



Australian Children's
Education & Care
Quality Authority

QUALITY AREA 1

BE PART OF RECONCILIATION



Fostering children's understanding and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, and challenging biases can impact on children's future attitudes towards cultural diversity.

All educators have the potential to make a significant and positive difference in National Reconciliation.

LINKS TO THE NATIONAL QUALITY FRAMEWORK

A guiding principle of the National Quality Framework (NQF) is that Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are valued.

Ensuring children have the right to an education that respects their family, culture and other identities and languages is woven through the National Quality Standard and the Early Years Learning Framework and the Framework for School Age Care.

National Quality Standard

Services are required to provide children with programs that suit their individual needs based on their current knowledge, strengths, ideas, culture, abilities and interests (Element 1.1.2).

Learning frameworks

Building cultural competence is a key practice of the above mentioned nationally approved learning frameworks and the concept is unpacked in the Educators' Guide to the Early Years Learning Framework and the Framework for School Age Care – My Time, Our Place.

YOUR ROLE AS AN EDUCATOR

Educators are a crucial link between the rhetoric of Reconciliation and the reality of the vision fulfilled.

Cultures and histories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be embedded into your everyday practices and children's learning experiences. It's about exploring Aboriginal culture and learning about ways of belonging, being and becoming.

Educators' practice should be reflective and inclusive so that children are not disadvantaged by an educator's bias or views.

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Burridge, N. 1999, 'Teaching for Reconciliation' in Craven, R. Teaching Aboriginal Studies, St Leonards: Allen & Unwin.

INTERACTING WITH VARIOUS CULTURES ENRICHES OUR EVERYDAY LIVES

CULTURAL COMPETENCE

The Early Years Learning Framework and Framework for School Age Care show cultural competence is much more than an awareness of cultural differences.

Cultural awareness is the ability to understand, communicate and effectively interact with people across cultures and includes:

- being aware of your own world view
- developing positive attitudes towards cultural differences
- gaining knowledge of different cultural practices and world views.

The learning frameworks also promote respect for diversity and equity. Strategies include:

- reflecting on our personal biases
- challenging discriminatory viewpoints
- using resources that are culturally relevant
- adapting curriculum to children's ideas, interests and culture
- drawing on the expertise of families and those belonging to a cultural group
- inviting guests from a range of cultures to visit your service
- using the reflective questions in the learning frameworks (EYLF p.14 - p.15, FSAC p.12 - p.13).

FIRST STEPS TO BUILDING CULTURAL COMPETENCE

By drawing on community knowledge and expertise, the learning program can be enriched, including local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and histories.

Suggested 'first steps' are:

1. Form respectful relationships with the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Traditional Owners and Corporations/ Cooperatives in your area. To find out more go to: www.australia.gov.au/about-government/government-and-parliament/indigenous-policy-and-programs/land-councils
2. Attend community events and build respectful relationships to show that you are genuinely interested in getting to know more
3. Find out if your jurisdiction has an Aboriginal Education Consultative Group
4. Contact your state or territory Education Department for referral to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander liaison workers
5. Look up Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander training or support providers in your area
6. Inclusion Agencies can offer support with the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. To find out more go to: www.education.gov.au/inclusion-support-programme
7. Be aware of cultural protocols. Protocols will vary in different areas. If you are going to be working with people from traditional and remote communities you can seek out locally based training or advice
8. Explore the rich array of resources available from organisations such as SNAICC and Reconciliation Australia.

Culture in practice:

Case study 1, the Early Childhood Australia (ECA) National Quality Standard (NQS) Professional Learning Program (PLP) gives examples of how experienced educator Adam Duncan embeds history and culture into every day practice.

Some examples include:

- acknowledging Country daily by focusing on 'the history that children have had on this country, and relating the history of the land to the experiences of children'
- exploring literacy and storytelling by telling Dreaming stories
- embedding modern Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander music and arts to achieve learning outcomes in the program.

Adam reflects that often non-Indigenous educators are concerned about 'getting it wrong' or being 'tokenistic' when embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures in their educational programs.

A great starting point to embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture in the service and it's program, policies and practices is to further educators' understanding and connection with these cultures. Planning to build cultural awareness could be included in Quality Improvement Planning processes and individual performance planning.

BUILDING CULTURAL INCLUSION

Education and care services can work to develop supportive and culturally safe environments for children to experience a positive sense of belonging, being and becoming.

This includes thinking about how education and care services can assist in progressing strategies under [Close the Gap](#) which is a Council of Australian Governments initiative to address the gap in educational achievement between Indigenous and non-Indigenous children. It encompasses ways of working to overcome barriers preventing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from accessing quality education and care.

Engaging with the principles and practices of the approved learning frameworks is an important step when reflecting on and planning educators' cultural competence journey. This includes fostering secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships, partnerships with families and communities, high expectations and equity, respect for diversity and ongoing learning and reflective practice.

RECONCILIATION

Reconciliation is about improving relationships between Australian Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander people and non-Indigenous Australians. Working towards reconciliation involves a commitment to continued learning about Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and our shared histories.

Important dates

National Reconciliation Week (NRW) and National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) Week present great opportunities to learn more and get involved in the local community.

NRW is celebrated nationwide from 27 May to 3 June each year. During NRW we have the opportunity to unite and reflect on our shared histories and the differences we can make towards reconciliation. www.reconciliation.org.au/nrw

NAIDOC Week celebrations are held across Australia each year from the first Sunday in July to celebrate the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. www.naidoc.org.au

[Indigenous Children's Day](#) acknowledges the treatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

More information is available on the ACECQA website acecqa.gov.au

HAVE YOU CONSIDERED DEVELOPING A SERVICE RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN?

Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs) provide a framework for organisations to realise their vision for reconciliation.

RAPs are practical plans of action built on relationships, respect and opportunities.

RAPs create social change and economic opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

[Narragunnawali](#) is a tailored program to support education and care services 'to find meaningful ways to increase respect; reduce prejudice; and strengthen relationships between the wider Australian community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.'

To develop a RAP for your service, visit the Reconciliation Australia website at www.reconciliation.org.au

ACECQA has developed its own [RAP](#)

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

Visit the ACECQA website at www.acecqa.gov.au to download:

[Guide to the National Quality Framework](#)

[Belong, Being & Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework](#)

[My Time, Our Place – Framework for School Age Care](#)

Find other useful resources:

www.snaicc.org.au

www.aiatsis.gov.au

www.reconciliation.org.au

www.education.gov.au/inclusion-support-programme

Burridge, N. 1999, 'Teaching for Reconciliation' in Craven, R. Teaching Aboriginal Studies, St Leonards: Allen & Unwin.

Embrace Culture in Kindy website highlights days of cultural significance. www.embracekindy.com.au

Hear from other services on their journey of embedding culturally inclusive practice on our We Hear You Blog www.wehearyou.acecqa.gov.au