cont.)

- asking parents and other community members about their preferences for ways of liaising and maintaining regular contact on issues related to education/training?

It is sometimes unrealistic to expect Indigenous parents/carers to participate in Western-style meetings or parent-teacher nights. The level of formality (derived from cultural conventions) may be off-putting, or it might be that, in some locations, contact is preferred through Elders. The best advice is to find out what the preferences of your local community are.

- working together on a plan such as this Workbook contains?

Good partnerships are fair dinkum. Shared commitment comes from sharing serious work. For full effectiveness, all parties must be involved. That doesn’t necessarily mean formal meetings. There are all sorts of ways to share information and decisions. See above.

You’ll find many more examples and ideas in the digital materials.

Go to ‘Taking Action’ then ‘Forming partnerships’.
Student profile

Name:

Address:

Contact for caregivers:

**Relevant family details:** (Brothers and sisters? Aunties or Uncles? Who is the student living with? Who do they live with sometimes? What is his/her people’s country?)

**Schooling history:** (How long at this school? What other schools have been attended?)

**Getting to school:** (How does the student normally get to school?)

**Attendance:**

**Literacy/Numeracy levels:** (school testing results)

**Interests, like and dislikes:** (Sport, art, music, etc. Also things he or she likes or dislikes about school.)

**Responsibilities:** (Commitments outside school like child minding, clubs, sport, practices)

**Any other relevant information**
Your partners and workers

The person in charge of the improvement effort

Name: 
Responsibilities: 

Where that person is not the principal …

Principal's responsibilities

Working group, including Community partners (see ‘Forming a partnership’ above)

Names: 
Responsibilities: 

Other relevant agencies

Local Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander organisations

Contacts: 
Useful background information: 

Local Indigenous education/training consultancy support

Contacts: 
Useful background information: 


State/system coordinating officers

Contacts:

Useful background information:

State/Territory branch of the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) with responsibility for Indigenous education

Contacts:

Useful background information:

Health

Contacts:

Useful background information:

Welfare

Contacts:

Useful background information:

Community Services

Contacts:

Useful background information:
Employment
Contacts:
Useful background information:

Police agencies
Contacts:
Useful background information:

Local Youth Organisations
Contacts:
Useful background information:

Service clubs
Contacts:
Useful background information:

Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander cultural or performance groups
Contacts:
Useful background information:

TAKING ACTION

Establish the partnership
Put the names of the main partners in your plan on page 42.
You could include an outline of their roles and responsibilities.
Your Goals and Targets
What are you going to achieve?

What changes in the performance of your Indigenous students are you going to see this year?

What’s a goal?
A goal is a statement of what you are trying to achieve — frequently in general and sometimes in overall terms. Goals differ in important ways from targets and performance indicators (see page 16).

Four goals of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education policy most relevant here are:

• To provide adequate preparation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children through pre-school education for the schooling years ahead.

• To enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander attainment of skills to the same standard as other Australian students throughout the compulsory years of schooling.

• To enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to attain the successful completion of year 12 or equivalent at the same rate as for other Australian students.

• To enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to attain the same graduation rates from award courses in technical and further education, and in higher education, as for other Australians.

The over-arching goal is to eliminate the gap between the success rates of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. This is where your thinking and planning should start.

The value of thinking holistically and the need for working across a whole institution for maximum effectiveness are referred to below. But because of the way multiple focal points may make effort diffuse and cause energy to be unrealistically spread, some management theory says — more than three goals equals no goals. Three goals is likely to be an upper limit for effective work.

Discuss and define your goals
Write them into your plan on page 42.
What’s a target?

Targets differ from goals in their degree of specificity and time-bounded-ness. They are ‘what by when’ statements, defining how and by when goals will be achieved.

So, a goal might be — ‘to improve the level of literacy among upper primary students’. Relevant targets might be —

‘to have 65 percent of Years 5 & 6 students performing at or above statewide averages in the literacy elements of the Basic Skills Test within two years’, OR
‘to increase the proportion of Years 5, 6 & 7 students working at level X in literacy by the end of the year by 15 percent’.

While goals may be lasting, targets can be progressive or otherwise adjusted as circumstances change.

Why set targets?

Setting targets for achievement has not been a widespread practice among educators in the past. Some of the reasons: perceptions of their limited dimensionality in a complex and diffuse process and some dispute about the nature of the goals to be met; inability to control the wide range of variables in operation; and suspicions about the adequacy and reliability of test instruments and other data-gathering procedures. These arguments about purpose, responsibility, efficacy and validity have been well rehearsed and all have a point.

However, targets and indicators of performance define and drive work.

They focus attention on what is to be achieved (and they are one way to deal with that bane of teachers’ lives, inability to define the outcomes of their work).

They will contribute to fostering a climate of engaged and serious purpose among staff.

They do so when they:

• focus on the main things without pretending to be comprehensive.
  Think: levels of literacy and numeracy and completion rates. They are targets. There may be sub-targets like increases in rates of attendance or decreases in discipline referrals which contribute to the achievement of those targets or which are useful indicators of institutional health and effectiveness.

• are reasonable and within reach.
  In some cases a 25 percent improvement over the course of a year will be a reasonable target; in others, perhaps 10 percent. We have many records of achievement at far higher levels. You’ll have to work this out for your own situation. But remember that targets are about what you think you can achieve if you try.

• are limited in number.
  The comments made above about suitable numbers of goals also applies to targets. When setting targets, discipline your thinking. Go for the main, most influential matters.
• are well formulated. They must be clear, concrete and easily intelligible, which usually means expressed as simply as possible. For example:
— 90% of Year 4 Indigenous students progress one or more Levels/Stages in literacy and numeracy (as defined in the relevant curriculum documents) over the next three semesters.
— 25% improvement in retention rate from Year 10 to Year 11 for 2002.
— 85% completion rate of course X this year.

• can be reliably and fairly easily evidenced. Get some ideas about this from the section on data, page 18.

**Add targets to your goals**

Write them into your plan on page 42. BUT FIRST …

Look at the examples of goals and targets in the section on data pages 21–23.

Discuss suitable targets and how they can be framed. Go back over the advice on the previous page.

You may find it useful to think in term of groups of students within the school, at certain year levels for example.

For your targets, you could try using the formulation: [What proportion] of [which students] will [what] by [when].
Your Data
How will you know how you’re going?

Collecting and analysing data is an essential part of working on improvement.

How are you going to prove you’re getting better outcomes if you don’t collect data?

Way back in 1996/97 I had a talk to the community and the staff. If we’re saying we’re going to get better outcomes we need to collect data to say — what are we measuring against? what are we benchmarking? Instead of just saying generally I think we’re getting better every year — how do you prove that?

We use that information to encourage kids to get better results… to look at the professional development needs of the teachers and the parents. If we find there is a particular thing that is not working — how do we make it work? It may be that we have to get an expert in to do some workshops. It may be that we visit another school to look at some best practice. It may be that we look at the expertise within our school and use that.

So we’ve collected data over a number of years and we’ve shared that and I think it’s been one of the most powerful things that have happened in the school here.

— Steve Foster, Principal, Badu Island State School

What are data?

Data are information, including observations and perceptions as well as quantitative information derived from sources such as test scores. They can be collected, for example, from surveys, from tests, from roll books, from teacher judgements and from collected opinions or formal assessments.

What are they for?

In this case — to give you a clear idea about how you’re going, to provide an effective basis for discussion and analysis of action and its results, to record progress, and to get a clear picture of what has happened.

You are also likely to need them for reports, for publicity, for allocating resources and for seeking additional resources.
What can you collect data about?

You can collect data about anything, and you can waste a lot of time doing so. As suggested above, it is best to concentrate on a limited number of important indicators which are well formulated and can be reliably and fairly easily evidenced.

These materials suggest two focal points:
- literacy and numeracy skills, and
- completion rates
which are both underpinned by
- participation rates.

Even given a level of transience, it is possible to collect very accurate data on attendance and completion rates. Where there is a high level of transience, you need to identify your students carefully.

With literacy and numeracy skills the picture may be less exact. It is important to be clear and specific. So you say, for example, that: ‘Using X measure [at least twice] our Y students progressed Z. This compares with [state-wide averages, national rates, ‘like school’ rates]’. Rather than: ‘Our Y students are X’.

Current tests in wide use are vastly improved from those from a decade or so ago. The easy criticisms that were heard then have generally been attended to and there have been very serious efforts to rectify matters like cultural bias. The ACER National Literacy Mapping Survey is a good example. (You can read about this in Masters and Forster (1997) *Mapping Literacy Achievement: Results of the 1996 National School English Survey* available from ACER, 19 Prospect Hill Road, Camberwell, VIC 3124.) Results won’t be perfect, but they will generally be a good guide to what is going on.

There are other things you can collect data about central to our purposes here. You could start with the 21 goals of the National Policy. (They’re in *The Guidebook*.) Let’s take just one of these.

Goal 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.

What could you measure to assess your performance in meeting this goal?

Think about opportunities made available, support (and possibly training) provided, level of involvement.

You can measure those. How?
How do you collect data?

Decide what you want information about.
Don’t collect information just for the sake of doing so. Time is too short. Choose issues which are
— central to the issue you are interested in
— will tell you what you want to know, and
— which you can measure as reliably as possible.

Decide how you’re going to get it.
• Find a suitable performance indicator. A performance indicator is a focal point that can be measured, which tells you what’s happened and how well you’ve done. For example,
  — ‘The proportion of Indigenous students receiving intensive literacy support’, or
  — ‘The extent to which students achieve attendance targets set out for them’, or
  — ‘The extent to which families believe their children’s needs are being met’.
• You might need an instrument. The method used to collect data is a process, but at its heart is usually an instrument. Surveys are instruments; a form for summarising attendance data is an instrument; the Basic Skills Test (itself) is an instrument; a list of questions you ask one or more people is an instrument.

Establish a baseline.
A baseline describes your starting point, where you are now.
For example:
— ‘At the end of 2000, 68 percent of your Year 4 students were working at Level X in various aspects of literacy’, or,
— ‘At the beginning of 1999 no Indigenous staff were employed’, or
— ‘In May 2001 four teachers had incorporated Aboriginal perspectives in their courses’.

After a suitable period of time do just what you did before.
In order to make valid comparisons over time or across groups the same method or instrument should be used. This is basic to making valid and reliable comparisons.
Some examples

Example One

Goal
To increase the level of access of young Indigenous children to preschool services and improve the quality of transition to school.

Targets, performance indicators and results
Target: provision of programs and services for Indigenous pre-school children and their parents in ten locations where these did not exist
Performance Indicator: existence of programs
Data source: project records
Results: achieved. All participating children commenced Kindergarten the following year.

Target: increase attendance levels among these children in the first year of schooling
Performance Indicator: attendance rates
Data source: School records
Results: The attendance rate during the Kindergarten year following participation in the transition program was 86% for Indigenous children (compared with the overall rate of 83%).

Target: increase levels of ‘school readiness’ in literacy and numeracy
Performance Indicator: satisfy providers’ expectations of readiness in literacy and numeracy for entry to Kindergarten.
Data source: Teacher records
Results: Of the 100 students in the target group, 92 satisfied providers’ expectations.

Target: improve levels of Aboriginal community involvement in the ‘life of schools’ their children attend
Performance Indicator: levels of participation
Data source: Numbers of Aboriginal parents/carers in attendance at school events. Numbers of Aboriginal parents/carers joining in classroom activities.
Results: increased Aboriginal community involvement in all school events.

No baseline data because the project was new.

Could this target have specified a ‘level’ or ‘rate’?

Good data sources? What do you think?

Useful comparison with another set of relevant data.
Example Two

Goals, targets, indicators and results

Goal: to increase the level of intensive literacy support offered to secondary students

Note: This information was collected by two surveys separated by 12 months.

— Proportion of Indigenous students receiving special literacy support

Baseline: 55%
Target: 74%
Result: 77%

Goal: to increase the Indigenous ‘presence’ in the curriculum

— Proportion of schools offering Aboriginal studies

Baseline: 60%
Target: 90%
Result: 100%

— Number of Indigenous people involved in designing curriculum

Baseline: 0
Target: 2
Result: 3

Goal: to increase attendance rates

— Attendance rates

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 9</td>
<td>90.4%</td>
<td>92.5%</td>
<td>93.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 10</td>
<td>88.3%</td>
<td>96.0%</td>
<td>95.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 11</td>
<td>91.6%</td>
<td>91.5%</td>
<td>89.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 12</td>
<td>91.5%</td>
<td>93.0%</td>
<td>93.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Goal: to increase progression and completion rates

— Progression rates (student numbers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 9 to Year 10:</th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6/6</td>
<td>6/6</td>
<td>7/7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 10 to Year 11:</td>
<td>8/9</td>
<td>7/8</td>
<td>9/9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 11 to Year 12:</td>
<td>4/6</td>
<td>6/9</td>
<td>4/7 (and TAFE: 2/7)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

— Completion rates (student numbers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 10</th>
<th>Year 11</th>
<th>Year 12</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baseline</td>
<td>9/10</td>
<td>6/8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target</td>
<td>7/7</td>
<td>8/9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results</td>
<td>9/10</td>
<td>8/9</td>
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</table>
Example Three

Goal
To improve the level of educational outcomes for Aboriginal students in this area to a level similar to that of the broader population, so that they are able to take on apprenticeships, commercial cadetships, or pursue further education and employment opportunities.

General targets and data sources
- improve educational outcomes of at least 75% of Aboriginal students in the pilot project to a level similar to the broader population of this area after three years.
  - From the Annual Progress Report: Progress of project students compared with Shire average.
  - Final assessments: Progress of project students compared with Shire average.
- produce 15 Aboriginal young people from this area who are able to enter employment at the level of apprenticeships, commercial cadetships or higher, or enter higher education beyond Year 12.
  - Progress over three years within initial core group of student participants.

Other performance indicators and data sources
- the extent to which educational achievement of students shows progress towards the required standard for employment.
  - School records to identify progress from baseline to target.
- the extent to which students achieve attendance targets set out for them.
  - School records of attendance.
- the extent to which each group completes the project as an entity (retention within the group, or ‘drop-out’ rate).
  - Numbers of students who started and completed within the project.
- the extent to which students perceive their needs are being met, and the extent to which families perceive their needs being met
  - Surveys of project students and their families
- the extent to which traditional Aboriginal culture is reinforced and valued, and used in the project.
  - Collected perceptions of Aboriginal community members, families and students.
  - Number of times that Elders are involved in the program. Their levels of satisfaction with their involvement.

Note the level of specificity.

Your Data

The proportion —
the 'what'.
The time —
the 'by when'.

It is assumed that these performance indicators are closely related to the goal. What do you think?
How do you calculate results?

The IESIP performance indicators
The Report of the MCEETYA Taskforce on Indigenous Education (March 2000) and the subsequent DETYA IESIP publication *Performance Indicator Handbook: Supplementary Recurrent Assistance (SRA) 2001–2004* contain information on data gathering and analysis to be reported.

For systemic schools, i.e., government schools and most Catholic schools, the information required can be collected and analysed centrally from data generated by system-wide assessments and testing and by student census material.

All schools are required to provide some information and understanding some of the terms used in these publications is useful. Here are some explanations.

Benchmarks: These have been established nationally in Literacy and Numeracy. All schools have copies of them. When the process is completed there will be benchmarks for Years 3, 5, 7 and 9.

Cut score: This is a score on a test that a group of people (in this case including educators and teachers) have decided will be the Benchmark or ‘standard’. Some students’ performances will be above this, and some below. Cut scores are intended to provide a general notion of comparative performance over time.

State assessments and tests: States, systems and independent schools use different mechanisms for assessing students’ achievement against the Benchmarks (e.g., Basic Skills Tests in NSW and SA). Some base their results on a sample of students (*sampling*); most test all students (*full cohort testing*).

Equating: This is an agreed process that converts results in one test to an equivalent in another, so that comparisons can be made across states and systems.

Calculations: The IESIP Performance Indicator folder contains formulas for working out the percentage of students who have achieved various benchmarks.

You will find calculators in the digital materials that will help you do the calculations for these indicators. (The path is Taking Action > Working Systematically > Your Data.)

The calculators will also help you do other useful calculations.

Calculating attendance rates
It is relatively easy to compare attendance of individuals and groups within the school, across years levels, over time, with other schools and with national, state and regional data.

Your school census information will provide the relevant information on the numbers of students in your schools and subsets of that number including Indigenous students at various Year levels. Attendance records will provide the other necessary data.

In the digital materials (see above for location) you will find a calculator which will help you calculate attendance rates in your own setting.

You will also find a mechanism for producing pie-charts which illustrate the attendance patterns of individual students. Just presenting the facts in this way has proved helpful in some locations when talking with students’ families.
Calculating completion, progression and retention rates

**Completion rates** are about the percentage of students who complete a course or year of study.

**Progression rates** are about the percentage of students who complete one school year and enrol in the next — such as Year 5 to Year 6 or Year 10 to Year 11.

**Retention rates** are about the percentage of students who remain at school after a number of years — such as Year 7 to Year 12. Strictly speaking, these are best described as apparent retention rates.

Calculators in the digital materials will help you with all of these (see above for location).

Measuring rates of literacy and numeracy

Achievement in literacy and numeracy can be measured in a number of ways. The most significant way is to assess students against the national literacy and numeracy benchmarks for students in years 3, 5, and eventually 7 and 9.

**Why use the benchmarks?**

- They are national.
- State, Territory and non-government systems have developed tests and other assessment tools that can be used to measure achievement ‘against’ (ie ‘in relation to’) them.
- Results can be more reliably compared across groups of children in schools, in systems and nationally.
- The rate of progress of individual students from Year 3 to Year 5 to Year 7 to Year 9 can be monitored.
- Reporting is required against the benchmarks by systems and the Commonwealth government.

Testing programs have been developed and implemented in States/Territories which provide information about your students.

Otherwise, there is a wide range of tools which will help to diagnose and assess students’ performance. Some of those in common use include:

- School Entry Assessment
- First Steps Continua
- Developmental Assessment Resource for Teachers (DART) materials from the Australian Council for Education Research (ACER)
- Waddingtons Diagnostic Tests (Numeracy and Literacy)
- TORCH (ACER Reading Comprehension Assessments)
- NEALE analysis
- The ESL Scope and Scales
How do you analyse data?

In simple terms …

**Make comparisons with other like data you have collected over time.**
*Like data* is the same information you are collecting, and collected by the same means.

You can make comparisons with how this group of your students performed compared with
- their performance previously
- other students working in the same area at a different time (eg, this year’s Year 9 literacy results compared with last year’s).

**Make comparisons with other like data from other sources.**
You can make comparisons with
- the performance of the same individual or group of students, and/or
- the performance of differing groups of students, like a school-wide group, a ‘like school’ group, a state/territory-wide group, or national results. (‘Like-school data’ is information collected using the same or equivalent instrument in a school like yours in terms, for example, of size, proportion of Indigenous students, makeup of the school population, and context.)

**Think about the reasons for what you’ve found.**
This is the hard part. The relationships between outcomes and their causes are sometimes difficult to establish in education and training. You might need to investigate further and explore other sources of information. Don’t be seduced by the results from one source or procedure. It can only ever be part of the story. The best analyses come from using data from a range of sources.

The case studies in the digital materials provide some good examples of this process.

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**TAKING ACTION**

**Add performance indicators, data sources and procedures for collection of data to your targets**

Choose one or more performance indicators which will tell you how you have gone.

Decide how you will measure performance according to the indicator.

Establish a time frame for your data collection. THEN …

Write what you have decided into your plan, page 42.
Your Strategies
What can you try?

Your goals are an end point.
Your targets describe what you are trying to achieve specifically.

Strategies are how you will achieve your goals and targets.

At the end of this section (page 41) is a task related to strategies to help your plan evolve. Use the intervening material to help you. But first, two pieces of advice which may be useful — a version of ‘think globally; act locally’ recast here as ‘think holistically; think about individuals’.

Think holistically

It’s no use having an excellent literacy program if students are not attending school. Equally, if students are attending, quality programs are required for progress to be achieved.

Material in The Guidebook and in the digital materials will explain why there are three central strategies to work on and why they are inextricably related.

• Cultural respect, recognition and support
• Skill development, and
• Participation.

On pages 34–41 you will find some ideas for action for each of these strategies. Many more are in the digital materials. But first …

There are many factors to take into consideration. Think about the ones which apply in your context.
With your goals and targets in mind, pick out the main factors.
Clarify the relationships between these issues. What contributes to what?
Think holistically, but don’t try to do everything at once.
Celebrate and build on small successes.

On the following pages is a list and a diagram which provide examples of this process.
A list of strategies

This is a ‘beginning list’ of strategies (or issues to think about and reflect in the project) developed by the partners in the Gumala Mirnumvarri Education Project at Karratha Senior High School in Western Australia.

• putting in’ cultural experiences
• family commitment to the Project
• level of family support
• Aboriginal presence in the Project
• camps, tours and industry awareness visits
• enrichment centres
• mentoring at school
• tutoring
• short term rewards
• school structures
• quality of project staff
• quality of teachers
• relationships
• peer influence and role modelling for students
• levels of expectations of students by adults
• the effect of ‘the Compact’ (an agreement between the various partners which formed the basis of the project)
A ‘spidergram’ of strategies

At a ‘Dare to Lead’ forum held in Launceston, the principal of a Tasmanian secondary school described the action process that operates at his school — not as a best case, but as an example of structured and planned local effort.

He first identified necessary stages in planning:

• Leadership
• Approval and mandate from members of the local Aboriginal community
• Formal planning embedded in school plans
• Implementation through programs and other action
• Review of performance and celebration of successes.

He also provided a ‘spidergram’ of strategies, programs and activities to illustrate what had happened at his school in practice.
Think about individual students

One strong message of these materials is to start with individual students.

Have you tried ...

- negotiating and preparing individual action plans or contracts for individual students with the student and his or her carers?

Even where there is no whole school plan this has been one strategy which has frequently paid dividends for all concerned. It might be down the track in your work, but while you are thinking about the other issues don’t neglect this possibility.

Action plans work best when they are focused not on rectifying a particular issue like attendance, but on students’ longer-term aspirations and goals. This increases the level of seriousness and suggests that education and training have purposes which, while they might be out of sight, are not out of reach.

Action to be taken should nonetheless be broken down into intelligible and achievable steps. Coming to school for at least 15 out of the next 20 days might be one of these.

A framework for developing an individual action plan comes next, followed by a template for a plan itself.
Action plans for individual students

Thinking about it and talking it over

• What are the student's aspirations?
• What does he or she need to do to achieve them?

Big goals, and big steps. Map it out clearly and simply. Where does education and training fit into that picture? What benefits could result that mean something to the student?
• What could be an area of improvement now?
Attendance? Participation? Literacy achievement? Numeracy achievement? Is the student at risk of leaving school early?
• What is an appropriate goal now?
Decide on a goal that is appropriate, achievable and able to be monitored. Set achievable short-term goals with a longer term goal in mind.
• Who needs to be involved?
Apart from you and your teacher colleagues, it is important to involve caregivers. They need to know that this student will experience better outcomes. Depending on what the goal is, you may also involve service providers like health educators, community representatives, etc.
• What will your strategy be?
List in sequence the things you will do together to get a result. Remember this is a partnership — so you need to set out what you will do and what the student's family might do as well as what the student will do.
• What is the timeframe?
Is it a month? One term? Two terms? One school year?
Consider the appropriateness of the goal to the timeframe. For example, if health issues are one of the main causes of non attendance, it is unlikely that you can realistically support increased attendance without parents leading the change and over a longer period of time. Improvements in literacy may be visible over a semester or shorter period.
• How will you monitor progress?
What information is available in the school about the student’s current status in relation to the goal? How can you establish this? What tools can you use? What indicators will demonstrate that the student is achieving better outcomes? Teacher judgement will always play an important role.
• How will you discuss and record progress?
How will you store and communicate information about the student’s achievement with the student, his or her carers and your colleagues?
• How will you celebrate and reward achievement?
• What do we do next?
The process doesn’t stop here but continues. A new term, a new year, a new teacher.
Play a role in the handover and help to set a new goal for the student based on what you now know.
Action plan

Name

Class

Long-term goal

Targets for now

How will we know?
[Indicators of achievement and ways of implementing them, stated simply and clearly. For example, ‘On the next test …’; ‘We’ll fill in your own data sheet about attendance — blue for when you’re here, red for when you’re not …’]

Partners

Timeframe

Strategies
What will [the student] do, by when?
Your Strategies

What will [the teacher and school/training institution] do, by when?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

What will [the carers] do, [by when]?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

When will we talk about what’s happening?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

How will we celebrate?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

What is the next goal?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Cultural respect, recognition and support
— an essential part of forming an effective partnership.

Remember —
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. 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.

Don’t make assumptions. Find out.

These ideas are framed according to the relevant questions in the earlier checklist.

Are provisions in place for non-Indigenous staff to learn about Indigenous cultures in general and local Indigenous cultures in particular?

Have you tried ...
• including relevant cross-cultural awareness programs in your professional development program?
• inviting Indigenous speakers to talk with students and staff?
• taking tours guided by community members to important local cultural sites?
• ensuring that your institution has accessible copies of core documents related to contemporary Indigenous issues. The digital materials include a list of suggestions. (The path is Taking Action > Building Awareness > Extending Your Knowledge.)

Is there a recognisable Indigenous ‘presence’ in the school or institution in terms of teaching and employed support staff, guests to the school and other support personnel?

Have you tried ...
• employing Indigenous teachers, education and other workers?
• ensuring that all of them have opportunities for professional development related to the actual nature of their work?
• maintaining one or more defined positions for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander parents or community representatives on your school council or board?
• establishing arrangements for welcoming Indigenous parents and carers when they come to school that they appreciate?
• offering Indigenous members of the community a space in the school/College for their own use?
• taking tours guided by community members to important local cultural sites?
Does the school or institution recognise and express its respect for the cultures of its Indigenous students in ways that are acceptable to and appreciated by students and other members of local communities?

**Have you tried ...**
- displaying local Indigenous art and artefacts or other public signs and symbols (the flags, murals, posters, charters, land rights information and so on) that Indigenous people appreciate and that are a sign of the institution’s acknowledgment?
- seeking a ‘welcome to country’ from appropriate Indigenous Elders to open formal school ceremonial occasions like speech nights, presentations or assemblies to begin the school year?
- arranging visits by or excursions to Indigenous dance or music performances?
- auditing courses to ensure that they include appropriate Indigenous perspectives?
- offering courses of study of one or more Indigenous language, offering courses of study about Indigenous languages or, where relevant, providing learning materials in the students’ own languages?
- reviewing library resources related to Australia’s Indigenous peoples for their coverage and adequacy?

Where they are desired by students, are arrangements in place within the school/institution or with other schools/institutions to develop a sense of cultural support and connectedness with other Indigenous peers?

**Have you tried ...**
- offering Indigenous students a space in the school/College for their own use?
- developing ICTs-based networks of contact and support for your Indigenous students with students in other locations?
- inviting Indigenous speakers to talk to students and staff?

Tick off the ones that you’re trying. Run a highlighter through other possibilities.
Developing skills

Good education
- assumes all learners can and will succeed
- makes its demands clearly known
- includes explanations of the purpose and value of what is being learnt and efforts to ensure that they have meaning for the student
- provides a series of well-structured steps relevant to the competence and background knowledge of students
- searches for strategies to which students will respond
- provides a maximum of explicit guidance and modelling
- provides opportunities for practice, and consistent useful feedback
- accommodates variations in pace, and pays special attention to the needs of students who don’t get it first time, and
- includes a level of intensity and manageable challenge.

Have you tried ...
- having and establishing high expectations of success, by explaining what you are trying to achieve together, how you intend to get there, what a ‘good result’ will look and be like?
- checking whether or not your students have any hearing or vision impairment? Where such impairments exist, are procedures in place to help rectify or alleviate them? Have teaching processes been modified to take account of them?

Think about this
- Learning is derived from perception — seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, smelling and the kinaesthetic sense, awareness of your own body, its ‘place in space’ and its relation to other animate and inanimate objects. These are how we derive information about the world. If one or more of these functions are impaired or, for that matter, particularly acute, assumptions about what is conventional will not apply.
- Conventionally, learning at school or in training settings is heavily dependent on being able to see and hear well. The comparatively high incidence of hearing and other sensory impairment among some Aboriginal children and Torres Strait Islander children mean that these are matters for sensitive attention, with some potential modification of teaching practice and additional support for students required.

- providing intensive individual or small group support for students whose skills in reading and writing Standard Australian English (SAE) and numeracy are below conventional levels?
- teaching features of SAE explicitly and, where relevant, its differences from students’ dialectal forms of English defining and explaining them clearly?
- breaking what is to be learnt into achievable steps, ‘scaffolding them’ and teaching them specifically (providing suitable conceptual and practical tools, referring to other relevant examples where students have been successful reminding them what they did when they …, seeing if there is another way to look at it, and so on)?
- making regular use of the life experiences and knowledge of students to make connections with other curricular content? Have you reviewed what you are doing and using now and explored alternatives to improve the relevance of curricular to students’ lives, interests, context and culture?
• using teaching materials that deal with Indigenous cultures in an accurate and relevant way as a conventional part of the content of the curriculum?
• providing opportunities for cultural reference and expression?
• providing consistent opportunities available for students to work cooperatively?

The one aspect of learning styles about which there appears to be some consistency among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students is the way they value and get results from working in collaboration with others. This applies, of course, to many other students.
• using a range of types of learning opportunities and media as a matter of course?

Tick off the ones that you’re trying. Run a highlighter through other possibilities.
Participation

Woody Allen once said: ‘90 percent of success comes from turning up’. He might have been joking. But, while we can’t say ‘90 percent’, we do know that consistent attendance and engaged participation are powerfully linked to success in education and training.

Where there are problems, have you tried …

- investigating the causes of absence? (Read the following pages.)
- working with key members of the local community to discuss possible strategies that might improve the situation?
- making efforts to
  - establish closer and less formal personal relationships between teachers and students?
  - provide a more informal and less regimented climate?
  - provide students with opportunities to negotiate work?
  - teach so that success can be regularly and obviously achieved?
- increasing the level of contact between students and Indigenous peers, mentors or members of staff in order to support individual students?
- ‘managing’ students on a case-by-case basis through
  - home visits and other forms of community liaison?
  - personal contact and consistent follow-up where absence occurs?
  - personal planning and goal-setting?
  - some work-related studies and experiences for older (age 14/15 plus) students?
  - support with academic work?
  - linkages (actual and/or electronic) with other students in similar situations?
  - counselling and mediation where problems are occurring?

These ‘case management’ processes work best when they have been developed with the help of the student, his or her parents/caregivers and the teachers/trainers concerned, when they can be readily applied, and when they allow for possible modifications of conventional institutional arrangements.

- developing a plan with the student(s) concerned connecting the role of education and training with any longer term aspirations they may have and laying out clearly what is required to get to their goals? (See page 31.)

And some advice from successful experience —

Schools should not reward Koori kids by suspension when they get into trouble at school. Rather, they should bring in a Koori task force at the critical moment and work through a special and intense mentoring program to keep that kid in school.
Investigating reasons for absence

Sporadic attendance is scarcely an issue confined to Indigenous students. Estimates of chronic ‘truancy’ range from two to 40 percent of the total school population in the compulsory years.

Some years ago a study was carried out of absenteeism among Years 7–10 students in a group of secondary schools in the northern suburbs of Melbourne (McRae, 1990). The attendance records of 2040 students from six schools were examined; 294 cases, or between 12 and 18 percent of the total, varying according to school, were investigated further because of a pattern of unexplained absence. The data illustrated that staying away from school was about more than ducking off to the shops or staying home to watch TV.

The reasons for absence were loosely grouped. Some of them are included here.

- Students who were required to help at home. For example, one Year 8 girl whose mother had recently died was looking after her invalid father and five brothers and sisters. Her friend in Year 8 was kept home by her parents because they believed that she had had sufficient education and should now take up home duties. These cases clustered at Years 7 and 8, possibly because such students have left school by Year 9. The pattern for these absences was a regular day a week, becoming two regular days a week and so on.

- Students who felt, in common with their teachers, that they ‘couldn’t do the work’. A large proportion of this group were either illiterate, or semi-literate in English. One-third were students of non-English-speaking background. Among those who were illiterate were a number of Aboriginal students whose schooling was also affected by high mobility and poverty. (One family had enough clothes for half the children only and hence they would take it in turns to go to school. The ones left at home would spend the day in bed.) At school these students ‘just sit there’.

- Students who were not at school and not likely to be at home. They would be in the nearby shopping centre or the city. This group, female and mainly in Years 9 and 10, had decided that school was a childish pastime. Often physically mature and sexually sophisticated (relative to their peers) they tended to be absent in groups and difficult when they were at school. Their parents tended to support their absences; in fact, a parent was often part of the group. Often bright and academically capable, they had little respect for conventional authority.

- Year 7 boys who were ‘testing their arm’. They would truant in the most conventional sense of the word by going to shopping centres, down to the creek, or to old factories or deserted buildings. They would continue to do this until they were ‘caught’. When this happened and their parents became involved they would generally stop.
- Students who stayed away because of real or imagined bullying and victimisation at school. Their social interactions with either students or teachers at school were unhappy. They were spread fairly evenly through Years 7–9, and balanced in terms of gender. They tended to stay at home for relatively brief periods after upsets. Other students grouped here were neither abrasive nor fractious. They had had major problems with primary-secondary transition and were sporadic attenders as a result. They were small in number, confined to Year 7, and balanced in terms of gender.

- Highly transient students. They had all been to many schools, in two cases more than twenty. Some were the children of itinerant workers, but the considerable majority were not with their parents. Most commonly they lived with grandparents, ‘aunts’ or ‘uncles’, and relatives and friends spread throughout the country. If they attended school at all, there were long gaps between short periods of regular attendance.

- Students who left for some classes and because of some teachers. Because of the nature of this practice school records are incomplete and it is probably far more widespread than the number of cases recorded.

- Students who had a very strong attachment to home reinforced by parental protection, sometimes coupled with very high expectations of academic performance which the school was blamed for not realising. Low levels of maturity, both social and emotional were characteristic of this group.

The broad findings of this study included:

- reasons for absenteeism are extremely various and need to be treated as such, and
- the formal nature of the school curriculum and the size of school organisational units were themselves of little significance. The most important ‘school factor’ was the nature and quality of relationships between students and staff.

What are the reasons for your students’ absences?
Check your roll books, talk to the teachers responsible for pastoral care, talk to the kids themselves. Explain that you’re just investigating so that you can do a better job.
Add strategies to your goals and targets

Write your strategies into your plan on the following page. BUT FIRST …

You might like to make a list from your work in this section of things you could try, and test them against your goals and targets.

Are the strategies you have chosen likely to do the job?

Do they cover all the bases?

Do they make sense when you look at them together?

Can you see how they might, where relevant, support each other and strengthen outcomes?
Your Plan
What do you need to do?

This is where you bring it all together: goals, targets, performance indicators, strategies, responsibilities, resources and timelines.
Goal 1

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<th>Target/s</th>
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<td>Baseline data (where it exists):</td>
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<td>Results by date:</td>
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<th>Strategy</th>
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### Goal 2

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| Baseline data (where it exists): |

| Results by date: |

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Goal 3

**Target/s**
Performance indicator/s:

Baseline data (where it exists):

Results by date:

**Strategy**
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Your Successes
How will you celebrate them?

Success is infectious. Suddenly the track is open, the goal within reach. If you can get this far, you might be able to get further.

Reward and celebrate hard work and achievement.

You know how to do this. No advice is necessary.

But write down what you are going to do here anyway, something your students, their families and staff will really enjoy —
Answers to the last two questions on page 8.

The Aboriginal flag

The Aboriginal flag was designed in 1971 by Harold Thomas, a Luritja man from Central Australia. The flag is divided horizontally into equal halves of black (top) and red (bottom), with a yellow circle in the centre. The black represents the Aboriginal people — past (ancestors who were the first people of this land), present and future. The yellow represents the sun, the giver of life and of light and warmth. The red represents Mother Earth from whom all life and spirituality have come.

The flag is a powerful symbol that unifies Aboriginal people across Australia.

The Torres Strait Islander flag

The Torres Strait Islander flag was designed by 15 year-old Bernard Namok of Thursday Island and accepted by the Island Co-ordinating Council on behalf of all Torres Strait Islander people. The flag was first flown at the Torres Strait Cultural Festival at Thursday Island in May 1992.

The environment, and its relationship to the masses of land to the north and south of the Torres Strait, is reflected in the design, together with the history and cultures of the Torres Strait Islander people.

The green upper and lower panels represent the land. The blue panel represents the waters of Torres Strait. The black lines represent the Indigenous people of the Torres Strait. The white feathered dhari (headdress) symbolises all Torres Strait Islander people. The white of the star represents peace. The five divisions of the Torres Strait region are depicted in the five-pointed star: Eastern Islands; Western Islands; Central Islands; Waibene (Thursday Island), Nurapai (Horn Island), Muralag (Prince of Wales Island), Kirirri (Hammond Island); and Northern Peninsula Area, mainland Torres Strait Islanders. The star, used in navigation, is an important symbol for the seafaring Torres Strait Islander people.
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.

If outcomes for Indigenous students are to be improved
• they must be given respect
• their cultures and the relevant implications of those cultures must be respected
• they must be taught well
• and they must participate consistently.

Improvement is a shared task — a partnership.

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.